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Title-PATTERNS AND FORMS OF ATROCITIES ON DALIT WOMEN IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF JAIPUR DISTRICT IN RAJASTHAN

ABSTRACT

The Major Key Findings:

The low social status attached to Dalit women by **untouchability** functions as an opportune reason for dominant castes to discriminate against the dalit women and accordingly devalue their abilities as persons. Physical contact 'touching' with Dalit women is prohibited due to the stigma of impurity attached to them. Their dependency on dominant castes for their livelihood, maintains a culture of silence against untouchability and discrimination. The fear of indignity, humiliation and rape is always present. Thus, untouchability practices are routed in economic and political equality based on a social norm of 'graded inequality'.

Dalit women respondents, in this study, 50 per cent belong to rural and 50 per cent in urban areas. They described the social context in which they live. The grim reality of untouchability appears inescapable. Untouchability is not only present in most of the rural India but has adapted to new socio-economic realities taking on new forms. It is prevailing everywhere in schools, teashops, working places, public places and the list is very long.

On the basis of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, the atrocities found in the study are categorized into 6 major forms such as public humiliation by using filthy language, physical assault, sexual harassment, attempt to rape, rape and attempt to murder. Out of the total study samples, more than 75 per cent Dalit women face public humiliation by using filthy language in the forms of derogatory usage of caste names and caste epithets, sexual insults, and threats. One-third of the Dalit women face these types of atrocities regularly, as habitual nature and normal. 28.5 per cent Dalit women faced physical assaults in the form of beating with different instruments and with intention of injuring their body by the dominant caste perpetrators. More than 13 per cent Dalit women faced sexual harassment including attempt to rape and rape by the dominant caste perpetrators. They faced sexual harassment in the form of unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature, demands for sexual favours and etc. Three cases of domestic violence also came to the light in the study. Various forms and manifestation of domestic violence came across, such as slapping, kicking, tearing hair, pushing and pulling, hitting with an object, and threatening for life. Forms of psychological abuse were also found, for instance, verbal abuse and sarcastic remarks in the presence of outsiders.

Atrocities result in harming the physical or sexual and psychological health of women with short term or long term consequences that is the major **challenges** for Dalit Women. It affects women's rights to privacy, dignity and reputation, by attacking their personal integrity and reputation. Atrocities restrict women's freedom of movement and social interactions with their families and communities. Alongside, the violation of these rights and atrocities adversely affect women's right to work, to economic emancipation and to education. The end result is the reinforcement of their low socio-economic status with negative implications for overall development. Despite living in separate basties or colonies Dalit women are tortured by the dominant castes. They are not allowed to enter into the public temples, take water from public tanks and also pass through the public pathway. They are also forbidden to collect fodder for their cattle from the public fields and grasslands. If they dare to speak anything against it, they are abused in filthy language and beaten up. They are also treated as an 'object' and always watched keenly by the perpetrators. After drinking, they abuse Dalit women and their families to '*leave the houses and land.*' But Dalit women, who have been shifted to the cities as a result of atrocities, are also facing discrimination. To get a new job for the survival of their children is the biggest challenge for them.

Atrocities as well as the **responses** of various actors such as family, community and the state actors extend the feeling of depression in the lives of Dalit women and lack of hope for justice. The long process to obtain justice for Dalit women against atrocities is too often effectively obstructed by different actors such as the perpetrators, their caste community, police, and the village panchayats. The brahminical patriarchal discourse of 'honour' and 'fear' of further dominant caste revenges influences Dalit women, their families and their communities, not to seek justice. Impunity for violence is an intrinsic factor in the maintenance of the caste system and caste and gender based norms restricts Dalit women's fundamental rights and basic freedoms. The depression directly comes from the atrocities when they did not get support from family, police, panchayat and court and they feel completely alone to recover from the trauma and violence. Perpetrators enjoy virtual immunity from prosecution for violence against Dalit women, as the police, who themselves often uphold caste prejudices, willfully neglect to enforce the law. Not only the police, but perpetrators and their communities use their political, social and economic power to silence Dalit women, thereby denying them access to justice. Therefore, there has been tremendous increase in the atrocities against Dalits.