

Conscientization of Dalit Women in India: A Study in Historical and Political Discourse

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Abstract

The researcher has attempted to study the conscientization of Dalit women in India's historical and political backdrop. Conscientization is a post-Marxist theoretical concept propounded by Paulo Freire, an educational theorist from Brazil. The term denotes a critical awareness or consciousness of either a person or any group/community about their real position in society. Conscientization is achievable through a process of relentless contemplation, consideration, and activities towards its realization. Dalit women's critical understanding of their social reality or conscientization does not take place in a day. Their conscientization is perceptible in the Dalit feminist movement that takes both time and tide to gain its current momentum. Being critically conscious of the social reality, Dalit feminists started to form their standpoints. There are ample testimonies in Indian history and polity to substantiate the view that Dalit women were unaware of their caste subalternity and gender subalternity but during the 1990s they started their struggle separately and independently to establish their rights.

Key Words: *Conscientization, Dalit, women, history, politics, society, movement, feminism*

1. Introduction:

The researcher has attempted to study the conscientization of Dalit women in India's historical and political backdrop. Conscientization is a post-Marxist theoretical concept propounded by Paulo Freire, an educational theorist from Brazil. The term denotes a critical awareness or consciousness of either a person or any group/community about their real position in society. Conscientization is achievable through a process of relentless contemplation, consideration, and activities towards its realization. Dalit women's critical understanding of their social reality or conscientization does not take place in a day. Their conscientization is perceptible in Dalit feminist movement that takes both time and tide to gain its current momentum. Being critically conscious of the social reality, Dalit

feminists started to form their standpoints. There are ample testimonies in Indian history and polity to substantiate the view that Dalit women were unaware of their caste subalternity and gender subalternity but during the 1990s they started their struggle separately and independently to establish their rights.

The researcher in this paper has not used 'Dalit' as a referential term for all the oppressed sections of the society because the meaning of this term has extended to refer to all who are "living outside the boundary of the village or landless farm-labourers, workers, the suffering masses, and nomadic and criminal tribes" (Limbale 30). The term has been used from the caste dimension to refer to those who are considered untouchables by Hindu society.

2. Conscientization and the Dalit women context:

Professor Margaret Ledwith in her book *Community Development* defined conscientization as "a process whereby people become aware of the political, socio-economic and cultural contradictions that interact in a hegemonic way to diminish their lives" (Ledwith 97). This definition demands one to be analytic about the hegemonic thought in the existing social and political context. Even though the Preamble of the Indian Constitution declares the goals to achieve social economic and political justice, equality, and liberty of every citizen irrespective of race, caste, class, religion but in reality, the provisions to ensure the aforementioned goals are very restricted to limited boundaries and needless to say, hegemonic social and political thought is very much in action. To achieve the goals mentioned in the Preamble of the constitution, one must first be aware of his or her current position. In the context of Dalit women in India, it becomes imperative to explore India's historical and political background before independence. Though Dalit women became politically active against their marginalized position by organizing themselves and establishing different organizations during the 1990s, the journey started before independence.

2.1. Three streams of Dalit women's conscientization:

Conscientization of Dalit women can be perceived in three different streamlines: Dalit feminist activism; Dalit women's writings or autobiographies; and Dalit theoretical formulation (Tamalapakula n.p). Theoretical insight demands critical reading of existing history and understanding Dalit women's lived experience of life. In this regard, the possible way to formulate a theoretical basis is the writings or autobiographies of Dalit women. Self-perception and understanding of a Dalit woman as a Dalit woman remained unspecified till Dalit women started writing for them and about them. There lies the importance of autobiographies, semi-autobiographies, novels, and poems by Dalit women writers.

2.2. Dalit women's literature:

Dalit women's literature is the reflection of their self-perception and conscientization. Existing literature shows that Dalit women writers have navigated a journey of about fifty decades from around 1970 till now and have been addressing the interplay of caste, colour, community, and gender in different short stories, autobiographies, poems, and essays. Dalit women's literary discourse started with Savitribai Phule's literary journey. Then came the generation of those women who were directly associated with the Ambedkarite movement, like Baby Kamble, Santabai

Kamble, Santabai Dani. They were followed by modern, fearless writers like Urmila Pawar, Kumud Pawde, and Jyoti Lanjewar. Finally, contemporary neo-Buddhist writers Shilpa Kamble, Pradnya Pawar, and Chaya Koregaonkar also developed their consciousness and awareness about their reality as 'Dalit' and as 'woman' with new perceptions. Due to social exclusion and backwardness, Dalit women could not access the world of literacy and education for a long time. But once they started, they have gradually become politically thorough and matured in their creative skill. In the literary discourse of Dalit women in India, Marathi literature first came into notice with Santabai Kamble's *Majya Jalmachi Chittrakatha (The Kaleidoscopic story of my life)* in 1983, *The Weave of my life (Aaidan)* by Urmila Pawar in 1988, *Prisons We Broke (Jine Amuche)* by Babytai Kamble in 1987. The life narratives of these Dalit women disclose the exploitation, marginalization, and social exclusion of mostly the Mahar women, the largest Dalit community of Maharashtra. Within a very short period in the southern part of India Tamil, Telugu, and Malayali Dalit women writers, such as Palanimuthu Sivakami, Gogu Shyamala, Vijila Chirappad were also coming up to contribute to the Dalit feminist discourse of India and unravel the saga of oppression.

3. The saga of oppression: ordains of *Manusmriti*:

The saga of oppression and subjugation can be dated back to the period of Veda in the Hindu religion. In the Chaturvarna Vyavastha or four-fold division of society depicted in *Manusmriti* which is believed to be the words of Brahma, a large number of people belonging to other castes do not find their place within this hierarchical schematic structure. They are, therefore, called Panchama (Fifth order) or Chandala, Avama (coloured), Antyaj (low born), etc (Hutton 64 & Srinivas 63-69). *Manusmriti*, known to be the earliest scripture in Hindu mythology on brahminical dharma, provides some clues about the status of women as a whole. In some places, there are few references to sudra women. *Manusmriti* is regarded as the rule book ordained by God for people of the Hindu religion. Seemingly, *Manusmriti* gives women a place of honour but at the same time, women have been made the very structure on which the honour of the individual as well as a community depends and thereby limiting and belittling their existence. Ambedkar and in the later period, many Dalit feminists critiqued that *Manusmriti* denies the basic human dignity to Dalit in general and Dalit women in particular. The rules and norms formulated by Manu lead to the exploitation and marginalization of Dalit women in different spheres of life. Even after the emergence of feminism, they are the least receiver in terms of education, employment, health, and nutrition. In the name of conserving the purity of the Hindu religion, the condition has not changed much even today.

4. Feminism in India:

As in the West, feminism also came in India in three waves. Feminism India started withholding the hands of men, to be specific, some native social revolutionaries and unconventional British rulers. They began with abolishing the age-old heinous custom of 'Sati' (Gangoli 16). The second wave commenced with Gandhiji's Quit India movement in 1915 with a large number of women taking active participation in the movement. Dalit women were also part of many independent women organizations at that phase. In this period of colonization, the traditional caste-based society of India was divided (in 1931 Census) by British rulers into five sections; Advanced, Intermediate,

Other Backward, Primitive and Depressed (Rege 24) which kept the caste-hierarchy undefeated and had a great impact on the class structure of the society. Rege argues that these divisions consolidated the brahmins more as a class. Women remained superfluous and susceptible to exploitation as the purity of women was often more important than anything else and the attitude to gender was influenced by caste and class considerations (Rege26). Finally, the third phase came with independence (Kumar 83).

4.1. Women's movement in the pre-Independence era:

It was roughly during the 1920s that the women's movement emerged in India. In India, the women's movement emerged as a composite of nationalism and colonialism. Even during that point in time, the women's movement did not have any feminist bent. It was moulded by the zeal of nationalism and movement for Independence. The term mainstream feminism which is in vogue now is the product of the mainstream women's movement which started during the colonial period. It was influenced by first-wave western feminism of the 19th and early 20th century which focused on the political and legal issues for women's liberation. Indian feminism echoes western feminism in the post-independent period by emphasizing the social and political rights of women at home and in the workplace as well. The movement being intractable and imperceptive becomes a prerogative of a certain class and caste of the society.

4.2. Women's movement in the post-Independence era:

Gradually, mainstream feminists realized that Indian feminism was contextually different from western feminism. So, after the independence women started to mobilize and involve themselves in different movements like land rights, legal rights related to dowry, divorce, rape, and other women issues. For example, there were movements such as the Sahada movement in Maharashtra related to land rights of tribals, the Chipko movement in Uttarakhand against deforestation, and the Nav Nirman movement in Gujarat against the excessive price hike. These were some movements during the 1970s where women largely participated but with differences in their interests. They even started to raise questions regarding the power structures and different forms of patriarchal relationships in society. During the 1980s differences and disputes in interest and identity among different existing women organizations became very obvious, especially regarding the issue of rape. Organizations like the Communist Party of India's women's front, All India Women's Congress, National Federation of Indian Women pronounced divisive articulations regarding the category 'woman', and accordingly, a tension was created relating to the justifiable and legitimate feminist issues. From this tension among different feminist perspectives different names were entitled to different groups according to their distinctive ideologies, namely, radical feminists, socialist feminists, and Marxist feminists. But, right from the nationalist movement to later social reform movements that India witnessed during the 1970s and 1980s, there was a common tendency to conceal the caste issue as it was led by mainly educated upper caste and middle-class women. They were concerned about issues and agendas related to them only. Mainstream feminism influenced by the notion of 'universal sisterhood' of western feminism addressed the category 'woman' conceptualizing it as a whole without acknowledging the fragmentations within the category. Rege rightly puts it in her argument that the historical struggle of Dalit women being lower caste people

had been “ignored in a historiography which was dominated by narratives of nationalism” (Rege ws 41). Later, mainstream feminists did the same job of camouflaging whenever there was a caste-gender intersection under the guise of universal sisterhood. Naturally, the struggle of Dalit women cannot be located in the normative historiography directed by mainstream feminism but rather in the history of non-brahmin movements and the movements by real marginalized women. Rege in the revolutionary article entitled “Dalit women talk differently: A Critique of ‘difference’ and towards a Dalit Feminist Standpoint Position” argues that ‘white feminists’ (Rege ws 39) had a very strong influence on mainstream feminists in India. Ignoring the pre-colonial connections of caste, gender, and class mainstream feminists only attempted the ‘Saidian framework’ (Rege ws 39) of colonial domination and failed to notice the role of women “in non-brahmin movements and movements by or on behalf of women” (Rege ws 39). Mainstream feminists overlooked the issues of Dalit women the way western feminists overlooked the issues of black women.

5. Dalit women in Phule/Ambedkarite movement:

With progressing time, the process of conscientization of Dalit women started to take place first in Maharashtra holding the hands of Jotirao Phule, and his wife Savitribai Phule. They for the first time brought the wave of Dalit liberation and justice by publishing the saga of oppression and subjugation by the Marathi Peswas in their mother tongue. In that sense, they were the first Dalit activists to run several girls’ schools, orphanage homes and begin the first civil marriage and establish the organization Satya Sadhak Samaj. Dr. Ambedkar played a major role in this process of reshaping thoughts. It is only in the twentieth century that the efforts of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who himself was a Dalit, made the Dalit community conscious of their humiliation and autocracy thrust on them. Like Phule, Ambedkar too recognized that sexual control and gender regulation are central to caste stratification. He became active in 1920 in the Indian Polity. Phule and later Ambedkar critiqued ‘brahmanical patriarchy’ on the ground of “caste radical’s” stance of “caste respectability” and “sexual purity” (Rao 52). Rao uses the term “caste radical” for those upper caste orthodox extremists who believed that it was their duty to protect the caste system as proposed by the brahmins. Phule’s establishment of a home for upper-caste Hindu women and Satyashadhok Samaj were a protest against this ‘brahmanical patriarchy’. This was a kind of rejection of the brahmanic hegemony or “caste power” (Rao 52) by the Satyashadhok activists. They initiated many cultural practices and rituals without acknowledging brahmin hegemony. Dr. Ambedkar also provided moral support to such egalitarian ideologies of Satyashadhok. He supported Satyashadhok marriage and threw challenges to Brahmin hegemony (Rao 52).

Ambedkar always emphasized the need to educate the womenfolk for the true emancipation of the Dalit community. He articulated the hegemony of hierarchical Hindu social order and deprivation of Dalits through his journals *Mook Nayak* and *Bahishkrit Bharat*. His perception of women’s emancipation was articulated through his speech addressed to women in different events, like, Mahad Satyagraha in 1927, the All India Dalit Mahila Parisad in 1942, etc. His writings and speeches moved Dalit women so much so that Dalit women started to come out with a fighting spirit to establish their assertions. He believed that the measure of women of any particular community is that of that community. He also made Mahad remarkable in the history of the anti-

caste movement by taking “a resolution to burn the Manusmriti, which held women and Sudras in contempt and imposed immoral rules that amount to treating them as lower than animals”(Pawar and Moon 120). Dalit women began to take an active part in campaigns and protests against the Hindu order led by Babasaheb. In 1930 in the Nashik Kalaram Temple Satyagraha, a huge number of Dalit women built their Samatasainik Dal under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar and challenged the state force.

5.1. Dalit women and the Devdasi system:

He always strived for a respectable life for Dalit women. This is very much evident in his great effort to make the Dalit women conscious of the degrading practice of “murali or devdasi or vaghyamuralya (ritual dancers)” (Pawar and Moon 92). This is a practice of dedicating young girls mainly among “Mahar, Mang and Kunbi and so-called nomadic communities who were married off to the God Khandoba at his temple in Jejuri in fulfillment of a vow” (Rao 61). They were gradually compelled to religious prostitution. A lot of controversies persisted during the late 19th century and early twentieth century over the issue of inheritance of property in case of the death of a man leaving no legitimate male offspring but having illegitimate offspring and Murali daughter (Rao 64). Rao argues that this social custom of ‘devadasis’ did not end up with sexual servitude only; it raised questions about female inheritance and finally gave privilege to patrilineal inheritance (Rao 64). ‘Muralis’ recognized the cause of their degradation within Hinduism and their community as well. They made Dalit males accountable for their demeaning condition. Muralis like Shivubai Wallad Laxman Jadhav –Sonkamble expressed anger and anguish through her letter published in *Somwanshi Mitra* on 1st December 1908 (Pawar 93). She made the fathers and the male customers accountable for those Dalit girls who were thrust into such ignominious custom and made “sexual labor” (Rao 65).

Ambedkar remarked,

“The greatest progress we have made is to be found amongst our womenfolk. Here you see in this conference these 20,000-25000 women present. See their dress, observe their manners, and mark their speech. Can anyone say that they are untouchable women?”
(*Report of the All India Depressed Classes Conference* 28-29).

5.2. Ambedkarite neo-Buddhist women:

Conversion to Buddhism is one of the major attempts to bring a change in the cognizance of society. Though Ambedkar led Dalit women’s movement for liberty from economics, political, educational, social deprivation assuming the Hindu caste system as the very root of Dalit servitude, Dalit women are still in bondage. He promoted conversion to Buddhism as a path to freedom in 1956. This converted sect is known as neo-Buddhists and “Ambedkar founded this sect as a means to counter casteism and sexism in India” (Hibbs ii). Had it been only the question of the bondage of the caste system, conversion to Buddhism could have liberated Dalit women from their century-old servitude. Religious conversion cannot save converted Dalit women from economic deprivation. Various Government policies to empower Dalit women economically by providing reservations and subsidies failed. According to the observation of the Dalit Solidarity Network.

“Dalit women often work in modern slavery and are key targets for trafficking. They are often used as debt slaves in brick kilns, garment industries, and agriculture. 98% of those forced into the dehumanizing work of manual scavenging, removing human waste by hand, are also Dalit women. Dalit women may also be born into temple prostitution as ‘Devadasis’ (sex slaves) in India or be branded prostitutes in Nepal due to their caste status” (<https://idsn.org/key-issues/dalit-women>)

So, they are part of the modern system of slavery.

In the Indian context, caste being both a system of production and reproduction (Chakravarty 27) Dalit women started to realize that they are most oppressed in the domain of sexuality and religion. Lucinda Ramberg in her research work “Casting Religion and Sexing Gender in South India” on the relationship between religiosity and sexuality talks about the religious and sexual subjectivity of Dalit women who fall outside the accepted belief of womanhood and religion. To her Dalit woman is not a single subject position evolved within structural violence of brahmanical patriarchy taken up so far by Dalit feminist scholars. She draws the attraction towards Ambedkarite Buddhist women, Matangi pujari, ‘vamp woman’ or sex worker. Religion and sexuality are the two agencies operating both inside and outside the scheme of caste and gender in Dalit women’s life.

6. Mainstream Dalit movement and Dalit women:

Dalit women might be a part of the Dalit movement on a larger scale but there had been no conscious effort to achieve liberty from the male counterparts from the anti-sexism stand point. The Dalit community itself was impervious to change in the question of the status of Dalit women within the community. Dalit women were neither given any space in the decision-making process in the upper caste women-dominated female organizations nor male-dominated Dalit organizations. Dalit women were generally discouraged “to speak up about their issues in Dalit gatherings referring it as Dalit nuisance, diversion, and distraction of the larger concern of the Dalit movement” (Nelavala 19). In post-independent India, during the era of the social reform movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s, several rebellious organizations appeared. Some of these organizations were “Shramik Mukti Sanghathana”, “Satyashodhak Communist Party”, “Shramik Mukti dal”, “Yuvak Kranti Dal” (Rege WS- 42). Except for these organizations, Dalit Panthers was another notable organization in Bombay to fight against caste oppression and discrimination. But very unfortunately this institution was set up by Namdeo Dhasal and J.V Pawar gave ‘a token inclusion’ (Rege WS-42) to Dalit women in their organization, where the other organizations were giving equal importance to Dalit women. The distinct issues and challenges of Dalit women remained unaddressed by the Dalit Panthers movement as Rege pointed out in her essay “in both their writings and their program-the Dalit women remained encapsulated firmly in the roles of the ‘mother’ and the ‘victimized sexual being’” (Rege WS42). Therefore, a large section of Dalit women remained outside the process of change of social perception which gradually took the shape of a movement. From the point of view of this movement, women can be divided into three categories: women from the Nomadic castes or tribes, non-neo-Buddhist Dalit women, and women in the Ambedkarite movement.

7. Mainstream feminism and Dalit women:

The concept of the universal sisterhood of western feminism lost its significance in the Indian context during the 1990s. Until the 1990s the issues and agendas of mainstream feminism are not recognizing the issues and concerns of Dalit women as their concerns. Dalit women activists understood that in 1972 when several feminist organizations took up the case of a tribal girl Mathura's rape in police custody and protested against the verdict of the court that acquitted the accused, they only campaigned to bring fore the issues of violence against women neglecting the linkage between caste- hierarchy, and patriarchy. Numerous Dalit literary texts were coming up mostly by Dalit women writers showcasing their anger and protest over the concept of universal sisterhood. Their point of anger or protest was mainly because of their challenges, their deprivations were not getting any place in mainstream feminism. The concept of the universal sisterhood of mainstream feminism again proved to be a hollow concept when upper-caste women vehemently protested against the policies for backward classes recommended by the Mandal Commission 1990. Feminists who stood up for the justice of Mathura now stood up against the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. This ambivalence in the attitude of mainstream feminism invited retrospection on their claim of working for 'women' because it inevitably unmasked their inherent connection with brahmanical hierarchy. Upper-caste women in this issue proclaimed that they could not compromise with the welfare of the nation "by using the rhetoric of merit" and represented themselves as "non-submissive", "assertive" and "feminist subjects" (Tamilapakan. p). The feeling of "otherness" of Dalit women among the 'other' remained unrealized and ignored by mainstream feminism. Mainstream feminists always contended for loyalty towards the perspective of gender "cutting across classes and castes" (Paik 40). But, the interplay of caste, class, colour, community, gender has a direct impact on Dalit women's lives and gives birth to Dalit feminism.

7.1. Formation of autonomous Dalit women organizations:

In Bangalore, in 1987, on international women's Day, the first national-level meeting of Dalit women was held. In this meeting comparisons were drawn between Dalit women and Black women and international solidarity was established. Ruth Manorama, a Bangalore-based Dalit social activist has drawn special attention to the practice of 'untouchability' and the intersectional praxis of class, caste, and gender in the context of Dalit women in India. After that, during the 1990s different autonomous Dalit woman organizations were established at both regional and national levels to establish a Dalit Feminist standpoint. To strengthen their voice, impact, and influence, Ruth Manorama, formed a pan-India organization National Federation of Dalit woman (NFDW) in 1995. This organization represents Dalit women both at the national and international levels. United Nations fourth world conference held in Beijing in 1995 was a watershed event for Dalit women as they lent their voice and activism and shared their vision and goals of emancipation and empowerment on the international level for the first time (The Wire). NFDW worked in the "Advisory Group" of the conference and motivated grassroots women activists to mobilize. NFDW argued that "the atrocities against women were not isolated instances of crime but a result of systemic caste-based violence" (The Wire). Some other notables are *Dalit Mahila Sangathana*

formed in Maharashtra in 1995; Dalit Mahila Samiti was formed in 2002 in Uttar Pradesh for building the Dalit women's movement stronger. All these aspects radically moulded the shape of the Dalit women's movement since the 1990s.

7.2.21st century and further developments:

With the beginning of the 21st century several NGOs, groups come up across the country to assert their identity and human rights as an aftermath of conventions, workshops, and conferences held by NFDW. In 2001 NFDW took part in the "World Conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance" in Durban and drew the concerns of Dalit women at the global level. In 2006, NFDW and National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) collaborated to assemble politicians, activists, scholars to exchange knowledge and support the causes of Dalit women. The declarations made in the Delhi conference are carried on the international platform of the First International Conference on the Human Rights of Dalit women in Hague Netherlands. NFDW once again emphasized the three axes of discrimination of Dalit women, caste, class, and gender. The Hague conference marked an epistemological shift to a Dalit feminist standpoint (Rege 45). This conference was a stepping stone in building an international network and solidarity. Their goal was to reach a common declaration to achieve the human rights and dignity of Dalit women keeping in view "the systemic discrimination, violence and impunity" (The Hague Declaration). Different working groups were formed to discuss issues like "temple prostitution or devdasi system, rape, torture, manual scavenging and how assault and rape reinforce social dominance over the whole Dalit community" (Mehta n. p). Legal systems and land rights, wages, housing are also discussed as some vulnerable areas for discrimination and marginalization. The Dalit Mahila Samiti, another Dalit feminist organization with over 1500 women is a glaring example of Dalit women's conscientization. Dalit women are coming forward to lead their movement against all odds. Before the 1990s Dalit women were not confident of their capacity to fight their struggle alone. Gradually, Dalit women created a separate identity and emerged with a distinct women's movement, termed Dalit feminism. Before Mayawati, the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh no Dalit woman was seen in any politically significant position. But from 2002, Dalit women leaders started to become more organized by making their goals and objectives better and more focused with organizations like Dalit Mahila Samiti which was officially established in 2003.

7.3. Dalit womanism:

Alice Walker in her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden: Womanist Prose* (1983) first coined the term 'womanism' (The Leaflet). She defines womanism as racial, cultural, sexual, national economic, and political consciousness of the concerned category of women (The Leaflet). Dalit feminist activist Dr. Cynthia Stephen views that Dalit womanism instead of Dalit feminism is the more appropriate term but the term Dalit womanism in India is yet to be specified because of the upper-caste favouritism of the term 'feminism in the discipline of Women Studies in India. She finds it crucial for the theoretical formulation of Dalit feminism. As she says, "Dalit womanism will be broad enough to include the experience not only of the Dalit women in general but also sensitive enough to provide space for the expression of the diversity of the experiences of religious minorities, tribal and ethnic identities who are presently termed, subaltern. Once the process begins,

there can be no stopping it” (Stephen n.p). “Dalit womanism asserts that Dalit women have the right to be seen as subjects and not as objects, who play an active role in the betterment of not only themselves but also their whole community” (dalitdastak.com). Conscientization of Dalit women can result in the empowerment of Dalit women. Educational and economic empowerment of Dalit women is the need of the time. Dalit women have a long way to go towards emancipation because they are facing three social axes of caste, class, and gender at a time as elaborated by Uma Chakravarty, a feminist historian in her book *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens*. The establishment of organizations like the National Federation of Dalit Women (1995) is an attempt to create a separate space for themselves where the three-fold oppression is recognized and worked upon to snatch due dignity and self-respect.

8. Conclusion:

To conclude, present India can see conscientization of Dalit women in the three streams of writings, activism, and theoretical formulation; at the same time they are using different digital platforms, social networking sites to invigorate Dalit women from all sections of society. There are already some existing websites like Dalit women ‘Caucus’ and ‘Savari’ which are used as an assembly to speak about gender-related issues related to Dalit women. In 2006, a special network for Dalit women solidarity started with Dalit women activists and academicians called Dalit Women’s Network for Solidarity (DAWNS). Thenmozhi Soundararajan an Indian-American Dalit feminist activist takes the movement to another level. She uses the digital media to be specific “the art of cross-media storytelling to speak about casteism within Indian diaspora” and to protest “against caste-related sexual violence and other human rights violations against them” (wikipedia.org). She is a Dalit artist though working from America relentlessly trying to spread messages to the world through translating “stories across platforms that include social media posts, professional photography, and security training for its participants among others” (the guardian.com). Indian Dalit feminist activists can use unique ways of art to highlight their pangs and pains. They can use other art forms including literary texts as a weapon to fight back.

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