Dalits in Different Eyes and Their Identity Crisis

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Abstract

The author has portrayed Dalits from diverse theoretical and philosophical standpoints. The main objective of this article is to explore the Dalits and their identity crisis from various insights. Documental study/desk review is used. A critical approach to generating information, united with thematic analysis in data interpretation, and the use of both digital and manual libraries, are the core areas of study in this field. These sources yielded the knowledge that Dalits no matter whether they are male or female are rich because of their traditional skills, occupations and distinctive capacities. Despite these strengths, they have been struggling for their identities. Dalit women are triply oppressed as stigmatized Dalit, as Dalit women, and as powerless beings. For generations, Dalits including women have been subjected to various forms of exclusion, denial, dominance, and discrimination. Dalit women's case is even worse as they are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. When viewed from various viewpoints, Dalits continue to be intricate and varied. Questions of representation, empowerment, and belonging continue to influence Dalits' individual and collective identities as they traverse this challenging social, political, and cultural landscapes.

People in these communities frequently experience an identity crisis as a result of these perceptions of Dalits, divided between the desire for greater social inclusion and their traditional caste-based identity. Their fight for recognition and justice within a broader context of historical injustices and international power dynamics emphasises their experiences and voices that are often ignored in mainstream discourse.

Keywords*: Caste, Dalits, Identity, Marginalized, Theories and Untouchables*

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Introduction

When the author studied *Dalits* from several theoretical viewpoints, a multifaceted interaction between social, economic, racial, and cultural factors was revealed. This literature gave me the understanding that they have been struggling for their identity for a long time despite their special abilities and traditional skills. Agarwal and Levien (2020) express Marxist perspectives on *Dalits* and perceive them through the lens of class struggle, with their marginalization being understood as a direct outcome of economic inequality and capitalist exploitation. This viewpoint highlights how the governing economic classes make use of *Dalits* as a marginalized labour class, which keeps them at a socioeconomic disadvantage. This discourse centres on structural injustices and the necessity of class-based uprisings to demolish the institutions that sustain their marginalization.

A postcolonial viewpoint, on the other hand, emphasizes how *Dalits'* marginalization has been made worse by colonial legacies. This method looks at how social differences were further cemented by colonial control, which institutionalized and strengthened caste hierarchies. As indicated by Witsoe (2013), postcolonial specialists contend that colonialism's effects can still be seen in modern social systems, affecting *Dalits'* place in India's socioeconomic hierarchy. To address the systemic injustices that *Dalits* experience, this point of view highlights the necessity of decolonizing both historical narratives and contemporary institutional practices.

Conversely, the symbolic and cultural aspects of *Dalit* identity and struggle are the main emphasis of a cultural studies approach. Narayan (2009) long ago says through literary works, social activities, and cultural expressions, this method investigates how *Dalits* negotiate their identity and claim their rights. It draws attention to how important *Dalit* voices are and how they challenge prevailing myths and stereotypes. This approach emphasizes the significance of recognizing and appreciating *Dalit* contributions to social discourse and cultural production by focusing on cultural practices and the politics of representation.

The diverse ways in which *Dalits* are revealed highlight the complexity of their identities and experiences. Prakash (2009) though old in writing articulates that *Dalits* are acknowledged as accomplished business people who have made substantial economic contributions through creative endeavor. This viewpoint emphasizes their agency and capacity to go past socioeconomic hurdles, showcasing their fortitude and spirit of entrepreneurship in the face of structural challenges. The main objective of this article is

to explore *Dalits* from various perspectives and their identity crisis by analyzing existing research and literatures.

Objectives

The main objective of this article is to explore the *Dalits* and their identity crisis from various insights. Specifically, the author aimed to explore the social perception and stereotyping of *Dalits* in Nepalese society. To analyze the impact of caste-based discrimination on the personal and collective identity of *Dalits* is another objective of this article.

Method

This is a qualitative study. To accomplish the objectives of this article, different national and international literatures have been reviewed. In this study, the author has used documental evaluation from various sources. Both digital and manual libraries are valuable fields of study, allowing access to a diverse range of materials that the author has used to explore information. Digital libraries have provided convenience and enormous resources. Documental research entails collecting and analyzing existing documents to create insights and knowledge. A critical approach has been applied to assess the trustworthiness and relevancy of sources, which has allowed for a more in-depth study and interpretation of the data. Thematic analysis has been used which aided in categorizing and understanding the materials. A descriptive presentation is applied to summarize the data in a clear and orderly manner, providing a summary of the important points.

Findings and Discussion

Dalits as Skilled Entrepreneurs

Dalits are known as skilled entrepreneurs. Traditionally, they possess adept business which overcome financial difficulties. They have been recognized to be enterprising in a variety of industries, such as manufacturing, services, and agriculture, despite encountering discrimination and systemic obstacles (Prakash, 2009). Thus, they have been the agency to create their economic opportunities. As a result of having less access to formal employment and educational opportunities, they have been marginalized along with the import of foreign goods and supplies.

Knowledge, skills, and technology related to tailoring/sewing clothes, making and playing the bands, making the pots of iron, silver, and other metals, works of leather, making jewelry, making, and playing Sarangi, making and sharpening the iron weapons

like scissors, were the *Dalits'* traditional occupations. Through these occupations, they have been known as contributors to the agricultural production, industrial manufacturing, and service sectors. Chakravartty (2007) stated if the patent rights are given and helped marketize their products, these assets can help empower and sustain *Dalits* in their occupation and emphasize the inclusive development of this community and nation (Moayed, 2021). As stated by Krumboltz, Mitchell & Jones (1976, p.71-81), the traditional social system of the *Dalits* is reflected in occupational choice and knowledge of the traditional skills of the individuals.

Ramabadran & Paswan (2021) rightly stated that *Dalit* entrepreneurs defy stereotypes and promote greater social changes by utilizing their abilities and local knowledge to strengthen and diversify national economies. Creating self-employment, it has sustained to advocate for policies and support mechanisms that empower *Dalit* entrepreneurs, recognizing their potential to drive inclusive economic development and reduce disparities embedded in caste-based discrimination. In this sense, they are self-entrepreneurs and can create the jobs by their own. They have traditional knowledge and skills which has supported to preserve the national identity.

Dalits as Materialism-Oriented Beings

Dalits are often portrayed as individuals whose material circumstances profoundly influence their spiritual and philosophical outlooks. As specified by Velassery & Patra (2018), materialism encompasses not only the state of the economy but also the real-life challenges of socioeconomic marginalization and discrimination against them based on caste. They struggle with idealistic aspirations for equality and justice, but their worldview is shaped by a stark realism that acknowledges the harsh reality of oppression.

They are spiritual people who come from a variety of backgrounds. They combine elements of idealism, such as visions of spiritual liberation and social justice, with a pragmatic realism based on their day-to-day struggles. They can seek empowerment in both material and spiritual domains by navigating their identities in a complex social landscape recognising this integration (Sandhu, 2020). This perspective offers a nuanced understanding of how they forge their identities and aspirations in the face of adversity by acknowledging the interplay between material conditions and spiritual resilience, challenging traditional clashes between materialism and idealism within broader philosophical discourse.

Dalits as Servitude Leaders

Dalits can be seen as servitude leaders who stand up to establish hierarchies and promote social justice. Baniya (2007) says that *Dalit* leaders through grassroots movements aim to alleviate the systematic injustices and discrimination against them. Serving their communities, elevating the voices of the marginalized, and inspiring group action in the direction of revolutionary change are qualities that define their servitude leadership.

They involved in the servitude industry possess traits like empathy, fortitude, and a thorough comprehension of the difficulties their communities confront (Dutt, 2024). They use the oppression they have experienced to strengthen their bonds, encourage resiliency, and gather resources for group empowerment. The significance of these grassroots leaders in spearheading initiatives from the bottom up that oppose prevailing narratives and advance inclusive governance frameworks which leadership theory acknowledges. Chander (2019) stated this viewpoint, which highlights them as leaders of servitude, moves the emphasis away from traditional hierarchical models of leadership and toward a more inclusive and participatory strategy that situates marginalized communities' experiences and goals front and centre in the fight for social justice and equity.

Dalits as Oppressed People

Menon (2019) spelt out that *Dalits* are seen as a deeply oppressed group inside South Asia's caste system within the framework of Marxism and critical theory. Marxism mainly uses the lens of class struggle to examine this oppression, with them being the lowest class and subject to a rigid social hierarchy that determines their economic, social, and political marginalization. Marxist theory holds that the caste system serves as a tool for social exploitation and control, keeping them in a system where they are forced to perform dehumanizing jobs for menial wages with little chance of advancement. Although it is based in a different socio-cultural setting, this exploitation is comparable to the bourgeoisie's exploitation of the proletariat in capitalist societies.

By investigating how power structures maintained by discrimination based on caste preserve social injustices and systemic inequality, critical theory sheds light on the predicament of *Dalits*. According to Kothari (1994), rather than being only a legacy of old customs, the marginalization of *Dalits* is a deliberate kind of oppression that serves the interests of ruling caste groups. "To eradicate caste-based discrimination and attain true equality, this viewpoint emphasizes the necessity of social transformation through conscientization and group action" (Krishna, 2019, pp. 139-153). The study of *Dalit*

oppression exposes not only economic inequality but also the widespread effects of social exclusion and ideological hegemony, which uphold their inferior status in society. This is achieved by fusing critical theory insights with Marxist critique.

Dalits as Special Human Beings with Special Ability

Dalits are viewed as individuals with distinctive perspectives and abilities as per the theory of specialty. Multani (2023) specified by highlighting the resilience and individuality that come from overcoming structural oppression, this viewpoint subverts conventional victim narratives. Because they struggle against injustice, they are seen as treasure troves of knowledge and wisdom that provide viewpoints on social structures and humanity that are frequently disregarded by dominant groups. Resilience that promotes a better comprehension of human potential and the human spirit can be observed in their capacity to withstand and oppose oppression.

As indicated by Duffee (2011), they are supposed to add value to society through their varied cultural expressions, artistic creations, and intellectual insights resulting from their distinct social position. This viewpoint promotes inclusive narratives that celebrate diversity and recognize the contributions of marginalized communities to the overall fabric of the human experience by acknowledging them as unique human beings with innate dignity and potential. In doing so, it promotes a more just and equitable social structure that values and amplifies the contributions and voices of Dalits while valuing the diversity of humankind.

Dalits as Subaltern People

Dalits are viewed within the framework of subaltern theory whose voices and experiences have historically been suppressed or marginalized within dominant discourses and power structures (Sikka, 2012). Subaltern theory criticizes how dominant groups impose their control and hegemonic narratives on marginalized communities. This perpetuates *Dalits'* status as subalterns by way of their systematic exclusion from socioeconomic opportunities, cultural representations, and decision-making processes.

The agency and resistance of *Dalits*, which are frequently ignored in popular narratives, subvert and disturb hegemonic power dynamics, according to subaltern theorists. Deivasigamani (2019) states that they express their identities and their demands for justice, dignity, and recognition through literature, art, advocacy, and grassroots movements. The significance of elevating these voices and recognizing *Dalit* agency in

transforming social norms and structures is emphasized by subaltern theory. It focuses on *Dalit* perspectives and experiences to undermine hierarchical oppressive systems and create a more equal and inclusive society where everyone's voice is respected.

Dalits as Racial Caste

Goldberg (2020, p. 226-255) stated that "race and gender are the most familiar ascriptive hierarchies. The notion of race is a social construction." In this sense, race is an artificial association or correlation between a set of physical characteristics including skin colour, certain facial features, hair texture and an imagined set of psychological and behavioral tendencies, conceived as either positive or negative, good, or bad. The alliances have been created and maintained by dominant groups (Christia, 2012). Being a biological trait, race is socially manufactured. Different groups of humans are separated from one another based on inherited physical and behavioral characteristics. According to Winsor (2023), social scientists, historians, and other academics now concur that the concept of race is a product of social construction. The dominant groups established and upheld these alliances to rationalize their subjugation and exploitation of subordinate groups, who they claim are inferior, immoral, or incapable of exercising self-governance. Therefore, caste as racism is a personal characteristic first and foremost a problem caused mainly by dogmatists who practice overt discrimination and frame discussions about racism as shaming, accusatory, or divisive (Dube, 2001). It is applied in *Dalits* and other castes.

Racial distinctions and endogamous marriages are the genesis of the caste system. According to Herbert Risley (1915), the four classes of Persia viz. priests, warriors, farmers, and artisans were the basis of the Indo-Aryan caste system, which emerged from their migration. That division of society persisted when they immigrated to this region. In both culture and racial tracts, they were distinct from non-Aryans. Consequently, they began engaging in hypergamy and placed restrictions on *pratiloma marriage* (a type of marital practice in which a man of a lower caste/class marries a girl of a higher class) marriages to preserve their superior status (Risley & Risley, 1999).

According to Park & Sandefur (2003, pp 247-275), "there are two categories of minority groups: involuntary and voluntary. Groups that were included into the dominant society through outside means, like slavery or colonization, but did not voluntarily choose to be members of it, are known as involuntary minority." They later on became caste-like people. Conversely, willingly migrating or assimilating into the majority society is the choice of voluntary minorities later on becoming mainstream.

Dalits as Part of the Cycle

Dumont (1980) examined both the Indian and non-Indian creators' viewpoints on caste culture. The East and West are in a general sense diverse in their social standards. Then, he named east as a Homo Major, which contains various levels of society (McNeill, 2009). This hierarchical society accepts that the human being may be a collective institution, and an individual may be a portion of the total society. But the West for Dumont is Homo Minor, who hypothesizes an individual as a resolute organic being that requires freedom and balance. In this sense, the caste philosophy of the East straightforwardly negates the libertarian hypothesis of the West. Without understanding these principal social contrasts, it is troublesome for Western authors to grasp the caste framework. A comparable issue exists with Eastern creators as distant as allowing Western points of view in Eastern settings.

A self-reproducing marital relation, nourishment utilization propensities, and the occupation held continuously keep an individual in a caste group. The method of control dispersion within the caste chain of command fixes the caste run the show. To arrange to proceed with this handle, there is a precise division of control. A Brahman does custom command, a Kshatriya does political command, and a Vaishya does financial command. In Dumont's words, Brahman is profoundly or completely preeminent even though tangibly subordinate; while the lord (Kshatriya) is the super s/he is profoundly subordinate (Dumont, 1980).

By operating Dumont's view, one can contend that a *Dalit* may be an incomparable exchange individual but tangibly subordinate to Kshatriya, profoundly subordinate to Brahman, and financially subordinate to Vaishya. In this way, in Dumont's understanding, the caste framework is an expression of a social chain of command with a dissemination of control. These caste bunches of individuals are evenly connected, vertically based on a direct or non-cyclical arrangement, and ritually based on virtue and debasement.

According to Risley, (1915, p.1310-1312) "a caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name; claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor: human or divine. Those who profess to pursue the same hereditary calling are recognized as creating a single, homogeneous society by those qualified to express comments. This system of social stratification divides society into various small, hereditary, and endogamic groups, each cluster of groups having its own distinguishing sets of customs and performances. It creates a hierarchy, and each such group of caste is linked with traditional occupations and is related to the other using an explained division of labour.

Dalits as Untouchable

Individuals are particular and one-of-a-kind in each viewpoint of their lives. The outward qualities of the characteristic and social environment of the area of home, family, culture, dialect, caste, and religion change from individual to individual. Individual qualities such as age and sex, physical and mental qualities, aptitudes, and states of mind are not the same. People and groups encounter peculiarities, prohibitions, segregation, and irritation in our complex world. Human beings cannot neglect the uneven treatment of those who have had such awful encounters; instead, one must recognize and make counteractive methods of acknowledgement, incorporation, uniformity, and break even with opportunity, and regard, which clear the way for greatness and flexibility.

Viswanath (2015) stated that "*Dalits,*" or planned castes in all religions, confront all sorts of segregation and are avoided since their birth and status as untouchables, which carries a social shame with it. Their character is ascriptive and conventional, based on the purity-pollution Brahminical-imposed religious oppose all classes of exclusion and are prohibited since their birth as untouchables, which carries a social embarrassment with it. Their character is ascriptive and conventional, based on the purity-pollution spiritual fundamentalism thought, instead of justifying.

Mandal (2010) says that *Dalits* have suffered from all forms of discrimination, domain, denial, and exclusion for centuries. The government and civil society have made a few improvement activities to enable them, but the preferences have however to reach them in critical numbers. They provoke numerous natures of separation. They confront caste preferences seriously. Indeed, after seventy a long time of opportunity, they proceed to live in down and out conditions. They are presently waking up to be included within the standard, however, they proceed to battle for social incorporation, handling issues with positive thinking.

Because of the aforementioned four walls, *"Dalits"* has been a term used to refer to a group of people who have historically been subjected to social, economic, and political marginalization based on their caste. In the caste system, *Dalits* were traditionally considered to be at the bottom of the social hierarchy and were often subjected to discrimination, segregation, and various forms of exploitation. The term "Dalit" itself means "oppressed" or "downtrodden," and it is used by the community to assert their identity and demand social justice and equality (Gorringe, 2013, p. 119-128). In official terminology, *Dalits* are also referred to as Scheduled Castes in India, and they

are entitled to certain affirmative action policies and protections under Articles 24 and 40 of the Constitution of Nepal (Waughray, 2010).

However, *Dalits* are generally marginalized from mainstream society due to their involvement in certain types of labour. What intensifies this situation is the religious justification provided for such exclusion (Kadun & Gadkar, 2014). Historically, the privilege of praying to a goddess has been reserved for those of higher castes. The intricacy of religious practices correlates directly with one's social standing. Consequently, *Dalits* have been formally barred from participation in religious activities, educational opportunities, land ownership, and the broader sanctified societal sphere (Kumar, 2021). Although affirmative action policies have expanded access to government positions and state education for *Dalits*, their freedom remains restricted and subject to control by dominant castes. The exclusion from all socio-economic, cultural, and political networks stems from the fundamental exclusion of *Dalits* from the caste system.

Hinduism and the caste system, produce self-images that adhere to the full range of scriptural directives, particularly the concept of Varna and Karma concerning social classes and functional descriptions. Sharma (2017) articulates the caste system is an extremely intricate phenomenon. It splits society into deeply divided groups in the first place. Furthermore, it adheres to the concept of inherited hierarchy, which delves into inter-caste relationships. *Dalits* and non-*Dalits* were subsequently placed on a scale by the roles and statuses allocated within such a framework, which could only be comprehended considering the "social distance" scale that was invented (Simon, 2021).

In my current analysis, however, the author has focused on some of the fundamental findings of sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists who have investigated a range of aspects pertaining to *Dalit* and Non-*Dalit* encounters and interactions in daily life, aside from above-mentioned concerns.

Caste System as Pillage to *Dalits*

The traditional caste system defines and controls the psycho-social interactions between *Dalits* and non-*Dalits*. They are as follows: (1) Endogamy; (2) Hierarchy; (3) Prohibitions on Occupation Choice; (4) Prohibitions on Commonality; (5); and (6) Untouchability. The term "endogamy" describes the practice of caste members marrying within their group, with outsider marriage considered improper. Mehta (2004) expresses as an extended kinship group in which each member is a potential or actual kin of another, caste consists of individuals. Certain endogamous Jains can be grouped into professions such as iron smiths or carpenters, Sutar, and Lohar, etc., and further divided

into broader groups known as the Varna categories, which include Vaishya, Shudra, Brahmin, and Kshatriya.

Chakraborty (2003) was right when he regarded endogamy as a key to the mystery of the caste system. Certainly, the caste system would not dissolve unless inter-caste marriages become common. But it is seen that even educated (but not enlightened) youths of the 21st century are bound by traditional caste norms in the matter of their marriages. It is a pity that despite education and modernization, the rules of Manu are still very strong (Damodar, 2023).

The second characteristic of the caste system is the hierarchical composition of endogamous groups. The moment included in the caste framework is the progressive course of action of endogamous groups. Progression infers a request from beat to foot in which the basis for evaluating is status. Gleach (2000) defined status as the rank or position of an individual in the prestige hierarchy of a group or community. Each society encompasses a framework of evaluating social glory, which is connected to the ownership of riches, instruction, open office, and so on. Rajpramukh (2013) speaks of this as "ritual status", which characterizes status grading in caste-ridden India based on the ascriptive pattern as against "secular status" which goes with the achievement pattern. The fault of such a conspire refutes the thought of the rational-legal status of people and gives much highlighting as well on custom status which convictions within the virtue and/or debasement of certain castes and individuals which cannot be changed until the end of time. According to Turner & Maryanski (2015), contamination and immaculateness are typically associated with birth, death, the feminine cycle, and so on. But what a contradiction (because of Hinduism's terrible tendency). *Dalits* are "impure" because of their special title, whereas an ill-clad dirty Brahmin devoted to a reservation is "pure" and cheerful, according to everyone.

The relationship between caste and occupation is another important area to comprehend the psycho-social relationship between *Dalits* and non-*Dalits*. Hinduism assigns different caste groups specific jobs. Hertel (1973) spells out that in reality, a lot of castes go by the name of the profession they are expected to pursue, like Lohar (ironsmiths), Sonar (goldsmiths), Chamar (shoemakers), and so forth. Because of this, every caste in such a system has a customary vocation. This implies that a person's status is determined by birth and that relationships between people must be maintained within the caste system. Nowadays, the caste-based occupation has been reformed and each caste can choose the occupation that they like and can get benefits. It is not required to apply for the same job which their ancestors had practiced.

The situation was altered by changes in urbanization, commerce, transportation, and communication. Knowledgeable *Dalits* are encroaching on non-traditional services as the Jajmani relationship has been steadily dissolving. In addition, new occupational patterns are created, loosening the traditional caste rules, due to changes in the economy and technology. But it is a fact that a phenomenon called 'social capital' (Bourdieu, 1985).

Another reality related to the concept of purity-pollution is that of 'untouchability.' Aktor & Deliège (2010) brief that certain castes were thought to be so unclean that even their touch prompted complex purification rites for members of the so-called upper castes. The concept of untouchability became so widespread that even the shadow of an untouchable was considered polluted. The thought that someone is considered untouchable, unapproachable, and unseen just by chance of birth is puzzling and psychologically distressing, at least to a modern thinking. When we look at the psychological effects, we find that the victims of untouchability have a poor social standing, which is quite profound. Ogbu (2020) states the black people of the United States are an analogous case to India's untouchables. American social psychologists have investigated the personality syndrome generated by such attributed low status among American black people.

As Wagatsuma & Vos (2021) stated, a parallel case comparable to India's untouchables is the black people in the United States. Low social status (imposed or bestowed by others) is implied to cause low self-esteem, self-identity confusion, self-hatred, a hostile worldview, hypertension, and neuroticism. When comparing the circumstances of American Blacks and Indian *Dalits*, one might assume that the former untouchables in India might be experiencing a syndrome similar to this (Eniwaye, 2005). Because of this, there is a conscious attempt to avoid "taking risks" in an environment where non-*Dalits* have spoken about their superiority. Their potential is lost when they are attacked by hegemonic Brahmins and other upper castes, making them feel guilty, afraid, and ashamed (Kumar, 2021). Due to their deeply damaged psyches, *Dalits* are incredibly shy, sensitive, deeply insecure and prone to self-deprecation which impede the full development of their personalities.

Upon assessing the *Dalit* situation concerning property, power, and prestige, it is evident that the *Dalits* have experienced division, differentiation, and discrimination (Mosse, 2018). *Dalits* have been subjected to a system of cumulative dominance that has made them feel alienated. They are living dead and devoid of the fullness of life as a result of the trauma, which is the result of long-standing hostility, ongoing discrimination, and physical and social violence.

As a result of their ongoing poverty and sociocultural deprivation, their worldview and perceptions are reduced to mere "yes-bossism" as they fight to survive under the oppressive control of hegemonic Brahmins and so-called upper castes. Consequently, they frequently become barriers to their development. These phenomena emphasize even more how alienated they feel from social advancement and economic prosperity in an increasingly globalizing and modern society (Kumar, 2008).

Dalit Women as Bottom-level Beings

Gender and caste interact in many ways in life. Rowshan, Khan, & Uddyog (2016) indicated that *Dalit* women have been disappearing from diverse settings in educational institutions, workplaces, social gatherings, private areas, and decision-making bodies. In addition to facing deprivation, *Dalit* women have also had to put up with severe forms of discrimination from the so-called upper caste and their male partners as well. Due to the widespread practices of dehumanizing and humiliating lower caste members, as well as oppression at the hands of *Dalit* men, they have been discriminated against (Jogdand, 2023). In this sense, *Dalit* women face multiple levels of oppression as a result of the intersections of gender violence, socio-cultural prejudice, and mechanically unfair and divisive economic structures.

Lerche (2008) referring International *Dalit* Solidarity Network (IDSN) said that *Dalit* women have been the victims of violence and exploitation for centuries. They are victimized by the members of their community, and by the members of other communities in the name of caste and gender roles and hierarchies. So, they frequently suffer from caste-based retaliation. The abuse against them includes complex social relationships, violence within the home, marginalization outside the home, and multilayered male alcoholism.

According to Rege (1998), *Dalit* women occupy the lowest social strata in conventional Hindu society. They are denied love, empathy, and social respectability because of their alleged ritual impurity since their bodies symbolize the contaminated status. Hindu Dharma *shastras* (scriptures) are complex texts that place women at the bottom of the Shudra hierarchy because they are socially and ritually taboo and impure. *Dalit* women experience various forms of subordination and oppression in society, restricted from their caste, gender roles, and lack of power. These factors collectively make them "multiply oppressed" (Seenarine, 1998). Even though almost every society has some form of violence against women, academics and scholars have not yet given *Dalit* women's abuse and violence enough attention.

Dalits' marginalization is sustained by intergenerational cycles of poverty, discrimination, and restricted social mobility, as perceived when they are seen as components of a cyclical system. It focuses on how their oppression is structural and how difficult it is to break free from ingrained socioeconomic practices. Similarly, the racial caste perspective looks at the systemic and pervasive similarities between caste-based and racial discrimination. By highlighting the similarities between caste and racial discrimination, this lens highlights how both affect social identity and opportunities. It emphasizes how crucial it is to eliminate caste-based prejudice in the same way that racial injustices are.

Marxism examines this oppression primarily through the lens system of class struggle, with *Dalits* ranking as the lowest class and subject to an inflexible social hierarchy that determines their economic, social, and political marginalization. According to Marxist ideology, the caste system functions as a mechanism for social exploitation and control. It trapeses *Dalits* in a system in which they are obliged to perform demeaning labour for low earnings with no opportunity for growth although it occurs in a distinct socio-cultural context. This exploitation is similar to the bourgeoisie's exploitation of the proletariat in capitalist society.

Lastly, the idea that *Dalits* are untouchables highlights the social and historical stigmatization that results from their caste. This viewpoint highlights the pervasive biases and discriminatory acts that shape their social standing. It illustrates the lasting effects of untouchability on their day-to-day existence and social relationships. There are still obstacles in the way of resolving the continuing systemic injustices. On the other side, *Dalit* women are multiply oppressed. Men are given superior and decision-making responsibilities in this gender stereotyping. Which starts from birth and persists throughout a person's life while women face discrimination and are marginalized in several areas of social, cultural, and private life.

Dalit women continue to maintain the lowest positions in society and are assigned to the least desired jobs, both within and outside the home. According to Mosse (2018, p. 422-436), women's labour generally plays a significant role in maintaining traditional and caste-related jobs.

Conclusion

The notion of *Dalits* as exceptional individuals with particular talents recognizes their tenacity and unique cultural contributions. In highlighting their creative and cultural capabilities, this perspective acknowledges their capacity to adapt and flourish in the face

of hardship. Instead of tackling structural problems, this viewpoint runs the risk of idealizing their pain or dismissing their experiences as extraordinary. It is highlighted that *Dalit's* historical and present roles in overseeing and facilitating domestic and service-oriented chores within the hierarchical social structure. The dichotomy of their leadership responsibilities inside servitude where they frequently occupy positions of responsibility but are yet marginalized and underappreciated in the larger socioeconomic hierarchy is highlighted by this viewpoint. Rather than exercising power within established systems, their leadership is viewed through the prism of overseeing subservient duties.

Dalits are viewed mostly through the prism of social exclusion and institutional discrimination because they are known as oppressed people. This viewpoint draws attention to the long-lasting effects of caste-based oppression, such as restricted access to social mobility, education, and resources. Here, the emphasis is on the ongoing fights for equality and human rights as well as the systemic injustices and inequities that support their marginalization. *Dalits* are positioned within a framework of historical and continuing marginalization as subaltern people. It focuses on their fight for justice and acknowledgement within a larger framework of historical biases and global power dynamics, highlighting their voices and experiences that are frequently ignored in popular discourse.

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