

**CASTE, CLASS, GENDER BASED EXCLUSION, EXTENT AND MAGNITUDE****Nilima More**

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Abstract

India has made progress and development in each and every aspect of life but even today women in genitival and 'dalit' women in particular are unable to enjoy any status. As untouchables and outcastes, dalit women face caste based discrimination. As women, they face gender based violence and discrimination, as poor, they face class discrimination and placed at the lowest strata of caste, gender and class hierarchies. Dalit women due to their socio, economic and political vulnerability have been exposed to multiple forms of violence throughout history. It is important to note that there were equally vocal and powerful voices of Jyothiba and Savitri Bai Phule with Periyar against the concrete material and social contexts of discriminatory caste system prior to Dr. Ambedkar. It was Dr. Ambedkar who gave the historic slogan 'Educate, Organize and Agitate' at the All-India Depressed classes Conference. It was Dr. Ambedkar who rather than preaching lofty ideas, took concrete 'constitutional' steps to empower women so that they are not reduced to the margins. This paper tries to highlight the reality of the suppression, struggle, and torture of 'dalit' women faced in her everyday life. These situations of 'Dalit' women are not simply due to their lack of education or economical status but due to Hindu religious scriptures. Inclusive education gives opportunity to Dalit women to become part of Indian society



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INTRODUCTION:

Dalit women in India are considered the dalits among dalits and suffer from three fold oppression-

On account of gender because of existing patriarchy,

On account of their caste 'the untouchable',

Finally, on account of their class – as they hail from the poorest and most marginalized communities.

Concept of **Inclusive Society**:

An Inclusive society is a society where people of different beliefs, faiths, ideology, class, castes, sexual orientations, feel included, despite having basic differences. In a rational,

Inclusive society the other is not just some one who is ontologically/biologically different from you, but someone from whom you can learn about yourself, so its impotant that the importance of others is recognised as not just being part of a society but for one's own self-understanding. The basic proposition is that "we as beings are created equal, with our own individual capabilities and capacities", where it's impossible to exist without the other, what is needed is basic human values of respect, compassion and an inherent love for someone who is different from us. A inclusive society recognizes the differences and ensures human dignity, security, and right of others. Dalit women in india constitute ~80 million or ~48 per cent of the totl dalit population, ~16.3 per cent of the total female population in India(census, 2011). 81.5 per cent of dalit women live in rural areas.

ANCEINT SITUATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA:

In ancient India(3200-2500 B.C.), the caste system was non-exsistence since even the most learned men were good house holders and had varied occupations. The women of ancient India were just as superior as men in learning, education, and itellect. The choice for her mate was according to her own wishes and marriage was practiced at the age puberty. She attended parties, competitions and religious functions as she wished. The remarriage of young widows was also a common practice (Thind). The creation of number of hindu religious books including the *Manusmriti*, *Atharva vedas*, *Vishnu smriti*, and many other like these and their strict compliance by the bramhmans(upper priestly hindu caste) led to a society in which equality between men and women was far from existent(agarwal). *Dr.B.R. Ambedkar*, an architect of the Indian constitution, also makes it very clear in his article title"the rise and fall of hindu women" that the root cause of suffering for women in India are these so called hindu religious books(thind; agarwal). A book like the *Manusmriti* divides people into a stratified caste system and promotes inequality between men and women(thind: agarwal). According to *Manusmriti*, women have no right to education, independence, or wealth. It not only justifies the treatment of dalit women as a sex object and promote child marriages, but also justifies a number of violent atrocities on women as can be seen in the following verses(agarwal; manusmriti): A man, aged thirty years, shall marry a maiden of twelve who pleases him. Or a man of twenty four a girl of eight years of age. If (the performance of) his duties would otherwise be impeded, he must marry sooner. By a girl, young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house. Her father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in her youth, and her children in her old age; a woman is never fit for independence. Women have no right to study vedas. That is why their *Sanskaras* are performed without veda mantras. Women have no knowledge of

religion because they have no right to know the vedas. The uttering of the veda mantras is useful for removing sin. As women cannot utter the veda mantras, they are as unclean as the truth. Even killing of dalit women is explicitly justified as a minor offence for the Brahmins: equal to killing of an animal. If the killing of an untouchable was justified as a minor offence, we can imagine the treatment they received throughout their lives. In a male dominated society, dalit women suffered unimaginable oppression, not only through caste, but gender too, from which there was no escape. The laws in *Manusmriti* and other vedic scriptures close all economic, political, social, educational, and personal channels through which dalit women could be uplifted. The horrendous laws in the *Manusmriti* were incorporated into Hinduism because they were favorable only to the upper castes, which form the majority of India. Even today, in modern times, we see the ever oppression and exploitation of dalit women. The laws of the *Manusmriti* have a devastating effect on the level of education reached by dalit women.

CASTE DISCRIMINATION OF DALIT WOMEN:

Dalit women are about 16.69 per-cent of India's female population according to the Census 2011. Problems of scheduled caste women encompass not only gender and economic deprivation but also discrimination associated with religion, caste, and untouchability, which in turn results in the denial of their social, economic, cultural, and political rights. They became vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation due to their gender and caste. The additional discrimination faced by dalit women on account of their gender and caste is clearly reflected in the differential achievements in human development indicators for this group. In all the indicators of human development, for example, literacy and longevity, dalit women score worse than dalit men and non-dalit women. In India 81.5% of Dalit women live in rural areas. They along with their male counterparts constitute a sizeable group that continues to suffer discrimination arising out of the caste system. Dalit women continue to be illiterate, malnourished, poor in health, overworked, oppressed and victimized by a number of issues, including their own family, community, and society. They make up the substance of the body of research knowledge and information in the country demonstrating the protest social indicators, gloomy social and economic achievement. They lack access to resources including the natural resources they work with every day. Hence, the situation of dalit women in India needs special attention.

In the Hindu caste system dalit women are described as untouchable or less than human and therefore face extreme discrimination and violence by other caste Hindus. Historically, dalits were systematically segregated from the rest of the village and were denied access to

education, housing and land. Public places such as temples, wells for drinking water, toilets and many other civic facilities were also out of bounds for them. Even today untouchability is practised in a big way throughout the country. Like the dalit men the dalit women suffer from inhuman practice of untouchability. Dalit women are prohibited or denied of certain acts and practices, access to common property resources, services and entry and participation in socio-cultural sphere at private and public places. Dalit women either have to wait for a long time to fetch water or are often beaten while fetching water from the public water sources. Caste-affected women in rural settings face a number of serious challenges, including lack of access to resources, land, basic services and justice. In India, rural Dalit women face serious challenges in carrying out their multiple productive and reproductive roles within their families and communities, in part due to lack of rural infrastructure and lack of access to essential goods and services. They have the highest poverty levels, are landless and depend on the dominant caste for employment, wages and loans. Their access to resources or even their efforts to access them are often met with violence. Due to the intersection of caste, class and gender, Dalit women are subjected to direct and structural violence. In particular, the structural violence and lack of access to resources perpetuate their poverty and weaken their self-esteem. India is a democracy and is a party to most of the major human rights treaties. These treaties provide the same rights for men and women. Because India is also a party to the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, the government has an additional responsibility to make sure that women can realize their rights. India is a party to the international covenant on civil and political rights. Based on this treaty, the Govt of India has an obligation to make sure that Dalit women can enjoy a whole range of human rights, such as a right to life, freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, freedom from slavery, the right to be equal before the court, the right to recognition and dignity as a person before the law and the right to privacy. The life and dignity of dalit women depends on the recognition of these human rights.

GENDER DISCRIMINATION:

The problems of Dalit women are distinct in many ways, and they undergo 'triple burden' of gender bias, caste discrimination, and economic deprivation. To gain insights into the economic and social status of dalit women, these issues examine into their lives and encapsulates the economic and social circumstances of dalit women in India. The papers based on analyses of poverty, caste and gender discrimination are based on data as well as primary research studies. This is an effort to develop an understanding of the problems of dalit women and present an analysis of the complex intersectional ties of the challenges they

face. It centers on the challenges faced by women belonging to scheduled caste group who are the lower castes. The multiple challenges that dalit women face require multiple solutions. Policies should be in place against gender discrimination and poverty for all women, which will also help dalit women; secondly, there should be paired policy measures and legal protection against social exclusion and discrimination for women who belong to excluded groups. This would certainly claim group-specific gender policies, in addition to general policy of women's empowerment, to deal with the issues of women from excluded groups. This would enable the state to conceptualize Inclusive policies to address the problems of dalit women more efficiently. Further, the women's movement in India needs to be placed at the centre of their origination of the fact that patriarchy in this society functions in combination with the caste system. This would make them more responsive to the injustices faced by dalit women, which too often are invisible to the Government and the judiciary. It is hoped that the paper in this issue would such an effort in future. The human is to respond to human miseries and pain with effective concern. It is not enough to feel with Dalit women in their pain. There is a need for an effective action, or else it would be just sentimentalism to dalit women towards their needs and problems. So, to recognize the system and to exclude violation proper perspectives about the issues have to be developed among all.

GENDER EQUALITY:

Female infanticide is more prevalent among the uneducated dalit families. Educational development among SC women is very marginal because only girls were not sent to school because of the responsibilities at home. Therefore the gender discrimination starts at the very early stage in the life of a Dalit girl. Normally girl children are retained at home to look after the siblings. Another thing is the compulsory marriage of the girls at very early age after which the education is stopped. Generally in the male-dominated society, polygamy is allowed and more so in many Dalit families. Because of this the position of the women deteriorated. Joint family system, polygamy, property structure, early marriage, and permanent widowhood were hurdles for the development of all women in early period. But in the twentieth century, after the Mahatma Gandhi movement to educate women, slowly changes occurred in the position of women. But here, rural women were blessed than urban women because divorce and remarriage. Marriage in the high reproductive stage with high fertility rate, children care more. Because of the unlimited family, the burden fell on the young girls which affected their health. They were not able to assist in family matters to their husbands. But now the situation is different. The girls manage to plan their family, educate

the children, assist the husbands in family matters and office going and professional girls improve the economic conditions. On the whole the family becomes socially developed because of the education of the girls.

CLASS:

The contribution of SC women to the economic development of our country is significant especially in the agricultural sector. They are exploited by the higher caste landlords. They are paid very marginal salary for the hard work in the field for the whole day. In leather industries the tanning process is considered to be an unclean job which is done only by socially backwards class. Traditional artistes get very more benefit because the middleman exploits them. The condition of scavenger and sweepers is very deplorable and they the most vulnerable sectors among SC. The working condition is very poor and the remuneration is also very poor.

OCCUPATION:

The occupation of many SC women are as following :

Agriculture labourer, Marginal Cultivators, Fisherwomen, Traditional artisans, Leather Workers, Weavers, Scavengers and sweepes, Midwifery, Beedi factories and unorganised sectors.

CONCLUSION:

The paper argues Caste-based discrimination which is illegal in our county but we see that people from upper castes always treat lower castes like inferior human beings. Women and girls affected by caste-based discrimination are particularly by caste, class, and gender. Caste, class and gender discrimination prevents Dalit women from enjoying their basic human rights like dignity, equality and development though Indian Government take necessary support by inclusive education for Dalit womens.

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