

This report is presented as received by IDRC from project recipient(s). It has not been subjected to peer review or other review processes.

This work is used with the permission of Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (IIDS).

© 2010, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies.

Dalit Women Rights and Citizenship in India

Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, Delhi

**FINAL REPORT
May 2010**

Project Sponsored by International Development Research Centre



**Indian Institute of Dalit Studies
New Delhi
2010**

Not to be Quoted

Dalit Women Rights and Citizenship in India

Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, Delhi

Report presented in the National Consultation organized

by

IIDS on 19th of March 2010

Project Sponsored by International Development Research Centre



**Indian Institute of Dalit Studies
New Delhi
2010**

Acknowledgments

This report is part of phase one study of Dalit women's rights and citizenship in India funded by International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

The research material has been put together and edited with necessary additions by Nidhi Sadana.

The research input in the report is provided by Nidhi Sadana, (Principal Research Fellow, IIDS), Anupama Rao (Professor: Columbia University), Wandana Sonalkar (Professor: Marathwada University) Narender Kumar, (Associate Professor: Jamia University), D.Parimala, (Associate professor, Department of Education, Delhi University) and Professor Sukhadeo Thorat (IIDS).

IIDS would like to thank Prof Sukhadeo Thorat, Prof. Surinder Jodhka and members of the advisory board, Dr. Navsharan Singh (IDRC), Dr. Vimal Thorat (IGNOU/AIDMAM), Ramya Subramanian (UNICEF) for the academic guidance in the report.

A very special thanks to Prof Vimal Thorat who is also the convenor of the All India Dalit Women's Forum, who shared her knowledge and literature on the history of Dalit women's movement in India. Many thanks.

We are grateful to International Development Research Centre for sponsoring this study and for supporting us in one of the most neglected areas of gender studies. We are particularly thankful to Dr. Stephen J. McGurk (Regional Director, South Asia and China, IDRC) and Dr. Navsharan Singh (Senior Programme Specialist, IDRC). We are thankful to all the contributors for taking out time to prepare the inputs that helped us to formulate the report.

Thanks are due to Saswatee Rath, L. David Lal and Narendra whose support is acknowledged and valued.

For further information please contact Nidhi Sadana (nidhi@dalitstudies.org.in), Gender and Social Exclusion Studies, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies.

The first draft of this report was presented in the one day conference. The draft report was discussed in number of sessions. The suggestions made in this conference improved the draft report. This final report incorporates the final suggestions made in the conference.

We thank all the participants and speakers in making useful suggestions.

March 13th, 2010

Executive Summary

The literature related to gender and feminist discourse in India is fairly comprehensive, rich and has brought a considerable insight on the problem of Indian women. This has helped to develop a strong movement of Indian women. Rich literature along with several civil society movements has influenced government policy for economic and educational empowerment of women, and their equal participation in governance.

However, these writings on the problems of Indian women are far from single voiced and the Indian feminist discourse is marked with multiple strands. Although these strands share a common view on some aspects of the 'women problem', there are visible differences on a number of other aspects. One of the strands, which deviate from the other strands, however, relates to the problem of 'Dalit women'. Dalit women include a section of women in Indian society, who come from the lower castes, particularly the untouchable and other lower castes, and who beside gender discrimination, have also suffered from the prescribed customary provisions in the institution of caste and untouchability. There is a sizable section of women in Indian society which suffers from the institution of caste and untouchability and these include women mainly from the social grouping of untouchables (16%) and other lower caste (about one third). The gender discourse in the context of caste, would also directly or indirectly cover other women (other than untouchable and lower caste women) of Hindu society who suffer from institution of caste, in one way or another.

This report develops an understanding on the problem of 'Dalit women' in India. This is done through a comprehensive review of the current theoretical and empirical literature related to gender discourse in general and Dalit women in particular. With the help of current data and some studies, the report tries to capture the economic and social situation of Dalit women and examine them in the background of theoretical discussion. Based on insights from the theoretical and empirical literature, the report indicates the need for studies based on primary surveys to develop a suitable perspective on the group-specific problem of Dalit women.

The overview of feminist discourse indicates that gender oppression has typically been understood through how societies render the biological fact of sexual difference in to men and men into a form of social distinction (and inequality). The understanding of patriarchy as that system where gender relations are based on the unequal rights and entitlements and status to women and their sub-ordinate role – this understanding has been a cardinal assumption of feminist theory and praxis. 'Gender' is now considered a social construct (and not biological category) defining man and woman's position and the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles. We began to accept that the different status the women and men enjoy in society is indeed socially and culturally constructed. It is an ideological construct by which women as a group are considered inferior to men and entitled to fewer rights, fewer resources, their work is undervalued, or underpaid, they face

violence in the family and in society; and lack decision-making power in social, economic and political institutions. The understanding of patriarchy as that system where gender relations are based on the unequal rights and entitlements and status to women and their sub-ordinate role – this understanding has been a cardinal assumption of feminist theory and praxis.

Further, we have noted that deviating from the mainstream American-European perspective, the African–American scholars have focused on the neglect of intersectionality of race, class, and gender and explored this intersectionality. This is a project that is beginning to be undertaken by scholars of caste and gender in India. The African-American women, have struggled to find a voice and an idiom of critique for analyzing the multiple layers of subordination they experience on a daily basis. In this there is a parallel for Dalit women for understanding the caste, class and gender interface Dalit women's narratives play an important role in self-expression, and function as a tool of socio-political critique.

Writers on the problem of Dalit women, (particularly those belonging to a Dalit background) argued that the low caste women, particularly the untouchables among them, not only suffered from gender discrimination and economic deprivation), they also suffered from discrimination related to religion, caste and untouchability. Thus the Dalit women's problem encompasses not only gender deprivation and economic deprivation, but also discrimination associated with religion, caste and untouchability - resulting in to denial of economic, social, cultural and political rights.

The view flowing from the Dalit feminist discourse asserts that the Indian feminist discourse is selective in its focus and hence excludes the problem of Dalit women from its purview. The Dalit-women-centric perspective argued that the Dalit women suffered not only from male domination resulting in lack of equal rights, and lack of economic rights, but also from unequal treatment in society due their caste identity governed by the institution of caste and untouchability. Their problem comprises triple deprivation - gender - poverty - caste. It is argued that that, while the two feminist discourses focus on the 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 high degree of poverty, and deprivation from which the other women do not suffer

Historically the articulation of the problem of Dalit women has come through three routes. The first was during the pre-Ambedkar period (before 1920's) as a part of the social reform and Phule's movement. The focus mainly was the reform of the Brahmin family with institution of widowhood involving, sexual exploitation and violence (inside Brahmin family and society) and child marriage. Second route was through the Dalit women activism, primarily as part of the social movement of Ambedkar and the similar movement in south India during the first half of the 19th century, ending by mid-1940's. Third effort began some where around mid-1980's. Since the 1980's a new Dalit women's initiative of all India character has emerged. We will therefore take a look at the Dalit women activism in the contemporary

period, since mid-1980's. This indeed provides us an insight into the reasons as to why Dalit women have chosen the path of different voice and separate organisation with a particular perspective on the question of women in general and Dalit women in particular.

The New Dalit Women's activism whose origin can be traced back to mid 1980's, thus has been influenced by both strands - mainstream feminist discourse and Ambedkar's position on Indian women. While the general feminist movement focuses on issues related to gender relations, patriarchy and economic empowerment, the Ambedkar legacy brought into sharp focus the issue of caste - gender interface with a particular concern for caste discrimination and gender discrimination as a part of the caste problem. Based on the understanding of their own situation and condition which is located within an institutionalized setting of caste, class, and gender oppression rooted in the polity and society, the New Dalit Women Movement organized themselves around issues of access to livelihood and social needs, patriarchy, caste-based discrimination, violence and impunity against Dalit women.

The forum symbolized emerging critiques by Dalit and lower-caste women, who had begun to argue with Indian feminists for the seeming invisibility of caste discrimination and caste gender inequality in mainstream Indian feminism. They argued that this had led to an exclusive and partial constitution of Indian feminist politics. The New Dalit Women Movement organized themselves at the national and at the regional level. The two known national level initiatives are the National Federation of Dalit Women which was formed in 1995 by a group of Dalit women activists following a long drawn interaction and intense debate within the mainstream women's movement and the Dalit movement. National Federation of Dalit Women itself was a federation of several initiatives developed at local level particularly from south and western Maharashtra. However, we have little idea about these regional initiatives, therefore we require further research to get in-depth understanding of the rise of new Dalit women initiatives at local level in India. The two known initiatives which emerged after formation of NFDW are the All India Dalit Women Forum which was set-up in 2006 in the North of India and Dalit Mahila Samiti in UP. An important research issue is how Dalit women have organized themselves for realising full citizenship. We require further research to get in-depth understanding of the rise of new Dalit women initiatives at local level in India.

In the backdrop of theoretical discussion, the review of the economic and social situation of the Dalit women indeed provided us an idea not only about their economic and social situation but also indicate the distinctiveness of their problem. The official data revealed the relative position of these women vis-à-vis rest of the women. Most of the SC women lack access to income earning assets and depend mainly on wage labour. In early 2000, only 21 percent of SC women were cultivators as compared to 45 percent of non-SC/ST women indicating that access to agricultural land is not equal to all women. As results about half of SC workers worked as agricultural wage labour in rural areas as compared to 17 percent for non-

SC/ST. Besides a large number of SC women are engaged in so-called unclean and polluting occupations, such as scavenging.

In 2001, the literacy rate among the SC females in rural areas was 41 percent respectively as compared to 58 percent for non-SC/ST women. Low education reduces employability and result in high unemployment rate. The unemployment based on current daily status in 2004/5 was 12.36% for SC, compared with the average of non-SC/ST women - being 9.50 %.

High incidence of wage labour with low earnings, low educational attainment and high unemployment results in high degree of deprivation and poverty among SC women. As per 2005/6 NFHS survey, about 58.3 percent of SC women suffered from anemia compared to 51.3 percent among non - SC/ST women. Malnutrition of the mother impacts the health outcomes of children. About 21% of SC children under 4 years of age suffered from malnutrition-compared with 13.80% of other's children respectively. Nearly 72% of children from SC suffer from anemia, compared to 63.8% among other. High level of malnutrition among the SC results in high morbidity and mortality. In 2005-06, IMR was 66.4 for SC - much higher compared to 49 for other respectively. High infant/children mortality levels in SC population indicate low infant survival.

The deprivation which Dalit women face is also reflected in their autobiographies and there stories. These autobiographies indicate that there are real differences between the situation of the upper-caste woman and the lower-caste woman in India. It is true that both are oppressed by caste patriarchy or what has sometimes been termed Brahminical patriarchy; but the caste nature of this patriarchy can remain hidden to the upper-caste woman even when she takes up a feminist stance. The Dalit woman, on the other hand, will never be unaware of this. The Dalit women's writings reviewed in this report illustrate the fact that a Dalit woman's rights of freedom of her person, of control over her body and her sexuality, cannot be protected; neither by the Dalit caste panchayat nor by the political power accruing to Dalits at certain moments in the system of electoral democracy. This should be seen as a serious limitation of the rights of citizenship that are supposed to accrue to every Indian, of the nature of a democracy that is supposed to afford space for the expression and redressal of grievances.

This evidence indicates that there are similarities and differences in the problems faced by women belonging to the Dalit social group and rest of the women. Like all women these women also suffers from subordination due to patriarchy experienced within the family, at the place of work, and in society. Like their poor counter part from other female groups, they also suffer from lack of access to income earning assets, education and resultant high poverty. However, Dalit women differs from rest of the women in so far as their performance with regard to human development indicators is lower compared with their counterpart from rest of the women and that the causes of more deprivation of these women lies in social exclusion. The women belonging to social grouping of low caste suffers from social exclusion and

discrimination due to their cultural identity, which rest of the women do not. It is this “exclusion –induced deprivation” which differentiates excluded women from 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. They also become the victim of social and religious practice such as *Devdasi* resulting in sexual exploitation in the name of religion.

Thus excluded women are not 'just like' the rest of the women. They are also disadvantaged by *who they are*. They suffer from social exclusion which deprives them of choices and opportunities to escape from poverty and denies them a voice to claim their rights. There is a close inter-face between patriarchy and social exclusion which enforce each other. The women from discriminated groups suffer from triple deprivation – gender, poverty and social exclusion. The report presents selected evidence on the nature and forms of caste – based discrimination suffered by Dalit women in access to sources of livelihood and social needs. This evidence however, very limited and there is a need to study the nature and forms of discrimination faced by Dalit women as a woman, as a Dalit woman and as poor women. The challenge is to capture the interface of these three dimensions of caste, class and gender and to analyse the consequences of social exclusion and discrimination on their rights and citizenship. This would help to conceptualize inclusive policies to address the problems of Dalit women more effectively.

Contents

		Pages
Introduction – Objective and focus		1
Section I:		
Review of Theoretical Perspectives on Gender		3
Global Feminist Discourse		3
Insights about gender and patriarchy		3
The roots of our understanding on gender and patriarchy: Global history of feminism		6
Summary		8
Feminist Discourse and Perspective with respect to Social/Cultural Groups		9
Feminist Discourse in India		9
Feminist Discourse in Colonial Period		10
Dalit Feminism in Colonial Period		11
Pre-Ambedkar Period - Before Early 1920's		11
Ambedkar Movement, Dalit Women's participation and the articulation of Dalit women's issue: 1920 – 1945		12
Indian Feminist Discourse: Contemporary Period		15
Perspective on the Problem of Dalit and Other Women in the Indian Feminist Discourse		19
New Dalit Women's Activism – Evolving Perspective on Dalit Women Question Beginning in mid 1980		22
Ambedkar's view on Caste		24
Ambedkar's View on Caste, Women and Dalit Women: Ambedkar on Patriarchy		27
Ambedkar and Hindu Code Bill: Equal Rights for Women		34
New Dalit Women Activism between mid 1980's – 2008: Patriarchy, Caste and Poverty		35
Livelihood and Social Needs		37
Patriarchy and Problem of Subordination by Men		37
Caste and untouchability Based Discrimination in multiple spheres		38
Caste related Sexual abuse, and violence		39
Sexual exploitation through religious institution of Devadasi and Murali		40
Lack of participation and discrimination in governance at various level		40
Gender, Rights and Citizenship		42
Concept of Citizenship: General Theoretical Discourse		42
Women and Citizenship: Theoretical Perspective		43
Concept of Gendered Citizenship as 'Differentiated Universalism'		44
Lessons for the Problem of Dalit Women's Rights and Citizenship		46

Section II:		
Emeprical Evidence on Human Poverty, Caste and Gender Discrimnation		48
Life of Dalits Dalit Women's as captured in the autographical writings		49
	Life and Nature of Work of Dalits in the Village	51
	Poverty, Ignorance and Superstition	54
	Education	57
	Food and Pollution	59
	Sexual Violence against Dalit Women	60
	Masculinities, Rivalries, and the Woman's Eye	63
	Patriarchy among Dalits	64
	Language	66
	Summary	67
Section III:		
Emperical Evidence on Human Poverty, Caste and Gender Discrimination (Official sources and Primary Studies)		72
Empirical Evidence on Economic and Social Status of Dalit women		72
	Access to Income Earning Assets and Employment (Rural and Urban)	72
	Employment and Unemployment (Rural and Urban)	76
	Reasons for days not worked for rural wage labour	82
	Wage Earning: Gender and Caste disparity	82
	Poverty and Malnutrition	83
	Women Life Expectancy, Infant and Child Mortalities	84
	Prenatal and Postnatal Care	87
	Social Development: Literacy and Education Level	88
	Educational Attainment	89
	Current Attendance Rates	91
	Political Participation	94
	Status of SC Women in Political Participation as Member of Parliament	94
	Status of SC women as Panchayat Leaders	96
Evidence on Gender Discrimination and Violence of Dalit Women		97
Evidence on Caste based discrimination faced by Dalit women in multiple spheres		99
	Indirect evidence to discrimination in occupation	102
	Indirect evidence on discrimination in Health outcomes	103
	(i) Longevity (Age at Death)	103

	(ii) Prenatal and Postnatal Care	106
	<i>Direct evidence on Discrimination faced by Dalit women in multiple spheres</i>	109
	Evidence of Discrimination in wage employment in rural areas:	109
	Evidence on Discriminatory Treatment in Access to Social Needs	111
	Evidence on Discriminatory Treatment in Access to drinking water:	113
	<i>Discrimination in Political Participation</i>	115
Evidence on Atrocities and Violence faced by Dalit Women		117
	Evidence on Atrocities and Crimes against Dalit women from Official Sources	117
	Evidence on Atrocities against Dalit women from Primary Survey	117
Section IV:		
Overall Summary and Synthesis - Evolving Perspective on Dalit Women Rights and Citizenship		121
	Summary of theoretical perspective on Dalit women issue	121
	Summary on Human Poverty, Caste and Gender Discrimination	125
	Synthesis – Evolving Perspective of Dalit Women Discourse	127
	Emerging Issues: Studies on the formulation of perspective on Caste – Gender and class interface	128
Bibliography		130
	<i>Dalit Women's Articulation about themselves: English Books</i>	132
	<i>Marathi Books</i>	132
	<i>Socio-economic status of Dalit Women</i>	133
	<i>Education</i>	136
	<i>Citizenship and Political participation</i>	137
	<i>Employment</i>	138
	<i>Reports</i>	139

Introduction – Objective and focus

The main objective of this paper is to develop an understanding on the problem of ‘Dalit women’ in India. This is done through a comprehensive review of the current theoretical and empirical literature related to gender discourse in general and of Dalit women in particular. With the help of current data and some studies (which are limited in number) the paper also tries to capture the economic and social situation of Dalit women and examine them in the background of theoretical discussion. Based on insight from the theoretical and empirical literature, the paper would indicate the need for studies based on the primary survey to develop a suitable perspective on the group specific problem of Dalit women.

For the purpose of this paper the “Dalit women” would include a section of women in Indian society, who come from the lower castes, particularly the untouchables and other lower caste and who beside gender discrimination, also suffered from the prescribed customary provisions in the institution of caste and untouchability. There is a sizable section of women in Indian society which suffered from the institution of caste and untouchability and these include women mainly from the social grouping of untouchable (16%) and other lower caste (about one third). The gender discourse in the context of caste would also directly or indirectly cover other women (other than untouchable and lower caste women) of Hindu society who suffered from institution of caste in one way or another.

The literature related to gender and feminist discourse in India is fairly comprehensive and rich, and has brought a considerable insight on the problem of Indian women. This has helped to develop a strong movement of Indian women. Rich literature along with several civil society movements has influenced the government policy for economic and educational empowerment of the women and their equal participation in governance (Kamla Bhasin, “Understanding Gender”, Kali for Women, 2009).

However, these writings on the problem of Indian women are far from single voiced and the Indian feminist discourse is marked with multiple strands. Although these strands share a common view on some aspects of the women problem, there are visible differences on number of other aspects. One of the strands which deviate from the other strands, however, relates to the problem of “Dalit women”. Writers on the problem of Dalit women, (particularly those belonging to Dalit background) argued that the low caste women, particularly the untouchables among them not only suffered from gender discrimination and economic deprivation (emanating from two strands on women in India). They also suffered from discrimination related to religion, caste and untouchability. Thus, the Dalit women’s problem encompasses not only gender deprivation and economic deprivation but also discrimination associated with religion, caste and untouchability - resulting in denial of economic, social, cultural and political rights. This view asserts that the Indian feminist discourse is selective in its focus and hence, excludes the problem Dalit women from its purview. The Dalit women centric perspective argued that the Dalit women suffered not only from male domination resulting in lack of equal rights and lack of economic rights but also from unequal treatment in society due their caste identity governed by institution of caste and untouchability. Their problem comprises triple deprivation - gender - poverty -

caste. It is argued that that, while the two feminist discourses focus on the 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 high degree of poverty and deprivation, from which the other women do not suffer (Vimal Thorat, 2008). During the last decade Dalit women have begun to articulate their problem in their own way and developed a view point on the issue of gender, which is similar to that of mainstream women writers in many ways, but also differs in significant manner in another way. Beside gender and economic deprivation, they also bring a sharper focus, the problem of caste and untouchability based discrimination and similar forms of discrimination. This has begun to be known as “Dalit feminist discourse”. This paper deals with the problem of Dalit women and the space that Dalit women have created in terms of developing a perspective on their own problem. The discussion would centre on few issues: How does the Indian feminist discourse interpret the problem of Dalit women? How do Dalit women conceive their own problem? How does the perspective of Dalit women differ from the Indian feminist discourse? What are the gaps in knowledge in the Indian feminist discourse?

In order to deal with these issues, it is necessary that we look at the present status of knowledge on related aspects. In this context, our work tries to (a) look at feminist discourse as developed in social science literature and capture its main elements, (b) Indian feminist discourse and its understanding about the problem of Dalit women, (c) survey the perspective of Dalit women (as well as of other writers) on their problem – looking at the theoretical writings and also the Dalit women’s literary writings, (d) examine the economic and social situation of Dalit women with the help of official data and some primary studies, (e) based on the understanding and insight from the review of theoretical and empirical studies, suggest the agenda for further primary studies on the various dimensions of the Dalit women’s problem.

The report is thus divided four parts: The first part deals with the review of theoretical writings on the gender issues in general and those dealing with Dalit women in particular. The second part deals with their human poverty, gender – caste discrimination based on the published data and some primary studies and the third part will present the various themes for studies to bring insights and clarity on the issue of Dalit women in India. The analysis of human poverty, caste and gender discrimination is based on the National Sample Survey, Census of India, Crimes in India, National Family Health Survey-3 and a number of primary studies conducted by scholars. Additionally, we have made extensive use of studies undertaken by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies.

Section I

Review of Theoretical Perspectives on Gender

Global Feminist Discourse

The present understanding of the question of women has shaped and crystallized the understanding about problem of “gender” and much needed gender policies. In this section, we summarize the main insights from the feminist discourse on gender and patriarchy and draw attention to global history of feminism with its multiple beginnings, the diversity of social practices, and the range of political contexts in which feminism has grown.

Insight about gender and patriarchy

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 subordinate status 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. “Gender” is now considered as a social construct (and not a biological category) defining man 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 discourse. The UN Document on Millenium Development Goals, for example, defines gender as follows:

- 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.

The discourse further drew attention to the point of different status the women and men enjoy in society is indeed socially and culturally constructed. It is an ideological construct by which women as a group are considered inferior to men and entitled to fewer rights, fewer resources, their work is undervalued and underpaid, they face violence in the family and in society; and they lack decision-making power in social, economic and political institutions. Neither sex nor nature is responsible for the unjustifiable inequalities that exist between women and men. Like the inequalities

between castes, classes and races, these too are man made; they are ideological constructs and therefore they can be questioned, challenged and changed. In this Report we are going to examine more closely what happens when gender, caste (and often class) intersect, with types of exploitation and vulnerability that are specific to Dalit women.

It is argued that the particular notion of gendering is articulated and developed through the process of socialization in an on-going process within families and society. The specific process of socialization teaches children their gender roles through gender indoctrination and makes them to internalize behaviour, attitudes and roles in a particular way. As we will highlight, in India this process of socialization is embedded in the caste hierarchy, and socialization will be different for children of different castes.

Further, the contribution of the feminist discourse is with respect to conceptualization of “patriarchy” and its role in gender inequalities and the subordination of women. Gender relations are unequal because of the existence of patriarchy. The term patriarchy is used to refer to male domination--- to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways. The subordination that women experience on a regular basis, takes various forms—discrimination, disregard, insult, control, exploitation, oppression, violence — within the family, at the place of work, and in society. Patriarchy is different in different societies. Patriarchy is an ideology or a belief system according to which men are considered to be superior. Religions (and culture) have played an important role in creating and perpetuating patriarchal ideology. V. Geetha offers this definition of patriarchy in her book on the subject, bringing out the centrality of cultural aspects of patriarchy:

”Patriarchy rests on defined notions of masculine and feminine, is held in place by sexual and property arrangements that privilege men’s choices, desires and interests over and above those of the women in their lives and is sustained by social relationships and cultural practices which celebrate heterosexuality, female fertility and motherhood on the one hand and valorize female subordination to masculine authority and virility on the other.”

The notion of patriarchy described above, brought lot more clarity and insight on gender relations through which women suffered inferior position in family and society. Patriarchy involves relations of *power* at the intimate level. “The term gender relations refers to the relations of *power* between women and men which are revealed in a range of practices, ideas, representations, including the division of labour, roles, and resources between women and men, and ascribing to women and men of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behavioral patterns and so on”..

The gender relations in patriarchy involve situations in which men dominate women. A common aspect of gender relations across cultures is the subordination of women

to men. Gender relations therefore are relations of dominance and subordination with elements of co-operation, force and violence sustaining them. Recent scholarship, as we will see, has explored how caste and patriarchy work together in India, so much so that some characterize patriarchy in India as 'caste patriarchy' or Brahminical patriarchy'. The use of force and violence in this context comes out clearly when we study the lives of Dalit women.

Another aspect of gender relations, is centred around the "gender division of labour and exploitation involved therein". Gender division of labour or sexual division of labour, refers to the allocation of different roles, responsibilities, and tasks to women and men based on societal ideas of what men and women should do and are capable of doing. Gender division of labour leads to hierarchies and inequalities because men's and women's labour is not valued or rewarded equally. Equal pay for equal work is not the norm in most countries; and housework done by female is treated as unpaid and hence remained invisible.

The allocation of certain tasks to men and women in productive processes also leads to issues of command and control over resources and the products of labour. Because of a gender division of labour, men assume control over resources, income, consumption and products. Here again, when we talk of the division of labour in Indian society, caste cannot be left out of the picture. While caste operates through culture, relations of power sustained by an ever-present threat of violence, its division-of-labour aspect is still operative in the economic sphere.

The gender discourse brought recognition for gender policies through which the case for a new framework of equal rights for women, fair gender relations in the family and society, equal access to resources and participation in governance was built up. Initially the policy focus was on integrating women into development---- the 'Women in Development' approach aimed at meeting women's basic needs and making use of women's traditional skills. Later the gender discourse shifted from welfare, basic needs and efficiency approaches, and sought to address the patriarchal system as the root of women's subordination. To improve women's condition and status and to make them partners in development, it was essential to understand the causes of women's subordination; to examine the social system (patriarchy) which keeps women oppressed and subordinate. From this came also a critique of the prevalent development paradigms.

More recently, the development literature frequently refers to "gender empowerment" and "empowerment of women", though it is debatable whether these references and the policy initiatives really address the complex issues of patriarchal power subjugating women. However, we may say that the women's movement and feminist scholarship has resulted in a greater awareness of gender issues, recognizing the possibility, and the importance, of bringing changes in a social and cultural ideology that reinforces the subordination of women.

The roots of our understanding about gender and patriarchy: Global history of feminism

The insights about gender and patriarchy set out above are now widely accepted after about fifty years of theoretical debate initiated by feminists the world over, during 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. We should look at some of the issues involved here before proceeding further. Of course, there are many areas of contestation and dissent and several schools within feminist thought, so that we do not claim to present any kind of consensus, but just to outline some of the theoretical questions that have been raised and dealt with.

For example the origin of patriarchal oppression of women in the family was explained by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which took account of the studies made by a nineteenth-century anthropologist named Morgan. The central idea of Engels' analysis is that it is only when human society's productive power is developed enough to produce a surplus over its immediate needs, and then classes emerge as a result of unequal property rights over this surplus, that men assert control over women's reproductive powers. This becomes necessary in order to retain inheritance rights over property within the male line of descent. Engels also implies here that patriarchal subjugation of women will be weaker in modern working-class families, since they do not own private property.

Engels' analysis was important because it made a connection between relations of production and property in society and men's control over women's reproductive work in the family. However, his assumptions and conclusions have been fundamentally challenged by feminists as well as by Marxist anthropologists like Claude Meillassoux, who show, on the basis of richer anthropological evidence, that men's control over women's reproductive power predates the emergence of property. Even hunting-gathering societies exert patriarchal control over women, whose role in nurturing the next generation is crucial in perpetuating a productive system where labour is the most important resource.

Feminists now talk of men's patriarchal control over both the productive and reproductive labour of women. The forms of control certainly change with the productive relations prevalent in society, so that although Marx did not deal with gender issues, the Marxist framework can help in understanding these changing forms. So, in modern times, we have patriarchy and capitalism reinforcing each other in the control and exploitation of women's labour within the household and outside. Recent changes in the global capitalist system have had their impact on women's productive and reproductive labour, and the way these are perceived and

represented in popular culture, and in the discourse on 'development' as well as in politics and the practice of law. From questioning the presumption that women are 'biologically' suited for the work of childcare and housework, feminists have moved to complex explanations of the undervaluation and invisibility of women's work in the household and its role in the productive mechanisms of the wider economic structure.

We must mention here the emergence of the important feminist slogan of the 1970's: 'The personal is political', asserting women's right to raise issues of inequality, subjugation and division of labour within the household and the family. This is perhaps the first example of questioning by feminists of the division between public and private in modern liberal society, in which the public is the sphere for political contention. Since then, much more complex and nuanced theoretical interventions on this theme have emerged in feminist scholarship, some of which we will touch on in the section on 'Citizenship and Rights of Women'..

This feminist discourse came under criticism particularly from the non-western scholars for ignoring the racial aspect of the gender issue and also from those who give attention to economic and social oppression of women. Scholars of non-Western regions, have extended this narrative, by noting that demands for female enfranchisement were themselves deeply racialized; that suffragists in Europe and in north American often ignored the rights of female slaves, or of African-American women, and that they often used their superior position in relation to these women to assert for themselves a public role. This view refers to projects of social uplift and of moral regeneration which were deeply implicated in the complex logics of class, race, and gender. That is, scholars of gender and colonialism in particular, have contested the narrative that Western feminism tells about itself—both at the level of its historical genesis, and its ethnocentrism.

Just as with Marxism, feminists have also drawn from Freudian psychoanalytical theory, challenged it and developed it. When we see how deeply embedded the patriarchal ideologies are, and the difficulties the women's movement has had in countering them, we need to look more deeply at the *process* of socialization of the male and female child within the family. The construction of gender in society begins within the family. Boys and girls are treated differently from birth, and this shapes their conscious and unconscious perceptions of gender in adult life.

Freud's most important contribution is the theory of the unconscious: that ideas of masculinity and femininity are formed as the child relates to the world outside and to his own sexual urges, and that these remain in the unconscious and influence our behavior throughout life although we are not aware of them. Feminists have challenged what they call Freud's biological essentialism, the rigid differences he sees between the development of the unconscious in boys and girls, and the centrality of the penis and its lack in his analysis of this difference. Some of them accept Jacques Lacan's re-reading of Freud, in which language and symbolism have a more central place than the biological differences between the sexes, while some

feel that even Lacan retains Freud's rigid framework. But much work still needs to be done to develop a feminist psychoanalytical theory, or to analyse cultural aspects of the formation of the unconscious in non-Euro-American societies. In India, we should note the work of Sharad Patil, who stands out among Marxists in his treatment of the *neniv* or unconscious, with references to some Buddhist texts, and emphasis on the role of the unconscious in the construction of gender and caste ideologies. The 19th-century essay on differences between men and women by Tarabai Shinde also carries some important insights on this theme.

Feminists have also extensively used discourse analysis, following on the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Sylvia Walby puts it thus: "While psychoanalytic theory is stuck with a dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, this is challenged by post-structuralists, whose analysis concentrates on difference and discourse. The project for many feminist post-structuralists is to explore the variety of forms of femininity and masculinity. The substantive focus is usually an investigation of the forms of representation of gender in cultural texts such as film, literature, magazines and pictures. Such writers try to catch the nuances of different forms of femininity, and indeed whether this is a sufficiently cohesive notion to be able to identify it as a unity."

In India, the diversity of cultural forms is even more vast, with region, religion, caste and locality all complicating the possibilities. The cultural representation of Dalit women needs to be examined, with a more layered understanding of their role in traditional art forms like the *tamasha*, or in vocal music and dance, which always carries overtones of their sexual availability to upper-caste men which is a central aspect of the caste hierarchy. The changes in these cultural forms under the impact of urbanization, commercialization and exposure to global capitalism also need to be explored.

Summary: This brief overview of the feminist discourse indicates that gender oppression must be understood through how societies render the biological fact of sexual difference between women and men into a form of social distinction (and inequality). The understanding of patriarchy as that system where gender relations are based on the unequal rights and entitlements and status to women and their subordinate role – this understanding has been a cardinal assumption of feminist theory and praxis.

Further, we have noted that deviating from the mainstream American-European perspective, the African – American scholars have explored the inter-sectionality of race, class, and gender which had been neglected so far. This is a project that is beginning to be undertaken by scholars of caste and gender in India. The African-American women have struggled to find a voice and an idiom of critique for analyzing the multiple layers of subordination they experience on a daily basis. In this there is parallel for Dalit women for understanding the caste, class and gender inter face.

Dalit women's narratives play an important role in self-expression, and function as a tool of socio-political critique.

Feminist Discourse and Perspective with respect to Social/Cultural Groups

Whereas 'second-wave' feminists were working for solidarity among women and tended to treat 'women' as a unitary category subjected to universal forms of patriarchal oppression, the 'third wave' of feminism beginning somewhere in the 1980's places much more emphasis on the differences among women belonging to different social, cultural and ethnic communities. In the North American context, black feminists challenged many of the theoretical formulations that reflected white middle-class women's consciousness and experience.

Again, we quote from Sylvia Walby's summary:

"Firstly, the labour market experience of women of colour is different from that of white women because of racist structures which disadvantage such women in paid work. This means that there are significant differences between women on the basis of ethnicity, which need to be taken into account.

Secondly, ethnic variation and oppression of women of colour may be different from those of white women. This is not simply a statement that women of colour face racism ... but this may change the basis of gender inequality itself. The best example is the debate on the family, which has traditionally been seen by white feminist analysis as a major, if not the major, site of women's oppression by men. Some women of colour, such as Hooks (1984), have argued that, since the family is a site of resistance and solidarity against racism for women of colour, it does not hold the central place in accounting for women's subordination that it does for white women."

Both these points resonate with the experiences of Dalit women, especially as reflected in Dalit women's writings which are discussed later in this Report. More fundamentally, Walby remarks that "the intersection of ethnicity and gender may alter ethnic and gender relations." Thus ethnic and racial issues need to be examined in the context of gender and the specific histories of colonialism and slavery. Similar remarks may be made about the intersection of gender and caste in Indian society; one may add only that in this case they have a much longer history, and our understanding of their rearticulation in colonial and postcolonial settings must take this into account.

Feminist Discourse in India

When we are looking at the problem of rights and citizenship of Dalit women, we have to place it against the background of the history and genealogy of both gender and caste in this society. We have looked at the concepts of gender and patriarchy in earlier sections, while indicating briefly how they are applicable to the Indian context, where caste is so important to the understanding of gender.

Caste is a form of legislated identity; the name for a culturally specific form of social stratification; an occupational hierarchy; the result of a ritual ordering of persons on a purity-pollution continuum, and the practice of historically produced discrimination and inequality. Most importantly, *the social reproduction of caste depends on control over women's sexual reproduction*: caste reproduces itself by subjecting women to (caste) norms and expectations.

Feminist Discourse in Colonial Period:

During the nineteenth century, as British colonial power was consolidated over most of India, several social reform issues relating to women were taken up by the colonial administration. In fact, these reforms were central to the 'civilising mission' of the colonial rulers, and centred round the Hindu family: issues like sati, child marriage and the treatment of upper-caste widows, became the subject of a reformist colonial discourse. A number of Indian reformers also joined in this effort, especially in Bengal and Maharashtra. Women's education also became a central concern, and a vigorous discussion on this subject became part of both the colonial discourses as well as response to it from Indian social reformers.

Feminist scholars in India like Uma Chakravarti, KumKum Roy, Tanika Sarkar and others have critiqued the nineteenth-century movement for education of women. The objective was to construct Indian womanhood in an image that boosted the self-esteem of upper-caste elite men in their dealings with the colonial bureaucracy. The educated Indian woman should be able to converse in English and yet uphold Hindu tradition within the home; her education should embellish her skills of household management and craft so as to make her a fitting consort for the 'brown sahib.' Even the 'radical' Hindu reformer Bal Gangadhar Tilak delineated the parameters within which women's education should be conducted, centering them around the household, child care and observation of religious ritual. D.D. Karve, who founded an institution for the education of widows, opposed the entry of widows from the lower castes on the grounds that this would discourage Brahmin widows.

Jotirao Phule stands out among these reformers in having founded a school for girls in Pune in Maharashtra 1848 which admitted pupils from even the untouchable castes. He also offered shelter to Brahmin widows who had strayed from the path of forced asceticism prescribed to them after their husband's death, and even adopted the children born to them. This was not just an act of beneficence towards the unfortunate women, but also a bold defiance of the Brahminical patriarchal establishment. Phule's writings also demonstrate his nuanced understanding of the interweaving of caste and patriarchy in Hindu society. His comparison of the daily routines of a *shudra* peasant woman and her upper-caste counterpart prefigures contemporary feminist studies of the nature of women's work.

By 1920, thirty-five years after the Indian National Congress was founded, M.K. Gandhi, the creative and unconventional Congress leader acknowledged untouchability as a "reproach to Hinduism." Because he understood the practice of

untouchability to be the manifestation of a religious hierarchy of persons, Gandhi (and the Congress) in turn produced a religious and moral response to the problem. That response consisted of a variety of things—from exhorting upper castes to clean toilets and value stigmatized labor; to pressing half-heartedly for untouchables' entry into temples; and finally, to renaming untouchables *Harijans*, or children of god.

Instead of focusing on the victims of caste discrimination, however, untouchable reform focused on the upper-castes guilty of prolonging the practice. Indeed in the hands of Gandhi and his followers, untouchability became a sort of test case for the possibility of reforming Hinduism by reforming upper-caste Hindu practices, and thereby achieving an authentically Indian self. It was not merely the identity of the untouchables that was in question, but the identity and religious legitimacy of caste Hindus. Untouchability was incorporated into the political project of anti-colonial nationalism as a religious problem of reforming Hinduism. And as a consequence of defining untouchability as a religious problem, nationalists made it possible—especially and ironically through the pursuit of legal action and court cases under the colonial regime—to remove debates about untouchability from the purview of the colonial state, constantly rendering it an internal problem for Hindus.

It is therefore not surprising that Gandhi's mobilization of women in the nationalist struggle in the early twentieth century, also operated within the framework of religion. He made it possible for Hindu upper-caste women to come out on the streets and take part in public demonstrations against the colonial regime, without compromising their duties as Hindu women, or questioning the religious norms for women's conduct. The political mobilization of Dalit women had to wait for the leadership of dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

Dalit Feminism in Colonial Period:

Unlike the social experience of upper-caste women, who came to feminism through the critique of patriarchy and in defense of the female individual, Dalit women have had a much more complex relationship to their community. This is because struggles against casteism have pre-dominated the social experience of Dalit communities, including Dalit women. Let us examine Dalit women's long immersion in caste protest, before we explore the ramifications of their activism for rethinking women's history and feminist politics in India. Let us turn, again, to some experiences from Maharashtra, and from south India.

Pre-Ambedkar Period - Before Early 1920's : The popular memory of the Peshwai, a brahminical state, which explicitly promulgated a juridical order of fines and punishments for caste and gender infraction, played an important role in the development of anticaste critique in western India. These critiques came to fruition in the extensive writings of Jotirao Phule (1827-1890), whose focus on the lived experience of caste exploitation focused quite centrally on sexual violence and gender exploitation as an important aspect of the history of Dalit and non-Brahmin communities.

The Satyashodak's Samaj's experiments with a new marriage form rejected Brahmin priests. As well, the plight of the Brahmin widow was an important locus of critique for anticaste activists. For example, Tarabai Shinde's *Stri Purush Tulana* was written in 1882, in response to the colonial state's criminalization of Vijayalakshmi, a Brahmin widow accused of infanticide. Together and separately, experiments with alternative marriage practices, and the critique of Brahminical patriarchy focused on *marriage as the hinge for the social and sexual reproduction of caste*. In Shinde's text the sexual depravity of men was held responsible for women's sexual misadventures, and male cunning and lust were held responsible for women's misfortune. What is more, Shinde's ability to view marriage and prostitution as two sides of the same coin suggested that she was keenly aware of how the logics of the good wife and the loose woman co-constituted the other. Shinde's text was one of the first *feminist* critiques of caste. Nevertheless, it was one that upper caste reformers, and later, anti-colonial nationalists, ignored.

Similarly, in south India, activists of the Self-respect movement, led by E. V. Ramasamy Naicker criticized Hindu marriage, both because it required the intervention of Brahmin priests, and because it treated women as chattel. Much as Phule had done almost fifty year earlier, E. V. Ramasamy Naicker, also focused on the relationship between caste, marriage, and the constitution of the (Hindu) family.

The scholar, S. Anandhi, notes that the Self-Respect movement (1925-1942) *politicized* marriage by taking it outside the domain of Brahmin intervention, and by supporting inter-caste marriage. V. Geetha mentions the *Adi-Dravida* activist Anapoorani, who was married to an upper-caste non-Brahmin. She also mentions the exhortations of a Self-Respecter, Minakshi, in the movement's organ, *Kudi Arasu*, against lavish marriages that placed families in debt and against women's investment in meaningless ritual testify to this reformist move (see V. Geetha, WS-12) The Self-Respect marriage, which did away with Brahmin priests, and were structured as a contract between political comrades, provided an idiom of austerity or frugality, which could function as an implicit moral critique of the financial burdens of weddings that the woman's family bore. As well, Self-Respect marriages questioned the nexus between marriage and Brahminical ritual in multiple ways: by relying on political comrades as witnesses to the wedding, by doing away with the Brahmin priest, and by arranging Self-Respect marriages at times considered inauspicious according to the Hindu almanac. Like political gatherings, Self-Respecters used slogans and banners to adorn cinemas and other public places where marriages took place, exchanged public vows that their private lives would be based on mutual respect, and actively supported inter-caste marriage.

Ambedkar movement, Dalit women participation and the articulation of Dalit women's issue: 1920 – 1945

In the period from 1920 to 1945, Dalit women started actively participating in Ambedkar's movement of resistance and reform, by first taking on more responsibilities and fighting on issues common to their community and then

organizing themselves to protest against specific problems which they faced.. Ambedkar organized several conferences of Dalits, ensuring that women's conferences were held simultaneously. A brief account of the issues which women organized them around are highlighted below.

During the satyagarha movement in 1927, which was a movement, to claim the right of untouchables to take water from the public tank, Dalit women not only participated in the procession from the conference site to the pond (where they were met with violence), they also "participated in the deliberations of the subject committee meetings in passing resolutions about the claim for equal human rights"(Meenakshi Moon and Urmila Pawar, "We made History Too: Women in the Early Untouchable Liberation Movement", *South Asian Bulletin*, 9:2, 1989, pp. 68-71, p. 69)

Dalit women actively participated in the five year long Nasik satyagarha (1930 – 1935) started by Ambedkar for the right of untouchables to enter Hindu temples, hundreds of women participated by conducting sit-in agitations in front of the Kalaram temple and courted arrest. This was a massive effort that went on till 1935, when on the 13th of October Ambedkar announced at Yeola near Nasik that he was born a Hindu but would "not die a Hindu" and the satyagarha movement to enter Hindu temple was terminated. It is reported that one of the objective of Nasik movement was to organize and to awaken the untouchables themselves.

Dalit women organized meetings to support separate electorates for untouchables and passed resolutions accordingly. They supported Ambedkar's call on conversion and held a conference in May 1936. The political movement begun by Ambedkar brought forth the political ambition of Untouchable women. The women conducted conferences and passed resolutions to support the Independent Labour Party and later the Scheduled Castes Federation programs. In 1942, Dalit women organized their conference and under the advise of Ambedkar, they passed resolution on educating their children, family planning and addressing patriarchy within their family (Meenakshi Moon and Urmila Pawar, "We made History Too: Women in the Early Untouchable Liberation Movement", *South Asian Bulletin*, 9:2, 1989, pp. 68-71).

Hence, the resolution passed by women in various conference demanded: free and compulsory education for girls; representation in legislative assemblies; self-protection such as karate; starting a women's branch of the Samata Sainik Dal (equality volunteer corps); and the prohibition of child marriages.⁵ The research shows that women also were interested in reforming the marriage system. Divorce, remarriage and widow marriage were allowed in the Dalit community, women in the movement brought several further reforms. They tried to eliminate unnecessary rituals in the marriage.

Thus as the three national women's organizations—the Women's India Association, the National Council of Women in India, and the All-India Women's Conference—were formed between 1917 and 1927, Dalit women began to form Mahila Mandals (first established January 1928), and later, in 1930, organized a parallel sessions of

the All-India Depressed Classes Congress. In 1936 the C. P. (Berar) Untouchable Women's Provincial Congress resolved to reserve one of three seats for Scheduled Caste women in provincial legislative councils, and demanded the appointment of women as honorary magistrates. With the formation of the Independent Labour Party in 1936, there was increased militancy around labor issues—demands for equal wages for female mill workers, support for compulsory education for Dalit girls through scholarships, and struggles to educate young women before they were pushed into marriage. Anjinabai Deshbratar, Shevantibai Ogale, Subhadrabai Ramtek, and Anusuyabai Ingole led these struggles. The formation of the Dalit Mahila Federation in 1942, presided over by Sulochanabai Dongre, was the last of the Dalit feminist organizations to grow and mature in the late colonial period. Dalit women took up issues that concerned the marginal status of the community when they participated in the 1946 satyagrahas against the denial of separate representation to the Scheduled Castes, and the landless struggles of the 1960s. Though they took up the theme of religious superstition and patriarchy within the community, as *workers*, Dalit women were intensely focused on access to education and economic parity with men.

Sexual servitude, sexual respectability, and later, female education and wage parity were major issues for Dalit gender reform. In this, the 'untouchable' status of the community—which led both to women's excessive sexualization and stigmatization—was significant. The issue of dedicated girls, or *muralis*, became a major issue when Shivubai Lakshman Sonkamble-Jadhav, herself a *murali*, published a piece in the pages of the *Somavanshiya Mitra* in 1910 criticizing men who dedicated their daughters and the men who frequented *muralis*. As conflict over ritual dedication expanded to involve Christian missionaries, upper-caste reformers, colonial officials and Dalit (male) activists, it would become increasingly clear that sexual respectability was the main focus of the debate, to the detriment of Shivubai's sophisticated structural analysis of sexual servitude. Similarly, Ambedkar's exhortations across the 1920s and the 1930s that women dress respectably, give up physical markers of caste, and out a stop to "traditional" practices such as performing in tamashas or participating in ritual prostitution, articulated norms of bourgeois respectability which became important vectors of gender modernity.

- 1) Unlike cultural nationalism, which associated (upper-caste women) with religion and tradition, we see that the reform of Dalit women was predicated on the rejection of Hindu tradition, which supported caste hierarchy and inequality.
- 2) Secondly, we see that critiques of Hindu marriage were an especially potent site of anticaste critique. This is because marriage linked intimate life with political power and family status, and with the maintenance of caste purity. The critique of marriage was thus also a critique of caste, since caste was reproduced through the control of female sexuality.

- 3) Third, we see that sexual subordination was understood to be an important mechanism through which the entire community was humiliated, since the sexual violation of Dalit women was seen as the right and prerogative of upper-caste men. Thus unlike associations of upper-caste women with chastity and purity, lower caste (especially Dalit) women were seen to be sexually available. A very important aspect of Dalit critique was thus mobilized around the question of sexuality and of sexual violence as an aspect not merely of patriarchal power, but of caste power.

We have surveyed here the understanding of caste and gender in the colonial period, especially as manifested through various reform movements, anti-colonial campaigns and anti-caste campaigns. We have tried to show that there were only a few political leaders and social reformers, notably Jotirao Phule in the nineteenth century and B.R. Ambedkar in the twentieth century, who explicitly recognized the interlinking of caste and gender. In the case of other nineteenth century reformers, the main concern was with reforming the upper-caste Hindu family, without challenging Hindu religious values or the caste hierarchy. On the other hand, Ambedkar, as we have seen, declared that the Hindu religion was founded on inequality, and gender inequality as well as caste inequality were central to the practice of Hinduism. However, Gandhi's mobilization of women in the anti-colonial struggle, which certainly did enable some upper-caste women to enter political life, as well as his campaigns against untouchability, were such as to keep the two issues separate and indeed to endorse the hierarchical Hindu caste order.

Indian Feminist Discourse: Contemporary Period - 1970's Onwards

In earlier subsections we have tried to outline some of the important theoretical interventions made by western feminists, with brief indications of the implications of these for the Indian situation. We now take a brief look at the major issues raised by the Indian women's movement from the 1970's onwards, and how it has dealt with issues of gender and caste.

The period of about twenty years after India became independent has been described by Vina Mazumdar, one of the earliest scholars of women's studies in India, as a period of lull for women's movements and 'the heyday of the middle-class', when the guarantee of suffrage, equal pay laws and the promise of entry into the public services and attainment of public office. Women's organizations did enter into welfare work on the basis of facilities and grants provided by the government, but little research was done on the status of women. So it came as a rude shock when 'The Committee on the Status of Women in India (1971-74) (of which Vina Mazumdar was a member) was inexorably forced to the conclusion of an increasing marginalisation of women in the economy and society.'

Interestingly, Mazumdar does not mention the Parliamentary debate over the Hindu Code Bill which was tabled by Dr. Ambedkar in 1947 when he was Law Minister. Later Ambedkar resigned his ministership when the Bill was defeated in Parliament;

but several women M.P.'s, such as Durgabai Deshmukh, Renuka Ray and some women outside Parliament had in fact vigorously supported him. This bill proposed to bring about an overall progressive reform of Hindu personal law, with, among other things, a law of monogamy, the right of divorce for women, recognition of inter-caste marriages in Hindu marriage, and some mild changes in the laws of succession and adoption. It was a culmination of his thinking on the role of gender and caste in Hindu society, and the possible ways to overcome the basic inequalities therein. Ambedkar was bitter about the defeat of this Bill, which for him held equal importance with the Constitution in giving a socially progressive legal framework for citizens of independent India.

Law reform did become a major part of the agenda for women's movement activists in later years. The oversight about the importance of the Hindu Code Bill that we find in Vina Mazumdar's account of 'the emergence of the women's question in India' is significant, however, as we shall see later.. Meanwhile, the first outcome of the publication of *Towards Equality*, the Status of Women Report was an increased interest in research on women, including women workers in industry and agriculture, adivasis and others, who had hitherto, as Mazumdar says, been 'invisible' to policy makers. It should also be mentioned here that, at the 1975 Indian Women's Conference held in Trivandrum, there emerged perhaps for the first time a platform of left-wing 'autonomous women's groups' that were separate from the women's wings of political parties like the Congress Party and the Communist Parties.

A crucial issue around which these women's groups agitated during the 1980's was that of violence against women. Again, it is useful to quote Vina Mazumdar: 'The issue which triggered off women's anger across the country from 1977 onwards were crimes against women - rape, murder and other forms of violence. These had not formed an important part of the Committee's evidence, but they can be seen as increasing manifestations of the *process*(my emphasis--- WS) of devaluation and marginalisation that the Committee had identified.' If we look back, Dalit and adivasi women figure prominently among the victims of these assaults over the years, whether in the Mathura police-station gang-rape case, attacks on Dalit women during the agitation for renaming of Marathwada University, or the much more recent (2006) Khairlanji rapes and murders. There is also the phenomenon of 'honour crimes' which is clearly on the increase especially in North India, where couples who transgress caste rules of marriage are beaten, banished, boycotted and all-too-often killed, often with the connivance of the police and local political leaders.

The issue of violence against women was taken up by the Indian women's movement initially with campaigns like that related to the Mathura case mentioned earlier. 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.

Changes in the law brought about after campaigns by women's movement activists have not always resulted in an unequivocal improvement in women's situation. Patriarchal values continue to be prevalent among the judiciary, and perpetrators of crimes against women are often not sentenced. When the laws are made more stringent, there have often been attempts to destroy evidence, and complaints or vague fears about 'misuse' of laws protecting women are strongly expressed, just as in the case of 'anti-atrocity' laws framed with an intent to protect Dalits from violence. There is an ongoing debate among feminist scholars and activists about how effective are attempts to change laws in a more woman-friendly direction. One of the problems appears to be that these changes are piecemeal, inserted into a body of legislation left over from pre-independence times, that exhibits the patriarchal prejudices of a colonial regime that generally did not interfere with traditional religious sentiments or caste practices except in specific well-publicised cases. Campaigns for changes in the law need to be backed up by vigorous efforts to address public opinion. The political atmosphere at present does not seem to be very cordial to such efforts.

One source of support that has been available for women's organizations aiming to change laws is from International forums and conventions under the aegis of the U.N., like the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, or CEDAW. 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 decentralization of governance, while the Beijing International Women's Conference in 1995 spurred the demand for reservations for women in national and state legislative bodies.

These developments bear witness to a shift in strategy, or what some would term a watering-down, in the Indian women's movement. It is increasingly difficult to talk of 'the Indian women's movement' in unified terms. Groups that once considered themselves part of an 'autonomous' women's movement have in many cases aligned themselves with 'NGO's' or non-government organizations; these may have an enviable international reach, but there may also be a tendency to fall in with agendas originating from elsewhere. The positions taken by women's organizations linked to

major political parties have also been complicated by political developments; the rise of Hindu fundamentalist parties has witnessed the involvement of women in communal riots, for example.

Marxist feminists in India have been carrying out studies related to women's work since the 1970's. Some of this has been linked to trade union activism especially in Kerala and Bengal, the strongholds of the Communist party of India (Marxist). Other feminist scholars closer to the autonomous feminist groups have done considerable research on making women's 'invisible' work visible, introducing gender concerns into government statistical records, the census and the budget. Maithreyi Krishna Raj, Nirmala Banerjee, Padmini Swaminathan and Utsa Patnaik have done important work in this area, and there are many others. At present, one might say that Marxist feminists on the left are most concerned with bringing out the gender impact of neo-liberal economic policies over the last twenty years. Women's organizations of the left political parties have over the years taken up issues of price rise and water distribution in city slums. They have joined in campaigns against dowry and dowry violence, and have taken the lead in the demand for reservations for women in Parliament and state legislatures.

An eco-feminist school including Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, among others, is more strongly critical of the prevalent paradigm of economic development. The Narmada Bachao Andolan, with two prominent women, Medha Patkar and Arundhati Roy, in leadership, has put together a broader network of organizations in the National Alliance of People's Movements. These diverse organizations work for the rehabilitation of persons displaced by big dams and other mega development projects, against loss of livelihoods because of capitalist--- corporate--- exploitation of natural resources, in some places for women's rights to cultivated land. Bina Agarwal has brought a comprehensive argument in favour of land rights for women based on traditional practices in different parts of South Asia.

The incorporation of some feminist demands into development agendas of international funding organizations has produced its own terminology and co-opted some feminist demands: micro-credit as a means to women's 'empowerment', 'violence against women as a public health issue', 'commercial sex worker', 'women's rights are human rights' are some examples of these. There are therefore many different strands to feminist discourse in India today, with diverse influences from theory as well as international development policy, contending positions on many issues, and a language of discourse in which academic rigour, the quasi-legal jargon of international forums and the techno-speak of development organizations all jostle for place.

The influence of post-structuralist and post-modernist theories has also brought a greater interest in issues of language and culture. This has come together with an awareness that we can no longer speak of 'the women's question' in the somewhat all-embracing, umbrella spirit expressed by Vina Mazumdar in the passages quoted at the beginning of this subsection. This is part of an international trend, as women

from different marginalized groups strive to make their own statements within the feminist movement. The willingness to understand that women speak with many voices can bring a greater tolerance and sensitivity into the women's movement, which is a spirit much needed in the Indian political scenario today. At its most banal, it can degenerate into a mere celebration of 'difference', or a tolerance for cultural practices that are sometimes demeaning of women.

Perspective on the Problem of Dalit and Other Women in the Indian Feminist Discourse

One can enumerate a few feminist writers in India who have consistently written on the relationship between caste and gender and the problems of Dalit women. Among them are Gabriele Dietrich and V.Geetha in Tamil Nadu, Vasanth and Kalpana Kannabiran in Andhra Pradesh. Maharashtra has a comparatively rich tradition of Dalit writing, both literary and analytical, and there are a number of scholars including Gopal Guru, Sharmila Rege, Urmila Pawar and Meenakshi Moon who have contributed on these themes. How far, however, has patriarchy in India been understood as caste patriarchy, in which ideological constructs and systemic violence controlling women's labour and sexuality within the male-headed family are always supportive of and backed up by a caste hierarchy, whereby patriarchy supports caste and caste supports patriarchy? Can the problem of violence against Dalit women be understood without such a formulation?

The title of one of Kalpana Kannabiran's books, *The Violence of Normal Times*, sums up the proposition that violence against women in India is systemic. However, it is somewhat surprising that the articles in this edited book include reflections on different instances of violence against women: communal violence, the 'scandal' of hysterectomies performed on mentally retarded women in institutions, violence against physically disabled women, violence against lesbian women, violence against women workers whose labour becomes 'invisibilised', 'honour killings in North India, domestic violence, but not a single example of violence against Dalit women.

We can certainly argue that violence against Dalit women is a part of the violence 'of normal times'. The Dalit women's autobiographies discussed in a later section of this report have several references to how Dalit women agricultural labourers are routinely sexually abused by the upper-caste landowners. Young girls experiencing this for the first time are advised to keep quiet, and even the male elders of their community are helpless to give them protection. Further, Dalit women's bodies become the site of sexual violence committed publicly whenever they or the men of their community are seen as transgressing the caste hierarchy. There is a sense in which there is no 'public' or 'private' for Dalit women. This underlies the phenomenon of individuals holding different responsibilities in the police, bureaucracy, medical establishment and politicians readily becoming involved in cover-up actions when a crime is committed against a Dalit woman. If the man is sufficiently powerful, this will happen even if the woman is upper-caste. The right of

the powerful upper-caste man to the body of the lower-caste woman is the paradigm for 'custodial rape'; this especially the case if the institution in which the woman is in custody is a charitable institution, hostel, public hospital or asylum. I do not think that 'the women's movement' has taken up these issues as having a central bearing on the nature of patriarchal power in this society.

Another issue is that of domestic servants. Mary John once remarked in conversation that household labour in middle-class households in India is not 'unpaid' labour because the housewives rarely perform it themselves: they hire servants to do it. For this reason middle-class feminists in India have never had to confront the men in their households to share the burden of household drudgery, since they can pass it on to other women. Even here there is a 'division of labourers' (to use Ambedkar's term for how the caste system splits the working-class)--- Dalit women are hardly ever employed as cooks in upper-caste homes. They will be hired to do the work of cleaning, washing clothes, and sometimes looking after the sick. In western countries such facilities were not available to practitioners of the women's movement, and when they pushed for more freedom to live the lives they wanted, the men were obliged to change. There is a visible change of attitude and prevalent social values over time as a result of the politics of the women's movement, something which has not happened in India. Even middle-class Dalit women are likely to find that caste affects who is willing to work for them as domestic servants.

Similar observations may be made about civic hygiene. Most towns and cities in India have armies of Dalit sweepers and scavengers to clean the dirt thrown out of 'pure' Hindu houses. In spite of a 1993 law prohibiting the use of manual labour to dispose of human excreta, Dalit scavengers still do this work in many smaller towns. Rag-picking is another occupation in which persons of certain Dalit castes are concentrated. The women have to take care of their children cook and clean their homes daily after doing this work. Why have these not become major issues for the women's movement? It is true that associations of domestic servants and of rag-pickers have been formed in some cities. These associations can potentially play an important role in making feminists more aware of Dalit women's problems and perceptions.

Dalit women's organizations formed in the mid-1980's and 1990's have taken notably different positions from 'mainstream' women's organizations on certain topical issues. In 2005 the Government of Maharashtra decided to prohibit licensed bars and restaurants serving drinks from hiring women to dance for the entertainment of customers. The government's motivation was typically puritanical-patriarchal: these dance-bars, said the Home Minister, pervert the morals of 'our' young men. Women's organisations in Mumbai came out to protest against the ban. The main arguments of the women's organisations opposing the ban will be familiar to western feminists. 'Moral policing' by the state should be resisted; women have the right to earn their living in the way they choose; in any case, women today have little choice of occupation, and the ban would throw thousands of women out of work.

The Dalit-bahujan women's organizations had a different response to the government ban : They welcomed it, while rejecting its moralistic justifications, because they felt that 'bar-dancing' was a seemingly innocuous occupation that would easily lead lower-caste girls into prostitution, they demanded that the government make arrangements for the rehabilitation of these girls.

The important point here is that the two groups placed their responses to the ban within the frameworks of different feminist histories. The first evokes 'the right to one's body', the individual's freedom of occupation, the resistance to moralistic control by a patriarchal state. There is also the designation of prostitution as 'commercial sex work', on par with other exploitative ways in which women have to earn their living. The Dalit-bahujan groups, on the other hand, are aware that there are traditional, religiously sanctioned practices that sexually exploit women of the lower castes and that with the growth of modern cities, many of these women end up as prostitutes. (Pawar and Moon, in the very first chapter of their book, presented statistics showing that the majority of prostitutes in the cities of Maharashtra at the beginning of the twentieth century were from the untouchable castes.) Dalit social reformers, from the pre-Ambedkar period down to Ambedkar himself, have always demanded that Dalit women reject these traditional practices and stay away from prostitution, even at the cost of economic hardship.

So, dialogue between the first group of Indian feminists and Dalit women's organizations requires that there be more awareness of the historical discourses that each relate to. This is difficult because the languages spoken are different, and use of language often becomes an issue in cultural politics. There are different perceptions of the role of 'identity politics'; left-wing feminists often regard agitations over names and symbols to be insubstantial and a distraction from the 'real' issues, while Dalit women might find it enabling in some situations. In any case, it can be immensely empowering for members of a socially excluded group to articulate a cause and argue for it in a national or international public forum. This is particularly so for Dalit women, since the caste system traditionally prohibits Dalits and *shudras* from certain kinds of speech or from the utterance of sacred texts. They would also have to fight with men from their own caste who would be all too eager to speak 'for' them. These things are now beginning to happen.

Summary

This part has tried to outline some of the areas in which theorists of the Indian women's movement (which is itself, as we have seen, a contestable term) have not squarely confronted certain questions which are crucial for Dalit women, and really need to be taken up on the theoretical plane. They include the nature and systemic justification of violence, the 'freedom of the individual' versus rights of the community, the right to speak for oneself and for society, and ultimately the question of how history is perceived and how it informs contemporary movements, agitations and organizations. All this has profound implications for a deeper understanding of

Gender and Citizenship issues in India, and, of course, for the Citizenship and Rights of Dalit women. We next consider these aspects in more detail.

New Dalit Women's Activism – Evolving Perspective on Dalit Women Question Beginning in mid 1980

Historical account of Dalit women's activism, through the platform of "The All India Depressed Class Women's Conference", as a part of Ambedkar social reform movement span over a period of roughly twenty years from early 1920's to mid 1940's. Although the active participation of Dalit women in the Ambedkar's anti-caste civil right movement, (including participation in conversion to Buddhism) continue on wider scale during the period of 1940's and mid 1950's, the organized efforts through an independent organization or a parallel conferences by "The All India Depressed Class Women's Conference" remained in relative silence after the last conference in July 1942 at Nagpur.

It is after a gap of about forty years that we see a gradual rise of Dalit women activism of all India nature emerging after the mid 1980's onwards. The National Federation of Dalit women (NFDW) was initiated on September 1995 by a group of Dalit women activists. Although there has been number of regional initiative and groups in some states of India, the NFDW has emerged in early 1990, with national character and visibility at national level. This national level initiative emerged mainly because of dissatisfaction and differences with the exiting mainstream 'feminist discourse'. Therefore these initiatives by Dalit women are of significance, not only because of their all India character, but more importantly of their "different" position on the question of Dalit women. In some sense they develop a different feminist discourse and represent a voice of discriminated women.

Therefore in the following section we discuss their perspective on Dalit women question. We look in to some selected questions: How have these initiatives of all Indian character emerged? Why were these initiatives thought by Dalit women? In other words, to use the word of Gopal Guru, Why Dalit women talk differently ?

The genesis or the origin of the pan-Indian initiative particularly by Dalit women in the form of NFDW is a less explored area. This would indeed require a separate study. We can only reflect on the emergence of Dalit women activism of all Indian nature since the mid 1980 in a general manner. In our view there are general and specific factors which enable the rise of Dalit women's new initiatives. It appears that the factors that caused the emergence of the Dalit literary movement in the form of Dalit literature and youth movement in the form of Dalit Panthers in the mid 1960's in Maharashtra, the similar factors seems to have induced the rise of Dalit women movement in India. The initial factor was the rise of educated class among the Dalit women in Maharashtra and in South (mainly in the states of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka) since the 1970's. It is quite likely that this process had started much earlier in south Indian states. While the emergence of the class of educated Dalit women in the south came mainly from the persons from Dalit

Christian background, facilitated by access to education through the Christian education system, in Maharashtra it was mainly due to access to education through public institutions and the institutions started by Ambedkar and other backward caste social reformers. From these educated women emerged some creative writers and social activists. In south India the Dalit women leadership had emerged mainly from the NGO movement, in Maharashtra it emerged from the legacy of Ambedkar movement. Individual level activism, in some case has taken a shape of collective action. Two known initiatives were “Women Voice” started by Ruth Manorama, a NGO activists in Bangalore and Jagruti Parisad by Vimal Thorat and Kaushalya Baisantry in Delhi, who came respectively from writer and social activist backgrounds. But there may have been other attempts, particularly in south India and elsewhere in India as well which demand systematic study.

Thus the rise of Dalit women’s new activism was a consequence of the emergence of an educated class among the Dalit women, which motivated them to engage in social causes, either at individual level or collectively. However, the major impetus for coming together of Dalit women activists and groups was encouraged and facilitated by the U.N. Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The UN Conference had provided an opportunity to Dalit women activists and groups to interact with other women organizations in the preparatory stage of this conference and to raise the issue of caste discrimination suffered by Dalit women side by side with gender exploitation. It appears that during the course of these activities, the individual activists and small groups/organizations got to know each other, and realized the need to have a separate organization of their own. While we shall discuss the position of Dalit women in next section, it is necessary to mention that, it is these intense activities and inter-mixing which provide the opportunity for Dalit women to reflect on their issue. As we shall soon see, through the interaction and participation with other women organization, the Dalit women realized that the issue of caste discrimination faced by Dalit women did not receive the attention it deserved from the mainstream women organizations.

It is in this background about 95 Dalit women –activists, NGO and women’s group gather together and formed a “Collective of Dalit women”.in Bangalore in 1991. The Collective organized two conferences, one in Bangalore in 1991 and another one in Thane in Maharashtra in 1994. The third conference was held in Delhi in which a decision to set up a separate body for presenting the problem of Dalit women was mooted, and that is how “National Federation of Dalit Women” came into being on August 11,1995. Later on some regional organizations were formed. Among the known organization include “All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch”, (AIDWF) in Delhi as a women wing of National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights and Dalit women Group in U.P.

From the first meeting in 1991 at Bangalore, the group has organized seven annual conference and also participate in UN conference on Race Discrimination held in Durban, South Africa in 2000. The seventh conference was held in Chennai in 2002.

The AIDWF has organized a conference in The Hague in 2008, where most of the groups had reassembled and participated.

It is through this intense discussion in conferences, seminars and round tables that Dalit women have evolved their position on the question of women in general and Dalit women in particular. A number of written documents on the theoretical articulation, analysis of the situation based on data and on strategy were prepared to present a particular view point. The reading of these documents gives us an idea about their position on the issue of Dalit women question. It also provides us insight into the reasons as to why Dalit women have separated out from the mainstream women's movement and developed their own path, and why they still talk differently, although they continue to connect and participate in the activities of other women's organizations.

In the following section we discuss the perspective of Dalit women on the question of Dalit women, which has emerged during the course the Dalit women activism since mid 1980's.

As we shall see later the Dalit feminist discourse has been influenced both by general feminist discourse and Ambedkar's views on the issue of gender. We have discussed the mainstream feminist discourse in the earlier section. Before we enter into the discussion on the contemporary Dalit feminist discourse, it is necessary to capture the Ambedkar's position on the issue of women. The insights from the mainstream Indian feminist position and Ambedkar's position will enable us to understand their influence on the contemporary Dalit feminist only discuss Ambedker's position.

Ambedkar Views on Caste

Among other issues, the caste and untouchability related discrimination, is the one which distinguishes the problem of Dalit women from the "rest" of the women. We therefore discuss the position of Ambedkar on caste system and the social position of women and Dalit women in the caste system. The new Dalit activism which began after mid 1980's draws heavily from the views of Ambedkar in ideological terms on both caste and gender issues. Therefore we try to get some insight into the position of Ambedker on the issue of caste and gender issue.

Characterization of the caste system- Ambedkar recognized that in its essential form, caste as a system of social and economic governance is governed by ideology and customary rules and norms, which are unique and distinct. The organizational scheme of the caste system is based on the division of people into social groups (or castes) in which the civil, cultural, religious and economic rights of each individual caste are pre-determined or ascribed by birth and made hereditary. The assignment and entitlement of civil, cultural and economic rights i among the castes is however unequal and hierarchal. The most important feature of the caste system, however, is that it provides for a regulatory mechanism to enforce the caste social and economic order through the

instruments of social ostracism (or social and economic penalties). The caste system is reinforced further with justification and support from philosophical elements in the Hindu religion (Lal 1988, Ambedkar 1936 and 1987). The theoretical roots of much of the violence and atrocities on Dalit women and men are to be found in this social and religious prescription.

The caste system's fundamental characteristics of fixed civil, cultural, religious and economic rights for each caste with restrictions for change, implies "forced exclusion" of one caste from the rights of another caste. Exclusion and discriminatory treatment to different caste in civil, cultural, religious and economic rights is therefore, internal to the system, and a necessary outcome of its governing principles.

This implies that the caste system involves the negation of not only equality and freedom, but also of basic human rights, particularly of the low caste 'untouchables', impeding personal development. The principles of equality and freedom are not the governing principles of the caste system. Unlike many other societies, the caste system does not recognize the individual and his/her distinctiveness as the centre of the social purpose. In fact, for the purpose of rights and duties, the unit of Hindu society is not the individual. (Even the family is not regarded as a unit in Hindu society, except for the purposes of marriage and inheritance). The primary unit in Hindu society is caste, and hence, the rights and privileges (or the lack of them) of an individual from a higher caste (both men and women) are on account of him/her being a member of a particular caste (Ambedkar, first published in 1987). Also due to differential ranking and the hierarchical nature of caste system, the entitlements to various rights become narrower for both men and women, as one goes down in hierarchical ladder. Various castes get artfully interlinked and coupled with each other (in their rights and duties), in a manner such that the rights and privileges of the higher castes persons become the causative reasons for the disadvantage and disability for the lower castes men and women, particularly the 'untouchables'. Castes at the top of the social order enjoy more rights – at the expense of those located at the bottom of the caste hierarchy.

Caste-based exclusion thus necessarily involves failure of entitlements, not only to economic rights, but also to civil, cultural, religious and political rights. It involves what has been described as "living mode exclusion" (minorities at Risk, UNDP HDR 2004). Caste, and untouchability based exclusion thus reflect the inability of individuals and groups like former 'untouchables', to interact freely and productively with others and to take part in the full economic, social and political life of a community (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997). Incomplete citizenship or denial of civil rights (freedom of expression, rule of law, right to justice), political rights (right and means to participate in the exercise of political power), and socio-economic rights (economic security and equality of opportunities) are key to impoverished lives (Zoninsein, 2001). The exclusion and resultant denial of equal opportunity in the economic sphere would necessarily involve denial of livelihood rights. The exclusion from having an access to social needs such as education, housing and health deprives them of opportunities for human development.

The implications of caste and untouchability are far more serious for the untouchable (Dalit) castes. They suffer from fewer rights, exclusion and isolation and psychology of contempt and anti-social relations. The untouchables, men and women (or *panchams* or eunuchs) who are located at the bottom of caste hierarchy are entitled to fewer economic and social rights. Under the traditional notion of the caste system, the untouchables not only have fewer rights---- economic, social, cultural, religious and political, but what is important is that they also face social and physical exclusion and isolation. Because of the notion of purity and pollution and the untouchables being considered impure and polluting, they are treated by other castes coming into relation with them as untouchable, unapproachable (and at times even un-see-able). It is this notion of untouchability which leads to physical (or residential) segregation. On account of being considered inferior and polluting, the untouchable suffers from general societal exclusion in their relation with the higher caste. The psychology of contempt is another feature which needs to be understood. Ambedkar argued that there are classes and social division in other societies and this social division made them non-social to each other. But in the caste system and untouchability, social division led to involve social and physical isolation and social exclusion due to the notion of untouchability. In Ambedkar's view "isolation and exclusion" – physical and social, is the unique feature of Hindu social order which is to be found only in few societies in the world.

There are other consequences of the system of rights and duties in Hindu social order and isolation and exclusion for untouchables. These consequences relate to the "social psychology of contempt " (and hatred) and its anti-social character in their inter - caste social relations. Why does the Hindu social order based on caste system and institution of untouchability leads to social psychology of contempt and hatred? In Ambedkar's view 'this has to do with the very concept of "human right and human dignity" in the Hindu social order. The Hindu caste system does not recognize the rights of individual and there fore the untouchable caste don't have entitlement to normal human rights but they do have duties towards the higher caste of various services. But is it that they lack the human rights. The reason is to be found in, they being recognized as inferior human being and not entitled for human rights which other enjoy. But since they are also considered to be impure and polluting and untouchable and unapproachable (and un-see-able) and not fit for social and physical association, they are considered to be "inferior human beings". It is this concept of untouchable being inferior human being with notion of pollution and untouchability which has lead to social psychology of contempt and hatred towards them.

Ambedkar observed

"one of the unique feature of the caste system is Isolation and Exclusiveness of the untouchables. Exclusiveness and isolation makes the caste group anti-social and inimical towards one another. It is the sprit of isolation and exclusiveness which bring anti-social sprit and it is the worst feature of the caste system and untouchability. An anti-sprit is found wherever a group has interest

of its own which shut it out from full interaction with other group, so that its prevailing purpose is protection of what it has got. This anti-social spirit of protecting its own interests is a marked feature of the different castes. The Hindus under the caste system are not merely an assortment of the castes but they are so many warring groups living for itself and for its selfish end”.

The untouchable being deprived of all rights and being located at the bottom of social and economic hierarchy suffer most from the anti-social spirit and violence of high caste Hindus”. (Ambedkar, 1987 first published).

We must end this section with the last but equally important feature of the caste system - in order to explain the cultural roots of violence and atrocities against untouchable –both men and women in contemporary tone. As we have seen earlier the caste system provides for community level mechanism to regulate and enforce the customary norms and rules of the caste system. The social ostracism in the form of penalties –physical and social, including social and economic boycott is an instrument prescribed in caste system for its governance. The use of violence and atrocities by high caste against the Dalits in contemporary time, is thus influenced by the provision in the customary rule of the caste system. Therefore if we find the high caste not using the normal legal provision of the country and resorting to community-level punishment of the untouchable in the form of physical violence (often involving sexual violence against the women), atrocities and social and economic boycott, the roots are to be found in the residual consequences of social ostracism on the social psychology and behaviour of high caste Hindus.

Ambedkar’ Views on Caste, Patriarchy, Women and Dalit women

Having got some insights on the rights and entitlement of low caste untouchables in the caste system, we now consider the prescription for women and Dalit women in the Hindu social order. Since the new Dalit women activism is heavily influenced by Ambedkar’s views on the gender issue, we discuss Ambedkar’s position on caste and patriarchy. For this purpose, we rely on the Hindu code of conduct for women as delineated in the Manusmriti and from the writings of Ambedkar on the condition of women in India, expressed in his important essay on ‘The rise and fall of Hindu women’ published in 1950. The social norms laid down in Manusmriti governed the social status of Hindu women and had profound negative impact on their rights, control over resources, social position in the family and society and decision making power in the social, economic and political institutions.

The central argument of Ambedkar was, that women enjoyed a high position before Manu’s time and that there had been an utter downfall in position of women after the Manu’s time (or Manu’s codification) in India. Women did occupy a very high position in the intellectual and social life of the country before Manu’s period.

Ambedkar presents a brief account of the freedom enjoyed by women before Manusmriti was written. The rights and freedoms enjoyed by women include access

to education, freedom to teach and be a teacher, and equal religious rights, ie to be a part of religious performance and ritual and to study religion, enter into religious discourse and also to occupy position and enjoy same reverence as men enjoy.

His essay details 'that at one time a woman was entitled to upanayan is clear from the Atharva Veda where a girl is spoken of as being eligible for marriage having finished her Brahmacharya. From the Shrauta Sutras it is clear that women could repeat the Mantras of the Vedas and the women were taught to read the Vedas. Panini's Ashtadhyai bears testimony to the fact that women attended Gurukul (College) and studied the various Shakhas (Sections) of the Veda and became expert in Mimansa. Patanjali's Maha Bhashya shows that women were teachers and taught Vedas to girl students. The stories of women entering into public discussions with men on most abstruse subjects of religion, philosophy and metaphysics are by no means few. The story of public disputation between Janaka and Sulabha, between Yajnavalkya and Gargi, between Yajnavalkya and Maitrei and between Sankara Charya and Vidyadhari shows that Indian women in pre - Manu's time could rise to the highest pinnacle of learning and education. That at one time women were highly respected cannot be disputed. Among the Ratnis who played so prominent a part in the coronation of the King in Ancient India was queen and the King made her an offering¹ as he did to the others. Not only the King elect did homage to the Queen he worshipped his other wives of lower castes². In the same way the King offers salutation after the coronation ceremony to the ladies of the chiefs of the Srenies (guilds)³.

The freedom and equal rights that women enjoyed were completely reversed and withdrawn during the period of Manu. Ambedkar provides evidence from the religious text, particularly the Manusmriti

On Womanhood-

The social norms related to womanhood define and determine the women's innate characteristics, women as human being. And this forms the base for Manu to later take away the independence and freedom of women as human beings.

On this aspect Ambedkar quotes Manusmriti as under that:

- II. 213. It is the nature of women to seduce man in this (world). For that reason the wise are never unguarded in (the company of) females.
- II. 214. For women are able to lead astray in (this) world not only a fool, but even a learned man, and (to make) him a slave of desire and anger.
- II. 215. One should not sit in a lonely place with one's mother, sister or daughter; for the senses are powerful, and master even a learned man.

- IX. 14. Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age; (thinking), ' (It is enough that) he is a man ', they give themselves to the handsome and to the ugly.
- IX. 15. Through their passion for men, through their mutable temper, through natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands, however, carefully they may be guarded in this (world).
- IX. 16. knowing their disposition, which the Lord of creatures laid in them at the creation to be such, (every) man should most strenuously exert himself to guard them.
- IX. 17. (When creating them) Manu allotted to women (a love of their) seat and (of) ornament, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice, and bad conduct.

Thus Manu constructs the womanhood as something which is the embodiment of bad qualities and evil. Women by her very original nature is a store house of impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice, natural heartlessness, seductive and of bad conduct and devoid of basic moral qualities. After having conceived women with complete lack of any virtue, It was natural for Manu to provide protection and safeguards against the women as evil entities. Hence Ambedkar went on to present the restrictions and safeguards against the evil of women. These were essentially in the form of taking away the freedom and independence of women and also the normal rights that men enjoy. These also require restrictions and penalties, which Manu prescribed in a clear manner.

Ambedkar presented in carefully the rules involving restrictions related to the social, religious, economic, educational rights including the right to property and marriage

Laws on Independence of Women:

Women are not to be free under any circumstances. The rules of subordination for women are:—

- IX. 2. Day and night women must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their (families), and if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one's control.
- IX. 3. Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never for independence.
- IX. 5. Women must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations, however trifling (they may appear); if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on two families.
- IX. 6. Considering the higher duty of all castes, even weak husbands (must) strive to guard their wives.

- V. 147. By a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house.
- V. 148. In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent.

Laws on Divorce:

The Manu's law on divorce according to Ambedkar's interpretation did 'not to tie up a man to a woman but it was to tie up the woman to a man and to leave the man free. For Manu does not prevent a man from giving up his wife. Indeed he not only allows him to abandon his wife but he also permits him to sell her. But what he does is to prevent the wife from becoming free. The meaning is that a wife, sold or repudiated by her husband, can never become the legitimate wife of another who may have bought or received her after she was repudiated'.(Ambedkar---)

- V. 149. She must not seek to separate herself from her father, husband, or sons; by leaving them she would make both (her own and her husband's) families contemptible.
(Woman is not to have a right to divorce.)
- IX. 45. The husband is declared to be one with wife, which means that there could be no separation once a woman is married.
- IX. 46. Neither by sale nor by repudiation is a wife released from her husband.

Law on Property Rights:

According to the law on property rights, a wife did not have any right to property and was equated to the level of a slave in the matter of property.

- IX. 416. A wife, a son, and a slave, these three are declared to have no property; the wealth which they earn is (acquired) for him to whom they belong.

When she becomes a widow Manu allows her maintenance, if her husband was joint, and a widow's estate in the property of her husband, if he was separate from his family.

Laws on Violence towards women:

A woman under the laws of Manu is subject to corporal punishment and Manu allows the husband the right to beat his wife.

- VIII. 209. A wife, a son, a slave, a pupil, and a younger brother of the full blood, who have committed faults, may be beaten with a rope or a split bamboo.

Law on Right to knowledge

Under Manu a woman had no right to knowledge. The study of the Veda was forbidden to her by Manu.

- II. 66. Even for a woman the performance of the SANSKARAS are necessary and they should be performed without uttering the Veda mantras.

Laws on Performing Rituals:

Offering sacrifices according to Brahmanism formed the very soul of religion. Manu forbids women from performing sacrifices. Manu ordains that :

- XL 36-37 A woman shall not perform the daily sacrifices prescribed by the Vedas. If she does it she will go to hell.

To disable her from performing such sacrifices Manu prevents her from getting the aid and services of a Brahmin priest.

- IV. 205-206 A Brahman must never eat food given at a sacrifice performed by women. Sacrifices performed by women are inauspicious and not acceptable to God. They should therefore be avoided.
- VV. 89 They shall also be withdrawn from women who have joined a heretic sect, who have too freely, who have injured a child in their womb or their husband and those who drink wine.

Law on Ideal of Life

Finally a word regarding the ideal of life, Manu has sought to place before a woman. It had better be stated in his own words:

- V. 151 Him to whom her father may give her, or her brother with the father's permission, she shall obey as long as he lives and when he is dead, she must not insult his memory.
- V. 154 Though destitute of virtue, or seeking pleasure elsewhere, or devoid of good qualities, yet a husband must be constantly worshipped as a God by a faithful wife.
- V.. 155 No sacrifice, no vow, no fast must be performed by women, apart from their husbands: if a wife obeys her husband, she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven.
- V. 153 The husband who wedded her with sacred mantras, is always a source of happiness to his wife, both in season and out of season, in this world and in the next.

- V. 150 She must always be cheerful, clever in the management of her household affairs, careful in cleaning her utensils, and economical in expenditure.

Further, Manu declared a new rule that killing a woman was only an Upapataka i. e. it was a minor offence.

- XL 67 Liquor, slaying women, Sudras, Vaishyas, or Kshatriyas, and atheists (are all) minor offences.

It is for this that Manu imposed these disabilities upon women and crippled them permanently.

In addition to the code of conduct for women detailed in Manusmriti, there are some additional laws with respect to Dalit women. This is mainly confined to the prohibition of marriage with Dalit women. (see “Manu’s Code of Laws – A Critical Edition and Translation of the Manava-Dharmasastra”(Olivelle: 2004). The restriction on inter-caste marriage was some things from which untouchables women also suffers form freedom and independence in the spheres of marriage. The forms and nature of disabilities prescribed for untouchables as low caste women is an area which has neglected by researchers. It would require a detailed study. From some perception and actual practice, it becomes clear that higher caste women also suffer from many restrictions, which untouchable women shared, but additionally because of their low caste status, the untouchables suffered from additional practices and restrictions. For instance, while endogamy restrictsa the marriages of Brahmin with untouchable women but Manusmiti provide the overwhelming right to Brahmin to have sexual relations with untouchable women. She is supposed be available for higher caste but without any responsibility for maintenance and hereditary rights for children. Another instance is the institution of Murali or devdasi, which is a form of religious prostitution and is confined to only untouchable women. However, we feel that this issue is much less explored area and needs detailed study to identify the caste–gender interface or caste linkages of gender exploitation of Dalit women.

Summary

This section has tried to interpret the traditional social norms and laws specific to women primarily on the basis of original traditional texts. For the purpose, this section presented the view of Ambedkar, outlined in his essay on ‘The rise and fall of Hindu Women’ published in 1950. It is clear that there were specific laws on the conduct for women and with respect to Dalit women as well. These social norms determined the social and cultural status of women and had a negative impact on their rights, control over resources, and decision making power in the social, economic and political institutions.

In Ambedker's view Manu constructed the womanhood as something which is the embodiment of bad qualities and evil. Women by her very inner nature is a store house of impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice, natural heartlessness, seductive

and of bad conduct and divorce of basic moral qualities. After having conceived women with complete lack of any virtue, Manu provides protections and safeguards against the women's evil character. Restrictions were essentially in the form of taking away the freedom and independence of women from having normal rights that men enjoy. The restrictions were also accompanied by set of penalties, including of physical nature. The women were denied right to property, right to education, right to spiritual elevation through religious prayer and godly discourse and ritual performance and right to divorce.

Ambedkar on Caste - Patriarchy Interface

As mentioned before, the relationship between caste and patriarchy needs greater scrutiny. Ambedkar's contribution is captured by M. Nalini which traces Ambedkar's presentation of an 'innovative argument' on the relationship between the rise of the caste system and the decline of the status of women. But Ambedkar analysis also indirectly implied that the loss of freedom of women through Manu's code is through family and society and made effective through the agency of men. To that extent Ambedkar points towards the linkages between caste and patriarchy. G. Dietrich reflects on Ambedkar's contribution on this subject and also his limitations:

Ambedkar, though aware of women's position in general, has not integrated his analysis of caste with an analysis of patriarchy. He confines himself to general observations like the following: *"From time immemorial, man, as compared with women, has had the upper hand. He is a dominant figure in every group and of the two sexes has greater prestige. With this traditional superiority of man over woman, his wishes have always been consulted. Women, on the other hand, have been an easy prey to all kinds of iniquitous injunctions - religious, social or economic. But man, as a maker of injunction, is most often above them all."*⁴¹ Garbrielle Dietrich, "Dalit Movements and Women's Movements", in *Reflection on the Women's Movement in India*, New Delhi: Horizon India Books, 1992.)

Dietrich continues with her analysis of Ambedkar's idea:

While he sees a connection between social evils like *sati*, child marriage, ban on widow remarriage, caste and untouchability, his preoccupation is clearly with untouchability and caste. Yet, his writings are not only relevant to rethink drastically on racial theories of invasion; they also lend themselves for drawing further connections between caste and patriarchy and also for critical introspection, both among feminists and Dalits.

Dietrich, in conclusion, pleads for 'drastic rethinking' in the Dalit movement on patriarchy.²⁵

Ambedkar was ahead of his time in his thinking about women's empowerment, as a close reading of the debates surrounding the Hindu Code Bill will show, and it is perhaps enough that he pointed out the relationship between the caste system and the position of women. In fact his analysis of degrading status of Hindu women in

term of Manu's social code and accompanying social ideology also throw light on some aspects of caste –gender face. It indicate that while the women from all caste suffered maus'code of gender disabilities, the women from untouchable caste suffered both from caste and gender disabilities. So while high caste women may be willing partners in addressing the disabilities related to gender, caste cleavage may develop on the issue of caste discrimination, as this affects mainly the Dalit women. In general high caste women, often may find themselves on the side of high caste men. By highlighting the role of Hindu ideology and legal framework Ambedkar has traced the genesis of the degrading status of Hindu women. Nevertheless, the "interface between caste, patriarchy and gender", is a theme which needs thorough theoretical and empirical study to locate the causes of double exploitation – caste and gender exploitation of Dalit women.

Ambedkar and Hindu Code Bill – Equal Rights for Women

Ambedkar's concern for equal rights for women is translated into action through the support on legal measures in marriage, divorce, adoption practices, inheritance and property ownership. It is documented that even before the Hindu Code Bill, Dr. Ambedkar supported legal measures to aid women. As a member of the Legislative Council of Bombay, in 1928, he supported 'vehemently' the bill for maternity leave for working women and felt the financial responsibility should be on both the employer and the government. He also supported equal wages for women (R.R. Sonker, "Women's Liberation in India and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar", *typescript*). Ambedkar describes the significance of the Hindu Code Bill as:

'No law passed by the Indian Legislature in the past or likely to be passed in the future can be compared to it [Hindu Code] in point of its significance. To leave inequality between class and class, between sex and sex, which is the soul of Hindu society, untouched and to go on passing legislation relating to economic problems is to make a farce of our Constitution and to build a palace on a dung heap. This is the significance I attached to the Hindu Code'(Foreword: Dr. Ambedkar in his Vol 14, Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches).

Ambedkar and his supporters including all women, faced fierce objections while defending the rights of women in marriage, divorce, adoption and property. Eleanor Zelliot (2006) quotes some statements on the objections raised in the parliament at the time of discussion on this bill:

"ladies will be reduced from being an Alexander in the home to being a mere partner"; the Code should apply to Muslims also; it is worded dictatorially; it should be submitted to all Indians in referendum; Sikhs find it regressive; Ambedkar does not have a mandate; "we do not want Ambedkarian religion"; custom should dominate over law; there will be nothing but litigation; "Ambedkar has been egged on by aggressive ladies". Dr. *Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writing and Speeches*, vol. 14, parts One and Two: The Hindu Code Bill, Vasant Moon, ed. Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1995, pp. 37-40.

The Hindu Code Bill was not passed in total but passed bit by bit as Acts between 1955 and 1956. Among its provisions are guarantees of property from the paternal home to daughters; abolition of caste in the matter of marriage and adoption; the principle of monogamy; and the principle of divorce'.

New Dalit Women Activism between mid-1980's – 2008: Patriarchy, caste and Poverty

In earlier section we have seen the background situation in which NFDW has emerged. We have also done a review of the general feminist discourse as well as Ambedkar's civil rights movement and his articulation about the women in general and Dalit women in particular. The New Dalit Women's activism whose origin can be traced back to mid 1980's, has been influenced by both strands - mainstream feminist discourse and Ambedkar position on Indian women. While it has drawn its position about patriarchy from the general feminist discourse, it also claimed a close affinity and link with Ambedkar movement and thoughts on the issue of caste discrimination and gender. While the general feminist movement focused on issues related to gender relations, patriarchy and of economic empowerment, the Ambedkar legacy brought into sharp focus the issue of caste- gender interface with a particular concern for caste discrimination and gender discrimination as a part of caste problem. It is in this context we now discuss the Dalit feminist position on the issue of caste, class and patriarchy and also provide a background as to why they talk differently in the word of Gopal Guru and formed a separate organization of their own.

National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW) was formed in August 1995 in Delhi following a long drawn inter action and intense debate within the mainstream women's movement and the Dalit movement. The discussion started in 1989, when 95 Dalit women leaders and writer activist met in Bangalore to deliberate on the need to articulate the "Dalit women problematic". The different position of Dalit women, led to a need of separate organisation. The need for a separate platform for Dalit women was necessitated by specificity and particularity of their problem which, according to them is located in an institutionalised structure of caste. In 1991, Dalit women conference was again organized in Bangalore for the same purpose followed by a conference in 1994 in Thane.(Maharashtra). Finally, in 1995, National Federation of Dalit Women was formed in third conference in Delhi - this itself was a federation of several initiatives developed at local level particularly from south and western Maharashtra. The NGO, particularly Dalit headed NGO had Dalit women issues in their activities. However, we have little idea about these regional initiatives, therefore we require further research to get in-depth understanding of the rise of new Dalit women initiatives at local level in India. The two known initiatives which emerged after NFDW was formed are the AIDMAM which was set-up in 2006 in the North of India and Dalit Mahila Samiti in UP.

The NFDW symbolized emerging critiques by Dalit and lower-caste women, who had begun to argue with Indian feminists for the seeming invisibility of caste discrimination and caste gender inequality in mainstream Indian feminism. They argued that this had led to an exclusive and partial constitution of Indian feminist politics. The relevant document released by NFDW read, that the platform also emerged from a critique of;

- a) The condition of Dalit women and the impact of planned development and later the economic liberalisation on their lives as well as the failure of the state to fulfil its constitutional guarantee and promises since independence.
- b) The *failure* of the progress and democratic movements to perceive and address Dalit women's contribution and needs.
- c) The lack of recognition of Dalit women's role *and* contribution to struggles as evident from their absence in decision-making bodies and the leadership of the women's movement. The failure to recognise the multiple identities of women and the need to create democratic spaces for the articulation of their voices.
- (d) The male dominated Dalit movement and varied organisations of the oppressed castes which are active in parliamentary and other forms of power politics and adopt the ways of functioning of the Upper caste dominated mainstream political organisations. Moreover caste-based discrimination and violence inflicted on Dalit women have not always been acknowledged or addressed.
- e) Rather than merely suggesting that Indian feminism was incomplete and exclusive, Dalit feminists went further, and suggested that Indian feminism would engage meaningfully with Dalit women's "difference" from the ideal subject of feminist politics,- the Indian upper-caste woman. By drawing attention to the relationship between caste ideology and gender relations in the intimate and public sphere, and by emphasizing that the regulation of gender and sexuality was integral to the reproduction of caste, Dalit feminists demanded a changed politics of feminism.

Based on the understanding of their own situation and condition which is located within an institutionalized setting of caste, class, gender oppression rooted in the polity and society, the federation organized themselves around issues of access to livelihood and social needs, patriarchy, caste-based discrimination, violence and impunity against Dalit women.

The NFDW and AIDMAM and other Dalit women organisation focused on issues of caste, class and patriarchy and their complex inter-face, interacting and influencing each other. Based on the document published by these organisation from time to time, some issues which receive priority by these organisation and which revealed their differences are discussed below. The focus is on caste discrimination, economic deprivation and patriarchy.

Livelihood and Social Needs

Due to the denial of rights to property to women both higher caste and low caste, women in general lack access to sources of livelihood- agriculture land and business. This is a common problem shared by women from all communities. The women suffered from lack of ownership of income earning assets, due to denial of the right to property. Dalit women, however, are vulnerably positioned at the bottom of the caste hierarchy as they suffered from denial of property right from both routes --- namely the customary rule denying right to property to all women of which Dalit women is part but also Dalit women as untouchable person.

Dalit women's forum recognized this double denial which resulted in complete lack access to income earning assets and therefore pressed for ensuring ownership of assets as means of livelihood for their economic independence (Conference on Violence Against Dalit Women, New Delhi, 2006). With respect to the title to land, the federation petitioned government to issue legal titles to the name of Dalit women and to allocate sufficient budgets for purchase of land to be distributed to Dalit women. Complimentary to policies for ownership, the movement also called upon on 'designing of appropriate policies to enhance the effectiveness of agricultural practices and to provide market support to improve their income' (Dalit Women's Rights Conference, Hague, 2006). It called upon to ensure strict enforcement of Minimum Wages Act and Equal Remuneration Act to address inequalities in wages.

They further called upon for ensuring equal access to education, health care and nutrition for their children.

Dalit women recognised the problem of their lower political participation which limits their role in governance. To address this issue the forum pressed for proportional representation of Dalit women elected into parliaments, legislatures and local governance systems.

Patriarchy and Problem of Subordination by Men

Dalit women recognised the problem of gender exploitation by their men and therefore, the Dalit women's movement addresses the issue of patriarchy which denies women from asserting their choices and participation in decision making in both the community and the family. The study on violence against Dalit women supported by All India Dalit Women's Forum, indicated that 'Dalit women faced violence in the family.

Within the Dalit community itself, Dalit husbands often act out their own oppressed position through violence against their wives. The study sponsored by ADMIM indicted that 43% of 500 Dalit sample women suffered from domestic violence (Dalit Women Speak Out, Overview Report, p 3)'. This violence was in the form of verbal abuse of the women, accompanied by physical assault. In most cases where a Dalit husband is concerned, the violence takes on a strong patriarchal dimension: women are tortured within the home for not bringing enough dowry, for not bearing male

children, for being ugly, or too beautiful, or allegedly unfaithful, for talking back to her husband, etc. Domestic violence resulted in some women being deserted by their husbands, or being forced to leave their marital home. For the majority of women, however, the social norms and pressures of married life and “duties” of wives to their husbands ensure that they continue to endure this violence (Dalit Women Speak Out, Overview Report, p 5). These are forms of violence which have a strong patriarchal dimension And results in physical, sexual or psychological harm.

In the Hague conference (2006), the Dalit women’s forum recommended to the state to stringently enforce the domestic violence legislation, i.e. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005. The forum called for the support of a special clause for Dalit women acknowledging unique vulnerability to domestic violence and to provide social security system to support the survivors of domestic violence. To the Dalit men, the forum, called upon them to prioritize the problems faced by women in the Dalit movement, to acknowledge that domestic violence was a problem in the Dalit community, the declining ratio of female children and respecting the right of women to decide when to have children.

Caste and untouchability Based Discrimination in multiple spheres

Issues related to livelihood and social needs (like education, health etc) and those related to patriarchy mentioned above are the concern of all women Dalit or non Dalit, although the forms and nature of them may vary. Like all women, Dalit women suffer from subordination due to patriarchy experienced within the family, at the place of work, and in society. Like their poor counter part from high caste and other female groups, they also suffer from lack of access to income earning assets, education and resultant high poverty.

However, the Dalit women differs form rest of the women in so far as the causes of their relatively high degree of deprivation and proverty of Dalit women is closely linked with caste and untouchability social exclusion and discrimination. The women belonging to social grouping of low caste, suffers from social exclusion and discrimination due to their caste identity, which rest of the women do not. It is this “exclusion –induced deprivation” which differentiates Dalit women problem from 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.

In case of Dalit women, although the same factors (like lack of ownership of income earning assets, less education and skill, poor health) are the ultimate cause of low income and poverty, the channel of causation in their case is some what different. In their case, there are “group specific factors”, from which Dalit women “alone” suffer and are vulnerable to deprivation. The group specific factors which are known to affect women from the Dalit community due to their social background relate to social exclusion and discrimination involving denial of equal rights and entitlement, -“unfair exclusion and /or unfair inclusion”(with discriminatory/differential treatment) which lead to lack of ownership of income earning assets like agriculture land, business,

lack of access to gainful employment, lack of access to education, health facilities, housing and participation in governance, causing lower income and high poverty. And unless the constraints posed by social exclusion and discriminatory access are reduced, their access to income earning assets, employment, education and skill and health facilities, and their poverty may not be reduced. They also face discrimination and exclusion from participation in certain categories of jobs because of their association with their occupation such as scavenging, Dalit woman face exclusion in *social relation* and employment in some category of jobs and works. The woman belonging to sweeper community is hardly employed for cooking and other household job because of the perceived notion of purity and pollution associated with scavenging.

Discrimination further occurs in access to and provision of *social goods* provided either publicly or privately in education, housing, food and health including common property resources like water bodies, grazing land and other land of common use. So the issue of caste discrimination in its multiple manifestation and in multiple spheres is the central focus of Dalit women organizations.

Caste related Violence and Atrocities: Another issue that distinguishes the Dalit women is the issue of caste related violence and atrocities. The violence and atrocities which are faced by both men and women is a social reality which was recognized by the state and a law enacted against atrocities, namely Prevention of Atrocities Against Schedule Castes And Schedule Tribes Act, 1989.

Caste Related Sexual Abuse and Violence

The economic and political vulnerability exposes the Dalit women to multiple levels of violence. Evidence based on primary level studies¹ across 500 villages indicate that across all states Dalit women are subjected to constant harassment and violence from non-Dalit men. Harassment takes numerous forms: use of abusive and derogatory language when addressing Dalit women and referring Dalit women as prostitutes or use caste names are the common practices. In their work place or in the market, non-Dalit supervisor or trader will often make sexual advances or speak sexual innuendoes to Dalit women. Sexual harassment also takes more violent form of physical molestation and rape. The incidence of recorded instances of *atrocities* on Dalit women is far higher than non-Dalit women. 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 status and obligations towards men. It is also used to remind the men of her caste of their caste status. This is another issue which clearly distinguishes the Dalit women from their high caste counterparts. This brings a specificity to their problem, which often does not draw sufficient concern and recognition from high caste women.

¹ Shah G, Mander H, Thorat S, Deshpande S, Baviskar A(2006): Untouchability in Rural India, Sage Publications, ND,

Sexual exploitation through religious institution of Devdasi and Murali

The Dalit women faced a particular form of sexual exploitation in the form of the practice of dedicating young girls as Devdasis, or servants of god, which is specific to them. This is the system of devdasi and murali, under which the Dalit are often required to dedicate their young in service of the Hindu God in a Hindu temple, which then becomes an institution of open sexual abuse. The Dalit girls become the victims of social and religious practice of *Devdasi* resulting in sexual exploitation in the name of religion. This practice is confined to untouchable girls only and remnants are still found in the states of Karnataka and Maharashtra and probably in modified form of sexual servitude in other parts of India. The government has passed a law against devdasi and similar system but it is still practiced in some states. Dalit women place this issue on their main agenda.

Lack of participation and discrimination in governance at various levels

The Dalit women recognized that they face discrimination in access to political rights including the voting in the regular election, less representation in various political institutions at various levels such as village, state and central legislature and discrimination in participation- in social treatment in the offices of village panchayat and the decision making process.

Thus the new 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 form part of their main agenda. Similarly non-discriminatory access and affirmative action policies in political participation also form the focus of activities of Dalit women.

This account presents the perspective of Dalit women about their own problem. It indicates as to how the contemporary Dalit women discourse shared common problems with respect to gender, economic empowerment and patriarchy. But Dalit women also recognized and articulated their particular problems related to caste discrimination in multiple spheres, caste related violence and atrocities, sexual abuse, particularly the institutionalized sexual exploitation through system of Devdasi and Murali.

This particular perspective on the problem of Dalit women, thus reflected in their demands and activities. In this context demands put forth by Dalit women in recent conference of Dalit women forum in Hague (2006) on the "on Human Rights and Dignity of Dalit Women" capture the perspective of Dalit. This conference made some

recommendations to address the issue of discrimination in economic and social spheres and to address the system of devdasi and manual scavenging. The demands include the following

Discrimination in access to sources of livelihood such as land- Dalit women demanded that the government restore lands earmarked for Dalits and register them in the name of Dalit women or jointly with men, and also acquire and distribute surplus lands by implementing Land Ceiling and Land Reform Acts and distribute lands to Dalits in proportion to their population in the country; legal title to lands possessed and enjoyed by Dalit women and men, in the name of Dalit women or jointly with men; grant to each Dalit family five acres of land registered in the name of Dalit women; allocate and distribute sufficient budget for the purchase of land and distribute to Discrimination in employment for Dalit women-ensures payment of equal and living wage to Dalit women without discrimination; Implement laws that prohibit bonded or forced labour.

Discrimination in access to Common property rights - Ensure that Dalit women enjoy equal access to and share of common property resources, in particular water resources, and provide budgetary support to create common property for their own.

Displacement and provide a social security system: Enact appropriate legislation to prevent displacement of Dalits and alienation of their lands in the name of development projects and schemes in the context of economic globalisation.

Discrimination in education: Allocate sufficient budget for full primary and secondary level education of all Dalit girls, including funds for staff in schools and infrastructure, and vocational institutions Discrimination in access to health care: Ensure reduction of pre-natal mortality, infant mortality and maternal mortality among Dalit women on a time-bound basis.

Discrimination in political participation: Provide support to establish informal organisations for Dalit women to freely discuss the social, domestic and development issues in their own community and to strengthen leadership within local governance structures. Mandate proportional representation of Dalit women elected into parliaments, legislatures and local governance systems, including equal distribution of other minority groups, such as Joginis irrespective of their faith, and provide adequate budget allocations in this regard.

To address discrimination in access to food security schemes such as ICDS, Mid-Day Meal and PDS.

Recommendations on Atrocities and Violence: Evolve and implement a comprehensive strategy to address impunity and ensure criminal justice for Dalit women. Grant powers to make legally binding recommendations to relevant National Human Rights Institutions to establish an independent complaints and monitoring mechanism to address the discrimination and violence against Dalit women.

To address cultural practices of the devdasi system- Eradicate the practice the devdasi system and enforce rehabilitation policies and programmes for their alternative livelihood and sustenance.

To address discrimination due to the nature of their occupation of Manual Scavenging -Eradicate the practice of manual scavenging and enforce rehabilitation policies and programmes for their alternative livelihood and sustenance.

Affirmative action policy for Dalit women to prevent domestic violence- Enact domestic violence (prevention and protection) laws that acknowledge the unique vulnerability of Dalit women, allocate adequate resources and ensure a comprehensive monitoring mechanism with representation of Dalit women for effective implementation of these laws.

Finally it seek to address discrimination in interaction in the Indian society by providing assistance to launch a national campaign for sensitisation about caste gender discrimination.

The demand also include collection of data by gender *and* caste in all official surveys and population census.

Gender, Rights and Citizenship

Concept of Citizenship: General Theoretical Discourse

In this subsection we look at Dalit women specifically as citizens and examine the various forms of deprivation they suffer in the light of the rights normally considered to be the rights of citizenship.

We can begin with T.H. Marshall's (1950) definition of citizenship as basically comprising three kinds of rights: civil, political and social. "Civil rights are the rights necessary for individual freedom—liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice." The right to justice implies "the right to defend and assert all one's rights on terms of equality with others and by due process of law." Political rights are basically the rights of participation in elected bodies having political power. Social rights range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security, to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society.

This definition is important not only because it is the widely accepted liberal conception of citizenship, as also is Marshall's view that civil rights are essential if political and social rights are to be guaranteed. The date of this quote is the year in which India became a republic and adopted its postcolonial Constitution, which makes a similar set of rights available to the Indian citizen. Social rights have been described as different from the others because they imply a claim on resources; but in fact the state needs resources to guarantee any of the three sets of rights. Social

rights do imply a commitment by the state to undertake redistributive economic policies, something which was and is widely accepted, but which is now being questioned in the neoliberal world order. Progressive income taxation, state institutions for education and health at least, and some government expenditure for public welfare and 'development', are the major instruments for the securing of what Marshall describes as 'social rights' of the citizen.

Ambedkar was however of the opinion that guaranteeing what he called economic rights would not be adequate because of the social disadvantages suffered by the Dalits. Our Constitution carries certain safeguards for persons of certain castes listed in Article 341 of the Constitution, in the Fundamental Rights of citizens and in the Directive Principles of State Policy. Subsequently, laws have been passed, aiming at removing discriminatory practices against the Scheduled Castes, and also for their social and economic empowerment. Notwithstanding the principle of equality of all citizens, the government reserves to itself the right to pass legislation designed to give special relief to the 'weaker sections' of the society. These include the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and also women and children. Anti-discriminatory measures for the Dalits include the enactment of the Untouchability Offence Act, 1955 (renamed as the Protection of Civil Rights Act (PCR) in 1976), and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act (POA), 1989, which aims to prevent crimes stemming from discrimination and hatred towards Dalits. Permanent National Commissions have been set up both for the SC's and ST's, and for Women. There are also various economic schemes announced from time to time creating employment or granting welfare payments or other benefits to the 'weaker sections'. Reservation of some seats in Parliament and state legislatures for SC's and ST's enables political participation of these groups; in the elected bodies of local government, there are reserved seats for women also.

All these provisions apply to Dalit women as they belong to both the categories recognized as disadvantaged, namely SC's and women. But we will see in the following pages that the different specific kinds of violence, humiliation, violation, exploitation and control which Dalit women are subjected to cannot be adequately understood as 'double subjugation'—or rather triple, since most Dalit women are also belong to an economically deprived class—and hence cannot be removed merely by applying the above kinds of laws. To understand this better, we turn now to the feminist critique of liberal conceptions of citizenship.

Women and Citizenship: Theoretical Perspective

The liberal conception of the rights of the citizen centres on the division between the public and the private. The public is the sphere where the citizen enters into economic activity, stands for political office, makes contracts subject to laws which are enforced by the power of the state. The private is the sphere of the household, of family life, where even the state has to respect the individual's right to privacy, to practice his faith and behave as he wishes (the word 'his' is appropriate here). Feminists in the west have pointed out that, while women in modern democracies

have the status of equal citizens, this division is implicitly based on their exclusion from the public sphere and their confinement to the private sphere, where too they are subject to the authority of the male household head, the husband or father. 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, expressed through the slogan 'the personal is political', which challenges patriarchal relations of power in the household and family.

Feminists also take issue with women's work in the household as being excluded from economic production, which is considered an activity of the public sphere. Marxists also accept this conception of the economic, and conclude that the emancipation of women is not possible unless they are brought out of the household to take part in 'social production'. Socialist feminists, on the other hand, as we have seen, consider work in reproduction to be as important as in production. In the west socialist feminists have often taken the lead in struggles against the state over social security payments to families, where the state usually applies a patriarchal logic, discriminating against female-headed households.

Feminists in the west, especially after Black feminists began to make their own formulations and interventions within the women's movement, have drawn attention to the fact that the citizen is always implicitly portrayed as a 'White, heterosexual, able-bodied male', and groups that do not conform to this universal norm still represent 'the other' whose claim to citizenship is insecure. This is one of the aspects of social exclusion, and the democratic state needs to take corrective action in favour of these groups. In India, the norm would perhaps be 'Brahmin/upper-caste, able-bodied, urban heterosexual male'. The constitutional provisions and laws discussed above do take account of some disadvantaged groups of citizens, of whom Dalits form a large part.

The Concept of Gendered Citizenship as Differentiated Universalism

The issue of internal differences that creates tension for developing a universal perspective on citizenship has been dealt in the recent theoretical feminist discourse by some feminist scholars. Ruth Lister (1997) described this as 'differentiated universalism'. In this, emphasis has been placed on the need to locate a gendered analysis within the wider framework of difference and the divisions and exclusionary inequalities which flow from it. This points to a conception of citizenship grounded in a notion of 'differentiated universalism' which represents an attempt to reconcile the universalism which lies at the heart of citizenship with the demands of a politics of difference. These ideas are offered as possible building blocks in the elaboration of a feminist theory of citizenship, which is inclusive of the particular problem of certain group of women from the broader category gender problem.

How prudent is it to project the experiences of struggle for greater gender equality by women from the dominant groups onto the very different life experiences and

contexts of women from the marginalized groups? As we see from our analysis, Dalit women have had different life experiences and historically have dealt with issues of women's emancipation in their families, communities and political movement. They may have not really been aware of the term 'feminism' (Mangaliso, 1997), yet they organized themselves at the grass-root level to address the problems of inequitable and discriminatory access to livelihood and social needs. Discourse on Citizenship rights is universalistic in nature without recognizing there are these differences within the larger group of women. These differences emerge prominently when we not only talk about citizenship rights as 'status' but when we talk about these rights in 'practice'; when *de jure* rights are translated to *de jure* equality. This active notion of citizenship is not only operative in public sphere and formal employment also in neighbourhood, communities and home (McEwan, 2001).

'A similar stance is taken by Anna Yeatman, in Lister (1997), using the vocabulary of a 'politics of difference' which involves 'a commitment to a universalistic orientation to the positive value of difference within a democratic political process' (1994: 89). Such a politics of difference requires, she argues, both 'an inclusive politics of voice and representation' and 'a readiness on the part of any one emancipatory movement to show how its particular interest in contesting oppression links into and supports the interests of other movements in contesting different kinds of oppression' (1993: 231)'

Lister (1997) elucidates further and draws from Maynard, 1994 that the 'fact that the category 'woman' is not unitary does not render it meaningless. Black feminists, such as bell hooks (1984), Audre Lorde (1984) and Patricia Hill Collins (1991) have argued that, provided the differences between women are fully acknowledged, they do not preclude solidarity on the basis of those interests still shared as women. Central to these interests is women's exclusion from full citizenship, as the patterns of entry to the gate-ways to the various sectors of the public sphere remain profoundly gendered. Thus, the project of engendering citizenship is not invalidated, but it has to be conceived of as part of a wider project of 'differentiating citizenship'. Feminist theory's dual challenge to the false universalism of citizenship and the category 'woman' has underlined the need for 'a conception of citizenship which would accommodate all social cleavages simultaneously' (Lister, 1997: Leca, 1992: 30).

In India, as Nivedita Menon remarks, struggles for women's rights have almost entirely been restricted to the struggle of those against unequal relations of power in the household, where legal intervention is sought in areas of 'judicial void' in the areas the law sees as the private. Moreover, they have almost entirely been confined to issues relating to the family and sexuality. Feminists have asked for laws against dowry to be made more stringent; they have sought reform in rape laws, and, most recently, have participated in the framing of the 2005 law against domestic violence. Most of these new laws have, however, run into a contradiction since the state's construction of the private sphere remains patriarchal, so that even if the law is changed, the enforcing agents of the state continue to follow a patriarchal logic. To change this, the women's movement has to undertake massive campaigns for

educating public opinion and to change the prevalent mindset which governs the thinking of both men and women in a patriarchal society. The development of a feminist theory of citizenship and gender in the Indian context is therefore very important.

Nivedita Menon points to another source of contradiction in Indian women's fight for law reform. The public-private dichotomy challenged by western feminists is very much a *modern* construction. As she says, quoting Upendra Baxi, "in India there are two broad complexes of norms, institutions and processes --- state legal systems and non-state legal systems. The first are marked by the quest for certainty and exactitude and are predicated upon the assumption of a clear demarcation between public and private. The second work on shared traditional perceptions of family honour, kinship ties and caste relations, and the public and private are not distinct categories in their understanding." We will look into this more closely when we turn next to Dalit women's rights and citizenship.

Summary

To sum up, in India the Constitution and legal structure are basically predicated on a modern liberal conception of citizenship. However, Ambedkar was aware that Dalits form a large group of citizens who are subject to social exclusion and whose claims to the rights of the citizen remain somewhat insecure. There are a series of constitutional provisions and laws that seek to protect Dalits from discrimination and to empower them socially and economically. Feminists have questioned the public-private divide on which the modern liberal notion of citizenship is based. In the west, they have asserted women's right to function on equal terms with men in the public sphere. At the same time, they have asserted the right to equal treatment and freedom from violence and harassment in the private sphere. Indian feminists have generally confined themselves to seeking changes in laws relating to the family and sexuality.

Lessons for the Problem of Dalit Women's Rights and Citizenship

If we look at the situation of the Dalit woman as citizen, we see that the division between the public and the private is not at all clear-cut in her case. The Dalit woman is granted no right of privacy in a caste hierarchy where the upper-caste male has the right have sexual relations with her whether or not she wishes it, whether or not she is married, even if she is under-age, etc. What is more, when there are disputes between Dalits and non-Dalits over the use of public space, whether a temple, a water tank, or a path through the upper-caste area of the village, the Dalit woman's body becomes the site of violent assertion of the upper-caste males' traditional rights. The child who is dedicated as a *devadasi* has no right to choose her profession or way of life. She is born to serve, and she is at every moment vulnerable. The judiciary in India is not only patriarchal but wedded to traditional caste values, as many judgments demonstrate. It is very difficult to get conviction in cases of violence against Dalit women committed by upper-caste men.

The tendency of the women's movement in India to concentrate on demands for legal reform in areas related to the family, marriage and sexuality, pointed out by Nivedita Menon therefore does not touch on Dalit women's deepest concerns. Her right over her own body cannot be seen merely as an individual right, but has to be sited in the relations of caste hierarchy. Unlike the upper-caste woman for whom the construction of the private as 'women's sphere' perpetuates gender inequality, for the Dalit woman the household is a place of refuge from constant public vulnerability, a site from which her caste-based subjugation can be resisted, a contested sphere whose privacy is not conceded by the traditional order. This holds even though she may be treated violently within the household. The Dalit is forced to live outside the village boundary, outside the *des* --- can we imagine a clearer expression of exclusion from citizenship? --- and yet, man or woman, has to be available to give service whenever required.

The relationship between the Dalit woman's work in production and reproduction is somewhat similar to that of other women, but her work in production is usually of the most laborious or unpleasant kind, and with the most unfavourable terms of employment. With worsening conditions in agriculture, migration for work is becoming more widespread, as we see in a later section. Dalits are prominent among migrant families, whose labour is usually hired by contractors who set husband-wife pairs to work. Gender inequalities in both the public and private spheres structure the nature of work and terms of employment.

The Dalit woman's exclusion from the rights normally considered as accruing to every Indian citizen thus needs to be examined more closely, looking both at her conditions of livelihood and employment and the various ways in which she is subjugated in the public and private spheres. Dalit women's narratives of self and their fictional writings provide valuable insights into this second aspect, and so in the sections that follow we have looked at this type of material as well as presenting and analyzing statistical data on their work, poverty, and demographic characteristics.

Section II

Empirical Evidence on Human Poverty, Caste and Gender Discrimination

In the preceding section we have tried to capture the feminist discourse in general and feminist discourse in India to draw insights for understanding the question of Dalit women. We also discussed in greater detail the attempt by Ambedkar and others' to address genesis of the problem of Dalit women or what may be termed as, efforts to develop a Dalit feminist discourse. We have also discussed the efforts by Dalit women in terms of their efforts during Ambedkar's civil rights movement during 1920-1945 and through new Dalit women initiatives since mid 1980 till 2008.

The insights from this theoretical review and the Dalit women initiatives throw light on the various dimensions of the Dalit women problem. It emerged from the discussion that the contemporary Dalit women movement has come long way in articulating the problem of Dalit women. The Dalit women activists have developed a view, by drawing from the mainstream theoretical perspective on patriarchy, gender relation and quite richly from their association with Ambedkar movement and his view on caste discrimination and caste –gender interface.

It emerged from the review that the Dalit women's problem is multiple in nature. While they share the problems related to gender exploitative relations, and economic deprivation with other women, they however additionally suffered from the caste discrimination, which other women do not. The Dalit women began to argue that, while their problem is similar to that of "rest of the women", but as Gopal Guru observed, it is also significantly different from the rest of the women. They suffered from triple deprivation that is related to caste, gender and class. And caste, gender and poverty get together to make the problem of Dalit women most intense and complicated to comprehend and overcome.

The activities of new Dalit women organisations give us some idea about the issues they faced and address. A review of the activities of two prominent Dalit women organisation, namely NFDW and AIDMAM indicate that, they address several issue related to caste discrimination, economic deprivation and gender exploitation. These mainly include, in livelihood, the issues relating to the ownership of income earning assets, (agricultural land and capital), access to employment and wages, education, water and representation in local panchayat, the problems that common to other women as well. Dalit women, however more specially focus on issue related to caste discrimination and untouchability- and these include problem of discrimination in accessing the income earning assets, and employment, in education, civic amenities

such water, health, housing, problem of scavenger. They get immensely engaged in caste related atrocities and violence including sexual violence. They also try to address the problem of female sub-ordination by male in family and address the issue patriarchy in their own way.

In this theoretical backdrop, in section II and the following section III we try to provide some empirical evidence on the problems which Dalit women have been articulated at theoretical level. The empirical evidence is provided through the information collected through two sources. First is the evidence gathered through the autobiographical writings by Dalit women about their life and the life of the Dalit family and community. Most of these autobiographical writings is in regional language in Marathi and Tamil. However, some works have been translated into English language (Section II). Thus selected English autobiographical writings form the base for the life of Dalit. Second empirical source is, however, much rich as it is based on the official data and primary surveys (Section III).

Life of Dalit Women captured in their autobiographical writings

This section tries to put together some evidence on the issues of rights and citizenship from Dalit women's writing that has been translated into English. The emphasis will be on autobiographical writings and fiction, which is the major form of Dalit women's writings that has been translated; such material is available mainly for writings from Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. The declarations made by Dalit women's associations formed after 1990, some poetry and plays and, more rarely, a history such as that of Dalit women's participation in the Ambedkar movement written by Urmila Pawar and Meenaxi Moon, would be some other examples of self-expression by Dalit women. We have additionally referred to some writings in Marathi which are not yet available in translation.

Recently there has been considerable interest in the writings of Dalit women as testimony, as the best source of evidence about their lives and the experience of being untouchable *and* a woman. Gopal Guru sums up the importance of Dalit women's testimonies thus:

"Testimonies can be interpreted as a powerful moral medium to protest against the adversaries both from *within* and *outside* (my emphasis.-WS) Dalit women's testimonies could be seen as the political initiative to engage with the Dalit patriarchy and social patriarchy. Dalit women's personal narratives are a kind of protest against the exploitation by the state on the one hand and market on the other."

Guru is here underlining the fact that Dalit women are subjugated in the three registers of caste, class and gender; he is also hinting at the exploitation of their labour, their exclusion from certain jobs and from welfare benefits offered by the state, and their subjection to state violence. These are some of the various kinds of evidence that we might look for in Dalit women's life narratives. We can also look at *their* view of the transition from tradition to modernity in Indian society, which

sometimes cuts across the grain of prevalent perceptions that are blind to the realities of caste. We also look at Dalit women's reading of social change, of resistance; some of their novels and short stories are particularly relevant in this respect.

In addition to the kind of material mentioned above, we have also looked at some interviews of Dalit women conducted by others. The largest narrative of this kind is *Viramma*, the story of an elderly Dalit woman who worked as a midwife in a village in Tamil Nadu. This book has Viramma's life as narrated to Josiane Racine, over a period of several years when the latter was doing field work and gradually got to know her well and induced her to talk about her life. Although the form of this interview is expressed in Viramma's words, it is Racine who has selected and arranged the material, so that its content has some important differences from the autobiographies written by Dalit women themselves; it is much more accepting of the oppressive social order than the latter, and is sometimes outspoken where they are reticent, and vice versa.

Many Dalit autobiographies show us a movement from village to city; tracing a life transition made by the author; Ambedkar too had exhorted Dalits to leave the villages, where they could never be free of the markers of caste, to the city, where they could get an education and find better jobs. Of course, many persons making such a transition find that residential areas in cities are still mapped by caste prejudice; that discrimination prevents them from getting jobs that they are qualified for, and so on. The women's writings also often talk about experiences of this kind. However, they are also richly descriptive of life in the village, with its caste hierarchies and segregated spaces, its allotment of the most menial tasks to the Dalits and especially the women, the role of religious festivals, the nature of the women's backbreaking toil, and the extreme poverty of the Dalits.

Several scholars, including Gopal Guru and M.S.S. Pandian, have noted that Dalit women's writing, in contrast to autobiographies of Dalit men, place their community rather than the self at the centre of their narrative: according to Pandian, it is a depletion of the 'I'. So it is not so much the personal trajectory or life narrative that is focused on: the women display a keenness to depict their world 'as it is', or was. It is interesting that Maya Pandit, the translator of *Jine Amuche* by Baby Kamble (literally "The Life We Live(d)", but rendered as "The Prisons We Broke" in English translation) carries an interview with the author at the end of the book and begins by asking her: "In your autobiography, there are very few references to your personal life. Can you tell us a little more about yourself?" But Baby Kamble answers, "Well, I wrote about what my community experienced. The suffering of my people became my own suffering." And she proceeds to speak about women's striving for their own and their children's education, their belief in Babasaheb Ambedkar's movement. Speaking about her own marriage, she describes how Ambedkar's followers simplified the marriage ceremony and states proudly that hers was one of the first weddings to be performed in the new way. ("The Prisons We Broke", p.136) Similarly, as the famous

Tamil writer Bama says in the interview appended to her third 'novel', *Vanmam*, "Before 1993, I was unknown. Today, when I say "I", it includes people like me. All these things together form our collective identity and help us all to act together. I cannot claim for myself the identity of an individual, a Dalit woman. I am part of a collective awareness. I carry their voices."

(*Vanmam*, p.151)

What is true of Baby Kamble and Bama, is true of most of the others we read. This is an important contribution of Dalit women to the genre of autobiography. All these writers give meticulous records of life in their communities. The life narrative of Kamble, the first Dalit woman in Maharashtra, and probably in India, who wrote an autobiography, was serialized in a Marathi women's magazine in 1982, and published in book form in 1986. The English translation appeared in 2008, appended by a translator's introduction, an interview with the author, and an afterword by Gopal Guru. Urmila Pawar's autobiography, *Aaydaan*, was published in 2003 and translated into English by Maya Pandit together with a translator's introduction and an afterword by Sharmila Rege. It has been recently republished by Columbia University Press and is to be used for undergraduate teaching. Bama published her autobiographical account, *Karakku*, in 1992 and it was translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom in 2000. *Viramma*, is a prolonged interview with an aged Dalit woman, since deceased, who lived in a village near Pondicherry, conducted by an upper-caste Tamil researcher married to a French anthropologist. It was published in French in 1995 and in English in 1997. All the translations carry glossaries; some of the words are specific usages of the Dalit community and would not be easily intelligible even to the urban, non-Dalit reader of that language.

In the rest of the section we have set out different aspects of the Dalit women's lives and sketch how some of these writers have written about them.

Life and Nature of Work of Dalits in the Village

The segregation of the Dalit residential colonies from the rest of the village is a feature of the caste system that persists even today. In Tamil Nadu the Dalits live in an area referred to as the *cheri*, while the richer, upper-caste families, together with non-Dalit labourers and traditional providers of village services like the barbers, live in the *ur*. In Maharashtra, the village is divided into sectors referred to by the caste of the residents, whether Dalit or non-Dalit. Thus the potters live in the *kumbharwada*, the Mahars in the *maharwada*, the Matangs or Mangs in the *Mangwada*, and so on. This usage is a consequence of the *balutedari* system, the traditional division of labour in the village according to caste. Even in Tamil Nadu, the different castes living in the *cheri* have their own caste consciousness, and there are rivalries among the Dalit castes. The women have their own way of looking at these caste rivalries, as we will see later.

In Maharashtra, the Mahars are general village servants; they have to take away carcasses of animals, convey news of deaths and other events to relatives of the upper-caste residents, and guard the ves or boundary of the village as well as perform agricultural labour. They are also the most numerous and politically mobilized caste in Maharashtra; Guru has remarked that most Marathi Dalit women writers come from this caste. The Matangs make rope, baskets and other items, and the Chambhars are cobblers and leather workers. Similar divisions are seen in other states; the Parayas and Pallars and the Chakkaliyars in Tamil Nadu, and Malas and Madigas in Andhra Pradesh, for example.

Detailed descriptions of the kind of labour performed by the Dalits in the village, both men and women, are a feature in all the writings. Work in the fields, although hard and exhausting, has its compensations; there are childhood memories of working in the fields, for these duties begin early in life and school going girls are not spared. There is a sense of a physical freedom of movement, even though the children are always aware of the watchful eye of the landlord looking out for any shirking on the job or 'stealing'. Several writers speak of the subversive pleasures of collecting a few groundnuts in their skirts while digging up the nuts from the soil; but they rarely get away with it. The girls and the women have the additional tasks of fetching water and collecting fuel, of cleaning the hut and the yard. Often they have to do cleaning work in the house of the landlords also.

While collecting firewood or carrying water from a distance, the young Dalit girls often have to venture into the jungle, or up rocky and thorny mountain paths. Bama tells us of how her hair would get tangled in the thorny bushes, of how the bare feet would be pricked by thorns and stones. Urmila Pawar in *Aaydaan* describes the women's journeys over long distances along mountainous trails carrying baskets of firewood on their heads to sell in a bigger village market. The *aaydaan* is a cane basket; her mother wove these baskets to sell them for a few paise. The nature of exploitation of the girls' and women's labour comes through in the ratio between the time and labour spent and the price received for this merchandise. Their extreme poverty implies that they have to take up any work, even the most laborious and ill-paid, that will supplement their cash income.

The writers also note the effect of changing times on returns for labour. Earlier, the Dalit was often a bonded labourer, 'tied' to working for a particular owner, and receiving part of their wage in portions of grain, a set of new clothes once or twice a year, at festivals, together with a share in the sweetmeats prepared at such times--- and then, of course, the leftover food from the house of the employers. Nowadays the Dalit agricultural workers, knowing the value of their labour, bargain for higher wages. Even Viramma, who belongs to an earlier generation and in general accepts the subordinate social status of her community as a part of the order of things, shrewdly remarks to her interlocutor: "Yes, it was better for *you* (my emphasis) in the past. You could employ us for a rupee or a rupee and a half a day and we'd eat what grew at the edge of the fields. Nowadays in this *kaliyugam*, ploughmen demand ten

or fifteen rupees....We could only buy from day to day when we used to go to the market. Now I can afford to stock up, to buy spices for two or three days..... I buy rice, salted fish and betel, and there's still a little money left which I put into a loan fund or the women's association..... Gradually we pay back our debts to the Reddiar"(Viramma, p.252)

The work undertaken in groups is livened by the interactions among the women. They sing songs, tease each other, and gossip. Many of these writers, especially Urmila Pawar and Bama are very clever in their portrayal of these conversations among women. There is a feminist motivation in the writing here: we see how the women help each other, and discuss the tribulations they all go through; occasionally there are small quarrels. The patriarchal mores of their society are also revealed.

Hard labour and confrontation with a harsh environment are less difficult to bear than the insults that are heaped on the Dalit workers by those that they work for. Bama in *Karukku* tells of how, as a child, she saw an elderly man from her community carrying some *vadai* wrapped in banana leaf and newspaper, holding it at arm's length dangling from the string it was tied with. She is at first convulsed with laughter at the awkward posture, but later her brother explains that the reason for it is that he is not supposed to 'pollute' the food by touching the string. She is then shocked and angered: "Such an important elder of ours goes off meekly to the shops to fetch snacks and hands them over reverently, bowing and shrinking, to this fellow who just sits there and stuffs them into his mouth." (*Karukku*, VIII,12)

All the writers, of course, give instances of the practice of untouchability: whether it is the waist-high platforms built outside the houses of the upper castes so that their interactions with their Dalit servants need not pollute them; children being chased away from a well in the landlord's field where they have stopped to bathe; the look of disgust on the face of an educated person in the city when Bama reveals her caste; Kumud Pawade's experiences with her *savarna* classmates' mothers when she is invited to their homes; Urmila Pawar's travails in looking for rented accommodation in a small town after her marriage, and of course all the practices surrounding the exchange and handling of food.

The Dalit women writers use language in different ways to convey the humiliation of being treated as untouchable; they liberally use humour and irony as well as direct expression of anger and a sense of injustice. *Viramma* is an interesting contrast. She is a woman of an earlier generation. The winds of change begin to affect her village only towards the end of her life. She is not in fact writing a memoir but rather talking about her life over a long period of time with a woman whom she perceives as 'different' but sympathetic. She is not, on the whole, rebellious about the caste system, but she has her own way of talking of her life with dignity. In a chapter with the title "High and Low Castes in Karani", she explains the hierarchy of castes in her village. In her eyes, the Reddiar, on whose fields she and her family works, is the highest caste and needs to be treated with 'respect'. Other landowner castes are not so 'high', and she can joke with them, tease them about their vegetarian food habits

and even make mocking references to their sexual potency. The Brahmins “own nothing apart from the temple land.” They eat ghee, yogurt and fruit and “in the country there are no other castes that can match them” and the Reddiar. But since her caste does not work for the Brahmins directly, either on their land or in their houses, she can make fun of them too. It is clear that the employer-employee relationship with the Reddiars, reinforced by tradition, leads Viramma to regard them with ‘respect’; she is quite pragmatic about this. His wealth ensures that her family have enough to eat; of course she has experienced starvation too, many days of going to work with only a little gruel in the stomach.

Viramma’s sense of dignity comes from her pride in her work, as a field labourer and a midwife, and her satisfying relationship with her husband. She has borne twelve children and seen many of them die through poverty and disease. She holds forth on many of her superstitious beliefs about disease, possession by spirits and destiny. She describes how various castes contribute to each others’ festivals, and even shrugs off caste hierarchies in the exchange of food: the Reddiars and other castes from the *ur* accept grain from her, but not cooked food; but she accepts cooked food from them, because “it saves time and money in preparation”.

Poverty, Ignorance and Superstition

Baby Kamble’s book can be compared with *Viramma* in the detailed account it gives of various rituals, festivals and superstitions. But her purpose is not just to faithfully record an exotic way of life that is gradually disappearing with the process of social change. She says that she wrote her memoirs mainly for a readership from her own caste. “I have tried to sketch a portrait of the actual life of the Mahars and the indignities they were subjected to. I am writing this history for my sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and my grandchildren to show them how the community suffered because of the chains of slavery and so that they realize the ordeals of fire that the Mahars have passed through. I also want to show them what the great soul Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar singlehandedly achieved”.(‘The Prisons We Broke’ p. xiv)

Baby Kamble uses humour and ridicule when she writes about the various rituals and superstitious beliefs that the Mahars followed in the days before they converted to Buddhism. She wants to remind her (Dalit) readers that these practices were imposed on them by the Brahminical Hindu religion, involving them in elaborate rituals that reinforced their subordinate status. For example, the dedication of a family’s eldest to the mother goddess as a *potraj* would be invested with a feeling of celebration and pride; he would be dressed up in colourful clothes and taught a few chants before he embarked on a lifetime of begging for alms. She describes how women would be ‘possessed’ by the goddess and engage in bouts of eating even bitter neem leaves, dancing without inhibitions and making bizarre demands. She tells us how the Mahars had the right to the white cloth which was used to cover a dead body before cremation. (This is one of the ‘rights’ described as ‘negative rights’ by Guru --- the ‘right’ to something that nobody else would want that the Dalits make use of only because they are excluded from anything better. There is a peculiar

economy operating here, which the women are most familiar with). After the cremation was over, and the dead person's family had dispersed, the cloth would be cut up by the Mahar women to make clothes for their family.

Baby Kamble's narrative dwells at length on the utter poverty of the Mahars' daily lives. It is the women of the house who have to face the consequences all day long, as the men can go out into the world and put on a brave face. It is the mother who has to face the children's cries when there is not enough food, to bear the pangs of hunger herself to feed others, even going without any special food in the days after she has delivered a child. It is the women who boil up leftover food given by upper caste families, which because of poverty they have to accept even if it is spoilt. It is the women who work hard to preserve the meat of a carcass when a sick animal dies and the Mahars are given their shares. This involves cleaning away maggots and parasites, cutting away the rotten parts of the carcass, as well as cutting the good meat into strips, called *chaani*, for drying, and collecting the fat and preserving that. "During epidemics, there would be many animals lying dead in the pens all over the various settlements and localities. The carcasses of these animals would rot, giving out such a foul stench that people in the house found it difficult even to drink water. They would ask the Mahars to carry the carcasses away. When such summons came, the joy of the Mahars knew no bounds..." The women would rush to carry their share home, competing with "vultures, kites and dogs"... "walking homewards through the village, warding the birds off with their shouts. Their heads would be drenched with blood, puss and other putrid secretions oozing out of the meat....With their arms waving sticks to ward off birds, they would walk, singing the strange chants till their throats dried up. Anybody who came across these women would easily have taken them for a group of *hadals*." ('The Prisons We Broke' p. 85-86)

Such a stark picture of the direst poverty is rare, even in Dalit women's (or men's) writing. Kamble's purpose is didactic; she wants to keep alive the memory of deprivation and the forced association with all that is discarded by *savarna* society and is repulsive to it. Her purpose is to arouse disgust as well as compassion in the contemporary Dalit reader who has not experienced such extreme deprivation. But the power and richness of her descriptions can help us understand the nature of the humiliation that is inflicted on the Dalits, something that goes beyond exploiting their labour and excluding them from the basic amenities of life. It is as if the deepest identity of the non-Dalit man, when he is feeling himself to be purest and nearest to god, is predicated on the impurity of another person, the Dalit. ('His' women also go through periods of untouchability, when they are menstruating or have just given birth, but this is temporary)

Baby Kamble, as we have seen above, uses humour to arouse contempt at the ignorance of the Dalits who are duped into believing in, and even taking pleasure in, rituals of the Hindu religion that are actually humiliating to them. Sometimes she also makes fun of the airs put on by the upper castes who are so convinced that they are superior. The Mahar women's saris are patched together from various rags, infested

with lice and their eggs, and yet their practice of tying them in different styles like the upper caste women holds a sense of mocking them as well as drawing humour from their own situation of bitter poverty and traditional subjugation (see the Afterword to 'The Prisons We Broke', by Gopal Guru, p.168). However, her tone towards the upper castes who practice untouchability is one of gentle sarcasm rather than anger. Her main intention being to address Dalit readers, she is more sharp about the willingness to be subjugated, and the ignorance and superstition she sees among the Dalits. In an interesting passage, her grandfather, Malhari, debates with a traditionalist among the Mahars, the karbhari, on the issue of whether to follow Babasaheb Ambedkar's advice to give up degrading village duties; Ambedkar is challenging what Gopal Guru calls the 'cultural inner' of the Mahar's religious beliefs.

Urmila Pawar, Shantabai Kamble, Mukta Sarvagoud are all Dalit women writing in Marathi and all of them have their own style in dealing with the subject of superstition and degrading beliefs associated with religion. Giving these up was an important part of Ambedkar's mobilization of the Dalit community in Maharashtra. His conversion to Buddhism in 1956, a few months before his death, was emulated by thousands and this marked a giving up of all these practices. There are many accounts of how the household gods were physically thrown out in an act of emancipation. However, Urmila Pawar notes towards the end of her autobiography that, when she visits her village years after she has left, she finds new roads, buildings and signs of prosperity; but inside the houses of neo-Buddhists she is dismayed to see that old icons and talismans have reappeared.

Like Urmila Pawar, Baby Kamble makes us see through the eyes of herself as a child, when she wants to underline the pathos of innocent beings suffering untouchability without fully understanding its implications. After describing the slavish obedience of her people to the rituals and superstitions of the Hindu pantheon, she has a moving passage in which the children, in their play, imitate their elders. These children play make believe like children anywhere; they crush red tiles and use it as *kumkum* powder, hang broken tin pots around their neck and pretend to play the drum, distribute stones as *nivad*, or the food offered to the god; they are having fun. But they do not have a proper playground to play in; they wander among cactus and thorny bushes, their feet bleed and burn in the heat. The cactus is familiar to them; its red pods are used as a last-resort food when there is nothing to eat in the house, indigestible though they are, because for a time they ward off the pangs of hunger. Elsewhere in the book, the children trail behind their mothers when they collect firewood to deliver to upper-caste households. The women are warned to pull off hairs or any other 'polluting' substances from the wood; and the children are shouted at if they touch anything in the yard.

The unpolemical style of Baby Kamble's writing in fact invites the non-Dalit reader to empathize with the Dalit. In this way we can perhaps understand our own sense of dignity and modernity, how fragile it is. Though she is describing a situation that existed before independence, our society is still too ready to tolerate poverty around

us, to compromise the future of children by marring the innocence of their present. Our sense of hygiene is confined to our person and the inside of our homes; even those homes are cleaned by servants. Dirt and deprivation are 'out there', attached to 'others' who themselves become dirty in the process of cleaning our surroundings. This too is a form of superstition, that prevents Indians from moving to more effective and humane civic solutions for cleaner streets in our villages, towns and cities.

The Kannadiga activist-writer Saraswathi, who has translated her short story "Bachisu" into English deals with this theme directly in her warm story about daily life and familial affection in the household of a woman municipal sweeper. The woman's daughter relates how her mother can never eat anything after she has picked up carcasses of dead cats and dogs during her duty hours. She does not touch the mutton curry that her daughter has lovingly prepared for her. The sweepers are demanding an increase in their wage, but the contractor refuses rudely and purposely insults them. When the daughter gives birth to a child with some of its fingers missing, the mother tries to comfort her. But the daughter replies: 'Amma I was pensive only because I was recalling how much you tried to make me go to school but I never heeded you; now there is no way but to send this child to school. You ask why? This child can only hold a pen in two fingers and never a broom. God has given this gift (*bachisu*), why should I refuse?'

Education

This leads us to the question of education, which is an important theme in many of the life narratives of Dalits, whether men or women. Especially in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, the movements led by E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker (Periyar) and B.R. Ambedkar have left a lasting impact in the form of a belief in education as a means of emancipation from caste oppression. While autobiographies written by male authors emphasise how education enabled an emancipatory trajectory of the self, even these often mention mothers and grandmothers who made sacrifices for the education of children in their families.

Kishor Shantabai Kale, who was born into a family of Kolhatis, a caste in which the women are singers and dancers and often have sexual liaisons with upper-caste landowners, grew up among women, pursued a medical education and became a doctor (He died in a tragic car accident a few years ago) In his autobiography, he relates how his maternal aunt with her troupe once visited the town where he was a medical student. He felt ashamed and did not want to acknowledge the relationship in front of his fellow-students. This is an autobiography by a Dalit man which stands out for its honesty and sensitivity towards women.

But works by Dalit women writers add something more to the stories of emancipation through education. The women are much more down-to-earth in their descriptions of the process of struggle whereby a person born in poverty in a community which tradition deems unfit for education faces deprivation, humiliation and all kinds of economic hardships to go through school and college. As we have noted earlier, they

do not so much tell stories of personal struggle and individual success in the face of huge obstacles like the men writing autobiographies; some of these narratives lose their revolutionary focus and sharpness after the (male) author has attained a certain amount of social prestige.

A Dalit woman writer's life trajectory is much less direct; it meanders and turns back on itself, there are steep hills and troughs even after the early obstacles have been overcome. So these women's narratives are much more complex, revealing many facets of social oppression and asking us to question the idea of ambition itself.

For example, the very title of Shantabai Kamble's Marathi autobiography, *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha*, rendered as "The Kaleidoscopic Story of My Life in Sharmila Rege's *Writing Caste, Writing Gender*, is full of irony and layers of meaning. First of all the language is not 'standard' Marathi, rather the speech of the village Dalits is deliberately transcribed with its 'impure' forms of words; the deliberate gesture is loaded with irony because the writer is a schoolteacher. "Chittarkatha" evokes many senses: a colourful, dramatic story, a strange story, ---something, readers, that will entertain you, the author seems to be saying. Shantabai, whose name before marriage was Najuka (the delicate one), studied up to the seventh standard with her father's encouragement, around the time India became independent; in those days, this level qualified one to become a primary school teacher.

Shantabai's father looked for a schoolmaster husband for her, and she was married to 'Kamble master' soon after this. For some time they lived happily together; then when Shantabai was five months pregnant, her husband was pressured by his maternal relatives into taking his cousin as a second wife. Shantabai was disgusted by this and asked him to give her a *sodchitthi* or simple formal divorce, before he married again. However, later she lived with him on and off and bore him three children after several miscarriages. She left for her natal home, where her father supported her in her resolve, and, soon after, she obtained a job in a school in a town at some distance. People told her it would be impossible for her to keep her job as a single woman in a small town, but she declared that she was capable of facing any difficulties that came her way. Shantabai tells her story in the non-standard Marathi of the title, with a certain flatness and a matter-of-fact air that contrasts with the 'colourful'. She later attends teachers' training college, and retires as an education officer in the government, a post that carries considerable authority.

Bama in *Karukku* also gives a many-layered account of her education, in which she is debating the merits and limitations of a Catholic education in Tamil Nadu. She engages with Christianity on a philosophical level, and wishes to spend her life teaching poor children following Christian values of equality among children of God and service to the poor. She decides to become a nun, but is disillusioned by the actuality of Christian missionary schools that cater to the privileged. She contrasts the relative luxury of the lives nuns lead even after taking their vows of poverty, with her memories of poverty as a Dalit child in a village.

Urmila Pawar in her autobiography *Aaydaan* of how her schoolmaster father used to thrash her and her cousins to make them go to school. As a child she thought this was mere cruelty, but later she realizes that he was correct to value education so highly. In her childhood the family is very poor, but later she gets a job that enables her to go to college. She falls in love with Harishchandra and marries him before she completes her degree, but her husband is supportive and she even does her M.A. after they move to Mumbai. But Harishchandra is resentful when she goes on to become a writer and wins fame and popularity.

Kumud Pawade grew up in Nagpur, in a relatively well-off Mahar family. Her *Antahsphot*, which means “outburst”, is less an autobiography than reflections on several incidents in her life. She has not suffered the same privations in childhood as the other writers we have discussed, and her writing is more analytical, talking of various forms of caste prejudice and strategies of resistance.

So we see that these women, who by the very fact of being able to write such narratives demonstrate how education has empowered them, have very different approaches to the issue of education. Yet none of them forget that behind them stand generations of illiterate Dalit women who intelligently and courageously dedicated themselves to the cause of education of their sons *and* their daughters.

Food and Pollution

Dalit women writers are perhaps in the ideal position to talk about the caste practices surrounding the preparation and consumption of food. After all, throughout the caste hierarchy, women are the cultural as well as the genetic carriers of caste, and it is through patriarchal controls over women that the caste hierarchy is sustained. Traditionally, food can be exchanged or shared across castes, but the upper castes will accept only uncooked food from a lower caste person, whereas the lower caste person accepts cooked food from the higher castes. As we have seen above, a woman like Viramma is aware of the asymmetry here but tries to rationalize it by saying that taking cooked food saves time and fuel. She also mentions the existence of castes lower than her in the hierarchy, of persons who accept cooked food from her. She is matter-of-fact in explaining how the logic of caste works: “meat is unclean, it’s waste. Milk is pure. And as we eat meat, we’re unclean. That’s the difference between low castes and high castes.”

It is this logic and order of things that was challenged by a Dalit students’ union in Hyderabad when they demanded that meat be served as an option in the hostel mess; a (government-funded) institution providing secular education has no business perpetuating the taboos based on caste. For Dalit girls negotiating their way through schools and colleges, claiming their right to education in a society that has denied it to their forebears, the sharing of food among classmates becomes an occasion for tension and possible humiliation. Partaking of food is a more intimate rite of friendship among girls than among boys, and most of these writers--- Baby Kamble, Shantabai Kamble, Hira Bansode (in her poetry), Kumud Pawade, Urmila Pawar---

narrate incidents when an act of mutual sharing suddenly becomes marked by reminders of caste differences. While Baby Kamble, in an earlier era, had to face open insults and even violence from her upper-caste classmates, the later writers describe their rude awakening when the food they bring from home is rejected, or they are served separately from the others in a friend's home. Urmila Pawar tells of a 'friend' who would not eat at her house, but borrowed Urmila's silk sari for a wedding, and returned it in a soiled condition. Kumud Pawade tells of her strategies of retaliation. She had an inter-caste marriage, and her upper-caste mother-in-law often organized *haldi-kunku* functions to which Kumud invited her classmates. They would avoid these occasions with some transparent excuse. When they invited her to such functions in turn, Kumud would decline without offering any excuse, provoking them to ask, "Do you not accept (food, *kumkum*) from our hands?" She would then answer, "I have no faith in other people's hygiene." (Kumud Pawade, *Antahsphot*)

Urmila Pawar has a whole chapter on food and eating habits in her autobiography, through which she achieves a number of distinct objectives. Firstly, 'the experience of extreme poverty, of living with a persistent lack of adequate nourishment, is most effectively conveyed through the child's viewpoint. The mother is described as stingy, fending off her children's demands, while we also see her efforts to make ends meet and to give them what taste and variety she can. Then there is the contrast with young Urmila's upper-caste schoolmates. The children's negotiations with each other and the pain the girl feels tells us a great deal about one of the central aspects of caste hierarchy. And, finally, throughout the hierarchy, it is the women who nurture the culture of their caste, and there is an enjoyment and a pride in talking about the food characteristic to one's caste and the food prepared at festivals, however meager it may be.' ' ("The Weave of My Life" p. xxiv, Introduction to the Columbia University Press edition by W. Sonalkar)

Sexual Violence against Dalit Women

One of the most pernicious forms of violence suffered by Dalit women in caste society is sexual violence; in their case this is not something they face in certain dangerous situations, but an ever-present threat. This is because the hierarchical order of caste is defended by patriarchal control by the men of each caste over 'their' women. But a sexual liaison between a man of an upper caste and a woman of a lower caste is not seen as a transgression of the social order; the man is exercising a right, and through this reminding the woman's father/husband/brother/ caste fellows of their inferiority. Thus sexual violence against Dalit women is a naked expression of caste power.

How do the Dalit women writers handle this? They deal with the issue more in their fiction than in autobiography, but Bama in *Sangati* tells the story of Mariamma, a young girl who is carrying home firewood she has collected, when she enters a shed to drink some water, and is grabbed by the landowner who happens to be inside. Frightened, she runs away and tells her friends what happened. But all she gets from them is a warning: "Mariamma, ...it is best if you shut up about this. If you even

try to tell people what actually happened, you'll find that it is you who will get the blame; it's you who will be called a whore." Even though she keeps quiet, the landowner goes to the headman of the Paraya community with a concocted story. "Just today that girl Mariamma, daughter of Samudrakani, and that Muukkayi's grandson Manikkam were behaving in a very dirty way. I saw them with my own eyes." The two are then hauled up by the headman before the caste panchayat, and she is made to go down on her knees and give a public apology, as well as paying a small fine. The women stand around, muttering about the injustice of it, but nobody listens to them. Some of them are only too ready to suspect the young woman of misbehavior. The girl's father is angry with her for having shamed him. Nobody is willing to listen to what she has to say. In the end, Mariamma is fined Rs.200, and Manikkam has to pay Rs.100. The headman concludes the proceedings by remarking, "It is you female chicks who ought to be humble and modest. A man may do a hundred things and still get away with it. You girls should consider what you are left with, in your bellies."

The story is particularly telling because it shows the complicity of the Paraya men in defending the caste patriarchal order. Everyone is aware that circumstances known to everybody make it impossible for the landlord's story to be true, but only the girl is made to apologise. She will certainly have to face the landlord's sexual assaults in the future.

The anxiety of the Dalit man, who cannot protect his women from men of the upper caste; who can never be sure that his wife is 'his alone', is often expressed in violence. This violence is portrayed most starkly by Baby Kamble, when she tells us that women having their noses cut off by suspicious husbands was by no means an exceptional occurrence. Husbands who beat their wives are almost 'normal'. Such beatings are described by Bama, by Urmila Pawar, and other Dalit women writers in Marathi like Mukta Sarvagoud, Shantabai Kamble as well as Baby Kamble. It is not as if this kind of domestic violence takes place only in Dalit households, but Dalit men in caste society can rarely have tranquil relationships with their wives in the village.

The Dalit man who achieves a position of prosperity and power often imbibes the patriarchal values of his non-Dalit peers. In Sivakami's novel, published in Tamil in 1989 and published in the English translation of the author as "The Grip of Change" in 2006, the story centres around Kathamuthu, who is a political leader of the Paraya community. He has two wives, and his character is modeled after the author's own father. Thangam, a young widow in her thirties, takes shelter in his home after having been badly beaten up. In fact she had earlier been raped by Udayar, the Naicker landowner in whose fields she worked as a labourer; she tried to resist, but eventually accepted the situation and became his concubine. The beatings are the work of Udayar's wife's brothers.

We also have Kathamuthu's adolescent daughter Gowri, who is a perceptive observer of events as they unfold, and critical of how her father comports himself. Kathamuthu deals with the situation by treating the assault on Thangam as a caste

atrocities without mentioning the sexual relationship, and manages to extract ten thousand rupees as compensation. Udayar is happy as he has not lost face within his caste. An attempt to pin false charges on Thangam is foiled. As Thangam has been installed in Kathamuthu's household by this time, the sum can be used for the whole household, with some small luxuries for Thangam. The novel is complex, showing a rural town in "the grip of change": exploitation of Dalit labourers and violation of the women become a part of complex power negotiations between the Dalits and the upper castes. There is a threat of caste riots erupting, but they are averted. In contrast to the manipulative and corrupt figure of Kathamuthu, we have a young trade union leader Chandran. In the end, however, what Thangam gets can hardly be called justice. She is still in thrall to patriarchal forces at the end. Yet the four women of the household forge relationships of sympathy among themselves, which takes the sheen off Kathamuthu's patriarchal self-image.

Sivakami also balances the central story of sexual exploitation of a Dalit woman by narrating two stories of young lovers. As Meena Kandasamy remarks in her afterword, "Shivakami does not glamourise sexuality....She speaks to us of caste that appears even in the silence of shattered love with the (inter-caste) episode of Lalita and Elangovan. Likewise, she dismantles the widespread caste Hindu assumption that love/sex among the Dalit castes is unrestricted, by showing the slow progress and social taboos that regulate the relationship of the Dalit lovers Sargunam and Rasendran." ("The Grip of Change", Appendix, p.194)

Shivakami, who is an IAS officer, revisited her novel ten years after it was written, and wrote a 60-page reflection entitled "Author's Notes". She is critical of herself in how she portrays certain characters, especially Kathamuthu: "Could the two aspects--- her father's polygamy and his coarseness--- give her the right to judge and condemn him?" Is she betraying her caste by writing about the corruption of Dalit leaders at a time when the Dalit movement was at its height? (the novel is set in the early 1980's). Accomplished novelist as she is, she too feels the dilemma that many Dalit women writers face--- whether to give an honest portrayal of patriarchy within the lower-caste community, or to depict broader socio-political changes taking place? In fact, Shivakami manages to do both with aplomb.

Dalit women's bodies are all too often the site on which punishment is meted out to the lower castes for transgressing the caste hierarchy, whether through education and economic self-improvement or through politics. The rape of two women and the brutal murder of four members of the Bhotmange family in Khairlanji village in September 2006 was a recent example of this. What is most appalling is the way in which politicians from both upper-caste and Dalit communities joined with the state machinery in suppressing the facts of the case and preventing the perpetrators from getting their lawful punishment. Shivakami's novel gives a nuanced and sensitive picture of how Dalit politicians become complicit in covering up sexual crimes against Dalit women. The caste order does not see these as crimes; so they must not be 'seen' at all.

What is remarkable is that Shivakami, in her “Author’s Note”, revisits her own novel with greater sympathy to the same male protagonist about whom she was so critical. She is like a daughter whose rebellion against her father was essential in the formation of her personality, but who in her maturity can see his strengths as well as his weaknesses. This is a kind of feminism that we see in many of these Dalit women writers, which need not suppress consciousness of their caste and identification with their community in order to be feminist.

What we see here, in the novel of Shivakami or in many autobiographies, is certainly not a portrait of ‘victimhood’ of women. Dalit women are seen as active protagonists, remarkably strong and resilient even when they are living in the most deprived and harrowing circumstances. They are down-to-earth, not given to euphemism. They take joy in their sexuality--- this most clearly seen in Urmila Pawar’s “The Weave of My Life” and in the conversations with Viramma. They negotiate for their dignity in situations where others would feel humiliated and crushed. As such, they can be seen as role models for Indian feminists who are, in the last resort, oppressed by the same patriarchal caste order that is so brutal towards the Dalit woman.

Masculinities, Rivalries, and the Woman’s Eye

Bama’s third novel, *Vanmam* or “Vendetta”, depicts the rivalry between the two major Dalit castes in a large Tamil Nadu village, the Parayas and the pallars. The novel begins with an altercation between two men which ends in a Parayar being killed. The novel depicts how the situation gradually builds up to a violent conflict between the two Dalit communities. It is only after a lot of blood has been shed that they realize that it is the upper castes who are benefiting from this rivalry. They come together and manage to defeat the upper-caste leader in the panchayat elections, for the first time.

What is most interesting in this novel is Bama’s depiction of the young men’s meetings in the *chavady* or public square within the *cheri*. Gopal Guru describes this as a democratic public space where different opinions can be freely and amicably thrashed out. It is, of course, mainly a space for men. But Bama very sensitively conveys to the reader the dynamics of masculinity and identity that are played out among the young men as hostility towards the other community builds up. There is a young man who has been educated in the city and now walks around with a swagger and some comic airs, one who is a natural leader of the group, one who makes the others think, and so on. She also represents Christianity, which is the religion of the Parayas in that village, as an ideology of moderation, whereas the Hindu Pallars are more likely to initiate aggression. But even this can be read as an argument for the young men’s need for an ideology that goes beyond community pride and a call for revenge.

The scholar S.Anandhi has done some research on this kind of group dynamics among young Dalit men and talks of “a crisis of masculinity” among them. Not just Bama but many of the other Dalit women writers have a sense of how the caste

humiliation of Dalit men provokes feelings of aggression that only too often finds an outlet in the form of domestic violence against the women of the house, primarily the wife. In a sense, we can thus see that even domestic violence among the Dalits is related to the way the caste system impinges on those at the bottom of the hierarchy. That is why we speak of the system that oppresses Dalit women as caste patriarchy.

Patriarchy among Dalits

It is interesting to pause here and consider how exactly the Dalit women writers deal with the issue of oppression of Dalit women by Dalit men, within the family and outside it. The important thing is that this is not the main focus of any of these narratives; there is certainly a self-censorship operating here.

One can start with the example of Baby Kamble. She was probably the first Dalit woman to write down her 'autobiography', though it is perhaps inappropriate to call it such, since it contains very little about her personal life. Rather, she has recorded the domestic life of her community in great detail. In the interview of Baby Kamble by her translator Maya Pandit in *The Prisons We Broke* (2008), Pandit repeatedly asks her to speak about her personal life, but she evades these questions. Of course, she does disclose that she was writing her account for years in secret, because she was afraid that her husband, and later on her son, would not approve of this activity. It was only when Maxine Burton, a sociologist working on Dalits in Phaltan, and Kamble was able to give her much information about the Mahar community, that she asked her why she did not write down her memoirs; and Kamble replied that she had in fact been writing for years. It is also interesting that Baby Kamble had been more frank about her ill-treatment at the hands of her husband when she was interviewed by Urmila Pawar and Meenakshi Moon, two other Dalit women, for their book on women in the Ambedkar movement, *Amhihi Itihaas Ghadavala*, in 1989 (translated as *We Also Made History* by Wandana Sonalkar).

In that interview Babytai recounts how her husband always suspected her of talking to other men, and frequently beat her without any pretext: "When working in the fields we have to fear for our modesty and at home we fear our husbands. I ran a vegetable shop. Not a single day of my life was spent happily. Beatings, quarrels, crying and starvation---- these were routine. I was convinced that a Dalit woman is really insecure."

We find more instances of Dalit women being beaten and harassed by their husbands in this book; but since they are all women who were active in the Ambedkar movement, they also found solutions to the challenge of combining their duties in the house with their public lives. Their husbands were sometimes sympathetic, but these women went ahead even without their support. Keertibai Patil left her husband after eight years of marriage with her three children to join the movement. Her mother-in-law would provoke her husband to beat her by telling him tales about her. Laxmibai Kakde independently took the decision to undergo a tubectomy operation after she had borne two children (this was way back in the early

1950's) so that she could devote more time to the movement. Jayabai Bhalerao was the second wife of her husband; he had sent back the first wife to her parents' home even after she had borne him children, because of their quarrels. Jayabai was unable to have children, and as she became more involved in the movement, she recalled her co-wife so that she could look after their husband, and free Jayabai for her political work.

Most of the women whose stories we read in the autobiographical narratives of in Moon and Pawar's book are encouraged by their families to go to school, even if the parents are illiterate. This is a major impact of the Ambedkar movement. But if a girl wants to pursue further studies, she faces opposition and ridicule, not only from the upper castes, but also from her own community, especially if she wants to study after marriage. The husbands, like husbands in any caste, leave all the housework to the women. The burden is worse for the Dalit women because they also have to toil hard outside the home.

Bama in *Sangati* describes several instances of marital conflict. Husbands regularly beat their wives, and the situation is not improved whether the wife submits meekly or, as is often the case, retaliates or answers back. There is a sense that these conflicts are not hidden within the four walls of the home as they would be in a better-off community. The neighbours witness what is going on, and sympathise with the woman to some extent, but generally agree that husbands beating their wives is commonplace, and only to be expected. After a pregnant woman is mercilessly kicked and beaten by her husband, her neighbours go to the woman's parents and ask them to intervene; but they refuse, saying that this marriage was her own choice. The people who have tried to help then say, "There is only one thing the girl did in any case, to deserve all this. She started the fuss and argument by asking him to give her his wages. If the wretched fool had let him keep his wages and not asked, she wouldn't have been beaten up in this shameful way.

"If a man goes off with the money he has earned, drinks as much as he likes, and eats at coffee-stands and food-stalls, then how can a woman go out to work and earn enough money to fill her children's bellies and do whatever else is necessary in the house? How can she manage everything with just her wages?" Mukta Sarvagoud in *Mitleli Kavade* describes how the Dalit men not only spend much of their earnings on drink or gambling, but also sit around in groups gossiping while their wives labour inside and outside the home.

Baby Kamble, Urmila Pawar also describe the ill-treatment meted out to a new daughter-in-law ; she is mercilessly forced to work at the behest of her elders, scolded and punished if she does not obey. Baby Kamble tells us how suspicion about the wife's fidelity was often the pretext for beatings or more violent treatment like cutting of the nose.

We may thus surmise that the Dalit women's writing about oppression by Dalit men is tempered by their knowledge of the injustice, humiliation and exploitation that these

men have to suffer, even though they do not say so explicitly. The values that consider daily beatings by men of their wives to be routine do not arise from a separate 'Dalit patriarchy' --- rather they are a part of an exploitative caste system in which the men also face unemployment, or have to perform the most menial and repulsive kinds of work, face caste-based insults in the public sphere generally, and where their women's vulnerability to sexual exploitation by other men is a daily challenge to their masculinity.

That is why Sivakami in *The Grip of Change*, while she is severely critical of the main male protagonist, a political leader of the Parayar community who has two wives, and fails to deliver real justice to the woman who comes to him for succor, in her later epilogue looks at him in a less judgmental fashion. After all, the fact that he could not seek justice for her sexual exploitation and the beatings resulting from that, but rather seeks a solution that saves the face of her upper-caste lover, implies that he knows the limitations of his political power in a caste society. Similarly, we should not miss the irony in Bama's account of how Mariamma is punished by the all-male, Dalit caste panchayat. The caste panchayat leader, and Mariamma's father, both turn on her because they know that they are unable to defend her from the sexual advances of the upper-caste landlord for whom she works.

Language

Although this essay is not primarily concerned with literary style, a few remarks on Dalit women writers' use of language are due before we conclude.

Many of these writers are very innovative in this, though this is rarely appreciated by the critics who speak more of the content, which has the power to shake the reader. Baby Kamble, for example, one of whose objectives is to create a sociological record of life among the Mahars in her time and her region, uses many words that are peculiar to both these. She also tells us how the Mahars ironically refer to their settlement (always outside the village boundary) as the Rajwada or royal colony, and to their huts as palaces. However, she eschews the use of swear words or any description of sexual relationships.

Viramma's language, however, is liberally sprinkled with swear words, which her interlocutors have deliberately retained. She is also explicit about her physical relations with her husband, in which she takes great pleasure, even in old age. She has a lusty sense of humour, and, as we have seen, enjoys a bit of sexual banter with the young men of the village.

Shantabai Kamble's use of the colloquial language of the Dalits for her narration succeeds in giving it an air of matter-of-fact acceptance, so that even when she depicts great poverty it is something usual for those who are experiencing it. The lack of drama makes the content even more shocking at times; eg when she describes how the women gather grains of *jowar* that have been extruded in cow dung, wash them and use flour ground from these to supplement their diet (this is not served to

the men). A male writer, Sharankumar Limbale, who mentions the same practice in his autobiography *Akkarmaashi*, speaks of his shock and disgust when, as a child, he tries to taste the *bhakri* eaten by the women in the house.

The translator of Bama's *Karukku*, Laxmi Holmstrom, notes that Bama uses the language of Tamil Catholics when discussing her spiritual crisis and confrontation with Christianity. Urmila Pawar depicts conversations among her mother's friends as they work and journey with baskets of firewood on their heads, explicitly using the swear-words that colour their self-expression. All this cannot always be conveyed in translation, but there is no doubt that these women writers are conscious and creative in their use of language; if we are more sensitive to this, we will be less likely to dismiss their writings as mere chronicles of victimhood. They are far, far more and have a lot to teach us about our society and ourselves.

It is interesting that many of these writings have been translated into French before English. As Bama says, "Oh, the French have so much regard for literature. They appreciated my writing for its own quality. They didn't think 'She is a woman writer' or 'She is a Dalit'". (*Vanmam* or "Vendetta", English translation, interview with the author---p.156)

Summary

In summary we draw together various strands of thinking that emerge from our readings of literature produced by Dalit women. In his 1995 essay, "Dalit Women Talk Differently", Gopal Guru took note of the fact that in the 1990's, Dalit women in India were finding it necessary to form organizations of their own, to represent themselves and to raise issues that had not been touched, or not taken up with sufficient intensity, within the Indian women's movement. The writers we have considered here have been reflecting on many such issues from a much earlier time.

We can perhaps start from the slogan "The personal is political", that had a radicalizing effect on many women in the 'second wave' of the feminist movement in the west, and also on many urban, educated, middle-class women in India in the 1970's and 1980's. The slogan addresses those women who have been confined to the home, to the 'private' sphere, told that they are responsible for the welfare of their family and household, and cut off from public life. It tells them that there are relations of power within the (patriarchal) household, and that to challenge them is a political act. For these middle-class, upper-caste, women this was the first step leading to active participation in the women's movement. It also remained a central concern of feminist politics, from the movement against dowry to the detailed attention with which women's organizations and feminist lawyers thrashed out the provisions of the 2005 Act against Domestic Violence.

Feminist theory has deeply questioned the division between the public and the private that is one of the cornerstones of liberal democracy in the west. It has shown that the 'public' is so constituted that women are *de facto* excluded from political

power, even though they have equal status as citizens. So the journey, so to speak, has been from “the personal is political”, seeking to change the division of labour and decision-making within the family, to seeking entry in public life, challenging the various sites of power.

From our reading of Dalit women’s writing we can see that they raise some important questions about how the public and private are constituted in Indian civil society. Caste society does not allow the Dalit woman a sphere of privacy; so she is forced to submit to the sexual demands of the landlord who employs her as a field labourer. Whenever there has to be a public display of caste power, the Dalit woman’s body is publicly humiliated: she is submitted to gang-rape, or paraded naked through the streets. When such acts are committed, that are crimes under Indian law, we repeatedly see a concerted effort by government functionaries, doctors, police, courts, politicians, to deny that the crime has taken place and to destroy the evidence. Many such cases are now well-known as part of the gender-related legal history of independent India, from the Mathura case of rape of an adivasi girl at a police station in the 1970’s, which was taken up as an issue by the women’s movement and the gang-rape of Bhanwari Devi, a government-employed social worker from a lower-caste background in the 1980’s, to the recent brutal gang-rape and murder of members of the Bhotmange family at Khairlanji in eastern Maharashtra. Whereas the first two led to changes in the law under pressure from women’s organizations, the general silence on the Khairlanji violence indicates that its implications, not just for Dalit women, but for the nature of patriarchy in our society, have not become a part of the general discourse of the women’s movement.

Secondly, Dalit women also have to face patriarchy within the household. But it is important to take note of how these writers deal with this, even when they are not explicitly theorizing about it. Firstly, they see clearly that the Dalit men are themselves not privileged, merely by being able to exploit the women’s labour, or to exert their authority over the women, even if in a violent manner. The whole family, and in fact the whole community, faces a situation of direst poverty in Baby Kamble’s narrative. The men too have to perform hard labour, and, what is perceived as worse, humiliation at every step as they are constantly reminded that they are born to serve. Meenakshi Moon and Urmila Pawar in the very first chapter of their history of the Ambedkar movement, quote Dr. Ambedkar describing how Manu’s laws lay down that shudras and women have a duty to serve others.

Thus, for the Dalit women writers, patriarchy does not mean merely, or even primarily, a relationship of domination by men over women in the family; rather the patriarchy they experience in the household is part of an overall social order, a caste patriarchy. Baby Kamble in her “autobiography” does not talk much about her ill-treatment by her husband, but she mentions it when she tells Moon and Pawar how she came into the Ambedkar movement. In all these writings, it is a process of collective change that is emphasized rather than individual rebellion against privileged men. The Dalit man may be a god, and often a cruel god, within his

household, but the women are aware that just outside the door lies a world in which he will be reminded at every step that he is inferior. It is this aspect of untouchability that is seen as much more painful than having to do hard labour or face deprivation.

Thus the Dalit women's writings show awareness that equality or freedom (objectives that are nowadays replaced by the bland word 'empowerment') is not attainable for them as long as the community as a whole, including the men, is subject to a hierarchical caste order. Even when the men appear to be relatively privileged, the women are aware of the limitations of 'their' men's power. Baby Kamble shows us that traditional forms of status and prestige or power within the Dalit community are predicated upon the subservient position of the community as a whole in the caste hierarchy. She is therefore rather ironic and bitter about her father who has the right to a larger share of the meat of the carcass when cattle die in the village, or the ceremonial dedication of a child as *potraj*, giving him a lifelong right to beg. Urmila Pawar tells us about *her* father, who acts as a priest (and in fact as counselor and giver of solace) in the Dalit community; but her brother who inherits his mantle at a tender age will have difficulty sustaining the role in a changing world. Shivakami tells us about the temptations and limitations of political power for a Dalit leader.

Division of labour within the household is certainly an issue for the Dalit women. The way that the men in the *cheri* sit around, gossip and play cards while the women toil at housework after working all day outside, is described by Sivakami, for example. In some cases, like Viramma's husband, or Urmila Pawar's husband in the early years of marriage, there is a sharing of household duties. All this is similar to the situation of middle-class, non-Dalit women, but these latter women have the alternative of hiring servants to do the most onerous part of the housework. There is a contrast here, that has been pointed out by Jyotiba Phule in a piece where he compares the life of a Brahmin woman with that of a lower-caste peasant woman. In the industrialized west, the option of hiring domestic servants was not available for middle-class women during the height of the 'second wave' of feminism, and so their feminist practice involved negotiating a sharing of domestic work and child care with the men in their family. The women's movement has thus, over time, left some impact in the form of a heightened general social awareness of these issues. In India, it is easy to pass on the work to hired (usually female) domestic servants rather than to confront men on this issue. In contrast, even middle-class Dalit women will face being reminded of their caste when they try to hire domestic servants to do cleaning work in their house.

These are real differences between the situation of the upper-caste woman and the lower-caste woman in India. It is true that both are oppressed by caste patriarchy or what has sometimes been termed Brahminical patriarchy; but the caste nature of this patriarchy can remain hidden to the upper-caste woman even when she takes up a feminist stance. The Dalit woman, on the other hand, will never be unaware of this. These are the realities behind the sense of discomfort, of cultural dissonance or an imposed sense of inferiority, which Dalit and Bahujan women often express in their

interaction with upper-caste feminists. The latter are also more articulate, more easily able to make their voice heard by public authorities, more savvy with the modern world of computers and the internet; they have an international reach.

Thirdly, what about Dalit women's rights and citizenship? The narrated incidents involving Mariamma and the caste panchayat, as well as Sivakami's novel, illustrate the fact that a Dalit woman's rights of freedom of her person, of control over her body and her sexuality, cannot be protected; neither by the Dalit caste panchayat nor by the political power accruing to Dalits at certain moments in the system of electoral democracy. This should be seen as a serious limitation of the rights of citizenship that are supposed to accrue to every Indian, of the nature of a democracy that is supposed to afford space for the expression and redressal of grievances.

Urvashi Butalia, in *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, in which she examines the role of gender in the violent events that were a part of the moment of formation of the India nation, mentions just one Dalit woman in her section on 'Margins'. She confesses that when she recorded the testimony of the woman sweeper Maya Rani, she was not sufficiently sensitive to its caste aspects and failed to ask the questions that she might have. However, Maya Rani, who was a girl of sixteen when Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in her village states that she had no feeling of fear for her own safety, even when murders were taking place around her, bodies were found on the streets, and both Muslim and Hindu families were fleeing, leaving their houses behind. In fact, as a young girl, she with her friends entered the abandoned houses and managed to collect food, quilts, sometimes even jewellery and other objects that appeared as luxuries to her, things which she put to good practical use in later life.

The point Butalia makes is that Maya as a Dalit did not feel herself to be either a Hindu or a Muslim in what was a violent conflict over property and territorial rights. Perhaps it was her 'invisibility' that afforded her some protection: the Dalits traditionally performed menial tasks for families from both sides, but their services were taken for granted. Later on, when the conflict between Hindus and Muslims began to be played out politically, in the negotiations over the division of territory between India and Pakistan, Dalits were wooed by both sides as their substantial numbers made them a useful political ally. But the Dalits' feeling of exclusion even at the moment of formation of the nation is worth noting here.

In rural India, power, 'honour' and even citizenship are implicitly tied up with the ownership of land. Bina Agarwal has elaborately brought out how women's exclusion from decision-making and the invisibility of their labour are a function of their exclusion from ownership of land. The same can be said of the Dalits as they still form a majority of the landless, though this is changing somewhat as loss of land through agrarian distress and debt is afflicting farmers from non-Dalit castes too. There is also a process, which needs to be studied, whereby Dalits from a village background who improve their economic status through entry into salaried service or through political leadership, save up to purchase land in their native village. The

Khairlanji incident is just one instance of how this kind of move can invite hostility and violence; again, a violence that is played out on the bodies of Dalit women.

To conclude, a range of Dalit women's writings have been surveyed briefly in this section. They cover a period of time from around the time of independence up to the present day. These decades have witnessed complex processes of change in society. Legal and constitutional changes have created a space for Dalits to embark on a process of struggle, compromise, forward movement and retreat, in a not-so-smooth path towards a more equal status in Indian society; economic changes have been both destructive of livelihoods and enabling in some respects; education has brought a greater power of agency, which however meets various limits whenever it is exercised. The complex ways in which the caste system and patriarchal power reinforce each other and alter their modes of operation to accommodate change peg out the framework in which India finds its path to modernity. Dalit women writers are sharp observers of some of the most fraught situations of contention and compromise, shifts of power, disturbances of equilibrium and new conjunctures affording new possibilities and new dangers.

Section III

Empirical Evidence on Human Poverty, Caste and Gender Discrimination

Empirical Evidence on Economic and Social Status of Dalit Women

In the preceding section, we have seen the reality of Dalit women based on their autobiographical writings. Nevertheless, these are the perceptions coming through their experiences about their life. In this section, we provide a systematic empirical evidence about their economic and social situation comprising human poverty, caste and gender discrimination. In the theoretical section it has been argued that women belong to discriminated groups suffer from multiple deprivations. The SC women are perhaps the most economically and socially deprived among the women of the Indian society. In order to gain insights into the economic and social status of Dalit women, we delve more closely and encapsulate the economic and social situation of Dalit women in India. The analyses of human poverty, caste and gender discrimination is based on the National Sample Survey, Census of India, Crimes in India, National Family Health Survey-3 and a number of primary studies conducted by scholars. Additionally, we have made extensive use of studies undertaken by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies.

Economic Status: Studies on economic status for the *Dalit social group* show that they suffer from less access to capital assets like agricultural land and non-land assets (and/or low productivity of those assets), exceptionally high dependence on casual wage labour, high under employment, lower daily wages and low levels of literacy and education, compared with non SC/ST groups in Indian society. They also suffer from lack of access to civil, cultural and political rights.

To understand the economic status of Dalit women, depending upon the availability of data, a set of indicators have been examined, which include employment, access to land and capital, dependence on wage labour, employment and unemployment rates and the incidence of poverty.

Access to Income Earning Assets and Employment - Rural: As mentioned earlier, access to fixed sources of income such as agricultural land and non-land assets for the SC social group is very low. Unfortunately, since gender break-up on ownership of land is not gathered, we rely on the classification of workers adopted by the Census of India. Census of India classifies workers into four categories, i.e. as cultivators, as agricultural labourers, those engaged in household industry and 'other workers'. The categories of workers of cultivators and agricultural labourers in rural areas present us an opportunity to examine the livelihood distribution of workers in the farm sector. Further, within the farm sector, the category of cultivators signifies access to land of rural households while that of agricultural labourers signifies the dependence on wage labour. The category of household industry signifies access to capital while the category of 'other workers' signifies the casual wage labour activities in the non-farm sector. This section first examines the

sectoral distribution of the women workforce in farm and non-farm sector, and then examines the access to land and non-land assets within farm and non-farm respectively; and finally dependence on casual wage labour in farm and non-farm sectors.

A look at the distribution of rural workforce in the farm and non-farm sector (Table 1), we find that majority of the work-force (73%) in rural areas from the SC social group continued to be employed in the farm sector and their dependence on this traditional sector is more prominent than non-SC/STs (68%) according to Census of India, 2001. This pattern is true for the SC women as well. The dependence of SC women rural workers on agriculture is also more prominent than that of non-SC/ST women workers (74%). In fact, the dependence of SC women on the farm sector for livelihood is even higher than SC men. In 2001, data indicates that approximately 80% of SC women rural workforce in India is predominantly employed in the farm sector and their dependence on the farm sector is more prominent than that of the SC men (71%).

Within the farm sector, Dalit women faced wide disparity in access to agricultural land with respect to Dalit men. The census data for 2001 indicates that a lower proportion of Dalit women worked as cultivators as compared to Dalit men (22% as compared to 29%). This indicates that like all women, SC women face gender discrimination in the control over resources which make them dependent and may reduce their ability to negotiate a better status within their family.

Further, wide difference in access to agricultural land is observed among women from different social groups. According to Census of India, 2001, only 21 percent of SC women were cultivators as compared to 45 percent of non-SC/ST women indicating that access to agricultural land is not equal to all women. On the other hand, it is observed from the data that a higher proportion of SC women workers are employed as agricultural labourers (57%) as compared to SC men (42%) and non-SC/ST women (29%).

Therefore three points emerge from the above analysis: Firstly, the commonality between women in the distribution of workforce in rural areas. Both SC and non-SC/ST women in the rural workforce are employed in the farm sector. Secondly, the common issues faced by women from both groups are gender inequalities in access to agricultural land. That is, a lower proportion of Dalit women worked as cultivators as compared to Dalit men indicating lower access to land. The third point is the 'point of difference' between SC women and non-SC/ST women which translate into their increased vulnerability. The data indicate that SC women workers are employed predominantly as agricultural labourers while the non-SC/ST women are cultivators. Hence SC women workers as agricultural labourers are unorganized and are thus more vulnerable with limited social security.

**Table 1: Occupational Pattern for SC and Non SC/ST
Social Group: Rural and Urban**

(Percentage Distribution of Workers Engaged in the Rural and Urban Workforce)

	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Household Industry	Other Workers
SC				
Total Male	23	35	3	39
Total Female	19	51	6	24
Rural Male	29	42	3	26
Rural Female	22	57	5	16
Urban Male	2	7	3	88
Urban Female	2	16	9	73
Non- SC/ST				
Total Male	32	13	3	51
Total Female	36	24	7	32
Rural Male	48	18	3	31
Rural Female	45	29	6	20
Urban Male	3	2	4	92
Urban Female	4	6	12	79

Source: Census of India, 2001

Within the non-farm sector in rural areas, the category of 'household industry'² which signifies some access to capital, accounts for a very small proportion of rural non-farm workers, engaging less than 5 percent of the total main women workers in SC as social group. While, 16% of women workers from the SC group in the non-farm sector were

² According to the Census definition, household industry is defined as an industry conducted by one or more members of the household at home or within the village in rural areas. Even if the industry is not actually located at home in rural areas there is a greater possibility of the members of the household participating even if it is located anywhere within the village limits². It relates to production of food stuff, textiles, wood products, processing, servicing, repairing, making or selling (not merely selling) of good. Thus the concept of household industry signifies, in some manner, that the workers engaged in this industry have access to some capital. In contrast, the non-agricultural workers classified as other workers are those who are engaged in factory, plantation, trade, commerce, and business transport, mining, construction, political or social work etc and have negligible access to capital. In contrast, the non-agricultural workers classified as 'other workers' are those who are engaged in factory, plantation, trade, commerce, trade, commerce, business transport, mining construction, political or social work, pavement service etc. and have negligible access to capital, <http://censusindia.gov.in/Metadata/Metada.htm#2m>

engaged as 'other workers' who are engaged in factory, plantation, trade, commerce, and business transport, mining, construction etc.

A further enquiry on the access to household businesses and hence to capital for women from SC and non-SC/ST social group indicates that women from latter group had a higher access to capital as compared to Dalit women. Close to 7 per cent of women from non-SC/ST group were found to be engaged in household and other industry compared to 5% of women from the SC group.

Access to Income earning assets and employment - Urban: The urban workforce is predominantly engaged in non-farm activities as the availability of agricultural land in urban areas is very limited. The census data, 2001, indicates that the majority of the urban workforce was employed in the category of 'other workers' for both SC and non-SC/ST social group. For the SC social group on an average, 39% of the urban workforce was to be found working as 'other workers' as compared to 51% for the non-SC/ST group. As mentioned before, the workers classified as 'other workers' are those who are engaged in factory, plantation, trade, commerce and business transport, mining, construction, political or social work etc.

With respect to women, the data shows that approximately 73% of SC women urban workforce in India is predominantly employed in the category of other workers and their dependence on this sector is less prominent than that of the SC men (88%). Further, the dependence of SC women rural workers in 'other workers' category is less prominent than that of non-SC/ST women (79%).

Further although the proportion of main workers engaged in household industry in urban areas is very small, it is mentioned here, as it gives us some idea on access to capital by women. The data indicates wide inter-social group differences in access to capital for small scale household industries for women. A higher proportion of women from the non-SC/ST social group (12%) were economically engaged in household industry as compared to SC women (9%).

We have some additional data on the nature of occupation by gender in urban areas as well as. In the occupation category of professional, technical and related workers which are mainly regular salaried jobs in urban areas, there is a lower proportion of Dalit women employed as compared to non-SC/ST women (Table 2). Because of their association with their occupation, Dalit woman face discrimination face and exclusion from participation in certain categories of job. For example, woman belonging to sweeper community in the Dalit social group is hardly employed for cooking and other household job because of the notion of purity and pollution of their traditional occupation (of manual scavenging). The evidence on Dalit women not being employed as cooks and other related jobs is available from the 61st round of National Sample Survey. Data in table 2 based on the NSSO, indicates that of the total women employed as cooks, waiters etc close to 13% belong to the Dalit social group as compared to higher proportion of 33% from the non-SC/ST/OBC social groups.

Table 2: Distribution of female population from Social groups across occupation Types, Urban (Female %)

	ST	SC	OBC	OTH
	Female	Female	Female	Female
Professional, Technical & Related workers	7.83	9.75	12.42	12.71
Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers,	1.32	2.11	2.25	2.59
Clerical and Related Workers	0.29	0.77	0.77	1.37
Sales Workers	3.18	2.13	3.34	3.30
Service Workers	4.80	7.56	7.95	6.70
Farmers, Fisher, Hunter Loggers & Related workers	74.44	57.60	56.61	52.01
Production & Transport related workers & Operators	8.13	19.97	16.53	21.18
Total In Labour Force	99.97	99.89	99.86	99.87

Summary

It is seen from the data that firstly, SC women workforce in the rural areas are predominantly engaged in the farm sector which is true for non-SC/ST women. Secondly, the data indicates that SC women workers are employed predominantly as agricultural labourers while the non-SC/ST women are cultivators. Hence SC women workers as agricultural labourers are unorganized are more vulnerable with limited social security. The common issues faced by women from both groups are gender inequalities in access to agricultural land. That is, a lower proportion of Dalit women worked as cultivators as compared to Dalit men indicating lower access to land.

In the urban areas, the majority of the 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. Because of their association with their occupation, Dalit woman face discrimination and exclusion from participation in certain categories of job. For example, woman belonging to sweeper community in the Dalit social group is hardly employed for cooking and other household job because of the notion of purity and pollution of their traditional occupation (of manual scavenging). The evidence on Dalit women not being employed as cooks and other related jobs is available from the 61st round of National Sample Survey. indicates that of the total women employed as cooks, waiters etc close to 13% belong to the Dalit social group as compared to higher proportion of 33% from the non-SC/ST/OBC social groups.

Employment and Unemployment

This section examines the employment and unemployment situation for SC women in rural and urban areas. The data source for this section is the National Sample Survey (61st Round) and the Rural Labour Enquiry for the year 2004 – 05, which gives the employment and the unemployment situation across social groups in rural and urban areas.

The analysis begins with description on the differences in the employment and unemployment situation, reasons for days not worked for wage labour amongst SC men

and SC women and SC women and non-SC/ST women in rural India followed by the analysis for the urban India.

**Table 3. Labour force Participation Rate 15 - 59 yrs
(usual status all approach) – 2004-05**

Social group	Male	Female
Rural		
ST	91.34	73.22
SC	89.90	55.30
OBC	88.49	53.04
Others	86.77	41.17
Total	88.63	52.47
Urban		
ST	80.09	36.87
SC	84.42	31.47
OBC	84.92	29.19
Others	82.21	21.40
Total	83.44	26.12

Source: 61st Round of Employment and Unemployment, NSSO

Employment Situation - Rural

The all India employment levels of SC women in rural India indicate that the labour force participation rate by usual status was 55%, whereas, the rate was higher for SC men. Close to 90% for SC men were in the labour force in 2004-05. With respect to the differences in LFPR, this rate was higher for SC women as compared to non-SC/ST women (Table 3).

Since SC women workers are predominantly employed in the agriculture/farm sector and are wage labourers, we have also analyzed the actual number of days for which SC women were employed in a year in the rural areas. This analysis is drawn from the Rural Labour Enquiry, 2004-05. The Rural Labour enquiry collects data on employment and unemployment for only rural labour households. Unfortunately, the disaggregated data by social group is available for the SC, ST and All categories. The category 'All' is an aggregate of all social group. Nevertheless, there are some important findings which are revealed from this analysis.

At the all-India level, it may be seen from the table 4 that usually occupied men from the SC social group were employed for a greater number of days in the year 2004-05 as compared to SC women. The average annual number of days worked by men belonging to SC rural labour households was 285 days while for women it was 245 days.

Further, SC women belonging to rural labour households were employed for a lower number of days as compared to women from the rest of the social groups. The women belonging to scheduled caste rural labour households remained employed for

245 days during the year 2004-05, while, women belonging to all classes remained employed for 250 days, respectively, during the year 2004-05.

Among different modes of employment, the 'wage-paid employment' formed the major mode of employment for all the workers belonging to both SC and all social groups of rural labour households. The dependence on the wage paid mode of employment throughout the year was high for SC social group. Among the SC men and women, wage employment accounted for 77% of the total number of days worked in the year. The average annual number of days worked in wage paid employment in the year was lower for SC women as compared to SC men (220 days for men as compared to 189 days for women). On the other hand, the average annual number of days worked in wage paid employment in the year was higher for SC women as compared to women belonging to all classes (189 days for SC women as compared to 177 days for women).

Table 4: Labour Time Disposition of Usually Occupied Persons belonging to Rural Labour Households by sex and classes during 2004-05

(In number of days)

Category of households/workers	Average number of days worked				Average number of days not worked			Grand Total
	Wage Employment	Self employment	Employment on Salary basis	Total	Due to sickness, bad weather etc.	Due to want of work	Total	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All Classes								
Men	215	51	25	291	28	46	74	365
Women	177	64	9	250	75	40	115	365
Children	164	104	18	286	38	41	79	365
Scheduled Castes								
Men	220	41	24	285	27	53	80	365
Women	189	48	8	245	72	48	120	365
Children	178	85	15	278	34	53	87	365

Source: Rural Labour Enquiry, 2004-05

It may be seen from the table 4, that during 2004–05, that women non- agricultural labourers remained employed for a larger number of days (214 days) as compared to their counter-parts in ‘agricultural labour’ (203 days) and ‘other occupations’ (27 days). This means that women engaged as labourers in non-agricultural occupations in rural areas had more number of days of employment as compared to those employed as agricultural labourers. This pattern of wage paid employment is not true for men labourers. The male agricultural labourers remained employed for larger number of days (239 days) as compared to their counterparts in ‘non-agricultural labour’(203 days) and ‘other occupations’(87 days). This analysis was for ‘all’ social group.

For the SC social group, women non- agricultural labourers remained employed for a larger number of days (229 days) as compared to their counter-parts in ‘agricultural labour’ (207 days) and ‘other occupations’ (29 days). This pattern of wage paid employment is not true for men labourers. The male ‘agricultural labourers’ belonging to scheduled caste households remained employed for larger number of days as compared to their counterparts in ‘non-agricultural labour’ and ‘other occupations’. The wage-paid employment of men and women agricultural labourers belonging to scheduled castes rural labour households were of the order of 240 and 207 days respectively. Corresponding figures for non-agricultural labourers were 205 and 229 days as against 91 and 29 days, for workers engaged in other occupations.

Further, women agricultural labour as well as non-agricultural labourer belonging to SC households remained employed for a larger number of days as compared to their counterparts in all classes of rural labour households.

It may be seen that the agricultural labourers besides being mainly employed in agricultural occupations were also marginally engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. The data for 2004–05 shows that out of a total of 239 days of wage-paid employment, the male agricultural labourers in rural labour households were employed in agricultural occupations for 228 days i.e. around 95 per cent of total days of wage-paid employment. Respective figure for male agricultural labourers belonging to scheduled castes was 95 percent. Likewise, the women agricultural labourers were also marginally engaged in non-agricultural occupations.

The extent of non-agricultural employment for women was of the order of 4, 5, 8 and 3 days respectively for all classes, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes’ households. It may also be seen from the table 5 that the duration of wage-paid employment of men and women workers in agricultural labour occupations have witnessed a decrease for all the four groups of rural labour households in 2004–05 over 1999–2000, whereas, the duration of non-agricultural employment has increased except of all classes and women workers of other backward classes where it remained constant at previous round level of 5 days and 3 days respectively. This indicates the diversification of the rural economy as the opportunity of employment is expanding in the non-farm sector.

Table 5: Sex and Class-wise Wage-paid Employment of Usually Occupied Workers belonging to Rural Labour Households during 1999-2000 & 2004-05

(in number of days)

Group of Households/	Agricultural Labourers		Non-agricultural Labourers		Other Occupations		All Occupations	
Sex	1999-2000	2004-05	1999-2000	2004-05	1999-2000	2004-05	1999-2000	2004-05
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All Classes								
Men	245	239	212	203	88	87	222	215
Women	216	203	206	214	34	27	192	177
Children	248	222	239	214	28	30	185	164
Schedule Castes								
Men	249	240	207	205	89	91	226	220
Women	213	207	207	229	44	29	200	189
Children	253	237	220	211	29	36	205	178

Source: Rural Labour Enquiry, Employment and Unemployment, 2004-05

In the urban areas of India, the data indicates that the labour force participation rate of SC women in urban India was 31% as compared to 84% for SC men indicating wide gender disparities in the opportunities to employment in the job market. In case of female employment, the SC women occupied a relatively better position in employment than the non SC/ST females (Table 3).

Summary: In summary, the data on employment days for rural labour indicate that the SC men were employed for a greater number of days in the year, 2004-05, as compared to women from the SC social group. The average annual number of days worked by men belonging to SC rural labour households was 285 days while for women it was 245 days.

The overview of the status of rural labour women from the SC social group in India indicates that the dependence on the wage paid mode of employment throughout the year was high for SC social group. The average annual number of days worked in wage paid employment in the year was lower for SC women as compared to SC men (220 days for men as compared to 189 days for women). On the other hand, the average annual number of days worked in wage paid employment in the year was higher for SC women as compared to women belonging to all classes (189 days for SC women as compared to 177 days for women).

Women non- agricultural labourers belonging to SC households remained employed for a larger number of days (229 days) as compared to their counter-parts in 'agricultural labour' (207 days) and 'other occupations' (29 days). This pattern of wage paid employment is not true for men labourers. The male agricultural labourers belonging to scheduled caste households remained employed for larger number of days as compared to their counterparts in 'non-agricultural labour' and 'other occupations'. The wage-paid employment of men and women agricultural labourers

belonging to scheduled castes rural labour households were of the order of 240 and 207 days respectively. Corresponding figures for non-agricultural labourers were 205 and 229 days as against 91 and 29 days, for workers engaged in other occupations.

In the urban areas as well, there are wide gaps in the labour force participation rate of SC women as compared to SC men indicating wide gender disparities in the opportunities to employment in the job market. In case of female employment, the SC women occupied a relatively better position in employment than the non SC/ST females.

Unemployment - Rural: The incidence of unemployment for SC women in rural areas deserves special attention as two-third of SC women live and depend on agriculture and owing to seasonality in agriculture; there is peculiar and acute unemployment in this sector in rural areas. The National Sample Survey organization gathers data on various approaches to capture the severity of unemployment. One of the approaches is of current daily status which captures unemployment and underemployment in the informal sector.

We generally find that both in rural areas the percentage of unemployed among the Dalit is higher than the unemployment rate of non- SC/ST woman. For instance, according to the daily status approach of measuring unemployment, in 2004 in rural areas 13% of Dalit women were unemployed as compared to 7% for non-SC/ST women. This suggests that not only the large majority of SC woman are agricultural labourers (mostly casual workers, and less of the permanent workers), the rate of unemployment among them is also quite high (table 6).

Table 6: Unemployment Rate 15 - 59 yrs (Current Daily Status)

Social group	Male	Female
Rural		
ST	6.69	6.29
SC	12.18	12.64
OBC	7.63	8.86
Others	6.89	7.16
Total	8.30	8.94
Urban		
ST	7.06	9.43
SC	11.71	10.83
OBC	7.61	12.59
Others	6.19	12.35
Total	7.56	12.05

Source: 61st Round of Employment and Unemployment, NSSO

Reasons for days not worked for rural wage labour

The data collected by the rural labour enquiry shows that the percentage of days not worked during the year 2004-05 increased over 1999-2000. The percentage of days not worked by men and women of 'all classes' of rural labour households in 2004-05 were 20.27, and 31.51 percent as against 18.36 and 29.86 respectively in 1999-2000. The respective figures of days not worked for scheduled castes households in 2004-05 were 80 and 120 as against 71, 116 in 1999-2000.

An interesting feature of the duration of days not worked was that the major part of the days not worked in 2004-05 by usually occupied women belonging to rural labour households was due to the non availability of work. The number of days not worked due to non-availability of work i.e. the duration of factual unemployment accounted for 62 per cent and 35 per cent of the total number of days not worked respectively by men and women workers belonging to all classes of rural labour households. Similarly, it accounted for 66 per cent and 40 per cent of the total number of days not worked by men and women workers belonging to scheduled castes rural labour households. Thus we find that the number of days not worked because work was not available, was significantly greater for Dalit women as compared to all women (40% and 35%, respectively)

In the urban areas, the unemployment level of SC males and females was about 12 and 11%, respectively. That is the unemployment rates for SC men were higher than the non-SC women in the urban India.

Wage Earning: Gender and Caste disparity

Unlike the disparities among SC and non SC rural labour workforce in terms of incidence of wage labour and landownership pattern among them the differences in their real wage rates are less profound.

To begin with the wage earning in the agricultural occupations in rural areas for SC indicate that the average real wage rate was Rs 9.58 (base 1986) for SC women labourers in 2000, whereas for SC male labourers the wage rate was higher at Rs 13.56. These differences are also observed in the real wage rates between SC women and SC men in the non-agricultural occupations in the rural areas of India (SC men real wage rate is Rs.19.76 as compared to Rs. 11.92 for SC women labourers). Thus we find that there are differences in the real wage rates between SC women and men. Similarly, differences are also observed in the real wage rates between SC women and all classes of women labourers especially those engaged in non-agricultural occupation (Rs 11.92 for SC women as compared to Rs 18.17 for All).

Further, the SC women who worked as wage labourers faced discrimination in wage earnings, particularly, in the urban areas. In 2000, the SC women casual wage labourers received daily wages earning of Rs. 37 as compared to Rs. 56 for the Non-SC/ST women, while the national average was Rs. 42. The disparity in earning

between the women from excluded and non-excluded groups reflect discrimination faced by them in terms of engagement in the labour market. This form of discrimination is likely to result in depressed earnings/income which ultimately will cause higher incidence of poverty amongst the SC women.

Summary: The incidence of unemployment for SC women in rural areas deserves special attention as two-third of SC women live and depend on agriculture and owing to seasonality in agriculture; there is peculiar and acute unemployment in this sector in rural areas. We generally find that in rural areas the percentage of unemployed among the SC women available for work is higher than the unemployment rate of SC men and non-SC/ST woman. This suggests that not only the large majority of SC woman are agricultural labourers (mostly casual worker, and less of the permanent worker) the rate of unemployment among them is also quite high. Further, the data collected by the rural labour enquiry shows that the percentage of days not worked during the year 2004-05 increased over 1999-2000 for the SC women rural labourers.

An interesting feature of the duration of days not worked for the SC women was that the major part of the days not worked in 2004–05 belonging to rural labour household was due to the non availability of work. It is seen from the rural labour enquiry data that the number of days not worked due to non-availability of work in the total number of days not worked was higher for SC women as compared to non-SC/ST women.

Further, we find that there are inequalities in the real wage rates between SC women and men in the agricultural occupations in rural areas. These inequalities are also observed in the real wage rates between SC women and SC men in the non-agricultural occupations in the rural areas of India. Similarly, wage inequalities are also observed in the real wage rates between SC women and all classes of women labourers especially those engaged in non-agricultural occupation.

In urban areas as well, the SC women who worked as wage labourers faced unequal wage earnings. The disparity in earning between the women from excluded and non-excluded groups reflect discrimination faced by them in terms of engagement in the labour market. This form of discrimination is likely to result in depressed earnings/income which ultimately will cause higher incidence of poverty amongst the SC women.

Poverty and Malnutrition

The high dependence on casual labour with relatively low earning among the SC and the ST women resulted in a high degree of deprivation and poverty among them. While the gender break-up of poverty is not available, the high degree of deprivation is reflected in other indicators of well-being as well, particularly, in the high level of under-nutrition and related health indicators. This section begins with a brief glance on the magnitude of poverty for the SC social group followed by the analysis of indicators of good health for SC women.

There were inter-social group disparities in rural poverty in India as the table 7 indicates. In 2004-05, there were about 37% of SC's as compared with 23% of non-SC/ST in rural areas. In urban areas as well, the magnitude of poverty was higher (40%) for the SC social group as compared to non-SC/ST social group (22%).

Table 7: Poverty rates across social groups: All India (2004-05)

States	% of poor SC	% of poor ST	% of poor Others	% of poor All
India (Rural)	36.8	47.64	22.69	28.28
India (Urban)	39.81	33.92	22.59	25.62

Source: NSSO, 2004-05

Mal-Nutrition: Due to lack of data the break up of poverty rate by gender is not available, therefore above we have examined poverty rate at the aggregate level. Since women constitute the half of the population it could be assumed that the same poverty situation applies to them. However, studies by feminist scholars show that, within the household, expenditure on women is always less than on men. Women's income is used for family needs, whereas a large part of men's income is spent on individual needs, including addictions etc. This is true of most families in India, and so also to Dalit families. For some indicators for poverty and hunger figures are separately available for women. The health conditions are assessed using a set of measurable indicators that reflect various dimensions of health on reliable data are available. This includes life expectancy rates for male and female, IMR and child mortality rates and nutritional status broadly called the 'health outcomes'. The selected indicators in this section present an overview of the health conditions of the SC population mainly SC women and children, and its comparison with that non-SC/ST's.

We also have data on access to and utilization, especially for women and children at the all-India level. Since there is a link between access to health facility and health status, we also look at the access to health. Indicators of health access include percentage of women who received pre natal and post natal care, delivery care

This section is based on two recent surveys, the National Family Health Survey (2004-05) and Morbidity and Health Care Survey (2004). These surveys collected information on large number of aspects related to health conditions, healthcare and health services utilization, especially for women and children at the all-India and state-level.

Women's Life Expectancy, Infant and Child Mortality Rates

Mortality has been an important, universally accepted and widely used indicator of the health status of any population, as well as a clearly understood health outcome. According to the *Morbidity and Health Care Survey*, 2004, NSSO, of the total death reported in the preceding year of the survey that is 1,716 deaths, 9.1 percent were *Adivasis*, 17.6 percent were *Dalits*, and 12 percent were Muslim, and 21.3 were Hindus. By contrast, *Adivasis*, *Dalits*, and Hindus comprised 7.9, 16.9, and 23.6

percent, respectively, of the total of the 383,288, persons in the M&HC-NSS sample. Thus, in respect of *Adivasis* and *Dalits*, there was a difference between their proportionate presence in the number of deaths and their proportionate presence in the sample.

Table 8 : Average Age of Death by Gender and Social Group

(Mean Years)

<i>Dalits</i>		<i>Adivasis</i>		Muslims: OBC		Muslims: non-OBC		Hindus (OBC)		Hindus (FC)	
Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
43.6	39.5	46.5	40.0	40.0	47.8	40.5	50.1	49.2	48.1	55.0	54.1

Note: Only non-pregnancy deaths for women

Source: NSS 60th Round, Health File

Table 8 shows the mean age at death by gender and social group. In terms of gender, the average age at death of *Dalit* women, at 39.5 years, was nearly fifteen years less than that for Non-SC/ST women and four years less than that of *Dalit* men. This was mirrored by the fact that the average age at death of *Dalit* men, at 43.6 years, was nearly eleven years less than that for non-SC/ST men and five years less than that for OBC men.

The infant mortality rate amongst the SC social group is much higher compared to the Non SC/STs. These excluded children have mortality rates that are 33–100 per cent higher than children in the rest of Indian society (table 9).

Table 9: Mortality Rates (All-India) NFHS - 3

	SC	ST	Others
Under-5 mortality rate, 2000	119	126	82.6
Under-5 mortality rate, 2006	88	95.7	59.2
Infant mortality rate (under 1), 2000	83	84	61.82
Infant mortality rate (under 1), 2006	66.4	62.1	48.9

Nutritional status: Nutrition is a pre-requisite for good health and the well – being of any population. In particular, it plays an important role in the physical and mental growth of both women and men. Chronic illnesses are often associated with poor nutrition, especially among children. Moreover, the mother's nutritional status affects her own health as well as that of her children. In this section, two indicators of nutritional status are presented for adults— height and body mass index (BMI). The height of an adult is an outcome which is dependent on several factors including nutrition during childhood and adolescence. Women's height can also be used to identify the degree of risks during child-birth. 'The cut-off point for height, below which a woman can be identified as nutritionally at risk, varies among populations,

but it is usually considered to be in the range of 140-150 centimetres (cm). A cut-off point of 145 cm is used for NFHS-3. The height and weight measurements in NFHS-3 are used to calculate the BMI. The BMI is defined as weight in kilograms divided by height in metres squared (kg/m²). This index excludes women who were pregnant at the time of the survey and women who gave birth during the two months preceding the survey. A cut-off point of 18.5 is used to define thinness or acute under-nutrition' (p.204, Report: NFHS-3).

Table 10: Indicators of Nutritional Status

Social Groups	Height (Below 145 cm)	Mean BMI (kg/m²)	BMI <18.5 (acute under-nutrition)	Anaemia
SC Women	15.0	19.9	41.1	58.3
Non-SC/ST Women	8.9	21.3	29.4	51.3

Source: NFHS - 3

In India, a staggering proportion of women suffer from anemia especially women from the excluded groups. About 69 percent of the ST and 58 percent of the SC women suffered from anemia compared to 51 percent among the Non SC/ST women. The BMI is also lower for the SC women as compared to non-SC/ST women and so is the height which is an outcome of childhood nutrition and is an important indicator of malnutrition. Malnutrition of a mother has an impact on the health conditions of her children. In 2004-05, 21.2 percent of the SC and 26 percent of the ST children less than 4 years of age suffered from malnutrition (based on weight for age). Of these, 48 percent of the SC and 55 percent of the ST children were severely under-nourished. There is a significant difference among the SC and the ST children and the Non SC/ST children – with 34 percent being under-nourished. The incidence of anemia among the SC and the ST children is also quite high, at nearly 72 percent and 77% respectively. The percentage is lower among the Non SC/ST children by about 10 to 17 percentage points (64 %).

Access to Maternal Healthcare: As mentioned since there seems to be a link between access to health facility and health status, we have also looked at the access to health care facility. Indicators of health access include percentage of women who received pre natal, post natal care and delivery care.

Women in India face a high risk of poor health and mortality during pregnancies and delivery with the result that maternal mortality rate is very high in India; the NFHS-2 estimates the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) at 540 per 100,000 live births. In order to address this issue, the Government Maternal Health Programmes (GMHPs) in India (now a part of the RCHP) provide Ante natal care (ANC), delivery care and post natal care (PNC) through a network of primary health centres and urban health posts. Most of the services in the public sector are provided free of cost, so that even the poor are not deprived of professional maternal health care. Besides, the network of health centres makes access to services easy. Thus, in principle, the coverage

should be close to universal. However, various surveys indicate that a large proportion of women do not get adequate health care during pregnancies and deliveries.

Prenatal and Postnatal Care

The M&HC-NSS provided information, by social group, on the prenatal and postnatal care received by ever married women below 50 years of age. Table 4 shows that, compared to 15 percent of Hindu women who did not receive prenatal care, such care was not received by: 31 percent of *Adivasis*, 26 percent of *Dalits*, 33 percent of OBC Muslims, and 26 percent of non-OBC Muslims. Similarly, compared to 27 percent of Hindu women who did not receive postnatal care, such care was not received by: 44 percent of *Adivasis*, 37 percent of *Dalits*, 36 percent of OBC Muslims, and 34 percent of non-OBC Muslims. Through the NFHS survey, similar disparity emerged in the case of tetanus vaccinations. About 74 percent of the SC mothers and 62 percent of the ST mothers received vaccination, compared to 82 percent for the non-SC/ST women.

Table 11: Proportion of ever married women who did not receive pre- and post-natal care

	Pre-Natal Care	Post-Natal Care
<i>Dalits</i>	26.2	36.5
<i>Adivasi</i>	30.5	43.7
Muslim (OBC)	32.7	36.4
Muslim (non-OBC)	26.1	34.5
Hindu (OBC)	22.7	31.3
Hindu (FC)	14.7	26.7
Total	23.5	33.2

Source: NSS 60th Round, Health File

Delivery Care: Among the factors related to health care at birth, which influence the survival chances of a newborn – place of delivery and the type of assistance provided are most important. About 77 percent of the births to the SC women and 82 percent of the births to the ST women took place at home and the corresponding figure for the non-SC/ST women is 53 percent. This means only 33 percent of the births to the SC women and 18 percent to the ST women take place in medical institutions. Of the total deliveries of the SC and the ST women that took place at home, more than 38 percent of the SC deliveries were attended by a *Dai* (midwife). Births attended by a public health person are 25 percent in the case of the ST and 41 percent in the case of the SC women.

Summary

To summarize our discussion above, we find that in the early 2000, 37% of SC's were poor as compared with 23% of non-SC/ST in rural areas. In urban areas as well, the

magnitude of poverty was higher (40%) for the SC social group as compared to non-SC/ST social group (22%)..

Moving on, the discussion clearly brings out that the health conditions of SC women are quite poor in India and that they are more deprived than the women from the other sections of the population. This is particularly true of childhood survival, and nutritional status. In spite of an improvement in survival levels; IMR of 83 and CMR of 40 among SC is unacceptably high for the present days. Besides, over two- fifth of the SC/ST women suffer from chronic energy deficiency as seen from BMI. The anthropometric measures show that nearly half of the young children are 'under-nourished' or 'stunted', and over half the children are 'moderately' or 'severely' anemic.

The results clearly show that the SCs remain relatively more deprived even in utilization of basic health services. The provision of maternal health care has been given high importance in PHPs in India, but the goal of providing professional health care during pregnancy and delivery is far from being achieved. Since maternal health care is provided free of cost by the primary health care network involving community health centres, primary health centres and sub-centres; all sections should get this care. Yet the coverage is lower for the scheduled groups and the deprivation is worse for SC women. Institutional delivery is not as easily obtainable as well.

Social Development Literacy and Education Level

Literacy rates: In terms of literacy rates, we find gender inequalities in the SC social group. Overall, in India in 2001, 42% of the SC women were literate as compared to 67% of men (Table 12). Gender inequalities in literacy are greater in the rural areas as compared to urban for the SC social group. Thus we find that SC women share a similar problem with their high caste counter parts ie lower of literacy rates as compared to men.

SC women in addition have suffered denial of education in the past because of their caste-background. This is reflected in the lower literacy rates for SC women as compared to non-SC/ST women (LR was 42% for SC women as compared to 58% for non-SC/ST women).

Table 12: Literacy Rates for the non SC/ST & SC Populations by Sex & Place of Residence, 2001

Residence	Total	Male	Female	M/F Gap
Non SC/ST Population				
Total	68.8	78.7	58.2	20.50
Rural	62.6	74.3	50.1	24.20
Urban	81.8	87.6	75.3	12.30
Urban-Rural Gap	19.2	13.3	25.2	
SC Population				
	Total	Male	Female	
Total	54.7	66.6	41.9	24.70
Rural	51.2	63.7	37.8	25.90
Urban	68.1	77.9	57.5	20.40
Urban-Rural Gap	16.9	14.2	19.7	
Non SC/ST-SC Gap				
Total	14.1	12.1	16.3	
Rural	11.4	10.6	12.3	
Urban	13.7	9.7	17.8	

Source: Census of India, 2001

Educational Attainment

The stock of the educated population for the SCs and the non SC/STs women was irrepressibly poor. The SCs, however, significantly lag behind their non- SC/ST counterparts. Higher attainment rates for the SCs upto primary education and gradual drop thereafter indicate that a majority of the SC children terminate their school education on or before primary classes, while the non SC/ST children attain subsequent stages of education. Looking only across women from different social groups, the incidence of illiteracy is more or less the same across all groups. But as we move up the educational ladder, the proportion of women reporting their educational level as graduate and above was higher among the women from the 'other' category than among category of women from the SC social group in both rural and urban areas. This gap is most pronounced in the urban areas where 18.2% of the women from other category reported their educational level as graduate and above in comparison to only 3.9% from the SC category (Table 13).

Table 13: Percentage distribution of 15 years and above by general level of education for All India

All India	Not literate	Literate and Up to primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher secondary	Diploma/certificate	Graduate & above
Rural							
SC							
male	40.7	27.7	17.2	7.6	3.9	0.6	2.2
female	68.5	16.6	8.5	3.5	1.8	0.4	0.7
person	54.4	22.2	12.9	5.6	2.9	0.5	1.5
Others							
male	21.5	26.6	20.8	15	8.1	1.4	6.5
female	43.4	25.2	14.9	9.1	4.4	0.6	2.6
person	32.3	25.9	17.8	12.1	6.3	1	4.5
Urban							
SC							
male	19.3	28	22.3	14	7.8	2	6.6
female	45	21.7	15	8.6	4.6	1.3	3.9
person	31.5	25	18.8	11.4	6.3	1.6	5.3
Others							
male	7.5	14.9	17	18.9	14.2	3.9	23.8
female	17.5	17.8	16.7	16.1	11.9	1.9	18.2
person	12.3	16.2	16.9	17.6	13.1	2.9	21.1

Source: Report on Employment and Unemployment for NSSO, 61st round

The current stock of educated manpower among the SCs is not only characterized by low attainments, but also by poor diversification into skills and job-oriented technical and professional courses. Table 14 on the educational attainment for 15-plus population by social groups and sex, 2001, presents the distribution of population in the age above 15 years by sex and social groups for those having attained graduate degrees and above. The SC males in 2001 holding technical degrees in engineering and technology were a little above 5.0 percent, while the percentage figures for the SC females stood at 3.6 percent, respectively. Correspondingly, the non SC/ST population stood at 8.6 and 4.0 percent, respectively. Although the inter-community difference for graduates in medicine was not as glaring, the non SC/ST population, therein, too, had a definite edge.

Table 14: Educational Attainment for 15+ Population by Social Groups and Sex, 2001

Educational level		Non SC/STs		SCs	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Graduate & Above	8.8	4.6	3.4	1.0
2	Graduate Degree other than Technical	68.2	67.5	69.6	70.0
3	Post Graduate Degree other than Technical	17.3	21.0	18.6	18.9
4	Technical Degrees				
	a) Engineering & Technology	8.6	4.0	5.1	3.6
	b) Medicine	2.2	1.9	1.4	2.1
	c) Agriculture & Dairying	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.1
	d) Veterinary	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0

Source: Census of India, 2001.

Low educational development has lead to *lower occupational diversification* and them being relegated to low skilled specific occupations, technical and professional courses. Empirical evidence indicates due to lack of access to educational qualification, lower proportion of Dalit women vis-à-vis are employed as skilled/trained workers, such as teachers and nurses (Table 2). In rural areas, low levels of education implies lower levels of information on various public policies aimed at uplifting Dalit women economically and socially. For example, policy of credit provision to start small business or state employment guarantees schemes.

Current Attendance Rates

Current attendance rate in educational institutions among the children and the youth is supposed to be one of the important social indicators for assessing the status of progress of any particular group of people under study³. Current attendance rate in educational institutions for different social group and age group has been defined as the number of persons currently attending in educational institutions per 1000 persons of them respective social group and age group. Table 15 presents the current attendance rates in educational institutions among the children in the age group 5-14 years and for the youth in the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 years for different social groups at the all-India level. The table shows that compared to the households belonging to the scheduled categories, the current attendance rate in educational institutions was much higher among the girls and the youth belonging to the *others* category of households.

³ NSS Report No. 516: *Employment and unemployment situation among social groups in India, 2004-0*, p31

**Table15. Current attendance rates in Education
Institution Across Social Groups : All India**

	Male				Female			
SC	5-14	15-19	20-24	0-29	5-14	15-19	20-24	0-29
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
rural	80.9	39.6	9.7	42.8	73.7	28.8	3.5	35.2
urban	85	49.5	17	43.3	79.3	41.2	10.2	40.2
rural+urban	81.5	41.8	11.6	42.9	74.7	31.6	4.9	36.1
Others								
rural	87.6	54.8	14.9	47.8	84.2	42.7	5.9	41.3
urban	91.5	69.4	27.8	51.4	91.4	67.6	21.6	50.2
rural+urban	88.9	60.3	20.4	49.1	86.7	52.1	12.4	44.5

Source: Report on Employment and Unemployment for NSSO

Higher Education: The participation rate of the SC women in 2001 was up by over 4 percentage points as it stood at 8.8 percent of the total enrollment in higher education. The increase in the SC women participation rate was higher than the male. Though the increase in the participation rates may have taken place, the level of participation in higher education for SC women was 3 points lower as compared to SC men.

The concept of GER looks at the access to higher education and measures the access level by taking the ratio of persons in all age group enrolled in various programs to total population in age group of 18 to 23. In 2003-04, as per NSS estimates, the GER was about 13.2 percent at overall level. However, there are significant disparities across social groups. The GER is much lower for SC as compared with non-SC/STs, being 7.51 and 21.8 percent, respectively. This indicates that once higher secondary stage is completed, the percent point difference in entering into the higher education stream is about 14 percent lower for the SCs.

The NSS data further indicates that the women belonging to the lower caste suffer more in access to higher education than others. For instance in 2003-04, as against the overall average of 11.0 percent for the female, the GER was 5.6 percent for SC female and 20.0 percent for other female. Thus the GER of the SC female was lower by more than three times compared with higher caste female (Table 17).

Table 16: Participation in Higher Education of the SCs 1991 and 2001

Stages of Higher Education	Courses/Streams	1991		2001	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Total Higher Education		9.0	4.5	11.1	8.8
Research & Post-Graduate		8.9	2.2	13.4	9.3
Graduate General/non-technical		9.4	4.9	14.0	8.2
	BA/BA Honours	13.6	5.6	16.6	9.4
	B.Sc/B.Sc Honours	6.6	4.6	11.0	8.6
	B.Con/B.Com Honours	5.8	3.6	11.5	4.9
	B.Ed/B.T.	11.0	5.0	15.2	11.0
Graduate Technical/Professional		6.4	6.9	7.4	13.6
	B.E./B.Sc Engineering/B.Arch	5.7	5.5	7.4	7.5
	M.B.B.S	8.9	8.1	11.0	10.8
Others		NA	NA	16.1	16.1
Post-Matric Diploma		10.9	3.8	10.6	12.2
	Polytechnic	8.7	8.5	10.2	11.4
	Teachers Training Schools	14.3	1.4	17.0	14.2
	Technical & Industrial Crafts	12.0	12.5	10.2	11.7

Source: Selected Educational Statistics, 1991 & 2001.

**Table 17: Gross Enrolment Ratio (2003-04) in Higher Education:
Some stylized facts (percent)**

Category	Social Groups				
	SC	ST	OBC	Others	All
Religion					
Hindu	7.2	4.4	11.3	24.9	13.5
Muslim	NA	NA	7.0	9.0	8.2
Sikh	7.0	NA	NA	20.8	15.6
Females					
Total	5.6	3.2	8.7	20.0	11.0
Rural	2.9	1.8	4.9	9.8	5.4
Hindu	5.3	2.6	8.8	22.6	11.1
Muslim	NA	NA	6.3	7.2	6.8
Sikh	7.1	NA	NA	25.5	18.7
Christian	NA	16.8	NA	42.1	25.3

Source: NSS Employment –Unemployment Survey-2003-2004,

Summary

The literacy status of the SCs in India is appalling. The latest population census (2001) indicates that they constituted about 20 percent (62 million approximately) of the 300 million illiterate Indians – far in excess of their share in population. The

gender gap within the two communities, as well as, between the urban and the rural females, continues to remain significantly large. This reinforces the contention that it is the rural females in general and the SCs among them in particular, which form the most disadvantaged pedestal of the illiteracy pyramid.

Educational attainment figures show that the stock of educated population for the two social groups is irrepressibly poor. Additionally, the SCs, significantly lag behind their non-SC/ST counterparts. The goals of universal elementary education remain distant as fewer than 45 percent SC female children and one-thirds male children aged 5-14 continued to remain out of school in the rural areas. One of the major impediments in realizing the goals of universal elementary education among the SCs was the presence of high school dropout rates among them, which seemed to set in no sooner than the child was enrolled in class I.

The participation of SCs in higher education was also very limited. In 2001, a little more than 5 percent of the SCs aged 20-24 were reported to be attending post-higher secondary education. Their presence in vocational courses was rather miniscule. The pattern of enrolment in higher education indicates that SC social group is in highly disadvantageous position compared to the non-SC/STs. Also the SC women suffer from lower access to higher education as compared with their higher caste counterpart.

Political Participation

In this section we study the issue of political participation of SC women in two ways. There is some official data which gives the representation of SC women vis-à-vis non-SC women and vis-à-vis SC men in the parliament. We will study the unequal representation of SC women in parliament. Secondly there are few studies which examine the nature of participation and the effectiveness of Dalit women in panchayats and other bodies. Based on the limited evidence we will study how effective is the role of SC women in the political governance. We also look at issues related to participation in the political institutions with the help of primary studies.

Status of SC Women in Political Participation as Member of Parliament

The data on the Lok Sabha from 1971-2004 reveals the dominance of SC men in the politics as compared to the SC women. The 14th Lok Sabha had a total of 75 MP's from the SC social group, of which 65 were men and 10 were women. When compared to 1971, more women parliamentarians have entered politics since 1971. There is slight improvement in the percentage share of the women parliamentarians from the SC background although they continued to be underrepresented. They are under-represented when compared to SC men and non-SC/ST women.

The 1971 Lok Sabha had total of 26 women MPs of which 5 belonged to the SC group, 1 belonged to ST group and remaining 20 belonged to the Non SC/ST groups. The data on the Lok Sabha from 1971-2004 reveals the dominance of Non SC/ST

women groups in the politics as compared to the women from the Scheduled castes and Scheuled tribe background. The data indicates that highest number of females from the Non SC/ST groups belonged to the 1984 Lok Sabha i.e. Congress dominated regime. The number of SC and ST women parliamentarians accounted to 5 and 2 in number constituting 10.87 and 4.35 percent of the total membership (table 18 and 19).

The highest numbers of SC women were in the 12th Lok Sabha which consisted of 12 SC women members and only two women MPs from the ST background and 30 women MPs from the non-SC/ST background. The data indicates that in terms of the membership of the women parliamentarians the 1977 Janata government had had least number of the women parliamentarians with only one SC female, one female from the Scheduled tribe background and 18 females from the Non SC/ST background. After 1984 Lok Sabha that had the highest number of the women parliamentarians i.e. 46 in number the percentage share of the women parliamentarians declined. Yet after this decline there has been considerable increase Indian National Congress the women parliamentarians since 1991. More women parliamentarians had entered politics since 1971. There is slight improvement in the percentage share of the women parliamentarians from the SC background although they continued to be underrepresented.

Table 18: All India Members of Parliament by Caste and Gender

	SC			Other		
Lok Sabha	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
5th (1971)	70	5	75	420	20	440
6th (1977)	63	1	64	447	16	463
7th(1980)	77	4	81	428	25	453
8th (1984)	74	5	79	410	39	449
9th (1989)	78	3	81	390	23	413
10th (1991)	74	5	79	402	30	432
11th (1996)	68	11	79	403	25	428
12th (1998)	60	12	72	407	30	437
13th (1999)	72	9	81	411	34	445
14th (2004)	65	10	75	394	33	427

Source: www.parliamentofindia.nic.in

Table 19: All India percentage Share Of The Members of Parliament By Caste and Gender

S.No.	SC				Others		
	Lok Sabha	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	5th (1971)	93.33	6.67	100	95.45	4.55	100
2	6th (1977)	98.44	1.56	100	96.54	3.46	100
3	7th(1980)	95.06	4.94	100	94.48	5.52	100
4	8th (1984)	93.67	6.33	100	91.31	8.69	100
5	9th (1989)	96.3	3.7	100	94.43	5.57	100
6	10th (1991)	93.67	6.33	100	93.06	6.94	100
7	11th (1996)	86.08	13.92	100	94.16	5.84	100
8	12th (1998)	83.33	16.67	100	93.14	6.86	100
9	13th (1999)	88.89	11.11	100	92.36	7.64	100
10	14th (2004)	86.67	13.33	100	92.27	7.73	100

Source: www.parliamentofindia.nic.in

Status of SC women as Panchayat Leaders

The 73rd constitutional Amendment has created space for women in political participation and decision making at the grass root level by providing that 1/3rd of the seats are reserved in all over the country.

Dalit women have also been separately granted thirty three percent reservations in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Though there have been a lot of studies published to look into the status and the role played by Women in the PRIs after the 73rd amendment. However, these studies are general in nature looking the functioning of Women representatives as a whole not focusing on the Dalit women.

There are limited numbers of studies on the status and the role of Dalit women leaders. The study of Haryana (2005) points out that a majority of Dalit women were between thirty and fifty years of age and most of them were illiterate, staying in the joint families that forced them to perform multiple roles after being elected. Though they had to play the role of leaders but lack of education was a major hindrance that did not enable them to understand even the basics of PRIs. The majority of SC women were not aware of their roles and responsibilities as the Members and those who were aware did not assert their rights as representatives due to societal imposed inhibitions and disabilities. Another important handicap has been the proxy representation of the women by their male counterparts in the family. Though in majority of the cases proxy representation is done by the husband but it is also the sons and the father-in-laws who become *defacto* representatives.

There are also some recorded instances of SC women elected representatives in the panchayat institutions being prevented from carrying out their duties owing to caste discrimination. At times they are not allowed to sit on a chair to preside over a meeting; there have been instances of SC women sarpanches not being allowed to conduct flag hoisting on Independence Day and Republic Day; often it is the male, non-SC deputy sarpanch who conducts all the business of the panchayat when the sarpanch is an SC woman.

Summary

More women parliamentarians have entered politics since 1971. There is slight improvement in the percentage share of the women parliamentarians from the SC background although they continued to be underrepresented. They are underrepresented when compared to SC men and non-SC/ST women. The data on the Lok Sabha from 1971-2004 reveals the dominance of SC men in the politics as compared to the SC women.

The data on the Lok Sabha from 1971-2004 reveals the dominance of Non SC/ST women groups in the politics as compared to the women from the Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribe background. The data indicates that highest number of females from the Non SC/ST groups belonged to the 1984 Lok Sabha i.e. Congress dominated regime. The number of SC and ST women parliamentarians accounted to 5 and 2 in number constituting 10.87 and 4.35 percent of the total membership.

Dalit women have also been separately granted thirty three percent reservations in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Though there have been a lot of studies published to look into the status and the role played by Women in the PRIs after the 73rd amendment. However, these studies are general in nature looking the functioning of Women representatives as a whole not focusing on the Dalit women. There are limited numbers of studies on the status and the role of Dalit women leaders. The study of Haryana (2005) points out that a majority of Dalit women were between thirty and fifty years of age and most of them were illiterate, staying in the joint families that forced them to perform multiple roles after being elected. They also face caste discrimination when carrying out their duties as elected women representatives.

Evidence on Gender Discrimination and Violence of Dalit Women

The evidence so far presented indicates that there are similarities and differences in the problems faced by women belonging to SC and the rest of the women. Like all women these women also suffers from subordination due to patriarchy experienced within the family, at the place of work, and in society. Like their poor counter part from other female groups, they also suffer from lack of access to income earning assets, education and resultant high poverty.

However, the SC women differs from rest of the women in so far as their performance with regard to human development indicators is lower compared with their counterpart from rest of the women and that the causes of more deprivation of

these women lies in social exclusion. The women belonging to social grouping of low caste suffers from social exclusion and discrimination due to their cultural identity, which rest of the women do not. It is this “exclusion – induced deprivation” which differentiates excluded women 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. They also become the victim of social and religious practice such as *Devdasi* resulting in sexual exploitation in the name of religion.

Thus excluded women are not 'just like' the rest of the women. They are also disadvantaged by who they are. They suffer from social exclusion which deprives them of choices and opportunities to escape from poverty and denies them a voice to claim their rights. There is a close inter-face between patriarchy and social exclusion which enforce each other. The women from discriminated groups suffer from triple deprivation – gender, poverty and social exclusion. In this section we provide some empirical evidence on the discrimination faced by Dalit women. As mentioned, discrimination faced by Dalit women is of dual nature namely gender discrimination which she faces like any other women from male and caste discrimination which she faces as a untouchable women from the high caste men and the high caste women. In this we will also try to study whether the caste discrimination faced by Dalit women is more intense than that of Dalit men because of her gender status (sexual abuse and gender related discrimination).

While there is some systematic evidence of caste- and untouchability-based discrimination in social, cultural and political spheres, the evidence on discrimination due to gender and subordination of men as well as economic discrimination is limited. We present some evidence on gender discrimination experienced by Dalit women from Dalit men in the first sub-section. The following sub-section will assess discrimination experienced by Dalit women in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres due to their caste identity.

Evidence on Gender Discrimination and Violence faced by Dalit Women

Limited evidence indicate that within the Dalit community itself, Dalit husbands often act out their own oppressed position through violence against their wives. The study sponsored by ADMIM indicted that 43% of 500 Dalit sample women suffered from domestic violence (Dalit Women Speak Out, Overview Report, p 3)'. This violence was in the form of verbal abuse of the women, accompanied by physical assault. In most cases where a Dalit husband is concerned, the violence takes on a strong patriarchal dimension: women are tortured within the home for not bringing enough dowry, for not bearing male children, for being ugly, or too beautiful, or allegedly unfaithful, for talking back to her husband, etc. Domestic violence resulted in some women being deserted by their husbands, or being forced to leave their marital home. For the majority of women, however, the social norms and pressures of married life and “duties” of wives to their husbands ensure that they continue to endure this violence (Dalit Women Speak Out, Overview Report, p 5). These are forms of violence which have a strong patriarchal dimension And results in physical,

sexual or psychological harm. There are not many primary level studies which have been undertaken to examine the issues of patriarchy within Dalit community.

Dalit women's recognised the problem of gender exploitation by their men and therefore, the Dalit women's movement address the issue of patriarchy which denies women from asserting their choices and participation in decision making in both the community and the family. The study on violence against Dalit women supported by All India Dalit Women's Forum, indicated that 'Dalit women faced violence in the family.

Evidence on Caste - Based Discrimination faced by Dalit women

The caste-based discrimination faced by Dalit women is studied by looking at the indirect evidence as well as direct evidence on discrimination faced in multiple spheres by Dalit women. This section is divided into mainly three parts. The first part looks at the caste based discrimination based on the primary evidence and covers Dalit persons without drawing differences between male and female. Since the discrimination is faced both by male and female, we will present the evidence with respect to Dalit persons. The second part presents studies which bring out the discrimination wherein Dalit women is the focus and the sphere of activity where Dalit women are the focus. We will present instances of discrimination which have been faced by Dalit women in multiple spheres. As a part of caste discrimination we separately look at the violence and atrocities suffered by the Dalit women as a low caste person.

Overview on caste-based discrimination: The first part of this section will be briefly presenting an overview of caste based discrimination based on the primary evidence covering SC social group. As mentioned before, since the discrimination is faced both by male and female, we will present the evidence with respect to Dalit persons. The presentation of empirical evidence with regard to caste discrimination for the SC group is based on an all-India primary study and selected primary studies in economic, civil, cultural and political spheres. The section covers all Dalit persons without drawing differences between male and female.

The pilot studies suggest that the caste-based discrimination in the rural labour market operates through exclusion in hiring, lower wages and restriction in efforts to change their occupation (Action Aid: 2001, Venketeswarlu: 1990, Khan: 1995, Tripathy: 1994). For urban areas, Banerjee and Knight (1987) observed that: 'there is indeed discrimination by caste, particularly job discrimination' and that 'discrimination appears to operate at least in part through traditional mechanisms, with 'untouchables' disproportionately represented in poorly-paid dead-end jobs...' (p277-307).

As the evidence suggests caste-based discrimination faced by SC's have an impact on their capacity to access social needs as well. SC's faced discrimination which was reflected in complete denial of access to particular water sources (well, tank, tube

well, etc.), village shops, health clinics, public transport, services offered by washer person, carpenter, tailor, potter. Table provides an overview of the different forms of untouchability that deny the SCs access to basic public services. Out of the total villages surveyed in the Action Aid study (2001), complicit denial to the SC persons was observed in little less than half of villages - 48.4 percent in terms of access to public water/drinking places, 36 percent in terms of access to shops, 26 percent in terms of the use of restaurants/ hotels, 21 percent in terms of entry to health centres/clinics, 9.2 percent in terms of public transport, and 3.2 percent in terms of entry to cinema halls/recreation facilities, etc. In the case of services provided by individual service providers also, the denial of access was apparent. Of the villages surveyed, denial was reported in access to the services of barbers in 46 percent of villages, in access to water person's services in 46 percent of villages, carpenters' services in 26 percent of the villages, and of potters in about 20 percent of the villages (table 20).

Equally importantly and more common is the discriminatory access reflected in differential treatment in access to public services. The discriminatory access takes on various forms and this study observed that in about one-third of the villages had separate seating arrangements or separate cups were provided to the 'untouchables'. Similar forms of discrimination were observed in purchases from shops, entry into public transport and treatment in private health clinics (Table 21).

These studies have largely been qualitative in nature which has collated incidences of caste based exclusion and its forms. These studies point out to the caste based restrictions faced by Dalits which have an impact on their capacity to access civil, political and economic rights and opportunities. Due to the qualitative nature of the studies the magnitude and trend of forms of exclusion can not be generalized though the practices do exist. The recognition of the practices of caste-based discrimination is recognized by the State in the official Report of the Commission of the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes 1998 where it is observed:

"Some of the major causes of atrocities and other offences against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are related to issues of land and property, access to water, wage payments, indebtedness and bonded or forced labour. Issues of human dignity, including compulsion to perform distasteful tasks traditionally forced on Scheduled Castes, and molestation and exploitation of Dalit women are also involved. Caste related tension is exacerbated by economic factors, which contribute to violence. It is the assertion of their rights, be they economic, social or political, by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and their development, which often invite the wrath of the vested interests. "Land and water is another sensitive issue. Accessibility of drinking water and water for irrigation and disposal of water removed from water logged areas become issues that can trigger off atrocities on SCs. Caste fervor during religious and social ceremonies, disputes arising during sowing and harvesting operations, and removal of crops from the granary after harvesting, have also been

known to cause tension. Increasing awareness and empowerment of SCs, manifested in resistance to suppression, also result in clashes".(p4)

Table 20: Denial of Access to Basic Public Services (Forms/sites arranged in decreasing order of incidence; pooled data from 11 states)

Public spheres	Percentage of villages where practiced		Percentage of villages where not practiced	Total villages surveyed
Water facilities	48.4	(255)	43.5	527
Barbers' services	46.6	(229)	41.3	491
Waterman's services	45.8	(194)	43.2	424
Carpenter's services	25.7	(117)	68.1	455
Potter will not sell pots	20.5	(75)	68.2	365
Entry into village shops	35.8	(186)	57.0	519
Entry into restaurants /hotels	25.6	(92)	64.9	359
Entry into private/public health centre/clinic	21.3	(74)	72.4	348
Entry into public transport	9.2	(41)	87.0	447
Entry/Seating in cinema halls	3.2	(6)	93.0	187

Note: Figures in brackets are number of villages where form is practiced. Villages where status of practice is ambiguous are excluded from both 'practiced' and 'not practiced' categories. Total surveyed villages exclude villages where relevant institution/site is absent-Source: Action Aid study, 2000

Table 21: Discriminatory Treatment in Public Services (Forms//sites arranged in decreasing order of incidence; pooled data from 11 States)

Denial and /or discriminatory treatment	Percentage of villages where practiced		Percentage of villages where not practiced	Total villages surveyed
Separate seating in restaurants/hotels	32.7	(144)	58.0	441
Separate utensils in restaurants/hotels	32.3	(145)	58.1	449
Tailor will not take measurements	20.8	(96)	70.1	462
Untouchability during transactions in shops	18.5	(87)	73.8	470
No seating / last entry in public transport	12.8	(57)	82.9	444
Discriminatory treatment in private clinics	8.7	(24)	83.7	276

There is some evidence of discrimination faced by SC persons in access to Food Security Programmes such as Mid-Day Meal and Public Distribution System. Exclusion took the form of denial of access/access with differential treatment in food security programme. A specific form of exclusion especially in the mid-Day Meal was

denial of Dalits being employed as cooks⁴. Similarly, Dreze and Goyal, 2003 study on Mid-Day Meal Scheme for Rajasthan reported exclusion of SCs as cooks and helper in almost 60 percent of the sample villages. Differential treatment experienced by children in accessing mid day meal was in the form of being served last, separate queues, separate utensils. In the food security scheme of food being distributed through fair price shops, the study of 550 villages from five States (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan observed discriminatory access in the form of different days in the week being designated for Dalits, lower quantity being distributed and derogatory remarks at the time of interaction (Thorat and Lee, 2004).

Caste based Discrimination

Till now we have presented pilot studies which have been undertaken to measure the nature and forms of discrimination experienced by SC social group without drawing differences between male and females. The following section will present the evidence on caste-based discriminatory practices experienced by Dalit women. The first part of this section will present indirect evidence drawn from the unit level data from the NSSO and the second part will present direct evidence based on primary studies.

Indirect evidence to discrimination in occupation

The discussion in the earlier section indicates that the situation of SC women with respect to all indicators of well-being such as access to agricultural land, nature and quality of employment, lower and irregular wages, education and health is at a much lower level as compared to non-SC/ST women. In fact the level of deprivation itself is very high compared to non-SC/ST women. The question remains as to why women from the SC social group have poor access to all resources including agricultural land and non land capital assets which directly and indirectly determine the level of income and capabilities to secure other sources of income. Are the outcomes such as employment in low wage occupations driven by education levels of SC/ST/OBC groups or is it discrimination, i.e. just because women are SC/ST/OBC? To explore this, Tables 22 and Table 23 describe women who have trained in work related to child care (percentage of employed) by employment levels, cross referencing with caste group. These tables show that even when stratifying by similar work training, SC women still have lower proportion employed when compared to non-SC/ST women. This strongly points towards the possible role of discrimination associated with caste and 'untouchability'.

⁴ The study on 500 villages by IIDS across five states provided quantitative evidence s like Mid-Day Meal Schemes (MMS) and Public Distribution System (PDS).

Table 22 Percentage of Women in the Workforce with Training in work related to Childcare, Nutrition, Pre-Schools and Crèche Within Each Social Group

	ST	SC	OTH	All
Employed	100.00	57.40	84.09	83.19
Out of Workforce	0.00	42.60	15.91	16.81
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: NSSO, *Employment and Unemployment*, 61st round

Table 23: Percentage of Women Employed with Training in work related to Childcare, Nutrition, Pre-Schools and Crèche across Social Groups

	ST	SC	OTH	All
Employed	4.40	3.80	91.80	100.00
Out of Workforce	0.00	14.00	86.00	100.00

Source: NSSO, *Employment and Unemployment*, 61st round

Indirect evidence on discrimination in Health outcomes:

The second point of analysis is the inequalities in health outcomes: the age at death; and the likelihood of receiving prenatal and postnatal care with a view to investigate the variation in health outcomes according to a person's gender and the social group to which he/she belonged.

(i) Longevity (Age at death):

The analyses in this section is drawn from the paper written by Borooah, Sadana and Thorat (2010)⁵. The evidence showed that the average age at death for Dalit women (39.5 years) was 14.6 years less than the average age at death of FC Hindu women (54.1 years). This difference is attributed to two different sets of factors:

1. **Social Status:** Compared to FC Hindu women, *Dalit* women might be more likely to be at risk to mortality-inducing factors. So, for example, *Dalit* women might be more likely than FC Hindu women to live in rural areas, in houses with poor sanitation, with limited access to safe drinking water etc.
2. **Social Capability:** Even when FC Hindu and *Dalit* women were at risk to the same mortality-inducing factors, *Dalit* women might be more likely than FC Hindu women to die younger. This might be due to gender differences in the response to such factors caused *inter alia* by: differences in literacy, differences in stress, differences in nutrition etc.

Given these two effects – engendered, respectively, by differences between FC and Hindu and *Dalit* women in *social status*, and in *social capability*, to address mortality-inducing factors – the need is for an *integrative* model, encompassing both *social status* and *capability* effects, to explain differences in the age at death of FC Hindu

⁵ Borooah, Sadana and Thorat, 'Gender and Caste- based Inequalities in Health Outcomes', Under publication, Working Paper, IIDS, 2010.

and *Dalit* women. In addition, it would be useful to quantify how much of the observed difference in the age at death between FC Hindu and *Dalit* women could be explained by differences between them due to their social status, and how much could be explained by differences between them in their capability to tackle mortality-inducing factors. The purpose of the analyses was to offer such quantification.

In order to do so, we estimated an econometric equation in which the dependent variable was the *age at death* and the explanatory variables were the following:

1. The household type in which the deceased lived was a "labourer" household:⁶ the observed difference between non-labourer and labourer households in the ages of their deceased was 6.9 years.
2. The household was a rural household: the average age of the deceased was significantly higher, by 4.9 years, in rural, compared to urban, areas.
3. Whether the household lived in a "forward" or a "backward" state.⁷
4. The *type of housing structure* in which the deceased lived: this variable ("structure") was assigned the value 1 if the type was *pucca*, or semi-*pucca*, or "serviceable" *kutcha* (i.e. good); and 0 otherwise.
5. The *quality of the latrines* used by the deceased: the variable "latrine" was assigned the value 1 if the latrines were flushing toilets or emptied into a septic tank; and 0 otherwise.
6. The *quality of the drains*: the variable "drain" was assigned the value 1 if the drains associated with the deceased's home were underground or were covered *pucca*; and 0 otherwise.
7. The *quality of the source of drinking water* used by the deceased: the variable "water source" was assigned the value 1 if the source of drinking water was from a tap; and 0 otherwise.
8. Whether the drinking water used by the deceased was *treated*: the variable "water treated" was assigned the value 1 if the drinking water was treated; and 0 otherwise.
9. If the drinking water in the deceased's household was treated, what was the *nature of the treatment* of the drinking water: the variable "water treatment" was assigned the value 1 if the nature of treatment was boiling, filtering, or ultra-violet/resin/reverse osmosis; and 0 otherwise.
10. The *nature of the cooking fuel* used by the deceased's household: the variable "cooking fuel" was assigned the value 1 if the cooking fuel was gas, *gobar* gas, kerosene, or electricity; and 0 otherwise.

⁶ Agricultural or other labour for rural households and casual labour for urban households.

⁷ "Forward states": Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Pondicherry, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal. The remaining states and union territories were classed as "backward" states.

This equation was estimated first on the sample of *Dalit* women (135 observations), and then on the sample of FC Hindu women (150 observations), who were deceased.⁸ Using these separate coefficients sets one may decompose the difference in the average age at death between FC Hindu and *Dalit* women into two parts: the first due to caste differences in the values of the mortality-inducing variables (*social status effect*) and the second due to caste differences in the coefficients associated with the mortality-inducing variables (*capability effect*). The social status contribution is computed by asking what the average Hindu-Dalit difference in the average age at death *would have been* if the difference in the values of the mortality-inducing variables between FC Hindu and *Dalit* women had been evaluated using a *common coefficient vector*. The critical question though is: what should be this common coefficient vector? Typically, two separate computations of the attribute contribution are provided using, respectively, the FC Hindu and the *Dalit* (female) coefficient vectors as the common vector.

Column 1 of Table 24 shows the difference between FC Hindu and *Dalit* women in their average ages at death: 14.13 years. Column 2 of Table 24 shows the amount of the overall gap of 14.13 years that is due to the *social status effect* when the variable vectors for FC Hindu and *Dalit* women are both evaluated using *FC Hindu* coefficients; similarly, column 4 of Table 9 shows the amount of the overall gap that is due to the *social status effect* when the variable vectors for FC Hindu and *Dalit* women are both evaluated using *Dalit* coefficients. Two points need to be made about the social status effect:

1. The size of the social status effect differs according to whether FC Hindu or *Dalit* coefficients are used in the evaluation. The social status effect based on FC Hindu coefficients (column 2) explains 39 percent – while the social status effect based on *Dalit* coefficients (column 4) explains 78 percent - of the overall difference in ages at death between FC Hindu and *Dalit* women.
2. The average age at death for *Dalit* women rose whenever their variable vector was evaluated at FC Hindu coefficients; the average age at death for FC Hindu women fell whenever their variable vector was evaluated at *Dalit* coefficients. Consequently, compared to the social capability of *Dalit* women to a given set of values of mortality-inducing variables, the capability of FC Hindu women were more favourable to a higher life expectancy.

The considerable size of the social capability effect in influencing the difference between FC Hindu and *Dalit* women in their average age at death can be explained in many ways:

⁸ These estimates, which are not shown, can be obtained on request from the authors.

1. First, terms like "bad sanitation", "poor housing", and "unsafe water supply" are broad terms and within their rubrics might conceal several qualitative differences. So, there might be severe differences in quality of sanitation and water supply between *Dalit* and FC Hindu even when such factors might be termed "poor".
2. The capacity to cope with such adverse circumstances might depend upon general health factors - like nutritional status, prior illnesses etc. - or on human and social capital factors - like literacy, access to information etc. - which might impact on *Dalit* women more adversely.

Table 24: The Decomposition of the Difference between FC Hindu and *Dalit* Women in their Average Age at Death⁹

1	2	3	4	5
53.14-39.01 = 14.13	53.14-47.66 = 5.48	47.66-39.01 =8.65	50.08 -39.01 = 11.07	53.14-50.08 = 3.06

(ii) Prenatal and Postnatal Care

The M&HC-NSS provided information, by social group, on the prenatal and postnatal care received by ever married women below 50 years of age. Table 25 shows that, compared to 15 percent of Hindu women who did not receive prenatal care, such care was not received by: 31 percent of *Adivasis*, 26 percent of *Dalits*, 33 percent of OBC Muslims, and 26 percent of non-OBC Muslims. Similarly, compared to 27 percent of Hindu women who did not receive postnatal care, such care was not received by: 44 percent of *Adivasis*, 37 percent of *Dalits*, 36 percent of OBC Muslims, and 34 percent of non-OBC Muslims.

⁹ Notes to Table :

X^H and X^D are the variable vectors, and β^H and β^D are the coefficient vectors, for FC and Dalit women respectively.

Column 1: *Observed difference*. Difference between FC Hindu and *Dalit* women in the average age at death: $X\beta^H - X\beta^D$

Column 2: *Social Status Difference*. Difference between the average age at death of FC Hindu women and what the average age at death of *Dalit* women would have been if their attributes had been evaluated using FC Hindu coefficients: $X\beta^H - X\beta^D$.

Column 3: *Social Capability difference*. Difference between columns 1 and 2 (Residual), $\{X\beta^H - X\beta^D\} - \{X\beta^H - X\beta^D\} = X\beta^H - X\beta^D$.

Column 4: *Social Status Difference*. Difference between what the average age at death of FC Hindu women would have been if their attributes had been evaluated using Dalit coefficients and the average age at death of *Dalit* women: $X\beta^D - X\beta^D$.

Column 5: *Coefficient difference*. Difference between columns 1 and 4 (Residual), $\{X\beta^H - X\beta^D\} - \{X\beta^D - X\beta^D\} = X\beta^H - X\beta^D$

Table 25: Proportion of ever married women who did not receive pre- and post-natal care

	Pre-Natal Care	Post-Natal Care
<i>Dalits</i>	26.2	36.5
<i>Adivasi</i>	30.5	43.7
Muslim (OBC)	32.7	36.4
Muslim (non-OBC)	26.1	34.5
Hindu (OBC)	22.7	31.3
Hindu (FC)	14.7	26.7
Total	23.5	33.2

Source: NSS 60th Round, Health File

In order to determine the probabilities of women receiving prenatal and postnatal care, we estimated a logit model in which the dependent variable took the value 1 if the woman received the relevant care and 0 if she did not. Borooah (2010) showed that when the equation was estimated over *all* the women in the sample, the results led to the following conclusions.

1. The level of education of women had a significant effect on the probability of their receiving both prenatal and postnatal care. Compared to an illiterate person (the default level), the probabilities of receiving prenatal and postnatal care were, respectively: 9.0 and 4.0 points higher for a person educated up to primary schooling ("low education"); 14.0 and 11.0 points higher for a person educated above primary and up to secondary level; and 15.7 and 14.0 points higher for a person educated up to higher secondary or more.
2. The economic position of the women's households exercised a significant positive influence on their probability of receiving prenatal care but *not* on their probability of receiving postnatal care: compared to women from households whose monthly expenditure was in the top quartile (the control group), women from households whose monthly expenditure was in the lowest, second, and third quartile were less likely to take treatment by, respectively, 3.3, 4.5, and 2.0 points.
3. However, even after controlling for all the above factors, the social groups to which women belonged had a significant effect on their probabilities of receiving prenatal care: compared to Hindus (the control group), other groups were less likely to receive care.

In order to investigate the social group effect more rigorously, we estimated the prenatal care equation - for which the social group effect was most pronounced - separately for *Dalit* and for FC Hindu women. The data showed that, compared to the 85.3 percent of FC Hindu women who received pre-natal care, only 73.8 percent of

Dalit women received such care: a difference of nearly 12 points. As with the age at death, we tried to explain this difference in terms of exposure and response:

1. **Social Status.** Compared to FC Hindu women, *Dalit* women might be less likely to be get "treatment-inducing" factors. So, for example, *Dalit* women might be more likely than FC Hindu women to have lower levels of education or to live in poorer households.
2. **Social Capability.** Even when FC Hindu and *Dalit* women were exposed to the same treatment-inducing factors, the capacity in terms of receiving treatment might be less favourable for *Dalit*, compared to FC Hindu, women.

In order to quantify the contribution of these factors, we carried out the decomposition shown in Table 26.

Table 26: The Decomposition of the Difference between FC Hindu and *Dalit* Women in their Proportion Receiving Pre-Natal Care¹⁰

1	2	3	4	5
81.4-73.2 = 8.2	81.4-75.3 = 6.1	75.3-73.2 = 2.1	80.3 -73.2 = 7.1	81.4 -80.3 = 1.1

Two points need to be made about the social status effect:

1. The size of the social status effect differs according to whether FC Hindu or *Dalit* coefficients are used in the evaluation. The attributes effect based on FC Hindu coefficients (column 2) explains 74 percent – while the social status effect based on *Dalit* coefficients (column 4) explains 87 percent - of the overall difference between FC Hindu and *Dalit* women in their proportions receiving pre-natal treatment.

¹⁰ Notes to Table :

X^H and X^D are the variable vectors, and β^H and β^D are the coefficient vectors, for FC and *Dalit* women respectively.

Column 1: *Observed difference.* Difference between FC Hindu and *Dalit* women in the average proportions receiving prenatal care: $X\beta^H - X\beta^D$

Column 2: *Social Status Difference.* Difference between the average proportion of FC Hindu women receiving care and what the average proportion of *Dalit* women receiving care *would have been if their attributes had been evaluated using FC Hindu coefficients*: $X\beta^H - X\beta^D$.

Column 3: *Social Capability difference.* Difference between columns 1 and 2 (Residual), $\{X\beta^H - X\beta^D\} - \{X\beta^H - X\beta^D\} = X\beta^H - X\beta^D$.

Column 4: *Social Status Difference.* Difference between what the average proportion of FC Hindu women receiving care *would have been if their attributes had been evaluated using Dalit coefficients* and the average proportion of *Dalit* women receiving care: $X\beta^D - X\beta^D$.

Column 5: *Coefficient difference.* Difference between columns 1 and 4 (Residual), $\{X\beta^H - X\beta^D\} - \{X\beta^D - X\beta^D\} = X\beta^H - X\beta^D$

2. The average proportion for *Dalit* women rose whenever their variable vector was evaluated at FC Hindu coefficients; the average proportion for FC Hindu women fell whenever their variable vector was evaluated at *Dalit* coefficients. Consequently, compared to the responses of *Dalit* women to a given set of values of treatment-inducing variables, the responses of FC Hindu women were more favourable to a higher proportion receiving treatment.

Summary

In this section we focused on the indirect evidence of caste based discrimination faced by Dalit women in the economic sphere, health outcomes and access to health services. The analysis was drawn from the unit level data from the NSSO. In the economic sphere we found that even when stratifying by similar work training, SC women still have lower proportion employed when compared to non-SC/ST women. This strongly points towards the possible role of discrimination associated with caste and 'untouchability'.

Then we focused on the caste aspect of *Dalit* women's disadvantage by comparing their health outcomes, in respect of age at death and proportions receiving prenatal treatment, to those for FC Hindu women. The novelty of the section was in separating the difference in outcomes between Dalit and FC Hindu women into two components due, respectively, to *social status* and to *social capability* effect.

We found that a significant proportion of the adverse health outcomes for Dalit, compared to FC Hindu, women was due to adverse exposure - to mortality-inducing factors in the case of age at death and to treatment-inducing factors in the case of prenatal treatment. Nonetheless, differences in social *capabilities* also played a significant role in explaining Dalit women's disadvantage. That is the, capacity in terms of receiving treatment might be less favourable for *Dalit*, compared to FC Hindu, women.

In the case of age-at-death, for reasons set out earlier, factors like poor sanitation or water supply impacted on *Dalit* women more than they did on FC Hindu women. In the case of receiving treatment, factors like poverty or illiteracy impacted on *Dalit* women more than they did on FC Hindu women.

Direct evidence on Discrimination faced by Dalit women in multiple spheres

Evidence of Discrimination in wage employment in rural areas:

Women from the vulnerable groups face barriers and difficulties while seeking employment in the labour market due to their group identity. There are very few studies which have been conducted to analyse the nature and form of caste-based discrimination which Dalit women face in wage employment

A Micro level study (2005) of three villages across states Haryana, Gujarat and Orissa undertaken by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies observed significant inter-social group differences in female employment. The higher caste females managed

to get much higher employment in non-farm sector compared to female from SC groups. For instance the yearly employment for this group varies from a minimum of 148 days for SC as compared to a very high level of 290 days for high caste women. In the non-farm sector as well there were differences in the level of employment between SC and high caste female. The study found that, although all female suffered from lower level of participation in non-farm employment, female from different group do not suffer in same degree, the low caste female suffered more from lack of employment in non-farm sector.

Women from the vulnerable groups face barriers and difficulties while seeking employment in the labour market due to their group identity. Evidence from pilot studies indicates that Dalit women face discrimination and exclusion from participation in certain categories of job. Because of their association with their occupation (manual scavenging) Dalit woman face discrimination in *social relation* and also in employment. The woman belonging to sweeper community is hardly employed for cooking and other household job because of the notion of purity and pollution of occupations, perceived to be unclean occupations ¹¹

Panel 1: Caste-Based Discrimination in Wage Labour – Farm

Sphere of Exclusion Wage Labour - Farm	Nature & Form of Discrimination (Identifier)	Consequences of Discrimination
1. Hiring: Employment	Complete denial in hiring, exclusion of low caste from certain types of jobs, selective inclusion with unequal hiring terms and conditions with respect to hours of works and other terms, hiring for work which is outside the house, denied work inside the house, Compulsive and forced work governed by traditional caste related obligations involving loss of freedom,	Less employment days, loss of freedom leading to bondage, attachment of family and child labor, income loss, high poverty
2. Wages	Complete denial (wages not paid), Unfair Inclusion: unequal treatment reflected in lower wages (lower than market wages), irregular interval of payment	Low wages, inequality in wages, income loss, high poverty
3. Work Conditions (Employer-Labour/Between labourers)	Discriminatory or differential behavior towards scheduled caste in work place	Loss of dignity, human rights and high poverty

Source: Shah G, Mander H, Thorat S, Deshpande S, Baviskar A(2006): *Untouchability in Rural India*, Sage Publications, ND,

Thorat Sukhadeo et al (2005sCaste, Occupation and Market Discrimination: A study of forms, nature and consequences in rural India, ILO Sponsored Study, Indian Institute of Dalit Study, Under publication

Evidence from the pilot studies is presented in the panel 1 above. This table indicates the sphere where Dalit women face discrimination such as in hiring, in wages and in

¹¹ Shah G, Mander H, Thorat S, Deshpande S, Baviskar A(2006): *Untouchability in Rural India*, Sage Publications, ND,

work relations¹². Scheduled caste women in this survey reported discrimination in hiring due to their caste background which is reflected in denial in employment. Further, discrimination in payment of wages was not as severe as in case of denial of certain tasks or being prone to harassment. Discrimination through exclusion in certain types of work that women do is however reported to be quite prominent and wide spread. Denial of work inside the house of high caste was more widespread. The scheduled caste women also face exclusion in work related to fetching of drinking water in high caste households. These are the forms of discriminations which are not faced by the high caste female and therefore they are likely to enjoy higher employment in household work. Thus SC women besides facing exclusion due to the preferential treatment for the Non SC/STs, their exclusion also occurs due to the continuing belief of higher castes in the notions of pollution and pollution. The Action Aid Country study in 2001 based on the information from about 550 villages in eleven states reported as well that the SC women were rarely employed for cooking, cleaning of food grains and other eatables in Bihar, for instance.

The same study also provided evidence on discrimination in the *market place* in the form of receiving lower price for their goods as sellers and as consumers, paying higher cost for their purchases.

Evidence on Discriminatory Treatment in Access to Social Needs:

Public Healthcare Services: Discrimination further occurs in access to and provision of *social needs* provided either publicly or privately in education, housing and health including common property resources like water bodies, grazing land and other land of common use¹³.

We provide the experience and insights from primary level studies conducted by the AIDMAM and IIDS on the caste related discriminations faced by Dalit women and children in accessing public health services.

Evidence based on a study conducted in 17 districts of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh indicate discrimination faced by Dalit women in Health Services in Government Hospitals. Five hundred Dalit women were interviewed who were willing to speak out about their experiences of discrimination in public sphere.

The panel 2 captures discrimination in spheres and treatment of discrimination that Dalit women and their family received from doctors, nurses and village health nurses when they entered government hospital or when they contacted medical staff outside

¹² Thorat Sukhadeo et al (2005) Caste, Occupation and Market Discrimination: A study of forms, nature and consequences in rural India, ILO Sponsored Study, Indian Institute of Dalit Study, Under publication.

¹³ Shah G, Mander H, Thorat S, Deshpande S, Baviskar A (2006): Untouchability in Rural India, Sage Publications, ND,

the medical premises. This table also provides the consequences of discriminatory treatment in access to health services on Dalit women and their families. It is evident that Dalit women face discriminatory treatment in form of rude verbal responses and refusal of medical treatment in public health services. This leads to their dependence on expensive private medical attention for which they have to take on debt.

Panel 2: Spheres and Indicators of Discrimination faced by Dalit Women in Public Health Services

Spheres of Discrimination	Identifiers of Discrimination	Consequences of Discrimination
Treatment at the time of ante-natal check-up	Face rude verbal response from Health Worker, without check up the nurse give medicines and send away.	Lack of care leading to requirement of private medical attention
Treatment by ANM for family planning operations	Indifferent verbal response and coerced into taking decisions, e.g. prospect of ration card being withdrawn if refused to have tubectomy, do not receive appropriate post-operative care.	Lack of post-operative care leading to requirement of private medical attention.
Treatment at the time of delivery	Ignored and kept waiting for long, the staff directs to go to a distant district headquarters hospital for the delivery	The delay complicates delivery leading to requirement to private medical attention. Take loan for delivery in private hospital.
Treatment after assault by men in authority (police and dominant caste landlord-employer)	Refusal of treatment by doctors in the local government hospital in order to avoid becoming involved in a police case.	Lack of care leading to requirement of private medical attention

Source: *Dalit Women speak Out: Violence against Dalit women in India, 2004*, AIDMAM and NCDHR

Although there are limited studies, some studies do provide evidence on the discriminatory access to Dalits to the public health services. A study conducted by Indian Institute of Dalit Studies and UNICEF for Gujarat and Rajasthan brings out the forms and nature of discrimination faced by the SC women and children in accessing the health services from public institutions.

Two hundred Dalit and 65 non-Dalit children were interviewed from the 12 selected villages. In case of those aged below 12 years, their mothers were interviewed. About 6-10 in-depth interviews were held in each village. The respondents were mothers, children, Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) members, non-government organisation (NGO)/government organisation (GO) members/ self-help group (SHG) workers; *anganwadi* workers; auxiliary nurse midwives (ANM), and health workers (HW). At least two group discussions and 1-2 consultative meetings were also held in each of the villages.

Panel 4: Selected variables for discrimination by sphere, form, and provider (Health)

Sphere	Form	Provider
Visit to/by provider (diagnostic)	Duration of interaction with the care provider	Doctor
Counseling	Touch (without offending)	Lab technician
Dispensing of medicine	Manner of speaking (gently or otherwise)	Pharmacist
Pathological test	Use of demeaning words/ Phrases	ANM/ VHW/ LHV
Seeking referral	Wait to give chance to the dominant caste person(s)	Anganwadi worker

Source: IIDS sponsored study on Access to Health services in Gujarat and Rajasthan, 2006.

Developing an index on 1 to 5 scale for the degree of discrimination, the study found that highest degree of discrimination was reported in the treatment during dispensing of medicine, followed by diagnostic visit to the doctor (in Rajasthan)/conduct of pathological tests (Gujarat) where as consulting care providers for referral treatment was reported as the area of least discrimination in a scale of 1 to 5. The most discriminating provider was the one at grassroots level – namely the ANM in the public health providers and the traditional healer in the private health providers. The higher-order providers such as doctors were the least discriminating in their behavior.

Access to information is an area of discrimination where Dalits do not receive the information and hence influences their health seeking behaviour as well as health status. Health personnel discriminate by not visiting SC habitations and families and when they visit, they express discomfort and disrespect for the clients. The study reported that most health care camps are held in the dominant caste habitations and hence the use by Dalit communities is restricted. Responses from the SC children indicate that they would like the health care provider to speak gently using respectful words, considering them equals, spending adequate time and treating them based on the severity of the illness as desirable behaviours¹⁴.

Evidence on Discriminatory Treatment in Access to drinking water:

Dalit women also face caste-based discrimination while accessing drinking water. The study in Gujarat¹⁵, conducted in 1971, is based on a survey of 69 villages. A repeat survey of these villages was done in 1996 to see changes in practice of untouchability. The study looked into the practice of untouchability in seventeen spheres of village life, which include the private and public domain. In 1971, 44 villages had separate water facility for the SCs near their localities. Two villages had been added to this list in twenty-five years. Untouchability is not experienced in normal times, but when water is scarce, the SCs experience difficulty and discrimination in taking water from high-caste

¹⁴ IIDS sponsored study on Access to Health services in Gujarat and Rajasthan, 2006.

¹⁵ Shah, G. (1998). Caste and Untouchability : Theory and Practice. Paper presented in Seminar "Ambedkar in Retrospect", JNU, N.Delhi.

localities. In the remaining 23 villages in which the untouchables take water from the common source, untouchability is practiced in 61 per cent of the villages. In most such villages SC women take water after the upper-caste women, or their tap or position on the well is separately marked. In seven villages (11 per cent of the sample villages) the SC women are not allowed to fetch water from the well. They have to wait till the upper caste women pour water into their pots. The upper-caste women who shout at them constantly humiliate the SC women: "Keep distance, do not pollute us!"

Summary

Evidence provided above indicate that Dalit women face caste-based discrimination in employment, in access to public health and access to drinking water.

The caste-based discrimination in employment was found to be in the form of gender preference in hiring, denial of work in some type of work and in some places and work relations¹⁶. Scheduled caste women in this survey reported discrimination in hiring due to their caste background which is reflected in denial in employment. Further, discrimination in payment of wages was not as severe as in case of denial of certain tasks or being prone to harassment. Discrimination through exclusion in certain types of work that women do was reported to be quite prominent and wide spread. Denial of work inside the house of high caste was more widespread. The scheduled caste women also face exclusion in work related to fetching of drinking water in high caste households. These are the forms of discriminations which are not faced by the high caste female and therefore they are likely to enjoy higher employment in household work.

Further, we also presented some evidence to discriminatory treatment in accessing public health services. Discrimination in access to and provision of health services has led to poor health and high mortality among Dalit women. The evidences from the field data suggests that high-caste service providers particularly the lower level workers' attitudes towards the low-caste users is still governed by customary notions of their social status and notion of purity, and pollution. Dalit women also face caste-based discrimination while accessing drinking water. Discrimination in access to drinking water takes the form of either complete denial where the SC women are not allowed to fetch water from the well or access which is discriminatory in nature. The forms of such discriminatory access is a separate water facility for the SCs, SC women having to take water after the upper-caste women, their tap or position on the well is separately marked. They have to wait till the upper caste women pour water into their pots and remarks by the upper-caste women which are derogatory and humiliating in nature.

¹⁶ Thorat Sukhadeo et al (2005sCaste, Occupation and Market Discrimination: A study of forms, nature and consequences in rural India, ILO Sponsored Study, Indian Institute of Dalit Study, Under publication.

Discrimination in Political Participation

In the end we look at the discrimination faced by Dalit women in the course of performing their roles in various bodies particularly village panchayat. Although there are many incidents reported in newspapers focusing on the discrimination on Dalit Women in the PRIs, the studies which deal with the constraints faced by Dalit women in performing their roles as representatives in the local governance are very few.

Limited empirical evidence from primary studies suggests that Dalit women face constraints which are related to patriarchy and to their caste background. On the issue of patriarchy, the study on Haryana by Dhaka and Singh (2005), points out difficulties faced by Dalit women in performing their roles in the form of proxy representation of the women by their male counterparts in the family. Though in majority of the cases proxy representation is done by the husband but it is also the sons and the fathers-in-law who become *defacto* representatives. The study points out that at times women are compelled to contest elections so as to serve the interests of the idle or unemployed male members of the family.

There are limited numbers of primary studies undertaken on the caste-based discrimination faced by Dalit women in performing their roles. Panel 5 provides the sphere, forms and consequences of caste – based discrimination experienced by Dalit women in political participation.

Panel 5: Caste-Based Discrimination faced by Dalit Women as Panchayat Leaders

Spheres of Discrimination	Identifier of Discrimination	Consequence of Discrimination
In decision making process (Panchayat Meetings)	Not allowing to participate in decision making process, upper-caste discouraging women to take part in panchayat meetings,	Not able to utilize funds for schemes on poverty reduction, lack of information from the three tier structure
In performing duties	Discriminatory behavior in the offices of Panchayat, indicating lack of skill in Dalit women in performing duties.	Not able to complete developmental functions in the villages.
Fund Allocation for their Panchayat's	Lack of allocation of funds and neglect from the officials,	Lack of funds to implement schemes meant for women and their community,

Source: Information in this table is collated from limited primary level studies on political participation mentioned in this section

The studies also points out that Caste plays an important role in the functioning of the Panchayats. In one of the study (Haryana), one-third of the respondents (villagers) argued upper-castes discourage the women from taking part in the Panchayat meetings. They argued that Dalit women were not aware of the developmental schemes and thus there was no question of their participation in the developmental

process. It was felt that the family members and the local bureaucracy did not allow these women to function independently as PRIs representatives. The problem of proxy representation also has serious implications on the effectiveness of these representatives.

The perception of the bureaucracy was not much of difference on the role and performance of the Dalit women representatives. They argued that the lack of education made these women vulnerable to perform their roles and subsequently they did not have adequate skills to execute the developmental plans. A majority of them felt concerned about the proxy representation of the Dalit women; however at the same time they asserted that they discourage such proxy representation. Interestingly, officials perceived that the Dalit women representatives were much more confident and had desire to learn and are sometimes able to display leadership qualities. In the study on Haryana the representatives themselves opined that lack of coordination among the three tiers of the panchayats is a problem. And this lacked the information on the discrimination faced by them inside the panchayats.

The study of Tamil Nadu (Baghel, 2009) pointed out that due to combination of Opponent Dalits and Dominant Castes or combination of Administration and Opponent Dalits, they faced hardships while carrying out the developmental functions in the villages. On the other hand, Bhawani Ilango of Pudukkotti District and Jesu Mary of Ramanathapuram district developed a collective strength and carry out the functions as representatives successfully and point out that for all their successes, their opponents were responsible as the criticism helps to perform better and administer the schemes perfectly.

The studies also point out that despite these discriminatory practices, Dalit women representatives made four kinds of efforts to empower the SC women (Bihar, Sachidanand -1) these women were made aware of their rights and the schemes meant for their betterment, 2) they were motivated to participate in the Gram Panchayat meetings, 3) they were motivated to pursue gainful economic activities, and 4) they attempted to provide loans to the SC women, 5) a decline in violence on SCwomen and men, most importantly, 6) the number of disputes between the SC and other communities were on decline as they were using public utility services like ponds and grazing grounds together. Dalit women representatives felt the improvement in their status after getting elected

In summary, we can infer from the available literature, that woman face constraints on effective participation in the panchayat. These constraints are: traditional and patriarchal prejudices against the women; economic dependence on husbands, sons or parents; illiteracy, lack of awareness of rights and duties. These are the constraints which maybe faced by SC women as well, although there are extremely limited numbers of studies focusing on the constraints faced by SC women in performing their responsibilities in panchayat institutions. The SC women as panchayat leaders additionally, may also face discriminatory treatment in the performing their duties which impact their effectiveness due to their caste

background. There are again very few studies detailing this issue which have been presented in the next section. Further research is required to understand the constraints faced by SC women leaders in performing their responsibilities, arising due to patriarchy and due their caste background.

Evidence on Atrocities and Violence faced by Dalit Women

Evidence on Atrocities and Crimes against Dalit women from Official Sources:

Sexual harassment also takes the more violent form of physical molestation and rape. The incidence of recorded instances of *atrocities* on Dalit women is far higher than non-Dalit women. 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. On an average about 1000 cases of sexual exploitation of SC women are reported annually and another 400 cases are reported for the ST women.

The economic and political vulnerability exposes them to multiple levels of violence. During the period of 1999-2001, an average of 28,016 cases of discrimination and untouchability were registered annually by the 'untouchables' under the Anti-untouchability Act of 1955 and Prevention of SC and ST Atrocities Act. This comes to about 3 cases per lakh population. The ratio of such cases was highest in Rajasthan (9.3); followed by Madhya Pradesh (7.7), and Uttar Pradesh (4.9). The ratio was about 3 cases per lakh population in Orissa, Karnataka, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. The break-up of crime against SCs for the year 2001 includes 763 cases of murder, 4547 of grievous hurt, 354 cases of arson and 1316 cases of sexual assault (rapes), and 12,200 cases of other offences. In the case of STs, an average of 4952 cases of crime was registered annually. Most of these cases were confined to Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. The break-up was 167 cases of murder, 756 of hurt, 108 of arson and 573 of sexual assault (rape) and 2732 cases of other offences. Total atrocities (2001) against SCs was five times more than that for non-SC/STs and this is more or less true for different types of crimes also.

Evidence on Atrocities against Dalit Women from primary survey

A study in 2004, was initiated, to examine the forms and manifestations violence against Dalit women over the period 1999 to 2004. A total of 500 Dalit women were selected, based on information supplied by knowledgeable persons or organisations working with the Dalit community, from a sample of 32 panchayat unions/mandals/blocks falling within 17 districts of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu/Pondicherry and Uttar Pradesh. These were women who were willing to speak out about their experiences of violence in either or both the general community and in the family, without serious repercussions for their personal security such as threats and further violence from the perpetrators, or renewed caste tensions in the village.

The wide-ranging experiences shared by the Dalit women in this study, when analysed, reveal the multiple layers of violence that pervade their lives. Dalit women endure violence in both the general community and in the family, from state and non-state actors of different genders, castes and socio-economic groupings. An overview of the forms, frequency and locations of violence, perpetrators and causal factors for violence highlights the incongruence between Dalit women's reality and the universal right of women to freedom from any gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm. As an initial comment, it must be noted that the overwhelming majority of the 500 Dalit women's case narratives were never reported in the media. Given that these cases were selected, in collaboration with those working with the Dalit community, from a small sample, it is likely that many more unrecorded instances of violence exist. The reasons for this "silence" when it comes to violence against Dalit women are that cases are not spoken out in public by the women themselves, or not reported in the media, or not registered by law enforcement authorities, or hidden by the Dalit women's families, relatives and community, or suppressed by the diktat of the perpetrators and/or the perpetrators' caste community. The effect is the creation and maintenance of a *culture of violence, silence and impunity* when it comes to violence against Dalit women. This further exacerbates the denial of their rights to security of life and basic human dignity.

Forms and Frequency of Violence

Twelve major forms of violence constitute the basis of this study, nine being violence in 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 being violence in the family – female foeticide and infanticide, child sexual abuse and domestic violence from natal and marital family members. The majority of the 500 Dalit women have faced several forms of violence over the past five years, either in one incident, or in a series of incidents of violence, in either or both the general community and the family.

The more frequent forms of violence that are perpetrated against the majority of Dalit women are verbal abuse (62.4% of total women), physical assault (54.8%), sexual harassment and assault (46.8%), domestic violence (43.0%) and rape (23.2%), in descending order. Although the remaining forms of violence are faced by relatively fewer Dalit women (less than 10% of total women per form of violence), this does not discount their gravity, precisely because of the qualitative factor of force present in these forms of violence.

The evidence based on primary level study¹⁷ by Action Aid across 500 villages across India; indicate that across all states Dalit women are subjected to constant harassment and violence from non-Dalit. Harassment takes numerous forms: non-Dalit frequently use abusive and derogatory language when addressing Dalit women. They refer to Dalit women as prostitutes or use caste names. In their work place or in

¹⁷ ibid

the market, non-Dalit supervisor or trader will often make sexual innuendoes to Dalit women.

There are some specific caste-related deprivations which have evolved through social customs and religious practices in Hindu society, which affect only Scheduled Caste women. These social and religious practices have led to a high degree of sexual exploitation of SC women in selected parts of India. Some of these customs include the *Devdasi*, and *Jogini* systems, under which unfortunate village girls are married to a village god and then become the subject of sexual exploitation by the upper castes in the village. The primary survey by *Organisation against jogini* estimated the number of *Jogins* in six districts of Andhra Pradesh at around 21,421. A similar practice exists in States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra, where they are designated as *Devdasis* (devotees of God).

Summary:

It is seen from the data that SC women 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 unorganized, are more vulnerable with limited social security as compared to women from non-SC/ST social groups. In the urban areas, the majority of the 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. In addition, because of their association with their occupation, Dalit women face discrimination and exclusion from participation in certain categories of job. For example, women belonging to sweeper community in the Dalit social group is hardly employed for cooking and other household job because of the notion of purity and pollution of their traditional occupation (of manual scavenging). In case of employment situation, Dalit women face gender inequalities reflected in lower employment rates in agricultural and non-agricultural occupations as compared to SC men. An interesting feature of the duration of days not worked for the SC women was that the major part of the days not worked in 2004–05 belonging to rural labour household was due to the non availability of work. Further, we found from the official data sets that there were inequalities in the real wage rates between SC women and men and non-SC/ST women in the agricultural and non-agricultural occupations in rural as well as urban areas.

From our analysis from the official data sets it is seen that, indeed, Dalit women suffer from higher level of poverty and hunger. This is particularly true of childhood survival, and nutritional status. Over two-fifth of the SC women suffer from chronic energy deficiency as seen from the BMI. The anthropometric measures show that nearly half of the young children are 'under-nourished' or 'stunted', and over half the children are 'moderately' or 'severely' anemic. The results from our analysis clearly show that the SCs remain relatively more deprived even in utilization of basic health services.

Lower literacy rates further exacerbate the vulnerability of Dalit women. In 2001, the literacy rate among the SC women in rural areas was 41 percent and 35 percent respectively as compared to 58 percent for non-SC/ST women. Low education reduces employability and result in high unemployment rate. SC women continue to be underrepresented in the parliament when compared to SC men and non-SC/ST women. In our analysis, the data on the Lok Sabha from 1971-2004 reveals the dominance of SC men in the politics as compared to the SC women.

Dalit women differ from the rest of the women in so far as the causes of their relatively high degree of deprivation and poverty of Dalit women are closely linked with caste and untouchability social exclusion and discrimination. The women belonging to social grouping of low caste, suffers from social exclusion and discrimination due to their caste identity, which rest of the women do not. It is this “exclusion –induced deprivation” which differentiates Dalit women problem from 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.

We gave an overview of the gender and caste-based discrimination which Dalit women faced in economic, social and political sphere. Evidence from pilot studies indicated that nearly one in two of 500 Dalit sample women suffered from domestic violence. This violence was in the form of verbal abuse of the women, accompanied by physical assault. The caste-based discrimination in employment was found to be in the form of gender preference in hiring, denial of work in some type of work and in some places and work relations¹⁸. Discrimination in access to drinking water takes the form of either complete denial where the SC women are not allowed to fetch water from the well or access which is discriminatory in nature.

Thus the problem is different for Dalit women, in the sense, that they not only suffer from gender discrimination and exploitation, they also suffer from class and caste. In other words, gender issue is not homogeneous in character. There are within differences and these differences are reflected in multiple voices

In case of Dalit women, although the same factors (like lack of ownership of income earning assets, less education and skill, poor health) are the ultimate cause of low income and poverty, the channel of causation in their case is some what different. In their case, there are “group specific factors”, from which Dalit women “alone” suffer and are vulnerable to deprivation. The group specific factors which are known to affect women from the Dalit community due to their social background relate to social exclusion and discrimination involving denial of equal rights and entitlement, -“unfair exclusion and /or unfair inclusion”(with discriminatory/differential treatment) which lead to lack of ownership of income earning assets like agriculture land, business, lack of access to gainful employment, lack of access to education, health facilities, housing and participation in governance, causing lower income and high poverty.

¹⁸ Thorat Sukhadeo etal (2005sCaste, Occupation and Market Discrimination: A study of forms, nature and consequences in rural India, ILO Sponsored Study, Indian Institute of Dalit Study, Under publication.

Section IV

Overall Summary and Synthesis - Evolving Perspective on Dalit women Rights and Citizenship

In section I, section II and III, we have tried to understand the efforts by social scientists and writers to deal with the problem of Dalit women in India. The review of the theoretical literature provided us an insight about the contours of the problem of Dalit women and how their problem is similar to that of “rest of the women” in some respects but also differed in many other respects. In the backdrop of theoretical discussion, the review of the economic and social situation of the Dalit women has provided us an idea not only about their economic and social situation but also indicate the distinctiveness of their problem. Many of these findings are supported by the narratives of Dalit women writers, whether autobiographical accounts or fiction. These writings give a telling picture of the kind of humiliation, violence and abuse that Dalit women have to suffer on a daily basis. But more importantly the review of all three sources--- theoretical and empirical literature and self-narratives--- revealed the present knowledge gaps in gender theory and empirical reality about the problem of Dalit women.

In this last section, we first try to summarize the insights that we received from the theoretical discourse with respect to the question of Dalit women, second in the background of this theoretical insights we summarize the main features about the economic and social situation of Dalit women, both as reflected in Dalit women’s own written accounts and in empirical studies. And lastly, we try to indicate the gap which prevails in understanding the problem of Dalit women – both in the sphere of theory, economic and social situation of Dalit women and indicate the issues for further studies for evidence base interventions by the government and civil society organizations.

Summary of Theoretical perspective on Dalit Women issue

The review of theoretical perspective on gender in general and of Dalit women in particular presented in the preceding section have helped to shape and crystallize the understanding about problem of “gender” and of Dalit women.

(a) The overview of the feminist discourse indicates that gender oppression has typically been understood through, how societies render the biological fact of sexual difference between women and men into a form of social distinction (and inequality). ‘Gender’ is now considered a social construct (and not a biological category) defining man and woman’s position and the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles. We began to accept that the different status the women and men enjoy in society is indeed socially and culturally constructed. It is an ideological construct by which women as a group are considered inferior to men and entitle to fewer rights, fewer resources, their work is undervalued and underpaid, they face violence in the family and in society; and lack decision-making power in social,

economic and political institutions. The understanding of patriarchy as that system where gender relations are based on the unequal rights and entitlements and status to women and their sub-ordinate role – this understanding has been a cardinal assumption of feminist theory and praxis.

Further, we have noted that deviating from the mainstream American-European perspective, the African –American scholars have focused on the neglect of intersectionality of race, class, and gender and explored this intersectionality. This is a project now being undertaken by scholars of caste and gender in India. The African-American women have struggled to find a voice and an idiom of critique for analyzing the multiple layers of subordination they experience on a daily basis. In this there is a parallel for Dalit women for understanding the caste, class and gender inter face. Dalit women's narratives play an important role in self-expression, and function as a tool of socio-political critique.

(b) Indian feminist discourse - 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 caste as an aspect of class, as for instance in 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 over-represented. However, the focus on labor and on class struggle has precluded an explicit focus on caste as it affects women, both of the lower and upper-castes. That is, upper-caste feminists have often refused to recognize caste as a form of social privilege, and as a form of capital that enables social mobility and choice. Rather than seeing caste as having its own independent identity, many feminists have seen caste as class-like, that is, as a socio-economic category, instead of understanding caste as an aspect of religious conceptions of self and society, and as reproducing structural inequality.

(c) Dalit women discourse

Historically the articulation of the problem of Dalit women has come through three routes.

- 1) The first was during pre- Ambedkar period (before 1920's) as a part of the social reform and Phule's movement. The focus mainly was the reform of Brahmin family with institution of widowhood involving, sexual exploitation and violence (inside Brahmin family and society) and child marriage. In the south, the focus was also on Brahmin priest hood and their ritualistic role in marriage. Thus unlike cultural nationalism, which associated (upper-caste women) with religion and tradition, we see that the reform of Dalit women was predicated on the rejection of Hindu tradition, which supported caste hierarchy and inequality.

The critiques of Hindu marriage (with its institution of Sati, child marriage and widowhood) were an especially potent site of anti-caste critique. This is because marriage linked intimate life with political power and family status, and with the maintenance of caste purity. The critique of marriage was thus also a critique of caste, since caste was reproduced through the control of female sexuality.

The anti - caste aspect of this movement also involves a focus on the right to education, denied not only to Dalit women but all women. Phule's efforts to set up a school for girls involved challenging the caste system which denied the right to education to women. But it also clearly recognized the right to education to Dalit girls. Opening of a school for girls with entry to girls from untouchable castes clearly emphasized the caste aspect of the gender issue.

- 2) The second effort of articulation of their problem was through the platform of "The All India Depressed Class Women's Conference ", as a part of, Ambedkar social reform movement and the similar movement in south India during the first half of 19th century, ending by mid 1940. The active participation of Dalit women in the Ambedkar's anti-caste civil right movement, (including participation in conversion to Buddhism) continued on large scale during the period of 1940's and mid 1950's. They participated first in the satyagarha movements on equal civil rights like access to drinking water and entry in temple. Gradually, the organized efforts through an independent organization or a parallel conferences by "The All India Depressed Class Women's Conference " was formed to address the problem of caste, class and patriarchy in this 20 year period. This platform gave Dalit women an opportunity to address their specific demands for free and compulsory education for girls; representation in legislative assemblies; self-protection such as karate; starting a women's branch of the Samata Sainik Dal (equality volunteer corps); and the prohibition of child marriages. The research shows that women also were interested in reforming the marriage system. Divorce, remarriage and widow marriage were allowed in the Dalit community, women in the movement in addition brought several further reforms. They tried to eliminate unnecessary rituals in the marriage. The discussion about the activities of Dalit women's organisation during this phase (1920 to 1945) gives an idea about the perspective of Dalit women about their own problem. "The All India Depressed Class Women's Conference " remained in relative silence after the last conference in July 1942 at Nagpur. And then there was a near calm in the activities related to Dalit women -from mid 1940 to mid 1980's.
- (3) Third effort began some where around mid-1980 when a new Dalit women's initiative of all India character emerged. This initiative chose the path of different voice and separate organisation with a particular perspective on the question of women in general and Dalit women in particular. The new Dalit activism which

began after mid 1980 draws heavily from the views of Ambedkar both on caste and gender issue in terms of ideology

(d) The New Dalit Women's Activism whose origin can be traced back to mid 1980's, thus has been influenced by both strands- mainstream feminist discourse and Ambedkar position on Indian women. While the general feminist movement focus on issues related to gender relation, patriarchy and of economic empowerment, the Ambedkar legacy brought into sharp focus the issue of caste- gender interface with a particular concern for caste discrimination and gender discrimination as a part of caste problem.

National Federation of Dalit women (NFDW) was initiated on September 1995 by a group of Dalit women activists following a long drawn inter action and intense debate within the mainstream women's movement and the Dalit movement. Although there has been number of regional initiative and groups in some states of India, the NFDW has emerged in early 1990, with national character and visibility at national level. This national level initiative emerged mainly because of dissatisfaction and differences with the exiting mainstream "feminist discourse". Therefore, these initiatives by Dalit women are of significance importance, not only because of their all India character, but more importantly of their " different" position on the question of Dalit women. In some sense they develop a different feminist discourse and represent a voice of discriminated women. National Federation of Dalit Women itself was a federation of several initiatives developed at local level particularly from south and western Maharashtra. The NGO, particularly Dalit headed NGO had Dalit women issue in their activities. However, we have little idea about these regional initiatives, therefore we require further research to get in-depth understanding of the rise of new Dalit women initiatives at local level in India. The two known initiatives which emerged after NFDW was formed are the AIDMAM which was set-up in 2006 in the North of India and Dalit Mahila Samiti in UP.

Based on the understanding of their own situation and condition which is located within an institutionalized setting of caste, class, gender oppression rooted in the polity and society, the federation organized themselves around issues of access to livelihood and social needs, patriarchy, caste-based discrimination, violence and impunity against Dalit women. The forum symbolized emerging critiques by Dalit and lower-caste women, who had begun to argue with Indian feminists for the seeming invisibility of caste discrimination and caste gender inequality in mainstream Indian feminism. They argued that this had led to an exclusive and partial constitution of Indian feminist politics.

The Dalit women focused on issues of caste, class and patriarchy and their complex inter-face, interacting and influencing each other. Based on the document published by these organisations from time to time, some issues which received priority by these organisation and which revealed their differences access to sources of livelihood and access to social needs. Due to the denial of rights to property to women both higher caste and low caste, women in general lack access to sources of

livelihood- agriculture, land and business. This is a common problem shared by women from all communities. Dalit women, however, are vulnerably positioned at the bottom of the caste hierarchy as they suffered form denial of property right from both route- namely the customary rule denying right to property to all women of which Dalit women are a part but also Dalit women as untouchable persons.

Dalit women also recognised the problem of gender exploitation by their men and therefore the Dalit women's movement addresses the issue of patriarchy which denies women from asserting their choices and participation in decision making in both the community and the family.

Summary on Human Poverty, Caste and Gender Discrimination

In the backdrop of theoretical discussion, the review of the economic and social situation of the Dalit women indeed has provided us an idea not only about their economic and social situation but also indicate the distinctiveness of their problem. Many of these findings are supported by the creative writings of women, who depict situations in which Dalit women suffer exploitation at work, discrimination in all spheres and public humiliation on a daily basis.

It is seen from the data that SC women 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 unorganized, are more vulnerable with limited social security as compared to women from non-SC/ST social groups. In the urban areas, the majority of the 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. In addition, because of their association with their occupation, Dalit woman face discrimination and exclusion from participation in certain categories of job. For example, woman belonging to sweeper community in the Dalit social group is hardly employed for cooking and other household job because of the notion of purity and pollution of their traditional occupation (of manual scavenging). In case of employment situation, Dalit women face gender inequalities reflected in lower employment rates in agricultural and non-agricultural occupations as compared to SC men. An interesting feature of the duration of days not worked for the SC women was that the major part of the days not worked in 2004–05 belonging to rural labour household was due to the non availability of work. Further, we found from the official data sets that there were inequalities in the real wage rates between SC women and men and non-SC/ST women in the agricultural and non-agricultural occupations in rural as well as urban areas.

From our analysis from the official data sets it is seen that, indeed, Dalit women suffer from higher level of poverty and hunger. This is particularly true of childhood survival, and nutritional status. Over two- fifth of the SC women suffer from chronic energy deficiency as seen from the BMI. The anthropometric measures show that nearly half of the young children are 'under-nourished' or 'stunted', and over half the

children are 'moderately' or 'severely' anemic. The results from our analysis clearly show that the SCs remain relatively more deprived even in utilization of basic health services.

Lower literacy rates further exacerbate the vulnerability of Dalit women. In 2001, the literacy rate among the SC women in rural areas was 41 percent and 35 percent respectively as compared to 58 percent for non-SC/ST women. Low education reduces employability and result in high unemployment rate. SC women continue to be underrepresented in the parliament when compared to SC men and non-SC/ST women. In our analysis, the data on the Lok Sabha from 1971-2004 reveals the dominance of SC men in the politics as compared to the SC women.

Dalit women differs from the rest of the women in so far as the causes of their relatively high degree of deprivation and poverty of Dalit women is closely linked with caste and untouchability social exclusion and discrimination. The women belonging to social grouping of low caste, suffers from social exclusion and discrimination due to their caste identity, which rest of the women do not. It is this "exclusion –induced deprivation" which differentiates Dalit women problem from 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.

We gave an overview of the gender and caste-based discrimination which Dalit women faced in economic, social and political sphere. Evidence from pilot studies indicated that nearly one in two of 500 Dalit sample women suffered from domestic violence. This violence was in the form of verbal abuse of the women, accompanied by physical assault. The caste-based discrimination in employment was found to be in the form of gender preference in hiring, denial of work in some type of work and in some places and work relations¹⁹. Discrimination in access to drinking water takes the form of either complete denial where the SC women are not allowed to fetch water from the well or access which is discriminatory in nature.

Thus the problem is different for Dalit women, in the sense, that they not only suffer from gender discrimination and exploitation, they also suffer from class and caste. In other words, gender issue is not homogeneous in character. There are within differences and these differences are reflected in multiple voices

In case of Dalit women, although the same factors (like lack of ownership of income earning assets, less education and skill, poor health) are the ultimate cause of low income and poverty, the channel of causation in their case is some what different. In their case, there are "group specific factors", from which Dalit women "alone" suffer and are vulnerable to deprivation. The group specific factors which are known to affect women from the Dalit community due to their social background relate to social exclusion and discrimination involving denial of equal rights and entitlement, -"unfair

¹⁹ Thorat Sukhadeo et al (2005sCaste, Occupation and Market Discrimination: A study of forms, nature and consequences in rural India, ILO Sponsored Study, Indian Institute of Dalit Study, Under publication.

exclusion and /or unfair inclusion”(with discriminatory/differential treatment) which lead to lack of ownership of income earning assets like agriculture land, business, lack of access to gainful employment, lack of access to education, health facilities, housing and participation in governance, causing lower income and high poverty.

Synthesis – Evolving Perspective of Dalit Women Discourse

The issue of internal differences that creates tension for developing universal perspective on citizenship has been dealt in the recent theoretical feminist discourse by some feminist scholars. Ruth Lister (1997) described this as ‘differentiated universalism’. In this, emphasis has been placed on the need to locate a gendered analysis within the wider framework of difference and the divisions and exclusionary inequalities which flow from it. This points to a conception of citizenship grounded in a notion of ‘differentiated universalism’ which represents an attempt to reconcile the universalism which lies at the heart of citizenship with the demands of a politics of difference. These ideas are offered as possible building blocks in the elaboration of a feminist theory of citizenship, which is inclusive of the particular problem of certain group of women from the broader category gender problem.

How prudent is it to project the experiences of struggle for greater gender equality by women from the dominant groups onto to the very different life experiences and contexts of women from the marginalized groups? As we see from our analysis, Dalit women have had different life experiences and historically have dealt with issues of women’s emancipation in their families, communities and political movement. They may have not really been aware of the term ‘feminism’ (Mangaliso, 1997), yet they organized themselves at the grass-root level to address the problems of inequitable and discriminatory access to livelihood and social needs. Discourse on Citizenship rights is universalistic in nature without recognizing there are these differences within the larger group of women. These differences emerge prominently when we not only talk about citizenship rights as ‘status’ but when we talk about these rights in ‘practice’; when *de jure* rights are translated to *de jure* equality. This active notion of citizenship is not only operative in public sphere and formal employment also in neighbourhood, communities and home (Mcewan,2001).

‘A similar stance is taken by Anna Yeatman, in Lister (1997), using the vocabulary of a ‘politics of difference’ which involves ‘a commitment to a universalistic orientation to the positive value of difference within a democratic political process’ (1994: 89). Such a politics of difference requires, she argues, both ‘an inclusive politics of voice and representation’ and ‘a readiness on the part of any one emancipatory movement to show how its particular interest in contesting oppression links into and supports the interests of other movements in contesting different kinds of oppression’ (1993: 231)’

Lister (1997) elucidates further and draws from Maynard, 1994 that the ‘fact that the category ‘woman’ is not unitary does not render it meaningless. Black feminists, such as bell hooks (1984), Audre Lorde (1984) and Patricia Hill Collins (1991) have argued that, provided the differences between women are fully acknowledged, they do not

preclude solidarity on the basis of those interests still shared as women. Central to these interests is women's exclusion from full citizenship, as the patterns of entry to the gate-ways to the various sectors of the public sphere remain profoundly gendered. Thus, the project of engendering citizenship is not invalidated, but it has to be conceived of as part of a wider project of 'differentiating citizenship'. The challenge of diversity and difference for citizenship Feminist theory's dual challenge to the false universalism of citizenship and the category 'woman' has underlined the need for 'a conception of citizenship which would accommodate all social cleavages simultaneously'(Lister, 1997: Leca, 1992: 30).

Emerging Issues: Research Areas

Emerging Issues: Studies on the formulation of perspective on Caste – Gender and class interface

Ambedkar's analysis of degrading status of Hindu women in term of Manu's social code and accompanying social ideology throws light on some aspects of caste – gender interface. It indicates that while the women from all castes suffered Manu's code of gender disabilities, the women from untouchable caste suffered both from caste and gender disabilities. So while high caste women may be willing partners in addressing the disabilities related to gender, caste cleavage may develop on the issue of caste discrimination, as this is seen as an issue concerning only Dalit women. The majority of high caste women, often may find themselves on the side of high caste men. By highlighting the role of Hindu ideology and legal framework, Ambedkar has outlined the genesis of the degrading status of Hindu women. Ambedkar also understood how women are often made the instruments for the perpetuation of the caste hierarchy, for nurturing the culture of caste. In India, patriarchal control of women by men of their own community is often justified by the need to maintain the caste order. This applies to upper-caste women, but in the case of Dalit women there is a possibility of men and women coming together to fight caste patriarchy. Therefore, the "interface between caste, patriarchy and gender", is a theme which needs thorough theoretical and empirical study to locate the causes and the actual day-to-day functioning, often in new modes which respond to changing social dynamics--of the multi-layered caste and gender exploitation of Dalit women. Research is required firstly, to understand the connection between patriarchy and caste, what sort of experiences Dalit women had in the family as mother, wife and daughter; what difference was there between a common Dalit or non-Dalit housewife and a Dalit woman social worker and how far these women are aware of continuing 'atrocities' on women and similar issues.

Secondly, an important research issue is how women have organized themselves for realising full citizenship. We require further research to get in-depth understanding of the rise of new Dalit women initiatives at local level in India. The two known initiatives which emerged after NFDW was formed are the AIDMAM which was set-up in 2006 in the North of India and Dalit Mahila Samiti in UP. Specifically, an area that has not been explored involves all the Mahila Mandals (women's organizations) that are

spread across the localities of Buddhists in urban Maharashtra. Some of these groups concentrate on Buddhism, some organize classes for literacy or some skill such as typing. They are purely local and locally organized, and their strength depends upon the individual commitment of women (Zelliot, 2006). It remains true today that women's associations like self-help groups or Mahila Mandals are usually organised along caste lines. We need to study how far Dalit women's groups confront the specific problems of Dalit women, and what difficulties they face in doing so.

Finally, women from excluded groups are not 'just like' the rest of the women. They are also disadvantaged by *who they are*. They suffer from social exclusion which deprives them of choices and opportunities to escape from poverty and denies them a voice to claim their rights. There is a close inter-face between patriarchy and social exclusion which enforce each other. The women from discriminated groups suffer from triple deprivation – gender, poverty and social exclusion. We need to study the nature and forms of discrimination faced by Dalit women as a woman, as a Dalit woman and as poor woman. We also need to understand the strategies of survival used by these women; maybe Dalit women could play a more active role in designing policies for reducing poverty. The Dalit women writers' narratives demonstrate that even in the face of most oppressive conditions Dalit women find ways of maintaining their dignity, and working for the survival of their family members. Their solidarity often extends beyond the walls of the family home to reach out to other women facing the same conditions of deprivation and exploitation. The challenge is to capture the interface of these three dimensions of caste, class and gender and to analyse the consequences of social exclusion and discrimination on their rights and citizenship. In fact a proper understanding of how caste and gender operate in the case of Dalit women may help us to understand better the nature of citizenship in this country and to expose its flaws. This would help to conceptualize inclusive policies to address the problems of Dalit women more effectively, and lead us towards the building of a better future for all Indian citizens..

Bibliography

Discourse on Women and Dalit Women

- Bhasin Kamala (2000): *Understanding Gender, Kali for Women*, New Delhi
- Bhai, N. *Harijan Women in Independent India*. Delhi: BR Publishing 1986
- Borooah, R. et al. (eds) *Capturing Complexity. An Interdisciplinary Look at Women, Households and Development*. New Delhi: Sage 1994
- Chen, M. A: *Sectoral approach to promoting women's work: lessons from India*, *World Development* 17, 1989: 1007-16
- Currie, K. *The Indian stratification debate: a discursive exposition of problems and issues in the analysis of class, caste and gender*, *Dialectical Anthropology* 17, 1992: 115-39
- Dixon, R.B. *Rural Women at Work: Strategies for Development in South Asia*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP 1978 [G]
- Dixon-Mueller, R. *Women's Work in Third World Agriculture*. Geneva: ILO 1985
- Dunn, D. *Gender inequality in education and employment in the Scheduled Castes and Tribes of India*, *Population Research and Policy Review* 12, 1993: 53-70
- Jogdand, P.G. (ed.) *Dalit Women in India: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing 1995
- Kannabiran, V. & Kannabiran, K. *Caste and gender: understanding dynamics of power and violence*, *EPW* 26. 1991: 37: 2130-33
- Karlekar, M. *A study of Balmiki women in Delhi*. In L. Dube (ed.) *Visibility and Power: Essays on Women in Society and Development*. Delhi: OUP 1986 [G]
- Kharwara, P.C. et al. *Comparative adoption of improved technology by female and male headed Scheduled Caste families [Himachal Pradesh]*, *Journal of Rural Development* 10, 1991: 343-51 [G]
- Malik, Bela *Untouchability and Dalit women's oppression*, *EPW* 34, 6, 1999: 323-24
- Mathur, B.B. (ed.) *Women and Depressed Class Population in India*. Allahabad: Chugh 1994
- Mayoux, L.. *Income generation for women in India: problems and prospects*, *Development Policy Review*, March 1989: 5-27 [G]
- Menefee Singh, A. & Kelles-Viitanen, A. (eds) *Invisible Hands. Women in Home-based Production*. New Delhi: Sage 1987 [G]
- Momsen, J.H. & Kinnaird, V. (eds) *Different Places, Different Voices. Gender and Development in Africa, Asia and Latin America*. London: Routledge 1993
- Samya Shakti. *A Journal of Women's Studies*. New Delhi: Centre for Women's Development Studies
- Tewary, S.N. *Scheduled Caste women in rural Bihar - a study in sociology of poverty*. In Chaudhary, S.N. & Chaudhary, P. (eds) *National Development and Women*. New Delhi: Har-Anand & Vikas 1992
- Townsend, J. *Women in Developing Countries. A Select Annotated Bibliography for Development Organisations*. Brighton: IDS, Development Bibliog. Series No.1, 1988 [G]

- Vyas, A. & Singh, S. *Women's Studies in India. Information Sources, Services and Programmes*. New Delhi: Sage 1993
- World Bank *Enhancing Women's Participation in Economic Development*. Policy paper. Washington, DC: The World Bank 1994
- Acharya, S. & Panwalkar, V.G. *Labour force participation in rural Maharashtra: a Temporal, Regional and Gender Analysis*. LO/ARTEP, June 1988
- Agarwal, B. *Gender, resistance and land: interlinked struggles over resources and meanings in South Asia*, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 22, 1994: 81-125 [G]
- Anandhi S. *Representing devadasis. 'Dasigal Mosavalai' as a radical text*, *EPW* XXVI, 1991: 739-54 [G]
- Bhaskar, M. *Women panchayat members in Kerala: a profile*, *EPW* 32, 17, 1997: WS-13- 21 [G]
- Gandhi, M.K. *Untouchability, women and Swaraj*, *Indian Social Reformer* 37, March 26, 1927: 465
- Ganesh, K. *Boundary Walls: Caste and Women in Tamil Country*. Delhi: Hindustan 1993
- Guru, G. *Dalit Women Talk Differently*, *EPW* 14 Oct. 1995: 2548-49
- Jogdand, P.G. (ed.) *Dalit Women in India: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Gyan 1995
- Kanungo, S.D. *Dalit women's search for identity*, *Social Action [New Delhi]* 43, 1993: 481- 94
- Kapadia, K. *Discourses of Gender and Caste in Rural South India*. RAP Working Paper No. 4. Bergen: Christian Michelsen Institute 1991
- Kapadia, K. *Every blade of green: landless women labourers, production and production in South India*, *Indian Journal of Labor Economics* 35, 1992: 266-76
- Kapadia, K. *Mutuality and competition: female landless labour and wage rates in Tamil Nadu*, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 20, 1993: 296-316 [G]
- Kapadia, K. *Siva and her Sisters: Gender, Caste and Class in Rural South India*. Boulder, Col.: Westview Press 1995
- Pardeshi, Pratima Dr *Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Question of Women's Liberation in India*. Pune: University of Pune 1998
- Pillai-Vetschera, T. *Ambedkar's daughters: a study of Mahar women in Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra*, 229-251 in S.M. Michael (ed.) *Dalits in Modern India. Vision and Values*. New Delhi: Vistaar 1999 [G]
- Ramani, Rao, S.V. et al. *Women at Work in India, Volume Two. An Annotated Bibliography*. New Delhi: Sage 1994
- Rege, Sharmila A *Dalit feminist standpoint*, *Seminar* 471 (Dalit...), Nov. 1998: 48-52 [c] [G]
- Srinivasan, A. *Reform and revival: the devadasi and her dance*, *EPW* 20, 1985 (No. 44): (1869-73)
- Tanner, C.L. *Class, caste and gender in collective action: agricultural labour unions in two Indian villages [AP]*, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 22, 1995: 672-98 [G]
- Townsend, J. *Women in Developing Countries. A Select Annotated Bibliography for Development Organisations*. Brighton: IDS, Development Bibliog. Series No.1, 1988 [G]

Dalit Women's Articulation about themselves: English Books

1. Rege Sharmila, 2006, *Writing Caste / Writing Gender*, Zubaan, New Delhi.
2. Pawar Urmila (translated by Maya Pandit), 2009, *The Weave of My Life*, Columbia University Press, New York.
3. Urmila Pawar and Meenaxi Moon (translated by Wandana Sonalkar), 2008, *We Also Made History*, Zubaan, New Delhi.
4. Bama (translated by Laxmi Holmstrom), 2000, *Karukku*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi
5. Bama (translated by Laxmi Holmstrom), 2005, *Sangati(Events)*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi
6. Bama (translated by Malini Seshadri), 2008, *Vanmam(Vendetta)*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
7. Kamble Baby (translated by Maya Pandit), 2009, *The Prisons We Broke*, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi.
8. Butalia Urvashi, 1998, *The Other Side of Silence*, Penguin Books, New Delhi.
9. Halder Baby (translated by Urvashi Butalia), 2006, *A Life Less Ordinary*, Penguin Books, New Delhi.
10. Viramma (translated from the French of Josiane Racine / Jean-Luc Racine), 2005, *Viramma: Life of A Dalit*, Social Science Press, New Delhi.
11. Sivakami, P., *The Grip of Change*, Orient Black Swan, 2009.

Marathi Books

1. Pawar Urmila, 2007, *Aayadan*, Granthali Prakashan, Mumbai.
2. Choukar Shubhada, 2008, *Saksham Me*, Parammitra Publication, Mumbai.
3. More Vimal, 2004, *Teen Dagdanchi Chul*, Mehata Publishing House, Pune.
4. Sheikh Mallika Amar, 2007, *Manuspanach Bhing Badalalyawar*, Lokwangamay Gruh, Mumbai.
5. Pawar Pradnya Daya, 2007, *Dhadant Khairlanji*, Pratishabda Prakashan, Mumbai.
6. Bansode Hira, 2001, *Phiniksa*, Dimpal Publication, Thane.
7. Kasbekar Sridhar, 2008, *Mazi Mai*, Pune.
8. Sakhare Seema, 2009, *Sangram*, Seema Prakashan, Nagpur.
9. Mulate Vasudeo, 2003, *Dalitanchi Aatmakathane*, Swarup Prakashan, Aurangabad.
10. Surve Krushnabai Narayan, 2009, *Mastaranchi Savli*, Dimpal Publication, Thane.
11. Meshram Nanda Keshav, 2009, *Me Nanda*, Dimpal Publication, Thane.
12. Haladankar Vaishali, 2008, *Barbala*, Mehta Publishing House, Pune.
13. Raokhande Shantabai, 2007, *Bhavani Te Sanjeevani*, Sugava Prakashan, Pune.
14. Pawade Kumud, 1995, *Antahsphot*, Anand Prakashan, Aurangabad.
15. Sarvagoud, Mukta, 2008, *Mitleli Kavade*, 2nd edition, Sugava Prakashan, Pune
16. Kamble, Shantabai,, *Majya Jalmachi Chittarakatha*, 4th edition, Sugava Prakashan, Pune

Socio-economic status of Dalit Women:

- S. K. Singh and S.P. Pandey, *Empowerment of Scheduled Caste Women (Through Self-help Groups)*, 2007.
- Mamta Rajawat, *Dalit Women Issues and Perspectives*, 2005.
- Ramesh Chaube and Kalpana Saini, *Status of Women in Rural Societies*, 2002.
- B. B. Mathur, *Women and Depressed Caste population in India*, 1994.
- Dr.T. R. Naval, *Law of Prevention of Atrocities on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*, 2001.
- Sarah cook, Naila Kabeer and Gary Suwannarat, *Social protection in Asia*, 2003.
- Jogdand, P.G. (ed.) *Dalit Women in India: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing 1995
- Meena Anand, *Dalit Women Fear and Discrimination*, 2005.
- Anupama Rao, *Gender and Caste: Issues in Contemporary Indian Feminism*.
- S.K. Singh, *Dalit Women: Socio Economic Status and Issues*, 2000.
- A. Appadurai et. al. (eds.), *Gender, Genre, and Power in South Asian Expressive Traditions*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1991, 486 pp.
- J. Archer and B. Lloyd, *Sex and Gender*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, 355 pp.
- Rae L. Blumberg (ed.), *Gender, Family and Economy: The Triple Overlap*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, 1991, 311 pp.
- Gisela Bock and Susan James, *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*, Routledge, London, 1992, 210 pp.
- Sandra Butter and Claire Wintram, *Feminist Group Work*, Sage Publications, London, 1991, 199 pp.
- R.M. Das, *Women in Manu and his Seven Commentators*, Kanchana Publications, Varanasi, 1962, 288 pp.
- _____ *Women in Manu's Philosophy*, ABS Publications, Jalandhar, 1993, 147 pp.
- Kalpana Dasgupta (ed.), *Women on the Indian Scene: An Annotated Bibliography*, Abhinav Publications, New York, 1976 391 pp.
- E.G. Davis, *The First Sex*, Penguin Books, New York, 1971, 382 pp.
- Neera Desai and Vibhuti Patel, *Critical Review of Research in Women's Studies 1975-1988*, project report submitted to Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, Bombay, 1989, 76 pp.
- Vivek Kumar, Dalit Movement and Dalit International Conference, *Economic and Political Weekly*, VOL 38 No. 27 July 05 - July 11, 2003, P. 2799.
- Bela Malik, Untouchability and Dalit Women Oppression, *Economic and political weekly*, VOL 34 No. 06 February 06 - February 12, 1999. P.323.
- Surendra Gopinath Rote, Hypocrisy of Brahmanical And Mainstream Feminist Movements, 02 April, 2009, Countercurrents.org
- Dalit women invisible citizens: Report (The Hindu, Tuesday, Jun 24, 2008)
- Unheard Voices: Dalit Women, Ref: Third World Resurgence No. 200, April 2007.
- Dalits in the Muslim and Christian communities, A status report on current social scientific knowledge by Satish Deshpande ref; <http://ncm.nic.in/pdf/report%20Dalit%20%20reservation.pdf>

- Regional Conference Report – Development Effectiveness through gender main theory: Lessons from South Asia, 10-12 May 2009, New Delhi, UNIFEM
- Govind Kelkar & Dev Nathan, *Strategic Gender Intervention and poverty reduction*, UN development fund for women, March 2005.
- Dorianne Rown Campbell, *Development with women*, Rawat Publication, New Delhi, 2006.
- Rameshwari Pandya, *Women in changing India*, Serial Publication, New Delhi, 2008.
- A.K Lal, *Dalits in Action*, Concept publication, New Delhi, 1997.
- Anil Dutta Mishra, *Gender Perspective (Participation, Empowerment and Development)*, Radha Publication, New Delhi, 1999.
- R.B.S Verma, Nadeem Harsnain & H.S Verma, *Towards Empowering Indian Women* (ed.), Serial Publication, New Delhi, 2007.
- Sangeeta Bhardwaj- Badal, *Gender, Social Structure and Empowerment*, Rawat Publication, New Delhi, 1987.
- Anil Bhutmalii & Bipul Malakar (ed.), *Women, Globalisation and Development*, Serial publication, 2008.
- Bhai, N. *Harijan Women in Independent India*. Delhi: BR Publishing 1986
- Borooah, R. et al. (eds) *Capturing Complexity. An Interdisciplinary Look at Women, Households and Development*. New Delhi: Sage 1994
- Chen, M. A sectoral approach to promoting women's work: lessons from India, *World Development* 17, 1989: 1007-16
- Currie, K. The Indian stratification debate: a discursive exposition of problems and issues in the analysis of class, caste and gender, *Dialectical Anthropology* 17, 1992: 115-39
- Dunn, D. Gender inequality in education and employment in the Scheduled Castes and Tribes of India, *Population Research and Policy Review* 12, 1993: 53-70
- Kannabiran, V. & Kannabiran, K. Caste and gender: understanding dynamics of power and violence, *EPW* 26. 1991: 37:2130-33
- Karlekar, M. A study of Balmiki women in Delhi. In L. Dube (ed.) *Visibility and Power: Essays on Women in Society and Development*. Delhi: OUP 1986 [G]
- Kharwara, P.C. ef al. Comparative adoption of improved technology by female and male headed Scheduled Caste families [Himachal Pradesh], *Journal of Rural Development* 10, 1991: 343-51 [G]
- Malik, Bela Untouchability and Dalit women's oppression, *EPW* 3A, 6, 1999: 323-24
- Mathur, B.B. (ed.) *Women and Depressed Class Population in India*. Allahabad: Chugh 1994
- Menefee Singh, A. & Kelles-Viitanen, A. (eds) *Invisible Hands. Women in Home-based roduction*. New Delhi: Sage 1987[G]
- Momsen, J.H. & Kinnaird, V. (eds) *Different Places, Different Voices. Gender and Development in Africa, Asia and Latin America*. London: Routledge 1993
- *Samya Shakti. A Journal of Women's Studies*. New Delhi: Centre for Women's Development Studies
- Tewary, S.N. Scheduled Caste women in rural Bihar - a study in sociology of poverty. In Chaudhary, S.N. & Chaudhary, P. (eds) *National Development and Women*. New Delhi: Har-Anand & Vikas 1992
- Townsend, J. *Women in Developing Countries. A Select Annotated Bibliography for Development Organisations*. Brighton: IDS, Development Bibliog. Series No.1, 1988 [G]

- Vyas, A. & Singh, S. *Women's Studies in India. Information Sources, Services and Programmes*. New Delhi: Sage 1993
- World Bank *Enhancing Women's Participation in Economic Development*. Policy paper. Washington, DC: The World Bank 1994
- Acharya, S. & Panwalkar, V.G. Labour force participation in rural Maharashtra: a Temporal, Regional and Gender Analysis. *LO/ARTEP*, June 1988
- Agarwal, B. Gender, resistance and land: interlinked struggles over resources and meanings in South Asia, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 22, 1994: 81-125 [G]
- Anandhi S. Representing devadasis. 'Dasigal Mosavalai' as a radical text, *EPW/VXXVI*, 1991: 739-54 [G]
- Bhaskar, M. Women panchayat members in Kerala: a profile, *EPW* 32, 17, 1997: WS-13-21 [G]
- Gandhi, M.K. Untouchability, women and Swaraj, *Indian Social Reformer* 37, March 26, 1927: 465
- Ganesh, K. *Boundary Walls: Caste and Women in Tamil Country*. Delhi: Hindustan 1993
- Guru, G. Dalit women talk differently, *EPW*, 14 Oct. 1995: 2548-49
- Kanungo, S.D. Dalit women's search for identity, *Social Action* [New Delhi] 43, 1993: 481-94
- Kapadia, K. Discourses of Gender and Caste in Rural South India. RAP Working Paper No. 4. Bergen: Christian Michelsen Institute 1991
- Kapadia, K. *Siva and her Sisters: Gender, Caste and Class in Rural South India*. Boulder, Col.: Westview Press 1995
- Pardeshi, Pratima *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Question of Women's Liberation in India*. Pune: University of Pune 1998
- Pillai-Vetschera, T. Ambedkar's daughters: a study of Mahar women in Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra, 229-251 in S.M. Michael (ed.) *Dalits in Modern India. Vision and Values*. New Delhi: Vistaar 1999 [G]
- Rege, Sharmila A. Dalit feminist standpoint, *Seminar* 471 (*Dalit...*), Nov. 1998: 48-52 [c] [G]
- Srinivasan, A. Reform and revival: the Devadasi and her dance, *EPW*, 20, 1985 (No. 44): (1869-73)
- Townsend, J. *Women in Developing Countries. A Select Annotated Bibliography for Development Organisations*. Brighton: IDS, Development Bibliog. Series No.1, 1988 [G]
- P.K.Das, G.P.Pradia, Socio-economic Condition and Status of Dalit Women in Orissa: A Study of Nayakhandi Village, *Man in India*, VOL.86, 2006.
- Dalit Women: Fear and Discrimination/edited by Meena Anand. Delhi, Isha Books, 2005, ix, 381 p., \$44.
- Dalit Women: Issues and Perspectives/edited by Mamta Rajawat. New Delhi, Anmol, 2005, x, 361 p, tables, \$85.
- S.P Pandey & S.K Singh, *Empowerment of Scheduled Caste Women: Through Self-Help Groups*, 2007
- Sachchidananda Niraj Kumar, *Dalit Women on the Move: The Bihar Scenario*, Serials Publications.
- Socio Economic Status and Awareness of Scheduled Caste Women/S. Murty. Jaipur, RBSA Pub., 2008, xii, 264 p., tables, \$39.
- Leela Vishvanath, *Social mobility among scheduled caste women in India a study of Kerala*, 1993.

- Gender and Caste: Issues in contemporary Indian Feminism. Ed by, Anupama Rao.
- Broken People: Caste Violence against India's untouchables, Human Rights Watch. 1998.
- Ghosh, G.K. and G. Shukla. *Dalit women*. New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing 1997
- Scheduled caste Women - P. C. Jain, Shashi Jain, Sudha Jain, Nambikar
- Bhawe, Sumitra. *Pan on fire: Eight Dalit women tell their story*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1988.
- Franco, Fernando, Jyotsna Macwan and Suguna Ramanathan. *The silken swing: the cultural universe of Dalit women*. Calcutta: Stree, 2000.
- Singh, S.K. *Dalit women: socio economic status and issues*, Lucknow: New Royal Book Co., 2000.
- APWLD. Double discrimination for marginalized women in Asia. 'Human Rights Solidarity' 11(9): September 2001: 8-9.
- Bhanutej, N. Naked assault: Dalit woman is stripped and paraded for two hours in Karnataka. 'The Week' 19(39): 9 September 2001: 43.
- Iyer, Lakshmi. Dalit women bear the burden of untouchability. *The Pioneer*: 21 December 1998.
- Sharmila Rege, *Writing Caste/Writing Gender Narrating Testimonios of Dalit Women*, Zubaan, New Delhi, 2006.
- Sharmila Rege, Dalit Women Talk Differently: A critique of Difference and toward Dalit Feminist Point, in Maitreyi Chaudhary (ed), *Feminism in India*, 2004.
- Acharya S. (2010), Experience of Discrimination and Social Exclusion in Health Care Utilization among Dalit Children, Volume 01 Number 02, IIDS-UNICEF Working Paper Series,
- Dalit Women Speak Out (2004): Violence against Dalit Women in India, AIDMAM and NCDHR, New Delhi, 2004

Education:

- S. Ram Sharma, *Education of Women of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*, 1995.
- Veena Jain, *Educating Scheduled Caste Women*, 2005.
- Mahesh Verma, Murari Lal and Sons, *Gender, Girls and Women education*, 2006, New Delhi.
- Karuna Chanana, Accessing Higher Education: The Dilemma of Schooling Women, Minorities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Contemporary India, *Higher Education*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Perspectives on Higher Education in India (Jul., 1993), pp. 69.
- Lalita Kabra, *Scheduled Caste Girls: Educational Backwardness and Prospects*, Mittal Publications, 1991.
- Veena Jain, *Educating Scheduled Caste Women*, New Delhi, Indian Pub., 2005.
- Nambissan B. Geetha (2009), Exclusion and Discrimination in Schools: Experiences of Dalit Children, Volume 01, Number 01, IIDS-UNICEF Working Paper Series, (2009),

Citizenship and Political participation:

- Sunita Dhaka and Rajvir S. Dhaka, *Behind the Veil: Dalit Women in Panchayati Raj*, 2005.
- Valerie Bryson, *Feminist Political Theory*, Macmillan Press Ltd., Houndmills, 1992, 304 pp.
- Women's Rights Campaign (Navsarjan is a grassroots Dalit organization dedicated to ensuring human rights for all) <http://navsarjan.org/programmes/women-s-rights-campaign/>
- For stronger political will by S. Vishwanathan, ref: Frontline, Volume 21 - Issue 23, Nov. 06 - 19, 2004 Conceptualizing the Dalit Agenda <http://www.mp.gov.in/tribal/taskforce/English/chapter3.htm>
- Ruth Lister (1997): Citizenship: Towards a Feminist, *Feminist Review*, No. 57, *Citizenship: Pushing the Boundaries* (Autumn, 1997), pp. 28- 48, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cheryl McEwan (2001): Gender and Citizenship: Learning from South Africa? *Feminist Review*, No. 47, *Realising Rights?*, pp. 47-59, Agenda Feminist Media
- Nivedita Menon: State/Gender/Community: Citizenship in Contemporary India, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 33, No. 5 (Jan. 31 - Feb. 6, 1998), pp. PE3-PE10
- Nira Yuval-Davis, Women, Citizenship and Difference, *Feminist Review*, No. 57, *Citizenship: Pushing the Boundaries* (Autumn, 1997), pp. 4-27
- Kathleen M. Fallon, Transforming Women's Citizenship Rights within an Emerging Democratic State: The Case of Ghana, *Gender and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Aug., 2003), pp. 525-543.
- Andrea Cornwall and Maxine Molyneux, The Politics of Rights: Dilemmas for Feminist Praxis: An Introduction, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 7, The Politics of Rights: Dilemmas for Feminist Praxis (2006), pp. 1175-1191
- Wendy Sarvasy, Social Citizenship from a Feminist Perspective, *Hypatia*, Vol. 12, No. 4, *Citizenship in Feminism: Identity, Action, and Locale* (Autumn, 1997), pp. 54-73
- Eileen McDonagh , Political Citizenship and Democratization: The Gender Paradox, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 96, No. 3 (Sep., 2002), pp. 535-552
- Helene Maria Kyed and Lars Buur , New Sites of Citizenship: Recognition of Traditional Authority and Group-Based Citizenship in Mozambique, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep., 2006), pp. 563-581
- Gay W. Seidman, Gendered Citizenship: South Africa's Democratic Transition and the Construction of a Gendered State, *Gender and Society*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Jun., 1999), pp. 287-307
- Cheryl McEwan, Gender and Citizenship: Learning from South Africa?, *Agenda*, No. 47, *Realising Rights?* (2001), pp. 47-59
- Cheryl McEwan, Engendering citizenship: gendered spaces of democracy in South Africa, *Political Geography* 19, (2000) pp. 627-651.
- Ruth Lister, Dialectics of Citizenship, *Hypatia*, Vol. 12, No. 4, *Citizenship in Feminism: Identity, Action, and Locale* (Autumn, 1997), pp. 6-26
- Helen Haste, Constructing the Citizen, *Political Psychology*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Special Issue (Part Two): Prospect Theory (Jun., 2004), pp. 413-439

- Kumar N. and Rai M. (2005), *Dalit Leadership in the Panchayats: A Comparative Study of four states*, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies and Rawat, Delhi
- Amanda Gouws, *Beyond Equality and Difference: The Politics of Women's Citizenship*, Agenda, No. 40, *Citizenship* (1999), pp. 54-58
- Belinda Dodson and Jonathan Crush, *A Report on Gender Discrimination in South Africa's 2002 Immigration Act: Masculinizing the Migrant*, *Feminist Review*, No. 77, Labour Migrations: Women on the Move (2004), pp. 96-119
- Mangubhai J., Irudayam A., Sydenham E. (2009), *Dali Women's Right to Political participation in Rural Panchayat Raj: A study of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu*, IDEA, Justitia et Pax, Netherland
- Thorat, Sukhadeo and Newman, S. Katherine. (2010), *Blocked by Caste: Economic Discrimination in Modern Indian*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Thorat, Sukhadeo and Aryama (2007), *Ambedkar in Retrospect: Eassy on Economics, Politics and Society*, New Delhi: Indian Institute of Dalit Studies and Rawat Pulications.
- Kamla Bhasin (2000), *Understanding Gender*, Kali for Women, New Delhi
- B. R. Ambedkar (1950), *Rise and Fall of Hindu Women* first published in Mahabodi in 1950 and then as a separate pamphlet.
- Shah, Ghanshyam, Harsh Mander, Satish Deshpande and Amita Baviskar, 2006. *Untouchability in Rural India*, New Delhi: Sage Publication.
-

Employment:

- Dixon, R.B. *Rural Women at Work: Strategies for Development in South Asia*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP 1978 [G]
- Dixon-Mueller, R. *Women's Work in Third World Agriculture*. Geneva: ILO 1985
- Mayoux, L. Income generation for women in India: problems and prospects, *Development Policy Review*, March 1989: 5-27 [G]
- Kapadia, K. Every blade of green: landless women labourers, production and production in South India, *Indian Journal of Labor Economics* 35, 1992: 266-76
- Kapadia, K. Mutuality and competition: female landless labour and wage rates in Tamil Nadu, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 20, 1993: 296-316 [G]
- Ramani, Rao, S.V. era/. *Women at Work in India*, Volume Two. An Annotated Bibliography. New Delhi: Sage 1994
- Tanner, C.L. Class, caste and gender in collective action: agricultural labour unions in two Indian villages [AP], *Journal of Peasant Studies* 22, 1995: 672-98 [G]
- Thorat, Sukhadeo, Mahamallik M and Panth S. (2004), *Caste, Occupation and Labour Market Discrimination: A Study of Forms, Nature and Consequence in Rural India*, ILO Study, 2004.

Reports

- Report of the Proceedings of the Third session of the all India depressed Classes conference held at Nagpur on July 18 and 19, 1942.
- Amhi Maitarini, January-February-March 1997, Dalit Mahila Special Issue.
- Amhi Maitarini, April-September 1988, Seventh Year, Issue 26th.
- Press Conference held on 24 November 2002 for the 'Formation of the National Federation of Dalit Women'.
- Pamphlet released by Akhil Bharatiya Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch, All India Dalit Women's Rights Forum for the 'National Conference on Violence against Dalit Women' organized by NCDHR on 7-8 March 2006, Delhi,
- Human Rights and Dignity of Dalit Women: Report of the Conference in the Hague, 20-25 November 2006.
- All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch, 6 Months Activity Report, April-September 2009
- Typed version of letter written by unmarried Dalit girl before her gang rape and murder on 31st December 2009.
- Dalit Student's Solidarity Movement, New Delhi.
- National Sample Survey Organization, 61st Round, Employment and Unemployment 2004-05
- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Crimes in India, Ministry of Home Affairs, GOI, New Delhi, 2000.
- National Family Health Survey, The Ministry of Health and Family (MOHFW) GOI, New Delhi, 2003.
- Census of India (2001), Various CD's on Economic Data