

Dalit Women in Slums: A Feminist Study

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Abstract

This paper explore that the Indian society is based on a unique socio-cultural phenomenon- the caste system, which is essentially a religious system, sanctioned and sustained by Hinduism. There is no caste system outside the Hindu context. Caste inequality and hierarchical thinking permeate every aspect of life in India. The most affected by this growing inequality are those who by their birth bear the stigma of untouchability. Slum is a Pervasive Phenomenon throughout the developing Countries of the World. Slum cannot be separated from the Social System in the urban life. Slum is the Product of industrial civilization, capitalist mode of production, growing urbanization, modern mechanism of urban settlement, and increasing rural-urban migration. Vulnerably positioned at the bottom of India's caste, class and gender hierarchies, Dalit women experience endemic gender-and-caste discrimination and violence as the outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations.

Introduction

Their socio-economic vulnerability and lack of political voice, when combined with the dominant risk factors of being Dalit and female, increase their exposure to potentially violent situations while simultaneously reducing their ability to escape. Violence against Dalit women presents clear evidence of widespread exploitation and discrimination against these women subordinated in terms of power relations to men in a patriarchal society, as also against their communities based on caste. As the National Commission for Women has commented, "in the commission of offences against... scheduled caste Dalit women the offenders try to establish their authority and humiliate the community by subjecting their women to indecent and inhuman treatment, including sexual assault, parading naked, using filthy language, etc." Hence, violence, which serves as a crucial social mechanism to maintain Dalit women's subordinate position in society, is the core outcome of gender-based inequalities shaped and intensified by the caste system.

Dalit women are compelled to go for various economic activities primarily due to these economic conditions. Even they go for hard labour, even the work that is supposed to be done by men. But they

used to get fewer wage in comparison to their male counterpart. Women work as daily labour for threshing paddy, transplanting seedling or even as labour in road or building constructions, mostly of higher caste Hindu, Muslim or Christian, many-a-time raped. Though normally considered as untouchables, these Dalit women were permitted to enter in inside of the houses at the time of childbirth. After jobs are over they are reverted back to the untouchable status.

The following points have been emphasized on the life of Dalit women:

- Dalit family system is patriarchal
- Dalit women's place in the family is secondary even if she earns
- She does not take any independent decisions
- She can be sometimes quite firms
- She is a little more free than other women as remarriage choice of husband is possible
- She has economic independence but spends all the money for her family.
- She can go out to work
- She still does the menial and dirty works
- Economic standard is low
- Food inferior state
- More than half of the women had torn clothing
- Houses usually in very bad. Area of the village dirty and mud construction "kachha"

- Marriage and the social occasions they tend to follow the caste restrictions
- During all rituals tendency is to spend more than what they can afford due to what people will say.
- No access to Better awareness of health
- Many more women are facing different kinds of violence in the community.

On the basis of these points one can draw certain conclusions. The life of Dalit women is governed by certain rules and taboos as prescribed by Manu. Consequently, the Dalit women are subjected to inhuman behaviour and acute discrimination. They are not being treated as human being. For those who converted to Buddhism or Christianity, the life of women have undergone change. They are more conscious and are trying to establish their own identity in society. On the contrary, the Hindu Dalit women are still stick to the tradition and superstitions.

Dalit woman today is inspired by Dr. Ambedkar. Her way is paved with difficulties. Dalit woman's social struggle will first of all be a familial struggle. Even the educated Dalit man's mind-set is not necessarily progressive. A dalit woman, only if she has a support in her family, can advance in social sphere. As long as she does not have wherewithal for self- actualization she cannot be considered as liberated. This entails a change in the value system of the society. This would mean a treatment of pathology in human beings and a change in attitude of man towards woman. Finally, Dalit Women also have a limited access to livelihood, food, water, sanitation and other welfare programmes.

Gender biases reinforce the impact of caste discrimination and dalit women face double discrimination in all spheres of life. They are more affected by poverty and a majority of them experience physical or sexual violence from dominant castes in slum, often used intentionally to sustain the oppression of the dalit community.

From this backdrop the Present study is based on exploratory views and focused on such a crucial subject of human settlement. Salient features of the problems of dalit women in slum area have been analyzed in this study. A view to helping the policy makers in formulating appropriate strategies and

approaches whose efficiency would be judged in the removal of gender disparities. Substantially based on Empirical Research findings, the present study categorically analyses the problems and prospects of dalit women in slum and positive and viable Recommendations are made for improvement of the situation.

Literature Review:

Review of literature is a vital part of any research. It helps the researcher to know the areas where earlier studies had focused on and certain aspects untouched by them. There have been numerous thought-provoking studies on dalit women in slum areas. A look at the studies shows that dalit women how suffer from different kinds of problems including, socio-economic, cultural and environmental. So many researches, studies on dalit women but not dalit women of slum. We can mention following few studies perpus of the literature.

- **Aloysius Irudayam** and team studied on "*Dalit women speak out violence against dalit women in India*" at Andrapradesh in 2006. They are finding some reasons for violence against dalit women are, Dalit women would appear to be extremely vulnerable to aggression primarily by dominant caste persons in their villages and towns. Dominant caste status, often combined with patriarchal status and reinforced by a dominant class position (for example, being a landlord), effectively legitimises many dominant caste men's exercise of power, authority and force over Dalit women. Moreover, reading through the 500 Dalit women's narratives reveals the pan-religious element in that perpetrators of violence come from all major Indian religions – Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs, indicating that even in non-Hindu traditions the caste hierarchy trumps religious ideals of equality and respect for all human beings.

The range of causal factors for violence in the general community is directly attributable to systemic caste-class-gender factors that ascribe Dalit women's low status in society and consequent disempowerment and exploitation. At the core is patriarchy, which is gender-based and gender-biased against women. Male exercise of patriarchal power to subjugate

women is overtly manifested in their attacks on Dalit women’s sexual and bodily integrity, as well as their rights in inter-personal relationships with men. At the same time, patriarchy in India is influenced by the caste system and its inherent inequalities arising from hierarchal structuring of the system. Dalit women become specifically targeted for violence as an outcome of their positioning at the bottom of both gender and caste hierarchies, which condone violence against those Dalit women who contravene caste and untouchability norms by asserting their right to equality, or criminalises Dalit women’s actions, or deems it socio-culturally acceptable to perpetrate sexual violence on Dalit women.

- **J.Singh** & team researched on “Health status of women in slums of Lack now” in 2006. Research point out, majority of women were found to be anemic & suffered from one or more illness. Majority of the women lag far behind the standard weight & height revealing the extant of malnutrition in women. Women in slum areas of Lack now & optional environmental factors are the main culprit for their poor health.
- **Anil Adagale** researched on “the study of dalit women in slums of puna” in 2006. He conclude has Corruption and political manipulation are still a problem in the slums. For people in the slums, the mobile phone is not only a communication device, but also their bank and their news provider. It is important when attempting to leverage technology to get citizens more involved that the solutions used are designed for the technology that people currently have. While urban planners in developed countries have for years utilized web sites for sharing information and receiving feedback about their plans, urban planners in developing countries need to leverage mobile enabled solutions to reach citizens in slums.

Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of this study are-

- To study the socio-economic, cultural and political status of the dalit women in the slums
- To identify the general, reproductive & mental health problems of the dalit women

- To study the infrastructure facilities how effects on dalit women in the community.
- To analysis the different form of violence against dalit women with in the family, community & society.
- To evaluate Government & Non-Government programmes & policies on the dalit women.

Conceptual Framework:

Dalit Women always face violence from men and society also. Equality is only preached, but not put into practice. Dalit women face violence, inequality, bias, oppression, gender stereotypes etc every day, and they will continue to do so until society changes and accepts them as equals. The right to equality regardless of gender and caste is a fundamental right in India. However, the Indian government has acknowledged that institutional forces arraigned against this right are powerful and shape people’s mindsets to accept pervasive gender and caste inequality. This is no more apparent than when one visits Dalit women living in their caste-segregated localities. Vulnerably positioned at the bottom of India’s gender, caste and class hierarchies, Dalit women experience the outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations in terms of endemic caste-class-gender discrimination in slum community. This study presents feminist perspectives analytical overview of the complexities of status of dalit women. So many researches on slum related issues, but not particularly on dalit women. In our research find out dalit women’s new problems and prospects in community.

The conceptual analytical framework for the present study has been drawn from two basic sources. First, the primary source consists of the feminist research based techniques (Qualitative research methods) and finally, secondary source consists study related, books, journals, magazines, research papers and statistical data on dalit women.

This research includes, theoretical section, social conditions of the women, economic status of women, health status, different forms violence against on women, Government and Non-Government programme for dalit women, finally, last section include-conclusion, recommendations of dalit women.

This research presents the final analytical framework of the study. It consists of a set of analytical questions related to the dalit women.

1. How does belonging to a particular caste or community influence the identity development of dalit women?
2. Are caste and community signifiers of gender inequality? In what ways?
3. What are the form of discrimination, oppression, violence and injustice experienced by dalit women in slum areas?
4. How are autonomy and empowerment manifested through the lives of dalit women?

The present study attends to answer the above questions in the subsequent chapters that follow.

Research Question /Hypotheses:

- Why dalit women neglected from the socio, economic, and health status within the community?
- What are the reasons for gender discrimination in the slum area?
- To study the life style of the dalit women.
- Identify the new problems of the dalit women.
- How to slum environment impact on dalit women's development?

Scope and Methodology:

Bangalore is the capital city of Karnataka state; it's also called as Silicon city, Garden city, Industrialization, urbanisation, and Information Technology, Bio-technologies also rapidly growth in this city. The high-rises of the IT city mask at least 25% of the city's population, though these people actively participate in the functioning of the city. Slums are increasing by the year in Bangalore and in other urban areas of Karnataka, which is one of the highly urbanized states with 37% of its 6.11crore people living in urban areas. According to official statistics from the Karnataka Slum Development Board (KSDB), the state has 2,796 slums housing 40.5 lakh people. With the expansion of Bangalore, the slums have also increased, taking the official number of slum from 473 in 2003 to 597 in 2013. Officials say 13.86 lakh out of 84.25 lakh people in Bangalore, which is 16.45%, live in slums. Experts dispute the figure and term it 'gross underestimation.'

They peg the figures in Bangalore between 25% and 35%. The urban poor are living on government, private and railway lands. Most slum dwellers work as drivers, domestic helps, cooks, construction labourers, vegetable and fruit vendors, watchmen etc.

Bangalore is followed by the relatively under-developed Hubli-Dharwar with 105 slums and the heritage city Mysore houses 81 slums. However, Mangalore is an exception. The city has the least number of slums and even the existing ones have basic facilities. Experts say Bangalore's situation is different from other cities, as it has many temporary (migrant workers living near construction sites) and scattered slums, which are hardly counted by the officialdom. The poor migrate from various parts of the country are flowing into the city. The increase of migration, there is an increase in the number of slums also in Bangalore. According to a report, at least 1.4 million people sleep in slums every night in Bangalore.

According to the Karnataka Slum Development Board, the city has at least 600 slums. However, the Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA) said that the city has over 1,500 non-notified slums which are not counted by the government and said that at least 25% to 35% of the population resides in slums all over Bangalore. In this population more than 65% of them are belonging to dalit caste. Compare to men, more than half of them are women.

In this research, we can choose samples through randomised, and also used Descriptive and Explorative research design for ways to collect this information are-Observational, defined as a method of viewing and recording the participants. Case study, defined as an in-depth study of an individual or group of individuals.

Output of the Research:

Living in the slums is a challenging life and lack of land tenure and fear of evictions do not make that life easier. Although there is a will to improve people's lives many suffer, because there opinion is not taken in to consideration. As the years have passed, the slums have only gotten bigger. The absence of citizen participation is still a problem in the slum upgrade projects. People are involved in the beginning, but as the implementation phase arrives and as problems arise, they are pushed aside.

Corruption and political manipulation are still a problem in the mobile phone is not only a communication device, but also their news provider. It is important when attempting to leverage technology to get citizens more involved that the solutions used are designed. For the technology that people currently have.

The slums are often projected as “eye sores” to be cleared away under any pretext stereotyped notions about slums as areas of darkness, despair and poverty further aggravate the apathetic attitude towards slum dwellers by the general public. So far, the government has failed to come up with a proper action plan to improve the lot of the slum dwellers. More ever in recent years, there has been a reversal in slum related policy measures from one oriented at relocation and rehabilitation to one of the eviction and demolition.

Little attention is paid to the fact that the majority of slum inhabitants are migrants to the city who are in turn the victims of unbalanced growth processes, social injustice and inequalities. Here, the need for a holistic approach that takes in to account the various dimensions- social, economical, political and cultural etc..... in framing any slum improvement policy/scheme ought to be stressed.

Some of the major recommendations are as following,

- The first requirements for them therefore a comfortable home providing with minimum basic amenities.
- To make dalit women literate or at least semi literate, providing them skill training or functional literacy.
- To create awareness about violence against dalit women through laws, Non-Government organisations and civil society also work on dalit women in the slums.
- Implementation of policies and programme for the socio-economic upliftment of the socially marginalized sections of population by the state with the active involment of the civil society.
- The strict empowerment of land reform measures in all the states and the proper implementation of the employment schemes in the slum areas.

- The provision of laws that take in to consideration. The interest of the slum inhabitants. This should include the conferring of the legal status to existing slum clusters and working towards improving living conditions in these areas.
- Providing the slum dwellers with easy accessibility to credit at subsidised rates of interest with proper monitoring in order to avoid difficult payments.
- The proper implementation of minimum wages legislation and amendment of laws to protect the workers in the unorganised sector from exploitation.

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