

The Interface between Literature and History

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Dalit Women's Writing: Life Writing as History

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In the past few decades, literary critics seem to have become increasingly interested in the relationship between literature and history. Exponents of New Historicism believe that literature and history are inseparable. History is not anymore, a coherent body of objective knowledge which can simply be applied to a literary text in order to discover what the text does or does not reflect. Now literature is a vehicle for the representation of history, and it does contain insights into the formation of historical moments. It does not passively mirror or reflect history but literature, especially Life Writing, is allowed to shape and constitute historical change. Still, the validity of testimony as history had been constantly challenged by critics under the spell of the Hegelian notion of history as a totalising narrative with an evolutionary teleology. For Hegel, history is the medium of rational self-consciousness that marks the beginning of modernity. Its overarching unity gives it an aura of objectivity which literature is unlikely to possess. This paper, citing some of the works of Female Dalit Writers like Bama and Baby Kamble, endeavours to prove that testimony, owing to its intersubjectivity, can be a source of history as it does not merely record the past but also can rewrite history and develop historical consciousness in the present.

Life Writing as Literature:

The discipline of history has had a close association with the learning and teaching of literature. History is treated