Chapter I

INTRODUCTION
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The present chapter deals with autobiography as a literary genre and explores Indian literature, Dalit literature, Dalit autobiography and takes into account the modern critical theories along with exclusion and marginalization.

1.1 Autobiography as a Literary Genre

Autobiography is a genre of literature in the form of prose fiction. It is one of the most appealing forms of writing. It is written by great socio-political leaders, soldiers, clerks, dancers, ministers, actors and actresses, farmers and labourers. As an interesting genre, it provides a tremendous scope for self-evolution. It is not simple a literary proposition of life but a form of creative vision. It reveals the intensely personal insights of the individual. It interprets one’s own life, with a distinct ‘I’ peeping into the ‘self’ and private life. It is an individual’s interpretation of his/her own life. It shares a venerable tradition meeting the demands of different audiences through the ages. Life events and their compulsions create an urge for self-expression in human beings.

1.1.1 Definition and Meaning

Autobiography is the most personal mode of self-expression. It comprises freedom of selection and of expression, farming identity, independence of the egotism choice of vagueness and clarity, editing and designing of truth, and mode of confession of the things. For this reason, the form, autobiography, carries different meanings. Autobiography is the story of an individual written by himself or herself, offering a picture of the author’s personalities. According to Cambridge International Dictionary of English autobiography means “the story of a person’s life or a book containing it, written by that person...” Being a ‘book’, autobiography contains the ‘story’ of one’s life. The narration of life brings it so close to life realities that its position becomes
ambivalent. Autobiography is the only form that holds such ambiguity because it connects life to literature. Apparently, it is an aesthetic story of life and conceptually it is the microscopic vision and reflection of life. It is also a revelation of mind and a representation of reality. By reflecting and interpreting, the author tries to create a meaningful pattern out of his/her varied past experiences.

The word ‘Autobiography’ is derived from the Greek elements referred as ‘auto’ meaning ‘the self’, ‘bio’ meaning ‘the life’ and ‘graphe’ means ‘the act of writing’ (Olney 1980:06). Semantically, ‘autos’ indicates the significance of ‘self’. It is the self of the writer that is both the narrator and the chief participant of his life-story. It occupies the foremost position. ‘Bios’ or ‘the life’ is the subject or central theme of autobiography. It is not possible to find an autobiography without the portrayal of one’s life. It conveys in detail the events and happenings in the move and making of the author’s life as individual. It means life that is lived. It carries the past as life-experience of the author. ‘Graphe’ means ‘the act of writing.’ It confines life to the book and past to the ‘literary record’ in a document. The act of writing implies the author’s entanglement in a triple-role. Autobiographer has an assignment as a writer, narrator, and protagonist of his life story. Thus, the three constituents of autobiography are self, life or past and writing. The oral narration of one’s life may not be appropriate for what is strictly referred to as autobiography; written or print version is essential. Autobiography records the life of an individual. *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines autobiography as: “The account of an individual human life, by the subject himself... above all, its principle must be security of the self” (1971-855). The above definition focuses on the essential thing of autobiography. The autobiography is an account of the writer’s life that helps him in establishing his identity. It is an account of the writer’s life written by himself/herself. The act of writing autobiography is a discovery, a creation and an imitation of the self. It is a self-narrated experience of the self. It is the self-representation by the ‘subject’ himself/herself. Self is omnipresent in autobiography. *Chamber’s Encyclopedia* states that autobiography can be defined as “a life narrative written by the author himself” (1950:843-44). Such definition can be held to include the other forms of literary self-revelation as memoirs, journals, diaries and letters. Autobiography is the map of the
writer's life history. It is written in the context of growing up which allows the self to ask a lot of questions and to discover new meanings in the experience of being and becoming in society. Autobiography in Roy Pascal’s view is “the vision of life as seen from inside by the man living it” (Pascal 1960: 194-95). The ‘inside’ necessarily connotes the mental, intellectual and spiritual, in association with the biographical. Autobiography is the view of one’s inner mind. It aims at a sort of wisdom in the form of self knowledge and self-exposition. Thus, autobiography is the narrative of self of the voyage of inner discovery. Autobiography is a search of self through the annals of history. It is an act which embodies the self. The real or actual self is replaced by a new and self-made object. The writer’s mind is not merely creative but analytical and more than that it is receptive. The writer receives life out it. Autobiography is a conversion of lived experience into literary experience relived. It reflects life as an intensely personalized vision. Autobiography has the inherent appeal to readers and intimate bond of trust with them. The autobiography and its reader create the bond of trust that results from autobiographer’s sharing of hidden and unknown details of his life with the readers. It creates a sort of mutual acceptance on part of both the autobiographer and reader. Autobiography, then “is an accepted artful representation of life more than a transparent reflection in a mirror-like manner. It is a thoughtful mental liberation of life into art” (Varma 2007:13). Autobiography is a literary construct. In the self-narrative, the writer speaks as an author, a narrator, and also a sharer of the experience narrated. His first person voice offers authenticity to the form. As Andre Maurois says:

“Autobiography is... as interesting as novels and as true as the finest life. It has... fidelity and impartiality in portraiture of a very high quality indeed... since it has the direct link of truth from life” (Maurois 1929:77-79).

Autobiography as a form of prose explores the writer’s private life without inhibitions or bias. In reviewing life, the autobiographer reveals the inner world of consciousness. He also analyses the external reality in an artistic way, combined with self. Autobiography in itself is a retold life-history embodying the writer’s observations of his own contact with the world. By opening a personal and private series of events to the society, through
autobiography, the writer transcends the limitations created by the social norms. Autobiography, therefore, implies a record of one's personal values, inner urges and visions combined with the actual life-experience.

The term 'autobiography' is coined by the nineteenth century poet Robert Southey in 1809 while describing the work of a Portuguese poet, Francisco Vieura. The nineteenth century was a gradual alignment of autobiography with the value accorded to authorship. Autobiography should rather belong to people of 'lofty reputation' or people who have something of 'historical importance' to say. The social distinctions were carried across into literary distinctions and autobiography was legitimized as a form by attempting to restrict its use. By the nineteenth century there was a definite hierarchy of values in relation to self-representation with memoirs. The memoirs occupied a lower order. They had a lesser degree of 'seriousness' than autobiography. In the words of Laura Marcus:

"The autobiography/ memoirs distinction—ostensibly formal and generic—is bound up with typological distinction between those human beings who are capable of self-reflection and those who are not" (Marcus 1994: 21).

The dominant tradition of autobiographical writing begins with Saint Augustine's *Confessions* (C. AD 398-400). It is often thought of as the origin of modern western autobiography. It is the origin of marking a historical beginning and of setting up a model for other, later texts. Autobiography requires a kind of consciousness of self which is peculiar to Western man. Augustine's confessions express the Christian imperative to the confession of sins and thus promote that inward-turning gaze which is the origin and basis of autobiography. It is through creating this "integrated succession of experiences" that confession lifts autobiography into art (Pascal 1960: 22-3). The historical moment of the confessions both refugured and repeated as the inaugurating moment of autobiography. The *Confessions*, at a simple level, tells the story of Saint Augustine's conversion to Christianity. This involves a process of spiritual and physical wandering, as Augustine charts his development from babyhood to manhood and a journey which takes
place him from his birthplace in Thagaste, in North Africa, to Carthage where he taught rhetoric, to Rome and then Milan where his conversion finally happens.

The plenty of spiritual memoirs and autobiographies were written in the seventeenth century particularly the period after 1640. It was because of the breakdown of state censorship during the civil war and a newly democratized access to print culture (Delany 1969: 81). Bunyan wrote his autobiography *Grace Abounding to the Chief Sinners* (1666). After that he had been imprisoned in 1600. He was imprisoned for being an Upholder and Maintainer of unlawful Assemblies and Conventiclers, and for not conforming to the National Worship of the Church of England (Bunyan 1962: 95). Like Augustine’s, Bunyan’s narrative takes its form from the experience of spiritual conversion. For Bunyan, it is the spiritual implications of the events of his life that are significant. Retrospectively he picks out those which reveal a providential design or illustrate his extreme sinfulness. He tells how he was spared from various accidents and survived the war. He confesses that the merciful working of God saved him. This he attributes to the ‘Puritan view of things, forever poised between hope and despair’ (Bell 1977: 118). He struggles for salvation. Bunyan’s spirituality is both effortful and unconsummated. His spiritual progress and parting from his wife and children are imagined in terms of the most painful of physical excruciation.

The seventeenth-century women also wrote conversion narratives. They had been given access to equal subject-hood by the belief that the distinction between good and evil superseded all others including the differences between men and women. “These narratives, just as those written by men, were thought of either as private exercises, an attempt to assess the subject’s progress towards salvation, or as public models, published, often posthumously, and offered by the male clergy to other sectaries as example or treatise” (Anderson 2007:33). The women’s negotiations with these narratives were not always completely smooth. They perceived the tensions when they moved between the expectations of the genre and of their own feminine role. The famous female autobiographies of this era were Sara Davy’s *Heaven Realized* (1670) and Anne Wentworth’s *Vindication* (1677). These autobiographical narratives constructed the
subject through strict narrative and linguistic conventions in order to create a conforming version of selfhood. For women they could also offer an alternative space, a place from which to contest their socially sanctioned position of silence and submission.

Despite all the established and varied definitions of the genre, the meaning of autobiography could be understood only by examining the essential, inevitable factors and elements related to or found inside the form. Autobiography, then, is not simply transforming life into literature but a way of expression, a medium, of analysis, the instrument to test one’s own attitudes by re-viewing the past. In communicating the life-experience, it is the author’s memory that brings the association of ideas and impressions to surface. Thus, autobiography is a fine fusion of life and literature in the sense of its literariness. It varies in the degree of truth and imagined possibilities or vision depending on the author’s intensity of involvement in the experience and his expression. Autobiography shares a generic kinship with other literary forms such as biography, diary, memories, letters and autobiographical fiction and poetry. These forms are akin to autobiography’s private mode of expression. All these forms, except biography, have the voice ‘I’ fused with double functioning of the author as a narrator and a participant. So autobiography is unique among all these forms. Because its theme is self, its mode is more private than personal. Its form is subjective and its base is confessional. Autobiography remains marked out from other personalized forms for its independent vision and individualistic outlook.

1.1.2 Autobiography and Biography

Biography is a kin form of autobiography for its focus on the lived reality of a person’s life. As Dr Johnson states:

“Everyman’s life is best written by himself...for the writer of his own life has at least the first qualification of a historian, the knowledge of truth” (Qtd. Prasad 1965:173).

Autobiography could not be differentiated from biography. Both forms successfully present the personality in the best examples of the period to which each author belongs.
Nevertheless, this presentation of a personality is subjective in autobiography and objective in biography in regard to the author. The biographer is thought to be free from the self-consciousness that pre-occupies the autobiographer. In simple words, autobiography is “a product of firsthand experience” whereas biography a product “of second hand knowledge” (Prasad: 1965:174). These two forms can be viewed separately from their author’s viewpoint. Biography transforms the life that is implied. Biography is distanced from its author. It does not carry the self of the writer or narrator. Biography adds time and movement to portrait. But autobiography remains careless about the addition of time and movement. It offers its priorities to the portrait. As Jean Starobinski says, “Biography is not portrait; or if it is a kind of portrait, it adds time and movement. The narrative must cover a temporal sequence sufficiently extensive to allow the emergency of the contour of life” (Starobinski 1971: 285). In the biography, the writer purposefully relates the individual’s life to the social, historical temporality of the times. The autobiography puts forward an intensified candid and uninhibited account of personal life wherein one has fewer chances to misunderstand oneself. The biography has a natural inclination towards making judgments. The need for writing biography is generally caused by the common events like death of a person, one’s admiration for that person’s high achievements or an occasion of reward and so on. But autobiography springs from an inner impulse, an urge for self-revelation. The expression of self in autobiography is both its cause and effect. Biography records a person’s life with only those events that are socially and historically significant. The biographer refuses to understand the emotional truth of the moments in his/her object’s life. S/he also tends to neglect the facts of her/his object’s life, for which s/he does not find convincing evidences. The autobiographer needs no evidence. Autobiography may be less objective than biography or history. But it imbibes a personal vision. The subjective interest makes it alert by individual conscience yet spontaneous in the author’s desire to tell the truth. Biography ignores personal truth, subjective values or individual emotions. The autobiographer’s portrait is not ‘from inside’. The very approach of a biographer sounds superficial in this sense. Biography is considered as the most reliable and rewarding source for the historian. In the Western literary tradition, biography stands out as one of
the most dynamic art forms. As Roy Pascal points out: "the biography in being more objective that is in seeing the person concerned as object, misses the specific dynamic truth of the autobiography" (Pascal 195). Biography can be differentiated on the basis of the sense of order and pattern. Biography can be framed in the propriety of sequence, in time and events. Autobiography does not care about the shape from sequence and order of time. The autobiographer attaches more importance to the valuable and significant moments, philosophical ideas and the process of growth of mind. To him/her the 'self' matters more. S/he explores the 'self' in his/her writing. But a biographer is tied to his/her object by the sense of observations, inferences and inductions. Biography is written with the pre-conceived notions and knowledge about its object. It has no powerful instrument like memory. So it fails at the correct perception.

1.1.3 Autobiography and Diary

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the diary had become a popular form of writing. It happened because of the expansion of literacy and the receded authority of both Church and State. The diary was an aide-memoire, to be turned to retrospectively when 'remembrance' had faded. But it was also justified artistically as registering a freshness and authenticity of impression which might be lost in subsequent retelling. Boswell’s account of Johnson was unique for this reason. However, the diary was also a register of one’s life. It was a place to return to in order to contemplate one’s after or one’s character. Jean Jacques Rousseau’s Confessions that he completed in 1770 was published posthumously between 1781 and 1789. Rousseau, instead of following previous spiritual models, developed a new model of secular autobiography for the Romantic era. Rousseau both exemplifies modern Romantic autobiography and occupies a ‘pivotal’ position in its historical development. He refuses other sources for himself and radical internalization of personal identity. It makes him both ‘novel’ and ‘influential’. For Rousseau, there is no higher form of knowledge than feeling; self-knowledge, it soon becomes evident, is inseparable from conviction or intuitive self-understanding, from the knowledge of his heart that belongs to him alone. Without recourse to Divine help, or situated within secular time, Rousseau’s feelings stretch out into a succession of
endlessly renewable inner revelations about himself. Rousseau believed that the task of autobiographer is to tell or 'confess' all and make himself as transparent to his readers as he was to himself. He thought that if the reader came to a wrong conclusion it would be his own fault. His responsibility as an autobiographer was to give the reader all the evidences that were available, all that the reader should need in order to arrive at the correct judgment. Though the truth may be immediate and spontaneous, its communication to the reader must be prolonged and insistent. Socially Rousseau is a poor man, without status or family to protect himself. He has no special significance in terms of his rank or wealth.

The diary records a person’s private information. This writing is concerned with the day-to-day happenings in routine life. It is a specific document that notes down the exactness of particularized time, days or dates from the writer’s life. The urge to write a diary is either rooted in the practical sense of habituality or a desire to record peculiarly mundane matters to make one’s life known to oneself forever. As Naik observes:

“A diary is only a day-to-day record of an individual’s activities by an individual. It may be valuable as a record of certain artistic element in it. But surely it cannot be called an autobiography” (Naik 1962: 40).

The autobiography is written for the desire to carry one’s practical perceptions to the philosophical ones through the memorized past. The autobiographer writes an autobiography to make it authorized comments, without analytical judgments or sense of choice. In the diary, the diarist records everything that he feels memorable. The autobiographer creates his/her life-story by choosing the facts stored in memory, and by analyzing those through his/her present perspective. Being a private mode of recording, a diary lacks a smooth continuity in its intermittent form and content. So “the self presented in diary lacks an obvious center, a smooth continuity in its intermittent form and content, and thus may call into question the dominant humanist assumption that man is the center of meaning” (Nassbaum 1988: 132). Diary is meant for private record, a
personal reading and secret accounts. It is tied closely to biographical dates and details. It has lesser appeal on behalf of the authorial self. It is a confession to the self with only the self as auditor and without the public authority. In diary, the author generally records more about ‘others’ in relation to him. S/he does not try to distinguish between the significant and insignificant. S/he lacks the very principle of organizing the events, views, and feelings. Autobiography cannot easily divert from the self, its attributes and idiosyncrasies.

In a diary, the self-explanation is always hasty and immature. The diarist perceives that the loss of memory may result in the loss of past. With his/her adult self, the autobiographer explores his/her psyche and his communal-social image. S/he romanticizes and aestheticizes his/her expression to make it as attractive as possible. S/he follows the protocol of his/her expression. The diarist makes diary as a more logical and scientific record for its accuracy of time and particularity of dates. The autobiographer does not pay attention to such apparent exactness. A diary contains the momentary fluctuations of mind, a sudden desire and irrelevant ideas. In fact, it cannot create a consistent picture of one’s life for its meticulous mentions of time, place and persons. A diary suffers from the paucity of time and re-thinking because of consistency and self-denial. Its intimate mode of narration proves useless and offers narrow scope for creation of clarity and vision. The authorial voice in diary exercises the habitual act of filtering the mind and move ahead refreshed. The first person voice is too intimate to judge in diary. Autobiography and diary are separate and distinctly oriented in their making and pattern. As literary forms, both are rooted in the ground of privacy. Autobiography draws attention to the individual’s perspective and analytical mind engaged in reflection of private life events. But a diary only offers a glance at those noted day-to-day events.

1.1.4 Autobiography and Memoir

Memoir is a form of writing about the influences and experiences that registered upon the writer’s mind and even his/her private and public life. The writer’s life consists of several events, experiences and vision. In his/her individual story of ‘becoming’, there is an
impact of multiple persons, places and happenings which influence his/her mind and life. Therefore, memoir is an artistic presentation of a memory that keeps lingering in the writer's mind. It is made meaningful in expression and form. In memoir, the author describes his/her 'external life' rather than his/her intellectual or spiritual growth. Self-expression differentiates autobiography from a memoir. Autobiography never consists of colouring a momentary mood or feeling upon a peculiar object. In it, the author is conscious and deliberate rather than delicate in expression. The transparent expression used in autobiography creates the writer's image as literary representation of human self. The Memoir has a single focus. It focuses not on the self but on one incident, occasion, person or place. It even focuses on a memorable journey of the writer. As Shipley explains in his Dictionary of World Literary Terms-

"Autobiography and memoirs, though the terms are often used as if interchanged, are properly distinguished by the relative emphasis placed on character and as extended events, memoirs customarily give some prominence to personalities and choices that are other than the writer's own".

In both autobiography and memoir 'I' refers to the self. However, the self cannot be projected completely in memoir and this makes the self partly visible. The full-fledged version of self-depiction is found in autobiography. The Memoir lacks completeness of the original self. It also lacks the integrity of autobiography. A memoir is written to convey an adventurous, admirable or romantic experience. It is also written as an obituary, about a dead person's life or actions. Then it becomes formal depiction of partial truth. Autobiography has a serious purpose, a greater truth and a larger canvass with deeper analytical insights. It becomes more attractive and significant for its concentrated thrust on subjectivity. Having a broader perspective, autobiography is devoted to the making of self-image. The aim of the memoir is refreshment of memory more than the exploration of self. The profound need or self-assertion produces autobiography. Autobiography finds the meaning of an individual's existence. The memoir is born of some occasional or emotional need. It gives vent to something that
troubles the mind. A memoir has only one serious purpose that is to arouse memories or to achieve fame.

1.1.5 Autobiography and Letters

Letter is a personal mode of writing having an address to a particular person. It explains the type of contact and relationship between the writer and the receiver. Autobiography is written not for one reader but for so many with whom the writer has no specific contact or relationship. It has a wider social connectivity so that autobiography comes closer to the truth of life-situations personally or privately faced by the author. Letters neither manifest the truth nor preserve the self-image. They are written just as replied to the previous ones. They clarify the misunderstandings. They are also written for advice, guidance or counseling. Sometimes they are written in a fit of passion, either love or revenge, threat or anger. The letter writing has different motives to different people. Autobiography is distinct in its form, content, purpose, directions, motives and results. Both forms have a similar thing that is the first-person-narrator. The writer of the letter has neither prejudices nor any inhibitions. S/he confides very honestly about his/her failures and achievements, doubts and opinions, ideas and illusions. S/he feels free to open his/her heart and communicate to close friends, intimate relatives and attached acquaintances. S/he conveys to his/her friends what s/he feels or thinks. In letters, the psychological vision of the writer is explored and fulfilled. Letters are a single-dimensional address to one or a few persons. Letters are notes, epistles or a sort of communicative memorandum meant for friends or acquaintances. The writer of letter uses different expressions of intimate sense or tone in relation to the identity, personality and relationship. It is not necessary for the writer of letters to revitalize the past. The autobiographer cannot escape the past. S/he selects the events from his/her past. The sense of publication brings a sort of pressure on the mind of autobiographer. The writer of letters considers the place of his/her correspondent and shapes the expression accordingly. So s/he has no fear of the publication of his/her letters. Autobiography and letter explain the functioning of a writer's psyche and inner visions. Both the forms offer insight into the writer's personal life.
Autobiography, in this way, differs from biography, diary, memoir and letters. The main feature or essence of autobiography is the self-analytical vision of self. This feature is absent in all these forms of literature. Biography moves around life and the diary records around the moments. The memoir moves around its object of memory and the letters around a relation or an experience. The core of autobiography is the ‘self’. The self remains at the center and at the periphery in the autobiography. The autobiographer has the intention of self-discovery and self-revelation in his/her mind. Autobiography, thus, is a journey of self-discovery. In it the writer displays the events that shape and reshape his/her life in a very special way. To John Sturrock, the autobiography is “the certificate of a unique human passage through time” (Sturrock 1992:03). It is a literary reconstruction of life done with great discrimination through the writer’s journey into the past.

The creation of a literacy piece is rooted in the life-experience. Life is a source for both literature and autobiography. Thinking of life-experiences gives birth to the act of writing. This is the quest for expression. In autobiography, it turns out to be a quest for self-expression. It becomes a way to search and discover the self. Self-knowledge, thereby, becomes an important motive in autobiography. The autobiographer shows a psychological insight that is useful in self-analysis. S/he uses the genre to investigate and affirm the self-identity. The autobiography is basically the narrative of self. It is a source to seek an answer to the question like ‘Who am I?’ or ‘How did I become what I am?’. The act of writing autobiography is an exercise of self and striving for the inner assimilation. The gratification of the inner thirst for self-knowledge is sought in autobiography through a sense of fulfillment.

1.1.6 Autobiography and Journal Writing

Like the diary, the journal, too, is a record of events performed, happening or recurring every day. The autobiography tries to interpret life in totality. But the journal writer presents the fragments that go to make up the whole. As George Gusdorf in his essay *Conditions and Limits of Autobiography* states: “The author of private journal, noting
his impressions and mental states from day to day, fixes the portrait of his daily reality without any concern for continuity” (Gusdorf 1980: 36). The journal is episodic and fragmented in structure. In autobiography, the writer selects and organizes events and experiences in terms of a unified vision and with a fixed perspective. The autobiographer reviews life while the journal writer presents the life. The writer of journal being closer to the events and experiences with regard to duration can present them with greater accuracy.

1.1.7 Characteristics of Autobiography

The autobiography is concerned with the self in its reactions and responses to the external forces. The focus of autobiography is the individual self through the hidden side of the writer’s life and personality. “To read an autobiography is to encounter a self as imaginative being” (Spacks 1976:19-31). The autobiographer presents his inner core, a self beneath the personality that appears to the world. Autobiography is rooted in the notion of self that is private, personal, subjective, individualistic and singular in its essential make up. The first-person narration initiates a deep mood of introspection and introvert contemplation. The autobiography connects the spiritual self and the psychological self. The ‘self’ becomes a theme with the central focus on it. The central interest of an autobiographer is “the self, not the outside world, though necessarily the outside world must appear so that, in give and take with it, the personality finds its peculiar shape” (Pascal: 09). The autobiographer combines his/her subjective vision of self with the analytical one. The self is a multi-faceted part of the writer’s existence. The self possesses highly active sensitivity and sharp sensibility. It holds the dynamic notions of thought and emotion. It brings the sense of being and helps the process of becoming. The self has two distinct phases of life – past and present. In autobiography, there is a celebration of self. It is carried to the point of self-glorification. The writer narrates how s/he has achieved a sublime position, a success through self-trials and struggle. The autobiographer presents a self-image with its historical shape, form and order for the documentation of self-development. The search for self-identity is one of the shades of self. Many a time, the autobiographer strives to find the identity of his/her self through
the writing of an autobiography. Sometimes the writer also tries to compensate through it for the feeling of dislocation and displacement that is felt in life by him/her. In such cases, autobiography becomes a tool to refuge the self in its proper place and form. “Autobiography is an examination of the self as both a sovereign integrity and a member of society. In fact, the self is at all times both these things… Autobiography is an endless stream of demonstrations of their inseparability” (Sayre 1964: 31). The autobiographer “presents his inner core, a self beneath the personality that appears to the world… that is his most precious reality since it gives meaning to his life” (Pascal, 193).

1.1.7.1 The Sense of Past

The element of ‘past’ is inseparable as the material and the content for autobiography. To autobiography, the ‘past’ is as essential as the ‘self’. It is the sense of past that creates a historical perspective in the writer. The phrase, “sense of past” carries two elemental qualities of the form. One is the mood of nostalgia that connotes the writer’s mind back into the past. And the other is the distance of time that the writer consciously tries to cross and cover, in his expressions. An autobiographer shows how the present self, combination of the past and the present life of the writer, is the natural outcome of that past self or those past events and happenings in his/her life. The writer broods and ponders over his/her past for the selection and omission of events. S/he has to make his/her choice by appropriate distribution of facts. The writer has to discriminate and dissect the facts that emphasize certain aspects of his/her past life. S/he has to evaluate life, and life cannot be evaluated without the past. An autobiographer inevitably recalls and impartially analyzes the past life through his/her memory. S/he moves from convictions to confessions, impelled by the urge of self-exploration and self-scrutiny.

In autobiography, the writer liberates his/her mind from the conflict of emotive experiences, moral pressures and inward struggles. The confidence of convictions helps the writer to portray the past life. So there starts the process of writing autobiography. It is a process of transformation of memories, formation of past into a text and display of self into language. In the attempt of defining the self-existence, the reflective and
retrospective way of experimental thinking about past attaches values to the past experiences. Through the description of past as part of life, the self comes into shape and the writer attempts to organize his/her shapeless life-experiences. The writer of autobiography goes through a deeper and repeated process of contemplation to choose and discriminate the memories, past events, feelings, associative ideas and impressions in his/her mind. The process of contemplation makes the balance of past and presents self by combining a sense of appropriateness and the impulsive urge for confessional narration. It thus makes autobiography as the re-vision of life. The sense of past relates the self of the writer from its origin and beginning to the matured or adult stage of the present. Lionel Abel defines autobiography as “a recounting of the events of the author’s life as they happened, together with what the author may have felt or thought at the time of these happenings, insofar as he can remember them exactly” (Abel 1985: 21). The combination of past events with the feelings and responses of the writer connects those events as far as his memory stores and restores. In autobiography, therefore, the past impressions do not completely belong to the past and do not contribute to the historical truth, but to the ‘historical’ sense of the writer.

1.1.7.2 Question of Truth

An autobiography cannot be judged on the basis of its factuality though it is a history of life. Here, the question of truth can be a medium to know and understand the hidden personal aspects and varied private forms of life. It is a necessary link that introduces the quality of the writer’s perceptions of his life. The writer records his life experiences on the basis of his analytical vision of the past. In view of Jerome Bruner “the truth of individual’s life and its introspective scrutiny can be found only in one genre – that is autobiography” (Bruner 1969:15). When the writer describes another person’s character, s/he may be right or wrong but s/he will always succeed, in describing herself/himself. Since each mind has its own story to tell, autobiography cannot be tested as true or false. It can be seen as a means of discovering truth on behalf of the writer. It defines the writer’s truth in relation to the world around him. “Autobiography is a way to enter in the truth like every pure experience; it takes birth from that state of existence, which is
superior to memories, general falsehood, great deceptions and desire to be or look honest and sincere” (Mandel 1980: 63). In autobiography, the narrative mode of truth emerges from nostalgic state of mind, out of the desire to prove oneself truthful. The truth in autobiography can be a truth of the moments of writer’s life, his private ideas, actions and reactions. It can be unique or singular. The truth in autobiography can be, at the same time, dramatic and aesthetic. The narrative in it follows the presentation of many-sided reality of life. The autobiographer aims at creating his/her ideal self-image through the real portrait of an individual. S/he takes the material from her/his life-experience. No one questions its reality, validity or utility just because the form is self-narrated. Autobiography offers the plain truth, the writer’s mental response and the knowledge of truth about self. Autobiography places its accent upon the subjective self. The truth in it happens to be the subjective representation of reality, shaded by the personal feelings, coloured by the mysteries of an individual mind (Varma, 47).

1.1.8 Limitations of Autobiography

Autobiography has its own limitations. The formal and internal mode of autobiography becomes a complex record of mind, life and time when the true conception of life in the form of a faithful portrait of a soul adventures extrovertly. Autobiography deals with purely personal concerns. So autobiography is a distinct and deliberate undertaking. There are basic limitations inherently shading and shaping the structure of autobiography. They are aestheticity, authenticity, incompleteness and the reader-consciousness. The aestheticity motivates the creative germ in the autobiographer. It affects the historical and factual side of its presentation. The aesthetic desire of an autobiographer to impress his self-image interferes consciously or unconsciously with his life-story. The authenticity shakes and shades the grounds of self-hood and subjectivity. Self can be seen as both the privilege and the limitation of an autobiography. Authenticity involves the role of memory, and in the process of recollecting the past. The limitation of incompleteness causes the author end his story while the life continues and creates the sense of death in his mind. No life or personality can be totally portrayed in the autobiography. The reader-consciousness, on the part of the writer whose mind anticipates the public opinion, forms
his self-expression accordingly. The class, race, caste, gender, religion or nation can be considered as the limitations in the vision of the author. These limitations vary from person to person. Autobiography as a literary genre has its own place, its own elements, principles and limitations. It reveals the reality of life more transparently than any other form.

1.2 Indian Literature

Indian literature is the writing of an Indian in Indian languages and in English also. As Aijaz Ahmad says, "Every book written by an Indian, inside the country or abroad, is the part of a thing called Indian literature" (Ahmad 1994:245). An Indian literature is one whose unity resides in the common national origins of its authors and the common civilization ethos of the Indian people. "Indian literature comprises several literatures—Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Kannada, Maithili, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Panjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, and not to mention Sanskrit, for people continue to write in it though the readers are few and far between—and Indian writing in English is but one of the voices in which India speaks" (Iyengar 1983:3). Indian literature is composite growth reflecting the impact of diverse ages, races, religions and influences, and maintaining simultaneously, sometimes in harmony, sometimes disharmony, different levels of cultural consciousness and intellectual development. Indian literature has always presented a panorama rather than a scene. As K. Satchidanan comments: "The local traditions, the rhythms of popular speech, the varying landscapes, ethnic communities with their lifestyles and styles of worship and celebration, folklore and forms of art, the general level of awareness, dissemination of diverse ideologies, different combinations of external influences and native elements and the particular genius of each language have given our literatures specific tones, flavours, directions, cultural registers, semantic codes and individual histories that hold a specific relation to the general history of Indian literature" (Satchidanan 1999:24-25). Thus "the centripetal impulse in the nation-state tends to view regional literatures of India as homogeneous, self-contained entities, adding to a larger integrated entity called Indian literature" (Ramakrishnan 2011:15). Indian literature as a discipline emerged with the idea of India that was
constituted as a site of knowledge in the context of its encounter with Europe. The works on Indian history and Indian languages began appearing from the late eighteenth century, among which were Alexander Dow’s *The History of Hindustan* (1770), Sir William Jones’ *A Grammar of the Persian Languages* (1771), John Richardson’s *A Dictionary of English, Persian and Arabic* (1780), and Charles Wilkins’s *Bhagavat Geeta or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon* (1785). This prolific phase of colonial writing defined India as an epistemological field. The subjects of these texts were first and foremost the Indian languages themselves, represented in European terms as grammars, dictionaries and teaching material in the projects to make the acquisition of a working knowledge of the languages available to those British who were to be part of the ruling groups in India. India was being discovered by the British administrators during this period. Sir William Jones while getting mastery over Sanskrit translated Kalidasa’s *Abhijananasakuntalam-sacontala* as *The Fatal Ring: An Indian Drama by Calidas* (1789).

India had a classical heritage of languages. Sanskrit was elevated to the rank of languages like Greek, Latin, French, German and English. Prakrit, Pali and Tamil can be involved in Indian classical languages. Sanskrit literature had the unique contribution to the unity of Indian literature. It was pan-Indian in its scope, spread, inspiration and influence. The *Vedas* are among the earliest known literary articulation of mankind. The Vedic dialect that had probably descended from the earlier Indo-Iranian language was the common source of Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit. Sanskrit grew to be the language of cultural and political hegemony up to the 6th century B.C. In the sixth century B.C. the Lord Buddha and Bhagwan Mahavira questioned the domination of Sanskrit and gave their sermons in Pali and Prakrit. Then Pali and Prakrit became the medium of carrying the messages of compassion and equality across to the common people. *Artherva*, the fourth Veda, revealed the several elements of indigenous popular traditions and practices. There were popular oral narratives—*Panchatantra, Kathasaritsagar, Brihatkatha, Vasudevahindi,* and *Jatakas*. The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* were also based on the popular legends and clan narratives like the stories of Puru, Kurus, Yadus and Nagas. The alternative tradition within Sanskrit in the form of Sudraka’s *Maricchakatika* (The Clay Cart) and the works of poets like Yogeshwara dealt with the lives of common people.
Thus the whole of ancient literature was not elitist. The poets of classical Sanskrit such as Kalidasa, Bhasa, Bhavabhuti, Visakhadatta and others up to Jayadeva appealed to the essential passions of all human beings despite their class prejudices in the choice of themes and character. Moreover, the contribution of Panini, the grammarian, Bhartrahari, the linguist and the exponents of poetics like Bharata, Anandavardhana, Kuntaka, Mammata and Kshemendra cannot be forgotten. These writers made Sanskrit language as standard and provided the foundations of Indian poetics.

The Buddhist and Jain literature in Pali, Prakrit and Apabhramsa were the parallel streams that co-existed with Sanskrit literature. Asvaghosa, Nagarjuna, Santideva, Vasubandhu and Hala belonged to the Buddhist and Jain literatures. The other parallel stream of Sangam literature was in Tamil, the second classical language of India. Tamil had produced great narratives like Manimekalai and Silappatikaram, treatise of grammar like Thirukkural and sensuous poems of love and domesticity (Aham poems) and of war and politics (Puram poems) collected in several anthologies. Tamil also developed its own ecopoetics based on the terrains (thinai) and its own concept of poetic suggestion.

Indian literature emerged with specific creative geniuses during the medieval period when modern languages came into being. The Bhakti movement literature being multilingual in nature began to shape Indian literature. The poets of the Bhakti movement were the weavers (Kabir), tailors (Namdev), brick-layers (Chokamela), small pedlars (Tukaram), potters (Gora), tanners (Raidas), goldsmith (Akho) or women poets (Lal Dedu, Meerabai, Mahadevi Akka). Some of them were Muslims (Kabir, Dedu, Rahim, Raskhan) and many belonged to the so-called ‘lower’ castes. The Tamil poets like Nayanmars and Alvars started the Bhakti movement in the South. They replaced the worship of the Vedic gods—Indra, Varuna and Agni by that of Shiva and Vishnu. These Tamil poets belonged to the categories of hunters, washermen, barbers, and poor peasants. The Bhakti movement was inspired by a radical spirituality that scorned earthly power and rejected man-made hierarchies of caste and creed. By rejecting priesthood and use of Sanskrit, the Bhakti poets used the language of the common people. These Bhakti poets were the first major poets of many modern Indian languages. The poets were
Basaveshwara, Ninnayya, Kambar or Ezhuthacchan in the South; Sarala Das, Chandi Das, Krittir Bas, Shankardev and Madhavdev in the East; Kabir, Nanak Dev, Lal Ded, Surdas and Tulasidas in the North; and Narasimha Mehta, Meera, Jnaneshwar, Namdev and Tukaram in the West. Jnandeva (1275-96), the first Marathi poet pioneered a new literary aesthetics and founded a new literary language while providing a philosophical commentary on the *Bhagavat Gita* in Marathi. As he addressed the speech community of Marathi as a whole, his poem takes on a dialogic tone. The poetic utterances of the Alvars and the Lingayat poets in the South, the Vaishnava poets of Bengal, the Sufi mystics and the Jain poets of Western India and Tulsidas and Kabir of North India could reconcile the conventions of oral tradition with the requirements of textuality. All these major Indian sects opposed to the institution of social castes and questioned the hegemonic structures of power. They articulated dissent in the everyday language of the masses. Literature and worship became inseparable in the customs and cultural practices of these communities. Genres such as *Vachana* in Kannada, *thullal* in Malayalam or *qissa* in Hindi are deeply rooted in the social formations of their societies.

The nineteenth century India had performance traditions and complex literary cultures. Parsi theatre shows how the native performance traditions transformed the European and Persian conventions of the theater into a hybridized form. It was in the urban areas of India from the 1860s to the 1930s, the Parsi theater staged plays based on the myths and histories of the Parsi community. Parsi theater also explored themes based on other Indian myths and histories. By the 1860s, Urdu had become the favoured medium for these popular plays since it commanded a larger audience cutting across communities. Urdu was the language of prestige during the late nineteenth and twentieth century. As a language of poetic art and public speech, it invoked great admiration. As language became a marker of nationalism and identity and with the Urdu-Hindi divide in the North, the Indian literature saw the rise of Hindi as the medium of Parsi theater.

The anti-colonial and reform-oriented movements shaped Indian literature during the nineteenth century. In order to fight against the British, the movements upheld the
tradition. To bring out reforms with regards religious practices and beliefs, the reformists re-examined the traditions that contained several retrogressive customs and practices like untouchability, caste distinctions, denial of remarriage to widows, patriarchy that oppressed and dominated women and Sati or widow-burning. Vallathol, Kumaran Asan, Bhaiveersing, Keshavsva, Jaishankar Prasad, Sumitranandan Pant, K. V. Puttappa, D. R. Bendre, Veereshalingam, Gulam Ahmad Mahjoor, Tagore and Nazrul Islam reflected a genuine respect for India's cultural heritage and Indian values. They protested against colonialism and articulated the common urge for social reform. Most of the Indian writers accepted the new Western literary genres such as short story, novel, biography, autobiography and literary criticism and related them to India's own narrative and critical traditions. Many Indian writers were deeply influenced by Gandhism, Ambedkarism and/or Marxism. Rooted inextricably in their social, historical and cultural contexts, Indian writers therefore continue to be, first and foremost, Indian whatever language they write in.

1.2.1 Tamil Literature

Tamil language is one of the Indian classical languages. But the first Tamil booklet for use by the missionaries appeared in Lisbon in 1554 with Roman scripts. The booklet was entitled as *Thambiran Vanakkam*. In 1577 Tamil types were cast in Goa and later in Quilon in better shape in 1578. A full-fledged printing press was established in Tarangambady, Tamilnadu in 1712. This resulted in a new literary activity fostered by Christian missionaries. Missionaries like G. U. Pope, F. W. Ellis and Beski who had learnt Tamil began to translate and interpret Tamil literary texts such as *Tirukural* and *Sangam Poems*. Western Christian scholars were in a way responsible for initiating the process of Tamiliology and Tamil cultural nationalism. This has some parallel elements of affinity with the attempts of Orientalists and the Royal Asiatic Society. The intellectuals, politicians and writers of the modern phase of Tamil literature are Arumuga Navalar, P. Sundaram Pillai, Ramalinga Adigal known as 'Vallalar', C. Subramania Bharathi popularly known as Bharathiar, Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, the popular leader of Self-Respect movement and Dravidian political parties, and Bharathidasan, a poet of
eminence. Arumuga Navalar, a religious scholar of Sri Lanka, was an exponent of Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. He was a scholar par excellence in Bhakti literature and took up the cause of defending Hindu practices of faith which were easy targets of Christian missionaries. Navalar was responsible for the modernization of Saivism in Tamilnadu. Saiva Shiddhanta emerged as a school with its own order of mutts. It was promoted as Tamil; Religion in opposition to the Vedic Hinduism of Brahmins. Saiva Tamil scholars treated Devaram and Tiruvasakam with respect, and considered them as texts composed by divine poets. Sundaram Pillai was a product of East-West synthesis. He was born to Tamil parents based in Kerla, and had his grounding in Tamil language and literature and also in Saiva Siddhanta. He wrote a famous verse drama, Manonmaniam, which was an adaptation of an English work Secret Way by Lord Lytton. But he shaped the book in such a way that it became an ideologue for Tamil cultural nationalism. The book contains a song in praise of Tamil which has now been approved as the official invocation song by Government of Tamilnadu. His five-act drama strongly recommends progress through identification with Tamil language and culture as distinctly different from the Vedic Brahminic culture and also by westernization, symbolized in the liberty of the heroine Manonmaniam with the help of Purushothaman, a Chera king, endowed with wisdom and heroism, the one who hails from the West. In the preface to the book he strongly condemns the Manu Code which divides humanity on the basis of Castes and Tiruvalluvar who claims that every one born is equal in birth.

Ramalinga Adigal (1823-1874), a saintly poet who announced that the men have to coexist with people of different faiths with respect for the faith of the other. He spoke of the need for the supreme values of mercy, compassion and pity in his poems made of simple verses and set to folk music, which, he claimed, are hymns divine. Tamil's story of religious heterogeneity and religious coexistence find their affirmation in the words of Vallalar. C. Subramania Bharathi's great contribution to the growth of Tamil letters was oriented towards Sanskritization as well as Westernization. Bharathi visualized a modern India empowered with wisdom of all the greats of India belonging to the field of science, politics, religion and arts. During the early years of the twentieth century Periyar
E. V. Ramasamy arrived on the socio-cultural scene of Tamilnadu. This iconoclastic leader of atheist stand was a Congress leader who emerged later as the father figure of Dravidian parties. The construct of Dravidian ideology—with loyalty to Tamil culture, love for Tamil language and literature, and shunning of Vedic Brahminism—was made complete with the writings of Bharathidasan and C. N. Annadurai, both influenced by Periyar’s social vision (Bala 2005:181-84). For more than a century, that is, right from Ayothi Dasar (1845-1914) to Periyar, there has been a series of discourses by various social movements for securing the rights of the backward and under-privileged Dalits. Once the reservation for Dalits in education and employment was brought in through legal sanction, it added a certain degree of militancy in the Tamil discourses. For the first time, the Dalits could move away from the benevolence of writings and discourses of the upper caste community, and articulate themselves and their constraints, in the field of politics, culture, language, art and literature (Panjangam 205:190). In Tamilnadu, since the start of ‘self-respect’ movement, stories started appearing in respect of the freedom and equality for communities kept suppressed over centuries. Since the 90s Dalit literature has assumed a distinct personality in Tamil language, thanks to the influence and impact of Maharashtrian Dalit political and literary institutions. Daniel’s Panchamar and D. Selvaraj’s Malarum Sarugum are noted as pioneering novels of Dalit category. Sivagami’s Pazhaiyana Kazhidalum, and Anandhayi, Poomani’s Piragu, Bama’s Karukku, Sangathi, Vizhi Pa. Idayavendan’s Nandanar Theru, Ka. Pa. Arugan’s Saadhi Pandhiyar continued the trend (Thilakavathi 2005:205-6).

1.2.1.1 Bama and the Context of Tamil Dalit Literature
Dalit literature in Tamilnadu has less than two decades of history. This history begins with Bama’s publication of Karukku in 1992. In Tamil Nadu, at the time of national celebrations of Ambedkar’s birth centenary, Dalits were becoming more aware of their rights. The activists of the Marxist-Leninist ideology who had grown disillusioned with communism after the collapse of the USSR started raising questions regarding the nature and function of nationalism, which bears traces of fascism. This debate appeared in the 1992 issue of the journal Nirapirikai (The Spectrum). It provided a niche for scholars
from various ideological domains—Marxists Dravidian, Tamil nationalist—to discuss issues concerning state and civil society and the role of media and family in the post-Marxist and contemporary feminist line of thought. After the Conference on ‘Politics and Economics in the 1980s’ caste was identified as one of the ideological structures. The scholars sought to construct Indian history from an alternative perspective beyond a narrow Marxist framework.

In 1990s, Tamil Dalits began to write themselves into history as part of the Ambedkar Centenary celebrations. The smaller Dalit organizations showed interest in retrieving art forms peculiar to Dalits, resulting in the formation of Dalit theatre. As part of the centenary celebrations, fact-finding reports of atrocities against Dalits and writings by and on Ambedkar were published as small pamphlets. Audio cassettes with songs attacking the caste system and celebrating Ambedkar were played and widely circulated. The caste of the Dravidian movement came to be examined through the writings of the activist-writer, Ravikumar in the Tamil Dalit journal Thai Mann. The Dalit Cultural Festival conducted first in Pondichery and in Neyveli in 1992 mobilized the grass root-level Dalit organizations and activists and provided a common platform for them. The Government’s publication of Ambedkar’s writing in Tamil translations also played a crucial role in shaping Dalit politics and in planning their course of action. In the academic sphere, while the European and American universities accommodate Dalit Studies as part of the expansion of Culture Studies, Indian universities have included it as part of fulfilling the University Grants Commission’s demand to accommodate Human Rights in the curriculum. Dalit Studies, however, remains a marginal study as it remains outside the mainstream curriculum, and is offered only as an elective or optional course. The post-colonial scholars who try to accommodate Ambedkar or Dalit Studies include it only as a section in their studies on colonialism. They reproduced the already existing political nationalism of the Gandhian kind. Besides such developments in the intellectual and cultural spheres, there was also the political mobilization of Dalits under the leadership of Thol Tirumaavalavan of Vidudhalai Ciruthaikai party in northern Tamil Nadu and of Dr Krishnaswamy of Pudiya Tamilagam part in the south. However,
Vidudhalai Ciruthaikal emerged as a major Dalit party which could challenge the Dravidian parties by re-establishing the continuity of the anti-caste intellectual tradition of Pundit Iyothee Thass, Rettai Malai Srinivasan (Rao Bahadur Srinivasan), M. C. Rajah, and other Dalit intellectuals. It was during this period that Bama emerged not merely as a Dalit writer but also as a significant woman writer at the national level through the translation of her autobiography Karukku into English by Lakshami Holmstrom, and through the translations of Karukku into other Indian languages. The ‘Crossword Award’ for the English translation of Karukku (2001) made Bama an internationally renowned Dalit woman writer. Along with the development in the Dalit intellectual and activist spheres, Bama’s writings received international recognition through translations into English and other European languages. She became such a significant writer that the ten-year anniversary of the publication of Karukku was celebrated in July, 2004 in Chennai, in which writers, activists and media persons participated. Naturally, the local Dalit communities who agitated over Bama’s writings as exploiting the Dalit way of life began to find her acceptable. Bama gained local recognition that was a greater achievement than the winning of international acclaim. As a writer alive to the environment, Bama’s focus changed from invoking Dalit victimhood, as seen in Karukku, towards focusing on the interrelationship between caste and patriarchy in her writings. Unlike the victimhood articulated subjectively in Karukku, her second work Sangati focused on the complexities involved in the oppression of Dalit women. The central theme of the novel simply echoed the slogan put up at the Durban Conference Against Racism: ‘We are raped not because we are women, but because we are Dalits’. This ‘crossover’ effect could be seen in most of the Dalit writings, erasing the border between literature and human rights.

1.2.2 Hindi Literature and Dalit Writings

In Hindi literature, the writing about Dalit life began with Munshi Premchand’s Godan, and Nagarjuna’s Balachnama. The writers like Babu Butesurnath, Fanishvarnath Renu and Ramdarash Mishra handled the Dalit issues in their writings. Modern Dalit literature, in Hindi, actually began with Achutanand who was inspired by the works of Kabir,
Rahidas and Nanak Dev. Achutanand wrote a drama *Shambuk* in the folk language. In it he represented the real picture of contemporary socio-cultural order. He also started the periodicals such as *Aadi-Hindu* and *Achut* to explain the Dalit life and literature. The early period of Hindi literature had Nath poets whereas mediaeval era had Kabir, Saint Rahidas, and Dindayal. Kabir in his *Dohe* (verses) spoke of upper-low caste discrimination, denial of idol worship, and ridiculed the cruel traditions and customs. In the period of Bhakti movement many Saints and Sufi Fakirs had represented Dalit life. In modern times the writers like Ugra, Upendranath Ashka, Rushabh Charan Jain, Premchand, Kausik, Nagarjun, Nirala, Renu, Dhumil, Jagdish Chandra, Shivprasad Sinh, Ramdarash Mishra, Jagdamba Prasad Dixit, Mohandas Naimishray, Omprakash Valmiki, Uday Prakash, Sanjay, Chitra Mudgal, Krushna Agnihotri, Manjula Bhagat, Ramanika Gupta, Maitrya Pushpa, Prabhruti and many others wrote with anger and protest in their novels and stories.

The major Hindi Dalit short story writers are Omprakas Valmiki, Mohandas Naimishray, Dyanand Bartahi, Surajpal Chauhan, Satyaparakash, Jayprakash Kardam, Prem Kapadia, Arunkumar Arun, Babulal Madhukar, Kusum Viyogi, Sushila Takbhure, Shatrughan Kumar, Kaveri, and Vipin Bihari. In the Hindi Dalit dramatic writings, Achutanand Harihar’s *Ramraj Ke Nyay* (Ramraj’s Justice) and *Mayanand*, Lallan Singh Yadav’s *Shambuk Vadh* (Shambuk’s Murder), Mohandas Naimishray’s *Hello Comrade* and *Kya Tum Kharidoge*, Omprakash Valmiki’s *Do Chehare* (Two Faces) and Kaval Bharati’s *Jab Rome Jal Raha Tha* (When Rome was Burning) are notable. Hindi Dalit autobiographies which are mostly discussed are Mohandas Naimishray’s *Maslan*, *Apne Apne Pinjare Part 1, 2*, Omprakash Valmiki’s *Joothan*, Bhagwan Das’ *Mai Bhangi Hoon* (I’m Bhangi), Suraj Pal Chauhan’s *Tiraskrut Aur Santapt*, Kaushalya Vaisanti’s *Dohara Abhipshap*, Mataprasad’s *Zopadi Se Rajbhavan* (From Hut to Rajbhavan), and Rupnarayan Sonkar’s *Nagfani*. These autobiographies are the stories of the autobiographer’s personal, familial, social and cultural struggles. They have a difference among their personal and familial references but social struggle and sorrows are common.
to them. Ompraksh Valmiki’s *Dalit Sahityaka Sondarya Shastra* (Aesthetics of Dalit Literature) has contributed a lot to Dalit criticism.

### 1.2.3 Marathi Literature

Marathi came to be used as a literary language in about the eleventh century. It must have been in use as a *Deshabhasha* for at least a couple of centuries before then. *Deshabhasha* was gradually acquiring the position of literary language with the resources of the *Prakrits* of their regions and *Apabhransha*. The *Apabhransha* influence is traceable more clearly during the spread of Buddhism and Jainism. *Apabhransha* was used as main language for religious teaching where as language of learning was Sanskrit. Marathi had been in use as a spoken language since about 600 A. D.

During the reign of the Yadava Kings, Marathi had acquired a respectable place in the court life. The Pandharpur inscriptions of 1273 A. D., of the days of Raja Shiromani Ramdevrao, had a flawless Marathi. In the twelfth century, a great variety of literature in verse and prose had been created. There were folk-tales, stories for children, folk-songs and *pauranic* songs; and also treatises on astrology, medicine and such other subjects of popular needs. To please the Patrons and Kings, the literature gradually came into existence. The literature of court consisted of long, rhetorical poems, based on *pauranic* stories, or religious and philosophical topics. The religious cults—the Jain, Shaiva, Vaishnava and Lingayat in the South, the Nath Pantha in Maharashtra—resulted from orthodox Hinduism and the domination of Sanskrit. These cults aimed at a religious awakening of the masses by offering them simple forms for worship through their own languages. The works like *Goraksh-Geeeta* and *Amaranath-Samwad* are attributed to Gorakhnath himself. Mukundaraj’s *Viveksindhu* was the first literary work in Marathi language. He also wrote *Paramamrit, Paramvijaya* and *Mulastambha*.

Mahanubhava, a religious sect, was founded by Chakradhara Swami. Chakradhara had many disciples who composed many verses. Mahimbhat, a disciple of Chakradhara, wrote *Govindprabhucharitra* and *Leelacharitra* (about 1286), a life story of Chakradhara.
Kesobaas' Siddhantasutras/ Sutrapath and Drīshṭant-path, Nagdev's Smritisthale, Damodar Pandit's Vaccha-haran, Narendra Ayachit's Rukminiswayamwara and Bhaskarbhatt Borikar's Shishupalwadh and Uddhavgeeta were valuable creations. Mahadaisa, a woman disciple of Chakradhara, constructed the dhawal, a song. Saint Jnaneshwar belonged to the last days of the Yadhava Kings. He was destined to establish the Bhagwat Dharma. His poetical and philosophical works broke down the walls of ritualism and opened up the simple way of Bhakti. Jnandeva, especially, took up the great work of interpreting the Bhagwadgeeta in the language of the people and bringing the springs of spiritual solace within the reach of the common man. His commentary on Bhagwadgeeta is known as the Bhavarthdeepika or more universally as Jnaneshwari in 1290. Jnaneshwari is not merely a commentary on an ancient text but it springs out of a profound religious and mystical experience. Anubhavamrita, popularly known as Amritanubhava is written by Jnaneshwar. He also wrote some abhangas. Namdev, a tailor, laid the foundation of the Warkari Panth having devotees of all castes: Gora, a potter; Sawata, a market-gardener; Chokha, a Mahar; Narhari, a goldsmith; Sena, a barber. Theirs was a simple unsophisticated devotion. Namdev in his ovee metre of abhangas—the Adi, Teerthavali and Samadhi—celebrated the life of Jnandev. The main poets of this period were Dasopant, Eknath, Mukteshwar and Tukaram. Ramdas's Dasabodha reveals the conventional, philosophical and religious subjects like the greatness of guru and a saint. Wamanpandit is also well-known for his Akhyan Kavita written in the tradition of Eknath.

During the age of the Peshwas, Poona the seat of the Peshwas, became a center of learning, culture and also of luxurious social life. This phase is best represented in the works of Moropanth who wrote Aryabharat, Gangaparadhana, Kashistuti, Kekavali and Sanshayaratnamala. The Powada and Lavani had been created in the reign of the Peshwas. A host of Shahirs arose to celebrate the exploits of Bajirao I and Madhaorao I. Honaji Bala, Saganbha, Anant Phandi, Ramjoshi and Prabhakar were the well-known Shahirs. In the Powadas they presented vivid pictures of the Maratha soldier in his war glory, and in the Lavanis the free and robust expression to his lone sensual pleasure.
mainly of the erotic. The Peshwas had Bakharkars in their employ. Khando Ballal’s Shivdigvijaya (1718), Chitre, alias Chitragupta’s Panipat Bakhar, Krishnaji Shamrao’s Bhausahebanchi Bakhar and Malhar Ramrao’s Marathyanchi Bakhar (1810) contributed a lot to the development of Marathi literature.

Jotiba Govindrao Phule’s (1827-1890) contribution to Marathi prose and education of women is valuable. Phule is the first Indian to proclaim in modern India the dawn of a new age for the common man, the downtrodden, the underdog and the Indian woman. He occupies a unique position among the social reformers of Maharashtra in the nineteenth century. His Tritiya Ratna (The Third Jewel) (1855), a play; Powada: Chhatrapati Shivajiraje Bhosale Yancha (Ballad of Shivaji) (1869); Powada: Vidyakhatyatil Brahman Pantoji (Ballad of Brahman Teacher’s Working in the Education Department) (1869); Brahmananche Kasab (The Cunningness of Brahmans) (1869) are the important books of Marathi literature. His Gulamgiri (Slavery) (1873) was dedicated to the good people of the United States as a token of administration for their sublime, disinterested and self-sacrificing devotion in the cause of Negro slavery. The book is written in the form of a dialogue. Shetkaryancha Asud (Cultivator’s Whipcord) (1879-1883); Satsar (The Essence of Truth) Vol. No.1 and 2 (1885); Ishara (Warning) (1885) and Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak (The Book of the Universal Religion of Truth) (posthumous publication 1891) reveal his views on religious and social issues in the form of a dialogue. Phule wrote trenchantly, often bitterly about the unjust orthodox Hindu social order, the ritualism and narrowness of the Brahmans.

Vishnushastri Chiplunkar (1850-1882) started a monthly Nibandhamalai (1874) and a periodical Kavyetihas-sangraha (1878) devoted to poetry, drama and historical writings. B. P. Kirloskar’s Shakuntala (1881), a translation of Kalidasa’s play and Saubhadra were well-known. The period between 1885 and 1920 saw the greatest prose writers of Marathi such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadeo Govind Ranade, G. G. Agarkar, B. G. Tilak and S. M. Paranjpe. Literature became an expression of the vigour and vitality manifested in the social and political life of the people. Hari Narayan Apte (1864-1919) who began
writing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century wrote social and historical novels—
Madhali Sthiti (1885), Ganpatrao (1883), Pan Lakshat Kon Gheto?, Yeshwantrao Khare,
Mee, Jag He Ase Ahe (1897-99), Mayecha Bajaar (1901-03), Bhayankar Divya, Ajach,
Karmayog, Ushakkal, Mysorecha Wagh, Gad Ala Pan Sinha Gela, Roopnagarichi
Rajakanya, Chandragupta, and Vajraghat. Krishnaji Keshav Damle (1866-1905)
popularly known as Keshavsut achieved great fame in Marathi poetry. His poems like
Pushpaprat, Satareche Bol, Nairitye Kadil Waryas and Ek Khede are simple and natural.
Tutari (Trumpet), Nava Shipai (New Soldier) are his significant poems. In his poems
Zapurza, Harapale Shreya (The Lost Shreyas) and Amhi Kon? (Who Are We?),
Keshavsut launched modern poetic values. He was the most outstanding poet of the age.
His contemporary poets were Narayan Waman Tilak, Vinayak Janardan Karandikar and
Ram Ganesh Gadkari. Gadkari who wrote under the pseudonym Govindagraj composed
Vagvaijayanti, a collection of poems published posthumously. Balkavi or Tryambak
Bapuji Thombre (1890-1918) speaks of the beauty of nature in a typical poem Phulrani.
Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar (1871-1934) was humourist, novelist, short-story writer,
essayist, critic, poet and playwright. His plays are Mookanayak (1897), and Mativikar
(1906). Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar’s (1872-1948) Swami Madhavravacha Mrityu
(1893), Kichak-vadh (1907), Bhaubandki (1909) are historical plays. His two musical
plays Manapman and Swayamwara were enormously successful. Ram Ganesh Gadkari
(1885-1919) wrote the popular plays like Vedyancha Bajar, Premasanyas (1913),
Punyaprabhav (1917), Ekach Pyala (1919) and Bhavbandhan (1920). Bhimrao Ramji
Ambedkar (1891-1956), a great philosopher and statesman, worked for the upliftment of
the untouchables, exploited and depressed for centuries. Through his periodicals—Janata
(1931-1956), Muknayak, Bahishkrut Bharat and Prabuddha Bharat—Ambedkar
awakened the Indian people.

Ravi-kiran Mandal, a Pune-based group of eight writers, published Kavyavichar.
Yashwant Dinkar Pendharkar, Girish or Shankar Keshav Kanetkar, Madhav Julian or M.
T. Patwardhan (1894-1939) were the members of the Mandal. Mandal published the
books like Gajjalanjali (1933), Virahatarang (1926), Sudharak (1928) and Nakulankar.
Manoramabai Ranade was the only woman member of the Mandal. Anil or Atmaram Ravji Deshpande (1901-1982) in his Phulwat (1932) gave a new kind of love poems that are sensitive, deep and with an indwelling music. His Prem and Jeevan, Bhagnamoorti, Pertewha, Sangati are well-known for his use of free verse. Keshavkumar or P. K. Atre (1898-1969) is famous for his parody of manners Jhenduchi Phule (1925). Kusumagraj or V. V. Shirwadkar wrote a collection of romantic poems entitled as Vishakha (1942). B. S. Mardhekar is well-known for his collection of new poems Kahi Kavita (1947), Shishiragama (1939) and Ankhi Kahi Kavita (1951). Vinda (G. V.) Karandikar has written Mridgandha (1954). Mangesh Padgaonkar has composed Dharanritya (1950).

Vasant Bapat, Sadanand Rege, Sharatchandra Muktibodh, G. D. Madgulkar, Indira Sant, Sanjivani Marathe, Padma Gole, Shanta Shelke are notable poets of 1947-1960. V. M. Joshi, S. V. Ketkar, B. V. Warekar, Narayan Sitaram Phadke, Vishnu Sakharam Khandekar are the valuable novelists of the modern era. Phadke (1894-1978) and Khandekar (1898-1976) towered above the other writers of fiction from the late 20's to the late 40's in popularity. Phadke's Jadugar (1928) or Daulat (1929) catapulted him into fame. His Atkepar (1931), and Akherche Bund (1944) reveal the cult of 'Art for Art's Sake'. Khandekar's output was less prolific than Phadke's, but more varied. Khandekar's first two novels Hridayachi Haak (1930) and Kanchanmriga (1931) were received enthusiastically by the adolescent readers. His Ulka (1934), Don Dhruva (1934), Hirwa Chapha (1938), Don Mane (1938) and Kraunchavadh (1942) made him popular. Khandekar had a greater all-India appeal than any other Marathi novelist. P. Y. Deshpande's novel Bandhanchya Palikade (1927) explains the story of a prostitute's daughter as a heroine. His Kaali Rani, Sukale Phool and Sadaphuli are some memorable writings. G. N. Dandekar published more than a dozen novels. B.S. Mardhekar's Tambdi Moti (1943) and Pani (1948) explained the life of the rural areas. His Ratricha Divas (1942) was the first sustained attempt to employ the stream-of-consciousness technique. Vasant Kanetkar's Ghar, Vishram Bedekar's Ranangan, S. R. Biwalkar's Suneeta, Vyankatesh Madgulkar's Bangaarwadi, Gangadhar Gadgil's Liliche Phool, S. N. Pendse's Elgar, Haddapar, Garambicha Bapu, Hatya and Kalandar are the good examples of Marathi fiction. Marathi dramatists like P. K. Atre, P. L. Deshpande
and Vijay Tendulkar made Marathi Theater colourful in the post-1960. Atre’s *Sastang Namaskar, Gharabaher* and *Udyancha Sansar* have an ostensible social purpose but little realism. P. L. Deshpande’s *Tuze Ahe Tuzpashi* made him popular in Marathi Theater. His *Tuka Mhane Aata, Bhagyawan* and *Amaldar* have set the stage alight with so much healthy laughter. Vijay Tendulkar’s *Shrimant, Manus Navache Bet* and *Grihastha* revised as *Kaviyanchi Shala, Ghasiram Kotwal, Sakharam Bindar, Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe* secured him a high place among the Marathi dramatists.

Marathi short story writers—Chintaman Vinayak Joshi, P. K. Atre, P. L. Deshpande, Shamrao Ok, Gangadhar Gadgil, B. S. Mardhekar, D. B. Mokashi, and G. A. Kulkarni—shaped the genre for Marathi people. In ‘Rural’ story writing D. M. Mirasdar, Shankar Patil, Madhu Mangesh Karnik, Jayawant Dalvi, Uddhav Shelke and others explained the life of their region. Annabhau Sathe (1920-1969) and Shankarrao Kharat (1921) stand apart from the other writers in this period with the expression they have given to the almost sub-human life inflicted on the ‘Dalits’. Segregating the Dalits from the rural poor in fiction—as they are, in fact, in life—has itself been a service in the cause of realism (Deshpande and Rajadhyaksha 1988:180-82).

1.3 Dalit Literature

Indian society has been the most hierarchical among the known civilizations. And the literature of this country has never focused on the problems of the ‘untouchables’ who are located at the bottom of the hierarchy. The dominant and established writers having power and pen in their hands did not mention the untouchables in the so-called great literary texts. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a few upper caste Hindu writers who attempted to portray the lives of untouchables tended to be driven either by a zeal for social reform or by sentimental compassion. Rarely did a writer take up an untouchable character and treat him realistically, like an ordinary human being full of vitality and hope as well as despair. The untouchables of India, therefore, have continued to remain neglected and ostracized in literature as in Hindu society. *Dharma Shastras, Smruties* and sacred books of Hindus imposed a series of social, political, economic and religious
restrictions on the lower castes, making the untouchables completely dependent on those above them. As a result, the untouchables long lived a life full of physical degradation, insults and personal and social humiliation. They did not have any formal education for a long time. It is only in the post-independence era that some educated untouchables who tasted the fruit of modern education, realized the need for an alternative mode of thinking and launched a new literary movement. The movement started in the state of Maharashtra where Dr B. R. Ambedkar was born. He fought for the rights, liberty and equality of the downtrodden throughout his life.

The awakened Dalit youths of Maharashtra organized themselves in 1972 under the banner of Dalit Panthers. The main objective of this movement was to create a counter culture and to bestow separate identity for the Dalits in society. The call given by the Panthers for social reconstruction was further articulated by Dalit writers, poets and activists through their writings and speeches. Thus the ‘Dalit literature’ emerged in the early seventies, which subsequently spread to the neighbouring states of Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu and then other States. Dalit literature reflects the growing identity, awareness and consciousness of the Dalits during the colonial and post-independence days. Dalit Literature is marked by revolt and negativism, since it is closely associated with the hopes for freedom by a group of people who, as untouchables, are victims of social, economic and cultural inequality. Arjun Dangle traces the origin of Dalit literature to Dr. Ambedkar whose revolutionary ideas stirred into the actions of all Dalits of Maharashtra and gave them a new self-respect. Dalit literature is nothing but a literary expression of this awareness’ (Dangle 1994: xi).

By 1970s, a sufficient corpus of Dalit literature had developed so that the Dalit critics began to theorize Dalit literature and its role. “Dalit literature is not simply literature ... Dalit literature is associated with a movement to bring about change... at the very first glance, it will be strongly evident that there is no established critical theory or point of view behind them (i.e. Dalit's writings); instead there is new thinking and new point of view (Dangle, xii-xv). Dalit literature is marked by a wholesale rejection of the tradition, the aesthetics, the language and the concerns of a Brahminical literature that, even at its
best, carried within it the signs of caste based social and cultural order. Instead, Dalit literature has established its own tradition of anti-caste or untouchable thinkers like Buddha, Kabir, Phule, and Ambedkar as its signposts.

The experience that Dalit literature represents is not always pleasant, nor constituted in terms of relations with the upper caste only. Dalit literature is unflinching in portraying the seamier side of Dalit life. Life outside the boundaries of the village, this literature seems to say, is marked by a sense of community, sharing, warmth and physicality. However, it is also often wretched. There is in it ignorance, sexism, violence, internal rivalry and conflict, competition for survival, drunkenness and death. Authentic representation, then, involves an unromanticized and unpitying reflection in literature of the materiality of Dalit life in all its dimensions. Dalit autobiographical and fictional narratives and poetry neither hide nor romanticize anything. The people that inhibit these texts are not objects of pity. Their life is often miserable, humiliating and filled with daily reminders of their impurity and pollutedness. These are signified by the wretchedness of their living conditions, their lawless or criminal pursuits, and their internalization of the oppressive ideas and habits of the Hindu caste society. Nevertheless, these are presented in Dalit literature without romanticizing or glib defensiveness. In the process of creating their authentic representations, Dalit writers expose and deconstruct those manufactured versions and processes of history and society that have been invoked through the centuries to legitimate the caste system. The Dalit literature is prominently a literature of social awareness. Dalit literature has achieved its distinction as a separate entity mainly based on its content, it is equally important to bear in mind that this content takes a distinct form with the individual writer and with each of his separate works. Dalit literature has this double dimension and this aspect forms its special feature. The tradition of social awareness lends a quality of realism to Dalit literature.

The Dalit literary movement began in the State of Maharashtra. It seems to be unique "not in the phenomenon of former untouchables writing literature but in the quantity of writing, its variety, its aesthetic considerations, its sense of being a movement, its tie to
social action, and in the serious attention it receives as a school within the Marathi literary traditions" (Zelloit 1992:1). Dalit literature reveals the socio-cultural, historical, and economic life of Indian Dalits. It records the feelings and experiences of Dalits who have been kept out of the so-called mainstream society. It is the creation of Dalit writers coming from different strata of the oppressed society. The Dalit writers accumulate the experiences from their community with his / her sensitive mind and express in his/her literary work. In their literature they depict the real picture of the Dalit community or society.

Dalit literature is a literary movement against racism and castecism. In it Dalit writers represented their exploitation, exclusion, marginalization and social discrimination. It elaborates the agony and anguish of Dalit community. It is also an urgent plea for egalitarian society and a humble attempt to propagate the human values such as liberty, equality, fraternity and humanity. Dalit literature in India has also originated due to socio-economic causes. Dalit literature is not written in fancy and imagination. It has originated due to the caste and chaturvarna based social and economic disparity in Indian society. Because of the unjust social order in Brhaminical Hindu society Dalit community had to bear the brutal inhuman atrocities. They had to live in deep poverty and sycophancy. They were deprived of very natural right of living. Therefore Dalit writers articulated their pains, sufferings, agony and anguish. They protested against the age old inhuman socio-economic order and the slavery of his fellow human beings. They also strived to establish the egalitarian society. Dalit creativity in all its phases was closely tied to the movement begun by the Mahar caste before the turn of this century.

1.3.1 Dalit Autobiography

Until the 1970s Indian autobiographies were mostly written by nationalist leaders or by people who considered their lives significant, exceptional, and influential due to their overwhelming success in particular area. From 1970s onwards, one can find the autobiographies of Dalits, women and other marginalized voices bringing out their personal experiences through autobiographies. Dalit autobiography is not just a
remembering of things past, but a shaping and structuring of them in such a way as to help understand one’s life and the social order that shaped it, on the one hand, and to arouse a passion for change in the Dalit reader, on the other. Autobiographies of these oppressed people are the documentations of neglected history of some social groups and the marginalized people. These autobiographies can excavate marginalized history. Autobiographies of these marginalized groups or the subaltern groups such as Dalits, Dalit women, Tribal and women have deconstructed the mainstream histories that marginalize the oppressed. These autobiographies serve the purpose of sharing Dalit experiences with the community. They also make aware the rest of the society about the difficulties of Dalits in the society and their experiences and their lives. These personal experiences bring out the unseen and unrecorded atrocities against Dalit communities. Life of any Dalit never remains an individual personalized unique experience. Dalit experience will always be merged with caste-oppression, social inequality and discrimination. Dalit autobiography serves the purpose of social intervention and accordingly carries strong militant connotations, changing socio-cultural contexts, motives and inspiration to write about the communal experiences. Many of the autobiographies explicitly insist on the decisive impact on their lives of the firm directives received from Ambedkar. Dalit autobiographies describe the injustice done to some particular communities of the society, which belong to the lowest rung in caste hierarchy. Recently many Dalit autobiographies are describing the different forms of untouchability in the rural and urban areas of modernity. Maharashtra has produced plenty of Dalit writings as well as autobiographies. Dalit autobiographies have always shown the communal Dalit experience rather than the personal experience.

As a distinct literary genre, autobiography is considered as the writing of an individual about himself/herself. It is written in the content of growing up, which allows the self to ask a lot of questions and to discover new meanings in the experience of being and becoming in society. An autobiography begins with the emergence of the sense of individual identity under capitalism. The life narratives of Dalits reveal the situations or experiences of marginality of both the self and the community. They, therefore, “brought alive the struggles of various castes and communities, threw into relief their resistance to
the hegemonic caste system and the tremendous upheaval that was taking place as a result" (Pandit 2008: xvi). The notable Dalit autobiographies are Daya Pawar’s *Bahuta*, P. E. Sonkamble’s *Athvaniche Pakshi* (Birds of Memoirs), Shankarrao Kharat’s *Taral Antaral* (A Harijan’s Rise to the Sky), Madhav Kondvilkar’s *Mukkam Post Devache Gothane*, Laxman Mane’s *Upara* (Outsider) Laxman Gaikwad’s *Uchaliya* (Petty thief), Sharankumar Limbale’s *Akkarmashi* (Bastard), Kishore Shantabai Kale’s *Kolhatyache Por*, Narendra Jadhav’s *Outcaste- A Memoir*, Babital Kamble’s *Jina Amucha*, Janabai Girhe’s *Marankala*, Vimal More’s *Teen Dagadachi Chuul* and Urmila Pawar’s *Aaydan*. Arjun Dangle comments that the Dalit autobiographical narratives “relating to different periods of time and set in different levels of society, reveal the various facts of the Dalit movement; the struggle for survival; the emotional universe of a Dalit’s life; the man-woman relationship; an existence crushed under the wheels of village life; the experiences of humiliation and atrocities; at times, abject submission, at other time, rebellion” (Dangle, xiv). In Dalits’ personal accounts, the narrator/subject moves back and forth between the individual ‘I’ and the collective ‘We’. Although it reveals the emotional universe of a Dalit’s life, it constructs the Dalit movement to struggle for existence and identity. The question discussed in the Dalit autobiography is not of an individual but of the collective. “The question of hundreds of thousands who are living in slums, on pavements, on the outskirts of villages and those who do not have even such places who are suffering in miserable conditions in the vales and valleys, hills and rocky planes. They have neither work nor opportunities, neither facilities nor support, neither shelter nor protection. They do not have even two meals a day” (Mane 1997: 09). The Dalit autobiography thus encompasses the hapless segment of India, dehumanized and degraded lives lacking the basic fundamental rights.

“Many Dalit women have published autobiographies, among them Shantabai Kamble’s *Majya Jalmachi Chittar Katha* and Kumud Pawde’s *Anthasphot* are representatives. Shantabai’s is a struggle for identity and growth against rural background while that of Prof. Kumud’s is set in an urban educated ethos” (Dangle, xii).
1.4 Contemporary Critical Theories

The critical theory, in the realm of literary and cultural studies in all parts of the world, has assumed considerable importance in the last two decades. The contemporary critical/theoretical approaches are New Criticism, Archetypal/Myth Criticism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, Marxism, Post-colonialism, Existentialism, Phenomenology and Hermeneutics, Russian Formalism/Prague Linguistic Circle/Linguistic Criticism/Dialogism, Avant-Garde/Surrealism/Dadaism, Structuralism and Semiotics, Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction, Post-modernism, New Historicism, Reception and Reader-Response Theory, Feminism, Genre Criticism, Autobiographical Theory, and Travel Theory.

1.4.1 Postcolonial Perspectives

The term ‘post-colonial’ has itself been the subject of considerable debate, and is still used in a variety of ways within the single discipline, between and across disciplines, and differently in different parts of the world. The meanings embraced by this protean term range from an emphasis on the discursive and material effects of the historical fact of imperialism to an incorporation of cultural difference and marginality into a form of synchronic post-modernism. The best known colonial discourse theorists are Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. Their analysis posited certain disabling contradiction within colonial relationships such as hybridity, ambivalence and mimicry, which revealed the inherent vulnerability of colonial discourse. Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994), Edward Said’s *Orientalism: Western Conception of the Orient* (1991) and G. Spivak’s *In Other World: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987) are the books that have the basic tenets of postcolonial discourse. Discourse, as Foucault theorizes it, is a system of statements within which the world can be known. It is the system by which dominant groups in society constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledge, disciplines and values upon dominated groups. As a social formation it works to constitute reality not only for the objects it appears to represent but also for the subject who from the community on which it depends. Consequently, colonial
discourse is the complex of signs and practices that organize social existence, and social reproduction within colonial relationships. Colonial discourse is a system of statements that can be made about colonies and colonial peoples, about colonizing powers and about the relationship between these two. It is the system of knowledge and beliefs about the world within which acts of colonization take place.

Post-colonialism deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies. As originally used by the historians after the Second World War in terms such as the post-colonial state, ‘post-colonial’ had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the post-independence period. However, from the late 1970s the term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization. “Although the study of the controlling power of representation in colonized societies had begun in the late 1970s with texts such as Said’s *Orientalism*, and led to the development of what came to be called colonialist discourse theory in the work of critics such as Spivak and Bhabha, the actual term ‘post-colonial’ was not employed in these early studies of the power of colonialist discourse to shape and form opinion and policy in the colonies and metropolis” (Ashcroft et al 2004: 186). Spivak G. first used the term ‘post-colonial’ in the collection of interviews and recollections published in 1990 called *The Post-colonial Critic*. Although the study of the effects of colonial representation were centered to the work of these critics, the term ‘post-colonial’ per se was first used to refer to cultural interactions within colonial societies in literary circles (Ashcroft et al 1997:2-3). This was part of an attempt to politicize and focus the concerns of fields such as Commonwealth literature and the study of the so-called New Literatures in English which had been initiated in the late 1960s. The term has subsequently been used to signify the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies. The cultural and political critiques by general theorists/post-structuralists such as Foucault, Derrida, Terdiman, Gramsci, Althusser and Lacan have been influential in the construction of post-colonial theory. The heavily post-structuralist influence led many critics—Said, Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak—concerned to focus on the material effects of the historical condition of colonialism, as well as on its discursive power, to insist on the hyphen to distinguish post-colonial studies as a field from colonial discourse theory per
se, which formed only one aspect of the many approaches and interests that the term ‘post-colonial’ sought to embrace and discuss. Post-colonialism is now used in wide and diverse ways to include the study and analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialisms, the discursive operations of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects, and, most importantly perhaps, the differing responses to such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre- and post-independence nations and communities. While its use has tended to focus on the cultural production of such communities, it is becoming widely used in historical, political, sociological and economic analyses, as these disciplines continue to engage with the impact of European imperialism upon world societies.

Postcolonial perspectives “emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of ‘minorities’ within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South. They intervene in those ideological discourse of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic ‘normality’ to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples. They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the ‘rationalization’ of modernity” (Bhabha 2006:245-246). Post-colonial critical discourses require form of dialectical thinking that do not disavow or sublet the otherness (alterity) that constitutes the symbolic domain of psychic and social identifications. The contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement, whether they are the ‘middle passages’ of slavery and indenture, the ‘voyage out’ of the civilizing mission, the fraught accommodation of Third World migration to the West after the Second World War, or the traffic of economic and political refugees within and outside the Third World (Bhabha 247). Postcolonial perspective insists that cultural and political identity is constructed through a process of alterity. “Questions of race and cultural difference overlay issues of sexuality and gender and over determine the social alliances of class and democratic socialism” (Bhabha 251).
Colonial discourse tends to exclude statements about the exploitation of the resources of the colonized, the political status accusing colonizing powers, the importance to domestic politics of the development of an empire, all of which may be compelling reasons for maintaining colonial ties. Rather it conceals these benefits in statements about the inferiority of the colonizers, the primitive nature of other races, the barbaric depravity of colonized societies, and therefore the duty of the imperial power to reduce itself in the colonial society, and to advance the civilization of the colony through trade, administration, cultural and moral improvement. Rules of inclusion and exclusion operate on the assumption of the superiority of the colonizer's culture, history, language, art, political structures, social conventions, and the assertion of the need for the colonized to be 'raised up' through colonial contact. Edward Said differentiates imperialism and colonialism. To him, imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory whereas colonialism is almost always a consequence of imperialism and is the implanting of settlements on distant territory (Said 1993:08). The book that put postcolonial criticism in a proper way is Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). It has a specific exposure of the Eurocentric universalism which takes for granted both the superiority of what is European or Western, and the inferiority of what is not. 'Said identifies a European cultural tradition of 'Orientalism', which is a particular and long-standing way of identifying the East as 'Other' and inferior to West' (Barry 2006: 193). The Orient, he says, features in the Western mind 'as a sort of surrogate and even underground self'. The East becomes the repository or projection of those aspects of themselves which Westerners do not choose to acknowledge (cruelty, sensuality, decadence, laziness and so on). At the same time, and paradoxically, the East is seen as a fascinating realm of the exotic, the mystical and the seductive. It also tends to be seen as homogenous, the people there being anonymous masses, rather than individuals, their actions determined by instinctive emotions (lust, terror, fury etc) rather than by conscious choices or decisions. Their emotions and reactions are always determined by racial considerations (they are like this because they are Asiatic or blacks or Orientals) rather than by aspects of individual status or circumstance (for instance, because they happen to be a sister, or an uncle, or a collector
of antique pottery). In the postcolonial theory, ‘Other’ can refer to the colonized others who are marginalized by imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the center and, perhaps crucially, become the focus of anticipated mastery by the imperial ‘ego’. The other is the excluded or ‘mastered’ subject created by the discourse of power.

Post-colonialism refers to a mode of reading, political analysis, and cultural resistance/intervention that deals with the history of colonialism and present neocolonial structures. “It is a mix of rigorous epistemological and theoretical analysis of texts and a political praxis of resistance to neocolonial conditions. It invokes ideas such as social justice, emancipation and democracy in order to oppose oppressive structures of racism, discrimination and exploitation” (Nayar 2008:17). A history of discrimination and misrepresentation is common among women, blacks, Dalits, homosexuals and Third World migrants. The signs that construct such histories and identities are gender, race, caste, homophobia, postwar diaspora, refugees, and the international division of labour. Post-colonialism, in sharp contrast to colonial approaches, pays attention to the differences among the native peoples. Theoretically at least, it cautions against any kind of homogenization of cultures or people. It specifies the local and the particular as against the colonial mode of seeing only large categories of ‘Indians’ and ‘natives’. Post-colonialism seeks to understand how oppression, resistance, and adaptation occurred during colonial rule.

Dalit literature “must be treated as a part of post-colonial writing because, like ‘traditional’ anti-colonial works, it seeks social transformations, freedom from dominating social structures, justice for the oppressed, a counter-point or counter-perspective to the established histories and to protest against the subsuming of local, victim narratives into a larger framework, thereby erasing their specificity” (Nayar, 108). Dalit literature reveals the oppressive structure, corruption, and continuing indifferences of the post-colonial state. Dalit texts also show the history of caste oppression—from mythic histories to colonial and post-independence India. To know the strongest critique of post-colonial India—that of the Dalits—it is important to re-treat the paths of pre-independence India. During the colonial period, British administration appropriated the
existing caste structure for its own purpose. The collusion of Brahminism and state power ensured the retention of Hindu social and caste hierarchies. Though Indian National Congress, under the Presidency of Annie Besant, passed a resolution of abolition of caste oppression on the Depressed Classes, it was never implemented in the reality. The Hindu social reformers reformed the Hindu society in such a way that it legitimized Brahmin domination and cultural hegemony (Bandopadhyay 2004:10-15).

1.4.2 Exclusion
Exclusion has been embedded in the socio-historical processes of most societies. It is a common phenomenon that not only adversely affects the individuals, groups, communities and countries but nullifies the spirit of democracy, equality and agency. The scientific study of social exclusion began recently.

1.4.2.1 Etymology of Exclusion
The word *exclusion* is a noun. Its root 'exclude', a verb, originates from the Latin word *excludere*. It is a mixture of *ex*—means 'out of' and *cludere* or *claudere* means 'shut or close'. Hence, the verb 'exclude' refers to shut or keep out; prevent entry of; to prohibit from inclusion; deny consideration; to expel or eject. According to *New Webster's Dictionary of English Language* exclusion means 'the act of excluding or state of being excluded; expulsion; that which is excluded or expelled. “Exclusion,” according to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, “is the act of preventing somebody/something from entering a place or taking part in something”.

1.4.2.2 Genealogy of Social Exclusion
The term ‘social exclusion’ is of relatively recent origin. It is invented by Rene Lenoir, writing about half a century ago, in France in 1947. The concept of social exclusion covers the social and economic problems. While identifying the ‘excluded’ in France, Lenoir included a wide variety of people such as poor, handicapped, suicidal people, aged, abused children, substance abusers etc. In his words the ‘excluded’ means “mentally and physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged invalids, abused children, substance abusers, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal,
asocial persons, and other social ‘misfits’” (Silver 1995: 63). Following Lenoir’s original initiative, Silver Hilary gives a list of things from which the people may be excluded. He says the people may be excluded from “a livelihood; secure permanent employment; earnings; property, credit, or land; housing; minimal or prevailing consumption levels; education, skills, and cultural capital; the welfare state; citizenship and legal equality; democratic participation; public goods; the nation or the dominant race; family and sociability; humanity; respect, fulfillment and understanding” (Silver, 60).

The term ‘social exclusion’ gained popularity in France. It had two reasons. First in France, the concept of ‘poverty’ had never been popular for its association with Christian charity, the ancient regime and utilitarian liberalism. The French Republicans rejected both liberal individualism and socialism in favour of the idea of ‘solidarity’. They justified the welfare state as a means of furthering social integration. They defined the social exclusion as ‘a rupture of the social fabric’, and attributed to a failure of the state. The second reason was the drastic global changes in the world during 1980s. It was a period of economic crisis and restructuring. There were also crises of the welfare state, and of social and political. The term ‘exclusion’ was used to refer to various types of social disadvantage related to the new social problems that arose especially unemployment, ghettoisation, and fundamental changes in family life. The old welfare state provisions were thought incapable of dealing with these problems, and a new set of social policies was developed.

The European Union (EU) channels made this concept very popular in other countries. The Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties and the Structural Funds included a commitment to combat social exclusion. It spread the idea of funding for social insertion via the European Social Fund, the European Anti-Poverty Network, and Anti-Poverty Programmes. In the first Anti-Poverty programme ‘poverty’ was central issue. But in the third programme this had changed into a ‘social exclusion’. Recently, social exclusion became central to British policies and debates. During the Conservative government the notion of social exclusion did not find entry into policy debates. However, this notion
was taken up in research though the French meaning of the term was perhaps not always properly understood. In 1992, the British Economic and Social Science Research Council commissioned Jordan to review research on poverty and social exclusion. And it emerged as ESRC’s ‘thematic priority’ in 1995. But the debate became dominated by the New Labour Government’s initiative to establish an interdepartmental Social Exclusion Unit in late 1997. The Unit had so far produced three reports, on neighbourhood renewal, on rough sleeping, and on truancy and school exclusion.

1.4.2.3 Meaning and Manifestation of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is a rupture of social bond. More broadly, it can be defined as the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live. As Buvinic states:

“The social exclusion is the inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic, and social functioning of the society,” and adds that it is “the denial of equal access to opportunities imposed by certain groups of society upon others” (Buvinic 2005:5)

This definition captures three distinguishable features of social exclusion. First, it affects culturally defined ‘groups’. Second, it is embedded in social relations. It means the social exclusion refers to the processes through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they subsist. Third and important feature is that the social exclusion delineates or explains the consequences of exclusion in detail. Thus, the outcome of social exclusion in terms of low income and high degree of poverty among the excluded groups depends crucially on the functioning of social and economic institutions. The social processes and institutions function through a network of social relations and the degree to which they are exclusionary and discriminatory in their outcomes.
It becomes clear that the process of social exclusion has two factors. The first factor that involved in it is the institutions governing societal relations that cause exclusion. The last factor is the consequential deprivations and denial of equal rights in several spheres of life. The concept of social exclusion is multidimensional. It reveals that the people are often deprived of different things at the same time. It refers to the exclusion or deprivation in the economic, social and political sphere. The concept also focuses on the relations and processes that cause deprivation or exclusion. Amartya Sen draws the various dimensions of the notion of social exclusion. He differentiates the situation wherein some people are being kept out or at least left out and wherein some people are being included (may be even being forced to be included) in deeply unfavourable terms. He describes the former as ‘unfavourable exclusion’ and the latter as ‘unfavourable inclusion’. The latter with unequal treatment, may carry the same adverse effects as the former. Sen thinks about the ‘active’ and ‘passive’ exclusion. To him, active exclusion is fostering of exclusion through deliberate policy interventions by the government or by any other willful agents (to exclude some people from some opportunities). The passive exclusion works through the social processes in which there are no deliberate attempts to exclude, but nevertheless, may result in exclusion from a set of circumstances (Sen 2000:15-17). Sen further distinguishes the ‘constitutive relevance’ of exclusion from that of its ‘instrumental importance’. In the former, exclusion or deprivation has an intrinsic importance of its own. For neither instance nor being able to relate to other and to partake in the community life can directly impoverish a person’s life, in addition to any further deprivation it may generate. This is different from social exclusion of an ‘instrumental importance’, in which exclusion in itself is not impoverishing, but can lead to impoverishment of human life (Sen, 10-11).

The concept of social exclusion clearly draws a distinction between group exclusion and the exclusion of an individual. As far as ‘group exclusion’ is concerned, all persons belonging to a particular social/ cultural group are excluded because of their group identity, and not due to their individual attributes. The exclusion of an ‘individual’ is fundamentally different from the exclusion of a ‘group’. The individuals, both from
excluded and non-excluded group often, get excluded from access to economic and social opportunities for various reasons specific to them and not because of their group social/cultural identity. For instance, the individuals may be excluded from employment due to the lack of requisite education and skills. The individuals may face exclusion in access to education due to lack of minimum qualification and merit, or their inability to pay for costly education. An individual may also be excluded from access to input and consumer markets due to insufficient income and purchasing power. It is important to note that theoretically the exclusion of an individual has necessarily no connection with the social and cultural identity of a person. But in case of an exclusion of a social group, the variables associated with social and cultural identities such as social origin like caste, ethnicity, religion, gender, colour and race become important. These variables exclude all persons belonging to a particular group from access to capital assets, business, employment, education, civil and political rights, and other social needs. Thus, the group characteristics of exclusion are based on social and cultural identities, and are irrespective of individual attributes.

1.4.2.4 Approaches to Social Exclusion
There are three major paradigmatic approaches to social exclusion. They are solidarity, specialization and monopoly.

1.4.2.4.1 Approach of Solidarity of France
The French Republican Tradition, drawing on Rousseau, emphasises on solidarity. In its view, the solidarity means an idea of the state as the embodiment of the general will of the nation. Here, society is held supreme, and the social order being not only conceived as external, more, normative but less grounded in individual, group, class or sectional interest. The bond between individual and society, individual and individual is referred as social solidarity. The rupture of this solidarity is known as exclusion. Thus, the individual or ethnic groups are excluded from the process of integration with the mainstream of society. Integration implies assimilation into the dominant culture. The solidarity approach is concerned with the exclusion 'inherent in the solidarity of the nation, race,
ethnicity, locality and other cultural or primordial ties that delimit group boundaries’ (Silver, 66).

1.4.2.4.2 Specialization Approach of Anglo-American/ Saxon

In the Anglo-American liberal tradition the term ‘specialization’ implies social differentiation, economic division of labour and the separation of spheres. The scholars who take inspiration from Locke regard exclusion to be a consequence of specialization (Silver, 67). The specialized social structures comprise separate, competing but interdependent spheres. To the extent that group boundaries frustrate individual freedom to participate in social exchanges, exclusion is a form of discrimination. Exclusion, in this case, comes from the application of inappropriate routes or barriers to free movement among different spheres of life (Silver, 68).

1.4.2.4.3 Monopoly Approach to Exclusion

The European Left, borrowing heavily from Weber, sees the social order as coercive, imposed through a set of hierarchical power relations (Turner and Killian 1987:148). Exclusion is seen by them as a consequence of group monopoly. In fact, they go on to argue that exclusion is contingent upon the interplay of class, status and political power and serves the interest of those who are included in the monopolizing group (Silver, 68). The monopolizing groups follow the process of closure to monopolize advantages by closing off opportunities to others libeling them as inferior or outsiders. Any manifestly observable features like language, religion, social origin, region, merit, etc. can be invoked to brand the competitors as outsiders. They perceive themselves as sharing a commonality in culture, language, religion, merit or any other identity and thus legitimize exclusion. They enjoy a monopoly over the scarce resources of the society (Silver, 69). The caste system, in India, forms a unique base of such social exclusion where certain groups monopolize the control over scarce resources.

1.4.2.5 Social Exclusion in Indian Context
In the Indian context, "exclusion revolves around societal institutions that exclude, discriminate against, isolate, and deprive some groups on the basis of group identities such as caste, ethnicity, religion and gender" (Thorat 2010:06). In India, the most rigorous form of exclusion is practised by the institution of caste, followed by income, ethnicity, gender, religion and territory. The contours of the exclusion perpetuated by these variables constantly change with the context and actors. The nature of exclusion associated with the institution of caste needs to be conceptualized. In India, caste is a system of social and economic governance. It is determined by certain religious ideological notion and customary rules and norms which are unique and distinct (Akerlof 1976; Scoville 1991; Lal 1988; Ambedkar 1936, and 1987). The caste system is based on the division of people in social groups or castes. In the social groups, the social and economic rights of each individual caste are predetermined or ascribed by birth and made hereditary. The entitlement to economic rights is, however, unequal and hierarchical or graded. The economic and social rights are unequally assigned. Thus, the entitlement to rights diminishes as one move down the caste ladder. The system also provides for a community based regulatory mechanism to enforce the system through the instrument of social ostracism or social and economic penalties, and is further reinforced with justification from some philosophical elements in Hindu religion (Lal 1988; Ambedkar 1936 and 1987). The castes in the village are categorized as high and low according to their social status. But each caste is separate and maintains social distance from other castes on the grounds of purity and pollution, commensality, connubial relation, occupation, wealth and power. The spatial distribution of different castes in the village also shows the existing physical isolation between the highest and lower castes. The fundamental characteristic of caste system is a predetermined and fixed social and economic right for each caste with restriction on change. This characteristic implies 'forced exclusion' of certain castes from the civil, economic and educational rights that other castes enjoy. Thus, the exclusion in the civil, educational, and economic sphere is internal to the system and a necessary outcome of its governing principles.
The Hindu social order governed by the caste system does not recognize an individual and his distinctiveness as the centre of social purpose (Ambedkar 1936). For the purpose of rights and duties, the unit of Hindu society is not an individual. In fact, even a family is not regarded as a unit in the Hindu society, except for marriages and inheritance. The primary unit in Hindu society is a caste. Hence, the rights and privileges or the lack of them of an individual are on account of the latter's membership of a particular caste (Ambedkar 1987). Due to the hierarchical or graded nature of the caste system, the entitlements to civil, economic and educational rights of different castes become narrower as one goes down its hierarchical ladder. The various castes in their rights and duties get artfully interlinked and coupled with each other in such a manner that the rights and privileges of the higher castes become the disadvantage and disability of lower castes, particularly the SCs, STs and OBCs located at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. In this sense, a caste does not exist singularly, but only in plural (Ambedkar 1987c). The castes exist as a system of endogenous group that are interlinked with each other in an unequal measure of rights and relations in all walks of life. Castes at the top of the order enjoy more rights at the expense of those located at the bottom. Therefore, the lower castes such as the Dalits located at the bottom of the caste hierarchy have far fewer economic, educational, and social rights than the castes at the top. Further some occupations or economic activities are treated as superior and others as inferior to maintain the hierarchy based on the stigma of pure and impure. It also provides mechanism for enforcement of the system in terms of social ostracism, through a comprehensive provision of social and economic penalties including social and economic boycott. Finally, the caste system also draws justification from some elements of Hindu religious philosophy such as making the origin of caste system divine and linking it with the concept of Karma and rebirth through eternal existence of soul. Caste/ untouchability-based exclusion are, thus, reflected in the inability of individual from the lower castes to interact freely and productively with others. And this also inhibits their full participation in the economic, social, and political life of the community (Bhalla and Lapeyere 1997). The incomplete citizenship or denial of civil rights such as freedom of expression, rule of law, right to justice, political rights or the rights and means to participate in the exercise
of political power, and socio-economic rights like right to property, employment, and education is the key dimension of an impoverished life. Therefore, the salient features of social exclusion on the basis of caste are social stratification, social inequality, hierarchy and hegemony. The social exclusion of weaker sections is closely associated with the discrimination and inequality embodied in the institution of caste.

1.4.3 Marginalization
Marginalization is a societal process having its roots in the primitive society. It has been an essential cause of rule over the others. The individual, community and country can be marginalized. The individual or community that has been continuously marginalized struggles for equal rights, privileges and obligations. The peripheral nation tries to be vital, free and independent. It is the result of understanding of their marginalization and factors that are responsible for their peripheral status. The awakened marginals, having the power of resistance among them, protest against the factors of marginalization. Their protest aims at individual existence and identity. While struggling with the dominant and powerful center, the marginal masses reconstruct their history, culture and identity (Masure 2011: 16).

1.4.3.1 Meaning
The word ‘marginalization’ is a noun. Its root ‘margin’ is derived from the Latin word ‘margo’ meaning margin, border or edge. In Middle English ‘margerie’ meant ‘margin’. In a psychological sense ‘margin’ means the fringe of consciousness. The transitive verb ‘marginalize’ of the noun ‘marginalization’, according to Webster’s New World College Dictionary, is “to exclude or ignore especially by relegating to the outer edge of a group or by diverting the public attention to something else”. To the Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary, ‘marginalize’ means “to make a person or group feel less important or powerful”. Marginalization is a process by which a group or individual is denied access to important positions and symbols of economic, religious, or political power within any society. In sociology, marginalization is the social process of becoming or being made marginal. It means to relegate or confine to a lower social standing.
Marginalization involves people being denied degrees of power. It has the potential to result in severe material deprivation, and in its most extreme form, can exterminate groups (Mullaly 2007: 252-286). Marginalization reveals how the social processes make individuals and groups feel about themselves, their beliefs or their place in a greater social order. In this sense, marginalization can invoke feelings of oppression and alienation. This alienation can be understood in its general sense as a dissociation of people from meaningful work, their organic social collectivities, or their own identities. Thus, to be marginalized means to be distanced from power and resources that enable self-determination in economic, political, and social settings.

The factors that marginalize are gender, culture, language, race, caste, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation, socio-economic position or class, and geographic location. Depending on the context and level of analysis, the individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and even entire geopolitical systems can be seen as marginalized. As the African American cultural critic Bell Hooks defines:

"Marginality [is a] central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives... [Marginality] is a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's stay in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds" (Hook 1990: 341).

This view explains that marginality represents a challenge to the defining imperial 'centre' or a transvaluation of the lived or remembered experience of oppression. The marginality, an oppositional discursive strategy, nourishes one's capacity to resist against the hierarchical social structures and hegemonic cultural codes. The oppositional discursive strategy not only takes strength from opposition but also conceptualizes the transformation of the subject's relationship to the wider world. So the "discourses of marginality such as race, gender, psychological normalcy", geographical and social distance, political exclusion, intersect in a view of reality which supersedes. The
geometric distinction of centre and margin and replaces it with a sense of the complex, interweaving, and syncretic weaving of experience” (Ashcroft et.al 1989: 104).

The structures of power are described in terms of ‘centre and ‘margin’. In reality they operate in a complex, diffuse and multifaceted way. The marginal therefore indicates positionality. And the marginalization can be best defined in terms of “the limitations of a subject’s access to power” (Ashcroft et.al.2004: 135). Marginalization or marginality is a condition constructed by the posited relation to a privileged centre, an ‘othering’ directed by the imperial authority. It assumes that the power is a function of centrality. The privileged centre creates the condition of marginality. Then who are the marginal? And marginal to what? The reply spontaneously comes out that the ‘imperialism marginalizes’. But they are neither all marginalized nor always marginalized.

In different countries, the marginalized groups constitute minorities such as religious, ethnic, linguistic or otherwise. The marginalized groups have sub-cultures in the mainstream or ‘great culture’ or religions. They suffer from economic, social or political impoverishment and find themselves estranged from this mainstream. Their marginality may vary in its degree, extent or intensity. A marginal group may actually constitute a numerical majority, as in the case of Blacks in South Africa, and should perhaps be distinguished from minority group, which may be small in number, but has access to political or economic power. The marginal sections of society were recognized after initial resistance. In the binary – centre and margin-mode of thinking “there exists the hegemonic centre and margin in the form of oppressed people, and underprivileged sections of society, marginalized by the centre” (Singh 2006: 20). Marginalized sections of society are generally beyond the pale of the dominant culture. Their existence is by and large peripheral. “The marginalized groups or sections are consciously or unconsciously distanced from the power centers. They are scattered here and there and lack cohesiveness and strength... They live in physical or psychological ghettos. The social organization in which they are imprisoned by custom and tradition builds walls of segregation around them. However, they struggle for emancipation” (Waghmare 2001: 16-17). For a person to have a marginal status in a society, it means to be positioned
outside the mainstream culture and central social processes. Marginalization of any kind is constructed and may be variously institutionalized by administrative means, legislation and law enforcement, social mobilization, “forced removal”, or other violent force.

1.5 Dalit

1.5.1 Meaning

The meaning of Dalit in Hindi and Marathi is “ground down, and depressed”. The word Dalit literally means ‘the ground-down, broken, depressed and down trodden’ (Rani 2004:65). Basically, the Marathi concept Dalit implies to the group or groups of people who have been broken, exploited and oppressed by those above them in an active and purposeful way. “A word Dalit is not a substitute for ‘Harijan’ but an expression of rage of millions of untouchables” (Valmiki 2007:72). The concept of Dalit itself reveals an inherent denial of human rights on the basis of caste hierarchy and the theory of Karma constructed by Hindu scriptures- Smritis, Shastras and Vedas. The word Dalit first used in 1931, in journalistic writings to connote the Untouchables, gained popularity only in the early 1970s when the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra protested against injustices. The Dalit Panthers and their major ideologue Baburao Bagul offer a radically different definition of the Dalit. To their view it is as a revolutionary category for its hermeneutic ability. The ability recovers the revolutionary meaning of the historical past of the Dalit and its great capacity to reach out to larger sections of people. Not a mere linguistic construction, it is based on a materialist epistemology. On the contrary, it is historically constructed through the revolutionary struggle of the Dalits. As the Dalit Panthers and Bagul define, this category has an ontological ability to encompass within itself the lower castes, Adivasis, toiling classes and women. Answering to the question ‘Who is a dalit?’ Gail Omvedt says that Dalit is the “members of scheduled castes and tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion’ (Omvedt 2008:72). Here, Dalit becomes the class of same people having collective identity and oppression. The word Dalit thus evocates the bondage and agony, the trials
and tribulations of the people who are victimized right down the ages in India. Dalits, according to the communal analyses of caste, are 'the people within Hindu society who belong to those castes which Hindu religion considered to be polluting by virtue of hereditary occupation' (Webster 2007:76-77). But to the scholars of Subaltern studies and Marxists it is a class subsumed in occupational categories like peasants, agricultural labours, factory workers, and the same. For Gangadhar Pantawane, a Dalit activist and well-known writer of Maharashtra, who is also the founder editor of Asmitadarsha (Mirror of Identity), the chief organ of Dalit literature, the term Dalit does not refer to the caste, but is a symbol of change and revolution. As he states:

"The Dalit believes in humanism. He rejects the existence of God, rebirth, soul, sacred books that teach discrimination, fate and heaven because these have made him a slave. He represents the exploited man..." (Pantawane).

The use of the term 'Depressed Classes' for Dalits by the colonial authorities created for the first time an all-India identity of the lower castes 'as a people' marginalized and oppressed' (Gupta 1985:10).

'Dalit' is now widely used in place of the word 'untouchables'. Over the years, there have been several terms used to describe the people of the erstwhile untouchable community, such as 'Ati-Shudra', 'Scheduled Castes', 'exterior castes', 'outcastes', 'depressed classes', 'ex-untouchables', 'Harijan' and 'Pancham'. The Dalits feel that these terms coined by the upper-caste Hindus, officials, and social reformers were abusive in nature and synonymous with derogation, domination and paternalism. That is why the people belonging to this category prefer to describe themselves as Dalits, which includes all aspects of oppression. Whatever may be the definition, the term Dalit refers to the conditions of a group of people who are subjected to all forms of oppression — social, political, economic, cultural, and religious.
1.5.2 History of Dalits

Dalits are the poor and downtrodden. Generally, Dalit includes those termed in administrative parlance as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). However, in day-to-day usage in political discourse, the term is so far mainly confined to SCs. The term SC was first used by the British in the Government of India Act, 1935. Prior to this, some of these castes were included among the Depressed Classes – a category used for the first time to the Dalits at the beginning of the 20th century. Dalits have been referred as the people without history of their own. They have been marginalized as objects in a country rather than being treated as its subjects. They have not been considered as subject of a nation who have equal rights as other citizens to all the benefits. They have been deprived of all the benefits which are due to them as worthy citizens. Rather than that they have been pushed around and subjugated and exploited at every point in their life. Traditionally, in the Hindu social order they are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy, considered Ati-shudras or Avarnas and are treated as untouchables. After Independence there has been a growing awareness of and concern for the degraded socio-economic condition of the Dalits. For this, efforts are being made in collaboration with different organizations and institutions to inculcate and encourage them to enter the socio-economic fabric of the country. Despite such efforts only a slight improvement can be seen in the socio-economic life of the Dalits. For all that, the majority of them are still staggering under the burden of acute poverty. As Paswan remarks:

“Blocked access to and control over strategic societal resources have prevented most of them from taking due advantage of modern facilities and modes of status mobility. It is indeed a pity that millions of them would be automatically debarred from entering modern occupations that yield higher income and status and ensure a better life style” (Paswan and Jaideva 2002:04).
Dalits, as they are known today, can trace their history perhaps to the earliest civilization which flourished on the soil of India. The Indus civilization undoubtedly had several classes of people. They were separated from each other both on social and economic basis. There were the class of ruled and the class of served. In Rig Vedic period, one can find the first literary evidence of class-distinction in the society. The Purusha Sukta in the truth Mandala of Rigveda divides the body of the primeval man into four regions. Each region gives rise to a new class or varna. The lowest of them all were to be known as shudra. Thus, by the end of the Rig Vedic period, backward class of the people had come into vogue noticeably. The Aryan civilization grew with the time from the North to the South and South East of this great piece of land India. With this entrance of the Aryans grew the gap between the upper and the lower classes. In the early Vedic times, the great hatredness of people towards Dasyus or the maligned ones can be noticed. In later Vedic times, these lower people were pushed so below that they were termed the ones ‘fit to be slain’. So Dasyuhatya is a popular term that one can find in the Vedic literature of the period in question. Later, centuries saw Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavira fighting for the cause of the oppressed ones. Lord Buddha opened the gates of his Sangha to all without discriminating anyone on the race, caste, religion, sex or place of birth. All could follow the path of Nirvana by coming to his Sangha. The same did Mahavira. Indian society has a peculiar form of caste system. The caste system divides human beings into higher castes and lower castes. This division is sanctioned by certain religious texts and traditions like ‘purity’ and ‘pollution’. These religious texts and traditions help the caste system to renew its legitimacy even after it is challenged. It is due to this caste system the untouchables of India, numbering more than 220 million, known today as Dalits, have been systematically neglected and ostracized in Indian society for ages. Dalits are various known as ati-shudras, chandalas, panchamas, antyajas, depressed classes, harijans and the scheduled casted in different periods in Indian history. Even after caste discrimination has been declared an offence under the law, the Dalits still suffer the stigma of untouchability. Dalits are socially broken men, economically needy and politically powerless. The constitutional provisions of protective discrimination policies have not changed the condition of Dalits. Very few Dalits have attained an economically and
professionally strengthened position under government patronage. But they remain socially downgraded and unaccepted.

1.5.3 Theories of Caste
The roots of the caste system are in a dim and distant antiquity. Due to its complex nature, it has always been difficult to define ‘caste’. The term ‘caste’ evokes a picture of fixed statuses and occupations with social immobility firmly solidified by rules of endogamy (Harold 1987: 30). The features of caste are strictly based on religiously governed principles of ‘purity’ and ‘pollution’ which automatically render a hierarchical social structure. Louis Dumont, the famous French sociologist widely known for his book Homo Hierarchies (1970), defines caste system as an extreme form of social stratification. He rejects the ‘racial’ affiliation to the very idea of caste. He also denies a ‘class’ character of ‘caste’. He forcefully tells that the religious motives play an important role in creating and maintaining the Caste system (Dumont 1998: 3). The caste system has “the central ordering religious values” (Omvedt 1976: 35).

1.5.3 History of Caste: The Indus Civilization
During the Pre-Aryan period, there was no caste system. The Indus Valley civilization (of about 2500BC-1700BC) is the oldest civilization that existed in India. The historians like R.C. Majumdar (1977) and Romila Thapar (1990) tell that this civilization belonged to the Dravidians. The Dravidians had been living in India since at least about 4000 BC long before the Aryans came and settled down. The Indus Valley civilization was urban in nature and the Aryan culture was primitive non-urban culture (Thapar 1993: 21-25). Gail Omvedt says, “The Aryans were basically a horse driving, cattle-herding people who adopted many things of the Dravidians and other indigenous groups that they had come across” (Omvedt 1994: 40). In the Indus cities, there were different types of houses of rulers, priests, businessmen, and highly technical people. The poor people lived in huts outside the city. The tribals and menials used to live still farther away from the city. The
Indus Valley discoveries of blacksmithry, mortar, food grain stores and houses of workers are all evidence of the existence of a slave society (Rao 1989: 9-10). But it is inconvenient to construct a theory of a caste system.

### 1.5.4 The Role of Aryans

Though there are disputes about whether the Aryans came and settled down in the region of the Punjab from their original home in Middle Asia, it has gained a measure of acceptance. The Aryans were basically nomadic and reared cattle. They were essentially a race of warriors who mercilessly killed the aborigines. The Rig Veda can be seen as the source of the story of Aryan invasion, destruction and conquest. In the Rig Veda, there is a distinction between Arya and Dasa. It has also a division of society into four orders – Brahmana, Kshatriya Vaishya and Shudra. The Brahmana represented the profession of the priest and the Kshatriya as the warrior-chief. The Vaishya represented the trade and the Shudra as the slave and service class. These four divisions namely ‘Chaturvarna’ is rendered in the *Purusha Sukta* in the Tenth Mandal of the *Rig Veda*. It says that the creator produced one community from the mouth, another from the shoulders, the third from the thighs and the last from the feet (Gupta 1991:29). The *Purusha Sukta* was allowed to remain and become responsible for the seeds of differentiation and discrimination which were truly and deeply sown into the community with all the sanctity a religion could grant. By appearance the division of a society under the four varnas was mainly job-oriented, with specific duties attached to each position. But the varnas were hierarchically placed with specific duties. “By modeling ritual behavior on the division of labour and ranking all occupational behaviour on a pollution scale, Hinduism provided the basis for the virtually unlimited permutation of Indian society into hereditary compartments ordained to perform their separate but interdependent religious and economic functions” (Gould, 68). The caste system was supported by religious sanctions. Many caste laws and restrictions were made for the shudras to keep them permanently away from the so-called dwija society. They were kept to the position of virtual slaves without rights of citizenship. The caste rules were made by the Brahmins with the active support of the orthodox Kshatriya kings. These rules were made to suppress the shudras
by prohibiting them from all knowledge and status. It continued for a long time and now is in existence. The caste system proved to be a very effective instrument of marginalization of the people who remained ignorant and submissive. Moreover, the caste system weakened the shudras by increasing divisions and disunion amongst them.

The Vedic Varna System comprises only four orders Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. It does not mention the Untouchables. However, there are references in Vedic literature to groups such as the ayogava, chandala, nishada and paulkasa, who are outside the Varna system and who seem to be despised (Gupta, 29). The hierarchical order on Varna continued over the centuries. Its caste gradation put these groups at the bottom of this order and made them marginal. These marginal groups identified as asprushyas or the untouchables with the lowest ritual standing. The untouchables were traditionally subjected to great social and civil disabilities. Usually, they also had the lowest economic positions. The practice of untouchability began during the rule of Pushyamitra Sunga. Manu, a Brahmin pandit of his time, codified all inhuman and unethical laws against the Shudras in the name of religion. It was done to suppress the potential revolution of the shudras against the killing of Shudra named Brushadatra, the commander-in-chief of the last Mauryan King. Manu’s creation Manushastra or Manusmriti has the full elaboration of the caste hierarchy. Manusmriti is the root of Brahminism. Manu has given the highest status to the Brahmans in society. He has put the responsibility of enforcement of the caste divisions on the King’s shoulders. It was made obligatory to the Kings to protect the dharma. The dharma was not interpreted as Varnashrama dharma. To keep the interests of the upper caste Hindus intact, the varnashrama dharma was supported, propagated and reinterpreted through the Upnishads, the Sutras, the Smritis and the Puranas. Together they are known as the Dharma Shastra. The ancient Dharma Shastras of the Hindus imposed a series of social, economic, political, and religious restrictions on the lower castes especially the untouchables. They made the Untouchables completely dependent on those above them. The Untouchables, as a consequence of Dharma Shastra, lived a life of physical degradation and insults. They shared personal and social humiliation for quite a long time. They were relegated to menial occupations only. They lived outside the
village and fed on the leftovers of the high caste people. As Arjun Dangle, a dalit social-activist says:

"The living conditions of these untouchables were shameful. They had no land to till nor could they follow any profession. They did menial work ordered by the higher castes, come rain or shine. Treated like animals, they lived apart from the village, and had to accept leftovers from the higher caste people, in return for their endless toil. Their physical contact was said to 'pollute' the upper caste – even their shadow was said to have the same effect. Hindu religious texts forbade them to wear good clothes or ornaments or even footwear, and prescribed severe and humiliating punishment for violating these orders. Even for a basic necessity like water they were helplessly dependent on the higher castes' good will. The most perverted practice of unsociability was that which at one time compelled the untouchables to tie an earthen pot around their necks so that their sputum should not fall to the earth and pollute it. Another was the compulsion to tie a broom behind them so that their footprints would be erased before others set their eyes on them" (Dangle 1992: 235-36).

1.5.5 Challenges to Caste
The institution of caste has been questioned by various philosophers and reformers at different points of time in history. In the sixth century BC, Lokayata or Charvaka, challenged the caste system. He was the famous materialist philosopher who protested against the slave system, caste exploitation and the existence of God. Charvaka propagated materialistic philosophy as opposed to the idealism of the Upanishads and the Vedas. The Lokayata preached the abolition of slavery, rational behaviour and beliefs rejection, all forms of sacrifices, rituals and ceremonies. Buddhism and Jainism set for themselves the task of questioning Brahmanic orthodoxy. The religious scriptures were scrutinized to interrogate the truth. The Lord Buddha, the first social revolutionary, rejected the authority of Vedas. He did not prevent any caste or class from becoming his followers. By embracing Buddhism, the untouchables, for the first time, could find a respectable place in the society. Buddha invited the poorest and the lowliest to live and
learn with princes and merchants, billionaires and proud Brahmans in the brotherhood of his Order. The teachings of Buddha influenced Hindu religion. The popularity of Buddhism threatened the entrenched position of the Brahmans. By declaring Lord Buddha as an avatara of Vishnu, the Brahman priests laid emphasis on caste distinctions.

In the medieval period, the Bhakti movement challenged the Varna system and stratification of human society on the basis of caste. By throwing up the radical thinkers and mystic reformers, the Bhakti movement cut across barriers of castes, creed, language and religion. In Bhakti movement, many saint-poets were from lower castes: Namdev (AD 1270-1350) belonged to the Shimphi (tailor) caste from Maharashtra; Chokamela (13-14 century) was a Mahar (untouchable) also from Maharashtra; Kabir (AD 1398-1518) was a weaver from Uttar Pradesh; Raidas (a contemporary of Kabir) was a cobbler also from Uttar Pradesh; Sena (another contemporary of Raidas), a barber also from Uttar Pradesh; Tukaram (born in AD 1608) was a Kunbi (peasant) from Maharashtra. These saint-poets used the local language spoken by the common people for their songs, dohas, and abhangas. They also used the metaphors connected with their daily work. Chokamela protested against the unsociability more than the traditional limits or mahar village work (Zelliott 1992: 3-31). Kabir not only saw the glaring disparity between the rich and poor, the discrimination by Brahmans and high caste Hindus towards the lower castes especially the untouchables but also ridiculed it in his dohas. Due to the low-caste base of this Bhakti cult/ movement, many historians and literary critics did not recognize its social protest, and the bitter descriptions of social oppression. Was there Brahmanism during the Islam rule? The answer is positive. To answer this question, one could bring to the notice that the Muslim rulers played the same role as the Hindu King in enforcing the rules of Varnashrama dharma. Aware of the minority status of their religion the Muslim rulers adopted the policy of not interfering with the Hindu society and allowed the Brahmans to interpret religion in their own way.

In ancient times, the upper castes had the rights of learning. The use of Sanskrit language was exclusively their privilege. The Untouchables, the Shudras and women had no access
to this language. The Sanskrit language was the repository of knowledge and wisdom. It became a closely guarded terrain. In this terrain, no outsiders were permitted. The hegemony of the higher castes became all-pervasive. The reason was that all knowledge was generated and processed by the higher castes. The higher caste people enjoyed the fruits of knowledge and power. They then did not let it go out of their hands. As a result, it created an outer group of the shudras and ati-shudras whose sole purpose of existence was to serve the interests of the upper caste people. An outer group of the shudras and ati-shudras remained permanently at the periphery of society for centuries.

The Untouchables were oppressed by the upper castes. They suffered a lot. Their condition was worse. Some of the untouchables accepted the generosity of their ‘masters’. But others did not surrender. They rebelled and suffered. “When they (rebels) were brought under subjugation eventually, they were neither incorporated into the main economic activity prevailing at that time, that is, agriculture, not into any other form of production in society. Only unskilled, unproductive, lowly and menial jobs were assigned to them. Thus, when they were forced to surrender it was not clemency they received. Instead, they were treated with utter contempt and were segregated as a residual category of the people to be employed as and when necessary” (Mukherjee 1988). The untouchables were considered as the lowest and the worthless. What they produced by great efforts was not denied. The goods they produced were not considered as mean. But it was accepted with purification. The Karma theory, sanctioned by Hindu religion, dissuaded the untouchables from undertaking any revolt against their oppressors. The untouchables believed it as the matter of their fate. They performed their prescribed duties uncomplainingly, willingly and obediently to take their next birth in a higher caste-group.

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