



Research Paper

Caste Based Discrimination and Violence Against Dalit Women In India

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ABSTRACT

In a male dominated society like India, Social position of women makes them more vulnerable to a number of human rights violations, such as, physical and verbal abuse, forced labour and slavery, trafficking, abduction, naked parading, and sexual violence including rape and gang rape. The social laws like Manusmriti and other Vedic scriptures closed all economic, political, social, educational, and personal channels through which women could be uplifted. In this situation **Dalit women** suffer unimaginable oppression, not only gender based but caste based too from which there is no scope to escape. Dalit women are also subjected to **discrimination** based on specific social customs and religious practices, including the Devadasi, Jogini and Badi systems of forced prostitution. It is in this context, this study¹ is the result of empirical research done in Rajasthan with 200 study samples of Dalit Women who were the victims of caste based discrimination and violence.

KEY WORDS: Dalit Women, Caste-based Discrimination, Violence, Atrocities

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I. INTRODUCTION

Violence is used by dominant castes as a social mechanism for humiliating entire Dalit communities. Dominant castes use violence against Dalit women to degrade their honour and self respect, control their bodies and sexuality, and demands women's submission to supply labour for livelihood. In result violence converts into atrocity as it is the combinations of violence against Dalits by non-Dalits to teach them lessons. In most of the cases of atrocities Dalit women have been threatened by the perpetrators to remain silent about the incidents or withdraw police cases or pressurized for 'compromises' when cases have been registered. Often Dalit women responded to verbal abuse of the dominant castes with silence and walk away without replying in order to maintain their dignity. **Atrocities** prevent the overall development and enjoyment of human rights for Dalit women and their community as well. So the assertion of Dalit women for their rights to equality, dignity and identity as human beings should be encouraged positively. It is in this context, this study² is the result of empirical research done in Rajasthan with 200 study samples of Dalit Women who were the victims of caste based discrimination and violence.

II. CASTE BASED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST DALIT WOMEN

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. Untouchability practices are routed in economic and political equality based on a social norm of 'graded inequality'.

¹ Mathur, Seema.2013, *Atrocities on Dalit Women in India: A Selected Study of Patterns and Forms*. Gujarat: Eklavya Prakashan.

² Mathur, Seema.2013, *Atrocities on Dalit Women in India: A Selected Study of Patterns and Forms*. Gujarat: Eklavya Prakashan.

Dalit women respondents, in this study, 50 percent belong to rural and 50 percent 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. This study reveals that in one form or another, untouchability is still continuing in the studied villages and cities. It is important to note that 79 percent Dalit women have faced caste-based discrimination from the dominant castes. In rural areas discrimination is more practiced with 92 percent than in urban areas with 66 percent. Some of the untouchability practices and discrimination as described by Dalit women are the following:

1. Residential Segregation:

Dalits are excluded from the mainstream ‘Basties’ or ‘colonies’ and compelled to live in segregated bastis or colonies from the dominant castes’. In cities and towns, Dalits are more likely to live in close proximity to dominant castes. Since caste segregation is continuous apart from the changing circumstances, 69 percent Dalit are living in segregated ‘basties’ or colonies. Only 46 percent Dalits are living in non-Dalits habitations particularly in cities. But, high caste Hindus avoid mixing up with Dalits so that they are forced to leave the colonies and migrate to other places. On the other side, the local governance being in the hands of dominant castes, Dalit villages or colonies are left out without development and basic amenities such as: roads, electricity, water, sewage drains, etc. Dalits live a life in extreme poverty conditions which lack certain basic amenities such as water, food, health centres, etc.

2. Prohibition of Entering into Non-Dalits' Houses:

Dalit women are not allowed to enter into non-Dalits’ houses and compelled to stand far away from the houses of dominant castes. Dalits can only go to certain parts of their houses i.e. the outer extension of the house, outside the threshold but not the interior parts of their houses. In certain cases Dalits are allowed to enter in the houses of non-Dalits but they are asked to wash utensils of water or tea used by them. More than 50 percent Dalit women are allowed to enter into non-Dalits’ houses only when there is need of their labour such as cleaning wheat, remove cow-dung, etc.

3. Denial of Accessing Water/Drinking Water Resources:

45 percent of Dalit women are not allowed to fetch water from common water sources but dominant castes draw the water for the Dalits and pour into their pots. They have to wait until dominant caste people come and pleased to fetch the water for them. If Dalits are allowed to fetch water, they fetch only after dominant castes fill their pots. In certain cases Dalits and dominant castes stand in separate queues at the wells. Dalits are not supposed to touch the pots of dominant castes. In some cases, common water tanks are polluted after use by dominant castes so that water is not used by the Dalits. Sometimes, assertion of Dalits to water resources becomes the cause of atrocities against them by dominant castes.

4. Religious Discrimination:

58 percent of Dalit women faced religious discrimination. They are not allowed to enter into public temples. If they enter, they are not allowed to offer their offerings or touch the ‘God’. For this reason most of the Dalits have separate temples for them. 59.5 percent Dalit women go to ‘Dalit temples’ for religious purposes.

5. Discrimination at Working Places:

In many places there is a direct denial of employment to Dalit women because of untouchability. If they get any job, they are paid less wage compared to non-dalit women. 35 percent Dalit women were compelled to work without wage or less wage. In cities, Dalit women are not allowed to take water from common pots and sit separately while taking lunch. Many of the Dalit women are stopped to run their business such as: ironing cloths, selling their products, weaving by the dominant castes.

6. Discrimination in Public Access (education, shops, roads, health centres etc):

53.5 percent Dalit women have no freedom to access the public resources. In schools, Dalit students are denied participation in programs and are abused by caste names. Dalit teachers also face discrimination by non-Dalit teachers. In many of the Anganwadis centres dalit women are denied to cook mid-day meal as dominant castes do not allow their children to eat the same food. Dalits are denied to ‘passage’ used by the dominant castes in the villages. In cities also non-Dalits do not like free access of Dalits. Dominant castes dump wastage in front of Dalits’ houses, move the way of drains towards Dalits’ houses and so on. It is interesting to note that in the studied villages of rural areas, not a *single woman reported discrimination by the doctors but in urban*

localities 16 percent Dalit women faced discrimination in the health centres. The reason cited is that in most of the rural areas the facilities of government health centres are very less, therefore, private and not highly qualified doctors visit the patients. They take money and treat patients without any discrimination.

7. Inter-dining:

Time is changing but caste discrimination still exists in the same manner as it was before. On occasion of marriage or other functions in dominant caste families, Dalits are not invited, and even if invited they are supposed to dine after the dominant caste finish their turn. In certain instances they are told to wash their plates after the dinner. When Dalits invite non-Dalits for some celebrations, they just come but don't eat the food prepared by the Dalits but hire a man from their community to cook food separately for them. In some places, non-Dalits never attend the functions in the Dalit families but their quota of food is ordered directly from the shop without getting into physical contact with Dalits.

8. Political Discrimination:

Dalits are prohibited access to public services resulting in limited participation in grassroots democratic institutions. Though Dalits are entering in local level politics through the reservation, they face discrimination. Most of them work as 'proxy' candidates in the hands of dominant castes. There is segregation of seats in village panchayats. Dalit women elected representatives are not allowed to sit on the chairs in panchayat office and meetings in front of dominant castes. In certain cases, Dalit women sarpanches are denied to hoist the National Flag.

III. CASTE BASED VIOLENCE FACED BY DALIT WOMEN:

Caste based violence against Dalit women are not a new. Specific forms of discrimination that Dalit women struggle against are based on caste, class and patriarchy. Social beliefs about pollution, the economic compulsions of being dependent on upper castes for work and livelihood and the vulnerability imposed by gender subordination, fuse to make the lives of Dalit women especially hard. This study reveals that verbal abuse and public humiliation (affecting the psyche), physical assaults (affecting bodily integrity), and sexual assaults (affecting bodily/sexual integrity), attempt to murder are the most common experiences of atrocities against Dalit women within private and public sphere. This study reveals that most of the atrocities have taken place in the rural areas. Illiterate and labourer women are the easiest target for the dominant castes to humiliate their community through women whenever they try to assert their rights. Whenever Dalit women defend their dignity and demand their basic human rights, they are not given support by their families and communities. Because of discriminatory caste, gender, and cultural norms Dalit women often and easily have become the target of atrocities. Some of the various types of atrocities in both rural and urban areas which Dalit women are facing are as follows:

1. Public Humiliation by using Filthy Language
2. Physical Assaults
3. Sexual Harassment
4. Attempt to Rape
5. Rape
6. Attempt to Murder

1. Public humiliation by using Filthy language:

More than 75 percent of Dalit women are facing violence regularly, indicating the habitual nature of this form of violence. It is important to emphasise that the three main dimensions of untouchability –namely, exclusion, humiliation-subordination and exploitation are equally important in defining this phenomenon. There are some names of specific castes that are often but not always associated with particular occupations such as Dhobi, Bhangi, Chamar, Koli and so on. These caste names continue to be used as forms of abuse even today, although their use is now a criminal offence. 75.5 percent Dalit women have accepted that dominant caste perpetrators use filthy language to humiliate them publicly. . It is more in rural areas with 96 percent and in urban areas with 55 percent

Perpetrators often address women by their **caste names**. Dominant caste men or women call a woman from Chamar caste as 'Chamarin', and a woman of Koli or Bunkar caste as 'Kolan' and a woman of Valmiki or Bhangi caste as 'Bhangan'. When the caste names or terms are used as a form of address it indicates the impurity, inferiority and immorality among Dalit women. Dominant caste perpetrators use caste name to address a Dalit woman to show their superiority. Some of the examples of public humiliations by using filthy language to Dalit women by the dominant castes, from field study, are such as: Mira Devi was scolded by a Gurjjar dominant caste male by saying, "*Chamaran, what are you doing here? Flee from here otherwise I will beat you.*" Rambati, a domestic worker, was asked to polish shoes by her dominant caste employer to humiliate her

by using her caste. Whenever a Dalit woman has tried to oppose the dominant caste man not to speak in filthy language, she faced atrocities. *Shayma Devi was routinely humiliated and was abused publically because of her 'untouchable' low caste. She was called by her caste name as 'Bhangan.'* Whenever she asked people (for whom she works) not to speak her in filthy language, they laughed at her by saying, "Are you a queen of somewhere or Madam !."

Usually while addressing Dalit women, perpetrators do not use only derogatory caste names but also use other **abusive epithets**, such as, bitches, asses, pigs. Many abusive terms also emphasize the low class status of Dalit women, linked with their caste, occupation, their poverty and economic dependency on the perpetrators, such as, 'Naputi' (women who don't have sons), 'Rand' (widow), 'beggars', and 'thieves'. The combinations of castes and animals name used against Dalit women by the dominant castes are extremely common because dogs, asses and pigs reside at the bottom of the hierarchy of animals in dominant caste Indian thoughts. Perpetrators routinely call Dalit women as bitches. For instances:

- *In Rajpura Patalwas, Manphuli Devi was abused by caste name when she asked for her wage. She was allotted a piece of land by the government but it was occupied by the Brahmins of the village. Whenever she tried to possess her land with other Dalit women, the dominant caste Brahmin perpetrators abused them in filthy language of 'mother and sister', 'koliyoki, "I will f**k you. You bitch!" also threatened to break hands and feet.*

The abusive language is based on caste, class and gender to target women. Verbal abuse to humiliate Dalit women begins with degrading terms and expressed in most offensive language with gendered epithets to her sexual organs. Perpetrators threaten Dalit women to commit sexual violence against her. Along with degrading forms of address and threats 'Verbal sexual advances' used by the perpetrators against Dalit women in the study. The perpetrators comment on Dalit women's body such as-

- *Anita Verma, a government employee was verbally abused, physically assaulted and attempted to murder by her dominant caste's colleague. He commented on her in filthy language to humiliate her, such as, 'Your personality is appealing', 'figure is good' 'spot in your chunni' and 'bekar rand' (useless women). He always tried to come near to her and always talked by showing finger at her." He created pressure of job to take physical pleasure from her. By having fear of the perpetrator Anita went to her aunt where her uncle also was attacked. She went to police station to complaint the incidents but police said, "Will see the matter later." With the help of CO circle officer belong to Dalit community case was registered but because of pressure from secretary of the Women Commission a compromise was reached at by saying 'sorry' in writing by the perpetrator.*

Most of the perpetrators describe Dalit women as "f****rs." In many case, it came out that Dalit women have been seen as sexual objects by the perpetrators and they wanted to take physical and sexual pleasure by taking advantages of their poverty and dependency on the perpetrators. Some of them directly invited for having sex with the perpetrators. For examples:

- *When Kesar Devi went to take goods from the general shop, the dominant caste shopkeeper asked her to come in the evening by saying "Come in the evening to me, I will give you whatever you need." When she reacted against it, Santosh was abused by the dominant caste shopkeeper in filthy language. She did not make a complaint against the perpetrator because of 'fear of dishonour and what people would say if she went to make a complaint in the police station'.*

Dalit women also face public humiliation and are threatened whenever they make any access to public places. For instance:

- *Dominant caste poojari of the temple used the following verbal abuse for Sarita in the temple, "You charamin, how dare you to offer 'prasad' to God... How dare you come inside the temple? You untouchable, if I see you again, I will beat you and thus humiliate in front of all."*

Perpetrators threaten Dalit women by the acts of violence against family members to destroy their social modesty. Impunity talk reminds Dalit women that their attempt to seek justice will likely to prove vain because the perpetrators enjoy effective protection from legal prosecution. For instance:

- *Manbhar Mahavar was threatened by the Brahmin perpetrator who occupied her plot and cut out the trees from there. When she spoke against it, he abused and beaten up her by saying, "leave your plot from Brahmins basti and go to other place" They attacked on her family many times. They attempted to cut the head of her sister-in-law with an axe and also registered false case (FIR) against her. The perpetrators also provoked the koli community against her, so that they could be able to take benefits of their fighting. Perpetrator closed the path way for her to go to field, and abused her on the way and was always ready to beat her and her family. They tried to prove her "Badchalan (bad characted) and Ghranit (hated)" in the society*

Almost 58 percent victims of public humiliation by use of filthy language did not seek legal redress at all because of the feelings of fear and dishonour. Though section 3 (1) (x) of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 states that "Whoever, not being a member of scheduled caste or a scheduled tribe, intentionally insults or intimidates with intent to humiliate a member of scheduled caste or a scheduled tribe in any place within public view, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months, but which may extend to five years and with fine." But 17.7 percent Dalit women who attempted to seek legal redress were blocked before the case reached the police station. Perpetrators, panchayats, Dalit community and victims' families are the main actors who blocked Dalit women's justice seeking efforts. Depression, loss of confidence, anxiety and fear of future are largely reported by the women, particularly from those faced repeated incidents of public humiliation by use of filthy language with other forms of atrocities also such as physical assaults.

In conclusion, it can be said that most of the Dalit women face public humiliation by using of filthy language whenever they attempted to access basic resources. Since Dalit women are largely landless and do not have property on which they can graze their animals, collect firewood, defecate, etc. and even while traveling from their houses to work places, they face verbal abuse.

2. **Physical assault:**

'Physical assault refers to the intentional use of criminal force on any person without that person's consent in order to cause the person bodily pain or injury, or fear of immediate and unlawful violence or annoyance. As such it covers crimes under the Indian Penal Code such as 'hurt' (sec. 323), 'grievous hurt' (sec. 325), 'hurt or grievous hurt by dangerous weapons and means' (sec. 324 & 326), 'assault' and the 'use of criminal force' (sec. 352).' (Jaishree, Aloysia and Joel-2006)

Physical assault means to use any physical or instrumental thing by a person to express her or his power, force or authority over another person in order to impose internal or external injuries to the body of that person. In this study out of 200 study samples 28.5 percent women have faced physical atrocities with verbal abuse and public humiliation by use of filthy language.

Dalit women, in this study, have described various types of physical assaults. **Body parts**, such as, hands and feet have been used by perpetrators to assault the majority of Dalit women on their bodies. They have been hit or beaten all over their bodies. Sometimes some **instruments** such as chappal, 'lathis' (wooden sticks), and stones or bricks also have been used against Dalit women by the perpetrators to physically assault them. For example:

- *Shanti Devi was attacked suddenly and pushed down and beaten with chappals when was taking bath on tube-well in field by dominant caste Brahmins and Gurjjars. They occupied her land which was allotted by the government. She is not allowed to do agricultural work on her land and also denied to cut the wood from it. They placed tube-well on her land. Now Shanti lives always in fear that any time they can stop her way and try to sexually harass her. (Study Sample No. 100)*

Besides using of chappals, lathis, and stones or bricks for attack, perpetrators also use **weapons** against Dalit women to injure and threaten them. Two women have reported attack on them when they demanded equal rights such as:

- *Pooja, a minor girl was hurt by throwing stones on her during attack on her family members by two 'Haryana Brahmins'. So she got hurt in her head. Both Brahmin stopped her in the way and denied her to go to the field for answering morning natural call.*
- *Wastage and bricks were thrown into Dhapu Devi's house to injure her and her daughter-in-law by the dominant caste 'Rajput' neighbors because she dared to ask them why they insult her daughter-in-law by saying 'banjh' (comment on her infertility).*

In many cases of atrocities, Dalit women of physical assaults also **threatened** to block them to reach police station by the perpetrators. The perpetrators showed their criminal history to the victims and gave message to them that police and others were in their pockets. Nothing would happen to them even if they murder somebody. For instance-

- *Bhawari Devi, a social activist and victim of rape (old case) is making the villagers aware about the necessity of education for girls, vaccination for children and evil customs such as female feticide, Child marriage etc. But dominant castes (Gurjjar and Brahmin) are against her so stopped her going into the village. One day Brahmin Panda borrowed money from her 'sathin' group' (a Self Help Group-SHG) but he did not return the money back. When she asked for money, he attacked her with an axe. She reported the case in the police station but nothing happened. Besides that the dominant caste perpetrator damaged her crops of wheat and threatened her by saying, "We will kill you and nothing will happen to us as nothing was happened when we raped you." It may be noted that no action was taken against Brahmins and Gurjjars in earlier two cases.*

Reported cases in this study also reveal how dominant caste perpetrators have humiliated Dalit women in public by combining attack on their bodies and stripping their clothes in public. For example:

- *Vidya Devi reported that her 'dupatta' (a long cloth being worn by girls/women on her shoulders) was pulled by a dominant caste man when she was going somewhere by saying, "Chamaro ki, gel chal riya hai". (How dare you to walk with me on the way).*

What needs to be underlined here is that this sign of physical assault 'stripping of clothes' is linked directly with 'hidden' or 'open' intention of the attackers to sexually harass and assault women.

From an overview of the various manifestations of physical assault discussed above, it seems that perpetrators have used whatever instruments were available for them on women's body to physically assault them. In other words, physical assault is present everywhere in various forms.

In the context of legal remedies, out of 57 incidents of physical assault only 8 percent women dared to reach to police station to file the complaints. But in most of the cases women were pressurized to reach at a compromise with the perpetrators or in land cases false cases have been registered against victims by the perpetrators. A few cases have reached to the court but nothing has happened in those cases. A clear fact emerging from this data is that more than 90 percent of incidents of physical assaults never reached or received due attention from state actors including the law enforcement machinery. In most of the cases women themselves did not seek legal remedies or stopped by the family members by saying, "these are normal incidents, leave them."

3. Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome physical, verbal or non- verbal conduct of a sexual nature such as physical contact and advances, demands for sexual favours and sexually colored remarks. Through sexual harassment there is an attempt to control over women's sexuality and simultaneously bring a feeling of 'dishonour' and 'shame' in the women by the dominant castes in brahmanical patriarchal society. According to National Commission for Women in its *1997 Code of Conduct for the Work place*, Sexual harassment therefore constitutes "a serious criminal offence which can destroy human dignity and freedom."

Sexual harassments, experienced by the Dalit women in this study are touching, grabbing, sexual gesture, showing private parts, tearing cloths, physical contacts, sexually coloured remarks about women's body by the perpetrators. Most of the incidents of 'verbal sexual harassment' have been described in above mentioned categories of atrocity i.e. 'public humiliation by using filthy language' and 'physical assaults'. Sexual harassments have taken place in buses, roadsides, and fields that means there is denial of right to privacy and dignity for Dalit women. Though they dare to question the sexual harassments, but the fear of society in the form of 'dishonor' and fear for more violent acts on their siblings particularly girls by the perpetrators force them to remain silent. For instances:

- *Bhuri Devi, helper in Anganwadi reported that during travelling in the bus a dominant caste teacher of her village put his private part in her underarm and grab her breast. When she felt it she was shocked and cried out but he fled from the bus. She did not tell anything about the incident to anyone because of shame. When Gyarsi went to the field for answering the morning natural call along with other women, 2 Brahmins of her village came and opened their pants and openly showed their private parts in front of them by using filthy language. When she opposed it, one of them attempted to rape her. But she managed to escape from there.*

Out of 15 cases of atrocities named as sexual harassments 11 percent Dalit women belong to rural and 4 percent urban areas. The Dalit women belonging to the age group of 31 to 45 years are more vulnerable for sexual harassments with 53.3 percent of the total incidents of sexual harassments happened with them. From the Koli community, 60 percent Dalit women faced sexual harassment. Illiterate women and educated up to 10th are the victims of sexual harassment with 60 percent and 40 percent respectively. In result it might be said that highly educated Dalit women are less vulnerable for sexual harassments. The representation of category of labour work shows that women working as labourer are the easy target for sexual harassment by the dominant caste perpetrators with 66.7 percent out of total study samples i.e. 50 percent. By contrast, the house-makers are slightly less target of sexual harassments i.e., 13.3 percent.

One fifth or twelve women of the incidents of sexual harassment did not seek legal redresses because of the feeling of shame and dishonour. Only three women who attempted to seek legal redress were blocked before the case reached to the police station. The main actors who blocked Dalit women's justice seeking efforts were perpetrators, panchayats, Dalit community and victims' families.

4. Attempt to Rape and Rape:

Sexual assault or the use of criminal force to molest a woman as per Indian Penal Law is any forcible invasion of women's sexual and bodily integrity not amounting to rape. Often sexual assaults of various types, often sexual assault lead to or accompany rape and sexual exploitation. Out of total study samples, 5 percent Dalit women have experienced 'attempt to rape' and 1 percent experienced 'rape'. Attempted rape takes sexual assault one step further though it includes many of the elements discussed above. It involves force shown by the perpetrator on woman to rape or by the woman in the form of struggle to save herself from being raped. For example:

Guddi Devi was attempted to rape when she went to the field to graze her cattle. When she was cutting grass for the cattle, suddenly dominant caste, Haryana Brahmin Lallu came and held her in his arms by using abusive language and tried to rape her. Somehow she ran away to home and told everything to her mother and sister-in-law. When her mother and sister-in-law confronted Lallu- why he did so with their daughter-in-law, they were beaten and abused.

All the ten cases of attempted rape are from rural areas while accessing public resources by the Dalit women in the study. The age groups of 16 to 30 years and 31 to 45 years were more targeted groups for attempt to rape i.e. 40 percent. 80 percent of the total incidents committed on women belong to Koli community. Similarly, 80 percent attempt to rape were committed on illiterate women. The representation of category of labour works shows that women working as labourers are the easy target for attempt rape by the dominant caste perpetrators. 90 percent Dalit women on whom rape was attempted were daily wage labourers.

Fear of rape is one of the pervasive instruments for controlling women and curtailing their freedom. Girls are socialised to fear men and are confined, protected and escorted in the name of safety. (Goyal P.-2009) In this study victims of rape belong to rural and urban areas in equal proportion i.e. 50 percent and both are illiterate but doing jobs. One is a social activist and another grazes animals with her parents. The figure 3:8 shows the percentage of rape victims by cross-tabulation of age. The age groups of 0 to 15 years and 45 to 60 years are the main targeted groups of rape with 50 percent.

The acts of physical and sexual assaults such as biting women's cheeks or breast, groping their breasts, gagging them clothing or hands, stripping off their cloths and hitting women to facilitate the rape have been described by the Dalit women who experienced atrocities. For example:

- *A minor Dalit girl was raped by the dominant caste 'Rajput' boy when she was returning from field in the early morning. Her father registered a complaint but no immediate action was taken. With the help of community based NGOs they protested against the police, only then medical check up of the victim was done. In result the perpetrator's father lodged a complaint against the victim's father for defamation. The girl's father is in jail but perpetrator came out on bail.*

5. Attempt to Murder:

In most of the cases of attempt to murder on Dalit women have been found in the study along with public humiliation by use of filthy language, physical assault, sexual harassment and attempted rape. There were cases of attempted to murder by sudden attack on them or their families as the results of their assertion for equal rights against the dominant castes. Dalit women describe their vulnerable situation that they are easy targets for

any perpetrator since dominant castes consider them to be 'sexually available' and unprotected by the state machineries. 15 percent Dalit women in this study have been attempted to be murdered. They have been beaten with lathis, axe, stones and other instruments during the attacks. For instance-

- *Guddi Devi was attacked and beaten up with lathis when she went to possess her land. Brahmins who had occupied her land did not allow her to do agricultural work and also denied to cut woods from it. Beating, abusing, attacking denying access to public resources are the series of acts by the perpetrators before attempted to murder on her.*

The representation of category of labour work shows that women working as labourer are the easy target for attempted to be murdered by the dominant caste perpetrators. 63.3 percent Dalit women have been attempted to be murdered who are dependent on the dominant castes for their livelihood or wanted to assert their rights. But in every age groups of occupation Dalit women are targeted to be murdered. The following figure shows that Dalit women who are illiterate or educated upto 10th have become the easy targets for atrocities such as attempt to be murdered with 70 percent and 26.7 percent respectively.

In the context of legal remedies only one-third of Dalit women made complaints in the police station. In some of the cases compromises have been made, few cases, reached to the police station or court nothing happened. In most of the cases, counter-false cases have been registered against the victims or their families.

Overall, it can be inferred from this study that illiterate women, aged between 20 to 40 years, economically dependent on dominant castes are the main victims of atrocities, such as, public humiliation by using filthy language, physical assault, sexual harassment including attempted rape, rape and attempt to be murdered. Their economic status which linked to their occupation for which they are dependent on dominant castes make them more vulnerable for sexual harassments.

IV. PLACES OF ATROCITIES:

Majority of Dalit women face violence in **public spaces** such as fields, streets, bus stands, working places, temples, schools and places around their villages and towns. Study reveals that about 60 percent of the atrocities against Dalit women have taken place in public places. It is related to greater work participation of Dalit women as compared to other women. As they are mostly employed in informal sector, daily wage labour occupation, which provide fertile grounds for atrocities against them. Moreover, given their economic dependence, Dalit women often do not report violence from employers in the work places; instead keep silent in order to retain their means of livelihood.

Fields of dominant castes, used by Dalit women for their nature's call, are the prime places for atrocities against them. Non-Dalits constantly harass them when they go to relieve themselves in groups and that too only early in the morning or late night. Many times acts such as showing private parts by the perpetrators lead to mental torture for Dalit women. On resisting, dominant caste men abused Dalit women in filthy language. Because of fear and shame they don't even make such acts public.

The most common places for violence are homes where 20 percent of Dalit women have faced atrocities in this study. As many Dalit women either work in the perpetrators' home or have to go there to receive their wages or ask for loan, etc., the perpetrator's home also becomes site for atrocities. In urban localities, most of the Dalit women work as domestic workers in the house of dominant caste and constantly face humiliation and exploitation by their dominant castes perpetrators. More than 15 percent Dalit women have faced atrocities in both public and private spheres.

V. CONCLUSION:

In concluding remarks it can be conferred that Dalit women suffer large-scale violation of their human rights, including acts of atrocities such as public humiliations, physical assaults, sexual harassments, rape, and attempt to murder. These atrocities also include psychological abuse and exploitation, residential segregation, denial of access and discriminatory treatment in basic public resources and services and discriminatory restrictions on public behaviour. Sometimes they have become the victims of atrocities because of their assertion for basic rights, such as, right to speak, right to work, freedom of movement and right to equality and respect.

It also has been accepted by National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, "Whenever Dalits have tried to organise themselves or assert their rights; there has been a backlash from the feudal lords resulting in mass killings of Dalits, gang rapes, looting and arsoning, etc. of Dalit basties." Thus atrocities prevent the overall development and enjoyment of human rights for Dalit women and their community as well. So the assertion of Dalit women for their rights to equality, dignity and identity as human beings should be encouraged positively.

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