

Status of Women Diaspora: A Sociological Study of Dalit Women Diaspora and the Empowering Measures

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Abstract: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights reminds us that all people are equal in dignity and rights. However, we still live in a male-dominated world where men dictate, and women are expected to follow, even on matters that are fundamental to a women's personhood" said Dr. Djibril Diallo, President and CEO of the African Renaissance and Diaspora Network (ARDN), a New York-based global NGO. Recently, United Nations Population Division revealed that, overall 49% of all international migrants were women or girls, and in the developed regions it is 5%. The statistics say that the majority of women migrate as dependent family members and also migrate as professionals moving on their own, conflict-induced migrants, as labor force, permanent, temporary, illegally, forced and trafficked migrants. The Indian women, if they are dalits, are more prone to violence. Dr. Djibril Diallo states that "women of the Diaspora are doubly burdened because they face discrimination and violence not only on account of their gender but also their ancestry"*

This paper intends to find out-

The status of dalit women diaspora

The causes for dalit women Diaspora

The violence on dalit women of diaspora

The measures have been taken to protect dalit women of diaspora-on the basis of secondary data.

Key Words: *Dalit, Diaspora, violence, Indian Woman, NGO*

I. INTRODUCTION

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II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This paper intends to find out-

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The measures have been taken to protect dalit women of diaspora-on the basis of secondary data.

III. DISCUSSION

The discourse of Diaspora has gained unprecedented prominence and proliferation in the contemporary literary, cultural, political and sociological disciplines. The studies of Diaspora now encompass various disciplines like sociology, economy, geography, political science, cultural study and film study. It has also been recognized as a distinct field of academic interest.

It is generally acknowledged that the term Diaspora is originated from the Greek words: speiro means sow, and dia means over. Hence, etymologically, it denotes dispersion, scattering and dissemination of people across the countries. In Hebrew, diaspora was termed as Golahor Galut meaning "Exile". Earlier, the term diaspora, was particularized in the history of the Jews exiles, as mentioned in the Bible. It is however unanimously conceded by scholars that the Jews diaspora is at the core of the diasporic conceptualization.

Diaspora can critically be defined as a seamless network of socio-cultural-politico and psychical manifestations spurred by a circuitous movement which accompanies the immigrants, expatriates, refugees and exilic with their sense of solitude along with their urge for return to the native land, temporarily connected with each other by their collective memory and their reinvention and reproduction of the cultural identities which seems to be an ever-evolving process.

Iain Chambers, in his book 'Migrancy, Culture and Identity' (1994) recognizes Diaspora in terms of mutability and uncertain departure from the homeland and arrival in the homeland simultaneously. He observes that "Diasporas are encapsulated within the unfixed language, histories and identities. In diasporic condition, a stranger is burdened by the new challenged identity, dispersed „historical inheritance“ and the heterogeneous present"

WOMEN AND VIOLENCE

Migrant women and teens face a high risk of sexual violence, warned UNICEF on November 25 2019, on the occasion of the celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. UNICEF adds that the risk is even higher in the case of unaccompanied minors and highlighted that globally some 15 million teen girls aged 15 to 19 have been sexually abused at some point in their lives. The risk of sexual violence extremely high for migrant women and children, the organization said.

Anna Riatti, the UNICEF official in Italy, said migrant and shelter-seeking girls are most at risk of becoming victims of violence, in particular of being sexually exploited. Domestic violence against women is one of the major human rights violations

"Every 11 minutes, a woman or girl is killed by an intimate partner or family member and we know that other stresses, from the COVID-19 pandemic to economic turmoil, inevitably lead to even more physical and verbal abuse. Women and girls also face rampant online violence, from misogynistic hate speech to sexual harassment, image abuse and grooming by predators. This discrimination, violence and abuse, targeting half of humanity, comes at a steep cost. It limits women's and girls' participation in all walks of life, denies their fundamental rights and freedoms, and blocks the equal economic recovery and sustainable growth our world needs" United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres mentions

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OF DALITS

International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) claims that about 260 million people are affected by caste system; the vast majority living in South Asia (IDSN 2013) Literature on Dalits and their international migration experience is limited. In the wider universe of research on migration, compared to work on women and irregular migrants, Dalits as a vulnerable group have rarely been studied. Globalization has brought many opportunities for international migration. with a growing number of Indians choosing to go abroad hoping for a better life for themselves and their families. Dalits are much more troubled by migration. The main cause of this migration is poverty.

The word 'Diaspora' is used to refer to any people or indigenous population forced or spawned to leave their traditional indigenous homelands; being dispersed throughout other parts of the world; and the ensuing developments in their dispersal and culture. When people migrate they do not migrate as biological entities, but with socio-cultural baggage as well. Caste being entrenched in their socio-cultural milieu gets transferred with migrant communities in the process of Diaspora. Caste exists in the Indian diaspora with its different shades. Caste is still present among so-called upper castes and Dalits. For example the presence of Brahmins and Dalits with their caste, religious symbols and icons in the US diaspora proves that caste has travelled from India to the Indian diaspora in the United States.

Indian dalits were not only taken to different countries as labourers, but many have migrated for many reasons. According to Lal (1984:126-130) out of 60,965 Indian contracted labourers who migrated to Fiji between 1879 and 1916 about 11,907 or 26.2% belonged to low menial castes like Chamars, Koris, Pasis, etc., Similarly, Breretan (1974:26) writes that between 1876 and 1885 the caste derivation as Hindu arrivals in Trinidad was Brahmin and other high castes 18% artisan castes 8.5%, agricultural castes 32%, low caste 41.5%. Jain (1984:175) also accepts that many untouchable castes like adi-dravidas migrated to Malaysia. Sandhu (1969) adds that south Indian dalits belonging to cherumaus, parayans, Pallavas and other depressed castes as contract labourers in Malaysia and the South Indian peasants particularly the untouchable easily become the contractual labourers. Dalit diaspora can be divided into two major types, that is, the old and the new. The 'old' pattern consists of enslaved and assisted labourers and these have taken by the contractors to different countries. This diaspora restricted to African and South Asian countries. The second type of 'new' dalit diaspora comprise professionally skilled dalits and semi literates and these have mostly emigrated to London and the United States as industrial labourers, technical assistants, and other professionals. Considering the 'new' dalit diaspora, United Kingdom and United States are becoming the hub of activities of the dalit diaspora.

DALIT WOMEN DIASPORA

Dalit women in the diaspora often face unique challenges and forms of violence due to their intersecting identities as members of the Dalit community, women, and immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Dalits, historically known as "untouchables" in India, have been marginalized and discriminated against for centuries. When Dalit women leave their home country and live in the diaspora, they may encounter various forms of violence and discrimination, which can include:

- **Caste-based Discrimination:** Dalit women may continue to experience caste-based discrimination and prejudice in their host countries, often from other members of the Indian diaspora. This can manifest in social exclusion, derogatory remarks, and even physical violence.
- **Gender-Based Violence:** Dalit women are vulnerable to gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and assault, both within their own communities and in the wider society. The intersection of caste and gender identity makes them particularly susceptible to such violence.
- **Economic Exploitation:** Dalit women may be subjected to economic exploitation, including unfair wages, poor working conditions, and limited opportunities for advancement. This exploitation can occur in various industries, such as domestic work, agriculture, and low-skilled labor.
- **Limited Access to Resources and Services:** Discrimination can limit access to education, healthcare, housing, and other essential services, exacerbating the vulnerability of Dalit women in the diaspora.
- **Forced Labor and Human Trafficking:** Some Dalit women may be forced into labor or human trafficking due to their economic vulnerability, caste identity, and lack of legal protections.
- **Mental Health Struggles:** The experience of violence and discrimination can lead to mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, among Dalit women in the diaspora.
- **Lack of Legal Protections:** In some countries, there may be limited legal protection against caste-based discrimination, making it difficult for Dalit women to seek justice and redress for violence and discrimination.

Accurate and up-to-date statistics specific to Dalit women in the diaspora worldwide can be challenging to obtain, as data collection often does not differentiate between various subgroups within the broader South Asian or Indian diaspora. Additionally, the term "Dalit" is primarily associated with India, and its application in the diaspora can vary.

Here are some general statistics and considerations:

- **Population in the Indian Diaspora:** The Indian diaspora is one of the largest in the world, with significant communities in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Gulf countries, and many other nations. These communities often include people from various regions, castes, and backgrounds.
- **Dalit Population in the Diaspora:** There is a significant Dalit population within the Indian diaspora, but precise statistics are limited. The Indian government does not officially track caste-based data for its citizens living abroad.
- **Gender Breakdown:** Gender distribution within the Dalit diaspora varies, but it is safe to assume that there is a significant number of Dalit women.
- **Challenges Faced:** Dalit women in the diaspora face a range of social, economic, and cultural challenges, including caste-based discrimination, gender-based violence, and access to education and employment. These issues may not always be adequately reflected in official statistics.
- **Challenges faced by Dalit women**
- **Observed results suggest poverty and caste discrimination were the main reasons for Dalit women migration. Empowering and entitling Dalit women is the greatest challenge. Dalit women mainly facing the challenges of economic and financial deprivation, lack of Education, poor Health, caste and untouchability-based discrimination, caste-based physical torture, sacred Prostitution (Devadasi), discrimination based on gender and many more.**
- **Studies on women migrating abroad show the distinct gendered hierarchy of occupational roles. Domestic service is a common occupation for migrant women. The labour market for women in the Gulf exhibits the dominant sexual division of labour, with relatively lower-end positions filled in by migrant women, who are predominantly engaged as domestic workers and low-end service providers like housemaids, babysitters, caregivers, cleaners, etc. Protector General Emigrants' India estimates that the most dominant occupation amongst women workers continues to be household work (PGE data 2010). These migrant women who are domestic workers, are considered to be susceptible to exploitation. Instances of harassment in the form of non-payment or under-payment of wages, excessive working hours, verbal and physical abuse, sexual harassment, etc. are common. Housemaids are particularly endangered because they work in closed doors so their work conditions and exploitation are invisible. These kinds of jobs neither are legally protected nor clearly defined.**

EMPOWERING MEASURES

Many community organizations, both within countries and internationally, work to support Dalit rights and address the challenges faced by Dalit women in the diaspora. These organizations may have internal estimates and data on their communities, but this information may not be comprehensive.

To obtain more specific and accurate statistics on the Dalit women in the diaspora, need to consult with relevant advocacy groups, NGOs, and academic researchers who focus on this demographic. They might have conducted studies or surveys that provide more detailed insights into the conditions and challenges faced by Dalit women in various diaspora communities.

Dalit women of diaspora present a different image in comparison to Dalit women in India. Most of them are literate and also employed in different fields. Dalit girls who do not have much education, are mostly working as sales associates in different stores. Women often help their husbands with their businesses and complete domestic work at home. Unskilled or less skilled women migrants pick fruits and vegetables, manufacture garments and other items, process meat and poultry, work as nursing home and hospital aides, clean restaurants and hotels, and provide other services.

GLOBAL LEVEL EFFORTS TO EMPOWER WOMEN DIASPORA

Efforts are being made to address the challenges faced by women diaspora. Advocacy groups, NGOs, and community organizations within the Dalit diaspora and the wider human rights community are working to raise awareness about the unique struggles faced by Dalit women. They also push for legal and policy changes to combat caste-based discrimination and violence. International human rights organizations, as well as governments in host countries, are increasingly recognizing the importance of addressing these issues to promote equality and justice for Dalit women in the diaspora.

The first dalit world conference held at Malaysia on 'Vision Towards a Casteless Society' on October 10-11, 1998 in Malaysia. They formed independent dalit party with the Indian Progressive Front and organised many rallies under the slogan 'Nidhiketu Nedudhurum Payanam' (Long March to Demand Justice). Now they respect and hold in high regard Ambedkar. They have developed a separate political and social identity. Some dalits have been nominated to the parliament of Malaysia.

In September 2000 the second international conference was organized by dalit diaspora of United Kingdom on Dalit Human Rights in London. This conference very much unique because it was found that the representation from all dalit communities of UK were participated. Shri Guru Ravidas, Bhagwan Valmiki, Amedkarite and Buddhists and Christian organisations not only attended and participated in the conference. Thematically, the conference mainly focused on the practice of untouchability and lack of facilities like, education, health, food etc. the conference suggested that Dalit research and Information Centre must be established and also took a step forward and decide that all the northern governments, non-governmental organizations, multi and bi-lateral agencies World Bank, NICEF, UNDP, and other groups that give aid to India's poverty alleviation programme should review their policies and must see that at least 50 per cent of aid is allocated to programmes that focus on dalits

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The dalit diaspora has played a dominant role in helping Indian dalits in achieving their desired goal. In the follow up of September 2000 conference, another international dalit conference in India during February 19-20, 2003 organized by VODI. The special focus of the conference was 'Dalit and International Developmental Aid'. Discussing the report of Charity Aid Foundation (CAF) and Voluntary Action Network India (VANI) the conference showed that there were 18,000 NGOs in India registered under the 1976 Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act which receive a sum of Rs 26,000 million as foreign contribution. But dalits who constitute 90 percent of poor in India are still deprived due to the failure of NGOs reaching to dalits.

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance which held in August 28-September 7, 2001 in Durban. In this conference dalits participated in large numbers and represented by National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR). [Kumar 2001]. Dalits have shown that international institutions can be used for readdressal of grievances if a national government is got failure in taking care of a group of people. In the same conference dalit women raised on the discrimination in the leadership of National Federation of Dalit Women

On may 16-18, 2003, the dalits diaspora in Vancouver, Canada under the banner of Association for International Dalit Conference organised a world conference and the theme of the conference was 'Charting Dalit Agenda for 21st Century'. The conference accepted a one- point declaration "The United Nations and its affiliates and non-governmental agencies concerned with human rights, social and economic development, must recognise that the dalits are a special group and create separate dalit divisions managed by the dalits themselves. The World

Bank and other financial institutions should attach conditional special component clause and must ensure the rightful share of the dalits in the funds they lend to India for socio-economic and sustainable development” (Vancouver Declaration 2003).

Dalit diaspora has started using the internet to unite the Dalits world over. There are about 51 sites, which provide information about dalits in India and abroad. Few important sites are www.ambedkar.org, www.dalitusa.org, www.dalitistan.org, www.dalitawaj.com, www.dalitindia.com, etc. Similarly dalits also run their E-magazines like - Dalit-International@ yahoo.com, dalits@ambedkar.org, Buddhistcircle@ yahoo.com, Sakyagroup @ yahoo.com. They are interconnecting and numbers are increasing day by day. Through these sites and magazines dalit fraternity world over keeps itself update about the latest happenings within the dalit diaspora and dalit community in India, which helps them to take prompt action based on these information. The process of sharing of information about themselves has made them aware and conscious and also sensitised them that distance is no more a hurdle to get united. And today world over dalits are approaching United Nation's Human Right Commission and organizing various conferences for awakening the dalits in India.

UNICEF in Italy has promoted many programs to prevent gender-based violence and respond to abuse by strengthening protection systems. Around 700 operators who work in the hosting and protection system were also trained to support victims and to help victims of gender-based violence.

IV. CONCLUSION

Studies show that migrated people are marginalized and exploited. Violence against women is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations. But violence against women remains unreported mainly due to the impunity, silence, stigma and shame surrounding it. On International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, observed on November 25th, 2022 Adventist Development & Relief Agency (ADRA) reaffirms we have put the well-being of girls and women on the frontline of our activities, projects and programs. ADRA is an organization which is a proud supporter of the #enditnow initiative.

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