
CASTE BASED MARGINALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The global issue that negatively impacts societies all over the world is marginalization. A sociological phenomenon known as marginalization occurs when an individual or group of individuals is forced to live on the periphery of society. Marginalization is a dynamic notion with multiple dimensions; it cannot be understood as a single thing. Concepts of social exclusion and social inclusion are related to and overlap with marginalization. A highly distinctive social unit in society is the caste. The concept of caste presented a significant challenge to academia because of its history and ramifications. The majority of scholars have examined its existence and provided a description of its functions along with some implications. In addition to writing about caste inequality, Dr. Ambedkar actively opposed it in India, particularly for the human rights of dalits, or former untouchables. Consequently in practically every community, the most vulnerable marginalized groups are women, individuals with disabilities, dalits, the elderly, children, minorities, and the impoverished, among others. Every aspect of their lives is negatively impacted by the marginalization, which violates fundamental human rights such social, political, economic, civic, and cultural rights. A sizable segment of the dalits and lower castes still rely on other people to support them. Global marginalization prevents the vast majority of people from taking part in the development. There are numerous variables that contribute to marginalization, making it a complicated issue. This paper focuses on the marginalisation on the basis of caste system in India with special reference to dalits and how the transformation of dalits from marginalisation to inclusion happens.

Keywords: Marginalisation, Caste, Dalits, Exclusion, Dr. Ambedkar, Transition, Inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, millions of individuals are impacted by marginalization. Individuals that are marginalized tend to have limited control over their circumstances and the tools at their disposal. As a result, their ability to contribute to society is hindered. They are unable to participate in local life because to their lack of supporting and encouraging relationships, which creates a vicious cycle that further isolates them. Both the society as a whole and the advancement of humankind are greatly impacted by this.¹ During the tenth five-year plan, from 2002 to 2007, India had unparalleled growth at a rate of 7.7% annually. Disadvantaged groups did not gain as much as they should have had, in particular scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and minorities. Now there is disparity within certain regions and even amongst different states. The planned classes (SCs), sometimes referred to as dalits, make up roughly 16.2% of people in India, whereas the Scheduled Tribes (STs), sometimes referred to as Adivasis, make up roughly 8% also the Minorities make up 12% of the population, especially Muslim minorities among the populace combined, making up about one-third of the population. Thanks to Dr. BR Ambedkar's work, that the state acknowledged the unique impairments of the SCs, STs, and minority communities in the Constitution and included various provisions, which were later on followed by a number of laws and policies. In this paper, an effort is made to consider the viewpoint of the SC (Dalit) groups within the broader framework of the nation's development and advancement.²

Throughout Indian history, the caste system has shaped the country's social and economic structure. The fundamental principles of the caste system are hierarchy, division of labour, and separation of each person's civil, cultural, and economic rights. There are set castes and people can be divided into four major types, each having several subgroups among them, such as separation of people into social groups (castes), where privileges are assigned based on birth, in a fixed and hereditary manner. Secondly the distribution of fundamental rights across different castes is hierarchical and uneven, with those at the top with the fewest responsibilities and the greatest rights, and those at the lowest having no rights and perform the majority of duties. Lastly, in the

¹ <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.lawcetopus.com/academike/problems-marginalized-groups-india/amp/> visited on November 10, 2023

² Eleventh Five Year plan: Inclusive Growth, Vol 1, No. 1 (2008)

event of any departure, the system is strictly enforced by social ostracism, a system of financial and social punishments.

MEANING OF MARGINALIZATION

Generally speaking, "marginalization" refers to the overt behaviours or inclinations of human civilizations to exclude or marginalize those whom they deem undesirable or unfit for a productive role. The current protection and integration systems do not apply to those who are marginalized. This reduces their options and means of subsistence.

Marginality, according to Peter Leonard is, *"Being outside the mainstream of productive activity and or social reproductive activity."*

The Encyclopaedia of Public Health defines marginalization as, *"To be marginalized is to be placed in the margins, and thus excluded from the privilege and power found at the centre"*.

According to Latin, *"Marginality' is so thoroughly demeaning, for human dignity, for economic well-being, and for physical security. Members of the dominant society can always identify marginalized peoples, and they will always be subject to prejudice."*

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary definition of the term, marginalize is, *"to relegate to an unimportant, or powerless position within a society or group"*.

According to Ghana S. Gurung and Michael Kollmair, the term "marginality" is typically used to analyse socioeconomic, political, and cultural domains in which underprivileged individuals fight for resources and full inclusion in society. Put differently, those who are marginalized may be subject to social, economic, political, and legal neglect, exclusion, or lack of attention, making them susceptible to changes in their means of subsistence.³

Social exclusion, another name for marginalization, is the process by which some groups of people are excluded from particular facets of society. This denial of access to opportunities and institutions can be caused by a variety of circumstances, such as financing shortages and historical bias.

³ <https://www.egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/9063/1/Unit-3.pdf> visited on November 10, 2023

TYPES OF MARGINALIZATION

Marginalization puts people in powerless positions based on one or several dimensions of exclusion:

1. **Economic marginalization:** Economic marginalization describes differences in the ability to accumulate money or get employment. For instance, negative preconceptions about the kinds of people who make effective managers or workers lead to the marginalization of racial minorities in many forms of employment.
2. **Political marginalization:** Communities that are politically marginalized find it difficult to access their political representatives or take part in civic activities like voting. Political marginalization included regulations from the Jim Crow era that barred Black Americans from exercising their right to vote.
3. **Social marginalization:** The term "Social Marginalization" refers to the inability of an individual to engage in regular leisure activities. One instance of social marginalization is being refused entry to clubs and organizations.⁴

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO MARGINALIZATION

Campaigns that deliberately work to keep some people out of society (such as members of particular ethnic groups) can lead to marginalization. It can also happen accidentally as a result of social arrangements that help certain people in society while making life difficult for others.

- a) **Discrimination and Bias:** Policies that prevent some groups from fully participating in society can be created by community members or officials as a result of social factors such as sexism, racism, and religious intolerance. Examples of this include institutional restrictions such as the ban on same-sex marriage. Another example is apartheid.
- b) **Poverty:** One of the main causes of marginalization is poverty. Due to their excessive time and energy spent attempting to support themselves and their families or because they reside in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and lack access to essential resources, impoverished individuals frequently lack the time and resources to campaign for their

⁴ <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/marginalization-explained> visited on November 10, 2023

interests. This problem is made worse by the disproportionate influence money has on the political system. For instance, many individuals who suffer from homelessness are unable to obtain mental health treatments or other social assistance that could enhance their quality of life.

- c) **Structural Disadvantages:** Occasionally, people are marginalized by society when they are not given the room or privileges necessary to speak up for their needs and have their views heard. People with disabilities, for instance, are experiencing higher rates of poverty due to a shortage of accessible accommodation.⁵

MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

Scheduled Castes: Hindu caste sub-communities known as scheduled castes have traditionally faced social exclusion, prejudice, and deprivation in India as a result of their alleged "poor status." Our culture has always included untouchability. The avarna communities were also referred to as "untouchables." They suffered social and economic isolation, were forbidden from drinking from public water sources, live in or visit areas frequented by "higher castes," and were denied many privileges and benefits that individuals born into savarna castes "considered basic rights."

Schedule Tribes: India has more than 700 Scheduled Tribes, according to the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. Similar to how the name "Scheduled Castes" was retained from British-era legislation, the definition of "Scheduled Tribes" has been retained from the census of 1931. The Scheduled Tribe communities in our nation are characterized by their primitiveness, social and educational isolation, shyness, and geographic isolation from other tribes.

Women: One way that gender inequality manifests itself in different economic contexts and is influenced by distinct historical, cultural, legal, and religious factors is through marginalization. In other words, women could be marginalized in certain professions and careers, and can be excluded from other aspects of life. As compared to men, they are always marginalised in the society and other areas as well.

⁵ Ibid

Dalits and other marginalized communities: They are scarcely found in prominent roles, not even in the media. In a 2019 poll, 106 of the 121 media leadership roles that were examined were occupied by people from higher castes, five by people from other lower social classes, and six by people from minority groups. Approximately 75% of television anchors moderating discussions are members of the upper caste. Not a single OBC, dalit, or adivasi was present in the room.

Adivasis: Known as "Original Dwellers" in the literal sense, these are the groups of people who have lived and often still live near forests. Adivasis make up the bulk of India's population, and many of the powerful individuals in the nation are Adivasis. The region where the Adivasi people live includes major mining and industrial hubs like Jamshedpur, Rourkela, Bokaro, and Bhilai. Adivasis are a diverse group, much like everyone else. In India, there are about 500 distinct adivasi communities. Indian government classification for adivasis is Scheduled Tribes. This category includes Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which are sometimes grouped together.⁶

CASTE AND MARGINALIZATION IN INDIA

Because a large number of dalits and members of lower castes in India still rely on others for their livelihood, caste-based marginalization is one of the most urgent human rights challenges in the country. In Indian civilization, caste has played a leading role in fostering marginality. The caste system purposefully denied marginalized groups their rights to social, economic, educational, political, moral, and legal opportunities. "Social evil stems from the fact that men are not created equal." The conditions of denial and deprivation in the education and career prospects of dalits have been cultivated by inequality. In the nation, prejudice and marginalization towards women, minorities, tribal people, and dalits are still pervasive and deeply ingrained. Additionally, the situation of these marginalized communities in nearly every socioeconomic development indicator (health, wealth, education, etc.) is stays low even with some improvement. For example, the Indian Human Development; according to the 2011 IDHR (report), there is a notable nutrition gap between the nutritional status of SCs and STs as compared to others communities.

⁶ <https://www.vedantu.com/civics/understanding-marginalisation> visited on November 11, 2023

CONCEPT OF DALITS

The term "Dalit" refers to a group of people who are traditionally considered lower class. They are a mixed population of various caste groups throughout South Asia and speak different languages. Traditionally, there are four principal castes (divided into many sub-categories) and one category of people who fall outside the caste system – the dalits. The word "Dalit" literally translates to "oppressed" or "broken" in Hindi and Marathi. The term "Dalit" is typically used to refer to people who were once known as "untouchables," those belonging to castes outside the fourfold Hindu Varna system. They are called Antyaja, i.e., outside the Varna system. The Dalits are also called by various other names, including Dasyu, Dasa, Atisudra, Panchama, Tirukulattar, Adikarnataka, Adi Dravida, Schedule Caste (SC), etc. The dalit community is divided into numerous sub-castes. Dalits are classified as manual "scavengers," agricultural labourers, street sweepers, cobblers, and leather workers. Traditionally, the second group officially believed to number one million has been in charge of clearing dead animals from villages, excavating graves for them, and cleaning up human waste. Roughly 75% of the workforce comprised of Dalits works in the agriculture industry. Dalits make up the bulk of the forty million bonded labourers in the nation. Seldom do these employment give dalits enough money to buy food for their families or send their kids to school. Consequently, a large number of dalits are illiterate, ignorant, and poor.⁷

A. Oppression And Exclusion Of Dalits

Dalits have experienced political marginalization, cultural enslavement, and oppression. They are still subjected to caste atrocities, which include being uprooted from their houses, having their lands taken from them, and not being allowed access to public amenities like wells, tans, hotels, cemeteries, etc. They are currently claiming their identities in Indian society due to the growth of contemporary education. The untouchability and "purity and pollution" dicta dictate what dalits may and cannot do, where they can and cannot live, go, or sit, and who they can and cannot marry, give water to, or eat with. These restrictions even extend to the most basic parts of daily life.

⁷ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302294900_Dalits_in_India_From_Marginalisation_to_Inclusion visited on November 11, 2023

Engagement or its Absence is never a good thing. The two main areas in which the practice of untouchability can be examined are:

- I. The private sphere, which is regulated by custom, and
- II. The public domain, which is subject to laws

Class exploitation and social injustice coexist in the caste system. The worst kind of both forms of exploitation are experienced by the Dalit community. In India, 49 percent of scheduled caste members live in rural areas while 86.25 percent of scheduled caste households are landless. Even so despite making up 16.2% of India's population, Dalits' grip over the country's resources is minuscule, making up less than 5%. Approximately 50% of the Dalit community is impoverished, and a notably higher percentage (62%) lack literacy. Among Dalits, majority of people involved in agriculture are labourers who are landless or almost landless.

The appalling social state of Dalit homes is demonstrated by the fact that less than 10% of them can afford power, toilets, and safe drinking water. Moreover, Dalits outnumber other groups in society in that regard and are frequently the victims of the greatest crimes and atrocities. Because of widespread fear, the great majority of these crimes are unreported, and those that are report are frequently disregarded by the police or wind up being backed up in the legal system. The caste system is still rife in India, more than 60 years after the country attained independence. Dalits continue to be the nation's most marginalized, violent, and vulnerable population. They falsely believe they are a part of the most inhumane living conditions, prevailing in the society. Given that everyone has the right to equality, democratically claiming that right to dignity is the demand of the moment. "Development with Equality" is required. Government budgets have significant authority instruments to address economic problems by giving Dalits access to public commodities. Including all of the components, including political, social, cultural, and economic ones, have given rise to what is known as "dalit movement".⁸Today's higher education is deeply embedded with the evil practice of caste discrimination, as evidenced by the tragic suicide of Rohith Vemula (a Dalit by caste), a Ph.D. student at Hyderabad Central University, who hanged himself and blamed his birth as a "fatal accident" in a chilling note.⁹ Another instance of caste

⁸ Vedamani Hans, "Dalits in India: From Marginalisation to Inclusion" 1 *Jmsg* 2016

⁹ Puneet Karwal, "Understanding Marginalisation with special reference to 'Dalits'" 26 *Iosr-Jhss* 2021

discrimination is of June 17, 2019, when a gang of an upper-caste villagers assaulted Prashant Solanki, a Dalit man in his late 20s, as he was riding a colorfully decorated horse to his wedding. They threatened to harm Mr. Solanki and his family and maintained that horseback riding was a privilege reserved for the upper caste.¹⁰

B. Nature Of Disabilities Associated With Dalits

- ☐ Mandatory guidelines for using various kinds of utensils only.
- ☐ Being caste aside from respectable and lucrative jobs and sent to menial workplace.
- ☐ Restrictions or denial of entry to temples or other sites associated with religion.
- ☐ Not being allowed to study the Vedas and not being able to work as religious instructors or captains.
- ☐ Being required to perform mandatory labour for higher castes without compensation and menial duties.
- ☐ Denial or limitation of access to public places such as courts, post offices, schools, highways, and wells.
- ☐ The requirements for deference in speech, manners of greeting, and seating positioned in the presence of castes further above Motion restrictions.
- ☐ Residential segregation that forces people to reside outside of the village; limitations on living a luxurious or comfortable lifestyle; and denial of access to amenities offered by theatres, stores, restaurants, barbershops, and washermen etc.¹¹

C. Transition To Inclusion

The caste system can't be completely destroyed and transformed only by changing one's identity; identity as "high and low" or "touchable and untouchable" inside the caste system endures because it still gives the current system significance. Therefore, realizing the caste system's pointlessness is a crucial first step towards alteration. So, choosing between "touchable" and "untouchable" is not transformation identity; nonetheless, it has to deal with both. This is only possible if one is certain that both constructs oppose humanity. However, because relationships are founded on the

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2009/Ghana/Namala.pdf> visited on November 11, 2023

caste structure, the decision is never simple that is conventional but created with new goals in mind. Caste still determines how quickly societies modernize and entry to fresh opportunities. Due to their suffering, dalits in particular are always looking for an identity that provides purpose and makes life worthwhile. "Touchable" minds are less inclined to shed their inhuman identity because they worry that their hypocritical world would crumble. Therefore, transformation must be a path towards value and self-respect that can sway the thoughts of others to gravitate toward and follow it. "Dalit," as interpreted and assimilated as a the moral stance of those who support "equality" is a significant step in the right direction.

100% of government assistance is provided under the Special Central Assistance (SCA) program to support State and UT initiatives to ensure the Scheduled Castes' quick socioeconomic development. It is offered as a supplement to the States' and Unions' Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCSP) in order to strengthen their efforts to promote the economic growth of Scheduled Castes. The objective of the SCA is to fill the critical gaps in family based income-generating schemes with supporting infrastructure development. By addressing the crucial gaps in the developmental demands, it focuses on maximizing the profits from the assets held by the SCs. Merely providing cash support is insufficient. The socioeconomic advancement of dalits ought to come from both the participation in politics, health, education, and informed citizenship.

The SC communities were issued a clear directive by Baba Saheb Ambedkar, which was to "Educate, Organise, and Agitate." This is a significant difficulty because, according to the census of 2011, over 74% of the population is literate overall, but many youngsters are still not in school. Untouchability in academia is well acknowledged. In many cases, reservations have not been properly implemented in various establishments, especially those involving higher positions. However, kids attending school as well as those who have succeeded in gaining admission to universities frequently encounter deeply ingrained caste prejudices into each and every academic field. Children of dalit descent sharing their experiences of marginalization in numerous researches and even official government publications have documented instances of prejudice and untouchability. The reservation system also has to be updated to reflect current circumstances.¹²

¹² <https://www.readcube.com/articles/10.2139/ssrn.2323268> visited on November 11, 2023

D. Post Independence State Intervention and Policies

According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report (HDR) 2004, caste-based exclusion is characterized as "living mode exclusion" in terms of political involvement as well as exclusion and disadvantage in terms of social and economic prospects. There are three distinct threads in the state's strategy and actions to alleviate the various forms of deprivation that dalits experience in programs and policies. If affirmative action policy is not protected by the law, "General Programs" have been used by the State to promote inclusivity, elevation, and SCs' empowerment in the social, educational, and economic spheres.¹³

- **Compensation Measures:** To address the various disadvantages that have been inherited as a result of historical exclusion and to level them with other issues pertaining to land reform and political representation.
- **Preventive Measures:** Acknowledging the use of violence and caste-based prejudice reaching out to dalit groups; the Civil Rights Protection Act (PCRA) and the SC/ST POA, or the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, was enacted to safeguard and stop them from being violent.
- **Promotional Measures:** To combat persistent discrimination and advance their enthusiastic involvement in the nation's expansion and development, reservations in terms of work, education, and unique economic arrangements have been put in position.

The state offers various measures to raise dalits' level of education like infrastructure improvements for schools, particularly in areas where SCs predominate, accommodations in educational establishments, financial assistance through local scholarships and fellowships at the local, state, & federal levels, facilities for remedial coaching to develop superior abilities, separate dorms for men and women and improving chances for women and girls among them.

E. Constitutional Provisions for Dalits

All Indian people are guaranteed fundamental freedoms and basic civil and political rights under the Constitution's bill of rights. Moreover, the Constitution contains specific clauses that forbid

¹³ <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2009/Ghana/Namala.pdf> visited on November 11, 2023

caste-based discrimination. These provisions often include affirmative action, reservations in education and employment, and protections against discrimination.

Article 14: Equality before the law

Article 15: Prohibition of Discrimination on Grounds of Religion, Race, Caste, Sex or Place of Birth

Article 16: Equality of Opportunity in Matters of Public Employment

Article 17: Abolition of Untouchability

Article 29: Protection of Interests of Minorities

Article 42: Provision for Just and Humane Conditions of Work and Maternity Relief

Article 243D: Reservation of Seats for SC's and ST's. (Part VI)

Article 330: Reservation of seats for SC's and ST's in the House of the People (Special Provision)

Article 338: National Commission for Scheduled Castes

CONCLUSION

To sum up, caste-based marginalization is a pervasive societal issue that calls for coordinated action from all parties involved; individuals, communities, and governmental organizations. A dedicated approach towards inclusive discourse, affirmative action, legal reforms, and education is necessary to overcome this problem. Society can endeavour to break down the barriers of caste-based marginalization by putting comprehensive policies into place, encouraging equitable opportunities, and jointly combating misconceptions. Our goal of creating a more just and harmonious society can only be achieved by taking consistent, cooperative action. Fostering awareness, promoting education, and implementing inclusive policies are essential. To shield people from violence and prejudice based on caste, anti-discrimination laws should be strengthened and enforced, communities should be encouraged to have candid conversations. Affirmative actions and measures should be adopted to provide underrepresented groups equitable

representation and resource access. In order to dispel myths and advance a more truthful image of various caste groups, appropriate media representation should be encouraged. Inequalities in the public and private sectors is to be addressed by promoting workplace diversity and fair job opportunities. Governments must make a concert effort to design laws that support lower castes and guarantee their involvement in the political process. Caste-based marginalization must be addressed through a multifaceted strategy that includes institutional, political, and societal changes.