National Seminar
On
Dalits in India: Debating Subalternity and Exclusion
28th -29th November, 2015

The proposed seminar is an extension of our earlier work on Subalternity, Exclusion and Social Change in India wherein we have tried to find out the answers to the questions- Why are the Subalterns Subalterns and how does a society produce and reproduce subalterns? Are Subalterns a historical construction and how do we place the differentially positioning groups within large subaltern category? We have also argued in this work for exploring the dynamic relations between exclusion, Subalternity and Social Change instead of treating them as discrete social categories. In spite of an unending subaltern reproduction through ideology, knowledge and power, the subalterns are negotiating the emancipation amidst their conflicting operations, subjugation, and exploitation within the society.

A major determinant of subalternity in India has been the distance and degree of exclusion-distance of social and degree of economic exclusion; both exist in a mutually reinforcing relation. Different subaltern groups have been subjected to different levels of social and economic exclusion. Land and caste –control over the means of production and socially ascribed position-have been the two major determinants of social exclusion in rural society. Exclusion has multiple determinants and dimensions in urban society. Nevertheless, access to economic resources, state and political power, and knowledge are important in the urban context. Exclusion, in turn, has been justified through an ideology of caste and religion, and perpetuated through deeply entrenched inegalitarian social and economic relations, retrogressive cultural and religious norms, values and practices. Forces of social change in such a society do not have an independent character and a linear trajectory. Also determinants of social change are not singular, say industrialisation in western society.

The issues of subalternity, exclusion and social change have been debated and discussed as different and discrete social problems in India. The focus of Subaltern Studies under the leadership of RanjitGuha has been excessively historical and narrative. Their major concern was to assert the role of subalterns in the construction of anti-colonial nationalism and Indian nation, a role denied to them by the elitist colonial and nationalist historiography. On the other hand, the social and economic assertion by subaltern groups in the post-independence
period has been much more vibrant, dynamic and goal oriented than the subaltern mobilization during the colonial period. Nevertheless, neither the subaltern studies nor its critics have given adequate attention to subaltern politics in the post-independence period.

Similarly, social exclusion in India has been explained in the historical perspective and contextualized in the structural conditions of a *homo hierarchicus* society. But is exclusion a fixed and sati social condition? While exclusion has social and economic context, social and economic conditions are not static. Despite the rigidity in the social structure and the limited avenues of economic mobility, there have been examples of low caste people moving to upper social strata through the acquisition of political power and control over the new economic opportunities have also been found to be socially liberating. Democracy and electoral politics have provided another avenue of group mobility in the post-independence period. Backward castes and more recently Dalits have used this opportunity to rise socially. Their political ascendency in the states of Tamil Naidu, Karnataka, Bihar and UP is irreversible and has created significant social effects. Political and economic mobility, in turn, has facilitated number of erstwhile subaltern social groups either in shedding their subaltern tag or in moving a few notches forward even though they remain a part of large subaltern groups. The process of exclusion, therefore, should be studied simultaneously with the process of inclusion, assertion and mobilization.

The seminar is intended to be part of our next volume on Subalternity, Exclusion and Social Change in India with special focus on Dalits as Subaltern group. The Seminar will deliberate on the following themes:-

- Who are Dalits and who are Subalterns? Subalterns have been defined more in relation to excluded and subordinated social groups than in a binary opposition to the elite. Subalternity is a condition of subordinate relations. Under subaltern groups in India, low castes (Dalits), minorities, women, peasantry and tribes are covered. The subalterns within subalterns, defined as *differential subalternity* and subalterns within various levels of subalternity as *multiple subalternity* are also noticed. Dalit is a subaltern group but even within Dalit, the social experiences of different Dalit groups have not been similar. Some of them have been subjected to extreme level of social distance and exclusion than some others.
- Social reproductions of Dalits in India.
- Routes of Dalit’s emancipation and empowerment.
• Dalits and Neo-liberal policies.
• Social and political processes of Dalit empowerment.

Scholars, bureaucrats, media and NGOs from all over India and abroad are invited in the Two-Day Seminar on 28\textsuperscript{th} -29\textsuperscript{th} November 2015.

Call for Papers: - Interested Scholars are requested to write their papers on either of the above Sub-themes. Scholars may send their abstracts within 300 words latest by 30\textsuperscript{th} October, 2015 to ajitpandey2010@yahoo.com or seminarsociobhu@gmail.com

Registration Fee:-
For Students- 300
For Teachers- 500