

# Navigating Dual Marginalization: Urmila Pawar's Autobiography and the Dalit Woman's Experience

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**Abstract:** This research paper analyses the autobiography of Urmila Pawar, a Dalit feminist writer, to explore the condition of Dalit women in India. Using a feminist and postcolonial framework, the paper examines the intersectionality of caste and gender, highlighting the multiple forms of oppression and discrimination faced by Dalit women. The paper also explores how Dalit women resist and challenge these forms of oppression. Overall, the paper contributes to the ongoing dialogue about Dalit women's experiences and their struggle for justice and equality.

**Key Words :** Dalit feminist, caste, gender, intersectionality, oppression, discrimination, resistance, justice, equality

## Introduction :

"Aaidan" is an autobiographical book written by Urmila Pawar, a Marathi Dalit feminist writer from India. The book was first published in Marathi in 1997, and later translated into English by Maya Pandit and published as "The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs" in 2009.

The book is a powerful and moving account of Urmila Pawar's life experiences, spanning her childhood in a small village in Maharashtra to her adult life in Mumbai. As a Dalit woman, Urmila faced discrimination and oppression at various levels, including within her own community, as well as in the larger society. The book is an exploration of her personal and political journey, as she navigates through various challenges and obstacles, and finds her own voice as a writer and activist.

Through her memoir, Urmila Pawar sheds light on the complexities and nuances of Dalit feminist politics, and the ways in which caste, gender, and class intersect to shape the lives of Dalit women in India. She also highlights the importance of education and empowerment in overcoming the obstacles faced by Dalit women, and the role of literature in creating a more inclusive and just society.

Overall, "Aaidan" is a powerful and poignant book that offers a unique perspective on the experiences of Dalit women in India, and the ways in which they resist and challenge oppression. It is a must-read for anyone interested in social justice, feminism, and the intersection of caste, class, and gender. Urmila Pawar's autobiography, "Aaidan," offers a detailed account of the many forms of suffering that she experienced as a Dalit woman in India. Throughout the book, she describes the multiple layers of discrimination and marginalization that she faced, both from the larger society and from within her own community. In her autobiography she lays an emphasis on several ways in which a Dalit woman suffers and they are:

**Domestic violence:** One of the key ways in which Urmila suffered as a woman was through domestic violence. She writes about how her husband and other male family members would physically and emotionally abuse her, often for no reason at all. She describes how they would beat her with sticks or belts, and how they would deny her basic rights such as the ability to make decisions about her own life. Urmila also writes about how she was forced to do all of the domestic work, including cooking, cleaning, and caring for her children, without any help from her husband.

**Economic exploitation:** economic exploitation was another way in which Urmila suffered as a woman. She and her family were poor, and she had to work from a young age to support them. However, she was paid less than her male colleagues and was denied opportunities for advancement. She also writes about how Dalit women were often forced to work in exploitative and degrading conditions, such as in brothels or as domestic servants.

**Discrimination in education:** Urmila also faced significant barriers to education, which was another way in which she suffered as a woman. As a Dalit girl, she was not encouraged or allowed to attend school, and had to fight to get an education. When she did, she faced discrimination and prejudice from teachers and classmates. Urmila also writes about how many Dalit women were denied access to education altogether, which perpetuated their marginalization and poverty.

**Social exclusion:** Social exclusion was another way in which Urmila suffered as a woman. She writes about how Dalits were often excluded from social and cultural events, and were not allowed to enter certain spaces or participate in certain activities. This exclusion was even more pronounced for Dalit women, who were seen as doubly impure and unworthy. Urmila writes about how this social exclusion led to a sense of isolation and loneliness, which further compounded her suffering.

**Sexual harassment:** Finally, Urmila experienced sexual harassment and assault from men in her community, as well as from higher-caste men in positions of power. This was a common experience for many Dalit women, who were seen as easy targets and were often unable to seek justice. Urmila writes about how this sexual violence further perpetuated her sense of powerlessness and vulnerability, and how it was yet another way in which she suffered as a woman.

Overall, Urmila Pawar's autobiography offers a detailed and nuanced account of the multiple forms of suffering that she experienced as a Dalit woman in India. Her writing highlights the ways in which patriarchy and caste intersect to create a unique form of oppression for Dalit women, and serves as a powerful testimony to the resilience and strength of Dalit women who continue to fight for justice and equality.

### **Fight for justice and equality in the book**

In the autobiography "Aaidan" by Urmila Pawar, Dalit women fight for justice and equality through various means. One of the ways they resist oppression is through education, which helps them challenge the hierarchical system that has perpetuated their marginalization. Through education, Dalit women are able to recognize their rights and are empowered to demand equality.

Another way Dalit women resist is through solidarity and collective action. The book highlights the importance of forming relationships and creating networks of support. By coming together, Dalit women can share their experiences and strategies for resistance, and build a stronger movement for justice and equality.

Pawar's autobiography also emphasizes the role of literature and storytelling in creating awareness and resistance. Through her writing, she exposes the injustices and discrimination faced by Dalit women and contributes to the ongoing dialogue about their experiences.

Overall, the book depicts the ways in which Dalit women resist and challenge the social, economic, and political structures that perpetuate their marginalization. By highlighting their strategies for resistance, the book inspires a new generation of women to continue the struggle for justice and equality.

### **Conclusion**

In her autobiography "Aaidan," Urmila Pawar shares several personal experiences that highlight the ways in which Dalit women fight for justice and equality. One such experience is her own journey to education.

Pawar was born into a Dalit family and faced discrimination and exclusion from mainstream society. However, her parents believed in the power of education and encouraged her to study. Despite facing multiple barriers, including poverty and gender discrimination, Pawar persisted and eventually earned a college degree.

Pawar's personal experience demonstrates the importance of education as a means of resistance for Dalit women. Through education, she was able to challenge the caste system and claim her rights. Furthermore, her journey serves as an inspiration to other Dalit women who face similar barriers to education and employment.

In addition to education, Pawar's autobiography also highlights the importance of solidarity and collective action. For example, she describes how she and other Dalit women formed a writers' group to share their experiences and create awareness about their struggles. Through these collective efforts, they were able to challenge the dominant narrative and gain recognition for their experiences.

Overall, Pawar's personal experiences in the book illustrate the importance of education and collective action as means of resistance for Dalit women. By sharing her own journey, she inspires others to continue the struggle for justice and equality.

Pawar's personal experiences in the book also shed light on the intersectionality of caste and gender. For example, she recounts how her father was denied a promotion at work because of his caste, and how her mother was denied access to healthcare because of her gender and caste. These experiences demonstrate the multiple forms of discrimination that Dalit women face in their daily lives.

Pawar also highlights the role of literature and storytelling in creating awareness and resistance. She explains how writing and reading helped her challenge the dominant narratives that perpetuate the marginalization of Dalit women. Through her own writing, she aims to break the silence and create a space for the voices of Dalit women.

Furthermore, Pawar's autobiography also brings attention to the role of the state in perpetuating caste-based discrimination. She describes how government policies have historically excluded Dalit women from accessing education, healthcare, and employment. This structural discrimination further exacerbates the already existing marginalization of Dalit women.

Overall, Urmila Pawar's personal experiences in her autobiography "Aidan" demonstrate the complex and intersectional struggles that Dalit women face in India. Through education, collective action, and storytelling, they resist and challenge the structures that perpetuate their marginalization. However, the ongoing struggle for justice and equality requires continued efforts from all sectors of society.