

ISSN : 2395-4132

THE EXPRESSION

An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

Bimonthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access e-Journal



Impact Factor 3.9

Vol. 8 Issue 3 June 2022

Editor-in-Chief : Dr. Bijender Singh

Email : editor@expressionjournal.com

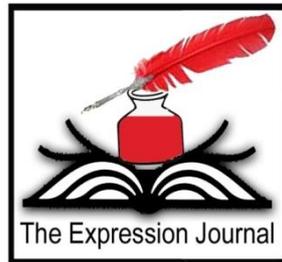
www.expressionjournal.com

The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 3.9)

www.expressionjournal.com

ISSN: 2395-4132



INTONED CRIES AND MEDIA'S FLOUT IN PROJECTING ATROCITIES ON DALIT WOMEN

Lt. Dr. Biva Sammadar

Lecturer in Sociology

Surendranath College, Kolkata, West Bengal

.....

Abstract

The deliberative democracy of India has utterly failed in providing justice to Dalit women. Indian Constitution tends to safeguard the rights of Dalits but Dalit women are the marginalized among the marginalized. In fact, triple marginalization can be seen in their case just because they are exploited due to their caste, class and gender. They are exploited both at home and society. Even the men of their family do not want to change the status quo of these women just because they want their dominion over women. Consequently, Dalit women are neither safe nor satisfied. The problem becomes more serious when they have to go to outside of their home for work or job. This is the place where they are more vulnerable to rape, eve teasing or exploitation. There are numerous illustrations of rape, violence and lynching of Dalit women. Their charred remains are found and the people do not show the least clemency in doing such inhuman acts with women. When this is the case of a Dalit woman, Indian media also seems to be reluctant for the coverage for such incidents just because Indian media has majority of the upper caste people. Police also do not easily lodge FIR and try to persuade the members of the victim to hush up the matter on the pretext that it will bring infamy to their family. In this context, media in the forms of books, magazines, Facebook, Whats App, LinkedIn, Telegram etc. have proved much beneficial to them because the media personnel on the TVs are not honest in the coverage of news related to justice to Dalit women. The present paper showcases all types of tyranny, subjugation, oppression and exploitation of Dalit women and how television media do not give saturation coverage of such events and the mass-media especially books and social networks are helping them in getting justice.

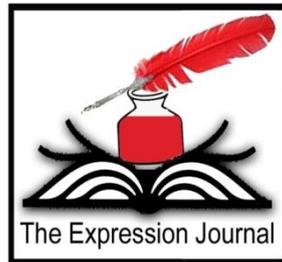
Keywords

Dalit Women, Subjugation, Atrocity, Exploitation, Mainstream Society, Media, Caste, Injustice.

.....

Vol. 8 Issue 3 (June 2022)

Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Bijender Singh



INTONED CRIES AND MEDIA'S FLOUT IN PROJECTING ATROCITIES ON DALIT WOMEN

Lt. Dr. Biva Sammadar

Lecturer in Sociology

Surendranath College, Kolkata, West Bengal

.....

A Brahman, Kshatriya, or Vaishya man can sexually exploit any Shudra woman.

– (Manusmitri IX.25)

Caste sometimes becomes a curse for a lower caste person and in the context of a Dalit women, life becomes a hell when they find exploitation waiting for them at every step. From where she can hope for the help when she is discriminated as a daughter in her parents' home? She is not given equal status like her brother and is considered a *paraya dhan* (others' property). When she steps outside for getting education or job, etc., she is not safe and the people like vulture try to chomp them. Even after molestation, parents sit silent and media and police do not help them due to which many girls and women commit suicide in depression.

Media can be called the power of a nation as it projects the real pictures of the society. It is imperative that media must be honest in projecting the image of the society. It is a powerful tool to create awareness, disseminate knowledge, impart education and portray the incidents of our day to day life. It is due to media that we are able to get the minute information of the events happening around us, in our state, country and across the globe. That is why the role of media is immense in keeping us updated and to bring justice to the weaker sections of the society. When the rights of the deprived sections of the society are infringed, even the society overlooks and officers concerned also ignore, at that time media can be very helpful to the marginalized sections. But all this is possible only when the correspondent concerned is honest, bold and is interested to take this challenge.

Now the definition and the concept of media have also widened with the time. Every year new means of media are emerging. Few years back, only newspapers, magazines, radios and televisions were the main sources of media but these days, there are so many social networks through which people are getting benefit.

The main problem for taking birth as a girl is that she has to remain under the control of others throughout her life. As a girl she has to remain under the control of her father, after marriage she has to obey her husband and in her old age, she remains depended on her sons. She remains under the control of others. It has been stated in *Manusmriti*:

Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence. (*Manusmriti IX.3*)

This is the stark reality of women but the more pitiable plight can be noticed of these women who belong to any lower caste. Class is not so much bigger issue in India as even the poor upper caste women live their life with respect but the lower caste women's lives are full of challenges. The lower caste women remain the easy target of the upper caste men. There are numerous examples in our day to day life when the news of Dalit women's rape, beating, stripping, flogging, fustigating, lynching etc. can be easily heard. Dalit women are suppressed in their homes as Gail Omvedt also remarks, "the inability of the low castes to repress their women was their shame" (Omvedt 189).

Clarinda Still postulates in her book *Dalit Women Honour and Patriarchy in South India* that a Dalit woman has to accept her husband however he is, "Adulterer, tramp or thief, a husband is a husband" (Still 163). They have to face all kind of domestic and physical violence. Moreover, they are raped by their own husbands: Valerie Mason-John writes:

Rape within marriage is quite common. Often men force their wives to have sex; the husband feels it's his right and duty because she is his wife. He may beat her, and she rarely says anything to anyone about it, because that would bring shame upon her. In any case there is nowhere for her to go... (Mason-John 57-58)

The mainstream historiography was produced by the upper caste Hindu writers in which all the crucial issues related to untouchables were ignored. There are several Dalit women's autobiographies in which Dalit women have poured out their pain. Among them Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*, Bama's *Karukku*, Yashica Dutt's *Coming out as Dalit*, Mallika Amar Shaikh's *I Want to Destroy Myself*, Baby Kamble's *The Prison We Broke*, Phoolan Devi's *I Phoolan Devi*, etc. autobiographies/memoirs are opening the intimate spaces of Dalit women. Bama's *Sangati: Events* is her community autobiography in which she has described the trials and tribulations of Dalit women.

In order to understand the pain of Dalit women, one needs to read Dalit women's autobiographies. There are several autobiographies which have been written in regional languages such as Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, Tamil etc. but among all these, Dalit English autobiographies are more appealing and near to the hearts of the readers. The fact cannot be denied that while translating a book, the real essence of meaning gets distorted and any autobiography can give full enjoyment in reading when it is read in its original language. Apart from it, Dalit women have written poetry and short stories also in their different languages. This is the role of women in publishing industry.

Dalit women have made a mark publishing industry after getting influenced by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Now time has changed and Dalit women have been crossing the boundaries and have become famous worldwide due to media coverage. Among them Yashica Dutt, Meena Kandasamy, Sujata Gidla etc. are prominent names. These women have won much popularity over TV channels also. Even Facebook, Twitter, Whats App, Telegram and other social media networks have also helped Dalit women win popularity.

The sorry state of the things is that Dalit women have to face exploitation at every place and it is due to lack of financial support. Dalit girls and women of the rural areas are deprived of the basic amenities of life and they have to go to work in the fields or the construction sites or brick kilns so that they may financially help their families. Even those women who have to go to job in odd hours are not safe. Emancipation of women from a patriarchal set up is equally necessary for the formation of an egalitarian society.

The main obstacle on their path is that they are poor, weak and powerless. It is rightly said that education can empower Dalit women but for that also they need money. It is not

possible in some situations because in tribal areas and villages, many Dalit girls and women are living life below poverty lines and feel trapped like a caged bird. Many poverty-stricken women are raped at their work places and it is common these days that media does not support them to get justice. The major reason behind it that Indian media has the majority of upper caste people.

The media led by *savarna* people do not want to give the coverage of such news because the media personnel think that it is their birthright to show what they want. There are numerous examples where media also remain silent.

There was a teenager girl Shabnam who was gang raped in 2013. Her case was in court and media was not paying attention to her. She was threatened to remain silent and take back the case and finally she had to take court protection. According to the NCRBs latest report, more than 405,861 women reported assaults and this data was more than 7% as was reported the precious years i.e. in 2018. Out of above data, total 13,273 assaults including 3,486 cases of rape were reported by women belonging to Dalit communities. Among all these, there were crimes of rape, stripping, kidnapping, beating and many of them were lynched also after rape.

Mashaal holds the views around eight percent Dalit women do not report the crime even after rape just because of fear of infamy and social pressure. In most cases these women and even their family members are threatened and intimidated by the powerful perpetrators, goons, politically powerful and economically rich people. It is a strange thing that even media and police also remain silent in such cases. They do not consider it in the category of rape if it happens with a Dalit woman. Mary C. Grey writes in her book *A Cry for Dignity: Religion, Violence and the Struggle of Dalit Women in India*:

The reality is that Dalit women suffer violence on a spectrum ranging from insults, accusations of low morals and loose living, sexual harassment of many sorts, to beatings and even gang rapes. In fact, when a Dalit woman is raped it is often not called 'rape' and it is not reported as such. (Grey 44)

Pooja was another girl who was kidnapped and gangraped by 12 men when she was seventeen years old. Mamta was also a minor when she was gang-raped by the upper caste men at the age of 12 only. The Khap Panchayat issued verdict that one of the rapists will have to marry her. Even the father of the rape-victim girl did not protest as he was a daily wage earner. After this incident, Mamta was locked in a room and both her husband, his relatives and friends kept raping her. He describes her pain in the following words:

"It was like a cage. I lived in a small room. My husband would lock the door from outside. He would not otherwise touch me as I was a Dalit but would forcibly have sex whenever he wanted. Every day, he would bring other men and they would also rape me. I was like a fly stuck in mud – I could not live and could not fly away either."
(www.thecitizen.in)

There are some limitations of Dalit women. Being daily bread-earners, they do not have sufficient money to lodge and pursue court cases. They are able to hire a single lawyer by difficulty whereas the powerful penetrators hire ten to fifteen lawyers to fight their cases. They keep some hooligans and big cars in order to realize Dalit victims that they cannot harm them in any way because power is in their hands. Most of the judges also belong to upper caste people. Suraj Yengde writes in his book *Caste Matters* that the power is in the hands of Brahmins and other upper caste people. "The government as a state institution is overwhelmingly run by legislators and ministers belonging to the Brahmin caste" (Yengde 73). Suraj Yengde vehemently criticizes Brahmins and Baniyas in this book:

The Brahmin in India has deployed every strategy to be the supreme lord from the rituals before birth after birth to marriage up until death and even after death; the Brahmin has designed strategies to loot people. (Yengde 72)

Injustice meted out to Dalit women is heart rending in many cases. The human cruelty can be seen in many cases, "Raping Dalit women is also seen as a way of humiliating Dalit men, powerless to retaliate" (Webster 17). The powerful hoodlums take revenge from Dalit men through their wives, "Parading Dalit women naked around the village or town is another way of humiliating Dalit men through the suffering of their wives" (Grey 45). There are many cases in Indian villages where women were beaten after stripping them and Dalit men, in most of such cases remain helpless to "protect their women" which is again perceived as a human weakness and vulnerability. (Dietrich 204). Media's silence in such cases is absolutely condemnable.

In most cases rural Dalit women lack economic power and they are generally reliant on the upper caste powerful landlord people for their livelihood. The problem of justice becomes more serious when the assailant is the victim's employer. In that case of sexual violence, seeking justice becomes a serious issue. It is generally seen the culprits and penetrators wield their economic and political power to silent the witnesses. They coerce and harass the survivors and the witnesses. It is also seen that such victims are hounded or escaped from their home or village after giving some money.

Dalit women's sufferings do not come to an end so easily as the patriarchal society of India wants to exploit them by hook or by crook. There are rituals of temple prostitutions in few states. Devdasi tradition is among them. Burnad writes, "During temple festivals she dances and earns her livelihood. She is not treated with respect and publicly humiliated by men who harass her sexually...Men take her as a partner, exploit her and leave her with a child" (Burnad 3). This tradition was prevalent in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan etc. states but now it has been ended completely by framing strict law on it. This ghastly practice of Devdasi has spoilt the lives of many innocent girls. Mason-John Valerie also holds the same views and sheds light on the dark side of this tradition in the book *Broken Voices: Untouchable Women Speak Out*:

This child's mother, persuaded to relinquish her daughter – for a price – did so in the belief that her husband would be cured from his illness. There was a genuine marriage ceremony: I had a proper marriage, with guests throwing flowers and rice at me. My name was placed on a register, and the temple people told my mother that she had to remember that I was married to Khandoba, and that I had to be completely loyal to this god for the rest of my life. (John-mason 45)

Conclusively, Dalit women feel hapless and helpless when they find all their ways bleak and blocked. Even their family members also succumb in front of powerful people and many Dalit women have to bear with the scar on their psyche and many of them commit suicide. Numerous girls are murdered after rape and media dominated by the upper caste people do not find it worth telecasting on their channels. Suraj Yengde criticizes this mentality in the following words, "Every major enterprise in India functions under the strict dictum of Brahmins and other dominant castes" (Yengde 71). Mass Media must show human concerns in the context of Dalit women and should show what is right and real. Dr. B. Shailashree and Dr. B. Shailashree aptly perceive:

Mass media have the capacity to reach to far, wide and diversified audience and cutting across all barriers. Popular mass media such as news papers, magazines, radio,

The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 3.9)

www.expressionjournal.com

ISSN: 2395-4132

television, Cinema and telecommunications represent a symbolic power of social control. The modern world is recognized as information era. ICT and the convergence of media technology is not only an instrument of social control but also an economic resource. The power of media is gauged by its reach to the people. (Shailashree and Shailashree 55)

Works Cited

- Burnad, Fathima. "Speech on Dalit Women, Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination." *Geneva*, 8-9 August 2002.
- Dietrich, Gabriele. "The Relationship Between Women's Movement and Dalit Movements: Case Study and Conceptual Analysis" in Gabriele Dietrich, *A New Thing on Earth, Hopes and Fears Facing Feminist Theology*. Delhi: ISPK for TTS, Madurai, 2001.
- Grey, Mary C.A *Cry for Dignity: Religion, Violence and the Struggle of Dalit Women in India*. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.
- <https://www.kractivist.org/the-rape-of-Dalit-women-its-all-about-gender-class>.
- <https://www.thecitizen.in/.../7/19576/The-Rape-and-Death-Of-A-Dalit-Woman>
- Manu. *Manu Smriti: The Laws of Manu with the Bhasya of Medhatithi*. Translated by Ganga Natha Jha. Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1920.
- Mason-John, Valerie. *Broken Voices: Untouchable Women Speak Out*. New Delhi: India Research Press, 2008.
- Omvedt, Gail. "Towards a Theory of Brahmanic Patriarchy." *Economic and Political Weekly*. 35(4) (22 January, 2000). pp. 187-190.
- Shailashree, B. and B. Shailashree. "Media and Political Empowerment of Women in Kolar District of Karnataka- A Study." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*. vol. 2 no. 9. September 2013. pp. 55-59
- Still, Clarinda. *Dalit Women Honour and Patriarchy in South India*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017.
- Webster, John C.B. *From Role to Identity: Dalit Christian Women in Transition*. Delhi: ISPK CTE 13, 1995.
- Yengde, Suraj. *Caste Matters*. New Delhi: Penguin Random House India, 2019.