

# **DALIT FEMINISM IN MAHARASHTRA**

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## **CERTIFICATE**

Dated

This is certify that the dissertation entitled, '**DALIT FEMINISM IN MAHARASHTRA**' submitted by **Smita Patil** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree Master of Philosophy is her original work in this university and has not been previously submitted to any other university for any degree or diploma.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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# **CHAPTER -I**

## INTRODUCTION

This study deals with Dalit feminism in Maharashtra. Dalit feminism in Maharashtra is a phenomena propagated by the urban middle class educated Dalit women in the 1990s. The fundamental argument put forward by Dalit feminists is that Dalit women are a different category from women in other castes and communities. However, the women's movement in India is not concerned with the problems of Dalit women. It has been concerned primarily with the difference between class and patriarchy but not caste and women. This is particularly true in the context of Maharashtra whereby, the Dalit Panther movement, and other social movements in 1970s and 1980s like the Shetkari Sanghatna, Satyashodhak Mahila Aghadi Sanghatna which addressed various issues relating to women's social, economic and political condition, did not focus any significant attention on Dalit women.<sup>1</sup> They highlighted the oppression of women in general by the landlords but these movements never touched on the oppression based on caste system in the Hindu social order. Moreover, they also neglected the Dalit women's voice. Though political parties have been demanding the status rights of women, they too, focused only on the class dimension of women in Indian society.

Dalit feminists argue that Dalit women are doubly oppressed based on caste and gender.<sup>2</sup> Further they have consciously highlighted two issues: 'external' and 'internal'. On the external side, they argued that when the non-Dalit women are talking about the shared position of Dalit women's representation, then it reduced the applicability and actuality of their problems at theoretical and political level. Dalit women raised the moot question of their representation at the various forums in the country and abroad as

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<sup>1</sup> Gopal Guru, "Dalit Women Talk Differently," 1995, pp,14-21.

<sup>2</sup> Sharmila Rege, "Dalit Women Talk Differently," 1998, p.42.

well. They emphatically asked whether upper caste women have the tenacity to understand and represent the pain and agony of the Dalit women or whether she should represent herself as a real sufferer.<sup>3</sup> Dalit feminists claim that solidarity of women itself is questionable at the national and global level because of the dilemma between high caste and Dalit women since caste discrimination is practiced against Dalit women by upper caste women.

The principal cause of Dalit women's oppression is the caste factor, which correlates with patriarchy. Patriarchy as a concept has often been criticized on the ground that it is an essentialist, ahistorical formulation which tends to obfuscate the differences in the range of experiences of women across cultures, classes and ethnicity. Nonetheless, the concept of patriarchy is essential to capture the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of aspects of women's subordination.<sup>4</sup> It is susceptible to development in a way that it can highlight the different forms of gender inequality across cultures, classes and castes or ethnic groups. For subordination of women in general, rape is used as a tool but for Dalit women particular, rape by upper castes is used for as a tool for oppression, which correlates with their caste. Though Dalit movement was assertive on rape issues with its multifaceted relationship between caste and women's subordination, it was an issue that was never seriously addressed, as both women's movement and Dalit movement were patriarchal and upper caste dominated.<sup>5</sup> The eco-feminists also talk of the issue of caste and gender-based oppression, which relates with the displacement of rural women, most of whom are Dalit.<sup>6</sup> Thus, they differentiated between rural and urban Dalit women and valued their language, cultural experiences, including personal politics.

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<sup>3</sup> Gopal Guru, "Dalit Women Talk Differently," 1995, pp. 2548-50.

<sup>4</sup> Sylvia Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy," 1990, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> P. G. Jogdand, (ed.), "Dalit Women in India," 1995, pg. xii.

<sup>6</sup> Chhaya Datar, "Non-Brahmin Renderings of Feminism in Maharashtra," 1999, pp. 2964-69.

Questioning the multifaceted character of their exploitation including their own community, Dalit feminists argue that the patriarchal domination within family and community must be challenged. Their central argument is that there is a distinct version of patriarchy that prevails within the Dalit community.<sup>7</sup> This version of patriarchy partakes of some of the elements of patriarchy in general, but it is also in many ways unique because it operates within a framework of culture of poverty and subordination. Hence, it is absolutely necessary that the distinctiveness of Dalit patriarchy from its more general version in Indian society must also be clearly analysed and understood if the situation of Dalit women has to be understood. Dalit leaders' systematic obfuscation of the Dalit women's questions in post Ambedkrian period is directly the result of the Dalit patriarchy.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Dalit patriarchy is responsible for the marginalisation of Dalit women and their political autonomy. In the cultural sphere also, the Dalit males are maintaining their dominance and hegemony. Through focusing upon the particular notion of Dalit patriarchy, Dalit feminists have successfully exposed and called into question the patriarchal notions of Dalit men, suggesting that Dalit women should be in a position to share their experiences at different forums access to which has so far been denied to them by Dalit males.

### **THE PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The main purpose of this dissertation is to understand the nature and position of Dalit feminism. The arguments and claims of Dalit feminism are located in the broader discussion of feminism and the transformation of women rights and the notion of equality. This study tries to evaluate the present situation of women's movement in India, as Dalit women are very much a part and parcel of Indian society. What are the

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<sup>7</sup> Gopal Guru, "Dalit Women Talk Differently," 1995, pp.2548-50

<sup>8</sup> Gabriel Dietrich, "Reflections on the women's movement in India: Religion, Ecology, and Development," 1998, pp.72-92



issues raised by the women's movement? It seeks to examine why caste and gender issues were excluded from mainstream politics since 1970s though the structural hierarchy of Indian society based is on religions? Thus, it will try to understand the legacy of it in authentic ways in which it impinges upon the situation of Dalit women. This dissertation highlights the variation between the larger society and Dalits in general. In particular it tries to reflect on the oppression of Dalit women at different levels and focuses on these agencies. Thus, it will analyse the fundamental questions of Dalit women's exploitation and why it is necessary to understand Dalit women's independent voices, visions and autonomy.

In studying the nature and sources of Dalit women's subordination, this study makes use of Dalit women's autobiographies as a principal source. And many other sources could be used to find out the situation of Dalit women. The choice was made in favour of autobiography not only because it has a personal account of a Dalit woman's daily experiences, but also because it the autobiography can best provide us with many incidences of patriarchy.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of this study is to be able to raise several questions, such as, why is it important to see 'Dalit feminism' as a separate category within feminism? What are the main features of Dalit feminism? How does caste and patriarchy function in the context of exploitation of women in general and Dalit women in particular? How does patriarchy function among the Dalits, especially in the social and cultural spheres? Thus, this study attempts to understand the situation of Dalit women by locating them in their own context, community and in society.

## CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TERMS

### DALIT

Dalit is a constantly used term in present situation. But historically, it has been first used in Buddhist literature called *Vinaya Pitika* on the relevance of the deprived people.<sup>9</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Phule and one of the Marathi newspapers have also used it. Phule was “the first to use the word dalit in connection with caste in the term ‘Dalitodhar’ (uplift of the depressed)”<sup>10</sup>. Ambedkar used it for broken people. Gopal Guru’s views “the category Dalit was first used by Ambedkar himself in his fortnightly *Bahishkrit Bharat*. He defined it comprehensively: Dalithood is a kind of life condition which characterises the exploitation, suppression and marginalisation of Dalits by the social, economic, cultural and political domination of the upper caste Brahminical order.” Ambedkar however did not use this category often.<sup>11</sup>

Today it has become very popular because in the post-Ambedkar period, the Dalit Panther’s Dalit literary movement used it continually for untouchables and oppressed people. They defined it in the background of women; lower caste, untouchables, tribes, and landless, poor peasant, working class, including suppressed, depressed, broken, harassed, and polluted ones in society.

Gangadhar Pantawane, founder of the journal *Asmitadarsh*, (*Mirror of Identity*) defines it in an entirely different way: “To me, Dalit is not a caste. He’s a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of this country. He does not believe in God, rebirth, the soul, holy books teaching separatism, fate and heaven because they have made him a slave. He does believe in humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Unpublished M.phil dissertation of Vivek Kumar, “Nature and Crisis of Dalit Leadership in India:A Micro Sociological Analysis,” 1994, p. 12

<sup>10</sup> Eleanor Zelliot, “From Untouchable to Dalit,” 1992,p. 271.

<sup>11</sup> Gopal Guru, “The Politics of Naming,”1998,p.16.

<sup>12</sup> Eleanor Zelliot, “From Untouchable to Dalit,” 1992,p. 268.

## **FEMINISM**

Feminism is a notion that talked about equality between men and women as human beings in social, political and economic spheres of life. The origin of feminism has long historical background. According to Jagger, in a sense, feminism has always existed. Certainly, as long as women have been subordinated, they have resisted that subordination.<sup>13</sup>

However, structural feminism emerged from the French and Industrial revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Britain itself and the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the entire Europe. These two revolutions cultivated democratic values and challenged the traditional feudal hierarchal social order. Even though women members in the family enjoyed certain level of status, compared to men, they were always subordinated. It was the era where “these economic and political changes drastically altered women’s situation and also the way in which women perceived their situation”.<sup>14</sup> Especially, the importance of female labour in the fields, plantation, and in domestic industries in pre-capitalist era was never counted as wage labour earlier started counting. In the present contexts it has taken a shape in personal and political equality that lays more emphasis on patriarchal domination with new assertion projects rights.

## **CHAPTERIZATION**

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The second chapter deals with the various theories of feminism with their specific characteristic and historical background. The third chapter will briefly focus on the women’s movement in India historically and will also look at the major issues concerning women in general in the post independence period. A similar approach will continue in respect of Dalit women

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<sup>13</sup> Alison Jagger, “Feminist Politics and Human Nature” 1983,p.3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

as well as Dalit men's contributions in raising Dalits women's assertion on caste and untouchability issues etc.

The fourth chapter will attempt to analyse the oppression of Dalit women in the hands of upper caste as well as Dalit male and thus discusses the forms of patriarchy including the socialization of Dalits in diverse situations.

The concluding chapter summarizes the principal results of this exploration and points out some dimensions along which further exploration in this very important but neglected area of Dalit feminism can be undertaken.

## **METHODOLOGY**

It is based on primary as well as secondary sources. The autobiographical accounts of Dalit writers are also the main source as it clearly shows the day-to-day experiences of Dalit women's life. Thus the author of this dissertation has translated Six Dalit women/men autobiographical literary forms, available discussed in detail in Marathi accounts. In addition's 12 interviews of Dalit activist were conducted in Mumbai and Nagpur to substantiate the argument of entire dissertation.

## **CHAPTER -II**

## FEMINISM: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Feminist theory involves moving beyond the self, when the starting point is the self. It requires a notion of a collective 'we,' of the collectivities of women. There is a shared sense of other women who are like you, although not identical to you.

—Zillah R. Eisenstein.

Dalit feminism is not an isolated concept. It must evolve in the context of a substantial theoretical development over a long period. In order to understand Dalit feminism it is necessary to understand this theoretical development and situate Dalit feminism in that context. Accordingly, in this chapter we undertake a critical analysis of the theoretical literature relating to feminism. Since this literature is vast and many sided, we focus on the significant theoretical viewpoints, clarifying them according to general theories out of which they evolved.

### DEFINING FEMINISM

In a general sense, feminism is the notion that claims equality between men and women as human beings in political, economical, social aspects of life. However, in a particular sense, its context has been transformed from time to time as society moves towards new and complex ways of looking at the human phenomenon.

According to Catharine McKinnon, 'feminism fundamentally identifies sexuality as the primary social sphere of male power.'<sup>1</sup> She further articulates that feminism provides a scientific methodology for concepts and theory, which affirms response. It is a consciousness rising process that challenges socially existing fundamental sexual politics as 'personal is political' from women's perspectives.<sup>2</sup> The core of sexuality emerges from feminist practice on its varied issues—abortions, birth control, sterilizations, abuse, rape, lesbianism, sexual harassment, postulation, female

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<sup>1</sup> Catharine, A. McKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method and State," No.3 pp. 516–19, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

sexual slavery, pornography and so on. Thus, it is attempting to change women's life concretely, experientially and reveal that women are socially constructed.<sup>3</sup>

Many scholars interpret this terminology in different ways. Barbara Arneil argues that defining feminism is a complex task.<sup>4</sup> It includes many schools of thoughts and one cannot come out with an adequate definition.<sup>5</sup> She clearly points out three phases. At the primary stage women started self-recognizing themselves, at the secondary stage they asserted for unequal distribution of autonomy within themselves, within family and society, and at the final stage they challenged the body of knowledge that should be revalued in terms of gender equality aspects.<sup>6</sup> Maria Mies argues that from 1960 onwards a number of new social movements like ecological movement, peace movement and so on emerged in which the question of women was always debated.<sup>7</sup> These new movements (social and women's) created fundamental changes to bring together every individual in the universe that whosoever is subordinated or oppressed (which is not based on identity, community feeling or women in particular section).<sup>8</sup>

Sylvia Walby stated, the first wave feminism has multiple faces and highly influences the political phenomena. It has given access for higher education, transformed wage labour.<sup>9</sup> It improves women in high position, shows the colour of patriarchy and through the democratic rights significantly changes gender relations.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, one can say that there are many shifts and directions in the women's movement. The first shift arises for legitimate political and civil rights where space

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid,19-60

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Arneil, " Politics and Feminism," pp.1-25, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Maria Mies, " Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale, pp 6-43,1998.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Sylvia, Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy,"p.118,1990

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

for women was created in the public sphere.<sup>11</sup> It was the same era when the black women also asserted their plight with questions of gender identity and racism.<sup>12</sup> But upper class elite women dominated the entire women's movement and thus neglected the issues of black women.

The second shift emphasised women's liberation in the private sphere like family and challenged the private domain in which 'personal is political' was the slogan.<sup>13</sup> The third shift focused on the difference between women's experiences in theory and practices that re-discovered the history of the women's movement.<sup>14</sup>

Though there are many transitions in the process of women's movement but the questions of equality in every sphere was always taken into account. The fact is that as the social realities changed the theoretical dimension kept moving and added new perspectives.<sup>15</sup> It is known that with the notion of capitalism western political philosophy emerged and liberals were the first to construct liberal theory. They questioned reason, rationality, with individual capacity on grounds of equality to men, women and the liberal feminist theory also became a product of it.<sup>16</sup> Here, it is important to understand liberal views first. Liberal theorists argued on moral values of liberalism that postulated the quality in every individual to have an equal capacity of reasoning and one can achieve his/her destination of self-interest as defined by them.

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Over a period they talked about the individual's autonomy and reflected on the notion of state to protect them in private and public spheres. And while achieving

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<sup>11</sup> John, Charvet, "Modern Ideologies: Feminism," pp.1-13,1982.

<sup>12</sup> bell hooks, "Feminist Theory from margin to Center," 1984, pp.1-2, P.Collins, "Black Feminist Thought,"1-5,1990.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Arneil, "Politics and Feminism," pp.2-25,1990.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," pp.29-33,1983.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



these goals individuals should not violate other's rights.<sup>18</sup> Even the traditional liberals emphasised on the notion of rationality and argued that rationality was a mental capacity but mind and human body are two different things.<sup>19</sup> It is conceived as a property of individuals rather than groups. Thus, the liberal interpretation of rationality is different between the end of human action and the means for achieving those ends.

### **LIBERAL FEMINIST APPROACH**

In order to find out how the idea of liberal feminism emerged one has to go back to the 17th century.<sup>20</sup> It is known that capitalism has given a shape to liberal political philosophy. This also shaped the liberal feminist vision.<sup>21</sup> In this process, democratic values developed with the combination of industrial development in entire Europe, which challenged the traditional feudal system.<sup>22</sup> A new capitalist man rebelled against the monarch's authoritative hegemony on them. On the other hand, at the same time new capitalist women (who status-wise enjoyed a certain right as belonging to a family) realised their subjugation and claim against traditional patriarchal norms and values.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the history of liberal feminism was constantly shaken and suppressed from the very beginning itself.

The central argument put forward by liberal feminists was that every individual is entitled with the capacity of reason. In the year 1700, Mary Astell wrote and questioned, "If all men are born free, how is it that all women are born slaves?"

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<sup>18</sup> Will, Kymlica. "Contemporary Political Philosophy." p.247-48, 1990

<sup>19</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature." p.28, 1983.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.27.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

As they must be, if being subjugated to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of men is the perfect condition of slavery?<sup>24</sup>

Mary Wollstancraft wrote an analytical essay in 1792 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women', in which she insisted that:<sup>25</sup>

"the perfection of our nature and capacity of happiness must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue and knowledge, that distinguish the individual, and direct the laws which bind society: and that from the exercises of reason, knowledge and virtue flow, in equally undeniable, if mankind be viewed collectively." Wollstancraft<sup>26</sup>

She further argued that women were underprivileged to pursue an education and due to their socialization, and debarred to develop their rational capacity.<sup>27</sup> J.S. Mill, a utilitarian, has taken a similar position and says that women were always objected to develop their rationality in the patriarchal society on humanitarian grounds.<sup>28</sup>

But contemporary liberal feminists argue that in the future human relation may possibly change.<sup>29</sup> It will stand on psychological differences as masculine and feminine but one cannot ignore the reality that capacity with the amalgamation of norms, values developed regarding their talents that possibly helps to reduce it.<sup>30</sup> Thus liberal feminists suggest an alternative method through the collective consciousness of human freedom, which restrains a good society with principles and morals. It can be beneficial to each one of us and appealing towards gender justice based on liberal values like liberty, equality and justice.

They demand for the implementation of equal wages, equal property rights and equality in the customarily coined marriage laws.<sup>31</sup> Slowly, they achieved

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<sup>24</sup> Sited in Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," p.28,1983.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Wollstancraft. (Reprinted )"A Vindication of the Rights of Women,"p.3,1992.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> J. S.Mill, "On the Subjugation of Women .," (Original 1869),pp.1-26,1982.

<sup>29</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature." p.173-84,1983.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. pp28-49

pregnancy benefits, maternity leave and stabilised childcare. Thus, they directly attacked the traditional pattern of equality and justice by state.

They argue that in marriage, property, education, wages, labour, and work hours women are often treated unequal.<sup>32</sup> To abolish such sex-biased discriminatory laws they provide the “protective” policies under which they put forward the frequent effort for consciousness rising<sup>33</sup> among women such as ERA (Equal Right Amendment) including the ban on sex segregated school, college inequitable admission policies.<sup>34</sup> But at the same time they clearly pointed out, it is an individual choice to accept the masculine and feminine division of occupation.

Criticising the condition of housewives they say housewives cannot enjoy authority, power because they are financially dependent and exploited in several forms.<sup>35</sup> Poverty is the main cause for individual women and collectively for all women to achieve formal equality.<sup>36</sup> Keeping expectations from state, liberal feminists argue that the state should provide certain incentives for poor women such as fund for abortion, fund for public childcare programmes, and temporary shelter for those women who are victims of domestic violence.<sup>37</sup>

Thus they claim that economic power will definably improve the dignity of women. Debating over sexual liberty, they mention that though the laws,<sup>38</sup> to a certain extent, protect women but women cannot pursue freedom because of social confines.

Insisting on sex education, liberal feminists say that for women it is an important issue because insufficient knowledge of sex ultimately damages women

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<sup>32</sup> Sylvia, Walby, “Theorizing Patriarchy.” p.33,1990

<sup>33</sup> Alison Jaggar, “Feminist Politics and Human Nature.” p.173-84.1983.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid,181-87.

<sup>35</sup> Chris Weedon, “Feminsm,theory and the politics of Difference.” p.12.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid,pp.12-15.

<sup>37</sup> Alison Jaggaar, “Feminist Politics and Human Nature.” p.181.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

more than men.<sup>39</sup> According to liberal feminists there should not be a limitation on sexual reproduction activity because it may be opting for pleasure, to earn money, to express friendship or love, etc. Sexual activity is part of private life of an individual but if it is violated or questioned by other human beings then it is the duty of the state to intervene into it.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, constituting women is the main factor; liberal feminists are trying to integrate women completely into the mainstream contemporary society. They believe on the system of meritocracy in jobs and offices with relevant qualification because the entire natural talents of men and women remain as it is and it may help to eradicate the discrimination.<sup>41</sup> They again argue if the formal equality is the main goal then in the judiciary, legislature or any decision making body must have representation of women including implementation section of these laws.<sup>42</sup>

In the contemporary society the new concept called 'Self improvement' was implemented by them where the collective consciousness is seen as main source to improve individuals.<sup>43</sup> They mobilized the women through various action programmed like self-defence mechanisms and further argue the private domain of work for women—liberal feminist say it should be replaced as a paid work seen into the aspect of profession.<sup>44</sup>

When we look at liberal feminism the major criticisms were founded within the family of liberal feminism over the liberal political theory.<sup>45</sup> Liberal theory centred on the self. It promotes that skepticism and political solipsism.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Will, Kymlica, "Contemporary Political Philosophy," pp.248-50, 1990.

<sup>41</sup> Sylvia. Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy p.130, 1990.

<sup>42</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," p.173-84, 1983.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," p.42-45, 1983.

The main assumption of liberal theorists is every human being has basic nature to stay in seclusion for a few needs and interest.<sup>46</sup> But they also argue that what are those factors, which collects individuals together in civil society. Who would justify them and prevent from coercion. Liberal theory provides the various answers through social contract theory. They presume that human individuals/entities have self-sufficient capacities.<sup>47</sup> But if we relate this logic to the human biology then liberals are failure to look after the infants, adults and so on. Thus liberal theorist completely alienates human biology. The skepticism has two directions in liberal norms and values in individual autonomy-As each individual has full freedom to determine what is good and beneficial for him/her; other is the instrumental interpretation of rationality.<sup>48</sup>

In which individual may have rationality to choose between varieties of means to a given end.<sup>49</sup> For this reason a liberal trusts the on political institutions. Theories are always constructed on human experience. No theory avoids human needs like water, food, air etc.<sup>50</sup> Liberal theory starts from self but the contemptary liberal feminist says, on the grounds of individualism there are psychological differences though capability of rationality is same.<sup>51</sup> The recent feminist scholarship recognized the emotional difference between the sexes could be attributed to the different experiences of male and female. Though the individuals have their desire, self-interest but they learned their values from social context.<sup>52</sup> Apart from rationality, human beings have quantity of emotions, feelings, and power of expression.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Alison Jaggar, p.40. Chris Weedon, p.12.

<sup>48</sup> Will, Kymlica. "Contemporary Political Philosophy," pp.85-90, 1990.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," 1983, p.42-43.

<sup>51</sup> Sylvia, Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy," p.6, 1990.

<sup>52</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," pp. 171-205, 1983.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Thus, earlier liberal theorists neglected the complexity of human and psychological identity. Another critique over liberal concepts of rationality relates the unifications of state versus individualism.<sup>54</sup> Rationality is not self-independent in epistemology methods. As autonomy is one of the element relates with rationality, which includes the concept of freedom and equality. It draws the line of state powers.<sup>55</sup>

Liberal feminist questions that if the individuals define autonomy then how can he/she relate with social interest.<sup>56</sup> The individual judgment can be seen as a major problem especially in the context of sex- role conditioning aspects as the earlier liberals relates the women with body and men with mind<sup>57</sup>. Thus, liberal feminist are attempting for a re-conceptualization of the old/ rigid liberal values.

Even though law and order also forced women to work into 'two jobs' for houses work and child care's including in the sex - separated as low paid in the occupation<sup>58</sup>. Perhaps we may say continuing the notion of inequality of women in every field failure the claims of formal equality of liberal feminist.

In the view of Marxist feminist the human labour has both intellectual and physical aspects that differs them from the activity of animals. It has certain conscious purpose.<sup>59</sup>

Analyzing on the capitalist mode of production the Marxist theorists argue that it's separated and alienates the mental and manual labour. It makes the division in the working class knowledge that originally belongs to them and used as a tool to exploit

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Alison Jaggar, Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," pp.51-82,1983.

them.<sup>60</sup> Thus, one can say these liberal feminists are failure while claiming on equal rationality to all. Moreover, The radical and the socialist feminist agreed with the position of the Marxist feminist and further say that mental and manual distinction has been controlled by men to exploit women.

Taking into account the manual and mental debate Marxist feminist raises the questions that if liberal feminists lay emphasis on the equal opportunity then why can't they challenge the contemporary structure of the work and it's hierarchy,<sup>61</sup> For e.g. the correlation between the formal educational status and income. Further, clearing this debate the Marxist feminist says the higher stratification at the top level again relates with their class, race, and gender.<sup>62</sup> Thus, Marxist feminist claim that liberal feminist are failure to challenge the fundamental postulation of male domination and capitalism. One can say that the Marxist feminist claims carries a more validity than Liberal feminist as it did not challenge the poverty/inequality in the stratified society or is the distribution of justice will be equal to all.

Again the Marxist feminist rejects the entire phenomena of liberal state. In their point of view state power can be enjoyed by the capitalist class in every sphere as the feminist like Catharine McKinnon stated that state is a patriarchal tool.<sup>63</sup> So, how far one should trust on the state for equal enforcement of women's rights. In the economic sector also men's provide more power that control the state<sup>64</sup>. Then it allows them to perpetuate the subordination of women.

## **MARXIST FEMINIST APPROACH**

Before we begin to understand the notion of traditional Marxist feminism it is important to study the Marxist theory. Marxist theory emerged as a counter attack on

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid,pp.51-82.

<sup>61</sup> Sylvia, Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy,"1990,p.13-21.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Catharine A.McKinnon, "Toward A Feminist Theory Of State,"p.5,1989.

<sup>64</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," ,pp.51-82,1983.

the capitalist system in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>65</sup> It was the time, industrial revolution reached to its worst position and the bourgeois revolution almost ended up but continued to be in a few parts of Europe.<sup>66</sup> It challenged the deepest inequalities in society based on division of class that forms social structure. To clarify it Marxism analysed with giving an example of women. They argue a woman is part of society and most oppressed one so, what is the main causality that represents for their oppression and how could be the possible answer to eradicate it.<sup>67</sup>

McKinnon explore an interesting debate between the Marxism and feminism. Feminism deals with sexuality and Marxism with labour of human being for survival.<sup>68</sup> Marxism raises question to feminism saying that it is bourgeois in theory and practice. It serves the ruling class, their interest and ignores the class division among women and also pleased capitalism.<sup>69</sup> It did not bring any basic changes or abolished barriers to women's personhood. For them women is natural, a historical entity not as a part of society in cross-culture.<sup>70</sup> Thus, only opportunist women get benefit out of it.

Feminism charges that Marxism defines a male theory. It moves and practice in the interest of men.<sup>71</sup> It is a failure to interpret the class experience in sexes of society. The working class movement always alienates women's work and apprehension.<sup>72</sup> Thus, McKinnon says Marxism and feminism are theories that deal with power and its imbalance distributions.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Catharine A. McKinnon, "Toward A Feminist Theory Of State." p.5.1989.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.



Marx's argues that individual can't lead a lonely life. Though he/she can able to take own decision as a member of the society.<sup>73</sup> For self-sustenance one has to be interdependent on others for e.g. a solitary/individual person cannot survive physically. If we assume individuals is completely alone then how can one learn ways of expression, experience, or reach towards maturities as human beings.<sup>74</sup> We human beings have the nature to look at the previous experience in the present context for progress of work with the accountability of skill, knowledge, experience of earlier work.<sup>75</sup> Thus, Marxism claims on social life, its experiences, in social parameters for individual working.

For all these actions Marx's used the word 'praxis.' Praxis is directed towards satisfying human physical and biological needs.<sup>76</sup> Human nature keeps changing as one desire ends up and another creates. It is and on-going process with production of means, e.g. food production.<sup>77</sup> Thus every act itself will end as a means and give a birth to new means of production as an instrument of satisfaction.

Marx says that it is important to see history of human biology, human society and its struggle, which focused on proletariat and bourgeoisie class.<sup>79</sup> Every society constitute ultimately by means of production where the member of society organized and performed their productive activity. It is not the universal standard to measure of thought rather it expressed in action and action valuates by given society.<sup>80</sup> Thus a particular member of the class will gain a certain amount of experience. It has a common platform or similar social conditions. It shapes them to develop a particular

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<sup>73</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," pp.207-4, 1983.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," p.51-81, 1983.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 207-46.

physical quality to their personality.<sup>81</sup> And some time those become an obstacle for development of others.

Thus, the specific class structure is re-imposed two things as dominate beliefs and values of dialectical society. It can be observed at deeper level configuration of daily life.<sup>82</sup> The ideologies explain and justify social experience but not explain in theories. It explains through the legal system, religion, and cultural forms with many other class there is the relation between dominant ideology and mode of production that reflect each other.

Marx says that to take out human alienation one has to dissolve the capitalist system and adopts socialism.<sup>84</sup> Where the specific individuals would no longer held or controlled the means of production. The means of production will be socialized for entire society.<sup>85</sup>

In the Marxist framework women's nature constitute as a human being based on her acts, action and dialectical inter-relation, biology, with their physical, social environments. Marxism says that human nature changes constantly as accordingly a historical development.<sup>86</sup> But the contemporary feminists analyzed them and said that women are a totally different entity because of their capacities, needs and interests.<sup>87</sup> Feminist thus claims that it is necessary to study the actual women's position in the past and the present. And believes on praxis and its activity on the productive system such as a types of labour in compare with men, within their groups as a social relation as a mode of structures.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Sylvia, Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy," p33, 1990.

<sup>86</sup> Alison Jaggar, Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature." p.51-81.1983.

<sup>87</sup> Sylvia, Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy," p.3-4.1990.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

Commenting on the capitalist society they try to locate the status of women into it. In their understanding capitalist society cut acrosses the sex lives and its divisions of labour. <sup>89</sup>In fact it is a dilemma whether a traditional or general Marxism justified women's value or not? And what line of argument they have drawn, as Marx himself did not undertake any investigation of women's situation under capitalisms.<sup>90</sup> In fact Frederick Engles undertook the real task. He discusses briefly the sexual division of labour under capitalism but surprisingly; he allocates far more space to a consideration of women's situation in pre-capitalist women's societies<sup>91</sup>. He argues over women, family, and marriage institution. But says that women's suppression was natural.

In the views of Engle's there is co-relation of monogamous marriage and proletarian family. <sup>92</sup>He contrasts two categories of women's, as a capitalist and the proletarian class women. The working class women share the common stand in overthrowing capitalism. <sup>93</sup>Capitalist model oppressed women as a group and working class women as a whole.

Traditional Marxist analysed that working class and capitalist class women have commonality to feel as they have same status with their male counterparts as far as they work together for wages<sup>94</sup>. Thus, Marxist feminist took the position that house wife could not realize the class-consciousness, alienations because they never had work experience of outside.<sup>95</sup> They have relatively lonely attitude with home. The class position of the working class women gives them the picture of the social realities. And the ruling class women can only think about ideological vision of

<sup>89</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," p.51-81,1983.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.207-46

<sup>91</sup> Frederick,Engle. The Origin of the Family Private Property and the State, 1-30,1884.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

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feminism<sup>96</sup>. Thus Marxist feminist did not pay any attention towards patriarchal oppressions rather claiming to capitalist oppression in the earlier phase

Looking at the context of division of labour in the family women is naturally treated as on sexual labour/acts and physical strength.<sup>97</sup> Perhaps Marx's and Engles are the first men who talk about the subjugation of women but their understanding was diverse as they claims suppression is natural, biological, and psychological. And thus, they argue women's capacity in the public sphere has moral and biological limitation.

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To examination why certain sphere constructed for men and women, Marxist explains the historical reasons.<sup>98</sup> In the pre-capitalist society women used to collect food, vegetables, hunt for animals, and thus develop productive surplus. But then why are women overruled men in the context of acquiring wealth

Then how come women and children started dependent economically on men<sup>99</sup>, if women earns than can't they have socially an equal status as men have in the society. It can't provide an absolute solution for the claims of historical material term as the reasons of sexual division of labour.<sup>100</sup> Their co-relation between the production and consumption but the problem with the feminist is where to draw a line between the production and consumption.

According to Marx, the material bases are responsible for the women's oppression.<sup>101</sup> It benefits the capitalism and creates two type of the sexual division of labour the private and public. The realm of the market belongs to the male.<sup>102</sup><sup>57</sup> The

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<sup>96</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," p.51-81.1983.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.207-46

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Frederick.Engle, "The Origin of the Family Private Property and the State," 1-50.1884.

realm of the family belongs to the female. So in capitalism women are seen a profitable production and all women are not to be considerate suppressed/oppressed.<sup>103</sup> Marx and Engles say women's subordination is not because of her biology but from the outer surrounding like class or materialist base<sup>104</sup>

Thus, the questions are if we assume to abolish the division of labour than can there be gender equality based on biological difference.<sup>105</sup> The contemporary Marxist feminists like Maria Mils explain that abolition of class will lead to human development in both way as physically and psychologically. Marxist feminist views freedom can be seen as an awareness process. Freedom is productive activity that is related with psychological and physical labour.<sup>106</sup> Marxist feminist refused the notion of the individual's freedom that is ideal. They reject the concept of accumulation of private property of individual's looks at it harmful into freedom aspects. And One can say that Traditional Marxism did not provide the concrete answer for the freedom / liberations that can relate to women.

The contemporary Marxist feminist say that housewives could not enjoyed freedom as being oppressed. And they are bound to become domestic, sexually slaves for their husbands. The housewives totally depend on the husband for their livelihoods.<sup>107</sup> Women have been constructed as means of productions in the terms of economic structure/inequality and in physical or legal aspects. Especially the dominance of husbands is more when the women are pregnant/economically

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," p.207-46,1983.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Maria, Mies, "Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale," p.12-40,1998.

<sup>107</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature,"pp.51-82,1983.

dependent on them.<sup>108</sup> And thus Engels stress on that housewives must come out of home and work in the public industry than only they can liberate themselves.

The contemporary Marxist feminist over a period of time argue that especially the oppressed people like ethnic minorities, old people; women will get relieved in perpetuating forms of suppressions. In the private/public sphere the women has to participate in public life than they has to maintain the distance in private life somewhere. But if we see family institution collectively with the applied notions of socialism for income than entire disabled people including women will get benefit for shelter, needs, in economical angle.<sup>109</sup> Perhaps the male dominations may be destroyed. Family will be the part and production of children but socialism can change the sexuality of women in the marriages and family<sup>110</sup>. Thus it can help to destroy the economic hegemony of male. And it provides positive signs and enough strength of ideological struggle. It may organize women in the context of rhetoric of freedom of choice and possibly equal opportunities.

Thus, Marxist feminist have different perspectives on public/private sphere from liberals. In the public domain people engage in politics with other area to shape the stages the history.<sup>111</sup> Even economy has seen in same directions. In public realm opportunity has given to public to work together in active common interest where, the process transformation of world began through their productive action process<sup>112</sup>. On the other hand evaluating the capitalist women Engels says that they are isolated and never developed any relations as a part of community. But there is no adequate answer to formulate the aspects of women sex specific oppression.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Sylvia, Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy," pp.30-58, 1990.

<sup>111</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," pp.51-82, 1983.

<sup>112</sup> Sylvia, Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy," pp.30-58, 1990.

Even the contemporary Marxist feminist saw prostitution as a form of alienation of class and gender in the specific framework. But they can't see the politics behind the body. Coercion of power accepts to see as the material productions approach towards it. It is strange to combine wage labour and prostitution in orderly expressions. Prostitution has deep relations with slavery rather merely alienations.<sup>113</sup> Alienations relates with capitalism. Bourgeois marriages are also considered as prostitution but unable to see the deepest relations of husband and wife. Thus they only sustained the theoretical analysis of marriages and prostitutions but never addressed women's problems like rape, physical violence, and sexual harassment

#### **RADICAL FEMINIST APPROACH**

The ideas of radical feminism have come into sight from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>114</sup> It's the most motivating phenomena that generated energy in the liberation of women. Some scholars say from Plato's and Marxist era we can figure out the radical morals through literature and philosophy.<sup>115</sup> But in the contemporary period it has taken a new forms/shape with a new insight on women's question.

Radical feminist challenged the liberals and Marxist view and constructs new humanistic philosophy with new social facts and strange experiences. In the late 1960's Middle-class, college educated white women started becoming members of various women organizations.<sup>116</sup> But as they received marginalized treatment based on sexuality by male dominating institution then these women collectively discussed their ample subsidiary experiences and realized its importance to analyze politics and

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<sup>113</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," pp.51-82,1983.

<sup>114</sup> Alison Jaggar,p.83, Chirs Weedon,p.20-21.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid,p.84

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

power relations behind it.<sup>118</sup> Thus they initiate to explore a different perspective of women subordination. Radical feminist does not have any solid theoretical insights but it has motivated the idea of culture, identity, and differences including a number of other grass root level problems.

While building up the hypothetical framework, the radical feminist has tremendous fragmentation. Some radical feminist focused on materialist categories rather than idealist views and argued to change basics of traditional political theory and some specifically focused on biological aspects only.<sup>119</sup>

They argue gender not only differs socially but also suppressed women with male dominions. When in the 1960s all over world women's movement re-established their voices for women's repression. Radical feminist pointed out that why it is important to classify forms of subjugation by male coercion. As "In radical feminist analysis patriarchy itself is founded on a fundamental polarization between men and women in which men exploit women for their own interests."<sup>120</sup>

In the previous days radical feminist draws same assumption like liberal views about human nature. They say a new woman are coming from such society and knows her idea of liberal notion.<sup>121</sup> But when any individual enters into a social process they might refuse the previous ideas, identity or principally differ from society to rebuild their own identity. It may be possible that individual will throw off their individuality imposed by society with full consciousness espouse her/his own future identity. Thus later on they shifted their ideas and were united on a perspective on reality like breaking the rules of man as well as woman.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Chirs, Weedon,, *Feminsm, theory and the politics of Difference*, p.27, 1999.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p.26.

<sup>121</sup> John, Charvet, " Modern Ideologies: Feminism," p.97, 1982.

<sup>122</sup> Chirs, Weedon.. "Feminsm, theory and the politics of Difference," pp.1-64, 1999.



Both masculinity and femininity may distribute from various places. They say we must improve the inherent potential aspects, even if one adopts it on a border humanities principles then how can one reach to real identity.<sup>123</sup> So radical feminist argue that women must work hard to fight against male domination and recognized that they need to have division of sexes.

They see women biology as a major problem in patriarchal society and it always marginalized women. Observing the anti feminist approach towards human biology <sup>124</sup>they argue that women's suppression is natural and unavoidable too. Again the relation of mother child created the division of labour as infant child and mother developed interdependency relations psychologically, which again leads to class-caste distinction on biology.<sup>125</sup> Which will helpful to a labour to develop the reproductive new economic class and cultural classification. They argue that the anatomy decides the destiny of human reproductive system. In the present era technology is the boon and reproductive system now controlled with contraceptive, test tube babies help to eradicate the exploitation of women. In Firestone's words "science conquered the kingdom of nature"<sup>126</sup>The radical feminist sees women biology as a main tool for change too.

Another vision of radical feminist says that male biology is not possessed by the virtue of reproductive system (life giving power) as capacity to become mother.<sup>127</sup> Thus they celebrated "womanhood" in many ways as women achieved honour; women enjoy culture, spirituality of women, including sexual expression of lesbianism. Radical feminism glorifies the physical beauty of women are clean and menstruation are seen as God gift.

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<sup>123</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," pp.248-302. 1983.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Chirs, Weedon,, "Feminsm,theory and the politics of Difference," .p.33.1999.

<sup>126</sup> Sited in Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," p.92, 1983.

<sup>127</sup> See,Jaggar Arnile, Weedon.

The contemporary radical feminist claims to observe individual sexuality is important to determine women position for e.g. her psychological physical life experience constitution of her values and interest based on procreation process. They have decision of every society; can be called “two sided culture” ‘visible’ (male) culture, and ‘invisible’ (female) culture.<sup>128</sup> The culture A, dominates the culture B. Because it is national culture for e.g. male government, male runs economy, male-defined institution of family.

In this process of culture, man is always seen as powerful, aggressive, dominant and women is oppositely as weak, passive, emotional, and submissive.<sup>129</sup> Radical feminist carry a message that male culture is inferior and female culture is superior. But to maintain the supremacy or patriarchal ideology in society male culture used women’s sexuality.

They argue in cultural arena of women always dominates the other culture such as it grounded on the values of mother, as healers’ nurturer and these values contain emotions, gentleness, sensitivity and feeling for others. Thus ‘they are looking for a way of expressing their vision of wholeness, which transcend above the patriarchal dualism of self and world, nature and spirit, reason and emotion.’<sup>130</sup>

They promote the concept of homosexuality where the male dominance construction can be stopped the authority of male of power over the woman’s bodies. To change the cultural trends radical feminist proposes certain measures for women liberation and ruled out few political approaches<sup>131</sup>. They argue that women should control over their bodies and build a new women culture with new values of wholeness, faith, nurturance with joy and sexuality in the new society asked women to create space for themselves.

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<sup>128</sup> Alison Jaggar, p.248,1983.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> John, Charvet, “Modern Ideologies: Feminism,” p.97, 120,1982.

Focusing on the revolutionary agenda radical feminist restructure feminist culture. They argue that women should establish an alternatives institution that is ruled with women and understand women's needs. For e.g. they should open health centres, which provides facilities for abortions, teaches herbal theory, cervical self examinations, for stress disease, from menstrual extractions to acupressure massage and so on.<sup>132</sup> Thus claims lesbianism has given a threat to the ideology of and personal, politics and economic basis of male superiority.

The questions of eco-feminism was also handled by radical feminist in 1970s and 1980s that share new ideas with their celebrations of women affinity to nature including pre-Christian goddess culture that directly developed the eco-feminist aspects.<sup>133</sup> The eco-feminist sees resemblance between the behavior of women and natural world under patriarchy that conceptualized the dominations<sup>134</sup>. It also addressed the politics between environment and women. But how far is it true to justify the emancipation of women on the basis of radical feminism as the society carries a number of phenomena.<sup>135</sup> Another critique on radical feminism is that it did not provide us actual theoretical approach apart from criticizing patriarchy, and male culture.<sup>136</sup>

One simply cannot ignore that society moves forwards with certain human nature and ethics.<sup>137</sup> Even though many writers wrote that men enslaves women repeatedly but never gives the clearness or material answer why they subjugated women. Radical feminist talks about categories of experience<sup>138</sup> as one can say that it promotes the post-modernist feminists approaches with subjectivity and attempt to build up theorization of the body in non-essentialist in the past definite ways with

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<sup>132</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," pp.248-302, 1983.

<sup>133</sup> Chirs, Weedon,, "Feminsm, theory and the politics of Difference," .p.32, 1999

<sup>134</sup> Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, Ecofeminism, pp1-24, 1993

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Chirs, Weedon,, "Feminsm, theory and the politics of Difference," .p.19, 1999

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

difference of idea, fragmentation and identity. It also developed the knowledge and variety of modern theories on 'sexual difference, racial difference. It classified rational, emotional, physical and sexual virtues between men and women to different 'races' on the basis of their bodies.<sup>139</sup>

Radical feminism did not dispose of the traditional logic, concepts but pointed out that it has failure to express proper women's suffering. Thus she claims that it is trying to reconceive it. However, it may be the reality that it appeals to some evils in marriages slavery, prostitutions and subordinations of women.<sup>140</sup> Thus, they tries to re-conceptualize many issues in different ways with a few supplements but somewhere are missing the reality of theory for analysis. In the context of liberalization radical feminist argues that women should control sexuality and maintain distance from male, forced motherhood, sexual slavery.<sup>141</sup> They insisted on keeping a distance from male, heterosexual relations as rape, prostitutions and domination of sexuality over women bodies.

But the counter argument came within the radical feminists that if we take these paradigms, then the question raised that can lesbians really protected from rape as being homosexual. Can abortion prevent women to power over their bodies? If we consider lesbianism as the choice to break barriers of hegemony of male the only solution to women's problems would be to continue with the consciousness raising process in the society. And the question arise is how can one maintained the balanced at universal level as men and women including the distribution of power<sup>142</sup>. Thus, the collective consciousness of sisterhood might free women from patriarchy and lesbianism may be one of the choices for individual women.

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<sup>139</sup> Chirs. Weedon, "Feminsm, theory and the politics of Difference..", p.18.1999

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

## **SOCIALIST FEMINIST APPROACH**

Socialist feminism emerged in the 1970s with the fragmentations between feminism and Marxism. It is an amalgamation of thought in Marxian and radical feminism.<sup>143</sup> Particularly they share the same values, believe like radical feminist and criticized the earlier stabilized political theories with its principle. In their point of view it is failure to raise the question of the women's oppression and equally a failure to provide the answer as to how to liberate women<sup>144</sup> in theoretical approaches. The socialist feminist argues that the earlier vision of Marxist ideology must be changed with new vision of economy and polity in the public /private sphere. And concepts like sexuality, childcare, childbearing should be understood in the historical perspective of traditional Marxist political economy.

Socialist feminists accept some ideas of traditional Marxism but also reject the idea of suppression of class struggle. They disagree with the prior attitudes of radical feminists, which realized the difference of age, sex, and other biological aspects in the universal terms for emancipation of women<sup>145</sup>

According to the socialist feminist's, the main root cause of subordination of women is co-related with capitalism, racism, patriarchal domination and imperialism and thus it should be separated. They say that for the achievement of liberations at least one system must be demolished in this way it may leads the downfall of the other system.<sup>146</sup> Thus, they try to understand the entire structural patriarchal domination in capitalism with a specific division of labour. The socialist feminist follows the basic ideas of Marxist ideology of human nature that contains the

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<sup>143</sup> See Jaggar, p 122, Weedon, p. 16.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," pp. 122-66. 1983.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, pp 303-30

dialectical interaction between human biology and surrounded by the human actions<sup>147</sup>.

Carrying the oldest idea of traditional Marxism the contemporary world should see the background of race, ethnicity, class, and nation state. Different groups are representatives of their identity in both, physical and emotional ways. It widely discussed the historical, and material difference in male and female with theoretical understanding of it. Even though within the socialist feminism there are splits<sup>148</sup> For example, the psychoanalytical feminist studies the variation of menstruation, menopause and reflects how the biological changes also decide socially. As Iris Young describes, the society differentiates between men and women with life experience, objects, as well as their bodies. The socialist feminists observe the language between sex and societies with gender norms. They explore the new idea that human biology is socially constructed.<sup>149</sup>

Thus for socialist feminism the psychological difference is prior than the physical difference of both the sexes. “The fundamental Freudian assumption that the male body is the desirable norm and that women’s lack of a penis is the key factor determining their intellectual and moral differences from men.”<sup>150</sup> Rejecting the Freudian views on psychoanalysis the socialist feminist visualized in what way the procreation process practices in gendered diminutions as a social practice. It suggests an alternative method to interpret biology in historical materialism.

They relate inner lives and social actions as being jointly with historical psychology of man/women with a sexual division of labour. The human sexual activity personified the power relations that give explanations to analyse the proper

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid,pp303-30

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Sited Iris, Young Is there a Women’s World? Some Reflections on the Struggle for Our Bodies. 1979, The New York Institute for Humanities, in Alison Jaggar,pg.329.

<sup>150</sup> Chirs, Weedon,, “Feminsm.theory and the politics of Difference,” .p.78.1999

understanding of subjects.<sup>151</sup> A 'women' can never be seen as separate/single category but looked in certain ideology and it's relations with society. Otherwise, the same action can be seen into adultery, or illegitimate angle 'bastard' child.<sup>152</sup><sup>155</sup>

The socialist feminists argue that history provides evidence that women participated equally in private/public domain, but they were alienated on grounds of sex in distributions of wages, labour, and power. Therefore, they see 'the sexual division of labor is not only a division between reproduction and production. It is also a separation within the 'procreation' and 'production'.<sup>153</sup>

Thus they say gender is socially constructed with procreation process and largely imposed in the non- procreative labour.

Socialist feminist stresses that women should fully participate with consciousness to bring the change in society. Opposing the natural relationship of women with male/children they claims that these relations should be reconditioned to liberate the power of women's positive essence. In the concepts of alienation, the socialist feminist addressed all forms of alienations and criticized that it is male-biased views.<sup>154</sup>

The Socialist feminist says these factors are co-related with the existing social system. And presently often linked up with class, race and sex of infants (infant mortality) for e.g. high birth rate was divided by the dominant class, when they needed labour for exploitation. When a primitive society begins for progress, the demands and desires change the agriculture sector.<sup>155</sup> In the contemporary society women are seen as model of interest, desire, sexual object evaluated in the physical attributes for their bodies. But all these reification parts fragment them. For women it

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<sup>151</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," pp.303-30, 1983.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Maria, Mics, "Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale.", pp.6-43, 1998

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

is difficult to come out from a domination of male culture. The matter of fact that woman's mind and body are separated from each other also fragmented within women's mind.<sup>156</sup>

One can say that the women neither have decision-making capacity or the autonomy to decide their procreative capacities thus, refuses the liberal feminist ideas of sexuality/procreation as a matter of 'personal choice'. They deny traditional Marxist feminist view, which assumes sexuality and procreation as being purely an area of human development.<sup>157</sup>

The socialist and radical feminist over a period share a similar concern on feminism and ecology with women spiritual experience of communication with non-human nature. But a difference in socialist feminist views on environment is that they assumed the Marxist human nature with materialist attitudes and opposed the spiritual grounding for concerns of radical feminist.

What kind of solution should be in the view of socialist feminist for social changes? The concept of alienation that links up capitalism, patriarchy and suppression of women with historical process and its forms differ from cross-cultural universality.<sup>158</sup> All forms of patriarchy subordinate women and to liberate women from this "patriarchy" an entire structure of new modes of production should be transformed along with the destruction of "femininity". Thus socialist feminist claims for abolition of gender and class, which they embodiment from traditional Marxism.

The problem with the socialist feminist is that they have failed to provide the theoretical dimensions. Because with these different ideas and types of opinion it is also unsuccessful to explain which form is the fundamental one. It's uses the central

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<sup>156</sup> Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Politics and Human Nature," pp.303-30,1983.

<sup>157</sup> Chirs, Weedon., "Feminsm,theory and the politics of Difference," .p.146.1999

<sup>158</sup> Sylvia Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy,"pp 1-8,1990.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.



theme of the Marxist categories and methods of transformation.<sup>159</sup> They argue over the political economy, and use various names for economic systems. Some say it controllers the labour of others. The powerful group subordinates the other group through sexual reproduction, including emotional labour. The psychoanalytical theories reflect on the understanding of women's body in the historical and social terms as the interest of specific clan, gender and racialized attention.

## **BLACK FEMINIST APPROACH**

A black feminism presence has been evolved since in 1960s.<sup>160</sup> And finally in 1973 black feminist shapes as a National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO).<sup>161</sup>This term used in different series of ways in different places. In the United States 'blackfeminism' is used to refer to the work and politics of feminists of African descent. In Britain it has been used as an explicitly political category to forge alliance between all women who are subject to racism.<sup>162</sup> As defined by Patricia Collins 'the term black feminism applied to selected African- Americans- primarily women-who posses some version of a feminist consciousness.'<sup>163</sup>

In views of bell Hooks and Patricia Collins the black feminist consciousness and activism emerged before a centuries in which Sojourner, Harriet Tubman and so on started sharing their awareness, experiences that based on racial identity.<sup>164</sup>They analysis that the White women in the women's movement has not given any specificity to Blacks women's experiences. Thus, the question and issue of black women deliberately marginalized by the elite white, middle class women.

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<sup>160</sup> Chirs, Weedon,, "Feminsm, theory and the politics of Difference," .p.160,1999

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid,p.159.

<sup>163</sup> Patricia Collins , " Black Feminist Thought,," pp 16.

<sup>164</sup> Chirs, Weedon,, "Feminsm, theory and the politics of Difference," .p.159,1999

There are many directions while discussing the black feminist appearance with the understanding of many scholars. Some says that the racial historical background and its analytical approach towards oppression and struggle provoke into the debate of Black feminism. Such as ‘The way the gender of black women is constructed differ from construction of white femininity because it is also subject to racism.’<sup>165</sup> Others black Americans critics insist that black are always left to fight their own battles: ‘Women’s liberation won’t be any different. White women won the right to vote but black people, including black women, did not get it for another hundred years.’<sup>166</sup> To Chris Weedon views “ perhaps the most important principal in the black feminism is the refusal to see racism and sexism as discreet and separate forms of oppression. Black feminist insist on seeing the two as interrelated.”<sup>167</sup>

The black feminist argues that they are triply oppressed as based on gender, race, and class. And its dynamics should be understood. Since the historical time black women have been exploited economically and sexually and their experiences shows us that they never entered into the parallel parameters as the white women are! In the economical aspects their labour that includes their intellectual and traditional used in the oppressive direction due to their poverty. They did an analysis that black feminist are quickly victimized as “mules”<sup>168</sup> unpaid domestic worker and unpaid labours in the market. Thus they claims that the entire political economy the black women are particularly ghettoization in domestic work in the hands of white male and female too.<sup>169</sup> To come out from such kind of situation, they say that black women’s statues must be improved.<sup>170</sup> they correlate poverty and sexism and further claims that

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<sup>165</sup> Hazel V. Carby, “White Women Listen! Black feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood.” in *Materialist Feminism*, (eds.), Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham.p.112.

<sup>166</sup> Jackie, Huggins, “Black Women and Women’s Liberation,” in *A Reader in feminist knowledge* (edt) Sneja Gunew, p.6,1991

<sup>167</sup> Chirs, Weedon,, “Feminsm,theory and the politics of Difference.” .p.161,1999

<sup>168</sup> Patricia Collins , “ Black Feminist Thought,” p.43.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid,p.11.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid,p.6

the dominant group subordinates /suppressed the weaker groups also shows the power relations among them.

Exploring the social construction of race and gender they are revealing their awareness shows that black women are vulnerable to rape as gender specific form of sexual violence. Thus, carrying a variety of experiences that are diverse which provokes them to take a self defined stand and shapes their standpoints and focused on the empowerment of black women.<sup>171</sup> Critical towards the white women they argues that the white women asserted for own benefited and the black women has been alienated .So the black women should participate as a political leader and shapes their new identity and struggle to rewrite the history of the oppressed women.

Thus began a new dialogue and appeal to approach the humanist attitudes to every human being and specify about their cultural identity. The black feminist argues on the private and public debate that correlates with the work and family. And claims that the white women the family is always into the private sphere but in the cases of black women, the black women always were in the public sphere as they have to work hard for their sustainability. <sup>172</sup>They talks about the different forms of patriarchy as being a colour of gender specifically demand some protection from states. They are demanding for their existence based on racisms and claims to structures their relationship with white women.<sup>173</sup>

However it may be one can say that Black feminist theory appears as a conscious counter revolution that challenges the white elites bourgeois racist women and their construction of theories. It also proved how gender of black women is differently constructed compare to white women and justified thoroughly its historical exploitation.

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid,p.24-26.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

Thus all these theories bring us to the conclusion that each one has a different position and direction, which can bring equality and justice for women. Liberal feminist in the previous phase speaks about the political and civil, educational rights of the women. Over a period it developed the various rights of women in economic, political, and social fields that based on rationality and reason. . Thus trying to cultivated values like liberty, equality and justice According to the traditional and contemporary Marxist feminist theory, human labour is important for human survival. This division of mental and manual labour is societal creation to reach towards the political and social benefits talks about conscious purpose of human being..

Analysing on the capitalist mode of production the Marxist feminist argue that it alienates the mental and manual labour Thus, women's subjectivity seen in these aspects of oppression in the contemporary society that based on class and gender category of exploitation as the capitalist and working class. The Radical, Socialist theories still are into the processes of formation but did not have any adequate theories. They also talk about women's subjugation with specificity of women's subjectivity, difference and experiences of categories including the procreative and production. Thought socialist and radical theories almost argue on the same line of but the main basic understanding of socialist are comes out from traditional Marxist approaches. The black feminist argues on their subjugation based on the race and gender since the historical time blames the white women as well as patriarchy.

## **CHAPTER -III**

## LOCATING DALIT WOMEN IN WOMEN'S AND DALIT MOVEMENTS

In order to study Dalit feminism, it is necessary to look at both the women's and Dalit movements, particularly in the post-Independence period, for two reasons. First, the Dalit feminism originated in response to the stance adopted by both the women's movement and the Dalit movement with respect to Dalit women. Second, it should reveal to us whether the two movements at all dealt with the issues of Dalit women and, if they did, what was the perspective and approach that they adopted towards Dalit women. Therefore, in this chapter, we first look at the development and thrust of the women's movement and then of the Dalit movement.

According to Jayawardena, feminism and movements for uniformity and emancipation are distinguished from each other. It includes protest for equal rights, in political, and economic sphere and restructures the legal equality in the active discrimination against women in to it. Moreover, feminism did not undertake the fundamental question of women's subordination in the family nor did it confront question in existing economic and political system.<sup>1</sup> Thus, looking at the women's movement in India during the nineteenth century, the question of women becomes visibly larger in Europe as well as India with the concepts of modernity. And the question of women was challenged within the framework of these two concepts of traditionality and modernity.

Especially in the context of women, the British writers like J.S.Mill through the 'History of British India' condemned Indian religion, culture, and society for their rules and customs and gave an analysis to criticise society in terms of the position of

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<sup>1</sup> Kumari Jayawardena, "Feminism and Nationalism in the third world in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century," p.1-5. 1982.

women.<sup>2</sup> Even though centuries before Muslim dynasties conquered India, the British were perhaps the first different outsiders who brought to India a new religion and a new way of organizing power relations. Thus, a number of Christian Missionaries landed up in India and revealed on the status of Indian women too.<sup>3</sup>

The status of women in India had varied across region at different historical periods of the country. 'There were numerous variations depending on class, religion and ethnicity'.<sup>4</sup> The Indians' responses in this context were more in the nature of traditionalism in combination with modernity.<sup>5</sup> It becomes significance for emerging views of self-identity with a growing tendency to understand the nature of human lives in terms of their con-figuration embodied.

Historians like Rajat K. Ray explain that Bengal Renaissance and intellectuals in India were reviving the past and appealing in new rational activity.<sup>6</sup> They accepted the combination of western and Indian culture and through it, tried to look at the ideology that redefined gender relations.<sup>7</sup>

Criticizing these ideas Radha Kumar says that British administrators, while ignoring discriminations against women in their own country, concentrated only on the Indian issues concerning gender inequality. Several intellectuals say that some of the Indian intellectuals admire their own culture conduct of women or evaluate the conditions of Indian women with those of European women and concluded that females in both countries undergone through hardships.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in Indian society who accepts women's subordinations with the considerations of social evil emphasis on

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<sup>2</sup> Sited in Geraldine Forbes, "The New History of India: Women in Modern India." p.13, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Kumari Jayawardena, "Feminism and Nationalism in the third world in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century," p. 80, 1981.

<sup>5</sup> Radha Kumar, "The History of Doing." p.1-5, 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Geraldine Forbes, "The New History of India: Women in Modern India," p.14, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the women's Question," in *Recasting Women*, pp 233-53, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> Radha Kumar, "The History of Doing." p.14, 1993.

female educations as a tool of women's emancipation. But some reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy, Pandit Vidyasagar, Swami Dayananda Saraswati and many others who were trained in Hindu religions rigid characteristic and saw India as getting better from a dark age stimulated and inclined towards Western ideas, that also acquainted with their own traditions but also refuted the positions and claims that the Muslim dynasties were unsafe for women and promoted child marriage, prohibited widow marriages, seclusion, and restricted female education.<sup>9</sup> 'Social reformers accepted the liberal values of western education. The fact is that missionaries Christian activities were also a kind of threat to them where the Hindu religion posed as a medium of evil customs.'<sup>10</sup> And one can say that it might be a one possibility, they modifying themselves to bring the change. Thus, the entire social reform movement and Nationalist movement were patriarchal in the context of gender equality.

Uma Chakravarti has argued that contemporary women insight of the past "has led to a narrow and limiting circle in which the image of Indian womanhood had become both a shackle and a rhetorical device that nevertheless functions as a historical truth".<sup>11</sup> Traditional education was a common phenomenon among the upper caste/class Hindu and Muslims women but the lower caste/class women were underprivileged in this regard.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, one can say that historical background of women's movement in India begins from the 19<sup>th</sup> century itself with the impact of western and colonial power. And thus the process of traditional modernity instigate in search of new question and

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<sup>9</sup> Geraldine Forbes, "The New History of India: Women in Modern India," p. 12, 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Kumari Jayawardena, "Feminism and Nationalism in the third world in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century," p.80, 1981.

<sup>11</sup> Sitied in Geraldine Forbes, "The New History of India: Women in Modern India" p.36, 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



answers. The Britishers came to India and promoted English education.<sup>13</sup> But bourgeois society and upper caste people have dominated the entire process of education. In other words, the entire project of self-identity was hegemonised by the upper caste elites.

The High Caste/Hindu women started asserting in the early of 20<sup>th</sup> century, many women came out and established independent autonomous organizations related to women issues such as education etc. Women like Tarabai Shiende, Anandibai Joshi, and Pandita Ramabai challenged the religious patriarchy of the society<sup>14</sup> and developed the process of self-consciousness but marginalized the lower caste women.

In Bengal and Maharashtra the reformers were very active in attacking Brahminical hegemony and its construction of society based on Hindu social order. Phule in Maharashtra (a non-Brahman), was the first who raised voices as a social reformer and brought up the women's question from private domain to public domain. For example he tried to start a 'home' in which unmarried women and widows could give birth to illegitimate children secretly and also started a school for Dalit girls<sup>15</sup>. However, he too failed to address the plight of Dalit women specifically.

Forbes gives an analysis of the male social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chand Vidyasagar, and Justice Ranade and so on and said that they have taken up various issues like sati abolition, widow remarriage, child marriage but none of them talked about liberation of women or gender justice<sup>16</sup>. Thus Sati, Child marriage and so on were also the forms of caste and patriarchal domination to maintain the property, hierarchy within private sphere in the society.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Uma Charavarti, "Rewriting History: The life and time of Pandita Ramabai," 1998, p. 77.

<sup>15</sup> Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Caste, Conflict and Ideology: Mahatama Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in nineteenth Century Western India," p. 119, 1985.

<sup>16</sup> Geraldine Forbes, "The New History of India: Women in Modern India." p.19-2, 1996.

On the other hand some male reformer like Iswer Chandra Vidyasagar really contributed to eradicate the evils in the society and tries to provide a space for women in a real way. He realized the hardship of a widow's rigid customs, and obligations on women. And raised the campaign on remarriages of widows and collected about a thousand signatures. He sent this petition of remarriage to Indian legislative Council. And finally, the Hindu Widow Remarriages Act was passed in 1856.<sup>18</sup> But again when the sexuality of upper caste widow women manipulated when the cases of pregnancy highlighted. Specially 1881 at Surat, Vijaylakakshmi (a young Brahmin) a woman was trapped while killing her illegitimate child. And during this time Tarabai Shinde wrote *Stri-Purusha –Tulane*.<sup>19</sup> The booklet while comparing of men and women, pointed out that faults commonly ascribed to women, such as superstition, suspicion treachery and insolence could be found ever more commonly in men.<sup>20</sup> Thus, one can say that it has given shape to new ideas of feminist perspectives.

The British promoted education of women and definitely gave a certain amount of dignity to Indian women as Rakhamabai's case illustrates in Bombay in 1887. Rakhamabai married at the age of eleven to Dadaji Bhikaji. But she stayed at her parent's home to educate herself. Her husband asked her to come and reside with him. She refused to live with him, than He sued for compensation of conjugal rights. Though Rakamabai won the case, but he applied to the court again and the court finally ordered her to reside with him or go to the prisons.<sup>21</sup> Later on this debate leads towards to the age of marriages, remarriage, and widow marriages,<sup>22</sup> and Child

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<sup>18</sup> Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Issues of Widowhood: Gender and Resistance in Colonial Western India." *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia*, (ed). pp 62-108, 1991.

<sup>19</sup> Tarabai Shinde, *Stri-Purush Tulana*, Poona, 1882, tra. by Rosalind O'Hanlon, *A Comparison Between Women and Men: Tarabai Shinde and the Critique of Gender Relations in Colonial India*

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Uma Charavarti, "Rewriting History: The life and time of Pandita Ramabai." p. 138-74, 1998.

<sup>22</sup> Geraldine Forbes, "The New History of India: Women in Modern India," p.38, 1996.

marriage reforms. Thus, one can say that woman sexuality, conceiving pregnant body and other issues were publicly debated but controlled by the male social reformers. And the issues and question of Dalit women were never ever into these debates.

Since then, women in India, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, gradually started describing their interests, and taking action for their devolvement in political measurement. They shaped their own links, discussed the women issues and founded a stable organization for women. Saraladevi Chaudhurani crucially debated women issues in the women's meetings held in Indian National Social Conference of Women's associations and declare independent women organizations. After World War I, three major recognised organizations Women's Indian Association (WIA), the National Council of Women in India (NCWI) and the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) emerged between 1917 and 1927.<sup>28</sup>

Later on, there are evidences of women's participation in the making of Nation state such as in the Congress, CPI (M) and so on. In 1940, the women's movement was engaged into effort for independence in such a way that the issue of women's liberation was felt to have been resolved.

The constitution of India has given equal rights to women and equal entity in right to property, right to divorce, maintenance and inheritance acts through Hindu code bill, though it was implemented after a long discussion between Dr.Ambedkar and other conservative leaders.<sup>31</sup> It was indeed a grand victory for safeguarding women's rights.

One can say that Dr.Ambedkar was the first one who attacked on the Manusmrit and shows that how it was responsible for the degradation of women. He

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid,p.72.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid,p.97.

answered it with providing the 'Hindu Code Bill'.<sup>32</sup> But if we evaluate women movement it has never even given space to Ambedkar for his reforms.

The period of mid-1960s and onwards, the undeveloped women's question was witnessed an emergence of wider socio-political movements.<sup>33</sup> This was a time when poverty and unemployment were common issues especially because it designed development (in both the manufacturing and agricultural sectors) had engendered a number of inconsistencies from its own conduct.<sup>34</sup> It was the era when a number of social movements challenged the state everywhere in India and particularly in Maharashtra, because women were more marginalized, more helpless, and therefore, most severely affected.

It is not the class and caste issues but gender itself has been guarded in many movement as a part of patriarchal forms for example in the Land reforms, sharecroppers, (peasant) etc, taken up by Kisan Sabhas, Telangana movement whereby the contribution of women was chief but over a period women were seen as a 'problem'<sup>36</sup> in revolutionary movement-women were never indulgence with inequality.

However, the seventies decade also saw the movement, particularly in urban India. At a different level, the gender questions were acknowledged a many-sided analysis of women's subjugation, especially of the caste and class basis of oppression. For example, the custodial Rape Cases as Mathura/ Tukaram (1978); Rameeza Bee case in Hyderabad (1976), Maya Tyagi Case (1980) and apart from it the dowry

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<sup>32</sup> Kumud Pawade's "Indian Constitution and Women's freedom." ed. by Minakashi Moon in 'Phule Ambedkari Stree Chalval,' p. 29,2002.

<sup>33</sup> Lakshmi Lingam, 'Taking Stock, "Social Movement and the State." (edt), Ghanshyam Shah,,pp.311-18, 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Mira Savara and Sujata Ghotoskar, 'An Assertion of Womanpower' in Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita (eds) "In Search of Answers: Indian Women's Voices from Manushi," p.135.

deaths was burning news. Demonstrations were organised throughout the nation regarding these specific incidents. And issue-based groups were formed Forums like the Forum Against Rape (now called the Forum Against Oppression of Women) was set up in Mumbai in 1981. The Progressive Organisation of Women (POW), influenced by the Maoist women, also came forward in that movement. Besides that, the urban woman has taken up issues to the subjects like alcoholism, spouse abuse, wife beating as subordination of women and sexual harassment and formulated a number of autonomous organizations.<sup>37</sup>

Many disintegrated women's groups have constantly raised their voice against different forms of violence including women's health, the depressing things of certain family planning measures objective, women's work, wages, employment circumstances, and have been, to an extent, successful in shaping women's legal rights and legal and reform significantly.<sup>38</sup> As Kishwar rightly stated 'From the mid 1970s onwards, small women's groups have been emerging in metropolitan centres, and more recently even in smaller towns and cities. These groups are very heterogeneous in nature.'<sup>39</sup>

She, however talked about the hegemonic authority of the upper and middle peasant caste groups, their established family composition, and landholding sample with special acceptance of village hierarchal lower groups. The root causes of power with patriarchy are seen into the aspects of customary seclusion and alienation of women from agricultural sector, in which the higher family woman carries an entirely different social status. On the other hand, the lesser value attributed to women's lives

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<sup>37</sup> Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita, (ed) " In Search of Answers: Indian women's voices from Manushi," p.31.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

and labour is strongly linked to women in gathers separation and dependence in agriculture sector.

The seventies onwards was the era in which the different women's groups were considered for academic discourses.<sup>40</sup> The Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) emerged and submitted its report 'Towards Equality' 1974. It indicated the beginnings of women's studies in academies. It entirely highlighted the visions on Indian women's questions and movement. It pointed out how the state mechanisms are failure to deals poor /rural women despite being three decades have planned development. It questions about the declining sex ratio, rising gender gaps in life expectancy, mortality, and emphasis on economic contribution and representing definite policy directions.<sup>41</sup>

'There is always a tendency to look at the sex identity as a basic and common cross-culturally in power context. It is also true to historical uprooted in societies.'<sup>42</sup> The Shah Bano case was the first case, which was challenged, in the identical political scenario rather than given a dimension to the entire marginal women's voices. 'By the time of Shah Bano judgement, it had become increasingly clear that in every way in which the nation was being constituted by dominant discourses, the powerless and the marginal was being defined out of its boundaries'.<sup>43</sup> The 1990s has been a spectator to the rise of numerous new forces like fundamentalism, economic liberalization, communalism and casteism. For Indian feminism these developments were new essential that imposed to define itself a new perspective and causes the more

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<sup>40</sup> Kukum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid,(ed), "Recasting Women ."pp,1-26,1999.

<sup>41</sup> "Towards Equality Report,"(Government of India), 1974.

<sup>42</sup> Suzi Tharu and T. Niranjana, "Problems for a Contemporary Theory of Gender" in Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty (ed), ix, pp. 224-60, 1989.

<sup>43</sup> Vasanthi Raman, "The Women's Question in Contemporary Indian Politics" pp. 39-71.2000.

complicated due to the diverse type of identity politics in which religious, caste and economic groups have been involved.<sup>44</sup>

As John argues, "...Shifts in the locus of control over resources and find new strategic points of intervention implied by the decentralization process, liberalization and increasing integration into the global economy, increasing reliance on market mechanism and the growth of non-government conflicts between different women will also need to be addressed, in a climate of rising caste and communal tensions and increasing socio-economic inequality."<sup>45</sup>

Though the constitution of India after independence carries equal attitudes for all minorities it made separate safeguards in the cultural rights and political rights. It protects these communities (SC & ST and others) in a democratic way and gives them recognition as citizens of India.<sup>46</sup> But from the very beginning, from 1955, onwards the personal laws were seen as continuing obstacles. The women's movement in particular needs with difficult while deciding upon the gender justice issue.<sup>47</sup>

The issue of Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is an appealing and complex issue in nature and in problematic for women's movement. The CSWI in its report had said that the absence of a UCC in the last quarter of the twentieth century, twenty-seven years after independence, was an incongruity that could not be justified with all the emphasis placed on secularism, science and modernism. The continuance of various personal laws, which accept discrimination between men and women, not only violate

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> "Marry John and Janaki Nair (ed)", "A Question of Silence: The sexual economics of modern India", p. 137.

<sup>46</sup> Vasanthi Raman, "The Women's Question in Contemporary Indian Politics" Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 39-71.

<sup>47</sup> Towards Equality Report, (Government of India), 1974.

fundamental rights, but are also against the spirit of national integration and secularism.<sup>48</sup>

Even though the issue of enactment of a Uniform Civil Code had surfaced time and again, it was pressed on to public opinion most forcefully after the Supreme Court judgment in the Shah Bano case. Legally, the issue before the court in that case was one which had been decided time and again by the judges was whether a woman could be denied maintenance simply on the ground of religious differences when the criminal law of the land laid down that a woman without independent means of sustenance was entitled to be maintained by her husband until she remarried.<sup>49</sup> The Supreme Court decision with respect to the substantive legal issue in the case was unexceptionable. It decided that a woman quite irrespective of her belief or religious persuasion was entitled to be maintained by her former husband if she had no viable means of sustenance. What drew the judgement in the realm of controversy was that the court prefaced the decision on the legal dimension of the case with an obita dicta calling upon the state to enact a uniform civil code. What is interesting from our viewpoint is that the obita dicta guided not by considerations of gender justice but was couched in terms of nationalism and promotion of national unity. This evidently aroused Muslim sensibilities, which subsequently brought pressure on the state to exempt them from the provisions under criminal law.<sup>50</sup>

Until the time of the Shah Bano judgement and for some time thereafter, the feminist movement was solidly in favour of enactment of a Uniform Civil Code. Once, however, the advocacy of the Uniform Civil Code was taken up by right-wing Hindu communal forces, the women's movement had to rethink the entire issue of

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p.142.

<sup>49</sup> Kumkum Sangari, "Politics of Diversity," p. 3287, 1995.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid



supporting the enactment of Uniform Civil Code afresh because supporting it amounted to lending support to communal forces.<sup>51</sup> From then on, the women's movement developed divergent voices on the question of enactment of Uniform Civil Code. Most groups felt that there was need to move in the direction of advancing gender justice through increased legislative activity. They abandoned their advocacy of the Uniform Civil Code. They began, instead to advocate a series of enabling legislations, which would advance gender justice without targeting any particular community or its personal laws.<sup>52</sup>

Another important issue constantly debated in the women's movement is the women reservation bill (WRB). It first comes into play as the 81<sup>st</sup> Amendment Bill in 1996. It proposes to reserve 33% seats in the parliament for women.<sup>53</sup> The debate is still a motivating phenomenon and two dimensions have been discussed, one that is in favour of reservations includes some political parties. Where their basic characteristics are patriarchal, they are interested in supporting women candidates. They carry impressions that once the number of women increases in parliament, it is easy to a lobby, which can then act according their convenience. They also argue that more women in parliament may change the direction of policy. The other side of the story encounters it negatively. It would contested oppose to the principle of equality in constitutions. Women can't associate with socially backward communities because within society, women can't be considered as a homogeneous set.<sup>54</sup>

One cannot segregate women's interests from economic, social, and political strata or communities to which they belong. And similar pressure lead from the other groups, communities than it directly posed a threat to national integrity. The CSWI

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<sup>51</sup> Zoya Hassan, (ed), "Forging Identities Gender, Communities and State", pp.58-73,1994.

<sup>52</sup> Vasanthi Raman, "The Women's Question in Contemporary Indian Politics", Vol. 7 No. 2. pp 39-71.

<sup>53</sup> Nividita Menon, "Elusive 'Woman': Feminism and Women's Reservation Bill," pp.3835-44,2000.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

strongly support the rural women upliftment and recommended the setting of the constitutional women Panchayats. It rejected the reservation of seats for women in parliaments including state assemblies.<sup>55</sup>

Different political parties and groups have different positions. The left party talks about reservation along with the affirmative actions. The BJP, Mahila such as Sushma Swaraj and Uma Bharati are in favour with this bill but within them a major fragmentation can be seen. As Bharati denies the quote for Muslim women. On the other hand Mayawati of BSP reflects on 50% reservations of women and within that demands for the separate reservations for backward caste and minority women.<sup>56</sup>

Scholars have different interpretations over this issue. Gail Omvedt and Shetkari Mahila Aghadi (SMA) argue that WRB is pushed forward by the upper caste feminists in opposition to the OBC male members in society. Thus, they insisted on the major focused on Panchayati elections and its reservations. Madhu Kishwar supports SMA in different ways.<sup>57</sup> Exploring from traditional background, till now the entire country has hegemony of males in parties, politics, public opinion and divergent women's notion of equality. The laws are easily passed in the Indian constitution but the entire society is patriarchal. These leads to the notion of inequality. The quota system will improve the socio-economic and political standing of women and ensure the positive representation of women's apprehension in political, developmental and decision-making forums. However, when Dealt with the question of Dalits and other minorities' women, it would still remain questionable.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Towards Equality Report, (Government of India), 1974.

<sup>56</sup> Nividita Menon, "Elusive 'Woman': Feminism and Women's Reservation Bill," pp. 3837. 2000.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Vasanti Raman, "Women's Reservations and Democratisation. An Alternative Perspective" pp. 3495-95.

With respect to the OBCs, it is complicated to accept women as representatives of political identities, because in Indian politics, caste, class and religious identities exist with gender identifications. Especially The Anti-Mandal incidence in which the upper caste women protested against the reservations for women and express the anger of not securing the jobs for the male members from their community further claims that it will destroy the future of their children. But today, the agitations of the similar upper caste women for reservation in parliament and state assembly are surprising.<sup>59</sup> And it would be clear from the past evidences that even if the reservation bill is passed rather than defined as Kishwar says, it leads to the proxy and caste discriminations.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the argument of Sangari and Vaid shows that 'the descriptions and management of gender and female sexuality is involved in the maintenance and reproduction of social equality.'<sup>61</sup>

One can build the same argument addressing the problems of communalism and women in which the question of Hindutva agenda is taken forward by the Hindu women. Many scholars argue that women are carrier of culture.<sup>62</sup> In the present context, rape of a particular woman is a tool that used is to undignified the other community. Earlier, when the women's movement raised such questions, it used to be collective voice. But today women are mobilizing their own community member's raising the new 'rape culture'.<sup>63</sup>

According to Vina Muzumdar and Agnihtri, the statues of women committee itself drew attention to the multiple diversity with specific focus on the cultural, religious, societal approaches on gender in India. The committee seriously raised the

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<sup>59</sup> Sited in Dietrich, pp.73-93 and Tharu 224-60

<sup>60</sup> Madhu Kishwar, "Women and Politics: Beyond Quotas," p.2867.

<sup>61</sup> Kukum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid,(eds); "Recasting Women," pg.5.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p.1-26.

<sup>63</sup> Upendra Baxi, "The Second Gujarat Catastrophe." pp. 3519,2002.

questions on the development and transformation with special regard but uncared for the real differences of caste, class, and ethnic history<sup>64</sup>.

Many scholars argue that these debates between caste and gender with patriarchy and within women's groups lead to different analysis. It has been pointed by many scholars that the women's movement itself was caste dominated and leads by the bourgeois women. Gail Omvedt also argues that the elite women dominated the feminist discourse. ". . . bourgeois ideology within the women's movement continues to argue for limited 'equals right' without challenging either society itself or the sexual division of labour and the family structure which oppress women"<sup>65</sup>

Thus one can say that the women's movement also responsible for promoting a space for patriarchy because the authority was hold by these women like their counterparts to maintain the structural hegemony in the society. We can also say that the entire women movement perhaps was the Brahmanical movement and knowingly drop out the Dalit and other marginal women from feminist discourses. It equally failure to appeal the caste issues in the context of sisterhood. And thus looking at the Hindu religion in new perspectives the so-called 'upper caste' women play a role to control and gained the power in the society

As rightly stated by Jogdand that the Indian women's movement which began as new social movement in the first stage women's rights and second stages prominence on women emancipation and self-governance with wider rang of issues like violence in public and private sphere that carries the 'consciousness raising process' but definitely the Dalit women's repression stay behind as a out of sight.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Vina Mazumdar and Indu Agnihotri, "Changing Terms of Political Discourse: Women's Movement in India, 1970s-1990s," p.1869.

<sup>65</sup> Gail Omvedt, "Women and Struggle: A Report of Nari Mukti Sangarshi Sammalan," Patna, 1989.

<sup>66</sup> P.G.Jogdand,(ed), "Dalit Women in India," Gyan publication, p.xii, 1991.

Today, when we discussed Dalit women's issues and problems, it is necessary to focus on the historical assertive project of Ambedkarite movement in Maharashtra. Ambedkarite movement played an important role to provide a certain position to Dalit women because it was highly inspired with Dr. Ambedkar's ideology. The non-Brahmin movements have, to an extent taken up the issues of Dalits but except Phule no body has raised the questions of Dalit women.<sup>67</sup> The Satyashodhak, Jalsas, Tamasas of Phule, contributed<sup>68</sup> a little but it was a failure to raise the kind of assertions, which Ambedkariat movement leads successfully.

One cannot ignore the parallel Dalit social reformist movement (as called as Mahar movement in the view of Zelliott) that cultivated the value of Jaytirao Phule primarily and later on equally put their efforts to recognize the Dalit women's issues. For Example, people like Shivaram Janba Kamble through their magazine 'Somvanshi Mitra' addressed social, religious and economic issues.<sup>69</sup> He pointed out the plight of Dalit women's specially Devadasi, Murali, and Jogin and asked them not to perform these professions. Responding to him Shrivubai, who herself was a *murali* replied to him that the parents and the community itself was responsible for making the girl *murali*. And instead of criticizing women, some concrete solution should be found out. After this moment Shivaram Janba Kamble and others started a movement in which they tried their level best to break these evils and re-habit them.<sup>70</sup> Thus, from her conversation one can understand that Dalit women were aware of the fact that not only society but also the families are equally responsible for the exploitation of Dalit women. The other reformers like Vitoba Munpade, Kisan Faguji Bansode,

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<sup>67</sup> Gail Omvedt, "Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India: 1873 to 1930," pp.111-12, 1976.

<sup>68</sup> Gopal Guru, "Dalit Cultural Movement and Dalit Politics in Maharashtra," pp.9-18, 1997.

<sup>69</sup> Minakshi Moon and Urmila Pawar "Amihihi Itihaas Ghadawila," pp.34-41, 2000.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

Kalicharan Nangawali and many others contribute to the emancipation of Dalit women. They constructed the consciousness process among Dalits and Dalit women too. Nangawai established the first girl school called 'Putri School' for Dalit girls in Vidharba region.<sup>71</sup> Though the Mahar movement has given recognitions to Dalit women but like the colonial Indian social reformer, the entire Dalit social reformers monopolized this movement with patriarchal dominance of Dalit male

The Ambedkarit movement was different and unique one, which organised Dalit women for the first time in the history of Dalits. This movement saw and independent assertion by Dalit women and shaped their coconscious. Dr. Babashab Ambedkar himself acknowledged the potential of women in general and Dalit women in particular and addressed Dalit women asking them to join him in the struggle to eradicate untouchability.<sup>72</sup>

In a number of his speeches, he mentioned how Hinduism is responsible for degrading women status. For example, during Manusmiriti burning day, he said to all women that men and women are equivalent. Whatever men can contribute to society, even women can so, it is the duty of Dalit women to eliminate untouchability.<sup>73</sup>

Addressing the questions of untouchables, he elevates some questions for Dalit women. You have given birth to us, but did you ever think that we have been treated so badly that even animals are in a better position than us. We have been treated in apathetic ways everywhere. In many places, we can't even apply for jobs and our shadows are considerate impure. Despite knowing these facts, why did you all

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid,p.13-23.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid,p.75-87.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

give birth to us.<sup>1</sup> You have to think seriously that what is the difference between 'we' as Dalit women and 'they' as Hindu women?<sup>2</sup>

You are more courageous, confident, and assertive than them. Then why is a child, born from a Brahmin woman's womb socially accepted? And a child born from your womb (as Dalit), unaccepted? He does not even have basic human rights but you have never given serious thought over it.<sup>3</sup>

A number of incidents show us that in the Ambedkariat movement, Dalit women practically raised educational, cultural and social issues for themselves. By doing so, they thus, tried to create a space for themselves.

In social sphere a number of Dalit women actively participated in the struggle of Kalaram temple, Mahad Satyagraha, Munusmiri burning programmes, opposition of Pune pact procession including various other social evils in the society.<sup>4</sup>

Though Dalit women were not that as highly educated like as the colonial, elites, upper (class/caste) women, the moment they realized inequality, untouchabilities or discriminations. They began to develop ideas on how to remove it. For example, in 1933, Vanutai Batkar, not a highly educated Dalit woman, expressed her views in the public meeting and shared her feelings and experiences.<sup>5</sup>

She said that when girls go to school, she had been questioned, about her belongingness (as castewife) that distinguishes on bases of caste. In the villages, landlords are playing as the role of husbands for Dalit women. (Here she wants to explain that the landlords control over sexuality of Dalit Women). By profession she was a Nurse and when she did not get a job, she was pressurized into converting to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid,p.57.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.75-87.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid,p.26.

Christianity. But she refused these ideas and raised her voice. 'I will never leave my caste identity rather I will fight back or assert to improve the statues of my caste.'<sup>6</sup>

From her statement, one can clearly postulate that Dalit women were conscious about the caste and gender and questioned patriarchal values in the larger society, specifically in the context of Dalit women.

In many speeches, they emphasise the education of Dalit girls as carrying a vision that if the girls would be educated, then they will create a confident, independent generation with a notion of good society. Jaibai Chaudhari established a school in 1924 at Nagpur for Dalit girl with provisions of hostel facilities.<sup>7</sup> In this agitation/ protest against untouchability, they constantly kept fighting.

Today (the word) 'Jaibham' is the symbol of Dalit's culture and Dalits pronounce it without any hesitation. But when, in the Ambedkar at movement, Sonabai, a fifty years old Dalit lady pronounced it, the Hindu gundas had beaten her up.<sup>8</sup> Thus, from this example one can clearly say that Dalit women were also affirm for her cultural space.

The Dalit women during that time participated or mobilized in major numbers in the celebration of Dr.Ambedkar's birthday. Many times they independently organized Sabhas in which various types of activities took place such as procession of Dr. Ambedkars photos, distribution of toys for children, and various competitions that includes the entire life and mission of Dr. Ambedkar's social and political speeches.<sup>9</sup> Through song, singing and talk, they carry the impression of cultural forms and tries to pay attention on the issues like health, hygiene, cleanness, and superstitions.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid,p.21.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.13-33.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



In 1938, at Bombay, a Dalit Mandal was established in which they came out with a manifesto for Dalit women such as, Dalit women will handle an independent movement in society and its responsibility. Then only Dalit women would realize their position in society. Women should become members of 'Independent Majdoor Paksha' (Majdoor Party) and mobilized other women to join it.<sup>10</sup> To bring a number of young Dalit women in public activities, the generation gap problems between new/old women must be amicably solved or filled up through discussion process. The uneducated women should leave their shy nature and confidently participate in the speeches. To educate the Dalit girl, financial assistance must be provided.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, from this agenda, we can say that Dalit women were extremely aware of Dalit consciousness with the comparison of larger society. Under independent Majdoor Paksha, a 'Samta Sainik Dal' founded a women's wing that devotedly worked for ameliorating Dalit women. In which a number of Dalit women contributed to it and spread up its networking in many villages.<sup>12</sup>

The upper class/caste Hindu Women never saw a Dalit women from perspective of a woman. Instead, they only created major problems for them while pursuing their activities. In 1938 in Nagpur, when the Akhil Bharatiya Mahila Sabha conducted the Brahman and other Hindu caste women did not allow Dalit women like Jaibai and others to share a common dining into it as an untouchable.<sup>13</sup>

Replying to this humiliating incident, Anjanabai Desbhartar and Sakhubai Meshram came out with declarations of a night school for Dalit girls and asked them to fight for self-respect, dignity and self-dependent. The main feature again in it was

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 53-87.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

emphasis on education. General secretary Indirabai Patil in her speech said 'campaign to men we, Dalit women are a very backward in education.' The progress of society would be in obstacles unless we should parallel help the men. That is why, we must fight for education of Dalit women.<sup>14</sup>

The 1942 Dalit Mahila federation was the landmark in history. In this federation, a number of Dalit Women were organized from many places. They accepted Dr. Ambedkar as their leader and Santabai Dani was elected as a District President in Nasik of Scheduled Caste Federations.<sup>15</sup> Later on, a second conference of Scheduled Caste Federations was held in 1944 at Kanpur in which a number of Dalit women participated. The third Scheduled Caste Federation was held at Bombay where the President was Minambal Shivraj.<sup>16</sup> But still the Dalit women failed to prove as an independent entity in the area of politics.

The post-Ambedkarit era was looking forward to stabilised with the political ideology given by Ambedkar. In which the major emphasis was on Independent party of Scheduled Caste people. Where the issues of scheduled caste should be widely discussed for their progress. In this context the RPI (Republic party of India, which was known as earlier Scheduled Caste Federation) has decided to remain the non-communal party who can keep a watch to social and economical the issue of untouchability.<sup>17</sup> But after Dr. Ambedkar's death, there was a major lack of leadership into it and it spited first time on policy issues. As Gaikwad group challenged by Kamble group. It is not that representation of Dalit women was not there in those groups. For example, Shantabai Dani, joined Scheduled Caste Federation (SSF) in 1945, organized the Dalit Women's conference. As, Gokhale says.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid,p.79.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Jayashree Gokhale, "From Concession To Confrontation," pp.214-63. 1993.

‘Due to her sex, Shantabai endured great hardship in her activities as a party worker, particularly in rural areas’.<sup>108</sup> She was very active member, who also contributed participated in the Bhumiheen (Landless) Satyagraha of 1950s, and also became the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly (MLA) in the duration of 1968-1974 and held the various prestigious position.<sup>109</sup> But representations of Dalit women almost marginalized. Latter on these two groups had very often biases over many issues that lead to decline the RPI-with so many fragmentations. Scholars like Dietrich argues that Dalit leaders have used Dalits women gender hold back their patriarchal interests, for example harassment of Dalit women. And thus the consequence very often remains same in which, Dalit women possibly finish up twice<sup>110</sup> and deserted within and without the support from the women’s movement. As Bhagwat also noticed “dalit polities also look at the issues of *empowerment of women as non-issues. Women in dalit politics figure only in number and are caught in a trap of ‘our women’ framework. This results into further marginalisation of dalit women.*”<sup>111</sup>

Thus one can also say that the Mahar-Buddhist community (this terminology used by Gokhla, Zelliott) in Maharashtra was failure to recognize a true leadership and equally never rhetoric at Dalit women problems.

According to Gokhale, the emergence of Dalit Panther movement begins when RPI was unsuccessful to speak to the caste, class difference among the masses in these lower middle classes strata of Dalit community.<sup>112</sup>

When Dalit Panther started from the early 1970s in Maharashtra and it was the rigid period of social dissatisfaction and economic travail in this state. The state was

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid,p.223.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid,p.225.

<sup>110</sup> Gabriel Dietrich. “Dalit Movements and Women’s Movements.” In Reflections on the women’s movement in India: Religion, Ecology. And Development,”pp.73-93.

<sup>111</sup> Vidyut Bhagwat “Dalit Women: Issues and Perspectives- some critical reflections” in P.G.Jogdand (edt). ‘ Dalit Women In India,’p,6, 1995.

<sup>112</sup> Jayashree Gokhale. “From Concession To Confrontation,” pp, 264-96, 1993.

enclosed with number of problem like job market, strikes and demonstration 1972-1973. It hand out up starvation occurred and totally disturbs the young blooded rural boys. <sup>113</sup> These Mahar-Buddhist village boys were facing a major problems challenged radically the entire system with this beliefs that it may be only solution to remove the poverty and oppression, untouchability and caste discrimination.

In the beginning Namdev Dhasal and Dhale-were the militant activist 1973. They established a distinct political identity separate from RPI named Dalit Panther on 15<sup>th</sup> August as a black Independent day. It was almost the same era that the parties like Shiv Sena were emerged. <sup>114</sup>

In the panther movement the two incidences the B.D.D. rioter (Bombay district Development) and the Aurangabad and Sangali incidents provides the insights as the beginning of the panther as political force. In both of these cases the major atrocities on the untouchables leads towards the riots.

The beginning of socio- economic appearance with the atrocities, indifference of political parties of youth and cultural conflicts with other militant movement (like E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (Periyar), who led an anti-Aryan movement in Tamilnadu, influenced the young educated and the economic political crisis where the Naxalite movement had emerged on the basis of radical communist ideology.) including the counter movements like Shiv Senas urban middle class which failure to adders the caste issues were responsible for the emergence of Dalit Panthers. And the ideologies of socialist and Marxist-Leninist into the minds of Dalits try to relate with

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<sup>113</sup> Lata Murugkar, "Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra: A Sociological appraisal,"pp.36-77, 1991.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

Ambedkar's ideologies with Marxism.<sup>115</sup> Thus, criticism on Hinduism was equally responsible for the emergence of Dalit Panther movements.

Scholars like P.G. Jogdand says that Dalit Panther movement did not lift up the plight of Dalit women. But we must recognise that in the earlier stages they raised the atrocities on Dalit including the question of rape on Dalit women. For example, In May 1972, in Brahmangaon in Parbhani, two Scheduled Caste women were assaulted by high caste Hindus and were stripped of their cloths because they had drawn water from a well belonging to caste Hindus.<sup>116</sup> But when the centrality of issues changes then it actually taken a diverse shape. Male member in Panther movement formulated many questions like poverty, literacy, and so on as the entire Dalit Panther movement was hegemonised by male members.

It is true that like any other social movement there were no participation or the representation of Dalit women into Dalit Panther movement and it did not address the Dalit women's concern seriously. This brings us to the conclusion that the women's movement as well as Dalit movement are failure to see gender equality in the context of the Dalit women, which directly relates with caste too.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid,p.40.

## **CHAPTER -IV**

## FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS IN DALITS LITERARY FORMS

To study the feminist consciousness in Dalit literary forms, it is necessary to understand the historical background of it in briefly first. Secondly how did Dalit Panther movement bring the new essence in the literary forms of Dalit literature, which also leads towards Dalit women's literary consciousness. And Dalit women begin to create a space for themselves. Thus, the focus will be highlighted on the autobiographical writing to see the patriarchal domination within and outside community in specific context of Dalit women.

When we study the feminist consciousness in Dalit writing we have to trace back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The roots of the Dalit literary movement have given shape to a cultural revolution as a part of Maharashtrian culture.<sup>1</sup> However, specifying it as a Dalit women's writing with feminist consciousness, perhaps Mukatabai must be the first one who through her small essay, '*Mahar Manganchi Dukha Avisatha*' (About the grief of the Mang and Mahar) attacked Hindu religion.<sup>2</sup> Her essay reflected the plight of Dalit women as Dalit women delivered their child in the house that did not have a cover up. She raised a very sensible question for Dalits in general and for Dalit women in particular. Further, she simultaneously attacked the Peshawa regime in Maharashtra with the specific behavioural approach for Dalits.<sup>3</sup>

The former Dalit literature was existed in literary forms.<sup>4</sup> The satyashodhaks (truth-seeker) in Ambedkarian era, Jalsa (traditional musical concerts) and Tamasha (traditional folk plays) were continued as part of Dalit cultural movement.<sup>5</sup> It simply made an expression about society, exploitation of lower castes in the hands of landlords,

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<sup>1</sup> Gopal Guru, "Dalit Cultural Movement and Dalit Politics in Maharashtra," pp.1-8. 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Susie Tharu and K.Lalita(eds.), " Women Writing in India," Vol.I,pp.215-16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> See, Eleanor Zilliot, Jayashree Gokhale and Lata Murugkar.

<sup>5</sup> Gopal Guru, "Dalit Cultural Movement and Dalit Politics in Maharashtra." 1997. pp. 1-30.

and especially talked about untouchability including the oppression of Dalit women by the larger society to same extents.

Dalit Panther movement had a political appearance with the spirit of protest but it knowingly developed through the medium of literature.<sup>6</sup> And it exploded it into the disruptive Dalit literature.

There are two dimensions of it. The first dimension was that perhaps most of the activists in the Dalit Panther movement were impressed with the literature of Russian, Chinese, Bengali, and Premchand's classics, including Marxist ideology.<sup>7</sup> After reading these literatures, Panthers might fill up the gap in-between Marathi literature. In fact, they were the first ones to create a space in Marathi literature, and put up the landmark as Dalit literature bringing a new spirit as a living cultural revolution.<sup>8</sup> Throughout its writings, in varying degrees of explicitness, it runs a feeling of revolution and argument with the forces of coercion and contention of the right to an honest and honoured life.<sup>9</sup> Dalit literature disproves and discards Hindu religion and its inheritance.<sup>10</sup> However it has given a new identity consciousness to Dalits.

Other dimensions are that the Dalit Panther movement itself began with the spirits from Black Panther. The Black literature was attacking on dehumanization based on racism.<sup>11</sup> And possibly the Dalit Panther took motivation from them. Thus, the Dalit literature was born in the womb of anger, pain and inequality in the

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<sup>6</sup> Mulk Raj Anand and Eleanor Zilliot, "From untouchable to Dalits," Arjun Dangle, "Poisoned Bread," Introduction.

<sup>7</sup> Lata Murugkar, "Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra: A Sociological appraisal," pp.49-59, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Arjun Dangle, "Poisoned Bread," Introduction, Lata Murugkar, "Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra: A Sociological appraisal," pp.48-59

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Lata Murugkar, Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra: A Sociological appraisal, 1991, pp.48-59.



society<sup>12</sup>. In its specific way, at a larger level, it has remarkable shape of a rebellious literature<sup>13</sup>, which again became responsible as the burning inspiration for Dalit women's writings.

There are many types of writings such as poems, fiction, essays, autobiographies, dramas, and so on.<sup>14</sup> These writers are writing about the category of experiences in which one can visualize their socialisation in a boycotted situation, and the larger and equally the other marginal community reacted with them as they belonged to untouchable community. Dalit literature itself is amazing because from its sources the new branches of other marginal sections and community developed or it has given a birth to forceful marginal sector of community and to rural, folk, Muslim, tribal or Gondi (one of the Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra) and fellow-suffering communities.<sup>15</sup>

It is important that though some writers were not a part of Dalit Panther movement, they were mobilized with Dalit literature in the beginning stage of this movement and wrote independently about their experiences.<sup>16</sup>

It reflects on inequality among human beings and its medium used to communicate the distance between the larger society and the oppressed community.

Dalit literature is a live expression of Dalit's lifestyle and its co-relation with society.<sup>17</sup> It is mixture of traditional villages and modernity. It reflects the life of Dalit women, as Dalit women are freer, since they do not have any limitation like

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Uttam and Anuradha Bhoite, 'The Dalit Sahitya Movement in Maharashtra: A Sociological Bulletin', 26:1, March, 1977.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Jyoti Lanjewar, "Dalit Literature and Dalit women," Dalit Women: Issues and Perspectives- some critical reflections" in P.G.Jogdand (ed), "Dalit Women In India", 1995, pp.188-200.

<sup>16</sup> Lata Murugkar, "Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra: A Sociological appraisal," 1991, pp.48-59.

<sup>17</sup> Sumitra Bhawe, "Pan on the fire: Eight Dalit Women Tell Their Stories," Translated by Gauri Deshpande, pp,xii-xvi, 1998.

other caste women as veiling and so on.<sup>18</sup> In the patriarchal society, Dalit male battered them but still Dalit women provided them money for drinking and looked after them properly as a dutiful wife and a good human being.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps the reason may be that they have to go out and work for survival. Thus they are free to some extent to take decision-making but one can't verify that Dalit women did not had to undergone the patriarchal opperssition. The relationship of Dalit male and female in context of husband and wife is very complex to understand.<sup>20</sup>

While maintaining the family relations, like any other community and common trends in relation, these people also have biases.<sup>21</sup> But in adversity conditions they were united and stand together and one can see their love bonds, as human beings<sup>22</sup>. The Dalit male writers did reflect much on the issues of Dalit women but the fact remains that it carries a patriarchal vision.

*Kolhatyacha Por* is an autobiography of Kishor Kale in which one can understand the oppression of Dalit women within family by father as well as upper-caste landlords.

It reflects on the dingy world of harshly life theatres, dusty wooden stages, shabby curtains and crowds of men—drunk, sweating, laughing—calling out to and teasing—the brightly dressed women dancing to entertain them. The fast furious beat of the dholak and the tabla, swift hands hammering out the rhythm; the crashing of three pairs of ghungroos as the dancers keep the beat with their feet on the wooden stage; the main dancer in her traditional nine yard sari, gold jewellery and flower bedecked hair, running, and dancing...with swift vigorous steps she comes from the back of the stage to the front, bends backwards, collects a rupee from the hands of the man who stands

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<sup>18</sup> Kanch Ilaiah, "Why I Am Not a Hindu," Samaya Publication, Calcutta, 1996, pp. 127-28.

<sup>19</sup> Sumitra Bhave, "Pan on the fire: Eight Dalit Women Tell Their Stories." Translated by Gauri Deshpande, Indian Social Institue, 1998, pp. xii-xvi

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

there... and takes it to the back; runs forward again, takes another note...she has two hundred, one-rupee notes to collect. Two hundred times she runs, bends, runs, smiling all the time...It was Kale's mother dancing up there, showered with all that money. Shantabai Kale was a tamasha dancer.

Kishore is her illegitimate son and his life story is that of a child of a Kolhati tamasha dancer and his struggle to become a doctor. He tells his story as a child would tell it: without sentimentality, without nostalgia, and without passing judgment on the actions of his relatives, especially his mother. At the same time, he tells it with all the hurt and despair of a child whose own mother has abandoned him.

The Kolhati community lives off its 'dancing' girls. They are the sisters and daughters of Kolhati men and the breadwinners of the family. It is a position, which gives them neither freedom nor power within their families. Kolhati women are expected to earn enough to support their male relatives until they die. This they do through dance, or by finding a wealthy patron who provides for the entire family in exchange for sexual favours from the dancer. Virginity is highly prized. A virgin is given to a rich man in a mock marriage ceremony called *chira utarna* for a prefixed price. After that, the man can come and visit her brother's/father's house as long as he pays generously to support her brothers. Once he leaves her, usually when she becomes pregnant, the girl has to go back on the stage as soon as she is able, and dance until she finds another patron.

The child she bears becomes a Kolhati and is brought up by the family until he or she is old enough to go into the trade and earn for the family. The child also completes the enslavement of the mother, because now she is told that if she doesn't earn, her child will suffer. The one thing the Kolhati men really fear is their sisters or daughters running away with a lover. But this rarely happens, as the lover usually will not accept

responsibility for the dancer's illegitimate children. In the rare instances when he does, the family normally finds a way to make sure that the child or children are left behind.

Kishore Kale is a child who got left behind. His mother, Shantabai, fed up with her bloodsucking brothers, ran away with an elderly admirer, Krushnarao Wadkar, of the Sali community of weavers, nicknamed Nana, who was the moneylender of his village. He was already married but installed Shantabai as his common law wife, giving her a room next to the flourmill on one end of his compound.

Four-year-old Kishore Kale was then brought up by his aunt Jiji. An ex-tamasha dancer herself, Jiji is the rightful owner of the house and land upon which Kale's family live, as her lifetime patron and lover gave it to her. Kishore receives a certain rough justice from Jiji. She protects him from the anger of his uncles, but expects him to work as hard as she does to look after his uncle's family. As the male child of a Kolhati woman who ran away, Kishore is ill-treated in ways that would make even Cinderella feel pampered. He has to clean the house, run errands for all his relatives, and help in the kitchen and in the fields. fetch milk, look after the livestock and stay the night in the fields during harvest. Often, he doesn't get enough to eat. And he is always punished for being the worthless son of a traitor to the community.

School becomes his refuge. Kale turns to studies as a way of escaping the stigma of being the child of a tamasha dancer who ran away. School is a place of freedom where he is given his first taste of self-worth because he is a good student and the teacher encourages him to study. And by doing well, he gains the self-worth he desperately needs to continue living. His good grades, the encouragement of the school-teacher and the respect of his classmates make him slowly realise that education can also provide a more permanent means of escape. As he grows older, and learns why his mother was forced to abandon him, he sees education as a way of regaining his mother;

of giving her financial and emotional support she sought in marrying Nana but which she loses after Nana gets tired of her physically. Kale even educates his younger brother while still studying himself.

This is brought out best in the case of Kale's aunt Jiji, who owned both the house and land the family lived on. She was always subservient to her brother, because she believed, as Kale tells us, that since she had no children of her own, her only option was to serve her brother so that when she was old he would look after her. When she did grow old, and was paralysed from waist downwards, the brother who she had served faithfully, left her in a hut in the fields, only sending someone there to feed her once a day. When Kale tried to take her to Bombay for an operation, the entire family stopped him because they were afraid that he would make her sign away the land in his name. Jiji, neglected and left to die, insisted that he let her remain there so that she could die on her own land and her dear brother would perform her last rites to ensure that her spirit finds a proper resting place. Jiji's story shows how tradition binds these women. Community identity is their trap, and blood reinforced by religion is the yoke that binds them into slavery so complete that even death is not a way out.

While the latter relationship is perhaps unique to Kolhati women, what they share with all Indian women is the perception (which is a reality too) that the only 'free' woman is a married woman and/or a woman with sons, that without a man's support a woman is community less and lacking community in India she is helpless, and must abandon herself to her fate.

Eventually, after many struggles, many moments of despair and even more of incredible courage, Kale becomes Dr. Kishore Shantabai Kale.

Thus, the entire autobiographical story shows us how the sexuality of Dalit women is used within family and larger community and still these evils custom function in parts of western Maharashtra. It explains the patriarchal power and its domination, the fact that his mother despite knowing these facts could not do anything. It also pointed out the subordination of women in the patriarchal society.

Dalit women face many forms of patriarchy within community as it is narrated through '*Baloot*' in Daya Pawar writing: He narrates "Dada, (his father) was alcohol addict of and never taken a responsibility of households."

The moment he will get his salary, then he did not turn up to house around 15–20 days. During that time mother used to go out and collect the waste paper, that's how their family survives. Though the mother was irritated with hard work but she never grumbled and lacked the courage to retaliate or to say a single word to her husband.

Once, his father said that he would come back from Naka (square) and the author as a child insisted that he would join him. They went to small Irani's hotel in which, already a woman was sitting, and waiting for Dada. Daya, being a child shouted and abused his father. On being questioned his father said that in the male dominating society, male always had extra-marital affairs and his father also had similar affairs. One of his father's friend, Satava had never done any work or labour. He had married twice and both of his wives used to work hard and feed him. Thus he exploited them.

Dada was working in the Brahman landlord's house as a bonded labour for a year. In the same field many women were also working. Dada used to hide the Scythe, and when women would inquire to him, Dada asked them to come and sleep with him. Thus, Dada sexually exploited many women.

On the other hand, morality in the village was totally different. Some of the young Mahars were the bonded labour for a one-year agreement. (Naturally they have to contact the upper caste women) in the rich caste Hindus' houses. During that time these Maratha women for their sexual satisfaction utilised these young Mahars. However, when it came to provide the food, and water these same Maratha women would put the water and food, maintaining a distance, as Mahar being untouchables.

From this example one can analyse how the caste Hindu women used the sexuality of Dalit male. And maintaining these relation (sexual) they did not maintain the concept of untouchablality at the same time maintained the concept of pollution and purity. Thus it shows the contradiction that the same logic was applied in the context of Dalit women by the upper caste/caste Hindu male.

In Mahar community the daughter-in-law has no legitimacy. One such incidence was narrated the by Daya, in which says that, once the father-in-law tried to molest his daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law screamed and sent a message to her nettle house. Her husband was working in Mumbai. He was called from Mumbai when the real story was narrated in front of all elders, the judgment of the husband came out that my wife is shared by me and my father. And I don't want to hurt my old father. He put the option that her father was free to take back his daughter.

Like any other male, the Dalit male are equally suspicious, perhaps one can say that it is part or form of patriarchy. When Daya's father died off, after a few days he came to know that mother is pregnant. In the Maharwada (where Mahar's community stay) an old person put the flame in the mind of Daya that your mother is bad character and she is pregnant. Daya had already heard of widow women's pregnancy in Mumbai, and seen the new-born babies in dustbin. Thus his analysis goes that why mother had done wrong thing? (His mother was actually pregnant but he did not realise that his

father was responsible for that.) He behaved badly, stopped communicating with his mother and did not even look at her even though she was bedridden. When he came to know of the facts then only he became normal. From this we can realise that even in the childhood, Dalit child tries to control the sexuality of mother. As male a child has an image that mother should have high morals but did not expect the same from father with that amount of intensity. One can actually see that even the patriarchal society moulds a small child to cultivate the patriarchal values and controlled the sexuality of women.

Daya Pawar himself tell us that he left his first wife Sai, because he had a feeling that his wife had a relationship with a Muslim boy called Mahboob. He spied on her. When Sai went to market, Daya followed her. On the way while coming back, Mahaboob met her and they started talking to each other. Daya came with his anger and asked Sai to go back to home and took Mahaboob in hotel. Though Mahaboob gives an explanation that for him Sai was like a sister, Daya ordered him to leave Mumbai. Later on, he left Sai at village. Though she came again and stayed back with him, Daya did not accept her widely. He sent her to village, ignored her and finally left her forever.

Once Daya's relative took him to the prostitute's area and introduced his Maushi (mother's real sister) whose name was Jamuna. She was extremely good looking and that is why husband was suspicious by nature, used to beat her up, ill-treated her and finally one day sold her. In her old days Jamuna Maushi became beggar. These lines itself speak how the Dalit male control their wives with form of suppression and shows the power relation between husband and wife.

Caste and religion played an important role in society and Pawar shares his experiences. Christian Missionary though spread up the message of Christ, particularly in cases of untouchables, if Mahars associated with it, they were provided with a certain amount of dignity with good jobs. A person named Kadu once went to Bombay to see



his relatives. There he visited a Church and was taken to be baptised. As Kadu's version says that he just went and ate the piece of bread. (Of course as an ignorant person he just had a bite of the piece of bread). But when this news reached the village, around 40 villages put ban on Kadu's village (where Kadu's was residing) rather than punishing him personally. Thus, entire transition of the village in which Mahars were residing was stopped.

In the villages, the houses of the Mahar (one of Dalit community) as being untouchables are in the outskirts of the villages. It shows the caste and households combinations.

Before the conversion, the Dalit communities unconsciously accept the rituals. It is part of sanskritation, because like Brahman Purohits, the Dalit also have a person called Bhat (a person who performed the rituals for Dalit community). His job is to perform the ceremony like marriage, namakaan (giving name to new born child). Though he also belongs to Mahar community but rest of the Mahar community looks at them in inferior's ways. Pawar says that the other marginal section students in hostel belong to Koli caste but also maintain a distance as untouchable and did not mingle with untouchable students.

Caste discrimination was the major one experienced by the Dalit children schools. As Daya Pawar narrates that though the local board built his school. But then we could not sit inside the room. When the schoolteacher conducts the school in temple, the Mahar students were allowed to sit on the steps of the temple. Taty (a uncle of Daya) went to the school and the teacher threw an iron rod on him. Taty behaved in a similar way and stopped going to the schools. One could analyze that caste discrimination with Dalit child was major phenomena, which also distracts them to leave a school forever.

The Dalit women assertion also is a part of his writing in which Daya Pawar says that the women (Dalit) face the problems for basic needs like water. They were dependent on upper caste Hindu for water, as they were not allowed to go to the well. Unsociability and assertions of Dalit is depicted in one more incident that when a Dalit woman goes to fetch water their shadow makes impure to God Maruthi as the temple was on the way.

The non-Mahar villagers stop the road for Dalit. The other road was more difficult and long for Mahar women. So the entire Mahar community protested and appealed to the court for their rights. Changes in Dalit community are evident now as earlier when any person would die then with the dead body all the family members used to take a photograph with it? Though today we can't see the same phenomena in the Dalit community. However, what else would be the reason behind these acts than perhaps to remember the person (died) forever. Most of the rituals followed by Dalits do were almost similar like other castes. It might be the possibility that by performing it they might be under the false impression (consciousness) process that they are not ritually degraded. Like Muslims, Dalits, before adopting Buddhism, follow the burial system. But education brought about a major consciousness among Dalits in which they became sensible and seriously gave a thought over these issues like 'why we as Dalits are separated? Why we are living a life, which is worse than animals?' It reflects the psychology of Dalits, how they accept slavery and maintain a distance. Since childhood they experience caste and they did not have the courage to think and get married with upper caste women. For example, though Daya liked a girl called 'Banu' but always carry a fear (of her father) that her position is in heaven and his position is nowhere, especially in villages. Despite being educated, when Daya as Mahar went to his village, the Maratha caste people used to say to him 'you are (Mahar). Whose name is Maruthi?

The Muslim and Dalit community reside as neighbours in the town and cities and also in Mumbai. Though both these communities to some extent share a common marginalisation but as an untouchable the sexuality of Dalit women was always under threat. And this led to the communal conflict between Mahars and Muslim.

Sometimes Dalits retaliate against Muslims. The Muslim community also maintained the concept of untouchability. They did not eat or drink in the house of untouchables. Though the Muslim community itself is marginalised and oppressed by the large community but their attitude towards Dalits is as it is for untouchable. Thus from these incidences one can analyse how the caste identity always been related with name (despite being an educated).

Another autobiography *Akkarmashi* (The Bastard) written by Sharankumar Limbale shows us the complexity of relations. He begins to question himself:

Who I am? Why I born? My father too was a Lingayat, and his grandfather and great-grandfather before him. That makes me a Lingayat. My mother was a Mahar. Her parents, her forefathers, were Mahars. So I am a Mahar. But I have brought up by a Muslim-Mahmud Dastageer Jamadar-my grandfather. Shouldn't that make me a Muslim?

He said that Masamai was his mother. She was the only daughter of Santamai. She was married to a poor man called Vithal Kamble. Starvation was a daily matter, yet she had to cut grass all day, drag it to the regional and town four miles away and sell it there. She carried heaps of wood to Akkalkot to sell and brought back necessities for the house. It was a hand-to-mouth existence, daily toil, for every day bread. Santamai and Dada sometimes walked for miles to Basalgaon to fetch Masamai, with loads on their heads. There were no motorised vehicles those days.

The farmer that Vithal Kamble worked for was a Patil called Hanmanta Limbale, who helped him in times of requirement of life. But the Patil's desires, nature were somewhat different. It was because of him that a one Dalit family broke up.

The *jat-panchayat* called over the issue that Masama had a relation with other man, though it was not true. Two of her children were snatched from Masai's and she was divorced. A husband-wife, child-mother relationship ended within a short time.

Masamai was free and for filling her belly she started selling wood at the district town. But her heart was where her home was—with her husband and children. Vithal Kamble was remarried. A man can masticate but women can't. If a woman does so, it only blemishes her reputation. How could Masamai remarry? She had nothing to eat. She was a woman discarded by her husband. The layer of his protection no longer sheltered her modesty.

However, Hanmanta Limbale supervises to catch hold of her. He kept her in a rented house in Akkalkot. Mai too required refuge with anybody and she took Hanmanta's refuge. In any case she had been broken because her name had been correlated with his. Now she determined she might as well brash it out. They lived together cheerfully. Soon Masai got pregnant and delivered a baby boy. Who was her son, Saran? (the author).

Hanmanta wanted Masai—her body—but not a child. If it bore his name, it would be a blemish on his family reputation. Beside, the child would ask for his share of the property on growing up. Masai would, in all likelihood, have gone to court. Hanmanta wanted to keep away from all this but how could he hide the birth of a baby? The similar variation can be seen in Kolhati community. Hanmanta badly treated them and finally Masamai was bound to leave him. She went back to her mother's house.

Why did his mother agree for that adulteration? Why did she bear the prohibited seed for nine months? Why did she yield such a bitter fruit? Wasn't she suffering by the dirty looks condemning her as an adulteress? Did anyone fuss over me? Or buy clothes for Mai? Who performed my naming ceremony? Whose inheritor was I? Who was it I could call my rightfully father? (*Punha Akkarmashi*, 1999:p.15).

Beauty is a curse when it blesses one of the Dalits, who have a saying: 'If she's beautiful, she's someone else's wife; mine's ugly'. A good-looking woman is the target of all men's desire. Masamai's husband left her only because of her looks. Hanmnata too deserted her after using her. That's why Mai was living like this with me as her only possession. How long could she go on without support?

Those who have been given power by religion because of their high caste and money inherited from ancestors, take it as their birthright to abuse Dalit honour. Every village Patil and zamindar has slept with the wives of his land labourers, used them like whores. As soon as she came of age, a girl from a poor family fell victim to their lust. You'll find the offspring of the Patil's promiscuity in some houses of the village. These families live exclusively at the kindness of the Patil. The whole village calls the Patil's mistress's house and the children, the Patil's whore's brood. His benevolence, his visits, are all that matter for household's happiness.

After Nimbale were born a thread of babies—Nagi, Nirmi, Vani, Sumi, Pami, Tamma, Indira, Sidramaa—in quick sequence, from the same womb, fed on the same life-blood. The mother was one but the fathers were different. Masami got three children from Vithal Kamble. The first-born, Bhanudas, died. Chandrakant and Lakshman were born after him. Her husband snatched them from her when he drove her out. Then author was born of Hanmanta. From Kaka, that is Police Patil Yashwantrao Sidramappa of Hannor, Masamai got Nagubai, Nirmala, Vanamala, Sunanda, Pramila,

Shrikant, Indira and Sidram. On paper, Kaka has put down their caste as Hindu-Lingayat. But no Lingayat would touch us or accept us as one of them. We are a parallel Maharwada.

However, one can grasp the manner in which patriarchy constrained women by looking at some of the literatures of Dalit women written by themselves, which describes their life experiences, and thus they may bring out both caste and gender oppression of Dalit women. It includes various autobiographies, poems that revolve around collective experience of Dalit women and their self-consciousness. Here we will look at literary forms of Dalit women.

Baby Kamble's autobiography *Jeena Aamucha* is a sociological exploration in which she expresses the extreme poverty, hunger, and unawareness of Dalit community on various issues. The half of the portion tells us about the religious superstitions in this community, where Dalit parents accept the life as it comes but handover their elder son as Potraj. (Potraj is a custom in which the elder son should be surrendered to god and goddess).

The second section of the book reflects on how the Ambedkar's ideas impacts in minds of Dalits, brought tremendous changes in the entire standard of living, and they began educating themselves and dropping their traditional jobs, abandoned the god and goddess. Thus it shows us the major shift in Dalit community.

Many Mahars admitted, their daughter in school after listening to Ambedkar's speeches. One of the incidences narrated by Baby Kamble is that in girl's school most of the girls belong to upper caste. Earlier they had an image for Mahar girl as untidy, unclean, and so on. The teachers gave a space for Dalit girls in the classroom in the last bench and the blackboard was invisible to Mahar girls. In school, the high caste Hindu girls did not allow the lower caste to drink water. Baby and her group of Mahar friends

rushed for a drinking water area and opened a tap. Then the other caste girls were worried about where to drink water. They spoke an unusual language and then the debate started criticising on Ambedkar as a Dalit leaders and Gandhi as a upper caste leader to humiliate each other.

Baby Kamble narrates how the daughter and daughter in laws is treated in Dalit family. The young bride was often as young as eight-or-nine year old and treated harshly. The complete cooking business was put on her and if she failed to do it, then she was savagely beaten up and abused. Thus she became almost a slave. Once she reached the stages of puberty, then it became more problematic and unbearable. In such a situation girls often ran back to their parental house walking a road alone at night and day. But again the husband and his family members took her back as she belonged to that family. The girl's brothers and father and other male members also sent her back to her husband's houses. Then the in-laws and his family members would not spare them. The punishment for her was that the village carpenter would be asked to make a stock for her, the log weighing several kilograms, with a hole hewn out of it. The runaway bride's right foot was inserted through it and then it was blocked with a bolt to prevent her from extracting her foot. Everytime she moves, the wood rubbed against her ankle and it would bleed. The carpenter did not belong to Mahar community but was ready to touch the untouchable women and the other society members also admitted this punishment for Dalit girls. If at all the girl was able to escape again then a similar process was to take. She would be thrown from the husband's family but before that all the members of her husband's family will point to her that as 'mudi' or cut-nosed one. Then she will never approach to her own blood relatives too as they equally ill-treated her. Thus the woman is a symbol of family purity and always under control in patriarchal society.

Focussing on *Antasphot* an autobiography written by a Dalit woman, named Kumud Pawade, one can clearly understand the picture of Dalit women's experience. The first story in it, 'How I stopped Savitri (pooja) fasting', describes the experience of the author's relative about the Savitri (pooja) fasting. The husband of her relative used to torture her on the ground of having no son and married another woman. He would also demand money. In her natal house her parent died and therefore she was compelled to take shelter in the author's house. Every year she would perform a fasting of Savitri Pooja. Once Pawade asked her 'Why do you fast for such a husband?' Her relative replied her 'At least God will listen to me.' So the writer asked her to think rationally and logically. And she herself had done the introspection and abandoned fasting. This is how she started thinking rationally and logically and insisted that her relative should also follow this.

Another story in her autobiography 'After all we are women' expresses the Dalit women's assertion of their rights and change in their perception of their own community. This part also describes the manner in which the men of their own community harass Dalit women. She explains the real incident in which 35 Dalit women, who are intent to participate in the women conference in Delhi, were harassed by the railway authority in terms of denial of tickets, in spite of the fact that the person manning the ticket-counter himself was Dalit. Thus, she shows the patriarchy by the upper castes as well as Dalits. She questioned herself that Ambedkar had converted to Buddhism because it taught rationality, tolerance, patience and humanity. Though there is so much of stress within Dalit community on Buddha's teaching, the writer is very suspicious of its actual practice among the Dalit community.

The author further looks at some recent changes among Dalit women while appreciating the increasing participation of women in various modern occupations. She questioned that Dalit women needed to develop their intellectual level since it is



indispensable to challenge patriarchy. She is also of the opinion that Dalit women are doubly oppressed than upper-caste women. In her view, Dalit women have to undergo both caste based and patriarchal oppression and therefore both materially and non-materially she is more oppressed in comparison to upper caste women.

Looking at an autobiography called *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* by Shantabai Kamble, the section (Naya goes to school and Doesn't) depicts directly the caste discrimination and untouchability experienced by her. Here she says that when she was in class six, a Brahmin girl was her classmate. Once she didn't come to school so the headmaster sent Shantabai to her house for taking her. So she went to her friend's house. There were 'rangolis' outside the door. Seeing her, her friend's mother (Aai) shouted at her, 'You daughter of a Mahar, stay there. You will trample the rangolis. Even in the 'Antasphot'. The story of My Sanskrit' shares the similar caste-based discrimination, which also reflects that Sanskrit is still considered a language of the Brahmins.

From these collection of writing one can draw a conclusion that Dalit communities undergone through shaken experiences in day-to-day life. In particular aspects of life Dalit women faced the tremendous sexual violence as being and belonging to Dalit caste and community. Thus, these literary forms are reflecting on the exploitations and oppression of Dalit women in the larger society as well as within their own communities. It also speaks about different a dimension that gives us the impression of socializing of individual Dalits and Dalit community in particular. It highlights the unbelievable experience of poverty, untouchability, caste discrimination, and the relation of other marginalized communities with Dalits and upper caste people.

## **CHAPTER -V**

## CONCLUSION

This study has been concerned with an exploration of Dalit feminism with special reference to Maharashtra. It started with two presumptions. One presumption was that both the women's movement and the Dalit movement had paid inadequate attention to the concerns of Dalit women. The second presumption was that on account of the failure of the women's movement and the Dalit movements to address the Dalit women's issues and concerns, the burden of mainstreaming the Dalit women's issues would fall on the Dalit women themselves. The aim of the study was to try to find out whether this had actually happened and, if Dalit women were beginning to address their issues, and what ideological or cultural shape their growing consciousness was assuming. Maharashtra was chosen as the site for this study because Maharashtra has had a history of a strong Dalit movement and had also witnessed the emergence of Dalit women's writings as a separate genre in Dalit literature.

The discussion on Dalit feminism has been anchored in an attempt to outline the major feminist approaches. Scholars working on Dalit women have a choice of multiple ideological shades of feminism. All of them aim at foregrounding women's oppression and exploitation within the family and society, but they differ with respect to the explanations for this oppression and exploitation. The study has tried to lay bare these distinctive approaches to feminism as a background to the discussion on Dalit feminism. The aim has not been to foreground this study into any particular understanding of feminism. Rather, the aim has been to understand the different feminist approaches to be able to better grasp the dimensions of Dalit feminism. This study has tried to argue that the approaches to Dalit feminism require an

understanding of patriarchy and Dalit patriarchy as a special social phenomenon.) Only against the specific orientations of Dalit patriarchy can the uniqueness of Dalit feminism be analysed and understood.

On the substantive question of the approaches of the women's movements and the Dalit movements, this study has shown that women were an issue of concern in the both movements. However, neither movement actually placed the special predicaments of Dalit women at their core. The women's movement addressed the issues of Dalit women only as one variant of women's issues. Its overall understanding was that if the issues of women were addressed, it would also ameliorate the situation of Dalit women. Thus, whether the question was the representation of Dalit women in representative institutions, the position of the women's movement was that representation of women and enactment of Uniform Civil Code would simultaneously address the concerns of Dalit women. This understanding arose from the conception on the part of the women's movement of women as a constituency. It did not adequately recognise that women were also differentiated along the lines of caste, class and community and their special location in the social structure determined their approach on all substantive questions. This remained a serious lacuna in the women's movement, which has found its most direct expression in the controversy over the enactment of a legislation to provide one-third reservation to women in legislative bodies at the national and state levels. As is well known, women of different marginalised communities have been arguing that the proposed enactment should anticipate quotas for different categories of women as there was no likelihood of their getting elected to the legislature and being able to represent their interests along with their communities if they are not provided with separate quotas. One argument in this controversy has been that since high caste

women represent their caste interests as well the concerns of the women from the marginalised communities would be sidelined.

The Dalit movement covers a long period of time during which its emphasis and thrust changed considerably. If we were to take the rise of Ambedkar in Maharashtra as a starting point of the Dalit movement, then it would seem that the Dalit women's question was significantly grounded. However, the principal thrust of the movement was towards amelioration of the status of Dalits in general. It was presumed that as the Dalit situation was ameliorated, the status of women would automatically be raised. Thus those early Dalit women who championed the Dalit women's issues laid a greater emphasis on education just as the women's movement had done a few decades earlier. So far the question of the sources of their exploitation and oppression was concerned, it was traced, as was the situation of the Dalits in general, to the overwhelming and dominant imprint of Brahmanical values. Ambedkar himself, as indeed those who originally spearheaded the Dalit movement, such as Phule to name one leading person, repeatedly emphasised the Brahmanical social order as the root cause of the exploitation and oppression of the Dalits. Accordingly, during this early phase the principal thrust of the Dalit movement was on opposing Brahmanical hegemony and exhorting Dalits to take to modern facilities of education and employment as a way out of their predicament. The same course was also recommended to women. They were told to go in for education and it was assumed that as they came to have access to education they would develop the capacity to resist and oppose the oppression to which they were exposed in their dealings with the higher Hindu castes.

It is not necessary for us to evaluate this strategy or to try to demonstrate whether it was eventually going to succeed. Since Independence, a great deal of research has accumulated that education by itself does not necessarily help women to

overcome the disadvantages to which they are exposed on account of both caste and gender. What comes from the number of studies that have become available is that unless the social arrangements under which women are living are challenged, the prospects remain that they would continue to be oppressed even though the forms of that oppression may change. Even after education, they are treated as untouchables by higher castes and as women by members of their own community.

Even though Ambedkar came to be the principal cult figure as a result of his early advocacy of the Dalit cause and his efforts to organise Dalit for social and political action, his approach to the question of amelioration of the Dalits came to be seriously challenged with the rise of the Dalit Panther movement. The Dalit Panther movement did not subscribe to the ideology of peaceful social transformation, which would usher in better social and economic prospects for the Dalits. It took on a more openly confrontational orientation right from the start. It openly attacked symbols of Dalit exploitation and encouraged average Dalit to use violence to bring about a change in their social existence. (Even though qualitatively different from the moderate approach of Ambedkar vis-à-vis Dalits, the Dalit Panther did not pay any special attention to the concerns of Dalit women.) It only took up the question of rape and sexual exploitation of two women, especially in the rural areas, but beyond that its attention remained centred on the larger question of raising the position of Dalits in general. (It did not question patriarchy in general,) nor did it address the patriarchal character of the internal social organisation of Dalits in particular.

Since after the decline of the Dalit Panthers, the Dalit movement has moved in the direction of structuring itself around the issue of Dalit identity. As part of this transformation, the Dalit consciousness has been mobilised through different strategies, to unite the Dalits as a unified constituency and thereby to use their united strength in the political sphere. Whether we look at the Dalit consolidation under the Bahujan Samaj Party, led by Ms. Mayawati, or its other variants in Maharashtra and

other parts of India, the emphasis is currently on forging unity among the Dalits to make a bid for political power through careful alliance building across other marginalised communities. Of course, on the question of forging alliances with other groups there is no unanimity among all Dalit groups or parties. There is, however, a great deal of emphasis in all Dalit movement groups that the Dalits must forge a unity and that this unity should be mobilised to gain access to political power. Other issues of social transformation and reform have become sidelined in this process.

One of the consequences of this major shift and reorientation within the Dalit movement has been that the Dalit women's question has been pushed into the background. This is not something unique not entirely unexpected. Experience of other communities also suggests that when a group feels that it must force a social unity, the concerns of the women are placed on the back burner. For example, in the aftermath of the Shah Bano judgement when the conservative Muslim groups thought that Muslims had to unite to struggle against the state, the more pressing issues of democratization of the Muslim society and that of Muslim women were overlooked. Again, as we have seen in the case of the rise of Hindutva mobilisation, the progressive proclivities in favour of women and internal democratisation of communities have all but subsided. This is precisely what has happened with the Dalit women's issues so far as the Dalit movement in its current phase is concerned.

It is against this historical background and role of the women's and Dalit movements that this study has sought to explore Dalit consciousness. One is not here arguing that Dalit women's consciousness grew as a kind of a resistance movement against the relative indifference of the women's movement and the Dalit movement through the different phases that Dalit feminism grew. It has been argued that there were liminal towards the development of a feminist consciousness since the nineteenth century, which found their most lucid and direct expression in Dalit women's writing, and those who are today championing the idea of cultivating a Dalit

version of feminism are using as a cultural resource on which to anchor their arguments and ideological stances.

Early Dalit women's writings were articulate expressions of the trials and tribulations of Dalit women in the rural society of Maharashtra, though there were some who also wrote about the situation in the urban scenario. Most of these writings focussed on the patriarchal orientations of their community and showed how their own exploitation as members of the female gender were actually accentuated by those patriarchal ethos. According to them, therefore, the prospects of their liberation or amelioration lay in the extent to which those ethoses were questioned. Adopting various literary strategies, they also offered the most penchant critiques of both Brahmanical values and the values of their own community. It is this legacy that has become harnessed under Dalit feminism.

One of the points suggested by this study is that there has not been any coherent formulation of a Dalit feminist position so far. What comes out clearly is that a nebulous critique of Dalit patriarchy is in the process of development, but its broad contours and consequences are still far from clear. Again, there is no clear articulation of a strategy to push forward and propagate feminist ideology on a mass base. It is also not quite clear how in the final analysis would Dalit feminism link up or relate to Indian feminism in general. For example, do Dalit feminists or advocates of a Dalit feminist consciousness, see themselves as a distinct group of feminists at theoretical angle just as the Black feminists did in North America, or merely as an adjunct of the larger feminist consciousness that pervades the society in general. These questions will have to be the focus of future research on this subject.



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## APPENDIX

### DALIT WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS

The primary focus of this study was looking at the autobiographical writings of Dalit women as a source of arriving at their sensibilities about Dalit women's issues especially locating their own position within the larger framework of Indian society. However, to capture the trends of current thinking, it seemed fair to carry out open-ended interviews with a selected group of Dalit women in Maharashtra to gauge their contemporary sensibilities. Accordingly, twelve women were selected for detailed interview with open questions. This study discusses the principal points emerging out of their articulation.

The interviews were conducted among Maharashtrian Dalit, educated, urban women. All of them belong to the Mahar caste. Many of them were professional and active in Dalit Women's Forum. The question asked to them was who should be the representative of Dalit women? What are the issues and problems of Dalit women? How they can visualize themselves as 'self' from other? Are they experiencing patriarchal forms within and outside the community? Do they carry the cultural identity for themselves and so on. Since all of them were educated they did not hesitate to response, while sharing their personal as well as family or social experiences. I found many of them were assertive and aware of the present situation in the country including the problems of women and its correlation with politics. Replying on the question of representation they said that the upper caste women could never realized the class, caste, and gender discrimination as they never went through experiences like untouchability and thus could not understand the intensity of Dalit women problems.

They said that though class wise, status wise and education wise they were equal to upper-caste educated women but still they face discriminatory approach. The upper caste society psychologically never accepted them as a human being. One of them replied that till the moment she did not mention her case openly they maintained good human relation with her, but the moment these people came to know her caste identity, and then they began to keep distance and maintain the concepts like purity and pollution. Answering the question of representation of Dalit women, all of them replied that from the very beginning the upper caste women are manipulating the financial resource and can't assimilate that Dalit women are getting reservation and other benefits. Thus they said that being privileged groups if we are expecting the help from upper case women to remove our problems would be foolishness act.

As said by all of them, 'from birth till death' we must be mentally prepared to experience the caste discrimination. But they said that compared to uneducated women it is humiliating to experience it, as, being educated; we are conscious. So, occurrence of caste discrimination is more humiliating and affects more psychologically each of them. There is a consistency of outlook of all the women being focused on economical and social dimensions like rape, violence against Dalit women, education, poverty economic problems and so on. The main emphasis of all women was on education of girls. They said that education should start at grassroots level only then we can think about the emancipation and empowerment of women in general and Dalit women in particular.

The Government of India should take some measures to educate them from primary till higher level and the policy makers should frame the policy in a way that marginalized section girls /women of be benefited. The implementers should seriously work it out for their upliftment.

The general feeling that the government should introduce facilities for girls that include hostels, financial assistance, exclusion of tuition fees and so on. Once these girls are able to sustain in school atmosphere then automatically the drop out will decrease. Not a single respondent was against education. . One of them said that the Ambedker's ideology should be taught from the school level to the Dalit girls and a little inclination towards the Gandhian education aspects of self-help earning as maximum Dalits are below poverty line. As said by them it was through reservation and constitutional rights that they were representing in every corner society like local self-government till parliament. Many of them also highlighted on the issues of stratification within the Dalit community and according to them it is duty of the state to frame out new laws that can protect the dignity of every human being including the Dalit women. She said globalization again has degraded the life of Dalit women. To challenge from the problems of globalization, like poverty, unemployment and so on every state should have minimum strategies for women. She claims that in the recent convention of Dalit Women's Organization, we, Dalit women demanded five acres of land in the name of every poor Dalit women. To challenge the subordinate position in the family, whatever property every Dalit husbands should be jointly in husband and wife's name.

All of them said that the other subordinated classes, caste women like Muslim, Christian, Sikh and so on should come together and share their common problems and experiences with Dalit Women. Thus they can come out with the solution regarding, poverty, sexual violence, rape, and molestation and other issues that concern woman. These women should cross their cultural boundaries and actualize the real problems of women as a sufferer. Unless these sections of women can join and develop the concept of 'sisterhood' till then Dalit women cannot emancipate themselves.



Dalit women are ready to support other women's issues and problems if these women liberation movement can actually willing to adopt the sensibility of the Dalit women. Each one has given a statement that all women are Dalit. Thus one should see them at one horizontal level as being a women and challenge patriarchy.

According to them there are common factors in the families of all women. For example they are not free in decision-making, because no decision can be without taking the permission of the husband, fathers, brothers and other male members So, women should challenge patriarchy within family first, and for that she must be financially independent. Only two of them said that they have complex experiences of family problems as husband used to drink and beat them up.

One of the respondents said that from the very beginning, when the women's liberation movement asserted the women's question and issue they never highlighted on the liberation of Dalit women. We being a Dalit woman supported them to every aspect of women's question and are ready to support evens today. Thus from 1970s till 1989, the entire Dalit women in the women's liberation movement were waiting forwards that one day these women may raised the caste based discrimination and oppression of Dalit women. After a long span they started talking differently and established a new autonomous forum for Dalit women. It includes dealing of many causes like rape, labour wages,, construction workers and so many other related problems. Dalit women were marginalized through the external domination of upper caste/class male and female, mainly because of poverty. One of them claims that the upper caste women are insensible and have never to understand the agony, pain of untouchability, and discrimination as a human being. She narrated that one of her relative was a servant in a caste Hindus family for many years. The young daughter of caste Hindu landlord insisted to maintain with her a sexual relation. When he refused

to agree with her demand, then the girl gave a threat to him that she would complain to her father to take him out of job. Poverty was high in his family and at last he surrendered to her. After six months the same girl grumbled to her father about his morals and finally he was murdered. No investigation was done neither by the Police or the State. Thus she refuted that Dalit women should represent themselves rather than taking help of upper caste women. They should take the help of other women of marginalized sections. And without their help intense problem like, poverty, illiteracy, violence against by the larger society cannot be challenged.

All the respondents say that Dalit women should raise their voices for the cause and upliftment of Dalit women collectively. With the uniformity only the social, and economic problems could be solved. One of the Dalit woman replied that we all women should create pressure on society. She shares her experience of rape as a girl in the higher institution at the age of 25. Her case was politicized though various political parties in that institute. She was economically backwards; it was the only reasons why she cannot raise her voice independently.

Though in the same institute the Dalit student forum was existing but they also had not taken any appropriate action except filling the FIR in the police station. And not a single forum approached to give her legal advise.

In the similar institute, she approached the upper caste and elite educated Dalit girls considering that, educated girls might be aware of the facts and injustice happened with her. But their response was different. Rather than coming towards solution, these girls like any other political parties politicized the case and were insensitive to her. Though she appealed to various forums within her institution. He was not able to get adequate response from any of them.

In her point of view the Gender Sensitisation forum also has a discriminatory approach because it the upper caste women were judging her case. The same Dalit woman is presently active in Dalit women's independent organizations. She share her experience that how she has been exploited within family. She reflected her experience with her husband that her husband used to beat her up and many times the father-in-law tried to molest her especially when the mother-in-law was out of town. Once she complain to her mother-in-law, the latter replied that you should agree what your father-in-law wants from you. Then she share her the same incidence of in-laws to her husband, and she received a similar answer from him and thus, finally she left her husband is house.

In her point of view, if she could be having a wealthily background than perhaps she could have won her battle in the court for rape as well as for in law's harassment. Most of the Dalit women said that rape is a tool used against them as a sexual object. Due to poverty even though they would like to confront the phenomena called rape, they are not in position to confront it. Many times the ignorance of legal aids, like law and order is a major problem. Thus it is the duty of educated Dalit women to mobilize the other marginal women and Dalit women through various Special Action Programmes. The basic knowledge of literacy, fundamental rights fundamental duties, protection of laws for them should be recognized. It should also include the minimum wages acts, and the various amendments, acts including reservation for Dalit women.

They were unhappy with all Dalit political parties and explained how these parties' the male domination.

Almost all the educated women said that consciousness-building programmes should be launched from grassroots level to the higher levels. One of the respondent

replied that Dalit women should break the barrier of family; only then the reform from within should be challenged and changed. She explained that girls are taught in certain ways, their socialization is decided in certain ways for example girl should not laugh and talk in a loud voice. These stereotype attitudes must be altered for women. As the Dalit male is imitating the vision and views of the upper caste male, which is extremely harmful for the uplift of Dalit women.

Debating over religion as an emancipatory medium, all of them pointed out that, Hinduism is responsible for degradation of women. But even though accommodated into Buddhism, Dalits have not fully cultivated the values of it. In the present situation the educated Dalit women are scared of life struggle and unbelievably follow the cultural values of caste Hindus religion and ethics. One of them said that conversion to Buddhism is a kind of revenge as Hinduism never gives equality to Dalit, but she is not ready to practically adopt Buddhism. For her it has not brought any changes in her life. Religion means a way of life. Converting into Buddhism means psychology we feel free. But in the present situation religion links up with politics of identity. Some of them raise a question whether their identity is Mahar or Buddhist? And they themselves are confused with this dilemma.

Regarding the issue of marriage maximum response was that Dalit women should get married within the Dalit community. If at all they do inter-caste marriages, the other caste people never accept them socially. Thus it is better not to carry a threat of remarriage and divorces from the larger society. Only two of them said that Dalit male prefer to get married off with other caste women because it satisfies their male ego, feel proud that the upper caste girl has accepted him despite being a lower caste.

In the cultural aspects the Dalits never goes out of peripheral of Dalit community that creates the cultural gap. For example Mahar resides in Maharwada.

For achieving the betterment in life it is necessary to cross the limitations of community. Thus the seclusion should be broken out.

In the political context, the representation of Dalit women is needed. The reservation in panchayat system has changed her position. The awareness for political rights is important but unless the economic aspect is taken care of she cannot think of political rights. The reservation of all marginal women everywhere is needed otherwise the upper caste women may lead similar hegemonic concepts as their male counterparts.

