

Reclaiming Voices: Agency and Identity in Dalit Women's Literature

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Abstract

This paper investigates the intersection of education, literature, and identity among Dalit women in India, highlighting their historical and contemporary struggles against caste-based discrimination and gender inequality. It examines the evolving access to education for Dalits, noting persistent gaps despite policy changes. The study critically analyzes how Dalit women have been portrayed in colonial literature and by Dalit men, revealing a recurring double marginalization and stereotypical depictions that underscore patriarchal and caste oppressions. Contrastingly, the rise of Dalit women's autobiographical literature marks a significant departure, asserting their agency and challenging prevailing narratives. This literature not only voices the unique challenges faced by Dalit women but also reclaims their narrative space, contributing profoundly to the discourse on Dalit identity and feminism. The paper underscores the need for acknowledging these intersectional experiences to advance justice and equality in Indian society.

Keywords: Dalit, Literature, Women, Identity, Autobiography, Inequality