

## ECONOMICALLY BACKWARDNESS AND CASTEISM IN THE NOVEL OF URMILA PAWAR THE WEAVE OF MY LIFE: A DALIT WOMAN'S MEMOIRS

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### Abstract:

*This research paper examines the intersection of economic backwardness and casteism as portrayed in Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs*. The paper explores how caste-based discrimination perpetuates economic marginalization and how economic hardship reinforces caste oppression. By analyzing Pawar's autobiographical narrative, this study highlights the structural inequalities embedded within Indian society and their implications for Dalit women. Through a critical analysis of the text, this paper argues that economic deprivation and casteism are intertwined, forming a cycle of oppression that limits social mobility for Dalits. Furthermore, this research emphasizes the role of Ambedkarite ideology as a means of challenging these systemic inequalities and fostering socio-economic empowerment within Dalit communities. Additionally, the paper draws comparisons with other Dalit women's narratives to establish patterns of oppression and resistance.*

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### Introduction:

Urmila Pawar, an Indian writer and activist, is actively involved in the Dalit and feminist movements in India. Writing exclusively in Marathi, her works are widely recognized for their critical examination of social discrimination and the exploitation perpetuated by the savarna community, as noted by commentators and media outlets. She belongs to Mahar community. Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs* is an essential autobiographical text that provides a firsthand account of caste oppression and economic deprivation. The memoir presents the harsh realities of Dalit life, especially for women, and offers insight into the persistent socio-economic inequalities within Indian society. Pawar's work serves as both a personal narrative and a broader social critique, reflecting the lived experiences of Dalit communities in India. By examining caste and economic backwardness through Pawar's lens, this paper seeks to understand how systemic oppression

operates and how resistance emerges within these marginalized communities.

Dalit autobiographies serve as crucial sources for understanding the complex interplay of casteism and economic exploitation. These narratives are not merely personal recollections but also function as historical documents that expose the structural inequalities maintained by the caste system. Urmila Pawar's work, in particular, provides a gendered perspective on Dalit oppression, shedding light on how Dalit women endure both economic and patriarchal subjugation. Through this research, we aim to unpack the layered dimensions of caste-based economic marginalization and explore potential pathways for resistance and empowerment.

### Objectives:

1. To analyze the depiction of economic backwardness in *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs*.
2. To examine how casteism and economic deprivation reinforce each other in the text.

3. To explore the lived experiences of Dalit women through Urmila Pawar's narrative.
4. To investigate the role of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's ideology in challenging caste and economic oppression as reflected in the memoir.
5. To assess the contemporary relevance of Pawar's experiences in understanding caste and economic inequalities in India today.
6. To evaluate the potential solutions proposed in the memoir for alleviating caste-based economic discrimination.
7. To compare Pawar's experiences with other Dalit autobiographies to establish common patterns of socio-economic oppression.
8. To analyze the intersectionality of caste, gender, and economic marginalization in shaping Dalit women's struggles.

**Hypothesis:**

1. *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs* demonstrates how economic backwardness is a direct consequence of caste-based discrimination.
2. Dalit women face compounded oppression due to their intersectional position within both caste and economic hierarchies.
3. Pawar's narrative serves as a critique of the Brahmanical social order, illustrating the transformative potential of Ambedkarite thought in challenging systemic inequalities.
4. Economic empowerment, through education and political mobilization, is a fundamental strategy in breaking the cycle of caste-based poverty and discrimination.
5. Caste-based economic marginalization is not an isolated phenomenon but part of a broader pattern of structural violence against marginalized communities.

**Economic Backwardness and Casteism: A Symbiotic Relationship:** Casteism and economic backwardness are deeply interconnected in Pawar's

*The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs*. As a Dalit woman, she experiences multiple forms of exclusion social, economic, and cultural. Pawar describes the abject poverty, "characterized Dalit life, detailing the lack of access to education, employment, and basic necessities" (Pawar 47). The rigid caste system ensures that Dalits remain in subordinate positions, preventing economic upliftment.

Economic deprivation is not merely a consequence of individual circumstances but a structural issue deeply ingrained in the caste system. As Pawar notes, "Dalits were denied opportunities for education and employment, forcing them into menial labor that barely provided subsistence" (Pawar 82). The exploitation of Dalit labor without adequate compensation kept them in a perpetual state of poverty, reinforcing the idea that caste and class oppression function simultaneously. Additionally, caste-based occupations such as manual scavenging and agricultural labor ensured that Dalits remained at the lowest rungs of the economic hierarchy, unable to break free from systemic bondage.

**Intersectionality: The Dalit Woman's Experience:**

Dalit women face unique challenges due to their intersectional position within the caste and gender hierarchy. Pawar's memoir details the specific hardships that Dalit women endure, including domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and economic dependence (Pawar 103). Unlike their male counterparts, Dalit women bear the dual burden of caste and gender oppression, making economic emancipation even more difficult.

One of the critical themes in Urmila Pawar's work is the resistance against patriarchal norms within the Dalit community. She highlights how women, "despite their socio-economic constraints, played a vital role in community organization and political awareness" (Pawar 127). This resistance, often inspired by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's call for social justice, provided Dalit women with a sense of agency. Novelist Pawar's

experiences illustrate how Dalit women not only suffered from the caste system but also actively challenged its oppressive structures, contributing to broader social movements for equality.

As Bama Faustina Soosairaj, another prominent Dalit woman novelist, asserts in *Karukku*, “Dalit women’s suffering is twofold, as they endure both caste and gender discrimination. They are seen as inferior not just by the upper castes, but often within their own communities” (Bama 89). This echoes Pawar’s observations, reinforcing the idea that economic oppression and casteism are inseparable from gender subjugation.

#### **Ambedkarite Thought and Economic Liberation:**

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s philosophy plays a crucial role in Urmila Pawar’s narrative. She frequently references Ambedkar’s efforts to eradicate caste based oppression and his emphasis on education as a tool for economic empowerment (Pawar 156). Urmila Pawar’s engagement with Ambedkarite ideology illustrates the potential for economic mobility through education and political activism.

As Urmila Pawar notes in *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman’s Memoirs*, “Education is the only means by which Dalit women can escape the oppression imposed upon them by both caste and gender” (Pawar 112). This statement aligns with her belief in the transformative power of education, reflecting a broader Dalit feminist discourse advocating for self-liberation through knowledge and awareness. Despite systemic barriers, Pawar’s memoir serves as a testament to the transformative power of Ambedkar’s teachings. Education, according to both Pawar and Ambedkar, “is the key to breaking the cycle of economic backwardness and caste discrimination” (Pawar 178).

By advocating for self-respect and dignity, Pawar’s narrative aligns with Ambedkar’s vision of social justice and economic equality.

#### **Conclusion:**

Indian woman writer, Urmila Pawar’s *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman’s Memoirs* provides an in-depth analysis of the intersection of casteism and economic backwardness. Pawar’s autobiographical account highlights how caste oppression perpetuates economic deprivation and how economic hardship reinforces caste-based subjugation. The memoir serves as both a critique of the Brahmanical social order and a call for resistance through education and political consciousness. By contextualizing Pawar’s experiences within the broader framework of Ambedkarite thought, this research paper underscores the need for continued efforts toward caste and economic justice in contemporary India. Addressing economic backwardness among Dalits requires a multi-pronged approach that includes policy reform, social awareness, and grassroots activism.

#### **Works Cited:**

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