Media Coordinator's Office Jamia Millia Islamia

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Press Release

JMI holds a talk on Decoding Dalit literature

What is Dalit literature? Who can write Dalit literature? were the questions at the heart of the talk today on the topic "The Creative Intrusion of Real Lives in Dalit Fiction", delivered by Laura R. Brueck, Associate Professor of Hindi Literature, North Western University, USA.

The talk was organised by the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, Jamia Millia Islamia.

Dr Brueck delved on the works of Uday Prakash and Ajay Navaria, two contemporary Delhi-based Hindi language authors, who focus on the dynamics of caste in contemporary India. She also considered each author's innovative usage of narrative techniques to blur the boundaries between real and fictional life narratives. She argued that a critical reading of texts will help understand them better. Through this they can challenge conventional forms of fiction and history by reconstituting biographical narratives from real life as well as history and literature.

Dr Brueck talked about the writings of Uday Prakash's *Mohandas* and Ajay Navaria's *Hello Prem Chand*. She argued that in this story Ajay imagined dialogue between Gandhi and Ambedkar. Ajay has tried to bring a shift in the relationship between iconic figures such as Gandhi, Ambedkar and Prem Chand from historical context to modern understanding. She added that social and political meaning of Dalit past is reinvented and reconstructed through Dalit literature.

Ajay Navaria, Professor of Hindi Literature in Jamia Millia Islamia said that lives of Dalits in ghettos make them think from a different perspective as if they are not a part of mainstream society and generates a feeling of anger and anguish amongst them. But in urban areas where the population is heterogeneous, this element of feeling of seclusion is minimal. It is argued that the level of anguish is not similar in the writings of an urban based writer as his relation with the exploitation is indirect. Ajay employed Dalits in impressive position in contemporary world and gives heroic and success stories of Dalits.

Rahul Ramagundam, Associate Professor at Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy concluded the talk by urging the students to explore the question of humiliation in different forms. He stressed that there is a need to understand the pain Gandhi experienced in South Africa when he was fighting against racism and the atrocities and that which Ambedkar faced in India against casteism.

Mohd. Shafiq, Dean, Faculty of Social Science, Dr Sonia Director, Centre for the Latin American Study, Dr Padmanabh Samrendra, Associate Professor, Dr. Arvind Kumar and many scholars and students from English Literature, Hindi Literature, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and

Inclusive Policy, Department of Political Science and Dr K. R. Narayanan Centre for Dalit and Minority Studies too were present.

Prof. Saima Saeed

Hony. Deputy Media Coordinator

