

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to share a few observations based on my thesis. The present study “Contemporary Indian Dalit Women and Hijra Autobiographical Narratives: A Study of Subaltern Identity” is a humble attempt to understand two different subaltern identities- Dalit women and hijras- expressed in the form of autobiographical narrative. The categories of ‘Dalit women’ and ‘hijra’ belong to the most subaltern groups among the subaltern subjects-‘the most subaltern among the subalterns’. They are the victims of caste and gendered subalternity that exists in, what can be termed as, ‘Brahmanic, patriarchal, heteronormative hierarchized caste and gendered structures’ of our society. The categories of ‘Dalit woman’ and ‘hijra’ are historical categories that take place within hegemonic caste and gendered structures of our country. There is one to one relationship between hegemony and subalternity. Different kinds of hegemonic structures develop different kinds of subaltern positions. The autobiographical narratives of Dalit women and hijras are narratives of those people who have no histories, hence their narratives (oral or written) become helpful to those readers who do not have ‘lived experience’ of a particular historical reality, but can develop ‘moral authenticity’ after reading them.

The study explores different levels of subalternity and treats the term ‘subaltern’ as a relational term. The term is used here to refer to spatiotemporal, economic, socio-cultural, educational, religious, sexual/gendered, ontological and epistemological exclusion and powerlessness that Dalit women and hijras experience in their lives. The word ‘Dalit’, though it is primarily used to express the caste and gender plight of untouchable women of India, it is also used here to refer to ‘the broken, divided, split, otherized, and scattered self’ of the subaltern subjects. In the case of Dalit identity, it may also refer to the ‘pancham varna’ within Indian caste system. At the same time, the word ‘Dalit’, following the rise of Ambedkarite counterpublics and

the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra in the 1970s, also possesses inbuilt resistance against the Brahmanic hegemony and hope for new Dalit vision. The word 'Dalit' possesses enough elasticity to embrace all marginalized, and subalternized groups in history.

The major observation of the thesis is that there does exist an autonomous subaltern literary tradition- mainly Dalit subaltern tradition- that needs to be thoroughly historicized in sharp contrast to the mainstream, upper caste Brahmanic literary tradition to develop pluralistic view of Indian literary tradition. The subaltern Dalit tradition is distinct in a sense that it offers a more democratic, egalitarian, epistemological and ontological understanding of caste and gender relations. The subaltern Dalit tradition originates from the Buddhist shramanic tradition and extends up to Jotirao Phule, and Dr. Ambedkar in western India; and from Iyothee Thass to Periyar in southern India, while incorporating the medieval bhakti protest movements initiated by many saints-poets belonging to the lower caste strata of society. These multi-faceted non-brahman democratic movements for the liberation and emancipation of the subaltern people have very often been overlooked in mainstream history. An attempt is made here to take a historical perspective of the entire process of Dalitization or casteization in Indian cultural sphere. Similarly, in the wake of The Rights of Transgender Persons Bill (2015) granting 'third gender' identity to hijras, there emerges a new subaltern subject to be studied with all its complexities. An attempt is made, here, to locate hijra identity in Indian mythological and historical past.

The emergence of Subaltern Studies as a special branch of studies in India can be seen in light of the light of postcolonial, postmodern understanding of different structures available in our world. The main objective of subaltern studies is to reclaim history and give voice to those people whose voice had not been previously heard. Hence, a critique of the elitist historiography and epistemology becomes a sine qua non in Subaltern Studies. This novel approach to history invites

many marginalized, subordinated groups to come to the forefront and express their voices. The subalterns in terms of class, caste, gender, race, sexuality, language and culture emerge with their own narratives in humanities and social sciences. But the subaltern studies in its initial phase largely focuses on the peasant uprisings in India, and connives at Dalit and sexual/gender subalterns that too form very large groups. Later Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak draws on many theoretical positions and takes up the issue of historiography and the idea of agency to the common people. For her, all histories reconstruct imperialist hegemony and deny power to the common people. The subaltern narratives encourage us to read all positions “against the grain”- to use Walter Benjamin’s phrase. To understand the hierarchies of caste and their importance in Indian Hindu social structure, a diachronic view of India history is taken. The works of Indian socio-political thinkers like Ambedkar, M.M. Srinivas, Gopal Guru, Sundar Surukkai, Gail Omvedt, Eleanor Zelliot, Kancha Illiah, Sharmila Rege etc. have been referred to chart out the subaltern Dalit historiography and epistemology. Similarly hijra identity emerges as an important subaltern identify with the rise of hijra autobiographical narratives and theories of sexuality and gender in recent years.

The thesis locates the formation of Dalit identity in Brahmanic ideology of *varnashram dharma* and the formation of *pancham* varna, the untouchables, in history as historical process. This includes the study and understanding of the emergence of brahmanical supremacy from the Vedic-Upanishadic period to the present time with subaltern resistance movements in between. At the same time, it also asserts the fact that, though the caste system as such has undergone significant changes for the last several decades, the role of the caste system is still prominent in Indian society. Though present India is greatly affected by modernization, urbanization and westernization, there is no denying that caste system is still a governing principle of the Hindu

social order. All the autobiographical texts written by Dalit women foreground the incessant role played by the caste system in Hindu and Chirstian socio-religious orders, especially in agrarian village economy.

An attempt is made in the thesis to understand Dr. Ambedkar as a subaltern social thinker, who shows his theoretical and practical commitment to the Dalit-subaltern issue. In recent years, Dalit studies has witnessed, what can be termed as, ‘Ambedkarization of social sphere’. In the Ambedkarite discourse the term ‘Dalit’ emerges as a liberative category and has its own relevance in contemporary Dalit movement. It is understood that the socio-political condition of untouchables/Dalits in India largely reflects the historical, social and cultural characteristics of subalterns as described by Gramsci in his writings. The thesis takes a holistic view of the issue of subalternity in the context of Indian Dalit women and hijra autobiographical narratives. In Ambedkar, and in many other pre-Ambedkarite and post-Ambedkarite thinkers, religion is a crucial dimension of politics as it creates its own epistemology in which certain groups are otherized on the basis of caste and its inherent purity-pollution binarism. In the case of Dalits, the Brahmanic religious epistemology becomes the major source of creating the binarism of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

The thesis underscores the need to building up subaltern historiography that includes the voices of Dalit women and hijras. The idea of building up Dalit and hijra historiography as a project of subaltern historiography also means altering or discussing the facts or aspects of the past not known or studied before in relation to caste and sexuality; it also means understanding them in the light of new approaches or modes of analysis. It is also an attempt to interrogate the mythical or semi-mythical narration of Dalit and hijra communities and the mythologization of caste and sexuality/gender in the texts available in the mainstream literary tradition. Caste as cultural and

political category has always been contested with different resistance movements in Indian history. It has met with the process of contestation and revolt in different periods of Indian history. The major thrust of all these Dalit movements excluding Gandhian Dalit movement is to contest aryanization and homogenization of culture existing at a particular historical time. Here, it is acknowledged that though India has entered into twenty-first century, our social and political relationships are still governed by caste and gender based concerns and the traditions of purity and pollution, inferiority and superiority, and heteronormativity. Thus, Dalit women's studies with special reference to caste and patriarchy, and hijra studies with special focus on sexuality, form an essential part to understand Indian cultural configurations.

The second important subaltern category studied in the thesis is 'hijra' identity. The thesis studies hijra (transgender) identity with the use of contemporary postmodern perspectives on transgender discourse in relation to the categories of sex and gender. In recent years, with the rise of many identity movements, issues related to sex and gender have been contested and revisited. In a country like India, hijra discourse of identity has emerged in opposition to normative heterosexual identity. The emerging hijra phenomenon including hijra literature can be looked at as critical discourse that investigates questions of sexual-gender differences and their transformation into social hierarchies.

One of the objectives of the thesis is to understand hijra identity in relation to the dominant culture which enforces heteronormative epistemic structure, and does not acknowledge hijra selfhood as a distinct one and relegates it to the margin. Within heterosexual word, hijra-transgender body appears as anachronism. But, in the postmodern times the hijra way of life may be looked as subcultural practices, alternative methods of alliance, and a different form of representation of sexuality and body. The hijra body contests the heterosexual understanding of

body aims at newer understanding of time and space. In our culture constructions of time and space get hegemonized and are uniquely gendered and sexualized. Both domestic and public time and space are gendered and sexualized. Hijras with their unique sharing of both male and female categories inhabit a very distinct idea of time and space which needs to be acknowledged.

The hijra texts under study take up the question of peripheral identity. They have been seen as postmodern expression of subaltern identity. Since postmodernism rejects any grand narratives of identity, it encourages the construction of new identities to challenge the hegemony of the dominant identities. The question of identity formation becomes an important issue for the peripheral groups like hijras who have always grappled with the issue of identity. The rise of hijra autobiographical narratives in India and across the world plays a very important role in numerous postmodern debates that include space and sexuality, subcultural production, literature and gender ambiguity, the politics of auto/biography, historical conception of sex and gender roles, gender and genre, idea of natural body, and above all, the formation of hijra self.

The emerging transgender critical intervention problematizes the binarism of sex and gender, once historicized through different cultural means, both in patriarchy and feminism. The previously distinct reality of sex/gender gets hybridized in the postmodern period. The postmodern period announces the end of gendered metanarrative and opens up a space for the transgendered narrative. The autobiographical narratives of Revathi and Laxmi create their own *Bildung* of the hijra subject and liberate it from the shackles of tradition and culture and proliferate it as autonomous, and postmodern self. The emergence of hijra phenomenon poses challenge to the established category of 'man' and 'woman' and treats sex and gender as floating signifier.

The thesis draws a gender-genre relation with special reference to Dalit women and hijra autobiographical narratives under study. The genre of autobiography is understood as a form that

encourages cultural quest, especially the cultural quest of the subalterns in our time. There emerges a logical correlation between the rise of subaltern studies and the revival of the genre of autobiography as voicing the subaltern lived experiences across the world. The basic assumption, here, is that the subaltern autobiographical narratives of Dalit women and hijra together present a voice of those who have been historically, culturally and literarily subjugated in the regime of power- Brahmanic, casteist, patriarchal, and heterosexual. Since they represent different categories of subalternity, caste and gender in particular, they are important voices to be heard and understood in our time. On the other hand autobiography, though a very important genre in itself, has also been subalternized in various literary traditions until its rise in our time with the rise of our developing interests in marginalized, subaltern subjects in postmodern-poststructural-postcolonial era. Thus, a link can be ascertained between the rise and development of autobiography as a literary genre in a country like India, and the arrival of subaltern voices like Dalit women and hijras through autobiographical narratives. The present study affirms the genre of autobiography and its basic relationship with the issue of ‘self’ and ‘identify’ – in our case subaltern identities.

The thesis offers a contemporary reading of the genre of autobiography while deconstructing the conventional understanding of autobiography as a genre that aims at depicting the gradual development of the narrator-protagonist’s self, reaching some closure, and attaining a unified self. As a literary genre autobiography has passed through three different phases: the depiction of ‘self’ (mostly patriarchal), and ‘life’ (bourgeois and elite life) to ‘the act of writing’ (the postmodern understanding of ‘écriture’). The contemporary genre of autobiography includes different subaltern groups and gives literary space to hitherto suppressed groups like Dalit women

and hijras. The emerging dissenting voices from the subaltern groups deconstruct the conventional ideas of 'auto' and 'bios' associated with the genre of autobiography.

The analysis of various definitions of the genre of autobiography proposed by eminent critics of autobiography show that today there exists humanistic, romantic, modern and postmodern definitions of autobiography. Autobiography very often seen as a story about one's own self, a narrative about one's own life--its joys and sorrows, its trials and tribulations has many other social, economic and political ramifications. Overtly looking a very simple narrative, autobiography poses very serious, fundamental, epistemological, and ontological questions about self, the narration of self, and the aesthetics of self- narrative. It also open up new horizons of references and understanding of self, representation, authorship etc. with umpteen theoretical possibilities. Though the genre of autobiography has existed for centuries, it has become canonized only in the eighteenth century and only during the twentieth century, and again, during the postmodern age, it has attained popularity among common readers, critics of literature and the marginalized groups like Dalit women and hijras in the context of India.

The genre of autobiography develops intricate relationship with the questions of self, truth, imagination, memory, and history from postmodern point of view. The 'I' of present time is in search of the 'I' of the past and in this constant dualism life gets created in narrative. The self, in postmodern times, can be understood as a creation of different ideologies like colonialism, postcolonialism, capitalism, casteism, transgenderism, and varied economic ideologies. The self ultimately becomes a construct, not isolated or monolithic but multiple, self-effacing, fluid, and creating itself out of multiple interactive discourses available in society.

The ideas of truth, imagination, memory, and history weave a complex pattern of autobiographical narrative. The genre is basically associated with — the truth of events (historical

truth), truth of life (philosophical truth), and the truth of form (aesthetic truth). The autobiographical narrative largely depends on choice based on memory. The self of the autobiographer is transported from wider life situations of the past to the play of restricted signifiers in the present. Every act of transcribing the past into present time narrative does not remain an act of mimesis, but a creative reconstruction of past in present. The autobiographical narrative enters into three different “times”: the time now, the time then, and the time of an individual’s historical context. The postmodern idea of autobiography negates the idea of ‘metanarrative’ and gives space to ‘fragmented poetics’ which includes ‘little or mini narratives’. The postmodern/poststructural understanding of self contests the conventional understanding of ‘unified self’ and makes into play the understanding of ‘multiple selves’ or ‘fragmented self’. The postmodern critics have treated ‘tradition’ as being shaped within political/patriarchal cultural matrix. The subaltern criticism deconstructs the patriarchal, colonial, Brahmanic, sexual tradition of culture and assesses the absence of women, Dalits, and hijra people and their narrative voice in it. The rereading of conventional self is prioritized in such subaltern narratives.

The rise of Dalit feminism, Dalit women’s autobiographical tradition and the emergence of Dalit feminist autobiographical aesthetics together form a subaltern response to the mainstream Indian feminism, women’s autobiographical tradition and aesthetics. The basic claim, here, is that feminism in India has never been a unified movement with unified, monolithic aesthetics. The emergence of women’s multiple affiliations to caste, community and the state, and the new visions of women’s empowerment and identity have drastically challenged any monolithic understanding of feminism and the genre of women’s autobiography. The emergence of cultural and interdisciplinary studies in our time has also encouraged the subaltern groups like Dalit women and hijras to voice their self. The subaltern reading of Dalit women’s autobiographical writings

and hijra narratives presents a critique of hegemonic historiography which presents the Dalits and hijras in Indian history as continuous and homogeneous subjects in terms of life experiences. Within subaltern studies Dalit and hijra subjecthood emerges as a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation. The emergence of Dalit feminism in recent years can be viewed as a very powerful resistance movement in the field of Indian feminism. The relationship between Dalit feminism and culture can only be thought of in terms of protests and struggles. It represents resistance politics and poetics of its own kind.

Since Dalit women are collectively affected by issues of constant hunger, labour, oppression, sexual exploitation by the caste people, impossibility of justice in everyday life, Dalit feminism demands new orientation and theorization that makes it distinct from the mainstream Brahmanic upper caste feminism. Unlike the mainstream upper caste feminism, Dalit feminism derives its strength and moral support from Phule-Ambedkarite movement in Maharashtra, and from the writings of Iyengar, Periyar, and Narayan Guru in South India. The historical overview of the Dalit feminist movement in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu shows that Dalit feminism originates along with the mainstream feminism during the nationalist period of India. The understanding developed about Dalit women and their selfhood within Phule-Ambedkarite tradition later extends up to Gopal Guru, Anand Teltumbde, Sharankumar Limbale, Raj Kumar, Gail Omvedt, Eleanor Zelliot, Sharmila Rege to name a few.

The thesis introduces the emerging genre of hijra autobiography which can be termed as 'transgenre'. The genre of hijra autobiography develops its own subalternity and marginality within the tradition of autobiographical writings. When most of the autobiographical narratives quite 'naturally' become a part of heteronormative sexual tradition of culture, the transgenre of hijra autobiography challenges such a fixed understanding of genre and encourages fluidity. The

word 'hijra' being a collective noun represents the entire community. The narratives of A. Revathi and Laxmi bring forth some fundamental questions not only about themselves, but also about the whole structure (social, religious, political) in which their identities are formed or deformed. Their autobiographical narratives open up a space in which the idea of hijra self (third gender self) can be circulated against the dominant gendered self. The hijra life narratives inaugurate a new literary, cultural tradition within the dominant autobiographical tradition occupied by men and women. They sketch out the silenced history of the forgotten third gender of our society and their lives in the symbolic autobiographical act of self-appropriation and self-determination. In doing so a very confident self, a multi-dimensional and multifaceted images of hijra identity comes.

The basic argument made here is that Indian transsexual autobiographical narratives construct a narrative space in which gender identity predicated on anatomical difference is contested. The hijra autobiographical narratives fight for self-justifications that seek social acceptance for the identity emerging out of body and mind cluster. Their writing opens up a space for future hijra narratives to contest the questions of socio-political and economic condition of hijras in Indian society and the philosophical questions of hijra body and subjectivity. As any autobiographical narrative offers an opportunity of rewriting of self, hijra autobiographical narratives, too, offers different representations and modes of transsexual subjectivity. The hijra subjectivity that emerges in the narratives is alternative, multifaceted, and very much subversive account of heteronormative idea of gender and sex.

The genre of subaltern autobiography differs from the general notion of autobiography in a sense that the latter is generally viewed as the story of a person written by himself or herself, while the subaltern autobiography deals not with an identity of a single person but of the entire class or caste that he or she belongs to, thus creating a group based identity. The subaltern

autobiographical literature is a literature of marginalized people in a major language. Such literature aims at creating new space in literary canon and tradition with its unconventional use of language and subverting treatment of epistemology of dominant groups.

The present study offers a reading of mainly four Dalit women's autobiographical narratives located in different regional contexts of India, but they certainly share the lived experiences of caste subalternity experienced within Hindu Brahmanic epistemological structure, and Roman Catholic Christian fold. At the same time, these autobiographical narratives do not offer any homogenized, essentialist view of Dalit life and Dalit woman's subjectivity. The narrative of each autobiography differs from each other in terms of deployment of literary style, and projection of Dalit experience in general and Dalit women's experience in particular. The Dalit women's autobiographical selves that emerge in these narratives are located in different socio-cultural-religious milieu of India society.

The emerging autobiographical selves of Baby Kamble in *The Prisons We Broke* and Urmila Pawar in *The Weave of My Life* are located in the subaltern Mahar community of Maharashtra, the community which has been hegemonized within Brahmanic social fold for centuries; while the autobiographical self of Bama in *Karukku* offers a newer understanding of Dalit Christian woman's self within the Christian religious fold dominated by caste prejudices and patriarchy. The narrative of Viramma et.al's *Viramma* unfolds a Tamil Pariah woman's self and its cultural embeddedness with the upper caste Reddiar community in Indian agrarian economy. On the other hand, the autobiographical writings of A. Revathi and Laxminarayan Tripathi alias Laxmi offer a very distinctive emerging voice of hijra narrative in contemporary subaltern studies. Like Dalit women's self-narratives, Revathi's *Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* and Laxmi's *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* also do not offer any homogenized, monolithic, and essentialist narrative of hijra

condition in Indian cultural setting. Despite their differences emerging out of their socio-cultural locations, the autobiographical selves of Revathi and Laxmi certainly pose a challenge to the heteronormative understanding of sexuality that patriarchy possesses. They have been clubbed together with Dalit women's narratives because they represent a very different idea of gendered subalternity which has now started to be discussed and is becoming a part and parcel of the extending boundaries of subaltern literature and feminist discourse.

The Marathi women's autobiographical narratives studied here are closely tied with the Ambedkarite movement and the rise of Ambedkarite counter-public in which Marathi Dalit women participated and played an important role. The autobiographical narratives of Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar are socio-biographies of the community. The individual self of the narrator-protagonist merges with the collective self of the community. They together challenge the conventional poetic demand of the genre of autobiography that assumes narration of an individual self as *bildungsroman*, by 'writing self' to resist and claim the collective past and lost histories. In both these narratives, Ambedkar emerges as the real protagonist. It is he who enables real transformation in Mahar community. It is he who inaugurates the historic struggle for self-respect and social recognition by challenging the undemocratic relationships within Hinduism. As far as Tamil Dalit women autobiographers are concerned, the influence of Ambedkar is not felt much in a direct way, though they certainly appear with the steady rise of Ambedkarite philosophy in Tamil Nadu. Even though, there are no direct references to the social reforms of Iyotha Thass, Periyar, and Narayan Guru, but their influences can be seen operating unconsciously. In her later writings, Bama does affirm the influence of Ambedkar, while Viramma in her narrative makes a sparse reference to Gandhi and his reformist ideas.

These Dalit women's autobiographies together challenge the mainstream male and female autobiographical traditions for their nationalist and bourgeois orientations. They have the awareness that they are rooted in a distinct literary culture and society. They passionately articulate cultural and caste discrimination and foregrounds the question of humiliation, injustice, otherness, and marginality. To achieve the goal, they subvert the conventional canon and the categories of aesthetics, assert their affiliation with the Ambedkarite movement, challenge both brahmanic and Dalit patriarchies, promote orality in narrative, employs dialects in narration, explore Dalit ways of life, rites, rituals and mythology, witness female bodily desires, personalize history, reflect collective association with the community, search out democratic, egalitarian values, and propose a distinct Dalit vision before the reader. The Dalit women autobiographical narratives together present Dalit household, food, hunger, humiliation, violence, resistance, community, caste, culture, labour, education and collective struggle. They form aesthetic and poetics of their own in sharp contrast to the mainstream aesthetics and poetics of autobiography. Certain spheres of Dalit male autobiographical tradition also get challenged in Dalit women's autobiographies. One of the important characteristics Dalit women writers' narratives is that they are full of auditory details of Dalit life. In male Dalit writers' narratives, we find more accent on the olfactory images, and the auditory images are totally neglected. Moreover, Dalit patriarchy also emerges forefront in Dalit women's autobiographies.

The hijra autobiographical texts like *Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, and *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* share many hijra concerns in the narratives- gender fluidity, the constant battle between 'the material body' and 'the felt sense of the body', condition of hijras in Indian socio-economic structure, identity construction of the third gender, and the idea of literary in transgenre narrative. A. Revathi and Laxmi in their narratives challenge the colonial, patriarchal, and heteronormative

ideologies in which a hijra self is excommunicated. They try to locate the hijra self as a ‘third gender’ with her own unique sexuality and gender so that it gets respect in the dominant heteronormative world. These autobiographical accounts reveal sexual/gendered subalternity faced by the hijras in the patriarchal, heteronormative world. The entry of a hijra narrative into the field of mainstream autobiographical writings should be seen as a challenge posed to the epistemological and aesthetic structure of the mainstream autobiographies including women’s autobiographies.

The importance of translating Dalit women and hijra autobiographical narratives as subaltern writings has come to be recognized only in the wake of Dalit feminist and other subaltern movements in our time. The rise of translation of Dalit, hijra and other marginalized narratives is a part of the growing interest in the subaltern subjects in recent times. Very often such narratives first appear in oral form and then are translated into a regional language and then into English. All the six autobiographical narratives are important contributions in Indian bhasha literatures. They have later been translated into English to appeal the larger groups. Barring the narratives of Urmila Pawar, Bama, and Laxmi, who have got higher education, the narratives of Baby Kamble, Viramma, and Revathi are the narratives from semi-educated or illiterate persons. With their entry into the sophisticated literary world, they challenge many age-old foundations of literary canons. The hijra autobiographies with their own aesthetics of transgenre contest the sphere of heteronormativity in autobiographical tradition. For the Dalit women and hijras, the very act of writing their ‘experience’ reconstitutes their subjectivities in radically new ways. All the autobiographical narratives together are acts of memory through which both past and present are assessed, contested and reconstructed. They save their narrators and the entire community of being amnesiac of cultural past. This further saves them from cultural aphasia.

To conclude, defining the identities of Dalit women and hijras in literature, history, politics, and culture is a challenging task, and disturbing in many respects. In order to achieve political and social modernity, one has to address the issues of ‘untouchability’ and ‘humiliation’ arising out of Indian caste system with regard to Dalit women, and patriarchal heteronormativity with regard to hijra community. For Dalits and hijras, the past is a means to confront the present in order to imagine a better, prosperous future. Since subaltern studies encourages ‘historical inquiry from below’, the arrival of Dalit and hijra discourses and the emerging understanding of Dalit and hijra subjectivities therein help us to redefine and widen the boundaries of subaltern studies. Within the framework of the thesis, the idea of subaltern subjectivity gets reconfigured, reimagined, re-theorized and re-historicized. All epistemologies within which identities are constructed and shaped come under scrutiny within the domain of subaltern studies. Thus, an attempt is made here to read autobiographical narratives of Dalit women and hijras as subaltern categories along the line of new subaltern understanding of history which tries to incorporate the subaltern voices to provide them historical agency.