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## The Indian Urge to Rewrite: A Critical Study of Postmodern Indian English Historical Fiction

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Traditionally, history was seen in the nineteenth century “as an empirical search for external truths corresponding to what was considered to be absolute reality of the past events” (Onega, 12). Some postmodern theorists think that historical fiction is problematic because historical narrative can never be complete. A few definitions of the postmodern version of the historical fiction emphasize its involvement in the epistemological problems present in representing the past, and on the constructed nature of reality and history. Ann Rigney focuses on how historical fiction can play ‘a significant role in the formation of cultural memory’ (Rigney, 367). Rigney suggests that creatively reworked artificial memories may prove more tenacious in practice than those strictly adhering to facts.

The postmodernist view of history “rejects the idea of ‘History’ as a directly accessible, unitary past and substitutes for it the conception of ‘histories’ an ongoing series of human construction” (Cox and Reynolds, 4). It also argues against conventional history writing and its claim to present historical events truthfully. A new kind of history emerges when the distinction between history and fiction gets blurred forcing history to become ‘metafictional’ rather than fictional only. Thus it explains the prefix *meta-* in Hayden White’s celebrated work *Metahistory*. He determines the aim of metahistory as finding answers to questions concerning the epistemological status of historical explanations and the possible forms of historical representation. White’s title according to Susana Onega draws a parallelism between the metafictional awareness in fiction and “the metahistorical trend in history” (Onega, 12). White highlights the idea that history writing consists of the process ‘emplotment’ in which chronicles turn into stories. To him, it is a necessary operation since “histories gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of mere chronicles” (White : 2001, 223). This apparent contradiction justifies the attempt to analyze the relationship between history and fiction in postmodern era. In the process of establishing the right of the novelist to present his version of history through fiction, more attention is paid to the manner in which the fictional mode is bent in achieving the same purpose and at this stage fiction took the character of metafiction. The novelist’s self-consciousness in presenting his version of history enabled him to visualize himself as a historian who dilates on what history is and how it should be written. Such fiction is labeled as ‘historiographic metafiction’ as was coined by Linda Hutcheon in her *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*.

“The term *postmodernism*, when used in fiction, should, by analogy, best be reserved to describe fiction that is at once metafictional and historical in its

echoes of the texts and contexts of the past. In order to distinguish this paradoxical beast from traditional historical fiction, I would like to label it “Historiographic Metafiction”. (Hutcheon, 1988, 3)

Contemporary literary theory (also read as the theory of postmodern) and fiction are inextricably bound up with the question of rewriting. Julia Kristeva’s “intertextuality” and Baudrillard’s “simulacrum” are typical samples of the authoritative rewriting and re-presentation of myths and history. Moreover, the postmodern obsession with pastiche, the worldwide feminist appropriation of women rights and the imbalance of political power scales due to national movements in the colonies are all premised upon the conviction that writing is compulsorily affiliated to rewriting. The rewriting of the native history of the colonized has become one of the dominant features of postmodern fiction in the subjected countries. Ahmed Gamal observes that

What testifies to such urgent need is the consistent relegation of postcolonial texts that are self-conscious yet historically or culturally grounded in the problematic domain of the ahistorical postmodern. Such a monolithic approach to metafictional rewriting of native history and culture tends to unquestioningly undermine the political agendas and theories of agency that are recommended by Third World and minority writers through their self-reflexive texts (Gamal, 2011).

Methodologically, the rewriting of colonial text and histories is idiosyncratic to postcolonial metafiction and other forms of postcolonial writing. Stephen Slemon writes that “reiterative textual responses” are a fundamental oppositional strategy of postcolonial writing, the basic type of which “involves the figurative invocation of colonialist notions of ‘history’...and the juxtaposition of the imperialist ‘pretext’ with a dis/placive ‘historical’ narrative” (Slemon, 4). Thus postmodern/postcolonial Indian English narratives replace the enclosed, linear pattern of realist fiction with open, circular, repetitive structures. Yet what distinguishes postcolonial metafiction from the merely deconstructive modes of the postmodern historiographicmetafiction is the potential of recuperating the culture-specific context of the colonized. Slemon argues that postcolonial writing adopts a parodic repetition of the imperial forms of textuality, but unlike postmodern fiction, postcolonial works remain basically oppositional and retain a “referential” or “recuperative” relationship to local culture (Slemon, 7-9). Postcolonial metafiction can thus be defined as that self-conscious fiction that has a dual agenda of contesting and deconstructing colonial textuality and stereotypes and simultaneously recuperating and reconstructing native agency and language. Thus, one can observe that the novelist’s engagement with history throughout the world in twentieth and twenty first centuries was not the same, as it was in the previous centuries.

Having established the history – fiction nexus as an innate quality of the postmodern novels, let us examine whether the Postmodern Indian English fiction writers have a different set of purpose to rewrite history and myth. Unlike the western postmodern writers for Indian English postmodern writers re-presenting and re-writing Indian history and mythology has become very important as it would allow them to review the received meanings and aesthetics, to deconstruct the ‘legitimized’ knowledge structures and to ‘problematize’ the national and personal identity. One may ask ‘whose history’ or ‘which version of history’ do the Indian English fiction writers re-present or re-write? Another important question may be why they should do so. To them, history as a narrative is not merely an imaginative portrayal of the

epistemological knowledge and the empirical realities of India vis-à-vis nation, narration and identity.

The Indians under imperialism were forced to learn their history written by their masters as metanarratives to suit the requirements of the colonizers. The colonial historians wrote the history of the colonized people in a manner that they could serve the interests of the colonial masters. The best example is the much publicized notion of 'Whiteman's burden'. As an answer to this claim, in colonies the novelists started to use history in fiction to rouse the nationalistic feelings among their brothers and to revive the glory of their own history, culture and heritage which obviously according to them was far better than the colonial masters' and thus pleading their countrymen to realize their right to and fitness for self-rule. In a way their writings supplemented the nationalist movements' efforts in their struggle against their colonial masters. This was quiet evident in the case of India. To them rewriting history is also a way of dissenting all forms of oppression and marginalization of the common man. Basically Indian English writers found the necessity to rewrite their past against the grandnarratives of historians where certain events and classes were neither not given enough importance nor were mentioned. They were sure that the histories written by the historians had been manufactured to promote a desired view of the past.

T.N.Dhar observes that "In the hands of novelists the past takes different shapes and for different reasons. History can be romanticized, sensationalized, interrogated, and problematized" (Dhar 27). For the postmodern writers the deconstruction of all the structures created by both the colonial masters and religious bigots has become necessary as they profess hegemony of their respective groups. A.K. Warder, a reputed scholar of Indology argues that the most important thing concerning Indian historiography was the encroachment of *kavya*(literature) on the field of *itihasa*(historical writing), the substitution of aesthetic truth for historical truth in presenting history. The puranas promoted purposive, goal-oriented knowledge for building and glorifying the patron's character. In the same manner the colonial masters engaged imperial historians who attempted recreations of India's past and narrated several accounts of India's past with a specific object of justifying British rule in India. After independence, the country witnessed great rifts among the historians who formed into different groups.

One includes the 'imperialists, the Marxists along with the sub-class of Pseudo-secularists, and finally the Muslims communists': their 'widely different strands' get combined their 'denigration of Indian tradition'. The other group includes 'the nationalists and the Hindu communalists' who 'romanticize Indian tradition'. The third set includes those historians who try to rise above the vitiating atmosphere and struggle to strike a new path 'to write objective history with a cruel awareness of the inevitable subjective element in it' ( Devahuti x).

Indian English novelist's use of history in postcolonial fiction subsumes several theoretical, epistemological and narrative questions of political importance. The major questions to be answered are - 'what does history mean to the postcolonial?' 'Where does the postcolonial writer seek his/her history?' 'How does a retrieval of history occur?' 'Is such retrieval desirable?' One more important issue to be considered is whether postcolonial novel also effects its own marginalization of other histories in its representation.

The most important question is about the postmodern/ postcolonial Indian English writer's borrowing of tradition and history as his/her theme. These are the generations, whether in India or in the diaspora, born under an Indian sun and speak with a confident individualistic voice which is no more imitative of the British model or apologetic about writing in English. These are the generation that grew up on western comics, KFC food and have modern western education which lays little emphasis on the knowledge of Indian culture and history. It would be surprising when these writers attempt to resurrect myth and revive grandmother's storytelling recipe and rewrite the epics, fables, and legends from the Indian Kavya tradition. This urge of rewriting of the Postcolonial/postmodern Indian English novelists demands an analysis of those complex psychological forces that drive them to flout their separate identity i.e. 'otherness'. Let us examine whether the Postmodern/postcolonial Indian English fiction writers have a different set of reasons to rewrite history and myth.

The first reason is even after achieving their independence the native writers feel the urge to glorify their native culture "as the incongruity of the superimposed structures comes home to the colonial mind, the need for re-opening a dialogue with the forgotten past assumes a compelling urgency" (Roy, 384). In the first flush of decolonization, the native intellectual tries to challenge imperialist hegemony by creating indigenous arts and in the process he ironically borrows the colonizers techniques and seizes on an aspect of his culture that consists of 'mummified fragments' (Fanon, 180). Secondly, he needs to be at once local and global to avoid the threat of being swallowed by faceless globalization. Helen Tiffin notes that by refusing, realigning, deconstructing the 'master narratives' of western history, by interrogating its tropes as well as its content, postcolonial writers have been and are recapturing notions of self from 'other' and investigating that destructive binarism itself.

Thus postcolonial Indian English novelist essentially should be cosmopolitan and eclectic, globally popular and multicultural, yet drawing strongly on native sources. As the writer's drawing on local materials for authenticity's sake is often tangled with the personal search for roots, reminds him the old issue of what it means to be a colonial. Thus the postcolonial / postmodern Indian English novelist tries to cling to a stable reality in a nihilist world by recreating a native atmosphere. Be it Rushdie's tales of fabulous mansions where uncles, aunts, father, mother, nephews, nieces, co-exist or Ghosh's ramblings on the lineage of great grandmothers – they are not merely authentic touches of local history. The documentation details of eastern existence from chutney and pickle making in *Midnight's Children* or jamdani weaving in *The Circle of Reason* or to Parsi food habits in *Such A Long Journey* stems from the liberated colonial's consciousness. Even a motif like western daffodil is replaced by the very Indian Jasmine. To them, history as a narrative is not merely an imaginative portrayal of the epistemological knowledge and the empirical realities of India vis-à-vis nation, narration and identity. Further, to them rewriting history is also a way to dissenting all forms (religious, political and social) of oppression and marginalization of the common man.

Representation of history in the recent Indian English fiction could also be viewed as representations of the 'inner history' (personal histories of common man as against the national history) of human lives that provide an entry into the aesthetic, moral and spiritual perceptions and conceptions of the world. Engagement with history in fiction involves interpretation of the history of lives and relationships – national, institutional, family, gender and personal. In the recent Indian fiction the reviewing of the long accepted traditions and aesthetics, the



deconstruction of cultural and social identities became so very meaningful. The reinterpretation of orthodox views on evidence and motivations surrounding a historical event and the legitimate scholastic re-examination of existing knowledge about a historical event is termed as “historical revisionism”. Re-presenting and reinterpretation of history implies deconstruction and decolonization of ‘the mind’ in terms of de-learning and re-learning of the past events. It provides a scope for looking at the older texts with fresh understanding and for appreciating ‘silenced perspectives’ such as the stories of the subaltern and the marginalized. Postmodern Indian English writers such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Githa Hariharan, Nayanatara Sehgal and Manjupapoor have consistently shown their interest in and awareness of history and have used it differently in their novels.

The 1980s for Indian English Writing have marked what Edward Said has called the second stage of postcolonialism (Said, 252-53). According to Nilufer E. Bharucha “most decolonized societies go through two stages – in the first, the focus is on the assertion of political sovereignty. In the second stage, with political sovereignty having become a ‘given’ and established fact, decolonized societies generally turn to “the charting of cultural territory” (Bharucha, 357). The charting of cultural territory involves a repossession of history and its politicization, a remapping at the level of the art, culture and literature. An awareness of differences such as of ethnicity, religion, region or gender springs up and a specific language/voice evolves through which those marginalized by colonial discourse can truly speak. Thus novels written in the second stage of decolonization in India generally offer resistance to the hegemony of master narratives or grand narratives produced either by the colonial masters or by the dominant classes of native society.

The Postmodern/Postcolonial Indian English writers can justify their need to rewrite history and myth quite profitably under the following three distinct heads – a) Political / Ideological Discourse b) Feminist Discourse and c) Ethno-Religious/ Minority Discourse (In India this includes the dalit literature). In the following discourse I have chosen Shashi Tharoor and Nayanatara Sehgal for the first category, Githa Hariharan for the second category and Mahaswethadevi and Narendra Jadhav for the third category.

Politics, ideology and dialectical dilemmas are highlighted by Nayanatara Sehgal and Shashi Tharoor. Sehgal’s texts seem to be overtly ideological and extremely critical of the political masters of postcolonial India. *Rich Like Us* (1987) deals with the period of the Emergency in India in the mid-1970s, when Indira Gandhi suspended the Indian Constitution and assumed extraordinary powers. Sonali, one of the main characters of the novel and an IAS officer, thus representing the core of democratic government, and her illness in the text symbolically portrays of the grave dangers to the very basics of democracy in India. During Emergency, the State machinery began to re-write history in the mode of all totalizing systems, whether colonial, communist or fascist. Sehgal constantly decenters her own version of history and politics by offering different meanings of these terms through several narrative voices.

Shashi Tharoor employed rewriting the great Indian epic *The Mahabharata* as it enabled him to merge myths, fairy tales, legends and contemporary realities into a single component. The *Mahabharata* provides him a suitable allegorical background to represent modern India’s political history. By adopting/adapting the structure of the epic, Tharoor sets up a perspective which connects not only the narrative but the very notions of history, fiction, and narrativisation with ancient and resilient Indian traditions. He dexterously embeds the freedom struggle and

post-independent Indian political history with the characters and events of *Mahabharata*. Shashi Tharoor delineates the relevance of the ancient India's epic in the postmodern context through the narrative. He asserts,

It is precisely the epic's appeal to non-Sanskrit scholars that has ensured the Mahabharata's present day relevance and given me material for my novel...I found *Mahabharata* the perfect vehicle for an attempt to retell the political history of twentieth century India, through a fictional recasting of its events, episodes and characters (The Hindu).

For the women writers rewriting history means substantiating their growing status in twenty first century by deconstructing all the old scriptures of patriarchal dominance which were the source of their inferior status. Adrienne Rich's powerful pronouncement about women's writing describing it as Re-vision fits the very cause of Indian women writers of postmodern period and their need to retell history in their works. Re-vision "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for us [women] more than a chapter in critical history: it is an act of survival (Rich, 18). This fact has been the main agenda for postmodern Indian women writers and all the institutions namely social, political, cultural, economic and religious have come in for a critical re-vision in women's writing. Under this program as was observed by C. Vijayasree,

Re-vision no longer remained simple "looking back" nor did it entail a mere "act of survival" but it gradually evolved into a re-visionist remaking of the past and re-invention of a new tradition so much so that it turned into an act of creation, transcreation (Vijayasree, 177).

As a result of this re-making old stories came to be retold in different ways from gynocentric perspectives and the traditional figures of patriarchal mythology such as Rama, Manu, Vyasa and the authors of epics and puranas have been re-invented demolishing the cultural stereotypes popularized and patronized by the patriarchal set up. Such re-visionist myth-making has been one of the strategies of emancipation employed effectively in the cause of women's liberation. Incidentally these women authors did not reject the tradition, rather they began to reclaim a new lineage and forged a gynocentric heritage. Rich says "We need to know the writing of the past and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (Rich, 19).

Githa Hariharan novel *When Dreams Travel* is a fine example for the Indian women writers' urge to rewrite myth. Hariharan's purpose is to de-construct both misogynous and colonial stereotypes projected in various translated versions of the original through her re-writing. Her motive in rewriting the age old text is to deconstruct the colonial image that was carried throughout the western versions of *The Arabian Nights*. By re-writing Shahrzad's story from a feminist angle, Hariharan imposes on the reader a whole re-thinking of the hatred for women so obvious in the famous translations of the medieval Arab anthologies. Hariharan is not only "answering back" to a misogynous literary tradition but she is also deconstructing and eroding the sexist impact of the original. This revised version of Shahrzad by Hariharan as woman warrior, who played the role of a strategist, psychotherapist, saviour, leader, lends the novel the Postmodernist quality. Unlike the western authors, artists and movie makers who reconstructed 'Scheherazade', her original name, as a siren, seductress, who is all body and

voluptuousness, Hariharan's 'Shahrazad', the semantic name, is a strategist. "She had to master three strategic skills: control over a vast store of information, the ability to clearly grasp the criminal's mind and the determination to act in cold blood. The first skill is intellectual, she has to know reams of poetry, the sayings of the wise, and improvise a great deal in terms of content as well as narrative device. But knowledge alone could not have helped her. She had also to draw on some more psychological talents that would change the criminal's mind by using words alone, something like the highly trained specialist who speaks to the anti-social person holding a hostage." (Column in *The Telegraph*). By deconstructing the most popular image of Shaharzade in a quite different form Hariharan achieves the true purpose of rewriting. In her first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*, the reader can find a thread of revisionist myth-making as a means to heal the wounds of one's soul as a process of net-working among the women of different ages and generations, an attempt at renewing the whole community of women through representation of myths. This text presents us with three women whose different and yet similar stories cut across generations and cross barriers of caste and class in a case of classic female bonding. The young, upper class, western educated Devi, her middle-aged but educated mother Sita and the lower-caste servant woman, Mayamma, have to contend with the same restrictive rules of patriarchy. The paternalistic laws of Manu, the ancient Indian sage, run like a disturbing thread throughout the text and give female subordination the legitimacy of religious dogma. If Manu speaks of female subordination, the grandmother's discourse revamps the old versions of mythical women and glorifies strong, rebellious and above all angry women like Draupadi and Amba from the *Mahabharata*. Hariharan attempts to rewrite the standard version of these otherwise virtuous women as rebels.

Finally for the writers who champion the cause of marginalized and subaltern classes, rewriting history is an act of questioning the hegemony of the so called superior classes and a corrective measure by erasing the manipulated and distorted versions of the privileged classes.

It is often said that what was Gandhi to Indian freedom struggle, was Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to the Dalit renaissance, which ran as an integrated part of Indian freedom struggle. Ambedkar has a prominent place among the most distinguished thinkers in modern India. Apart from his part in drafting the Constitution of free India, he played a crucial and pioneering role in organizing 'lower caste' Indians into a community seeking emancipation and equality. By combining the teachings of Buddha and Karl Marx in his message to the deprived classes in Indian society, he provided a sense of self-hood to the 'untouchables'.

It is interesting to note that in most of the literatures of India, including Indian English writing, the Dalit cause was initially articulated with ferocity and sincerity by a few "Savarnas" (upper class Hindus). This could be appropriated as a natural response by those educated and rational minds free from parochial concerns and prejudices, and who could empathize with the Dalits and felt the need to protest the canonized history. The non-dalit writers like Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, PadminiSengupta, Tara Shankar Bandopadhyay, GopinathMohantyy, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Mahaswetha Devi, ParashuramMund, RajendraAwasthi, Shashi Deshpande, Pratibha Roy, Arundhati Roy and so on have exposed the travails of dalits and their history in their novels. These writers exploited a variety of themes and are identified with the various strata of the society. *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand is perhaps the first major fictional representation of the dalit / untouchable issue in Indian English Writing. However, there was a visible difference in the treatment of subject matter between a dalit writer and a non-dalit writer.



Dalit writers had a forceful attempt in constructing the social history of "ahistorical" people, whose struggles were not recorded in the so-called history texts. In words of dalit writers, they have to dig more to unravel the past as well as to bury the constructed history of the dominant social groups. In the process of writing their own history, they thoroughly interrogated the existing histories of dominant caste/class groups in their literary writings. Their novels are much more realistic and political in nature to overturn the hierarchy. Ideologically, they declared uncompromising war against brahminism /upper caste social and literary hegemony. At the same time, they are critical about other alternative political streams. Dalit novel is a culminating point of all these discourses that internalized all the arguments from the perceptions of gender, class, region and sub-caste.

In fact, Dalit life has found its highest expression in folk songs and other mass performative arts like street/stage plays. Most of their literature is in oral tradition. However, only in post independent period, considerable number of dalits got access to education, therefore were late to enter into the print mode. This gave the way to enter into the literary modes of dominant social groups. It took almost hundred years for dalits to enter into the literary genre of novel writing.

The postmodern Indian English Novelists were not totally blind to the subaltern issues though they did not use them as their main themes. The portrayals of the dalit / subaltern characters run as parallel / sub topics. These characters do question and oppose the hegemony of the upper classes and dogmatic traditions and make an effort to rewrite the myth and history. Ekalavya, the tribal youth in the Mahabharata, has emerged as a poignant metaphor for the injustice met out to the downtrodden by the savarnas. In Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* Ekalavya is portrayed as a defiant and aggressive character. After proving his worth to the Guru and the princes, Ekalavya is asked by Drona to chop off his right thumb and offer it to him as his guru-dakshina. In the Mahabharata, Ekalavya complies with the guru's demand, but Tharoor's Ekalavya does not do so. He raises his voice against discrimination and power politics and refuses to concede to the irrational and prejudiced demand of his Brahmin guru.

Though the dalit literature today comprises the work of both dalit writers and non-dalit writers, yet a keen observer can find a slight difference between these two categories when they chose their modes of representation. While the non-dalits handle the themes, their purpose is to throw light on the atrocities of the higher castes, the wretched conditions of the dalit and their attempt to question the authority and so on. In the process the writers attempt to rewrite the history and myth from the dalits' point of view and thus practice the postmodern technique 'historical revisionism'. Most of the non-dalit writers wrote their fiction in regional Indian languages. Thus the most powerful dalit expression is often found in the translations of these works.

At the same Dalit literature by dalit writers focuses on the questions of otherness, difference, marginality, canon and the categories of aesthetics. In order to voice the protest of the marginalized, the Dalit literature often follows the subversive historiographic path of personalizing history. It is therefore, perhaps, that autobiography is the most potent and often exercised form of fiction produced in Dalit literature. If long entrenched social discrimination separates history from its original twin, fiction, Dalit literature seeks to revert to the primal unity between fiction and history. This is one of the reasons that the present research analyses one such powerful autobiography by Narendra Jadhav for the Dalits' urge to rewrite the Indian history and

myth. NarendraJadhav's *Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Escape from India's Caste System* offers a powerful narration of the plight of the untouchables in free India. It is a worthwhile chronicle of a historic battle against oppression. The novel opens with these remarks:

Every sixth human being in the world today is an Indian, and every sixth Indian is an erstwhile untouchable, a Dalit. Today there are 165 million Dalits...suffer under India's 3,500-year-old caste system, which remains a stigma on humanity. (Jadhav, 1).

Jadhav's *Untouchables* is a manifold personalized saga of the social transformation of Dalits in India. At one level, it is a loving tribute from a son to his father, at another, it gives an intelligent appraisal of the caste system in India and traces the story of the awakening of Dalits traversing three generation. At yet another level, it is reflective of the aspirations of millions of Dalits in India.

'*Untouchables*' is a story of one Dalit (untouchable) family's struggle, inspired by Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar who touched the lives of millions of Dalits. Damu (Damodar) Runjaji Jadhav was just one of them. The author's father, Damu was an ordinary man who did an extraordinary thing. He stood up against the oppression of the caste system by teaching his children to believe in themselves and reclaim their human dignity. Damu's response to Ambedkar's call to Dalits to "Educate, Unite and Agitate" is too complete and all-consuming to allow him to live in the past bearing the caste Hindus injustices.

Damu comes to Mumbai to escape the tyranny of the upper castes in his native village Ozar, in Nashik District of Maharashtra. His struggle for survival and his transformation under the guidance of Dr. Ambedkar, from servility to awakened self-consciousness, is the main theme of this book. Damu was not a born leader, nor did he ever become one. But he had one exception, he chose to rebel against the prevailing caste system to create his own destiny. An intelligent man, with no formal education, he worked hard to be allowed to live with dignity. Damu is abused and severely beaten up by upper-caste people in his village, for refusing to take out a putrefied body from a well. His forefathers were required to wear clay-pots around their necks to keep their spit from polluting the ground, and brooms were tied to their rumps to obliterate their footprints as they walked. The simplicity of the narrative brings out the misery in the story and triumph of the Damu's family describing various landmarks like, a radical transformation in Damu and his family under the spell of Dr. Ambedkar, their sloughing off of servility and realization of their self-esteem and finally their empowerment through education.

NarendraJadhav's *Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Escape from India's Caste System* is selected for analysis as Damu's story differs from those Indian Dalit autobiographies which revisit and relieve the horrors of untouchability without going beyond, whereas Narendra Jadhav represents a part of an awakened and educated Dalit community, focusing on his community's past, which is not found in written histories. In the process of unearthing the hidden histories of a Dalit community, *Untouchables* focuses on the Dalits struggle to find a way out of their suffocated lives under the caste ridden social system.

In fine, one can say that as long as rewriting strategies in postmodern and postcolonial literature draw our attention to the potential of debunking the hegemonies of privileged classes, they do have a value and continue to attract the attention of the critiques. These rewritings tickle

the imagination of the postmodern writers and force the readers to examine and force certain paradigm shifts.

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