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**Selfhood Narrated: the Self Reflections and Cultural Refractions in the  
Autobiography *Viramma: Life of a Dalit***



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**ABSTRACT**

The promise of an exploration or revelation of a 'self' has made autobiography of immense interest to its critics. As viewed by the noted critic James Olney, the current interest in the literary genre of autobiography arises from a shift in attention from life to the self. A major preoccupation of contemporary literature has been the problem of man's establishment of an identity in the face of the complex conditions of the present times. Human quest for identity being the core of contemporary experiences, the autobiographical works portray the individual self, searching for and attaining higher levels of emotional and intellectual awareness of both the inner self and the outside world. Human beings today, whether they are cultural critics, social scientists, therapists or

ordinary folk, evince a keen interest in the study of self. Traditionally, the genre of autobiography was confined to the male writers till the mid twentieth century. The patriarchal society could not visualize a scenario when women could also open up their life experiences. But after the 1970s, with the advent of feminism and feministic movements, many women writers turned towards autobiography as an optimum mode of literature for the expression of their problems and realizations of the self. When it comes to autobiographical narratives of dalit women, the question of oppression and power become more pertinent, and through writing their selves they try to realize their true identities and selfhood. *Viramma: Life of a Dalit* is such a remarkable book that reveals the world of an extraordinary woman living at the very margins (pariah community) of Indian society, who describes her dalit experiences with pleasure and accepts it as the part of human life.

### **KEYWORDS**

Dalit autobiography, oppressions, identity crisis, cultural heritage, Viramma.