CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social stratification in a traditional society is based either on caste or ethnic and racial groups. In India, caste is the most important basis of social categorization. It divides people on the basis of their birth and occupation. It has created the personal, social, economic and political caste ideologies. The various authors and scholars approached the issue of caste and women's issues in different manner. The social scientists and social Anthropologist, in their studies mainly focused on the caste stratification ideology evolutionary perspective, dialectical orientation and, the relevant issues of caste and class exploitation, power relationship and social mobility. In the context of women's issues they dealt with sex blindness and explained the existed women's position and status in the caste system and their roles in family, religion and society. The invisibly related the gender, caste and social hierarchy of women. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the feminist scholars questioned the women's subordination and showed the how constraints on women developed historically with the formation of caste system and patriarchal caste hierarchy. They dangers that it posed against the women in the caste structure and the development of the gender division control over of female sexuality economic positions and the violence against women and radically question the monopoly of caste. This chapter discusses the various ideological views of Indian caste system, women's position in the caste and social hierarchy the caste related violence in generally and women specifically by the different scholars.
3.1 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF CASTE

Louis Dumont distinguishes between the gradations of caste and stratification. The gradation of caste he says, are based on the ideology of the opposition between the pure and impure derived from the Hindu religious values, whereas class stratification is band up with the variables of economic and political power; that is, it stems from the opposition of superior and inferior. The former is designated as hierarchy and the later as power. Hierarchy and power are independent of each other, although under certain conditions one may subsume the other. According to Hutton seems caste have been originally the four classes into which Rig vedic society was divided in as Brahmana, Kshathriya, Vaisya and Sudra. The first three categories were collectively called ‘dvijas’ meaning the ‘twice-born whereas the last category is called ‘ekjati’ the ‘once-born’. The outcastes are constituting the fifth order the ‘panchamas’ are below the sudras.

Yogendra Singh outlines four types of caste principles (i) cultural universalistic; it is considered as a matter of ideology or value system, that of hierarchy (ii) cultural particularistic; it is the ideology of purity-pollution which refers to India alone (iii) structural universalistic; it considers caste only as a particular case of general phenomenon of a closed form of social

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stratification (iv) structural particularistic; it confines itself to Indian society\(^3\). Caste is not just a system of social stratification based on ritual purity and impurity of people, things and occupations. Economic and power dimensions have also been the central foci of the caste system. K.L Sharma says caste as an integrating and cohesive factor in the village community as it encompasses kinship ties, political and economical relationships. And it involves not only an ideological system but also differential access to control over resources and differential access to power. (Sharma K.L, 1997)\(^4\). Emile Senart defines A caste system is one whereby a society is divided into a number of self contained and completely segregated units (castes), the natural relations between which are ritually determined by a graded scale\(^5\).

3.2 PERSPECTIVES OF CASTE SYSTEM

E.A.H. Blunt defines this way; Caste is a endogamous group or collection of endogamous groups bearing a common name, membership of which is hereditary arising from birth alone; imposing on its members certain restrictions in the matter of social intercourse; either

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(i) following a common traditional occupation or
(ii) claiming a common origin or
(iii) both following such occupation and claiming such origin and generally regarded as forming a single homogeneous community.

F.G. Bailey defined the caste system in India refers to the three characteristics - its "rigidity" and its "ramifications in cultural and structural terms. First that rigidity as the essential feature of caste system is beyond criticism. However castes are no longer a closed system. In modern times, they have been at least peripheral changes. Bailey goes on to say that the second definition relating to Indian set of religious beliefs is the cultural type which is more relevant than the first than first since the caste system has been defined in terms of religious beliefs or ideas connected with purity. The third definition of caste by Bailey is a structural definition based on exclusiveness, exhaustiveness and ranking of caste system.

Singh says Caste in India is basic to functional social relations. It is also basic primary group that determines power and authority structure and primary groups are marked by higher degree of feeling and integration. Though increasing casteism and role of caste have lead to diverse conflict in rural society. Gabriele Dietrich explains caste as a phenomenon belonging

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8 Singh, *Rural Leadership among Scheduled Castes*
to the superstructure of feudal society. By this they meant that feudal landlordism used the religious notions and social practices associated with caste to justify and enhance their economic control over peasants and laborers. SN Singh, says the caste system is so complex and it is governed by the twin principles division and hierarchy. The principle of division refers to divisiveness of society into a number of groups and sub groups with certain characters. The principle of hierarchy refers to the arrangement of these groups into a gradation of high and low.

3.3 CASTE AND JATI

G.S Ghyrye (1969) refers to the origin of caste explains that the word ‘jati’ the vernacular term for caste etymologically means something into which one is ‘born’. Kolenda Pauline defines caste as a system of descent groups, that the word jati used to refer to a community with in a village, but it is also used to refer to the set of such village locals which intermarry. David G Mandelbum views the endogamous decent groups of Indian society as jatis rather than as caste, according to him people of different jatis commonly work together in their village. In this same, jatis may be seen as

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component groups of system village-community relations. The system of varnas-units as well as their arrangement is broadly the same throughout the country and has remained more or less unaltered for over 2000 years. The jatis on the other hand differ somewhat from one region to other, and the natural positions in any given region have also changed from time to time. And he sees jatis as the inner dynamics of the caste system (Beteille).

3.4 SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Dumont perceives hierarchy as the domination of thought rather than of things as it is the ideology of pollution purity that determines high and low in the society in regard to people, clothes, occupation and positions. Marx analysis of evolution of society, state and forces of production provides antagonism and contradictions are the causes of differentiation and change and these have been inevitable phenomena of change in the system of social stratification. The structuring of social inequality is a life process of the placement of individuals, families and groups. Morton Links caste with physical force and economic power and social inequality is measured in terms of the distribution of material resources and power.

13 David, G Mandelbum, Society in India Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1972, Pp.51
16 Karl Marx, and Frederick Engles, The German Ideology Moscow: progress publishers, 1968, Pp.36.
3.5 POLITICIZATION OF CASTE

Politicization of caste pervasiveness makes universal aspect of change, in which politicians not only use caste in order to use organize their power but also mobilize the masses i.e., to unite to fight the hegemony of caste which monopolize power in the political area. In its relation to politics, caste exhibits a dialectical change. Politicians making use of caste whenever and wherever possible turning caste itself into instrument of upward mobility. Dominant castes as well ascendant castes and their caste are associations transplanting and their local rivalries influence into the area of electoral politics through tied in with the important political parties.

3.6 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Neera Desai & Usha Thakkar, describes women are considered as a property i.e., all men, even property less men, view women as their property. Defined violence is a coercive mechanism to assert will over other, in order to prove or feel sense of power. It can be perpetuated by those in power against the powerless or by the powerless in relation against coercion by others to deny their powerlessness. Rape is a form of violence generally used crush protest movements or demoralize opponents during communal or caste confronts. Violence against women is part of general violence found in social structure such as class, caste, religion, ethnicity and the way of

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state controls people, it also encompasses aspects of structural violence and forms of control and coercion exercised through hierarchal and patriarchal gender relationships in the family and society. The state perpetuates violence against women in the name of cultural legitimacy and the maintenance of "law and order". Moreover, the coercive power of state & army) often use sexual violence against women in caste and communal clashes and women in police custody (Govind, Kelkar)

Margaret Schuler defines gender violence "any act involving use of force or coercion with an intent of perpetuating/ promoting hierarchical relations". Further, (i) The community (i.e., social, economic, religious and cultural institutions) provides the mechanisms for perpetuating male control over women's sexuality, mobility and labour. (ii) Rape and punishment of the female members of "enemy" groups are forms of gender violence used today many parts where conflicts are rise

3.7 VIOLENCE AGAINST DALIT WOMEN

Caste is a powerful agent, which legitimized violent practices on women and particularly increasing violence on lower caste women

Gail Omvedt states the dalit women who bear the triple burden of caste


21 Ibid: Pp 1-10

oppression, class exploitation and gender discrimination. And (i) the process of “sanskritisation” and strengthening of market economy, liberalization, privatization and globalization have actually all combined to adversely effect the social and economic status of dalit women. (ii) physical and sexual violence against dalit women is resorted to by their oppressors when they are involved in struggles for their rights.

3.8 WOMEN AND CASTE SYSTEM

Gaikwad, Haideo says the system of caste considers the women’s duty (Dharma) to suffer all kinds of torture, acquiesce to physical violence and keep the household. Many rituals and customs proved this – giving downy to the bride groom during the marriage ceremony the practices of male leaded households, males owning the property males controlling the decision making process. Dr. Babasahe Ambedkar points that the practices of sati, compulsory widowhood and child marriage as means which were employed to create and perpetuate by force endogamy, superimposing it on the earlier exogamous system. The existence of these means is identical with caste and caste involves these means.

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25 Babasahe Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches, Govt of Maharashtra, Vol. I PP. 3
3.9 WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

The Women’s Liberation Movements has focused primarily the issues like widow remarriage, child marriage, domestic violence, sexual atrocities and existed injustice and exploitation of the social order of caste to bring about a change the inequality ridden society. The 19th century social reform movement had focused on urban, educated, Brahmin women and had not brought to the forefront issue of caste discrimination. The women’s movement emerged in 1975 with the leadership of upper caste elite. Therefore the issues earmarked by the movements were issues affecting the upper caste and middle class. Their work has remained restricted with in the parameter of issues like women’s education, employment, security, legal issues and problems of women affected by natural calamities. They had invisibility in the women’s emancipation from religions and caste bondage. The Dalit movement has expressed that the religion has led to the subordination of women and women’s liberation linked to abolition of caste oppression. The dalit women’s movement analysis ‘rape’ as an out come of the complex relation ship between caste and women’s subordination.

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27 Ibid: Pp 115-119
3.10 GENDER CASTE AND PATRIARCHY

Joanna & Rama Joshi's study of "Indian Women" in the context of interconnections between gender, caste and class they write; The patriarchal upper castes tightened both caste and gender divisions as they consolidated their economic supremacy and defended challenges to that supremacy. These processes reveal the link between female sexuality and the economic position of the community, where the female property is removed from the family at marriage but is contained within the caste group by controls on the women's sexuality\(^\text{28}\). The subordination of women in caste system, the factor patriarchy which suppress the women culturally in Hindu society. The concepts of purity, hierarchy separation and opposition are very strongly present in many patriarchal culture i.e., A woman is passive, a man active (opposition), a woman is impure and a man is pure (purity-impurity), a man is head of the family and woman is subordinated (hierarchy) and a man is rational, woman is emotional (separation) are gender ideological assumptions used and reconstructed in the caste system\(^\text{29}\).

Leela Dubae, Leacock and Shirley Andener ,ed., views patriarchal stratification system and status of women are inter-related and any kind of positive change in women's status would be attack an attack on patriarchy


and stratification systems like caste and class. Gabriele Dietrich & Bas Wielenga defines patriarchy has been control over the women’s labour, their sexuality and fertility and patriarchy has the straight forward way of power relations which makes it possible tolerate it to caste, class and role of state. Connel R.W explains gender regimes refer to a complex of institutions (family, work, state) that cerate and substantiate gender inequalities; gender is reproduced within these institutions through ‘male reason’ and the dichotomy of ‘maleness’ and ‘femaleness’ gender regime is a cluster of practices, ideological and material, which in a given social context, acts to construct various images of masculinity and femininity and thereby to consolidate forms of gender inequality. Rege, Sharmila acknowledged collusion and contestation between patriarchy and Brahmanism (upper caste practices and ideologies) reveals the exercise of power through the differential definitions and management of gender by caste.

3.11 CONTEXTS OF COMMUNALISM

Bipan Chandra distinguishes three steps in the process leading to communal violence:

1. Declaring the religious community the base for common secular interests.
2. Declaring that not only one religion differs from the other—which is obvious—but that the secular interest of one religious community are different from those of another.
3. Declaring that these different interests are opposed to each other. Once people are convinced that what is economically or politically good for the other community must be bad for the own community, or the other way around, communal violence gets easily justified.

Oommen distinguishes between different types of communalism, playing different roles in the Indian political context. T.K. Oommen proposes the following classification:

1. Assimilationist communalism, as pursued by the State and by a section of conservative Hindus, tries to define non-Hindus as Hindus. This happens with Scheduled Caste and Tribes, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs.
2. Welfarist communalism aims at improving the welfare of a particular community.
3. Retreatist communalism is characteristic of small religious groups which withdraw from politics in the name of religion.
4. Retaliatory communalism refers to the mechanism of retaliation in communal riots.
5. Separatist communalism insists on a separate cultural identity.
6. This may eventually escalate into secessionist communalism depending how it is managed.

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3.12 FACTORS INFLUENCING CONFLICTS

The power of casteism can be seen from the phenomenon of conflicts between communities trying to assert superiority claims over each other as well as political, economical, ideological and religious factors are play role in communal conflicts\(^\text{36}\). Arjun Appadurai\(^\text{37}\) says the worshiping pattern, festivals, and redistribution and reciprocity of honors (mariyathai) are creating conflict among groups and sub groups. Kuppusamy says the awareness about rights, education, modernization, industrialization and sanskritization led to inter caste tension and rioting violence of arson and says\(^\text{38}\). Georg Simmel stress the conflict is admitted to cause or modify interest groups, unifications, organizations and infact dissociating factors - hate, envy, need, desire are the causes of conflict\(^\text{39}\). Muzaffar Assadi writes industrialization, upward mobility, competitive economy and increasing potentiality are geared the communal riots among the groups\(^\text{40}\).


\(^{38}\) Kuppusamy, Social Change in India


\(^{40}\) Assadi, Muzaffar, "Communal Violence in Costal Belt" Economic and Political Weekly, Feb-20, 1999.
Edward A Rodrigues comments the refusal of the dalits to accept their
traditional lowest position in the caste hierarchy and asserting their rights for
land, wages, control of panchayats, a life of dignity and self-respect are the
roots for variety of atrocities committed against the dalits\textsuperscript{41} and the money,
liquor, police, politicians, unemployment and caste leaders are played the
major roles in caste clashes\textsuperscript{42}.