

Status and Role of Scheduled Caste Women in Indian Society

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Abstract

The present paper is concerned with the scheduled caste women. This paper concerned about the situation of the schedule caste women in Indian society. It is indeed difficult to point out the social status of schedule caste women in the society. Traditionally Schedule castes were suffering from several disability or problems.

A Woman has secondary position in Indian society. Men always exploit women due to the male dominant society in India. Gender inequality is present in our society ever where. Apart from this general condition of gender inequalities, the situation seems more miserable in case of scheduled caste women. They are victims of double deprivation. One, on the gender front, and the other one the caste front. This paper includes different cases from different books and articles. Many authors point out and show the situation of schedule caste women by their studies.

Introduction

The "Scheduled Castes" is the legal and constitutional name collectively given to the groups which have traditionally occupied the lowest status in Indian society and the Hindu religion which provides religious and ideological basis for an "Untouchable" group, which was outside the caste system and inferior to all other castes. Today, untouchability is outlawed.

Schedule castes or untouchables were suffering from so many problems in Indian society. The high caste in Indian society maintained a social distance from them. They suffered from many economic hardships and they were not given proper reward for their service. They were not allowed to carry or permitted to engage themselves in the professions of

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the other caste. so, this is a subject of concern that if a caste is exploited by society than what is the situation of the women of this caste in the society because a woman is always get secondary position in Indian society .In general they are always marginalized relative to men, in every country and culture. In a male dominant society, Dalit women suffered un imaginable oppression, not only through caste, but gender too, from which there was no escape. Women belonging to lower classes, lower castes, illiterate and poorest region have different level of marginalization than their better off counterparts. In these circumstances the poor dalit and scheduled caste women have been doubly marginalized first as women and then as member of this class.

Over Centuries, discrimination is shown towards a woman in all the spheres and aspects of her life in the guise of tradition and culture. Here it is essential to see the portrayal and the status of Dalit women in traditional Literature briefly.

The need of the time is to end inequality between man and woman in various fields. Inequality breeds many social and economic evils and these problems are a hindrance to women's liberation and development. With in woman also, there is inequality between Dalit women and non-dalit women. If women are considered as a category, then all women face, the same problems of discrimination and denial of nature justice, women are fragmented in different groups on the basis of caste, religion, occupation cultural tradition, family background literacy and economic development. This fragmentation has also caused numerous problems. Fragmentation means woman are not a homogeneous category. The type and gravity of problems of women in various groups are different and as such demand different solutions. Here we are concentrating on dalit women only.

The term dalit is used here for all scheduled caste and scheduled tribe woman who are socially, economically, educationally and politically backward who have suffered exploitation for centuries and who have been denied natural justice.

In Indian society, the Dalit woman in not treated as a human being both economically and socially, these woman are marginalized.

They are helpless being and their life is cheap and unimportant in this caste society. They are the victims of caste class and sex.

In the pre-independence period many social reformers such as **Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Mahatma Phule, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Pandita Ramabai** etc made efforts to bring about equality in the society. In the post independence period this mission has been continued by the state. Through its 5 years plans through provisions in the constitution and by various reformers or voluuntary organization yet there remain a plethora of problems of dalit women.

As per 1981 census all India literacy rate for men and women put together was 36.17 percent. It was 46.79 percent for men and 24.82 percent for women..

In scheduled caste, it is 21.23 percent for men and women 31.12 percent for men and 10.93 percent for women.

This means that compared with non-dalit women dalit woman have the literacy note of one third and compared with non-dalit men it is one- fourth, lack of education has resulted in their lower social status. So, Rest of the society continues to exploit them on account of their ignorance. But now it is going something change. As per census 2011 all India female literacy 65.46 percent against of 82.14 male literacy. This gape indicate a wide gender disparity in India The literacy rate of scheduled caste women about 42 percent in 2001 increases into 56.5 percent in 2011.

According to the National Commission for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes 2000, approximately 75% of the dalit girl drop out of primary school despite the strict laws of government of India, which hold reservation for dalit children. Despite showing keen academic aptitude, reasons for this early drop out from the education system is poverty or to escape humiliation, bullying and isolation by classmates, society and even their teachers.

According to the National Commission for schedule castes and scheduled tribes, the majority of the educated people are of the upper caste, many of which may practice caste based discrimination. Therefore,

dalit girls feel discouraged to enter education and we see the lowest literacy rate for dalit girls compared to the total population of upper caste girls.

The main reasons for the very low literacy rate among dalit women could be some or all of the following——

1. They cannot afford expensive fees for the private schools due to their extreme poverty.
2. Lack of educational resources in rural areas.
3. Demand of dowry for educated scheduled caste women.
4. Misbehave by high caste students and teachers.

In the Labor market ,According to India's Ministry of Labour,85%of dalit women have the most formidable occupations and work as agricultural laborers, scavengers, sweepers and construction laborer. Many of these women work for minimum wages under the upper caste landlords. since it is proposed that by the National Commission for SC/ST that 85% of the dalits are landless. If they refuse the work for ridiculously low wages or fail to follow their harsh orders it results open violence, beating, rape and jail.

There are many cases which we read in newspapers and so many are not published due to the lack of the support of the society.

Dalit form only 16 percent in India half of which are dalit women. A major part of the labour force in our country formed by dalit women. Dalit women go through greater oppression and violence. They are dalits among dalits, down trodden among downtrodden, lowest of the low. They are oppressed with in the family as also with in the society. They are exploited socially, politically, economically, culturally and physically. They are the victims of triple oppression. The caste, class and gender factors all join together to crush her inhumanity the last, least and lost of our society.

The rural Dalit women faces more atrocities from the upper caste men and women. In this society they have no safety and security. And any time the upper caste men can use them, they way like untouchability is forgotten here, if an upper caste man wants, he can to rape a poor, pole, weak, unhealthy, dark voiceless, the dalit women.

The financial position of the Dalit woman in adverse, Dalit Women are estimated to contribute eighty percent of social labour to strengthen the Indian economy. There is no restriction on Dalit Women going out to work. They are free to perform jobs which are normally kept off from upper caste Women. i.e. Menial filthy and unwelcome. Dalits are poor and live below the poverty line. So to feed the family the Dalit women has to go out and work.

Dalit women have no access to education. They are asset less being mostly landless agricultural laborers or small artisans. They stand no chance in the battle for lively hood the contest is unequal. Equality is these only among equals; to treat unequal's as equals is to perpetuate inequality. The greatest injustice is to divide equally among unequal's. Most of them are under employed. Wages are arbitrary and pitifully low.

Among Dalit women rate of self employment is very low. Most of them are wage laborers in unorganized sector thus not getting any benefits that workers in the organized sector are entitled. Exploitation increases as they are not organized they have to work in jobs with low status and there is no certainty of work round the year. In the absence of permanent employment they are mostly dependent upon family members and thus do not have economic freedom. Women work for longer hours than men. They work along with men and additionally on domestic front, fuel collection, tending the cattle etc.

Sexual exploitation of the dalit woman by the powerful and upper castes in the worst form of de humanization and continues unabated. They are left with no voice and no choice. They are the victims of violence and atrocities both with in the home and with out.

Liberalization, Globalization and mechanization development have only made the Dalit Women's life worse. The poor Dalit Women has become a victim of development.

Though India is developing these is no development in Dalit women life. In Madhya Pradesh the Lotha Caste is a low caste. A first class post graduate women from this caste, is one Chunni kotal. She is doing her research, while working.

One day suddenly she committed suicide. The reason was her superior officer insulted her often because of her caste. This is the state of affairs in the caste society of the developing affairs in the caste society of the developing country, India [Eenadu, New Delhi, Vasondara.]

In Madhya Pradesh it is quite common for land lords to rape dalit women. In Andhra Pradesh, the violence against dalits in karamchedu, Neeru konda and chundur has not yet gone out of our memory. In orissa in 1995 within 8 months, 330 rape cases against dalit women were registered. Near chennai 18 women of the Dalit community who belong to pacheti village, were raped by forest officers.

In Kustogi, a village in Raichur district of Karnataka, Shararovva the Dalit anganwadi worker and the daughter of Kariyavva a Devdasi was allegedly summoned to local travelers bungalow and gang raped by Taluka, Tahsildar, Assistante, Engineer of Zilla Parishad, a P.W.D. Junior Engineer and a Lawyer on February 10, 1993. When the victim fell unconscious, bleeding profusely, the accused put her in a car to take her to Hubli Hospital. She died on the way to Hospital.

In Fatehpur (V.P. Singh Constituency) in 1990, the land lords killed Kachi devi's husband because he did not send Kacchidevi to them. They burnt him alive. They are many incidents like this going on in India. In each and every state we have this kind of incidents frequently.

Here it is worth finding out, what the government is doing to help these women. Our constitution stresses on the urgent need for promoting the educational and economic, interests of the weaker section of the people. The planning commission has marked out three major areas for women's development. These are education, health and welfare.

In the five years plans efforts are being made to boost up lower caste girls education but changes in government hold things up. Thirty percent reservation for women is another important measure which has to be appreciated. But here again dalit women are ignored. This again is used by upper caste women. So, the government should deal with these Dalit women's issues separately. Dalit women are a separate Category. They should not be bracketed with the other women because their problems are different from those of the other women. Social

awaking is happening to the Dalits, and it mostly begins with Dalit Women. The feminist have convenient of chosen to ignore the struggles of Dalit Women/ But the “New Dalit Women” do not want to suffer the exploitation lying down.

They are coming up and they are struggling for recognition they are demanding that their problems should be dealt with separately. Karam Chedu in Andhra Pradesh becomes the starting point for the evolt of the Dalits against the Outrage, and the exploitation of Dalit Women. This made them rejects the financial aid offered by the Government and laid the foundation for the Dalit Movement after the attack on Dalits of Neeru Konda on 15th July 1987, the Dalit Women of the place took up the fight with the police. When the leaders of the Dalit Movements of Kollipura were as arrested, and taken to the Tenali Police station, the Dalit women took out a huge procession and got their leaders released. There are many such incidents in Andhra Pradesh.

In another village 40 trained Dalit Women Chased away 300 villagers. In Maharashtra also hundreds of Dalit women are organizing themselves showing the social awakening of Dalit women. If all the Indian Dalit Women, organize united movement, with their husbands and children supporting them the fight for their liberation will attain its goal soon.

According to G.C. Vippal a nation does not prosper only through fertile soil dense forests and overflowing river. It is the healthy people who make a healthier Nation . A society is made up of both men and women. If women are weak and exploited, it is not a healthy society and if a society is not healthy a nation will also become sick.

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