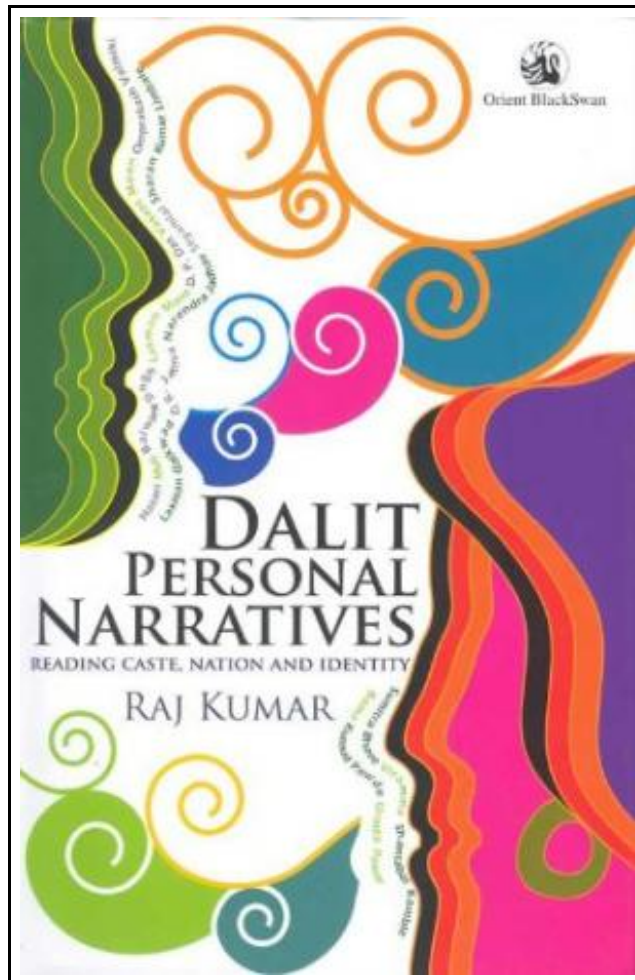


Dalit Personal Narratives: Reading Caste, Nation and Identity



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(Prof. Corbin Hilll)

DALIT PERSONAL NARRATIVES: READING CASTE, NATION AND IDENTITY



Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi, India, 2011. Softcover. Book Condition: New. Autobiography as a literary genre is diverse and complex and Dalit Personal Narratives is an attempt to understand its multiple meanings expressed and mediated through different identities such as caste, class, ethnicity, religion, language and gender. Raj Kumar's pioneering book primarily examines Dalit autobiographies. It is a historic breakthrough because till recently, Dalits in India were voiceless. These narratives thus symbolise how Dalits are breaking down the age-old barrier of silence. Focusing on multiple marginalities pertaining to caste, nation and identity, the author has followed an inter-disciplinary approach across disciplines such as history, sociology, law, religion, philosophy and gender studies apart from English literature, to bring to the reader the remarkably different personal narratives of both Dalit men and women. The autobiographies are located against a socio-cultural background, along with the emergence of Dalit literature, Dalit life-narratives, while revealing their everyday caste and class exploitations that call for the restoration of dignity and self-respect. In itself, the very emergence of Dalit autobiography is an act of resistance because Dalits are using this opportunity to assert their identities through their writings. Through the autobiographies, one gets a glimpse into the life of a community struggling against deprivation, discrimination and exploitation at the hands of a society ridden with caste biases and unequal opportunities. It also traces the origin of autobiographical writing in the West and follows its development both thematically and structurally by analysing the autobiographies of Saint Augustine, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Benjamin Franklin and J. S. Mill. Also discussed are autobiographies of upper caste Indian public personalities, including M. K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. The personal narratives of upper caste Indian women, however like Rassundari Devi, Binodini Dasi and others reveal their under-privileged status in a patriarchal system. Raj Kumar is an Associate Professor...



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