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Dalit feminism: issues and perspectives (civilization britanique)

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'I am conscious of the fact that if women are conscientized the untouchable community will progress. I believe that women should organize and this will play a major role in bringing an end to social evils... The progress of the Dalit community should be measured in terms of the progress made by its womenfolk. Every woman should stand by her husband, not as his slave but as his contemporary, as his friend.'

Dr B.R. Ambedkar, speech to the Dalit Mahila Federation in 1942.

Dedications

I treasure every single second I spent with my father who was and will always be my best friend, my greatest mentor and motivation. I am eternally grateful for the knowledge he shared with me and the irreplaceable life lessons that I live by. I am honored to be his daughter. A special thank to my dearest mother. I feel fortunate for being surrounded by the strength and support of my husband and love of my daughter and son.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

As the lowest in the caste hierarchy, Dalits in Indian society have historically suffered caste-based social exclusion from economic, civil, cultural, and political rights. Women from this community suffer from not only discrimination based on their gender but also caste identity and consequent economic deprivation. Dalit women constituted about 16.60 percent of India's female population in 2011. Dalit women's problems encompass not only gender and economic deprivation but also discrimination associated with religion, caste, and untouchability, which in turn results in the denial of their social, economic, cultural, and political rights. They become vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation due to their gender and caste. Dalit women also become victims of abhorrent social and religious practices such as devadasi/jogini (temple prostitution), resulting in sexual exploitation in the name of religion. The additional discrimination faced by Dalit women on account of their gender and caste is clearly reflected in the differential achievements in human development indicators for this group. In all the indicators of human development, for example, literacy and longevity, Dalit women score worse than Dalit men and non-Dalit women. Thus, the problems of Dalit women are distinct and unique in many ways, and they suffer from the 'triple burden' of gender bias, caste discrimination, and economic deprivation. To gain insights into the economic and social status of Dalit women, our doctoral research will delve more closely into their lives and encapsulate the economic and social situations of Dalit women in India. It will identify some consequent issues related to untouchability and discrimination as well as feminist perspectives to counteract inequality, injustice and humiliation in different walks of life, namely through social and political or literary activism and commitment.

Key words: Dalit, women, gender, caste system, economic deprivation, religious practices, sexual exploitation.

List of Acronyms

- **AIDWA**: All India Democratic Women's Association

- **AIDWF**: All India Dalit Women's Forum

- **AIWC**: All India Women's Conference

- **AIWWCC**: All India Working Women's Coordination Committee

- **BRP**: Bhartiya Republican Party

- **CEDAW**: Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

- **DWM**: Dalit Women's Movement

- **HAS**: Hindu Succession Act

- **HRW**: Human Rights Watch

- **IAWS**: Indian Association of Women Studies

- **IDSN**: International Dalit Solidarity Network

- **IWC**: International Women's Conference

- **MDMS**: Maharashtra Dalit Mahila Sanghatana

- **NCDHR**: National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights

- **NCRB**: National Crime Records Bureau

- **NCSCT**: National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

- **NCRB**: National Crime Records Bureau

- **NFDW**: National Federation of Dalit Women

- **NFIW**: National Federation of Indian Women

- **NGO:** Non-Government Organisations

- **OBC**: Other Backward Castes

- **PAA**: Prevention of Atrocities Act

- **PCR**: Protection of Civil Rights

- **POA**: Prevention of Atrocities

- **SC**: Scheduled Castes

- **ST**: Scheduled Tribes

- **UN**: United Nations

- **VVDMP**: Vikas Vanchit Dalit Mahila Parishad

- **WCAR**: World Conference against Racism

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Being one of the oldest civilisations of the earth, the Indian civilizations emergence can be traced back least to five thousand years. Initially Aryan tribes invaded lands of Dravidians around 1.500 BC and cultures of these two foreign civilisations merged (Chaudhuri, 2004). One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Indian culture is the Varna or the caste order. This order categorizes Indian people into five groups. The first four groups are almost sharing intrinsic qualities. They are from top to bottom, namely Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.

Besides those mentioned four castes, there is another group who is considered as outcastes. They are the Untouchables. The Untouchables are deprived of several basic human rights. They are considered to be impure to touch, to live together, to use public possessions or even to pray together. "Naturally", the Untouchables suffered the most by this social order.

Furthermore, after the independence of India the new consciousness of the Untouchables was inspired by Mahatma Phule and initiated by Babasaheb Ambedkar. Initially all downtrodden people of India unified, including the Untouchables, and became known as the Dalits. Thanks to their political awareness, they maintained significant constitutional safeguards for themselves.

The caste system is based on the division of people into social groups (or castes) in which the civil, cultural, and economic rights of each individual caste are predetermined or ascribed by birth and made hereditary. The assignment of rights among castes is unequal and hierarchical.

In the traditional scheme of the caste system, the untouchables, are at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, and deprived of all rights. Being located at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy, they suffer the most from an antisocial spirit and violence by high-caste Hindus (Sabharwal and Sonalkar, 2015). They were denied the right to property, education, and civil and cultural rights, and restricted to so-called 'polluting' occupations and manual labour.

As a matter of fact, the Indian government has addressed the problem of caste and untouchability through various constitutional safeguards. The Constitution of India has recognized SCs and STs as 'historically deprived' segments of the society. Subsequently, laws have been passed that aim to remove discriminatory practices against the SCs and also to ensure their social and economic empowerment. Anti-discriminatory measures for the Dalits include the enactment of the Untouchability Offence Act, 1955 (Sabharwal and Sonalkar, 2015).

Unfortunately, in practice many of the associated behaviours, norms, and values persist. This means that Dalits still often live in separate locations with poorer services, face discrimination when accessing services, receive lower pay, and face discrimination in the marketplace.

On the other hand, the problem of Dalit women is distinct and unique in many ways because they suffer from the triple burden of economic deprivation, patriarchy, and caste -based discrimination. In addition, Dalit women are also victims of social and religious practices such as devadasi/jogini (temple prostitution) that result in their sexual exploitation in the name of religion. Empirical analyses from official sources of information in this research will highlight that Dalit women are at the lowest end of a social structure that is characterized by great inequality on the basis of caste and gender.

The interface between caste, patriarchy, and gender is a theme that needs a thorough theoretical and empirical study for the purpose of understanding the nature and causes of the caste and gender exploitation of Dalit women. In this research we attempt to develop such an understanding of the problems of Dalit women and present an analysis of the complex intersectionalities of the challenges they face. The analysis of human poverty, violence, caste, and gender discrimination is based on the official data sources of the National Sample Survey Organisation, the Census of India as well as a number of primary studies conducted by various scholars.

The recognition of gender as an issue powered the post-colonial women's movement, supported by feminist activists; where they follow a feminist line

specific to their struggles. Dalit feminism differs from Indian mainstream feminism in its demands. It adds female emancipation to the Dalit movement that is not free from patriarchal structures. It questions the hegemony of the former in the claim to speak for all women and of the latter in the claim to speak on behalf of Dalit women.

Dalit feminism can be perceived through three major streams: Dalit feminist activism, Dalit women's writing/autobiography and the theoritical formulation of Dalit feminism. Dalit feminism indicates the position of Dalit women at both the intersections of gender and caste and feminist movement and Dalit movement. Marginalization of Dalit women within the mainstream feminist organizations and the male dominance in mainstream Dalit movement resulted in the Dalit women's need to formulate Dalit feminism. Dalit feminism not only addresses the intersectionalities of caste and patriarchies but also critiques the position of Dalit women in both the feminist and Dalit organizations.

The appalling conditions of Dalit women's life made me aware of the cruel practices in India. As a woman and as an EFL researcher, I thought it interesting to deepen my knowledge. Besides, Dalits issues are spoken in India and outside India, specifically through diasporic mass media and writers at home and abroad.

Therefore, the thesis aims to depict the plight of Dalit women who are considered to be a vulnerable population group facing multiple and intersecting discriminations because of caste, class and gender. Besides, they are disproportionately affected by caste discrimination. The latter, affects Dalit women's unequal access to resources of basic survival such as water, fuel and sanitation facilities in addition to educational institutions, public places and sites of religious worship. The high level of poverty among Dalits, wage inequality, landlessness, political disenfranchisement and denial of legal rights perpetuate the symbolic structures of untouchability, which frequently legitimates the dominant castes' sexual abuse of Dalit women in particular.

The research questions that might be related to the choice of the topic can be set as follows:

(1) Do Dalit women enjoy their rights of equality and justice before the Indian Constitution?

(2) What are the nature and forms of violence that Dalit women encounter when accessing these rights?

(3) How is this violence related to systemic discrimination against Dalit women?

In order to set related hypotheses, it should be mentioned that:

(1) Women always face violence from men, from the community and the upper-caste perpetrators.

(2) Equality is only preached, but not put into practice.

(3) The empowerment of Dalit women to enable them to realize their rights and eradicate caste and gender discrimination has been intrinsic to the achievement of the wider goal of Dalit human rights.

The present research has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter aims at understanding the main concepts of Dalit cultural context, as well as understanding the patriarchal and casteist society that hinders Dalit women from prosperity and justice. The second chapter is related to the understanding of Dalit feminism and how they identified and defined themselves in these movements. Chapter three, on the other hand, deals with analyzing the woman question, by providing a number of primary studies conducted by various scholars and official data records. In addition, chapter four aims at depicting that Dalitism and Dalit literature have contributed to bring to light issues of inequality and oppression on the basis of caste/class and gender. The conclusion opens paths of research through questioning some unsolved queries regarding Dalit women future needs and requirements.

Harvard Referencing style has been used as reference to the present thesis.

Chapter One

Cultural Dalit Context

1.1.   Introduction

In India and other countries in South Asia, Dalits have been systematically discriminated on the basis of their work and descent. They are also known as Untouchables or outcastes. People in India are socially differentiated through class, religion, region, tribe, gender, and language. Although various forms of differentiation exist in all human societies, these processes become a problem when one or more of these dimensions overlap each other and remain the sole basis of systematic ranking and unequal access to valued resources like wealth, income, power and prestige. The Indian caste system is considered a closed system of stratification, which excluded Dalits from mainstream society and made them suffer numerous disabilities. This chapter will be exploring the various aspects of the Indian cultural context and its effects on Dalit community in general and Dalit women in particular.

1.2.   Towards an Understanding of Untouchables

The Untouchables form the fifth group within the Hindu caste system. Hence, the Varna order consists of four castes, and the untouchables are the outcastes. They are among the groups that compose the Dalits. The others are the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and *Sūdras*. The *Sūdras* compile the fourth caste, which most of them are labourers. The SCs Tribes are defined by the Government Act of 1935 (Özden, 2005).

The Untouchables are dishonoured; politically, religiously and socially isolated and economically exploited. The relation of the Untouchables with the affiliates of the *chaturvarna* is arranged and defined by the notions of pollution and purity and karma. They are considered as the Untouchables, because of being perceived as impure and less human. The purity notion is dressed on the higher classes; on the contrary the Untouchables are polluting by birth and perpetually

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dirty (Balkrishna G. Gokhale, 1999). To emphasize this statement Jogdand (2013:125) argues as follows:

> *"Varna ideology teaches and propagates that humans are born unequal from different parts of the divine body. This inequality and hierarchy of humans is justified by karma-samsara theory. If I am a dalit, I have done something wrong in my past life. Your very nature of birth is determined. You have no choice. Your svad-harma is intrinsic to you. Your salvation lies in your faithful observance of your varna (jati). There is no mobility in this system. Stay where you are till you die."*

The Untouchables had no right to touch either a member of the upper classes or their staff, simply because they were considered as badly affecting the cleanliness of superior rungs. They *"are outcastes, too impure to belong to the caste hierarchy. The pollution purity principle operates to strongly that touch, and sometimes their shadows and even voices are believed to pollute the caste Hindus!"*(P G Jogdand, 2013: 125-126). They do not have social relationships with upper classes. They live in such places where they are asked to stay in and cannot move anywhere from the Untouchable zone. Moreover, they cannot share public places and they are reduced to do contaminating tasks, ignominious jobs as cleaning, sewage cleaning, farm cultivating or cremating. Trade was banned for them.

Hence they are not allowed to enter schools, temples, or cannot claim land even though it is legally theirs. The foodstuff they cook cannot be consumed. They are not permitted to touch the water tanks in common usage and even cannot wear shoes in the presence of upper caste members. They have no access to health services, non-toxic water, public parks; public offices even have no access to *dharmshalas*, which is a kind of hotel (Özden, 2005). As far as this social system is a part of *Hinduism*, then it is the Hindu Gods decision affirmed by Clarke, Sathianathan (2002) in this statement:

"…the natural plague that could be taken as a Divine fiat against the oppressors mainly targets, in fact, the broken and crushed ones of the earth. Thus, it is Dalits' water that turns to blood, Dalits' houses that are swamped with frogs, Dalits' grounds that are crawling with gnats, Dalits' foodstuffs that are infested with flies, Dalits' livestock that are dying with disease, Dalit bodies that are festering with boils, Dalits' huts that are destroyed with thunder and hail, Dalits' fields that are destroyed by locust, Dalits' living areas that are covered in darkness, and Dalits' firstborn — and every born — son and daughter who are felled by death."

The Untouchables are presumed to be vitiated that they should keep at a distance from upper caste affiliates. Yet, their shadows are also considered to be polluting. *"Without Brāhmans, of course, we might think there could be noUntouchables, since only those who considered themselves 'gods on earth' might be arrogant enough to believe that the mere touch of another human being brought defilement"* (Wolpert, 1991: 128-9). Before the Untouchables arrive to a public place, in some quarters, they had to inform the others about their Untouchability. In the light of these statements Joshi (1980: 5-6) quotes:

"By 400 A.D. the Chinese traveller Fa-Hsieu described a world in which the Chandalas (Untouchables) are named 'evil men', and dwell apart from others. If they enter a town or market, they sound a piece of wood in order to separate themselves, hen men knowing who they are, avoid coming in contact with them."

It is very clear from the above ideas stated concerning the way the Untouchables are treated; Wolpert (1999: 16) in addition, focuses on the fact that *"when an Untouchable touches a subsidiary of a higher varna, the touched has to clean her/himself, and sometimes she/he must to be purified by religious calls.*

From their contact, to their shadow and sound the Untouchables; by curse, were regarded to be totally dirtying". Furthermore, violating the rules and contacting a superior caste person, implies a punishment with the utmost rigour in turn. It is noteworthy mentioning that disgracing the Untouchables is ironic. On one hand they have neither any right nor are there any possibilities of liberation and consideration; and on the other hand, they exist either as objects of pleasure for the high castes or as means for their welfare and luxury (P G Jogdand, 2013: 126).

The Untouchables are the first, the most despondent and the most miserable people that history can testify. Untouchables have even been stripped of the right to pray to a Hindu deity; which has always been a high caste privilege. The Dalits can meet the priest only for very special occasions of life, like birth, marriage and death. During these religious ceremonies, the priest gives them information about the relationship between the divinity and the people.

Although, the priest treats them as part of his religion; consequently, he gives the information because it is part of the ceremony, but he neither teaches them the religion nor does he incorporate them (Ghose, 2003). The *Brahmins* were not seeking to create a rigid uniformity in their religious community. Rather, they were following a discriminating and elitist route. According to Joshi (1980: 1) one of the ancient religious Hindu texts, the *Dharma Sutra* states that:

> *"If a Shudra listens to a recitation of the Vedas, his ears shall be filled with melted tin. If he recites Vedic texts, his tongue shall be cut out…He, who tells [religious] law to a Shudra and he who teaches him religious observances, he indeed together with that Shudra sinks into the darkness of the hell called Hsamvritta."*

The aforementioned hymn in *Rig Veda* describes four castes as different fractions of the supreme creator Brahma. In this stanza, Untouchables are not mentioned as any element of their idol. Religiously, it implies that, Untouchables do not have any spiritual significance. Thus, they are less prominent than the other

castes as parts of the *Brahma*. It is, however, evident why Untouchables are religiously left behind and why they are not considered as a part of ordinary life and as a piece of the general public, and therefore, why they are dejected. The frustration is that their destiny is the result of the unfair social environment born out of the Hindu social order which is so deadly hostile to their progress (Özden, 2005). Along the same line, P G Jogdand, (2013: 126) affirms that *"they are cast out and left out, they are dalits. Determining a person's humanity on the basis of birth is the specialty of Indian culture."*

So far, then, Untouchables are neither authorized to study, nor do they have the right to be healed or the right to possess assets. Further, they do not have the right to live where they like, cannot shop among upper Varna members and the list of prohibitions on them continues as well (Özden, idem). They have been, dramatically, ringed within the borders drawn by the upper castes and forced to be servants. They live quite different from the other Indians, they are different from the way they are nourished to the languages they speak, the rituals they practice.

Their right to education is very limited. Either they cannot enter schools or gathered in one separate class. In diverse parts of India, or in some places Untouchables even cannot study. The experiences of an Untouchable child are narrated by Overland (2004) as follows:

> *"As a child, Rajkumar was often told that he was not welcome at the government school. 'My teachers said an education was wasted on a Chamar' he said, referring to those traditionally relegated to skinning animals, one of the most degrading tasks in Hinduism. 'Why do you come to school? You should be sweeping the roads,' they said. They told us to go to the fields to collect fodder for their cattle. Forced to sit inthe back of the class and beaten for even minor infractions, few of the children from the caste group known as Untouchables, or Dalits, stayed in school long enough to learn to read and write. Rajkumar, was one of the few Dalits to graduate from his school, and one of the rare few in his village to ever go on to college."*

Following this testimonial, one could also notice that this prohibition deprives the Untouchables from becoming professionally skilled. Opportunities of a decent work are almost non-existent for them. Consequently, they are backward cumulatively. To be more explicit on this point, the jobs which are given to Untouchables are limited around cheap-labour vocations. This situation implies that *"…Untouchables are socially conspicuous, economically vulnerable"* (Joshi, 1980: 6).

From this point of view, caste system of India seems not to be a religious but an economic categorization. As a result, it is not wrong to seek other reasons, than religious motives, of substandard situation of the Untouchables. Sticking in the same idea, (P G Jogdand, 2013: 126) makes clear as follows:

> *"To these upper sectors of society the out-castes are nameless, they have no self and no identity of their own. They do not count, except, of course, when there is work to be done to produce wealth, create leisure and the conditions for the development of culture, and to keep the society healthy and going."*

1.3.   Forms of Untouchability

It is an "accepted" fact that untouchability is not only about not touching certain kinds of people. It is a much more complex phenomenon that is fundamentally evil, despicable and anti-human. It is a prejudice much stronger than racial prejudice and more dangerous because it is invisible. Bellow shows the main untouchability practices prevailing in various parts of India and the various forms of each practice as it is stated by Kumar (2013: 69-70-71):

(1) Denial of drinking water

If a village has a common water source for both Dalits and *Savarnas*, the following forms of untouchability are seen to be observed:

Dalits are not allowed to draw their own water. The *Savarnas* draw the water for them and pour it into their pots. They have to wait until a higher caste Hindu comes to the water source and is favourably inclined towards drawing water for them. In addition, Dalits are not supposed to touch the pots of the *Savarnas*. Dalits can get water only after all the *Savarnas* have fulfilled their own water needs.

In most villages, separate wells and bore-wells continue to exist for Dalits and the *Savarnas*. In case of acute shortage of water, *Savarnas* can use the Untouchables' water source. But, it is not the other way around. If the *Savarna* castes want water from the Dalits' bore-well, they have to first cleanse the bore-well and its surroundings. If a village has a natural lake, pond or tank, Dalits are supposed to draw their water from downstream, where the *Savarnas* do not go.

(2) Prohibited from entering a Savarna house

Dalits are not allowed to enter the house of the *Savarnas* and they are compelled to stand far away from their houses. They can only go to certain parts of a *Savarna's* house: the outer extension of the house and outside the threshold, but not the interior parts. At the time of harvest, Dalits are sometimes allowed to enter to store their agricultural products in a *Savarna's* house.

(3) Segregation at feasts

On the occasion of a marriage or a function in a *Savarna* family, Dalits are usually not invited, and if they are invited, they can eat only after the *Savarnas* have finished. In some places, they are supposed to bring their own plates. Sometimes, they are told to wash their own plates after they have dined. Almost all the time, Dalits are served at a distance from the hosted premises. Sometimes, they are given their food in towels or in their upper garments.

(4) Discrimination in schools

Dalit students have to sit separately at the back of the class. They are often abused by their caste name. They are not allowed to eat together with the *Savarnas*. There are separate water facilities for them.

(5) Ban on sitting in public places

Dalits are not allowed to sit in public places. They have to sit separately at some distance from the other castes. Often, they are allowed only to stand, that too with folded hands and they are also allowed to sit at lower level.

(6) Ban on walking in *Savarna* localities

Dalits are not allowed to walk wearing footwear of any kind in the vicinity of the *Savarnas*. They are not allowed to use an umbrella in localities. They are not allowed to ride cycles or in rickshaws and, in certain cases, even in bullock carts.

(7) Forced services

The following examples are forced services as: Drum beating for funerals and festivals/*jatras*; grave digging; cremation of dead bodies; chappal making; removal of animal carcasses, and scavenging. Dalits are supposed to sweep the whole village at the time of festivals and *jatras*.

(8) Denial of services

(a)   Laundry services: denial of laundry services. Even laundry shop owners refuse to iron the clothes of Dalits.

(b)   Barber services: they are denied the hairdressing services. If a family member is cutting the hair of Dalits, he cannot perform the same service for the *Savarnas*. If such services are rendered to Dalits in their locality, the service provider must purify himself immediately on coming back to his house.

(c)   Denial of entry into shops: Dalits are prohibited from entering shops, and where they are allowed into a shop, they cannot touch anything. Consequently, they have to stand in separate lines and not touch any *Savarnas*.

(9) Untouchability in giving and receiving things in the shop

Dalits are not allowed to touch any items, but they have to indicate with a small stick the items they desire to buy. They have to stand outside the shop and the exchange takes place by throwing the money and the purchased item and sometimes, a separate tray is kept for them, through which the exchange takes place.

(10) Discrimination in health services

Dalits have to stand in separate line; while physical touch is avoided both during check-ups and while prescribing medicines. Health workers seldom visit the Dalits' areas in a village. In spite,

1.4.   Dalit Profile

Dalits are one of the foremost denigrated groups in India which suffer from various kinds of exploitative and oppressive practices of the Indian society. They, in fact, have been degraded by Hinduism beyond imagination. They have not only suffered from psychological, social and cultural proscription, but also this social rejection unleashed tremendous amount of miseries and hardships to them. According to Dr. Indu Baghel (2009) the term Dalit is chiefly used for those who are ex-untouchables in the Indian society and are extremely poor, landless, illiterate and exploited and also Rabindra Kumar (2013 : 9) states that *" time and again, we come across terms such as 'untouchable classes', 'depressed classes', 'Harijans', 'scheduled castes and more recently, 'Dalits' "* (Kumar, 2013: 9).

In retrospect, Dalits claim to be the real inhabitants of the ancient cities Mohanjodaro and Harappa until the Aryan invasion in 1500 BC, but then they escaped into the forests and tried to preserve their culture there. The invaders enslaved them, when they were caught. Eventually they became the 'Untouchables' (Parikh, 92-93). British manipulation, as a foreign influence, had existed in India since seventeenth century.

Around the twentieth century, however, the idea of India's independence was spreading around. The struggle for liberty was twofold. On the one hand, the *varna* members were impatient to topple the foreign administration in order to get back the control, establish an autonomy and consolidate the traditional Indian system.

On the other hand, there were lower classes and outcastes, who were not proclaiming against the foreign government as the four *varnas* (Özden, 2005). For the Untouchables, the British were the enemy of the enemy. The best of the two options was the British administration, because at least the British stood out the Untouchables of certain prohibitions by providing these people with particular fundamental rights.

Despite the fact that the British policies regarding the rise of the lower castes were in agreement with humanitarian sentiments, there was also a secret agenda that stipulates making the lower castes look to the British for protection and facilitating the policy of fracture and rule by inflaming caste tensions (Srinivas, 1957: 532).

It is quite "clear" that the downtrodden classes were no more uninstructed to the old social caste system, but are instead enthusiastic about getting concerned in the political, social and economic customs as any other partner in the society. As a matter of fact, Untouchables were aware of themselves and subversive to the system, which oppresses them since the nineteenth century. As time passed by, the way they expressed their complaints about their social, economic, political and religious position has switched by the appearance of an emblematic landmark, Dr. Ambedkar (Gokhale, 1999: 271).

For this reason the Dalit does not signify a caste, a definite class or a group of people. The Untouchable and the Dalit terms cannot be used interchangeably. It is rather an all-encompassing brand. It covers all poor, unfortunate, displaced, disadvantaged people of India. So, it is a common denominator summing up the Untouchables and other downhearted Indians (Özden, 2005).

Keeping this in focus, the word Dalit means the oppressed and it comes from the Marathi language (Soykut, 2004: 98), the language of Maharashtra (Soykut, 2004: 98). Dalit *"'oppressed' or 'broken' is not a new word. Apparently it was used in the 1930's as a Hindi16 and Marathi translation of 'depressed classes'"* (Dr. Indu Baghel, 2009: 30). Thereby, Dalits in India are known by many other names given to them by others, for the most part to abominate them or just to evince disdain. A name is not only a simple designation, but an unveiling of a bitter truth. They are *avarnas*, colourless and non-descript; or *pancamas*, those left over as it were after the four castes have been counted; or *antyajas*, last-born, as if they were an accident, an unwelcome appendix, an unwanted tail.

They were called untouchables as they are unclean castes, the unclean feeders, *Harijans* and SCs etc (P G Jogdan, 2013: 126). They are also named in the regional languages as *"chura in Punjabi, Bhangi or Lal-Bhangi in Hindi, Mala and (Madiga) in Telugu, Paraiyan in Tamil, Pulayan in Malayalam, Koragas in Tulu and Konkani"* (P G Jogdan, 2013: Ibid). Other labels to define them, besides the previous ones are *"exteriors, atee shudras, broken men, avarn, antyevasin, asura, nisada, chandala, raksasa, dasysa, dasa, panchama, damai, asprishya, non-Hindu, protestant Hindu, non-conformist Hindus, downtrodden, antyaja"* (Joshi, 1980).

Moreover, the expressive term Dalit, that mirrors the awareness of stigmatised Indian people to eliminate the historical injustices and discrimination, is a quite new one. In fact, there is no class or caste namely Dalit. In prior times, they were known and called as "Untouchables" and "outcaste" inhabitants. They were fated to hold jobs that did not afford them enough economic incomes (Tugba Özden, 2005).

In addition, they did not have any influence in governance, *"such groups were pre-literate, and they lacked the political and educational skills that would have allowed them to engage directly in the new modes of formal and organized political activity that were coming to dominate political life there towards the end of the century"* (O'Hanlon, 1986: 6).

The word *harijan* was formulated by Gandhi because of its meaning 'people of God'. But this term was rejected by Ambedkar, as far as that still had a separating denotation. All the names other than Dalit have humiliating refinement and in year 1919, British Administration changed these terms into Depressed Classes or SCs and Tribes. In different parts of India, the Untouchables are called with different names. Most of these terms are known to be expressions of hatred towards the Untouchables and other low layers of the Indian social hierarchy. Reversibly, the people degraded by the traditional Hindu order loathed Brahmans the same way, because of being made villains eternally.

This mentioned hatred and resentment towards the *Varna* system were reflected by the language and many proverbs that were created (Omvedt, 1976: 71-2). Among numerous sayings the following proverbs exemplify how upper castes were seen by the lower: *"Give the bhat the verandah and he will take the whole house", "There are three bloodsuckers/butchers in this world: the bug, the flea and the Brāhman", "Set a Brāhman to kill a snake", "Bribes to a clerk, gifts to a priest", "A cat that will not lap milk and a Brāhman who refuses a bribe", "Brāhmans are made to eat, Bhavaiyans to play and sing, Kolis to commit robbery, and widows to mourn"* (Omvedt, 1976: Idem).

Chronologically, they were recognized with the term Untouchable and outcaste. 'Depressed class' and 'scheduled caste' were the phrases offered by the British, and the second expression 'scheduled caste' has a legal connotation. The term 'scheduled caste' came out by the Government Act of 1935. They were 'scheduled', because the Constitution put schedules listing the names of the Untouchables (Jha, 1997: 2). According to the censuses held since 1941, the percentages of the SCs were also recorded and it is seen that their proportion to the total population has never been so low, and this percentage has been rising every year.

In the year 1941, 13.49% of the Indians were the SCs; this means out of 295,808,722 Indians and 39,920,807 were the SC members. The climb of this

percentage was recorded by regular censuses and as a result it was found that in 1951: 14.40%, in 1961: 14.67%, in 1971: 14.60%, in 1981: 15.47% in 1991: 16.48% (Ibid: 3). As for the 2004 census results of India, concerning Maharashtra state, which is the centre of the Dalit Movement, there are 77.800.000 Hindus, 12.000.000 Muslims, 5.838.000 Buddhists, 1.058.000 Christians, 1.300.000 Jainists, 980.000 Scheduled Castes and 850.000 Scheduled Tribes (Soykut, 2004: 111-2).

Then, Mahatma Gandhi pronounced the new term *Harijan*, which means "children of God". Dr. Ambedkar rejected Gandhi's expression, due to the fact that the Untouchables found the newly proposed word always degrading and constantly emphasizing the inequality of social strata. *Harijan* word did not implement any changes in the situation of the Untouchables nor did it present a new identity, but rather a merely populist aimed at keeping lower classes under control by showing them that ruling ranks did not abominate them. In a way, the designation made by Gandhi depicted that lower castes were external elements of the Indian social order; therefore, essentially did not incorporate lower castes to the system (Özden, 2005).

Indeed, the term Dalit was invented to denote the fight of disadvantaged populations. None of the words used in place of Dalit before had such an influencing and stimulating impact. The word Dalit was triggering, resuscitating, revolutionizing to all depressed Indians. The Dalit idiom feels a denial of pollution, karma, and justified caste hierarchy. Hence, the term Dalit became acceptable for all opponents of the Indian caste system (Eleanor Zelliot, 1992: 267).

For a low caste or Untouchable, being a Dalit means to achieve a political identity, insofar as their mission is blighting the caste system and being able to rise in social and economic areas. Not only making downtrodden classes apparent in India, but their aim is also gaining basic human rights and having a word in governance, *"Dalit is the group once known as 'Untouchable' that languishes beneath the caste system"* (Chaos, 2003). The word Dalit signifies their anger, their protest, anti-caste objectives and political awakening of depressed classes of Hindu

caste society where *"The term Dalit has become appositive, assertive expression of pride in Untouchable heritage and a rejection of oppression"* (Joshi, 1980: 3).

1.4.1.   Definition of the Concept of 'Dalit'

As pointed out in the previous paragraphs, Dalit word pledges a cultural identity to underprivileged Indians, because it distinguishes the other fanatic opponent of *Brahman* class, who are considered being *Aryans*. The *Aryan* invaders are believed to destroy the 'Indus Valley civilization', displaced the native Indians, and established a new culture within Indian lands. This new culture was imposed as the superior, the high class culture, where the local culture was oppressed and brought about as the inferior one. This is why Dalit is just the opposite of *Aryan* and *Brahman* culture.

The Dalit term indicates the modification of Hindu social system. Besides, it also expresses the resurgence expectation of those, who have been exploited since this ancient system was established. The term Dalit eliminates the negative meanings of all other expressions labelling Untouchables and brings a self-expression with the resistive eloquence (Özden, 2005).

The term Dalit, expressing the politically awakened Untouchables, is raised from the root dal. The Sanskrit verb dal means to break, to split, to open, to go down and crash. Dalit is the adjective form of the verb dal (the word dal is found on page 471 of the prestigious Oxford Sanskrit English Dictionary, new edition, 1964, edited by the world - famous Sanskrit scholar, Sir Monier Williams). The word Dalit is existent in various Indian languages, including the Dravidian. According to the dictionary, Dalit means burst, split, scattered, dispersed, broken, torn as under, destroyed, crushed. Özden (2005) gives more details about the word Dalit:

"The same root 'dal' is present in other Indo-European languages as well. For instance, in English 'dal' or 'tal' means 'cut'; then 'dale' means 'valley' and 'tale' means a piece of life to tell. In German 'thal' is tailor, one who cuts. The same root is present in Hebrew, perhaps by coincidence. In Hebrew, 'dal' means

poor or weak. The contemporary meaning of Dalit is believed to be used by the nineteenth century Marathi social reformer Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. Phule used it to express the brokenness of the outcastes and the Untouchables as victims of Indian caste society."

Accordingly, what is deduced from the above citations is that the definition of the word Dalit, symbolizes the awakening of the whole oppressed Indians politically, socially and economically. It is a counter rebel to the harsh traditional Hindu caste system that exploited, distinguished and persecuted Indians. Since first flames of this uprising one more point changed, which is about religion. The latter, was set up by misfortune, inequitable social order and economic exploitation of groups. In early times, victims of the long-established order criticized the classification, blamed upper castes and particularly the Brahmans, but not Hinduism (Pradhan, 1986: 125).

1.5.   Caste Structure and Characteristics

The Indian Caste System is historically one of the main dimensions where people in India are socially differentiated through class, religion, region, tribe, gender, and language. Although this or other forms of differentiation exist in all human societies, it becomes a problem when one or more of these dimensions overlap each other and become the sole basis of systematic ranking and unequal access to valued resources like wealth, income, power and prestige (Sekhon, 2000: 39).

The Indian Caste System is considered a closed system of stratification, which means that a person's social status is obligated to which caste they were born into. There are limits on interaction and behaviour with people from another social status (Sekhon, 2000: 39). Its history is massively related to one of the prominent religions in India, Hinduism, and has been altered in many ways during the Buddhist revolution and under British rule. The following will be exploring the

various aspects of the Indian caste system related to its hierarchy, its history, and its effects on India today.

1.5.1. Caste System in India

Defining the word "caste" itself is harder than thought to be. Hutton defines it as *"a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name; claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community"* (Hutton, 1963: 47). It can also be defined as an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank of social esteem in comparison with other such subdivisions (Velassery, 2005: 2). Caste name is generally associated with a specific occupation and, as mentioned before, is a closed stratification, which makes it endogamous (Hutton, 1963: 47).

The Indian caste system is a classification of people into four hierarchically ranked castes called *varnas*. They are classified according to occupation and determine access to wealth, power, and privilege. Leadership positions in society are monopolized by a few dominant castes (Pintane, 2010). The two upper castes are ritually considered as superior to the lower castes (Smith, 1994: 43). The Brahmans, usually priests and scholars, are at the top. Smith (1994), the author of Classifying the Universe, explains his definition of the Brahman caste:

> *"The Brahmin class is essentially defined by its supposed priority (as the class created first by the creator god), by knowledge of the Veda, and by the monopoly this class holds on the operation of sacrifice. These traits justify the social position of the class vis-à-vis others: they are predominant because they are prior, and they claim to stand outside of the power relations that govern social life for others because of their superior knowledge and sole possession of the ultimate "weapons," sacrificial techniques."*

There are, however, varying "degrees" of Brahmans, such as Kanya-Kubja, Tamil, Tanjore, and others who are part of numerous villages (Pintane, 2010). These sub-castes, called *jatis*, are very specifically endogamous, so that a Brahman is not only restricted to marrying another Brahman, but to marrying a woman of the same subdivision of Brahmans (Hutton, 1963: 47). Each *jati* is composed of a group deriving its livelihood primarily from a specific occupation. People are born into a certain caste and become members. They then acquire the appropriate occupation according to their *jati*. Separation of these Brahmans from others is one of several indications of social status, which include material goods, social power or influence, and social skills (Pintane, 2010).

Following the Brahmans are the *Kshatriyas*, or political rulers and soldiers. They were the ruling class and often times collaborated with the Brahmans as they reigned over their kingdom. In ancient India, the rulers were bound by Holy Scriptures to govern their kingdoms with justice. A Hindu ruler was the protector of his subjects, and in order to protect his subjects the king needed to be an expert warrior.

A *Kshatriya* is characterized by physical and martial strength (Smith, 1994: 48). These qualities determined his relations with others: *"the Kshatriya is charged with the protection of the higher Brahmin class with rule over (and unrestricted exploitation of) the lower Vaishyas"* (Smith, 1994: 48-9). The word '*kshatra*' in Sanskrit means government, power, and dominion. *Kshatriyas* are considered to be bold, alert and full of fortitude, generosity, discipline and modesty (Lahiri, 2010).

Priests and warriors were said to be "better" than or "superior" to the other castes, and in general the Brahmans and Kshatriyas were regarded as united into a ruling class according to the populace at large. But although the Brahmans and Kshatriyas together proclaimed to be superior to the commoners, the Brahmans never hesitated to declare their own caste as higher than the Kshatriyas. The reason of this, according to the Vedas, is that Brahmans have been characterized as being self-sufficient, whereas the Kshatriyas are dependent on priests. Thus, it is said that

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Brahmans can live without rulers, but rulers cannot sufficiently execute their tasks without the aid of Brahmans (Smith, 1994: 42).

Next are the *Vaishyas*, or merchants. A *Vaishya's* duty was to ensure the community's prosperity through agriculture, cattle rearing and trade. The *Vaishyas* were considered and expected to be weak in comparison to their rulers, and were infinitely exploitable and regenerative. These oppressions however, were usually not boycotted because this was presented as a natural state of affairs in the social realm (Smith, 1994: 49).

Later, the *Shudras* took over agriculture and cattle rearing while the Vaishyas became traders and merchants. However, though they were "twice-born" and economically strong because they controlled commerce. Vaishyas were denied a high social status, for which they resented the upper castes. One expression of this resentment was their support of the anti-Brahminical sects that developed around the 6th century BC, like Buddhism and Jainism (Ghurye, 1969).

The Shudras are usually considered as labourers, peasants, artisans, and servants. Shudras were thought not to have any special abilities and were considered only capable of serving as slaves to the upper three classes. Shudras enjoyed no rights or privileges, and were not permitted to perform any sacrifices or homa, read or learn the Vedas or recite the mantras (prayer rituals). They were also not allowed to enter temples and could only serve the upper three castes as a slave, barber, blacksmith or cobbler (Ghurye, 1969). They too supported the anti-Brahminical groups that came about.

At the very bottom are those considered the "untouchables." These individuals performed occupations that were considered unclean and polluting, such as scavenging and skinning dead animals and are considered outcastes. The Hindu law books insisted that there were only four varnas and never a fifth, which was used as a reason to not accept the tribal people of India (Velassery, 2005; 8). They were therefore not considered to be included in the ranked castes. In some cases, the untouchables could face criminal charges if they polluted certain things with their

presence. For example, it was a criminal offense for a member of an excluded caste knowingly to pollute a temple by his presence (Hampton, 2010).

Dalits were also forbidden to enter the streets in which the houses of the upper castes were situated, and there were many customs and laws that kept them beyond the villages and towns. Since they were rated outside the caste system, they were destined to only in the outskirts of the village and were never an integral part of village community. Their services, however, were still essential to the health of the community and therefore still had to be part of the system in order to serve the upper castes (Velassery, 2005; 8).

1.5.2. Origins of Caste System

The origin of the Indian caste system has many theories behind it. Some of them are religious, while others are biological. The religious theories explain that according to the Rig Veda, which is the ancient Hindu book, the primal man, Purush, destroyed himself to create a human society and the different parts of his body created the four different varnas. The Brahmins were from his head, the Kshatriyas from his hands, the Vaishyas from his thighs, and the Shudras from his feet. The Varna hierarchy is determined by the descending order of the different organs from which the Varnas were created (Daniel, 2010).

For example, Brahmans, who were derived from the head of Purush, are considered the most intelligent and most powerful varna because of their wisdom and education and are a representation of the brain. In the same way, Kshatriyas, considered the warrior caste, were created by arms, which represent strength. Another religious theory claims that the Varnas were created from the body organs of Brahma, who is the creator of the world in Hinduism:

> *"When the gods spread the sacrifice with the Man as the offering, spring was the clarified butter, summer the fuel, autumn the oblation. They anointed the Man, the sacrifice born at the beginning, upon the sacred grass. When they divided the Man (Purusha)....His mouth*

became the Brāhmin; his arms were made into the Warrior, his thighs the People, and from his feet the Servants were born." (Wolpert, 1991: 117)

The biological theory claims that all existing things inherit three one of three categories of qualities. Varna means different shades of texture or color and represents mental temper. There are three *Gunas: Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas. Sattva* is white, Rajas is red, and *Tamas* is black. These in combination of various proportions constitute the group or class of people all over the world with temperamental differences (Lahiri, 2010). *Sattva* qualities include characteristics related to wisdom, intelligence, honesty, goodness, and other positive qualities. Rajas include qualities such as passion, pride, and valour. *Tamas* are considered to acquire qualities that include dullness, stupidity, lack of creativity, and other negative qualities (Daniel, 2010).

According to this theory, the Brahmans usually inherit the *Sattva* qualities. They are serene and self-controlled and possess the quality of austerity. They are considered to have purity, uprightness and forbearance. Brahmans also have the will to acquire knowledge, wisdom, and faith (Lahiri, 2010). The Kshatriyas and Vaishyas inherit the Raja qualities, and the Shudras inherit the *Tamas* qualities (Daniel, 2010). The type of one's actions, the quality of ego, the colour of knowledge, the texture of one's understanding, the temper of fortitude, and the brilliance of one's happiness defines one's Varna (Lahiri, 2010).

1.5.3. History of Caste System

Historically, however, it is believed that the caste system began with the arrival of the Aryans in India around 1500 BC (Daniel, 2010). Of the many cultures that flourished in India, the literary records of the Indo-Aryan culture are not the earliest. They do, however, contain the first mention and a continuous history of the factors that make up the caste system (Ghurye, 1969: 162-63). The Aryans came from southern Europe and northern Asia with fair skin that contrasted with the

indigenous natives in India. When they arrived, their main contact was with the Dravidians.

The only other culture whose records are dependable about the origins of the caste system are the Dravidians, but when that culture's documents were put forwards, it had already been largely influenced by the Indo-Aryan tradition (Ibid: 63). Unfortunately, the Aryans completely disregarded their local cultures and began conquering regions all over north India (Daniel, 2010). At the same time, the local people were pushed south towards jungles of mountains in north India.

The Aryans possessed a particular principle of social ordering called Varna Vyavastha, which was based on the four hierarchical divisions of function in society. They were placed in order of decreasing importance: religious and educational functions, military and political functions, economic functions, and menial functions (Velassery, 2005: 2). The Aryans organized themselves in three groups. The first group, Rajayana (later changed to Kshatriya) were the warriors, which were followed by the Brahmans, who were the priests (Daniel, 2010). These two groups constantly struggled for political leadership among the Aryans, *"The sacred and political functions were separated well and clearly, where importance of political was second degree due to well distinction between royalty and priestlyhood"* (Omvedt, 1976: 41).

Eventually, the Brahmans became the leaders of the Aryan society. The final group consisted of farmers and craftsmen, and was called the Vaishyas (Daniel, 2010). The Aryan conquerors subdued the locals and made them servants. In this process, the Vaishyas became the landlords and businessmen of the society and the locals became the peasants and craftsmen.

In order to secure their status, the Aryans laid out social and religious rules which stated that only they were allowed to become priests, warriors, and businessmen of the society. Maharashtra, which is a state located in west India, is a great example. This region has been known by this name for hundreds of years, and many think that the meaning of its name is Great Land. But there are some who

claim that the name Maharashtra is derived from the category called Mahar, who are considered to be the original people of this region (Ibid, Idem).

These individuals were forced to adhere to the social and religious rules the Aryans laid out. In the caste hierarchy, the Mahars were outcasts because they were dark-skinned compared to the light-skinned Aryans. Skin color was an important indicator in determining an individual's caste. As mentioned before, the word varna does not mean caste or class, but colour (Ghurye, 1969: 163). Having come across people who were very dark in colour and had rather snub noses, the Aryans described the earlier settlers as "*dark colour*," as people without noses, and applied them to the term *dasa*, which in Iranian stood for "*enemy*" (Ibid: 165).

Between the outcasts and the three Aryan varnas were the Shudras, who were simple workers of the society. The Shudras consisted of two communities: one community was of the locals who were subdued by the Aryans, and the other was the mix of Aryan and local descent (Daniel, 2010). One of the main regulations the Aryans began with was the exclusion of these Shudras from their religious worship.

Very early in their Indian history, the Aryans enjoined that the Shudras shall not practice the religious worship developed by them. The various factors that characterize caste-society were the result of the attempts on the part of the upholders of the Brahmanic civilization to exclude the aborigines and the Shudras from religious and social communion with themselves (Ghurye, 1969: 172).

In Hindu religious stories, there are many wars between the good Aryans and the dark-skinned demons. Stories of demon women trying to seduce good Aryan men in deceptive ways are very prominent. Many believed that these incidences really occurred in which the Gods and the positive heroes were of Aryan origin and the demons were in fact the original residents of India who the Aryans themselves coined as devils and demons (Daniel, 1969).

1.5.4. Caste System and Patriarchy

As most of the societies in the world, India had a patriarchal system. Most of the time, the son inherited his father's profession, which led to developing families, who acquired the same family profession for generations. Later on, as these families grew bigger, they were seen as communities, or *jat*. Different families who professed the same profession developed social relations between them and organized as a jat.

After a while, the Aryans who had created the caste system slowly began to add non-Aryans to their statuses. Different *jats* were integrated into the various *varnas* according to their profession. Other foreign invaders of ancient India as Greeks, Huns, Scythains, and others conquered parts of India and created kingdoms. These were integrated with the Kshatriyas (Daniel, 2010).

Most of the communities that were in India before the arrival of the Aryans were categorized with the Shudras or were made outcasts depending on their occupations. The beginning of the Dalit varna began at that time, where the communities exercising polluting professions were made outcastes and considered as "untouchables." Brahmans are very strict about cleanliness, and in the past people believed that diseases could be spread not only through physical touch but through the air as well. This is one of the reasons why Dalits were not allowed to touch the high caste community and were required to stand a certain distance away from the higher castes (Daniel, 2010).

Around the 6th century, many individuals of the lower castes who were getting fed up of suppression turned to Buddhism. Buddhism actually began as a reaction to the violence of the Hindu society, including the brutality of the caste system. Buddhism concentrates not on the society, but on the individual, thus separating religion from the interests of the ruling and dominance. In Buddhism, one is no longer born into a position due to past injustice.

Although Buddhism does see life as pain and suffering and reincarnation as a renewal of this suffering, there is a potential escape. The Buddha, himself born into the warrior caste, was a severe critic of the caste system. Buddhism utterly rejects any system of caste, and it actually reached high levels of support during the rule of Ashoka, who adopted the Buddhist concept of ahimsa, or non-violence, and its tendency toward greater equality (Essortment, 2010).

Buddha ridiculed the priests who claimed to be superior, criticized the theological basis of the system, and he welcomed into his community people of all castes, including outcasts. His most famous saying on the subject was, "Birth does not make one a priest or an outcaste. Behavior makes one either a priest or an outcaste". Even during the time when Buddhism was decaying in India and Tantrayana (another sect of Buddhism practiced after the 7th century) had adopted many aspects of Hinduism, it continued to welcome all castes (Malalasekera and Jayatilleke, 2010).

1.6.   Religion and Caste System

The division of castes constitutes one of the most fundamental features of India's social structure. In the Hindu society, caste divisions play a part in both actual social interactions and in the ideal scheme of values. Members of different castes are expected to behave differently and to have different values and ideals (Béteille, 1965: 45). These differences are sanctioned by the Hindu religion.

Traditionally, the caste system of stratification in India was legitimized through classical Hindu religious texts, especially as interpreted by Brahmans (Sekhon, 2000: 45). Hinduism is *"as much of a social system as a religion...Its social framework has from very early times been the caste system, and this has...become...increasingly identified as Hinduism as such"* (Smith, 1994: 9).

The caste system was rationalized in ancient India on various grounds. One of them was the justification in the Vedas. The caste system would not have found approval among the Vedic people unless there was some reference to it in the

Vedas. The Purushu Sukta in the 10th Mandala of the Rigveda describes how the castes came into existence: from different parts of the Purusha, the Cosmic Soul, at the time of a grand sacrifice performed by the gods (Jayarama. V, 2010). As mentioned earlier, the Brahmins came out of his mouth, the Kshatriyas from his arms, the Vaiyshas from his thighs, and the Shudras from his feet. Another justification derives from the theory of Karma.

This concept rationalizes the caste system based on birth. It supports the argument that people of the lower castes have to blame themselves for their troubles and low status because of their bad Karma in their past life (Jayarama V, 2010). The law of Karma states that the present condition of one's soul, for example, confusion or serenity, is based on his/her decisions in the past and that he/she, as an individual, have made him/herself what he/she is based on his/her actions.

Also, the present thoughts, decisions, and actions determine the future life events, and these events can alter one's Karma through natural, moral decision and action (Oriental Philosophy). Therefore, it is the notion that *"one's particular duty is calibrated to the class into which one was born and the stage of life one is presently passing through"* (Smith, 1994: 10), and that one of the main entailments of the caste system is *"the belief in karma and the cycle of rebirth whereby ones social position in this life is ethically determined by moral actions in past lives"* (Ibid: Idem).

Since one of the main beliefs in Hinduism is that the consequences of one's past decisions have determined his/her present state, reincarnation plays a huge role in the prevention of people revolting against the caste system. Reincarnation was created by the Aryans in order to justify the oppressive behaviour they were imposing on the natives and to keep the people from rising up against the system. Reincarnation bolsters caste oppression in two ways.

Reincarnation justifies injustice, and deflects hopes for progress from this life to a "next life" (Tweet, 2010). For the people on top of the caste system (the Brahmins), reincarnation justifies why they get the privilege of high-class birth.

Those privileges were earned through virtuous behaviours in their past lives, and a privileged birth proves that one deserves privilege.

For the people on the bottom, the Shudras and the untouchables, reincarnation justifies why they suffer for their low birth. They must have earned their suffering through sinful acts in past lives. In order to avoid a low-caste birth in their next life, Hindus who are born as Shudras or Untouchables learned to support rather than oppose their own oppression. Hinduism teaches low-caste people that the way to improve their position in their next life is by leading a virtuous life this time around with no acts of deviance towards the caste system (Tweet, 2010).

As mentioned before, many in India who were oppressed (like the Shudras and the "untouchables") joined anti-Brahmanical movements in order to take a stance against the discriminatory acts they were facing. Even in 1950, one of the primary reasons for the conversion to Buddhism in India during the 1950s under the leadership of B.R. Ambedkar was the caste system and the plight of the oppressed "untouchables" (Sekhon, 2000: 45). Conversion to Buddhism seemed to be believed as the only means of emancipation from the injustices associated with the caste system.

This is where the term Dalit derived from; those termed untouchables referred to themselves as the oppressed people, and that term is used to denote both pride in their community as well as resistance to exploitation (Ibid: 45-6). Sometimes, the oppressed Shudra castes and tribal groups also refer to themselves as Dalit. These Dalit activists rejected being defined as Hindus and supported the movement against social and economic injustice (Sekhon, 2000: 46).

It is "unfortunate" that although the original intent of Varnas was not to create caste, it has evolved into emphasizing the idea of the caste system. Varnas are conditioned with one's actions and desires based on Gunas, but people have mistaken Varnas for caste and treat them as identical. Varnas are God created, whereas caste is man-made. It is simply a social institution and can easily be changed and modified according to changing needs of society (Lahiri, 2010). Caste

by-birth was never the original intent nor was it ever the basis upon which the Varnas were constituted; it was meant to have individuals engaging only in a field of activity that they are capable of doing (Lahiri, 2010). The Varna System stood on the basis of Gunas and karmas of the individual and has nothing to do with birth (Lahiri, 2010).

1.7.   Movements and Political Policies against Caste

There were many movements and governmental actions that took place pre- and post-independence in order to overcome and attempt to eliminate the inequalities and injustices associated with the caste system. During the national movement, Gandhi began using the term "*Harijans*" (God's people) to refer to the untouchables in order to encourage a shift towards positive attitude vis à vis the lower castes. Many lower caste members, however, found the term to be patronizing.

The Census of India had started by the British in the late 19th century, and in 1935, *"the British Government of India came up with a list of 400 groups considered untouchable, as well as many tribal groups, that would be accorded special privileges in order to overcome deprivation and discrimination. Those groups included on this list came to be termed Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In the 1970s, however, many leaders of castes considered untouchable started calling themselves Dalits"* (Sekhon, 2000: 48).

The anti-caste Dalit movement began with Jyotirao Phule in the mid-19th century, and he started a movement for education and the upliftment of women, Shudra, and Dalits, and the movement spread to many parts of India. He also worked to abolish the idea of "untouchability," which meant getting rid of restrictions on entry into temples, and finding a place for Dalits within Hinduism (Sekhon, 2000: 48). After 1910, however, Dalit leaders started focusing on distancing themselves from Hinduism and began to advocate for a separate electorate for the Dalits. But Gandhi, who was one of the leaders of the Indian

National Congress, tried to instead encourage the incorporation of Dalits as part of reformed Hinduism (Ibid: Idem).

Another prominent movement was the Dalit movement under B.R. Ambedkar, which began between the 1920s and 1930s. He campaigned for greater rights for Dalits in British India, and even after independence. Both Ambedkar and Gandhi were advocates for the abolishment of the caste system, but they disagreed on the means to go about it. Gandhi believed that *"untouchability to be a moral issue that could be abolished through goodwill and change of heart among the upper-caste Hindus"* (Sekhon, 2000: 48).

Ambedkar, however, believed that *"the subordination of Dalits was primarily economic and political, and could only be overcome by changing the social structure through legal, political, and educational means"* (Sekhon, 2000: 48). Ambedkar did receive constitutional guarantees after independence that reserved a certain percentage of seats in elections for Dalits, but by the mid-1950s, Ambedkar was not satisfied by the rate of implementation of the measures. He therefore resigned from government and began to recruit Dalits to seek rights.

In 1956, Ambedkar encouraged around six million Dalits to convert to Buddhism *"as a means of escaping the social stigma of untouchability within the Hindu caste system"* (Ibid: 49). During the 1970s, the Dalit Panthers movement sprouted up among the younger generation of Dalits along with other social movements in India, and their movement expressed their anger and frustration at the failure of implementation regarding policies that would eliminate acts of violence against Dalits by upper-caste Hindus in many parts of urban and rural India (Ibid: 49).

There are three main categories of people that have been identified as eligible for preferential policies that reserve seats in legislatures, in government jobs, in public sector enterprises, and in state-supervised educational institutions, in terms of their population proportion in their area. They have also been promised special programs (such as health care legal assistance, allotment of land,

scholarships, loans, and grants) and are legally protected against discrimination (such as debt, forced labour, and untouchability). The first group is the SCs, which includes communities who are considered to be untouchables. The second are the STs. This category includes in it those communities who did not accept the caste system and preferred to reside deep in the jungles, forests, and mountains of India, away from the main population. The Scheduled Tribes are also called Adivasi, meaning aboriginals (Daniel, 2010).

The third group is the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), which includes in it castes who belong to the Shudra Varna, former untouchables who converted from Hinduism to other religions, and nomads and tribes who made a living from criminal acts. They are considered to be affected by "backwardness" based on social and economic disadvantages. It is not clear, however, what criterion identifies OBCs and there is an ongoing disagreement over whether to assign people this status on the basis of caste or on economic criteria. The problem with this is that caste and economic status have been largely correlated in the past, and even now, caste-based prejudice and discrimination hinder economic advancement for the lower castes (Sekhon, 2000: 49).

In the 1960s, the reservation system for SCs and STs began, but the individual states were the ones that were to determine which would be identified as OBCs. Many southern states identified economically disadvantaged castes as OBCs, but there has been considerable opposition to implementing these policies in other Indian states (Ibid: 50). The Central Government appointed a commission headed by B.P. Mandal to look into the issue, and by 1978, the Mandal Commission report was completed. It was concluded that caste was the main contributing factor to social and economic backwardness.

Many seats in state institutions were reserved for the three groups. The Commission recommended that 27 percent of seats be reserved for OBCs, in addition to 15 percent for SCs and 7 percent for STs. Unfortunately, the government did not implement these policies in fear of large scale opposition from the people,

but in 1990, the Janata Dal government *"attempted partial implementation of recommendations leading to widespread unrest and opposition from middle- and upper-caste youths, intellectuals, and elites"* (Ibid: 50).

1.8.   Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

It was under the British Rule that the question of Dalits was largely considered. Initially, they did not take measures, construed as a confrontationist with the caste-based Hindu society. But as the days rolled, the administrative compulsions and pressures from Hindu social reformers forced the British to take steps that 'opened and 'closed' Hindu society (Chatterjee, 1996: 139).

Only in 1950 did the Indian society enter into a covenant with itself to be secular, democratic and egalitarian, to rid itself of its highly rigid, caste-based, hierarchical structure with the ascending rigidity of privileges and descending order of disabilities that had been in practice for three millennia. The overwhelming majority of the Indian society had been subjected to various kinds of social discrimination, economic deprivation and total powerlessness through ages. The victims of this entrenched backwardness broadly comprise the present SCs, STs and OBCs (Kumar, 2013: 51).

In retrospect, The Simon Commission in 1935 first coined the term 'Scheduled Caste'. All the untouchable castes, which were listed in 1931- Census of India, came to be known as the 'Scheduled Castes' through the Government of India Act of 1935. In the meantime the government published a list of Scheduled Castes under the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936. The government of India in post-Independence period carried the same idea (Baghel, 2009: 279).

According to the Constitution of India, under article 341 (1)[1], the President of India, after consultation with the Governor, may specify, "the castes, races, tribes or parts of groups within castes or races, which shall be deemed to be Scheduled Castes." As a result, the president has notified the Scheduled Castes in the order called 'Constitution Order-1950' and the 'Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes List Order-1956' (Baghel, 2009: 280). The specification of a caste as a Scheduled Caste in Article 341(1) is cited as follows in the Constitution:

> *"The President may with respect to any State or Union Territory and where it is a State after consultation with the Governor thereof, by public notification, specify the castes, races or tribes or parts or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall for the purpose of this Constitution be deemed to be SCs in relation to that State or Union Territory, as the case may be." (Kumar, 2013: 52)*

However, under article 341(2), the Parliament of India by law can include or exclude the above-mentioned groups from the list of the Scheduled Castes. In a simple way, in contemporary period, Scheduled Castes are defined under article 336(244) of the Constitution of India as, *"the Scheduled Castes means such Castes, Races, Tribes or parts of or groups within such Castes, races or tribes, deemed under article 341 to be Scheduled Castes for the purpose of this Constitution."* (Kumar, 2013: 52)

The following part of the article 341(2) is well detailed below:

> *"Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of SCs specified in a notification issued under the clause: (i) any caste, race or tribes or part of or group within any caste, race or tribes, but save*

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[1] See appendix

as aforesaid a notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification." (Kumar, 2013: 52)

Moreover, the SCs constitute a significant demographic strength in India. According to the 2001 Census (Baghel, 2009: 281), the Scheduled Caste population are 166,635,700 persons: which means, it constitutes 16.2% of the country's total population. Being rural people, four fifth (79.8%) of them live in rural areas and one fifth (20.2%) live in urban areas. The sex ratio of 936 females per thousand males is slightly higher than national average of 933 females' sex ratio. The highest percentage of Scheduled Caste population of the country live in Uttar Pradesh (21.1%) followed by West Bengal (11.1%) and Bihar (7.8%), Andhra Pradesh (7.4%) and Tamil Nadu (7.1%).

In fact, more than 57 per cent of total SCs population inhabit in these five states. Proportionately, the largest proportion of population of the SCs to total population of the states is in Punjab (28.9%), followed by Himachal Pradesh (24.7%) and West Bengal (23%). In Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Pondicherry proportion of SC population is exactly equal to the National average of 16.2%. The smallest concentration of the SC population is in the North-Eastern tribal states; such as, Mizoram with only 272 persons followed by Meghalaya (0.5%) and Arunachal Pradesh (0.6%) (Ibid: Idem).

1.8.1. Policy for Dalits Upliftment

All-round development is possible only if the multi-ethnic groups, multi-lingual and various groups and communities within the country develop in proportionate manner. On the one hand, such type of development will help to utilize their inherent skill, ability and knowledge in the nation development process. On the other hand, it assists to uplift the living standard of the Dalits, the neglected, the downtrodden and oppressed classes by creating employment opportunities

through the mobilization of local resources. The article 46 of the Indian Constitution states that:

> *"The State shall promote, with special care, the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of social exploitation.''(Rabindra Kumar, 2013: 54)*

The Indian Constitution emphasized on their social and economic development. But, serious efforts are still needed to bring this class of people who have been backwarded from every aspect of social, political and economic issues because of the prevalence of aged old poverty and social deprivation. In number of places, this section of the population could not get social respect in practice due to the existence of the caste system and inhuman behaviour because of ineffective enforcement acts, which categorically has made the caste system punishable (Baghel, 2009: 286).

1.8.2. Types of Scheduled Castes Exclusion

Untouchability was abolished by the Constitution of India, where a report issued by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes underscores that Untouchability, imposition of social disabilities on persons by reason of their birth in certain castes. It is still practiced in many forms throughout the country. Untouchability is prevalent not only in its physical form, but also dwells deep in the minds of the people (Kumar, 2013: 77). The main causes for the continuance of untouchability even after six decades of independence, according to National Commission for SCs and STs of the Government of India (1996-97) are the following:

- " the deep-rooted caste system;
- Carrying on of unclean occupations by the SCs;

- Illiteracy
- Lack of awareness among the SCs, and;
- Rigidity and bias created by religious literature. We find these basic facts true for SCs across most levels:
- The SCs find themselves at the bottom of most of the human development indices.
- Their social and economic backwardness is clearly related to their religion sanctioned exclusions from all walks of public life.
- Discrimination is not a thing of the past, but an everyday reality."

However, the following table summarizes the types of exclusion faced by SCs:

Sources of Deprivation/Exclusion	Types of Identities	Nature of Oppression	Needs
Lowest status in the caste hierarchy	Untouchables	Social repression	Social equality
Powerlessness	Subject	Political disenfranchisement	Political participation
Poverty	Slave	Economic exploitation	Bargaining for better economic conditions
Lack of culture	Not a human being	Cultural repression	Cultural revolution and negation of Brahminism

Lack of education	Ignorant/ illiterate	Repression at various levels	Equal educational facilities

Table1.1: Types of Exclusion faced by The Scheduled Castes in India (Rabindra Kumar, 2013: 78)

The Indian government has addressed the problem of caste and untouchability through various constitutional safeguards. The Constitution of India has recognized SCs and STs as 'historically deprived' segments of the society. Thus, the Indian Constitution has listed 1,108 castes in its first schedule, and hence, these deprived castes are known as SCs. The Indian Constitution also carries certain safeguards in Article 341 for the SC for ensuring their fundamental rights as Indian citizens, and the Directive Principles of State Policy authorize the state to protect this socially marginalized group from any further discrimination in modern Indian society based on their caste identity. Subsequently, laws have been passed that aim to remove discriminatory practices against the SCs and also to ensure their social and economic empowerment.

Besides, there are also various economic schemes announced from time to time to create employment opportunities or grant welfare payments or other benefits to the 'weaker sections' of the society. Importantly, in addition to legal safeguards against discrimination, equal access to and participation in public employment, education, politics, and governance are ensured through reservation of some seats in government services, public educational institutions, Parliament, and state legislatures for SCs and STs. In the elected bodies of local government, there are also reserved seats for women. Although the practice of 'untouchability' has been banned since Independence (1947), in practice many of the associated behaviours, norms, and values persist. This means that Dalits still often live in separate locations with poorer services, face discrimination when accessing services, receive lower pay, and face discrimination in the marketplace (Sabharwal and Sonalkar, 2015).

1.8.3. Atrocities on Scheduled Castes

If the SCs attempt to defy the social order, they are punished through social boycotts and acts of retaliatory violence. Over a period of time, the SCs have been increasingly asserting their basic right to gain a place of honour in terms of equality in the social and economic life of the nation. The assertion of their rights by the SCs, particularly their refusal to accept humiliation, is being retaliated against in many areas.

The incidence of retaliation has become so frequent that the government has had to take note of it and put them into a different category of crimes. On the other hand, the reports of The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (NCSCT) 1992-95 recommendations, suggested the following measures to be taken for the effective implementation of the Prevention of Atrocities Act (PAA) (Kumar, 2004: 59-60):

(a)   "The Postmaster can be assigned the duty of telegraphically sending the complaints of the victims

(b)   The Act (PAA) is made part of examinations, regulations and orientation courses.

(c)   Publishing it through mass-media

(d)   Identifying the atrocity-prone areas.

(e)   Making local administration more vigilant.

(f)   Setting up special courts to dispose of the criminal cases quickly.

(g)   Providing a relief of one lakh to the victim of atrocities."

Terming crimes against SCs and STs as 'atrocities', the government started collecting data on such crimes in 1974. The atrocities have been classified into four categories; such as, murder, grievous hurt, arson and rape (Kumar, 2013: 125). A crime-wise analysis indicates that there are three main reasons for atrocities being committed against the SCs:

(1) Unresolved land disputes relating to the allotment of government land or distribution of surplus land to landless SCs;

(2) Tension and bitterness arising from non-payment or under-payment of the minimum wages prescribed by the states; and

(3) Resentment against the manifestation of awareness among the SCs about their rights and privileges as enshrined in the Constitution and various legislative and executive measures (The Report of NCSCT, 1997-97).

Whenever the SCs try to organize themselves against oppression or assert their right, there is a backlash from the caste Hindus resulting in mass killings, gang-rapes, looting and arson in the SC colonies. The atrocity data compiled in the Fourth (1996-97 and 1997-98) and Sixth (1999-2000 and 2000-01) Reports of the National Commission for SCs proves this point (Ibid: 126). The following table is showing crimes and atrocities perpetrated against the SCs as reported by the National Commission for SCs:

Type of Case	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Murder	571	543	513	516	506	486	3,135
Hurt	4,544	4,585	3,860	3,809	3,241	3,298	23,337
Rape	873	949	1,037	923	1,000	1,034	5,816
Kidnapping and abduction	276	281	243	253	228	242	1,523
Dacoity	70	90	58	49	36	37	340
Robbery	218	213	162	150	109	93	945
Arson	500	464	389	346	3337	260	2,296
Under PCR Act	1,528	1,417	1,216	724	678	666	6,229

Under POA Act, SCs and STs Act	13,925	9,620	8,070	7,443	7,301	6,617	52,976
Other Offences	10,492	13,278	12,396	11,425	11,657	11,009	70,257
Total	32,997	31,440	27,944	25,638	25,093	23,742	166,854

Table 1.2: Atrocities Committed against SCs between 1995-2000, (Kumar, 2013: 127)

The table reveals that between 1995 and 2000, 166,854 cases of crimes and atrocities were committed against the SCs. These include 3,135 cases of murder, 23,337 cases of hurt, 5,816 cases of rape, 1,523 cases of kidnapping and abduction, 340 cases of dacoity, 945 cases of robbery, 2,296 cases of arson, 6,229 cases under PCR Act (Protection of Civil Rights Act), 52,976 cases under SCs and STs Act (Prevention of Atrocities Act) and 70,257 cases of other offences. This means there are two cases of murder and three cases of rape and 13 cases of hurt committed against SCs every day. In this respect, Kumar (2013) pointed out some testimonials of inhuman behaviour by caste Hindus towards SCs in 2002:

> *"On 5 September 2002, a Kaundampatti village of Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu, Sankan, a Dalit agricultural worker, was forced to drink urine for registering a police complaint of trespass against the caste Hindus, following a dispute between them over a piece of land. An equally horrifying incident occurred at Thinniyam village in Tiruchi district of the state on 22 May 2002. Two Dalits, Murugesan and Ramasami, were forced to feed each other their excreta. Their crime was that they stood by another Dalit, Karuppiah, who was engaged in a prolonged struggle against a former Panchayat president and her husband to recover some money he said he had given them as a bribe to get a house allotted for his sister." (Kumar, 2013: 127)*

1.8.4.   Role of Government Machinery

The government machinery is also playing its part in maintaining the Hindu social order and following the caste Hindu code. This can be seen in the National Police Commission's recommendations (Ibid: 128). The report includes a section on 'police and weaker sections,' which details police abuse specific to the SCs. The section notes, according to Kumar (2013), that those complaints against the police in their handling of cases of atrocities against the SCs often relate to refusal to register complaints.

In addition, the police delayed on purpose, their arrival on the scene, half-hearted while investigating specific cases, using extreme brutality in dealing with accused persons belonging to the weaker sections. Yet, soft treatment is attributed to accused persons belonging to the more influential sections, making arrests or failing to make them on a mala fide consideration (Police and the Weaker Sections of Society, 1980: 4).

Ironically, even after decades, '*none of the Commission's recommendations have been adopted and the police continue to detain, torture and extort money from the SCs without fear of punishment*' (Kumar, 2013: 128-129). Admittedly, it is deduced through these testimonials and data mentioned above, that discrimination and atrocities against the SCs are merely a reflection of the deep and strong Hindu sentiment.

Such feelings of hatred and harmful actions are carried over in law and administration that are clearly justified in the making of distinctions between Hindus and the SCs to the disadvantage of the latter. The following report is demonstrating the excess of the police and to what extent they are challenging the law:

> *"The Protection of Civil Right Act of 1955 and SC/St Prevention of Atrocities Act of 1989 are meant for the protection of the SCs. Under the provisions of these Acts, the police play a key role in helping the*

SCs and punishing the upper caste Hindus who are found to be guilty. Instead of helping the SCs, the police themselves perpetrate atrocities on them. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has received information about the involvement of police officials in crime and atrocities only from Orissa and Rajasthan. Such cases numbered eight in 1994, five in 1995 and four in 1996. During the past three years, 23 police officials were found to have been involved in such acts, of which 20 have already been convicted." (Kumar, 2013: 128)

Consequently, so long the Hindu social order exists, discrimination against the SCs will continue in various forms and degrees (Kumar, 2013: idem). Despite the various reports of The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; they have been wondering on the efficiency of the police who have been allegedly pandering to the caste Hindus, instead of providing security to the victims.

1.9. Conclusion

We may conclude that untouchability or imposition of social disabilities or exclusion of persons by reason of their birth into certain castes is still practiced in many forms throughout the country. In addition, this practice is not just visible in physical forms, but also exists as deep-rooted beliefs in the Indians minds. The main causes for the continuance of untouchability practices, even after more than sixty years of independence, are the entrenched caste system, rigidity and bias created by religious and Brahmanical scriptures. Though, the Indian government took a number of special safeguard policies to eradicate the socioeconomic disparities which existed in the society; the key issues remain unsolved for Dalits and the creation of numerous movements challenging the valid reality of Dalits and mainly Dalit women become inevitable. The following chapter describes the different actions and movements in favour of Dalit women's protection and safeguards.

Chapter Two

Debating Indian Feminisms

2.1. Introduction

The present chapter deals with the concept of Indian feminism, where certain ambivalence towards the concept of 'feminism' has been evident in India; even among those who have been part of what can be defined as the feminist movement. The term Indian women's movement is highly contested, mainly the appellation of Dalits. The latter, when used for the women's movement, implies a political and cultural singularity that obscures the movement's diversity, differences and conflicts.

2.2. Definition of Feminism

The term feminism coming from French takes its origin from the Latin word 'femina' which means 'woman', and thus refers to the defence of woman's right seeking to remove restrictions which discriminate women. In other words, it relates to the belief that women should have the same social, economic, and political rights as men. The term became popular at the beginning of the 20th century where an outbreak of awareness emerged for protecting women's right to vote in political elections in Western countries, as well as the well-organized socio-political movement for emancipating women from patriarchal oppression. In a time where all the cultural precepts are in favour of men, feminism, on the other hand has focused on depicting women's preoccupation with marginalization in patriarchal culture.

Unlike other approaches, feminism is visibly a political approach that can attack other approaches for their false assumptions about women compared to formalism. It is clear that a woman is defined exclusively in her relation to man as when in *"...in childhood a women should be under her father's control, in youth under her husband's and when her husband is dead, under her sons, she should not have independence...."* (Buhler, 1992). The Unbalance of the gender male and female is made evident in the biased form of sexual myths where *"We sometimes*

say 'the sex' to designate woman; she is the flesh, its delights and dangers. The truth that for woman man is sex and carnality has never been proclaimed because there is no one to proclaim it. Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth" (de Beauvoir, 1949).

In addition, the plural form "feminisms" is political because, on one hand it disturbs the notion that 'feminism' is a single category, and on the other hand it has clear limits, fixed in a single conceptual space. The plural form rewrites gender as something potentially transgressive or subversive and *"If there is more than one feminism, feminisms might be anywhere, might do anything. This is of course, the point. Feminisms are multiple."* (Robbins, 2000).

In order to better understand this concept, the word feminist refers to a person who upholds or practices feminism and takes a political position; whereas, female is the matter of biology and feminine is a set of culturally defined characteristics. While feminisms are concerned to define between sex and gender, between femaleness and feminity; they do not want to forget biology completely. There are strategic reasons for remembering bodies. Sex and gender are not, however, the only sites of women's oppression; one can be oppressed because one is poor, one is coloured, undereducated, addicted or imprisoned. Feminisms, as Robbins (2000) puts it, *"are political discourses which uncover the symptoms of oppression, whatever their grounds, diagnose the problem, and offer alternative versions of liveable realities"*.

Notwithstanding the contributions of the revolutionary nineteenth and early twentieth century authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft and her daughter Mary Shelly, George Eliot, and Virginia Woolf, feminist literary criticism developed mostly since the beginning of the late twentieth century women's movement (Guerin, et al., 2005). That movement included the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett, and Betty Friedan, who examined a female 'self' constructed in

literature by male authors. Most men support feminists with the false belief that equality among genders will lead to a better world. Indeed, it is a utopia.

2.3. Feminism in Indian Context

Traditionally, right from the ancient days, India was a male-dominated culture. Indian women were covered with many thick, slack layers of prejudice, convention, ignorance and reticence in literature as well as in life. They were considered as inanimate objects, who should be five steps behind their men, they also had to be gentle, patient, gracious, and for generations together. In addition, Bengali women were hidden behind the barred windows of half dark rooms, spending centuries in washing clothes, kneading dough and murmuring verses from "The Bhagavad-Gita and The Ramayana" in the dim light of sooty lamps" (Neeru, 2008).

The term feminism in India refers to a set of movements intending to define, establish, and defend equal political, economic and social rights and equal opportunities for Indian women. Like their feminist counterparts in the world, feminists in India seek gender equality. This can be the right to work for equal wages, to have access to health and education as well as political rights. It is worth mentioning that feminists in India have also fought against cultural issues within the patriarchal society of India, such as inheritance laws and the practice of widow immolation known as *Sati*.

The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases: the first phase, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, initiated when male European colonists began to speak out against the social evils of Sati (Gangoli, 2007). The second phase, from 1915 to Indian independence, when Gandhi incorporated women's movements into the Quit India movement, and independent women's organizations began to emerge. Finally, the third phase, post-independence, which has focused on fair treatment of women in the work force and right to political parity.

Jayawardena (2016) in her pioneer work on feminist movements in Asia, in the late 19th and early 20th century, defines feminism as *"embracing movements of equality within the current system and significant struggles that have attempted to change the system"*. In this definition, she assets these movements as the formulation and consolidation of national identities which mobilized anti-imperialist movements during the independence struggle, and the remaking of pre-capitalist religion and feudal structures in attempts to 'modernize' the third world societies.

The coming of M. K. Gandhi changed the total scenario. He gave a new direction and dimension to the Feminist movement in India. He freed women from passivity, servility, and domesticity. Feminism as a new way of life, as a new viewpoint came into existence in India with the partiality of feminine and trying to redefine woman's role and situation in the society. Women's role in Pre-colonial social structures reveals that feminism was theorized differently in India than in the West (Chatterjee, 1999).

In India, women's issues first began to be addressed when the state commissioned a report on the status of women to a group of feminist researchers and activists. The report recognized the fact that in India, women were oppressed under a system of structural hierarchies and injustices. During this period, Indian feminists were influenced by the Western debates being conducted about violence against women. However, due to the difference in the historical and social culture of India, the debate in favour of Indian women had to be conducted creatively and certain Western ideas had to be rejected (Gangoli, 2007). Women's issues began to gain an international prominence when the decade of 1975-1985 was declared the United Nations Decade for Women.

Historical circumstances and values in India have caused feminists to develop a feminism that differs from Western feminism. For example, the idea of women as "powerful" is accommodated into patriarchal culture through religion (Singh, 2010). Despite the progress made by Indian feminist movements, women

living in modern India still face many issues of discrimination. India's patriarchal culture has made the process of gaining landownership rights and access to education challenging. Unlike the Western feminist movement, India's movement was initiated by men, and later joined by women. The efforts of these men included abolishing sati, which was a widow's death by burning on her husband's funeral pyre (Gangoli, 2007). Other atrocities are committed in the name of religion, but the India's movement was to revoke such practices as, the custom of child marriage, abolishing the disfiguring of widows, banning the marriage of upper caste Hindu widows. Whereas, they were also fighting for promoting women's education, obtaining legal rights for women to own property, and requiring the law to acknowledge women's status by granting them basic rights in matters such as adoption (Chaudhuri, 2005). It was believed that men and women were partners, sharing equal duties in social life and equal rights in political field. Though the Municipal vote for Indian women was acquired right in 1855, but it had not been properly utilized by them for lack of education, lack of opportunity for self-development, lack of interest in social problems.

2.4. Feminism and Nationalism

Sarojini Naidu's (Behtash and Sajjadi, 2012) presidential address to the AIWC in Bombay in 1930 arrests the attention on two central themes. The latters are emphasizing primarily on the tension with the western origins of feminism and secondly, the construction of a nationalism that erases internal differences, perceived as potential threats to nationalism. Naidu addressed the women's conference in the following words:

> *"We are not weak, timid, meek women, we hold the courageous Savitri as our ideal, we join how Sita defied those who entertained those suspicious of her ability to keep her chastity. We possess the spirit of creative energy to legislate for the moral of the world. I think this conference is writing the history of women of the world. I am not*

a feminist. To be a feminist is to acknowledge that one's life has been repressed. The demand for granting preferential treatment to woman is an admission on her part of her inferiority and there has been no need for such a thing in India as the women have always been on the side of men in council and in the fields of battle.... We must have no mutual conflicts in our homes or abroad. We must transcend differences. We must rise about above nationalism, above religion, and above sex."

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi addressing the AIWC in 1980 said:

"... I have often said, that, I am not a feminist, yet, in my concern for the unprivileged, how can I ignore women who, since the beginning of history, have been dominated over and discriminated against in social custom and in laws. . ? In the west, women's so-called freedom is often equated with imitation of man. Frankly, I feel that is merely an exchange of one kind of bondage for another. To be liberated, a woman must feel free to be herself, not in rivalry to man, but in the context of her own capacity and her personality. We need women to be more interested, more alive and more active, not because they are women, but because they do comprise 'half the human race'. Whether they like it, or not, they cannot escape their responsibility nor should they be denied its benefits. Indian women are traditionally conservatives but they also have the genius of synthesis to adapt and absorb. That is what gives them resilience to face suffering and to meet upheavals with a degree of calm, to change constantly and yet remain changeless which is the quality of India herself." (Behtash and Sajjadi, 2012)

This long speech dominating nationalist frame resurfaces the conflation of the Indian women with Indian nation and culture and its very special identity.

2.5.   Feminism and Literature

The literature written particularly by women and related to women is called feminist literature. After a long decade of struggle, feminism has succeeded in establishing itself as a legitimate and widely respected academic discipline, although gender discerning reading has become inescapable and widely practiced in almost every academic field. A number of thinkers, such as John Ellis, Harold Bloom and Roger Kimball focus on designing feminist critics an 'angry', 'resentful' and 'hostile' who hate literature and assault the standards. They maintain the view that politics and aesthetics are incompatible, the former infecting and staining the purity of the latter.

Felski (2003) sets out to unveil the blind-spots and errors of such claims and to liberate feminist scholarship from the burden of this harmful and mistaken caricature before it settles into popular. Feminism has transformed the academic study of literature, basically altering the standard of what is taught and establishing new agendas for literary analysis. Felski (2003) explains how feminism has changed the ways people read and think about literature. In literature one of the main goals is interpreting reality, particularly when we know that problems of women are one of the biggest issues in the world. So, literature can be as a vehicle for solving these problems.

The feminist literary criticism that emerged in the sixties and seventies was often ingenuous. It emphasized on describing how women were represented in literary works by both men and women writers. Feminist literary critics wrote about literary characters as if they were real people. In addition, they certainly found women characters treated less compassionately by men than they should be. Furthermore, this feminist thought also wrote as if they had a public duty to be ideologically correct on sex, race, and class.

Milton, in contrast, is considered to the chief sinner among the poets, and Dickens maybe the worst offender among this early school of the nineteenth century novelists. It is common, for instance, for feminists to refer to Milton's "misogyny"

though, Milton was far in advance of his time in the respect, in both aspects be it, spiritual and intellectual; he showed for woman as a moral agent, as in his treatment of Eve (Behtash and Sajjadi, 2012).

2.6. Literary Feminism in India

Indian literature of the twentieth century is a testimonial of the triumph and tragedy of Indian people involved in the substantial commitment in their history, as well as the struggle for independence and the challenges that followed the achievement of that goal (Kumar Das, 1991). Feminism challenges the age-long tradition of gender differentiation, where it attempts to explore and find a new social order, to find relevant solutions to real life issues of a traditionally-gendered role-playing society. Moreover, woman has always been perceived as being a secondary and inferior human being. Feminism is perhaps the most powerful movement that shook up the literary world in the recent decades (Kumar Das, 1991).

Feminism, as a crucial tool, aims at providing an alternative new consciousness of women's role in the modern complex world. Famous feminists in India, such as Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande, have written substantial novels in this realm. One of the important novels by Shashi Deshpande is '*The Dark Holds No Terrors In*'. The latter, has been translated into German and Russian languages. Deshpande succeeded to depict modern, educated and career-oriented middle class women, who are susceptible to the changing time and situations. Keeping this in focus, middle class women, though they are subjected to social and cultural inequalities, they want to rebel against them in their search for freedom and identity; because they realise that they are, ultimately, against the well-entrenched social inertia (Behtash and Sajjadi, 2012).

Sarita, in the novel, '*The Dark Holds No Terrors In*,' very boldly confronts reality and realises that darkness no longer constitutes a dread to her. In addition, *Sarita*, who always wished and hoped and was longing to break away from the rigid

traditional norms, is conscious of her own limitation, but lacks self-confidence. She longs for a new environment where, the mother cannot impose her will on her daughter (Behtash and Sajjadi, 2012).

Furthermore, Shashi Deshpande portrays in her second novel entitled 'Roots and Shadows' modern, educated and career-oriented middle class women, who are susceptible to the changing time and situations. The novel, won the *Thirumathi Rangamal* prize for the best Indian novel of 1982-83, where it depicts the issues and problems of the contemporary middle class women. *Indu*, the protagonist, is retained in a conflict between family and professional roles, between individual aspiration and social demands. Caste system and patriarchy are the two major factors responsible for this narrow-mindedness.

In her third novel '*That Long Silence*', Shashi Deshpande presents a sensitive portrayal of Indian womanhood, where she delicately describes the swings of mood, the seesaw moments of joy and despair, the fragments of feelings perceived and suppressed, heart-wringing anguish of the narrator protagonist, Jaya, a housewife and a failed writer.

Shashi Deshpande's incontestable feminist position, has owned her a distinctive place in the contemporary Indian English fiction. Her themes are emphasized on lives and issues of women only. Her novels are autobiographical in nature, they depict her own experiences of educated middle class Indian women's plight, and also they tend to be gender specific. Deshpande's work, in addition, focuses on the location of the Indian women in the traditional bound, and male-dominated middle class society of the contemporary India. According to Shashi Deshpande, each novel is a journey of discovery of herself, of other humans, and of the universe (Ibid, Idem).

2.7.   Dalit Feminism

In this chapter I will outline the development of a Dalit feminist movement in distinction to the Indian feminist movement and to the Dalit movement. It grew

out of a necessity to articulate the distinct problems of women in connection with caste and untouchability. As mentioned in the above chapter, women of untouchable castes face gender-related as well as caste-related discriminations. Thus, they follow a feminist line specific to their struggles. Dalit feminism differs from Indian mainstream feminism in its demands, and it adds female emancipation to the Dalit movement that is not free from patriarchal structures. It questions the hegemony of the former in the claim to speak for all women and of the latter in the claim to speak on behalf of Dalit women.

According to Subramaniam (2006: 60) *"caste differences and the issue of untouchability within women's movements remained marginal during the 1980s and the early 1990s"*. Rege (2005: 93) states that the feminist movements from the 1970s and 1980s subsumed the caste issues within larger concepts including feminist politics that are concerned with the most marginalised communities could not even emerge. *"In retrospect, it is clear that left party based women's organizations collapsed caste into class, the autonomous women's groups collapsed caste into sisterhood, both leaving Brahmanism unchallenged"* (Rege 2005: 93).

There is no single point of time or place regarding the start of the movement. In the pre-independence period Dalit women largely participated in the Phule and Ambedkarite movements. In the post-independence period up to the early 1990s the Dalit women's question was largely absent from the social movement discourse. Nevertheless, Dalit women did organise protests, and the Dalit movement addressed issues such as violence, assault and rape, but Dalit women rarely occupied leading positions. The first national meeting of Dalit women took place in 1987 and was affiliated to the Christian Dalit Liberation movement. The urge to organise themselves in order to address problems specific to Dalit women led to the formation of several independent and autonomous Dalit women's organisations that developed around the 1990s, predominately on a local and regional level. On a pan-Indian level the NFDW was formed in 1995 (Subramaniam 2006: 58-62).

With regard to the formation of the NFDW, Gopal Guru (1995), professor of political science at Pune University published the frequently cited and debated essay *'Dalit Women Talk Differently'*. Guru argues that a major feature of Indian feminist politics is the "politics around differences", and that the NFDW as an organisation of Dalit women was a logical outcome around the notion of differences. The Dalit women's need to 'talk different' stands in contrast to the middle class feminist movement as well as to the Dalit male movement. Consequently, the emergence of a Dalit feminist movement brings to the fore the Brahmanism of the feminist movement and the patriarchal practices of Dalit politics and anti-caste movements. As a critique on feminist movements Guru (1995: 2548) underlines that *"[s]ocial location which determines the perception of reality is a major factor […] that makes the representation of dalit women's issues by nondalit women less valid and less authentic.*" Regarding the critique on Dalit movements, Guru (1995: 2549) points out the marginalisation of Dalit women in the political as well as in the cultural field:

> *"It is not only in the political arena that dalit women face exclusion. In the cultural field, for instance, dalit women have criticized their male counterparts for dominating the literary scene. Dalit male writers do not take serious note of the literary output of dalit women and tend to be dismissive of it. Dalit women righty question why they are not considered for the top positions in dalit literary conferences and institutions."*

Rege (1998: 39) counters Gopal Guru by arguing that the mere focus on the "naming of differences" limits the position on the authority of authentic experiences and leads to narrow identity politics. She further develops a "Dalit feminist standpoint":

> *"A dalit feminist standpoint is seen as emancipatory since the subject of its knowledge is embodied and visible […] It places emphasis on*

individual experiences within socially constructed groups and focuses on the hierarchical, multiple, changing structural power relations of caste, class, ethnic[ity], which construct such a group. It is obvious, that the subject/agent of dalit women's standpoint is multiple, heterogeneous even contradictory, i.e., that the category 'dalit woman' is not homoge[n]ous – such a recognition underlies the fact that the subject of dalit feminist liberatory knowledge must also be the subject of every other liberatory project and this requires a sharp focus on the processes by which gender, race, class, caste, sexuality – all construct each other. Thus we agree that the dalit feminist standpoint itself is open to liberatory interrogations and revisions." (Rege 1998: 45)

Rege claims a Dalit feminist position that does, in fact, acknowledge the significance of individual experiences, and that seeks emancipation from oppression on the grounds of multi-layered and interdependent constructions of identity. Furthermore, she claims a position that is inclusive and can be shared by others. Regarding Dalit literature, as a field to express a Dalit feminist point of view, women writers are clearly underrepresented. Many female writers feel that their voices are marginalised and that male writers misunderstand their feminist expression as an aggression toward Dalit men. Some male writers perceived the raised voices against patriarchal norms and the feminist expression as a divisive attack on the understanding of Dalit literature. Nevertheless, there is a growing committed feminist writers' community that creates a Dalit feminist discourse and creates spaces to express resistance and re-imaginations of norms. In their own literary work, they seek to show alternative possibilities for female agency and to counter patriarchal narrative patterns with feminist representation and awareness in Dalit literature and activism (Brueck 2014: 39).

2.8.   Understanding Dalit Feminism

Dalit feminism can be perceived through three major streams: Dalit feminist activism, Dalit women's writing/autobiography and the theoretical formulation of Dalit feminisms. Dalit feminism indicates the position of Dalit women at both the intersections of gender and caste and feminist movement and Dalit movement. Marginalization of Dalit women within the mainstream feminist organizations and the male dominance in mainstream Dalit movement resulted in the Dalit women's need to formulate Dalit feminism. Dalit feminism not only addresses the intersectionalities of caste and patriarchies, but also critiques the position of Dalit women in both the feminist and Dalit organizations.

In the west, feminism began with a small group of university educated white middle class women. Politicizing the personal was one of the most radical viewpoints of feminism from the beginning of the movement. Feminism radically questioned the existing gender relations, gender discrimination and control of sexuality through theorisation of patriarchy. In the Indian context too, feminism, developed in 1970s ascribed a common agenda to all women by perceiving upper-caste/middle class women's issues to be the concerns of all women (Rege, 2003). Within the feminist movement in India, feminist groups addressed issues like domestic violence and dowry and a few left based women's organizations addressed issues like unequal wages and land reforms (Kumar, 1993). However in the later stages, many feminist organizations with a "clear" vision to work for women emerged. Feminist organizations were formed and run for and by upper-caste/middle class women, though there were also Dalit and tribal women as (only) members of these organizations who had no say in the decision making process. Feminism's interventions into the issues of Dalit or tribal women especially in case of rape or molestation have been criticized as occasional interventions (Chakravarty, 2006).

The 1990s became a crucial decade for feminist politics in India. There was a radical shift in feminism when Dalit women vehemently questioned feminism's

exclusive focus over the issues of upper-caste/middle class women. The social position of women, i.e. importantly the caste position of women and the changing manifestations of patriarchal oppression with regard to the caste position of women, was not recognized by mainstream feminism. During the 90s, feminism was inevitably challenged for its blindness to the social reality called caste. The question of caste became crucial and unavoidable in feminist politics. A new need was felt among the feminist groups to critique feminism's blindness to caste (Rege, 2013).

There were *"two significant factors which led to this new awareness: one was the participation of upper caste women in the protest against the implementation of Mandal Commission's proposal to extend reservations to OBCs"* (Rege, 2003, Tharu and Niranjana, 1996). Upper-caste women declared that they were against all kinds of reservations to save the nation from the hands of *"the "unmeritorious" groups. Upper-caste women in this context represented themselves as "non-submissive", "assertive" and "feminist subjects" who had shown their social responsibility to save the nation by using the rhetoric of merit"* (Rege, 2003, Tharu and Niranjana,1996). They announced that if the reservations for OBCs were going to be implemented along with already provided/existing reservations for SC/STs, they would be deprived of employed husbands. This assertion of upper-caste women has caste and patriarchal connotations, especially in their argument and lamentation over the death of merit due to reservations. The statement implies that they support caste system which strictly forbids exogamy to advocate caste-endogamy and secondly it also implies that they are economically and socially dependent on their respective husbands/upper-caste men.

Moreover, the assumption that Dalits are unmeritorious also shows their caste prejudice. This protest brought the significance of caste position within the category of women. The second contributing factor was the raising of Dalit women's voice against feminist movement's exclusive focus on the concerns of upper-caste/middle class women and its exclusion of Dalit women from both representation and recognition. Dalit women are not only marginalized within

feminist organizations, but also their concerns are not recognized. Ruth Manorama questioned the feminist movement's neglect of the caste question and social justice. The NFDW founded in 1993 by Ruth Manorama and 'Dailit Mahila Sanghatana' formed by Maharastra Dalit women in 1995, they fought for the recognition of Dalit women's question both at the national and international levels. However, Dalit feminism is considered more as a threat to the larger concerns of Dalit politics and movement than as an extended form of theoretical and ideological formulation (Rege, 2003, Tharu and Niranjana, 1996).

Exclusion of Dalit women within the mainstream feminist organizations led to the formation of Dalit women's organizations. Dalit women activists like Ruth Manorama who had been working with the women's movement since 1970, experienced the serious exclusion of Dalit women at the level of decision making process. Dalit women were denied leading positions despite their capacity to be leaders in the mainstream feminist organizations. She also observed the lack of representation and recognition for the issues of dalit women in these organizations. She says Dalit and Adivasi women are more in number than the upper-caste women in many organizations which gives the organizations a numerical strength.

However, from the 90s, Dalit women have separate banners under which they are fighting for the rights of Dalit women. Also many Dalit women provided their critique of the social inequalities, caste and patriarchies through their writing and autobiographies. However, Sharmila Rege (2003) argues Dalit feminism can be a stand point that has to be acquired by non-Dalit feminists, whereas Gopal Guru says Dalit women need to address their 'literary and political marginalization' by Dalit movement by organizing themselves separately (Guru, 1995).

Rege (2003) argued that women's movement and Dalit movement need to move way beyond what she calls the "savarnization" of women's movement and "masculinization" of Dalit movement to make the question of Dalit woman visible. Guru (1995) claimed Dalit women suffer two distinct patriarchal structures:

> *"the Brahminical form of patriarchy that stigmatizes dalit women due to their caste identity of being untouchable and patriarchy within dalit families. Dalit men are reproducing the same mechanisms against their women which their high caste adversaries had used to dominate them;"*

Within the discourse of Dalit feminism, we need to look at various arguments and discussions leading to the formulation or understanding of Dalit feminism. Non-Dalit feminists claimed that upper-caste women are more prone to domestic violence, whereas Dalit women are vulnerable to the threat of rape and violence in public sphere (Rege, 2003). Sexual violence like rape and humiliation in public space is a fact in the lives of Dalit women but whether the question of domestic violence is absent or not in Dalit families is the important question to discuss.

Dalit women are the victims of caste system who face both similar and different caste based oppression and violence in comparison to Dalit men, sexual in its nature. Dalit woman is the victim of casteist patriarchy that makes her subservient to the upper-caste males too which leads to her sexual exploitation at the hands of upper-caste males. Dalit women also experience the patriarchal control over their sexuality and labour within their families:

> *"Cases of dowry connected with torture and murder are more frequent among upper castes and it is probably not exaggerated to say that family violence among upper castes tends to be quite systematic. This type of systematized family violence occurs much less among backward castes and Dalits unless they have become economically prosperous and tries to imitate upper caste values, which is very rare. Dalit women are not under the ideology of husband worship and if they face violence within the family, they may fight back." (Grabriele Dietrich, 2003).*

2.9.   Initiation of the Dalit Movement

When the British government took control of India from the East India Company in 1858, it developed a system of indirect rule under which local elites were co-opted and British agents were supposed to rule over the masses by applying traditional local law and custom. The British relied heavily on the Brahmans and kshatriyas, largely adopted their perspective on Indian society and Hinduism, and made the classic Brahman texts; such as, the Laws of Manu part of the de facto law governing Hindus in British India. One aspect of the British Raj was periodic censuses of all Indians which classified and ranked them into several thousand Jatis (communities). Consequently, the caste system became even more rigid than it had been previously (George, 1997).

This process of colonial division culminated in 1935 with the listing of several hundred "scheduled castes" and almost as many "scheduled tribes" which were considered untouchable. While the British were codifying the caste system, several Indian reformers and radicals were calling for its modification or abolition and the integration of untouchables into Indian society, *"those reformers did not form a single, united, national movement, and to this day Dalit movements remain severely divided and fractious"* (George, 1997).

Another factor which has divided radicals and reformers is a perennial dispute about the origins of the caste system and, consequently, the proper way to dismantle it. On one extreme are scholars and activists who trace the system to Hinduism and consequently propose a radical spiritual transformation of India; they usually call the issue a caste problem. On the other extreme are scholars and activists of a materialist (often Marxist) bent, who see Hinduism as only a superficial superstructure disguising economic inequality and exploitation. These people usually define the syndrome as a class problem and usually advocate some variety of socialism as its solution.

The rivalries between adherents of these two camps (and several others, less influential, ideologies) have been, and continue to be, passionate and vituperative.

Inevitably, this racist trend created radical opponents, even among the lines of Brahmans and Kshatriyas. Radicalization caused avalanche of abhorrence on Brahmanic traditions and Hinduism, and Joratio Phule began organizing "non-Aryans" against this system.

2.9.1. Jotiba Govind Phule

Sarkar (1992) asserts that, it was Jotiba Govind Phule, who first pronounced the anti-Brahman affection in Maharashtra, with his book Ghulam-giri (1872), and his organization, the *Satyashodak Samaj* (1873) emphasizing the need to save the "*lower classes from the hypocritical Brahmans and their opportunistic scriptures*" (Sarkar,1992: 57). One of the foremost social reformers of India and an important social thinker of 19th century, Phule was born to a mali caste, family of gardeners, in Phoona. He forfeited his life for human liberation to the deprived segments of Indian public.

For this reason, Phule initiated the Satyashodak Samaj movement, meaning the truth seeking movement, to obtain a non-Brahmin order and to release depressed classes from Brahmanical dominance. His most famed work namely '*Slavery'*, which is '*Gulamgiri'* in the Hindi language, was published in 1872. He is best known with his struggle towards the inequalities of Indian society, ignorance and slavery. He mobilized the backward classes in order to discard the humiliating and degrading social structure and to bring equal and just social order that does neither include discriminative classification nor leave women behind because he desired a welfare society. It is believed that the first person to coin the word Dalit is Phule since he is considered to be the initiator of the modern anti- Brahmin movement (Raj, 2001).

Phule took measures to be disposed of the Brahmanical domination and to engage women in social sphere. Jotiba Govind Phule is branded to be the first Indian initiating the education of women. It is known that he opened a library for the usage of the Untouchable children, two orphanages of Brahman widows and a

school of non-Brahman girls. He put emphasis on intellectuality and education, especially the education right of downtrodden children and women. Thus, he demanded free education for all inhabitants of India, and likewise the technological and scientific development, launching human rights, economic independence, brotherhood, equality, and the removal of mediators, Brahmins in religion and many similar constructive factors for a fair society (Ibid).

To realize his aims, Phule established the *Satyashodhak Samaj* on September 24, 1873. This institutions establishment was highly related with the inspirations from St. *Kabir. Satyashodhak Samaj* aimed to seek truth, highlight the importance of human rights, remind Indian society that all humans are equal by birth and what elevate their level are their own equalities. This is why the Samaj made vital contributions in education of lower castes and also girls. For instance, they established school for making a priest for non-Brahmin students, which was unheard of till then. Mahatma Phule exempted poor and downtrodden children from payment of education fees (Özden, 2005).

Still the welfare issue was important because improving the standards of *shudras* and the Untouchables was the imperative of *Samaj. Samaj* depreciated the magnitude of notions like rebirth, penance, and such rituals of Hinduism and Indian tradition that were believed to add value to or remove it from people. Thus, *Satyashodhak Samaj* was completely opposed to Brahmanical elitism. The *Samaj* asserted the essential of saving lower castes and outcastes from Brahmanical dominance. The notions of equality, brotherhood and non-requirement of the middlemen in religious matters were the great ideals of *Satyashodhak Samaj* (Özden, 2005).

2.9.2. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

Dr. Ambedkar has been the predominant character in the Dalit Movement. He was, in fact, a member of a class of the Untouchables, within the Mahar community or caste. Even though being born in an illiterate community, he

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managed to complete his education of law in the United States and United Kingdom. Moreover, he earned degrees from Columbia and London Universities. He returned India back in 1923. Because he received an advanced and modern education, he was an open-minded leader and had a wide vision. He was after fresh and up to date view patterns rather than the traditional ones.

Ambedkar sought equal rights for every citizen of India and he was unpleasant with discriminative nature of conventional Hindu social structure. His demands also included separate representation, the right to use tanks and enter temples (Sarkar, 1992: 243). He is also recognized as the architect of the Indian Constitution of 1950 and Nehru's Minister of Law. He became the chief of the Dalit movement. Some believe that it is Dr. Ambedkar, who coined the word Dalit for the first time (Raj, 2001). He pursued *"the policy of reserving quotas in education, government jobs and employment of the Scheduled Castes"* (Sunil, 1997).

Additionally, Zubrzycki (1992) underlined that the system of quotas or reservations gave Dalits or Untouchables proportional representation in legislatures, government jobs, and educational institutions. Dr. Ambedkar also organized protests against the caste and gender discrimination that put Untouchables and women off countless rights and led women *"numerous incidents of abuse, rape and kidnapping by police and outsiders"* (Contursi, 1993: 329). Dalit women were, especially, subject to a greater discrimination on three basis; one because they are low caste; two because they are the Dalits; and three because they are women.

According to Clarke, the abuse of the Dalit women is a kind of show off by the upper castes. They use bodies of the Dalits in order to express the power they have over them. That is why the Dalit bodies are subjected to various kinds of violence. *"The extension of violence against the Dalit body is extended to violent rape of Dalit female bodies. The shaming of the Dalit communities through acts of violently violating their women folk is a tactic used by caste communities to demonstrate the power they have over all Dalit life"* (Clarke, 2002).

There is an obvious argument that Dr. Ambedkar is best known with his saying *"I will not die a Hindu"* (Gokhale, 1999: 271). Another relevant point of cultural struggle is the syncretism of religion and politics (Clarke, 2002). Dr. Ambedkar and his followers reprehended *Manumriti* as being the source of inequalities within the Indian society, and they did not hesitate to burn the book of Laws of Manu. As a result, he asked downtrodden people of India to leave Hinduism and to convert to Buddhism. It was clear that the only solution to free enslaved people of India according to Dr. Ambedkar where Gokhale (1999: 271) focused on *"the position of Untouchables and lower castes in Hindu society is such the possibility of leaving Hinduism has always been attractive."*

Dr. Ambedkar, further, established the Independent Labour Party by the year 1936 in order to struggle for the rights of the Untouchables and to seek solutions to the socio-economic inequality question, via the political sphere. Moreover, he was also after nationalisation of Indian sources like industry and agriculture. He supported special representation, reserved seats in the parliament for Dalit people of India. The contributions of Dr. Ambedkar in the formulation the Indian constitution are impossible to overlook. Before telling about the Ambedkar's role in the formulation of the Indian Constitution, it is better to clarify the notion of constitution. Dr. Ambedkar defines constitution in his article titled 'The Constitution of British India' as follows:

> *"A constitution is the study of the organisation of the state for the State is an artificial person, which claims the right to punish, to possess property, to make contracts and to regulate its rights and duties as between itself and the subjects and also as between the subjects themselves." (Özden, 2005)*

Following this discussion, Ambedkar was a social liberal, the towering enlightenment figure of modern India, who applied committed reason to social reconstruction. His concept of ideal society was most suited to the needs of a

modern society. To him, society was an integrated whole, and each individual was related to the other through a web of social ties. Ambedkar's cherished goal of an ideal society was one that guaranteed to all its members political, social and economic justice, and according to him, the attainment of this human ideal should be through the democratic process (Kumar, 2013: 179-180). According to Ambedkar (1987):

> *"Then caste system is not merely a division of labour. It is also a division of labourers- it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one above the other. This division of labour is not spontaneous, it is not based on natural aptitudes. Nor is the division of labour brought about by the caste system a division based on choice. Individual sentiment, individual preference, has no place in it. It is based on the dogma of predestination."*

In his book, '*Sates and Minority'*, Ambedkar presents the blueprint of his model of development. His model of economic development represents a modified form of state socialism. According to Kumar (2013:181-182) the model proposed by Ambedkar has the following features:

(1) Key industries, or those that are declared to be key, shall be owned and run by the state;

(2) The agricultural industry shall be a state industry;

(3) It shall be the state's obligation to finance the cultivation on the collective farms by supplying water, draught animals, implements, manure, seeds, etc;

(4) Farms should be cultivated as collective farms; and

(5) Thus, he proposed state ownership of agriculture with a collectivized method of cultivation and a modified form of state socialism in the field of industry.

The focal point in Ambedkar's philosophy was that his thorough influence by his socio-religious ideas and his attitude towards religion was not spiritual, unlike that of Gandhi. In fact, his approach was intellectual, social and political. To him, the foundations of religion were essential to life and social practices and religion was not merely a concept of faith and a means of worship, but a science for social reconstruction.

Ambedkar's struggle for the emancipation of the SCs from the stigma of caste and untouchability was directed against the oppression and exploitation of man against man and man against woman. In addition, Ambedkar wanted to make the Buddhist philosophy a political philosophy to achieve equality. It is very "clear" that he held Hinduism responsible for the disorganization and demoralization of society and particularly for the pathetic condition of the SCs, where Keer (1981: 72) observed that:

> *"The religion, which discriminates between its followers, it is partial and the religion which treats crores of its adherents worse than dogs and criminal and inflicts upon them insufferable disabilities is no religion at all. Religion is not the appellation for such an unjust order."*

2.9.3. Gandhi's Harijans

As far as their standpoints towards the Untouchability problem of India were distinct, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar were political rivals. Actually, Gandhiji was concerned with the idea of freeing India from the British dominion and ignored the Untouchables, but paid effort only to silence them. He was neither willing to demolish the traditional Hindu social order nor bestow the Depressed Classes separate representation in the Congress. On the other side, Dr. Ambedkar was the voice of the Untouchables in the Indian political scène. Ambedkar expressed the wishes of the Untouchables that can be concisely listed as basic Human Rights and political representation (Özden, 2005).

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The term coined by Gandhi, harijan to define Dalits, was not accepted by the Dalits, since this word still had a denotation of exclusion. Actually, Gandhi did not mobilize the lower castes and the Untouchables into a well-organized national movement, but the middle class, the bourgeois and upper-caste Indians. They were already controlled by the Congress Party. This conservative consolidation of the Indian national movement has left the masses of the population still immersed in poverty and caste degradation (Omvedt, 1991: 2-8).

The Congress Party was an elite organisation, dominated by Brahman professionals in addition to some upper class merchants. Those people were totally different from the rest of the Indian society by even clothing and language. So, they were separated from the masses. Still Gandhi was aware of the fact that, the integration of masses into the movement was vital. In order to close this gap, the Party opened auxiliary branches in towns and villages of India.

However, this did not work, because it was due to the reality that the problem was not reaching the masses. The problem, in fact, was the feeling of disturbance of the elite by the integration of masses. Mahatma Gandhi took some measures on behalf of the Untouchables, by his own. One of them was Temple Entry Movement, in which Gandhi declared that he would fast unto death if the trustees of certain temples open to the Untouchables (Omvedt, 1991: 2-8).

There is another view explaining that Dr. Ambedkar neither found the term harijan, coined by Gandhi, friendly; nor did he find Mahatma Gandhi in cooperation with them in the case, as far as Gandhi gone to fast unto death in order to prevent Dalits granting a separate electorate as Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. Gandhi in reality, wanted to prevent Untouchables obtaining such rights because in the eyes of Gandhi, the Congress was representing all Indians, where Dalits were no exceptions. Mahatma Gandhi dedicated his life to Hindu-Muslim unity and believed that a separate electorate would bring the Untouchables a distinct nationhood sentiment, which would pave the way to a distinct state and thus to the disintegration of India (Wolpert, 199:129).

One of the principles of Mahatma Gandhi was sarva dharma samabhava meaning equality of all religions. Even though the Depressed Classes were deprived of the right to worship, they were considered as Hindus. In fact, they were not benefiting from this understanding of Great Soul. In the eyes of Gandhi, the Untouchables were factionists, who were breaking the unity among Hindus. Ironically, Dr. Ambedkar owed the same idea plane with Gandhi; he was also a supporter of unity within India and disintegration was the last thing he would desire.

Dr. Ambedkar was an opponent to the politics of both Hindu elites and Muslims; because they break India up. He was not willing to divide India and establish a separate Buddhistan. Rather he claimed for an Indian nation and cared for the equality within Indian nation. This is why he called for a public conversion (Özden, 2005).

2.9.4. Ambedkar versus Gandhi

On the one hand, Gandhi seemed to be a challenger of the varna order, since it favoured the discrimination. But on the other hand, he did not dare to devastate such an entrenched social institution. Thus, he did not go far beyond calling Untouchables as Harijans. Keer (1990: 59) points out that, *"it was much easy for Dr. Ambedkar to lead and reach the Untouchables, compared to Mahatma Gandhi, because he sprang from amongst the Untouchables themselves, so knew how they thought and felt"*. It is very "clear" that, Great Soul Gandhi was a reformer and where Ambedkar was a social reformer, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal. The slogan of social reformers was 'social reform before political reform'. However, Dr. Ambedkar claims that the Congress forced it to be forgotten by the slogans *'politics first, politics last' and 'politics by each, politics by all'* (Keer, 1990: 59).

What can be caught from a reformer and a social reformer is: a reformer restores the old structure, where the social reformer overthrows the old system and builds a new one, which exactly suits with the positions of Gandhi and Ambedkar. However, Ambedkar was trying to abolish the Untouchability system totally and

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appeals for a political, social and economic order, in which all citizens are equal. Gandhi on the other hand, wanted to smoothen people's regard of Untouchables, by naming them Harijans and allowing them entering the Hindu temples.

The reason why Ambedkar did not join the movement of Ganhdi for the political independence of the country was his disbelief for democracy and independence. He was conscious about the order Gandhi aspired. That was the ancient traditional Hindu order, which enslaved the Untouchables. Ambedkar aimed to bestow his people civic, religious and political rights that they were deprived by varna ashramas (Keer, 1990: 73).

Thus, in this struggle, Ambedkar knew that he has to struggle against both the supporters of the caste system and the British governors of Hindustan, for political rights. In his endeavour, he put great emphasis on self-elevation, to reach a consciousness about own human rights. He said *"education is something, which ought to be brought within the reach of every one"* (Keer, 1990: 84) and demanded cheaper higher education for low classes.

 Besides, Ambedkar was declaring that education was not enough by its own, but some aggressive measures are needed for a more quick solution. He directed Untouchables to rush into temples and not to hesitate using public water wells. He advised his people to fight for their own liberation, because universally, liberty is never received as a gift (Özden, 2005).

To draw a conclusive statement, Ambedkar and most of the Untouchables believe that Mahatma Gandhi also failed in his anti-Untouchability campaign. According to Özden (2005), Babasaheb Ambedkar lists three reasons for this failure:

> *"One is, the Hindus did not respond to the appeal of Mahatma, about*
> *the amputation of the Untouchability institution from Indian society.*
> *Second is, Gandhi did not want to irritate the Hindus. He did not want*
> *to use fast unto death or satyagraha against Hindus to terminate the*

> *Untouchability. His explanation was that satyagraha could only be used against the foreigners. As last point, Gandhi did not want to strengthen the Untouchables, because he was afraid of the probability that the Untouchables could establish own state by disintegrating India. This fear is based on the idea of 'Two Nation Theory' of Brahmans, who separate themselves from the rest as Aryans and non-Aryans."*

From the theological aspect, for Ambedkar, the main question was positing religion and men. Which is for the other? Men for religion or religion for men? Because the Untouchables were in a quarrel with Brahmanism, it seemed that they were against religion. However, Ambedkar set that, the Untouchables are not opposed to religion. They can even die for the religion, which takes care of them. Nevertheless, Hinduism does not take care of the Untouchables, but rather pushes them aside from all spheres of life. This religion prevents them even from worshipping and praying. As the voice of the Untouchables, Ambedkar always found this ban meaningless and addressed that *the image of the god in temple should be accessible to all, who wanted to worship it, without any discrimination, binding or condition"* (Keer, 1990: 95).

The religion that the Untouchables are assumed to be affiliated, 'Hinduism', spoils the social harmony among the all Indians, by laying *varnas*. Those *varnas* and duties and rights of each are chartered in *Manusmriti*, which is the backbone of Brahmanism. At the same time, this holy text was the one labelling a portion of the Indian populace as the Untouchables. Thus, unavoidably Babasaheb Ambedkar was in a position to attack the sacred text, since it was the "symbol of unjust social laws" (Keer, 1990: 106). Mahatma Gandhi did not attempt to bring those mentioned varnas to an end. As the leader of the Untouchables, Ambedkar declared for several times a temple is not tainted the presence of an Untouchable.

Thus, Ambedkar always stressed equality and importance of eradicating *varna* order. Rather than subduing this embedded but disgracing institution,

Mahatma Gandhi favoured making minor variations in the status of his *Harijans*. Nevertheless for the Untouchables, these endeavours seemed like tricks to silence them. While it was important for the Untouchables to be equal, in all means, with the others, the religion they belonged impeded them from obtaining it.

The inequality that the Untouchables complained is brought by the religion itself. So the only way was abolishing Brahmanism, which is a product of pure ignorance and cruelty, totally or to convert, where the second option sounded more logical and practical. Actually, conversion was the most meaningful way to balance the social discord continuing since long years. *"Ambedkar defined religion as something that offered you prosperity or elevation first in this world and than salvation; the former should be the first article of faith of every religion"* (Ibid: 92).

In fact, both Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi fought against the Untouchability institution of the Hindu social order. However, the aim of Ambedkar was eradicating the entire *varnashram* structure and the Untouchability, whereas Mahatma acted less radical and he offered to reconcile the ill sides of it. Mahatma Gandhi believed that it was possible to integrate the Untouchables to the daily life. He made efforts to persuade Indian people about purity of the downtrodden people. From the standpoint of the Untouchables, it was almost impossible to incorporate the Untouchables to the world of *varnas*, the upper caste members would never accept them in their own spaces (Soykut, 2004: 4-11).

For Ambedkar, until the Brahmanic structure is not destroyed, the Untouchables can never be freed. So a political guarantee must protect Untouchables, but 'social freedom' aspect is not less important than legal one. In the words of Ambedkar: 'So long as you do not achieve social liberty, whatever freedom is provided by the law is of no avail to you'. Ambedkar and Gandhi remained as political rivals, because they never found out a common point for solution of the Untouchability question of India (Ibid, Idem).

2.10. Indian Women's Movement

In India the Challenges to those engaged in building a women's movement are simply "formidable". Those people are called activists, who look up to seize political position for women's issues where their voices must be heard alongside the multiplicity of class, linguistic, religious, ethnic and caste claimants who made up the Indian Polity.

It is almost certainly agreed that the influence given to the Indian women's movement by the organizational cohesiveness, has been due to its ability to name issues, to call attention to different aspects of women's lives that journalists, intellectual and political elites, and a large sample of the general population could no longer ignore.

In the late 1970s, women's activists undertook to organize around issues of gender violence as rape, dowry, deaths, wife beating, sati, female neglect resulting in differential mortality rates and also female foeticide. Raising such issues won the movement its share of critics, but without daring to protest against gender violence. Hence, issues of violence against women by no means constitute the whole or even the primary focus of the contemporary women's movement in India.

It was in 1988 that women activists conference in Patna (February 1988) and the Fourth National Conference on Women's Studies in Andhra (December 1988) ranged broadly their debates around questions of poverty, employment, work, property, health and ecology, culture and religion, political representation, law, as well as issues of gender violence (Baghel, 2009: 43). In fact, it was in the late of 1970s that the focus on violence against women propelled the movement forward and endowed it with much of its present strength.

Interestingly enough, Baghel (2009) elucidates the contemporary Indian women's movement to be constituted by a range of organizations be it urban and rural, academic and activist drawn from upper, middle and lower-income segments of society. Nevertheless, on particular occasions thousands of women can be

mobilized for protests, rallies and mass meetings, the numbers of activists with sustained movement involvement as well as supporters with a collective feminist consciousness are limited in comparison with activists' numbers in the West. From an ideological and structural point of view, the movement is marked by heterogeneity. Tharu and Lalita (1997) state that:

> *"The movement as it has emerged today, has no centralized organization, no commonly acknowledged leadership, no unifocal programme.... Groups do not share a commitment to any one analysis of women's oppression, or its relationship with other forms of oppression/exploitation, or the strategies necessary for action or change. In fact, even an intra-group consensus is often not assumed or demanded."*

In the light of what has been said, the movement observed to be multi-associational, ideologically diverse, regionally broad, and concerned with a vast array of issues.

2.10.1. Women's Organisations

All India Women's Conference was founded in 1927 as a social reform organization committed particularly to the promotion of education for women, where it declared also as a political organization. Nevertheless, there were many prominent members of AIWC who were also active in the nationalist movement. Mutual support, on the other hand, existed over the course of time between the movement and the Conference. Since Independence, the Conference has been closely connected to the Congress Party (Baghel, 2009: 44).

In 1954 the NFIW was formed, it was followed by All India Working Women's Coordination Committee (AIWWCC) and later by All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) formed in 1970's. Their national organization has been less active than particular subunits, such as, the Janwadi Mahila Samiti in

Delhi whose protest against dowry deaths and whose work in slums are well known. The Mahila Dakshata Samiti, led by Promila Dandavate, whose socialist affiliation links organization to party, has also been very active in Delhi (Baghel, 2009:44).

When it comes to leftist party, it is argued that women's groups associated with parties have the potential of being more effective because of their connections with mass organizations. Without these party connections, feminist activism would remain isolated. It seems evident that these party-connected groups are capable to mobilize huge numbers of women for demonstrations. As far as the controversy over the Muslim women concerning the Protection of Rights in Marriage Bill in 1986, for instance, the leftist party connected women's groups who mobilized large numbers of women for demonstrations, which the Delhi-based autonomous groups could not have brought out (Ibid: 45).

2.10.2. Autonomous Women's Groups

When it comes to show what feminists came across in the late 1970s, one should bear in mind that the creation of what is called "*autonomous women's organizations*" is the culmination of consciousness and determination to plight for their noble cause. In addition, these groups were independent of party affiliation; though, individual members often had party links. These newer autonomous organizations are largely urban-based, for instance, in January 1979 a small group of women began the publication of Manushi (meaning in Hindi a girl's name) that was soon successively to achieve a circulation of several thousands.

Another organization is Saheli, which was formed in 1982 and is concerned, particularly with issues of dowry and domestic violence, as well as media storm with documentary films covering current controversial issues. Additionally, Kali for women devoted itself to the publication of original feminist literature analysis and the list of Delhi organizations (Ibid: 45-46).

In the nutshell the membership of the groups is small and many have between ten and twenty active members. Besides, when activists from these

different groups come together, their numbers can be impressive. The Bihar conference in February 1988, for instance, drew 750 representatives of different autonomous groups with 8000 people attending the final rally. Generally speaking, the strength of these autonomous groups is not based on their ability to mobilize large numbers in protests or demonstrations but rather stems from their capacity to reflect on, to name and to publicise movement issues (Ibid: 46).

2.10.3. Grassroots Organisations

An important force that works for women's interests is located in the grassroots political movements of India where women play a major role. The Shramik Sanghatana movement uncovers Dhulia District of Maharashtra, where women activists and others organise rallies against wife-beating, male drinking and harassment. In certain regions as Bihar, Gaya, Bobh and Sangarsh Vahini, Dalit women activists were making pressure to address issues of drunkenness and wife beating. Similar movements in Marath-Wada also took place in the late 1970's under the guidance of the Kashatakari Sanghatana. To sum up, grassroots groups have undertaken energetic campaigns for raising their wages, putting an end to wife beating and alcoholism of their husbands, and to protest incursions of outsiders on their livelihood. Unfortunately, such efforts are fragmented, and only occasionally linked by national meetings or gatherings.

2.10.4. Contemporary Women's Movement: Solidarity and Schism

Among the early women's organizations, the All-India Women's Conference had the closest links with the Indian National Congress. However, all the organizations were to some extent committed to a "harmonious alliance" with the male leadership. As a result, these organizations accepted the Independent Indian state as an ally because the Congress adopted many women's causes. In their critique of patriarchy, identification of oppressive male presence was muted; whereas, the system was accused of being the enemy instead of men.

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This political position, in fact, meshed well with the organizations' welfare orientation and the charitable work. The position of social feminism, on the other hand, was consistent with the broad framework where claims to equality were based on the importance and values of women's traditional roles that continued to dominate women's organizations until the 1960's (Baghel, 2009: 110).

In retrospect, Women began from the 1940's broadening their scope far beyond women's organizations to liberating the struggles of peasants, workers and trade union movements. Women's organizations not only lost their hegemonic claims to represent all Indian women, but also female activists lost their privileged position especially when their numbers in political parties and movements increased. Consequently, the "harmonious alliance" with Congress faced stress and strain, especially when women began to articulate a more diverse, radical and nuanced critique of patriarchy, reaching towards a new and more politicized gender identity (Ibid: 110).

The turning point came in 1970s, when several events occurred to women's movement. The "new feminism" in developed Western countries led in 1971 to the international year and then decade of women, where the focus was on development. More interestingly, in the 1950s the India state had bypassed Gandhi's vision of an alternative path to progress, choosing conventional Western models of development like industrialization, central planning, expansion of science and technology. The expectations were that this model would bring well-being and benefits to all. But the reality was harder than the expectations, mainly when the predictions foundered in front of the Indian patriarchy.

Holding this view, the outcome became evident, when the Indian government appointed a committee on the status of women at the urging request of the United Nations. Baghel (2009) explained the content of the committee's report of 1974 as the worst fears of sceptics: *"according to the report, since 1911 the condition of Indian women, especially poor women, had worsened in a variety of conventional measures of well-being. Gender disparities had widened in*

employment, health, education and political participation". The new generation of middle-class women who encountered isolation and other disabilities brought a new eye to bear on the "woman's question".

Additionally, in the mid-1970s India witnessed a watershed in its politics, where Congress under the leadership of Indira Gandhi, inaugurated a new era of populist politics. In this era, there was a gradual broadening of the democratic base of mainstream political institutions. At the same time, the Indian left fractured giving birth to a new body of leftist thought. A series of locally organized and intense popular struggles broke out. This was the beginning of new social movements, within which popular women's voices found their platform (Ibid: 111).

The second wave of feminism emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Women's organizations set up at this time did not make a bid for hegemony; because, they were autonomous groups joined through informal networking, local leaderships, an emerging feminist press, and an intensification of multi-voiced exchanges. In fact, this array of organizations, represented women from all classes, castes, communities, where they focused on different claims to represent all Indian women, but it has a national profile and presence.

2.11. Formation of Dalit Women's Organizations

The focus on education of low caste women is one of the important factors responsible for the emerging identity of Dalit women. Ambedkar's thought and action made important differences in the lives of Dalit women. His movement and especially his organizations encouraged many Dalit women to become educated, to be active in public life and to gain leadership. As a matter of fact, self-respect in the contemporary period encouraged women to participate in organizations for Dalit women at regional, state and national levels.

After independence in 1960s and 1970s, Dalit movement and women's movement emerged to demand their rights against caste and gender respectively. However, specific problems of Dalit women were not acknowledged by these

movements. Hence in the 1990s there were several special, independent and autonomous assertions of Dalit women's identity. A case in point is the formation of NFDW and AIDWF at the state level. The MDMS was also formed in 1995, and a year earlier, the women's wing of BRP (Baghel, 2009: 33).

In December 1996, at Chandrapur, a Vikas Vanchit Dalit Mahila Parishad was organized and a proposal to commemorate 25th December (the day on which Ambedkar had set Manusmriti on fire) was set forward. Another organization of the Christi Mahila Sanghatana of Dalit Christian Women was established in 1997. On the other hand, the IAWS networks with Dalit feminist across different regions had brought special solutions to problems related to Dalit women (Ibid: 34).

Interestingly enough, many Dalit Non-Government Organisations, both in India and abroad, have been involved in raising the plight of India's 205 million untouchables. One of the most important tasks of these Dalit NGO's is to bring the plight of Dalit people to the attention of the International community and to document and publicise human right violations. They depict them as the poorest of the poor; where they show to public opinion that Dalit women lack the means and the opportunity to defend themselves at home or to make their problems known outside of rural India.

Many Dalit women have formed NGO's through which they collectively fight against abuse from the Upper classes. It is an evidence among Dalits that the caste system has been truly a crippling disease in India till today and this indelible reality has its roots embedded in the Hindu religious scriptures (Ibid: 82).

It is worth mentioning that many of the Dalit NGO's are involved in establishing schools, scholarships, and basic supplements to Dalits in the rural parts of India. Among these NGO's are, for instance, Ambedkar Centre for Peace and Justice and the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights are involved in bringing the plight of Dalit people to the attention of the international community and to document and publicize human rights violation.

Furthermore, several efforts have been made to secure human rights of women in general and Dalit women in particular. Despite this, human rights of Dalit women are seen to be violated in different forms. Such infringement of human rights echoes the need of evolving suitable mechanism to empower Dalit women to assert for equal rights and justice in order to live a dignified life. Hence, the long-term objectives are to enfranchise Dalits as full citizens of their society and eliminate caste-based discriminations (Ibid: 83).

2.12. Theoretical Discourse on Gender and Patriarchy

As far as the theoretical discourse on gender and patriarchy is concerned, it is important to outline the theoretical interventions from the western feminists and its implications on the understanding of gender in India. The traditional belief of attributing different characteristics, roles and status to women and men in society to biological (i.e. sexual) differences between them and treating them natural and therefore not changeable was considered to be baseless and unsound. Similarly, the notion of sexual differences being the natural cause of the subordination of women was all together rejected.

The definition of "gender" as a conceptual and analytical category helped to overcome many wrong notions about the women issue (Sabharwal, Sonalkar, 2015). "Gender" is now considered as a social construct (and not a biological category) defining man's and woman's position and the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles. The distinction between sex and gender was introduced to deal with the general tendency to attribute women's subordination to their anatomy (Kamala Bhasin; 2009).

All this is now widely accepted in various types of development discourses. According to Sabharwal, Sonalkar (2015), the United Nations Document on Millennium Development Goals, defines gender as:

(a)   It is a conceptualization of the roles and responsibilities of women and men as a function of culture, religion, tradition, social norms and economic necessity;

(b)   It is viewed differently over time and in different ways from place to place. It is not biologically determined or constant;

(c)   It explains differences between the status, conditions, access to and control over resources, and development needs of men and women.

Further, the contribution of the feminist discourse is with respect to the perception of "patriarchy" and its role in gender inequalities and the subordination of women. Gender relations are unequal because of the existence of patriarchy. The subservience that women experience in everyday life takes various forms of discrimination, as disregard, insult, control, exploitation, oppression, violence within the family, at the place of work, and in society. Hence, patriarchy is an ideology or a belief that men are considered to be superior (Ibid).

There is an obvious argument that the notion of patriarchy brought clearness and insight on gender relations through which women suffered inferior position in family and society. The insights about gender and patriarchy set out above are now widely accepted after about fifty years of theoretical debate initiated by feminists all over the world, what is often referred to as the 'second and third waves of feminist movements'. *"Second-wave feminism owed a lot to the political movements of the 1960's and 1970's, even as it engaged with and critiqued their ideologies. Thus, feminist theory has incorporated, modified, opposed and complexly negotiated with Marxism, Freudian psychoanalysis, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist ideologies and analyses"* (Sabharwal, Sonalkar et al, 2010).

It is worth mentioning that asserting women's right to raise issues of inequality, subjugation and division of labour within the household and the family was due the emergence of an important feminist slogan of the 1970s known as 'The personal is political'. This is perhaps the first example of questioning by feminists

on the division between public and private in modern liberal society, in which the public is the sphere for political conflict.

2.13. Citizenship and Rights of Women

Citizenship in its modern form can be viewed from Marshall's (1950) definition of *"citizenship basically comprising three kinds of rights: civil, political and social"*. This definition is important as it is the widely accepted as liberal conception of citizenship. Feminists have questioned the public-private division on which the modern liberal notion of citizenship is based. They have emphasized women's right to function on equal terms with men in the public area.

Meanwhile, they have asserted the right to equal treatment and freedom from violence and harassment in the private range. On the other hand, feminists pointed out that 'public' citizenship in itself is not a sufficient condition for equal citizenship of women, because it does not take into account the private sphere where patriarchal relations still suppress equal female participation in personal issues.

In addition, the struggle of women for the vote can thus be seen as one of asserting women's right to take part in public life and to aspire for political office. The other kind of struggle involves asserting the right to equality in the private sphere, which challenges patriarchal relations of power in the household and family. The mainstream discourse on citizenship fails to draw a distinction in Citizenship as a Status and Practice. On the one hand, the Status is where the citizen enjoys the rights necessary such social, civil and political. On the other hand, Citizenship being just as Status reduces women as passive citizens; while citizenship as Practice is where there is a full realization of the citizen status. Thus, by promoting gender equality the problem of male stream and false universalism between men and women can be solved (Sabharwal, Sonalkar, 2015).

2.14. Feminist Discourse in India

We now take a brief look at the major issues raised by the Indian women's movement from the 1970s onwards, and how it dealt with issues of gender and caste. The period of about twenty years after India became independent, has been described by Vina Mazumdar, who is one of the earliest scholars of women's studies in India, as a period of lull for women's movements. Women organizations did enter into welfare work on the basis of facilities and grants were provided by the government. But little research was done on the status of women.

A crucial issue around which these women's groups agitated during the 1980s was that of violence against women. The issue of violence against women as rape, murder and other forms of violence was taken up initially with campaigns like that related to the Mathura police station for the gang rape case. The demands of the movement resulted in some changes in the law, such as that on "custodial" rape, dowry-related deaths (Sections 3204B and 498A of the Indian Penal Code), and most recently, domestic violence. Special police cells were set up in selected towns to deal with violence against women.

However, most of the cases brought before these cells relate to domestic violence, not the kind of public violence that Dalit women so frequently undergo. The gang-rape of Bhanwari Devi, a lower-caste woman employed in a government scheme for 'empowerment' of women, when she tried to stop a child marriage within a powerful landowning family in a village in Rajasthan was taken up by an NGO called Vishakha as a case of sexual harassment of a woman carrying out her assigned work duties. This led the Supreme Court to issue a ruling on sexual harassment at the workplace, with a directive to set up cells for the prevention of sexual harassment of working women at their places of employment.

One source of support that has been available for women's organisations aiming to change laws is from International forums and conventions under the aegis of U.N., like the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Measures like the Supreme Court directives on sexual harassment

at the workplace and the Domestic Violence Act of 2005 have drawn from CEDAW even while they have tried to be sensitive to the specificities of the Indian situation.

Similarly, the 73rd And 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution, which reserve one-third of seats for women in local elected bodies, grew out of international concerns about the decentralisation of governance, while the Beijing International Women's Conference in 1995 spurred the demand for reservations for women in national and state legislative bodies. Further in 2005, the Hindu Succession Act was amended to bring all agricultural land on par with other property and makes Hindu women's inheritance rights in land legally equal to men's.

The Indian feminist discourse has been uncomfortable, until quite recently, with acknowledging caste or religious differences in its own activism, partly because this fractures the kind of political unity that feminists seek to create around the category of 'woman,' and their social experiences. When they have recognized caste differences, feminists have recognized caste as an aspect of class. For instance, in the efforts to organize rural women workers, many of whom might be Dalits, or when they take up issues of poverty, where Dalits and lower-castes are overrepresented.

2.15. Dalit Women Discourse

In the early 1990s, Dalit women began to question the mainstream women movement because of their failure to recognize the distinctive character of the problem of Dalit women. Although the discourse on Dalit women shares a common view on some aspects of the 'problem of women', there are visible differences on a number of other aspects. Dalit women discourse recognises the problem of gender exploitation by their men and therefore DWM addresses the issue of patriarchy which denies women from asserting their choices and participation in decision-making in both the community and the family. However, writers on the problems of Dalit women argued that low caste women, particularly the untouchables experience

gender discrimination, economic deprivation (emanating from two strands on women in India), they also experience discrimination related to prescribe customary provisions in the institution of caste and untouchability (Sabharwal, Sonalkar, 2015).

Their problem comprises a triple deprivation: gender, poverty and caste. It is argued that, the mainstream feminist discourses focus on gender discrimination and the issue of economic, educational and political empowerment. They invariably ignore the issues of caste and untouchability based discrimination of low caste women which cause a high degree of poverty and deprivation, from which the other women do not suffer. It is this "exclusion induced deprivation" which differentiates Dalit women problem from the rest of the women. Low caste women faced denial of equal rights in the past, which continued in the present in some spheres, if not all and manifest in various forms (Ibid).

Dalit women's movement recognized that caste-based discrimination deprives them of choices and opportunities to escape from poverty and denies them a voice to claim their rights. The forum pressed for anti-discrimination and affirmative action policies in the sphere of sources of livelihood such as land and business; in employment in the form of non-discriminatory terms of engagement (wages, number of days etc.); good working conditions. Further, non-discriminatory access to social needs, such as education and nutrition, to public health care, to food security and nutrition enhancing government programs was part of their main agenda.

2.16. Political Participation of Dalit Women

Political participation is generally recognized as a representative instrument towards achieving positive policy outcomes for each group. In 2009, only 10.3 percent of the seats in both houses of parliament were held by women and only 10 percent were in ministerial positions placing India in 100th and 93rd positions globally, and respectively, on these indicators. Democracy, by definition, must

account for all its constituents; with women making up roughly half the country's population, it seems absurd that they do not comprise anywhere near a similar composition in the national parliament in India.

Indian data on the trends in participation at the national level of governance show that participation of women in general and Dalit women in particular remains dismally low in India. Data on Lok Sabha from 1971 to 2004 reveals the dominance of SC men in the politics as compared to SC women. The 14th Lok Sabha had a total of 75 MP's from SC social group, of which 65 were men and 10 were women (Sabharwal and Lal, 2011).

There is slight improvement in the percentage share of the women parliamentarians from SC background although they continue to be under-represented. They are under-represented when compared to SC men and non-SC/ST women. The 15th Lok Sabha general election was held in the year 2009 for the 543 electoral constituencies. A total of 8070 candidates were contested out of which 7514 were Men and 556 Women from different social groups. Within the 556 contested women only 57 got elected. A total of 12 women belonging to scheduled caste, 5 from schedule tribe and other 40 were from general groups. This data clearly highlights the lower participation and also representation of women and in particular Dalit Women at the higher level (Ibid).

It is seen from the above section that SC women lack at different avenues of daily life in comparison to other women. Data on workforce in the rural areas are predominantly engaged in the farm sector as agricultural labourers while the non-SC/ST women work as cultivators. SC women workers as agricultural labourers are unorganised, more vulnerable with limited social security as compared to women from non-SC/ST social groups.

In the urban areas, the majority of SC women workforce was employed in the category of 'other workers' who are engaged in factory, plantation, trade, etc and have negligible access to capital. Lower literacy rates further exacerbate the vulnerability of Dalit women. From our analysis from the official data sets, it is

seen that, indeed, Dalit women suffer from higher level of poverty and hunger (Ibid).

This state is particularly true of safe motherhood, childhood survival, and nutritional status. A lower proportion of mothers gives birth safely assisted by trained medical officers as compared to others, over two- fifth of SC women suffer from chronic energy deficiency as seen from BMI. The results from our analysis clearly show that SCs remain relatively more deprived even in utilization of basic health services. Low education reduces employability and result in high unemployment rate. With respect to political participation, the data on the Lok Sabha from 1971- 2004 reveals the dominance of SC men and non-SC women in the politics as compared to SC women. Thus, the official data indicates that the SC women differ from rest of the women in so far as their performance with regard to human development indicators is lower compared to rest of the women (Ibid).

2.17. Internationalisation of Dalit Movement

Today, more than ever Dalit activists are demanding socio-economic equality and the destruction of the caste system. Increasingly frustrated in the arena of representative politics by limited progress the Dalit movement in the 1990s reorganized on a network basis. They widened the basis of their struggle against caste based on the ideas of Ambedkar. The move to international advocacy in recent years has been most forcefully spearheaded by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights founded in 1998 (Zabiliūtė, 2015).

After meetings and consultations of academics, activists, Dalit movements, human rights organizations and Dalit organizations from all India; who then decided that there had been a need for a platform, dedicated for Dalit human rights. Despite the title's implication that the NCDHR is a 'national campaign', it has been involved in networking and advocating for Dalit human rights transnationally from the very beginning of its functioning. In fact, it was established already within the

existing discourse of transnational advocacy networking and human rights movements.

In fact, the organisation was established already within the existing discourse of transnational advocacy networking and human rights movements. The NCDHR has also cooperated with foreign human rights activists when founding the IDSN. As shown, the IDSN and the NCDHR are purposive and strongly institutionalized organizations.

In addition, this coalition falls into what Tarrow (2006: 166–79) described *"within the typology of transnational coalitions as campaign coalitions"* which *"combine high intensity of involvement with long-term cooperation"* (ibid, 168, 175), features that are easily recognized in the IDSN and the NCDHR. The IDSN seeks support for the Dalit issue from the United Nations and the European Union institutions and private sector actors. It is mostly occupied with what Tarrow (Ibid: 32) called *"externalization: the vertical projection of domestic claims onto international institutions or foreign actors"*.

The NCDHR also employs an externalization strategy. It drew the attention of academics, civil society groups and the media because of its participation in the United Nations World Conference against Racism (WCAR), Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban in 2001. Together with support from NGOs like Human Right Watch and other organizations, The NCDHR has attempted to make it visible and put the pressure on the UN so that it would include caste discrimination issues into the conference agenda as discrimination based on work and descent (Hardtmann 2009). Although the idea of caste discrimination as an issue of the UN conference was strongly opposed by the Government of India, and was not included in the final statement of the conference, Dalits have raised their visibility on the international level and in India (Ibid).

However, they have been continuing these strategies ever since, especially through lobby work aimed at the UN and creation of the draft of the UN's princilples and guidlines for the elimination of discrimination based on work and

descent (IDSN 2011). The externalization strategy has been reaching out for foreign support and in this way putting pressure on the local government is called a 'boomerang' pattern, a concept introduced by Kecks and Sikkink (1998). They described the 'boomerang' pattern as emerging mostly in authoritative states, where the activists' access to their own governments is blocked and is used mostly for the human rights causes.

India, however, is a democratic country and untouchability is outlawed by its Constitution (The Constitution of India, Art. 17). Nevertheless, Dalit transnational activists have found it fruitful to use the boomerang pattern strategy by bringing their own 'local' issue into the transnational scene. Some scholars hold the NCDHR as one of the main actors in the process of internationalization of the Dalit issue. According to Bob (2007: 179), the success of Dalits to draw the attention of powerful organizations like the HRW and the Ford Foundation contributed a lot to the establishment of the NCDHR.

Up till this point, these developments were in favour for the making of the Dalit issue more visible internationally. However, some of the NCDHR founding members were active in advocating Dalit human rights in India and participated in different Dalit human rights movements before the establishment of the NCDHR. In addition, some internationalization developments had taken place before the establishment of the NCDHR and before the HRW started paying attention to the Dalit issue (Bob, 2007: 175–78).

Similarly, the founding of the IDSN proves the agency and the capacity of the Dalit activists. The IDSN was founded by Indians and activists from abroad, who worked in other international organizations before. Thus, the establishment of the organization and its success on the international arena can hardly be attributed solely to the recognition by powerful international actors.

It is known that transnational activism is not a new phenomenon, and dates from the 19th century anti-slavery movements (Keck, Sikkink 1998). However, recent developments in the world strongly facilitated the expansion and change of

the patterns of transnational activism (Piper, Uhlin, 2004: 3). Additionally, according to Tarrow (2006: 5) the transnational activism of our age is *"its connection to the current wave of globalization and its relation to the changing structure of international politics."*

2.18. Conclusion

Be it Indian or specifically Dalit feminism, feminists have undertaken a new understanding of women's violence and the ways it is perpetuated and fed by patriarchal control of women. Though the fight is not over, they have greatly provoked controversial debates at both local and inter/national levels on the woman question. The lack of woman solidarity, the imbalanced power between women within the family, and complex relationships with various social movements, therefore did not dismantle the protection of patriarchal kinship and still keep women, particularly Dalit women under male and caste hegemony. There are three times subjugated: being a Dalit, i.e. as a subaltern of the Hindu casteist system, a woman vs. man, and a female under older women authority and hate. The feminist fundamental concern with gender and its consequential oppression is a major preoccupation toward the construction of womanhood which remains shared by Dalit feminists, Indian feminists and western feminists. At least, the woman question continues to be an expansive matter of debates within political, economic, social, and literary spheres. The following chapter focuses on the Dalit women question.

Chapter Three

Dalit Woman Question

3.1.   Introduction

The situation of Dalit women in India is just "unexplainable". They are one among the worst sufferers of socio-cultural, political and economic exploitation, injustice, oppression and violence. Their woes and miseries are boundless. They are the ones who are affected by all kinds of social and economic oppressions. Further, they are mainly employed in unorganized sector of Indian economy as daily wagers and marginal workers. The lack of adequate employment opportunities, limited skills and illiteracy have made their mobility extremely limited and prevent them from achieving independent status.

3.2.   Dalit Woman Issues

As the lowest in the caste hierarchy, Dalits in the Indian society have historically suffered caste-based social exclusion from economic, civil, cultural, and political rights. Women from this community suffer from not only discrimination based on their gender but also caste identity and consequent economic deprivation. Scheduled Caste or Dalit women in *"India today number 80.517 million or approximately 48 per cent of the total Dalit population, 16 per cent of the total female population, and 8 per cent of the total Indian population"* (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 2). However, they, together with their male counterparts, constitute a sizeable social group that continues to suffer descent and work-based discrimination, untouchability practices, and violence arising out of the caste system.

It is assumed that historically, Dalits have been excluded from social, economic, cultural, civil, and political rights (Baghel, 2009: 30). Egregious denial of rights and violations have been primarily due to customary restrictions imposed on them under India's stratified social hierarchy based on their birth into particular polluted 'jatis' or castes. Untouchability practices, therefore, based on notions of

Dalits' supposed impurity operate as tools for the social exclusion and exploitation of this community, under a socio-religiously legitimized mechanism for denying this community and their fundamental rights (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011:2).

As it is mentioned earlier, Dalits are among the most socially and economically vulnerable communities given their social exclusion, lack of access to landownership, lack of significant political participation, and also lack of free employment; *"over half the Dalit workforce are landless agricultural labourers dependant on the dominant castes in their localities for their livelihood. Within the Dalit community, Dalit women are more vulnerably placed given caste and gender subordination"* (ibid, idem).

In addition, Dalit women's problems encompass not only gender and economic deprivation but also discrimination associated with religion, caste, and untouchability, which in turn results in the denial of their social, economic, cultural, and political rights. They become vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation due to their gender and caste.

Dalit women, on the other hand, also become victims of abhorrent social and religious practices such as *devadasi/jogini* (temple prostitution), resulting in sexual exploitation in the name of religion (Sabharwal and Sonalkar, 2015). The additional discrimination faced by Dalit women on account of their gender and caste is clearly reflected in the differential achievements in human development indicators for this group. In all the indicators of human development, for example, literacy and longevity, Dalit women score worse than Dalit men and non-Dalit women. Thus, the problems of Dalit women are distinct and unique in many ways, and they suffer from the 'triple burden' of gender bias, caste discrimination, and economic deprivation.

3.3.   Caste-Class-Gender: Intersectional Violence

Empirical research[2] strongly argues for the egalitarian character of the Dalit community and for the view that Brahmanical class-caste based patriarchy; which is, alien to Dalits and their culture, has had an uncontrollable impact on them in history and it *"might be argued that the inequality prescribed by Manu in his Smriti is after all of historical importance. It is past history and cannot be supposed to have any bearing on the present conduct of the Hindu. I am sure nothing can be a greater error than this."*[3]

Evidence of this includes Dalit women's experience of equality and freedom with men in such areas as speech, physical movement, establishing contacts and relationships, choice of work and employer, earning and spending on household goods. In addition, Dalit women are the mainstay of the family income for daily wage labour and even the principal breadwinner. Although, it may seem that Dalit women are enjoying a certain freedom in their families; nevertheless, the powerful control of Brahmanical patriarchy substantially erodes their egalitarian moorings. In the process, three sets of actors pursue their influence on them (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 46-47).

Doubtlessly, the first set is the dominant caste men under whom Dalit women work as labourers and with whom they interact on a daily basis, where they are forced into submission and subservience. Due to the prevailing social, economic and political status of the dominant caste men; this latter is granted the leverage to exercise a dominating influence on Dalit women.

The second set, however, consists of the upper caste women, who are already controlled by patriarchal ideology, and who also rely on the strength of their male counterparts' economic, social, and political positioning to influence or exert

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[2] Cited in F. Franco, J.Macwan, and S Ramanathan.2000, (eds), The Silken Swing: The Cultural Universe of Dalit Women

[3] Quoted in S. Islam, Untouchables In Manu's India (2002), Annex.

pressure on Dalit women into patriarchal ways of thinking and acting. Finally, the last set, includes Dalit men and more specifically Dalit women's husbands and male relatives, who, are subjected to patriarchal influences and pressures in similar ways, and in turn they practice male control over their women (ibid: 48).

Reflecting further, one can say that Dalit women, Dalit men and their community as a whole are placed in a situation of bipolar tension. On the one hand, at the horizontal level in relation to their families and community, the women experience relative equality of relationships and freedom of movement. On the other hand, due to their free movement and interactions in the larger society, the women face the impact of patriarchy flowing from the vertically structured class-caste society (Paswan and Jaidev, 2002).

Furthermore, their problem becomes more complex and irritating for the simple reasons that Dalit community is rather weak position in terms of economic, political, and knowledge sources. These latter reasons hinder it from waging a frontal assault on patriarchal ideology and supportive structures such as caste codes and traditions, religious beliefs, marital alliances and practices, dominant caste and electoral panchayats, and the like. Seemingly, dominant caste men and women perceive higher stakes, in comparison to Dalit men, in perpetuating patriarchy in the Dalit community in terms of legitimating their discrimination and violence against Dalit women (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 49).

3.4.   Principles of Brahmanical Patriarchy

Regarding human sexuality in the Brahmanical patriarchal view is that the male is superior to the female. Therefore, in terms of reproductive sexuality, the male is the giver while the female is the receiver and caretaker of the offspring. The insinuation underlying this principle is that man, due to his superior status, can reserve to himself the right to give or refuse, and the woman has the duty to receive when given, or philosophically accept his refusal (Paswan and Jaidev, 2002).

Dramatically, any refusal on her part generates force, and most of the time violence from him; thus, his freedom becomes her obligation and his dominance her submission. Another aspect of this Brahmanical law is that the male offspring born of a dominant caste man from a woman of low caste status is still considered to be superior in caste status.

The low caste woman must, in this case, understand her relationship with him as a privilege granted by him. Whereas, if a man from a low caste has a male offspring from a dominant caste woman, that offspring will lose any privileges of the superior dominant caste[4]. Consequently, the caste-wise superior man enjoys prerogative rights over the body and sexuality of a low caste woman, and for her it is a privilege granted by him. On the contrary, any refusal from the low caste women of such presumed privileges, justifies force and violence from the dominant caste man (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 55).

3.5.   Practical Implications of Caste Patriarchy

Moving further, it is obvious that under the patriarchal caste system Dalit women are subjected to interlinking caste, class, and gender discrimination and violence. Dominant caste-class men and dominant caste-class women conditioned by patriarchal ideology and Dalit men who have assimilated the values of this ideological system, all subject Dalit women to discrimination and violence. Moreover, the patriarchal caste system in everyday practice defines Dalit women's relationship with dominant caste men and women and Dalit men in all areas of life as one of availability, affordability, accessibility, amenability, expendability, and adjustability (ibid: 57).

- **Availability**: A Dalit woman must be available and must make herself available for dominant caste men, to provide labour in the fields, to work over time, to withdraw her nomination for panchayat positions at the

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[4] Cited in Manusmriti, ch. 10, no. 67

direction of dominant caste mmen; to submit herself to the sexual demands of the dominant caste men, etc. (ibid: 57)

• **Affordability**: A Dalit woman's services must be financially affordable to the dominant castes. As such, she must receive wages unilaterally determined by the landlords, serve his sexual needs regularly or periodically in exchange for some money or goods or no compensation at all; accept the compensation determined by perpetrator, or his family, or his dominant caste community in event of violence, etc. (ibid: 58).

• **Accessibility**: In terms of time and space, for dominant caste men, a Dalit woman must be accessible anywhere in public or in private (her workplace, her or his home, on the streets, even in open spaces used as women's public toilets) and any time during the day or at night, to be the recipient of his abusive language. On the other hand, when dominant caste women and men must enjoy spaces where they are out of reach of Dalit women, the inverse is not the case. There is no right to privacy for a Dalit woman, nor should she be concerned about her sense of shame and humiliation in public when violence is unleashed against her (ibid: 58).

• **Amenability**: A Dalit woman, legally married or cohabiting with a dominant caste man, or promised marriage by a dominant caste man, is expected to be amenable to any of his actions; such as, excessive drinking, relationships with other women, and habitual physical violence. Unfortunately, they are permanently living in fright of the dominant castes, due to their dominant social position and political connections, pressure tactics and threats (ibid: 58).

• **Expendability**: A Dalit woman is expected to respond meekly to the desires, wishes, and decisions of men, being Dalit or dominant caste relating to any aspect of life. This facet of expendability is particularly in matters concerning sexual violence, domestic violence, and control of her reproductive sexuality in terms of forced abortions and female infanticide. Any refusal to submit herself as an expendable object for use by the man,

invites physical and sexual violence, also the denial of dowry demands will lead to house incarceration or desertion and abandonment (ibid: 59).

- **Adjustability**: A Dalit woman is not expected to approach state redressal systems, mainly the law in relation to any violence to which she has been subjected in connection with land disputes, payment of wages, drawing water from common wells, voting in and contesting elections, etc. Rather, she is expected to either accept these violations as her fate, or to be satisfied with whatever solution is imposed on her by the dominant caste village leaders (ibid: 59).

To wrap it up, the factors cited previously of Dalit women's vulnerability, reflect the kind of patriarchal world they live in and also to what extent their dignity and rights are denied in everyday life.

3.6.   Types of Intersectional Violence

From the foregoing analysis, it seems "clear" that violence is not only due to gender, but intersects with different structures of the system. For instance, such violence can be gender-class, gender-caste, and gender-class-caste. However, depending upon the nature of these structural intersections, one can discern two specific types of violence: the targeted violence, and the compound violence. While the two other types of violence; though not specifically intersectional but carrying some common features as the ones previously cited above, which are group violence and serial multiple violence (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 60).

(1)Targeted violence: An example of targeted violence is that of a dominant caste landlord who, having eyed a Dalit girl labourer over an extended period, asks the other labourers to stop working and leave early. Having isolated the girl, he then rapes her in his field. Consequently, the dominant caste man perceives the act of rape according to his caste, class and male superior status vis à vis the woman. Actually, his perceptions of the sexual availability of the girl due to her low caste and class, encourages him to target her for sexual violence.

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Yet, another type of targeted violence is punitive violence. The latter is committed in the case of a group of Dalit women labourers demanding timely payment of wages. The Dalit woman leading the group is particularly targeted with verbal, physical and sexual violence. Any assertions on the behalf of Dalit women are seen by dominant castes as an affront to their dominant caste, class, and gender status and honour. Besides, the Dalit women, the entire Dalit settlement are punished in addition to planned and occasionally spontaneous attacks by dominant castes. Purposely done, it is to degrade the self-respect of Dalit men by attacking their male pride because of their inability to keep their women under control or to protect them (Ibid, 2011: 60-61).

(2) Compound violence: This occurs when Dalit woman face the violence on one issue simultaneously form Dalit men due to their low gendered position within the Dalit community and from dominant caste males and females on the basis of their low caste, class and gendered position within the caste system. Another variant of compound violence is the one arising from the complicity of state actors and civil society actors in their combined efforts to subordinate Dalit women. With dominant caste, class and patriarchal identity as their common basis, the two sets of actors collude together to deny the women from their right to remedial justice by siding with the dominant caste perpetrator. As a matter of fact, Dalit women's caste, class and gender status make them vulnerable to further discrimination and violence (Ibid, 2011: 61).

(3) Group/Gang violence: It is defined as any collective assault, characterized by premeditated and intense emotional rage towards Dalit women due to their gender as well as low caste and class position, where it is categorized as group/gang violence. In this variant Dalit women are subjected to overt violence in one or a series of incidents, where they have been forced to undergo caste, class and gender discrimination and violence over generations. The women's socialization process, subtly schemed through the instrumentality of religion, culture, and

enforcement measures, has successfully sustained gender violence against them for centuries (Ibid, 2011: 62).

(4) Multiple violence: It is characterized by a single occurrence of aggression marked by any number of different forms of violence, whether in the general community or in the family perpetrated by a dominant caste man or woman or Dalit man. Consequently, verbal abuse may lead to physical assault and end with rape. Sexual harassment may give rise to verbal abuse followed by physical assault (Ibid, 2011: 62).

3.7.   Vulnerability of Dalit Women

It is easy for the historically dominating caste and gender to violate human rights of Dalit women who are at the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder. The violence perpetrated against Dalit women provides ample evidence of their widespread exploitation and the discrimination to which they are subject. The subordination is twofold, the first one is in terms of power relations to men in a patriarchal society; whereas, the second one is in terms of their communities on the basis of caste (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 3).

It is worth noting that violence is also the core outcome of gender based inequalities where *"Dalit and tribal women are raped as part of an effort by upper caste leaders, land lords and police to suppress movements to demand payment of minimum wages, to settle share cropping disputes or to reclaim lost lands"* (Baghel, 2009: 31).

Hence, Dalit women are more likely to face collective and public threats or acts of social violence than dominant caste women; who on the contrary, tend to face violence more particularly within the family due to stringent regulations over their sexuality and freedom of movement. In this respect, the National Commission for Women has commented, *"in the commission of offences against ... the scheduled caste 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." [5].

Besides, widespread patriarchal attitudes shape Dalit Women's experiences of violence in the domestic sphere of the family, multiplying the gendered harm perpetrated against them. The insecurity generated through structural violence against Dalit women in both the general community and within the family acts as a form of coercive control over them. The following incident, recited by Baghel (2009: 31), emphasizes the statements previously cited:

> *"A Dalit family had refused to let upper caste villagers built a road through their fields. Hence on September, 29th, 2006, Bhaiyalal Bhotmange's family comprising his wife Surekha, daughter Priyanka and two sons were killed by the villagers of Khairlangi in Bhandra district of Maharashtra. They were first attacked with huge iron chains and then abused by the other caste women of the village. Surekha and Priyanka were paraded naked and raped, and later, their bodies were mutilated and thrown into a pond."*

As a matter of fact, the above cited horrific incident shows that Dalit women are easy targets for any perpetrator upper caste; who, considers them to be sexually available. Therefore, they are largely unprotected by the state machinery. Further, there is prevalence of violence, making Dalit women eat human excreta, parading them naked, gang-rape, murder, dacoity, robbery and burning of their huts or communities. These are the types of crime, which violate their human rights *"according to SCs/STs Commission Report between 1981 and 1986 about 4000 Dalit women became victim of rape. In 1993-94, this figure rose to 798 and 992 respectively. This means annually about 700 Dalit women fall prey to sexual assault by high caste people"* (ibid: 32).

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[5] Cited in National Commission for Women (1996: 33)

Dramatically, the main complaints of the poorer Dalit women are that they have no good houses. In urban areas, most of them stay in unhygienic slums and in rural areas; in addition, their houses are away from mainstream society. Under conditions of grinding poverty and severe exploitation at workplace, Dalit women also suffer caste specific ban on water access from upper castes and may be beaten up in their own houses as well (ibid: 32). At the outset, prevailing caste and secondary status of women in the society is largely responsible for violation of human rights of Dalit women. To understand the root cause of the situation, it is essential to examine basic factors responsible for their vulnerability.

3.8.   Pervasive Violence

Violence or 'atrocities'[6] against Dalit women occur at two levels: as an inherent part of the caste system, using violence to reinforce caste norms, with Dalit women susceptible to all forms of violence, especially sexual violence; and when they transgress caste norms, such as those relating to caste endogamy or untouchability, or assert their rights over resources: public or cultural spaces. In other words, the process of Dalit women's empowerment in itself is perceived as a challenge to caste and patriarchal structures, and provides fertile ground for punitive violence perpetrated by the dominant castes (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011:7).

Actually, violence is socially legitimized through the impunity with which perpetrators of violence against Dalit women often operate. At one extreme end are the mass killings of Dalits in the central plains of Bihar by the private armies of the dominant castes, *"such as the notorious Ranvir Sena, in response to Dalit assertions of rights to government surplus or common land, minimum wages, and*

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[6] The term 'atrocity', according to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, implies offences under the Indian Penal Code perpetrated against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by those not belonging to either community. Caste consideration is really the root cause of the crime even though caste consciousness may not be the immediate motive for the crime.

against sexual exploitation of Dalit women by dominant caste landlords" (P. Prasad, 2001).

As a matter of fact, the Protection of Civil Rights Act and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Prevention of Atrocities Act addresses the threat of violence and atrocities against the Dalits (Sabharwal and Sonalkar, 2015). The objective of these acts is to clearly emphasize the intention of the government to deliver social justice and to enable SCs to live with dignity, without fear of violence and atrocities. Although the acts incorporate strong compensatory and punitive measures, violence and atrocities continue against Dalits.

The increase in the number of crimes and atrocities against Dalit women has raised a serious issue regarding empowerment of Dalits as a whole and especially of Dalit women, whose bodies become the sites of sexual violence committed publicly whenever they or the men of their community are seen as transgressing the caste hierarchy. The position of Dalit women in society can be understood in terms of the nature and number of atrocities committed against them. The table below, reported by the National Crime Records Bureau (1999-2012), will show the incidences of rape against Dalit women as one of the pervasive violence against them (ibid, idem).

Year	Number of Dalit Women
1999	1,000
2000	1,083
2001	1,316
2002	1,331
2003	1,089
2004	1,157
2005	1,172
2006	1,217
2007	1,349
2008	1,457

2009	1,346
2010	1,349
2011	1,557
2012	1,576
Source: National Crime Records Bureau, GOI, 1999–2012	

Table 3.1: Incidences of rape against Dalit women over the years (evidence from the NCRB) (Sabharwal and Sonalkar, 2015).

Overall, the average of about 1,000 cases of sexual exploitation of Dalit women is reported annually as mentioned in the above table. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 1,576 cases of rape of women were reported in the country during 2012 as compared to 1,557 cases in 2011, which is an increase of 1.2 percent in the incidence of rape. The number of atrocities that are not reported to the police and that remain unregistered is far greater. The cases that get registered are severe, and women who register are courageous women.

Similarly, The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (2002: para 53) has also noted that Dalit women:

> *"Face targeted violence, even rape and death from state actors and powerful members of dominant castes, used to inflict political lessons and crush dissent within the community, or the women are used as pawns to capture their men folk. These women are gang raped, forced into prostitution, stripped, paraded around naked, made to eat excrement or even murdered for no crime of theirs ... Young Dalit girls are married off at an early age mainly as protection against sexual assault from dominant caste men."*

In the light of what has been said, the official statistics, however, capture only the tip of the iceberg, providing information on the most heinous crimes such as rape. Other forms of humiliation such as sexual harassment and derogatory

remarks are not captured in the official statistics. There are some primary studies that do provide us with other forms of violence against Dalit Women.

3.9.   Forms and Frequency of Violence

Dalit women endure violence in the general community and in the family, from state and non-state actors of different genders, castes, and socio-economic groupings. In this context, however, a study by Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee (2014) was undertaken of the narratives of 500 Dalit women across four states on the forms and manifestations of violence committed on them. The study encompasses the forms, frequency, and perpetrators of violence that highlights the incongruence between Dalit women's reality and the universal rights of women to freedom from gender-based violence and security of life.

Twelve major forms of violence emerge from the Dalit women's narratives, nine of them are within the general community (physical assault, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and assault, rape, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, kidnapping and abduction, forced incarceration and medical negligence) and three within the family (female foeticide and infanticide, child sexual abuse, and domestic violence) (ibid: 94-95). The following table shows that the majority of 500 Dalit women faced several forms of violence during 1999-2004:

	Number of women who have Faced form of violence*		Frequency of violence	
Form of Violence	**Number of Women**	**% of total Dalit Women(500)**	**Number of Incidents**	**Many Times**
Verbal abuse	312	62.4	331	106
Physical Assault	274	54.8	532	30

Sexual Harrassement/Assault	234	46.8	241	73
Rape	116	23.2	122	9
Sexual Exploitation	44	8.8	15	39
Forced Prostitution	24	4.8		24
Kidnap/abduction	24	4.8	24	
Forced incarceration	23	4.6	24	1
Medical negligence	17	3.4	25	
Domestic violence	215	43.0	76	185
Child sexual abuse	23	4.6	8	22
Female Foeticide/infanticide	2	0.4	3	
Total			1,401	489

Table 3.2: Number of Women Facing Violence and Frequency of Violence (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 95)

*Most women have faced more than one form of violence

As seen from the table above, the forms of violence most frequently perpetrated against the Dalit women in the study are verbal abuse (faced by 312 women or 62.4 per cent of the total women), physical assault (274 women or 54.8 per cent), sexual harassment and assault (234 women or 46.8 per cent), domestic violence (215 women or 43.0 per cent), and rape (116 women or 23.2 per cent). The other forms of violence are faced by less than 10 per cent of the total number of women for each form of violence.

On the other hand, the frequency with which this violence occurred, most women have experienced more than one incident of violence; whereas, others have faced violence many times or regularly. In addition, the other forms of violence, such as domestic violence, verbal abuse, sexual exploitation, and forced prostitution in particular, are more likely to be habitual forms of violence.

3.10. Perpetrators of Family and Community Violence

Within the wide range of identified perpetrators of violence against Dalit women in the general community is set out the table below where dominant caste landlords were the most significant. It is assumed that landlords are the feudal landed class owing over 10 acres of land, and it is their continuing socio-economic and political power and authority as well, in rural agricultural regions; furthermore, their reference as employers of many Dalit women agricultural labourers, provides them disproportionate scope for perpetration of gender-caste-class violence against these women with impunity (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 96).

Main Status of Perpetrator *	Number of Women who have faced Violence from these Perpetrators**								
	Physical Assault	Verbal Abuse	Sexual Harassment/ Assault	Rape	Sexual Exploitation	Forced Prostitution	Kidnap	Forced Incarceration	Medical Negligence
Landlord	105	109	91	38	7	2	1	1	
Police/forest official	9	25	12	4	1	2		7	
Businessperson	13	12	7	6		1		2	
Goonda /thug	7	8	9	5		1	1	2	
Hospital nurse/doctor		3				1			27
Effected panchayat member	6	9	6		2	1	1	1	
Local political party leader	6	5	5	1	1	1	1		
Teacher /school head	6	8	3		2		1		
Family member	1				2		16		
Pimp/trafficking agent	1	1	3	1			3		
Work contractor	1	2	2	2			1	1	
Moneylender	2	2	3						
District govt official	1	5	1						
Child (<16 years)		3	1						
Other dominant caste person	146	197	116	50	27	17	16	10	
Other Dalit person	39	56	24	18	9	6	5	4	
Other Adivasi (ST) person									

* when perpetrators hold positions of socio-economic and/or political power, their major social status has noted. Only where perpetrators do not hold such positions are they Identified here as 'other dominant caste, Dalit or Adivasi person'

** Some Women have faced from more than one category of perpetrator.

Table 3.3: Social Status of Perpetrators of Violence in the General Community (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 96)

Police and forest officials, as well as business people, also figure as key perpetrators of violence against Dalit women. Hence, the police are not active perpetrators; they also act in a significant number of cases in collusion with the perpetrators by failing to enforce the law when violence against Dalit women occurs. Goondas and thugs also play a role in supporting other perpetrator categories in their acts of terrorizing Dalit women with actual or threats of violence.

Two other groups of perpetrators whose numbers are significant are those in the professional category, namely local political party leaders and elected panchayat members. In all these cases, apart from goondas and thugs, these perpetrators hold positions of authority or positions entailing a duty of care and responsibility towards other people. Therefore, their presence as perpetrators indicates their gross misuse of the power and authority conferred on them by virtue of their professions (ibid: idem).

In addition, there is a large number of 'other dominant caste persons' as perpetrators, for whom only their caste and no other specific social, occupational, or political status has been identified by the women victim survivors. Their significance lies in the fact that they are often ordinary community members who, by virtue of their 'higher' caste status vis-à-vis Dalit women, engage in violence against them. Frequently, this violence is committed not only individually, but also as a group of people of the same status.

Moreover, the other cases of physical assaults, verbal abuse, and sexual harassment, are often done against an individual Dalit woman. Finally, a number of 'other Dalit persons' have been identified as either active perpetrators of violence against Dalit women, or colluders in the violence. While family members become perpetrators when it comes to dedication of their daughters as joginis (ibid: 98).

As far as violence in the family is concerned, the next table indicates that Dalit women's husbands, in laws, their relatives and husbands' relatives are perpetrators of violence, in descending order.

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Number of Women Who have faced Violence from these Perpetrators			
Main Status of Perpetrator	**Female Infanticide/Foeticide**	**Child Sexual Abuse**	**Domestic Violence**
Husband	1	20	135
Mother- in- Law	1		76
Father-in Law	1	1	50
Husband's other relatives		1	48
Woman herself and/or woman's family	2		
Woman's family or relatives		3	53

Table 3.4: Perpetrators of Violence in the Family (A. Irudayam, J. Mangubhai, and J. Lee, 2011: 101)

The limited evidence that is available indicates that within the Dalit community, Dalit husbands retaliate against their own oppressed position by perpetrating violence against their wives. Pressures also exerted from both natal and marital families led to female foeticide and infanticide. Child sexual abuse takes the predominant form of child marriages (below 16 years of age), incest (where fathers and brothers are perpetrators) and sexual abuse from male relatives through marriage (where brothers-in-law and fathers-in-law are perpetrators). Husbands are also the key perpetrators of domestic violence, followed by mothers-in-law, the women's family and relatives, their fathers-in-law and their husbands' other relatives (ibid: 101).

By the same token, one specific form of violence against Dalit women that fails to be recorded in official government statistics as a crime against women is the practice of the *Devadasi* or *Jogini* religious rituals (ibid: 101). In the name of these

practices, village girls are married to God by their helpless parents. Monstrously, these girls are then sexually exploited by the upper caste landlords and rich men and directed in to trafficking and prostitution.

In his autobiography, Kale (1994) has described a ritual called 'Chira'; which means, cut or break. He explains that in this ritual, when a girl from the lower caste community reaches the age of puberty, an elderly prestigious man from the higher caste breaks the hymen of the girl child by sexual act. Dramatically, this ritual is performed in a way to make the girl accept this fact as a routine practice (Baghel, 2009: 32-33).

It is estimated by non-governmental organizations that five thousand to fifteen thousand girls are secretly auctioned every year (Jayshree et al, 2000: 197). Actually, Pal and Bhargav (1999) indicate that *"the 28th Report of Sc/ST Commission reported that in February 1986 there about ten thousand joginis belonging to SC in Nizamabad district of Andra Pradesh. Eighty percent of these Joginis belonged to SC"*. To wrap it up, this data is just an example of one district of the country. Practices such as *Chira, Joginis, Devdasi* which are prevalent even today harmful and threaten the dignity of Dalit women and violate their human rights.

3.11. Poor Economic Conditions and Landlessness

In India, Dalit rural women face serious challenges in carrying out their multiple productive and reproductive roles within their families and communities, in part due to a lack of rural infrastructure and a lack of access to essential goods and services. They have the highest poverty levels, are landless and depend on the dominant caste for employment, wages and loans.

Their access to resources or even their efforts to access them are often met with violence. Due to the intersection of caste, class and gender, Dalit women are subjected to direct and structural violence. Specifically, the structural violence and

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lack of access to resources perpetuate their poverty and undermine their dignity (Baghel, 2009: 33-34).

Due to the intersection of caste, class and gender, Dalit women are subjected to direct and structural violence. Specifically, the structural violence and lack of access to resources perpetuate their poverty and undermine their dignity. Dalit rural women have very limited access to and control over land, which in turn leads to food insecurity. They also lack access to water and other communal resources. When those resources are in non-Dalit areas, the women are attacked for attempting to use them. When it comes to infrastructure and resources in Dalit communities, the government often overlooks those areas and does not allocate the necessary funds to ensure equality of access to resources. Further, Dalit women lack employment options and other livelihood opportunities, more than their male Dalit counterparts (Ibid: 34).

Access to and control over land may be an important factor in attaining food security and an increased income. However, Dalit women have limited access to land and no control over it. Due to cultural norms, they do not own land even when it is within their family. Moreover, Dalits generally do not own the land but work it for a dominant caste landlord.

The landlords' socio-economic and political power in rural, agricultural areas and status as employers of Dalit women allows for continual caste and gender violence, committed with impunity. Dalit women are met with physical, verbal and sexual violence from the landlords when they try to assert their economic right to wages or land and their right to sexual integrity.

When Dalit families do own land, they are often forced off the land by encroaching dominant caste families and usually have no recourse because the dominant caste members will exert their power and authority within the community. By forcing Dalits off their land, the dominant caste can perpetuate the cycle of poverty and violence by denying them necessary resources for income and food. Since Dalit women have the least amount of power and access to resources, this also

exposes them to increased forced and bonded labour (Sabharwal and Sonalkar, 2015).

Looking just at rural India where the majority of Dalit women are concentrated, 61.8 per cent are agricultural labourers while only 19.9 per cent are cultivators. By comparison, rural women workers in general are les concentrated in the primary sector, with fewer women agricultural labourers represented by 48.4 per cent and more women engaged in the cultivation of their land represented by 40.6 per cent[7] In addition, Dalit women also dominate certain spheres of menial work and traditional occupations; such as civil sanitation, scavenging and leatherwork. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes notes *"their services for the society, though absolutely essential, were considered menial, unclean and required hard labour but brought abysmally low returns"*[8]. Dramatically, over half a century from Indian independence, still Dalits are concentrated in their traditional occupations or in agricultural labour (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 17).

Certainly, one will recognize that there are common factors like gender and poverty that cause high deprivation for all women, including Dalit women. The latter, additionally suffer from social exclusion and discrimination because of their lower position in the caste hierarchy. This additional factor in the case of Dalit women makes them vulnerable to more poverty and deprivation than their counterparts from the general population, though they actively participate in the process of economic growth.

Very few studies have been conducted to analyse the nature and form of the caste-based discrimination that Dalit women face in the economic sphere. In this context, a pilot study was undertaken by Banerjee and Sabharwal (2013) on 216 women and their access to the urban labour market of a metropolitan region of

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[7] Cited in Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Supra note 3.

[8] Cited in National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, supra note 44, para. 3.3.1.

Delhi. They found out that Dalit women face barriers and difficulties while seeking employment due to their group identity in certain categories of jobs. The following table illustrates their statement:

Type of Work	Dalit Women	Upper Caste Women	Total (N= 216)
Cooking	37.40	62.6	100
Washing Utensils	41.0	59.0	100
Washing Clothes	57.3	42.7	100
Cleaning(dusting, sweeping and mopping)	62.5	37.5	100

Table 3.5: Discrimination in hiring for type of work from March to May 2013 (Banerjee and Sabharwal, 2013)

Dalit women had difficulties in getting employment for cooking because of the notion of the purity and pollution. Furthermore, among the occupations which was perceived to be clean like cooking was mostly being done by the upper-caste where 62.6 per cent performed by them compared to 37.4 per cent performed by Dalit women. As for sweeping, mopping, and dusting was done by the lower-caste women represented by 62.5 per cent as opposed to 37.5 per cent on the behalf of the upper caste women.

3.12. Literacy and Health Conditions

There is a general consensus that education is an important aspect of development and in the recent past, it has been taken as one of the major indicators of development. Education is an important social resource and a means of reducing social inequality. It helps an individual to raise his social status in various ways. The knowledge, skills, values and attitudes acquired through education helps to lead

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a better life. With this realization, the Indian Constitution through Articles 15 (4), 29 (i) and 350 provided educational development of the weaker sections of society (Kumar, 2013: 99). Furthermore, the general condition of education among SCs is pitiable in such a way that they have lagged behind in the field of education in all over the country. The following table however depicts the literacy rate of the SCs and that of the total population of Bihar as a sample.

Year	Scheduled Castes			All Population		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
1961	11.2	0.9	6.0	29.8	6.9	18.4
1971	11.9	1.0	6.5	30.6	8.7	19.9
1981	18.0	2.5	10.4	38.1	13.6	18.1
1991	24.0	5.4	15.1	42.0	18.1	30.6
2001	40.2	15.6	28.5	60.32	33.57	47.53

Table 3.6: Caste and Sex-Wise Literacy in Bihar (in%) (Rabindra Kumar, 2013: 100)

The low level of education is a problem and in turn gives rise to many other problems. In 2001, only 28.5 per cent of the SCs were literate, while it was at high level 60.32 per cent for the rest of the population. The table also indicates the gap in the rates between the SCs and the others between 1961 and 1991. The situation was far more pathetic in the case of SCs women. The level of literacy among SC females was extremely low at 5.4 per cent in 1991, while it was nearly three times higher among the others in Bihar (18.1%). The rate of growth of female literacy among SCs was also more than that of the total population.

It is relevant to state that health status is another pair of sleeves for Dalits. The health profile of a community can be gauged by indicators such as mortality,

immunization of children and expectant mothers and longer life expectancy. The following table shows the infant child mortalities by social characteristics.

Social groups	Neonatal Mortality	Post-Neonata Mortality	Infant Mortality	Child Mortality	Under-Five Mortality
SCs	52.8	33.5	86.3	52.0	133.8
STs	56.1	25.6	81.9	37.8	116.6
OBCs	71.0	24.3	75.3	34.1	106.8
Others	43.1	24.0	61.2	29.9	89.3

Table 3.7: Infant and Child Mortality by Social Categories, 1998-99

(Kumar, 2013: 111)

The infant mortality rate and child mortality rate among SCs is 86.3 and 133.8 per 1,000 births according to Kumar (2013). Respectively, this rate is much higher than among other communities. Sc, ST and OBC children depict considerably higher levels of infant mortality and child mortality rates. It is worth mentioning that Dalit women's daily diet is the leftover of family meals; which is inadequate in quantity and quality. Health services are either not available in case of illness or unaffordable even to other caste children. In addition, due to early marriage and too many pregnancies besides rape their health is always at risk.

As measures to control birth are being practiced, tubectomy operations are performed on these 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 kinds of diseases. Further, more than 80 per cent of women in reproductive age group between the ages of 15 to 45 are anaemic; where this dismal and vulnerable situation pushes her inevitably to death (Baghel, 2009: 34-35).

3.13. Lack of Political Voice

At the political level, Dalit women's voices are rarely heard (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 22). As previously mentioned in this chapter, women constitute half of total population quantitatively, but are unable to get equal share in active politics. Obviously, their social and economic status directly depends on their participation in politics where 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. Additionally, the 73rd amendment in the constitution of 1993 granted reservation to Dalits, tribals and women in local government. This amendment made it compulsory that one-third of the seats reserved for Dalits be filled by Dalit women (Baghel, 2009: 35).

In some states, the acceptance of reservation of the lower castes and Dalit women by the upper castes was nearly inexistent. As a result, atrocities against Panchayat members including women broke up. Political participation is generally recognized as a representative instrument toward achieving positive policy outcomes for each group. Indian data on the trends in participation at the national level of governance show that participation of women in general and Dalit women in particular remains dismally low in India. Data on Lok Sabha (lower house of the Parliament) reveals the dominance of SC men in politics. At the national level, Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee (2011) states that:

> *"The twelfth Lok Sabha had 12 scheduled caste woman members of parliament (MPs), or 27 per cent of women MPs and 15 per cent of scheduled ncaste MPs. By the fourteenth Lok Sabha, however, this number had fallen to just 10 scheduled caste woman MPs, or 22 per cent of women MPs and 13 per cent of scheduled caste MPs. When read in the light of the less than 10 per cent women's representation in the Indian parliament, there is currently little scope for women's effective participation in governance, let alone for Dalit women."*

Arguably, the analysis of the economic and social status of Dalit women from the official data revealed the relative position of these women vis-à-vis Dalit men and upper-caste women. The previous data indicates that Dalit women are at the bottom of the economic and social structures characterized by inequality on the basis of caste and gender.

Unfortunately, there are wide variations in human development indicators between Dalit women and the upper-caste women. Even more political participation of Dalit women at the higher levels of governance is lower as compared to their counter parts upper caste women. Therefore, disparities continue to persist between Dalit women and the rest of the women which hinder them to achieve positive policy outcomes (Sabharwal and Sonalkar, 2015).

As a matter of fact, the incapacity of women, particularly Dalit women, to uphold their rights is at the root of the problem. The reservation for Dalits, particularly for women, is accepted in the form but rarely in substance. Dalit women's sitting in chairs of parliament is seen as a threat to social hierarchy. Yet, the upper castes in the village vetoed chairs in the panchayat office. Other important hindering points facing Dalit women in fulfilling their duties are 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 have been explicitly suppressing Dalit women and violating their political rights (Baghel, 2009: 36).

To sum up, all these facts are proving that Dalit women have violated right from the family to the society at large scale. 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 endure violation of their civic and human rights. Thus, they become victims of universal violence.

3.14. Culture of Violence, Silence and Impunity

As indicated in the previous titles, the occurrence of violence against Dalit women is not a simple isolated event, nor can they be considered as the stray object of dominant caste individuals. What is at stake for such individuals and groups in violence of this nature are socio-economic and political interests, such interests are structured by caste, class, and gender. Dominant caste violence is, thus, built into the social system as an enduring reality for Dalit women.

Precisely, it is because dominant caste violence transcends incidental character that Dalit women have to continually live with the threat of violence (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 62). In addition, *"as an experiential dimension of their existence, violence has no fixed form of expression. It can happen anywhere, at any time, on any issue, for whatever reason, in whatever form, at whatever risk if the women react to the violence, with whatever consequence this has for them"* (Kleinman, 2000: 228).

Given the enduring character of violence, one can say that the caste system is permeated by a culture of violence against Dalit women. Being invasive, this culture is found wherever Dalit women live and deal with dominant castes, regardless of geographical regions and areas of life, be they economic, political, religious, social, or cultural. This culture makes *"Dalit women experience the violences of everyday life. Violence by dominant castes thus becomes 'naturalized' and 'routinized' as a given reality to be expected and accepted without question"* (A. Kleinman, 2000: 228).

Consequently, this stereotyped script of violence provides justification to the dominant caste perpetrators of violence to exercise control over Dalit women. It considers punishment for transgression of traditional caste codes and practices by Dalit women as obvious and as falling within the standards of caste-based justice (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 63).

3.14.1. Culture of Civil and State Impunity

The culture of violence and silence faced by Dalit women is related to that of impunity where the term *"impunity refers to the virtual impossibility of bringing the perpetrators of violations to account for their acts of violence"* (A. Kleinman, 2000: 228). In effect, it is the actualization of the perpetrator's claim to be above the rule of law. For instance, in the case of Dalit women being victims of violence perpetrators, their caste community and dominant caste village leaders often threaten these women to go anywhere to seek justice for violence inflicted on them. Although this violence may have been committed by a single dominant caste member, the perpetrator enjoys his community support in silencing the victims (Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee, 2011: 64).

Furthermore, as a dominating caste, the economic and political clout under power provides the perpetrators a foundation of security. They are not only aware that they can bend the law to suit their ends through their capacity to buy agents to make their bidding. But also, they are aware that these poor women and their families and community do not have a chance to obtain justice.

In such instances, citizenship rights are unavailable, or not easily accessible to women. As a result, they face a form of double violence provided from the perpetrator as well as from the dominant caste community determined by their low caste position in society. Consequently, these women are pushed to the point of forfeiting their right to any civil adjudication (Ibid: 65).

State impunity is closely linked to civil impunity. When they take the case of a Dalit woman approaching the police station to file acomplaint, law enforcement officers most often conspire actively with the dominant caste-maker and their supporters. Such collusion or negligence is caste-based, the police often belonging to either the same caste as the perpetrator or similar caste of dominance. In cases of state impunity, Dalit women face not only double, but triple violence from the aggressor, dominant caste leaders, and law enforcement officers.

Holding the same view, dominant castes act on the presumption that they have the right to inflict humiliating violence on Dalit women based on their attributed dominant status in the caste system, *"as is often the case, it is the caste law that has an overriding influence on secular law. In this sense, one can say that a 'culture of impunity' is deeply embedded in the caste system."* (Ibid: 65).

Embarking on the dominant caste women case, it is worth mentioning that despite their vulnerability to violence, their situation is different from that of Dalit women. Compared to the latter, they are better placed in the caste system and consequently enjoy caste privileges accumulated from their position within the dominant caste groups. Fortunately for them, the established norms of caste purity and honour, caste based summons and the customary laws provide some measures of protection against male excesses. Yet, there is a complete absence of adequate protection against caste based impunity, which is becoming the utmost norm leaving the way open for dominant castes to unleash violence against Dalit women (Ibid, 66-67).

3.15. Controversial Debates

Everlasting controversial debates on the part played by the law were and are still central within feminist Dalit discourse and activism. Yet, *" feminist demands to legislate against specific forms of what are considered gender-based violence, including trafficking into prostitution and sexual harassment in the workplace are legitimised in part by appeals to conventions such as the Convention Against Discrimination of Women... And the Convention on Combatting the Crimes of Trafficking in Women and Children"* (Gangoli 2000 in Gangoli 2005, 6).

Undoubtedly, Indian feminism was influenced by Western feminism and particularly initiated by English colonists who denounced the evil practice of sati (burning of alive wife with the dead husband). Dalitism then was considered as a movement influenced by Indian feminism in general, but understood by its

opponents as the construct of Westernisation outside the cultural Indian Hindu values, in order to silence feminists as just borrowing outside context:

> *"however, in such cases appeals can be made on the basis of the need to modernise according to western standards of gender equality, and in others feminists have suggested that some forms of violence against women are less specifically" indian" than reflecting a wider global trend of patriarchal oppression of women." (Ruth 2001, Talwar Oldenburg 2002 in Gangoli 2005: 6).*

Furthermore, other feminists campaigns impact on and support social environmental and anti-globalization movements, while at the same time raising women 's issues related to castes struggles and lesbian/gay rights within those movements.

> *"a possible rationale for this critique can be seen as the threat posed by feminists to the personal sphère of the home, manifested in feminists critiques of" traditional" sexual and based personal relations based on female subordination " (Gangoli 2005: 7).*

Thus, a degree or feeling of skepticism arose with law and legal amendments, as it was clearly mentioned." as historians of colonial India have demonstrated, Indian nationalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century characterized the home and therefore domestic arrangements as an area where colonialism could not and indeed should not impact, hence nationalist struggles were fought at the public arena, and to protect the home from the "colonial encounter" (Mani 1998 in Gangoli 2005: 7-8).

Certainly, criticisms are obvious for many feminists as to trust the implementation of law which seems to have little impact on women violence. "these include both" academic "feminists like Menon (2004), but to some extent activists and feminists lawyers who both work with the law as a way of providing relief to

women, while accepting its limitations (Gandhi and Shah 1989, Agnès 1992, Agnès 1995), as they feel that there may not be viable alternatives other than the formal structure of law (Gangoli, 2005: 9).

Though caste based discrimination is made unlawful under the Indian Constitution, *"however, there is evidence that Dalits and tribals continue to suffer structural inequalities and sustained poverty"* (Fuller 1997), and experience organized periodic violence from "upper castes" in some parts, of the country (ibid: 10). In fact, there is no guarantee of equal protection to these historically and religiously marginalized Dalits.

> *".... Article 14 that guarantees right to equal protection under the law, Article 15 that forbids discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, Article 25 which guarantees freedom of religion and Article 29 that guarantees to minorities the right to conserve their culture." (ibid:idem).*

Though debates on law have politicized the issue of women violence in general, much criticism was shared from some Dalit people who did not appreciate the importance of their activism within some Indian organizations. "Dalit women are projected as having only experience. Not intelligence", (Manorama 2006). Therefore, alluding to the ways in which the interests of Dalit women have been marginalized within Indian women's movements (Gangoli 2005:10).

Consequently, women organizations including Dalits were set up, as the All India Dalit Women's Forum in 1994, the National Fédération of Dalit Women and Dalit Solidarity. Besides, Dalit women's organizations work towards women's interests, challenging the structural inequalities including caste based violence and oppression, and extreme poverty.

> *"Various regional Dalit women's groups link case relations to gender exploitation, and have focused on sexual violence, therefore*

suggesting that rape, the stripping and parading of women, and other gendered forms of humiliation lead to the perpetuation of upper caste dominance, as does the "hyper-exploitation of Dalit women's labour." (Rao 2003 in Gangoli 2005: 11)

But, much criticism was defended by Hindu fundamentalists who protect their religious legitimacy over women as dutiful mothers and wives. Historically speaking,

"The rise of Hindu fundamentalism in post colonial India has been analysed as having its origins in the 'divide and rule' policy successfully implemented under colonial tule, contributing to partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, that accompanied independence from colonial rule." (Sarkar 1985, Butalia 2000, Kakar 1995)

Before independence, Hindu fundamentalism was prevailing embodied by the Rashtriya Seva Sangh... founded in 1925, and the RSS continues to see itself as *"the antidote to... the dangerous tendencies of modern - day tendencies"* (Narula, 2003: 44 in Gangoli 2005: 11). Even in today post independent India, feminists fear the serious thoughts and practices of fundamentalism as it witnessed the *"electoral success of Hindu fundamentalist political parties, both nationally represented by the Bhartiya Janata Party... and regionally, represented by the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra."* (Gangoli 2005: 11).

To illustrate better, because of mainly common action, during communal riots as those of 2002 in Gujarat or even before in Mumbai in 1992-1993, was for Hindu fundamentalists to target Muslim women's body sexually. That shows that Indian feminists had to work hard with different secular groups as the International Initiative for Justice in Gujarat 2003. Consequently, they required the construction of a "gender just civil code"(Ibid: 12) with fair civil and police administration to protect them. Increased responsibility was required within the organizations as they rather felt isolated or unheard and kept women ignored.

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3.16. Blurred Faith on Betterment

As to the inevitable impact of globalization on the economy in India, critics gave a twin answer. Those belonging to the middle classes benefited from the liberation of the economy, with *"reduction of government controls, increased autonomy for private investment, reduced state investment in the public sector, foreign capital giving greater access to the Indian market"* (Sen, 1996, Ibid: 13). As to the others, particularly the left wing parties in India, they consider this new reform as a decline in agricultural benefits and rural workers 'rights. Another outstanding impact is the mainly women environmental movements to fight against the construction of dams, as the Narmada Bachao Andolan, which deprived Dalits from their houses and living areas. But, mainly connected to globalization, working class women and those from lower castes suffered from much exploitation and hardships.

Being positive or rejected, Dalit Indian feminists have tackled these challenges, notably displacement and impoverishment, the role of law, the impact of Western or global feminism, exploitation of women, to redress women's lives outside the Hindu symbols of Kali and sati, respectively strength and wife burning, to condemn women to the Hindu values and and legitimate oppressive patriarchal pressures. As it was expressed:

> *"Indian feminists are not unaware of these issues and problems. At a general level, it is safe to postulate that most feminists have little or no faith in legal solutions to violence, but at the level of activism, see few viable alternatives other than the formal structure of law. For many feminists , therefore law remains a significant arena for feminist intervention, and the dreams of a feminist jurisprudence are not completely lost" (Gangol, 2005: 116).*

Even more women have acquired more government rights, but, they are still very often counteracted by family and patriarchal values. Discomfort, despair is very often revealed as it is mentioned in the following by Justice Phendse:

> *"in view of the increasing number of murders, suicides,, and sexual abuse of women both in public and in domestic spheres, and the increasing commodification of women's bodies in the media, we need to protest very seriously against each instance of judicial bias against women.... It appears that all the efforts of sensitizing the judiciary and the state machinery regarding women's issues seem to have been in vain"(Gangoli, 2005: 117).*

If the new 2005 law on domestic violence, was an impact of the draft bill by feminist organizations in 2004, which

> *"protects the rights of women who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within domestic relationships, to prevent the victims from further domestic violence, to give effect to the provisions of the CEDAW and to provide for protection orders, residence orders, monetary relief and other matters referred to and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto"(Government of India 2005 in ibid: 117).*

The reconceptualization or redefinition is of women's violence from dowry to mental or physical deeds shows in reality that the implementation of the law is far from bringing great changes, because of the categorization of woman status(married, divorced or single), and small changes in judicial attitudes because of hegemonic discourses. Feminist activism with gender and related issues of rights raises issues of identification and recognition beside protection in favor of women's interests, and looked with suspicion the government in perpetuating an unclear language against women's oppression.

> *"The language of rights in fact affirms the power of the state to negotiate, intervene and co-opt the victim. Ironically, when today it is the state that has become the greatest violator of the rights of its people. And, these rights can be reduced to a set of legal provisions that are based on the language of victim hood, not of survival, resistance and strength of communities who are being violated"*
> *(Asian Women's Human Rights Commission and Vimochana 1998,8 in Gangoli, 2005: 120).*

The dichotomy in reshaping women's human rights accentuates the complexity of contestation of issues within any feminist movement. Feminisms are at the crossroads of appealing to the state legislation or reinterpreting Hindu tradition in feminist ways, notably to find out ways within religion to deconstruct patriarchal assumptions.

Though caste and community issues seem to stay fixed in people's minds, Dalit feminists work hard within their community to undermine misogyny and mainstream male oppression. Debates on feminist's politics overtly express the lack of citizenship rights and truth for women in general and Dalit in particular.

> *"precisely when women and non western people have begun to speak for themselves, and indeed to speak of global systems of power differentials."* *(Lee's et al., 1986:14-15 in Gangoli, 2005: 124)*

Clearly, both Indian and Dalit feminists articulate claims to the detriment of upper caste individuals who mythised a past which denies rights of women and particularly Dalits. They redefine female sexuality and thus creating a challenge to patriarchal understanding of sexual difference. They also advocate for change in the perception of women's bodies through discriminatory representations of women in the media.

The notion of shame is given for the one who commits violence or rape while the notion of pride and honour must be granted for women who transgress

social norms to protect themselves for a decent life. Even if the common saying of women are women's worst enemies, it is high time women stop encouraging man and woman violence in its varied forms which feeds patriarchal control, and to integrate worthy consideration of the woman question, in general and Dalit issue in particular.

3.17. Questioning Authentic Dalits

My research was carried out on Indian women's movement in general but specifically on Dalits ' issues and perspectives'. Being an EFL teacher interested in cultural issues and women's studies, and as a fellow feminist, i decided and tried to investigate the Dalit woman question. Being not a native of India, but of Algeria, I feared nevertheless to make some intercultural misunderstanding, and that feeling gave me another sense of responsibility being a researcher and a woman. Thus, my research is made from an outsider's perspective.

The degree of objectivity or subjectivity can be considered to some extent inconsistent. Yet, I have read and studied documents available on the Internet, bought from French booksellers or Paris university libraries. Documentary resources were practically non-existent in Algeria. I conducted also one semi structured interview with a famous university professor of literature and linguistics in Andhra University, India who is a Dalit and codified 19 dialects. The relevance of such a chosen interview is that the questions were arranged in advance and related to views on feminism, experience as a Dalit woman of higher educational and standards, in addition to her relationship with colleagues and students.

The interview's questions are found in the Appendix. The answers reveal that even higher education and university rank give a higher salary and thus better economic conditions of life. Yet, a Dalit remains a Dalit, i.e. an individual belonging to a lower caste and therefore given socio-religious belonging does not change.

3.18. Conclusion

Dalit women of India have been living in the culture of silence throughout the centuries. They have remained mute spectators to their exploitation, oppression and barbarity against them. They do not have any control over their own bodies, earnings and lives. The extreme expression of violence, exploitation and oppression against them is visible in forms of hunger, malnutrition, disease, physical and mental torture; besides, rape, illiteracy, ill-health, unemployment, insecurity and inhuman treatment. The collective forces of feudalism, casteism, and patriarchy have made their lives just a hell. An overwhelming majority of Dalit women live under the most precarious conditions. The following chapter describes and analyses Dalits' women pressures in social activism or literary impression toward social and political change.

Chapter Four

Un/Heard Dalit Voices

4.1. Introduction

As explained in the theoretical chapter on feminism, gender oppression is one fundamental issue to counteract. Dalits are conscious and living entities whose grievances were formulated in various forms from vocal, to written or agitational, to outline the outstanding problems confronted in a daily basis within their community and society at large, keeping uncomfortable issues mooted by Dalit cultural feminism or Dalitism. Dalit literature is thus a movement of self-identity, movement of self-respect, a movement through which Dalits expressed their world-view with a critical mind.

4.2. Understanding Dalit Activism

Dalit feminism analysis includes making distinctions of the objectives of feminists and their organizational strategies linked to social and reform movements.

4.2.1. Indian Feminism

To understand better Indian feminism we need to deal with the theoretical framework. Though any experience is specific, controversial debates emerge in feminist thought and action. Marginalization is a fundamental issue in the complex vision of Indian culture. The evocation of femininity is made beyond culture but contemporary feminism refers to women's rights and issues. Though it remains hard to define political ideologies, Indian feminism remains difficult to shape as those women were accustomed to support the burden of inhibitions perpetuated for ages as well as types of social power relationships.

Indian feminism as in any feminist studies stipulates that gender and sex are cultural constructs, different from each other biologically and socially speaking. *"Gender refers to the socially attributes of being male or female, of femininity or masculinity, i.e. it is a social construct which defines self and others"* (Bedjaoui,

2005:8).   It is inevitable that gender is a key notion which includes a set of theoretical problems linked to the understanding of culture. Women and men share some features but femininity and masculinity are produced differently. *"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"* (De Beauvoir, 1988: 267).

To avoid any distorted Indian feminism, historical and cultural contexts must be taken into consideration. As it was explained in the chapter concerned with Indian culture, women are deeply involved in their traditional roles as life givers and kinship keepers to keep their traditional way of life safe. On the one hand rejection of patriarchy does not involve rejection of motherhood. Motherhood is highly considered since Vedic times.

> *"Crucial to the choice of becoming a mother are: first, the timing of motherhood, which is attached to social and cultural narratives concerning 'good' mothering and a 'reasonable' female life course; second, the ambivalences encountered in choosing to become a mother; and, third, the link between the heterosexual relationship and its quality and the choice of becoming a mother." (Eija Sevón, 2017)*

On the other Indian marriage demands self-effacement as it is a sacred contract to maintain religious and socio-religious casteist values. Yet, the cruellest punishments can be given to Indian women guilty of offenses by their husbands. As mentioned by Wittig (1681): *"What makes a woman is a specific social relation to a man, a relation that we have previously called servitude, a relation which implies personal and physical obligation as well as economic obligation...."*

Outstanding feminist issues are associated with violence questions. Feminist campaigns, the police, women organizations contributed to a drastic shift in public and casteist behaviours.

> *"with increasing focus on the place of women in development by multilateral agencies, donor countries and non-governmental*

organisations, various strategies of intervention are employed. One
such intervention results in poor illiterate women in Orissa, redefining
their position in contrast to the dominant discourses and gender
ideology of state, religion and economy, to overcome culturally
enshrined powerlessness." (Everingham, 2002)

So, Indian feminism is much concerned with everyday relationships between men and women, in the private space (home) and public space (society).

"Patriarchy remains an analytical category by feminists in theorizing
women's subordination: the patriarchal control of major social and
political institutions acts as a special form of discrimination against
women, particularly the expression of female sexual subjectivity and
resistance to male domination "(Bedjaoui, 2005: 146).

Indian feminism focused on change in the field of social and political justice to protect them from inhuman persecutions due to their social or family status as bride or widow burning, divorced or unwed girl. Though Indian feminists are sometimes described as immoral and home breakers by traditionalists and misogynists, not surprisingly they redefine issues of women's lives from religious traditions to much commitment to women's rights and feminist activism.

4.2.2. Dalitism and Feminism

Any understanding of Dalistism cannot be reached without considering the location of Dalit women at the very bottom of the social ladder being twice oppressed: as a woman vs. man (gender), as a Dalit woman vs. upper caste woman (socio-religious division). Being at the bottom of the social pyramid and discriminated on grounds of gender mean that Dalits' women struggles are feminist issues.

Culture is an essential reference to establish effective bridges of understanding of the location of Dalit women. Gender is then the cultural marker to reproduce culture and consequently gender ideology.

On the one hand, the western feminists argue that non western women are passive victims of oppressive family and social practices. Dalit women thus suffer from gender oppression and various inequalities regarding struggles over violence, sexuality and economic support. Their construction of Indian/Dalit women's resistance challenges the western perception of passivity.

"Sakti" refers to *"the feminine creative principle and energizing strength which helps women to convert their passivity or weakness into resistance or strength"* (Smears, 2019). More, they believe they have no choice.

> *"There's a sense of fatalism about it; as a woman, this is her fate, her dharma, her duty to bear all, unflinchingly. But the strength of an Indian woman is not to be underestimated. Her capacity to bear and suffer has not drained her; she remains strong beyond belief, the depth of which is revealed in her resilience, her power to overcome. Given the smallest opportunity to emancipate herself from the legacy she's inherited, she will grasp it and mold it to her needs."(Reddy 2010)*

Though a Dalit woman is committed to her culture having an idealized in her role of mother and wife, she is enough strong to promote any change. On the other hand, the ambiguity resides in the fact that her passivity is translated into strength to play both roles: as a pillar of the family and as a catalyst. Dalit femininity includes subordination and gender oppression in the household first, and in society at large. They become societal martyrs under specific forms of power as patriarchy, religion and underemployment in casteist India.

Dalit women's sphere is both at home and in society. At home she reinforces patriarchal practices. Outside home, she assumes material economic security though most of them face material insecurity and deprivation. Thus, they are caught between painful needs and social construct. Out of ignorance or urgent requirements, their behaviour becomes contested. Their dilemma remains between patriarchal ideologies and their oppressive trends and their desire to shape ways of eradicating these attitudes. They strive for much balance within individualistic existence in their community of men and women.

Dalit women are located at the crossroads of tradition and freedom, suffering and hope. They become outsiders to find more freedom though much helpless and confused in their attempt at education and economic independence or survival. Their attempts at being educated involve much disdain and harm but they heartedly desire to get rid of humiliation provoked by men. One fundamental struggle is the one between the mother, the wife and the self as it is affected by social and casteist discrimination based on gender.

> *"These women are oppressed and suffered under social machines. But even then they are not away from their daily activities such as preparing and eating food, celebrating family and social events, performing social rites, bathing and swimming". (Sarangi, 2018)*

Home is both a refuge and a space of sexism where much damaging practices occur. To feel a home safe and to reject the prescribed cultural behaviour become crucial. Feminist empowerment can only be achieved through the breaking up of patriarchal structures. Subjectivity differs so much as a discourse cannot be homogeneous but they intend to interrogate and dismantle patriarchal and casteist norms of Dalit woman existence.

4.3. Theorizing Dalit Feminism

One main contribution made by Dalit feminism is to increase awareness of the role of education as explained by Ambedkar, and to bring to light the weight of harmful cultural traditions which were blindly accepted and reproduced at their own expense. Raising awareness means identifying casteist and male differences and their consequent oppression problems. Thus, the hierarchical relations are kept to binary oppositions where women strive hard to challenge and affirm their new / authentic identity.

> *"In the Indian context for instance, the self-identification of scheduled caste or untouchable groups as 'dalits' was constructed to struggle against Brahminical hegemony and mobilise all those who suffered similar types of oppression. Often these struggles convert into organised social movements to achieve their demands. They build new symbols, idioms and values to create an alternative space. For instance, open confrontation between the Dalit Panthers (Dalit organisation formed in Maharashtra in the 1970s) and upper caste Hindus took place several times in the 1970s.(CSCS, 2015)*

The various perceptions of Dalit feminism and the different reactions reveal the fact that it is rather difficult to define and theorize Dalitism as a specific issue. Feminine insights vary in ways of thinking and being or behaving. If caste and patriarchy impact on gender, they contribute to and perpetuate woman's oppression, exploitation and injustice.

The main issues as health care, child care, violence against women and children, sexual abuse are among others, addressed in Dalit movements. Feminist theory supports the belief that women are full humans able to tackle different tasks, intellectual, economic and social foe example. Like an ideology it reshapes the relationship between women and men, challenge male hegemony and sexism. Dalitism joins western feminism inserting the struggle against wrong assertion of

male power, and the plurality of women's needs around the world. Different forms of Dalit feminist resistance emerge which are tightly related to feminist issues of caste and gender. But,

> *"Feminism is attainable and will be successful only when the Dalit women on the lowest rung achieve freedom from all social restrictions and commodification. They built their feminism on this ideological premise." (Rajesh, 2017).*

Dalitism therefore reveals a participation in the public sphere (education involvement, literature recognition …) to better the status of women beside protecting their rights. Such rights include the control of their own body, biological and reproductive function neglected by by patriarchal mentality to develop their own potential.

Thus, Dalitism becomes a feminist doctrine which proclaims inevitably great change. It stands against the role of motherhood to keep women passive and submissive; and against the view that women have to be held down or back. Dalits are against caste and patriarchy which have defined the rules to maintain the status quo. The struggle for better social and life conditions, at the individual or community levels, implies a feminist commitment which threatens traditional views of thought and behaviour. A new Dalit woman culture is shaped with its own standards of behaviour, values and interests.

> *"Activism by and on behalf of Dalit women has countered … neglect and systematically challenged identity- based and other leftist social movements in India. They have done this by calling attention to sexism in the historically male- dominated Dalit movement and caste inequality in the mainstream Indian women's movement, and by asserting the difference — the unique subject position— of Dalit women from both other Indian women and Dalit men."(Mehta, 2019)*

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This challenge over patriarchal and casteist norms is an essential site of struggle and a trope cherished by Dalit women writers. Dalit women narratives express voices unheard previously but more audible than before as their lives are intertwined with fiction. Such feminist commitment to literature will be developed in the next sections.

4.4.   From Social Activism to Literary Impulse

Before Ambedkar, some people participated in bringing out a "prise de conscience" among Dalits as Gopalbaba Valangkar and Kisan Phagoji on their writings. Furthermore, the development of Dalit literature has witnessed three fundamental stages. The first step when:

> *"Hindu religious literature was monopolized entirely by upper caste Hindus who not only pushed the untouchables on the boundaries of the villages; they also made them invisible in their literature which was largely religious" (Karan Singh, 2011:19).*

Upper caste writers avoided to make them visible and heard. As to the second step, it was due to the impact to socio-political changes, notably with the English colonizers and consequent modern education as well as the Nationalist movement. *"There grew in literature a new consciousness about the plight of dalits and were started to be portrayed with sympathy"* (ibid: 20). The third step witnesses a distinct way of writing. *"The scope, language and purpose of dalit literature in its third stage made it a genre apart from upper caste writings"* (ibid: 20). Besides, the rise of Dalit literature is connected to the rise of the Dalit Panthers Movement and some magazines as "The Little Magazine". Dalit literary themes are thus deeply entrenched in Dalits socio-economic conditions and reflect their life reality.

> *"these narratives seek to capture the authentic Dalit experience*
> *through a minute chronicling of the smallest detail of life in a*
> *language that, as Limbale terms it, is crude, impure and uncivil. It is*
> *as if, by capturing each detail, and reproducing it deliberately in a*
> *language that is the opposite of the language of upper caste literature,*
> *the Dalit writer will convey the essence of Dalitness"(ibid:20).*

The preoccupations of feminists are not new. In various cultures women are perceived as the weaker sex having muffled voices "which cannot be represented, that which is not spoken, that which remains outside naming and ideologies" (ibid: 21).

4.5.   Locating Dalit Women Literature

Dalitism and social movements are tightly interrelated with the focus on questioning the dominant socio religious and cultural patterns which keep them victims of atrocities and injustice. These questions constitute the fundamental themes and specificities with which Dalit writers construct their literary aesthetics in the representation of Dalit women.

4.5.1.   Transcending Literary Voices from Below

Being the weakest and lowliest of all members in the traditional Indian caste system, it seems that the Dalits did not have a sound tradition in arts in general. Yet, some records as those of Mulk Raj Anand (1985) focus on the fact that they indeed did have their own cultural background including revolution which focuses on the cruellest practices of the Hindus Brahamans, while the representation of Dalit identities and contemporary Dalit literary consciousness became a fundamental trope in Dalit narratives. As such, Dalit literature becomes a literature of social protest and revolutionary change.

First, Dalit literature cannot be explained to some extent without referring to the postcolonial literary texts. These literary texts involve the representation of a specific culture without considering the genre, and the writer's cast/class. Furthermore, they reflect the impact of western influences but with a great concern on re-establishing the culture of the previously colonized natives. Such a literary perspective is highly considered by M. H. Abram and Geoffrey Galt Harpham:

"The major element of postcolonial agenda is to disestablish Eurocentric norms of literary and artistic values and to expand the literary canon to include colonial and post colonial writers." (2012:307).

Noteworthy to mention that the early post-colonial texts deal with the themes of duality, of ruler /ruled and hybridity, notably cultural and linguistic. As mentioned by Krishnaswamy, Varghese and Mishra:

"Foregrounding differences and diversity, celebrating hybridity, plurality and otherness as potential sources of vitality and change and rejecting notions like standardization, conformity, universalization that are seen as sources of power, hegemony and colonialism-these notions are gaining ground"(2001:93).

Similarly, Dalit literature has emerged from cultural conflict and thus its main challenge is "to bring total revolution in society…and affirms humanitarian freedom" (Imtiaz, 2015:133). In this vein, Dalit denial of Hindu mentality with its focus on Dalit slavery constitutes *"the main thrust of Dalit literature"* (ibid: 132). Therefore, as the Dalit writer Khandekar asserts:

> *"Man is the centrifugal force in the philosophy of Dalit literature. Man is supreme. He is above all Gods, sacred books and science. It is man who can make and unmake anything. Dalit literature believes that nothing is permanent. Everything is subjected to decay. with every decay there is resurgence, new creation… it proclaims that nothing is true which is not applicable for man's sublime freedom, nothing is good if it is not useful for man's welfare, nothing is beautiful which is not useful for beautification of mankind" (ibid:133).*

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This belief corresponds to the fundamental responsibility of the Dalit writer in general and the purpose of literature to bring about social changes. As such, Dalit literature constructs a counter culture and a distinct identity for Dalits where the identity quest becomes the essential cultural marker as it is expressed in the following quote: *"Dalit writers are not against any group but against the establishment, the government and the social system which in their views, keep them depressed and deprived"* (ibid: 137).

So, where is located the literature of the Dalits, in other terms the subaltern literature in a country which is defined by its wide continent and great diversity of cultures and hybrid identities? Indeed, *"Dalit literature emerges to voice for all those oppressed, exploited and marginalized communities who endured this social inequality and exploitation for so long"*. (Bala, 2014)

On the one hand, *"the subaltern has become a standard way to designate the colonial subject that has been constructed by European discourse…"* (Abraham and Harpham, 2012: 307) and the writer thus describes the forms of oppression and the attempts at reconstructing the national or cultural identity. On the other hand, any literary text of the subaltern deals with the difference between oppressed and oppressor, and thus becomes a literature of resistance and protest toward freedom and human dignity. In this sense, it remains a discourse from a subalternist's perspective: "Dalit, as the symbol of class according to Spivak are the subaltern component of the humanity, whose views and thoughts have to be respected" (Kumar, 2005).

4.5.2. Dalit Artistic Forms

Dalit artistic forms are not new as it is shown through its poetry, music, dance, painting or drama and sculpture to name a few. Thus, indigenous literary forms of Dalits are rich and varied: the oldest identified one is: "Pallu literature" in Tamil which is closely connected to the land and agriculture. Inevitably these Dalits called Pallars were accustomed to sing to soften themselves from the extreme

fatigue and burden while farming the lands of the rich owners. These songs contained different issues as suffering, love, dark understanding of their own plea and God and idols worship.

Any song is then a reflection of their feelings translated in the form of art, a mixture of music and "poetry" which reveals the reality of their human emotions and state of mind because of the harsh reality Dalits were enduring. The terms are easy to understand as they describe their way of life and their cultural values. Obviously, Dalit literature is a literature of suffering which started centuries ago and that is not new. The past and the present or spatial and space dimensions are tightly interconnected to express their despair and agony. Indeed *"we can see from reading Dalit literature that spans several decades, that the suffering of the untouchables is a never ending chain"* (Lalmingthani, 2013:11).

In fact, increasing numbers of poets and writers from different parts of India ranging from Maharastra, Andhra Pradesh to Karnataka since the 1970s published their poems, novels or autobiographies and analysing the themes of untouchability, caste exploitation and poverty beside extreme forms of oppression and physical harms. Yet, the powerful tool of literacy is used to deny and counteract Hindu hegemony for humanistic change. In addition to literature, Dalit modern forms of art consists in music, dancing, painting, cinema and handicraft …which contribute *"to reduce the existing power inequalities and discrimination …Culture and art forms have become a powerful and liberating communication tool for Dalits in India"* (Jacob, 2015).

4.6.   Non Dalit Literature on Dalit Recognition

Non Dalit writers, beside Dalit writers participated greatly to the recognition of the appalling existence and extreme suffering of Dalits. They denounce the hypocrisy and cruelty of the upper castes and the plight provoked by blind casteist socio-religious traditions. The novel of Saraswati Vijayam by Potheri Kunhambu written in Malayalam, and translated by Dilip Menon into English (1893) is a

famous illustration of this denunciation, representing the subalterns in a secondary position under the power and strength of Hindu patriarchy and its open disdain as well as unfair ostracization from the Hindu culture.

But, the fundamental element of hope is provided through Buddhism, as this religion should represent brotherhood and thus equality, justice and freedom eradicating the caste divisions and supremacy of the Brahmans. The novel embodies an element of modernity against old age customs. Such emancipation via conversion to Buddhism is glorified as a path to push doors onward and release from Hindu harsh constraints. In fact, Untouchables even when being converted to Christianism or Buddhism and Islam were always seen as Dalits, an ineffable human flaw. Another non Dalit and non-conformist writer, named Mulk Raj Anand depicted the miserable life of a small sweeper boy in his *Untouchable* (1935). Full of incidents and evils toward Dalits, the story goes deeper in its social, psychological, historical or moral investigation. As Arnand said:

> *"the Vanity of youth wanting recognition the departure from the abstract psychological theories towards the search of philosophic insights based on the lives of human beings, whom one knows in flesh and blood, the urge to express oneself at all cost in an absolute manner, so as to expose the ugliness of death in life by deliberately dramatizing even through distortion the non human realities which impinged on one from all sides." (Arnand, 1977:6)*

The young boy is probably full of hopes and cannot understand his unjust condition of life which gives much impetus to his idealism. *"The young protagonist is torn between his existential dilemma of his Dalit condition and his thirst to human fair recognition and in this sense the novel is a kaleidoscopic projection of the protagonist's miseries"* (Premila, 1983:20).

Such pathetic life conditions were also dealt with E.M.Forster when he affirms that:

"The sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound to his master and forever born into a state, from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social inter course and the consolation of his religion. Unclean himself, he pollutes others when he touches them" (E.M.Forster, 1985: ix).

But the ultimate hope is expressed in the following quote which celebrates Christianism as the only valid reason for survival and faith. *"Yessuh Missih must be good"* (Anand, 1985: 20). Yet, another related question arose: non Dalit writers, as Anand, Premchand or Khandekar were accused of not being able to write on Dalit experiences and suffering. Such a critique would mean that only Dalit writers can express their authentic feelings and sensitivity, *"their letters of their own blood"* (Imitiaz, 2015:133). But, even more:

"Usually anger, pity, and melancholy are the dominant feelings in the literature on Dalits written by non Dalits. Many a time even the value system of the Dalit world is interpreted wrongly. In creative writings such babysitting for other groups and classes is very awkward" (ibid: 134).

With Dalit literature, the novels embrace themes of the pain, suffering, existential and moral struggles of Dalit characters in a caste –ridden Hindu society which has imposed life plights and atrocities to them. It seems that writers focus on individual sufferings and humiliations but do not refer to the whole community as a whole and as such the protagonist represents an individual experience which is translated as the symbol of lower caste Dalits' degraded lives. In fact, there is no real depiction of Dalit culture, but of their subordination and powerlessness.

Nevertheless postmodern Dalit writers started to represent the Dalit culture associated with the themes of ill treatment, empowerment, and protest for liberation. Though their sufferings dated for centuries, the theme of protest or revolt against

the evilest deeds of the higher castes was initiated with the call for education and awareness of their human rights by their leader/s. Mukherjee (2010:1) stated that:

> *"Dalit literature is marked by revolt and negativeness, since it is closely associated with the hopes for freedom by a group of people who as untouchables, are victims of social, economic and cultural inequality."*

4.7.   Regional Dalit Literature

Dalit literature is expressed in the different regional languages first and most of the literary texts are translated into English, French and Spanish mostly. It contains different forms and genres as novels or poetry, but mainly short stories and autobiographies. As such, it remains literary but also political and ideological. *Karukku's* Bama pointed that: *"reading and writing are political practices for Dalits"* (Bama, 2000: 193).

Though Dalit literary expression is not new, evidence shows that Indian English literature or in translation was almost rare. Though the writings of Gandhi or Nehru were published and highly considered, those of Ambedkar and his followers were rather ignored or disregarded. The pioneering figures of India, Mohandas K. Gandhi and Ambedkar had a controversial relationship:

> *"The rivalry between Gandhi and Ambedkar lives on through polemics in street-corner debates, newspaper columns, blogs, books, documentary films, and so on, often with aggressive insults…" (Singh, 2014: 413).*

Mainstream Hindu Culture vs. subaltern Dalit culture was the controversial issue to perpetuate the everlasting extent of marginalization.

But, some regional writings in Tamil for example as those of Karukku Rettai Malai Seenivasan; namely: *Jeeviya Charitra Churukkam* (1992) were only available in the form of quotes under the rubrics of secondary sources and published as a whole work only in 1999 (and translated into English in 2000 by Lakshmi Holmstrom). This coincides with the publication of Ambedkar's notes concerning some of his life events. Yet, these pioneer themes relate Dalit assertion of the self and the triple identity or belonging as a Tamil, Dalit and Christian/Buddhist. The fundamental issue is the one worded by the Dalit leader Ambedkar's motto which is to take education and thus the writer fought for educational opportunities for Dalits and particularly struggled to find scholarships to those converted Dalits.

Seenivasan's work represents therefore a fundamental political educational and literary force in Dalit literature. Nevertheless:

> *"Seenivasan's work was long regarded unacceptable and by September 1934, the book had been rejected by as many as nineteen publishers and the author contemplated suicide, but was saved by the timely intervention of a young English poet"* (Anand, 1977: 27).

Another well-known leader and thinker is Panditar Ayotidasar whose writing focuses on the vital importance and relevance of academic and technical education. He went further daring to claim that Dalits are not Hindus but Aadhi Tamilar and fiercely criticized Hinduism against the shackles of the caste system and social inequality but in favour of rationalism, self respect and empowerment of women.

In 1881, Ayotidasar also established his journal Dravida Pantiyan to formulate his criticism on Hinduism and the related questions of hegemony of the Brahaman priests. Fortunately, his great undertaking was to bring about awakening and awareness of Dalit social conditions. *"To the upliftment of Dalits his major contribution was to inculcate a social stirring amongst the community through his writings."* (Mavali)

Ayotidasar was recognized as a pioneer Dalit writer, philosopher, social activist, educationalist, and thus a political interventionist who contributed to the promotion of Dalit equal opportunities and legislative enactments to better the lives of Dalits. Though the fights of committed Dalit writers were noticeable, the publishers censured some writings because of offensive topics as the oppression and exploitation of well-trodden Dalits by upper caste Hindus. Praised or scorned, their writings provided a strong endeavour to articulate Dalit individual self and the collective identity as Dalits.

The list of Dalit writers is long, as Raj Gautaman. But they improved Dalit life which was first connected to agricultural works and agrarian ties being themselves, a real economic income to upper caste Hindus. But, denouncing the harms and atrocities endured by the Dalits, these writers contributed greatly to reshaping the culture of the Dalits and reasserting a specific contemporary literary space.

4.8. Dalit Women Can Speak Up

The literary representation of Dalit identity and awareness was also undertaken by a growing number of Dalit women writers whose main goals are to speak up the various types of oppression linked to gender and cast. Therefore, Dalit women voiced up their double marginalization: being both women and Dalits in their literary texts.

Among the works worth mentioning Baby Kamble's autobiography entitled: *The Prison We Broke* (*Jina AMucha in Marathi*) remains a case in point. This writing reveals the plight Mahar women from Western Maharashtra had and have to face to some extent, particularly the socioreligious beliefs and customs which had been inculcated for centuries. Consequently, this autobiography expresses the new trends in women Dalit thoughts and behaviours that are to break away from subordination and exploitation as well as suffering, because of the Hindu casteist system and patriarchal hegemony even among members of their own community.

The Hindu holy scriptures locate women at the lowest rank of the varna system. *"... Illiterate, cattles and women all are liable to get punishment"* (Sunil D. Ramteke, no date). Because of their gender, they have to toil for survival to provide food and water from the wells or rivers, shelter and clothing and education to children. The family and economic burden is on these victimized women who started to forge their identity since the revolutionary call to education by Ambedkar.

Thus, *"autobiographies, as genre confuses the boundaries between the word and the world"*. (Sarkar, 2001). The essential difference between autobiographies written by non-Dalit women is that upper caste women's narratives use indirect speech following "Bhakti" or religious songs. Dalit ones are expressing their felt reality and thus direct speech form. This book symbolizes not only the first autobiography written in any Indian language but also the first social biography written by a Dalit woman. As said this writer:

> *" Baby Kamble's autobiography The Prison We Broke is a direct self-assertion of a Dalit woman, but it also went two steps ahead: it was a head on confrontation with brahminical hegemony on the one hand and patriarchal domination on the other. In one sense it is more of a socio-biography rather than an autobiography "(Kamble, 2009: xiii).*

Kamble's autobiography is a feminist critique of patriarchal social structure, in the public and private spaces where women show dignity and resilience, challenging the physical and psychological violence and atrocities. As such they are the agents of social change at both levels: in their community and society at large. The Dalit woman writer explains that women underwent much severe suffering as superstition, extreme poverty and great hunger or deep ignorance throw them between the hands of patriarchal domination and power, of Mahar and higher caste men. Following the Mahar cultural customs, women stayed at home, as daughters and wives. This feature was a distinct mark of male pride. As Kamble confesses:

> *" In those days, it was the custom to keep women at home, behind the threshold. The honor enjoyed by a family was in proportion to the restrictions imposed on the women of the house. When no one could even se a nail of the woman thus confined within the four walls of the house, then this "honor" became the talk of the town-a byword among the relatives and friends in the surrounding villages... My father had locked up my aai in his house, like a bird in a cage"(Kamble: 5).*

Besides, child marriages also remain recurrent literary Dalit themes, which denounce the hard life experienced by these young girls becoming the exploited daughter in law. *"The daughter in law of that house was kept busy all twenty four hours of the day.... At many a time, the duty fell on the daughter in law..."* (Kamble: 73-74). Such enslavement of daughters and women is a prevailing practice in the Mahar community as it is clearly expressed by the woman writer:

> *"The other world had bound us with chains of slavery. But we too were human beings. And too desired to dominate, to yield power. But who would let us do that ... So we made our own arrangements to find slaves our very own daughters in law. If nobody else, then we could at least enslave them"(Kamble: 87).*

Consequently, Dalit women were exploited three times, the caste system, Dalit men and Dalit women. Women were not sharing friendship or brotherhood but avenging themselves from the hardships inflicted on them. Chopping off the wife's nose or daughter in law's one is a common practice which perpetuates women suffering by their own gender. Another practice which condemns daughter in law to the status of slave is mother in law's another inhumane deed: to fix a wooden or iron load around the ankle, to kill any attempt at escaping.

> *"in those days, at least one woman in a hundred would have her nose chopped off... Husbands, flogging their wives as if they were beasts,*

would do so until the sticks broke with the effort. The heads of these women would break open, their black bones would be crushed, and some would collapse unconscious. But there was nobody to care for them. They had no food to eat, no proper clothing to cover their bodies... Women led the most miserable existence. "(Kamble: 98).

But the cruelest practice puts onto particularly wed daughters in law, is open rape in case of lack of respect to a man of higher caste and which is interpreted as a humiliation by men as a whole.

"The master would.... summon all the Mahars there... Who, just tell me, who the hell is that new girl...doesn't she know that she has to bow down to the master.. Shameless bitch. How dare she pass me without showing due respect". (Kamble: 53).

And the Mahar father in law would abuse her daughter in law and even joined by the mother in law to hurl sexual abuses, as slave mentality is settled in mind and life. In other cases, as Dalit women are traditionally to wash upper women clothes. The dreams of the former are then to behave as and imitate the latter. But, in reality they try to find refuge from torture and hunger or disease in pretending being possessed by ghosts. This array of superstition and woman suffering beyond the imaginable functions to maintain psychological and physical slavery. Ambedkar views conversion to Buddhism as the vital means to free Dalit from the authority and hegemony of the Hindu casteist rules. *"We have true power, because we have sheel, satwa and neeti, and they stand supreme in the whole world"* (Kamble: 62). Indeed, the call of Ambedkar: *"educate, agitate and unite"* was heard by massive numbers of Dalits to live a more dignified life. As said Kamble (117):

"I have never made a public display of my reverence for him. I worshipped, instead, the principles he stood for. I have had to face

several adversities in my life and I fought these bravely with the weapons of sheel and satwa".

Obviously, autobiographies remain unique and authentic at a personal level. But, at a literary level, memory gives to time another temporal dimension which has to be revisited and redefined. At least, it is difficult not to react to this autobiographical literature at a personal level. There is something elemental about it. It touches you to the very core (Imitiaz, 2015:137).

4.9.   Women Dalit Social Relativity

Much of the world literature has been dominated by men who gave no importance to women's writing. Women's writing was primarily to inspire rather than to create. In the course of time, women were treated as "*Second Sex*" (1949) or rather having no significance for their role in the life of man as mother, wife, daughter, daughter-in-law etc. Therefore, women writers from times have been attempting to amplify the cohesive consciousness of their protagonists who willingly go in quest for freedom. Irrespective of the impending faces of cruelty heaved on them in the name of marriage, forced relationships, child abuse, sexuality or rape etc. They remain to be icons of patience, submission, sacrifice, love and sisterhood.

Dalit woman literature deals obviously with the struggles and hope of the female protagonist. However, their fights against all the social constraints help them create a special niche of self-confidence to enlighten their chosen path. Whatever the short stories or autobiographies, the quest for freedom is revealed as writers are sensitive to the sense of freedom and want to strengthen their bonds

But Dalit woman literature offers a summing-up of life principles highlighting the escalating positivism in the succession of the wo/men published works. Dalit writers make an attempt to cross over into a deeper understanding of,

and more sensitive appreciation to establish the Dalit woman as a positive force, who attempts to seek a world of her own with her own criteria of self-assertion.

Consequently, language is a powerful weapon for subverting dominant patriarchal discourses and related practices and it draws upon them strength. Strategies of resistance to hegemonic domination and control are developed to struggle against domestic violence and over sexuality to construct their own identity and subjectivity. In Dalit literature, women shape an original feminine tongue with a duality in their world view. On the one hand they remain committed to home and family while on the other hand, they want to challenge traditional representations and valorise positive female qualities to bring social change.

The literary insight includes narratives about marriage and motherhood within the family and society as well as hunger and illness or inhumanity. These women writers empower their female protagonists through the cultural feminine attributes, notably sensitivity and motherhood or passivity to transgress male centred powers, as hierarchical relations of power are kept in binary oppositions.

4.10. Dalit Women Literary Contribution

The insightful contributions of Dalits in the fields of literature and then Cultural Studies recently, have fore grounded gender as a primary issue of intellectual enquiry. Critical studies on gender issues across cultures may provide a better way of framing, and enquiring into the core issues about ideology, social formation, political movements and shifts in perception of embodiment and community. As such, the emerging field of Dalit Studies is about the politics of recognition. Dalit literary texts on gender have evolved into particularly a rich source of exploring this important aspect of the Hindu /Indian society. These literary and cultural studies on emerging gender issues respond creatively and dynamically to all the cultural forms from an interdisciplinary approach involving social science, media, and gender studies.

The focus on the gender issues has enabled creative ways of thinking about how the Dalit woman body specifically is inhabited, and the urgent practices that promise to radically destabilise the meaning of the traditional social/community genders. In this sense gender becomes a genre that implies a set of conditions given by a text, avoiding recourse to fixed constraining norms, leading to the feminisation of labour, the social status of women in the hierarchical social or casteist system, especially in the Indian subcontinent.

Undoubtedly, an attempt has been made to trace the status of Dalit women's quest for freedom in the Indian society along with the status of women as writers down the ages in order to know their age old identity quest to establish themselves as individuals, whose positive stance has helped them to live in a congenial world, a world which has otherwise relegated them as slaves, marginalized and oppressed humans.

4.11. Dalit Social and Literary Empowerment

Dalit women try hard to confront the twin repressive frames and pressures of caste and gender which are used to enslave them, in their daily life. Dalit literature is inevitably related to their socio economic conditions of life giving voice to the muted, broken, down-trodden underprivileged,   and thus much visibility and empowerment.

4.11.1. Dalit Women Voices of Resistance

The *voiceless*, particularly Dalit women, were hard and for the first time, voicing and shaping a language to reveal their age-long suffering. Indeed what the oppressed could unveil and how they could express themselves, are the main issues dealt with in Dalit movements and literature.

Untouchable Women Speak Up by Shantabai and Baby Kamble (1991) are *"written life narratives use to be described or defined as 'autobiographical*

testimonies'" (Poitevin, 2002). As Todorov states it: *"narrative …is a referential text which develops itself in the course of time"* (1972: 378 in Poitevin, 2002).

In fact this intimate and collective awareness, sentences Untouchability and machismo which stereotype woman body as a privileged space for all kinds of control and oppression. It becomes A cultural and social denunciation of the Hindu upper castes *"dispensation of graded inequality"* (Poitevin, 2002), with *"an ascending scale of hatred and descending scale of contempt"* (ibid).

The language of the out-castes and under-privileged is cut, used with broken utterances which symbolize the breakdown and fragmentation of the human being. But, at the same time such a literary direct style reflects the enthusiastic participation of particularly Dalit women in their liberation movement. This collection of two autobiographies becomes testimonies of feminine resistance, strength and revolt and of the outstanding impact of Ambedkar 'call on their lives: 'Take education!' which would bring obviously them mobility in the Indian society.

As valuable sources of social history and of the revolutionary power of education, writings and social activism represent the liberation from the shackles of subordination through efforts of education and social activism which inevitably brought much awareness among Dalit masses for assertion, protest and mobilization. Dalit consciousness and imagination are just but a historical phenomenon with strong militant connotations to bring change through teaching and much sensitivity or sensibility.

These Dalit women writers then are spokespersons and testify that the subaltern could speak and write and embody resistance to exploitation and domination or suffering. In this sense, Dalit literary expression is about the monopoly of Dalit writers when it refers to penning Dalit literature. As any piece of art, aesthetics is a fundamental criterion to set up any recognition and understanding. If Indian traditional aesthetics refers to the pleasure and beauty which is imparted by mainstream works of art and literature, the aesthetics of Dalit literature rests on three features:

- *"the artist's social commitment*
- *the life-affirming values present in the artistic creation*
- *the ability to raise the readers' consciousness of fundamental values of life like equality, freedom, justice, and fraternity"*(Imitiaz, 2015: 135)

Dalit aesthetics talks about the pain and sufferings of a great group of Indian population and therefore the notion of beauty and truth underwent a drastic change: privileging the individual and his/her felt experiences rather than an abstract notion of imaginary beauty and archetypal experiences. Thus Dalit aesthetics is one of authenticity. Dalit revolutionary aesthetics is based on equality, liberty, justice and solidarity: the art for life's sake.

4.11.2. Dalit Woman Individual Identity and Social Belonging

The real issue of the Dalit woman question seems to reside between religions, education and politics in India: tolerance among groups and equality between them. Any social identity is motivated by two processes: self enhancement and self-esteem including positive distinctiveness.

Despite the Indian Constitution against caste, discrimination and untouchability which represent the outcome of age-old casteist divisions, women remain an easy target for exploitation and violence, as it has been harshly expressed in the Kambles Women Can Speak Up specifically among others. The first Dalit women autobiographies in Marathi which voice the boundaries of a new Dalit literary identity, symbolize a reflection and assertion of Dalit consciousness over Hindu caste discrimination and self-humiliation. It is a collection of stories of rural and poor women including great amount of details and experiences. Consequently, writings become a valuable document of intimate and collective awareness. Though expressing individual experience, but they symbolize regional consciousness they at the same time shape the commonality of women's experiences, notably   the pain, the hopelessness, and hope.

Dalit consciousness is deeply concerned with the question, 'Who am I? What is my identity?' The strength of character of Dalit authors comes from these questions. Dalit consciousness is what gives Dalit literature its unique power. The ultimate aim of Dalit literature, therefore, is to construct this new identity on the basis of a universal society of brotherhood: Dalits sought to become modern fully human citizens or full members of a community. Consequently, belonging is rather about emotional attachment and feeling at home and safe. But, the politics of belonging is about transgression the rigid norms and structures imposed by a blind society with boundary maintenance. Breaking the conventional casteist laws is a way of questing for oneself and a means of asserting one's identity.

Such writings become testimonies of women/feminist resistance, strength and revolt, and reveal the decisive impact of Ambedkar's call for education on their daily lives, besides being valuable sources of social history and of the revolutionary power of education.

As to the context of gender and caste discrimination, women activists in India revealed an outstanding participation in highlighting the problems faced by women. Alliances of women's organizations protest against incidents of violence and pressurize the authorities to take urgent actions against the perpetrators. At an international level, Amnesty International has expressed deep concerns for many years about the torture, ill-treatment of Dalit women in India and focused the problem of rape in custody and believes that a series of actions are necessary in order to fulfil India's international human rights obligations.

> *"Human rights defenders, instead of being recognized and protected by the state, are portrayed as 'criminals', 'foreign agents', 'anti-nationals' and 'terrorists', and painted as a threat to development or traditional values. Such labels are divisive, signal contempt for constitutional rights, and give a green light to further abuses," said Asmita Basu, Programmes Director at Amnesty International India.(International Dalit Solidarity Network, 2017)*

Yet, from the beginning of the twenty first century, violence against women is usually treated as a marginal issue by the Indian law. On the one hand, the National Commission for Women beside several women's organizations have been involved in attempts at establishing a crime of sexual assault in its very place and at different times without much success. Numerous suggestions were made by lawyers and women's activists to strengthen legal protections regarding rape and related issues as crime. But, *"In India, those advocating for the rights of ethnic and religious minorities and against caste-based discrimination are at ongoing risk of attack"* (Ibid).

On the other hand, feminist narratives explore woman identity in relation to community and nation involving themes of resistance, challenging boundaries to overarching socio-religious structures and institutions for much respect and dignity. Dalit Literature is deeply concerned with the struggle of gender equality which is also the struggle for democratic secular spaces. It is a literature of protest and resistance, a vehicle for radical social change beyond the tension between the self and the community, finding ways of belonging to a culture with utmost pride.

4.11.3. Dalit Feminist Interventions

The 1980 and 1990s campaigns are outstanding feminist anti rape interventions to which state responses were recorded to these feminist challenges. Such issues are usually including men in position of authority. Gang rape and rape on minors particularly were discussed by laws which amended the legislation to some extent, though domestic violence remained a fundamental feminist preoccupation related to dowry.

Certainly, the difficulty resides in the fact women want to acquire more decent rights which stand in conflict with traditional family and patriarchy rights or authority. Thus, the Domestic Violence Act 2005 stipulates the protection of women, as it is explained:

"who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within domestic relationships, to prevent the victims from domestic violence, to give effect to the provisions of the CEDAW and to provide for protection orders, residence orders, monetary relief and other matters referred to and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto" (Government of India 2005, ibid,117).

Though there is no faith on what real solutions can be provided, feminists are still sceptical on the implementation of legal solutions to violence. Particularly, Dalit women (and men), struggle to face the police in cases of conflicts within communities and cases. But, the strengths within Indian and Dalit feminisms are that they redefined their perceptions and actions, notably through the developed understanding of the different ways men and women violence against women are conceptualized and perpetuated to nurture patriarchal control of and power over women. Indian feminists fed debates at local and national levels while Western feminist movements were classified by their distinct politics. (Dworkin: 1983, Mackinnon: 1993 cited in Ibid, 129).

4.11.4. Feminist Deals

Indian Feminist/ Dalit interventions were focused on traditional patriarchal frameworks, specifically family, society and individuals. Their strategic challenge was to describe the fundamentals of patriarchal institutions within legislation as marriage and divorce which granted powerful rights to men. In addition, it was to denounce the implementation of law concerning domestic violence as well as to campaign for extended women rights against sexual assault and rape. In this vein, their movements were identified as challenging the traditional family norms and accused of being influenced by Western cultural practice and thought.

Indeed, Dalit woman status as for any woman stands at the crossroads of tradition and modernity. Key concepts as patriarchy and feminism have both a global and local relevance since the 1970s. In the Indian context, feminist

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interventions posed challenges to established Hindu interpretation of local issues as Dalit woman, sexuality, or broadly speaking woman's issues linked to violence and rights. Hot long debates further demonstrated the intricacies of the problems at the crossroads of religion and society. Besides, confronting patriarchy and Hindu fundamentalists meant that caste and community identities are involved in the limitations of cultural framework which itself is opposed to much westernization and globalization. To struggle for women legal rights is considered on the one hand as a positive fight to enjoy effective citizenship rights and to recast Dalit women in the societal ladder.

But Indian is a vast continent, and scholars declare that it is really hard to describe or assess the status of Dalit women particularly (Devi 1993, Kishor and Gupta 2005 in Gangoli 2005, 2). The point raised is that women are supposed to have definite legal rights in conformity with the Indian Constitution, but in reality they are far for benefiting them. Gangoli (2005,2) refers to the constitutional rights as follows: "The Fundamental Rights incorporated in the Indian Constitution include equality under the law for men and women (Article 14), equal accessibility to the public spaces (Article 15), equal opportunity in matters of public employment (Article 16), equal pay for equal work (Article 39) (Ibid).

Furthermore, statutory provisions protect these rights notably: the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 and the Maternity Benefit Act, 1976. Other ones make illegal the taking of dowry as the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, while the Section 498 A Indian Penal Code 1983 condemns evilest practices provoked by in laws and husbands. Though the Hindu Succession Act, 1955, gives Hindu women equal rights to property, and widows granted rights over a final property, few Dalit women specifically seem to have limited rights and decisions about their lives.

4.12. Translation of Dalit Literature

The literary works written in local languages or translated, into English at least, reveal notably the need or desire for a wider audience, the lingua franca role of English as a mediator between Indian languages and its status of hegemony. Writers sometimes include lexical glossary to better understand their writings. These writers want the reader to guess the meaning, context being the best teacher. When words are defined at the end of the story they are made and remain foreign, from far-away settings, time and cultures.

Writing in English suggests the construction of a new post-colonial Dalit identity. The issues of power and hierarchy, representation and exclusion, differences of caste, gender and sexuality, differences of geographical and social spaces are dealt with intensively in Dalit literature. Therefore such concepts as identity construction and hybridity are understood in dynamic interaction since they are crucial elements in defining woman identity.

To illustrate the relevance of the issue of translation of Dalit literature, we would refer to the international conference at the British Centre for Literary Translation, in University of East Anglia (29 & 30 June 2015) which was quite successful and fruitful. Some fundamental questions were raised by academicians and linguists leading to the "(Im) possibility of Translating Identities: Translator, Dalit litterateur and the 'Truth' of Dalit Experience" as formulated by Kalyan Das. Others as Laura Brueck spoke of "A question of language? The politics of translating Dalit literature for a new Indian audience» and investigated the issue of the translation made by a non-Dalit, a non-Indian of Dalit literature.

Nevertheless, Shoma Sen in his talk on "The Choice of Writing in English: Short Stories of B. Rangrao and Narendra *Jadhav's Outcaste*", he shows that a tiny minority of Dalit writers switch to writing in English, as Professor Rangrao with *Desperate Men and Women* (2013). While Narendra Jadhav, has chosen to translate

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his own autobiography *Aaamcha Baap aan Amhi* from Marathi into English entitled *Outcaste* (2007).

Thus, the linguistic and cultural un/translatability of caste and Dalitness are explored and challenged without forgetting that the interpretation must be done with fidelity, since Dalit literature criticizes existing Hindu tendencies to marginalize Dalit communities on grounds of national or ethnic origin. No doubt, translation contributes to more thinking about Dalit women's issues, notably, patriarchy, sexuality, socio-cultural roles. In addition, translated works can be read, outside geographical or linguistic borders, giving voice to unheard historically /religiously/culturally marginalised communities and individuals.

As already explained, the growing popularity of Dalit wo/men writings is due to the massive impact of the Ambedkar's education call. To speak and write in a rebellious, interrogative and inventive way in regional languages and in English offer a fiction that transgresses the socio-religious limits and challenges the cultural heritage toward self-recognition as a human being and be heard. Furthermore, translators have brought an outstanding contribution to Dalit literature by reaching it out to a world audience.

4.13. Indian Fame to Dalit Representation

Writing for Indian /Dalit women is of expressing feelings of suffering, loneliness, frustration, fear, alienation as well as hopes and dreams. It is a lonely activity, criticised, underestimated, unrewarded and clandestine, because the patriarchal norms define what is adequate and relevant both in content and form. Writing is, thus, undertaken within socio-cultural and political constraints. Since writing represents a political claim, social responsibility resides in writing, in reading and responding to matters.

Yet, the issues developed by Dalit literature induce the struggle to live against the principles of a sole exclusive religious Hindu ideology that has enhanced intolerance for the other ending with violence and murder or rape as if it were a

religious sanctification to their odious actions. In such a contest, religion cannot give an answer for every question and doubt since the truth has been revealed once for all: the Sacred Book, in the case of the Hindus: The Vedas. In fact: *"India lives in several centuries simultaneously. The names are changed but not history, not rituals, not identity"* (Guntheinz, 1997).

As a raging activist, talented essayist and award winning film maker and writer, Arundhati Roy particularly criticized in *The God of Small Things*, fundamentalism, regarding gender, caste, religion, untouchability and politics is understood from below: murder and crimes. Roy is well known for her continuous vindication of human rights. But, Roy has been harshly criticized for her engaged voice and her Booker Prize is an example of novel that engages the ups and downs of religious and secular identities, as it had been the case for S. Rushdie's The Satanic Verses. The story is about Ammu, the divorced upper caste woman who has a sinful love affair with the outcaste Velutha, who is beaten to death by the police whereas she is banished from parental home, left and died alone in a room.

The Indian critical reception of *The God of Small Things* in particular raises the question of censorship for women writers in India. Certainly, censorship is applied by a great range of institutions involving the vernacular press, the rightist cultural national, political groups symbolizing patriarchy, as well as those traditionalist Indian women who condemn the freedom of expression for women. Usually, censorship prevails when literary establishments deny publication of women's works but in such cases, probably, their objections for publishing have to do with content.

It seems that writing has to be uncritical of Indian norms and values: any Indian woman writer who criticizes patriarchal chauvinistic values or promotes the Western inculcated ideas faces publishers, i.e. societal and family rejection (as it is illustrated by Roy's *The God of Small Things* criticism). They must avoid to refer to family or community life but the writing is to focus solely on their primary roles of good housewives, mothers and daughters. That means therefore, that writing if

allowed must be done only in the time and space left over from completing the duties that come with their specific roles.

In the case of Roy's novel, extremist Hindus and politicians denigrated and ridiculed or sanctioned her writing for socio-political reasons. Yet, Roy, Indian committed writer and activist, did not consider them as for her, such criticisms were formulated to silence Indian women but her novel was published in different languages, notably in the U.S.A. and Europe. Again and again, Indian women writers have to challenge the Indian socio-cultural constraints impsed by patriarchal hegemony.

Thus, winning literary awards at international level does not mean writers at all recognition or fame in India as it was the case for Arundhati Roy. The disdain is due to their gender identity and their consequent active involvement in writing towards the feminist reconstruction of *"a literature of their own"* (Showalter, 1977), in their identity quest transgressing fixed Indian socio-religious and political criteria. Therefore, both Indian and Dalit women writers challenge overtly rigid markers of Indian cultural identity.

Then, the voices of Indian Dalit women represent or fragment the traditional patriarchal values and ideals and / or attempt at creating their own culture. Indeed, Feminist Publishing in India, as Kali For Women and Zubaan and Women Unlimited, become fundamental publishing houses and voices to Indian /Dalit Feminism. A great number of genres and themes are dealt with, from English translations to different local Indian languages by women who struggle to reshape issues of women's lives from traditional passive roles given to them from Hindu myths to a strong commitment to women's rights and feminist activism for much freedom and human moral and physical dignity.

In India for example *Countries of Goodbyes* by Mridula Grag was translated from Hindi to English by Manisha Chaundhry (2003). *Recollections* (1986) and *Our Existence* (1986), respectively by Shantabai and Baby Kamble were published in India, funded by Subventions of the Commission for the Culture and Literature of

the State in home languages (Marathi) and translated into French by French priest Guy Poitevin (1991) titled Parole de *femme intouchable* with La Fondation pour le Progrès de l' Homme. Besides, other spaces are created in India too, as it is the case for the Mehfil-e-Kawateen and the Karnataka Lekhakiyara Shanga to incite Indian women's writing and publishing in local languages and English (Joseph, 2001).

Much known in India is Mridula Grag for her provoking themes. The English translation made by Manisha Chaudhry of her 1996 best seller *Kathgulab* allowed non Hindi readers to read her masterpiece. Beside Roy, though she was arrested for obscene writing in Delhi, she was congratulated with the 2001 Hellman Hammett Award for her audacious writing *Chittacobra* (1979) and by the New York Based Human Rights Watch. Grag's success as a writer whether in Hindi or in translation is outstanding. She denounces ill practices to the world, challenging severe age-old norms in her attempt to re-define and re-negotiate the Indian Hindu society. Certainly, translation is just an original product, but it allows much freedom to be heard and understood, particularly in Dalit women 's fight towards change and progress.

The English translation of Indian writing could be highlighted by media and publishers, particularly giving worldly acclaim. The written expressions of Indian/Dalit women writers have shackled a traditional culture and defied Indian male hegemonic power and knowledge to eradicate or at least reduce the harsh casteist Hindu practices.

What Indian/Dalit male and female writers have come to mean at the present time is changing the definition of the Indian society. These changing roles and impressions are quite visible in what we read and in what is being written. If literature is a reflection of one's reality, then Indian Dalit women changing roles, be they emotional, social or political in life and Dalit women literature, could not be ignored.

4.14. Women and Legal Regulation of their Sexuality

Civil laws and legislation in India regulate women's sexuality, notably within marital or heterosexist framework. Besides, criminal laws include those on rape, prostitution, divorce or adultery, and pornography or homosexuality. Yet, Indian /Dalit feminist challenges have revisited and redefined woman sexuality. No doubt, some issues were undermined as feminist construction or understanding of heterosexuality, monogamy vs. polygamy and marriage. Debates on women rights on lesbian rights were disregarded as sexuality is seen as a silenced cultural problem. Sexual control within marriage, sexual assault and harassment or sexual practices, shaped ethical sexual behaviours where homosexuality and deviancy became fundamental feminist questions.

Sexual control within marriage is protected under legislation which legitimizes any patriarchal attitudes. As to rape law it regulates sexual abuse of women within marriage, but in such a way that the Hindu law obliges woman as *"a wife's duty to her husband is to submit herself obediently to his authority..."* (Gangoli, 2007, 58). Thus working outside home is regarded as an action of rebellion to the point that economic independence is understood as a threat to *"unlimited sexual access over his wife"* (ibid, 59) or even when a husband is financially dependent on her, he can demand for his conjugal rights. Indian women in general, are the legal property of the husband in any case.

Feminist campaigns are directed to the recognition of married women rights over their body, to the denunciation of marital rape which are counteracting social and cultural norms as men are supposed to be more mature, older and thus the dominant partner or master. *"the law only makes a specific kind of extra marital relationship an offense... The relationship between a man and a married woman..."* (ibid, 60).

Once more, Brahmanical patriarchy protects man to own his wife sexually. Fidelity and chastity for women are meant when being also divorced separated, as sexual abstinence in these cases. Humiliation for women "immoral, deviant"

behaviours are daily faced by women who transgress social and sexual patriarchal norms. Thus, such a "bad" woman deserves only bad treatment by family, neighbours or law.

Interpretations of marital behaviour or rape are constructed over social norms as well as prostitution which raise another matter of concern related to law enforcement. Prostitutes are considered being both important to meet social male needs whereas embodying a serious threat to public morality. Closely linked to prostitution is pornography which has no specific obscenity law to penalize it.

Against this cultural background of required devout and faithful wives, feminist challenges are concentrated on legal rights and violence against women. Sexual choices, defended by Lesbian and gay activists in the 1990s and 2000s seem to be ignored or silenced. Such dilemmas are shared by Hindu and Dalit women, where specifically Dalitism seeks to struggle to gain legal social rights and define their feminist assumptions on sexual behaviour and violations, as it is the case for any cultural or transnational feminism/s.

4.15. Conclusion

Dalitism and Dalit literature have brought to light issues of inequality and oppression on the basis of caste/class and gender, despite the Indian Constitution which might protect Dalits from any kind of discrimination. Dalitism and Dalit literature in various regional languages or written / translated in any European languages, contribute to the growing awareness and recognition of Dalit assertion as a positive change in Dalits' lives at the local and global level. Yet, these struggles against all forms of discrimination be they under any literary expressions or socio-political activism, are still prevailing as India is a vast continent with a great population who keeps their religious beliefs tightly connected to their daily lives and cultural practices.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

India has spent the post-war era attempting to excavate the social inequalities of caste from its social landscape. The various dimensions of caste have been examined and connected with each other and to the past, while the consequences of caste have been widely researched. The most affected population of the caste system are Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular.

In this research, we have depicted some hidden facets of Dalit women discrimination and in order to recapitulate the previously mentioned statements, we can say that Dalit or SC women, in India's highly patriarchal and caste-based society, bear the triple burden of caste, class, and gender. Being positioned at the lowest social order of Indian society, SC women suffer from many forms of discrimination, including lack of education, economic disadvantages, social disempowerment, domestic violence, political invisibility, and sexual oppression.

In contravention of both national laws and international human rights standards that prohibit any physical, sexual or psychological violence against women, varying forms of violent acts specifically targeting SC women are occurring on a large scale across India today. The convergence of these conditions leads to the wide-ranging and multiple layers of violence that pervade Dalit women's lives, characterized by enduring violence in both the general community and in the family, from state and non-state actors of different genders, castes and socio-economic groupings.

Women are the most vulnerable and face untouchability, discrimination and violence much more than their male counterparts. The position of Dalit women in the society is reflected by the nature and number of atrocities committed on her. Being a Dalit woman, abuse is used to remind her of her caste and keep her oppressed. Untouchability and social exclusion being faced by the Dalit community, takes shape of an institutionalized system in some places in context to Dalit women, called 'Devadasi's'.

Under the Devadasi system, a scheduled caste family dedicates its young daughter to the village goddess, and when the girl reaches puberty she becomes an available sexual partner for the priest and all upper caste men in the village. Dalit women also face violence when they try to access rights and entitlements provided by the Indian Constitution and the government. In addition to facing discrimination and untouchability in accessing welfare schemes, women from the Dalit community also faces sexual and other kinds of physical violence.

The recent years have also seen a rising violence against Dalit human rights defenders, and Dalit women activists are all the more vulnerable in this scenario as the violence against them takes the shape and form of sexual violence-rape, gang rape, being paraded naked etc. A significant proportion of India's Dalit women suffer multiple forms of systematic discrimination, including verbal abuse, physical assault, sexual harassment and assault, domestic violence, naked parading, ingestion of human excreta, individual and gang rape.

Dramatically, it should also be noted that in India about 90 percent crimes against Dalit women are not reported to the police for the fear of social ostracism and threat to personal safety and security especially Dalit women. Also the legal proceedings are so complicated, tardy, time consuming, costly and unfriendly to Dalits that usually they do not approach courts or other law enforcing agencies for their redressal.

Notwithstanding, the overview of violence against Dalit women and its effects, previously stated in chapter three, presents a broad picture of the systemic nature of violence faced by Dalit women. Consequently, Dalit women constitute a distinct social group specifically vulnerable to violations of their rights. Their vulnerability is multi-dimensional, in that it arises from the intersection of systemic factors of caste, class and gender.

Moreover, these factors are manifested in the practice of untouchability accompanied by violence, in the dominant Brahmanical patriarchal discourse of Dalit women's sexual availability, in allegations of their criminal nature, in their

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allegedly inherent pollution and low status as both Dalits and women. Further, in their alleged possession of duties rather than rights as a consequence of their subordinated caste and gender position; violence is targeted towards these women as a means to either reinforce caste-class-gender norms, or punish Dalit women who transgress such rigid norms by demanding their equal rights to dominant castes.

At the core of violence against Dalit women lies the violation of four key rights: their right to equality; their rights to life and security of life; their right to legal remedies and protection of the state from interference with their rights; and finally their right to development.

In the meantime, a number of constitutional and legal provisions decreed to protect Indian citizens generally, as well as to specifically protect socially marginalized citizens such as Dalit women. Through this research, we noticed that these legal measures are not being implemented to protect women from violence, nor to allow them legal redress once violence takes place.

Factually, the Indian state fails in its duty to act with due diligence to prevent violence against Dalit women, or to investigate and punish acts of violence and provide compensation. The underlying reason behind this culture of violence and impunity for violence is that the patriarchal caste system perpetuates both caste sanction and impunity and state impunity for this violence.

Interestingly enough, these major findings suggest an urgent need to systematically eradicate both violence against Dalit women and the impunity that perpetrators of this violence enjoy. The government of India and Indian society need to recognize and support the ongoing struggles of Dalit women to attain their rights and protect themselves against this culture of violence in the general community, and violence in the family.

At the same time, coalitions and networks between Dalit and women's movements and organizations as well should be evolved to collectively examine cross-cutting issues and build increasing linkages on perspectives and programmes.

In addition, they should also link to other non-governmental organizations. Dalit women's leadership in the anti-caste, anti-poverty and gender movements needs to be strengthened through trainings, providing opportunities to take up leadership positions and ensuring specific focus on gender concerns.

On the other side, media coverage is of paramount importance to expose the significance of this violence that police negligence and general community obstruct to women seeking legal remedies. In addition, centres for safety, protection and rehabilitation of Dalit women victims of violence also need to be established at the local level, in order to listen to, assist and help the women recover from the violence.

It is plausible to state that at the international level, an international convention on the elimination of all forms of violence against women should be adopted in order to provide a comprehensive international legal binding instrument on this subject. Moreover, meetings between CEDAW and CERD committees would be useful to discuss the impact of multiple forms of discrimination on women, and to work for establishing suitable tools to assess and address violence and other rights violations mainly those targeting women by race, gender and caste.

Ultimately, a considerable number of measures are necessary for a holistic approach to fighting violence against Dalit women at multiple levels, from grassroots mobilization to state, national and international interventions. All these constitute the foundation for Dalit women to become equal citizens living with human dignity. Dalit women voices are becoming to be heard as their cries are audible through different ways: social activism or literary commitment. Their literary writings reflect their protest, resistance and anger or refusal to be undermined and injured by blind human beings for whom unjust socio-"religious" laws perpetuate discrimination on grounds of caste, class and gender. Written in the various languages of India or in English and translated into other world or European languages, Dalit issues and perspectives are not only known in India, but also taken seriously outside India. Certainly, Dalit and non-Dalit women writers who defend

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the powerless and the marginalized threaten the united Hindu upper castes. Is it the emergence of a powerful force in favour of a fundamental change in the distribution of equal opportunities? Or is it simply a global challenge to reduce the widening gap between the poor, the rich, or the dominant vs the oppressed?

It would be interesting to undertake a comparative study of discrimination based on the idea of untouchability both amongst Hindus in India and Buddhists in Japan, notably the Indian Dalits and Japanese Burakumin by focusing on how discrimination was perceived within their liberation movements.

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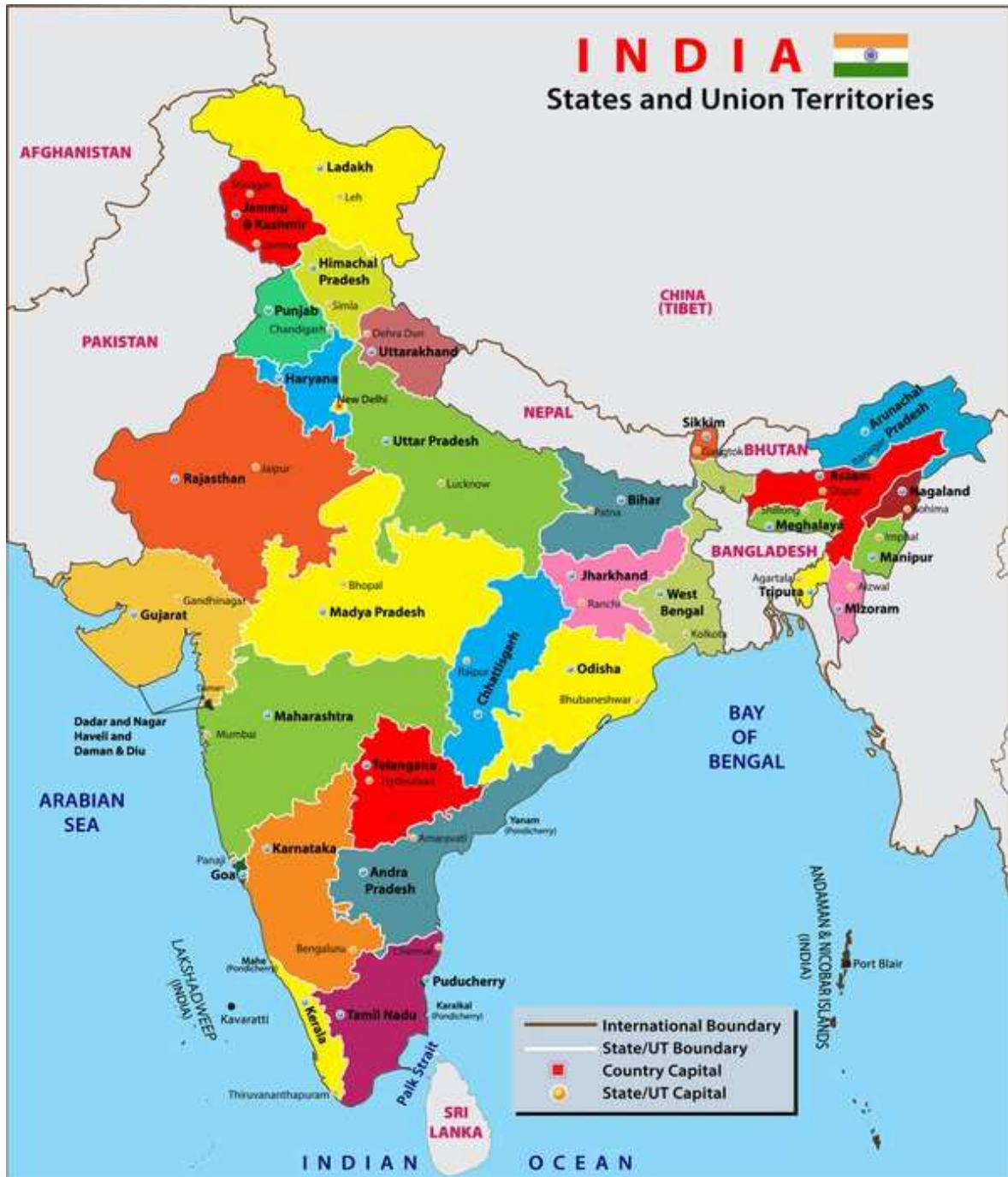India.

Appendices

Appendices

Appendix 1:   Facts and Maps about India and Dalits

Appendix 1.1:   Overview and Facts about India

India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world with a kaleidoscopic variety and rich cultural heritage. The Republic of India is situated in southern Asia; it is surrounded by the Bay of Bengal to the east, the Indian Ocean to the south and the Arabian Sea to the west. There is a Himalayan mountain range which is spread across most of northern India. India is the seventh largest country in the world, and the second most populated. It is expected to overtake China to become the world's most populated country within the next 25 years. The estimated population for India in 2012 is 1.21 billion, with 29 percent of the population living in urban areas. It is thought that India has more than 2,000 ethnic groups. The country is made up of 28 states and seven Union Territories, with New Delhi as the capital. Hindi is the official language of India and is spoken throughout the major cities. English is also widely spoken in urban areas. There are 21 other languages that are commonly spoken across the country. India's main religions are Hinduism (80.5 percent), Islam (13.4 percent), Christianity (2.3 percent), and Sikhism (1.9 percent). Other religious groups include Buddhists, Jains and Parsis (1.8 percent).

Appendix 1.2: **States and Union Territories Map of India**

(https://myloview.com/sticker-india-map-states-and-union-territories-of-india-india-political-no-DFA5B26.)

The map is representing India's political map with capital New Delhi with the states and union territories of India.

Appendix 1.3:   Population of Dalit Caste over India

(https://www.pinterest.fr/pin/379780181050763639/)
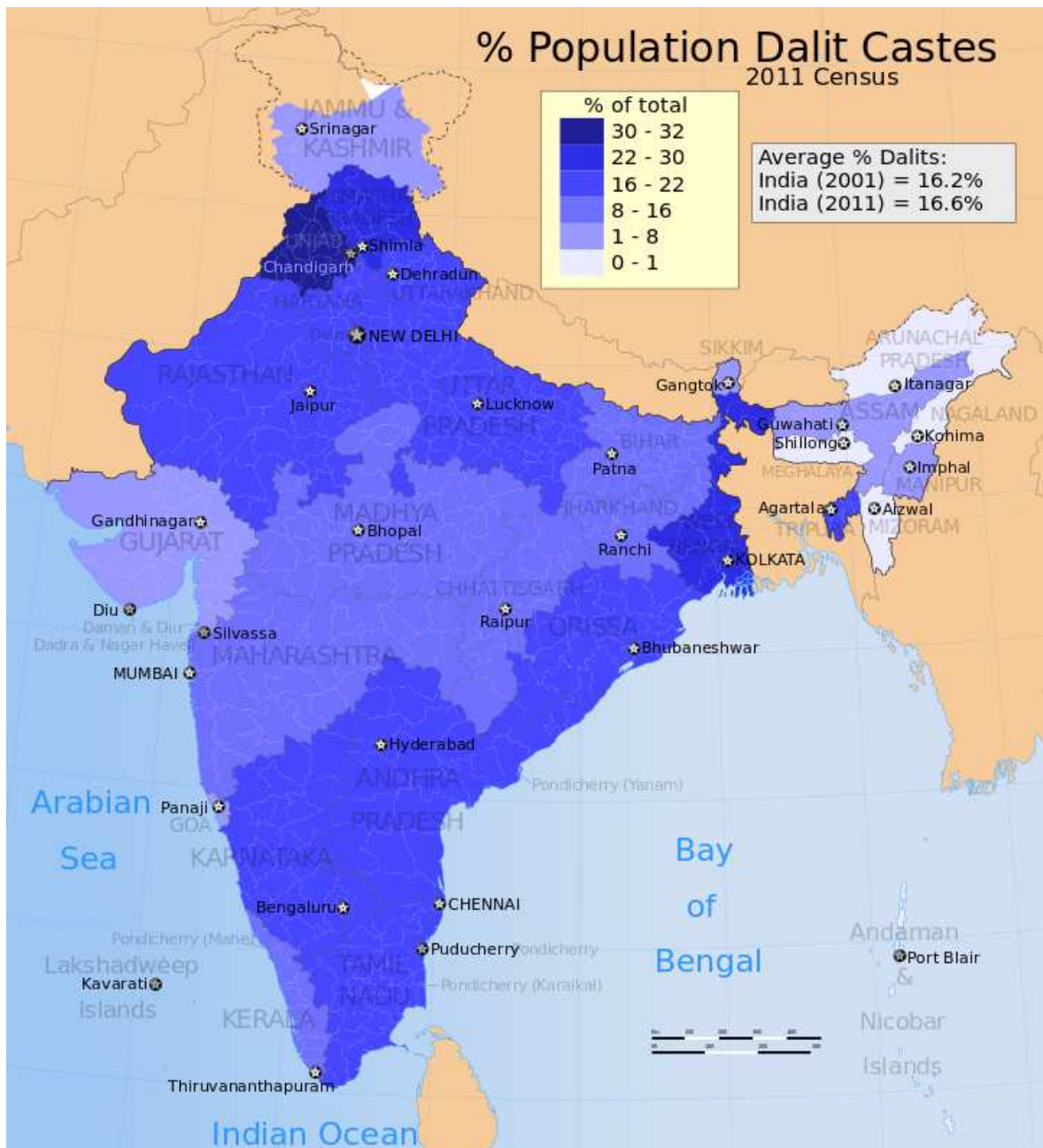
 The map represents the localisation of Dalit population in India.

Appendix 1.4:   Practice of Untouchability across India

Figure 9: District-wise Map of the Share of Households Practising Untouchability
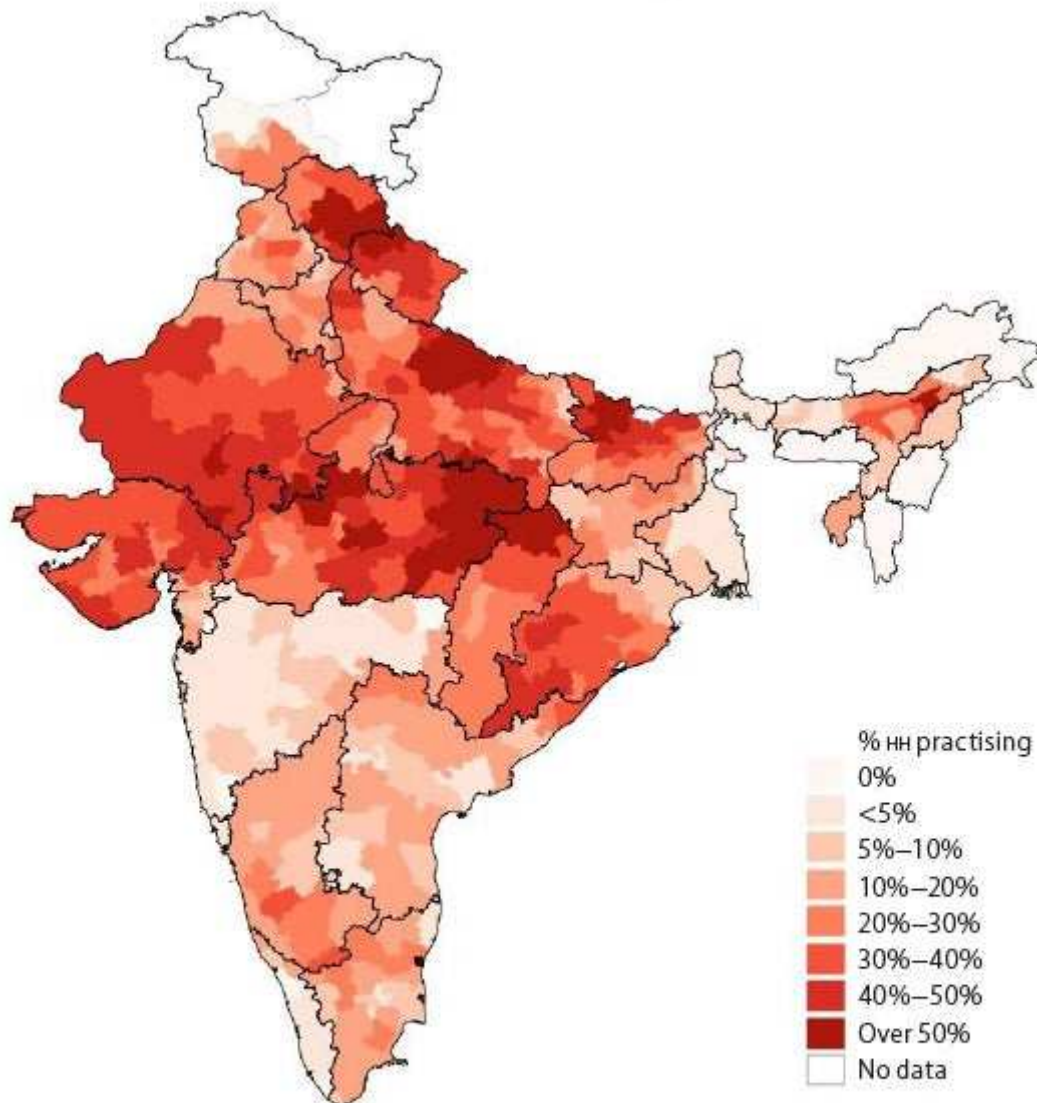
This is a district-level map. The darkest colour indicates that over 50% of households practise untouchability.
As the colour gradation falls, so does the share of households practising untouchability.
*HH refers to households.
Source: Based on the IHDS-II data set, generated by Reeve Vanneman, University of Maryland.

(https://www.reddit.com/r/india/comments/7tl49y/map_showing_practice_of_untou chability_across/)

Appendix 1.5:   Manual Scavenging done by a Dalit Woman

(https://www.livemint.com/Politics/tX3ZyvUiB5ky7PUQyE13GI/The-worst-job-in-India-PS-its-illegal-too.html)

Manual scavenging is the worst and illegal job done mainly by Dalit women in India.

Appendix 1.6:   Violence and Murder against Dalit Women Activist

(https://www.thequint.com/news/india/dalit-activist-killed-in-gujarat-for-refusing-to-withdraw-old-case)

This Dalit woman was killed in Gujarat and before her death she reported that: "Since 2013, there have been several attempts to kill my father. The police did not support us. That is why, the dominant caste men of our village could dare to enter our home and hack him to death," said the weeping daughter of a Dalit rights activist Amrabhai Boricha, 50, who was killed in Gujarat's Bhavnagar district on Tuesday, 2 March."

Appendix 2: Leaders' Autobiographical Synopsis

Appendix 2.1: Autobiographical Synopsis of Mahatma Gandhi
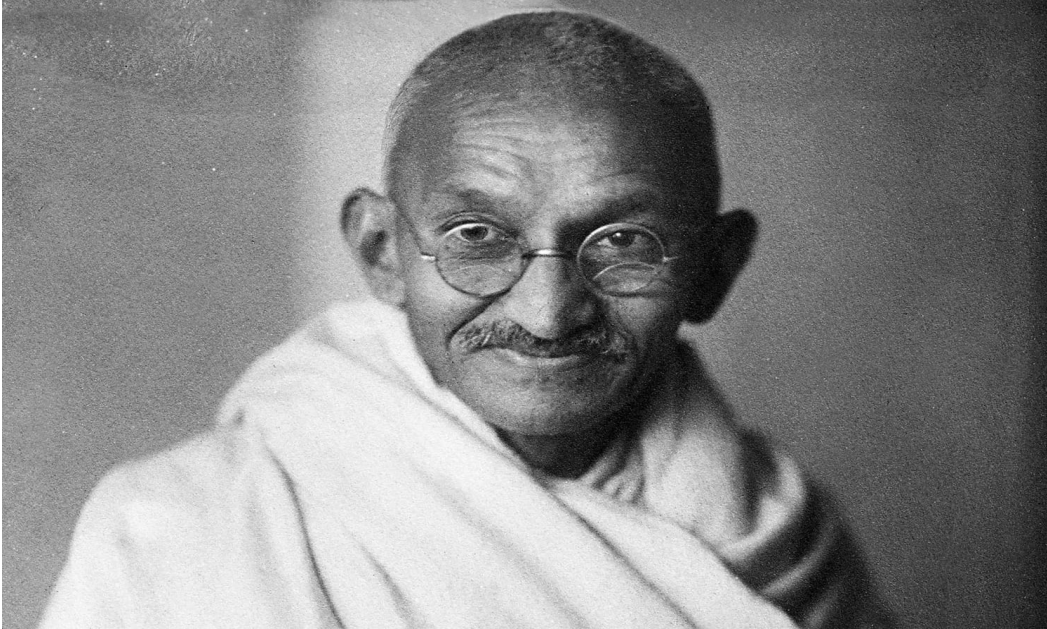
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) was born on October 2, 1869, into a Hindu Modh family in Porbanadar, Gujarat, India. Gandhi was born into the vaishya (business caste). Gandhi studied law at the University of Bombay for one year, then at the University College London, from which he graduated in 1891, and was admitted to the bar of England. Back in India, Gandhi became active in the struggle for Indian Independence. He spoke at the conventions of the Indian National Congress, becoming one of its leaders. Gandhi was addressed by the people as Mahatma (Great Soul) and Bapu (Father). Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru issued the Declaration of Independence on January 26, 1930. Gandhi planned to achieve stability through the secularization of India, as the only way of uniting Hindus and Muslims in one peaceful nation. Gandhi campaigned to improve the lives of the untouchables, whom he called Harijans (the children of God). He promoted equitable rights, including the right to vote in the same electorates as other castes. Gandhi was shot three times in the chest and died while on his way to a prayer meeting, on January 30, 1948.

Appendix 2.2:   Autobiographical Synopsis of Dr. BR Ambedkar

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born in 1891 into an Untouchable caste, known as Mahar. Despite his lowly caste, Ambedkar's father had become an officer in the Indian Army and was able to insist that his sons should be educated, so Ambedkar was allowed to attend school. Ambedkar was the first in his community to graduate High School and went on to study for a BA in Economics and Politics at Bombay University. In 1924, Ambedkar intensified his campaign for social reform by establishing the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha (Group for the Wellbeing of the Excluded) to promote socio-political awareness among the Dalits and raise public awareness of their grievances. He created Dalit newspapers, social and cultural institutions, attended more conferences of the Depressed Classes, initiated protests against discrimination in temple entry and access to water, and passionately promoted Dalit access to education. Despite Ambedkar's differences with Congress, when India became independent in August 1947, Prime Minister Nehru invited him to be the first Minister of Law and Justice. Ambedkar's influence can be seen in many aspects of the resulting Indian Constitution such as the strong emphasis on liberal democracy, the federal structure, and the provisions and safeguards for minorities alongside the emphatic abolition of Untouchability. He died in Delhi in 1956.

Appendix 3:   Questionnaire

Appendix 3.1:   Introductory Letter

(Letter addressed to Professor Prasanna Sree with a questionnaire)

Dear Madam,

      I am a PhD researcher supervised by Professor Fewzia BEDJAOUI. Indian culture and literature are of a great interest and estimation for me. My research focuses on Dalit women issues and rights and also Dalit/Indian literature written by women. In fact, it is a privilege for me to contact you and I would really appreciate if you could answer some questions in hope to enrich my research, generalize the findings, and deepen my knowledge.

Looking forward to your reply

Ms. Fatima Zohra MESSAFEUR ALLAL

PhD Researcher at Djillali Liabes University

Sidi Bel-Abbès

ALGERIA

Appendix 3.2:   Questionnaire to Dr. Prasanna Sree

(Dr. Prasanna Sree is a Senior Professor at Andhra University of India and Visiting Professor at Princeton University, New Jersey, USA.) She is the first woman in the world to have devised alphabets for 19 Indian tribal languages spoken in the hill and plain lands of India.

1- Do you enjoy citizenship rights as most women in your community in particular and within the Indian society in general?

2- Does your university status or rank allow you to take administrative responsibilities in your faculty, school or university?

3- Do Indian women and men have the same salaries?

4- Does your status of a renowned linguist allow you to have more visibility and respect from colleagues of different castes?

5- To what extent are you helping the Dalit cause as a university professor?

Appendix 3.3:   Dr. Prasanna Sree's Division of the Tribal Languages of India

(The document was sent by Dr. Prasanna Sree)

Bagatha

The language Bagatha is spoken in the Paderu, Sujanakota, Karakapalli, Tajangi, Devarapalli and Peddavalasa hills in India by the Bagatha, also called Bhakta, Bhagada, Bogatha and Bhagatha, a Scheduled Tribe numbering 87,994, according to the 1981 Census.

The Bagathas speak Bagatha and Telugu with their characteristic hill accent. Those who live border areas of Orissa State also speak a form of Odia.

Being expert archers, the Bagatha served the 17th Century Golconda and GangarajuMadugole chieftains of the Visakhapatnam Agency as their army personnel. They showed so much devotion that they were recognized as their devotees or Bhaktas. The name 'Bhaktas' later became Bagathas. In appreciation of their military services the chieftains appointed them as local chiefs. Due to this shift in status, the Bagatha claimed themselves as a warrior tribe, expanded geographically, developed politically and acquired social supremacy in the tribal area over a time span of about 50 years from the late 17th Century to the early 18th Century

Nuclear families are predominant over joint families among Bagatas. They are patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal. In the absence of son, daughter inherits the property of the father.

Agriculture is the main stay of their livelihood while agriculture labour and collection of Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) are subsidiary occupations.

There are traditional councils at village level with some representatives called "Peddamanusulu". Most of the internal disputes are settled by these traditional councils and penalty will be imposed on the culprits.

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References:

- Education material:
  - https://www.indianetzone.com/8/bagata_tribe.htm
  - https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/5549854/basic-statistics-on-tribes-and-tribal-areas-of-andhra-pradesh/13
- Script in use: https://www.omniglot.com/writing/bagatha.htm

Gadaba

Gadaba or Gutub is a Mundari language spoken by the Gadaba, a Scheduled Tribe living in the Agency Area of north coastal Andhra Pradesh.

Linguistically, people of Gadaba tribe belong to the Mundari dialect. The Gadaba Tribal people are distributed in the Jey-pore, Malkangiri, Koraput and Pattangitaluks. They are, like the Savaras, farmers, but hunting and fishing make additional contributions to their food supply. The Gadaba women are good at weaving bark fiber cloth on miniature looms of their own manufacture and the woven fabric is dyed by them with various vegetable dyes. In fact no Gadaba girl is considered qualified for marriage until she has acquired the requisite skill on the loom. The enormous wire rings worn by Gadaba women as ear ornaments have also attracted considerable notice.

The village headmen have very little power, the influence of a person in the community depending on his ability and economic resources. The village council holds its meetings on stone seats under a tree. As these stone seats are associated with the spirits of the dead, the discussions are conducted in a sacred atmosphere and the decisions arrived at have added validity for that reason. They call themselves 'Mogililu' or 'Modililu' in their own dialect in the Srikakulam District. The Gadaba were formerly employed as palanquin-bearers.

This tribe owes its name to the fact that its ancestors emigrated from the banks of the Gadabari (Godavari) river, and settled at Nandapur, the former capital of the Rajas of Jeypore. Some evidence says that they can be called Kadava, as in Tamil, because of their prominent earrings - Kadu in Tamil meaning ear. It may be more proper to derive their name from the three Sanskrit gatvara, which in Odia means locomotive and palanquin-bearers may deserve the adjective 'gatvara'. Another derivation may be from the Sanskrit kadavada, which means speaking indistinctly. There is no more indistinct speech than that of the Gadaba, for their words are rarely heard. Kadavada also means vile or contemptible.

The Gadaba are distributed in the Agency Area of Visakhapatnam, Vizanagaram and Srikakulam districts and in certain agency tracts of Koraput and Ganjam districts of Orissa. According to the 1971 Census the total population of the Gadaba was 25,108. In the State of Jeypore they are the only representative of the Munda speaking people and they are "now a small occupational group of palanquin-bearers, living east of Jagadalpur."

There is a low level of literacy among the Gadaba, and their language is rarely written.

<u>References:</u>

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http://www.indianetzone.com/27/gadaba_tribe_sudras.htm
- Script in use:
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Gondi (Gōndi)

The Gonds are among the largest tribal groups in South Asia and perhaps the world. The term Gond refers to tribal peoples who live all over India's Deccan Peninsula. Most describe themselves as Gonds (hill people) or as Koi or Koitur.

Scholars believe Gonds settled in Gondwana, now known as eastern MadhyaPradesh, between the ninth and thirteenth centuriesAD. Muslim writers describe a rise of Gond states after the fourteenth century. Gond dynasties ruled in four kingdoms (Garha-Mandla, Deogarh, Chanda, and Kherla) in central India between the sixteenth and mid-eighteenth centuries.

Hereditary bards and professional storytellers called Pardhans tell stories about Gond legends and myths. This makes for a rich oral tradition. In these stories, it is said that when Gond gods were born, their mother abandoned them. The goddess Parvatirescued them, but her consort Sri ShambhuMahadeo (Shiva) kept them captive in a cave. PahandiKaparLingal, a Gond hero, who received help from the goddess JanguBai, rescued them from the cave. They came out of the cave in four groups, thus laying the foundations of the basic fourfold division of Gond society. Lingal also is responsible for creating a Gond kinship system and establishing a group of great Gond gods.

Gondi is a Central Dravidian language with about 2 million speakers mainly in the Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chhattishgarh.

Few Gondi speakers are able to write their language and there is no written literature in Gondi. There is a rich oral tradition though. When written, the Devanagari or Telugu scripts are generally used for Gondi, while the Gond script, which was created by MunshiMangal Singh Masaram of Balaghat district, Madhya Pradesh in 1928, is little used today.

References:

- Education materials:
    - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gondi_language
    - http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Germany-to-Jamaica/Gonds.html
- Script in use: https://www.omniglot.com/writing/gondi.htm

Goudu

The Goudus are a pastoral tribe in the agency tracts of Andhra Pradesh and they are recognized as Scheduled Tribe in the Agency area of Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts. They inhabit predominantly the hill tracks of Araku valley, Paderu and Manchingput areas of Visakhapatnam district. According to 1991 census, their population is 11, 279. The total literacy among Gouduis 17.78

The entire Goudu tribe is divided into twelve endo-gamous subdivisions which are further divided into exogamous clans such as: 1) Korra (Sun), 2) Pangi (Kite), 3) Killo (Tiger), 4) Vanthala (Snake), 5)Samardhi (flower) etc.

They practice shifting cultivation and also settled cultivation in the valley lands. The main occupation of Goudus of interior villages is cattle-rearing.

The popular ways of acquiring mates are through negotiations, capture, love, elopement and service. Levirate type of marriage is also in vogue. The Goudus have their traditional community councils known as "Kula Panchayats" which maintain their customary laws, settle disputes, and impose fine on the offenders.

Goudus of East Godavari district speak Telugu and those living in Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam districts speak Adivasi Oriya.

References:

- Education materials:
    o https://www.omniglot.com/writing/goudu.htm
    o https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/5549854/basic-statistics-on-tribes-and-tribal-areas-of-andhra-pradesh/13
- Script in use:http://www.aptribes.gov.in/html/tcr-studies-eci-goudu.htm

Jatapu

The Jatapu are one of the major Scheduled Tribes in the India state of Orissa, mainly in the Srikalulam and Vizianagaram districts, and also in the Koraput and Ganjam districts. The Jatapu are part of the Khondas, who speak the Khond language in the hills and Telugu on the plains. They speak a dialect called 'Kuvi ' according to the 1911 available Census Report of Madras, the Khondas and Jatapus are considered as synonymous.

The titles Jatapu or Jatapu Dora, Khond, Samanthulu, Korings, Kodulu are used synonymously for the Kuvi speaking people. Kuvi is a Dravidian language spoken by the Khond. Jatapu is the 6th largest tribes of Andhra Pradesh with population of 1,18,613 (2001 censes). They are originally part of the ancient of Jeypore. As per the historical evidence this kingdom was under the Nawab of Bedar in the 13th century.

The literacy rate is very low among the Jatapu, since they consider that a child can contribute better by engaging in some economic activity at home rather than going to school.

References:

- Education material:
https://www.omniglot.com/writing/jatapu.htm
- Script in use:
    o http://www.indianetzone.com/9/jatapu_tribe.htm
    o http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=kxv

Kammara

Kammara is spoken in the scheduled and adjoining areas of Srikakulam,Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam East and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh, India. The Kammara people are also known as KondaKammara or Ojas, their population is 45,010, according to the 2001 census, and in addition to their native language, many of them also speak Telugu. Even though traditional occupation of Kammaras of Scheduled areas is blacksmithy and carpentry, most of them gave up their traditional occupation and started resorting to shifting and settled cultivation.

Kammara tribe is divided into a number of totemic clans which regulate marital relations among the Kammaras. Some of the popular clans are Korra (Sun), Killo (Tiger), Bhalu (Bear), Samardi (flower), Pangi (kite) etc. and their surnames are identical with surnames of other tribal groups in Visakhapatnam district.

Marriage by mutual love and elopement, marriage by capture, marriage by service and marriage by negotiations are socially approved forms of acquiring mates. Both levirate and sororate are in vogue. Kammaras eat beaf and pork.

Kammaras worship NisahanDevatha, Sankudevatha, Jakiridevathaand Gangalamma. They perform festivals like Chaitrapurab, GangalammaPanduga, and new fruit crop eating ceremonies such as MamidiKotha, KandiKoha, ChikkuduKotha and Korra, SamaKotha. They perform Dhimsa folk dance along with other tribal groups.

They have traditional tribal councils of their own which regulate the social life of the Kammaras and settle their disputes. Kammaras have been living in Symbiosis with other tribes of the area. They manufacture agricultural implements and supply them to other tribals of the village and receive in kind for their services.

References:

- Education material:
  - http://www.indianetzone.com/9/kammara_tribe.htm

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Kolam

Kolam tribes of Madhya Pradesh are also identified in different names like Kolamboli, Kulme and Kolmi. The main concentration of this tribe is on the plains and mountainous region. These tribal groups are reckoned as scheduled tribes and apart from Madhya Pradesh they reside in some parts of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. The Kolam people are divided in different clans like ChalDeve, PachDeve, SahaDeve, and Sat Deve. Marriages between the same clans are not permissible. The Kolams use the name of their clans as their surnames. Some of the clans of this tribal community are Bhurchi, Lakhu, Vadang, Aanzi, Konde, Shilekar, Kodape, Bode, Rampure etc.

The early history of this tribal group says that the Gond tribes regarded the Kolam tribes as their priests in the 12th century. Change came to them in the first decades of the twentieth century, when outsiders acting as agents of the wider money economy penetrated into tribal regions, and governments with their Societal structure of this Kolma tribal community too follows the norms and practices of any of the other tribal communities of the Indian subcontinent. Some of them also consider themselves as the descendants of Pandavas of Mahabharata.

Due to close affinity with the Gond tribes, the culture of the Kolam tribes resembles with them in the fields of rituals and ceremonies. The people of this community take up agriculture as their major occupation. Some of them are also engaged in forest works, hunting, making wooden articles etc.

Kolam tribal community uses the beautiful language of Kolami. This language belongs to the famous Dravidian language family. Quite a handful of these Kolam tribes even speak other languages like Marathi, Telugu or Gondi quite fluently. For writing, this Kolma tribal community uses the famous Devnagari script. These Kolam tribes have a preference of the homemade medicines. They adapt to cultivation and farming and sometimes shifting cultivation is also practiced. In the earlier times of 1940 and onwards, these Kolma shifting cultivators

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observe subsistence farming. Till date, this system is dominant amongst people of the distant areas.

Some of the members of this Kolam tribal community are also there who work as laborers in lieu of daily wages. Other occupations include animal husbandry, hunting and also food gathering. The Kolam food gatherers mainly produce various producers from the forest areas and also sell them in the markets. The villages of these Kolam tribes are known as 'pod' which is well planned and a Chavdi is located at the centre of the 'pod'. A village goddess is established in front of the Chavdi.

Kolam is a Dravidian language spoken by about 200,000 people in the Indian states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The language is also known as Kolami, Kolamboli, Kolamy, Kolmi or Kulme.

The Kolam call themselves 'Kolvar': 'Kola' means stick or bamboo in their language. Their name probably derives from their livelihood of making baskets, wattles and winnowing fans from bamboo.

References:

- Education material:
  - http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=kfb
  - http://www.indianetzone.com/9/kolam_tribe.htm
- Script: https://www.omniglot.com/writing/kolam.htm

Konda-Dora

Konda-Dora is a Dravidian language spoken in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Orissa by about 28,000 people. The Konda-Dora are a Scheduled Tribe and are distributed in the Agency Area of the Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Srikakulam and East Godavari districts. According to the 1981 Census, their population is 1,41,374. They call themselves PandavaDoras or Pandava Rajas. They believe that they are the descendants of the Pandavas of the Mahabharata. Etymologically konda means hill, and dora means headman or chieftain, hence Konda-Dora means hill chieftain.

The Konda-Dora language, which is also known as Kubi, is closely related to the Kui language of the Khond, and has borrowed vocabulary from Odia and Telugu. Many Konda-Dora speak Telugu as well as or instead of their native language.

Konda Dora tribe is divided into a number of clans such as Korra, Killo, Swabi, Ontalu, Kimud, Pangi, Paralek, Mandelek, Bidaka, Somelunger, Surrek, Goolurigune, Oljukula etc.

Levirate type of marriage is customarily practiced in this community. Polygyny is also in vogue. Marriage by capture, elopement, negotiations and service are traditionally accepted ways of acquiring mates. Divorce is socially permitted. They eat beef and pork.

They are basically shifting cultivators. But they are adopting to settled cultivation. They collect and sell non-timbre forest produce. They perform the famous community dance called 'Dimsa' during 'Vetting' festival, and on marriage occasions. The traditional musical instruments used are Tudum, Dappu, Kiridi and Pirodi.

In the traditional panchayatheaded by the headman, 'Guruvakadu', the cases such as divorce, minor civil fights and minor social disputes are dealt and the decision of the headman is final.

Appendix 4:   Parliamentary Acts on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

Parliamentary Acts on SC/STs 1985-95

BILL No.93-F of 1987

The Constitution (Fifty-Seventh Amendment)

Bill , 1987 (au passed by The Houses of Parliament)

A bill further to amend the Constitution on India .

Be it enacted by Parliament in the Thirty-eighth Year of the Republic of India as follow :

1.(a) This Act may be called the Constitution (fifty-seventh Amendment)Act,1987.

   (b) It shall come into force on such date as the control Government may, notification in the official gazette, appoint.

2. (a) In article 332 of the Constitution after clause (3), the following clause shall be inserted namely :

   (b) Notwithstanding anything contained in clause (3), until the taking effect under article 170, of the re-adjustment on the basis of the first census after year 2000 of the number of seats in the Legislative assemblies of the States of Arunachal Pradesh,Meghalaya,Mizoran and Nagaland,The seats which shall be reserved for the Scheduled tribes in the legislative Assembly of any such States shall be.

   (i) if all the seats in the legislative Assembly of such State in existence on the date of coming into force of the constitution (Fifty-seventh Amendment) Act,1987 (hereafter in this clause referred to as the existing Assemble) are held by members of the scheduled Tribes all the seats except one .

   (ii) in any other case, such number of seats as bears to the total number of seats a proportion not less than the number (as on the said date) of the members belonging

to the scheduled tribes in the existing Assembly bears to the total number of the seats in the existing Assembly.

3. The amendment made to article 332 of the Constitution by-subsection (1) shall not affect any representation in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Meghalaya or the legislative Assembly of the State of Mizoram or the Legislative Assembly of the State of Nagaland unitil the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Arunachal Bradesh or the Legislative Assembly of the State of Meghalaya or ther legislative Assembly of the State of Mizorma or the Legislative Assembly of the State of Nagaland existing at the commencement of this Act.

Bill No .104-F of 1987

The constitution (scheduled tribes) order (amendment) bill,1987

(As passed by the Houses of parliament).

Tribes specified relation to the State of Meghalaya.

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Thirty-eighth year of the Republic of India as follows.

1. (1) This Act my be called the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) order (Amendment) Act ,1987 .

   (2) It shall be deemed to have come into force on the 19 h day of September, 1987 .

2. In the Scheduled to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 (hereinafter referred to as the participle Order) "Part XI-Meghalaya",after item 14, the following items shall be inserted namely :

"15.Borro kacharis 16.koch 17. Raba,Rava"

3. (1) The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Ordinance 1987, is hereby repealed .

(2) Notwithstanding such repeal anything done or or any action taken under the principal Order, as amended by the said ordinance, shall be deemed to have been done or taken under the principal Order, as amended by this Act.

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes

(Prevention of Atrocities) Act ,1989 .

Act No.33 of 1989 (11 th September , 1989)

An Act to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, to provide for Special Courts for the trail of such offences and for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of such offences and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto .

Be it enacted by Parliament in the Fortieth Year of the Republic of India as follows:

Chapter I

Preliminary

1. Short title, extent commencement

   (a) This Acts may be called the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 .

   (b) (2) It extends to the whole of India except the State of jammu and kashmir .

   (c) (3) It shall come into force on such date as the Central government may, by notification in the Official Gazette appoint.

2. Definition

(d) In this Act unless the context otherwise requires –

(e) "Atrocity" means an offence punishable under section 3:

(f) "Code" means the Code of Criminal Procedure,1973 (2 of1974) :

(g) "Scheduled" Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall have the meaning assigned to the respectively under clause (24) and clause (25) of article 366 of the Constitution.

(h) "Special Court "means a Court of Session specified as a special Court section 14.

(i) "Special Public Prosecutor" means a public Prosecutor specified as a Special Public prosecutor or an advocate referred to in section 15.

(j) words and expressions used not defined in this Act and defined in the Code or the India Penal Code (45 of 1860) shall have the meaning assigned to them respectively in the Code ,or as the case may be , in the India Penal Code.

3.Any reference in this Act to any enactment or any provision there of shall ,in relation to an area in which such enactment of such provision is not in force be construed as a reference to the corresponding .

Chapter II

Offences Of Atrocities

1. Punishments for offences of atrocities: (1) Whoever, not being a member of a scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribes …

(a) Force member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe to drink or eat any inedible or obnoxious substance.

(b) Acts with intent to cause injury or annoyance to any member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe by dumping excreta, waste matter, caresses or any other obnoxious substance in his premises or neighborhood.

(c) forcibly removes clothes from the person of a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe or parades him naked or with painted face or body or commits any similar act which is derogatory to human dignity .

(d) Wrongfully occupies or cultivated any owned by, or allotted to, or notified by any competent authority to be allotted to a member of a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribes or a gets the land allotted to him transferred.

(e) wrongfully dispossesses a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe from his land or premises or interferes with the enjoyment of his over any land ,premises or water .

(f) compels or entices a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe to do begar or other similar of forces or bonded labour other than any compulsory service for public purpose imposed by Government.

(g) forces or intimidates a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe not to vote or a particular candidate or to vote in a manner other than provided by law .

(h) institutes false , malicious or vexatious suit or criminal or other legal proceeding against a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe.

(i) gives any false or frivolous information to any public servant and there by causes such servant to use lawful power to the injury or annoyance of a member of a Scheduled Castes or a Scheduled Tribes.

(j) Intentionally insults or intimidates with intent to humiliate a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe in any place within public view.

(k) Assaults or uses force to ant woman belonging to a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe with intent to dishonour or outrage her modesty.

(I) being in a position to dominate the will of a woman belonging to a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe and uses that position to exploit her sexually to which she would not have otherwise agreed.

(m) Corrupt or fouls the water of any spring reservoir or any other source ordinarily used by members of the Scheduled Caste or the Scheduled Tribes so as to rende rit less fit the purpose for which it is ordinarily used.

(n) denies a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribes any customary right of passage to a place of public resort or obstructs such member so as to prevent him from using or having access to a place of public resort which other members of public or any section thereof have to use or access to .

(o) Forces or causes a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe to leave his house village or other place of residence.

(p) Shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to five years and with fine.

2. Whoever, not being a member of a SC or STR.

(a) gives or fabricates false evidence inter tending there by to cause ,or knowing it to be likely that he will thereby cause ,any member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe to be convicted of an offence which is capital by the law for the begging in force shall be punished with imprisonment for life and if an innoncent member of a Scheduled Caste Tribe or a Scheduled Tribe be convicted and executed in consequence of such false or fabricated evidence, the person who gives or fabricates such false evidence, shall be punished with death.

(b) gibe or fabricates false evidence interding thereby to cause or knowing it to be likely that there by cause, any member of a Scheduled Caste Tribe to be convicted of an offence which is not capital but punishable with imprisonment for a term of seven years or upwards, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to seven years or upward and with five .

(c) commits mischief fire or any explosive intending to cause, or knowing it to be likely that he will thereby cause damage to any property belonging to a member of a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe ,shall be punishable with imprisonment for a

term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to seven years and with fine .

(d) commits mischief by fire or any explosive substance intending to cause or knowing it to be likely he will thereby cause destruction of any building which is ordinarily uses as a place of worship or as a place for human dwelling or a place for custody of the property by member a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe shall be punishable with imprisonment for life and fine

(e) commits any offence under the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860) punishable with imprisonment for a term of ten years or more against a person or property on the ground that such is a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe or such property belongs to such member to such member, shall be punishable with imprisonment for life and with fine.

(f) knowingly or having reason to believe that an offence has been committed under this chapter, causes any evidence or the commission of that offence to disappear with the intention of screening the offender from legal punishment, or that intention gives any information respecting the offence which he know or believes to be false ,shall be punishable with the punishment provided for that offence or.

(g) being a public servant commits any offence under this section shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than one year but which may extend to the punishment provided for that offence.

3.Punishment for neglect of duties whoever, being a public servant but not being a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe, willfully neglects his duties required to be performed by him under' this Act, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term shall not be less than six months but which may extend to one year.

4.Enhanced punishment for subsequent conviction-whoever, having already been convicted of an offence under this chapter is convicted for the second offence any offence subsequent to the second offence , shall be punishable with imprisonment

for a term which shall not be less than one year but which my extend to the punishment provided for that offence .

5. Application of certain provision of the Indian penal Code-Subject to the other provisions of section 34 chapter III Chapter IV, Chapter V, Chapter, Chapter VA section 149 and chapter XXIII of the India Penal Code (45 of 1860),shall so far as may be ,apply for the purposes of this Acts as they apply for the purposes of the Indian Penal Code.

6. Forfeiture of property of certain persons:

  (a) Where a person has been convicted of any offence punishable under this Chapter the Special Court may in addition to awarding any punishment, by order in writing declare that any property movable or immovable or both belonging to the person which has been used for the commission of that offence shall forfeited to Government .

  (b) Where any person is accused of any offence under this chapter it shall be open to the special Court trying him to pass an order that all or any of the properties movable or immovable or both belonging to him , shall, during the period of such trial, be attached ,and where trial ends in convictions the property so attached shall be liable to forfeiture to the extent it is required for the purpose of realization of any fine imposed under this Chapter .

7. Presumption as to offence –In a prosecution for an offence under this Chapter ,if it is proved that :

  (a) the accused rendered any financial assistance to a person accused of, or reasonably suspected of committing ,an offence under this Chapter ,the Special shall presume unless the contrary is proved that such person had omitted the offence.

  (b) a group of persons committed an offence under this Chapter it- is proved that the offence committed was a sequel to any existing dispute regarding lands or any matter, it shall be presumed that the offence was committed in furthermore of the common intention or in prosecution of the common object.

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8. Conferment of Power

(a) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Code or in any other provision of this Act, the State Government may, if consider it necessary or expedient so to do-.

(i) for prevention of and coping with any offence under this Act ,or.

(ii) for any case or class or group of case under this Act, in any district or part thereof, confer by notification in the Official gazette on any officer of the State Government the powers exercisable by a police officer under the Code in such district to part there of or, as the case may be for such case or class or group of cases and in particular the powers of arrest investigation and prosecution of persons before ant Special Court .

(b) All officers of police and all officers of Government shall assist the officer referred to in sub-section (1) in the execution of the provision of this Act rule, scheme or order made there under.

©The provision of the Code shall so far as may be apply to the exercise of the powers by an officer under sub-section (1)

Chapter III

Externment

1. Removal of person likely to commit offence

(a) Where the Special Court is satisfied ,upon a complaint or police report that a person is likely to commit an offence under chapter II of this Act in area included in Scheduled Areas or tribal areas as referred to in article 244 of the constitution it may by order in writing direct such person to remove himself beyond the limits of such area by such route and within such time as may be specified in the order and not to return to that area from which he was direct to remove himself for such period not exceedind two years as may be specified in the order ..

(b) The Special Court shall along with the order under sub section (1) , communicate to the person directed under that sub-section the grounds on which order has been made.

(c) The Special Court may revoke or modify the order made under sub-section (1) for the reasons to be recorded in writing on the representation made by the person against whom such order has been made or by any other on his behalf within thirty days from the date of the order.

2. Procedure on failure of person to remove himself from and enter there on after removal.

(a) If a person to whom a direction has been issued under section 10 to remove himself any area-

(i) Fails to remove himself as directed or

(ii) Having so removed himself enters such area within the period specified in the order Otherwise than with the permission in writing of the Special Court under sun-section (2) the Special Court may cause him to be arrested and removed in police custody to such place outside such area as the Special Court may specify.

(b) The Special Court may order writing permit any person in respect of whom an order under section 10 has been made to return to the area which he was directed to remove himself for such temporary period and subject to such condition as may be specified in such order may require him to execute a bond with or without surety for the due observation of the conditions imposed.

(c) The Special Court may at any time revoke any such permission.

(d) Any person who with such permission returns to the area from which he was directed to remove himself shall observe the conditions imposed and at the expiry of the temporary period for which he was permitted to return or the revocation of such permission before the expire of such temporary period shall remove himself outside such area and shall not return there to within the unexpired portion specified under section 10 without fresh permission.

(e) If a person fails to observe any of the conditions imposed or to remove himself accordingly or having so removed himself enters or returns to such area fresh permission the Special Court my cause him to be arrested and removed in police custody to such place outside such area as the Special Court may specify.

3. Taking measurements and photographs etc, of person against who order under section 10 made

(a) Every person against whom an order has been made under section 10 shall if so required by the Special Court ,allow his measurements and photographs to be taken police officer.

(b) If any person referred to sub-section (1) ,when required to allow his measurements or photographs to be taken resists or refuses to allow his taking of such measurements or photographs it shall be lawful to use all necessary means to secure the taking there of .

(c) Resistance or refusal to allow the taking of measurements or photographs under sub- section (2) shall be deemed to be an offence under section 186 of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 186).

(d) Where an order under section 10 revoked, all measurements and photographs including negative) taken sub-section (20 shall be destroyed or made over to the person against whom such order is made.

4. Penalty for non-compliance of order under section 10-Any person contravening an order of the Special Court made under section to shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year and with fine.

Chapter IV

Special Courts

1.Special Court –For the purpose of providing for speedy trial the State Government shall, with the concurrence of the Chief Justice of High Court ,by notification in the

Official Gazette Special for each district a Court of Session to be a special court to by the offences under this Act .

2.Special public Prosecutor-for every special court the State Government shall ,by notification in the Official Gazette ,specify a Public Prosecutor or appoint an advocate who has been in practice as an advocate for not less than seven years, as a Special Public Prosecutor for the purpose of conducing cases in that Court.

Chapter V

Miscellaneous

1.Power of State Government to impose collective fine –The provisions of section 10 A of the Protection of Civil Rights Acts 1955 (22 of 1955) shall ,so far as may be,apply for the purposes of impositions and realisation of collective fine and for all other matters connected there with under the Act.

2. Preventive actions to be taken by law and order machinery.

 (a) A District Magistrate or a Sub-divisional Magistrate or any other Executive Magistrate or any other Executive or any police officer not below the rank of a Deputy Superintend of Police may ,on receiving information and after such inquiry as he may think necessary has reason to believe that a person or a group of persons not belonging to the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes residing in or frequenting any place within the local limits of his jurisdiction is likely to commit an offence or has threatened to commit any offence under this Act and is of the opinion that thereis sufficient ground for proceeding declare such an area to be an area prone to atrocities and take necessary action for keeping the peace and good behaviour and maintenance of public order an tranquility and may take preventive action .

(b)The provision of Chapters VIII ,X and XI of the Code shall ,so far as may be ,apply for the purpose of sub-section (1)

 (c) The state Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette make one or more schemes specifying the manner in which the officers referred to in sub-section

(1) shall take appropriate action specified in such scheme or schemes to prevent atrocities and to restore the feeling of security amongst the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

3.Section 438 of the Code not to apply to persons committing an offence under the Act-Nothing in section 483 of the Code shall apply in relation to any case involving the arrest of any person on an accusation of having committed an offence under this Act.

4.Section 360 the code of the provisions of the Probation of Offender Act not to apply to persons guilty of an offence under the Act-The provisions of section 360 of the code and the provisions of the probation of Offenders Act 1958 (20 of 1958) shall not apply to any person above the age of eighteen years who is guilty of having committed an offence under this Act .

5.Act to override other laws –Save as otherwise provided in this Act the provisions of this Act Shall have effect not withstanding anything inconsistent there with constrained in any other law for the time being in force or any custom or usage or any instrument having effect by virtue of any such law2.1.Durty or Government to ensure effective implementation of the Act .

 (a) Subject to such rule as the Central Government may make in this behalf ,the State Government shall take such measures as may be necessary for the effective implementation of this Act (2) In particular ,and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provision, such measures may include

 (i) The provision for adequate facilities including legal aid, to the persons subjected to atrocities to enable them to avail themselves of justice.

 (ii) The provision for travelling and a maintenance expenses to witnesses, Including the victims of atrocities during investigation and trail of offences under this Act,(iii) the provision for the economic and social rehabilitation of the victims of the atrocities .

(iii) The appointment of officers for initiating or exercising supervision over prosecution for the contravention of the provisions of this Act,(v) the setting up committees at such appropriate levels as the State Government may think filto assist that Government in formulation or implementation of such measures ,(vi) provision for a periodic survey of the working of the provisions of this Act with a view to suggesting measures for the better implementation of the provisions of this Act.

(iv) The identification of the area where the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes are likely to be subjected to atrocities and adoption of such measures so as to ensure safety for such members .

The Central Government shall take such steps as may be necessary to co-ordinate the measures taken by the State Government under sub-section (1).

The Central Government shall every years place on the table of each house of parliament a report on the measures taken by itself and by the State Government in pursuance of the provisions of this section .

6.Protection of action taken in good faith-No suit prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against the Central Government or against the State Government or any officer or authority of Government or any other person for anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Act.

7.power to made reles

(a) The Central Government may by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

(b) Every rule made under this Act shall be laid as soon may be after it is made ,before each house of parliament , while it is in session for a total period of thirty days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions and if ,before the expiry of the session immediately following the sessions or the successive sessions aforesaid both houses agree in making any modification inthe rule or both houses agree the rules should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified from or be of no effect as the case may be , so however

that any such modification or amendment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule .

<center>**Bill No.98-F of 1990**</center>

<center>**The constitution (Sixty-Fifty Amendment) Bill,1990**</center>

<center>**(As Passed by the Houses of Parliament)**</center>

A Bill Futher to amend the constitution of India

Be it enacted by parliament in the Forty-first year for the republic of India as follow :

1.(a) This Act may be called the Constitution (sixty-fith Amendment)Act ,1990.

(b) it shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may by notification in the Official Gazette appoint

2. In article 338 of the Constitution

(a) for the marginal heading the following marginal heading shall be substituted namely-National Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Schedules Tribes

For clauses (1) and (2) ,the following clauses shall be substituted namely .

(i)There shall be a commission for the Schedules Caste and schedules tribes to be known as the National commission for the Schedules Castes and Schedules Tribes

(ii) Subject to the provisions of any law made in this behalf by parliament ,the commission shall consist of a chairperson vice chair person and five other Members and the conditions of service and tenue of office of the chairperson vice-chairperson and other member so appointed shall be such as the president may by rule determine.

(iii) The chairperson vice-chairperson and other member of the commission shall be appointed by the president by warrant under his had seal.

(iv) the commission shall have the power to regulate its owns procedure .

(v) It shall be the duty of the commissions .

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(c) To investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled castes and schedules tribes under this constitution or under any other law for the time being in force or under any order of the Government and to evaluate the working of such safeguards

 (d) To inquire into specific complains with respect to the deprivation of right and safeguards of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes .

(e) To participate and advise on the planning process of socio economic development of the Scheduled Caste and Schedules Tribes and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and State.

(f) To present to the president annually and at such other times as the Commissions may deem fit, report upon the working of those safeguards .

(g) To make in such report recommendation as to the measures that should be taken by the Union or any State for the effective implementation of those safeguards and other measures for protection welfare and socio-economic development of the scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes and.

(h) To discharge such other functions in relation to the protection welfare and development and advancement of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as the President may, subject to the provision of any law made by parliament by rule specify.

3. The president shall cause all such report to be laid before each house of parliament along with a memorandum explaining the action taken or proposed to be taken on the recommendations relating to the Union and the reasons for the non-acceptance, if any of any of such recommendations.

4. Were any such report or any part there of relates to any matter with which any State Government is concerned a copy of such report shall be forwarded to the Governor of the State who shall cause it to be laid before the legislature of the State along with a memorandum explaining the action taken or proposed to be taken on

the recommendations relating to the State and the reasons for the non-acceptance, if any of such recommendations.

5.The Commission shall , while investigating any matter referred to in sub-clause (a) or inquiring into any complaint referred to in sub-clause (b) of clause (5), have all the powers of a civil trying a suit and in particular in respect of the following matters namely .

(a) Summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person from any part of India examining him on oath .

(b) Requiring the discovery and production of any document.

(c) receiving evidence on affidavits .

(d) Requisitioning any public records or copy there of from any court of office .

(e) issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses and document .

(f) Any other matter which the president may, by rule determine.

6. The Union and every State Government shall consult the commission on all major policy matters affecting Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes .(c (existing clause (3) shall be renumbered as clauses (10)

Bill No.111 of 1991

The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order

(Second Amendment)Bill,1991

A bill to provide for the inclusion of certain tribe in the list of Scheduled Tribes specified in relation to the State of Karnataka.

Be it enacted by parliament in the Forty-second Year of the Republic of India as folow.

1. (a) This Act may be called the Constitution (Scheduled Tribe) order (Second Amendment)Act ,1991.

(b)(It shall be deemed to have come into on the 19 the day of April 1991.

2.In the Schedule to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) order ,1950,in Part VI karnataka, in iterm 38, the following shall be inserted at the namely "Naik,Nayak,Beda and Valmiki".

Bill No ,56 of 1993

The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Bill,1993

A bill to constitute a National Commission for karamcharis and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental there to .

Be it enacted by parliament in the Forty-fourth year of the Republic of India as follows

Bill No ,43 of 1994

The constitution (seventy-seventh-Amendment) Bill,1995

(as passed by the Houses of Parliament)

A bill further to Amend the Constitution of India .

Be it enacted by parliament in the Forty-sixth year of the Republic of India as follows :

1. This Act may be called the Constitution (Seventy-seventh Amendment)Act,1995.

2. In article 16 of the constitution after clause (4), the following clause shall be inserted namely.

3. Nothing this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for reservation in matters of promotion to any class or classes of posts in the services under the State in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes which, in the opinion of the State are not adequately represented in the services under the State .

Glossary

Glossary

Adivasi: a member of any of the aboriginal tribal peoples living in India before the arrival of the Aryans in the second millennium BC.

Agni: The god of fire, one of the three chief divinities of the Vedas.

Agni Pariksha: a trial by fire described in the Sanskrit epic poem Ramayana.

Ankoor: the word means "sapling, sprout, shoot" in Sanskrit.

Aryan: relating to or denoting a people speaking an Indo-European language who invaded northern India in the 2nd millennium BC, displacing the Dravidian and other aboriginal peoples.

Bindi: The holy dot or bindi is an auspiscious makeup worn by young Hindi girls and women on their forehead, and is traditionally a red dot made with vermilion, and signifies female energy (shakti) and is considered a symbol of marriage.

Brahma: The creator god in Hinduism, who forms a triad with Vishnu and Shiva. Brahma was an important god of late Vedic religion, but has been little worshipped since the 5th century AD.

Brahmin: person belonging to the highest Hindu caste of the Varna system of traditional Hindu society, and regarded to be responsible for society's spiritual aspects. A man born into a Brahmin family becomes twice-born (dvija) when he undergoes initiation into Vedic education.

Chaturvarna: is a Sanskrit word, Chatur means four and Varna means 'Groups', i.e, it means four groups. There were four groups of people Brahmins, where it means the four castes.

Chipko: In the 1970s, an organized resistance to the destruction of forests spread throughout India and came to be known as the Chipko movement. The

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name of the movement comes from the word 'embrace', as the villagers hugged the trees, to prevent the contractors' from felling them.

Dalit: Dalit in Sanskrit is derived from the root dal which means to split, break, crack, used first by social reformer Jotiba Phule (1827-1890), to describe the outcastes and untouchables as the oppressed and broken victims of the Indian caste-ridden society. It is also used in contemporary India to describe 'Sudras'.

Devadasi: In India, devadasi means "servant of god." Young girls are "married" to an idol, deity, or temple. These girls are often from the lowest castes in India—their parents have given them to temples as human offerings in order to appease the gods. In the local language, they have a saying about devadasis: "Servant of god, but wife of the whole town." In reality, they are sexual slaves, and devadasi girls are forbidden from marrying. And they have to earn their own income by begging in the streets.

Dharma: In Hindu philosophy, 'dharma' means religious duty. In Buddhism 'dharma' implies 'protection' from suffering by following Buddha's teachings.

Dharmshala: a building devoted to a religious or charitable purpose, especially a shelter for travelers.

Dharma Sutra: A dharma sutra is a book or scripture that forms the initial foundation of Hindu law, containing regulations regarding government, castes, relationships among people, economic actions, diet and religious affairs.

Endogamy: Anthropologically, the word means the custom of marrying only within the limits of a local community, clan, or tribe or caste.

Formalism: Formalism is an early twentieth century mode of criticism that has its roots in Russian Formalism or the work of linguists such as Roman Osipovich Jakobson, and a group of linguists and critics who formed the society Opuyaz or the Society for the Study of Poetical Language in 1915. Formalism is also known as the 'New Criticism'. This critical approach examines a literary text or art work through its aesthetic composition such as form, language, technique and style. The formalist approach considers the form, structure or shape of the text, as well as technical features, more important than the content and context.

Goonda: a hired thug or criminal paid to hurt people or cause damage

Gunas: is from the Sanskrit word 'guna' meaning thread and quality. It is one of the three qualities (in Sankhya and Vedantic philosophy) of prakriti, or nature, which are passion (rajas), dullness or inertia (tamas), and goodness or purity (sattva).

Harijan: The polite form for untouchable coined by Mahatma Gandhi literally 'people of God', however this term is considered condescending and Dalit is preferred.

Hinduism: the main religion of India which includes the worship of many gods and the belief that after you die you will return to life in a different form.

Incest: Having sexual relations between people classed as being too closely related to marry each other. For instance, the crime of having sexual intercourse with a parent, child, sibling, or grandchild.

Jati: It is a Heredetary social class among Hindus; stratified according to ritual purity. It is also defined as a Hindu caste or a distinctive social group of which there are thousands throughout India.

Kali: Hindu Godess, known for her role as destructor of evil, a non-benign form of Godess Parvati, wife of Shiva. Kali is worshipped nationally, but especially in Eastern India, and has also been used as a feminist icon.

Karma: In Hinduism and Buddhism is the sum of a person's actions in this and previous states of existence, viewed as deciding their fate in future existences.

Kshatriya: Person belonging to the warrior caste, derived from kshatra, meaning 'dominion, power, government.'

Lok Sabha: Literally House of the People; similar in composition to the House of Commons in the UK; therefore, made up of elected representatives from all over the country.

Maharashtra: Maharashtra, is a state in the western region of India. It is the second most populous state after Uttar Pradesh and third largest state by area in India. Maharashtra is the wealthiest state in India, contributing 15% of the country's industrial output and 13.3% of its GDP. Maharashtra is bordered by the Arabian Sea to the west, Gujarat and the Union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli to the northwest, Madhya Pradesh to the north and northeast, Chhattisgarh to the east, Karnataka to the south, Andhra Pradesh to the southeast and Goa to the southwest. The state covers an area of 307,731 km² or 9.84% of the total geographical area of India. Mumbai, the capital city of the state, is India's largest city and the financial capital of the nation. Nagpur is the second capital of the state. Marathi is the state's official language. Maharashtra is the world's second most populous first-level administrative country sub-division. Were it a nation in its own right, Maharashtra would be the world's tenth most populous country ahead of Mexico. In the 17th century, the Marathas rose under the leadership of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj against the Mughals, who ruled a large part of India.

Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti: Women's Self Defense Organization.

Marathi: an Indic language spoken mainly in the western Indian state of Maharashtra.

Mochra: Popular demonstrations and agitations against a specific cause.

Narmada Bachao Andolan: Literally, Save River Narmada Movement. It is a national coalition of environmental and human rights activists, scientists, academics, and project-affected people, working to stop several dam projects in the Narmada Valley.

Naxalite: An informal name given to revolutionary communist groups that were born out of the Sino-Soviet split within the Indian communist movement. The term comes from Naxalbari, a village in Bengal where a leftist section led a militant peasant uprising in 1967, to establish 'revolutionary rule' in India.

Orissa: Odisha. Formerly Orissa is a state of Eastern India on the Bay of Bengal. Brought under British rule in 1803, Odisha became a constituent state of independent India in 1950. Bhubaneswar is the capital.

Panchayats: Local self-government bodies, primarily at village levels.

Raj: The British Raj was the period of British rule in India which ended in 1947.

Rajasthan: A state in North West of India; formerly Rajputana and a group of small states. Its Capital is Jaipur.

Rig Veda: It is one of the four canonical sacred texts of Hinduism, known collectively as the Vedas. "Rig Veda" is the oldest of the Vedas, and one of the oldest extant texts in any Indo-European language.

Sati: An upper caste Hindu custom in India in which the widow was burnt to ashes on her dead husband's pyre; also used to describe a virtuous woman.

Savarna: Communities which belong to one of the four varnas or classes are called savarna or "caste Hindus".

Sita's story: Is part of the Hindu epic, Ramayana. She was the consort of Lord Rama, prince of Ayodhya, and she underwent a number of trials and tribulations, including following her husband in a nomadic and penurious life when he was unjustly exiled for 14 years; being abducted by Ravana, king of Sri Lanka; being rescued by Rama, but then forced to go through a 'trial by fire' (agni pariska) to prove her chastity; and then abandoned by him when she was pregnant, and being asked to prove her faithfulness by Rama several years later; at which point, she asked for Mother Earth to swallow her as a sign of her virtue.

Sudra: Member of the fourth and lowest caste, his role in Vedic India was that of an artisan or a labourer, also the 'untouchable' caste that have suffered various forms of oppression.

Thug: a member of an organization of robbers and assassins in India. Devotees of the goddess Kali, the Thugs waylaid and strangled their victims, usually travellers, in a ritually prescribed manner. They were suppressed by the British in the 1830s.

Vaishya: Member of the third of the four major castes comprising of merchants, artisans and landowners.

Varna: Caste, literally means 'colour.'