Chapter VII

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This chapter sums-up the study and makes a comprehensive and comparative statement on the major analyses done in the earlier chapters regarding exclusion and marginalization of Dalits in the autobiographies—Joothan: A Dalit's Life, The Branded: Uchalya, The Weave of My Life: Aaydan and Karukku. Marginalization and exclusion are two mutually supportive processes leading to inequality in society. In India, they are the result of social processes and institutions that exclude, discriminate, isolate and deprive the historically disadvantaged groups such as Dalits. The social exclusion of Dalits results in deprival and limits their individual opportunities. The nature of exclusion has centered on the caste system, untouchability and gender. The fundamental features of caste system—fixed social, cultural and economic rights for each caste by birth, with restrictions on change—have created various forms of exclusion and marginalization.

Dalit autobiography is an expression of protest against the inhuman conditions of existence to which the Hindu caste system has subjected the Dalits for thousands of years. Dalit autobiography is less about a Dalit individual than about the community/caste. That is, it is a collective biography of a people that have been structurally subordinated for centuries. Dalit autobiography places the individual's story within the public domain, in a discourse that makes the story worth sharing with others. The descriptions of the localized individual's suffering are located within larger historical contexts of collective pain. In Dalit autobiography, the narrative moves from individual to community through a re-telling of exclusion and marginalization. Dalit autobiography is about the re-construction of the self after the traumatic event. Dalit autobiographer never cares for the set form and norms of autobiography. S/he gives more importance to
content than the form. Dalit autobiography is content-oriented rather than orienting to form.

In contrast to the parts of western India which came under the influence of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, the State of Uttar Pradesh did not experience any large-scale anti-caste movement during the colonial period that resulted in a delayed development of political consciousness among Dalits. The reasons lie in the rigid and unchanging character of the social structure in the state, the nature/form of mobilization experienced during the national movement, and the impact of Dr B. R. Ambedkar, which was felt therein much later than in Maharashtra and only by a small elite in widely separated pockets. The caste structure in the north Indian plains differs fundamentally from that of southern and western India. Though the inspirational sources of these autobiographies are different; the autobiographers’ writings form the backdrop of thoughts and movement of Phule-Ambedkar. These autobiographies reveal the physical and mental blockages resulted from traditional hierarchal social system and lack of education. The exclusion and marginalization of Dalit voices on the basis of caste, untouchability and gender make the core of these autobiographies.

Caste and gender are the major factors of a Dalit’s exclusion and marginalization. Caste has undergone many changes with development and urbanization but it continues to be an important fact in the public life of Dalits. The castes decide, even after sixty years of independence, the status and position of people in Indian society. The castes offer respect and reverence to the dominant and deny human or fundamental rights to the marginal and excluded. The local dominant castes, the influential villagers and the feudalist people try to keep Dalits away from the rudimentary necessaries like education, societal relations and religious celebrations. The caste consciousness never permits the dominant upper-castes to accept Dalits as superior to them and follow a Dalit’s instructions at workplace. Dalit’s dominance in education and in societal relations has become, it is quite clear, the root cause of resentment and anger among the upper castes in the village and in town life. Dalits are still living almost beyond the margin. Dalits are a heterogeneous group of people and victims of severe discrimination. They are a marginalized section of Hindu
society, disowned by that society even though they are part of it. Dalit men and women are excluded in the name of traditions, rites and rituals and marginalized for their poverty and hunger. Their economic marginalization is linked with caste and untouchability. These important aspects of Indian social life are presented in the select autobiographies.

The selected autobiographies cover the period of Indian social life from pre-Independence to post-independence. Valmiki’s *Joothan* begins with the arrival of Christian missionaries and ends with the fruits of Indian democracy. It explains the marginal situation of Chuhras or Bhangis in pre-and-post Independent India. Similarly, Laxman Gaikwad in his *The Branded* delineates the position of Uchalyas in British India and Independent India. In *The Weave of My Life* Urmila Pawar has recorded the time of Mahars in pre-Ambedkarite era and post-Ambedkarite epoch. She has represented the marginal situation of Mahars and neo-Buddhists or Buddhists. The Untouchables of Tamil Nadu like Paraiyars embraced Christianity owing to the cruelties and injustices inflicted on them by Hinduism. Though the Tamil Paraiyars converted to Christianity, they have neither place nor value in Christianity and Hinduism respectively. The journey of Paraiyars from an Untouchable to a Dalit Christian is documented in *Karukku*.

Omprakash Valmiki’s autobiography, *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* is an authentic documentation of exclusion and marginalization of the protagonist and his community in the state of Utter Pradesh. Valmiki more emphatically speaks of the caste/untouchability-based exclusion than the other autobiographers do. Urmila Pawar’s has a head-on confrontation with Brahminical hegemony on the one hand and with patriarchal domination on the other. Her world is physically located on the margins of the village and also on the periphery of the ‘social imaginary’ which is at once alienating and alienated by being cut off from the village as unclean, impure, polluting and untouchables. She graphically describes the physical and psychological violence women have to undergo in both the public and private spheres. If the Mahar community is the ‘other’ for the Brahmins, Mahar women become the ‘other’ even for the Mahar men. Urmila Pawar demonstrates how caste and patriarchy converge to perpetuate exploitative practices
against women. Her autobiography discloses the diverse ways in which construction of the resistant selfhood and subjectivity of not just a person but an entire marginalized community happens. Pawar’s *The Weave of My Life* is a conventional autobiography and Bama’s *Kamkku* flouts the established conventions of writing an autobiography. *Kamkku* eschews the confessional mode and avoids a linear narrative. The conventional autobiography is a connected narrative wherein the author presents his/her episodes chronologically. The anecdotes and experiences in the author’s life generally illustrate the narrator’s journey to success. On the other contrary, *Kamkku* is a painful journey that is open-ended and many questions are left unanswered. It is not a “complete success story” like a conventional autobiography. It is rather a revelation of the bitter reality of the social ills confronted by a Dalit woman. Bama’s narrative, to a great degree, does not deal with herself, but with the context of Dalit life in which she grew up and acquired certain self-awareness.

In the life stories of Dalits chosen for the research work, the heroes and heroines have become educated because of the illiterate parents. Omprakash Valmiki is sent to school by his father Chotan Lal who thinks education could improve the caste. Chotan Lal works hard and educates his son. Martand working as a guard at Chamle’s farm gives his son, Laxman ‘a slate and pencil’ instead of a ‘Bharat blade’. Martand realizes that his child must learn to read and write. He faces the opposition of the higher castes and of his own community yet he sends his son to school. He never allows Laxman to go for the thieving trips. Arjun Pawar strictly provides his attention to the education of his daughters—Shanta, Manjula and Urmila. For him, education is the sole of self-reliance. So he educates his daughters and also advises his wife to educate the children during his last days. Bama’s father enrols his daughter in the school. And he educates her but the thought of his daughter’s marriage makes him fearful. He then warns Bama to give up schooling. These educated Dalits—Omprakash, Laxman, Urmila and Bama are made to sit outside the classroom. They bear the beatings and batterings of feudalistic upper caste teachers and students in the school life. Being born in the untouchable castes—Chuhra or Bhangi, Uchalya or Pathrut, Mahar and Paraiyar, they are strictly forbidden in the societal activities of the village.
The narrative self, like the self in the West, is not disembodied and is deeply rooted in the mores of community. This self is partly constituted by the life-story and acquires larger meaning only in the context of the narrative of community. This self is both the individual and the collective. This narrative self in Dalit women’s autobiographies is historically located and sociologically constituted. It is this normative link between the individual and the community that empowers Dalit women to offer dispassionate criticism of community practices. Dalit women’s stories, unlike that of Dalit male autobiographies, are more inward-looking as they tend to interrogate the evil practices of Dalit community. Dalit autobiography also questions the larger social system for its anti-Dalit stance. As is the case, Dalit women flow freely in their autobiographies. This is because Dalit women autobiographers are relatively free from the colonization of their body by the Dalit patriarchy. Both the objective and subjective factors have led Mahar-Buddhist women to achieve the required confidence to write autobiographies, as the statement of protest both against the internal as well as external structures of exclusion and marginalization.

Dalit women’s autobiographies are a matter of their outcry that goes in various spheres—literary gatherings, academic gatherings, publishing sphere and other spheres of recognition, like political parties. The Mahar-Buddhist women have developed self-consciousness of their marginalization and exclusion that they make only a guest appearance in autobiographies written by Dalit males. In the autobiographies written by the Dalit males, woman is projected as a sacrificing mother or a mother patiently enduring pain and suffering but quite rarely as the agency of change. It is this subordinated image of women that keeps appearing in the male Dalit autobiographies.

The life stories of Bama and Urmila Pawar decisively demolish the myth which certifies Dalit patriarchy as democratic. The narratives of exclusion, marginalization, humiliation and starvation are common to both the autobiographies. The theme of resistance, against Dalit patriarchy in particular and social patriarchy in general, is also commonly seen. Dalit woman is doubly marginalized: by the upper-caste man and Dalit male. She is economically marginalized and socially excluded in the man centered society. Though
Dalit woman is ‘excluded among the excluded’, she is free to access education, marital relations and decisions of economy. Dalit woman enjoys a greater freedom than the upper-caste woman in public and private domains of life. Dalit community is also a patriarchal one. It is a form of Brahmanical patriarchy. In Dalit patriarchy, woman struggles for individual identity and tries to pose herself on equal footing to man. She fights against not only the injustice posed by her man but also the atrocities imposed upon her by the dominant upper-caste man. She is not considered as a mere thing of commodity in Dalit community. Most of the families are headed by women after the headman’s death. She is capable and wise to tackle the familial, social and economic problems of her household. She works hard to make both ends meet. She makes decisions in the absence of her husband along with her children’s nourishment. The wives are beaten up and abused by their male counterparts. The girl child is not easily welcomed in Dalit communities. The proper attention is not provided to the nourishment and upbringing of the male as well as female child. The Jat-panchayat or caste council controls the activities of woman more powerfully in the Uchalya community than the other Dalit communities—Mahar-Buddhist, Chuhra and Parayiar. The codes of Jat-panchayat deny freedom of speech to the members of the community against its cruelties and exclusion. Dalit women are doubly marginalized compared to the upper-caste women. Dalit women have to undergo both caste-based and patriarchal exclusion and therefore both materially and non-materially they are more oppressed in comparison to upper-caste women. In general, in the context of patriarchy and caste, it is admitted that just as the upper castes look down and marginalize the lower castes, the latter in turn look down and exclude their own women. Dalit women have to bear labour pain, produce labour power and suffer the brunt of poverty more than the men. Besides, Dalit women are easy targets of rape and other atrocities from males, especially of the dominant castes. Therefore, Dalit woman is marginalized as a woman, as a Dalit and as a poor human being. Her exclusion is concerned with the system of family, caste and male-dominated culture.
Nation in Dalit Writing

Dalits believe that the creation of a larger, anonymous and egalitarianly-constituted solidarity is nation. Nation is an ideal society suffused with the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. Nation is a social amalgamation. Dalit writing stresses more carefully the man and his society. It clearly shows that men constitute a society because they have things which they possess in common. Dalit poetry explains that Hindu nation is a broken country full of divisions of castes and religion having hierarchal and graded social order. In Hindu nation, castes decide the dignity and status of human beings. Dalit short stories, novels, dramas and autobiographies expose nation as a new social formation characterized by a consciousness of unity and fraternity leading to increased, intensified but also non-discriminate social exchanges.

Exclusion and Marginalization of Omprakash Valmiki

The casteist mindset of upper caste teachers and students prevents Omprakash from getting access to education. The teachers having feudalistic mentality not only beat but make Omprakash sweep the whole school instead of making him study. Teasing, beating and swearing are used to exclude Omprakash from the educational access point. To make Omprakash silent in the class, the teachers use derogatory and casteist terms in the classroom. He is kept out of extracurricular activities due to his bhanginess. His Chuhra caste becomes a hurdle in obtaining good marks in the practicals. The upper-caste Tyagi teachers and fellow students do not allow the low-caste students like Ompraksh to participate in the common activities of the school. The disclosure of his surname Valmiki creates a dissociation of his upper-caste friends and relatives. Omprakash has also to face the literary exclusion as his literary creation is not published in the established magazine.

Exclusion and Marginalization of the Chuhra Community

The Chuhras work for the upper-caste Tagas without any payment and are made to live on marginal wages. The Chuhras are economically marginalized by the Tagas. No wages are paid to the Chuhras for the disposal of the dead cattle. The Chuhras are marginalized
and excluded from the common activities on the basis of their caste-based occupations and duties. The centuries-old customs ban the honour and respect to the Chuhra.

**Exclusion and Marginalization of Laxman**

His belongingness to Uchalya community makes him the subject of his classmates' mocking. Laxman is utterly neglected in his family, excluded and marginalized in the parliamentary election, made to work without wages and prevented from sharing his ideas in the meeting of the managerial board. The rooms on the rent are denied to Laxman for his caste. Fear of ostracization prevents him from speaking against the community Panchayat.

**Exclusion and Marginalization of the Uchalya Community**

The Uchalya community is forced to live outside in the nation. The upper castes and classes of Hindu hierarchal society never treat them as human beings. The theory of purity and pollution granted by Hindu philosophy and religion discriminates and excludes the Uchalya community and segregates it from the human capability and capacity building processes. Eating the flesh of animals and birds ostracizes Uchalyas as untouchables. The caste Hindus did not allow the Pathruts to take water from public well. Uchalyas were not given any job in the village for their criminality. The dominant castes like Marathas treated the Uchalyas inhumanly. The police-Patil, the policemen and the influential village people reduce the Uchalyas from human beings to the level of animals. Lawyers and the political leaders also neglect the Uchalyas. The Uchalya woman is excluded and marginalized on the basis of gender.

**Exclusion and Marginalization of Urmila**

Urmila is treated as a meaningless girl child in her own family. Her family members show unwillingness to her marriage with Harishchandra. Urmila is denied the right of education after her marriage and is treated as an 'alien' in her own house. She is denigrated to the status of worthless person. Her life partner does not provide her 'space' and 'power' to take decisions. Urmila is marginalized at her workplace and in the literary domain. As a woman she is excluded and marginalized in Dalit movement. Being born in
Mahar community, Uraiila is marginalized at school. She is denied rental rooms because of her caste. Urmila is made to stand on the threshold of customers’ houses and not allowed to enter them. The gender-based marginalization and caste-based exclusion form the core of Pawar’s autobiography.

Exclusion and Marginalization of the Mahar Community

Mahars are not allowed a place in the village celebrations. They are forbidden to touch the palanquin of gods and goddesses. The women activists and the toiling Mahar women are marginalized by Mahar men, upper-caste men and upper-caste women. Being marginalized within their own community they are threatened into silence or absolute devaluation. Their marginalization is not the outcome of ignorance, nor is it caused by one’s laziness and foolishness but certainly it is the direct outcome of one’s stature both as Dalit and as a woman. To be Dalit and female is to suffer from the double jeopardy of casteist discrimination and a deplorable gender bias.

Exclusion and Marginalization of Bama

Bama’s autobiography *Karukku* elaborates the statement of what it is to be a Dalit and a woman. A Dalit woman is a Dalit amongst the Dalits. She is thus doubly oppressed by her caste and gender. In Bama’s case her position is further endangered by her existence as a Dalit Christian. Hence *Karukku* focuses on three essential forces that cut across and sear Bama’s life, viz., caste, gender and religion. Bama is marginalized due to her Parayaness in the school. Being a low-caste nun Bama is excluded in the convent, in the Church and in the religious order of Christianity. Bama works in a Christian order where the Tamils are considered inferior and a Tamil Parayar is the lowest of the low and holds no esteem. The order itself has had its own reservation about Dalit women and would not accept Dalit women as prospective nuns and feels that there is a separate order for them somewhere. Bama is admitted in the order only after it is confirmed that a convent has asked for her services. She finds that the Convent is not devoid of caste consciousness. The upper-caste students enjoy greater status and respect from the nuns. The nuns in the convent constantly throw insults and abuse against Dalit students. Dalit children perform
jobs like sweeping the premises, washing and cleaning the lavatories. The nuns feel that
the low-caste people are all degraded in some way and have no moral discipline nor
cleanliness nor culture. In the midst of the tyrannical nuns, Bama dies several deaths
within. She is excluded and marginalized in the family, in the convent and in the society.

Exclusion and Marginalization of the Paraya Community

Parayas are excluded and marginalized in the name of God, and in the name of serving
the poor, by the upper-caste priests and nuns. Parayas are segregated inside the Church
during worship and discouraged from serving at ritual or being part of the Church choir.
Their dead cannot be buried in common cemeteries. Within the Christian churches' organisational structures, the Parayas are excluded in their recruitment to the clergy and in the distribution of positions of power and privileges. What the Church is to Christians, caste is to Hindus. The non-Christians like Nadars, Naickers and Aiyars never appoint and admit the low castes or Dalits in their schools in the capacity of ‘teacher’. The Catholics or the Christians debar the low castes or Dalits for their poor quality. And the non-Christian upper-castes keep Dalits away from the rest for their lowly caste. Thus, the Catholics as well as non-Christians interdict Dalits from education and employment. Bama gives a clear picture of the caste-based exclusion of the Dalit Christians not only by the upper-caste society but more so within the Catholic Church itself.

The social ostracisation resulted from caste-based occupations that associated with
untidiness and pollution and is the source of Dalits social exclusion. What is conspicuous in the case of the social exclusion of Dalits is that they have been made to feel conscious of it; they have been constantly reminded of their subordination by different forms of undemocratic practices in their everyday life. The seclusion of Dalits prevents them from social contract with the village mainstream. The spatial ostracisation of Dalits in the village which has been a kind of cementing of the social ostracisation becomes a responsible factor for their politico-economic marginalization and exclusion. The topography and demography of every village has been structured in such a way that the clusters of the houses are and still are separated by the caste lines. The houses of the Brahmins, upper-caste landed gentry, backward castes and the most backward castes are
situated in the main village in a corresponding hierarchical order. The Dalits are excluded from any form of contact with the language and culture of the main village. The geographical distance as well as the social ‘othering’ of Dalits make it clear that Dalits remain mostly untouched.

The caste-based exclusion is more powerful than the rest factors like gender, untouchability, traditional occupations, religion, region, language, age, dress, food, surname and biological factors. Dalits are excluded and marginalized in civil, social, cultural, political and economic spheres. Their exclusion and marginalization lead to lack of income earning capital assets like agricultural land, employment, education, and social needs like housing, water, and electricity. Dalits have faced violence and atrocities in their attempts to secure human rights and lawful entitlements. The restriction assumes various forms, ranging from social and economic boycott to physical violence. The present study has also brought out the evidence on the exclusionary and discriminatory treatment by public institutions in operation of food security and in enforcement of anti-discrimination laws by the police, judiciary and organs of the state involved in delivery of social justice. The exclusion and marginalization in multiple spheres and violent opposition by the high castes and powerful civil society and also by some organs of state have drastically reduced Dalits' freedom and capacity to use civil, political and economic rights and equal opportunities. The failure of entitlement due to caste-based exclusion is in a significant magnitude. From the present study, it becomes apparent that the caste/untouchability-based exclusion and marginalization of Dalits, in past, and its continuation in the present, still continues to be one of the main reasons for their lower human development and higher deprival and poverty. The social and cultural sources of exclusion—including low self-esteem, stigma, discrimination and denial of citizenship—are rooted in the informal social structure and institution of caste and untouchability which cover not only the private but spill over to public domain governed by the State. In economic, civic and political spheres of life, the Chuhras, the Uchalyas, the Mahars and the Parayiars have been excluded and marginalized. Social mobility, ostracism and marginalization of the Dalits go hand in hand. Hence, it is concluded that the autobiographies—*Joothan: A Dalit's Life, The Branded: Uchalya, The Weave of My Life:*
Aaydan and Karukku—reveal the exclusion and marginalization of Dalits at individual and community levels. The exclusion and marginalization are based on the factors—caste, caste-based occupations, untouchability, gender, poverty, religion, region, language, surname, clothes, biological phenomena and age.

The English translations have become important for transmission of life words both within the country and outside it. Translation makes Dalit experience available to a larger public through its reproduction in English and other languages. Translation plays an important role in terms of creating a moral impact upon the recalcitrant self, usually from the upper caste. It can open an ethical/moral corridor within the hardened self. Translations help in bridging the gap between two minds existing in two different spaces and times, viz. the sociological space in terms of the caste location, and the intellectual space it allows Dalit concerns to occupy. It also connects two minds existing in two different spatial contexts. The story of the self, translated in a communicative language also makes known the foreignness of other's mind. First order translation seeks to communicate the life experience at the horizontal terrain of language transition.

Suggestions for Further Research

The study tentatively concludes by suggesting that the representation of all these writers provides a comprehensive understanding of Dalit India from the colonial period to the present time. It argues that the exclusion and marginalization of Dalits based on caste, untouchability and gender could be studied by comparing Indian Dalit autobiographies in English translation. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to study Dalit writings emerging at present and available so far in the area of Translation Study and Cultural Studies. This has been done to bring out the gap between popular culture and Dalit culture to reduce the cultural distance existing in Indian society. This analysis would hopefully open up new perspectives on the study of Dalit writings in English translation. Above all, it would be an advance towards the criticism available so far on the subject. It is hoped that the study would stimulate further work in these areas in times to come.

308