

## Synoptic View of Urmila Pawar's 'Aaidan'

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**Abstract-Women across the globe have been writing works of enduring value particularly Indian women authors to prove their calibre as outstanding and accomplished especially in the field of cause of Dalit writings. Their works are ample testimony to the gender and caste indifferences faced by women in terms of gender and caste. Urmila Pawar, a well reputed Marathi Dalit writer penned *Aidan* (1988) translated and titled as *The Weave Of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoir*. Like Wangari Maathai, the 'spokesperson' of African women who voiced and championed the cause of women's rights in her memoir '*Unbowed*', Pawar's autobiography too elaborates the life of her family, thus giving the readers a pathetic insight into the life of Dalits. The play is an assessment of social discrimination and delineates the journey of Pawar as a Mahaar, a Dalit woman who fought against caste and gender. The play focuses on Pawar's experience of caste discrimination at a very young age. The play is a realistic narration of Pawar's experiences of being a 'Mahaar' and caste discrimination. Nonetheless, Buddhism becomes a channel of self-affirmation for Pawar like many Dalits. The play is certainly an embodiment of Dalit consciousness.**

**Keywords: Women, Dalit, gender, caste, struggles, critique, social discrimination, self-affirmative.**

### INTRODUCTION

Dalit Literature begins Marathi community which has been consistently encountering hegemonies of caste in the middle of the twentieth century. Since then, India has experienced phenomenon of Dalit writings in different Indian languages. The term 'Dalit' came to designate as literature of the oppressed. The writers who made a remarkable contributed to Dalit literature are Anna Bhau Sathe, Shankarrao Kharat, Arjun Dangle, Yogiraj Waghmare, Avinash Dolas, Yashwant Manohar, Keshav Meshram, etc. Undoubtedly, the inspiration to all these writers is Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, an originator of Dalit Literature.

Born into a Hindu Mahar family in Maharashtra, Urmila Pawar migration to Mumbai in 1976 and her discovery of feminism shaped her life and writing. *Aaidan* (1988) translated into English as *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoir* –details the life of Pawar's family and is an insight into the life of Dalits. The word 'Aaidan' designates bamboo and Pawar's family traditionally were bamboo basket weavers. Pawar is an activist, and her books are critically acclaimed as voice of the marginalised, the Dalit and feminism. *Aaidan (The Weave of My Life: a Dalit Woman's Memoirs)* is a fine illustration of Dalit consciousness displayed very powerfully and meaningfully.

Women across the globe have been writing works of enduring value particularly Indian women authors to prove their calibre as outstanding and accomplished especially in the field of cause of Dalit writings. Their works bear ample testimony to the problems faced by women terms of gender and caste. Urmila Pawar, a well reputed Marathi Dalit writer penned *Aidan*(1988) translated and titled as *The Weave Of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoir*. Like Wangari Maathai, the 'spokesperson' of African women who voiced and championed the cause of women's rights in her memoir '*Unbowed*', Pawar's autobiography too elaborates the life of her family, thus giving the readers a pathetic insight into the life of Dalits. The play delineates the journey of Pawar as a Mahaar, a Dalit and as a woman who fought against caste and gender. The play focuses on Pawar's experience of caste discrimination at a very young age. The play is a realistic narration of Pawar's experiences of being 'Mahaar' and caste discrimination. Nonetheless, Buddhism becomes a channel of self-affirmation for Pawar like many Dalits. The play is certainly an embodiment of Dalit consciousness.

In the Foreword to the English translation of the memoir, Wandana Sonalkar states about the title of the work expressing that *The Weave* is a metaphor for

writing a tool used by Pawar to project the "the lives of different members of her family, her husband's family, her neighbours and classmates, are woven together in a narrative that gradually reveals different aspects of the everyday life of Dalits, the manifold ways in which caste asserts itself and grinds them down"

Pawar's autobiography *Aidaan* is an account of experiences by a Dalit woman. It is a play about Dalit women in India. Pawar weaves the life of characters of Dalit women and challenges the customs of both caste and gender. Pawar says,

"My mother used to weave Aidaan. . .

I find that her act of weaving and my act of writing are organically linked. The weave is similar.

It is the weave of pain, suffering and agony that links us. . . .

When I asked my mother about 'motherhood,' she replied in one word 'sacrifice' with pain on her face."

The play begins with Urmila birth in Konkan and her eventual journey to another world. Pawar commented about the memoir,

I was a rebellious child and had numerous fights with my mother while growing up. But by the time I wrote this book, I felt I had taken her place. Like her, I was attempting to make the most of my life in a patriarchal society; I had lost my husband and my son, and my two girls misunderstood me because they could not understand my need to have a life beyond home. It's as if our lives had been juxtaposed.

The play opens with recollections of Urmila's school day when she experienced caste discrimination at an early age. The book describes the journey of Urmila as a schoolgirl, and the memory of her father who desire was the education of his daughters. The play enumerates incidents from the writer's personal life: the death of her brother, the birth of her children and her journey in the society. Urmila begins writing short stories after getting inspiration from Ambedkar. She also dreams of doing her graduation only on receiving her husband's support.

The strength of Pawar's writing lies in her treatment of mundane objects to remind the reader of hegemonies based on caste in the male-chauvinistic society.

"Her family lived on limited means, barely making ends meet, especially after her father's death. Studying with upper caste girls, she would be reminded of her origins through simple things, such as the sweetmeats they would bring in their tiffin boxes.

Pawar's interaction with enormous Dalit women in Maharashtra, made her conscientize the truth about the plight of Dalit women. Ambedkar's call to give up caste bias paved the way for Pawar for her personal growth and successful.

The play focuses on the narrator- character's life in the city and her journey as a literary artist was restricted like her own household. Pawar grew in the midst of weaving as she watched her widowed mother weave aidaans to make ends meet. This act of weaving is linked to writing,

I was a rebellious child and had numerous fights with my mother while growing up. But by the time I wrote this book, I felt I had taken her place. Like her, I was attempting to make the most of my life in a patriarchal society, I had lost my husband and my son and my two girls misunderstood me because they could not understand my need to have a life beyond home. It's as if our lives had been juxtaposed (150).

Her books are treatises on the intersectionality of caste and gender. she has not only written on her experiences of being a Dalit woman but has penned short stories and fiction as a channel text to discuss about the issues of caste and gender. Pawar is unparalleled in her realistic portrayal of caste and gender identity. Pawar's works are depictions of bitter memories and the pathetic conditions of women subjected to harassment and physical assault. But through her works, Pawar has tried to show that women too are capable of literary discourse and produce pieces of enduring value and Pawar's rewriting of self is thus the rewriting of Dalit history to create a consciousness in every woman that they powerful and intelligent on par with men.

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