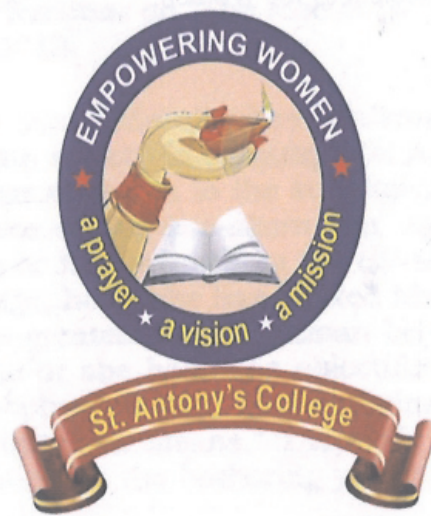


# **THE RISE OF DALIT LITERATURE AND ITS IMPACT**



Organised by

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## DALIT LITERATURE : AN INTRODUCTION



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The untouchables in India were identified by names such as Chandal, Antyaj, Shudra, Avarna, Asprishya, Pancham, Harijan before the use of the word Dalit. These labels were ascribed by the Savarna groups, with the assumption that they were superior and others were inferior, so these names reminded them of their inferior position in the society. Rejecting them, these untouchables decided upon the word Dalit as their identity. As a consequence of the consciousness embedded in this word, they have arrived at such a self-description. We can appreciate the sentiments embedded in this term on the basis of the following opinion of Ramachandra:

The word 'Dalit' is a word that denotes pride. This term also carries the awareness of oppression and victimization. The revolutionary sentiment of being continually reminded of the acts of the oppressor class is also embedded in this word. It also has an echo of consciousness. The word 'dalit' makes one aware of a sense of responsibility, and not one of sympathy. It can then be said that along with communicating the meanings of the word 'dalit', the dalit discourse is also geared towards social change and transmission of a 'dalit consciousnesses.' (179)

In India, brahmanical ideology and political power have been in alliance for centuries, on account of which the lower castes have been oppressed. The Manuwadi (based on the prescriptions of Manu) social order had strongly snared the lower castes in its tentacles and political power had always lent its support in this act. Even today, there are many political groups in power who support such a Manuwadi social order. However, whenever this alliance between them weakened, the castes considered inferior have experienced a new political