

**THE DALIT EXPERIENCE: A LITERARY EXPLORATION  
OF UNTOUCHABILITY AND OPPRESSION**

*Dissertation*

*Submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirement for*

*The award of Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature*

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I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled **The Dalit Experience: A Literary Exploration of Untouchability and Oppression** is a bonafide record of research done by SREELAKSHMI K S (Register Number AIAVMEG019), has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title.

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Place: P.Vemballur

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Literature helps to show the reflection of the society. It helps us to understand the actual problems faced by people in the society. It is like a mirror to the society which shows the injustices that happens to the people. In India people had to suffer caste discrimination and racial discrimination. The people who had to go through these discriminations used literature as a tool to express their buried pain. Literature can travel through many countries and it reached all over the world. So, people in every corner of the world were made possible to understand the difficulties people had to face in different parts of the world. Literature not only shows the bad side of people but it also shows people with good heart. There are plenty of ideas to show through literature including Feminism, Post colonialism, Queer theory, Trauma theory, East West conflict, Tradition and Modernity, Multiculturalism, Cyber Feminism, Eco Criticism, Dalit literature and so on.

Through Dalit literature writers was made possible to write about the problems faced by the oppressed people. The word Dalit means 'broken' or 'oppressed. It is also known as 'untouchables' and it refers to the people who belongs to the low caste, which is present in South Asia. In another way we can say that Dalits are people from outside the traditional Indian caste system. They were placed in the lowest position of caste system and they had many restrictions. They were denied their educational rights and equality. The struggles a Dalit has to face while growing up is clearly depicted in the novels *Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India* by Sujatha Gidla and *Coming out as Dalit: A Memoir* by Yashica Dutt.

*Ants Among Elephants* is a great contribution given to Dalit literature by Sujatha Gidla. This book clearly shows how a Dalit struggles to live in the Indian society which has discrimination based on caste. This is a book written by a Dalit about the Dalit community in India. It is a memoir of Sujatha Gidla who is a Dalit, who are also called as untouchables. A memoir is an author's personal knowledge, which is written from his/her personal viewpoint, about a significant phase of his/her life. This book shows the Indian caste system's history and the challenges they had to face by the oppression of upper-caste. The struggles are not only in the society but also within the family. The lower-caste people not only had to suffer by the upper-caste landlords, but they were oppressed by the police and officials of government also.

This book is an emotional roller coast which portrays Dalit's experience in India. The writer, Sujatha Gidla tears away the mask that has been worn by the society who commit injustice to the people. At that time many people didn't even know the burden that has to suffer, being a Dalit. But she portrayed it well in her book *Ants Among Elephants*. This book depicts the story of a family history which is non-fictional. This gives us an insight to the actual fights against discrimination based on caste with genuine bravery which not only opens the eyes of Indians, but also the non-Indians.

She criticizes the Indian society which claimed to be democratic but in real the people are oppressed by the upper-caste. This story is an influential representation of the struggles of Dalits and their fight for equality in India. It gives importance to the voice of Dalit women, who were silenced by the hands of power. This book was successful in giving awareness to the people about the plight of Dalits in India. It will

be helpful for those who tries to know the society of India. Sujatha Gidla's *Ants Among Elephants* is a memoir which gave voice to Dalits. This book is a typical example which shows the difficulties a Dalit has to face in his/her everyday life. It is very tiring to survive in the society while being a Dalit.

Through her book she manifested that the root cause for the injustices that happens in the society is due to the caste system in India. The Dalit community were mistreated and basic human rights were denied. The women were also treated badly. These women not only have to face the struggle of being Dalit but also, she has to face gender inequality. The hands of power gained mastery over her not only because of her gender but also because of her caste. So we can also see India's intersectionality of gender and caste in this book. Intersectionality is the incidents that happens in the life of an Individual who has to face more than one oppression at the same time. This book is the story of a Dalit women. Women's life is more focused in her writings. Most of the time, the Indian literature neglects or ignore the voices of Dalit women, but Sujatha Gidla gave voice to the silenced Dalits through her writings.

This book tells the story of a family who were born into Dalit community. In India Dalits belong to the lowest caste in the Hindu caste system. This story has an insipartional touch which shows how they overcome the difficulties imposed on them by the caste system. This story gives details of the experiences of Dalits through generations, their oppression and poverty. It begins with experiences of Sujatha Gidla's grandfather who was born into a Dalit community living in Andhra Pradesh. Living as a Dalit is tiring, they have to face many restrictions and limitations. The upper-caste people didn't find any difficulty in humiliating Dalits. Grandfather had to go to work from a very young age and he worked as a bonded laborer.

Sujatha Gidla also had to face challenges as living in India and in United States. She was marginalized in the society because of her caste and in profession the upper-caste people humiliated her. The society treated them as an outcaste. She not only talks about her personal experience as a Dalit but also about the political history of India. It also talks about the Movements in support of Dalits, including the Movement led by Ambedkar against the caste discrimination. She strongly believed that, In India there is a relation between politics, class and caste. *Ants Among Elephants* is an influential and impressive non-fictional work which shows the realities of oppression because of caste discrimination.

The book written by Sujatha Gidla is not just some words combines together, but it is more about real life. Her stories were worth telling and writing. She was born in Khazipet, a town in Andhra Pradesh. She belonged to lower-middle class and her parents were lecturers. There were many castes in her town and she was an untouchable. Every caste people had their own place and job. The untouchable's job was laboring in others fields or to do the job that other Hindu people considered as dirty. They were not permitted to live in the village. They had to face many restrictions. They should stay outside the boundary of the village, they were restricted to enter inside the temple, and they couldn't go near the water that was drunk by other caste people. They were even restricted in the matter of eating. They should not sit near a caste Hindu and should not use their utensils. The restrictions may vary from place to place.

In Indian newspaper we can see the news about the injustices suffered by the untouchables or lower-caste people. They were even beaten or killed by unnecessary reasons. Lower-caste people became afraid of telling their caste, because of the

injustices they had to face. So, some people began to hide their caste and started to tell lies about belonging to other caste. They cannot say lies about their caste in their village because villagers already know them but they lie outside the village. Either you can say the truth about your caste and live a miserable life or tell them lies and live in fear of getting caught. This is the life of lower-caste people.

At that time Christians belonged to untouchable and Hindus were treated like king. The Hindu ignored Christian as they didn't exist. Hindus wanted to have sex with untouchable women but not marriage. They were treated very lowly. They were even murdered for falling in love with Hindu girl. In early period untouchables were forbidden from reading and writing. Education was denied to them like other basic rights. Owning a land was their dream because they were always a labor in the field of others. During the Independence their struggles was not so visible but after getting Independence they understood that Independence is not for them, they will always be a slave to upper-caste people.

Another work that gives a detailed account of the everyday struggle of a Dalit is *Coming Out as Dalit: A Memoir* by Yashica Dutt. This is written by the writer who is born into the Dalit community and gives a detailed description of the experiences of caste-based discrimination faced by Dalits. She was believed that she belonged to the upper-caste, but later through her journey in life she realized the fact that she is actually a Dalit. This book is about identifying her own identity and embracing it through struggles. She moved to different places, India and abroad. She encountered many challenges while traveling because of her caste.

She had to face discriminations because of her identity as a Dalit woman. She had to face multiple problems at a time, discrimination based on caste and gender.

This situation is called as intersectionality. Growing up as Dalit women is difficult in this society where equality has no value. She gives a detailed account of how difficult the life of Dalits are because of the caste system in India and how great its impact is on the everyday life. This book is definitely an example of Dalit literature because it is written by a Dalit author who explains about the plight of Dalits in India through the viewpoint of a true Dalit.

Yashica Dutt is not only a writer but also journalist. This book shows how much a Dalit has to suffer India as well as in US. The story opens with story of her childhood days in India. At first, she didn't understand the privilege of being in an upper-caste and the disadvantages that comes with being a Dalit. As she grown up she understood the caste system and she being a Dalit and it restricted her opportunities. At first, she hid her identity as Dalit from her colleagues but later she decided to embrace her identity and she became a proud Dalit. There are not only disadvantages but advantages are also there being a Dalit, she later understood that while growing up.

In this book she explains about her life experience, while studying journalism and working in media industry. Because of caste discrimination she escaped to New York for a better career. She wanted to see her own life from the point of view of an outsider. This story is about a girl's inner struggles to accept her own identity. And it also highlights the caste-based inequalities. Equal opportunities are not valued in this society. It also shows the importance of education. This book is a great contribution by Yashica Dutt to the Dalit literature.

This project is a study of two novels - *Ants Among Elephants* by Sujatha Gidla and *Coming out as Dalit* by Yashica Dutt based on the theory of Dalit literature. It

consists of five chapters. The first chapter is an Introduction about the theory and the two novels. The second chapter is the detailed study of the theory Dalit literature. It gives a detailed study of the Indian caste system. It also gives a brief note on the empowerment of Dalits. And some important people in Dalit literature and major works are discussed in this chapter. The third chapter is the detailed study of the novel *Ants Among Elephants* by Sujatha Gidla based on the theory of Dalit literature. The fourth chapter is centered on the life of Yashica Dutt and her experiences a Dalit which is explained in her memoir *Coming out as Dalit*. The fifth and the final chapter contains the findings and conclusion of the study.

The purpose of my study is to identify and analyze the struggles of Dalit while growing up. Two novels are taken for this study, they are *Ants Among Elephants* by Sujatha Gidla and *Coming out as Dalit* by Yashica Dutt. Yashica Dutt had been hiding her identity as a Dalit, most of her life. While hiding since childhood she couldn't understand what actually a caste is and she was facing identity crisis. But when she realized the importance of her own identity, she walked through the right paths and became proud of herself. Sujatha Gidla and her family was suffering from poverty and discrimination which made them stronger. The history of her ancestors who fought for the upliftment of lower-caste is remarkable.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Never-Ending Struggles and Resilience of Dalits**

Literary representations of marginalized communities are of the utmost relevance in a time when human rights issues are at the forefront of public discourse. Dalit literature aims to highlight the prejudice, violence, and exclusion that the Dalit population in India experiences. The majority has ignored the lived experiences of the Dalit community members, who have been relegated to the periphery. Their experiences have been viewed as unworthy of writing. The British colonization in India in the 19th and 20th century made many important changes in the society. Many movements took place including freedom struggle. Some movements were emerged for the abolition of caste system. Great leaders like B. R. Ambedkar led the Dalit movement.

The emergence of Dalit literature, which includes poems, novels, memoirs, and other works of a similar nature, is slowly redressing this condition by illuminating the subtleties of the Dalit culture. One of the most significant literary movements in post-independence India, Dalit literature aims to give a long-victimized group of people their rightful place in society. Finally, their struggles with being stigmatized as "untouchables" are being recognized. Dalit literature has evolved to represent the Dalit consciousness, both personally and collectively. The foundation of Dalit sociopolitical movements and literary works is laid by the writings of B.R. Ambedkar, Jyotirao Phule, and Periyar.

During the independence of India many rules were made for equality and a society that is free of caste system. But unfortunately, the rules couldn't break the chain of caste discrimination and violence. In present India there is caste-based



discrimination. No one was successful in eradicating the discrimination of caste system in India. Some movements and literature produced by Dalits helped a lot to make people understand the struggles of Dalits. There are many writers who supported them through their writings. Mahatma Phule and Jyotirao Phule can be considered as the ancestors of Dalit movement. They were great writers and their writings challenged the caste system which marginalized the oppressed people mainly Dalit.

In India there are caste divisions. Some are treated like kings and some are treated as slaves. The inequalities and privileges that present in the caste system is unfair. This caste system divides the society into hierarchical divisions. The traditional Indian caste system is chaturvarna, which means four castes. Brahmin is the superior caste, then the Kshatriya, and then comes Vaisya, at the end is Sudra. Dalit belongs to the lowest division of caste system. Rigveda explains about the creation of people in the 'Purusha Sukta'. According to this myth there is a belief that all humans come from the monstrous body of Purusha.

Purusha is described as a giant man who has thousand heads and thousand eyes. He also has thousand feet. He is known as the ruler of immortality. The myth further explains that his mouth became Brahmin, his arms turned into warriors, his thighs became the business people, and servants were born from his feet. This means that from his head Brahmins were originated. From the shoulders Kshatriyas were born, from his stomach Vaisyas were developed. And finally, the Sudras were born out of his feet. Thus, the four varnas were created.

The first among the four varnas are the learned men or priests, which is Brahmin. Then the next is the strong men or warriors which is Kshatriyas, then the business men which is Vaisya, and the last one is the humble toilers which is Sudras.

This is not the only caste division, the chaturvarnas are further divided into sub castes. In India there are numerous castes and religions. This is also the reason for calling India as a diverse country. The people from the final level of division are known as untouchables. They are also called as 'impure' and 'despicable'. Dalit is the modern term to call this group of people.

Dalit literature came into existence from the late 19th century and 20th century in India. Dalit movement emerged as a result of the injustices and inequalities faced by Dalits. They were marginalized by the Hindu caste system. In 1958 a conference was arranged by Maharashtra Dalit Literature Society. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule also attended the conference and there he used the term Dalit literature for the first time. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar also played a main role in giving voice to Dalits. He was against the division of caste system. Meena Kandasamy also worked hard to give equality to Dalits and to put an end to the sufferings of Dalits. Omprakash Valmiki is a poet and a writer who also supported Dalits through his writings.

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule is an important figure in Dalit literature. He was born into a low caste community. During 19th century he started writing and his writings supported people from low caste and Dalits. He spoke for their rights. His writings were mainly in Marathi and it influenced many people. His most famous work was "Gulamgiri" which was published in 1873. This book shows the caste system and oppression faced by the low caste people by the upper caste people. His works inspired people to write more autobiographical works. He mainly writes about his own experiences because he was born as a low caste person. His works main themes are inequality, oppression and exploitation. He was also a social reformer. He played a significant role in the development of Dalit literature in India.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's works were also significant in the development of Dalit literature. He is also called as Babasaheb Ambedkar. He played a pivotal role in the development of Dalit literature. Not only his writings but his speeches also contributed a lot to Indian Dalit literature. During the 20th century his works and his words had the ability to influence many people. Main themes of his works were socio-political treaties, speeches, and autobiographical writings. He wrote many essays, articles and books. He wrote on several subjects including history, philosophy, political and economics. He gave awareness about self-respect and importance of education through his works. He taught about confidence and dignity to Dalit communities. He fought for equalities of opportunities and his writings were mainly about the real-life experience of Dalit people. His works not only inspired one or two people but a generation of Dalit writers. His works still inspires Dalit writers and political activities.

Another man like Ambedkar who supported Dalits is Omprakash Valmiki who is a Dalit writer and poet. He played an irreplaceable role in the development of Dalit literature. His most famous and significant work in Dalit literature is "*Joothan: A Dalit's Life*". This is an autobiographical novel. It shows his struggle during his childhood. He lived in Uttar Pradesh, India where he was oppressed by the upper-caste people. It shows the realities of the caste-based discrimination and violence. He strongly believed in the importance of education which can break the chain of poverty and can give equal opportunity. His work "*Joothan: A Dalit's Life*" still inspires many people around the world to fight for their basic rights. It is the greatest contribution to the Dalit literature.

Empowering Dalits is not an easy task. It is a complicated procedure which requires a lot of attention. There are many ways to empower Dalits and most important and basic among them is education. Providing them the best quality education and basic life skills can increase employability and can get more opportunities like upper-caste people. The government can also help them in empowering by introducing new policies. Economic support is also an important step in empowering them. If the economic supports like grants, loans, subsidies are given to them their life will be much better. Financial aid is very much important in breaking poverty. Giving awareness is an inevitable task in empowerment of Dalits because giving awareness about the sufferings of the oppressed in the society important to get the support of the people. Social media platforms are the best media to show their struggles because of caste discrimination.

Sujatha Gidla is an irreplaceable Indian-American writer and activist in Dalit literature. She made significant contribution to Dalit literature. Her most important work in Dalit literature is *Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India*. It is a memoir and tells the story of her family who had to go through so much because of caste and sufferings of Dalits in India. Many great writers like Arundhati Roy had praised her work. She tries to show the violence that comes with the caste system through her works. Gidla's books are always special because it has detailed view of real-life experiences of Dalits. Because of her own experiences as a Dalit, she could write more personally. The struggles of Dalits which was ignored by other communities but Gidla saw them and supported them through her writings.

Sujatha Gidla's *Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India* is a memoir that tells the story of the family of Sujatha Gidla. This work shows life of her Grandparents who suffered extreme poverty, caste discrimination and violence they had to suffer under British colonial regime. Through her real-life experiences she shows the caste-based discrimination the Dalits had to face and the historical evolution of Dalit movement. She also makes visible the interconnection of caste and gender. In her works she highlights the violence faced by marginalized people especially Dalit women in particular. It does not simply show the sufferings of Dalits but shows the history of Dalits. Through her powerful words she portrays the evil side of caste-based oppression and their struggle for justice and equality.

Yashica Dutt is an Indian writer and activist who made great contributions to Dalit literature. In 2019 her memoir *Coming out as Dalit* was published which shows her childhood life experience as a Dalit. Actually, she believed that she belonged to a high-caste but later she realized that she was actually a Dalit. Her works are unique because she highlights the caste-based discrimination inside a family. Through her work she empowers Dalits through knowledge especially in media. Dutt is active in social media and she used her social media platform to give awareness about the Indian caste system. She wanted a society where talent and ideas are given more importance rather than caste and family background.

Yashica Dutt's *Coming out as Dalit* is a memoir which can be included in the genre of Dalit literature because it shows the experiences of growing up as a Dalit. It portrays the hardships in the journey of self-discovering and shows the caste-based discrimination within family. As a child she belonged to upper-caste but while

growing up she understood that she is a Dalit, and because of that she had to face many hurdles. Dalits not only has to fight society but sometimes they had to fight with their own family members. This memoir not only takes us through the journey of her life while growing up, but also shows the history of Dalit movement. This memoir shows how terrified she was to hide her real identity as Dalit and she was scared of being found out.

Overall, Dalit literature has a significant role in India's literary and cultural landscape. Dalit literature has challenged Brahminical viewpoint of Indian society and focused more on the experiences of Dalit. Since the beginning its genre had progressed and widened its range. A community which was silenced by the oppressors was given voice by the Dalit literature. It is a great tool for empowerment and bringing changes to the society. It inspired many people and gave courage to fight for a future that is free from the discrimination of caste. As the time passes the support for Dalits are increasing and it is reaching worldwide.

## Chapter 3

### Finding Identity in Oppression

The existence of caste discrimination is due to the formulation of caste system. Numerous hypotheses exist regarding the origin of caste system. Activist and sociologist, Gail Omvedt gave an explanation about how caste system was formed. She begins by examining pre-Hindu civilizations like the Indus Valley before moving on to tribes or groups of farmers, hunters, and fisherman who traded surplus commodities. These teams transformed into "jatis" throughout time. However, as the Aryans (people from Central Asia), who first settled on the subcontinent, did not have any caste-like divisions, these jatis were mostly found among Dravidians, who are thought to be the subcontinent's original inhabitants. Dravidians and Aryans converged into one culture. Aryans claimed themselves as superior than the Dravidians. The concepts of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra were created.

The British theory was based on the Aryan Invasion theory. They believed that the Aryans were considered as superior as white men, and Vaishyas, Kshatriyas, and Brahmins were originated from Aryans who were considered as superior and pure. On the other hand, the Shudras and Dalits were the first people who lived on the Indian subcontinent. Upper-caste people claimed themselves superior to lower-caste people and equal to white men. Jyotirao Phule was against this theory and argued that Aryans invaded and exploited the original inhabitants, they are Shudras and Dalits.

The 'Indo-European language speakers' did not conquer the subcontinent approximately 2,000–1,500 BCE, according to current evidence, but rather migrated there. The Rig Veda, the first known Hindu text, was written about the same time. Manu, who some people believe to be the first human, is credited with writing the

Manusmriti, or code of behavior, about 1,800 years ago as the religion developed. The position of each individual in society is defined in this essay. Dalits were considered pollutants by the Manusmriti and Vedic scriptures.

They were prohibited from having direct contact with the rest of civilization and resided in bastis or wadas outside of villages or major residential areas. They also used other roads and bodies of water. It appears that the caste system's unequal ranking that restricts people to particular occupations was established to defend the wealthiest individuals. The higher castes were able to escape arduous manual employment, securing for themselves and future generations recognized places and the associated material wealth.

However, for this to succeed, the untouchables and lower castes had to totally embrace their lives of slavish labour and excruciating poverty. One way to do it was through the idea of karma, which is the idea that crimes committed in former lives will be atoned for in later ones. It persuaded those who were born into lower castes that their circumstance was due to their own choices made in prior lifetimes. They had to deal with inequity in this existence as well as guilt about potential wrongdoings from a prior one. The Dalits had to work in the most disagreeable jobs because they were karmically soiled. They knelt, bowed, and prostrated themselves to avoid polluting others because they felt that if their shadows were cast on an upper-caste person, it will pollute them.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar also formulated an idea about how untouchability must have been originated. Hindu became vegetarian by stop eating beef during the period of third to sixth century which was the Gupta period. During that time Buddhism which was a non-violent religion was searching for new followers. Hinduism changed



and many spiritual authorities began to promote a vegetarian lifestyle. People from upper-caste easily adopted this way of lifestyle. But poor Dalits couldn't afford this type of lifestyle, they could only afford cheap beef. So eventually they became impure and inferior to upper-caste.

Ambedkar came to the conclusion that customs like Sati, the cruel isolation of widows, and child marriage even at the age of five or six to man of thirty or forty age was to maintain endogamy and manage the issue of surplus men and women in the caste. Ambedkar contended that these three customs restricted upper-caste man from marrying outside their caste. These practices not only caused damage to Dalit women but also to upper-caste women. Caste system has restricted the rights of Dalit to education, land, wearing clean clothes or jewelry and entering the temple was also banned. If they violated any of these rules, it will be considered as insulting the upper-caste people and they were punished severely.

British made their own theories in the eighteenth century about the culture of India and also the about the caste system. They knew that the present caste system was unhealthy but didn't do anything to change it and left it as it was. In fact, they exploited the unequal caste system for their own benefit because it was the caste system that separated the colonial subjects. If the caste system as not present and people were united ruling them will be difficult. Unity can make them stronger and it is not good for the colonizer. So, they never tried to abolish the caste system present in India and exploited it for their own good. Both Ambedkar and Phule find fault in the Britisher's spineless act of supporting caste system.

Britisher's silence to the caste system extended to the education of Dalits also. Dalits were denied of education because of caste system and Britishers

never forced them or supported them for their education. For Bahujan and Dalits separate schools were established, but the teachers who were Brahmins didn't want to teach the lower-caste people. They even believed that if Dalits were trained to become teachers, it will displease the God, so they were against the development of Dalit teachers.

Phule couldn't agree with this absurd belief and questioned that, if God will be displeased when Dalits become teacher then why the Dalits were enlisted in the British army. The schools which were run under the British supported Brahmins and Dalits were mistreated. They only heard the voice and complaints of Brahmins; they even removed the textbook which criticized the caste system by the complaint of Brahmin students. To them Dalits never existed nor they cared to listened to them. By the invasion of Britishers, upper-caste somehow profited from them by getting more powers over Dalits.

The administration was handed over by Britishers to upper-caste, and also power over land and agriculture was given. During the eighteenth and the nineteenth century agriculture and land was the source of income, through this upper-caste benefited the most. Britishers were more interested in the taxes rather than the administration. So, the upper-caste had more power on administration and they exploited the law. Dalits were denied justice, no one was ready to even hear the story Dalits had to say. They were not allowed near judges because Dalits will pollute the Brahmins. So, they had to shout aloud from outside the court room and sometimes important details were missed and were denied justice.

When the colonial period was over the bureaucracy, education, agriculture, media and judiciary was given to upper-caste. During Independence, when Dalits was

facing difficulty in reading and writing, upper-caste people were progressed and became journalists, lawyers, businessman and judges for many generations. But even in the past and the present Dalits were still struggling with numerous things. They didn't even get a chance to become successful, they were still the same untouchable. During the colonial period the colonizers ruled them, after Independence the upper-caste began to rule them.

Before the colonization Christian missionaries from different parts of the world came to India with the aim of spreading Christianity and also education. By the arrival of Christian missionaries, they wanted the freedom of Dalit slaves and also wanted them to realize the importance of equality. After the abolition of slavery some Anglican missionaries focus was turned to Dalit slaves who were freed recently. The missionaries educated the slaves by opening slave schools. Basic reading and writing were taught to Dalit women and Dalit men. Because of the influence of missionaries many Dalits were converted to Christianity. This was one of the biggest conversions.

Instead of teaching the upper-caste Christians to treat Dalits equally they taught the Dalits to improve their habits. They supported Dalits to stop eating meat. Doing this was necessary because even though slavery was abolished the prejudiced society never changed. They still considered Dalits as 'Untouchable' and 'Polluting'. Even after the conversion to Christianity, the discrimination and abuse they got by the upper-caste never ended. Even in Christianity caste system existed. Upper-caste Syrian Christians belittled Dalit Christians. They were against the idea of sitting with Dalits Christians in the church because they considered Dalits dirty. They even had to make separate churches for them. When Dalits were treated as outcaste they focused on education and wanted to blend in with the society.

To attain equality Dalits led many movements against discrimination based on caste. Ayyankali was one of the most significant figures in the Dalit movements, who was born into a Dalit Pulaya family. Dalits were banned from walking through the roads because upper-caste people considered them as dirty and walking in the same road will make them dirtier so they denied Dalits to walk through the same roads. Ayyankali broke the ban of the presence of Dalit in the public space by taking a painted bullock cart that was only available to upper-caste people and rode it. He also demanded for the equal education to the students without considering their caste. He created a group called Ayyankali's army to support the Dalits.

During the making of Constitution of Independent India, it was important to identify who Dalits are so that they can give reservation policies to support Dalits. But unfortunately, Christian Dalits were not included in that Dalits. Legally they weren't considered as Dalits, so no reservations were given to them but Tribal Dalit Christians are an exception. Their votes were considered useless so the parties avoided their plead. Their complaints about discrimination were invisible to everyone around them so they decided to change their religion to escape these never-ending sufferings caused by discrimination based on caste.

*Coming out as Dalit* is memoir which shows the experiences of Yashica and her family had to go through because of their caste. At the early age Dalits were denied education, they didn't get the chance to learn even if they wanted to. Her great-grandfather had to go through this situation, but he was different. He wasn't ready to surrender and he taught himself how to write in the mud by scrawling with a stick. Even when the teachers were not ready to teach him, he attended the class. It was because of his protest that grandfather was able to study.

Her grandfather wanted to join civil service, which is both competitive and the toughest exam in India. Dalits have reservation in civil services and all other government jobs. They can attend the exams as many as attempts as they want unlike other caste people but has age limit that is until thirty-seven. Even though there are many reservations or privileges for Dalits still they are treated as inferior. People will not notice their efforts or achievements they only look at their caste. Even though there are privileges for Dalits, the Indian society will not allow Dalits to prosper because the upper-caste people always want the lower-caste people below them.

The system is created in a way which allows the Dalits to enter but makes it difficult for them to survive in the society which is addicted to caste discrimination. If they use the reservations, they are called opportunist, if they don't use it no one will create opportunities for them as upper-caste people get. They always have to prove that they are worthy of the reservations and the privileges they get. Reservations only paves way to upper-caste system but it is their talent and hard work that flourish them.

Her great-grand father and her grandfather used these opportunities wisely and became successful. Every caste has their own jobs which the upper—caste people couldn't do, because they considered it dirty like cleaning the dirtiest places. But Yashica Dutt's mother's grandfather thought about a different future of their family and joined British Indian army. Yashica Dutt belonged to a lower-caste called Bhangi. It was the Bhangi caste that united her parents which eventually led to marriage. Before marriage her mother had many dreams and condition regarding their future. She wanted to become an IPS Officer like Kiran Bedi. She wanted her husband as a teetotaler but in fact she got a drunkard. At that time, she was pursuing Master's

degree in History. Only two Dalit women was present in the class because education was not limited to Dalits.

Only after a long journey of difficulties, Dalit women got education but that also was somehow restricted. They didn't get the chance to choose which course they had to study. Their family's preference was always before their wish. Yashica Dutt's mother also had to go through this because she wanted to study science or mathematics, but her father forced her to study Humanities, to make his daughter an IAS Officer. This is not the first time she had to ignore her wish for her family. Actually, she wanted to study in Allahabad but it is far from home and there is a rumor that the girls in Allahabad will smoke cigarettes and will drink alcohol. After knowing this her father restricted her to go to Allahabad. She had to sacrifice her wish again. She didn't even get a chance to choose her life partner.

Being a woman and Dalit at the same time, she had to suffer a lot because of this. Her husband is a drunkard and will beat her all the time. She thought her father would rescue her from this mess. But instead, he advised her to be a good wife and daughter-in-law. Everyone started to blame her because her marriage was falling apart, no one noticed the mistakes of her husband. She even thought about suicide and jumped from the roof of the house which injured her legs. The pregnancy became complicated and her chances for surviving was declining. But she survived because of her strong mentality.

Not only Dalit women suffers from domestic violence but other women also have to face this suffering. But women who belong to Dalit community especially from rural areas are more vulnerable and has to suffer a lot. Their gender, class, caste makes them weaker and has to face violence not only from her own family but also

from the society. Most men from upper-caste believe that Dalit women as a sexual property. They rape them whenever they wanted and on one will question them, even their husband has to shut their mouth. No law could save a Dalit woman nor a human.

The caste discrimination between upper-caste and lower-caste is like the racism between Black and white people. African American always tries to present themselves as white. They dress in the way white dresses and tries to talk, walk and behave as the white does. They believe that while imitating them they will have to face less discrimination. Like that Dalits also tries to become upper-caste physically, even though deep down they know they belong to Dalit community. They change their name, lifestyle, the way of talking and even eating habit (Brahmins are vegetarians but Dalits prefer beef which is cheaper). These changes of adapting upper-caste traditions were called as 'Sanskritization' by sociologist, M. N. Srinivas.

For a better life Yashica Dutt and her family moved to Ajmeer which was a better place for them as well as for the education. Ajmeer was also a colony of Britishers and they established many educational institutions in Ajmeer. She got admission in the Sophia convent school. Ajmeer was a perfect place to go beyond their caste. Even if their financial status was not so good, they tried to imitate what upper-caste would do. They celebrated Yashica Dutt's birthday very grandly, to show everyone that they are not lower-class people. The most difficult one in imitating the upper-caste people was speaking in English.

Yashica Dutt's mother had difficulty in speaking but she spoke very fluently. Most of the Dalits are even unable to read English and some of them are troubling with speaking English even if they know how to write and read. Yashica Dutt's mother was teased by her husband and his family because she couldn't speak English,

so she decided that her daughter must speak English fluently and the respect that she didn't get will be given to her daughter. Yashica Dutt thought that only if she excelled in English, she will be treated equal to upper-caste. Her mother also had to face the criticism of giving birth to girl child. First child was girl and the second also but fortunately the third child was born as a boy, it was a relief to Yashica Dutt's mother.

Being a Dalit comes with poverty also because of discrimination and denied opportunities for success. Yashica Dutt's family was also facing financial problems. Her father's government salary was not enough to survive and her mother pawned her jewelry. To pay the fees her mother would use gold bangles. Her mother could have sent her to a local school but she didn't. She was so adamant in showing that they do not belong to lower-class even if it costs more money. Yashica Dutt was sent to Sophia's boarding school so that her mother can keep an eye on her drunkard husband.

While living in boarding school it became difficult for her to act as an upper-caste in her every breath. It was not an easy task even for an adult and she was at the age of seven. But she was able to do that and she got a chance to learn about upper-caste women, which will benefit her while acting as an upper-caste. She clearly observed every tiny detail about how they talk, braid their hair and how they tuck in their sheets. Even if they didn't have any cash her mother would send her daughter money to maintain the aura of upper-caste. If the upper-caste mask is torn then everyone will know that they are Dalits and they must face discrimination. So, her mother will do anything to maintain the act even if they are in short of money.

Her mother was worried about the skin color also. We can maintain an upper-class life by buying luxury cloth and accessory but skin color cannot be changed. Still



her mother would try by putting face mask or any other means to make her daughter whiter. White skin is pictured as more superior and black skinned people are born to be inferior. The upper caste people are mostly white and Dalits are mostly dark. There is racism in caste also. The advertisements about fairness cream manipulates the mind of people and make them believe that dark skin is bad. The advertisements make them question their own identity. White skinned people always think they are pure and superior to dark skinned people who are treated as dirty and inferior.

After completing studies in Sophia, Yashica Dutt and her family moved to Gangapur city where her dad was posted. She then studied at Mussoorie-based boarding school because of the subsidized fees. But because of late coming she was not able to use this advantage. Still the people at school were helpful and accepted Yashica's admission. Because of insufficient money her mother decided to sell the land belonged to her father but her grandfather was against this. He thought that there is no use in educating a girl in an expensive school. But her mother strongly believed that that is the only way to get accepted as upper-class people. Getting education for Dalit children is very difficult especially for girls.

Educating Dalit children is very hard, they don't have financial backup and the parents have to beg to school because of the inability to pay the fees. Yashica Dutt also had to go through this. Her mother and father went to see every officer in the school hoping that anyone will understand their situation and will help them. While going through this, her mother was very strict in maintaining the mask of upper-caste. Her mother told her to hide her caste and act as a Parashar Brahmin. Her mother was even worried about her second daughter who was three-year-old, could also put on a mask like Yashica Dutt did, the mask of upper-caste. While staying at Mussoorie

Yashica had to excel in everything and hide her caste. She only understood that no one will expect a Dalit to be bright, so she had to prove herself again and again to be the brightest among all. The caste discrimination has put a lot of weight on children even though they couldn't understand how a caste system actually works.

Her mother was a strong person, who will not be discouraged if anything happens wrong. When they were becoming poorer and her urge to become an upper-caste never ended. She bought a cow which only upper-caste people will do. This was her another act to be an upper-caste. She named her Laali and loved her so much, but couldn't afford her for a long time and had to let go of her. While Laali was living with Dalit family Laali also had to go through poverty. Like other cows in upper-caste she didn't get good food, she had to eat garbage and sometimes drink water from the gutter. She never stopped in becoming an upper-caste. Doing even a simple thing like learning Sanskrit was not considered appropriate for them because of their caste but she was not someone who could be stopped. She tried whatever she could to become an upper-caste, to break the chain of discrimination.

Dalits job was not like an office job, it required a lot of patience and hard work. Yashica Dutt's grandfather's wife was a manual scavenger, removing dried waste from people's restrooms. The situation has not changed yet, nowadays we can see Dalit people cleaning toilets. It cannot be changed until toilets are fully updated. This job has not only paid less salary but has also given health issues. They do their job with bare hands; no safety measure is taken. Other people don't care about them and let them do it. Women will go to houses and clean toilets and carry the waste in a basket carrying in her head and dump it very far from where people live. While rainy

season the waste will reach their body because of the bad condition of the basket and it reaches their dress and hair.

Their job caused many incurable diseases like tuberculosis and some people even die because of health problems caused by this job. Still upper-caste people will not care about them or respect them. They are not even considered as humans and sometimes they will not get paid by money, they will get leftover food and old clothes for doing this job. Dalit women's condition are worse, they will get paid less than Dalit men. They even have to suffer the sexual harassment in their working place.

Even if they wanted to quit their job they can't because it their job from generation to generation there is no escape from this. They are ready to risk their life for few rupees to clean the dirty society, or else they will be starved to death because of Dalit's poverty. The smell on their body while doing their job will not get away from them even after cleaning themselves for many times, so people will outcaste them and they have to live in a place which is very distant from upper-caste. They are not only outcasted because of their job but also because they eat cheap beef and are considered dirty whoever eats dead animal.

Owning a piece of land was a great dream for Dalits, when her mother was able to fulfill that dream, she was so happy and it also encouraged her. Then her mother started to believe in astrology. This was also another way to become an upper-caste. She learned Hindu religion and rituals swiftly, so that she could become an upper-caste. While building their house her mother started to believe in Vaastu Shastra. But building a house was not an easy task. She had to go through many difficulties but she didn't get discouraged and hoped for the best. And finally, after many years of patience the house was finally built.

The poverty strikes them the most when her father's job was suspended. The real struggle began from there. They couldn't pretend as upper-caste anymore her mother had to do two jobs as an NGO worker in the morning and in the evening, she has to work at the boutique. To escape from this poverty, she had to study hard and excel in the field of mathematics or science to enter into medical or engineering. But her heart was at English Literature class all the time. But for the sake of her family, she had to ignore her desire. While getting admission at St. Stephens her mother ticked her caste while filling the form to get the student quota. She couldn't pretend to be upper-caste anymore. Yashica Dutt started to accept her caste and stopped pretending to be upper-caste.

While studying at St. Stephens she started tuition for children to get money. After her class while other students form group and enjoy their youth, but she will run to her house for tuition. Because of her poverty she couldn't even enjoy her youth. They also suffered because of the decreasing availability of food. Yashica Dutt started to work at call center also for money. Because of her fluency in English, she could stick with her job in call center. Because of her fluency in speaking English everyone thought that she was an upper-caste.

After two months she quit her job, because it was not a job meant for her. After that she got a job in journalism and she liked journalism. She started to ghost write articles for others. But after her graduation she needed Master's Degree in journalism to land in a good job. For higher studies she needed money, but being a Dalit it was impossible to have that much money. She continued her ghost writing and also, she did edit and proof reading.

While studying in St. Stephens even though she didn't pretend to be an upper-caste, she was not ready to tell her real caste to other. She always feared when the result was on the notice board, because everyone could see her name under her caste category. Other students will discuss about how other low-caste students get reservations, and they believed that it is easy for them to study because of the reservations. But only Dalit students will know the true sufferings of Dalits to reach to this point. Even though Yashca Dutt heard every discussion she stayed silent. She couldn't explain to others about how she felt ashamed about getting reservation that belonged to her. People made her doubt herself. Others argued that reservations had destroyed the chances of upper-caste students.

In the Universities we can see discriminations. Universities and colleges should be the place which teaches the students about equality, but the teachers and students discriminate people. The professors who belonged to the upper-caste discriminated their lower-caste students and colleagues. The students question the merits of lower-caste students and discriminate. Students learn from teachers but if the teacher is showing discrimination the students will learn from the teacher. They are ruining the future generations.

Before independence the struggles of Dalits were more severe. Students were not allowed to sit in the benches. Now it has changed, the students are allowed to sit on the back bench were no one notices. Now Dalits don't need to forcefully do their job they can do whatever job they wanted but the problems were the opportunities were not reached to them. They can only aim at public service job. Now Dalits could live with the upper-caste people only if the owner of the house allow then to rent it.

Even though Untouchability and discrimination has been banned people always find new ways to isolate them.

Yashica Dutt wanted her job to be a reporter. Unlike other upper-caste students she didn't have any connections nor money to be a reporter. She had to search for opportunities by herself. She joined FCBUlka with high salary, but there also she had to face discrimination. People started to think that because of her 'Stephanian quota' she doesn't have to work so hard and will get salary without great efforts. Her hard-earned job seemed effortless to others. No one will see the efforts they had taken to reach there, but will easily judge them without thinking it would hurt others.

Quotas are available for upper-class also but people will not question them, because they think they deserve them. Everyone will support them and congratulate them and will celebrate the victory with them. But when it comes to Dalit or OBC people will not see their talent and simply criticize them that they only reached there because of the reservation they got, otherwise they will not reach anywhere. Dalits are also talented; they just need a platform to show it and an opportunity to prove themselves.

While working she realized the need to learn more. She wanted to become more capable and expert in journalism so that no one will question her caste. She started to research in everything that was available to her freely. Her mother wanted Yashica Dutt to do Master's programme. She sent her application to Colombia University to do her Master's programme. But as usual money was always a problem, then with the help of many people who loved her and with loans and scholarships finally she went to Colombia. It was a rare chance and she grabbed it.

While she was writing an essay for Colombia University, she realized that, in the process of pretending to be upper-caste she almost started to forget about her own identity. While writing her caste Bhangi popped up in her mind for several times. It was the same college that B. R. Ambedkar had presented her thesis. She started to remember her grandfather's struggle for freedom. Then she wrote about her caste and struggles while hiding it. While expressing the things she bottled up in her heart she began to be proud of her caste. Before leaving to New York, she decided to open up to her friend Parul. She thought that Parul will be displeased after knowing her caste name but instead it didn't even matter to her at all. Yashica Dutt thought that Parul will hate her but actually her lover for her friend didn't change at all. She posted about her caste in Facebook also.

At New York she began to speak about her caste freely. She shared her experience of hiding her caste. She was taught that her caste was lower and inferior, but now she is proud about her caste, she is not shameful at all. In Delhi she couldn't announce her caste to everyone because living there was difficult, she didn't want to add Dalitness to the difficulties. Being a Dalit was more miserable. Only after moving to New York, where caste is not an issue, she was ready to accept her caste. She stopped hiding her caste as well as hiding from herself.

While living in New York she understood many things like colonialism, race and class. It made her understand about the caste system that she was unaware of while she was living in India. She started to accept herself and her caste. She started to think of Ambedkar. She was not like other Dalits who already know about Ambedkar, because talking about him means being a Dalit. Her mother was protecting her from being find out as Dalit so she never talked about Ambedkar or even tried to

know about him. She then researched about him, tried to read his books and understood his ideologies.

Because of the being a Dalit many people were abused, raped, mistreated, discriminated and even killed them. So, there is no wonder why most of the people want to portray them as upper-caste. At an early time, upper-caste people could easily find out Dalits, because their dressing and also by their jobs. But now Dalits can easily blend with upper-caste. Dalits has mastered the art of pretending to be an upper-caste. But actually, every Dalit should be proud to identify them as Dalit because their forefathers have gone through many struggles for Dalits. They should not forget their history.

In the beginning of the story Yashica Dutt is portrayed as a girl who knew nothing about caste system and didn't question her mother when she tried to cover her up with a mask of upper-caste. But the end of the story we can see a woman who is proud being a Bhangi. Many people wrote about Dalit as a victim and about reservation that is undeserving, but no one wrote about Dalits who are like her. So, she wrote "*Documents of Dalits Discrimination*". The reader was curious about how a Dalit can be fluent in English. Some people said that without undergoing lots of sufferings one cannot be a true Dalit. Some people had misunderstandings about Dalits some were proud to read her work.

While working as journalist she realized that Dalit journalist are very few in numbers. While seeking jobs many were rejected because of their caste. Instead of checking his/her talent people are looking for their caste name while interviewing. Being a Dalit journalist is also difficult because people will question their work



saying they are biased when covering an issue related to caste. Many people already biased that Dalit people cannot speak or understand English and will not hire them.

When no one supported them, they used online media to show their anger because of discrimination they had to face. The issues which mainstream media ignored was shown by the Dalits through online media which grabbed the attention of thousands of people. Injustices that the Dalit community had to face, was show in front of people through media. The cases of rapes, assaults, murders, and every cruelty of upper-caste was shown to the people. Nothing could silence their voice. Even non-dalits started to learn about them and showed support for them. Dalit artist have begun to produce work that illustrate Dalits narratives. There is some optimism that we can move past the ‘single story’ that the upper-caste have created for us so far when more Dalit creators join them.

Yashica Dutt wrote the book *Coming out as Dalit* to show the stories of Dalits which were ignored by the society and media. She had tried to enlighten us how the caste system looks like. Whether we are aware of it or not, practically all-important choices and advances in the nation—whether in the judiciary, the executive branch, or the media—are made by upper-caste individuals. And they virtually usually exclude Dalits or members of lower castes. Caste is a factor in several issues, including government employment, cow trading, manual scavenging, and reservations. Every area of our existence includes it. There are countless stories out there, we have to identify them and understand them. She is a journalist, author, and Dalit woman who lived most of her life in hiding. Whether casteism still exists or not, it is not the question. Once you pay attention to people who are yelling to be heard, you won't have doubts.

## Chapter 4

### The Silenced Voices Of Marginalized

*Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India* by Sujatha Gidla is an analysis of Indian history, examining how various communities in India have been impacted by colonization, class conflict, and political activism. Gidla uses her personal experiences to emphasize the importance of education and awareness in combating discrimination and offering an escape from the cycle of poverty and social isolation. We will look at how caste, identity, and social justice are addressed in Sujatha Gidla's narrative in this essay. We'll discuss how *Ants Among Elephants* adds to the literature of Dalits and the larger discussion of prejudice and social injustice in India. Finally, we will look at how these ideas relate to the worldwide fight for justice and equality.

Sujatha Gidla was born in Khazipet, a small town in Andhra Pradesh into a middleclass family who are untouchables. Her parents were college lecturers. When she left Andhra Pradesh for America at the age of twenty-six, people asked her about her caste, how people can know about others caste and what is supposed to be an untouchable. So, she started explaining about that. Everyone in the town or village already knows others caste; no one can hide it. But strangers can't recognize the caste when you travel somewhere else. People will ask about your caste and no one can escape that without answering.

Everyone has the right to know, according to custom. Some people will choose to tell the truth and will become the victims of discrimination and assaults. Other choose tell lies and will suffocate for a very long time while pretending to an upper-caste. Every caste has a unique duty and a distinct home. The Brahmins (who

serves as priest), the carpenter, potters, blacksmiths and so forth. Each one of them lives in a separate place within the community. The untouchables, who's unique function—their ancestral duty—is to work in other people's fields or engage in other dirty labor, are not permitted to reside in the community at all.

They must reside somewhere than the village proper. They are not permitted to go into temples. They cannot approach water sources utilized by other castes for drinking. Not permitted to use the same utensils or to eat in the same chair as a Hindu of a higher caste. Numerous additional such limitations and indignities also exist and differ from one location to another. An untouchable is assaulted or killed every day for wearing sandals or for riding a bicycle, according to Indian newspapers.

When she was a child no one told her that she was an untouchable, it was the mother's duty to tell her daughter about her caste but she only told her that they were Christians. In India, every Christian were Untouchable in the past. Being a Christian untouchable is hard, the Hindu neighbors will treat them like they never existed. Upper-caste men will rape untouchable women and will make children with her, but will never marry her.

If an untouchable boy falls in love with an upper-caste girl he will be thrown in front of a train and no one will question them. People consider Hindus as superior and Christians are treated like inferior creature. Sujatha Gidla thought that this is natural and accepted this. But questions raised in her head while watching a movie which showed a rich Christian girl who falls in love with a poor boy. A lot of questions popped up in her mind but at her age she couldn't manage to find answers.

At the age of nineteen, she left her town for education. She took admission in Regional Engineering College which is situated in Warangal. There she saw people

who are very different from her town. Girls were very modern and she came to know about boyfriend and girlfriend. Every girl could speak in English. It was all new to her, she learned many new things. After that she went to IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) in Madras. In hostel she saw rich, high-class people and superior Christians. Outside her town everything was different.

In Madras boys will flirt with Christian girls but in her town, they called her and her sister shit lilies. Christian girls had nicknames like crows, pigs and scavengers. She wanted to befriend with these girls but she was shunned like other Hindu girls would do to her in her town. People around her made her doubt herself. She thought she had some defects that's why people are avoiding her. She was confused why Kerala Christians got more respect than her. She decided to find out about her ancestor's story.

Sujatha Gidla asked about the history of her ancestors to her mother and she started telling stories from her grandparents' generation. Venkataswami and Atchamma was her mother's grandparents. They did not practice agriculture, instead they used fruits and honey to stay alive. They didn't belong to Hindus. They had their own tribal goddesses and worshipped them. They lived in the forest and was not curious about outside society. When the Britishers came, they were forced to leave forest and live in the civilized society. Hindus owned land, and they didn't get a chance to own a land and were pushed into the category of lower-caste, because to live in a society they should have a caste.

Their place was always outside and were called untouchable and considered as dirty. They had many restrictions. They lived apart from the Hindu society, their job was impure occupation so no one wanted to be near them and they couldn't even

share meals or marry other caste people. They are not allowed to learn reading and writing; they will be illiterate without getting a chance to study. When missionaries came, they were able to go to schools but had to face discrimination there.

Untouchable student was made to sit on the floor while upper-caste students sat on benches.

Her great grandfather had six sons, and youngest was her grandfather, Prasanna Rao Kambham. Unlike other sons Prasanna Rao was educated by the missionaries and was trained to be a teacher. Prasanna Rao falls in love with Maryamma and asks her hand to her mother Marthamma. They were also untouchables. They were married and both of them worked as teachers in missionaries. Upper-caste people wear most decent dress and untouchable wear loincloths. When Mariyamma wore a nice dress and went to market she was criticized for wearing decent clothes. They didn't even apologize for their bad behavior. They couldn't stay there anymore and left the village.

They had a son named G'nana Satyamurthy and while growing up everybody called him as Satyam. And he also had a brother named William Carey and a sister named Mary Manjulabai but her family called her Papa which means baby. Satyam knew that his family was lying to the land owner that they are not untouchables, and they stopped eating beef to prove that. Prasanna Rao was in debt and because of poverty her left his wife and children and ran away and joined military and became clerk because he could read and write. He would send some money to his family. Maryamma couldn't handle the children while there was bombing and took her children to their Uncle Nathaniel's house in Pranasa where Maryamma's mother Marthamma lived.

While playing Satyam noticed a boy in the meadows who would gaze him. When he enquired about him, he came to know that he is 'golla'. They are low-caste people whose occupation is cattle herding. He learned that Hindus are superior to untouchables. Satyam belonged to 'Mala' caste. Every caste has their own occupations. 'Madigas' job was to take the dead animals from village and make leather, 'Malas' were considered as servants of villages and had to do menial works.

Satyam didn't actually have a house; he was moving from his aunt then to his uncle now to grandmother. This is the result of poverty and being born into an untouchable family. At first, he was interested in Gandhi but at some period he was not satisfied with Gandhi's tactics then he became a follower of Subash Chandra Bose. He was also a part of freedom struggle through his own ways. He as a promising leader and had led a strike while he was in college. After getting freedom he realized that the independence is not for people like him, lower-caste or untouchables. The upper-caste was freed from Britishers but the lower-caste people are still under upper-caste and that's not going to change.

This work of Sujatha Gidla mainly shows about the poverty that an untouchable has to go through while growing up. While studying in college he starved because his father had stopped sending him money. After his father returned, he bought land because for an untouchable owning a piece of land is very prestigious and most difficult thing to do because of poverty. Because of this they experienced poverty and Satyam had to starve in college.

He was not unfamiliar with poverty. He had lived in poverty all his life. In his village all of them were ants. Even if one was slightly larger than the rest, it didn't really matter. Satyam, however, was an ant amid elephants at A.C. College. He was

the only pupil in this position. He was hungry, but his loneliness and shame hurt him more. Even though they were in poverty, the Kambham family managed to get by at home with what they had. They never thought to want more. They simply carried on with their way of life.

A man received a half-egg when they offered egg curry. That was what the patriarch in their household consumed. Unless they saw fruits on a tree or someone was ill, they seldom gave fruits any thought. Prasanna Rao would occasionally buy Satyam's mother a grapefruit when she was ill and on the verge of death. They believed that grapefruits were intended by nature for the ill. When the kids wanted to share, the adults said that there is medication in that grapefruit which is for their mother. Satyam was ashamed that his classmates might have seen his name posted at the entrance of the mess hall. He had no money for books or lab records or term fees or exam fees. He couldn't afford to dress the way students were supposed to, in shirt and pants.

Satyam didn't have much to do so he wandered around the library and started to read and falls in love with literature. Satyam was a famous poet with the penname Shivasagar, which meant God Shiva and he was called as SM. He was a communist. He was not good in studies and concentrated more on the activities to support untouchable. He even spoke in strike and captured many people's heart. While struggling for untouchable he knew many new things and also came to know about Vetti system. In this system, every family should give their first-born male child to Dora to be a slave in his house. The meaning of Vetti is unpaid labour. In this system the lower-caste were forced to work for upper-caste without getting paid. The landlords would keep lower-caste girls for their pleasure.

Large landowner is called as doras and they lived in a house called Gadi. When doras came and they took the lands, untouchables became their slave. Under the doras rule, people of all classes were subjected to cruel punishment. Every caste endured pain. Everyone was compelled to deliver products and services to the Dora on demand and without payment under the Vetti system. The potters were required to create pots for the doras home. Every member of his family, as well as his retinue of slaves and attendants, need clothing from the weavers. They had to have shoes made by the cobblers. The doras field tools needed to be made and repaired, and his homes needed to be improved. The Dora's glasses have to be filled at all times by the toddy tappers, who turn palm sap into local booze.

The peasant who had nothing to give the doras was forced to accept free labor from them. All of the male members of the doras family had to have their hair cut, their faces shaved, and their bodies bathed and massaged with oil. People had to wash the washer. The villagers who had nothing to offer the Dora were forced to make a free service. All of the male doras members had to have their hair trimmed, their faces shaved, and their bodies bathed and oil-massaged. The washer people will wash the doras family's clothes and rub his feet till he nodded off. On the doras property, the diggers had to construct embankments.

Those without any particular abilities were required to work in the doras fields, carry his goods, and perform whatever other tasks he assigned. The doras and his family frequently rode in palanquins when they had to go anywhere. The doras palanquin was obliged to be carried by the men of the boya (stonecutter) and besta (fisherman) caste as they travelled to many places. The doras might ride a horse or bullock cart at other periods. When he did, a washer man caste man would need to run



before of the horse to clear a path and another behind to act as an escort. Not only had those in the poor service castes endured hardship under the Vetti system. Ritual services for the doras were to be carried out by Brahmins. He needed to be provided with food by the grocers. A merchant was supposed to obtain an item just for the doras if it was out of stock, all without charge.

The doras owned the entire hamlet and everything in it. One could receive a fine and a beating for even picking up a twig from the ground for their hearth. The doras also belonged to every woman in the hamlet. They were required to leave their food on their plates and come to his bed if he called them while they were eating. Young untouchable girls were chosen to reside in the doras home where they acted as concubines for him, his family, and visitors. These slave females travelled with the doras daughter as part of her dowry along with pots, pans, and other property when she got married and moved to live in her husband's village. When doras were defeated after a long struggle, the lands were divided among the people.

Satayam didn't pass the exam, while concentrating on the Party. He had a crush on a girl called Flora, but she rejected him because of his caste. Then his father wrote letter to make him come back to house. Prasanna Rao came back now they are living in Telaprolu, which is place which gives more importance to the number of lands people own rather than their marks or education. Reddys were the dominating people in that place, he owned lots of land after getting Independence. At that time the Reddys wanted to educate their children well but the good teachers at that time was untouchables. But for the teachers to live in that village was impossible, because upper-caste people couldn't stand to live with untouchables. So, untouchables have to

live away from upper-caste and Reddy gave his house for rent. Prasanna Rao and his family managed to stay in that rented house.

Prasanna Rao became famous among his students because of talented teaching skills. They called him 'Masteroo' with love. Not only the students but the villagers also liked him. He not only taught students in school but after school he took tuitions for students. Living in a hut was difficult especially in rainy seasons. Because of the rain woods will be wet it is difficult to set fire to cook. He had to walk miles to get water, because the well which is near his house is only for upper-caste, untouchables are not allowed to go near it. No one in that place helped him because of his caste. He couldn't handle any more so he called his wife's mother Marthamma to help.

When Satyam came back no one criticized him for his failure in studies. We can see a supportive family here. There are many incidents in this book which shows the supportive family. Satyam settled in the house and helped his father in tuition. At his free time, he would go to library to feed his curiosity. He read books and also started to write. Because of reading hobby, he was an intelligent person and he shared his knowledge to his sister Papa. She was an intelligent girl. She excelled in her studies. If any subjects would trouble her, she would work hard to excel in it. She was so talented.

Bharati was a friend of Papa who belonged to Magida caste. Their occupation was trading dead animal. After the death of an animal madiga would carry them away from upper-caste people and would sell it to lower-class people. They will make leather out of this dead animal also. Her house is filled with bad smell. When Papa asked to come to her house Bharati refused it. At that time Papa didn't understand why she refused her but later she realized that she was refused to enter into Bharati's

house because she was ashamed of her own situation. She was so poor that she couldn't afford a glass cover for her kerosene lamp. Bharati will study under that kerosene lamp. One day her mother slept and didn't notice the fire which came out of the kerosene lamp, it set fire on the house they were dead. Poverty can sometimes kill their own lives.

Satyam and his friend Nancharayya would never miss even small chance to uplift untouchables. Nancharayya suggested to Satyam that they should establish a People's Theatre branch of Communist Party in Gudivada. But the party leaders didn't support them financially. They thought about casting people from Pakis. In coastal Andhra, the term "pakis" refers to the caste whose occupation is the most demeaning, indecent, and inhumane of all. They are referred to as manual scavengers. Simply put, they haul away human feces.

They manually empty the "dry" latrines, which are still widely used throughout India. They only have a tiny broom and a tin plate as tools. They use these to load their palm-leaf baskets with excrement, which they then carry five or six kilometers on their heads to a location outside of town where they are permitted to dispose of it. Pushcarts have taken the role of these baskets, but it has not changed yet. People still use the traditional method of loading the waste into a basket and carrying in their head.

These employees are almost entirely women. They are unaware of the fact that gloves exist, which keeps their hands safe from dirt. They don't know about it and they don't own them also. They have to lower their backs to sweep as their brooms become less effective. When the leaks in their baskets begin, their faces are covered in filth. These folks become completely covered in filth during the rainy season,

including their hair, eyes, noses, and mouths. They are endemic to infectious diseases like tuberculosis. It may lead to death.

These Pakis were employed as janitors and sanitation workers as India evolved into a modern civilization with public buildings, schools, offices, railroads, movie theaters, and sewage systems. Since the employment of the Pakis is caste-based, their pay is not actual remuneration but rather discretionary charity. The majority of Pakis are obliged to borrow money at excessive interest rates and end up in debt as a result of the resultant income volatility. Even their work schedule is erratic. Those who work in railways always have a bad day, because the employer will say that they can stop their job when the train stops. But unfortunately, the train never stops and they have to work non-stop.

Behind the Gowri Sankar Cinema Hall, in their own distinct peta, the pakis of Gudivada resided. Because wealthier individuals would not want to live next to the noise, movie theaters are often erected in underprivileged areas. However, the Gudivada Pakis appreciated having a busy movie theater just next to their residences. They could hear the music and conversation from outside its boundaries all day and all night. They became friends with the ushers, who would let them in for free to sit in the floor class (i.e., on the bare floor, the cheapest seating option in Indian cinemas) when the theater was not full.

Every paki in Gudivada was able to memorize every line of speech by the first or second week of a film's run. While watching the movie they would learn to dance and act for entertainment and they loved doing it. They knew that part leaders will be against this idea of recruiting paki people as performers, but he didn't drop this idea. He went with his plan and performed with them. The paly grabbed the attention of

many people. Their play was about two peoples, rickshaw puller and landlords. The pakis got recognized for their hard work and talent and even won prizes.

Caste discrimination affect children very much even if they didn't totally understand the concept of caste system. While playing in the ground we can see discrimination, while sharing food and so on. Carey, Satyam's brother also had faced many discriminations and he became very violent. There was one incident which punished him even though he was not at fault because of his caste. In school upper-caste students will rule the lower-caste student. They will set the rules and everyone should others should obey them without questioning.

They will not allow other untouchables and Carey play on the playground. This battle broke into fight and at the headmaster's office, Carey was punished. He also got into trouble while harassing an upper-caste girl. Touching an upper-caste girl by untouchable boy is considered as sin and that also in temple. The upper-caste people were furious, if Carey was caught, he would have been killed by them. Not only he would have been in trouble, but his whole family will be in danger.

When Papa won gold medal and want to go to college the thought of fees was disturbing the family members. They went for scholarships, but some selfish people wanted to cancel that scholarship, but there are still few kind hearted people like Bapanayya who helped in scholarship. When Manjula was finally able to go to college, she has to face discrimination because of her gender and also because of her caste. There were hundreds of men and only a few girls. Being a women and untouchable, made them suffer more. Girls should wait in the ladies waiting room till the lectures enter the classroom, then only they can enter into the classroom. But the boys freely entered into the classroom, they didn't have any particular rules.

Boys in the college treated high-caste (like kamma caste) girls with respect but they gave insulting nicknames to untouchable and low-caste (like mala caste) girls which would make some of the girls to cry. Majority of the people in the college including staffs, teachers and students were kamma caste. But Manjula was different she was treated well. Students wanted to befriend her, because she was intelligent and decent unlike other untouchable girls. At that time girls will not read many books but Manjula because of her brother learned a lot and read the books which her brother left in their house. Her brother taught her well about society and caste.

In college, her history professor, Rama Prabhu discriminated. A teacher should teach the students about equality but he taught discrimination to students. He would make her stand up and criticize her saying that she should not be here, education is not for people like her. He would always asks questions to her and when she couldn't answer, he would insult her. She was treated badly in front of many students and no one supported her. She lost confidence in her and believed that she was ugly because of this discrimination she had to face as a student.

Her brother was protective of her and made her look unattractive in the name of protecting her. She had no right in her dressing. In that period women were like that, only her family's wishes will come true and rules are set by men in the household. She believed that modern girls who dress as they wish are actually bad girls, that's how her family teaches her.

A rich kapu family had employed Manikya Rao (from mala caste) to teach Niranjanamma, a young lady. Niranjanamma, who was 19 years old, confided in her charming 24-year-old private tutor. She was quite depressed. Her grandmother Rangamma, an elderly widow who oversaw the family's assets, was in charge of her

life because both of her parents had passed away while she was a young child. Rangamma's husband passed away, but as she was a woman, she was unable to inherit the land; instead, her son received it. Rangamma was appointed legal guardian because he was too young to manage it at the time.

Rangamma constructed a sizable compound on this area, settling forty or fifty unhappy prostitutes there. She maintained a protection fee for these women. She maintained a group of Goons to make sure they paid up in a hurry. The family's wealth continued to increase. Rangamma, however, had a tenuous grip on this fortune because she was a woman. It hinged on her power over her son, who remained subservient to her rule even after he reached adulthood and was married. He had to remarry nevertheless because his first wife passed away without leaving him a kid. He might endanger Rangamma's standing if he brings another woman into the household.

As a result, Rangamma arranged for her fourteen-year-old granddaughter Niranjanamma to marry her widowed son. Manikya Rao was recounted in detail by Niranjanamma about her terrible union with her much elder uncle. A man with a body full with several diseases. An uneducated, incompetent man who had only completed third grade, as opposed to Niranjanamma who was about to graduate with a bachelor of science.

After someday one night, Niranjanamma got a rickshaw, snuck out of the home, and arrived at Manikya Rao's door. She was expecting. It was his kid. She said he can do whatever he wants to with this kid. Manikya Rao made an effort to comfort her. The conversation ended before they could decide what to do. Rowdies belonging to Rangamma, carrying weapons arrived at their doorstep. They didn't even had time to pick up their sandals and ran away. Manikya Rao assured his loved one to be at

ease. He was an honorable Communist. They would be rescued from this situation by the party. They arrived at a town committee leader's home at an ungodly hour, and he or she welcomed them inside.

The Guntur party committee was called to an urgent meeting the following morning, and Manikya Rao was there. All of the leaders were kammass. The party leaders were ready to risk their party's support for one individual. So, they didn't help the lovers. While his friend's life was in jeopardy, Satyam could not do nothing. They couldn't sit there anymore and left to a place where no one knew them to escape from this mess. Nobody knew where Manikya Rao and Niranjamma were hiding.

Satyam couldn't leave his friend like that and searched for him and when he got them, he brought them to his house. Because of that his family had to face many difficulties, but as a supportive family they didn't say anything to him. Manikya Rao went in search of job, to take care of Niranjamma, Carey and Manjula couldn't attend college. During this time other untouchable people helped them by giving them food and necessary things. Untouchable people always have unity to protect their people unlike upper-caste people. Satyam realized that it was danger to let Niranjamma stay in his house because the goons have reached near them so he transferred her to colony of prostitute. Unfortunately, Carey also had to go with her and it would ruin her reputation.

Manikya Rao searched for job and when he finally got lecturer job, he was arrested at his classroom. It was Satyam who rescued him after a lot of fights. Satyam solved this issue by proving that Niranjamma has a baby, by letting them see her. The issue ended there, but the actual problem was happening to Manjula. People thought her as a bad girl and boys started to approach her for sex, because she lived in



the land of prostitute and she is untouchable. Satyam had to interfere in this matter. He got into fights to protect his sister.

Satyam was a loyal friend, brother, son and the best leader who supports the oppressed no matter what happens. He joined the college, in which his brother and sister was studying. On his way to campus one morning, he came across a pitiful scene. Outside their tents, a group of destitute Tamil Nadu migrant lepers were weeping and beating their chests. Their houses were being demolished by a bulldozer sent by a landlord who desired to purchase the property. As the bulldozer approached, Satyam threw his books to the side and bolted. Along with him, his pals Nancharayya, Rama Rao, and Vishnu stopped the devastation. A court granted the lepers the land a few months later, and they were so appreciative that they gave their colony the new name Satyamurthy Nagar.

When Marthamma went back to Pranasa because of the injury caused by Carey no one was there to take care of the children so, Satyam thought about his marriage. He married a caste girl, Maniamma, his cousin. Before marriage he had some conditions. First one is to take care of him while he is studying, Satyam is brought up like a prince who wouldn't do anything on his own. She should take care of his sister, because her studies was more important. Brothers didn't let their sister to do any work because they know after marriage, she has to do all the works in her husband's house. The next condition was to take care of Marthamma, who looked after his brother and sister, when she is back home. Maniamma has to take care of his father also. And the final condition was to put up with Carey's anger. After agreeing to all these conditions, they got married and had as son named Siddhartha.

During the wedding function there was an argument on Pig. People want pig as feast because it is tradition. But Satyam had another idea. He considered eating beef is barbaric. Untouchables eat beef because it is cheap and it is the only food which is tastier and cheaper. But upper-caste people think eating dead animal is as filthy as untouchable. Here pig represents untouchable, their job is mostly in dirty place because of this dirt they get food to survive and they also live in places that are not so clean. Likewise pig also eat dirty food for its survival and can live in dirt. Pigs are considered as filthy animal and is not treated with respect unlike cows to the upper-caste. Upper-caste people treat untouchables as pigs with no respect, they don't even consider them as a human being.

Satyam's college life was over and at the last day after the feast for graduating students, he showed the food that they wasted was eaten by the poor children and other lower-caste people. He simply showed how poor people around us were. People were fighting with stray dogs for their food in the trash. Some people were rich enough to forget about the values of foods and on the other hand some people were fighting for food for their survival. He advises his friends to think thoroughly about their future. This is the situation of India, and he asked the graduates, what they will do to develop their own country.

Inter caste marriage is impossible during that time. Carey falls in love with an upper-caste girl. But no one supported him. Everybody knew that it was dangerous for their life. This time he had really fallen in love but love was not enough to marry the girl he love, caste was always the first priority. Even his family didn't support him and advised to break up with her. Carey had no other option, he cried until he got better in his bed.

Satyam wanted get a M. A. and he decided to work and after that he would study. But the job was in Vijayawada, he thought he could stay with his friend Manikya Rao but he was not welcomed there. Seetharamayya, who was like father to him and Koteswaramma allowed him to stay with them. His job was to translate the news in English. He didn't had experience in this field of job. His employer treated him very badly and finally he was fired. And there was a rumor that he was fired because they find out his caste. Caste is always a problem everywhere.

Manjula got admission in Andhra University and stayed at hostel. Manjula got new friends and she spends most of her time with them. Some other students looked down on her because she was going to cinema, which was consider as sin for them. She didn't concentrate on her studies and she got low marks which was not enough for her to be a teacher. To get good marks she studied hard but still she didn't get the marks she expected so she went to see her professor. The professor was disgusted by her because of her caste. She knew how her marks got lowered, it was because of the professor's prejudice.

When Manjula got her job as teacher her salary was only given to her family. She became a support for her family. Even though she had job, the money was never enough for the family so she asked for debts from her colleagues. She started thinking about marriage as an escape from this but still she was not confident about herself and thought that she was ugly. When she finally got married to Prabhakara Rao, whom her brother had selected, thought that will be good to her. But the actual truth is she was going to hell. He is a tutor and he had reputation among his students but he was not a good husband.

She thought that Prabhakara Rao was rich but everything was a mask to get him married soon, to save money for two marriages at the same time. He was not young that was also an act. She didn't get much respect on her husband's house. After a month she got pregnant. The place which she was living was dirty and it was not good for the health of the baby in the womb. Her life was hell. No one was there to take care of her. Her husband didn't even know how to make tea. When her brother Carey came, she was able to eat good food. Now Carey is a physical education teacher, with a wife Premalatha and he couldn't be with her all the time. She had to suffer alone.

When the baby was born, Manjula didn't want to name her a Christian name, because she was secular. She named her baby as Sujatha. Then she again got pregnant and she was fired from her previous job. She went to search for new jobs. She had to shift from one job to another. Only after several fights she got a permanent job. She named her second child, Abraham. She had to suffer a lot in the house. Her husband will beat and punish her for simple things when his mother is near them, but when they are alone, he treats her normal. She became pregnant for the third time.

Her third pregnancy was really dangerous to her which led her to the hospital because of abundant amount of bleeding. For her safety the doctors recommended tubectomy, but it need her husband's signature. But her husband was not there and her brother Satyam forged his signature to save his sister. At the hospital the costs of medicine were too high for them. After the operation Manjula didn't get penicillin because of lack of money. After all of this fights Manjula gained more courage, it is pain which makes a human strong.

Satyam was actively participating in fights for equality, he had three children, and his girl daughter's name was Sri Devi. He solved many problems as he could and remained a true leader. He became a tutor and taught many students even though he didn't have a stable job he was happy with his family. But because of some misunderstanding people turned against Satyam and his family. He was jailed and also his party excluded him, he had to go hiding. Satyam became a traitor but he truly was a good person who always thought about his country and always helped the people in need and also raised his voice against injustice.

Manjula's life became better when he handled finance herself. She was not poor now and sends her daughter to missionary schools, where all the staffs were untouchable and now Sujatha will not feel left out because of her caste. While living in the new house, they had to face difficulties from monkeys. Monkeys will come into the house and will destroy their peace. But they couldn't kill the monkeys because for the upper-caste Hindus they were sacred and should not be killed. The caste system and its rituals has given more importance to animals rather than humans. Even in these difficulties Manjula always cared for her children. When they grew up and went in their own paths finally Manjula and her husband got time to spend and lived a normal harmonious life.

Sujatha grew up as an untouchable and poor. She has seen how much poverty can damage an untouchable's life. They could only afford apple for Christmas because it is expensive. While going through these types of poverty Sujatha prayed there would be no more poor people in the world. But she didn't know how to achieve it. Her uncle Satyam was a hero to her, who helped several people in their worst time.

She hasn't seen Satyam because he is always hiding, he was expelled from the party because he was traitor and he tried to divide the party, but she still believed in him.

She learned the truth about her uncle from his friend. He said that people in Party was discriminating people by giving job to lower-caste people according to their cast. Satyam couldn't stand this practice and questioned this to the leaders. Because of this he was expelled. He also got insulted because of his caste. Satyam was not a coward, after four years long run he appeared in front of numerous people and made his speech and surrender legally to the police. He announced why he was expelled from his party and also proved that he was unarmed.

Several untouchables supported him. Because of Satyam, untouchable people mustered up courage to see themselves as not someone's slave. Until his old age he helped people in need. He was such a revolutionary leader. Manjula wanted to be like Satyam and chose the same path as Satyam did and she ended up in jail. At that time, she understood her mother's pain and decided to focus on her career. But later she collected the all-possible data about her uncle and wrote a book about him, that is titled as *Ants Among Elephants*.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

The struggles and experiences of a historically marginalized minority are represented in Dalit literature, which is an important part of Indian literature. The genre, which first appeared in the early 20th century, has given Dalits a voice and questioned prejudices and preconceptions related to the caste system. Dalit authors have recounted the trials and sufferings of Dalits under caste-based persecution via poetry, memoirs, and novels, highlighting their resiliency and drive to overcome their situation. The confluence of caste and gender, education as a tool for liberation, the impact of colonization on Dalits, and the role of the Dalit movement in opposing caste-based oppression and discrimination are some of the most important themes that have evolved in Dalit literature.

A new generation of writers who are experimenting with new themes and genres and utilizing their writing as a form of activism have also been influenced by Dalit literature. The ability to tell their own stories and elevate their experiences to the forefront of Indian literature is made possible by Dalit literature, which is a potent movement of empowerment and resistance. Through their writing, Dalit authors have fought against caste-based oppression and given all groups hope for a more just and equal future.

The book *Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India* might be seen as a significant contribution to the genre of Dalit literature, which depicts the struggles and sufferings of a historically oppressed group. The memoir gives a vivid and intimate portrayal of the effects of caste-based prejudice on the lives of Dalits in India and emphasizes the community's tenacity and

resolve in overcoming its challenges. The book dives deeply into Indian history, examining the subtleties of caste and offering insight into how colonization affected Dalits.

In order to show how action and education can help break the cycle of poverty and discrimination, the author tells the stories of her family members who experienced social exclusion, hardship, and violence. The author's candid analysis of her own experiences as a Dalit woman, both in India and the United States, is one of the memoir's most important features. Her own experiences provide a window into the intricacies of caste-based prejudice, its widespread impacts, and the necessity to address it as a significant determinant of identity.

Yashica Dutt's "Coming out as a Dalit: A Memoir" is a notable piece of Dalit literature, a genre that depicts the challenges and experiences of a historically underrepresented group. Dutt offers insightful perspectives on the complex identity of being a Dalit and the difficulties experienced by Dalits in India and abroad through her own stories. The memoir offers an open examination of the difficulties Dalits confront both at home and abroad as a result of their caste identity. The author shares her experiences coming to terms with her Dalit identity, accepting it, and overcoming the internalized guilt and stigma attached to it.

In view of the importance of caste as a defining characteristic of identity, Dutt's story emphasizes the urgent need to eradicate caste-based prejudice. Dutt's memoir makes an important contribution by unapologetically examining the relationship between caste and gender. She talks about her experiences studying journalism and working in the media in India, where she frequently ran against prejudice and small-mindedness. The story of Dutt exemplifies how social, cultural,



and economic forces interact and jointly support the caste system; particularly socio-cultural norms that uphold discrimination based on gender.

Her memoir gives Dalits a forum to share their personal narratives, elevate their experiences in Indian literature, and raise awareness of caste-based injustice. In this regard, Dutt's autobiography makes a significant contribution to India's continuous fight for social justice and equity. In this book we get a detailed explanation about the history of caste system; how it began. Hindu caste is divided into four which is called chaturvarna. This caste division is unfair and unequal which marginalized Dalits and keep them outside the system. This caste system existed before the British invasion, but the colonizers made it worse by formalizing it. They made the upper-caste more superior by putting them in the top position of powers. They didn't break the caste division because they knew that this division will keep them separated and they will not unite to fight for freedom.

Both these books have depicted well how severe their problems are. Discriminating humans because of a caste system which is made by humans is not acceptable. Everyone is human in this world, who has their own feelings and they should be treated equally. Living in a low caste family not only affect and traumatize the adults but it also affects severely the children who the future of our country. Ambedkar had said that caste system is the problem of discrimination and we have to correct it by removing the caste system. We have created this system and we also have the power to demolish this system if we all became one.

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