

MARGINALIZATION OF DALIT WOMEN

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Abstract : *Dalit women are placed at the absolute bottom of the social hierarchy as they face structural discrimination of threefold: as Dalits, as poor, and as women. As women they are subjugated by patriarchal structures, both in the general community and within their own family. As a result of this Dalit women are subjected to inhumane living conditions and human rights violations; discrimination and violence systematically don't give them opportunities, choices and freedoms in all spheres of life. The nature of violence against Dalit women is accompanied by equally systemic patterns of impunity for the perpetrators. The causal links that result in the deprivation of political, civil, economic and social rights of Dalit women are multiple. They suffer from gender bias in the same way as non-Dalit women, but caste and class status deprive them further. Compared to non-Dalit women their status of health and education is low. They are also restricted in employment opportunities and confined to unclean occupations, such as manual scavenging, due to the notion of purity and impurity embedded in the caste system. The Present paper would like to explore marginalization of Dalit women.*

Key words: Marginalization of Dalit women, Discrimination, political marginalization

Objective: to know the marginalization of Dalit women

Research Methodology: The present paper is based on secondary data, literature and discussion with experts.

Introduction:

Dalit women are one of the most marginalized segments in the society. The condition of Dalit women is more vulnerable than non-Dalit women. Dalit women are suffering from multi-disadvantages of being Dalit i.e. socio-economically and culturally marginalized section.

Being women and sharing the gender based inequalities and subordination to explore these and other crucial issues concerning Dalit women there is need to discuss some basic facts concerning the vulnerable situation of Dalit women. Dalit women are easy targets for any perpetrator upper caste considers them to be sexually available. Hence they are largely unprotected by the state machinery. Further there is prevalence of violence, making Dalit women eat human excrete, parading them naked, gang-rape; murder dacoit robbery and burning of their huts or communities. These are the types of crime, which violate their human

rights. According to SC/ ST commission report between 1981 and 1986 about 4000 Dalit women became victim of rape.

Discussion:

With reference from one of the article Gowri and even the novelist – P. Sivakami focuses on the major events and incidents in the lives of the Dalit and the women are portrayed with that true and vivid picture of victimized society. They are doubly marginalized as they remain silent victims of even the Dalit men. They are doubly marginalized as they remain silent victims of even the Dalit men. Vaishali Shivkumar writes: Through *Thangam*, the novelist gives a thorough picture of Dalit women's silence and their being victimized by the Upper Caste Hindus as well as they are sexually exploited by their own caste men equally. Body and misuses of the bodily pleasures become a central motif of the novel and yet the novelist does not glamorize sexuality by smattering the text of the novel with careless elopements and gauche marriages. The majority of the description part in the novel focuses on the incident which takes place with *Thangam* and her body. Her body bears acknowledgment to the difficulties faced by Dalit women. (359) She is a widow and so she becomes a „surplus“ woman when is harassed by her brothers-in-law. Women can be the instruments to be enjoyed, of entertainment or joy for the men of their caste as well as the men of the Upper castes but they cannot raise their voice against this kind of crimes. Men and women of different castes can fall in love but when the society punishes them, it punished the woman only and not the man. Especially, when the love-affair or physical suppression is done on the Dalit woman, she becomes the victim for the man who misuses her as well as the victim of the society. *Thangam* described the torment to *Kathamuthu* that she has gone through. My husband's relatives spread the story that I had become *Paranjothi's* concubine. That's why *Paranjothi's* wife's brothers and her brother-in-law, four men, entered my house last night. They pulled me by my hair and dragged me out to the street. They hit me, and flogged me with a stick stout as a hand. They merely killed me. No one in the village, none of my relatives, come to help me. I begged for mercy, but they wouldn't stop. They abused me and threatened to kill me if I stayed in that village any longer. They called me a whore.

Socio cultural discrimination:

First and foremost Dalit women are victims of social, religious and cultural practices like devadasis and Jogins. In the name of these practices, village girls are married to god by their helpless parents. These girls are then sexually exploited by the upper caste landlords and rich men and directed in the trafficking and prostitution.

The 28 percent of SC/ST commission reported that in February 1986 there were about ten thousand Jogins belonging to SC in Nizamabad district Andhra Pradesh

Health and nutritional status:

Dalit women's daily diet is the leftover of family meals, inadequate in quantity and quality, health services are either not available in case of illness or unaffordable even if

available. In addition to that, due to early marriage and too many pregnancies their health is always at risk. If birth control is practiced at all 91 % cases of tube to be performed on the women who have to carry the burden of family planning. In an overall situation where Dalits are prone to ailments in general, women suffer from more serious and more varied kind of sickness.

Political marginalization:

Women constitute half of total population, but are unable to get equal share in active politics. Their socio-economic status directly depends on their participation in politics. Political parties in India speak much about equality of women but have totally ignored the Dalit women.

Traditionally leadership in the village was confined to rural elites, who were aged and belonging to higher castes. In the year 1993 73rd amendment in the constitution granted reservation to Dalits, tribal and women in local government. This amendment made it compulsory that one third of the seats reserved for Dalits be filled by Dalit women. In women states, there has been little or no acceptance of reservation for the lower castes and Dalit women by the upper castes. The members of the higher castes, who are not prepared to relinquish power to the lower castes, grabbed their land. An easier method to retain power is to put-up proxy candidate but keep the control in the hands of the dominant castes always men.

The incapacity of women, particularly Dalit women, to assert their right is at the root of the problem. The reservation for Dalits, particularly for women, is accepted in form but seldom in substance. Any change in the status quo is resisted. Dalit women's sitting on chairs is seen as threat to social hierarchy, so, the upper castes in the village vetoed chairs in the panchayat office.

Dalit women also faced many problems in performing their duties due to illiteracy, lack of information and dependency on the male members of their families. Despite recognition and legal sanction for political rights, rigid caste system and patriarchy directly and indirectly has been suppressing Dalit women and violating their political right.

This proves that human right of Dalit women are violated right from her family to the society at large by one and all. All these factors are largely responsible for the precarious position of Dalit women as far as their social, cultural, religious, economical health and political status in the society is concerned. These factors force them to mutely allow violation of their civic and human rights.

The limitations and hurdles:

The limitations and hurdles in the expression of Dalit women's voices in modern democratic India reveal the tradition of silencing and marginalization. This continuum of experiences in Dalit women's lives makes it imperative to trace the long-term historical structures and concerns that surround the issues of Dalit women and their assertions through participation in historical movements, political mobilization, and literary writings. Finally, it is rightly said that exploring the plausible counterfactual claims in the form of 'histories from

below' lead to the recovery of past events, persons, and mentalities' (Stanly and Wise, 2008, 217). What Nancy Fraser said about democracy in the U.S. stands true for India as well: "In the U.S. we hear a great deal of ballyhoo about the triumph of liberal democracy and even the end of history. Yet there is a great deal to object to in our own actually existing democracy (Fraser 1990, 56)." Indian democracy too has to be reminded time and again of its exclusionary practices, policies, and institutions. Without the inclusion of historically and structurally marginalized lives, democracy can neither be practiced nor experienced in its true sense and form

Conclusion:

Dalit women faced many problems in performing their duties due to illiteracy, lack of information due to illiteracy, lack of information and dependency on the male members of their families. Despite recognition and legal sanction for political rights, rigid caste system and patriarchy directly and indirectly has been suppressing Dalit women and violating their political rights. It proves that human rights of Dalit women are violated right from her family to the society at large by one and all. All these factors are largely responsible for the precarious position of Dalit women as far as their social, cultural, religious, economic health and political status in the society is concerned. These factors force them to mutely allow violation of their civic and human rights.

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