Conclusion

More than two decades have passed since the postcolonial/subaltern theory (PC from hereafter) occurred. It presented an illusion that it has indeed succeeded in retrieving the subaltern voice, in designing an alternative historiography or in creating an autonomous space for the postcolonial (Indian) subject in the world academics. But illusion it proved to be many loopholes reoccupied the center-stage with unprecedented swiftness. Postcolonial theory, instead of giving birth to an alternative body of knowledge, proves to have delivered more distorted versions of Indian realities. At the politico-academic level, we come across on the one hand, demands for the acknowledgement of the pre-British colonial realities and on the other hand, the pull towards the integration of those realities with contemporary theories. The present dissertation tried to register these inadequacies of the PC theory.

The present work is thus a critique of the un-contextualized, monolithic reading of the Indian nation/gender/caste. PC theory is presented as insensitive to the caste and gender variations. The study of nation and gender has been the exclusive preserve of the mainstream theorists. PC scholars narrated the story of nationalism leading victoriously to the formation of autonomous thought. Here the upper caste men become sole actors and thus emerge as natural riders of the nation. The upper caste women are passively absorbed in this process. PC project displays only a scant concern for Dalit theory and politics. The outcome of the arguments is that PC theory can no more claim relevance to the realities of the Dalits.

There are various kinds of loopholes in this theory especially regarding the Dalits. Their selective mentioning of pre-British colonial realities can be stated as the first limitation. Most of the time they bring only the cultural factors of caste system to scrutiny. One can hardly come across PC study on the violent manifestations of caste system. They do not even look at the violent core of Hindu culture. Indian/Hindu culture is never apolitical and therefore never non-violent. During the British colonial period
Dalits tried to liberate themselves both from the British colonizers and the native Hindu caste supremacists. Therefore it is not an exaggeration to depict the various Dalit movements as effective fights against both native and British colonial oppressions. The following narration on Channar rebellion (*Melmundu Samaram*) explains the fusion of culture and caste and also explains that for Dalits nationalist struggle meant a liberation from *upper caste* domination also:

"The breast cloth struggle, or Channar rebellion, which continued in South Travancore for years together was for the rights of Channar (Nadar) women to cover breasts. When some Channar women who had converted to Christianity came to public places covering their breasts, dominant caste men in Namboodri and Nair communities attacked them...In 1828, under the leadership of revenue inspector Eswaran Pillai, dominant caste men tore the blouses of Channar women and expelled their children from schools. The rebellion, which commenced following this, could be curbed only with the entry of the army from Quilion...When the Channar community did not get any reply from the Government for their appeal to be allowed to wear a breast cloth, they approached the Madras Government in 1855. Though the reply from Madras was negative, the women wore breast cloth. This again led to further struggles. The church at Mekkod was burnt. Many squabbles started in the bazaar. The residency bungalow and chapel were also burnt. Two mission schools were also destroyed. In Thittavella, a Channar couple were attacked. Their house and twenty seven adjoining houses were burnt and destroyed. Many women and men were from the community were caught and tortured in secret chambers in dominant caste houses. Their houses were also looted..."

"There are many stories of torture which the women who covered their breasts had to face. A Channar woman who covered their breasts had to face. A Channar woman in Kayamkulam who was caught with her breasts covered by the upper caste men, was tortured. They her blouse and poured molten on her breasts. They peeled of the cloth from an Izhava woman who was caught with her mundu which went beyond her knees. ...Rape, cutting of breasts, cutting of ears...these are some of the torture mechanisms reserved for lower caste women who dared to defy caste rules.""

It also explains that modernism (which accompanied British colonialism) has imparted ideology of liberation and self-respect for the Dalits. But the PC scholarship does not look at these dimensions. It mainly bases itself on the critique of western theory. For them any theory emanated in the west is essentially ethnocentric. Its study of Indian culture thus results in merely marking its difference with west. Their recurrent reliance on Hindu scriptures and historic documents (which are also mostly religious sources) do not lead them to focus on the caste dynamics of Indian political history. These texts are the powerful repositories of casteism and caste patriarchy. Most of the PC literature that is discussed in the present work seems to enjoy its ideological compatibility with this Hindu fundamentalist ideology. Partha Chatterjee's *Nationalist*..."
Thought and the Colonial World is a good example of this. One must connect his notion of ‘autonomous nationalist thought’ (his main hypothesis in this text) with institutionalization of caste misogyny that upholds upper caste domination over Dalit men and women. The cultural glorification of this narrow autonomous nationalist thought includes a glorification of caste misogyny against Dalit woman. Any critical interrogation of the legacy of this hindutva nationalist thought that does not call attention to the caste related oppression that condoned the exploitation of the Dalits is only a prejudiced version. For PC scholars to condemn the imperialism of the British without critiquing internal caste/caste patriarchy is a strategy that seeks to delete the particular ways caste/caste patriarchy determines the specific forms of violence. PC writers merely re-produce this caste/caste patriarchal legacy when they re-legitimise these Hindu scriptures and ideology (through PC academic politics) that perpetuate Dalit/Dalit women's subordination. If their notion of nationalist thought and nationhood tolerate and celebrate Dalits'subordination via the perpetuation of this epistemic violence, then demands for a re-imagination of nation, re-writing history or retrieving the voice of subaltern will never be attached to a politics of commonality. Thus PC literature fails to make transformative intervention since it attacks only the British colonialism and seeks to preserve the caste/caste patriarchal domination.

The PC scholars' alliance with postmodernism is to be noted here. PC intellectuals (like the postmodernists) seek to dismantle the ‘binary opposition’ of concepts that exist in hierarchical dualistic pairings. They oppose this kind of binarisms as part of their project to deny the universal theories. They believe that it is impossible to find universal principles that explain the caste/caste patriarchy. Dipanker Gupta's propagation of the notion 'discrete classes' (and Partha Chatterjee's support of it in his essay "Nation and its Outcastes") has to be understood in this context. The Dalits on the other hand would try to see caste as an essentially oppressive and extremely unified system. Such an understanding forms the very base of Dalit politics. PC project undermines many of the concepts that Dalits themselves continue to propagate and apply in their politics and theories. Most of the politics of the Dalits can perfectly be located as 'modern' rather than postmodern, for they rely on western politico-philosophical
frameworks premised on the Enlightenment Reason. It is undeniable that they construct their politics on the modern notions of individual rights, justice, equality and so on. Dalits, long denied these rights, clearly realize that postmodernism seeks to delegitimize these notions. Thus PC project’s overwhelming reliance on postmodernism, their rejection to see Indian caste/culture as system of power and violence are some of the major reasons which invoke Dalit suspicion.

The call for commonality structured around notion that Indians constitute a community with common British colonial experiences made contestation difficult. Such theories of commonality re-center the experiences and versions of upper castes in ways and methods that deny caste/gender differences. Partha Chatterjee’s book *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* begins with the resurrection of a genealogy in which Indian nationalism is evoked as a legacy handed down from one generation of upper caste nationalists to the next. Thus Gandhi, Nehru become the natural heirs to Bankim but never Ambedkar or Iqbal. Consequently PC literature leaves us with no understanding of historic ways Dalits challenged upper caste violence as part of their nationalist struggles.

It is time to call attention to differences that could not easily be reconciled by sentimental evocations of Indianhood. The present work tried to combat this hegemonic academic process by pointing out the fact of variations and differences. It is not an exaggeration to conclude that PC theory has not yet recognized the category ‘Dalit and Dalit woman’ as full pledged national subject. We do not come across a term ‘Dalit’ in their bulky literature. Dalits are denied a role of subjecthood for the reasons mentioned above. Thus it is not a hasty thing to conclude that the Dalits and the PC streams stand in opposite to each other both at the politico-academic plane.

The present work basically revolves around Dalit woman and the implications (all those discussed above) of PC theory to her. It tried to look at how the PC literature operates as a conduit of the epistemic violence inscribed in the Hindu religious
texts/ideology and mainstream nationalist fights (the fight of upper caste women for political rights is incorporated). Deconstruction hindutva texts and mainstream nationalism explain that Dalit woman has figured to an astonishing extent in these two streams. It is astonishing in the sense that it is frequently assumed that Dalit woman has been largely invisible in these streams. Yet, she appears in the margins of these streams. These margins are nevertheless the foundations of these streams. In other words her status as margin is central to their discourse and politics. The above analysis proves that PC literature mirrors the above oppressive streams. The researcher tried to understand how PC project took up this task and its net results to the Dalit woman.

Dalit woman is still identified in the Hindu common psyche by the equation of Dalit woman with outsider and outsider with Dalit woman. This negative image has been pumped into the popular mindset of the Indians by various channels which include Indian academics as well. PC literature continues to endorse this construction of Dalit/Dalit woman as outsiders. It evolved itself as an oppressive politico-academic system and emerged as cite for perpetuating this image academically. Dalit woman have been located in these margins in much more demeaning ways as distinctively different from other historically oppressed communities like Dalit men and upper caste women. He marginalized status can only be totally grasped as the legacy of caste patriarchy working over centuries. It was during the British colonial period that this image of Dalit woman as outsider was re-injected into upper caste nationalist mythology. It is at least now time to ask how this image of Dalit woman as outsider has been perpetuated into the contemporary world. At this juncture it became important for the scholar to pay attention to the role of the PC theory as a tool of transmission of this image.

As the study analyses, PC discourse has by no means been exempt from caste mythology. Partha Chatterjee’s three essays on ‘woman’ are good examples of how Dalit woman is imposed with a prefabricated theory. His generic use of the concepts like nation and Indian woman relegates Dalit woman to the margins of his theory. She appears only as a footnote. In Sudhir Kakar’s illustration Dalit woman (or rural sister) first makes her appearance along with her upper caste counterpart. Slowly she fades
away into margins when the upper caste woman occupies the status as a substance of the text. The texts produced by the upper caste feminist intellectuals also share almost same patterns of writing regarding the theme 'woman and nation'. This essentially backward-looking body of knowledge continues to endorse caste patriarchal mythology by reproducing the ancient image of Dalit woman as an outsider to nation/theory.

As the PC school exclaim nation failed to emerge. This body of nation clearly exhibits numerous fissures. But the PC literature never showed caste/caste patriarchy as one of these fissures. They end up in flooding the academic arena with romantic versions of Hindu nationalist thought as the anti-British colonial thought. Its attachment to the pre-British colonial cleavages is effectively camouflaged. Such versions highlight only one set of fissures or one brand of nationalism and nullify others. Thus, broadly this work is about the complicity of the PC academic project with the epistemic violence launched by the Hindu religion and the upper caste nationalist discourse.

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