

## A Marathi Subaltern Text, *Kolatyacha Por*: A Postcolonial Reading of Culture and History

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### I

The roots of Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) could be traced in the works of Italian Marxist critic Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). Its identity is conceptually derived from the idea of his *cultural hegemony*. Originally, the term is borrowed from military science. In Post-colonial theory, the term *Subaltern* describes the lower classes and the social groups who are at the margins of a society. It refers to any person or group of inferior rank and station, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion. A subaltern is a person rendered without human agency, by his or her social status (Spivak, 1992).

The SSG arose in the 1980s; it emerged under the influence of scholarship of Eric Stokes. It was an attempt to formulate a new narrative of the history of India and South Asia. The narrative strategy inspired by the writings of Gramsci was explicated in writings of Ranjit Guha especially in his classic monograph *The Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency* and Subaltern Studies-I. The subalternists are, in a sense, on the left, but they are critical of the traditional Marxist narrative of Indian history. The Marxist traditional notion that the semi-feudal India was colonized by the British and it got politicized, and earned its independence is crucial issue for the subalternists. The subalternists are critical of the focus of this narrative on the political consciousness of elites, who are said to have inspired the masses to resistance and rebellion against the British. The focus of the subalternists is, on the contrary, on non-elites subalterns as agents of political and social change. They have had a particular interest in discourses and rhetoric of emerging political and social movements, as against only highly visible actions like demonstrations and uprisings.

Issues of caste, gender, sexuality and identity search in Indian *dalit* autobiographies like other Indian texts provoked subaltern discourse. The social reformers in India were upper caste men and their concern was evil practices of upper caste Hindu families like *Purdha* system, *Keshwapan*, (to make widow's head bald after her husband's death) child marriage, encouraging

of widow marriages etc. These reforms were in no way related to issues of lower caste women. Sharmila Rege holds the view that both the leftist women's organizations and other groups failed completely to emancipate women of lower caste from violence and oppression (2006: 90-101), whereas Anupama Rao brands this phenomena as *Brahminical feminism* (2003: 47). It is true that like *dalit* women upper caste women also suffered (and they still suffer) from male domination. The English translations like Baby Kamble's *Jina Amucha*, and Bama's *Karukku*, the first *dalit* autobiography in Tamil and the scattered Indian women texts (even oral) of both *dalit* and Brahminical as well remained unnoticed. Majorities of *dalit* women are illiterate even after six decades of India's independence. Sumitra Bhavé's (1988) attempt in *Pan on Fire*<sup>3</sup> records eight *Dalit* women's life-stories, originally narrated in Marathi. As against the canonical texts, these subaltern texts manifest complexities of socio-political and cultural developments of Indian times and histories.

Nonetheless, Gayatri Spivak advises against a too-broad application of the term, because:

. . . *subaltern* is not just a classy word for *oppressed*, for [the] Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie. . . . In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern -- a *space of difference*. The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern. . . . Many people want to claim subalternity. They should see what *the mechanics of the discrimination* are. They're within the hegemonic discourse, wanting a piece of the pie, and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern. (*Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa, 1992*)

According to G. N. Devy, Subaltern Studies is a movement in political and cultural historiography; most of these scholars are from Bangala and have attempted to explore 'the processes of formation of colonial historiography and its inadequacy to narrate its micro-processes of history' (1977: 123). By pointing out that the *Subaltern* is the creation of the British colonial contact with India, he defines *Subaltern* as *subordinate* or *inferior*; or by implication it might mean 'inferior modes of knowledge' (1977: 123). While locating place of Subaltern Studies, he argues that the Subaltern historiography seeks to re-establish the balance of knowledge by demonstrating that the *inferior* is made so through discourses of power and politics' (1977: 123-24). Bernard S. Cohn's essay is a fine illustration of deconstructing the power structures shaping *the forms of native knowledge*. In this essay, Cohn's intellectual sympathies are with Persian against English, with Sanskrit against Persian, with Hindi against

Sanskrit, and finally against Bangala against Hindi (1985: 276-329). Cohn looks at the colonial hierarchy of languages from the perspective of the oppressed and the marginalized. 'Subaltern historiography is thus a perspective of the marginalized, of many against the dominant one. The approach is closer to the Marxist historiography but it does not poeticize peasants' (1977: 124).

Sociologists apply the term *subaltern cosmopolitanism* to describe the counter-hegemonic practice, social movement, resistance, and struggle against neo-liberal globalization especially the struggle against social exclusion. Moreover, the term *cosmopolitan legality* describes the diverse framework for an *equality of differences*. It denotes the oppressed peoples at the margins of a society who are struggling against hegemonic globalization. Yet, context, time, and place determine who, among the peoples at the margins of a society, is a Subaltern; in India women, *dalits*, rural, tribal, immigrant laborers are part of subaltern; the most oppressed people are the rural folk, the *dalits*, and illiterate women.

Ranjit Guha's *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*<sup>1</sup> (1982) played an important role in setting the trend of subalternism. The series of Subaltern Readings now has a global presence that goes well beyond India or South Asia as an area of academic specialization. The intellectual reach of *Subaltern Studies* now exceeds that of the discipline of history. Postcolonial theorists have taken interest in the series. Contributors to *Subaltern Studies* have participated in contemporary critiques of history and nationalism, Orientalism and Eurocentrism in the construction of social science knowledge. Following the Indian way, a Latin American Subaltern Studies Association was also established in 1992. Today, the Subaltern Studies, once the name of a series of publications in Indian history, now stands as a general designation for a field of studies often seen as a close relative of postcolonialism.

Subaltern historiography as a significant trend since 1982 'has proved a new analytical thrust to many recent writings on modern Indian history and society. in contrast to dominant tendencies, which have obscured and even ignored the place and role of the consciousness and politics of lower orders or subaltern groups, the central focus of *Subaltern Studies* of these groups and their activities' (as quoted by Ranjit Das Gupta, 2013: 110). The fundamental theme of subaltern texts is to view the subaltern as the subject of history, *the marker of his own identity*. The idea of 'subalternity' is relevant for historical circumstances in colonial India where the processes of class formation and caste / creed categories have never been adequately clarified and they are not free from ambiguities either.

After the Second World War, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, the interpretations of the left of the Indian historical conditions and new crisis and ‘their accommodating compromises with the ruling Congress (led by Indira Congress) and the emergence of people’s movements in India, along with the bankruptcy and hypocrisy of Indian leftist historians and intellectuals’ (2013: 364), the Subaltern Studies group emerged around the 1980’s. The term ‘subaltern’ is therefore not just a substitute for peasantry or labouring poor or common people but a concept implying a dialectical relationship between superordination and subordination.

The primary thrust of the subalterns being the recovery of history from below, ‘the question of how the knowledge of history is produced’ (Vinay Bahl, 2002, 2013: 361) becomes crucial in this context. Bahl argues that the Western historians’ attempt to write history was ‘history from below’:

...British workers left diaries behind for British historians to find their voices in, but Indian workers and peasants did not leave behind any such *original authentic* voices. Therefore, to find Indian subaltern voices, subaltern studies had to use different methods of reading the available documents, that is, read them *against their grains*. In the process of pursuing this goal, subaltern studies concentrated more and more on how subalternity was constituted rather than finding their voices. It is with this new question that they could critique the West (Vinay Bahl, 2002, 2013: 361).

Bahl’s contention is that voices (consciousness) of the subalterns must be discovered to read and understand *authentic history* of India since there are no authentic documents to do so.

David Ludden’s *Introduction to Reading Subaltern Studies* (2002, 2013) provides a comprehensive perspective and a critique of Subaltern Studies. According to him, Subaltern Studies joined debates about insurgency and nationality between popular unrest and state power, nevertheless, communalism and regionalism did not attract Subaltern Studies. On the other hand,

Subaltern Studies became an original site for *a new kind of history from below*, a people’s history free of national constraints, *a post-nationalist reimagining of the Indian nation* on the underside at the margins, outside nationalism. Subaltern India changed its form and rejected official nationalism and developed transnationally (Introduction, 2013: 12-13).

Nations were reinvented as imagined communities (1991: 173-98). Epistemologies and ways of knowing histories came under scrutiny as social theory took a linguistic and literary turns. Cultural studies became increasingly prominent. ‘Cultural criticism became cultural politics’ (1998: 396-428). Deconstructing cultural power and everyday resistance became

adventuring projects for scholars; these scholars at the same time discovered failures and betrayals of modernity, positivism, and the Enlightenment. Old empirical certainties, of modernization, capitalist development and national progress were disassembled and scattered in the radical newness of post-modern and post-colonial writing. The politics of language, media, and representation came of age in a world of globalization.

Look at the poem by Prakash Jadhav who comes from a *dalit* community and writes of the homeless underclass in Bombay. The poem *Under the Bridge* takes a view of the city from beneath the arches of a bridge; it is from under a bridge in Bombay. It is a Marathi poem translated in English; observe the demotic slang mixed in devotional dialect reminding of the dialect of the *Black Panther*:

Hey, Ma, tell me my religion. Who am I?  
What am I?  
You are not a Hindu or Muslim!  
You are an abandoned spark of the  
World's lusty fires.

Religion? This is where I stuff religion!  
Whores have only one religion, my son,  
If you want a hole to fuck in, keep  
Your cock in your pocket!

(quoted by Homi K. Bhabha, Introduction, 2012: 24-25)..

Look at the anger and the refusal to identify with the Hindu-Muslim polarization. These are *now* local problems of Mumbai, London, Paris, Hong Kong *because globalization begins at home*

Consider the following lines of the prominent Marathi *dalit* poet, Namdeo Dhasal from *Golpitha*:

Fifteenth August a suspicious corrupt huge vagina  
What is Freedom that is named after an ass  
In which phase of Ram Rajya we are living  
Beginning development values culture  
What is the fundamental meaning of Freedom

.....

9 months 9 days which impotent oxen has delivered a he-buffalo  
Which baby cattle died in the hassles of up and down  
Or is it that the only hairy vested interests have built the Chinese Walls

*(My translation)*

The anger and wrath is parallel to that of Prakash Jadhav's poem cited above. Look at the metaphors, Fifteenth August is described as a *suspicious corrupt huge vagina*, *Freedom* is understood as *ass*, *oxen* is said to be delivering a *he-buffalo* and the explosion of consciousness is a negative aftermath of the complete cultural, social and political deprivation of the *dalit* community even after the political independence that India achieved in 1947 (i.e. Fifteenth

August!). The common people's contributions in the Freedom Movement of 1947 have been completely neglected and sidetracked. Look at the lines, *Which baby cattle died in the hassels of up and down / Or is it that the only vested interests have built the Chinese Walls*; the *dalits* and the *bahujan* communities have not been given due consideration, which is reflected in the national agenda of the post-independent India. The line, *9 months 9 days which impotent oxen has delivered a he-buffalo* refers to the nurturing of a *baby of Freedom* in the womb of Mother India and its birth in 1947. This subaltern text clearly manifests the suffering and agonies of the neglected and deprived communities in the post-political agenda of the country.

Ganesh Devi's<sup>2</sup> interview (*Loksatta*, 18 Aug 2013) therefore in this context appears more significant. In Devi's view, Indian *Bhashas* (Folk Languages, i.e. non-standard Indian dialects, as the one demotic slang used in the above citation) as against the standard dialects (e.g. Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, Panjabi, Bengali etc.) shall play a crucial role in the future of the country; it is these *Bhashas*, which are going to be richer assets and tools of national progress and developments. Before the West (including Japan and America) begins to neo-colonize us, Devi asserts that we must attempt to preserve the *Bhasha* wealth and employ them for our national enrichment. These language surveys shall now provide, it seems, with a sound basis as *true voices of Subalterns* and also *authentic documents* for decolonization of Indian culture and they will also provide a valid basis for Subaltern Studies.

## II

Even today *dalits* suffer the stigma of untouchability after caste discrimination has been declared as offence under the law. The *cultural hegemony* of upper classes and castes in India has not been under control after the legal and constitutional amendments. Basically, this is a cultural issue much politicized during the independent era with unprecedented history of a few centuries. When *dalits* rise up, they are brutally crushed; the government machinery at time is also exploited to suppress their voices. They are forced *to eat dirt*<sup>4</sup> and encounter inhuman deliberate insults and calculated humiliations. Dr. Ambedkar therefore described the *dalits* as *broken men* (1968).<sup>5</sup> The *dalits* are challenging the cultural hegemony of upper castes and classes; their interrogation and resistance to the cultural hegemony of the upper castes is being manifestly reflected in *dalit* literature. Ganesh Devi's contention is that it is here that the use of a very different experience narrated in non-standard dialects of *dalits* is going to raise several

cultural questions that might empower the *dalits* and subalterns through *their real voices* and shackle the cultural hegemony of the upper classes. This process has been already started in the post-1980s era.

*Kolatyacha Por* (1994) as a subaltern narrative illuminates a life story of Kishor, the protagonist scanning childhood period and extending to a space till he achieves a medical degree. Kishor Shantabai Kale, the name itself is odd and unacceptable in a patriarchal cult, as the middle name bears *not of father* but of Kishor's mother *Shantabai* as he was an illicit child (The Marathi prominent *dalit* poet, Namdeo Dhasal took pride in his name as *Namdeo Salubai Dhasal*). The *Kolatis* are from a nomad community called *Kolati*, wandering in rural and interior regions of Maharashtra and performing acrobatics where especially children participate in playing fantastic games like walking on ropes etc. in erstwhile independent India. Later, they assumed a role of courtesans; however, *courtesans* would be an elitist term and so inapplicable here. Hansa Wadkar's narrative *Sangate Aika*<sup>6</sup> (1970, 1970), on the other hand, unlike Kishor's is directed to the depiction of a courtesan and film actress; whereas Shantabai's saga does not remain on her individualistic level but transcends it. It depicts suffering of a section of a society entirely neglected in social, economic, political and ethical terms. Hansa's narrative is non-subaltern in this sense. Nevertheless, both the narratives have a common thread that the women of their family earn the living and their men without doing anything idly pull on on their life on their counterpart's earnings and income. Hansa's father was a *tabala* player but was a drunkard and lived luxuriously on her daughter's earning. Similarly, Kondiba and his two idle sons spent their life first on Jiji and later, on Shantabai and her sister, Sushilamawashi's earnings.

The *Kolati* community women were rather engaged in a profession of dancing; they were rather like semi-pros; this is not found in Hansa's saga. The rich from rural areas visit these camps to view their dance as entertainment and engage in erotic sessions as hedonistic pleasure. On several occasions, several of them would invite a woman to live with them as their *Keep* and provide them with a house to live in and the material necessities. They would expect to live with them as their wife and stop dancing. In due course of time, however usually these women were deserted and they were forced *to eat dirt* and live life of deprivation, poverty, violence and humiliation. Kishor's mother Shantabai was such a victim or else she would have become a school teacher if her father would not have forced her to become a *Kolati* woman. Kishor is the son of the MLA of Karamala who later deserted his mother. The mother has to continue her

profession of dancing; even when she bore the baby in her womb till the ninth month, Shantabai had to dance on the stage and earn money for her father Kondiba. Kishor's mother is trapped in Krishnarao Wader, fondly called in the book Nana and she gives up dancing and lives permanently with him at Sonpeth and the terrific suffering and a saga of torture and violence begins in Kishor's life. He has to stay at his grandfather's home at Nerale, where his mother's sisters earned money by dancing and run the house.

Kishor's school education at Nerale till the seventh standard at his maternal home is a saga of unprecedented torture and violence, the only sympathetic shadow to Kishor is his grandmother Jiji, the step sister of Kishor's grandfather, Kondiba. The secondary education and later, the college education at Ambejogai and Mumbai is another difficult journey of torture, starvation, violence, insults and humiliation through which the protagonist goes. The narrative ends at a point when Kishor becomes doctor.

All women in the narrative are victimized and the worst women sufferers in the narrative are. Jiji, the grandmother, Shantabai, the mother, Sushilamavashi, the sister of the protagonist's mother; almost every female character is the victim of male violence and domination. There are terrific depictions of the tortures and violence done to these characters.

Consider the following depiction of atrocities by Nana done to mother Shantabai:

The time was nearing the midnight; I, mother and Jaya, we three of us started towards Tamasha where Nana must have dropped in. But Warakya's Balya ran to Nana and told him that Bai (mother) was reaching the place. We returned home and Nana had already reached home before us. He was indeed waiting for us. As he saw us, he burst out, "Where had you been to eat dirt? If you step out of home in night, I will break your legs, remember?" Mother was then menstruating, so he began to beat Jaya. He beat Jaya terribly and inhumanly till she collapsed with her eyes became whitened saying that kids will follow their caste. At last, not able to tolerate Nana's cruelty, mother picked up Nana's neck. We all started shouting and crying. Nana then started beating and abusing me. He then brought all gods from *devhara*, a specific place where gods are placed and worshiped in home and he started throwing them one by one towards mother. As mother was menstruating, she did not touch anything but that day she threw stones at Nana. Then she withdrew in a corner and started sobbing. Mother was saying, "First, give me justice and then go to wherever you wish to go. Did I come to you licking behind your buttocks? People like you are in habit of tasting a new and fresh woman every day; I am not a woman of that kind. Do first justice to me and then go anywhere. Now it is twelve years I am living with you. You did not give me any land to till or any property. I am living in this tin pot home. You took all my golden ornaments by sweet talk and conspiracy and I don't have anything

with me now. Where can I go now? How can I look after my kids now? You give me my daily bread then you do whatever you want to do. You then keep any number of women you are capable of. I did not come behind you. Don't destroy me" (1994, 2009: 72-73, *My Translation*).

Grandfather Kondiba and his two sons harassed Kishor when he was a school going kid physically and mentally so much so that his life became almost hell.

Once, I returned from the school. As I stepped in, the grandfather said, "Where were you since a long time, it is good you came finally. Look now, go to flour mill and bring wheat and Jawar flour, Jawar one and half *payali* (one *payali* is about seven kilogram) and wheat one *payali*. Go my my son, go early or the mill will be closed. Tomorrow, there is no flour in the home. Yoyn Shushilamawashi (Shantabai's sister) and Rasmeshkaka (who now looks after Shushilamawashi; she is his *Keep*) are in the home." It was five o'clock in the evening and no one had gone to the mill for flour till then. I was not even allowed to wash my hands. As I kept my school sack, the grandfather put the heavy load of wheat and jawar on my head. I mutely followed grandfather's order; the load was heavier for a kid of my age. I was a labourious boy, so I could pull it on. My shoulder and neck was pressurized by the load. The mill was one kilometre away from the home. There was considerable crowd in the mill and so it became pretty darker outside. It was eight thirty when I started to return fro the flour mill (1994, 2009: 62, *My Translation*).

The grandmother, Jiji becomes victim of the family politics. all her life she serves Kondiba, her step brother, the grandfather of Kishor and his family, Kishor's two Mamas who never worked nor did they go for education and lead their life idly and sluggishly on Jiji's income sources. Look at Jiji's pathetic situation in her old age:

I went to Nerle. Jiji was sleeping. She had a torn *godhadi* (a blanket made from pieces of clothes) to cover her body. I called Jiji. As she heard my voice, she suddenly got up. She got abruptly energized. As she saw me, she cried loudly, "You came finally to bury my dead body, my kid." When I went nearer to her, she started crying loudly and began touching my feet as if I was an elderly person. I immediately withdrew. She was weeping profusely and was uncontrollable. "My kid, take me from here, take me to a hospital. I shall be all right. These people will kill me"

Jiji looked very weak; she appeared so hungry that she had not eaten for several days. Her stomach was stretched to her waist. She began caressing me, her weakling fingers in my hair. I had her favourite dish, *Shev-Chivada* with me. I kept the dish before her and she began feeding me. Her habit of feeding me since my childhood was still alive and she was not freed from it, though she was on her deathbed and was profusely hungry. She fed me *Shev-Chivada* and my childhood memories surfaced. Then, she started eating. She devoured on the dish hungrily, as if she was eating after several days. But while eating, she had

feelings of motions. She began to take out her *godhadi* gradually and started creeping like a child to move to the other side. When I saw her creeping like a child, a sense of terrific fear wobbled through my belly.

Perhaps during several weeks, Jiji's head was without oil. Who knows that whether she had even bathed for months together? I had decided that I shall take her to J. J. hospital in Mumbai.

Jiji's brother Kondiba treated Jiji inhumanly though there was twenty five acres of land in her name. She was paralyzed. Nobody took her to a hospital and she was kept in an open place in the courtyard of the home. Nobody took interest in her, not even to see if she was alive or dead. She was given food like a dog. She had her own home but it was all useless.

Jiji was behaving like a mad person. She cursed her brother. I was taking her to J. J. Hospital in Mumbai. I had even done the reservations. All preparations were done. We were to start and the people from my family began to allege against me. "You have a conspiracy to get her land in your name and you have called your father (Nana) to stay with you. We have known all your plans." Saying so, they whispered something in Jiji's ears. She said to them "Then, take me to Kolhapur." In spite of so much suffering and agonies, Jiji favoured her brother (1994, 2009: 103-104, *My Translation*).

A few illustrative depictions from the narrative cited above show humiliation and awful sufferings of the protagonist and the female characters related to him. The narrative is full of such pictures where a young woman is a sellable product for the erotic and hedonistic pleasures of a rich class from the rural and semi-urban areas like Phalatan, Karamala, Isalampur, Ambejogai etc. The text is subaltern; it portrays a section of a society, which has entirely been unknown and was not included in the Marathi literary canons. Its worth as a subaltern text is that it takes us into a very different unsaid and untracked realm. It is a text to use Gayatri Spivak's term that focuses '*a space of difference*'. According to Spivak, '*everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism*' and '*wanting a piece of the pie*' and '*so let them speak*' and '*use the hegemonic discourse*' (Interview: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 1992). Kishor's discourse is thus a discourse against *the cultural imperialism* of the elitist literary traditions. So its significance lies in its manifestation of a subaltern reality.

It is indeed surprising to note that the *Kolatis* opposed to the text as they thought that it portrays *dirty parts* of the *Kolati* life, culture and practices. An article in *Loksatta* (August, 2013) was published in this context; the writer made a plea to the *Kolati* community to prevent such a pressure of ban on the book. This also shows the politics of publication; a politically powerful section of society might be also involved in creating pressure of ban on the book, as the narrative

openly and courageously mentions names of a few politicians. This is indeed another important aspect of the narrative. The subalternity of a text thus plays a pivotal role in social and cultural transformation of society.

As a subaltern text, the *narrative Kolatyache Por* records unprecedented life story of Kishor, the protagonist who struggles through poverty, starving, deprivation, insults, humiliation and social and familial violence of an entirely not yet narrated section of a society. What emerges out of the narrative is a *darshan* (a philosophical discourse) of a section of life untold and unsaid in the times and history of our country.

### Notes and References

1. Ranajit Guha (1922) is a historian of South Asia who was greatly influential in the Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) and was the editor of several of the group's early anthologies. He migrated from India to the UK in 1959, and currently lives in Vienna and Austria. His *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* is widely considered to be a classic. Aside from this, his founding statement in the first volume of Subaltern Studies set the agenda for the Subaltern Studies Group defining the "subaltern" as "the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the 'elite'".

2. *Loksatta* is one of the prominent Marathi dailies in Maharashtra in which Ganesh Devi's interview was published in the Sunday Supplement of 18 August 2013 as a Cover Story on the occasion of the publication ceremony of the first Volume of The Survey of Indian Languages in Pune. The supplement carried two more important contributions, Arun Jakhade, who played a key role in the composition of Survey Study of Marathi non-standard dialects. Dr Devi is also connected with the tribal communities; his contributions in this field are immense and they are admirable as well as revolutionary. The next volumes of *People's Linguistic Survey* are on the way of publication. These texts, according to many experts in this field, are going to play invariably significant roles in the future of our country.

3. Sumitra Bhavé's *Pan on Fire* is a text that can be termed as a 'Narrated Autobiographies' where eight Dalit women narrate their life-stories. The stories were originally narrated in Marathi and later they were translated into English by Gauri Deshpande. The life stories were collected by a Research Team headed by Sumitra Bhavé under the auspices of Ishvani Kendra Pune. The very objective of the Project was to find out image of woman's self. While narrating their life-stories, the women were particular about selecting those parts of their lives, which they thought had a greater bearing on their present day situations. It is an unfortunate fact that even after the independence of more than sixty years a majority of Dalit women are illiterate.

4. D. H. Lawrence has used this phrase *to eat dirt* to refer to the class distinction based on money and wealth as power of exploitation of those who poor and moneyless in his poem titled, *Money Madness*. The capitalist class owns the means of production and consequently in the contest of maintaining it makes the working class to provide a pie that would keep them alive for its survival. The wealthy thus crushes the poor and moneyless into a world of social injustice, insult and humiliation.

5. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar used this phrase *broken men* to describe the dalits in his book titled, *The Untouchables: What are They? And Why They Became Untouchables?* Anand Book Company, New Delhi, 1948.

6. *Sangate Aika* (1970, 1977), a segment of autobiographical narrative was first published in 1966 in the Diwali issue of *Manus*; as it caught the attention of the common reader, a series of the narrative was published in the following issues of *Manus*. Later, G. Majgaonkar of Rajhans Publications, Pune published it in a book form in 1970. The narrative is fragmentary and incomplete; probably it is the strength of the narrative. It is saga of a courtesan woman fighting against male eroticism as a patriarchal cultural product. The book is translated in English (by Zuban, New Delhi in 2013) with a very odd title, *You Ask, I Tell*.

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