
A SOCIO-LEGAL STATUS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST DALIT WOMEN: INSIGHTS FROM BIHAR

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ABSTRACT

Socio-legal violence against dalit women in Bihar is prevalent and entrenched issue. It is deeply rooted in the history of state due the complex patriarchal hierarchy followed by the state and the also the discriminatory legal frameworks that exists. Even since the adoption of constitution and so many progressive legislation the dalit women suffers a lot. They are treated as the disadvantaged, marginalized and weaker section of the society. They are discriminated and even their entry is prohibited in educational institution, temples, medical hospital and other such public places. Also, they are subject to violence in different forms even the society has moved towards modernization.

There are various day to day instances of caste discrimination which are reported on daily basis. They are subjected to disparity and inequality as a result of which they suffer unique form of violence which includes improper access to justice, discrimination based on caste and lack of poor educational and employment issues. When we take into account the prevailing circumstances, it may be found that the main reasons behind their sufferings are ineffective implementation of laws, inadequate access to legal justice system and corrupt institutions which makes their situation even more vulnerable.

The common form of violence that is prevalent against dalit women includes assault, domestic violence, forced labors, poor access to public resources, discrimination and inequality. Even though with eyes wide open and developed media the society as a whole fails to address their challenges and struggles. Various report and data are the evidence which simply states that violence against dalit women has reached its peak. They are inadequately represented members of the society with very less or no voice where in case if they raise their voice they are further subject to more violence. The main aim of this article is bring dalit women into limelight and highlight all those instances where they have been subjected to heinous crimes but the media and the society remained silent.

Introduction

In India even after the adoption and enforcement of constitution which guarantees several affirmative provisions for all its citizens they are few marginalized groups in the society who continues to suffer. One among the group is Dalit women, who are still under the hardships of caste, class and gender. They are so marginalized that it will be unjust to place them under other categories of women. When we look into history we find that in ancient days caste was not prevalent in society. At that time men and women were treated equally. The women at time were literate, intellect and superior. They were allowed to perform as well as attend rituals, they could marry man of their choice and even the young widows were allowed to remarry. The situation deteriorated when religious books were created. It was strictly followed by the upper caste and equality was overshadowed.

It was well stated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar that the condition of women became worse after Manusmriti which prevented women from education, freedom, choice and wealth. The book was highly criticized by Ambedkar as it stated dalit women as sex object. Even the killing of Dalit women by upper caste men was treated as a minor offence. During that period the society was highly dominated by men and dalit women suffered unimaginable oppression. They were subject to continuous violence, discrimination and inequality. The women entry to political, social, educational and economical sphere was completely closed. Manusmriti was favored at that time because it was highly accepted by the upper caste people. Even though in modern times we have different legislations but still dalit women are oppressed and exploited.¹

As per the report submitted by National Commission for Women it was submitted that dalit women has inadequate representation in politics and had very poor access to education and health.² The National Human Rights Commission in its report also stated that dalit women were not only represented inadequately but also they were denied from basic human rights.³ Further, as per the report submitted by United Nations Development Programme, it was submitted that dalit women were socially excluded and suffered violence in different forms. Furthermore as per the report submitted by Planning Commission of India, it was noted that dalit women were

¹ SS Srivastava, Violence and Dalit Women Resistance in Rural Bihar (Nov. 04, 2024, 10:05 AM), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41920038>

² Ms. Abirami Jotheeswaran, Dalit Women Rise for Justice, (Nov. 04, 2024, 10:50 AM), <https://www.ncdhr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Dalit-Women-Rise-For-Justice-Status-Report-2021.pdf>

³ Jatindra Ram, Emerging New Social Status among Dalits in Bihar, (Nov. 04, 2024, 12:10 AM), <https://www.epw.in/journal/2018/11/notes/emerging-new-social-status-among-dalits-bihar.html>

suppressed from raising their voice and even after continuous violence the instances reported are very less in number.⁴ The report submitted by Human Rights watchdog shows that dalit women are tool of sexual abuse.

Dalit women are placed at the bottom and the issues which they go through are not dealt with seriously. Even when there is movement for Dalits, women are ignored. It is high time to look at class, caste and gender simultaneously. Dalit women have been ignored since ages and the violence against them continues. The atrocities which they go through are most vulgar and it becomes more vulgar when no one raises voice for them. As reported by Human Right Activist we find that gang rape is common among dalit women and these cases should be dealt immediately with utmost care.

In this research paper, the researchers have tried to examine constitutional provisions, international treaties, forms of violence and like issues such as how they are being barred from accessing justice with the help of various case laws with special reference to state of Bihar where not only the government but also judiciary has failed to prosecute the cases of rape against women. From analyzing different aspects we will try to answer that these cases should be given priority with immediate action as well as punishment. Further, the main object is to examine the prevalent nature and form of violence against dalit women, the effectiveness of national and international laws addressing violence against Dalit women and to study various rape cases against dalit women and the role of government and judiciary in ensuring justice

Social Profile of Dalit Women

As per the survey, which counted the people of all castes for the first time since Independence was completed earlier this year and it contains wide data of 216 pages with contains demographic information. This survey clearly states that the poverty level among dalit families is the highest. In Hindu caste system it is true that an individual is limited to his caste since birth to death and during his lives as well. The reports show that there has been improvement in social status of dalit as a result of affirmative action but the day to day instances state that even they are economically better they are treated inferior due to their caste . In an article⁵ that

⁴ Supra at 1

⁵ Sambavi Parthasarathy, Nitika Francis, Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Torching Dalit homes is a recurring crime in BiharData, The Hindu, October 03, 2024

reviews the survey done recently it is pointed out that in Bihar still dalit women are sexually exploited, isolated, humiliated and discriminated.

The study of socio legal status of dalit women is an important because socially we are responsible to analyse and understand their issue for better address. As a member of community and as a rational being we need to raise voice against the ongoing rape cases against dalit women. The supreme law of the land promises equality to all irrespective of their religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. In an event, Minister of SC/ST Welfare of Bihar said that instead huge reporting of rape cases against dalit women, justice is not achieved and this is primarily because of the authorities who hold the duty. The laziness and ignorance of these officials not only affect the reported but also the unreported cases. Further, socio- legal status of dalit women is very poor because the law is failing to address the issue of sexual violence against that takes place against them. The Director of Bihar legal network points that it is very difficult to express the pain of dalit women in words because of the gravity of violence they have suffered.

In state of Bihar, dalit women constitute approximately half of the population and they suffer major demographic challenges as a result of which their socio- economic status gets impacted at large scale. The average working age of dalit women is approximately 40 years while the skilled workers are slightly younger. The age of marriage varies meaning thereby the unskilled gets married at younger age as compared to those who are unskilled. The demographic significance plays vital role in understanding the issues and challenges the dalit women suffers.

Literacy rate among dalit women is comparatively lower as compared to those who are from upper class. Even after constitutional provision which guarantees equality for all they are isolated from getting educated. The main factors behind lower literacy rate includes social and economic barriers, the culture of prioritizing males over females and inadequate infrastructure specially designed for them because they are still treated as untouchables. There are governmental policies which promote education for dalit girls, still they face safety concerns. The families out of fear do not send them to school as they fear that the next victim of sexual violence could be their girl.

The participation of dalit women in formal sector is comparatively very less. They are mainly engaged in informal sector such as agriculture, domestic work or they are daily wage earners.

There are instances which show that their job structure is unstable and they poorly paid. The pay disparity and job security remains the major issue. Further, their access to healthcare is very limited and poor due to the social barrier such as economy, discrimination and inequality.

Dalit women of Bihar are the frequent victims of violence, discrimination, harassment and assault and these cases are unreported due to fear. Their issues need to be addressed separately and it requires multi faced approach because of the gravity of disparity and inequality they suffer.

Forms and frequency of violence

The following are the forms and frequency of violence against dalit women:⁶

- **Physical Violence:** Involves acts that rely on the use of physical force to harm or control a person. Such acts may include hitting, slapping, kicking, choking, and other acts that result in injury or harm to the body.
- **Sexual Violence:** This includes any non-consensual sexual act such as rape, molestation, sexual assault, harassment, or any kind of sexual exploitation. It may occur between partners or outside of an intimate relationship.
- **Emotional and Psychological Violence:** are tactics that make one believe, feel, or act in some specific ways through the manipulation or control of feelings or the psyche. It includes verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, humiliation, or isolation. It also encompasses gaslighting or making a person doubt his reality through distorted truths.
- **Economic Violence:** It takes place when one dominates the other's purse or denies him access to money or prevents him or her from working or education. Economic violence can make somebody dependent and weaken his or her independence and autonomy.
- **Domestic Violence, or Intimate Partner Violence:** This is abuse between partners who are married or cohabiting. Physical, sexual, emotional, and economic may characterize it.

⁶ Ayesha Siddequa Daize and Mst. Shirin Sultana, Casual Analysis of the Violence Against Dalit Women at Munshiganj District of Bangladesh Jaggnath University Journal of Arts, Vol. 9, No. 1, 156-163, (2019)

- **Cultural and Traditional Violence:** Includes harmful practices like child marriage, female genital mutilation, honour killings, and other such practices supported by cultural or traditional belief that infringe the rights and freedom of women.

Case laws and incident considered

World Prevalence: Violence against women and girls is pervasive across every region. According to estimates, in their lifetime, about 1 in 3 women have experienced either physical or sexual violence, mostly at the hands of an intimate partner.

1. **Domestic Violence:** One of the most prevalent abuses and affects millions worldwide. Those women suffer from social stigma, fear, and lack of support; therefore, underreported.
2. **Sexual Violence:** Sex-related violence often occurs within relationships but may occur within a public area, workplace or in conflicts. This form of violence occurs very recurrently with a majority occurring unreported.
3. **Child and adolescent violence:** Sexual abuse, trafficking, and cultural practices are most rampant among young girls worldwide.

The rate of violence varies in different contexts as it cuts across different nations, cultures, and communities. However, being a global issue, systemic change must be the difference maker to safeguard the victims from more harm and abuse.

Bathani Tola Massacre (1996)

“State of Bihar v. Dharmendra Singh & Others” commonly referred to as the Bathani Tola Massacre Case. On 11 July 1996 at Bathani Tola, Bihar, an upper caste Ranvir Sena attacked a Dalit and Muslim community. The butchering left behind 21 dead victims, who were mainly women and children. The massacre was part of several caste-based attacks. It is because most of the previous operations of Ranvir Sena had targeted lower caste villagers. In the year 2009, a Trial Court sentenced 23 members of Ranvir Sena to the court. Among them, three were given the death penalty, while the rest were sent to life imprisonment. These convictions were quashed by the Patna High Court in 2012 on grounds of lack of cogent evidence; all 23 were

acquitted. The acquittals caused public furore at not having received justice.⁷

Balmiki Prasad Rape Case (2003)

In 2003, a Bihar upper caste man, Balmiki Prasad Yadav was accused of raping a minor Dalit girl. This case threw a light upon the issue of caste violence and how Dalit women/girls are vulnerable in rural areas. As very less information about the final judgement of this case is found in public sources since the case is not that high profile national case. This is known to be one of the cases that opened up discussions within the Indian judicial system about matters that affect caste relations, especially how Dalit women deal with crimes committed against them and how such crime can prevent them from exercising their right to access justice.⁸

Khagaria Gang Rape Case (2009)

On 1 October 2009, a minor dalit girl from Khagaria district, Bihar, was allegedly gang-raped by some persons belonging to upper castes. The case exposed caste-based tensions, as the victim girl belonged to the lower caste and the perpetrators to the upper castes. This again brought to the fore the scenario of sexual attacks on women belonging to a deprived community in Bihar's rural areas. There is very little documentation in the public domain regarding the judgment and proceedings pertaining to the Khagaria Gang Rape Case. The case is also famous for throwing into sharp relief the issues regarding the problematic delivery of justice to marginalized communities suffering sexual violence.⁹

Brahmeshwar Singh Rape Case (2010)

Brahmeshwar Singh has been called as one of the founders of the Ranvir Sena, the upper-caste militia in Bihar. He was charged with inciting and becoming a party to the violent crimes including the crimes of heinous rape and massacre against Dalits and other weak castes under the banner of casteism. This is one case that falls under a broader tapestry of violence exercised by the Ranvir Sena against lower-caste groups in Bihar. There are very few public records relating to rape conviction or specific judgement against Brahmeshwar Singh specifically from

⁷Bathani Tola Massacre, (Nov. 05, 2024, 10:50 AM), <https://liberation.org.in/liberation-2023-august/1996-bathani-tola-massacre>

⁸ Balmiki Prasad Rape Case, (Nov. 05, 2024, 11:50 AM), <https://www.indianet.nl/dalitatroc0509.html>

⁹ Khagaria Gang Rape Case, (Nov. 05, 2024, 12:30 PM), <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/national/minor-girl-gang-raped-by-three-in-bihars-khagaria>

the year 2010. However, he has been indicted on several counts of violent crimes operating under the name of Ranvir Sena, and he had charges of multiple cases against him during his lifetime.¹⁰

Kaimur District Rape Case (2011)

In 2011, in the Kaimur district in Bihar, a minor girl was reportedly raped and outraged as the nature of the crime was brutal. In this case, the issues were caste-based because the victim belonged to a downtrodden community. Information regarding the final verdict and court trial is not available in the Kaimur District Rape Case. In the case, clear evidence emerged of ongoing problems in how justice could be applied to matters regarding sexual violence committed against marginalized communities in Bihar.¹¹

Madhubani Rape Case (2012)

In 2012 in Madhubani district, Bihar, a woman was allegedly gangraped. The case made national headlines due to the gruesome nature of the crime. The case again focused the spotlight on issues relating to violence against women and the poor state of affairs for women in rural Bihar. Public records cannot provide much information as far as the judgement or verdict of the Madhubani Rape Case in 2012 is concerned. In this case, more importance was shed on the need to have stiffer protections and justice for women in rural areas.¹²

Muzaffarpur District Rape Case (2014)

In 2014, alleged gang rape cases among minor girls were reportedly surfacing in Muzaffarpur district in Bihar, thus spreading anger widely within the general public. The case again raised to the fore issues of insecurity over the safety of young girls and widespread sexual violence in the region. Public resources hardly have details of the final judgment in the Muzaffarpur District Rape Case of 2014. The case, as mentioned earlier, created a rehash in the discussions

¹⁰ Brahmeshwar Singh Rape Case , (Nov. 05, 2024, 12:50 PM), https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/protests-in-bhojpur-and-patna-over-gang-rape-114101701061_1.html

¹¹ Kaimur District Rape Case, (Nov. 05, 2024, 1:30 PM), <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/patna-news/man-allegedly-rapes-minor-at-gunpoint-case-registered-under-pocso-act-in-bihar-s-kaimur-district-101681111223985.html>

¹² Madhubani Rape Case, (Nov. 05, 2024, 2:30 PM), <https://www.opindia.com/2024/05/4-awarded-life-sentence-for-gang-rape-of-minor-hindu-girl-in-madhubani/>

on need for efficient legal actions and measures and protection of minors against sexual violence.¹³

Purnea Rape Case (2015)

In 2015, in the Purnea district, Bihar, a young woman was raped according to complaints. It reported by drawing the attention due to brutality. It identified that sexual violence against women is an issue in Bihar, and gender violence against the female gender is broached about the safety of women in the area. The public sources have sparse details regarding the final judgment of Purnea Rape Case in the year 2015. The case revealed the problems still persisting in the region concerning the well-timed delivery of justice for victims of sexual violence.¹⁴

Vaishali Gang Rape Case (2016)

In the year 2016, inside Vaishali district, Bihar, a young woman was reportedly abducted by a gang of men and allegedly gang-raped. This created an extreme public outcry.

This crime brought to the fore very seriously the issue of the lack of safety for women in that region as well as the enormous prevalence of sexual violence in that region. From the public record, there is hardly any detail with which the final judgement of the Vaishali Gang Rape Case in 2016 can be identified. Such a case highlighted the need for greater effective legal protection and speedier justice for victims of sexual assault in Bihar.¹⁵

Patna District Rape Case (2017)

A minor girl was gang raped in the Patna district, Bihar. This incident sparked concerns in the state capital over women's safety. The rape case brought to the fore sexual crime issues in urban centers and called for stringent measures for women's safety. There is sparse information available on the final judgment through publicly accessed records. This case underlined the urgency of legal action and providing justice for the victims of sexual violence.¹⁶

¹³ Muzaffarpur District Rape Case, (Nov. 05, 2024, 3:30 PM), <https://www.thequint.com/gender/muzaffarpur-case-no-rape-says-police-family-disagrees-what-happened>

¹⁴ Purnea Rape Case, (Nov. 05, 2024, 4:30 PM), <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/10-yr-old-girl-raped-in-bihars-purnea-clay-and-sand-inserted-in-genitals-1208081.html>

¹⁵ Vaishali Gang Rape Case, (Nov. 05, 2024, 5:30 PM), <https://www.sconline.com/blog/post/tag/gang-rape/>

¹⁶ Patna District Rape Case, (Nov. 05, 2024, 6:30 PM), <https://www.livelaw.in/high-court/patna-high-court/patna-high-court-acquits-accused-rape-case-finds-victim-testimony-unreliable-275490>

International convention and declaration for protection of women

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is an international convention adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 with regard to the promotion and protection of gender equality and the rights of women. This is known as the “international bill of rights for women,” which elaborates on overall standards in the elimination of discrimination against women in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres.

Contracting countries commit to guarantee women’s equality, eradicate any law or practice that discriminates against women, and try to change the cultural and social atmosphere that allows gender prejudice to prevail. Matters relating to equality in pay, education, political rights, health care, protection from domestic violence, and more are handled by the CEDAW committee. Countries which ratify CEDAW are required to report periodically to the CEDAW Committee on steps taken toward the implementation of Convention objectives. Country significance

CEDAW has proven to be a transformative force globally with regard to shaping and promoting gender equality reforms. In fact, these conventions have sparked legal and policy reforms in many countries, leading to the emergence of domestic violence laws, laws against gender-based discrimination, and even workplace harassment laws. Aside from the legal changes, CEDAW has supported advocacy and mobilization efforts and has, consequently, empowered civil society organizations to hold governments accountable as well.

Although the practice of CEDAW’s standards continues facing formidable challenges in full implementation, and despite several countries holding reservations to some of its provisions, the convention remains crucial. It is a worldwide standard setting instrument while it continues to affect the normative gender equality framework in the world, forcing societies to move further toward greater inclusion, protection, and empowerment of women. Because of CEDAW, nations work cooperatively together to smash systemic obstacles against sustainable

development and human rights.¹⁷

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women:

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women was an international declaration, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993. It aimed to end all kinds of violence against women across the globe, observing that violence against women is a severe violation of their rights and a significant obstacle to gender equality.

The Declaration defines violence against women as any act that causes, or is calculated or likely to cause, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty. Within it are domestic violence, sexual abuse, harassment, trafficking, and all other forms of harm-based discrimination against women because of their gender.

This declaration will engage governments and societies with active steps on the protection of women, prevention of violence, and support for victims. Support will be given to the enforcement of laws and policies that punish the perpetrators but also cover shelters and support services for survivors, raising awareness, and imparting education targeted at changing these harmful attitudes.

In brief, the Declaration is an international commitment toward a safer world for women, recognizing the right to live free of violence. The Declaration has been instrumental for women's rights organizations to mobilize new policies and support systems in the world for making violence against women a paramount issue in the global struggle for human rights and equality.¹⁸

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was developed during the Fourth World

¹⁷ Aparna Jaykumar, All About Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Domestic Violence Against Women (CEDAW), 1979, (Nov. 05, 2024, 10:50 AM), <https://blog.ipleaders.in/convention-elimination-forms-discrimination-women-cedaw-1979/>

¹⁸ Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, (Nov. 06, 2024, 10:50 AM) <https://blog.ipleaders.in/offences-against-women-internationallaws/#:~:text=In%201993%2C%20the%20United%20Nations,home%20and%20elsewhere%20in%20society>

Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China, in 1995. Representatives of 189 countries gathered there and prepared the declaration thus devised, which has set a global agenda for advancing women's rights and achieving gender equality.

The critical areas of major challenge include poverty, education, health, violence, economic opportunity, and political participation. Government, community, and organization action in all countries of the world is called to take concrete actions for women's empowerment and removal of barriers to equality as identified by the Platform for Action. These include the eradicating of gender-based violence and ensuring equal access to education. It's also given as a goal, the recognition of the imperative role that women's economic independence plays. Lastly, full participation of women should be encouraged in decision-making roles in both the public and private sectors.

The significance of the Beijing Declaration is in the way it helped set standards and obligations for gender equality to be met and observed around the globe. It has become the roadmap for action inspiring the countries and forcing meaningful changes within societies. Despite the difficulties, the Beijing Platform for Action remains a powerful guide toward creating a more equal world for women and girls.¹⁹

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and Domestic violence (Istanbul Convention):

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence is known as the Istanbul Convention. It is a landmark treaty adopted in 2011, protecting women from all forms of violence, including domestic violence, sexual violence, and harmful practices like forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The three major purposes of the Istanbul Convention are:

1. Prevention: End the violence from happening through attitude change, awareness, gender equality.
2. Protection: Give legal aid, shelter, health care services to the victims – women.

¹⁹Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, (Nov. 06, 2024, 11:50 AM), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>

3. Prosecution: Punish the perpetrator-the crime of violence must be taken seriously before the law.

This Convention also calls upon countries to enhance their legal machinery and, in particular, educate and train professionals who are required to deal with violence victims, such as the police and medical service providers.²⁰

Importance:

The importance of the Istanbul Convention is paramount since it forms the very first legally binding instrument in Europe to distinctly focus on prevention and combating violence against women. That makes it stand out as the first clear standards of obligation for countries upon which governments can act powerfully in favor of women's rights. It creates an atmosphere of safety among European women through prevention, support for victims, and demands strong laws against perpetrators.

Impact on physical and mental health

Rape has a very deep effect on the physical and psychological level of victims, probably causing severe long-term effects.

Physical Effects:

Injury and Trauma: Rape may cause physical injuries like bruising, lacerations, fractures, and genital injuries. In some cases, rape can also lead to STIs or unwanted pregnancies.

Chronic Health Conditions: Victims suffer from chronic pain, gynecological problems and complications associated with trauma. It may result in a long term impact on reproductive health if complications from violence or infections arise.

Physical Stress: Trauma can affect the immune system and make them more susceptible to

²⁰ The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, (Nov. 07, 2024, 11:50 AM) <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/istanbul-convention-preventing-and-combating-violence-against-women-and-domestic-violence/>

getting diseased and other health problems.²¹

Mental and Emotional Impact:

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Most survivors experience PTSD that takes various shapes: flashbacks, nightmares, extreme anxiety, and emotional numbing.

Depression and Anxiety: People develop shame, guilt, fear, and powerlessness; they end up suffering from depression, anxiety, and panic attacks. Victims pull away from society and are unable to lead a normal life.

Self-esteem and Identity: Rape affects the self-esteem of the victim, and they would start to accuse themselves of being worthless. Victims also suffer from distrust issues and have problems in relationships

Suicidal Thoughts: Some survivors experience suicidal thoughts and commit suicide.

Rape has severely adverse physical and psychological effects on the victim, making it rather a more hectic process for the victim to come out of the trauma through medical and counseling assistance. Therefore, both short-term and long-term efforts need to be focused on healing the wounds of the victims and rebuilding their lives.²²

Main Challenges for Dalit Women

There are many challenges faced by dalit women. Few main challenges faced by dalit women in Bihar are enlisted below:²³

Access to resources

In Bihar, dalit women face a lot of challenges while carrying out multiple roles within family and community. The main reason is lack of adequate resources and good infrastructure. The poverty level is high, they are landless and they rely on upper caste for employment where

²¹Physical effects on dalit women, (Nov. 07, 2024, 11:50 AM)

https://www.worldfoodprize.org/documents/filelibrary/youth_programs/2022_gyi_student_papers/Sivaprakash_Rithvika_E01A71106C7A1.pdf

²² Mental effects on dalit women, (Nov. 07, 2024, 12:45 PM)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/136346156600300211>

²³ Challenges faced by Dalit women in Bihar, (Nov. 07, 2024, 5:10 PM) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41920038>

they are exploited and sexually harassed. Whenever they try to step out of the house in search of employment for livelihood, they meet with violence. Due to caste and gender classification dalit women are subjected to direct and structured violence which leads to poverty and loss of dignity. It is seen that they lack even basic resources and when they try to get it from non-dalit area, they are attacked. Government barely cares to invest in the improvement of their infrastructure to protect them from inequality. When gender and caste discrimination is combined, they are at the bottom of the socio- economic scale.

Women control over land

It is seen that dalit women are landless as a result of which they don't have even food security. In general they don't own and work for dominant class. When dalit women go for work they are collectively exploited, assaulted and harassed. When the demand for wage is made, in return of their effort they are subjected to physical, verbal and sexual violence. Since they have least access to employment they need to struggle for their livelihood. There are incidents where dalit women are raped and assaulted while doing their work in agricultural land owned by the dominant classes.

Demand for social right

In Bihar, dalit women's voice often remain unheard whenever they raise it for asserting their basic human rights which includes equality, housing, drinking water, education, etc. The dalit women even don't have proper maternal healthcare facilities. The scheme in the name of SC and ST Welfare Department aims to ensure all round development among the dalit community. Through this scheme various programs are being run by the government but due to bad implementation mechanism the group for the scheme is made is unable to avail the benefit. Another such scheme is "Vikas Mitra", which works for the progress of mahadalits. The scheme is focused in organizing various programmes for dalit. It also states that there must be dalit women representation for better implementation. But again the scheme is a big failure, as even dalit are unable to meet the basic resources to meet up their livelihood. These schemes will only benefit the community once their demand for social right is achieved.

Violence in form of rape, assault, discrimination

Several reports show that dalit women suffers both gender and caste violence. The report of

UN special Rapporteur has observed that dalit women are object of targeted violence, even they harassed and raped by the dominant section of the society. Further, their rape cases do not gain media coverage, even the police denies for lodging FIR, even if anyhow FIR is lodge no proper investigation is done. Just in one state Bihar the cases of rape against dalit women continues to be increasing but the cry for justice is almost unheard and uncovered. There are heinous instances of rape, violence and discrimination against them but the judiciary, the government has failed to address it. The quantum of punishment is not proportional to the gravity of crime.

Barriers in assessing to justice

The laws such as Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 exist to protect the dalit women but the enforcement of law is weak. Many dalit women are still unaware of their legal rights and mechanism. Police and judicial system in India are often seen to be biased and influenced by caste. Many a times they refuse to register complains and they discourage women from filing complaints. Dalit women who lodge complain suffers from threat and face further violence. The economic marginalization reduces their ability to access legal assistance. The judicial process is biased and slow often leading dalit women in a prolonged state of limbo without ant resolution to their cases.

Suggestions

The following suggestions may be considered for the empowerment of dalit women:

1. Government should take steps to increase awareness among the dalit women about their rights and duties. This should be backed by technological information so that it may reach to both urban and rural areas.
2. Programmes for the elimination of exploitation in all forms and protection of women rights and interest should be promoted.
3. Cooperations should be strengthened through extending monetary incentives and sustained monitoring.
4. Skill up gradation programmes should be carried for development of dalit women. For this local NGOs should be encouraged to promote incentives gaining skills through

training.

5. Social security schemes should be introduced especially in unorganized sector because lot of dalit women work there.
6. A system that promotes social justice that is responsible for social welfare and development of dalit women is suggested. The control should be in the hand leader who is unbiased and in case of malpractices heavy fine should be imposed.
7. Development and governance have undergone a paradigm change. Community-based organisations are being empowered by democratic decentralisation, collaboration with nongovernmental organisations, participatory development, and sustainable human empowerment in development and governance.
8. Education is essential to the empowerment process, and educational facilities should be designed to meet specific demands, such as varied vocational training and employment-oriented education. They can receive training in village crafts, small-scale and cottage industries, and other professions.
9. Given the quantity and severity of Dalit women's issues, voluntary organisations need to be promoted in all spheres.
10. Young Dalit children must be raised with moral principles and ethics. Human rights education, which respects all people regardless of their caste, race, creed, or sex, ought to be a required part of the curriculum in schools and colleges.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy that tackles Dalit women's particular socioeconomic difficulties as well as the intersectional prejudice they encounter is necessary for their advancement. It is imperative to dismantle the long-standing caste, gender, and class obstacles that limit their access to economic, medical, and educational possibilities. Affirmative action and legal changes are only one aspect of empowering Dalit women; other strategies include community-based projects, cultural changes, and Dalit women's active involvement in decision-making. Dalit women may flourish and reach their full potential in a more just and equitable society if we give them a voice, promote inclusivity, and guarantee

equal opportunity. The advancement of society as a whole is contingent upon the empowerment and advancement of its most marginalized members, making the empowerment of Dalit women not just a moral imperative but a crucial step toward true social equality.