



**Social Exclusion of Dalit Women in Contemporary India : A Case
Study of Chamars in Kanpur District of Uttar Pradesh**

Ph.D. Thesis

by

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Chapter-6

Conclusion

It is a common-sense fact that the Dalits in general and the Dalit women in particular are a community who face marginalization and discrimination. Historically they are the most stigmatized groups of people and their marginalization is sanctioned through the religious texts. It is also a common-sense that the situation of the Dalits and Dalit women has hardly changed since ancient times. What are the contemporary nature and forms of marginalization and discrimination? Particularly, in the context of a plethora of policies and governmental initiatives, how such marginalization and discrimination survive and escapes the vigilant eyes of the government welfare and social justice mechanisms.

The perspective of ‘social exclusion’ promises to foreground the complexities of discrimination and marginalization of the Dalits and Dalit women, because the concept does not make any assumptions rather leaves the variables to emerge from the empirical realities. Instead, what the approach of social exclusion assumes is the fact that discrimination and marginalization is a product of multiple mechanisms that are at play, which are enmeshed with each other. Social exclusion is always already multidimensional in nature and this multidimensionality is the main thrust of the concept that identifies the complexities of exclusion for a policy initiative.

In the introduction and review of literature chapters, we reviewed a number of studies conducted which attempt to use the concept of social exclusion to understand marginalization and discrimination, in general, and Dalit and Dalit women in particular. Most studies identify class, caste and gender as primary mechanisms that are enmeshed to produce marginalization and discrimination among the Dalits. In this study, we attempt to empirically test these theoretical findings and try to understand how the multidimensional forms of exclusion operate in the rural and urban settings.

The Chamars of Kanpur are an important caste groups, not only because they are marginalized and excluded, but also because this community has a historicity of resistance to exclusion and marginalization. Hence, it was interesting to understand how such an assertive group have dealt with their social situation. This study found

out that despite the efforts by the government as well as by the resistance movements from the community, exclusion and discrimination is structurally embedded and complexly enmeshed with variables of caste, class and gender. The study collected both primary and secondary data to understand the complexity of social exclusion taking place among the women of the Chamar community in the district of Kanpur, Utter Pradesh. The study found out that the Dalits and the Dalit women in particular are still discriminated on the basis of caste, class and gender both in rural and urban areas. This disqualifies the popular notion that with modernity and urbanization caste identities will wither away. Social exclusion and discrimination of Dalit women on the basis caste, class, and gender happened at both rural and urban area in public as well as private domains. They live in the bottom rung of the society. High rates of illiteracy, marriage at early age, early motherhood, multiple forms of discrimination and violence are some of the major forms of exclusion they face in day to day life.

The study also found out that the Dalits are still excluded in the mainstream society just because of their traditional occupation which ascribed lower position to them in caste hierarchy and attached stereotype of untouchable identity. Because of this untouchable identity the majority of the Dalit community are forced to live in poverty and lack of basic resources that should be available to an ordinary citizen in this country. The case of the Dalit women is a classic case of graded inequality, which implies hierarchical unequal treatment of rights towards them. The exclusion, discrimination, and violence towards Dalit women are structural and systematic, which operates through dominant castes the issues of Dalit women are significantly different from the upper caste women. This Exclusion and violence towards the Dalit women becomes a tool for revenge on the community male and family with the active support from the local State and the machineries of the government. The Dalits and Dalit women live in constant fear and lead a miserable life. The upper and dominant caste hegemonies all the resources especially in rural areas, and unleash economic, socio-political and cultural hegemony.

Many laws, policies and schemes have been initiated that has brought some changes in the status among the Dalits, but the rate of improvement in their socio-economic status has not been enough to reduce the absolute level of their discrimination and poverty. There is also a gap between the legislative provisions and implementation of schemes, as stated earlier; causing poverty as well as the continuation of

discrimination and exploitation of Dalit. It is recommended that the presence of the Dalit and Dalit women is specified with the proper manners in those laws, policies and schemes. The policy against discrimination and deprivation needs to pay attention to the intersectionality. It has to recognise that discrimination and exclusion towards the Dalits not only characterised by the caste, it is also associated with ethnicity, class, gender, and religion and other factors responsible in their socio-economic, cultural and political spheres. It requires an inclusive policy and scheme to overcome deprivation associated with ethnicity, class, gender, and religion etc.

Though after independence government initiated many policies, programmes, and schemes to overcome deprivation and poverty but the major provinces come through the reservation policy; “The government in recognition to the peripheral status of the marginalised social communities has consistently promulgated various legislations and statutes, which are influential by main considerations, namely: To overcome the multiple deprivations of the marginalised social groups inherited from exclusion in the past, and to the extent possible bring them at par with the others;

- a. To provide protection against exclusion and discrimination in the present by encouraging their effective participation in the general economic, social and political processes of the country.

Towards these ends, the government had utilised two-fold strategies, which include:

- a. Anti-discriminatory and protective measures
- b. Development and empowering measures”¹

The Government has used a dual strategy for the empowerment of the scheduled castes, first, the provision of legal safeguards against discrimination and secondly, pro-active or positive measures in the form of the reservation policy for the public sector and state-supported sectors. Reservation for the Scheduled Castes in the government service, educational institutes, and political bodies like the central and the state legislatures also fall under positive measures. These measures have been integrated to ensure the equal participation of the Scheduled Castes in the public domain-democratic decision-making bodies. It is equally important to understand that the reservation policy is confined to the state-run and supportive sectors. The private

¹Thorat, Sukhadeo, Senapati, Chittaranjan. (2006). Reservation Policy in India-Dimensions and Issues. *Indian Institute Studies of Dalit Studies, (Vol I, Number 02)*, p.2.

sector where more than 90 percent of the scheduled caste workers are engaged is excluded and therefore, remains outside the purview of the reservation policy and open to possibilities to discrimination.”² This is totally true that on the one hand reservations provide positive measures for inclusion in the public sectors, education, political spheres, on the other hand, the percentage of public sector is very less and the share of public services day to day is reduced in the country where more than 95 percent hegemonies in the private sector are occupied by the dominant castes. It is true that whatever affirmative programmes towards the Scheduled Castes implemented cannot bypass the reality that the social and cultural exclusion is continuing and the violence and exploitative nature of the upper and dominant castes towards them still as it is. It will require a common policy of social and cultural institutions to ensure the participation of all castes especially the inclusion of all caste women (because the imposition upon various code and conduct since ancient times in society is executed through the women) in various spheres of the society.

The proactive measures in the form of legal safeguards against discrimination and exclusion to give Dalit the equal share in socio-economic, political, cultural spheres should be done through policy interventions as legal enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, special and general empowering measures which come as part of the anti-poverty programme. These pro-active policies should be given equal opportunity mainly in the form of ensure to equal access to employment, basic amenities, assets for better livelihood, housing, education, health, civil and cultural rights, etc. This will require specifying policy measures to certify equal share and participation of Dalit and Dalit women in such areas as the legislature, executive, and employment in government and private sector, education, health.

Dalit community and civil society itself finds it effective, positive interaction between men and women and to take the initiative to ensure the active participation of Dalit women in local power structures in the Panchayat and Municipal Corporations. This may encourage the more representations of Dalits and Dalit women and positive interaction between them, which can become more meaningful through their representation and participation in administration and decision making at all level.

²Ibid, p.8

Sukhadeo Thorat argues that there is a need to recognise the source of existing differentials among disadvantaged groups to identify the different reasons for which justice is owed to these groups. One way is to draw attention to the discrimination between removal of historical discrimination or removal of disadvantages imposed by law and custom of equalisation of life chances. It is right to say the social inclusion is a process to recognise the equal opportunities, the resource they need to participate fully in socio-economic, political, cultural life and enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which we live. It ensures that they participate more in decision making on matters that affect them and gain equal access to the resources, opportunities, and services they need to enjoy their fundamental rights.

It is the responsibility of the State to provide equal opportunity by removing hurdles in the process of access to the framework of laws and policy, supported by the institutions, government for their operation, whose access to opportunities is limited due to a lot of barriers experienced through intersectional discrimination. The denial of access is based on them belong to a particular caste, poor and women and therefore condition has to be dealt various contexts. The state has a power to determine the things and can be easier and affirmative towards the marginalised section of the society; the state has to formulate remedial programmes which target women mainly Dalit women. Government and non-governments sectors provide integrated development programmes for Dalit community, so that Dalit women can accumulate social, economic and culture equality.

In the era of privatisation, the state has to look over its revised role on Dalit women, because there is a significant gap in the state mechanism. In addition to government efforts, NGOs should provide and promote accessing skill training centres, access to finance and productive resource for them within premises, self-help group, support MSME (Micro Small and Medium Enterprises) programme and institutes in specifically rural areas, where Dalit women find alternative source of income and enter or promote their enterprises. Because this is the current government agenda to promote small industry and enterprises basically for those who have a small amount of capital and cherish their business, but none of the villages in my fieldwork discussed about the government providing these schemes to cover this programme.

The other way of inclusion of Dalit and Dalit Women identified with their movements, their writings, and their leaders and freedom fighters included in mainstream academic and nationalist movements which is basically ignored by the mainstream academic and nationalist writers. The Researcher found that in many research works in pre-independence and post-independent India, the Chamar community always counterattacked in the form of caste movements, peasant's movements, feminist movements, movements against the landlords. Mutiny rebel with their direct participant similar to the national movement with is ignored by the mainstream history and academic and intelligential and not recognised their efforts because of these agencies are hegemonies by the upper caste. As well as Dalit or lower caste men and women also write their experience in writing form, present the counter culture, which is dominated by the upper caste. Through their writing, the most influence part of the Dalit writings to raise their voice in the form of Autobiography which legislating their own life stories based on daily life experiences encourage publicising as well as the ability to rational in many formal and informal periods. This will create to present alternate literature and an ironic collection of information on Dalit Women. The mainstream women's movement has to be focused and work together with the Dalit women's movement. The Dalit movement, which is led by the Dalit male, also give priority to the Dalit feminist movement to enable the development of collective consciousness where the intersectional exclusion and discrimination in the form of caste, class, and gender and multiple oppression which is face by Dalit women recognised. These movements will efforts be made to bring about structural changes aimed at the removal of this intersectional exclusion and discrimination.

There should be a fresh debate and larger discussion regarding exclusion and discrimination within the intersectionality of caste, class, and gender by the alternate media. Media and their own media have to understand the actual life of problem of the Dalit women in mainstream society and to ensure their development and empowerment to highlight the success story of their fight against discrimination in the society, their movement, their leaders, male space in politics need to be constantly for the development of shared consciousness. This makes space for the voice of Dalit women with shared experience and approach to developed leadership. This has done by not only Dalit women but other women also come together as a group.

There are a lot of ways to empower the Dalit women, like the intervention of a more inclusive policy made by the state focusing based on caste, class, and gender discrimination. But there are other ways to include Dalit women in a more inclusive way in the society which is not more directed by the state actor but as an academic, civilian, activists, and organisation. Common person organises seminar, generating public debates, talks, workshop, training programme, skill, and handicraft workshop, address Dalit women and other women hurdles can work with multicultural groups so that from the different-different background can see their experience have a common thread. A session can be organized for Dalit women who are less educated; they can share their voice without any fear, in their preferred language. This would be encouraging as the Dalit women to feel more confident in their ability to challenge the discriminatory expectations and limits placed on them. Dalit women have given equal opportunity in their proportion of the population to enter more public sectors like, education, health, judiciary, police, politics, social organisation, local and community level programme which is mainly hegemonies by the upper caste male and their female also. Along with the focus of this special treatment for the Dalit women, there should create awareness and such dialogues to build an effective way of dialogue Dalit women, which will allow them to understate of their oppression. These intellectual debates bring awareness of the long-term socio-political changes, shift from an exclusionary to an inclusive society and state.

There is also a need to achieve gender-based equality for women of all across the castes and class. It is important that they come together to fight against persistent forms of gender inequality; work for increasing the rights over the property and social justice. Through gender equality, it is important to achieve social justice, equal opportunities between male and female considered free to develop their abilities, and they make choices without limitations set by strict gender roles. Their own community must work with men and youth to reduce gender inequality at their family levels and stop gender-based violence in family and society. Their community level of sensitisation is must important role to play empowerment and equality of Dalit women. Families encourage education and employment, decision-making independence, reflecting in a challenge to the existing patriarchal norms. They become trying to more independent on the economic basis and try to help the women

who come to the marginalised section. The contribution of Dalit women to the income of the family was considerable and had given them conveying space inside the home and outside.

But along with the economic independence alone will not improve condition unless we would not try to remove the social and cultural stigma which is faced by the lower caste and Dalit women.

Upper and dominant groups also need to aware of the dynamics of exclusion and discrimination to overcome these disparities towards the Dalits. There have to learn social behaviour in a more cultural context of reformation, bias against persistence towards the Dalit women the notion of purity and pollution. Upper caste women should have lifted to this disparity for which they also take their equal position in the house and try to find a more democratic base in the society to achieving education, ownership of rights, political participation. All women come together and forget their caste and class fought against poverty, equal participation, and equal pay, safe working in outside, hunger, malnutrition, mother and child mortality rate.

The role of women agency should be more critical and work on the ground level where the majority of the women take benefit in an actual way. For this women agency involvement in active, more mobilised and objectifies their work based on the gender-based inequality in axes to caste class also, gender budgeting and getting enough funds to empowering them and the funds will utilise properly for their upliftment. Women working agencies also come with the government, identify the area in which Dalit children are employed as child labour, and encourage and pull back them to education. Women are working agency appeal educational institutes to adopt equal and fair opportunity policies coupled with affirmative action for Dalits children. They also ensure non-discrimination health facilities and services towards the Dalit women equitable and adequate nutrition, including maternity benefits. The affirmative action towards Dalit community holds a strong feeling that the government provides security and socio-economic mobility.

Dalit women and other women shared their experience to develop consciousness, to build solidarity, self-decision making allows both of them a safe space collectiveness where they can discuss and express their concerns easily. It is facilitated to help make solidarity and understanding of the intersectional exclusion and discrimination faced by Dalit women, is build confections among other women across caste, class, and gender. It is developing a sense of responsiveness which encourage to inspiring

mutual responsibility for social justice, remove hesitancy, group equally through their experience and empowered to shared make more public voice and roles. This togetherness can encourage relationship across caste, class, and gender interlink by conveying women who come from different background caste and class to explore their common and distinct experiences.