

Exclusion of Dalit Women and Common Property Resources: An Intersectional Analysis

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CHAPTER TEN

Summary, Findings, and Recommendation

The present research is a study of Dalit women exclusion from the CPRs, from an intersectional approach. The excluded Dalit women are not only being Dalit and women but being poor also. This is based on the caste class and gender exclusion. This study examines and claims that CPRs provide safety net for the rural poor, particularly, Dalit women. In contrast, lack of accessibility to CPRs of rural poor adversely affects the environment. There is wide agreement on the importance of CPRs for the rural poor; they collect the natural resources from the rural commons, basic necessities items as well as regular interaction with nature for maintenance of dwelling and self-employment by rural households. Many scholars have emphasized the collection of fuelwood and other non-timber forest products as income-generating activities for rural poor.

10.1 Summary

The thesis deals with exclusion of rural poor from the CPRs accessibility and its implications to poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. The issues of property rights, caste, class and gender in resource management and, climate change and impact urbanization and encroachment have also been covered in the study with primary data collected from Kanpur Nagar and Lucknow districts of Uttar Pradesh. The thesis is made up of ten integrated chapters. However, the central part of the thesis, which deals with major research questions of the study, consists of five chapters, i.e. chapter five, six, seven, eight and nine.

The thesis briefly introduces the research problem. Chapter two highlights a comprehensive review of the literature on the research problem. Chapter three starts with a brief introduction of Uttar Pradesh state which deals with the identification of research areas. The hypothesis, objectives, sample design and methodology of the study have been sketched in Chapter four. The five main chapters that we have dealt with in the thesis are Dalit Women's Interaction with Nature (chapter five), Mapping Exclusion of Dalit Women from CPRs (chapter six), Impact of Climate Change on CPRs and Dalit Community (chapter seven), Urbanization and Declination of CPRs (chapter eight), and CPRs and Encroachment in study areas (chapter nine).

The macro study comprises a geographical overview and the importance and use of CPRs in the state, shows the study area and an inter-district comparison of CPR access,

quality, availability, and use of common property resources. The micro study based on the sample survey of 10 villages of the two districts of the Uttar Pradesh, covers Trans Gangetic agro-climatic zones of CPR rich and poor districts. This work emphasizes mostly women's inclusion in commons accessibility, who belong to the marginal communities. A short description of the conceptual framework has been given at the starting of five main chapters along with the objectives. The study tested objectives based on primary and secondary data and concentrated observations from study areas. The summary, findings, and suggestions of the study appear in Chapter ten followed by Bibliography and Appendices.

The major issues Dalit and intersectionality discussed in chapter five of the thesis can be summarised below:

i) The Indian social structure

The social structure of India is primarily based on the hierarchy of the caste, and it is also the division of people into social groups, that historically determined the civil, cultural and economic rights through the individual caste, ascribed by birth. The concept of caste has two conceptual trajectories, first, it has a birth-ascribed status and is immutable and it implicates durability of position which cannot be altered with the effort of individual determination. Second, the caste contains a large population of persons who have been situated at the bottom of the hierarchy. Another aspect of the social system of India is the patriarchal structure. Where, men have primary authority over women, children, and property. In both cases, caste and patriarchal social structure, the situation of the women is lower than men, as a results in this, they remain deprived of the social, cultural and economic benefits. The incidences of violence against Dalit women are a dual nature, of being both castes as well as gender-based. So, the problem of women being as a Dalit is different and exceptional in many ways because they suffer from triple exclusion due to caste-based discrimination, economic deprivation, and patriarchy.

ii) History of the Dalit movement

The Dalit movement emergence in Maharashtra about 1877 through the efforts of Jyotiba Phule, G. B. Balankar and later B.R. Ambedkar in which, Dalit literature plays a significant contribution, It comprised of creative literature, the political and ideological writings, etc. in which from the couplet of Ravidas, 15th century

Saint poet, and 19th-century Adi-Hindu and Adi-Dravida leaders, Ambedkar's contemporary writings. Where, Dalits express themselves in every style, whether it's poetry, autobiographies, prose, plays, novels, political and ideological writings, and even in the form of institutional research material for further studies. These literatures were so powerful has been the tradition of Dalit literature that it has the expected shape of an all India movement, in which women's movement has made tremendous contribution. The women's movements talk about Dalit women's experience, which was extremely different from upper-caste women's experience, because specific problems of Dalit women were not recognized by women's movements. The origin of Dalit women's movement can be traced back to the mid-1980s. That had been influenced by feminist discourse and Ambedkar's view on the position of Indian women.

iii) The contradiction between women and Dalit women about their social issues

The discussion on Dalit women's problem particularly from their perspective, emerged at that time when Dalit movement emerged in the form of Dalit literature, coinciding with the rise of Dalit panthers in the mid-1960s in Maharashtra. Dalit women were treated in society as excluded women, who were not the same as the rest of the women. Dalit women certainly felt that the upper caste feminists could not stand for their atrocities as they were not the ones who tolerated the shock of being a Dalit woman. In contrast to this, the declaration of Dalit women movement has essentially connected with other women, and their 'subjective experiences of knowledge' has accessed the base of the worldwide experience of womanhood. Thus, 'experience' is the base of personal politics as well as, the only trustworthy mythological tool for defining women's subjugation. Dalit women's movement sees that, the issue of class and patriarchies has been merged by socialist and radical feminists without addressing Brahmanism. While for the former 'caste' was contained in the class and for the later all women came to be conceived as 'victims' and considered as 'Dalit'.

iv) The insights of intersectionality

The idea of intersectionality is the intersection of those inequalities in a manner that captures the distinctive dynamics at their multidimensional interface. Its Subjectivity has been created by mutually supporting trajectories of class, race,

gender, caste, and sexuality, acknowledging the complication that arises when the subject of analysis expands to comprise multiple dimensions of social categories. The central focus of intersectionality is basically on structural, political and representational realities through and within which various forms of hierarchies are located helps to expose the systems of discrimination and oppression that exposure to marginalize people of different identity indicators. The importance of intersectionality comprises the experiences of multiple marginalized groups represents an analytical shift, which means giving priority to multiple sites for producing social inequalities. It highlights the usefulness of an intersectional approach, which helps to understand multifaceted social interactions and their relations. This framework allows us to scrutinize how features like caste, class and gender identities not only shape diverse contexts of one's lived involvements but also formed and contextualized by each other.

In chapter six, the study explains the idea of eco-feminism that refers to the material relation of women's responsibility towards nature that makes women more caring. While men are dominating to get more benefits and they are insensitive towards nature. The environmentalism is seen as structured given by caste, class and gender organization of production and, reproduction, and distribution.

The major issues discussed in chapter six can be summarised below:

i) Women and nature

Women are recognized as close to nature and men as being close to culture. Nature is seen as lower to culture and; hence, women are seen as lower to men. Usually, men do participate in life abolishing activates, and women do participate in life-saving activities. The biological process of reproduction shows the connection between women and nature. So, violence against nature and against women is linked not just ideologically but also materially.

ii) Rural poor women's relation to natural resources

The rural poor women in study areas are highly dependent on local natural resources for their sustenance rather than upper caste, rich rural people and men. Women are close to nature with material relations and primary sustainers of nature. They collect various natural resources like fuelwood, dry leaves,

shrubs, fodder, and medicinal herbs, etc. for cooking purposes. Few plant parts leaves, stems, flowers, fruits and roots from natural resources are used as medicines to cure their ailments. Therefore, natural resources are a means of subsistence for all the households in the surveyed villages.

iii) The decline of natural resources

Natural resources play a crucial role in the economies of the rural poor and provide various products to the survival of everyday life. Rural poor households are more dependent on these resources rather than rich households, because of these resources are provided by CPRs for free on a regular basis. But due to the continuing decline of these resources has created a survival crisis in front of the rural poor. These resources are more affected because of encroachment by local people, especially belonging to politically and economically strong caste and class.

In chapter seven, this study examines the exclusion of marginal communities' women from common property resources. Because they dependent more on these resources, rather than the other social groups.

The major issues discussed in Chapter seven can be summarised below:

i) The role of private property in CPRs

The role of property rights to private and common lands has shaped the productivity, distribution, and management of natural resources. In which private property resources ownership is very helpful for maintaining the CPRs and they depend on each other to some extent to sustain their existence. the rights and size of private property depend upon the socio-economic status of the households, and gender justice of the society.

ii) The socio-economic structure of society for women

As we have discussed in earlier chapter, patriarchy is one of the pillar of the Indian social structure. At the family level, men are mostly head of the household and they keep economic power in their hands rather than the allowing women of their house to access economic resources. They also have the right to private property. In contrast to this, the hereditary transfer of

private property is negligible for women, and in the policy of joint titling in private property is also very low in study areas. So, the structural inequalities of society exclude or restrict women to own property.

iii) Accesses rights on CPRs of rural women

Rural poor women are highly dependent than men on CPRs for the survival of basic needs since they have less access to private property resources. Various sources of village commons, i.e. village ponds, village forests, and village pasture are dominated by higher or influential caste and a class of the village, where Dalit women's accessibility in these resources is negligible or excluded and they face various problems included violence also. Apart from this, the management of village commons in the study areas is not successful, due to this reason CPRs continue to lose their existence in the study villages.

In chapter eight, the study examines the impact of the development process on CPRs. Urbanization and development has been contributing to the rapid degradation of CPRs.

The major issues discussed in chapter eight is summarised below:

i) The notion of urbanization

The notion of urbanization is detached from nature; it is population transfer from a rural area to an urban area. This means the transfer of population from nature to man-made environment. It is also a result of demographic explosion and poverty induced rural-urban migration and closely linked with the sociological process of rationalization, industrialization, modernization, and westernization. However, in many places, the division between rural and urban is vague as development occurs further away from the centre of the urban area. This may not benefit rural poor because urban development, interrupt their relationship with nature.

ii) The decline of CPRs in the process of urbanization

The process of urbanization is highly influential in peri-urban areas, which is situated between the urban and rural border. Urban people move towards this area due to land hunger. So, higher urbanization could lead to the alteration of

land for non-agricultural use, such as residential plot, apartments, buildings, colleges, factories, and offices, etc. thus, the socio-economic urbanization is more active in peri-urban areas which represent a transitional space characterized by a diversity of occupational interests that compete over limited resources. Besides, government supported development is also responsible for reducing amounts of agricultural and common resources in the future.

iii) Challenges of development for rural areas

The development program of the government plan is prepared to keep in view all sectors, whether they belong to urban, rural or peri-urban areas. But only urban areas get attention in policy and planning, this dichotomous focus on rural development and urban planning implies that the linkages between urban centers and the rural areas are ignored. This can have adverse impacts on the livelihoods of those who live in these places, as they lose access to natural resources on which they depend for their livelihoods. Thus, it does create compound difficulties of the peri-urban landless community that has traditionally depended on CPRs for their sustenance. The decline of CPRs in peri-urban areas and rural areas are affecting the everyday life of Dalit women in transit, they are continuously seeing detached from nature or natural resources and they are opting other alternatives for the survival of their life.

vi) Natural disaster due to development

The unplanned development process influences the risk of natural disasters in several ways, like global warming and pollution, which is created due to the decline of green spaces. because, expansion of slums, blocking of natural derange, soil erosion, deforestation, and rising sea levels, etc. all are increasing natural risks and due to the condition of inappropriate use of resources and inadequate governance reduced the sense of community towards nature. As a result of this, pollution (in particular air pollution) has become a major problem in developing countries like India. In study areas air quality is different due to being CPRs rich and poor, i.e. in Lucknow district air quality is better than Kanpur Nagar district.

In chapter nine, the study examined tendency of encroachment among the local people on CPRs in study areas. Encroachment is the main reason for decline of CPRs and due to monopoly or domination on village commons, especially common lands, restricted the other community members to access.

The major issue discussed in chapter nine can be summarised below:

i) Regularisation of common lands and encroachment

CPRs are used by the rural communities' for grazing livestock, collecting of fuel, fodder and medicinal herbs, for earning a living, getting basic needs and sustaining their livelihoods through this. But after the 1990s, state government policies started to privatize lands for the poor or Dalits, as a result of this, the competition of encroachment on common lands has become higher among Dalits. Thus, when the common lands or wastelands are assigned to the rural poor through the government policy, often these lands are later acquired by the rich people. Decline of CPRs in Kanpur Nagar is higher than Lucknow due to government policy.

ii) Domination of the elite on CPRs and encroachment

The CPRs play a crucial role in the survival of the rural poor, who have a marginal position in the survival of their life. But these resources are dominated by particular caste, class, and gender that vary from village to village, they might belong to Dalit, OBC or general category, particularly, those communities who have the population and financial power and this domination and power influence the encroachment. Besides, often encroachment on common lands is mostly done by those groups or individuals who have the nearest existence of these commons with their land and house.

iii) Encroachment and decline of CPRs

Encroachment originates from two primary sources; one, sprawl and another, the loss of biodiversity. Because, when biodiversity starts to reduce, then the risk to native animal and plant species increases. Encroachment on common land is a problematic issue in India because it reduces the area of common lands. Often it makes expensive to prevent and reverse all the encroachment. Because, farmers who cultivate land near to the common land, they are typically encroaching

gradually by extended the boundary of their land in the common land, and it is difficult to recognize. This is creating a serious problem not only for our environment, but it increases risk for future sustainability.

10.2 Findings of the Study

The concept of Common property resources is used for economic welfare of weaker sections, and it plays a very crucial role in fulfilling their necessities, which is helpful in the upliftment of their economic status. But, they are excluded from access rights on natural resources. They especially Dalit women are facing many problems related to rights on CPRs, like complicated administrative rules and regulation, finance, the domination of male, encroachment, and degradation of natural resources. Because participation of Dalit women in the collection of firewood from the CPRs is higher rather than other social groups i.e. OBC and general. Even the government scheme for the rural poor *Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojna* is not helpful for the marginalised communities to solve their problem of the daily struggle for the fuel because the gas cylinder is out of reach for their financial capacity.

In the study villages of Kanpur Nagar, rural women suffer due to lack of fuel and fodder from the village commons for being CPRs poor district, and they are more dependent on firewood for cooking rather than their counterparts in Lucknow. Since the cost of gas cylinder is much higher rather than the firewood for the rural poor. Thus, natural resources degradation and the appropriation by encroachment and by privatization, tend to have particularly adverse effects for the Dalit women. As well as the village commons are continuously declining due to encroachment and ignorance. That creates various problems related to erosion of village commons, as a result of this; these resources are not able to given benefit the rural poor. For instance, village ponds dominated by the people of a particular class, caste, and gender, because pond lease depends upon financial strength and accessibility to power position in both districts, except for OBCs. However, water bodies have been reserved for particular caste in study areas, i.e. *Mallah* and *Kashyap*.

Furthermore, one can say the village commons of the study areas are continuously declining due to encroachment and ignorance and as a result of this; these resources are not able to benefit the rural poor due to bad management. The study of Lucknow villages found that Dalit households depend more on the market fodder for their livestock. Besides, the decline of the CPRs is also affecting the green spaces of the study areas. Natural resources

are directly connected with the ecological balance, which is challenged by climate change. Uneven changes in climate have severer effects on the ecosystem, health of humans and livelihood. Besides, urban cash economies are developed through the environmentally exploitative plan, as a result of this; fast unplanned urbanization along with unsustainable ways of consumption and lifestyle changes over recent decades have mainly resulted in environmental degradation. This has increased pressure on natural resources, generation of waste, vulnerability to climate change and experience to pollution and disasters, which requires crucial united responses and awareness. As well as, encroachment on rural common and the resulting decline of CPRs can be seen in the changing pattern of rural life. Where the rural people's inclination towards urban lifestyle has been increasing and the value of natural climate and resources losing their existence, i.e. dependencies on village pasture land and village pond have been reducing. So, these common lands have either been encroached upon or they are in a degraded condition. Thus, one can say, study areas of both districts, mostly villages are suffering from the diminishing CPRs due to encroachment.

In spite of this, rural poor still depend upon CPRs because of the opportunity of the rural poor's labour to take in paid work is still lower, and continuous degradation in natural resources, especially for firewood and fodder, due to no "investment" in CPRs are creating the crisis. Therefore, one can say, decreasing the availability of fodder from the common lands is changing the livestock composition. This is increasing the crises of natural animal products (i.e. pure milk of cow, buffalo, and goat, etc.) in rural and urban both areas.

The above descriptions are shows the social inequality of the rural poor women has directly affected their life sustenance because they are forced to depend upon natural resources. Due to belonging to the economically weaker section, they are following the primitive culture of lifestyle and they also very low awareness of their political or civil rights. As well, their power relations (i.e. caste, class, and gender) are also suffering more from the exclusion of accessibility of CPRs (i.e. being a Dalit, being poor and being a woman).

So, I support the voluntary compliance school (e.g. Wade, 1986, 1987; Jodha, 1986; Berkes, 1989; Chopra, et.al, 1989; Murty, 1994; Beck and Nesmith, 2001; Mohapatra, 2006), which advocates the decentralized collective management of CPRs at the local level, to the proper system of sustainable growth and maintenance of village commons. Because the study finding shows that, natural resources and Dalit women both are dependent on each other to fulfil their basic necessities.

10.3 Recommendation

Our environment is a significant part of our existence. That provides us a way to live a healthy life. So, we should try to maintain the long life of our green space. These spaces are common lands, which are complementary to private land and right on the private lands provide authority to use construct building, sale and protect, etc. Thus, common property resources are important for every stage of the people; whether they belong to any class, caste, and gender. Hence, we should try to be protecting these natural resources for future sustenance.

Based on the study following Recommendations towards Dalit women and common property resources in a rural area have been offered:

- i. As we discussed before, women are considered as close to the nature, so women should be included in the management policy of CPRs and also poor women provide a right to open access on that without any restriction and there should be lease reserved for the women of marginal communities in some common areas of the village commons. So, women-centric law should be implemented in the community management of CPRs. It will help to access common resources for women of marginal communities to some extent.
- ii. CPRs management should be regulated through the MGNREGA program in rural areas, that provided rural poor job and it also increases the quality of the natural resources, i.e. uphold the quality of the grass in pasture land, try to make fertilizing wasteland and cutting and replanting of community forest, etc. this type of practice is helpful to protect the natural resources from the degradation.
- iii. The use and maintenance of the CPRs regularly create fewer chances of encroachment behavior. Because encroachment behavior is often dominant at that time when commons are less useful or not in use for a long time. So, the local community should be keeping in practice regularly to get the benefit and to conserve these resources.
- iv. CPRs related data based on quantity and quality should be transparent and updated in the Revenue department website. That is helpful for the researcher, to find out the problem regarding CPRs management and accessibility. Besides, the base-line survey of the CPRs, broad survey of land resources, and formation of durable structures of

boundaries and brings awareness of the environmental impact of random economic development.

- v. The local administrative body of rural areas should undertake plantation related to raw material providing trees, like, trees providing green leaves for plate making, in the village forest, that provides eco-friendly jobs to the Dalit community or rural poor.
- vi. The local administrative body should make the local community awareness of the importance of the plantation as per their requirement because during the field study most of the respondents had a negative image about the plantation of forest land. They are scared if there is a plantation on forest land, then, due to forest wild animal would attack or harm them.
- vii. If natural resources are connected to religion and save these as a moral duty, such as pond, river, and trees, etc. then CPRs can be protected⁵¹.
- viii. If development needs green spaces through the clearance of natural resources, i.e. water tank, common land, and forest areas, then the government should shift these eco-areas in a modified way, with less environmental disturbance.

Thus, if we want to protect these resources for future sustenance, then we should encourage plantation on common lands and spread awareness among people to save our environment and natural resources. This is not only useful to them but, also it provides a healthy environment for forthcoming generations. Because this practice can be useful for our environmental protection and at some level, we can succeed. With this, if common lands would be occupied by trees and plants, then there will be a low chance of encroachment and it impacts positively on the climate change effects. Then these common resources and products will be useful for Dalit women, because, as we know, it provides them life-sustaining material or daily needs of domestic use and economic purpose of their income.

⁵¹ In this context Emile Durkheim (1912) in his book 'The Elementary forms of religious life', credit to the religion for the security of communal living and he said that, the animal or plant as a totemic power of each clan worshipped as a sacred power in the society of Australian tribe.