

Dalit Women And Human Rights Violation

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ABS TRACT

The 28th report of the commissioner for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe reported that by February, 1986 there were about 10,000 jogins belong to scheduled castes in Nizamabad district of Andhra Pradesh. The prevalence of this system has been observed in large parts of Andhra Pradesh. The survey conducted by District Collector and Scheduled Caste Finance Corporation revealed the prevalence of 15850 cases and 80 percent of the Joginis belong to Scheduled Castes. Under this social and religious system the unfortunate village girls are married to a village god by their parents. These girls are then sexually exploited by the upper caste landlords and rich men of the village who have initiated the process of "Divine marriage". This socially "sanctioned" prostitution has been prevalent in large areas of Telengana, which adjoins Karnataka where similar practice of Devdasi exists. The Devdasi system also exists in parts of western Maharashtra (Kolhapur, Solapur and Dhawad). The first and major atrocity, leaving a lasting impression on the psyche of dalits all over Tamil Nadu was the killing of Immanuel (one of the dedicated fighters for dalits rights) at Mudukulathur Village in 1957. From then onwards, a number of atrocities have been happening every year. In 1968, 48 dalits in more than 29 different parts of the state. During the late 1980s a series of caste clashes occurred in North Tamil Nadu. But during 1990s caste clashes escalated in the Southern districts. South Tamil Nadu faced a civil war of situation due to Thevar-dalit clashes.

INTRODUCTION

The protection of Human Rights Act of 1993 defines the "human rights means the right of liberty, equality and dignity of individual guaranteed by the constitution or embodied in the international covenant and enforceable by Government of India. "As regards Human Rights of Women the National Human Rights Commission Annual Report of 1994-95 says the following": Various laws having to do with the status of Women continue to be of deep interest to the Commission, "It refers to the various Acts such

as Dowry prohibition, the sati prevention, the Indian Penal Code, and Code of Criminal Procedures and some amendment of Child Marriage Restraint Act.

It further observed that: though the U. N. Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by General Assembly in 1977, India ratified it in June 1993. The provisions of CEDAW would now have to be implemented by way of internal laws and administrative regulation. The commission recommends vigorous implementation of the country's obligation under this convention". The Act as well as the programmes of the National Human Rights Commission does not make any reference to the specific human rights issue of Dalit Women. It also tends to treat the human right problems of Dalit Women par with non-Dalit women. This paper analyses about the human right violations against Dalit women.

Sexual violence

Although we do not have a break-up of PCR and IPCC cases separately for Dalit men and Women, the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe commissioner's report however, provides information on sexual violence against Dalit Women. Sexual violence problem from which Women in general suffer in the case of Dalit Women and their economic dependence, they become victims of the high caste sexual violence, on a scale far greater than that of the non- Dalit Women. Between 1981 and 1986 about 4000 Dalit Women became victims of rape. In 1993 and 1994 this figure rose to 798 and 992 respectively. This means annually about seven hundred Dalit women fall prey to the sexual assault by high caste people. Since 1981 such cases have increased between 1981 and 1986 as well as during 1993 and 1994 in the country. The cases were relatively higher in U. P, M. P, Rajasthan and Bihar.

Victims of Social and Religious Practices like Devadasi and joginis

The 28th report of the commissioner of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe reported that by February, 1986 there were about 10, 000 joginis belong to scheduled castes in Nizambad district of Andhra Pradesh. The prevalence of this system has been observed in large parts of Andhra Pradesh. The survey conducted by District Collector and Scheduled

Caste Finance Corporation revealed the prevalence of 15850 cases and 80 per cent of the joginis belong to scheduled castes.

Under this social and religious system the exploitation, Dalit Women also Suffer from political, economic and the educational rights. Unfortunately enough studies are not available on the Human Rights violation of Dalit Women in these areas. Nevertheless the limited evidences indicate that the Dalit Women suffer from discrimination and unequal treatment in the field of economic activities and in education. Some of the studies point out the economic discrimination in employment of Women belonging to scheduled castes in general and Sweeper community and others involved in so called unclean occupations. There are evidences that Dalit women do not find jobs inside the house of high castes. They are rarely employed as a maid servant due to the practice of discrimination in the schools. In the area of politics Women do not enjoy full freedom. Thus they are deprived of their political rights.

Human Rights Violation and Economic Deprivation

There is a close link between economic deprivation and violation of Human Rights of Dalit women. The Dalit are female.

Similarly, in urban areas the unemployment rate for the Dalit Women was 3.27 per cent. This was only 1.98 per cent for non-Dalit women. This suggests that not only the large majority of Dalit women are agricultural laborers, but the rate of unemployment among them was also quite high.

Besides this a large number of Dalit Women are encouraged in unclean occupation which is considered to be inferior in nature. Because of their association with these occupations, these women face discrimination in social relation and also in employment.

The lack of educational development is the another important problems from which the Dalit women suffer. In 1991 the literacy rate among Dalit women suffer. In 1991 the literacy rate among Dalit women was indeed quite low in the rural areas. In rural areas only 19.46 per cent Dalit women were literate. By comparison the rate for general population was 30.62 per cent. Similar disparities existed in 1991 for urban areas also. In fact in urban areas the literacy rate among Dalit female is the lowest.

The lack of income generating assets and heavy dependence on wage employment of all Dalit women on the high caste landlord provide a situation for the latter to exploit them sexually and otherwise. Thus the economic situation of Dalit women compels them to surrender their civic, political and economic rights.

Tamilnadu is one of the states that has recorded high incidence of atrocities against Dalits. Caste clashes continue to plague the southern state of Tamil Nadu (Nayyarshamsi, 2004). Individual clashes lead to the group clashes and they finally lead to murder, poverty, damage and other forms of violence. Dalits are socially backward as well as weak in number. According to 1991 census, the SC population comes to 13.82 crores and the ST population to 6.77 crores representing 16.33 and 8.08 per cent of the total population respectively. In Tamilnadu, the percentage of SC population was 19.18 per cent in 1991 and 19 per cent in 1998. On the All- India map, Tamilnadu has the sixth biggest concentration of Dalits. Compared to the state average of 19.18 per cent, the districts which have greater than the state average are Nilgiris (30.22%), South Arcot (inclusive of Villupuram and Cuddalore districts) (27.1%), Chengalpattu (inclusive of Tiruvalluvar and Kachipuram district) (25.97%). Thanjavur (inclusive of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattanam) (24.17%), Thiruvannamalai (21.46%), North Arcot (20.70) and Dindigul (19.41). The estimated number of caste in India is 16,000. In Tamilnadu, there are 74 castes and sub-castes categorized as SC and 34 Tribes listed as ST. (Jacob & Bandu, 2002). These people who were discriminated down the ages, get education and then they claim their rights, demand minimum wages, refuse to do bonded labour and in human activities. When the Dalits get enlightened, it is not tolerated by the upper castes, which eventually leads to clashes and destruction of Dalit properties by dominant caste people.

The first and major atrocity, living a lasting impression on the psyche of Dalits all over Tamilnadu was the killing of Immanuel (one of the dedicated fighters for Dalit rights) at Mudukulathoor village in 1957. From then onwards, a number of atrocities have been happening every year. In 1968, 48 Dalits in more than 20 different parts of the state. During the late 1980s a series of caste clashes escalated in the southern districts. South Tamilnadu faced a civil war of situation due to Thevar-Dalit clashes. Southern districts except Kanyakumari witnessed frequent clashes during 1995, 1997 and 1998. One can easily know

the number of caste clashes that happened in Tamilnadu in the 90s from the book *Tamilahathil Manitha Urimaigal*, 2000 of Human Rights Watch, Madurai. The estimates of economic damages caused by these group clashes are not available except for two major group clashes. The Kodiyankulam, (Tuticorin district) caste dash between Thevars and dalits left 130 people dead in the districts of Thirunelveli, Madurai, Tuticorin, Ramanathapuram and Virudhunagar in September 1995. No house in Kodiyankulam village was spared and all the house hold assets were looted or smashed. The assaulters had also poured pesticides into the water bodies to make the water poisonous (Jacob & Bahndu, 2002). But no monetary estimate of the loss is available. The clash started on 13-4- 1997 in Kovilpattil and lasted up to 30-7 -1997 and resulting in a number of shops and houses burnt down in different districts including Thirunelveli and Tuticorin. The damage caused by this clash was estimated by People Watch, Madurai at Rs. 42 lakhs apart from a few unestimated cases (Report III, People Watch, 1997). The next major caste clash whose damage was estimated in the clash that took place on 26-2-1998, in Induthalai Nager and Bharathi Nagar, 'B' colony of Dindugal district, in which 154 persons were injured and the damages caused was estimated at Rs. 45 lakhs (National Public Hearing Report Vol. II, 2000). There were three major clashes but the damages estimated are of two minor clashes and the damages of the clash still remain unestimated. The total damage of the two clashes in which there was also loss of life, was 87 lakhs. But in the Kodiyankulam clash which is major one, 130 persons killed apart from a lot of damages from property.

Conclusion

If every clash taken for estimation, then the total damage may run to crores or rupees. It is not easy to estimate the loss by assessing the damage caused to property. Loss is caused by injuries, cost of treatment, loss of productivity etc. and if we take all these into accounts, the total loss will be much more than it appears to be. Loss is compensated by the concerned government and it empties the government treasury or reduces the quantity of money meant for development purposes. All these losses can be avoided if there is a political will to stop it and people are made aware of the fact that all are equal before law and every citizen has the right to lead a life with dignity.

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