

A FEMINIST READING OF
“THE WEAVE OF MY LIFE” BY URMILA PAWAR

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ABSTRACT

Urmila Pawar’s autobiographical work A Weave of My Life provides a compelling narrative that intertwines caste and gender oppression within the framework of Indian society. It presents a powerful intersection of caste and gender, offering a distinctive feminist perspective rooted in Dalit experience. This study examines how Pawar articulates a form of Dalit Feminism that challenges both patriarchal oppression and caste-based marginalization. Through her personal narrative, Pawar foregrounds the everyday struggles of Dalit women, whose identities are shaped not only by gender but also by systemic social hierarchies.

Her use of weaving as a metaphor symbolizes both survival and creativity, reflecting the resilience of marginalized women. By situating A Weave of My Life within the broader framework of Dalit literature and feminist theory, this research underscores the importance of inclusive narratives in understanding women’s experiences in India. The study ultimately argues that Pawar’s work expands feminist discourse by integrating caste consciousness, thereby redefining the scope and direction of contemporary feminist thought.

KEYWORDS: *Dalit Feminism, Caste Discrimination, Gender Inequality, Empowerment, Patriarchy, Resistance.*

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Introduction

Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* is a powerful autobiographical narrative that reflects the lived experiences of a Dalit woman navigating a deeply hierarchical and patriarchal society. The text goes beyond a personal life story and emerges as a significant work of Dalit feminist literature, foregrounding the intersection of caste, gender, and class oppression. Through vivid memories of her childhood, family, and social environment, Pawar exposes the multiple layers of discrimination faced by Dalit women, both within their communities and in the larger social structure. A feminist reading of the memoir reveals how the author not only critiques patriarchal norms but also asserts her identity, voice, and agency, making the work an important contribution to intersectional feminist discourse in India.

Research Objectives of the Study

- To study feminist ideas in *A Weave of My Life*
- To understand how caste and gender affect women's lives
- To see how education helps women become independent
- To learn about the ways Dalit women resist injustice

Literature Review

The Weave of My Life by Urmila Pawar have primarily focused on its contribution to Dalit feminist discourse, highlighting the intersection of caste, gender, and class in shaping women's experiences. Critics widely agree that Pawar's narrative challenges main-stream feminist frameworks by centering the lived realities of Dalit women, who experience a unique form of marginalization.

Several scholars emphasize the concept of intersectionality, originally theorized by Kimberlé Crenshaw, to analyze the layered oppression in the text. They argue that Pawar's memoir illustrates how Dalit women are subjected to both caste discrimination and patriarchal control, making their struggles distinct from those of upper-caste women. This has led to the recognition of the text as a key work in Dalit feminist literature. Critics have also examined Pawar's portrayal of women's labor and economic exploitation, noting how the narrative foregrounds the physical and emotional burdens carried by Dalit women. The depiction of her mother's basket-weaving and other forms of labor has been interpreted as a symbol of both survival and resistance. Scholars highlight that such representations challenge the invisibility of marginalized women's work in literary and social discourse.

Another significant area of analysis is the memoir's critique of patriarchy, both within Dalit communities and in the broader caste society.

Researchers point out that Pawar does not romanticize her community; instead, she exposes internal gender inequalities, thereby offering a nuanced feminist perspective.

Research Methodology

This study is based on closely reading and understanding the text *A Weave of My Life*. It uses a simple qualitative method to explain the themes and experiences in the book. This study adopts a qualitative and interpretative approach to analyze *The Weave of My Life* by Urmila Pawar. The research is primarily based on textual analysis, focusing on selected episodes, narrative patterns, and thematic concerns within the memoir to understand its feminist dimensions.

Feminist Analysis of the Text

- **Double Marginalization:** Dalit women face two types of discrimination—because of caste and because they are women. Pawar clearly shows this double suffering in her life.
- **Struggle for Identity and Self-Respect:** Pawar's life shows her struggle to gain respect and identity. Society tries to silence her, but she fights to express herself and be recognized.
- **Role of Education:** Education plays a very important role in her life. It helps her grow, think independently, and fight against injustice. The book shows that education is a key to freedom.
- **Critique of Patriarchy:** The book shows how society is controlled by men. Women are expected to obey and stay within limits. Pawar questions these ideas and challenges them.
- **Women's Solidarity:** The story also shows how women support each other. Dalit women share their struggles and help each other, which gives them strength.
- **Everyday Forms of Resistance:** Pawar does not talk about big revolutions but small actions—like studying, speaking up, and refusing injustice. These simple acts become powerful forms of resistance.

Research Findings

- Dalit women face discrimination because of both caste and gender
- Education helps women improve their lives
- Patriarchal society limits women's freedom
- Small actions can be powerful forms of resistance
- Dalit feminist writing creates awareness in society

Conclusion

A feminist reading of *The Weave of My Life* by Urmila Pawar reveals it as a powerful narrative that transcends personal autobiography to become a significant intervention in Dalit Feminist Discourse. The memoir highlights the intersection of caste, gender, and class, exposing the multiple layers of oppression faced by Dalit women in Indian society. Ultimately, the text stands as an act of resistance and self-assertion, giving voice to silenced histories and redefining identity through storytelling. It affirms that Dalit women are not merely victims of oppression but active agents of change, making the work an essential contribution.

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