

Abstract

Autobiographies as Emancipatory Epistemology: A Study of Takbhaure's *Shikanje Ka Dard* (2011) and Kaveri's *Tukda-Tukda Jeevan* (2017)

The emergence of Dalit women's autobiographies in various Indian vernacular languages since the 1980s has challenged the dichotomy between public and private spheres central to upper-class modernity and has disputed claims about the homogeneity of women's experiences across the social ladder. The life narratives of Dalit women have been compared with those of Black women and Latin testimonios as they proclaim the collective struggles and oppression of Dalit women at the intersection of caste, class, and gender. The critical engagement with Hindi Dalit autobiographies, particularly those by Dalit women, has been minimal since they began to emerge in the late 1990s, after the underprivileged caste people gained political consciousness and social mobility in North India. Therefore, this paper intends to turn the spotlight on the autobiographies of two prominent first-generation Hindi Dalit women authors from the North Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, namely Sushila Takbhaure's *Shikanje Ka Dard: Aur Aage Ki Kahani* (2011) and Kaveri's *Tukda-Tukda Jeevan* (2017). While the selected autobiographies underscore the importance of education and individual agency in empowering subaltern communities, they also offer a "Dalit Critique" of liberal democracy in India by documenting their struggles to attain self-respect and dignity, even after migrating to urban areas (Guru, 2011, p. 117). The authors also take a vocal stance on the different dimensions of patriarchal prejudice to underscore the intersectionality of multiple forms of discrimination in their everyday lives. This paper examines the primary themes and literary strategies employed in these life narratives to represent the predicament of Dalit women at both the individual and collective levels. This study will argue that the selected autobiographies, embedded in the authors' lived

experiences, contribute to an emancipatory subaltern epistemology of casteism, gender oppression, religion, and liberal democracy.

Keywords: Hindi Dalit autobiographies, Dalit women, intersectionality, gender, caste, subaltern epistemology

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