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Resistance and IKS: Female Consciousness in Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar's Autobiographies

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Abstract

This study examines the portrayal of female consciousness, resilience, and social resistance in Baby Kamble's *Jina Amucha* and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*. Originating from India's marginalized Mahar and Dalit communities, these autobiographical accounts record systemic injustice, gender discrimination, and individual struggles to attain dignity and selfhood. The analysis uses Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), with their philosophical, ethical, and psychological dimensions, to understand how these women confront social hierarchies, patriarchal expectations, and internalized trauma. Particular emphasis is placed upon resistance and resilience as connected processes and upon women's agency in constructing identity under structural marginalization.

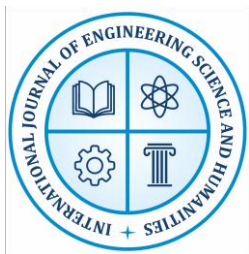
The research follows a qualitative and interpretive method that combines textual study, feminist approaches, and IKS concepts such as Shakti, Dharma, Manas, Buddhi, and Chitta. Its findings indicate that the two autobiographies not only preserve social and historical realities but also express a transformative form of feminine consciousness grounded in cultural and ethical systems of knowledge.

Keywords: Baby Kamble, Urmila Pawar, women's consciousness, Dalit autobiography, Indian Knowledge Systems, Shakti, resilience

Introduction:

Autobiography creates a distinctive means of entering the lived realities of marginalized groups, especially where caste and gender oppression shape life in India. Through their personal narratives, Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar offer powerful insight into the relationship among caste, gender, and psychological endurance. Kamble's *Jina Amucha* depicts a Dalit woman resisting untouchability, exclusion, and patriarchal domination, whereas Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* traces the ways Dalit women negotiate memory, agency, and identity within a restrictive social structure.

Although these autobiographies have frequently been interpreted through feminist and sociological approaches, their study from the perspective of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)



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remains limited. By including ideas of consciousness, ethical action, and feminine energy, IKS supplies a holistic framework for examining how women absorb, resist, and transform social as well as psychological restrictions. This research attempts to connect Dalit autobiography, feminist criticism, and IKS-based psychological interpretation and thereby draws attention to how marginalized women voice resistance, claim agency, and preserve resilience.

Review of Related Literature:

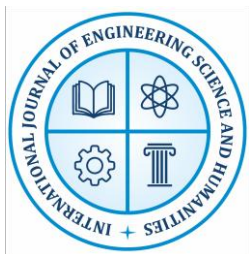
Dalit autobiographies have received extensive scholarly attention for their feminist and socio-political significance. Guru (2009) stresses the importance of Dalit women writers in revealing the intersecting operations of caste and gender. Rege (1998) focuses on the double marginalization produced by patriarchal and caste-based systems. Jain (2015), while studying the psychological consequences of structural oppression, draws attention to the resilience displayed by women within these accounts.

Sharma (2007) and Radhakrishnan (1951), from the standpoint of IKS, offer conceptual frameworks for interpreting consciousness, inner strength, and ethical equilibrium. Manas (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (memory), and Shakti (feminine energy) become useful concepts for reading moral agency and psychological endurance in literature. Feminist thinkers such as Chodorow (1978) and Beauvoir (2011) also inform the examination of gendered identity and emotional labour, both of which are fundamental to the experiences narrated by Pawar and Kamble.

Theoretical Framework:

1. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) Perspective:

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) offer an integrated framework for interpreting consciousness and ethical existence by bringing together mind, intellect, ego, and memory. Manas denotes the sensory and emotional mind through which people process feeling and react to private as well as social experience. It registers changes in desire, attachment, and instinctive response. Buddhi, meaning intellect, enables rational thought, ethical evaluation, and deliberate choice, helping individuals exercise discernment when faced with difficulty or moral conflict. Ahamkara, the ego or awareness of self, is repeatedly formed and reformed by oppression, resistance, and self-realization and therefore shapes identity and psychological resilience. Chitta serves as the storehouse of memory, preserving generational trauma, inherited cultural impressions, and earlier experiences that influence present consciousness and behaviour. Shakti occupies a central place in IKS as the creative and dynamic feminine force associated with endurance, transformation, and resilience under adversity. Dharma, finally, represents ethical balance and directs righteous conduct, moral responsibility, and action even in conditions of personal and social hardship. Considered together, these ideas provide a culturally rooted and comprehensive lens for studying psychology, ethical behaviour, and feminine resilience in literary writing.



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2. Feminist and Psychological Framework:

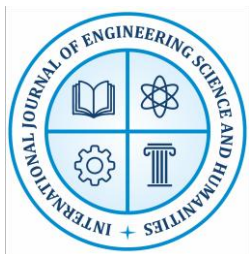
To study the complex forms of women's consciousness in the autobiographies of Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar, this research brings Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into conversation with feminist psychology. The approach places at the centre the social and psychological processes through which women manage emotional labour, internalized oppression, and gendered exclusion while simultaneously developing agency and resilience. It also considers how systemic inequalities, especially caste and patriarchy, influence the formation of identity and shape both social position and self-understanding. By combining IKS ideas such as Manas, Buddhi, Ahamkara, Chitta, Shakti, and Dharma with feminist interpretations of gendered experience, the study develops a culturally grounded and holistic psychological reading of the autobiographies. This combined perspective recognizes that women's lived experience emerges through the interaction of inner consciousness and external socio-cultural limitations.

Objectives of the Study:

- To investigate the ways Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar portray women's consciousness in their autobiographies.
- To interpret the ethical and psychological aspects of agency, resilience, and resistance through IKS.
- To study how caste and gender oppression influence the construction of identity.
- To establish the relevance of IKS for interpreting the autobiographical narratives of Dalit women.
- To emphasize the simultaneous processes of trauma and empowerment within the lives of marginalized women.

Research Methodology:

A qualitative, comparative, and interpretive methodology is used to examine the psychological and ethical aspects of women's consciousness in Baby Kamble's *Jina Amucha* and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*. Close textual reading forms the primary basis of the research and permits detailed attention to characterization, narrative strategies, psychological concerns, gendered realities, and ethical judgment. The analysis is further supported by secondary scholarship in feminist theory, Dalit studies, and Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), which supplies the necessary conceptual and contextual foundation. Themes including resilience, resistance, emotional labour, and Shakti are identified and systematically coded to produce a structured yet nuanced interpretation. Through this method, the study compares women's lived experiences, examines the intersection of consciousness with caste and gender, and incorporates the culturally specific philosophical insights offered by IKS.



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Analysis and Discussion:

1. Resistance and Agency:

Kamble and Pawar both represent women responding to systemic domination through symbolic as well as practical acts of resistance. Kamble challenges restrictions based on caste by finding her voice through education and social activism. Pawar, meanwhile, questions patriarchal conventions and affirms women's entitlement to self-expression. Their actions embody Shakti because they convert individual and collective suffering into resilience.

2. Emotional Labor and Silent Suffering:

The autobiographies expose the emotional labour performed by women as they preserve family unity, respond to social expectations, and silently contain psychological pain. Viewed through IKS, this endurance expresses an equilibrium between Manas and Buddhi: emotional consciousness informs ethical choices even in the presence of systemic hardship.

3. Memory, Trauma, and Chitta:

Both narratives preserve memories of intergenerational trauma arising from caste violence, patriarchal control, and social rejection. IKS describes Chitta as the repository in which such memories are retained, shaping women's consciousness and their ethical decisions. By narrating traumatic experience, the women achieve both catharsis and transformation and thereby recover a measure of agency.

4. Feminine Resilience and Shakti:

Shakti appears as the principal source of resilience and enables women not merely to survive hardship but also to grow through it. Their mental endurance, ethical strength, and inventive responses to difficulty demonstrate how feminine energy sustains social order and life even under oppressive conditions.

Findings:

The autobiographies of Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar powerfully reveal how resistance and resilience interact in the lives of marginalized women. Their narratives present defiance, perseverance, and self-assertion as essential strategies for confronting oppression based on society, caste, and gender. IKS concepts, particularly Shakti, Chitta, and Dharma, clarify the ethical and psychological dimensions of these experiences by showing how women maintain inward strength, process traumatic memories, and make morally informed decisions during adversity. Emotional labour, silent suffering, and the negotiation of identity occupy a central place in their consciousness and disclose the quiet yet profound methods by which women engage with and reshape social reality. Caste-based and gendered marginalization increases psychological complexity; at the same time, it can foster ethical fortitude, emotional resilience, and transformative agency. The narratives thus demonstrate women's capacity to endure and to reconstruct both individual and collective identity.



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Conclusion:

The study shows that combining Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) with women-centred perspectives substantially deepens the interpretation of Dalit women's autobiographical writing. Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar express ethical consciousness, resilience, and resistance within oppressive caste and social systems, and their narratives provide significant examples of feminine empowerment grounded in psychological, cultural, and moral knowledge. By moving beyond largely Eurocentric models, the research demonstrates the importance of indigenous epistemologies in literary and psychological study and offers a culturally responsive, holistic framework for understanding women's consciousness, agency, and ability to create change in literature. Reading marginalized voices through the connected approaches of IKS and feminist psychology not only enriches literary interpretation but also brings forward the spiritual, emotional, and ethical aspects of human life that conventional analyses often neglect.

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