



## VOICE, MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN DALIT LITERATURE: A STUDY OF AAYDAN BY URMILA PAWAR

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Received: July 10, 2026, Accepted: August 23, 2026, Online Published: September 30, 2026

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### ABSTRACT

This study discovers the connection of caste, gender, and personal narrative within the framework of Dalit literary discourse. It has appeared as a powerful medium of confrontation, enunciating the subsisted involvements of marginalization and social exclusion. In this context, *Aaydan* helps as a noteworthy autobiographical text that not only recounts individual experiences but also reflects the collective memory of the Dalit community. The paper inspects how voice functions as an instrument of proclamation and resistance against caste-based domination. It further evaluates the role of memory in reconstructing the socio-cultural realities of Dalit life, where personal recollections are profoundly tangled with historical and communal experiences. Through a critical reading of *Aaydan*, the study highlights how identity is transferred and formed under the intersectant pressures of caste and patriarchy. Additionally, the research accentuates the contribution of Dalit women's writing in intensifying the scope of Dalit discourse by integrating gendered perspectives often unnoticed in mainstream narratives. Urmila Pawar's narrative thus becomes a site of both personal demonstration and socio-political critique, offering insights into resilience, dignity, and the ongoing fight for equality. The study accepts a qualitative and interpretative methodology, drawing upon theoretical perspectives from Dalit studies and feminist criticism. It accomplishes that *Aaydan* not only challenges dominant literary traditions but also redefines identity through the articulation of voice and memory, making it a vital text in understanding Dalit feminist discourse.

**Keywords:** Dalit literature, Voice, Memory, Identity, Dalit Feminism, Autobiography, Caste, Gender, Resistance, and Aaydan.

## Introduction

Dalit literature represents a significant and transformative stream in Indian literary tradition, giving voice to the factually relegated and troubled sections of society. It moves beyond mere artistic expression and functions as a tool of resistance, identity formation, and social emerging. It is deeply rooted in lived realities, Dalit writing challenges the deeply entrenched structures of caste discrimination and asserts the self-respect and mortality of those silenced for centuries. In *Aaydan*, Urmila Pawar distressingly replicates this struggle through her personal experiences. As she writes,

We wove our lives like the bamboo baskets we made— intertwined with pain, struggle, and survival.

This quote representatively captures the essence of Dalit life, where survival itself becomes an act of resistance. The metaphor of weaving highlights how individual experiences are inseparable from the collective suffering and resilience of the Dalit community. It also emphasizes the role of labour, tradition, and memory in shaping identity. *Aaydan* is not just an autobiography; it is a narrative of collective memory that documents the socio-cultural realities of caste and gender oppression. Through her narrative, Urmila Pawar brings forth the intersectionality of caste and patriarchy, illustrating how Dalit women experience layered marginalization. At the

same time, the text reflects empowerment through education, awareness, and assertion of voice. The themes of voice, memory, and identity are central to Dalit literary discourse. “Voice” becomes a means of breaking silence, “memory” serves as a repository of historical and cultural experiences, and “identity” is continuously reconstructed through these narratives. In *Aaydan*, these elements converge to create a powerful testimony that challenges dominant literary traditions and redefines the discourse of Indian literature. Thus, Dalit literature, particularly through works like *Aaydan*, plays a crucial role in fostering social consciousness and promoting equality, making it an essential area of academic inquiry.

## Statement of Purpose:

The primary purpose of this study is to critically examine the themes of voice, memory, and identity in Dalit literary discourse with special reference to *Aaydan* by Urmila Pawar. The study pursues to understand how autobiographical narratives in Dalit literature function as influential tools of confrontation and self-representation, particularly for marginalized communities.

This research aims to explore how *Aaydan* enunciates the lived experiences of caste-based discrimination and gender domination, while instantaneously highlighting the processes of self-realization and enablement. By focusing on the narrative strategies employed by Urmila



Pawar, the study intends to analyze how personal memory is altered into a collective social history that reflects the struggles and flexibility of Dalit women.

Furthermore, the study seeks to investigate the role of “voice” as an instrument of assertion against historical quietening, and “memory” as a means of preserving cultural identity and lived certainties. It also examines how identity is raised and conveyed at the intersection of caste and gender within the framework of Dalit feminist discourse. Another important purpose of this research is to subsidize to the rising body of Dalit literary studies by highlighting the significance of women’s narratives, which have often been understated in mainstream literary criticism. Through a close reading of *Aaydan*, the study desires to highlight the text’s role in challenging dominant literary traditions and redefining the discourse of Indian literature. The study is envisioned not only to scrutinize a significant literary work but also to contribute to a deeper understanding of Dalit identity, resistance, and social transformation in modern literary studies.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the concept of Dalit literary discourse and its role in enunciating issues of caste, marginalization, and social inequality.
2. To judgmentally analyze *Aaydan* as a noteworthy text in Dalit feminist literature.

3. To explore the theme of “voice” in the narrative and understand how Urmila Pawar asserts identity and resists caste-based subjugation through her writing.

#### **The Hypotheses of the study**

1. **H1:** *Aaydan* by Urmila Pawar signifies Dalit literary discourse by articulating the lived experiences of caste-based marginalization and social inequality.
2. **H2:** The narrative of *Aaydan* validates that “voice” serves as a powerful tool of resistance and self-assertion against historical silencing of Dalit communities.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

The study provides a critical analysis of Dalit literary discourse with special reference to *Aaydan* by Urmila Pawar, the study is primarily confined to a single autobiographical work, *Aaydan*. Therefore, the findings may not be fully representative of the entire spectrum of Dalit literature. The research distillates mainly on the themes of voice, memory, and identity. Other important aspects such as language style, narrative techniques, and comparative analysis with other Dalit texts. These are not explored in depth. The analysis is based on the socio-cultural context reflected in *Aaydan*, which may vary across regions and communities within Dalit literature.

### Research Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative and interpretative research methodology to analyze Dalit literary discourse with special reference to *Aaydan* by Urmila Pawar. The methodology is premeditated to critically examine the themes of voice, memory, and identity as represented in the text. The study follows a qualitative research approach, as it emphasizes on textual analysis, interpretation, and critical understanding of literary themes rather than arithmetical data. This approach is appropriate for exploring subjective experiences and socio-cultural realities depicted in Dalit literature. A descriptive and analytical research design is employed to examine the narrative structure, thematic elements, and socio-cultural context of *Aaydan*. The study interprets how the author presents issues related to caste, gender, and identity.

### Sources of Data

- Primary Source: The main text for analysis is *Aaydan* by Urmila Pawar.
- Secondary Sources: Books, research articles, journals, and critical essays related to Dalit literature, Dalit feminism, and autobiographical narratives are used to support the analysis.

### Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The analysis and interpretation of data in the present study are carried out through a qualitative, textual, and thematic

examination of *Aaydan* by Urmila Pawar. Since the research is based on literary text rather than numerical data, the “data” in this context refers to the narrative content, experiences, and thematic representations found within the text. The study methodically classifies and analyses major themes such as voice, memory, and identity. These themes are inspected to understand how they reflect the lived realities of Dalit life and subsidize to Dalit literary discourse. The recurring patterns in the narrative are construed to highlight the socio-cultural conditions of marginalization and resistance. The narrative voice in *Aaydan* is analysed as a means of self-expression and resistance. Urmila Pawar speaks experiences that were factually silenced, thereby transforming personal narration into a collective assertion of identity and dignity. The study understands how this voice challenges dominant social and literary structures. Memory is observed as a crucial tool for reconstructing personal and communal histories. The autobiographical elements in *Aaydan* are interpreted not merely as individual recollections but as replications of broader social authenticities. The study highlights how memory connects past experiences with present identity creation.

### Findings

The present study is based on a critical analysis of *Aaydan* by Urmila Pawar, the study finds that *Aaydan* effectively



represents Dalit literary discourse by representing the exacting realities of caste-based discrimination while simultaneously functioning as a form of resistance against social oppression. It is observed that the narrative voice of Urmila Pawar serves as a powerful tool of self-expression and assertion. The text breaks the historical silence imposed on Dalit communities and establishes a strong individual and collective identity. The study reveals that memory plays a crucial role in reconstructing both personal and collective histories. In *Aaydan*, personal experiences are deeply connected with the broader socio-cultural realities of the Dalit community. The findings highlight that identity in the text is shaped by the intersection of caste and gender. Dalit women experience multiple layers of marginalization, which shows that *Aaydan* provides an authentic and detailed representation of the struggles, labour, discrimination, and resilience of Dalit women, thereby contributing significantly to Dalit feminist discourse.

### Conclusion

The present study concludes that Dalit literary discourse plays a crucial role in articulating the lived experiences of marginalized communities while challenging the deeply rooted structures of caste and gender inequality. Through a critical analysis of *Aaydan*, it is evident that the text exceeds the boundaries of a

conservative autobiography and emerges as a powerful socio-political document. The narrative effectively demonstrates how “voice” becomes a means of resistance and assertion, enabling the author to break the silence imposed by historical oppression. At the same time, “memory” functions as a vital tool for reconstructing personal and collective histories, preserving the cultural and social realities of Dalit life. The study also highlights that identity in *Aaydan* is not standing but unceasingly negotiated through the intersections of caste, gender, and socio-economic conditions. Urmila Pawar successfully portrays the exclusive experiences of Dalit women, thereby contributing significantly to Dalit feminist discourse. Her narrative reflects both the pain of marginalization and the strength of resilience, emphasizing the transformative role of education and awareness. Furthermore, the research establishes that *Aaydan* challenges dominant literary traditions by foregrounding lived experiences and marginalized voices, thereby expanding the scope of Indian literature. It redefines literature as a space for social critique and empowerment rather than mere aesthetic expression. In conclusion, the study affirms that Dalit literature, particularly works like *Aaydan*, is essential for understanding issues of social justice, identity, and human dignity. It is not only documents the struggles of the past but

also inspires a vision for a more equitable and comprehensive society.

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