



Indian Dalit Autobiography: A Study of Kumud Pawade's *Antasphot* and Shantabai Dhanaji Dani's *Ratrandin Amha*

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Abstract:

Dalit autobiographies in India serve as powerful narratives that articulate the struggles, resistance, and assertion of identity against the backdrop of caste oppression. Among these, *Antasphot* by Kumud Pawade and *Ratrandin Amha* by Shantabai Dhanaji Dani stand out as seminal works that encapsulate the lived experiences of Dalit women in a caste-ridden society. These autobiographies offer a unique intersection of gender and caste, shedding light on the double marginalization faced by Dalit women. Kumud Pawade's *Antasphot* (Inner Explosion) portrays her journey as a Dalit woman striving for education and self-respect in a society that continuously suppresses her aspirations. It is a poignant account of her personal and intellectual struggles, highlighting the systemic discrimination within academia and social institutions. On the other hand, Shantabai Dhanaji Dani's *Ratrandin Amha* (For Us, the Nights and Days) provides an in-depth narrative of the everyday hardships faced by Dalit women, chronicling their resilience and determination to assert their dignity. Both autobiographies are not just personal recollections but also socio-political commentaries on caste, gender, and the transformative power of education. This research paper undertakes a detailed study of these two autobiographies, analyzing their thematic concerns, narrative techniques, and sociopolitical significance. It explores how both authors challenge the dominant caste narratives and assert their voices against oppression. By situating these texts within the larger discourse of Dalit literature, this study underscores their role in shaping the Dalit feminist consciousness and contributing to the broader struggle for social justice in India.

Keywords: Dalit autobiographies, Kumud Pawade, *Antasphot* (Inner Explosion), Shantabai Dhanaji Dani, *Ratrandin Amha* (For Us, the Nights and Days), Dalit women's narratives, caste oppression, gender and caste intersection, double marginalization, education and social mobility, resistance and assertion of identity, Dalit literature, feminist consciousness, socio-political commentary, social justice in India

1. Introduction

Science fiction has long served as a cultural laboratory for testing ideas about technology, society, and the future. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, writers such as H.G. Wells advanced the "scientific romance," weaving narratives that projected techno-utopian possibilities and evolutionary speculation. *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898) foreground anxieties about technological progress, class division, and imperial power, while later works such as *A Modern Utopia* (1905) and *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) reflected a belief in science as the guiding force of history. Wells's speculative visions were grounded in contemporary scientific discourse and shaped by industrial modernity, embodying both optimism and unease about humanity's trajectory.

By the mid-twentieth century, however, the genre's centre of gravity shifted. Authors like Ursula K. Le Guin expanded the thematic boundaries of science fiction beyond techno-utopian projection to socially critical exploration. In novels such as *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), *The Dispossessed* (1974), *The Word for World Is Forest* (1972), and *Always Coming Home* (1985), Le Guin situated speculative worlds within anthropological, ecological, and feminist frameworks. These works emphasised cultural relativism, ecological interdependence, and the ambiguity of utopian ideals, challenging the positivist faith in progress that characterised Wells's era. Where Wells often treated science as an inevitable force of destiny, Le Guin reimagined speculative storytelling as a vehicle for interrogating power, gender, and social responsibility.

In this context, a comparative study of Wells and Le Guin illuminates the **paradigm shift in science fiction storytelling**—from narratives of technological determinism to critical explorations of culture, identity, and ethics. This study analyses their works through critical frameworks, including Darko Suvin's "cognitive estrangement," Tom Moylan's "critical utopia," Donna Haraway's posthumanist critique, and Edward Said's theory of imperialism. By pairing Wells's prophetic visions with Le Guin's anthropological and feminist reimaginings, the paper traces how science fiction evolved from a literature of scientific

wonder to one of cultural critique. In doing so, it argues that this transformation reflects broader historical and intellectual currents, from industrial modernity and empire to decolonisation, feminism, and ecological consciousness.

Research Objectives

- **To systematically review existing literary scholarship on Dalit autobiographies and Dalit feminist writings.** This includes critical works by scholars such as Arjun Dangle (*Poisoned Bread*), Sharmila Rege (Dalit feminist standpoint), Gail Omvedt (Dalit literature and anti-caste movements), and Urmila Pawar. The objective is to situate *Ratrandin Amha* and *Antasphot* within the broader trajectory of Dalit life-writing and feminist testimonios.
- **To analyse the thematic concerns in Shantabai Dani's *Ratrandin Amha* and Kumud Pawade's *Antasphot*.** Dani's text foregrounds poverty, caste-based exclusion, and activism within the Ambedkarite movement, while Pawade's autobiography emphasizes education, gender oppression, and the struggle to access Sanskrit studies. This objective aims to uncover how both writers represent resistance, dignity, and survival against systemic oppression.
- **To compare the narrative strategies and political interventions of the two autobiographies.** *Ratrandin Amha* employs a testimonio-style narrative, merging personal memory with collective struggle, whereas *Antasphot* engages in intellectual resistance by contesting Brahminical dominance in academia. The goal is to identify similarities and differences in their approaches to storytelling as socio-political acts.
- **To evaluate how socio-historical contexts shaped the authors' voices.** Dani's narrative reflects the Ambedkarite movement, anti-caste struggles, and the politics of conversion, while Pawade's text reflects post-independence educational reforms, entrenched casteism in universities, and patriarchal structures. This objective underscores the embeddedness of personal stories within wider social-historical realities.
- **To propose an interpretive framework for Dalit feminist autobiographies.** Drawing on Sharmila Rege's feminist standpoint theory, Ambedkarite perspectives on education, and testimonio theory, the study seeks to explain how Dalit women's autobiographies transform personal suffering into collective resistance and how they contribute to shaping Dalit feminist consciousness in India.

Study Design

This research adopts a **comparative literary-historical approach**, integrating methods from Dalit studies, feminist literary criticism, and socio-political history:

- **Systematic Literature Review**

Reviewing critical scholarship on Dalit autobiographies, caste and gender studies, and Dalit feminist theory. Sources include foundational works such as *Poisoned Bread* (Dangle, 1992), Rege (2006), Omvedt (1994), and recent academic articles on Dalit life-writing. This will provide the theoretical scaffolding to situate the two texts in the broader discourse of resistance literature.

- **Textual & Thematic Analysis**

Close reading of *Ratrandin Amha* and *Antasphot* to identify themes such as poverty, untouchability, education, gender oppression, resilience, and activism. The analysis will focus on how each author narrativizes personal and collective struggle, with particular attention to narrative voice, metaphors, and resistance strategies.

- **Critical-Theoretical Application**

Applying frameworks such as:

- **Rege's Dalit feminist standpoint epistemology** (for intersectionality of caste and gender).
 - **Ambedkarite philosophy** (education and self-respect as tools of emancipation).
 - **Testimonio theory** (autobiography as collective memory and political act).
- These frameworks will help explain how the autobiographies destabilize dominant narratives and create space for marginalized voices.

- **Socio-Historical Contextualization**

Situating the autobiographies within the political, cultural, and historical milieu of 20th-century India. Dani's narrative will be connected to the Ambedkarite and Dalit women's movements of the mid-20th century, while Pawade's text will be read against the backdrop of post-independence educational institutions and persistent caste barriers in academia.

- **Archival & Bibliographic Research**

Using resources such as academic anthologies (e.g., *The Oxford India Anthology of Dalit Writing*), translated editions of Dalit women's autobiographies, and online repositories (feminisminindia.com, Cordite Poetry Review, etc.). These will provide both primary sources and secondary commentaries that contextualize the autobiographies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Emergence of Dalit Autobiographical Writing

Dalit autobiographies in India emerged prominently in the post-1960s period, coinciding with the rise of Dalit movements and Ambedkarite consciousness. Dangle (1992) in *Poisoned Bread* emphasizes that Dalit writing arose as a counter-discourse to Brahminical literary traditions, foregrounding the voices of the historically silenced. Scholars such as Rege (2006) situate Dalit autobiographies as "testimonios" that blur the line between personal experience and collective struggle, thereby transforming private suffering into public resistance. Early works like Daya Pawar's *Baluta* (1978) and Baby Kamble's *Jina Amucha* (1982) established the genre as both political intervention and literary expression. These narratives mark a radical departure from mainstream Indian autobiographies by centering caste oppression, untouchability, and survival.

2.2. Gender and the Double Marginalization of Dalit Women

Feminist scholars such as Sharmila Rege (2000) argue that Dalit women's autobiographies occupy a unique intersectional space, as they reveal the "double jeopardy" of caste and gender. Works like Bama's *Karukku* (1992) and Urmila Pawar's *Aaydan (The Weave of My Life)* (2003) demonstrate how Dalit women challenge both patriarchal oppression within their communities and casteist exclusion from mainstream society. According to Chakraborty and MacCarter (2016), these texts not only chronicle individual suffering but also function as counter-histories that reclaim agency for marginalized women. Dani's *Ratrandin Amha* epitomizes this strand by articulating the resilience of Dalit women in everyday struggles, while Pawade's *Antasphot* highlights systemic resistance within academia. Both works reinforce Rege's claim that Dalit women's testimonios are essential to understanding caste patriarchy.

2.3. Education as a Site of Struggle and Liberation

Ambedkarite scholarship has long emphasized education as the central tool for Dalit emancipation. Omvedt (1994) situates Dalit autobiographies within this lineage, noting that education often appears both as aspiration and as a site of discrimination. Kumud Pawade's *Antasphot* is especially significant in this context, as it exposes how Sanskrit studies—historically restricted to Brahmins—became an arena of resistance for a Dalit woman. Her struggles reflect what Teltumbde (2010) identifies as the "institutional entrenchment of caste" in modern Indian education. Similarly, Dani's autobiography highlights her mother's insistence on education as a liberatory practice, echoing Ambedkar's call to "educate, agitate, organize." Together, these narratives illustrate education as simultaneously oppressive and empowering, embodying the paradox of social mobility within caste society.

2.4. Dalit Autobiography as Socio-Political Commentary

Gail Omvedt (1994) and Dasan et al. (2012) note that Dalit life-writing functions not only as autobiography but also as socio-political critique. By weaving personal memory with historical events, these texts transcend the individual to become collective testimonies. Dani's involvement in the Ambedkarite movement, including protests against the Poona Pact and her leadership in the Scheduled Caste Federation Mahila Parishad, exemplifies how personal narratives become embedded in political struggles. Pawade's confrontation with casteist barriers in academia, and her rejection of patriarchal rituals such as Wata-Savitri Vrat, similarly transform her life into a critique of systemic oppression. As Dutta and Sarangi (2015) argue, Dalit women's autobiographies create "counter-publics" that disrupt dominant caste narratives and affirm marginalized voices.

2.5. Synthesis

The scholarship indicates that Dalit autobiographies, especially those authored by women, must be read as both literary and political acts. Dani's *Ratrandin Amha* embodies collective resistance and exposes the compounded marginalization of Dalit women in social, political, and familial contexts. Pawade's *Antasphot*, by contrast, emphasizes intellectual resistance within academia, using the study of Sanskrit as a symbolic reclaiming of spaces historically denied to Dalits. Together, these works exemplify what Rege (2006) terms "Dalit feminist standpoint epistemology," where personal life-writing becomes a vehicle for social critique, political assertion, and identity formation. As with other Dalit testimonios, these autobiographies underscore the transformative power of narrative in challenging entrenched hierarchies and advancing the discourse of social justice.

3. Method

3.1. Research Question

The central research question of this study emerges from debates within Dalit studies, feminist literary criticism, and postcolonial theory about how personal narratives become political acts of resistance. Scholars such as Rege (2006) have argued that Dalit women's autobiographies function as *testimonios* that expose the intersection of caste and gender oppression while simultaneously reclaiming historical agency. Omvedt (1994) situates Dalit writing as an extension of the Ambedkarite anti-caste movement, while Teltumbde (2010) stresses the persistence of caste hierarchies even in modern institutions. Building on these perspectives, the guiding research question for this study is:

How do Shantabai Dani's *Ratrandin Amha* and Kumud Pawade's *Antasphot* articulate Dalit women's resistance against caste and gender oppression, and in what ways do these narratives contribute to the emergence of a Dalit feminist standpoint within Indian literature and socio-political discourse?

3.2. Corpus (Primary Texts)

The study is based on a purposive selection of two major Dalit women's autobiographies that exemplify both personal testimony and political critique:

- **Shantabai Dhanaji Dani – *Ratrandin Amha* (For Us, These Nights and Days)**
 - **Focus:** Poverty, untouchability, education, Ambedkarite activism.
 - **Significance:** A *testimonio*-style narrative linking personal hardships with the collective struggles of Dalit women and the Ambedkarite movement.
- **Kumud Pawade – *Antasphot* (Inner Explosion)**
 - **Focus:** Education as a site of resistance, casteist exclusion in Sanskrit studies, patriarchal oppression.
 - **Significance:** Challenges Brahminical dominance in academia and foregrounds the intellectual struggles of Dalit women.

These texts were selected for their canonical importance in Dalit feminist literature, their representation of different historical contexts (colonial/post-independence India), and their thematic complementarity (grassroots activism vs. intellectual resistance).

3.3. Data Collection and Sources

Data were collected through three complementary strategies:

1. Systematic Literature Review

A review of secondary scholarship was conducted using academic databases such as JSTOR, Project MUSE, and Google Scholar, along with anthologies like *Poisoned Bread* (Dangle, 1992), *The Oxford India Anthology of Dalit Writing* (Dasan et al., 2012), and *Surviving in My World* (Dutta & Sarangi, 2015). Critical essays by Rege (2006), Omvedt (1994), and Chakraborty & MacCarter (2016) were examined to situate Dalit women's autobiographies within feminist and socio-political frameworks.

2. Archival and Contextual Research

- Historical sources on the Ambedkarite movement, the Poona Pact, and Scheduled Caste Federation activities were used to contextualize Dani's activism.
- Resources on caste in higher education, Sanskrit studies, and gendered exclusion informed the reading of Pawade's intellectual struggles.
- Online repositories such as *feminisminindia.com*, research journals (*Pune Research*), and translations of Marathi Dalit autobiographies were used to access both primary and critical material.

3. Critical-Theoretical Application

4. Selected theoretical frameworks guided interpretation:

- **Sharmila Rege's Dalit feminist standpoint epistemology** – understanding intersectionality of caste and gender.
- Ambedkarite philosophy – situating education and social justice as tools of emancipation.
- Testimonio theory – reading autobiography as collective memory and political resistance.
- Postcolonial critique – assessing the way Dalit women's voices resist hegemonic cultural erasure.

3.4. Data Analysis

The analysis followed a comparative thematic model in four steps:

• Step 1: Thematic Coding

Each autobiography was read closely and annotated for recurring themes: caste discrimination, education, gender oppression, resilience, activism, and identity formation. For example, Dani's segregation during meals was coded under "untouchability" and "social exclusion," while Pawade's exclusion from Sanskrit academia was coded under "intellectual marginalization" and "casteist institutions."

• Step 2: Cross-Comparative Mapping

The texts were compared directly to identify overlaps and divergences. For instance:

- *Ratrandin Amha* emphasizes collective struggle through grassroots activism.
- *Antasphot* emphasizes individual intellectual resistance against caste in academia. Mapping these approaches allowed an analysis of how both strategies contribute to Dalit feminist consciousness.

• Step 3: Theoretical Interpretation

The coded themes were interpreted using the critical frameworks:

- Rege's feminist standpoint was applied to show how both texts expose "double marginalization."
- Ambedkar's philosophy illuminated Dani's insistence on education and political mobilization.
- Testimonio theory contextualized *Ratrandin Amha* as a collective narrative rather than mere personal memory.
- Postcolonial critique was used to highlight how Pawade's intellectual defiance parallels broader struggles of cultural resistance.

• Step 4: Synthesis and Contextualization

Findings were synthesized to demonstrate how the texts reflect broader socio-historical realities:

- Dani's work reflects early 20th-century Dalit struggles under colonial modernity and the Ambedkarite movement.
- Pawade's narrative reflects post-independence educational exclusion and the persistence of caste in institutions. Together, they illustrate the transformation of autobiography into socio-political critique.

3.5. Reliability and Validity

To ensure rigor and credibility, the following measures were adopted:

- Triangulation – Cross-verification through primary autobiographies, archival resources, and secondary criticism from multiple disciplines (literature, sociology, gender studies).
- Contextualization – Situating interpretations within both literary (Dalit autobiography as genre) and socio-political (caste, patriarchy, Ambedkarite movements) contexts.
- Critical Reflexivity – Maintaining awareness of the researcher's interpretive stance, particularly when applying feminist and Ambedkarite frameworks that emphasize structural critique of caste and gender hierarchies.
- Language Sensitivity – Considering translation issues, as both autobiographies were originally written in Marathi, and ensuring fidelity to their cultural and political contexts

A thorough analysis of the selected primary texts and secondary sources yielded the following thematic categories: representations of technology, colonial encounters and imperial metaphors, social structures and class divisions, constructions of gender and identity, ecological consciousness, and models of utopia

4. Findings

4.1. Representations of Education and Knowledge

For Shantabai Dani, education is portrayed as a fragile but essential pathway to dignity, constantly threatened by caste-based exclusion. Her segregation during meals at school and denial of equal participation reveal how systemic discrimination undermined access to learning. Yet her perseverance, aided by her mother's insistence on literacy, highlights education as resistance and survival.

Kumud Pawade, however, frames education as a battlefield of intellectual defiance. Her pursuit of Sanskrit — historically restricted to Brahmins — transforms her narrative into an act of symbolic rebellion. While Dani portrays education as a collective hope for emancipation, Pawade presents it as a site of confrontation with entrenched Brahminical authority.

Overall, findings show that education emerges both as an emancipatory tool and as a deeply contested arena, where Dalit women negotiate dignity, access, and recognition.

4.2. Caste Oppression and Social Exclusion

Dani's *Ratrandin Amha* vividly documents untouchability in daily life, from eating in cow sheds during feasts to being denied participation in communal spaces. These instances underline caste as a pervasive and dehumanizing force structuring every aspect of existence. Her engagement with the Ambedkarite movement reflects the transformation of these humiliations into organized resistance.

Pawade's *Antasphot* exposes the subtler but equally corrosive casteism embedded in modern institutions. Despite her qualifications, she was repeatedly denied employment, until her marriage into a caste-Hindu family gave her access to opportunities her own merit could not. This paradox demonstrates how caste continues to trump credentials in determining social mobility.

Findings indicate that while Dani foregrounds social exclusion in lived experience, Pawade underscores institutional exclusion in intellectual life, together offering a comprehensive critique of caste oppression.

4.3. Gender, Patriarchy, and Double Marginalization

Both autobiographies foreground the compounded oppression Dalit women face from caste hierarchy and patriarchal control. Dani's narrative demonstrates how women are silenced not only by upper-caste structures but also within their own communities, forcing them to assert dignity on two fronts. Her leadership in the Scheduled Caste Federation Mahila Parishad reflects an insistence on women's political agency.

Pawade's *Antasphot* extends this critique by challenging patriarchal rituals such as the Wata-Savitri Vrat, which enshrine women's subordination. Moreover, her father-in-law's refusal to accept his Dalit-born grandson underscores how caste and gender intersect even within family structures.

Findings show that Dalit women's autobiographies uniquely expose double marginalization, offering insights into gendered caste oppression often absent in male-authored Dalit literature.

4.4. Activism and Political Consciousness

Dani situates her life within the Ambedkarite movement, aligning her experiences with broader struggles for equality. Her participation in protests against the Poona Pact and grassroots mobilization for Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party highlight autobiography as a record of collective resistance. Her writing transforms personal memory into political testimony, exemplifying the *testimonio* tradition.

Pawade's activism, though less grounded in mass mobilization, is intellectual and symbolic. By mastering Sanskrit and resisting exclusion in academia, she contests the cultural monopoly of upper castes. Her narrative thus reflects Ambedkar's insistence that knowledge itself can be a revolutionary weapon.

Findings suggest that while Dani embodies activism through collective political struggle, Pawade represents activism through intellectual defiance, both complementing each other in shaping Dalit feminist resistance.

4.5. Identity, Dignity, and Assertion of Selfhood

A key convergence in both texts is the insistence on reclaiming dignity. Dani asserts selfhood by narrating the pain of untouchability yet refusing to accept silence. Her conversion to Buddhism, echoing Ambedkar, symbolizes a rejection of Hindu caste orthodoxy and the embrace of new identity.

Pawade's identity assertion is intellectual: by daring to enter the forbidden world of Sanskrit, she claims a space historically denied to Dalits. Her insistence on being recognized as a scholar, despite systemic exclusion, reflects a profound assertion of dignity and belonging.

Thus, findings highlight how Dalit women redefine identity not as a passive inheritance but as an active, resistant, and transformative project.

4.6. Literary Form and Narrative Strategy

Dani employs a *testimonio*-style narration, where personal experiences blend with collective histories of oppression and struggle. This aligns with Chakraborty and MacCarter's (2016) description of Dalit writing as counter-histories.

Pawade's narrative, meanwhile, is framed as an "inner explosion" — a deeply personal yet political testimony that combines autobiography with critique of Brahminical authority. Her choice of Sanskrit, both as subject and symbol, embodies the disruption of dominant cultural narratives.

Findings show that both texts transform autobiography into socio-political commentary, blurring boundaries between personal memory and collective resistance.

4.7. Synthesis of Findings

The comparative analysis reveals that *Ratrandin Amha* and *Antasphot* exemplify the dual modes of Dalit women's autobiographical resistance. Dani foregrounds social exclusion, collective struggle, and grassroots activism, situating her voice within the Ambedkarite movement. Pawade emphasizes institutional exclusion, intellectual resistance, and feminist critique, situating her narrative within academic and cultural contestation.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The comparative analysis of *Ratrandin Amha* by Shantabai Dani and *Antasphot* by Kumud Pawade reveals both shared concerns and distinctive strategies in the articulation of Dalit women's resistance. On the one hand, both autobiographies transform personal memory into political testimony, aligning with Sharmila Rege's (2006) conceptualisation of Dalit women's life-writing as *testimonio*. On the other hand, their emphases diverge significantly: Dani foregrounds collective struggle and grassroots activism, while Pawade situates her resistance in the intellectual and institutional sphere, particularly through her defiance of Brahminical control over Sanskrit. Together, they exemplify the plural ways Dalit women have narrated dignity, resilience, and agency against entrenched structures of caste and patriarchy.

The analysis suggests that this shift is not merely literary but also historical and ideological. Dani, writing from the vantage point of the Ambedkarite movement and mid-20th century Dalit politics, situates her life within collective mobilization against untouchability and caste oppression. Her text embodies the lived realities of poverty, exclusion, and grassroots activism, while also demonstrating how women carved out political space within the male-dominated Ambedkarite struggle.

Pawade, writing in the post-independence context, reveals how caste hierarchies persisted even within modern institutions ostensibly built on principles of merit and equality. Her exclusion from Sanskrit academia—despite her demonstrable skill—exemplifies what Teltumbde (2010) identifies as the institutional entrenchment of caste. Where Dani's narrative invokes public protest and conversion to Buddhism as strategies of resistance, Pawade's emphasizes intellectual contestation, dignity in education, and the rejection of patriarchal cultural practices such as the Wata-Savitri ritual.

This contrast highlights what Rege (2006) has termed the **Dalit feminist standpoint**: a way of seeing the world from the intersection of caste and gender oppression that neither upper-caste feminism nor male-centered Dalit writing fully captures. Dani and Pawade together extend the discursive field of Dalit literature by foregrounding women's experiences, thereby transforming autobiography into a vehicle of social critique and feminist consciousness. Dani's narration of being served food in a cow shed or fighting for recognition within Ambedkarite circles illustrates the persistence of untouchability and gender exclusion. Pawade's struggles to be recognized as a Sanskrit scholar despite institutional barriers underscores the ongoing monopolization of knowledge by upper castes. Both works therefore expose the **double marginalization** of Dalit women and insist on reclaiming dignity as both a personal and political act.

At the same time, the study reveals important continuities. Both Dani and Pawade emphasize the centrality of education as a site of liberation, echoing B.R. Ambedkar's call to "educate, agitate, organize." Both portray autobiography not as a private recollection but as a socio-political commentary, weaving the personal into the fabric of collective struggle. Both also reject silence: whether through grassroots mobilization (*Ratrandin Amha*) or intellectual defiance (*Antasphot*), they insist that Dalit women's voices must be heard within the public sphere.

The implications of these findings are twofold. First, they demonstrate that Dalit autobiographies cannot be read solely as individual life stories but must be situated within broader histories of caste, gender, and resistance. Second, they affirm the role of Dalit women's autobiographies in shaping a **distinctive strand of Dalit feminism**, one that critiques both caste patriarchy and upper-caste feminism's tendency to erase caste from its discourse. In this sense, Dani and Pawade's works are not only literary texts but also interventions in the politics of knowledge, challenging Brahminical hegemony in culture, education, and gender relations.

Nevertheless, certain limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The analysis has focused primarily on two autobiographies, which, though representative, cannot encompass the diversity of Dalit women's life-writing across languages, regions, and historical contexts. Furthermore, this study emphasizes thematic and ideological analysis, and thus may understate stylistic dimensions such as Dani's oral-testimonio style or Pawade's rhetorical strategies of intellectual critique. Finally, the research has relied primarily on published texts and critical scholarship; archival exploration of unpublished manuscripts, letters, and reception histories could yield further insights into authorial intention and community response.

Despite these limitations, the study underscores the enduring significance of Dalit women's autobiographies as tools of social critique, political assertion, and feminist resistance. *Ratrandin Amha* and *Antasphot* together illustrate that autobiography, for Dalit women, is not simply self-expression but a mode of reclaiming agency, resisting silence, and forging solidarity. They exemplify the transformation of personal suffering into collective testimony, contributing to what Chakraborty and MacCarter (2016) describe as the creation of "counter-histories" against dominant narratives.

Future research could build on these insights by expanding the comparative framework to include other Dalit women writers such as Baby Kamble (*Jina Amucha*), Bama (*Karukku*), and Urmila Pawar (*Aaydan*). Cross-linguistic studies could further enrich the understanding of how Dalit women articulate resistance across different regional and cultural contexts. Moreover, comparative analysis with other global marginalized literatures—for example, Black women's autobiographies in the U.S. or Indigenous women's life-writing in Australia—could situate Dalit women's narratives within broader frameworks of intersectional oppression and feminist resistance.

In conclusion, the movement from Dani's *Ratrandin Amha* to Pawade's *Antasphot* exemplifies the evolving role of Dalit autobiographies: from narrating survival within everyday untouchability to contesting cultural and institutional exclusions. Together, they expand the horizons of Dalit literature by articulating a distinctly feminist consciousness rooted in caste realities. These texts remind us that Dalit women's life-writing is not merely retrospective memory but an ongoing call for dignity, equality, and social transformation.

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