



DALIT WOMEN IN INDIAN CASTE SYSTEM

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Introduciton:

Dr B R Ambedkar said that Caste System is just like a multistory building having no stairs; you have to die where you have born .In this way, Caste system is a peculiar feature of the Indian society. It is just like a social cancer. The caste system is the dominant and ruling philosophy of Hinduism, directly linking power and social order. The caste system is not only the division of labour but division of the labourer due to graded inequality.He exposed the drawback of the caste system by his writing the '**Annihilation of Caste**'. People are saying that castiesm has come down but it is my firms believe that Castiesm is more as it was earlier but of course, untouchability came down. Dalits have somehow educated due to the Constitutional Right so they realized their fundamental rights, ultimately untouchability came down.

The women are being discriminated in every aspect of the society.The whole women are the victim of gender discrimination in the society.However, Dalit women have been discriminated on the ground of caste and untouchability. In comparison to other high caste women, the Dalit women have been forced to live in most vulnerable conditions.The socio-economic condition of Dalit women in India needs special attention. They experience violence, discrimination, and social exclusion on a daily basis. The economic growth in India has been strong over the past decade. However, the caste disparities are increasing.

Dalit women are discriminated against three times over: Firstly they are poor, secondly they are women, and thirdly they are Dalits. Dalit women are discriminated against not only by people of higher castes, but also within their own communities. The Devadasi system of temple prostitution is the extreme form of exploitation of Dalit women. Dalit girl are forced to prostitution. The majority of cases of violence against Dalit women are not registered.

India is a democratic country. The Government of India has an obligation to make sure that Dalit women can enjoy a whole range of human rights, such as the right to life, freedom from torture, inhuman treatment or punishment, freedom from slavery, the right to be equal before the court, the right to recognition as a person before the law, the right to privacy, the right to marry only with free and full consent, and the right to take part in public affairs. In the real sense the life and dignity of Dalit women depends on the realization of these human rights.

Article 24 (2) of the Constitution provides that every child shall be registered immediately after birth. But in India, 46 % of all children are not registered. There is



no registration for marriages. This is not only a barrier for the realization of civil and political rights; but it also prevents the protection of Dalit girls from sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and forced and early marriages. India's child mortality rate is one of the highest in the world.

The contribution of Dalit 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. The condition of the Dalit women in the villages is very pathetic.

Men are dominant in Dalit communities. Dalit women also have less power within the Dalit movement itself. If you will see the historical background, Dalit women have actively participated in the movement but there is no record for her participation. They were actively involved in the anti-caste and anti-untouchability movements in the 1920s. Today they are the strongholds of the Dalit movements in thousands of Indian villages. They continue to play a critical role in the movements for land rights. They are making their mark as independent thinkers and writers in the literary world. However, they are unable to put an end to the structural discrimination and exclusion.

The father of the Indian Constitution Dr B.R. Ambedkar said that education is a most powerful agent for bringing changes in the society and it is considered a powerful instrument for social transformation. For him education was an instrument to liberate the masses from illiteracy, ignorance and superstition so that they can fight against all form of injustice, exploitation and oppression. Dalit women are extremely poor, and make up 2% of the world's population. In India, 60 million children do not attend primary school; the majority of these children are Dalit girls.

Dr Ambedkar said that it is the responsibility of the State to provide education to all citizens of the country irrespective of Caste, Creed and Gender. Being the main Architect of the Indian Constitution he incorporated in the Article-45 of the Directive Principle of the State, which provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 year.

The provision in **Article 45** of the Directive principles of State policy reinforces **Article- 24**, which reads, “**no child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory mine or engaged in any hazardous employment. The Constitution also directs that children cannot be abused or forced to work and to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength**” through article 39(e) and (f).”

There has been a significant increase in overall literacy rates and school participation rates across the country since the early 1990s. Gender and social disparities have also declined with an overall increase in school attendance. This is confirmed by the data from Census report 2001. A number of factors have contributed



to the rising enrollment rate including the introduction of mid-days meals, opening of alternate schools, and massive enrolment drives. A constitutional amendment was passed in 2002 making free and compulsory education a fundamental right for children aged 6-14 years. The national and state governments continue to deliver the programme *SarvaShikshaAbhiyan*, which aims to achieve universal elementary education.

While enrolment and attendance in primary school has increased, the quality of education remains a major concern. The poor quality of education is reflected in the continuing low level of completion rates of primary school. Disparities in primary education can be seen between children from different castes, economic group, and sex, rural and urban. Universal primary schooling is still a distant goal, particularly for females amongst the socially disadvantaged groups.

Let us discuss the role and relevance of Mid days Meals programme, on one hand the enrolment rate in the primary school has been increased tremendously due to this programme but on the other hand the quality of the education has been questioned. The single agenda of the primary school is, it opens in the morning on the name of Mid days Meals and closed evening on the same. In real sense, this programme is not educating them but making Sakshar, so that they can write their name only. It seems to be a big conspiracy to stop deprived communities from the education. If you will see that data, due to lack of proper education the percentage of drop out children increasing day by day.

I have attended three days National Seminar in Guwahati organized by Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi. Delivering a lecture on the topic **'India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium'** Professor Shreekantam said that we are getting standard education in several good institutions. Discussing in the open session I argued that no doubt we have reputed IIMs and IITs but the question is to whom you are providing standard education. We have two groups in the society Have and Have-Nots. On the one hand, 60% children belonging to Have-Nots are bound to get education in the Primary Schools where the quality of education is too bad and on the other hand, 20% children belonging to the Have are getting standard education in the Public Schools. It is obvious that there is discrimination in the education system. Ultimately, discrimination in the society. How you can justify equal education and opportunity to all?

Educational development among Dalit women is very marginal, 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. The reasons for the high rate of illiteracy among Dalit women are parents are not ready to send girls to schools, insecurity in the villages, lack of school, transport, to earn their livelihood, getting married at young age, increase dowry in marriage etc.



In concluding remarks, I can say education is the right weapon, which can cut all types of slavery as Dr. Ambedkar said. Therefore, he believed that if you want to destroy any society just give all luxurious facilities but do not give education. On the other hand if you want to develop any society donot give anything but give the education. He believed that education is the surest warranty forsocial change and social transformation. Education is the precondition for social change and social change is the precondition for economic change. So, unless until educational status of Dalit women will not change, we cannot see remarkable change in the status of Dalit women.

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