



# A Critical Review on Dalit Autobiographies in India

<sup>1</sup>Mr. S. S. Kase

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar

<sup>1</sup>P. G. Department of English and Research Centre, People's College, Nanded, India

**Abstract :** This study is considered to critique Dalit autobiographies in India. The objective of this study is that because of their race and caste, famous people faced various hardships and mishaps in their early years. Today, the majority of the once untouchable people in Maharashtra use the term "Dalit" to refer to those members of Indian society who are considered to be physically, socially, and culturally unclean by more powerful and subservient groups. In this study The researcher is dealing with the autobiography written by Dr. Sharnkumar Limbale - 'The Outcaste': Akkarmashi, Urmila Pawar - 'The Weave of My Life', Dr. Narendra Jadhav - 'Untouchables': My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India, Daya Pawar - 'Baluta' and Shantabai Kambale's 'Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha', etc.

**IndexTerms – Dalit Autobiographies, Sharnkumar Limbole, Urmila Pawar, Daya Pawar, Dr. Narendra Jadhav**

## INTRODUCTION

This study compares the autobiographies of African Americans with those written by Dalits in India to examine the nature of oppression, socioeconomic disparity, exploitation, resistance, and suffering. It emphasizes how Dalits and blacks are oppressed in many ways due to the ideology of the dominant socioeconomic class, caste, and race. The ruling socioeconomic class and caste rejected earlier Dalit writing, but this viewpoint was altered in the 1960s. Writers from Maharashtra including Annabhau Sathe, Baburao Bagul, Daya Pawar, Namdev Dhasal, Mallika Amar Shaikh, Narendra Jadhav, Kishor Shantabai Kale, Sharankumar Limbale, and others had their perspectives altered by Phule, Shahu, and Ambedkar's philosophies. This study tries to see Dalit literature from a different perspective.

Indians of many castes, groups, and faiths resided on the vast country's territory. Religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, and Christianity had prominent sects that made their core beliefs known. This divided society into two categories, such as the exploiter and the abused. Dalit culture is radically different from Hindu culture, as Dalit writers utilize vocabulary that is distinct from the language used in earlier works of literature. Dalit authors are drawn to describing the history of their people, and only Dalit language can express Dalit emotions.

## THEORETICAL APPROACH

The theoretical pillars of this research are womanism, post-colonialism, Marxism (Ambedkarism), and the subaltern approach. This chapter will analyze the works of Urmila Pawar, Sharankumar Limbale, Laxman Mane, Kishor Shantabai Kale, and Narendra Jadhav, taking into account the theoretical foundation or models of the black theory. It will provide a succinct overview of many topics and ideas for assessing the society as it is described in the autobiographies of Dalits.

### Womanism

Dalit womanism, which was developed in Maharashtra by educated Dalit women of the middle class and spread nationwide, was the response of Dalit women to discussions about mainstream feminism. Black feminists claimed that American white women's dominant discourse marginalizes and ignores the issues facing Afro-American women.

#### Formation of Dalit Womanism

In an effort to contradict the beliefs of mainstream Indian womanism, the National Federation of Dalit Women was founded in Maharashtra in 1995. According to Dalit feminists, both internal and external patriarchy triples the exploitation of Dalit women, and the mainstream feminist movement is caste-based, hierarchical, and dominated by upper castes. They contend that it is necessary to look at the patriarchy that permeates the Dalit community as a whole.

### Ambedkarism

Ambedkarism is still a powerful force in India today, influencing the anti-caste movement and Dalit struggle. However, it must be distinguished from an individual activist-complex theoretician's struggle with the interpretation of Indian reality, just as "Marxism" as a trend in the working class movement must be separated from Karl Marx' actual theorizing. Ambedkar's ideas were not always coherent, and they did not entirely answer the issues he faced. Ambedkar's most important ideas were developed in the 1940s and 1950s, when he spent the majority of his time in Delhi serving as the Labor Minister and the official spokesperson for the untouchables. He attempted to give political expression to a general left-leaning philosophy and caste destruction, but the decade

ended with the failure of a left alternative to the bourgeois-Brahmin Congress. To understand Ambedkar's technique and analysis, it is necessary to understand the unique qualities of this latter age.

### *The Strategic and Theoretical Context*

Fascism was brutally opposed in the 1940s, leading to the adoption of socialism and the use of atomic energy. This period of peace was seen as a resurgence of hope and a move in the direction of a populist, socialist independence, but was marked by internal gloom and the backdrop of Ambedkar's struggle for the untouchable masses. Marxism's dominance on the left in India led to the adoption of Hindu-Muslim communalism as the primary religious and cultural identity, and the establishment of the "Muslim community" and the "Hindu community" as dominant social realities. The Congress progressives supported Nehru's secularism, while the communists adhered to Nehru's position while placing an even more emphasis on class. All parties acknowledged the reality of "Hindu" and "Muslim" identities, but failed to address the fundamentals of the 'Hindu' identity ascribed to Indian heritage, opening room for Hindu nationalism.

Gandhism and Nehruism were marginalized by the events of independence and division, with Nehruism promoting a "Third World coalition" and socialism and a development focused on heavy industry. The Dalit movement was left in a void due to Gandhism's and Marxism's failure to move beyond a spiritualistic and Hinduistic interpretation of a decentralized and village-based development, and their respective failures to allow for the fertilization of theory and practice by the anti-caste movements.

### *Caste, Class and Mechanical Marxism*

Babasaheb Ambedkar's class-caste paradigm was developed in the 1930s and had a significant impact on his economic theory and how he perceived caste in society. He rejected communism in the 1920s by stating that he agreed with socialism's "goals" but not its "means" of violence. His criticism of violence was based on his belief that communist-led strikes and actions were often "adventurous," that they needlessly injured the most vulnerable members of the working class (Dalits), and that they sacrificed lives in campaigns that tried to be militant for the sake of militancy. Ambedkar embraced several fundamental tenets of the "class" paradigm, such as the addition of "caste" and "Brahminism" as crucial social realities.

The article reversed the often used architectural comparison of "base and superstructure" by using the relations of production as the foundation of the "economic interpretation of history". It argued that the construction of a religious, social, and political institution is based on the economic relationships, and that existing social, political, and other institutions must be dismantled in order to change the economic relationships inside society. The mental grip of religious servitude would need to be broken in order to strengthen the working class, and the elimination of caste and untouchability was seen as the primary goal of the "democratic" stage of a two-stage revolution.

Socialists should applaud efforts to bring the working class together, but the first phase of the fight for the Indian revolution is the abolition of untouchability and caste prejudice. Ambedkar's essay expressed dissatisfaction with Nehru and the Congress socialists, but came to the conclusion that untouchables would have to put all of their might into the struggle against untouchability. His viewpoints served as both a critique of an agreement with the presuppositions of a mechanical, economic type of Marxism, which saw caste and all other "non-class" types of oppression as primarily socio-religious, in the realm of consciousness and not material life. He used an analogy from mechanical architecture to give the "superstructure" priority.

Ambedkar argued that the anti-caste battle is a component of the democratic revolution, not of the socialist revolution, and that it is more important to focus on it for the democratic revolution than for the socialist revolution. He focused his efforts on the scheduled Caste Federation as a powerful pressure group, with an indefinite postponement of a broad revolutionary struggle.

Ambedkar and the Dalit movement took standard left-leaning economic assumptions for granted, leading to attempts to develop a historical theory of caste and social struggle. This neglected the extent to which a state-controlled heavy industry would be a Brahmin and high caste-controlled economy and successfully repressed any discussion with other economic models. Ambedkar's "State socialism" was part of a broad consensus that saw development in terms of industrialization and nationhood in terms of a centralized, strong, unitary state. Gandhian tradition in India was associated with a decentralized, village-based form of development, but this was unacceptable to Ambedkar and militant Dalits or non-Brahmins. Today's developmental movement rejects Nehru's large dams and advocates for alternative development.

### *The Economics of a Flexible Socialism*

Ambedkar's "The Problem of the Rupee" was written in 1923 in response to a conflict over the exchange rate between nationalists and the British administration. He argued for a compromise ratio of 1s.4d to preserve the interests of both the "business classes" and the "earning classes" from the devaluation's price increase. The Problem of the Rupee is an incisive critique of British monetary policy, which reveals Ambedkar as a contemporary proponent of devaluation and an economist who believed that India could compete on the world stage within an open economy. The 1925 book *The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India*, which details how British fiscal policy has ruined India, also criticizes British imperialism. Ambedkar argued that the land tax inhibited the flourishing of agricultural industry, customs tariffs harmed the country's manufacturing, and basic levies like the salt tax and the land tax disproportionately affected the poor. He argued that the British administration not only engaged in economic exploitation but was also powerless to address social ills. Both the critique and discussion fit comfortably within conventional economics, and Ambedkar did not view the 'development' of a backward ex-colony as a problem once the fictitious barriers erected by the colonial state were removed.

Ambedkar's economic radicalism was rooted in his understanding of democracy rather than a conviction in the proletariat's capacity for world creation and revolutionary destiny. Ambedkar argued that democracy must regulate the shape and form of society's economic structure if it is to uphold the idea of one man, one value.

### *Post-colonialism*

Post-colonialism is the study of the multiple modernity-related trajectories as perceived and experienced from a variety of philosophical, cultural, and historical viewpoints. It suggests a future in which colonialism may be defeated, but other forms of dominance or subordination may emerge.

#### *From decolonization to post-colonialism*

The British withdrawal from their second empire and the decolonization movements of the 1960s and '70s in Africa and elsewhere are two of the most significant periods for those studying post-colonialism. During this time, international principles and instruments of decolonization were formally declared, and the language of national self-determination was applied to liberationist movements within former colonial territories. These conflicts led to processes that were not just political and economic, but also cultural, as

people who had previously been oppressed sought to regain authority over their language and history. The early 21st century struggles of indigenous peoples in various regions of the world are often referred to as post colonialism, but this may be less appropriate given how the international system interprets the concepts of self-determination and self-government, as well as the minority status and vulnerability of such peoples even inside decolonized governments. The history of imperialism is very complicated. The persistence of empire in human history is a major concern of postcolonial research, and the heritage of the Enlightenment is a necessary and inescapable aspect of the present. Both European and non-European thinkers and activists have used the universal categories and notions at the core of most Enlightenment philosophy to critique the inequities of their countries and imperialism itself. This complicated legacy is best illustrated by the influential works of C.L.R. James, Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and the group of historians affiliated with the editorial collective of Subaltern Studies. The collection of ideas and concepts that "the" Enlightenment refers to is plural and open to various elaborations.

*What does post-colonialism deal with?*

Post-colonialism is an area of academic investigation that examines the legacy of imperialism. It is concerned with a collection of issues at the core of contemporary political philosophy, such as the link between imperialism and identity. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) are two of the most famous works of post-colonialism, where violence is justified as the proper response to the violence committed by colonialism and as the mediating mechanism by which the colonized might start to regain their self-conscious agency. Fanon integrated a material and psychological examination of colonialism's impacts, focusing on both the micro- and macro effects as well as the experience of colonial rule. Postcolonial theorists have identified and investigated the consequences of imperialism on both the colonized and the colonizer.

They have criticized nationalism as well as the "nativism" and idealistic communitarianism proposed as alternatives to it, and have looked into how European conceptions of politics, as well as generalizations about secularism and historical time, have been used to describe and situate the modes of collective action and self-understanding of non-European peoples. They have also criticized the assumption that what is required is merely the extension of existing liberal universals, this time in good faith, to those to whom they were previously denied. John Stuart Mill's defense of the rejection of Indian self-government is a typical example of this type of presumption.

### *Subaltern Approach*

Antonio Gramsci coined the term "subaltern" to refer to those who are marginalized due to their socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, caste, or sexual orientation. The subaltern perspective seeks to analyze society via the subjugation of members of various castes, classes, ages, genders, and races. It emphasizes the importance of the public as opposed to the elites in political and social movements, and views indigenous peoples, peasants, and other oppressed groups as the authors of their own histories. The main advocates of the subaltern worldview in India are Ranjit Guha, David Hardiman, and BR Ambedkar. Subaltern historiography is a viewpoint that emphasizes the importance of popular politics in contrast to elite politics. It emphasizes seeing peasant or tribal insurgents as history's producers rather than just as its objects, and emphasizes the insurrectionary activities and potential of these classes. It is a crucial method for the investigation of tribal peasant migration. This viewpoint highlights the nationalist and elitist historiography's inability to include the voices of the weak in the endeavor of rewriting history.

### ANALYSIS OF DALIT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

The importance of Dalit autobiographies as a source of cultural identity increases in India due to their status as untouchables. The Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishyas, and Shudras were the four classes included in the Hindu caste system. Dalit memoirs begin by discussing the connection between sexuality and caste work, using Dalit feminist perspectives on first-hand caste experiences. The discrimination Dalit women experienced was comparable to racial discrimination, and researchers want to draw conclusions about their journey and battle for survival.

### *The Outcaste: Dr. Sharankumar Limbale*

Dr. Sharankumar Limbale, the author of *The Outcaste* (2003), is an Akkarmashi bastard and a Dalit Panther employee. He was a product of Hindus from lower castes abusing Dalit women sexually. His father was a Patil, a landowner and the head of the community, while his mother was a landless Mahar who worked as an agricultural laborer. Vithal Kamble was the husband of Masamai, Limbale's mother, who was employed by Hanumanta Limbale the Patil of the hamlet of Basalgaon as slave labour under a yearly agreement (salgadi) in his fields. Masamai was expelled by the caste Panchayat from Kamble's home and eventually travelled to Hannur to dwell with her mother Santamai after leaving Basalgaon.

Sharankumar is a Lingayat, Mahar, and Muslim, but his guardian is a Muslim named Mahammad Dastagir Jamadar. Dada treated Sharankumar as if he were his grandchild, regardless of his caste or religion. Sharankumar Limbale was conceived as a result of a forced meeting between his upper caste father and his mother, a Mahar lady. He experienced rank prejudice and abject poverty at his public school, and was forced to accept food leftovers from students of higher castes. He was also fatherless at birth, and was viewed as a bastard. He was coerced into having sex with men from higher castes, but was able to break out and become an economics professor and author of several books.

The suffering of women is the biggest stain on mankind, as they are reduced to a silent person when all of their rights and comforts are taken away. The desire for equal status was made known in the nineteenth century through social, cultural, and political movements in North America. Sharankumar Limbale believes that Dalits have been deprived of authority, wealth, and status due to a popular theory that god established this system to prevent Dalits from uprising against it. Ambedkar argues that these so-called Hindu religious texts are the primary source of women's suffering in India, as they assign the wife the function of pativarta, which forbids her chastity restrictions, forces men to use women as sex objects, encourages child marriage, and also justifies a variety of horrific crimes against women.

The predicament of Dalit women is the worse since they suffer from a triple burden of caste, class, and gender. Feminist writers such as Ruth Pawar Jubavala, Nargis Dalal, Anita Desai, Attia Hussain, Shakuntla Rama Rao, Nayan Tara Sehgal, Vimla Raina Kamla Markandey, Kamla Das, and others encouraged writing in regional languages in many genres, including poetry, fiction, and autobiographies. Limbale's autobiography of Limbale is a factual piece with no anger or regret. The suffering of the Mahar community is as complex as the weaving of Ayadan produced by Urmila Pawar's mother and Baby Kamble in *The Prison*. The family in the booze industry had become acclimated to the alcohol, leading to arguments and confrontations. Sharankumar Limbale exposes their passion and exposes the Hindu society's hypocrisy and thirst for untouchable women. Dalit women were left by their husbands and

were the victims of abuse at home, especially lower caste working women who were viewed as the sexual property of men from all castes. Many happy families have broken up due to others looking down on them and treating them like concubines or whores. Harya discovered his wife having an affair with Bhimanna.

The idea of aesthetics and beauty is a burden for Dalit women, which is due to the caste Hindu inclination to own everything that makes them happy. Dalits have been taken advantage of by those who were granted high caste status by religion and inherited wealth, such as Patils who have turned women of Dalit farmworkers into prostitutes. There are Dalit households that make a living by having sex with the Patils, and Dalit children are regarded as Patil descendants. Masamai was Hanmanta Limbale's whore, who was kept by Yeshwantrao Sidramappa Patil and Janu, a Gondhali woman, and produced eight children. Patil norms and traditions dictate that a Patil is always a wealthy landowner who exploits a Dalit woman as his whore, leading to Dalit women's exploitation and reduction to nothingness. High castes are also shameless in their shamelessness, as Limbale reveals that his mother's infidelity was motivated by hunger rather than lust.

#### *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs: Urmila Pawar*

Urmila Pawar's *Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs* is a story of her childhood memories of life in the village and her mother's struggle to make it through to her life after her marriage in Mumbai. It covers the period from immediately following India's independence in 1947 till the turn of the century and reveals various facets of Dalits' daily lives, their ongoing battle to exist, and the numerous ways in which caste oppresses and impoverishes them. Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* is a Dalit autobiography that blends seeing and experiencing in an act of sharing that gives it a political edge. It is set in the Konkan area on India's west coast, where Dalit women endure hard, labor-intensive lives alongside a precipitous drop down to the sea and the Sahyadrs mountain range. The trek of the Dalit women from the countryside to the market in the town is where it all starts, as they travel as a group with their kids.

Urmila Pawar's work is a reflection of the Dalit people's struggle for freedom, and *Sauvadinia* is her first effort to form a community for Dalit women. Women created their own cultural resistance during the post-Ambedkar era by converting to Buddhism and weaving their own words into traditional religious songs, referring to their beloved leader as Baba or Bhim, his first wife Ramabai, and his social message. Urmila Pawar's conversion to Buddhism was a crucial turning point in Maharashtra's Dalit community's history, rejecting superstition and ritual in favor of a more rational understanding of reality. Buddhism provided Dalits with a fresh outlook on life and the opportunity to live a life free from servitude and enslavement. Urmila Pawar's father built a home in Ratnagiri in order for his children, nephews, and nieces to attend higher schools. The Dalit priest's job is to impart human wisdom within the framework of daily life, removing the Brahmin priest's monopoly on the interpretation of sacred law. Urmila Pawar recounts her experiences with caste prejudice in Ratnagiri, where the landlady learns of her caste and makes her leave two rooms.

Untouchables are not allowed to participate in the Holi festival due to centuries-old customs, and the upper castes beg for misfortunes to be visited on them. Urmila Pawar's memoirs describe the Mahar wedding traditions, which include seven stacks of rice and seven circling of the holy fire. Women from her community traveled to Ratnagiri's market to sell equipment, but the road was treacherous and dangerous, with snakes, tigers, and freaks lurking in the bushes and woods. Pawar provides examples of patriarchal persecution of women, both inside the Dalit community and along the lines of caste hierarchy.

Urmila Pawar's essay describes the experiences of living in abject poverty and lack of proper nutrition, and Maya Pandit's translation captures the spirit and practicality of the discourse. Urmila Pawar's autobiography, *The Weave of My Life*, highlights the patriarchal domination of women in caste hierarchy. Urmila Pawar is actively participating in a political initiative to unite Dalit women's organizations against caste and gender injustice. Urmila Pawar's book provides an insightful account of how Dalits in India underwent societal change and how cultural politics are expressed in everyday lives.

#### *Untouchables' My Family's Triumphant Journey out of the Caste System in Modern India: Dr. Narendra Jadhav*

The book *My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India* tells the story of a Dalit family's fight to escape the dominance of the higher castes in their hometown hamlet of Ozar in the Nasik District of Maharashtra. The author's father, Damodar Runjaji Jadhav, challenged the injustice of the caste system by encouraging his kids to have confidence in themselves and regain their human dignity. Damu endures harassment and brutal beatings for refusing to remove a dead body from a well. The story's depression and the Damu family's conquest are brought out by the narrative's simplicity, which also highlights other significant moments like the family's dramatic transformation under Dr. Ambedkar's influence, their realization of their own worth, and finally their empowerment through education.

Dalit authors have made attempts to navigate the difficulty of gaining narrative authority by highlighting discriminatory experience and Dalit identity as two essential requirements for writing. Dalit autobiographers also confront the question of authority to speak for the Dalit community. Dr. Narendra Jadhav mentions Dr. Bhimrao (Babasaheb) Ambedkar leading thousands of Dalits to the Chavdar Pond in Mahad in a peaceful agitation for water rights. Vasant Moon's *Growing Up Untouchable in India* is more political in comparison, but does not tackle contentious political subjects. The recent explosion of Dalit writing in India is an effort to highlight the prejudice, brutality, and poverty that the Dalits face.

Dalit literature, poetry, novels, and autobiographies have increased due to the desire of the Dalits to express their experiences and challenge the institutions and ideologies that have marginalized them. This has been used to make political statements and gain influence and support in a larger movement against oppression. The autobiography "*Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India*" by Dr. Narendra Jadhav tells the story of a Dalit family's transformation from an exploited to a self-awakened human unit. It emphasizes the importance of education and how a low-income family achieves middle class status thanks to the father, the mother, and the kids' diligence. Dalits seek independence from caste authority, enjoy rights and freedoms, and feel respectable.

#### *Baluta: Daya Pawar*

Dagdu Pawar's *Baluta* (1978) and N.S. Suryavanshi's *Things I Never Imagined* (1975) are two examples of Dalit autobiographies published in the Marathi language. *Baluta* depicts the struggles of an untouchable woman seeking a quiet life and was praised for its clear, concise, and to-the-point presentation. Both books received positive reviews and shook Marathi society. Daya Pawar's use of words is unique, reflecting his involvement in national social, cultural, and literary movements. His work was successful and he suffered both psychologically and physically, making a strong case for ongoing suffering.

In Anupama Rao's opinion;

*“Baluta as a representative of Dalit literature wasn't just a more faithful narration of the Dalit experience but that it presented an ethical challenge to the caste Hindu whom it implicated.”*

Dalit literature is an expression of the misery of oppressed people and a protest against the unfair social structure based on caste and class disparities. It questions conventional literary aesthetics, slogans, ideologies, and idioms.

Dagdu Maruti Pawar is a Dalit who has a strong sense of intellect and has participated in several Dalit upliftment social activities. His autobiography, *Baluta*, is a first-person narrative of the battle of marginalised awareness that serves as an example for him and others while describing prejudice and plight. It is a powerfully emotional testimony about the suffering of past lives as pains of death, and the reader is filled with sensitivity to the situation and condition of the protagonist. Anti-Dalit anger was directed towards the autobiography, but it was able to draw attention to the predicament faced by the majority of Dalits. Pawar's battle demonstrates his strong involvement in the national social, cultural, and literary revolution.

The text tells the story of Ambedkar, a social and political activist who worked tirelessly and devotedly on behalf of dalit and nomadic people, slum dwellers, those who live on the streets, Kamathiwada prostitutes, etc. It also tells the tale of *The Untouchable*, a youngster who was identified as a stone after being given a mineral name. He went by the name Dayaa, which calls for the readers to feel the same sense of sadness that onlookers and bystanders who see a potraj on the street have when reading about his existence. He and his mother both starved when the Mahar was shunned by the community, but because it was the only way he could survive, he used to consume the meat of dead animals. People should feel guilty for having degraded humans to this point.

The Mahars were publicly shunned by the hamlet by having a bitter gourd tethered at the boundary and prohibited from entering the village. They received no food or drink from anyone, and the Marathas would drag the animal's body that perished in the epidemic out into the field. God Rokdoba was prayed for by the Mahars to have pity on them, but he did not. The starving Mahars would travel at night to collect the foul-smelling, decaying flesh, and even the itchy inflorescence of a cactus was consumed. The Marathas were reluctant to hurt the Mahars' feelings, but at night they transformed into tigers and made the offending Maratha pay for his actions. The Mahar would return the next day and join the people in expressing support for the Maratha.

#### *Summing Up*

The researcher discussed the suffering and prejudice experienced by Dalit women in the second chapter. They experienced racial prejudice, as well as being viewed as untouchable due to birth into a certain community. Due to their caste, they were discriminated against three times: as untouchables and outcasts, as women, and as poor people. In a patriarchal society, they were subjected to unfair treatment and abandoned by their husbands. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale's autobiographies are the most sensitive and cognizant of the issues women face as a result of gender discrimination.

However, it has been a source of hostility and disdain for decades, and it occasionally mistreats lesser castes and spits out the poison that they have been consuming for years. As the writers and many women seek to reconcile their low caste identification with their current middle class standing, these autobiographies include some ambivalences.

