



## Articles

### THE PIONEER

1994-96

#### Human spirit triumphs in the end as always

Two novels written by dalit writers that chronicled their struggles in the face of all odds are taken to Maharashtra by storm. Ketan N Tanna meets the heirs of this legacy

What does one say to a father who insists that his son and daughters address him as baap ('father' Hindi) and not vadil (the same in Marathi)? Or what does one say about a father who was deprived everything save his wit, sharp mind and foresight which rose above his Dalit background and made success of his children's life so much so that the youngest is now an economic advisor to the Reserve Bank of India and the eldest the Bombay Municipal Commissioner?

Equally, what does one say about an illegitimate son of a 'dancer' who too braved the barbs and the humiliation of the society he grew up in for using his mother's name as his surname and is now a successful doctor in JJ Hospital in Bombay?

The life and times of Damodar Runjaji Jadhav and Kishor Shantabai Kale may be different but what they have in common is their grit and determination which saw them their hands high and what more, writing about their experiences for future generations who too may face tough times like they did.

Unparalleled. This one word describes the response that the two Marathi books written by Jadhav and Kale have been receiving in the last few months all over Maharashtra. Aamcha Baap Anhi Aami (O Father And We) has sold more than 10,000 copies after two editions while the second book Kolhatyan Por (Son of Kolhat- a backward caste which is famous for dancers). While Aamcha Baap has sold over 5,000 copies in its first edition.

The author of Aamcha Baap....is Dr Narendra Jadhav, the youngest son of Damodar Runjaji Jadhav an economic advisor to the Reserve Bank of India and brother of Bombay Municipal Commissioner Jadhav. The author of Kolhatyan Por is Dr Kishor Shantabai Kale who is a doctor at the JJ Hospital

Both books vary in nature. The first is a chronicle of the life of Damodar Runjai Jadhav ( father of Narendra Jadhav), a Class IV employee from the Dalit community who was determined to make a life for himself and his family in Bombay in the early part of this century. On the other hand, Kolhatyan Por is the sordid portrayal of the goings on in the Kolhati community, which is well known for dancing (tamasha) girls. The author is Dr Kale who is the illegitimate off-spring of one such dancing girl who was "offered" to a local MLA in Karamali village of Maharashtra at a tender age of 15 as per the tradition of the Kolhat community.

While the two books are different in nature, both project the travails and turbulence of two individuals who belong to the backward community. Aamcha Baap.... was such a resounding success that it is now being made into a film and a television serial. With English and Hindi translations expected so this book has received widespread critical acclaim from pundits of Marathi literature.

Aamcha Baap... is the outcome of jottings of Damodar Runaji Jadhav, his struggle through the pro

Independence days, growing up in the backwoods of a village near Nashik and later moving to Wada in Bombay and raising his children through the grime and dust of the city.

Persuaded by his youngest son who wanted to keep his father busy after retirement, Damodar Run Jadhav wrote 10 books in his rambling, unstructured style ending his story in 1949, when his elder child got admission in a school which he considered his greatest triumph.

It was only some years ago that Dr Narendra jadhav pulled out those old, dusty books which had been lying in an house. Realising his father's writings had the potential for becoming a social chronicle, Jadhav showed them around.

After sounding out the giants of Marathi literature who raved about the simple but sharp style of his father's writing, Dr Narendra Jadhav finally got the book published in 1993.

The first part of the book contains a very interesting preface by Dr Jadhav while the second part contains the jottings of his father. The third part has individual narrations of Dr Jadhav's three brothers about how they evolved under their father's guidance.

The high point of the book is that unlike other Dalit literature, there is no bitterness or rancor from either Damodar Runjaji Jadhav or his sons. Says Dr Jadhav: "So far, Dalit literature was marked by rage, bitterness and frustration of the writers against society that ill-treated them. On the other hand my father despite being a Dalit, despite facing problems, had absolutely no complaints against the same society. He moved ahead with the times without lamenting about his origins."

On the other hand, Dr Kishor Shantabai Kale has in his book portrayed the evils of the Kolhati community in vivid detail where the majority of husbands and parents live on the income of their daughters or wives who earn their living by dancing. Indeed, times have not changed in the Kolhati community even today in rural Maharashtra where the local village head, the sarpanch or the strongman wait for teenage Kolhati girls who are "offered" to them as soon as they attain puberty. Another book on the Kolhati community, Chitra (Tearing) which exposes the nexus between the village heads and Kolhati community leaders is also being written by Dr Kale.

However, Dr Kale has not been as fortunate as the lucky as the Jadhavs. His books may have got critical acclaim but Dr Kale has been disowned by his mother and excommunicated by his Kolhati community.

By Ketan Tanna

[Print this Page](#)   [Email this Page](#)

Ketan Tanna   **email:** [ketan@ketan.net](mailto:ketan@ketan.net)   **home:** +91 22 25218153   **cell:** +91 9869236133