



**From Margins to Assertion: Exploring Dalit Experience and the
Transformative Power of Dalit Literature in Shaping Collective
Consciousness**

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Abstract:

This paper examines the condition of the weaker sections of society, particularly Dalits. Besides this, the paper studies the transformation of Dalit literature into a potent mechanism for voicing the lived realities concerning oppression, resistance, and identity of subaltern groups in India. Through a close reading of selected Dalit autobiographies and literary texts, the study reveals that these narratives serve to record systemic discrimination on caste lines, to awaken consciousness of self-assertion, and to effect socio-political change. The paper also highlights the multiple obstacles and humiliation faced by them (Dalits). Drawing on recent cases of caste-related violence, this study questions imposed social norms and calls for a more inclusive society and a reduction in rising caste-based violence. This paper offers critical insights that stimulate intellectual engagement and encourage readers, critics, and scholars to work toward a just and egalitarian society in which every individual is respected as a human being. Furthermore, it foregrounds Dalit voices and demands serious attention from the readers, critics, academicians, and researchers and all those who empathize with Dalits and the Fourth World cause.

Keywords: Dalit, social exclusion, violence, oppression, resistance, collective consciousness.

Introduction

“Kuan Thakur ka

Paani Thakur ke

Khet-khalihan Thakur ke

Gali-Muhalle Thakur ke

Phir Apna kya?

Gaon?

Sheher?

Desh?”

“The well is the Thakur’s.

Water the Thakur’s

The fields are the Thakur’s.

The streets are the Thakur’s.

Then what is ours?

Village?

City?

The country?”

(SabrangIndia)

In 1932, Premchand published *Thakur Ka Kuan*, and in 1981, Omprakash Valmiki wrote a poem titled *Thakur Ka Kuan*, sharing the same title. This demonstrates that society has not undergone any significant change in its treatment of Dalits. The writer Omprakash Valmiki, in *Thakur Ka Kuan*, highlights Dalit oppression and an entrenched unjust social system. This poem raises a soul-piercing question: what is left for Dalits to own and access?

Even after 78 years of independence, India has not achieved social equality despite the existence of numerous constitutional protections and affirmative measures. It is deeply troubling to witness reports of caste-motivated killings, rapes, and atrocities committed against Dalits. Such inhuman practices remain a blot on humanity and pose a serious threat to the nation's internal security. Although untouchability has been abolished by law, it continues to be widely practised in many parts of the country, affecting the daily lives of Dalits. The NGOs which claim to be working for the upliftment of the Dalit community do not seem to be free from caste bias. Even today also, Dalits are fighting for basic rights such as education, healthcare, and employment. Starvation deaths among Dalits still occur in parts of India today. This is the harsh reality. Snatching bread from the jaws of a dog by Manoranjan Byapari, a celebrated Bengali Dalit writer, to satiate the hunger is enough to show the exploitation of Dalits. Manoranjan Byapari recounts this shameful incident on page 77 of his acclaimed autobiography, *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit*. Another deeply disturbing instance is the case of a 19-year-old Dalit girl from Hathras, who was gang-raped on 14 September 2020 and subsequently succumbed to her injuries on 29 September 2020. Her tongue was severed, and her spine broken down by upper-caste Hindus. The brutality inflicted upon her exposes the entrenched nexus of caste and gender-based violence perpetrated by dominant-caste men. Ironically, when Valmiki passed away, not a

single woman leader belonging to the ruling party came out to condemn this heinous incident. Reflecting on this disparity, the renowned Dalit feminist writer Pradnya Daya Pawar, in a social media post, poignantly questioned: “Where is that India that collectively stood up for Nirbhaya? Will that India stand up and raise its voice for this Dalit girl... to get justice?” Mainstream feminism, with its focus on issues like workplace discrimination and reproductive rights, often overlooks the lived realities of Dalit women, who are fighting battles on multiple fronts, Yashica Dutt, an Indian writer and journalist observes this in *Coming Out As Dalit*. They experience both caste and gender-based oppression simultaneously, a condition that theorists describe as “double marginalisation.” In terms of caste, they are systematically confined to severe poverty and subjected to persistent exploitation marked by exclusion and discrimination. Simultaneously, as women, they endure a deeply dehumanizing existence in which multiple aspects of their identity and dignity are continually eroded.

Dalits continue to be exploited in their own soil. Police personnel are often slow to register their complaints, investigations remain tardy, and authorities frequently appear to side with dominant castes. In today’s times, the system of oppression has shifted from khet, kuan and talab to corporate sectors, universities, media, and judiciary. Laws aimed at eliminating exploitative labour practices—such as the Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993, the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Service Conditions) Act, 1979, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, and the Karnataka Devadasi (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1992—and their associated rehabilitation programs, have proven largely ineffective. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to state that a significant portion of the Dalit population continues to live in a state of hopelessness and insecurity. Dalits continue to face segregation in

residence, education, and public service. They are deprived of land ownership, compelled to work in humiliating environments, and regularly abused by police personnel and members of the upper caste who enjoy state protection. They face oppression not only from upper-caste and upper-class individuals but also from state institutions such as the police, judiciary, and bureaucracy, as well as from religious entities. In *Karukku*, Bama vividly describes the brutal police violence experienced by her community following an intra-caste riot. Due to their poverty, they were unable to pay off the police, which led to the officers, armed with batons, pursuing, and mercilessly beating the men of her community before arresting them. The portrayal of a deteriorating, oppressive society is etched in the mind as Bama describes the fear in striking detail. Quoting from the text, “That night, nobody could sleep. All through the night the police prowled round and round our streets. There was no sound at all, except the sound of the policemen’s boots and the barking of the dogs. Each step felt as if the boot was treading on my chest and pressing down” (Bama 32).

Theoretical Framework

This study employs an interdisciplinary theoretical framework drawing upon Subaltern Studies, Trauma Studies, and Critical Caste Theory to examine the intersection of caste-based oppression, historical marginalisation, and lived trauma in Dalit autobiographies. These frameworks enable a critical understanding of how marginalised subjects articulate their experiences within structures of exclusion and violence. Furthermore, the study positions Dalit autobiographical narratives as sites of resistance that not only challenge hegemonic discourses but also contribute to the formation of collective consciousness and processes of social awakening among oppressed communities.

Methodology:

This study follows a qualitative research method, which is an analysis and in-depth study of the selected text and its writers. Primary texts include autobiographies such as *Interrogating My Chandal Life* by Manoranjan Byapari, *Coming Out As Dalit* by Yashica Dutt, *Karakku* by Bama, *The Outcaste* by Sharankumar Limbale and *Joothan* by Omprakash Valmiki. Scholarly articles, books, journals, and reports on Dalit Studies are selected to provide first-hand narratives and lived experiences, which are central to understanding caste-based atrocities, resistance, assertion, and Dalit consciousness. Secondary sources include books, journals, research articles and related research available on websites. This study uses an interpretative and critical approach to analyse Dalit literary texts. It focuses on how personal narratives reflect lived experiences and contribute to the development of a shared social and political identity among Dalits. Through close reading of texts, the study seeks to explore the plight of Dalits in modern India and the transformative role of Dalit literature in creating awareness, resistance, and collective consciousness.

Discussion

Modern India is shackled by the chains of an ancient, oppressive social order. To build an inclusive society, India must confront its past, challenge its present, and imagine a society rooted not in hierarchy, but in justice, dignity, and equality. Consciousness of Freedom among India's Untouchables by James M. Freeman said that the Dalits are "the world's most oppressed minorities." Dalits also face extreme sexual violence because they are powerless. Dalits are treated worse than animals. They are the most detested community. Even today, practices of social exclusion and segregation persist in the country, while reports of extreme caste-based discrimination against Dalit communities continue to emerge periodically. At times, mainstream media fails to adequately report atrocities committed upon them. In Kerala, for instance, a Dalit

woman was subjected to prolonged sexual exploitation over several years; however, the case did not receive significant public attention, due to the victim's caste location. In contrast, the media extensively covered the R. G. Kar Medical College rape case, revealing a pattern of selective visibility. Such disparities underscore how Dalit bodies are often constructed as sites of exploitation within dominant socio-cultural narratives. Even today, members of the Scheduled Castes continue to face entrenched caste prejudice and systemic violence. Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show a steady rise in crimes against Dalits. Reports suggest that, on average, two Dalit homes are set ablaze, three Dalit women are sexually assaulted, two Dalits are murdered, and two Dalits are beaten every hour (Sarim 7). Dominant-caste groups employ practices such as public stripping, gang rape, and other forms of sexual violence as instruments to assert and reinforce their social dominance. Sharankumar Limbale, in his autobiography *The Outcaste*, writes: "Every time the dominant classes attack and exploit the weak, they violate their women." In the text, the Patils uphold the ideology of untouchability; however, this notion of ritual purity collapses when it comes to the sexual exploitation of Dalit women. As Limbale further notes: "The Patils in every village have made whores of the wives of the Dalit farm labourers. A poor Dalit girl on attaining puberty has invariably been a victim of their lust. There is a whole breed born to adulterous Patils. There are Dalit families that survive by pleasing the Patils sexually. The whole village considers such a house as the house of the Patil's whore. Even the children born to her from her husband are considered the children of a Patil. Besides survival on the charity of a Patil what else can such a household expect (Limbale 38)." In this autobiography, he jots down all the traumatic incidents that happened in his life. He expresses his agony and the difficulties of being a man of mixed blood. There is an identity crisis and an inferiority complex as he was

stamped as a half-caste. His father was an upper-caste, and his mother was a lower caste. As he writes,

“Why did my mother say yes to the rape which brought me into the world? Why did she put up with the fruits of this illegitimate intercourse for 9 months? Why did she allow this bitter embryo to grow? How many eyes must have humiliated her because they considered her as a whore? Did anyone admire me affectionately? Which family would claim me as its descendant? Whose son am I, really?” (Limbale 37)

Despite legal protections, they are facing extreme discrimination. At least twenty sanitation workers died in sewers between February and May 2025 alone while cleaning sewers and septic tanks. Ironically, these incidents took place just days after a January 29, 2025, Supreme Court judgment, which firmly prohibited the dangerous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks in urban cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and many more. We are living in the 21st century. Nevertheless, the police have to provide protection to a Dalit groom so that he can ride a horse to the bride’s house. Instances such as a school principal forcing Dalit students to clean toilets, a schoolteacher humiliating a minor boy for his caste identity, the body of a Dalit girl being found hanging from a tree, a Dalit man being killed for owning a horse, and a Dalit groom being assaulted for riding a horse are not uncommon. Crimes against Dalits are rising under the present government. The current government’s decision to introduce a 10 percent quota for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) has been critiqued as undermining the constitutional principles of affirmative action. Manoranjan Byapari, author of *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit* and recipient of the The Hindu Prize for non-fiction in 2018, in an interview questions the eligibility criteria, noting that many Dalits survive on extremely low daily wages. In contrast, the inclusion of individuals with annual incomes up to eight lakh rupees within

the category of the “economically weaker” raises serious concerns about the conceptualization of poverty and makes a mockery of the immense poverty. The EWS reservation aims to dilute the affirmative action policies for deprived sections.

It is worth mentioning that so far, the Central and State Governments, except for the political reservation under Articles 330 and 332, have not filled the assigned quotas for the employment of Dalits as per Article 335 of the Constitution. Also, the ‘Not Found Suitable’ mechanism is employed to keep them away from education and leadership. Authorities deliberately declare eligible candidates unsuitable. This is new manuvaad. NFS is an attack on the Constitution.

Education – It is believed that if a Dalit becomes educated, he will live a respectable life. This, however, is not true. Even after occupying the highest office of the land, President K.R. Narayan’s untouchable status reached France even before he reached there. To escape from the cyclic oppression, many Dalit men and women have converted into another religion to achieve liberation. Caste pride and superiority have been produced to maintain the hegemonic system. According to the UGC, complaints of caste-based discrimination rose by 118 % in universities and colleges.

The literacy rate for Dalits in India is 66.1%, according to 2011 census. The system systematically denies Dalits access to education. Up until 2011, Dalit students accounted for over 80% of all student suicides at IITs (Dutt 77). Dalit students often face exclusion, alienation and bullying, and dropout rates remain high. Yashica Dutt’s *Coming Out as Dalit* highlights caste-based discrimination in India’s higher education institutions. Rohith Vemula, a research scholar at Hyderabad University, killed himself inside the campus and left a suicide note. The contents of the letter show that he was upset over the relentless caste-based persecution at the university. Rohith’s death was an institutional murder. Dalit writers such as Omprakash Valmiki, Bama, Babytai Kamble, and Sharankumar Limbale, through their personal experiences, illustrate how

teachers, rather than serving as sources of knowledge and encouragement, often reinforce caste hierarchies. In their autobiographies, these writers reveal the role of teachers as gatekeepers of caste privilege rather than as impartial educators. They recount being subjected to ill-treatment, including physical abuse and verbal humiliation, instead of being provided with a nurturing and supportive educational environment. *Joothan*, a canonical Dalit literary text, shows how teachers reinforce caste discrimination. In school, Valmiki had to face discrimination and discouragement, “Whenever I asked questions to my teachers, I was punished, they beat me up, gave me lower marks in the examinations” (Valmiki 71).

The Outcaste also highlighted the segregation endured by the Dalits in the sphere of education. Sharankumar Limbale recounts his experience of segregated seating arrangements for Dalit and upper-caste students within the school. He further notes the teachers’ proximity to upper-caste pupils and their marked distance from Dalit students. Limbale also depicts the menial tasks assigned to Dalit students, who were compelled to sweep floors and apply cow dung paste to the walls and floors. Limbale talked about his unpleasant experience of being made to sit at the Marwari mansion’s door while members of the upper caste are permitted to sit on the platform.

“In this society, if you are born into a low caste, you are forced to live a life of humiliation and degradation until your death. Even after death, caste difference does not disappear. Wherever you look, however much you study, whatever you take up, caste discrimination stalks us in every nook and corner and drives us into a frenzy” (Bama 35).

Because of the efforts of Dalit writers, poets, and organizations such as the Dalit Panthers, Dalit Mahasabha, and Dalit Sangharsha Samiti, the idea of social equality gradually began to take root in India. Dalit consciousness, as envisioned by B.R. Ambedkar and carried forward by Dalit writers, stems from a shared understanding of oppression and a united struggle for dignity,

equality, and liberation. Critics have called Dalit autobiographies ‘narratives of pain.’ One thing to keep in mind is that shared pain binds the community together. It is different from mainstream literature because it advocates the rights of the Dalit community and inspires people to fight against injustice, humiliation, and oppression.

Through poetry, autobiographies and memoirs, Dalit writers challenge dominant caste narratives and the hegemonic system. Dalit writers rejected all role models, traditional literature, Eastern and Western critical theories and decided to create a literature of their own (Hemalatha 29). Omprakash Valmiki, the author of *Joothan*, argues that Dalit literature has recuperated stigmatized figures such as Eklavya, Karna, and Shambuk from ancient epics and reconstituted them as heroic symbols. Dalit writers frequently invoke such figures—along with Gautama Buddha and B. R. Ambedkar—to articulate a collective demand for respect, dignity, and equality within a casteist social order.

Dalit Literature festival, Dalit Sahitya Academy, Dalit Panther Movement, the Menstrual Justice Movement spearheaded by Dalit activists such as Deepthi Sukumar and Nagamma, compensation for intellectual property loss under the SC/ST act, Digital activism, Bhanwari Devi’s case, Manoranjan Byapari’s activism, etc., are enough to show Dalit assertion. This assertion is evident in art as well. Godna painting in Madhubani, practised by Dusadh women, is an act of resistance against the dominant tradition of Mithila painting by upper-caste women. These examples are valid and powerful indicators of Dalit assertion across cultural, legal, and political domains.

Role of Dalit Literature in fostering identity and solidarity:

Dalit consciousness is a state of mind wherein people strive to dismantle structures of oppression and marginalisation. The political consciousness among Dalits derives from the thought and

ideology of B. R. Ambedkar, as well as from the contributions of numerous writers, activists, and reformers who, in various ways, have fostered the expansion of Dalit consciousness. Dalit literature refers to literature written by Dalits about their experiences of marginalisation. As Sharankumar Limbale defines and elaborates on the functions of Dalit Literature: “By Dalit literature, I mean writing about Dalits by Dalit writers with a Dalit consciousness. The form of Dalit literature is inherent in its Dalitness, and its purpose is obvious; to inform Dalit society of its slavery and narrate its pain and suffering to upper caste Hindus” (Limbale 19). Dalit literature plays a crucial role in the development of Dalit consciousness since its main purpose involves narrating the collective experiences of the community. The same consciousness drives Dalit individuals to present a social challenge to current society regarding their identity and their freedom. After gaining recognition as an authentic literary field during the twentieth century, this literary tradition has come to include numerous committed authors who write extensively about their lived experiences across journals, books, pamphlets, and other literary forms. *Joothan*, a canonical text, challenges entrenched social and cultural hegemony. The author raises heart-piercing questions in the text. He asks why there is no value of hard work done by his community, why the Dalit community was never mentioned in any epic, and why no epic poet ever wrote a story about their lives. He also questions why Hindus are so intolerant of Dalits. These questions reflect the contradictions in the dominant society’s ideology and attitude. The text is replete with such challenging statements reflecting “a subject who has come to voice after centuries of enforced namelessness and voicelessness” (Valmiki, xxxvi). *Joothan* exhorts Dalits to encounter reality boldly as “change will not come about through running away. It will come about through struggle and engagement” (Valmiki 127).

Sharankumar Limbale, in his seminal work, argues that the rebellious nature of Dalit literature emerges from lived experience: “Rejection and revolt in Dalit literature have been birthed from the womb of Dalits pain. They are directed against an inhuman system that was imposed on them. Just as the anguish expressed in Dalit literature is a collective social voice, similarly, the rejection and revolt are social and collective. The Dalit consciousness in Dalit literature is the revolutionary mentality connected with struggle. It is a belief in rebellion against the caste system, recognising the human being as its focus. Dalit consciousness is an important seed for Dalit literature; it is separate and distinct from the consciousness of other writers. Dalit literature is unique because of this consciousness” (Limbale 31-32). The movement has expanded to such an extent that every university in India now includes Dalit texts in its curriculum. Moreover, academic interest in Dalit literature has acquired an international dimension, with these texts being taught in universities across the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and France. In June 2014, Britain’s Nottingham Trent University and Universite Paul-Valery Montpellier, France jointly initiated a study that seeks to bring Dalit literature to new audiences. A forthcoming course at New York University (NYU) titled ‘Aesthetics and Politics’ will feature a segment on Dalit literature as well. English translations like Omprakash Valmiki’s *Joothan* (2003), Narendra Jadhav’s *Untouchables* (2005) and Baby Kamble’s *The Prisons We Broke* (2009) have emerged as popular texts.

Dalit Literature fosters awareness, unity, and resistance. Dalit literature became an official term through its introduction at the initial Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha conference in 1958, hosted in Mumbai. The development of Dalit literature in Marathi owes its existence to Baburao Bagul, Namdeo Dhasal and Daya Pawar. Several modern Dalit texts have, in fact, contributed to fostering greater Dalit consciousness through autobiographies, novels, and short stories. Some of the remarkable examples are Om Prakash Valmiki’s *Joothan*, Vasant Moon’s *Growing up*

Untouchable in India, and Bama's *Karukku*, all of which consider the Dalit condition and their fight against caste-based discrimination. Dalit Literature promotes Dalit consciousness. Dalit Literature has emerged as a powerful tool for awakening Dalit consciousness, challenging the hegemonistic elitist structure of society, and advocating for a more just and egalitarian society. Writers like Omprakash Valmiki, Sharankumar Limbale, Babytai Kamble and Bama have used their narratives to challenge Brahmanvad and Manuvad. In their writings, they bitterly criticise the oppressive socio-political power dynamics and assert Dalit identity. Dalit writers use literature as an instrument of social change. Their literary works not only depict a Dalit's life but also act as a catalyst for change by influencing public discourse, policy-making and social attitudes. The impact of Dalit Literature cannot be described in words. Shahu Patole's book *Dalit Kitchens of Marathwada* was influenced by Dalit Literature. The book documents Dalit food habits and recipes and is a direct response to the exclusion of Dalit voices and experiences. Patole seeks to conserve and disseminate culinary traditions of the Mahar and Mang communities. This aligns with the broader aim of Dalit literature to assert Dalit identity and reclaim cultural ownership. Dalit Literature also plays a crucial role in preserving the glorious history of the Dalit community. For example, P. K. Rosy's significant contribution to Malayalam cinema was long hidden, but *The Lost Heroine* by Vinu Abraham helps keep her legacy alive.

Dalit Literature gives voice to the silenced and marginalised segments of society and reclaims dignity and agency for the Dalit community. The intersection of literature with activism has empowered the Dalits to challenge the status quo and demand justice. Dalit Literature is an essential force in the crusade against caste-based oppression. Dalit writers have faced opposition and criticism from orthodox pundits because Dalit writers see religion as a tool to oppress the marginalized sections of society. As Karl Marx aptly observed, "Religion is the opium of the

people.” Dalit Literature has helped to raise awareness of the social and political issues faced by Dalits and has contributed to a shift towards equality. Dalit writers use various literary forms, including poetry, short stories, essays, novels, and autobiographies, to express their personal stories and hardships. By presenting Dalit experiences, the literature challenges and defies social norms. These authors from the Dalit community bravely document their existence and help Dalits to develop a strong sense of self. Dalit writers have been steadily improving both Indian literature and Dalit literature through their recent contributions. The literature has attracted considerable attention from critics and reviewers at both national and international levels. Recent scholarly work by John C.B. Webster, Josiane Racine, Jean-Luc Racine, Dr Gail Omvedt, Eleanor Zelliot, Christophe Jaffrelot, and Indian scholars has brought significant attention to Dalit life experiences by delving deep into their lives. Dalit Literature promotes collective consciousness by helping Dalits to recognise and understand their shared history.

In *Joothan*, Valmiki writes: “We need an ongoing struggle and a consciousness of struggle, a consciousness that brings revolutionary change both in the outside world and in our hearts, a consciousness that leads the process of social change” (Valmiki 152). Arun Prabha Mukherjee, a Canadian scholar, states that these words inspired me as a reader who believes in the important role that literature might play in the ongoing project toward human liberation, and I hope that others will find some inspiration as well. The Dalit litterateurs believe that if the discriminative caste system is present, there can never be full freedom, brotherly sentiment and justice brought in the country. The lines below describe the fury and seething desire for revenge among the writers.

That some were high while others were low?

Well, all right, then this city deserved burying. Why did they call it the machine age?

Seems like the Stone Age in the twentieth century.

(‘You Wrote from Los Angeles,’ by Daya Pawar)

Impact of Dalit Literature on Society:

Dalit literature has played a pivotal role in fostering Dalit consciousness and mobilising socio-political movements. By presenting an unfiltered portrayal of caste oppression, these writings have challenged mainstream literature’s silence on caste and forced a re-evaluation of Indian social structures. A mini-revolution took place in recent years when three Dalit authors: Yashica Dutt, Sujatha Gidla, and Suraj Yengde published English-language books after reaching the US. Sujatha Gidla’s *Ants Among Elephants*, Yashica Dutt’s *Coming Out as Dalit*, and Suraj Yengde’s *Caste Matters* have significantly contributed in bringing the experiences of Dalits to a wider audience. The translation of Dalit literature into English and other languages has helped in bringing global attention to Dalit struggles. Dalit Literature is a catalyst for social change, shaping Dalit consciousness by providing a platform for self-expression, building a sense of community, challenging the caste system, and fostering a sense of agency and self-worth. For example, in *Interrogating My Chandal Life*, Manoranjan Byapari explains the glorious past of the Namashudra community. He is not ashamed of his Chandal identity; rather, he boasts of his identity.

Conclusion:

Delving into the Dalit reality using literature reveals the complex systems of caste oppression, social neglect, and exclusion which have, for ages, kept the Dalit people’s voices muted. Dalit consciousness was prevalent among the masses due to Dalit literature. Dalit literature has emerged as a powerful tool for voicing the experiences, struggles, and aspirations of the Dalit community. It serves as a form of artistic expression and a means for social justice, resistance, and

empowerment. Dalit Literature serve as agents of positive transition and envisions an egalitarian society. Through autobiographies, poems, and first-hand experience narratives, Dalit writers question dominant discourses and reshape the parameters of the Indian literary tradition. In this process, Dalit literature acts as a mechanism of social awakening by building Dalit consciousness, instilling value in cultural heritage, and mobilizing mass action toward justice and equality. It is both an account of trauma and a celebration of resilience, making it the focus of socio-political assertion of Dalit identity in present-day India.

Way Forward

Society cannot remove the strongly rooted caste spirit overnight. However, the following steps can help promote equality in a casteist society:

- The government should vigorously promote inter-caste marriages to eliminate caste-based discrimination. Vigorous promotion of inter-caste marriages will help in breaking caste barriers and will help in fostering social integration.
- People should not flaunt caste on cars, bikes, etc., and should not create facebook pages based on caste. These practices reinforce caste divisions and social segregation.
- There should be greater awareness and caste-sensitization programs in schools and workplaces to promote inclusivity.
- Dalit Literature should be introduced and taught in all schools and colleges of India and there should be an easy availability of Dalit Literature. The curriculum should be developed and designed in such a way that it promotes empathy and drives people away from caste prejudice, sensitises them to work with commitment and sincerity towards restoring dignity, equality, and justice.

- Also, the government should consider the issue of caste-based rallies as caste-based rallies create a sense of alienation and resentment among other communities. Organising caste-centric rallies creates a sense of otherness, which is not good for a healthy, and inclusive society.
- Lastly, there should be Dalit consciousness and Dalits should promote magazines and journals like Dalit Asmita, Contemporary Voice of Dalit, and Dalit Voice.

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