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## ROLE OF STATE AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN UPLIFTING DALIT AND MINORITY WOMEN

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### **Abstract**

From a very long time, Dalit and minority women in India have been facing exploitation, oppression, atrocities and barbaric acts done to them, they do not have rights and liberties and have been facing oppression of higher castes, their rights are also regulated and controlled by upper caste peoples and economic dominant classes. The extreme expression of violence, exploitation, and oppression against them is visible in forms of hunger, malnutrition, diseases, physical and mental torture, rape, illiteracy, ill-health, unemployment, insecurity and inhuman treatment. They are the victims of Feudalism, casteism, and patriarchy which have made their lives miserable, due to which their majority of population lives under poverty and extreme conditions. In the present age of modernism and post-modernism, they are still living in the dark age of savagery. Caste has played an instrumental role in raising issues related Dalit women. In Indian society, women belonging to the lower castes are among the most vulnerable section of society. The Dalits and the marginalized are still colonized by the higher caste people and the elites without freedom from caste discrimination.

### **Introduction**

India is among the oldest civilizations of the world, with a very vast cultural identities, different languages and culture in different regions of part of country. People of different

religions, caste, class, race and ethnicity resides together in India.

Being one of the world's largest democracies, India glorifies the principles of secularism and diversity and the Indian constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex. India is culturally, religiously, and socially a very diverse country, which leads to various forms of discrimination on the basis of caste, class, sex, race, etc., for example, Dalit, Muslims, and Christians, or other religious minorities or the indigenous communities (Adivasi), and women of such community suffers the most.

The act of discrimination against the minority isn't limited only to India but is a global problem and Women suffers the most of it, minority women often experience discrimination and suffer from the economic, social and political marginalization affecting their communities as a whole. Minority women have been facing discrimination, violence and stereotypes in both urban and rural areas. These women are forced into doing undignified and ill-suited jobs and have to face hate speeches, anti-minority sentiments, violations, discrimination and they are not even able to enforce their legal rights due to lack of awareness, poverty and social marginalization.

SC and ST(Prevention from Atrocities) Act was passed in 1989 in order to protect the lower caste people from facing atrocities, caste based violence and discrimination. Despite the

1989 law to protect lower caste peoples from facing atrocities, the situation is still the same.

Ten Dalit women were raped every day in India last year, according to official figures. Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of cases of violence against women as well as the highest number of cases of sexual assault against girls. Three states - Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan - report more than half of the cases of atrocities against the Dalits.

### **Historical background**

The concept of caste system is a very old concept of Indian society, it is an integrated part of Indian society. The Vedic Varna system divides Indian society into four Varna, i.e., Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya and shudras. They have a hierarchical order in society, Brahmins enjoys the highest privileges and shudras gets the lowest privileges, shudras were assigned with the duty to serve other castes.

There was one another caste which was not even considered to be in the Varna system, was Dalit, they were often considered to be the "untouchables", they were the people who have to suffer the most, they have the least rights and have had highest restrictions imposed upon them.

Dalits were not even allowed to enter temples, village wells, bathing Ghats and tea shops. The Dalits were not even allowed to walk in the daytime in some parts of the country because their shadows were regarded as pollution. The Dalits have been facing cruel and humiliating conditions, and their attempts to better their condition have been oppressed by attacks, rapes, and murders committed by upper castes people. The Dalits have been subjected to harsh and unfair treatment, but it has been reduced over time, though it still occurs in modern society. Various schemes have been introduced by Indian government and even constitution has provisions to control and stop the atrocities and for upliftment of lower castes and minority of country.

### **Challenges faced by Dalit and minority women**

#### **1. Political Participation and Empowerment:**

Dalit women are given very less of+ voice in the decision-making process. In India, there is a reservation system for Dalits to have seats in the local panchayat as well as in legislative assembly. But it only works on the papers, the ground reality is completely different, Dalit women do have reserved seats , but they just "hold" the seat, whole politics and working is done by the male members of their family. Dalit women also do face the backlash from the dominant castes, pressure and even violence. In the majority of instances, a Dalit woman has no right to exercise her rights and power in panchayat because her husband represents her and makes the decisions.

#### **2. Attitude of dominant castes:**

From a very long time, dominant classes are oppressing the dalit and minority group of the country. Their voice is continuously oppressed and they have been facing the discrimination, oppression, atrocities and segregation from rest of the society. Rights are given and controlled by the upper castes people, they barely have rights and liberty. Dalit have to live in the one corner of the village, unable to access drinking water, health care, education, etc. The exploitation is still continuing even after various schemes and laws made by the state and government.

#### **3. Violence against minority women**

Violence against women is a very old concept in Indian history. Women have to face domestic violence, dowry-related harassment, death, rape, sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, female foeticide etc. A study of Thomson Reuters ranked India as the world's most dangerous country for women due to the high risk of sexual violence, human trafficking and



slave labour. The crime rate against minority women is even higher, according to a recent study on the government's crime records, a crime is committed against a Dalit every 18 minutes in India. Every day, six of their women are raped, and 11 are beaten up.

### **Constitutional laws for benefit of Dalit and minority group**

The makers of the constitution knew that there's a serious need to bring some laws for upliftment of Dalit and minority classes in order to ensure their welfare and protect them from discrimination and atrocities by upper caste peoples. Country-wide laws which also benefit the women of the minority community are:

- Article 14 : The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
- Article 15(1) : The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them
- Article 16(1) and (2) : There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.
- Article 25(1) : Subject to public order, morality, and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.

- Article 26 : Subject to the public order, morality, and health, every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right
  - a) to establish and maintain an institution for religious and charitable purposes;
  - (b) to manage its own affairs in matters of religion; (c) to own and acquire movable and immovable property; and (d) to administer such property in accordance with law.
- Article 29 : provides the citizens with the right to conserve their language, script and culture; as well as guarantees that they would not be denied admission into any educational institution based on their race, language, religion or caste.

### **Schemes of government for upliftment of Dalit and minority women.**

Government plays a very important role in protecting the Dalit and minority class, especially women of this section. Government has introduced various schemes for welfare and development of the Dalits and minority women, it works for social, educational and economical development of these sections.

In order to protect and ensure the welfare of Dalit and minority women, the state government as well as the central government should:-

- Incorporate and effectively implement the schemes, law and policies for abolition of caste-based discrimination;
- Recognize Dalit women as a distinct social group; should made policies which specifically focuses on advancing their rights, liberties, equality, and protection within the law;
- Works for strict enforcement of existing laws, particularly the Scheduled Castes

& Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, and should investigate in the cases related to violence against Dalit women;

- Organize, support and fund community-based education, legal literacy and training programmes that improve understanding of caste based discrimination and violence;
- Recognise that economic dependence and backwardness is a significant reason behind Dalit women not filing police complaints; should make a national plan with separate funding aimed at accelerating efforts to reduce the poverty gap between Dalit communities and the general population.

The government has also taken a lot of initiatives for the welfare programmes and schemes specially focusing on the Dalit and minority group of country, out of which some of them are discussed below:-

### **Educational empowerment**

The central government as well as various state government has introduced various schemes for ensuring that no one from dalit or minority community is denied from getting education due to poor economic condition or due to exploitation from upper caste people. Some of the schemes are discussed below:-

- **Pre matric scholarship** - this is a central sponsored scheme, the objective of this scheme is to support the parents of SC and ST community in educating their wards. This scheme receives 100 percent financial assistance from central government. This scheme is mainly beneficial for the children of :- (i) scavengers of dry latrines, (ii) tanners, (iii) flayers and (iv) waste pickers.

- **Rajiv Gandhi national fellowship for SC Students** - The Scheme provides financial assistance to the students of scheduled caste who are pursuing research studies such as M. Phil, Ph.D, or any equivalent research degree in universities, research institutions and scientific institutions. This scheme provides an amount of Rs 31,000 per month to the SC students.

- **Post Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Caste Students:** - The Scheme is the single largest intervention by the central government for educating the Schedule Caste students. This scheme is made by central government and is a 100% central sponsored scheme and the fund is given to different state and union territories. The budget of this scholarship scheme is 59,000 crores.

- **Free coaching for SC Students** - the objective of this scheme is to provide quality coaching to the students of SC community in order to help them qualifying various government papers such as UPSC, Railways, Banking, State PCS, etc. and for various entrance exam paper such as JEE, NEET, CAT etc.

### **Economic empowerment**

Various schemes has been introduced by central and state government for the economic development of dalit and minority group, of which some of the schemes are discussed below;

- **National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC):** - this scheme was introduced by central government for the SC people who are living below the poverty line (presently Rs 98,000/- per annum for rural areas and Rs 1,20,000/- per annum for urban areas). This scheme provides loans, skill training, entrepreneurship programmes

and various other programmes for Schedule Caste peoples.

- **National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC):** this schemes was set up by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to empower the Manual Scavengers, Safai Karamcharis and their dependents to help them in generating income from various other sources apart from the traditional practices and help them to live with dignity and pride.
- **Credit Enhancement Guarantee Scheme for Scheduled Castes:** This scheme was introduced by The Department of Social Justice & Empowerment on 06.05.2015. This scheme was made in order to provide financial assistance and credit facility to the young and enthusiast entrepreneurs belonging to dalit community.

### Social empowerment

Dalits and minority community has been facing discrimination, atrocities and violence from a very long time, so in order to protect them from atrocities and discrimination, government has introduced a number of schemes for empowerment and protection of dalit and minority community, of which some are discussed below :-

- **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.** Even after independence and various laws made in the constitution and by government in order to protect the dalit community from facing violence and atrocities, the situation was same for the Dalits. So the central government decided to bring a very strict law in order to protect the rights and liberties of the dalit community. So SC and ST(Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 was introduced by the central government.

As per this act, a person who would be held liable under this act, cannot ask for anticipatory bail, and the offence is the cognizable offence.

- **The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 :** *This act was made in the pursuance of article 17 of Indian constitution, which prohibits the untouchability. This act was first named as the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955, which was later amended and renamed in the 1976 as the "Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955". This act is an act applicable over whole india, and as per this act, untouchability was considered to be the criminal offence and a person would be punished if found practicing untouchability.*
- **The 'Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013' (MS Act, 2013):** There were various measures taken by the government of india in order to stop the evil practice of manual scavenger, but even after so many measures, manual scavenging was still prevalent in indian society. Hence the act of "Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013" came to existense in order to end the evil practice of manual scavenging, Eradication of dry latrines and providing alternative occupations to the manual scavengers.
- **Abolition of triple talaq-** In Islam, a Muslim man can divorce his wife just by saying talaq three times. This custom has been made illegal in various Muslim majority countries, such as Saudi Arabia, morocco, Pakistan, Afghanistan, etc. In 2017, the supreme court of India outlawed the Islamic practice of triple talaq and made it unconstitutional. On 30 July 2019, the parliament of India abolished the practice of triple talaq and

made it illegal and unconstitutional and declared it as a punishable offence.

## CONCLUSION

Dalit and minority community women has been constantly suffering from various atrocities and discrimination by the upper caste people. In order to protect their rights and liberties, various steps has been taken by government as well as by state. Constitution of India has special provisions in order to protect the rights of Dalit and minority community. The government of India has made various schemes for development and protection of Dalit and minority group. But even after so many legislations and schemes, the Dalit and minority community is still suffering and has been constantly facing discrimination and violence from the upper caste peoples.

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