

**DALIT WOMEN MIGRATION AND CHALLENGES  
(WITH REFERENCE TO STATUS OF DALIT WOMEN IN URBAN AREA )**

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**Abstract:**

*India, with a population of 1.42 billion, is one of the fastest-growing countries globally. Among its demographics, Dalits constitute 1.3 billion people. In Karnataka, with a population of 67.71 million, Dalits make up 19.5%. The predominantly rural landscape relies heavily on agriculture, contributing to poverty and unemployment, prompting migration to urban areas. However, urban life exacerbates the challenges for Dalits due to caste-based discrimination and substandard living conditions. Migrant and local Dalits, particularly women with low incomes, grapple with financial hardships, healthcare issues, and limited access to basic services. A study from Virtual Commons (Bridgewater State University, 2020) highlights their struggles in the face of caste discrimination. Although India has made strides in reducing extreme poverty, recent years have witnessed a slowdown in progress. The COVID-19 pandemic initially increased extreme poverty but moderated as vaccine accessibility improved in 2021. However, the plight of Dalits, especially Dalit women, worsened after 2017-2018, with rising cases of inequality in consumption and job opportunities. The research paper sheds light on the challenges faced by Dalit, tribal, and rural women in Karnataka, emphasizing the need for addressing their unique issues in the state's development initiatives.*

**Keywords:** Dalit Women, Inequality, Karnataka, Urban Area, Migration.

**INTRODUCTION**

Government of India has been implementing the number of schemes, programmes and policies for the upliftment of Dalits in India, fortunately these are not reaching or fulfilling the

targets, still dalits are not being fully forwarded and being exploited by dalits Dalit women, are deprived of the socio-economic and financial independence to access basic health care services. Unless

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one is economically empowered, access to a healthy life is very difficult. The existing caste system and financial instability push Dalit workers to migrate to cities for better living conditions. Migrant Dalit men find work mainly in the construction industry and service-based informal sectors while most migrant Dalit women work as domestic helpers to earn their livelihood. Because of low literacy rates among Dalits, the awareness of government-run programs and initiatives to uplift the Dalit workers are not very effective. This adds to the burden on Dalits in terms of their spending on their personal health and healthcare needs, largely due to the caste based discrimination prevailing in the country and problem of poverty which makes it difficult for the Dalit poor to avail health facilities (Ramaiah 2007). The researchers, in this study, are trying to understand the health issues of Dalit women migrant workers, one of the weakest sections of India.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study based on secondary data collected by the official Gazette, Published literature and research articles, survey reports and journals.

- Examine the Problems of migrated women's in urban setting
- To identify caste-based discrimination and poor standard of living.
- Understand the relationship between the migrant Dalits, and the local dalits.

Richard Pais (1999) in his study on Scheduled castes, Employment and Social Mobility in southern Karnataka-Mangalore in Urban Agglomerations. Here Scheduled Castes are housed in segregated colonies indifferent parts of the city. Until recently they were engaged in menial jobs such as cleaning the streets carrying the night soil cleaning latrines transporting city wastes etc. though some of them sought jobs in central and state governmental departments schools colleges hospitals and banks etc. social mobility of scheduled castes as a result of employment in an urban settings, for urban society accepts changes and tolerates ambiguities more readily than rural society.

Mutthurayappa (1986) made a study on scheduled caste of the state of Karnataka and found that these people are still in lowest income group and their situation in rural areas is very serious as most often they borrow loan form either masars or from their local *sahukars* and hence always remain in deficit

#### **ISSUES ON DALIT WOMEN MIGRATION OF KARNATAKA**

Dalit women migration in Karnataka is marked by a series of pressing issues that intersect with gender and caste dynamics. These women often confront discrimination and exploitation at both their places of origin and destination, experiencing unequal wages and social exclusion. Economic factors, including limited opportunities in their home regions, drive migration, but Dalit women

frequently find themselves in low-paying and exploitative jobs. The vulnerability to various forms of violence, including physical, verbal, and sexual abuse, is exacerbated by the unfamiliar environment of migration destinations. Limited access to education and healthcare further compounds their challenges. The persistent influence of the caste system contributes to discrimination, hindering their integration into new communities. Inadequate legal support and social stigma, particularly from conservative societies, add to the difficulties. Housing and living conditions in urban areas are often substandard, and the intersectionality of gender and caste identity magnifies the challenges faced by Dalit women migrants. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach involving social, economic, and policy interventions to empower and improve the well-being of Dalit women migrants in Karnataka.

Dalit women, along with their families, continue to face systemic marginalization, as they are often relegated to segregated hamlets on the outskirts of villages or isolated corners, where basic civic amenities such as drinking water, healthcare, education, and approach roads are conspicuously absent. In urban areas, their dwellings are predominantly situated in unhygienic slum areas, exacerbating the challenges of their living conditions. Compounding these issues is the exploitation endured under the guise of religious practices like "Nude Worship"

and the persisting devdasi system, rendering Dalit women more susceptible to violence and discrimination. Shockingly, the UN Special Reporter on violence against women has highlighted that Dalit women become targets of deliberate violence, including rape and murder, orchestrated by state actors and powerful members of dominant castes, often deployed as a means to suppress dissent within the community. The gravity of these crimes is further compounded by the withdrawal of cases and witness intimidation due to external pressures, with inadequate protection offered to those affected. Sanctioned impunity remains a significant challenge, as the police frequently deny or purposefully neglect Dalit women's rights to legal aid and justice. The consistent pattern of delays in filing reports and irregularities in criminal procedures perpetuates widespread impunity, creating formidable barriers to justice for Dalit women in India.

#### **WORKPLACE VIOLENCE ON DALIT WOMEN**

Dalit women engaged in migrant work face heightened vulnerability due to hazardous workplaces and a lack of adequate labor rights protection. The prevalence of short-term labor sub-contracting exacerbates the difficulty for them to seek compensation in cases of occupational injuries. This increased risk is compounded by the exploitation from various fronts, including employers, migration agents, corrupt bureaucrats, and

criminal groups, leaving Dalit women in a precarious position.

Furthermore, the alarming issue of enslavement trafficking contributes significantly to the migration of a substantial number of Dalit women. A disturbing mindset among dominant castes fosters a sense of impunity, leading them to believe they can act without consequence towards Dalit girls. This deeply rooted discrimination, driven by Brahmanical notions of "purity and pollution," has far-reaching consequences, adversely affecting all aspects of development for Dalit women.

### **FINDINGS**

The following are the major findings based on the in-depth secondary source of information done by the researcher focused on Poverty, caste-related discrimination, better job opportunities, accompanying spouse or parents are the major reasons for the migration of Dalit women. Low productivity and seasonal unemployment in the agriculture sector in rural areas drive the migration to cities like Bangalore. Economic and financial deprivation, lack of education, poor health, caste and un-touchability-based discrimination, caste-based physical torture, sacred prostitution, gender-based discrimination are some of the major challenges faced by the Dalit women. Bangalore City offers job opportunities to migrant Dalits largely in the informal sector. Dalit women mainly work as domestic helpers. Un-hygienic living

conditions and improper self-care increases the health risks of Dalit women, body aches, injuries, respiratory problems, allergic reactions, pregnancy-related issues, menstrual hygiene issues are the major health problems faced by Dalit women. Most of them are not eligible or not aware of welfare and social security measures, lack of identity proof and documents makes it difficult for them to avail these benefits, huge medical expenditure leads to financial toxicity for the migrant dalits. It also leads to physical, mental, emotional distress, irregular and informal income, job loss, illness add to the financial woes of the migrant women many employers complain about increased illegal activity and theft by the migrant population, and that is one major source of Dalit discrimination in major cities like in Bengaluru in the state.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Indian caste system originated in ancient India and gradually evolved concurrently with Indian history. Dalits in Indian history were considered as lower caste untouchables and were deprived of basic human rights. After the onset of modern economic development and the progressive initiatives taken by the government, the situation has improved considerably. The modern Indian state, since independence has been oriented towards providing reservations for Dalits in education and other public services. However, even with continuous efforts to eradicate the caste system and numerous

measures to improve their lives, Dalits, specifically Dalit women, are still deprived of their basic needs. Many of them have moved to urban areas to earn their livelihoods and find employment mostly in the unorganized sector. Empowering these large numbers of Dalit women is a challenging endeavour, especially when they are deprived and mostly unaware of basic healthcare needs. The present research paper aims to discover the factors influencing the migration of Dalit women. It explores the deteriorating quality of life experienced by Dalit women with increased out-of-pocket expenditures for healthcare

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