

CHAPTER: VII

CONCLUSION

Dalit women and Social Exclusion is a very new theme to explore. During last four decades the issue of Feminism and Social Exclusion has got prominence. In this background, the Varna/Caste system, Gender, Patriarchy and other social evils have emerged as focus of study. The present study revolves around Chamar women of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.).

There is a long history of Dalit women in India throughout the ages. For Dalit women, social equality and dignity has been an issue of their struggle for survival in unequal society like India. Having an untouchable past, Dalits are the most vulnerable section of Indian society. There is a very long and wide range of social practices in the Indian sub-continent which place Dalits at the bottom of caste hierarchy with the inhuman notion of untouchability.

The present study is a modest attempt to understand the social exclusion of Chamar women. In order to carry out this work; works on historical anthropology, ethnography, folklore etc. were referred to.

Dalit Feminism is a very important field of investigation about the historical documentation of life world of Dalit women in contemporary society and core issues of Feminism. There is long history of Dalit women in India through the ages. Having an untouchable past, Dalits are the most vulnerable section of Indian society. There was a very long and wide range of social practices in the Indian sub-continent which place Dalit at the bottom of caste hierarchy with the inhuman notion of untouchability. The present study is an initial documentation of Dalit Feminism in Uttar Pradesh.

Caste is the key component for all social inequality and exploitation of Women, Dalits, Dalit women and minorities in Indian society. In India especially Uttar Pradesh is known as the ‘Heartland’ of Hindi belt in Northern India and again mentioned as Colonial, Nationalist, and Postcolonial Heartland. In this backdrop, the proposed study investigates the history of Dalit women, Social exclusion and Chamar Community in Uttar Pradesh during the period of 1947-2012. It includes Dalit women social status,

education, occupational mobility, political consciousness, folk lore, social exclusion and atrocities as core of this research.

This work is deals on the historical anthropology; ethnography, folk, voices the unheard scream and memory including field observations as well as interviews. The experiences from past and historical imagination leads society to became more inclusive.

They have the best hopes from independence in new nation in making but at the time of independence, Dalits of India hope for good future but still they are underdeveloped and venerable.

Colonial rule in India provided a context for redefinition and articulation of Indian social concepts with new tone which continued to Postcolonial ages with moderate initiatives of Indian Republic. However, Dalit women have been oppressed, culturally subjugated, and politically marginalized and face exclusion on caste/class/gender axis in India. The stigmatization of Dalit and Chamar Women is very common phenomenon in the society.

This research firstly focused on development Dalit in colonial India as a historical base for writing Dalit women in general and Chamar women particular in Uttar Pradesh. Second section discussed the Postcolonial context of Dalit women with the themes of contemporary social status, education, occupational mobility, political consciousness, identity and issues of social exclusion as main themes of exploration in the society. This discussed Dalit women (former untouchable or Dalits) in general and Chamar women particular in Uttar Pradesh, India. Chamar are the largest Caste population in Uttar Pradesh and Chamar women constitutes largest social group among all women. This study analyzed the notion of Dalit Feminism within the structure of Feminism in India and why there is need of special attention towards Dalit feminism.

Women issues became significant not only in the West, but also in India. Initially, the problem of the upper caste or middle-class women gained prominence in the women writings and debates in India. Academia remained silent about the issues of Dalit women. It is only recently focus has shifted onto Dalit women. During the 1990s, issue of caste became important and a topic difficult to be ignored while understanding women's issues. Feminist groups criticized feminism's lack of engagement with caste. Dalit feminism can be understood by dividing it into three major streams, the first stream deals

with Dalit women activists, who emphasize caste and gender interconnection. The second stream refers to Dalit women writers and autobiographers that outline their genuine understanding of caste and various patriarchies. The third stream is a theoretical formulation of the Dalit feminism, which is dominated by non-Dalit feminists.

The main objective of the Dalit feminism indicated or highlighted the position of the Dalit women in Dalit movement and at the intersection of gender and caste. The ignorance or overlooking of Dalit women's issues by the mainstream feminists and male dominance in Dalit movement resulted in building separate organizations for Dalit women to raise their problems. It can be said that, Dalit feminism not only emphasizes the interconnection of caste and patriarchy, but also challenges the status of Dalit women in both the feminist and Dalit organization.

Prior to shift in focus on Dalit women, mainstream feminists had a common agenda for all women they generalized the issues of women irrespective of categories. The Indian feminists mainly addressed issues such as dowry and domestic violence. Along with this, some women's organization that were based on left ideology raised the issues like unequal wages and land reforms. There was presence of Dalit women, and Tribal women, but their presence never made any significant impact they could not interfere in the decision-making process.

On the other hand, issues of Dalit or Tribal women were not significant for the feminists of India, only issues of Dalit or Tribal women such as rape or molestation have been criticized by feminists in occasional programs. Social or the caste position of mainstream feminist movements sidelined the issues of Dalit and Tribal women. It was in the 1990s, when Dalit women, writers and activists challenged the feminist thoughts and ideologies of the period.

Thus, two significant factors are responsible for emergence of Dalit feminism, which raised the new types of awareness. First is the upper caste women's participation in the protest against the implementation of the Mandal Commission's proposal to extend the reservation to OBC. In other words, upper caste or middle classes women argued that, they are against all types of reservation, because reservation will give responsibility of future of the nation in the hands of the unmeritorious people. In addition, they submitted that due to reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs they would be deprived of employed

husbands. Upper caste women were economically and socially dependent on their respective husbands or upper caste men, and other thing is that, their assumption was that Dalit people are unmeritorious, which shows their caste prejudice. The second crucial factor, which was responsible for challenging the feminist movement of the pre-1990s period, was ignoring issues pertaining to Dalit women.

Dalit feminism challenged the previous feminist groups, which comprised of liberal, Marxist or socialist and radical feminism, which did not raise the issue of caste based discriminations. The emergence or assertion of autonomous Dalit women's organizations in the 1990s, posed numerous important theoretical and political challenges. Dalit feminism underlined the Brahmanical nature of the feminist movement and the patriarchal practice of Dalit politics. Initially Dalit women were promoted to both autonomous feminist movement and left party based feminist movement. Moreover, she argues that, independent assertions of Dalit women's organizations are accepted as one more points of view and within such a framework of difference, the problem of the caste becomes the sole responsibility of the organization of Dalit women.

Dalit feminists emphasized on not only the assessment of the categories of caste, but also categories of gender. The Dalit feminists challenged the feminist argument that, women are a homogeneous category, without differentiating in their historicity such as class, caste, race and sexuality. Dalit feminists believed that, mainstream feminism remained confined to upper middle class, which is based on 'savarna' ideology. Dalit feminism is denotes as 'politics of differences'. Dalit women faced dual patriarchy such as from Brahmanical patriarchy on the basis of caste and other patriarchy by their men on the basis of gender. The establishment of the National Federation of Women is the historical moment for Indian feminism, which challenged and subverted the notion of feminists that, Indian women are homogeneous being. Dalit feminists believe that, Dalit women are facing subjugation in three forms such as due to subject of caste oppression by upper caste men, as the subject of labour to class based discrimination also mainly by the upper caste men and as the subject of women gender based exploitation by their own family or community men. Thus, Dalit feminists try to tackle the Question of identity politics in spreading the scope of feminism to include various differences in approach and attitude.

The Dalit movement produced many revolutionaries who theorized Indian history, politics and economy in different ways. This trend had started from 18th century and fully emerged in 19th and 20th centuries. Joytirao Phule, Savitri Bai Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar E. V. Ramasamy are among them who revolutionized Indian society, history, religion, culture and tradition. One of the major drawbacks of Indian feminism is that they failed to observe them, or failed to possess them. After the independence of India, this was systematically neglected by the caste intellectuals and their contribution towards emancipation of Indian women. One of the historical figures whose theoretical, practical and constitutional works virtually remained ignored by the mainstream feminists, and often get misrepresented that he had nothing to do with women's emancipation, he was none other than Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. However, after the emergence of Dalit feminist standpoint Indian history saw structural changes in the Indian feminist agendas. There happened a paradigm shift in Indian feminism as Dalit feminism challenged the ideology of not only liberal, Marxist or socialist feminist but also the radical Feminist. Because, mainstream feminists focus on gender and class based subjugation of Indian women, they ignored the issue of caste and religion.

Dalit women feminist historiography and Literature is a very important field of investigation about the historical documentation of their life world in contemporary society and core issue of Dalit Feminism. The voices of Dalit women in the terms of feminism are highly political and they follow the oral tradition to express their grief sufferings and exploitation in the patriarchal gendered and caste based society.

There is a symbiotic relation between history and society in which both get benefitted from each other. No any society can be imagined without its past. History has creates the base for understanding the past and provide interpretation to the historical fact. According to E H Carr, Fact speaks for them self. But in Indian academics there is paucity of academic work on Dalit women. They are represented as an object and victims in the society. They are facing triple jeopardy of caste, patriarchy and gender relatively. Women are the career of many cultural codes and at the same time it create an exclusionary process which impose many restriction them.

The modern writing of Indian history began with colonial perception of the Indian past that was to be seminal to its subsequent interpretations. It took shape with the

beginning of colonial rule in the various parts of the subcontinent from the eighteenth century onwards. Historical imagination of the past is very important which leads to present status and more accepted reality of the society. According to E H Carr, “History is unending dialogue between present and past”. In this context there is a need to revisit the history of Dalits in core frame of Dalit feminism in India. For previous six decades there are many debates on Dalits and Dalit women in pan Indian level. The core issue of Dalit movements and feminist movement has given the rise of the question of Dalit women. According to Benedetto Croce, ‘All history is contemporary history.’ This provides the space for writing Dalit women history is very important field of investigation in India as well as in Uttar Pradesh.

Dalits are one-sixth of the Indian population and Dalit women constitute more than half of this. In India, there are many elites and privileged groups who speak about women empowerment but this process by and large confined to the problem associated to their own. At the same time the mainstream renaissance in India could not make Dalit women discrimination and untouchability as an issue. India is a country with very diverse religious, ethnic, linguistic, regional, cultural genealogy, mosaic of political consciousness, identity and ideologies. Here, ritually pure and privileged groups follow many trends, ideologies and religious theories to subjugate women in general and Dalit women in particular.

The recent debate focuses on the origin of Dalit Feminism, Gopal Guru argues, that “Dalit women justify the case for talking differently on the basis of external factors (Non-Dalit forces homogenizing the issue of Dalit women) and internal factors (the Patriarchal domination within Dalits),’ the claim for women’s solidarity at both national and global levels subsumes contradictions that exist between high caste and Dalit Women. The autonomous mobilization of Dalit women can also be understood from an epistemological Standpoint. This perspective maintains that the less powerful members of a society have more encompassing view of social reality than others because their disadvantaged position grants them a certain epistemic privilege over others.

In response Guru, Sharmila Rege reflects that ‘Naming of difference’ leads to a narrow identitarian politics-rather this assertion is read as a centering of the discourse on caste

and gender and is viewed as suggesting a Dalit Feminist standpoint. Though Guru's argument is well taken and we agree that Dalit women must name the difference, to privilege knowledge claims on the basis of direct experience on claims of authenticity may lead to a narrow identity politics. It is important to take note of the fact that there has been a resurgence of identities and the importance of naming the difference that emerge out of race, sex and so on can not be denied. But it is important to underline the fact that we don't have to accept postmodernist notions of 'plurality' or 'difference' in order to take note of these differences, i.e., to say that 'no doubt, the notion of difference did play a significant role in black and third world women naming their oppression. But analytical and political tool its value is limited. A shift of focus from 'naming difference' or 'different voice' to social relations that convert difference in to oppression is imperative for feminist politics. A Dalit feminist standpoint is seen as emancipatory since subject of its knowledge is embodied and visible (i e, the thought begins from the lives of Dalit Women and these lives are present and visible in the result of the thought). This position argues that it is more emancipatory than other existing positions and counters pluralism and relativism by which all knowledge based and political claims are thought to be valid in their own way. It places emphasis on the individual experience within socially constructed groups and focuses on the hierarchical, multiple, changing structural power relations of caste, class, ethnic, which constructs such a group. A transformation from 'their cause' to 'our cause' is possible for subjectivities can be transferred. By this we do not argue that non-Dalit feminist can 'speak as' or 'for the' Dalit women but can 'reinvent themselves as Dalit feminist'.

On this debate Datar critiques that 'Not only does Rege ignore ecofeminism, she criticizes the autonomous women's groups and the left party-based feminists for ignoring the caste-based oppression of Dalit women. She also takes issue with the post-modernists who talk of 'difference' but do not feel the need to convert multiple voices into social relations that explain oppression.' It is unfortunate that Rege targets what are really stray tendencies within sexuality and sexual politics as though they define second wave of the women's movement. Those who regenerate both natural and societal resources can claim a standpoint and their knowledge became liberatory and forms a vantage point for this alternative standpoint. But Dalit feminist as it stands cannot become a standpoint. It

merely helps inform the library knowledge of other movements particularly the ecofeminist movement to expand its scope and richness. She claims that she is afraid that the Dalit feminist standpoint does not take into account the contemporary dynamic situation which encourages assertion of intra-caste patriarchy by the Dalit men. Thus control over female sexuality as a means of retaining control over property is a typical patriarchal mechanism and is reported at present from areas undergoing transition from tribal communal life to commercial economy. She regrets that Dalit women are not using this analysis to explain the phenomenon of growing internal patriarchy among Dalit castes which are getting more and more stratified and those who have acquired mobility are emulating Brahmin customs and practices. Cultural revolt is essential but it needs to be invoked in every aspect of daily life, as well as in the issues such as access to natural resources; water and land. Caste oppression started by denying access to these resources and hence there is a need to claim these resources instead of leaving them to the savarnas.

Rege Again responded to Datar that she misrecognises the Dalit Feminist Standpoint as being located within the narrow confines of postmodernism versus feminism, as also some kind of scale of politically correctness on which ‘real feminism’ is sought to be measured, and as foreclosing all possibilities of emancipatory dialogues and interrogations. Datar’s critique which focuses only on ‘intra-caste patriarchy’ and the patriarchy in the Dalit movement becomes a script of historical denial and an erasure of internal critique. A Dalit Feminist Standpoint which is located in the structuring of experiences of everyday lived relatives of Dalit women’s live is obviously sensitive to the structural differences in access to land and livelihood and to a history of ‘lokayatas’. Datar Claims about both the left and the postmodernists being a part of the same mainstream which does not interrogate the industrial, technological paradigm is erroneous and seems so very similar to the postmodernist rejection of Marxism and Nazism (in the same breath) as metanarratives. No politics committed to redistribution in the caste-based society can overlook sexual politics. It is therefore important to revision it rather than give it up or pose the upper caste women alone as the only needy constituent of such a politics. Datar’s contention about anti-caste movement being cultural revolts is debatable for such a contention on one hand views Brahmanism and the struggle against

it as located in cultural symbols and overlooks the caste-based character of capital accumulation and labour and of reproduction in the broader sense of the term.

The documentation of this study reflects on following basic arguments in the chapters:

First, chapter deals with thematic introduction of the topic, historiographical trends on Dalit women writings and contextualizing the Dalit women in India, Dalit women and Indian Social System: Theories of origin and development, Feminism in India: Approaches and themes, History and Dalit women: Documenting symbiotic relation, Social Exclusion and its impact on Dalit women and Dalit feminism in Uttar Pradesh. This chapter has tried to reflect on the social history of Dalit women in general and Chamar women in particular in the frame of Feminism. It investigates the question of Dalit Feminism and how it emerged in 1990s. It places the context of this writing in Uttar Pradesh as Heartland of this Nation with highest population count. It includes review of literature, objectives, area of the study, methodology and finally the chapters plan. This drafts the whole structure of the research thesis.

In this thesis, chapter second deals with, Dalit women ethnographical documentation in Uttar Pradesh and gave the bigger picture of Dalit caste groups in UP. The origin of term Dalit, Dalit women social status in the society elaborates the basics of this research. Notes on Chamar women and discuss the untouchable past and venerable present of Dalit women, along with gender, caste and patriarchal relation in the society. The stereotypes thoughts and prejudices regarding Dalit women are examined. This also includes Dalit women social status with evidences from the field.

The third chapter of this thesis explores the Dalit women and occupational mobility. This is a very unique field which describes mobility of the Dalit women in general and Chamar women particular. It compares the occupational mobility of three generations. Literatures are discussed on occupational mobility in India. It examines the historical past and occupational status of Dalit women in the core issue of social exclusion. In this perspective the generational and intergenerational occupational mobility has discussed but in the case of Chamar women the mobility is static in nature. This chapter draws the basic information from the field interviews on occupational

mobility. This shows the stage of transition for occupational mobility of Chamar community.

The fourth chapter deals with Dalit women and education. The first section, History of education in colonial India discuss the development of Education in Colonial India including Charter Act of 1813 and education, Wood's Despatch, Hunter Commission, Calcutta Commission, Radhakrishnan commission. Secondly it describes the development of education in Postcolonial India focusing on Kothari Commission, NPE and RTE etc. Finally it analyses the field data collected through structured questionnaire cum interview schedule from the selected districts of Uttar Pradesh and the field data reflects the educational status of the Dalit in general and Chamar women in particular.

Chapter fifth of thesis reflects with Political Consciousness and Identity Construction among Dalit Women in Uttar Pradesh. It departs from history of associational politics to democracy in India. It locates the changing forms of Dalits political inclusion, democratic social order, identity construction, political consciousness among Dalit women. This explores the Dalit movement and political assertion with special reference to Dalit women because Indian Democracy is known as "women democracy." Along with this, it documents the Dalits in socio-cultural movements and Dalit women folk related to identity and political consciousness in Uttar Pradesh. The critical interventions of the new social movements have raised the three key areas, which works as a background for Dalit and Dalit women political representation. Firstly, the social research on political inclusion should not exclude the diversity of social experiences. Secondly, it should not produce values of an oppressive society but should be emancipation from inequality of social relations and finally, it should be advocating new models of interpretations of the society and nation. These theorisations are very constructive in studying Dalit women socio-cultural and political initiatives. Chamar women of Uttar Pradesh are highly influenced by Dalit perspectives. The folk songs making them more associated with Ambedkar and Dalit leaders.

The chapter six of this thesis focuses on the Social exclusion and Dalit women in India. Its core theme is Historical past and Dalit women subordination in the hegemonic

society like India. It also elaborates the social, cultural, gender and patriarchal oppressions on Dalit women. It examines the very unique question that "Is Dalit Patriarchy democratic in Uttar?" Along with this the issues of violence, discrimination and atrocities on Dalit women are discussed in Uttar Pradesh. Finally, it documents the field evidences on Dalit women social exclusion, atrocities, violence and gender and caste discrimination through field visits and interview in the study area of Uttar Pradesh.

This work is modest attempt in the field of researching Dalit women in general and Chamar women in UP. This study reviews the data of the government records and field observation of social realities about Chamar Community in U.P.

It is being observed in Uttar Pradesh that beginning with the colonial period, two closely inter-related societal processes have been significant in the northern plains: fusion or integration and fission or differentiation. The former has been due to mobilisational changes within the caste system leading to the formation of large caste blocks or horizontal aggregations in place of small fragmented local 'jatis' or sub-castes, belonging to the same level in the caste hierarchy, which were not inter-linked traditionally. While in the colonial period these efforts were aimed at improving their social position and obtaining concessions, in the post-independence period, they have been for joint political action often leading to the formation of political parties. But none of them were aimed at destruction of the caste system; rather they provided greater mobility within it.

It is found that in Azamgarh and Sitapur Districts, the Chamar women remain at the receiving end of the caste system and Dalit patriarchy. It is owing to their poverty, social restrictions and caste oppression that they lag behind in getting proper education and finding high paid jobs. It is for the same reason they still follow the primitive religious practices, caste gods/goddess, beliefs in evil spirits. Lack of education also prevents them in participating adequately in political processes. Some are attracted towards the Ambedkarian philosophy yet that remains confined to its ritualistic aspect alone. Nevertheless, under its influence they show some preparedness for change and that itself is revolutionary. In its light, they dream of a more inclusive society and attainment of respectful position for themselves within family and outside. The ideas and thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar, celebrations of his Jayanti's, icon and monuments are herald development

of consciousness and identity for political mobilization of Dalit women and evolving Dalit Feminism in U.P. The Neo-Buddhism is also providing some space for Dalit women and Chamar women in the religion. This thesis tried to fill this gap with documenting Dalit women social history within the fold of Dalit Feminism. This writing will open the new area for further researches on the different similar issues and themes in North India.