

Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Dalit Women's Life Narratives

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Introduction:

Dalit Literature is an articulation of unrepresented painful past of former 'untouchables' of the Indian subcontinent. They were kept outside the four Varnas of Hindu social order. 'Untouchables' is also called 'depressed classes' (Ambedkar), 'Harijans' (Gandhiji), 'Scheduled Castes' (Article 341, Indian Constitution) and 'Dalits'; the last being their self-chosen terminology. According to Zelliott, "Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution."

(1996: 268). According to Bhoite & Bhoite, “Dalit Sahitya (Literary) Movement is not purely a literary movement as it sounds to be; a deeper analysis reveals that it is basically a social movement” (1977: 74), for the liberation of Dalits and to bring about fundamental changes in the Indian social order.

Dalit Literature as a quest for identity and social equality mainly articulates the oppressed history of a community; documenting atrocities and discrimination done to Dalits by the hegemony of upper-caste people. But the developing Dalit literature had its own internal limitations. The gender question had either not been comprehended or kept excluded from the ‘mainstream’ Dalit literature. “Dalit women’s issues did not have any place on the agenda of the Dalit movement and the Women’s movement. Even today things have not changed.” (Pawar 2015: 260). Seemingly Indian feminism has not broadened its perspective to encompass the concerns of dalit women who are ‘Dalit of Dalits’ (Manorma: 2008). Appropriately “[I]t is not our differences which separate women, but our reluctance to recognize those differences and to deal effectively with the distortions which have resulted from the ignoring and misnaming of those differences.” (Lorde 1984: 122)

Hence the need was felt by women imbued with dalit consciousness, to represent their perspectives and lived experience. The central problem addressed in this article

is how dalit women made creative use of their marginality and the learning from their 'outsider-within' status. The current study illustrates the sociological significance of the select dalit women's life narratives.

Discussion and Analysis:

Dalit women have unique lived experience as this faction comprises of the intersectional oppressions of two groups oppressed on account of their birth: 'Dalits' and 'women'. Dalits in India are the 'depressed classes' (Ambedkar, 1936) and women 'the second sex' (Beauvoir, 1989). These doubly oppressed women are subjugated, downgraded, and marginalized. Hence the need to create a Dalit Feminist Standpoint was felt and traced by many researchers: Gopal Guru (1995), Sharmila Rege (1998), Chhaya Datar (1999). However, 'lived experience' of dalit women and their perspectives could be articulated accurately in their own writing.

The scrutiny of select texts: *Sangati*, *The Weave of My Life*, and *The Prisons We Broke* reveal the common aspect of the lives of their respective writers: Bama Faustina, Urmila Pawar, and Baby Kamble that they all certainly have a privileged standpoint as an 'outsider-within'. The study reflects their development from childhood to fully conscious grown-ups; their odyssey from a marginal space to the dominant social structures fetching them the epistemic benefit of the 'double vision' as a result

of bestriding both sides of a dichotomous social divide. This shaped their new perspectives on life. These narratives can be called 'social epiphanies' which made dalit women trail the ethics of black women writers: 'politicizing of their memory', 'remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present' (Hooks 1990: 147). The other commonality of dalit women writers is that they all have written their narratives in their regional languages and the visibility of these minor texts has been accredited to the political commitment of their translators. Maya Pandit has crossed many borders and very proficiently introduced the readers who are 'outsiders', to the nooks and corners of Indian Marathi region in her translations of the two original Marathi texts into English: Kamble's *Jina Aamcha* (1985) as *The Prisons We Broke* (2008) and Pawar's *Aaydan* (2003) as *The Weave of My Life: Dalit Women's Memoirs* (2008). *Sangati*, an English translation by Lakshmi Holmstrom of the second work of Bama, published in Tamil (1994) conveys the essence of the original text without sensationalizing its subject matter. As a result, what is from the margins in the regional language and culture has been brought into the vanguard of the international arena for the sake of bonding with similar cultural forces operating within other cultures. Thus like black women intellectuals the 'double vision' of dalit women writers helped them to understand that the privileged classes and the patriarchy use ideologies to restrict these women to the periphery, consequently limiting their access to societal resources

and institutions in order to control, define, and marginalize their location.

The term ‘Outsider-within’ was first coined by Patricia Hill Collins (1986). ‘Outsider-within’ status holder occupies a special space that their difference makes; they become different people, ‘the other’, ‘marginalized’ and vice-versa. It shapes the perspective of the experiencer which locates a unique standpoint. ‘Outsider-within’ status was captured by bell hooks, a black feminist critic while giving an account of her small-town, Kentucky childhood. She states, ‘living as we did –on the edge – we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out... we understood both’ (1984: vii). Their difference makes them conscious of patterns or social constructions that may be beyond the comprehension or sight of sociological insiders. Therefore, the select narratives reveal some common themes.

Three Key Themes in Dalit Women’s Life Narratives:

The lived experiences of dalit women are painful: “When drawing on bitter memories and writing about them, the tendency to reconstruct instead of resurrecting the past is inevitable” (Whitehead, 2009:126). Chandran and Hashim (2014) assert that in the process of reconstructing, writers may choose to restructure and present

events or experiences according to the importance that deems appropriate. Accordingly, the writers of the select texts while writing about the oppression and marginalization of dalit community develop a strong leaning towards feminist issues for the reason that gender with caste forms a lethal combination in the life of women. As a result consideration of the interlocking nature of caste, gender and class oppression is the foremost recurring theme in the select texts followed by the discussion on the endurance and resilience, and the role of women in the transformation of Dalit community.

Secondly, while living life as a dalit woman may produce certain commonalities of outlook, the multiplicity of class, age, religion and sexual orientation shaping individual dalit women's lives has resulted in different expressions of these common themes. Therefore, collective themes which appear in their narratives may be experienced and expressed differently by different groups of dalit women. Finally, it may be undertaken that while Dalit Feminist Standpoint exists, its contours or outline may not be clear to dalit women themselves. Therefore, this paper would be an attempt to theorize the articulation of dalit women's lived experience that will elucidate the Dalit Feminist Standpoint (DFS) and documented experience of depressed women may reach a wider audience. The subsequent discussion of three key themes in select life narratives is itself a fragment of this emerging process of interpretation.

The Interlocking Nature of Oppression:

The texts illustrate that the marginality and social exclusion of Dalit community further pushed their women, being the second sex, into a state of repression, poverty, and ignorance. The interlocking nature of caste, class, and gender oppression of women is appropriately summarized by Bama:

The position of women is both pitiful and humiliating. In the fields, they have to escape from upper-caste men's molestations. At church, they first lick the priest's shoes and be his slaves while he threatens them with tales of God, Heaven, and hell. Even when they go to their own homes, before they have had a chance to cook some kanji or lie down and rest a little, they have to submit themselves to their husband's torment (2005: 35).

This shows dalit women suffer within the household, at the workplace, and in religious places. She is agonized physically, mentally, economically, and spiritually. The effect of caste on the women is closely related to their location within the Indian society. The select texts show that the caste system is most prevalent and stern in rural areas and elucidate power relations and the framework of intersectional oppressions of caste, gender, and class responsible for crippled existence of women. Their main struggle is for survival. "In the face of poverty, the girl

children cannot see the sense in schooling, and stayed at home, collecting firewood, looking after the house, caring for the babies, and doing household chores" (Bama 2012: 79). Kamble states, "Our place was in the garbage pits outside the village, where everyone threw away their waste We ate the leftovers without complaining and labored for others" (2008: 49). This shows the social exclusion and marginal spatial reality of Dalits. Majority of the women who belong to the repressed community work as food gatherers and are mostly dependent on natural resources for their survival. They collect fire wood, dry grass, wild fruits from forests, and variety of fish, crabs, and shells from the creeks. "The Weave portrays the conditions of a subhuman existence of an entire community, shamelessly exploited by the upper castes, reduced to a status of beasts of burden, extremely marginalized" (Pandit 2015: xvi). The text presents an authentic picture of dalit women's hardships:

...women hunted for crawfish or crabs in the rocks by pushing their hands inside. They got drenched in the waves dashing against the rocks. Their hands and feet would be cut by the sharp edges of the rocks, and the salty seawater stung the wounds (Pawar 2015: 44).

These women are also compelled to undertake the dicey journey for their survival to sell their wares. Kamble's Aaji would also go with other women to fetch wood.

Once the big branches were cut and tied in small bundles, and being carried to the village for sale; the caste factor traversed their labor.

They were not allowed to use the regular road that was used by the higher castes. When somebody from these castes walked from the opposite direction, the Mahars had to leave the road, descend down into the shrubbery and walk through the thorny bushes on the roadside. They had to cover themselves fully if they saw any man from the higher castes coming down the road, and when he came close they had to say, "The humble Mahar women fall at your feet". This was like a chant, which they had to repeat innumerable times, even to a small child if it belonged to a higher caste (Kamble 2008: 52)

Such utterances made them accept their subjugation and submission to the social hierarchy maintained on the foundation of religious ideology. These women could not pass without showing due respect to the upper-caste men, otherwise, they had to face the rage of their masters and elder male members of their family. Then the gathered firewood was mostly sold in the Brahmin lane. Every house in this lane had a platform of a chest height meant to prohibit the Mahar women from directly reaching the entrance. Instead, she would call out, "Kaki, firewood! The Mahar women are here with firewood." (Kamble 2008: 54). The kaki would then bargain with them. And finally, these women were asked to carry the

bundles to the courtyard of the house. They had to stack all the wood neatly after checking if any of their thread or hair was not left sticking to the wood that might pollute the lady's house.

Akin to the same principle of submission on the name of caste or religion, hegemonic gender ideology also made them accept the subservient position in marital relations.

We believe that if a woman has her husband she has the whole world; if she does not have a husband, then the world holds nothing for her. It's another thing that these masters of kumkum generally bestow upon us nothing but grief and suffering. (Kamble 2008: 41)

The writers represent numerous cases of violence against dalit women: "At the slightest pretext, the husband showered blows and kicks on her. Sometimes he even whipped her." (Pawar 2015: 112-113); "He would beat me up for flimsy reason... In fact, this was the life most women led" (Kamble 2008: 155); "... the poor women would take her children and cross the hills and valleys at night, her face broken, body swollen, bleeding and aching all over, and reach her mother's house" (Pawar 2015: 33). Therefore, a dalit woman is only a subservient partner in marital relation, only an object of lust fulfillment, and an unpaid servant.

Bama's *Sangati* is an illustration of how patriarchy works in the case of dalit women. The foremost question is of economic inequality. Women presented in *Sangati* are wage earners working as agricultural and building-site laborers, but earning less than men do. Yet the money that men earn is their own to spend as they please, whereas women bear the financial burden of running the family, often single. They are also constantly vulnerable to abuse in the world of work. Hard labor and economic precariousness lead to a culture of violence and this is the theme that Bama explores boldly throughout the book. Bama also exposes the atrocities and sexual exploitations of Dalit women who work as farm laborers for the upper caste landlords. The whole account of Mariamma in *Sangati* validates the inhuman treatment given to poor dalit girls. She fell into the well while working and had been almost crippled, she suffered from malnutrition, a landlord attempted to rape her. But gender and caste politics proved her the perpetrator for which she is made to pay a fine of rupees two hundred. In Dalit community '[I]t's one justice for men and quite another for women' (Bama 2005: 24). Mariamma is then scolded by the *naat-taamai*, "The landowners get up to all sorts of evil in the fields. Can we bring them to justice? ... After all, we have to go crawling to them tomorrow and beg for work" (Bama 2005: 25). Thus social relegation of Dalits leads to their powerlessness in protecting their women from the sexual exploitation by upper-caste men. Therefore,

these women suffer the double patriarchal oppression one from the men of their own community and second from the upper caste men. Thus patriarchy as a system is not free from caste.

The study of texts also shows the violent treatment of women by fathers, brothers, and husbands. Bama writes that within the community the power rests with men: caste courts and churches are male-led and rules for sexual behavior are very different for men and women (2005). Kamble's text, *The Prisons*, illustrates that dalit men did not hesitate in chopping off the nose of their women who failed to abide by the patriarchal norms. She also discusses the horrible social practices of *Dev-dasis* and *Muralis*. In the former practice young dalit girls are married to gods or goddesses and in the later, the traditional Mahars used to dedicate their girls to God *Khandoba* as *Muralis*.

Pawar also represents the enforcement of archaic and unjust gender rules of caste panchayats and shares the case of a widow who was found to be pregnant. The whole village knew who the man was. But only she was subjected to the verdict.

She was made to lean forward, and women kicked her from behind till the child was aborted. The villagers felt this was a valiant act of bravery. They felt proud that they had protected the village's honor. If a

woman was suspected to have erred, she was brought before the Panchayat for justice and punishment. She was publically judged and her other relatives would beat her up as well (Pawar 2015: 156).

Therefore, the narratives of dalit women reject the claims made by both the non-dalit feminists and dalit male intellectuals such as patriarchy differs for dalit women; that it generates less intense patriarchal oppression (Ilaiyah, 1996), or that domestic violence can be resisted by dalit women (Dietrich, 2003). The interlocking nature of oppression is so exasperating that dalit women are many a time possessed by the spirits and Bama explores the psychological stress and strains to be the possible reason for dalit women's belief in their being possessed by spirits or *peys*.

In fact, children become aware of prejudices at an early age. Gender discrimination begins from birth. It is a must for a woman to beget a boy. Besides a baby boy is given more attention, care and is fed longer. Boys are given more support, liberty, and respect than girls. Gender bias which begins from the birth of girls continues throughout life for all women including progressive women. If she wants to pursue education or go for a job the condition is attached that she could do anything but only after finishing daily chores in the house. In addition, the community has an exploitative culture for working women to hand over their salary to their husbands. It

was like “deliberately offering your head for butcher’s knife” (Pawar 2015: 208). Gender discrimination is further seen in working women at the time of promotion. “The moment a man is promoted; he immediately becomes a *Bhau saheb*. But women can never earn the title of *Saheb*. After their promotions, they remain ‘*bai*’, without the ‘*Saheb*’ (Pawar 2015: 235). Therefore, many social practices far from being neutral are in fact gendered which sustains a patriarchal social order. And the problems are compounded by considerations of caste.

The practice of untouchability is imposed on Dalits by birth as caste is ontological and dictates their fate of repression and marginalization in caste centered Indian social structure. In fact, children become aware of caste bias naturally without anybody telling them. Many dalit writers have memories of a difficult childhood, starvation, repression, and social exclusion. Pawar still has the colonial imprints in her memories. *Aaye* sent Urmila to deliver baskets to her customers who never allowed her to enter their house and made her stand at the threshold. They sprinkled water on the baskets to wash away the pollution. To avoid contact with her they would drop coins in her hand from above. She also remembers her accounts with Pandit family to whom her *Aaye* would send her off with a couple of paisa coins to buy some pickle from them. She was not allowed to go beyond the first step of Pandit’s house.

Kaku would bring some fiery red pickle on a plantain leaf, the lime pieces covered with yellow rai dal and oil, and keep it on the second or third step. Then I kept my coins on a step, which the Kaku collected, but only after she had sprinkled water on them to cleanse them of pollution. (Pawar 2015: 78)

Many women lack awareness about themselves and their oppression. Women's powerlessness comes from the real concrete circumstances of exploitation. They are oppressed politically, and have no say in the community; exploited economically, "... men received one wage, women another, they always paid men more" (Bama 2008: 54); suffered physical and sexual violence, silence and impunity. For women, service to others and biological reproduction is their prime duty. Biological reproduction continues until their menopause. Kamble gave birth to eleven children of whom three died during childhood. She describes the traumatic and life-threatening conditions in which women give birth to children:

The ignorant midwives would keep thrusting their hands into the poor girl's vagina to see how far the baby had progressed. Invariably, the vagina would get swollen, obstructing the baby's path... It was battle with death. (Kamble 2008: 58)

This indicates that the women who produce the labor force themselves labor at the cost of their life. They lack basic facilities and for the want of cotton or cloth

pads, they continue to bleed. Many a time they suffer the pangs of hunger.

After the baby comes out into the world, a terrible void is left inside. The stomach needs soft and light food. But from where could Mahars get such food? With the hunger gnawing her insides, the poor woman would just tie up her stomach tightly and lie down on rags, her body a mass of aches and pain. (Kamble 2008: 57)

As they have nothing to eat many women risk their lives during childbirth. Infants die as well. These women offer their whole lives to the service of mother earth. But they are helpless when they themselves become mothers.

Endurance and Resilience:

Despite the pain and sufferings that dalit women experience, there exists within them, the motivation to persevere. Bama asserts, "Our women have an abundant will to survive however they might have to struggle for their last breath. Knowingly or unknowingly, we find ways of coping in the best ways we can" (2005: 68). Some women endure the sufferings patiently and many show perseverance and continue with the duties that they are obliged to perform. Others resist and find a new meaning to their existence. Bama chose the path of education and remaining single: "In this way, because of my education alone, I managed to survive among those who

spoke the language of caste difference and discrimination" (2012: 22). Baby Kamble worked with her husband in their department store and managed to spare time for reading and writing. Pawar grew with each experience and turned out to be a hard-core feminist. She came to understand more about rationalism, humanism, scientific thinking, and the distinction between suffering born out of natural causes and those caused by man-made artificial factors such as hierarchical relations.

I felt that a woman was also an individual. If a man has muscle power, a woman has the power to give birth. These are distinctly different capacities and need to be evaluated differently, not in the same way...I had realized that I now had a new vision, a new perspective of looking at women. I had lost my fear. (Kamble 2008: 248)

Therefore these narratives talk about the differences between women, their varied needs, the different ways in which they are subject to oppression and their coping strategies. The older generation had their own ways of overcoming oppression and distress. Aaye, mother of Pawar suffered from the curse of caste, illiteracy, and poverty. She became a widow at a young age and lost her son. But this pain made her tough to take a stand and rebuild her life. She earned by weaving cane baskets, became combative, arguing with the customers, abusing and thrashing her children if they missed school.

Bama Faustina is a rare example of dalit women's endurance and resilience. Bama's writing of *Karukku* was more of an outpouring of all her experiences than a literary act. She rejected all the colonial imprints embodied in memories. Pouring out all negative emotions was like 'catharsis.' She healed herself and felt like "a falcon that treads the air, high in the skies" (Bama 2012: xi).

Bama's *Sangati*, her second novel, teases out a positive cultural identity as Dalit and women which can resist upper-caste and upper-class norms, it's also a glimpse to a part of the lives of those "Dalit women who dared to make fun of the class in power that oppressed them. And through this, they found the courage to revolt" (Bama 2005: vii). It also shows their liveliness and the will to bounce back. Set against the narratives of hardships are the accounts of reinforcing cultural events: 'coming-of-age ceremony,' a 'betrothal where gifts are made by the groom to the bride', 'a group wedding of five couples at church,' (Bama 2005: 76). Kamble writes in detail about their favourite month of *Ashadh*, a month of ritual baths, house cleaning, comfort, and sweet food: "This one month of happiness developed in their hearts an iron will to endure whatever suffering came their way during the remaining eleven months" (Kamble 2008: 12). Other reviving facets in common women's life can be seen in their female bonding and everyday happenings; their working together, preparing and eating food, washing, bathing, and swimming or celebrating. Singing was their main joyous activity. "They sang all the time at

work, too, so that the woods rang out to the sound of their laughter as they made up songs and words to tease each other' (Bama, 2005: 76).

Handsome man, dark as a crow
More handsome than a blackened pot
I have given you my promise
You who can read Ingilissu (Bama 2005: 77).

The reference in the last line is to the prospective bridegroom had been to school and could read English. So the bride could learn little English, a matter of pride for these women. Here's another song about a man who took a mistress after he got married:

Eighteen sweet paniyaaram
You handed to her, across the wall
But whatever you might give away
You still are my husband (Bama 2005: 77).

The women always sang songs and laughed like this, while weeding, transplanting rice, harvesting etc. Their habitual act of lampooning and joking finally gives them the strength to stand up courageously against caste oppression.

Role in Transformation of the Community:

Dalit women perform the reproductive labor for their community. They are the force behind the survival and

struggle of the oppressed community. The analysis of select texts reveals that the women not only form the household but are responsible for running the family often single as man's earnings are used for himself whereas woman works for her family. Dalit women have emerged as the agents of transformation in the community. They forwarded the Dalit literary movement by contributing intellectually, by representing their perspectives on various issues of their community, and womenfolk. Bama in an interview with Manoj Nair (2001) says, "...I could not build a monument; I could not build a sculpture. I wrote a book. My community thus found a place in the mainstream media" (outlookindia.com). Their writings generated dalit consciousness and inculcate the impulse for resistance in future generations. Kamble states in 'Introduction' to *The Prisons We Broke*:

I am writing this history for my sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and my grandchildren to show them how the community suffered because of the chains of slavery and so that they realize what ordeals of fire the Mahars have passed through. I also want to show them what the great soul Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar single-handedly achieved which no one else had achieved in ages (Kamble 2008: xiv).

Kamble is a veteran of the Dalit movement in Maharashtra. Inspired by the radical leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, she has been involved with the struggle from a very young age. She has established a residen-

tial school for socially backward students in Nimbure, a small village near Phaltan, Maharashtra. Her autobiography also brings to the forefront the tremendous transformative potential of the oppressed people to change the world. Kamble writes Dr. B.R Ambedkar, the torchbearer of Dalit movement, taught the depressed classes, “You don't worship God; you worship your ignorance. Generations after generations Mahars have ruined themselves with such superstitions.” He asked them to follow the path of educating their children and abandon god. Ambedkar's speech was attended by a huge crowd including women. Kamble's Aaji also made a resonating speech. (Kamble 2012: 65). Many women became determined to sacrifice anything for their children's education. Pawar's mother also worked hard for her children's education. On the one hand, she would abuse and thrash her children if they missed school, and on the other, she would confront the school teacher for his caste bias: “Look, I am a widow; my life is ruined. Yet I sit here, under this tree and work. Why? Because I want education for my children so that their future will be better” (Pawar 2015: 69).

Pawar, a long term member of the Dalit and Women's movement offers a cogent critique of feminist and dalit politics in her writings. She along with other members founded ‘Dalit Women's Organization’ (Pawar 2015: 267) and her idea of ‘Samwadini Dalit Stree Sahitya Manch’ was brought to reality by her companion Eleanor Zel-

liot. (Pawar 2015: 275). Pawar along with Meenakshi Moon also wrote the contemporary classic *We Also Made History* to record the contribution of women to their community and Dalit movement.

Bama enlightens the people about the repressive nature of all religions and the Catholic Church in particular. She brings forth that the church is made of priests and nuns who are from upper castes, and ‘control the dispossessed and the poor by thrusting a blind belief and devotion upon them, and turning them into slaves in the name of God, while they themselves live in comfort’ (Bama 2012:108). She believes that only education can transform society. She also admires and applauds the ideals of ‘courage, fearless, independence, and self-esteem.’ (Bama, 2005, xx) in dalit women and not the traditional Tamil ‘feminine’ ideals of *accham* (fear), *naanam* (shyness), *madam* (simplicity, innocence), *payirppu* (modesty).

Conclusion:

The learning derived from the ‘outsider-within’ status of dalit women writers proves a real site of epistemic reformulation, and new understandings about the hierarchy of caste-based Indian social structure which suppress, repress and marginalize Dalits, and their women who are also the easy targets of hegemonic gender ideology. The standpoint of the writers substantiates the truth that

many social practices are not neutral but gender-based which maintain and propagate a patriarchal social order, relations of power that systematically privilege men, and detriment, disempower and objectify women as a social group. Dalit women's sexuality is exploited to maintain caste. They are doubly ensnared in patriarchal societies; one from the men of their own community and another from upper-caste men. Caste councils and caste panchayats try to enforce their archaic and unjust gender rules over them to protect the community identity. And upper caste men are granted impunity for their crimes committed against these women.

Dalit communities also remain burdened with social evils of superstitions, ignorance, drunkenness, harassment, and humiliation of bride in the hands of the in-laws under the guise of religion, culture, and ideology. Dalit women endure the interlocking oppressions of caste, class, and gender. Despite all the adverse factors these women have shown endurance and resilience. They have equally contributed to the family, labor, economy, caste struggles and Dalit movement, and Dalit Literature.

Therefore, the study concludes that the narratives of dalit women are not 'sob stories' but testimonies; voices against injustice that challenge the social order and provide productive starting points for enquiry into questions about not only those who are politically and socially suppressed and muted, but also those who because of

the same social and political system, subjugate others. This study may also benefit other marginalized sections or sociologists by putting greater trust in the creative potential of their own narratives and cultural biographies.

Notes:

1. The Hindu social order; according to the holy texts, consists of four-fold Varna division in the society, "The highest is that of the Brahmans or priests, below them the Kshatriyas or warriors, then the Vaishyas, in modern usage mainly merchants, and finally the Shudras, the servants or have-nots....There is in actual fact a fifth category, the untouchables, who are left outside the classification' (Dumonts, 1999, 66-67). So these were 'outcasts' who were described as impure and relegated to the rank of those who should not be touched, in other words, "Untouchables". They performed menial and impure jobs.

2. Grandmother

3. The name of an Atishudra (Dalit) caste

4. Paternal aunt; also a respectful way of addressing elder women.

5. The headman of the paraiya (Dalit) community

6. Brother

7. Sir, master —used especially among the native inhabitants of colonial India

8. A polite form of address for women.

9. Mother

10. “[t]he labor needed to sustain the productive labor force. Such work includes household chores; the care of elderly, adults, and youth; the socialization of children; and the maintenance of social ties in the family.” (61). See Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar. “Migrant Filipina Domestic Workers and the International Division of Reproductive Labor.” *Gender and Society* 14, no. 4 (2000): 560–580

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