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HUMAN RIGHTS: A GAP BETWEEN ASPIRATIONS AND ENJOYMENTS FOR SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN

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Human Rights has been a core concept of life in the present century. It has become sine qua non for civic life and civilization. Natural rights based on moral universalism, rationalism and scientificism are the foundations of it. This is essential for full fledged development of human personality. According to it's third generation it reflects collectiveness, solidarity and inclusiveness. It has to protect and nourish all the individuals irrespective of any group, caste, colour, creed, religion and sex and it also includes animals and environment impliedly. This aspect of inclusiveness leads to peaceful, full-fledged developed and sustainable world. But, in many cases it is felt and experienced that certain groups and communities are excluded from the process of this inclusive growth and development. And the Scheduled Caste women have been deprived of enjoying their human rights. They have to bear the triple burden of deprivation in terms of caste, gender and poverty. They are forced to enter the labour market at a very early age in order to sustain their families. Traditionally allocated menial and stigmatised works are generally assigned to them. Better paid and dignified jobs continue to be out of reach for them through a systematic denial of rights to higher education, skill training, assets and other productive resources. This process of systematic denial further ensures their exclusion from socio-political

scenario and keeps them restricted to the bottom of the society as invisible citizens.

Who is Scheduled Caste?

Scheduled Caste is historically disadvantaged population groups recognised in the Indian Constitution. During the colonial time (since 1885), they were known as Depressed Classes who faced multiple deprivations on account of their low position in the hierarchy of the Hindu caste system.

According to Poona Pact (1932) the agreement, the demand of separate electorate was replaced by reserved constituency for the depressed classes and in this way, the scheduling of castes took place. In 1936, The Government of India, Scheduled Caste Order (Article 26 (i)) describes the Scheduled Caste - "such castes, races or tribes, or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes, being castes, races, or tribes, or parts or groups which appear to His Majesty in Council, to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as 'the depressed classes', as His Majesty in Council may specify (Mukherjee & Sabharwal, 2015)". Further, people belonged to SC community are dalits. The literal meaning of Dalits is "broken people" or "oppressed". The caste system is a Hindu hierarchical class structure with roots in India dating back thousands of years. In descending order, the caste system is comprised of Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaisyas (farmers), Shudras (laborer-artisans), and the Dalits, who are considered so polluted that they are beyond caste. Traditionally, caste, determined by birth and caste system entailed a life of degradation for Dalits. For instance, Dalits undertook occupations that the rest of Indian society found ritually polluting, such as handling carcasses, disposing of human waste (also known as the practice of manual scavenging), sweeping streets, or cobbling considered degrading because of its association with feet and leather. Dalits also received ill treatment from members of higher castes, particularly from Brahmins.