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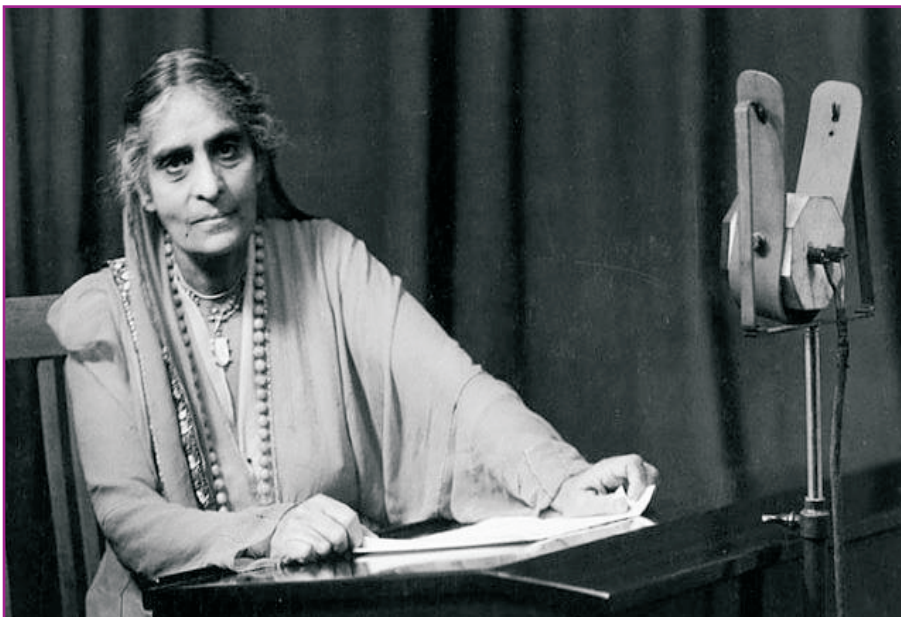
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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF INDIAN DALIT WOMEN: A STUDY WITH AN ECOFEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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philosophy born out of the union of the feminist and the ecological thinking. In the light of the above perspective Ynestra King defines Ecocriticism as “ a critical social movement representing the convergence of the two most contemporary movements i. e. feminism and environmental activism. Ecofeminism as a social and literary movement demands equal value for the world of living organism, its richness and diversity of life as compared to human life. It rejects exploitation and violation of the richness (except to satisfy the vital needs) just for the sake of pleasure through indulgence. It shows concern for the nonhuman life independent of its usefulness for human beings. It objects the excessive human interference with the nonhuman world and with women in terms of their femininity, freedom and sexuality. Ecofeminism as a movement calls upon us to rethink the socio-political and

ABSTRACT

Ecofeminism as a school of literary criticism owes its origin to French feminism. The term ‘feminism’ was first coined by Françoise d’ Eubane and was used widely by Simone d’ Beauvoire. As a social movement ecofeminism calls upon women to protest against the reckless exploitation of nature and women. The motto of this movement was to save the planet from environmental degradation. Ecofeminism as a social movement affirmed that both women and nature are dominated by man and that the liberation of both is essential

for the welfare of this planet. Ecofeminism embraces the idea that the oppression of women and nature is closely connected with each other. Thus the term ecofeminism is a fusion of two discourses i. e. scientific and literary, socio-political. Eco derives from ecology and feminism from the activism of women against their domination expressed in literary criticism. Ecology studies the relationship of living organisms with their natural environment whereas feminism studies the domination and exploitation of women in a patriarchal hegemonic social structure. Ecofeminism is a

ideological strands over the causes of women and environment pertaining to their adverse effects on the basic natural resources and behavioral patterns. It also demands on our part to evolve an ideology which would adhere to the principle of sustainability and equality of life rather than the higher standards of living and to commit ourselves to the healthy environmental praxis. The paper seeks to explore the ecological and feminist issues as they appear in the select autobiographies written by Indian Dalit women. It tries to focus upon the role of Dalit women who stand for not only procreation but also for care and nurture of nature. It also aspires to internalize their suffering construed out of the patriarchal, social and political ideologies and the artificial categories of class, caste, gender and race that are engineered for the benefit of the patriarchs, the rich and the powerful sections of society. A brief attempt also will be made to contextualize the difference between the western feminism, the African and the Dalit feminism. It is seen that the Western approach to the problems of women failed to particularize the problems of black women as it focused over the politics of exploitation and the representation of body. Similarly it is also observed that there has been a tremendous similarity between the plight of African American women and Indian Dalit women in terms of their subjugation, suppression and exploitation. The autobiographies under study are Jeena Amucha by Baby Kamble translated as Prisons We Broke by Prof. Maya Narkar and Machhya Jalmachi Chitarkatha written by Shantabai Kamble. The autobiographies invoke a sense of protest pertaining to the precarious life the writers were subjected to live. The narratives depict the personal worries, the plight of their family and community. The writers through these autobiographies record their protest against their triple domination at the hands of the upper caste Hindu males, the males from their won caste and their domination merely on account of their being female. They protest against their exploitation which is multidimensional, mechanized both by the internal as well as the external agencies stated as above. A comparative assessment of the subjugation of the women from the upper and the lower caste women has also been made to show the intensity of the suffering of the Dalit women who otherwise are equally instrumental in the nurture of nature and excel in their sense of affinity and belonging to their family and community. Thus the paper proposes to make an attempt to study the Dalit women's personal narratives by providing them with a global perspective in the arena of Indian ecofeminist criticism and more appropriately by orienting them towards the vein of organic womanism in the spirit of an everlasting commitment to the praxis of environmental ethics and social activism.

KEYWORDS: Feminism, Ecofeminism, Environmental Activism, Ecological Concerns, Dalit Personal Narratives, Womanism .

INTRODUCTION :

Ecofeminism is a school of literary criticism. The school owes its origin to French feminism. The term 'feminism' was first coined by Françoise d'Eubane and was used widely by Simone de Beauvoir. As a social movement ecofeminism calls upon women to protest against the reckless exploitation of nature and women. The motto of this movement was to save the planet from environmental degradation. Ecofeminism as a social movement affirmed that both women and nature are dominated by man and that the liberation of both is essential for the welfare of this planet.

Ecofeminism embraces the idea that the oppression of women and nature is closely connected with each other. Thus the term ecofeminism is a fusion of two discourses i. e. scientific and literary, socio-political. Eco derives from ecology and feminism from the activism of women against their domination expressed in literary criticism.

'Ecofeminism' is like any other progressive strand, it is a 'movement', began in the late 90s and therefore a recent one, taking a stand against a particular kind of domination. Most of the environmental movements focus on the anthropocentric alliance for ecological crisis. Ecofeminism deems 'androcentrism' as the root cause of the problem. Ecofeminism can be treated as an attempt to synthesize two strands of the two movements i. e. feminism and ecocriticism which hitherto have been viewed as almost completely distinct and disjointed entities. But as a matter of fact the two movements if approached from the point of view of the domination stand for one and the same aim. If we look at them differently, we realize that ecofeminism seeks to highlight the

interconnectedness or the isomorphism that exists between women and nature. It indicates a politics that revolves around the indispensable correlation between women and nature, both in essence and praxis.

The paper seeks to explore the ecological and feminist issues as they appear in the select autobiographies written by Indian Dalit women. It tries to focus upon the role of Dalit women who stand for not only procreation but also for care and nurture of nature. It also aspires to internalize their suffering construed out of the patriarchal, social and political ideologies and the artificial categories of class, caste, gender and race that are engineered for the benefit of the patriarchs, the rich and the powerful sections of society. A brief attempt also will be made to contextualize the difference between the western feminism, the African and the Dalit feminism. It is seen that the Western approach to the problems of women failed to particularize the problems of black women as it focused over the politics of exploitation and the representation of body. Similarly it is also observed that there has been a tremendous similarity between the plight of African American women and Indian Dalit women in terms of their subjugation, suppression and exploitation. The autobiographies under study are Jeena Amucha by Baby Kamble translated as *Prisons We Broke* by Prof. Maya Narkar and Machhya Jalmachi Chitarkatha written by Shantabai Kamble. The autobiographies invoke a sense of protest pertaining to the precarious life the writers were subjected to live. The narratives depict the personal worries, the plight of their family and community.

ORIGIN OF THE MOVEMENT:

Simone de Beauvoir a French feminist is considered to be the first acknowledged ecofeminist. She asserts that it is not just the economic advantages that drive mankind in its craze for development, but there are certain psychological incentives and factors also which are equally responsible for the so-called craze for development.

The origin of this discourse known as 'ecofeminism' could be attributed to the notion of 'Mother Earth'. Primal religions, by and large, conceived of God in feminine terms until patriarchy crept into societal hegemonic structure based on the hierarchy of the high and the low where women were necessarily treated inferior to men. This faith in the superiority of men was imbibed ingeniously into the mind and conscience of the people particularly men and thereby was perpetrated in almost all the societies of the world by means of indigenous traditions practiced in respective religions. It paved way to the reckless exploitation of women and their labour for centuries. These women regardless of their being the wives who were treated and objectified as sex objects were basically mothers, the caretakers and the most selfless in their services to their family and thereby the society at large. Eric Newman, an illustrious pupil of Carl Jung, has said much about the 'great mother' and her relations to nature in his *Great Mother*. Edward Vitand's *The Return of the Goddess* is another classic in this tradition. However, it is proposed that ecofeminism should not be confused with a project that seeks to merely revive and rejuvenate the old agenda on a religious plane which became once upon a time a grand cause to glorify women and use their services by making them sentimental and exploiting them in the name of the respective Goddesses.

It was a French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne who really set up the project of ecofeminism as part of launching a new initiative called 'Ecology, Feminism Center' in 1972. In 1974, she published her path-breaking book *Feminism or Death*. She used the word 'ecofeminism' to refer to women's potential and their contribution to bring about an ecological revolution. In one of the chapters entitled "The Time for Ecofeminism," the author contended that if we think of saving this planet and restore it for the better future we will have to rescue it from the male progeny. If we fail to do so there would be no tomorrow for the humanity. To put it in her own words:

"The planet placed in the feminine will flourish for all."¹

It is well-known fact that with the advent of the project of 'patriarchalization' in the cultures worldwide, the domination of women got a steady momentum and women's productivity along with earth's fertility came under the control of men. Thus, phallocracy came to be identified with the evils of the growth of population and the consequent environmental calamity pertaining to the strain on the natural resources.

The Major Premises of Ecofeminism:

Ecofeminism as a movement which believes in the principle of equal value for the world of living organisms, its richness and diversity of life compared to human life. It rejects exploitation and violation of the richness (except to satisfy the vital needs), just for the sake of pleasure through indulgence. It has concern for the non human life independent of its usefulness for human beings. It objects the excessive human interference with the nonhuman world and with women. (in terms of their femininity, freedom and sexuality). It calls upon the intellectual fraternity to rethink the socio-political and ideological strands over the causes of women and environment pertaining to their adverse effect on the basic natural resources and behavioral patterns. It aims at evolving an ideology which would adhere to the principle of equality, sustainability and quality of life rather than the higher standards of living and a commitment from our part to the environmental praxis.

There have been different approaches and strands to ecofeminism right since its origin. Pertaining to different contexts and ideological perceptions the term tends to be multiple in its ethos. But however it is commonly realized that ecofeminism if studied from a pluralistic point of view is an attempt to transcend the dichotomization of the strategies and the struggles for women's rights and environmental justice. The principal aim of this movement is to establish an integral connection between the domination of women and of nature and to see how it could be realized on a universal level and search if possible the remedies to do away with it. And the same could be treated as the central tenet of ecofeminism.

According to Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, the noted Indian exponents of ecofeminism:

Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice. (The concept wholeness refers to man's allegiance to nature as a whole and his sense of belonging to the nature). Vandana Shiva perceives the devastation of the earth and human beings by the corporate warriors (MNCs) and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors as feminist concerns. She looks at it as a product of masculine mentality, denying women the right to won their bodies and sexuality. Shiva attributes it to the multiple systems of dominance perpetrated by the society and the power of the respective state.

Ecofeminism deals with the concerns of women and ecology on a common ground i.e. the utilitarian ideology to the post modernist consumerism which has in a way created such problems that a nation cannot cope with single handedly. Concerns over women and nature are being dealt with from various conceptual perspectives. It is believed that 'deep ecology' and 'nature feminists', regard humanity and other forms of life as quintessentially one and the same ('radical egalitarianism'). They tend to reject anthropocentrism in toto. George Session's *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (1989) has been a pioneering work in this field. One of the major drawbacks of this school of thought is that it fails to take into account the social justice component. People talk a lot but are not in a position to evolve feasible solutions to the problems. Naturally then, it remains as 'environmentalism of the poor'

What Ramchandra Guha discerns is that the focus on anthropocentrism effectively masks the role of capitalism and political economy in the domination of nature and human beings. The concepts such as green power, green economy, green housing and green industry are some of the misleading concepts under veil of which capitalist systems succeed in alluring the community and have the benefits at the cost of the loss of human ecology. It's no wonder if a writer like Guha comes with comment like, "Both the Western style of development and the American brand of Deep Ecology are grave."⁴

As long as the Radical or cultural feminists are concerned, they tend to analyze environmental problems from within its critique of patriarchy. Mary Daly and Susan Griffins are, perhaps, the most representative of this school. Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* and Griffins' *Women and Nature* are considered to be contributions of immense importance in this area. They consider patriarchy is as the root cause of the subjugation of women and nature, and their analysis is based on the basic biological difference between men and women. They affirm to view maintained by Simone de Beauvoir who said that Human beings are biologically sexed and socially gendered. They contend that Sex and gender relations provide men and women with entirely different sets of power concepts. These relations are engineered socially where men, use women to secure their 'immortality' through child bearing. Of course this approach is criticized by naming it as essentialist and 'ahistorical'.⁵

'Social feminists' or 'socialist feminists', maintain that environmental crises have their origin in certain political power structures. This implies that in addressing the concerns of ecofeminism, one needs to challenge the systems of social domination based on class and gender. They consider gender construction (patriarchy) and classism (capitalism) as integral to the oppressive systems of domination, leading eventually to subjugation of women and exploitation of nature. The capitalist ideology and technology is equally responsible for today's environmental crisis. Radical feminists ground their analysis in biological reproduction whereas socialist ecofeminists bring in the dimension of social reproduction into its analytical orbit. In this regard Ynestra King observes that socialist feminism has become a political force to reckon with ecofeminism. While exposing the theoretical scantiness of this school she says that they have failed to address the domination of nature in a convincing manner.⁶

In Indian context it is realized that the critique of capitalism and patriarchy have made a formidable impression on Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies. It is also realized that the combination of class and gender in analyzing the issues of women and ecology, is still inadequate to address the domination of women and nature in Indian context, since the categories of class and gender are essentially the derivation of the Occidental social ethos. In Indian context these postulates have to be dealt with from other angles such as caste, tribe and ethnicity. Seen from this lens, there seem to be at least two pitfalls with social (ist) ecofeminists such as Shiva and Mies in India. Firstly, implied in their propositions is an assumption that the obvious answer to the capitalist development model lies in a 'socialist' development paradigm, often understood in Marxist categories. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, there is a conspicuous silence on caste and other subaltern categories, either by oversight or design, in their discourse on women and ecology in India.

In view of the above pitfalls and looking at the Indian context, it is realized that the first generation Indian women writers as elitists wrote about their problems from the point of view of the upper class and caste whereas the second generation writers hailing from the various middle and the lower castes wrote about their multilayered subjugation. These writers strive to address the issues of women and nature particularly from a Dalit or a tribal perspective which in fact could be better understood in the light of the organic relationship these women have with nature.

ORGANIC WOMANISM:

The term organic womanism is said to have been first used by Alice Walker, the noted Black American novelist. It implies the femininity and feminine qualities a woman is expected to have such as love and respect for other women, their sexuality or non-sexuality. It also implies appreciation, emotional flexibility and woman's strength and commitment to survival and wholeness of entire people male and female and does not believe in separatist practices.

In Indian context organic womanism could be explained by contextualizing the plight of Dalit Indian women pertaining to their segregation on the basis of caste and the hegemony of patriarchal domination which is necessarily double in nature as that of the Black women in America. The autobiographies proposed to be studied in this paper are characterized by the phenomena of casteism and the organic womanism that makes much more sense to women of Dalit and Adivasi locale.

The adjective 'organic' here is employed to highlight the natural and an intimate relationship the Dalit and tribal women have with nature and their surroundings. It is also suggestive of the hierarchical ownership of women's body and sexuality and the land (ecology) the very base of power. The image of 'mother' is an important facet of 'organic womanism'. In Indian culture it is understood beyond its biological constructs. It stands for care, nurture, creativity and regeneration with overtones of sanctity and sacrifice.

ECOFEMINIST APPROACH IMPLIES:

This approach calls upon us to preserve reverence for Nature and Women as nurturing mothers, as they are the sources of procreation, care and nurture required for the wellbeing of the community at large.

Both Nature and women are known for their perseverance, bounty and magnanimity.

Women are the best teachers teaching and inculcating a sense of respect for the natural world (living

and non-living) in the mind of the young and enable them to foster the values such as love, sacrifice and friendship etc. These values are treated as the most important for the sustenance of the global community. Ecofeminist approach also intends to internalize their suffering construed out of the patriarchal, social and political ideologies and the artificial categories of class, caste, gender, and race, engineered for the benefit of the patriarchs, the rich and the powerful sections of the society.

Western Feminism vs. African American Feminism:

Western approach is a bit of an elitist brand which seems to have failed to particularize the problems of women as it focused over the politics of exploitation and the representation of body.

As a counter reaction to this activism African American Women writers coined the term 'womanism' as an alternative version of ecofeminism, suggestive of their affinity with nature and their capacity for sacrifice.

Western approach was motivated by socio-political ideologies whereas African feminism focused the innate potential of a woman for sisterhood and motherhood as a unique landmark of welfare and community development.

The Indian Context:

As stated above the writings of Indian Dalit women are characterized by their intimate relationship with their community and more particularly the surrounding in which they grow and live with affinity which otherwise could hardly be realized in the writings of the women who belong to the upper caste. These writers (the Dalit women) strive to address the issues of women and nature particularly from their own sensibility which in fact could be better understood in the light of the organic relationship these women have with nature.

Organic Womanism in Dalit Women's Writings:

Characterized by the phenomenon of casteism, organic womanism makes much more sense to women of Dalit and Adivasi locale. The adjective 'organic' is employed here to highlight the natural and an intimate relationship the Dalit and the tribal women have with nature and their surroundings. It is also suggestive of the hierarchical ownership of women's body and sexuality and the land (ecology), the very base of power. The image of 'mother' is an important facet of 'organic womanism.' In Indian culture it is understood beyond its biological constructs. It stands for care, nurture, creativity and regeneration with overtones of sanctity and sacrifice. Like the land, (nature) women are also considered as the private domain of men. As stated earlier the term 'womanism' was coined by African American Women writers a counter reaction to feminism and which later became as an alternative version of ecofeminism. In India also the Dalit women by means of their endurance for atrocities over them registered their protest against the upper caste parochialism and patriarchic domination. The writings of Dalit women are characterized by their patience and are suggestive of their affinity with nature and their capacity for sacrifice. Even today in the wake globalization the bodies of Dalit and tribal women in Indian society continue to be the property of upper caste men. The social division of labour (caste system) and sexual violence play a significant role in causing ecological crises.

The organic touch of Dalit and tribal women and their close encounter with nature is one of the *raison d'être* for my preference to organic womanism to ecofeminism.

Such a kind of an approach aspires to recapture the lost ownership of their ancestral land and its care through an organic interaction is what organic womanism is.

Autobiographies of Dalit Women: Major Titles:

The following are a few of Dalit women who wrote though not extensively but at least produced autobiographies and poetry a part of which were translated into English and a few more are being translated into English and are on their way of publication.

Autobiographies:

Mukta Salwe, a girl from Mang community has expressed her life experiences which may be considered

as the first dormant autobiography of an Indian woman.

1. Baby Kamble's 'Jeena Amucha' translated as 'The Prisons We Broke' Maya Narkar,
2. Laximbai Tilak's 'Smritichitre' translated as 'I Follow After' Trans. Josephine Inkster.
3. Shantabai Kamble's 'Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha'
4. Urmila Pawar's 'Aayadan' translated (Maya Narkar) as 'The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs', begins with a detailed description of the harsh landscape of the Konkan region.
5. Mukta Sarvagod through her 'Mitlelei Kavade' – "Closed Doors" disclosed the plight of the Dalit women to the world.
6. Bama's 'Karukku' deals with the Dalit the plight of women. Dalit women are easy targets of the non-Dalit men for sexual harassment, mental torture, and exploitation.
7. Mukta Sarvagod through her 'Mitlelei Kavade' – "Closed Doors" disclosed the plight of the Dalit women to the world.

The above autobiographies are exclusively written by the women who belong to the Dalit community and have lived life in utter poverty, dejection, subjugation and hatred on the part of the high caste society. The experiences narrated through these autobiographies are suffered by the concerned authors and therefore they are authentic in nature and intensity. They are characterized by their affinity with the people around and the environment where they lived all through their lives. They considered themselves as a part of the nature and every living and non-living phenomena around them. Their families had to depend upon the stale food offered by the class people and at times upon the flesh of the dead animals. The flesh of the dead for them was precious than the so-called value added food the Savarnas would eat as their daily bread. It is not possible to have the review of all the titles mentioned above. Just for the sake of an example the following comparison may highlight the crux of the matter.

The Autobiographies of Upper Caste Women and The Dalit Women A Comparative View:

The domain of the women who belong to the higher caste is their family and their personal worries whereas the domain of the Dalit women is their community. Their family is their community. The caste women record their protest against the stereotype patriarchal domination and exploitation from within their own community at interpersonal level whereas the Dalit women protest against their exploitation, which is multidimensional, and mechanized by both the internal and the external agencies as stated earlier.

The caste women strive for their equality, individual freedom, modification, progress and liberation whereas Dalit women are too far away from it and are portrayed as faceless, having no individual identity.

Caste women own their body and self to be their own but the Dalit women are supposed to disown their 'self respect' and their 'bodies' too as they are treated as a public property.

The Comparative Reading of 'I Follow After' (Laximbai Tilak) and 'The Prisons We Broke' (Baby Kamble):

The Comparative Reading of 'I Follow After' by Laximbai Tilak who belonged to an upper class and caste and 'The Prisons We Broke' by Baby Kamble, the lower caste writer brings home the difference between the discrimination of a woman from a higher caste and a woman from a lower strata, the Dalit community. So long as the issue of conversion was concerned, it is observed that women of the higher caste were rational and fashionable whereas the women from the lower caste wanted it to escape the stigma of caste and bring about a change in their lives by transforming their religion and improve upon their status pertaining to the patriarchal domination and discrimination based on gender politics. Therefore it was treated as ideological, radical and revolutionary. Baby Kamble in her 'Jeena Amuche' has described the status of a Dalit man in her society as a creature without tail. Dalit men looked like Bulls, strong by body and full with power. She protests that it was because of the attitude of the class people the people of the Dalit had to embrace the dejected and subjugated status. She claims that the status of the Dalits was worse than that of the oxen yoked for hard labour on the fields.

These women remain hungry for rotten food. This type of food is like a waste to be thrown away. Dalit women help to clean surrounding. These women keep the neighborhood clean by composting the leaves by

trees and turning them into fertilizer. They collect dump garbage in the allotted bins with the help of baskets and brooms. They cannot take care of their health but have to be cautious about the health requirements of others. Even unconsciously they are associated with nature and with their simple ways they help to protect our planet, keep it clean and safe.

Dalit women offer their entire lives in the service of mother earth. But when they themselves became mothers what do they get? After giving birth to their children they have to lie down helplessly. There is a saying that 'a black cow can survive even on thorns'. Dalit women are like that proverbial black cows. It is appropriate to provide soft diet for a woman who recently delivers her baby. It is needed for the nourishment of the mother and the baby, but for Dalit women there was no specific and special health care and standard food. That's why they had to eat whatever it was available depending on the situation. They could hardly afford for nutritious food and had to go sometimes without any food. Women in Baby Kamble's autobiography search cornflower from nearby alleys. When opposed by landowner she justifies herself as her hunger is the most powerful rather than all things. She had to steal cornflowers to satisfy her hunger. Dalit women's motherhood is also exploited by patriarchal society. The motherhood for them is a challenge. They cannot take care of their children pertaining to the lack of amenities and proper means of survival.

Sometimes they have to assist their male counterparts to carry away the carcass of the dead animals and dispose the remains after eating the flesh of these dead animals. This act itself is a great gesture on the part of the Dalits in that it helps environmental cleanliness. They carry animals like dogs which are lying dead in the plains all over various settlements and localities. These people remove the carcasses of these animals; dispose them off safely and save the environment from pollution. The Dalit people who perform these menial kind of tasks are treated disrespectfully by high caste people.

While carrying the flesh of dead animal these women are compared with vultures, kites and dog like animals that play the role of disposing the rotted things. In this disposal task Dalit women have to carry rotting carcasses to a deserted spot at the considerable distance from the village. While contributing a part of dead as their food they have to fight with these unwanted guests like flies and other insects who disturb them and snatch out the flesh from them. It is their food quenching their hunger partly. For it they have to carry to meet their hunger partly. The most dehumanizing incidence narrated by the writer Baby Kamble is the marriage of Akka. On this occasion there is a call of duty for lowly Mahars to do lot of things like cutting firewood, sweeping the house and all dirty and laborious jobs. They have to arrange Akka's marriage and they have to clean garbage pit used by Akka for defecate. This worse activity has to be completed by the Dalits in disposing garbage material. After having worked for hours they call Mahars to carry the sticky leftover food wastage from the pots. In one of the instances Baby Kamble describes the feelings of one of the terribly hungry Mahars who was waiting near the garbage in the following words.

"With utmost humility, he would bend before the master,
Saying 'Jee dhani, jee dhani,' The master would then command
Him, 'Look here Ggurya, the feast is over First sweep the Pandal
Clean. Then you can take away those two baskets of leftover food.'" (8)

To sum up it may be said that the all the above autobiographies by Dalit women record their love for their surrounding and have a deep sense of gratitude to it as it happens to be the source of their survival. For example the autobiography Eyedaan written by Urmila Pawar and translated as The Weave of My Life by Maya Narkar becomes a critique of the life of a woman who by engaging herself in the act of weaving becomes a participant in the creative process of the cosmos. Her indifference to her agony is symbolic of the gesture of the mother earth that never bothers for the injuries inflicted upon her body by her sons, (the reckless explorers) the entire community haunted by their materialist dreams. Apart from the depiction of the masculine domination and influence and the depiction of the pangs of a life fated to undergo by means of exploitation and negation on account of caste and gender atrocities, these autobiographies could be treated as the discourses which are more than feminist because of the presence of a sense of community living and the principle of common responsibility which I think are at the core of our community life and the environmental activism the way the world is looking at. While summing up I would like to quote a few lines from Varsha Bansode a Dalit poet from Vidharbha.

Gulam (Slave) Varsha Bansode.

Where the doors are decorated with mango leaves,

Where the houses are decorated with little flaming oil lamps'

In that country a woman is still a slave.

Where a woman's identity fades like nature's blossoms, Where the sky-flowers of desire must be left to float down the river,

Where the threatening force of woman's mind must be burried in the earth,

Where the silvery moonlight happiness must be poured into a jar of darkness,

In that country a woman is still a slave.

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8. Baby Kamble translated by Maya Narkar as *The Prison We Broke*, 2009:76

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