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"I ache with pain under the weight of my memory": A Study of Manohar Mouli Biswas' Surviving in My World

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ABSTRACT

Self-abnegation, humiliation, social exclusion, marginalization and erasure from the mainstream life contribute to the construction of Dalit self and Dalit identity in dalit autobiographies. Dalit writers attempt to recover and rewrite their social, cultural, political and economic history in their writings, in order to claim their own identity. Dalit writers found autobiography as the suitable site to re-create their selves and also to raise the dalit consciousness to dismantle the social hierarchy. This paper undertakes to analyses how Manohar Mouli Biswas, a distinguished Bengali Dalit writer, rendered his suffering as a Dalit in his autobiography Surviving in My World (2015), how he was subjected to oppression and marginalization in the society, how he scripted his 'self', his upbringing, his continuous struggle against Brahman cal hegemony in order to survive. This paper will also examine how Biswas has unfolded his misery as a Dalit child growing in a remote village in 'Undivided Bengal' and how he continued to suffer violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect, physical and mental torture and became a victim of caste discrimination as every Dalit individual does even after Bengal was divided. This paper will also show that caste discrimination do exist in today's so-called 'bhadralok' (gentleman) Bengali society and it will focus on how Biswas made effort to voice his protest and resistance against discrimination based on caste, how he endeavored to vandalize the shackles of casteism, and how he carved out his own identity first as a human being and thereafter as a writer of repute.

Keywords: community, caste, Dalit, marginalisation, pain.

INTRODUCTION

Dalit writers document their social exclusion and erasure from the mainstream life in their autobiographies. Dalit autobiographies are critique of caste discrimination in Indian society where the ideologies created by the Brahmins have forced these subordinated Dalits to look at themselves through the eyes of the ruling classes. Dalit autobiographies serve as the most powerful weapon that can effectively bring out Dalit's pain and anguish and can voice their protest and resistance to Brahmanical hegemony. Dalit self and dalit identity in these dalit autobiographies are constructed by undergoing humiliation, repression, subjugation and abnegation of self because of their exclusion and marginalization common to all Dalit lives. Neerja Jayal Chand points out in this context:

> Coming from different parts of India, with diverse linguistic, social and cultural contexts, the one common thread that runs through all Dalit writings is that of pain and human suffering, consequent upon an outdated, hackneyed Brahmanical law, which divides human beings into unkind categories, irrelevant in an age of democratic, egalitarian social equality and justice and which goes against the preamble of Indian constitution which officially claims that India is a secular state. . . . (81)

Therefore, a Dalit autobiography is not an individual's story but is a depiction of the life and struggle of the whole community of dalits. Sharmila Rege quotes Janardan Wagmare that "these narratives come to represent not the journey of an individual voice, emotion and consciousness but rather a social and community based chorus of voices" (13). When they do write, it is always in the larger context of their caste and community. Kashinath Ranveer comments in this context:

> Through the creation of the notions of caste . . . these subordinated and oppressed groups of the society have been made to suffer from self-scorn, self-hatred, self negation, self abnegation and self erasure. Hence, they were deprived from the very notion of their self, self esteem, self dignity and self respect. (108)

As dalits experience loss of their self, they try to recover and reclaim their own identity repeatedly through their writings. In their writings, they attempt to recover and rewrite their social, cultural, political, economic and religious history in order to

claim their own identity. Ravikumar, an activist of the dalit movement in Tamil Nadu, commenting on the significance of autobiographical writings of the marginalized sections, says:

> The early writings of a newly literate community, or a group finding its voice for the first time, have always been autobiographical — be they aboriginal, women, black or dalit. The aboriginal writers say that when their entire history is erased, the autobiographical stories they narrate become their history. (7)

On the other hand, Arun Prabha Mukherjee states in an interview that Dalit writers generally bring out in their autobiography how the society remains unfair to them from times immemorial and shows how "an angry dalit autobiography incites others who have suffered in silence" (20-21). Therefore, autobiographical literature has remained a strategy for survival of the Dalits in contesting marginality, questioning silence and re-writing their past. This paper will analyse how Manohar Mouli Biswas brings out his life and struggle as a Dalit and how he foregrounds the sufferings of Dalits in Bengal in his autobiography Surviving in My World.

Manohar Mouli Biswas originally wrote and published his autobiography – Amar Bhubane Ami Benche Thaki (2013) in Bengali. Later it was translated and edited into English by Angana Dutta and Jaydeep Sarangi as Surviving in My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal in 2015. This autobiography is hailed as one of the cornerstones in the genre of Dalit life-writing, as G. J. V. Prasad appreciates in the beginning of this autobiography that "Manohar Mouli Biswas is a significant voice in the growing corpus of English translation of Dalit Literature from West Bengal" (Views i). Continuing this appreciation, Sharankumar Limbale states in the very first page of the book that "The narrations of Biswas bring to life the struggles of survival of the dalit namashudra community.

This, and more such translations will help fight the illusion that 'there is no caste discrimination in Bengal'" (Views i). Sekhar Bandyopadhyay has explained the significance and importance of this autobiography in the Foreword to this book: Over the last few years a number of dalit autobiographies have been published in Hindi, Kannada and Marathi, and a few of them have been translated into English. As for Bangla, it is only recently that we have seen the publication of a few autobiographies by dalit intellectuals, providing us with a rare glimpse into the lives and experiences of the dalit in Bengal, and more importantly, giving us a clear idea of how caste discrimination worked or still works in this linguistic region. This literature thus explodes that popular bhadralok myth that caste does not matter in Bengal. The autobiography by the talented dalit poet and essayist Manohar Mouli Biswas is one of the earliest in this genre and probably the first to be translated into English. (Surviving xi) Biswas writes that the sole purpose of writing this autobiography is to bring out the pain and anguish he has gone through in his life. In 'A Note by the Author' at the beginning of this book, he writes:

My world is of great pain, one of being pitied by others…. In the process of journeying through pain and suffering, I keep sculpting myself in my own fashion. I do not compromise with this task of sculpting my identity, of getting established in the self, of gaining personal spontaneity. Probably it is not even possible to compromise. This is how I live alone in my world. (Surviving xviii-xix) In another instance in 'A Note by the Author', he writes:

> I wrote this autobiography out of pain. This pain is of being belittled, of being unwanted, of being enslaved. May my people be able to come out of this and stand with their heads held high, may they be able to touch the summits of civilization – I remain alive amidst such hope….It is unfair and undesirable to hope that in this country, drowning in the luxury of consumerist culture, the autobiography of an unwanted person would be accepted with honour….What is presented is an astonishing life, growing up naturally amidst the muddy waters, and its strange experiences of poverty, caste discrimination and the tale of starvation…. It is as if the occupation of my forefathers becomes a victim of neglect. Yet I remain in my familiar environment, in my familiar space – I want to remain here and so I write my autobiography. (Surviving xx-xxi)

Biswas begins his autobiography with his memory of childhood that he had spent in Khulna in Bangladesh in 1940s and 1950s. The time briefly recorded is of undivided Bengal to the aftermath of partition of this state. At the beginning of his life-narrative he brings reference to his father and his firm belief that "The children must get educated" (Surviving 1). But he loved to spent time in the heart of Nature, as he grew up amidst the beauty of Nature, where he has observed Nature very closely and almost every chapter bears the testimony of this fact. He writes: "Tales of childhood smeared with nearness to snakes and leeches survive as living memory in the corner of my mind even today" (Surviving 76). Talking about his attachment to rivers, he mentions, "I derived more joy out of observing the characters and qualities of the fish under clear water than fishing itself. Being born in a poor family in a land of rivers and canals, today I feel the beautiful experiences of my childhood are rich treasures of my life" (Surviving 73).

While he loved to play in the muddy waters and forests, his father, uncle and grandfather often discussed his future, his life and his education. He quotes how his Jetha used to ask his Thakurda: "Will our children be able to become babus if they are

educated? They cannot, they cannot, they cannot! Even if our children get educated they won't be able to become babus. They will do manual labour, they will have to hold onto the butt of the plough – such is the inscription in the scriptures by the Gods" (Surviving 4). His Thakurda remained optimistic about the future of his grandson and often made his Baba and Jetha understand:

> I am illiterate, you are also illiterate. You want to make your children illiterate too? Go ahead…But remember this, times are changing, not like what they were like. I can see so much of transformation – earlier people used to abuse me as charal-chandal so often. But now no one calls you charal-chandal, no calls you tui disrespectfully referring to your caste. They are showing a little respect, remember this! (Surviving 5)

He seems grateful to his father and grandfather when he says "With them the journey of my education began!" (Surviving 6). But for him working on the field was more essential than going to school because gathering food to save the family from starvation was his foremost duty. He regrets at the end of the first chapter that "I had to help Baba and Jetha on the land to such an extent that I could not concentrate on my studies" (Surviving 6).

Biswas describes the scene of gathering food by physical labour as very natural and common scene in the life of Dalits: "I never saw our people steeped in sorrows lament…. Parents cuddled their children, while children shared the physical labour of their parents from an early age. This was the natural way of our lives" (Surviving 12). He sarcastically remarks in his autobiography: "…we were people from a different planet. We knew the value of food and clothes, but we did not know the value of education" (Surviving 23). Biswas says that the people of his community often gathered together on the banks of Chitra and Kali rivers for collective physical labour. Their power of tolerance and capacity of hard labour are incomparable. He explains in his autobiography how children of his community were accustomed to hard work right from their childhood:

We are a people of mud and water. Just as the water hyacinth grows within the muddy waters without any care, the same happened in the case of our children. They were intimately acquainted with the boat or donga. There was no need to teach them to swim. They were so familiar with the rivers that unconsciously a stream of kinship developed…. They were natural warriors of physical labour. That something was physically impossible did not have a place in their dictionaries. They were hardworking people by birth. Labour was another name for life to them. (Surviving 55-56)

But "in spite of having talent and intelligence these people remained unwanted in society because they lacked using the pen for tasks. They were transformed into the 'leftovers' of society" (Surviving 22). On the other hand, he writes about the upper caste people and how privileged they are. To him it was like "people lived so close to the sun! They lived in the light. It hurt to see the two different flows along the two rivers of this same earth" (Surviving 58).

Talking about caste discrimination, Biswas states in his autobiography that often they were referred to as "Pork eating namas" (Surviving 9). He remembers that pork was never allowed to be sold openly in any of the market place as it was considered food for the untouchables. The pig sellers who were from a different caste never ate together with them as they were cow breeders, known as 'rakhal'. He says "People of different castes did not eat together. Just as they did not know who formulated this rule, so didn't we!" (Surviving 12). Therefore, people used to gather pork very surreptitiously. He has explained that because of their habit of pork eating, the upper caste people used to avoid entering the neighbourhood of these namashudras.

He cites another instance of caste discrimination in his autobiography. He remembers the higher caste Hindus usually preferred to board a Muslim's boat and carefully avoided the boats of the shudras in order to save themselves from purity pollution. It was hard for him as a child to decipher the meaning of this unwritten custom. He says, "Later in life the question of doubting this story never occurred to me. It was endorsed by experience" (Surviving 56). As a child he has witnessed how people of his community failed to become the owner of boats. They suffered from penury and destitution as they were victims of caste discrimination. It has left a scar in his mind. He pessimistically remarks in his autobiography:

Sometimes or rather frequently, I felt there would remain a gap somewhere in accepting us genuinely as 'Hindus' and letting us develop on a par with the more advanced caste groups of the Hindus. We were only used in the head count for making Hindus the majority. Socially, economically, culturally and educationally, we were a massive heap of garbage at the bottom. Human communities are a matter of national resources. But we had failed to transform ourselves into resources. We remained a waste. The way this question disturbed me in my childhood still hurts in many forms. (Surviving 56)

Thinking along the lines of caste discrimination in Indian society, Biswas pours out his heart when he says in his autobiography that "it was all a matter of adjustment – learning to live with tolerance. We never thought along the lines that we are unwanted beings of this world, that our griefs have no end or that it is meaningless to live like this. We never needed to" (Surviving 12).

In his autobiography, Biswas compares the struggle of his community in gathering food for survival with that of a water hyacinth. He says:

We were living epitome of a life extremely simple and abstemious, living on two handfuls of rice a day, a life of enjoying the beauty of nature while living, in its midst, learning to tolerate scarcities and complaints. This pattern was not of one life, but that of generations. It was living like a prisnika – a water hyacinth – living on the verge of death and dying on the verge of life! (Surviving 39)

He describes how he and his sister along with the other children of his community used to enter the dunkar jungle to pluck and eat dunkar fruits as much as possible to quell their hunger and would carry the surplus for the little kids back home. During this the thorns of dunkar trees would prick in their naked bodies as the children wore no clothes, and, blood oozed out from those wounds. He says:

> I don't remember being scolded at home for such outings. This life of ours, full of slights and hurts, was nothing new to our parents. We received this life as heritage! Our forefathers' lives were similar. Our guardians did not get anxious seeing our bloodied bodies, nor did they foresee any danger. (Surviving 15)

He describes the usual diet of his community consisting of boiled rice of coarse grains with various kinds of fish caught out of the wetlands and canals, kochu-leaf (taro) preparation, fried shapla with small prawns or fish, and "we felt it was our eternal tradition. We had become experts in living a life of this kind as a heritage handed down to us through many generations. What I want to express is that we were spontaneous travelers in the river of our lives. It was difficult to find any parallels." (Surviving 75)

Biswas writes how people of his community were superstitious. The whole community grovelling in the darkness of superstitions would always listen to the headman of the village and consider him as their godfather. The Morol (headman) would decide and settle down each and every matter of the village. His words would be followed by the illiterate villagers inch by inch. The Morol would say: "when children reach the age of marriage, they must be married off. Otherwise, if they are not married off at the right age, then they are possessed by ghosts. But when they are given in marriage, they get released" (Surviving 45).

Discussing about the marriage and dowry he openly states that:

> "The nama community did not have the dowry system. Rather the groom's father had to give a rupee to the bride's father – a silver coin. Smearing that coin with vermillion, it was pressed on a piece of paper. This acted as a deed of final agreement" (Surviving 37). Biswas has discussed the treatment of women in his community. Once he witnessed a scene in his childhood where he remembers a man found beating his wife was subjected to punishment. The wife was seen standing in public with her head lowered and covered by a long veil, while, the guilty husband pleaded before her standing with folded hands saying, "I'm guilty, forgive me – forgive me this time!" (Surviving 13). This proves that women of his community often suffered double discrimination along the lines of gender as well as caste.

Talking about the practices of Hindu religion, he explains that to subjugate these Dalits, the literate upper castes would always refer to the scriptures to prove their superiority. But surely and certainly "none of them had read the scriptures" (Surviving 49). The Dalits were made to believe "in the unwritten rules coming down from eternity to be the scriptures" (Surviving 49). Describing the condition of widows of his community, Biswas says that the namashudras were Hindus, but, often discarded the popular Hindu customs and rituals. He stated that:

> The widows of the Hindu homes observed penance during ekadashi. They fasted and observed various spiritual rituals. They would not eat fish or meat but were vegetarian. The widows of my community were accustomed to eating fish or meat. This practice remains among them today. It is not their habit to observe ekadashi or other such rituals. The strict restriction of widow remarriage was not prevalent among them. Their own social reformers had started the practice of widow remarriage a long time ago. (Surviving 51)

In his autobiography, he remembers the miserable and poverty-ridden life of his community people, and writes about their half-filled bellies, scanty tattered rags, outbreaks of diseases, lack of proper medical treatment leading to death, ignorant masses, superstitions, meaningless rituals and humiliation. He describes how his father died when not a single doctor was

found nearby. These Dalits had to arrange all possible natural and homemade medicines to save themselves in order to remain alive. He says, "We were born as children of immortality on this earth. Even after being in the toughest of crises we were somehow salvaged. Just as we survived battling with nature, we also invited our own disaster at times. I grew up watching the hide and seek play of smiles and tears" (Surviving 30).

Biswas has given a vivid description of how they were often neglected by the police. In most Dalit autobiographies, there is description of how dalits suffer the atrocities of police, inhuman torture, implication on the basis of false charges, taking them into the custody and merciless and brutal beating by police who often take bribe from the upper castes. Out of penury these Dalits cannot grease the palms of the police, so they receive the worst treatment. On the other hand, Biswas exposes that the police never attended them during the time of their dire need. This is common in almost all the Dalit communities as well. Biswas writes:

> There was one good thing in his region. Be it a natural or unnatural death, there was no role of the police or the police station. This was a community that remained neglected away from the watch of the nation's administration. The people born in nature, lived in their own way and even died in their own way. The name of this history of life and death is prisnika – growing up like the water hyacinth and dying like it, uncared for. I was born into such a community and that is how I grew up in my deprived childhood. (Surviving 48)

Describing various struggles of his life and his community, he mentions in Chapter-8 of his autobiography that his father would say that, "education is such a thing that even if it has a beginning, it has no end. You have to do physical labour as well as study. If you can strike a balance between the two, then in spite of being the son of a poor man, you can do something" (Surviving 65). To him, it occurred that education can bring an end to his hard life. He interprets the words of his father as: "One is born in a poor household, the doors of education will open if one can strike the right the right balance between education and labour" (Surviving 66). Biswas knew that his father never wanted him to do physical labour because he remembers his grandfather's words that the people who live their lives out of physical labour face great neglect. Biswas writes, that "the possibility of living a life of self-respect, free of condescension, always occupied Baba's mind. This is why Baba wholeheartedly accepted my interest in education" (Surviving 65).

When he was a student of primary school, he used to wake up very early in the morning to help his father complete the task of flattening nal reeds. As a child he would thoroughly notice how his father used to weave mattresses. With an unending energy he would try to match his speed with his father, but splitting the nal reeds was not an easy task for him. His small palms would bleed, but he never gave up. Seeing his enthusiasm, his father would dream that one day his son would complete his education, would get a good job, would work and live with the elite class of society and would become successful in life. Biswas remembers how he often poured out his heart before him saying, "you are my son, I will labour day after day for you, I will bear the hardship. Remember your father's hardship every day, lifelong. How much a father can become proud of his son, you will understand only when you become a father" (Surviving 67).

Biswas has skillfully drawn the common experiences of the whole community of dalits which have produced community based dalit literature of which dalit autobiography is a part. The collective selves of people of dalit community are continuous with the individual self of the autobiographer in order to unitedly confront hegemonic forces to demand their basic human rights. The self born out of oppression and marginalization is invariably rebellious and "no longer prepared to be silent occupants of the liminal space to which they had been confined for centuries" (Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature 5). Bama, the Tamil writer, writes in this context:

Dalit literature should not be viewed as a mere story of the individual's tragedy. Instead, it should be the story of the Dalit struggle and its relationship with Authority. It produces a political reaction. It is provocative and unpalatable to the champions of the oppressive caste and class system. It should bring about chaos into the hierarchical relationships between the dominant and the dominated. It is singular in concept but plural in practice. (98)

Biswas has shared his community feeling and writes in his autobiography:

> Just as everyone is proud of their community, I am no exception…. I'm not an exception it is my conviction that the namas are a tremendously independent minded community…. Opposed towards slavery, in spite of becoming defeated soldiers in occupations under the dictates of others, they were able to wear a kind of crown of victory. (Surviving 57)

He discusses that in those days they had innumerable relatives – near and distant ones, who used to dwell in their surrounding villages. He mentions that "apart from belonging to the same community, we shared relationships, a relation of

similar thoughts, of similar customs – most important of all, we were bonded by blood" (Surviving 21). He justifies the reason saying that the Dalits have fought for long to unburden themselves from the man made shackles of caste discrimination from times immemorial and this is common to all Dalits' life. He explains that "actually, we had fought long for sculpting a dignified identity, been enraged in this struggle for generations. None knew for how long!" (Surviving 9). This has raised the Dalit consciousness and fellow-feeling among themselves. He writes that his autobiography is one such example of the struggle of the Dalits:

I ache with pain under the weight of my memory. Breaking the doors of the past means that so many things have come forth. Many more remained locked in the cage of yesteryears. Whatever has come out, I have narrated one by one. It is not a story of someone growing up with a middle class lifestyle that is usually taken to be the standard. Those who are born into the light, set forth their feet towards school, holding their parents' hands; those who get to eat a bellyful twice a day, who wear new clothes during festivals, wear shoes on their feet, get treatment when sick, who bear no stamp of malnutrition on their bodies, get to wear warm clothes in winter, who grow up with care and concern – this is not their story. (Surviving 77)
After bringing into discussion so many facets of his life as a Dalit, he regrets:

> "I don't think I have been able to narrate my autobiography properly, which takes the form of the events of a few consecutive years of my childhood" (Surviving 72).

He explains how his autobiography can be taken as a document of history that unfolds the growth of the deprived Dalits in Bengal for generations:

> This autobiography is my autobiography, my father's autobiography, my grandfather's autobiography, my great grandfather's autobiography. This is the autobiography of remembering the bygone memories of my community. Just as my wife is unacquainted with this autobiography, so are my sons, my daughters-in-law, my grandchildren, too. This autobiography is a document of growing up amidst deprivation. It is a document of almost losing in life; touching the margins and then again stepping back among humans. (Surviving 78-79)

At the end of his autobiography, Biswas describes his experience during the partition of Bengal. He writes: As a child I saw my country become independent, I saw my country get partitioned, and saw the divisions on religious lines. But it was not religion, but poverty that was swinging like a sword on the top of our heads. Those who had demanded partition of the nation on the basis of religion were only a handful. None of them was poor. They were successful in using religion blindly for their selfish interests. Just as I was unable to understand as a child how these politicians, who were intelligent people, were solving national problems, similarly today, at this mature age I am unable to understand what is happening. What I feel is that the body of something pure and holy as religion, which beautifies humans from within, has been smeared with dirt. (Surviving 80) He also states that:

> We have never imagined that the country will be divided on the basis of religion…. Even if the country becomes independent, why can't we all live together? ... Some of them would give a counter logic, 'they are of higher castes and we are untouchables'…. 'Is it then a lie that there is no difference among humans? … Then why do we want to live by feeding on others' leftovers, depending on the grace of others? Why are we not thinking of becoming equals? (Surviving 83). He clarifies that presently he realises the reason why the whole generation of his grandfather had supported the British when they wanted to divide Bengal for administrative convenience in 1905. It is because "In spite of being illiterates, they had realized the truth of their economic, social and religious position. Isn't it so?" (Surviving 48)

He mentions that the present generation of Dalits has no experience of his community's strife with poverty and discrimination. He feels that he has a sense of responsibility towards his community and their past. Therefore, he faithfully excavates the past to bring out the condition of Dalits before the present generation – before his wife, his sons and daughters-in-law, before his grandsons – to show how they survived on leftovers. He wanted to let them know how the country was divided, he wanted to pen-picture through the eyes of a child the pathetic experience of the humble and innocent wanderers during partition of Bengal, he wanted to describe the indescribable experience of the common people of his place during the time of partition of his motherland and how he himself was a victim of that time. He describes in his autobiography, "We were not like the aristocratic rui or katla fish who could cross over the borders immediately with the partition of the land and seek a living on the other side. We, like the common chunoputi fish, stayed back in our motherland, primarily because of sheer helplessness" (Surviving 84).

He cites an incident of how he lost his scholarship when he needed it on the face of utter poverty. After the time of partition a notice was put up on the college notice board that his name was on the national talent list and therefore he should collect

the money of his scholarship by producing an identification letter from the head of the college where he was studying then. He wanted to collect that money but all in vain as after partition he was a student of a college of West Bengal and no more a student of his own place. He writes: "Alas! Such was my fate! Money had been allotted in my name but I had no right to withdraw it…and my own country, my birthplace, had become a foreign land" (Surviving 81). Therefore, he brings out the bitter truth of a Dalit's life saying, "What business does one who does not get one square meal a day have with higher studies?" (Surviving 81).With a view to the present condition of Dalits he remarks:

> There is no greater pain than hunger to starving. There have been commendable developments in government policies aiming at dalit empowerment and much has been achieved as well; however large sections of dalits still remain trapped in conditions of dire deprivation. Many of them remain homeless, without any shelter. In my student days, I was tremendously attracted to Marxism. It is our misfortune that the Marxists have failed to work on non-caste lines. Just as they failed in the past, they are failing even now. If leaders taking initiative for dalit uplift like Jyotiba Phule…Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, had not taken birth in India, our children could not have come out of the grave darkness of the past into the path of brightness and light. (Surviving 79-80)

He regrets that caste discrimination still exists in this country. Though we have reached moon, touched the zenith of technology, achieved a lot in the field of education, yet discrimination continues along the caste lines. He remembers in the last line of his autobiography how, in spite of being an equal or even a little higher in educational qualifications, he failed to become the equal of Rushita, an upper caste friend of his. He recollects, "The words with which Rushita's mother had bade farewell remained alive as a deep wound and time could not heal it" (Surviving 85).

Surinder Singh Jodhka has rightly said in this context in the Preface to his book Caste that, "…caste is alive and kicking, not merely in the form of substantialized identities but also as a source of privileges and deprivations. Instead of it fading away, many would argue that the pubic presence of caste has grown in India over the years" (xiv).

He regrets and unburdens his heart and ends his autobiography saying, "So what I am trying to say is that hurt by the load of my memories, I remain the traveler of a lonely path. Just as many things surface from my memories, many remain hidden below" (Surviving 82). He adds, "Innumerable things remain pent up in the store of life's experiences. I have not been able to express everything" (Surviving 84).

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