



DALIT WOMEN IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Dalit women possess multifaceted roles as a collective force, serving as both a significant social entity and a cultural symbol while also being deeply rooted in historical circumstances. Based on the data from the 2011 National Census, it can be observed that the number of Dalit women amounts to around 9.79 crore. The 2011 National Census estimates that there are 58.7 crore Indian women. Dalit women represent around 16.68 % of the overall population. The great majority of Dalit women are impoverished and illiterate. They were exploited by both members of their own caste and members of the upper caste. Sexual violence against Dalit women is a prevalent crime that is frequently perpetrated against them. The caste system, the patriarchal society, and antiquated rituals all put many barriers in their path. The problems that Dalit women face are distinct from those that other Indian women face. Their economical and cultural rights have been completely overlooked, while their civil and political rights are frequently violated. They suffer from unrelenting mental anguish, ignorance, disease, unemployment, repression, and degrading treatment.

Key Words: Dalit, Women, Discrimination, Caste.

Introduction: The majority of socially marginalized minorities were women of Dalit descent, who constituted around 2% of the world's population. Since the beginning of time, Dalit women in our country have lived in dimly lit rooms. They are helpless to stop their mistreatment and heartless actions. Women belonging to the Dalit community are a disadvantaged demographic in society and face systemic discrimination. The notion of Indian feminism has failed to address Dalit women's issues. They are instruments of an unjust system. For being Dalit's, they face extreme discrimination in society, even from Dalit male members. They were exploited by both members of their own caste and members of the upper caste. Violence against Dalit women is more prevalent. Many Dalit women participate in damaging customs such as Jogini or Devadasi. Sexual violence against Dalit women is a prevalent crime that is frequently perpetrated against them. Others control them. They suffer from unrelenting mental anguish, ignorance, disease, unemployment, repression, and degrading treatment. She deals with serious problems like starvation and unresolvable rape. The caste system, the patriarchal society, and antiquated rituals all put many barriers in their path. They are forced to labour from a young age. They are made to carry out brutal and humiliating jobs like manual scavenging in society. This research aims to reveal the realities of the marginalization, exploitation, and abhorrent lives of Dalit women.

Caste, Class, and Gender were great weights for Dalit women in a society where males ruled, according to Ruth Manorama, a well-known leader of the National Alliance of Women and the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights. She underlined the differences between Dalit women and other social groups, stating that they belong in a different category entirely from other Dalit's and women. Dalit women were subjected to oppression in a society where men are typically in positions of authority due to both caste and gender. Dalit women thus have more challenges on their path. Feminist scholar Gail Omvedt has referred to Indian Dalit women as "Dalit among Dalit's." Dr. Ambedkar used an analogy to support her claim, comparing the Hindu caste system to a pyramid constructed out of earthenware pots placed one on top of the other. Not only do women belong to the lowest caste, having been crucified and discarded, but also Brahmins and Kshatriya's occupy the highest positions. Therefore, oppressed Dalit women come in second from the bottom, behind Dalit is themselves. The problems that Dalit women face are distinct from those that other Indian women face. Their socioeconomic and cultural rights have been totally ignored, and their civil and political rights are often infringed.

Dalit Women Movement:

In 1920, Dalit women took an active part in demonstrations against caste and untouchability. Dalit women were active in the non-Brahman movement as early as 1930. These early societies helped draft resolutions denouncing things like forced widowhood, dowries, and child marriage. 25,000 of them attended the All India Depressed Classes Women Conference in Nagpur in 1942. Sulochanbai Dongre, the meeting's president emphasized the need of birth control. During the conference, resolutions endorsing women's divorce rights, condemning polygamy, advocating for improved working conditions for women, raising the number of women in politics, and enhancing education for women entering the workforce were all passed. Dalit women participated in the social movements of 1980 and 1970. In 1987, the first-ever national assembly of Dalit women was held in Bangalore. Dalit women established numerous organizations, like the National Federation of Dalit Women and the All India Dalit Women's Forum, in 1990. Dalit women attended the 1993 World Conference against Racism and the 1995 World Conference on Women as delegates. The 189 countries agreed to implement the measures required to achieve the eight distinct objectives known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) when they adopted the Millennium Declaration in 2000. The accomplishment of the MDGs will be significantly impacted by the fulfillment of Dalit women's human rights. Dalit women, who account for 2 percent of the world's population, live in extreme poverty. The majority of India's 60 million Dalit girls who do not receive a basic education are young. During the 2001 worldwide conference against racism, Dalit women contended that discrimination rested on estate ought to be classified as a kind of racism. In 2002, a group of Dalit women founded the publication Khabar Lahariya. The review in question

entered the UNESCO knowledge prize. The participation of Dalit women at the World Social Forum in 2004 and the Asian Social Forum in 2003 is considered a major event. New Delhi hosts the first national meeting on violence against Dalit women. The meeting supported the Delhi Declaration, which addressed prejudice, violence, poverty and sickness among Dalit women. An international conference on Dalit women's mortal rights was held in the Hague in 2006. The two main issues raised at the meeting were the individualities of and violence against Dalit women. The conference focuses on the development of legislation guarding the mortal rights of Dalit women as well as the operation of being laws. The generality of Dalit women was created in 2006.

Incidents of Discrimination:

1. The 2006 Khairlanji Massacre

On September 29, 2006, four Scheduled Caste people, the Bhotmange family, were slain in the Maharashtra village of Khairlanji. The two female members of the family, Surekha and Priyanka, were shown in public naked before they were murdered. Surekha and her two boys and daughter were hauled out by the accused, who then paraded them around the village in their undies before hacking them to death. The previous day, Surekha had filed a police report over a property dispute, which infuriated them.

2. A Dalit social worker in Rajasthan was gang-raped.

Disturbingly reminiscent of the Bhanwari Devi case, a Rajasthan Anganwadi worker says that her superiors gang-raped her at a state-funded training session. The police attempted to conceal the incident by classifying the 25-year-old Dalit woman as mentally sick, which led to her being sent to a psychiatric facility. However, India's "Sexual Harassment Law" was created and put into effect as a result of the Bhanwari rape incident.

3. In jail, Dalit women are tortured.

The police have been accused of mistreating three Dalit women from the Muktsar district of Punjab, including shocking their "private parts" with electricity and wrongfully detaining them.

4. Brutal Gang Rape of Dalit girl.

On September 29, 2020, a Delhi hospital records the death of a Dalit girl from Uttar Pradesh who had been the victim of a gang's brutal rape.

5. Death of Dalit girl.

Four males from the higher caste brutally beat a 19-year-old Dalit girl from the Uttar Pradesh village of Hathras before strangling and dragging her by her scarf. After receiving several wounds, she was sent to Safdarjung Hospital in New Delhi, where she eventually passed away (The Hindu, September 30, 2020). In addition, later accounts relate tales of contradictions and the truth being lost in the commotion. The story of rape for Dalit women extends from Khairlanji to Hathras. By neglecting the caste backdrop, we cannot see Hathras, Khairlanji, or the hundreds of other attacks as just sexual crimes. Feminist organizations, however, have not yet addressed the unique issues Dalit women confront.

The Status of Dalit women:

Dalit women possess multifaceted roles as a collective force, serving as both a significant social entity and a cultural symbol while also being deeply rooted in historical circumstances. Her contribution to the field of agriculture holds significant historical significance. She assumes a significant function within the context of industrial culture. She plays a significant role as a walk-on participant in the process of constructing buildings and laying roads. Her significant contribution may be identified in the textile mills, cement industries, and healthcare facilities. Individuals are confronted with a multitude of impediments and challenges in their daily existence. One important goal entrenched in the Indian Constitution is the pursuit of equal status. Dalit women are entitled to an equitable system that does not yield uniform effects. Therefore, the determination of the social standing of Dalit women presents a complex and challenging issue. The societal disregard for the political involvement and contributions of Dalit women hampers their potential impact on the nation's growth. The plight of Dalit women and girls is characterized by their systematic exclusion and marginalization within society. Individuals frequently experience infringements against their civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, encompassing instances of sexual abuse and violence. Frequently, individuals find themselves relocated and coerced into engaging in forced labor, prostitution, and human trafficking. The intersectionality of caste and gender renders millions of Dalit women very susceptible to instances of discrimination and violence, including sexual assault. When Dalit women seek justice, they face several obstacles. Research conducted in India reveals that the conviction rate for rape cases involving Dalit women is less than 2%, but the conviction rate for rape cases involving women from all social backgrounds in India stands at 25%. The primary barriers to eradicating caste-based discrimination persist in the form of non-compliance with legislation and policy, as well as the absence of efficacious remedies and functional state institutions, including the court and police. According to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the incidence of atrocities perpetrated against Dalit women and their culture is a significant contributing factor to such acts of violence. Rather than implementing stringent regulations that forbid anyone from engaging in manual scavenging, a significant number of Dalit women are involved in occupations that are considered demeaning, hence affecting the dignity of Dalit women. In a societal context characterized by male dominance, Dalit women encountered subjugation that stemmed not just from their caste identity but also from their gender. This phenomenon presents additional challenges for Dalit women. According to a report issued in 2000 by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, a significant proportion of Dalit girls, almost 75%, discontinue their education despite having access to all the quota amenities. According to the Annual Report of the University Grant Commission for the fiscal year 1999-2000, there is evidence indicating a significant disparity in the level of involvement of Dalit women in higher education, with generally low participation rates seen. Based on the data from the 2011 National Census, it can be observed that the number of Dalit women amounts to around 9.79 crore. The 2011 National Census estimates that there are 58.7 crore women in India. Dalit women comprise around 16.68% of the total population. As per the National Census, the ratio of Dalit women to Dalit males is 945 women to 100 men. The rate of growth in the number of children aged 0 to 6 years within Dalit groups has experienced a decline, decreasing from 17.4% in 2001 to 14.5% in 2011. There has been a notable increase in the literacy rate among Dalit women, rising from 41.9% to 56.5%. However, it lags below the completely female population, which has a literacy rate of 64.6%. In the year 2001, over 57% of women belonging to the scheduled caste were engaged in agricultural wage work in rural regions, whereas the corresponding figure for non-scheduled caste women was 29%. In metropolitan settings, the proportion of scheduled-caste women engaged in daily wage labor stands at 16%, while their non-scheduled caste counterparts account for a mere 6%. The data reveals that a mere 21% of women belonging to the Dalit community were engaged in cultivation activities. In comparison, 51% of women identified as scheduled caste, and 45% of women categorized as non-scheduled caste and scheduled tribes were involved in similar pursuits.

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