



Life as a Dalit: Views from the Bottom on Caste in India

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Life as a Dalit looks at caste society from the point of view of the Dalit's, focusing on their worldview, emotions and critical appraisal of their own position and of the higher groups. It is a volume based on the critical perspectives provided by scholars who have turned around the more acclaimed and accepted theories of caste society privileging the Brahmanical and textual interpretations of caste. It shows that those at the bottom have their own interpretations and follow a rationality that is tutored by their own life conditions and not what is fed to them from the top.

These views from the bottom are indicative of the way in which the oppressed live their lives, make critical judgments and also stage protests, both symbolic and based on real violence against the oppressive system. The focus is more experiential and based on ground-level data-based chapters. It foregrounds the fact that history is created from the bottom of society as well as from the top and those at the bottom are their own agents and well aware of their subject positions.

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Editorial Review

Review

[The book] tries to take a look at caste from the bottom, rather than from the top...the recovery of the lost voices of the dalits is possibly the most important agenda behind the volume.

(Economic & Political Weekly)

About the Author

Subhadra Mitra Channa did her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the Department of Anthropology, Delhi University. She is presently a professor at the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi. She has been a Fulbright Visiting Lecturer to the Auburn University, USA in 2003, a Visiting Professor to the Maison de Sciences l Homme in Paris and at many Indian universities. She was the President of the Indian Anthropological Association for five years and has been the editor of the Journal of Indian Anthropologist, since 2000.

She was a Scholar-in-Residence, for the teaching year 2008 2009, under the Fulbright programme at the University of South Carolina, USA, where she taught among other courses, one on Ethnicity and Race. She is also the Chair of the Commission on the Anthropology of Women, an international body and part of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES). She was earlier Co-Chair along with Professor Faye Harrison (Chair) up to 2009.

Her research interests focus largely on Dalits, gender, religion and cosmology, world view, and identity.

Joan P Mencher retired as Professor of Anthropology from the City University of New York s Graduate Center, and Lehman College of the City University of New York. She is currently the Chair of an NGO called The Second Chance Foundation (TSCF), which works to support rural grassroots organizations in India and the United States which work with poor and small farmers on issues of sustainable agriculture. She has worked extensively in South India on issues of ecology, caste, land reform, agriculture, women, and related issues over the last half century, and has published widely both in the United States and in India on all of these subjects.

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