



## Exploring Dalit Women's Narratives Of Resistance And Identity Assertion In Contemporary Indian Society

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### Abstract

India is a patchwork of social, linguistic, religious, and ethnic groups that demonstrates variety while maintaining unity. Indian women hence represent a variety of cultures, geographies, faiths, and social strata. Their unique living experiences and societal positions contribute to a variety of challenges. As a result, an analysis of the literature on Indian feminism reveals how complex it is. According to Mukhopadhyay, the fundamental goal of Indian feminism, which was predominantly started by males, was to abolish immoral customs like polygamy, child marriage, Sati, Purdah, illiteracy, and others. Indian feminists were not aware of or knowledgeable about the notion of "intersectionality" or intersectional oppression. Following the dictum "Personal is Political," in this case, it became the responsibility of the women whose gender overlaps with caste to speak for their own lived experiences. By examining a few of their works, this essay aims to provide light on the lives of Dalit women. Literary study resources include Bama's Sangati, Meena Kandaswami's Touch poetry collection, and P. Sivakami's The Grip of Change. The research shows how the experiences of Dalit women provide a distinctive interpretation of "Indian intersectionality," in which the combination of their social and political identities results in many forms of disadvantage and discrimination, leaving them open to violence. The research could provide insight into strategies for stopping violence against Dalit women. The research will attempt to shed light on the discrepancies that exist between the two genres of writing, in addition to highlighting the contrasts between upper-caste female and dalit male literature.

**Keywords:** Identity Assertion, Dalit Women, Indian Society, Narratives of Resistance.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Dalit Women in History: Struggles, Voices, and Counter publics

The Dalit community in India has been marginalized in mainstream economic, social, and political history, with the literature projecting women as extensions of male protagonists. As a consequence of this marginalization, Dalit women have seen a reduction in their property rights, number of years of life, educational opportunities, and overall empowerment. As a consequence of the fact that the majority of the state's plans and programs are heteronormative and centered on males, the agency of Dalit women as decision-makers is marginalized.

In order to draw attention to the continued marginalization of Dalit women's narratives and the sanctioned ignorance of their lived experiences in historical patterns and trends, the goal of this research is to call attention to these issues of marginalization. On the other hand, reform initiatives such as widow remarriage are deeply rooted in caste-class categories and formations. On the other hand, Dalit counter publics dispute historical orthodoxies that help to keep caste out of the public arena.



Figure 1: Dalit Women

Verifiable twisting and the formation of a site of distinction have come about because of documents' quiet on the subject of Dalit women's voices in Indian history. Different understandings of the expression "voice" are fundamental for a verifiable investigation of Dalit women's voices. Simply having a voice matters in a general public where certain ethnic and orientation gatherings and ranks hold influence. The issue of caste and gender is intermingled within the larger reality of justice, creating double marginalization for women, especially Dalit women.

### 1.2. Major Dalit Women Voices and Issues in the History of India

The following is a discussion of Dalit women's perspectives on South Asian history. 'Dalit' may signify a few different things depending on context. Similarly, as with other mistreated gatherings, Dalit women have chronicled their battles and requests for equity in accounts for centuries, especially in regions where harsh foundations have started to disintegrate. Being able to hear these kinds of voices is essential for social science students. The Rigveda is the first extant scripture that describes the four social classes in Hinduism: the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas, and the Sudra. Dalits, untouchables, and Scheduled castes are some of the historical terms used to describe the Sudras. Among the four varna, women were not given special treatment but were instead seen as having less privilege. Sudra women were consistently disregarded in the daily routines of the learned. Society strongly believed in the concept of purity and punished anybody who touched a Dalit lady. Never should a dvija (twice-born)<sup>7</sup> be seen or be near a Sudra lady. Seeing a Sudra lady requires one to pause his Vedic recitations. As a result, a Dalit woman faces increasing discrimination and exclusion throughout history.

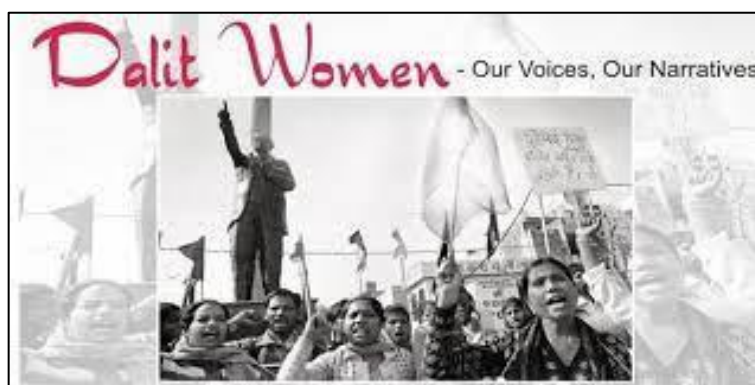


Figure 2: Dalit Women Voices And Issues in The History of India

The later Vedic messages present inconsistencies, with Shatapatha Brahman expressing that the spouse is around 50% of her better half and finishes him, and marks of shame of contaminations by feminine blood. This advanced a feeling of distance in India, which was doubly biased for Dalit women. The Atharvaveda portrays Sudra women as salacious animals, while the Upanisadic age was the period of information, where women were making some noise.

In the 6th century B.C., men in the Ganga fields gave messages of consideration and empathy to the oppressed, prompting the development of heterodox groups that gave space and a dynamic climate for women, Sudras, and other less special networks. Mahavira and Buddha showed uniformity and empathy for each person, while Makkhali Gosāla appreciated Sudra women. Hālāhalā, the supporter of Gosāla, indicated the right of the salvation voluntarily. Therigatha, a collection of poems by Buddhist Bhikkhunis, emphasizes sexual equality and the possibility of freedom for women and men. A woman's voice means cultivating a state of mind filled with freedom, emphasizing the struggles and cries of Dalit women in South Asia and the importance of understanding their voices in the context of historical oppression.

### 1.3. Dalit Women's Voices in Modern India

During the colonial period in India, modernity aimed to liberate women, with modern education and the abolishment of practices like sati, child marriage, polygamy, and widow laws. Dalit women, such as Jhalkaribai and Udadevi, were fighting against British rule but were absent in mainstream historiography. Social developments like the Telangana Development, Ambedkarite Development, and Dignity Development permitted Dalit women to cut a specialty for them and work towards women's liberation and freedom. Dalit women journalists have attempted to reevaluate authentic developments to draw out their voices and idiosyncrasy inside the domain of civil rights.

Savitribai Phule, an unmistakable Dalit lady, was the primary low-standing lady to underscore the significance of schooling and English through her sonnets. She likewise began schools only for Sudra and Dalit women, constructing a comprehensive and coordinated progressive social, social, and instructive development.

During the 1990s, a few Dalit women's associations arose, prompting banter on majority versus solidarity in women's developments. India embraced its Constitution in 1950, yet lower social layers legislators started to partake in governmental issues. Dalit women are currently assuming a huge part in governmental issues, however their initiative doesn't necessarily in all cases get politico social acknowledgment.

## 2. Literature review

**Bama's (2005)** With its striking experiences into the issues that Dalit bunches face in present day Indian culture, "Sangati" gives a holding check what is going on out. Bama focuses light on the nexus of rank, orientation, and financial position by means of the utilization of striking account fully intent on accentuating the difficulties that Dalit women face and their capacity to drive forward through them. Understanding the lived real factors of Dalit people and the subtleties of segregation in light of position might be achieved through the utilization of this story, which goes about as serious areas of strength.

**Devy's (2009)** It examines various aspects of Indian culture, including issues relating to rank, character, and the variety of social customs. G. N. "The G." Devy was a prominent Indian academic and activist. N. Devy Peruser" is a gathering of papers and works that he has created. The experiences that he gives give a system to fathoming the socio-political elements of current India, as well as critical perspectives on the issues that are looked by distraught individuals, like Dalits.

**Ganguly (2012)** The author examines the significance of personal narratives in documenting Dalit experiences and movements in "Dalit Life Stories." Ganguly reveals insight into the many voices that emerge from inside the Dalit people group and the difficulties that they face in their battle against rank-based separation through the assessment of an assortment of life encounters. This section gives savvy data on the capability of narrating with regards to Dalit activism and the declaration of character.

**Baburao Bagul (2008)** A key work in Marathi writing portrays the horrendous truth of Dalit presence in Maharashtra. "The Detainment facilities We Broke" was composed by them and deciphered by M. Pandit. Kamble uncovers the seriousness of standing based separation and the versatility of Dalit individuals in contradicting abusive foundations by means of the utilization of stories that are major areas of strength for both convincing. It is a strong recognition for the difficulties that Dalits need to go through to lay out their freedoms and nobility that this book fills in as.

**Kumar (2010)** His book "Dalit Personal Narratives," in which he conducts a critical analysis of Dalit autobiographies and literature, examines the ways in which caste, nation, and identity interact. Kumar researches the manners by which individuals who distinguish as Dalit work to deal with their characters inside the structure of station-based separation and public governmental issues by directing top to bottom readings of individual stories. The book provides insightful viewpoints on the intricate lives of Dalits and their quest for social justice and recognition.

**Nandy's (2012)** All through this article, the writer researches a great many ideas relating to mistreatment, as well as the ramifications that these speculations have for social conversation and perception. The study of power dynamics and inequality dynamics conducted by Nandy sheds light on the complexities of oppression and resistance in a variety of cultural contexts. Through his investigations, he has given significant experiences into the difficulties of defeating biases in view of standing and creating significant exchange between bunches that are impeded and the people who are predominant.

## 3. Dalit Women's Possibilities of Identity Assertion

When it comes to resistance, it is vital to bear in mind that it does not necessarily have to take the shape of direct opposition all the time. In addition to offering instances of the resistance that Dalit women have put up, Sangati and The Grip of Change both expand on the particular of violence that is perpetrated against Dalit women. Throughout the whole of these works, we are able to see Dalit women engaging in a wide range of behaviors in order to navigate their ways towards assertiveness.

Women of the Dalit station is endeavouring to affirm their independence inside the Sangati bunch by utilization of language. As per Raj Gauthaman, "Dalits who have been treated as wares claimed by others for so long should yell out their selfhood, there 'I' when they ascend." This comment was stated by Raj Gauthaman. The writings of these individuals, which are written in languages that are exactly spoken by the Dalit people, are distinguished by an obvious emotion of fury, which has shown itself as a demonstration of protest against injustice. Many different explanations have been given regarding the use of the phrase in question. Dalit women often employ language like this against their own husbands in order to shield themselves from being beaten up.

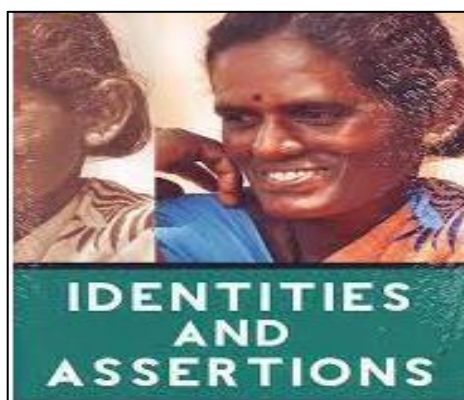


Figure 3: Dalit Women's Identity Assertion

This is despite the fact that such language is intended to be used against upper-caste men in Dalit male literature, who have kept them in slavery and provided them with ignorance. This is done in order to prevent oneself from getting beaten up by the other person. The narrator of the novel Sangati narrates an occurrence that she happened to see taking on between Pakkiaraj and Raakkamma, who was his wife. These two individuals were married at the time. Pakkiaraj was humiliating and insulting her in a disgusting and filthy manner, and he was on the verge of hitting her. "Even before his hand could fall on her, she yelled and cried, 'Ayyayyo, he's murdering me,' while Raakkamma was responding in language that was as violent in order to protect herself from being beaten up. You are a low-life, a bastard, and you are this and that for a variety of reasons. You will be taken out as a corpse, you will be carried out like a corpse, and you will die from the effects of your death. The portrayals of Kanagavalli and Nagamani, who are Kathamuthu's two spouses, provide a vivid illustration of the notion of bargaining agency throughout the whole of *The Grip of Change*. They are neither entirely victimized, as Thangam is, nor do they completely oppose the system (they continue to act within the framework of married domesticity). Rather, they are none of these things. On the other side, it is possible that they are the ones who are seeking to negotiate their way into the household in order to build a position for themselves. They do not suppress their anguish, despite the fact that neither of them is satisfied with the circumstances in which they find themselves. They interrupt Kathamuthu and make pointed remarks, such as "Everyone laughs at the set-up in your home, and here you are trying to teach others."

This instance is made evident by the way in which they stop Kathamuthu. What gives you the confidence that you are such a strong individual? Kanagavalli entered the room and murmured something in a way that kept his words from being heard by anybody else. This demonstrates that Kanagavalli, the more experienced wife, is aiming her criticism on the husband. This is proven by the information presented here. The fact that they are both loud in their hatred of Kathamuthu is made abundantly obvious when Thangam approaches and seeks for aid. When Kathamuthu makes a derogatory remark about how "thangam" (which literally means "gold") is an improper name for a Dalit girl who is equivalent to a broomstick, Nagamani reacts by stating, "That is only to be expected of you." Kathamuthu's statement is an example of Nagamani's response. At no point in time do you behave in a manner that is commensurate with the dignity that is appropriate for a man of your stature. The words "Come on, let's go in" are said by Kanagavalli to Nagamani as a reaction to the violent retribution that Kathamuthu has taken. From this vantage point, there is nothing for us to do. Because of this, it is possible that the two women would be seen to have effectively dealt with patriarchy by establishing a sense of camaraderie amongst themselves.

#### 4. The Power of Narratives in Dalit Women's Lives

Abstract stories are profoundly associated with the local area they start from, as they uncover the local area's convictions, excellencies, and treacheries. These stories are objects of information as well as wellsprings of information, organizing the convictions of the local area. Scholarly illustrations should be visible as a strong means to express the social and incite reflection on the personal satisfaction of a local area. Stories don't have the ability to change society altogether without anyone else, yet they reproduce people in the public eye through intriguing illustrations that underline specific implications.

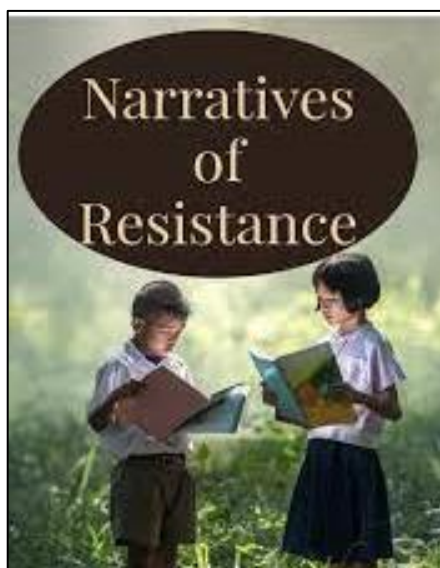


Figure 4: Power of Narratives

This makes a significant degree of mindfulness among the readership, which can add to laying out a firm bond with the political. Thus, the political makes an interpretation of itself into an interest for acknowledgment, incorporation, equity, and change. The epistemological enunciated in the story becomes moral when the account delivers a crack in the approach to seeing and grasping the qualities and convictions of any general public. This interaction prompts reflection since it assists us with adapting to the disorder of presence and face what in any case is unfortunate.

Writing is coordinated in plots, arrangements of activities that include the disclosure of people in the midst of recognizable and new conditions. It pictures the issues that burden us and assists us with rehashing new stories that could show up as potential answers for our concerns. However, not all stories are considered literature because not all sufferings are significant. Enslaved people group can challenge laid out methods of writing by making their own feel and story customs. Dalit women in India have confronted the double persecution of standing and orientation for quite a long time, consigned to quiet and underestimation. Notwithstanding, their accounts rise - strong declarations of opposition, strength, and personality attestation. These stories hold monstrous power, molding their singular lives as well as affecting the texture of Indian culture. Dalit women' accounts offer remarkable points of view on the real factors of standing and orientation separation, testing cultural predispositions and requesting acknowledgment. By sharing their own encounters, Dalit women recover their office and reclassify their characters past the limits forced by position and cultural assumptions. Dalit women' stories act as extensions between networks, offering non-Dalit people a window into the real factors of station and orientation separation. By encouraging sympathy and understanding, these accounts can add to destroying bias and separating social hindrances. Tending to difficulties and constraints morally and guaranteeing places of refuge for narrating is critical to saddling the maximum capacity of their accounts.

#### 4.1. Diverse Sources of Dalit Women's Narratives: Voices of Resistance and Identity

Diverse sources that capture the voices and perspectives of Dalit women are essential to comprehending their experiences and struggles in India. A look at various categories is provided here:

##### ✓ Literature

- **Fiction:** Works by creators like Meena Kandawali ("Gooseberry Bonehead"), Bama ("Karukku"), Poorna Devi ("Mother of Manu"), and Child Kamble ("The Detainment facilities We Live In") offer strong fictionalized records of station and orientation separation looked by Dalit women.
- **Non-fiction:** Self-portrayals and diaries as thorat Sukhadev's "I, the Anonymous," Urmila Pawar's "A mind-blowing Wind," and Bama's "A Play of Dice" give firsthand records of station real factors and battles for training, respect, and personality.
- **Poetry:** Assortments as kandawali Meena's "Cockcrow and Different Sonnets" and Sukirtharani's "Outcaste" utilize strong symbolism and language to communicate the aggravation, outrage, and strength of Dalit women.

##### ✓ Activism

- **Speeches and writings:** Through their activism and writings, leaders like Bhemabai Gurjar, Manjula Pradeep, and Arundhati Roy provide insights into grassroots movements and analyze caste and gender issues.
- **Reports and campaigns:** Associations like the Public Lobby for Dalit Common freedoms and Dalit Women' Organization report instances of separation, brutality, and activate for strategy changes.
- **Blogs and online platforms:** Sites like "The News Minute," "Women's activist India," and "Roundtable India" highlight accounts and viewpoints of Dalit women activists and researchers, and more.

This rundown is unfinished, and there are in every case new sources. It is fundamental to connect with these accounts basically, perceiving the Dalit people group's variety, and regarding individual voices. We gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and strength of Dalit women's encounters through these various sources, contributing to a more nuanced and comprehensive discussion about position, orientation, and civil rights in India.

#### 5. Conclusion

Despite the fact that Dalit women have been subjected to segregation in India for a very long time upon a very long time, women of this heritage have demonstrated stability and control over their lives. This isolation has caused them to be defrauded. They are the target of this tendency, which is the inspiration driving why they have been assigned. They have been fruitful in accomplishing their targets of recovering their social legacy, requesting civil rights, and destroying orientation and station separation by utilizing various strategies, like writing, activism, grassroots getting sorted out, and web stages. As a result of this, there has been a modification of public talk, which plays had an effect in the social commotion and provoked the improvement of an overall population that is more libertarian and open. Thusly, something has drawn closer consequently.

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