INTRODUCTION

The Indian society is based on a unique socio-cultural phenomenon – the caste system, which is essentially a religious system, sanctioned and sustained by Hinduism. There is no caste system outside the Hindu context. Speaking about the caste system, J.H. Hunton concurs that it is an exclusively Indian phenomenon and that no other society in the world can be compared to the caste-ridden society of India (J. H. Hunton, 1963: 40). Caste inequality and hierarchical thinking permeate every aspect of life in India. The most affected by this growing inequality are those who by their birth bear the stigma of untouchability.
ROOT AND MEANING OF THE TERM DALIT

The Dalit is derived from Sanskrit language where it is used both as noun and adjective. As noun, Dalit stands for all three genders: Masculine, Feminine and Neuter. It has as its root dal, which means to split open, to crack, etc. when used as a noun or adjective, it means burst, split, broken down-trodden, scattered, crushed, destroyed etc. (The practical Sanskrit, English dictionary Delhi, 1989); There is also a word dal in Hebrew language, which means broken, crust, down-trodden, split etc., (M.E. Prabhakar, 1988), and may be used in two senses: it may refer either to physical weakness or to a lowly insignificant position in society (Elsa Tamex, Bible of the Oppressed, 1983: 70). In other words, Dalits are people who are broken, crushed and torn apart. They are extremely poor and lowly. The term Dalit can be used for any oppressed group or people who are marginalized and dehumanized.

STATUS OF DALIT WOMEN

Dalit women are compelled to go for various economic activities primarily due to these economic conditions. Even they go for hard labour, even the work that is supposed to be done by men. But they used to get fewer wage in comparison to their male counter part. Women work as daily labour for threshing paddy, transplanting seedling or even as labour in road or building constructions, mostly of higher caste Hindu, Muslim or Christian, many-a-time raped. Though normally considered as untouchables, these Dalit women were permitted to enter in inside of the houses at the time of childbirth. After jobs are over they are reverted back to the untouchable status.

The following points have been emphasized on the life of Dalit women:
(1) Dalit family system is patriarchal. (2) Dalit women”s place in the family is secondary even if she earns. (3) She does not take any independent decisions. (4) She can be some times quite firm. (5) She is a little more “free” than other women as remarriage and choice of husband is possible. She has economic independence but spends all the money for her family. She can go out to work. (6) She still does the menial and dirty work that Manu ordained. (7) Economic standard is low. (8)
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Food-inferior state, etc. (9) Clothing -50 percent women had torn clothing. (10) Houses, usually in very bad area of the village dirty and mud constructions “Kachha”. (11) Marriage and other social occasions they tend to follow caste restrictions. (12) During all rituals tendency is to spend more than what they can afford due to what people will say. (13) Better awareness of health. (14) Though all women understand importance of education only the Boudha Dalit women understand the importance of education particularly girl’s education. (15) Political awareness is quite a lot. (16) Boudha Dalits and Christian Dalits more advanced than Hindu and Muslim Dalits in their living and way of thought. (17) The Boudha women seem to have matured more and more conscious of their rights than even the Christian. (P.G. Jogdand 1995: 167)

On the basis of these points one can draw certain conclusions. The life of Dalit women is governed by certain rules and taboos as prescribed by Manu. Consequently, the Dalit women are subjected to inhuman behaviour and acute discrimination. They are not being treated as human being. For those who converted to Buddhism or Christianity, the life of women have undergone change. They are more conscious and are trying to establish their own identity in society. On the contrary, the Hindu Dalit women are still stick to the tradition and superstitions. As a result, they (Hindu Dalit Women) are lagging behind in all spheres as compared to Nav Buddha women.

Dalit woman today is inspired by Dr. Ambedkar. Her way is paved with difficulties. Dalit woman’s social struggle will first of all be a familial struggle. Even the educated Dalit man’s mind-set is not necessarily progressive. A debit woman, only if she has a support in her family, can advance in social sphere. As long as she does not have wherewithal for self-actualization she cannot be considered as liberated. This entails a change in the value system of the society. This would mean a treatment of pathology in human beings and a change in attitude of man towards woman. Till then, Dalit woman cannot forge ahead.
DEFINITION OF SLUMS ACCORDING TO CENSUS OF INDIA

The Census of India has adopted the definition of slums specified/declared “slums” through State/UT or local government under any act. In addition, it also considers the following area as slum: “A compact area of at least 300 population or about 60-70 households of poorly built congested tenements, in unhygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities”.

PROBABLE REASONS FOR UPCOMING SLUMS

There are many reasons associated with the development of the slums in urban cities of India. Some important reasons are as follows,

- Urbanization
- Industrialization
- Higher productivity in the secondary/tertiary sector against primary sector makes cities and towns centers of economic growth and jobs
- Cities act as beacons for the rural population as they represent a higher standard of living and offer opportunities to people not available in rural areas. This results in large-scale migration from rural to urban areas.
- Negative consequences of urban pull result in the upcoming of slums characterized by housing shortage and critical inadequacies in public utilities, overcrowding, unhygienic conditions.

Slum Population simply refers to people living in slum areas below the poverty line. As India is still on the path of development, there is a large number of people living below the poverty line. These people usually live in slum areas connected to the city. According to Government sources, the Slum Population of India has exceeded the population of Britain. It has doubled in the last two decades. According to the last census in 2001, the slum-dwelling population of India had risen from 27.9 million in 1981 to 61.8 million in 2001. Indian economy has achieved a significant growth of 8...
percent annually in last four years, but there is still large number of people nearly 1.1 billion still survives on less than 1 $ (around 46 INR) in a day.

**SLUMS IN PUNE**

Pune is a rapidly expanding prosperous city and the second largest urban agglomerate in the state of Maharashtra. The city has become a major centre for industry over the last three decades and is now also emerging as a key location for information technologies. Despite its prosperity, Pune continues to suffer from inefficient networks: bad roads, dysfunctional telephone and electricity lines, inadequate drainage, water and sewerage networks. Some areas completely lack these networks, which are vital to the efficient functioning of the city as a whole. In this context, a number of high-profile planning projects have been proposed in recent years. Plans have been put forward and discussed for a light-rail system and a large-scale riverfront improvement scheme. In addition, roads are being widened and resurfaced, fibre optic cables laid, and there are plans for high-capital investment sewage and water treatment plants.

The state of Maharashtra has introduced a number of Acts for the improvement and Clearance of Slums. The most comprehensive Act is the Maharashtra Slum Areas, (Improvement, Clearance and Redevelopment) Act of 1971. Under the Act, a slum is loosely defined as a congested, unhygienic area or buildings that are public hazards. The Act declares the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) as the administrative authority to implement projects under the Act, mainly the provision of basic services in slums. In order to provide these improvements, the PMC “declares” a number of areas as slum areas as slums, which they think adhere most to the definition of the slum. Since the Act came into existence.
DALIT WOMEN ARE FACING:

- Gender discrimination - patriarchy
- Social /caste discrimination - untouchability
- Violence - domestic, at work place and in society
- Economic deprivation – poverty, unemployment, landlessness
- Political powerlessness – non acceptance and participation in decision making

Dalit Women also have a limited access to livelihood, food, water, sanitation and other welfare programmes.

RECOMMENDATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

Countries need to recognize that the urban poor are active agents and not just beneficiaries of development. Developing cities requires local solutions. Local authorities need to be empowered with financial and human resources to deliver services and infrastructure to the urban poor. Cities should draw up local long-term strategies for improving the lives of slum dwellers. Local
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governments should develop strategies to prevent the formation of new slums. These should include access to affordable land, reasonably priced materials, employment opportunities, and basic infrastructure and social services.

Public investments must focus on providing access to basic services and infrastructure. Working with the urban poor, cities need to invest in housing, water, sanitation, energy, and urban services, such as garbage disposal. These services and infrastructure must reach the poor living in informal settlements. The transportation needs and safety concerns of a city’s poorest residents should be a high priority in planning urban transportation systems, which can expand the choices people have regarding where to live and work. Building codes and regulations should be realistic and enforceable and reflect the lifestyle and needs of the local community. This means, for example, that they may have to be flexible enough to allow housing that is built incrementally, out of low-cost materials and on small plots of land. Some of the major recommendations are as following,

- The first requirement for them therefore a comfortable home provided with minimum basic amenities.
- To make urban Dalit women literate or at least semi literate, providing them skill training or functional literacy.
- Implementation of policies and programmes for the socio-economic upliftment of the socially marginalized sections of the population by the state with the active involvement of the civil society.
- The strict enforcement of land reform measures in all the states and the proper implementation of employment schemes in the rural areas.
- The provision of laws that take into consideration the interests of the slum inhabitants. This should include the conferring of legal status to existing slum clusters and working towards improving living conditions in these areas.
Wherever, slums have to be relocated, care should be taken to see that the slum dwellers are not in any way disadvantaged.

Proper co-ordination and co-operation between the various agencies working for slums, ensuring that these agencies are free of corruption and red tapism and consistency in slum development policies and programmes.

The incorporation of expenditure on slums as an item in the Central Government Budget and the allocation of funds to states for the implementation of slum development programmes.

Implementation of subsidized programmes for the educational upliftment of slum groups, particularly of those belonging to the marginalized sections, and for the provision of subsidized job oriented courses in the vicinity of the slums.

The proper implementation of minimum wages legislation and the amendment of laws to protect the workers in the unorganized sector from exploitation.

Provision of subsidized medical and educational institutions in the vicinity of the slums and providing the slum dwellers, including those migrants from across the borders, with ration cards. Provision of safe drinking water and electricity supply for the slum dwellers.

Providing the slum dwellers with easy accessibility to credit at subsidized rates of interest with proper monitoring in order to avoid default of payments.

**CONCLUSION**

Living in the slums is a challenging life, and lack of land tenure and fear of evictions do not make that life easier. Although there is a will to improve people’s lives, many suffer because their opinion is not taken into consideration. As the years have passed, the slums have only gotten bigger. The absence of citizen participation is still a problem in the slum upgrade projects. People are involved in the beginning, but as the implementation phase arrives and as problems arise, they are pushed aside. Corruption and political manipulation are still a problem in the slums. For people
in the slums, the mobile phone is not only a communication device, but also their bank and their news provider. It is important when attempting to leverage technology to get citizens more involved that the solutions used are designed for the technology that people currently have. While urban planners in developed countries have for years utilized web sites for sharing information and receiving feedback about their plans, urban planners in developing countries need to leverage mobile enabled solutions to reach citizens in slums.

The slums are often projected as “eye sores” to be cleared away under any pretext. Stereotyped notions about slums as areas of darkness, despair and poverty further aggravate the apathetic attitude towards slum dwellers by the general public. So far, the government has failed to come up with a proper action plan to improve the lot of the slum dwellers. Moreover, in recent years, there has been a reversal in slum related policy measures from one oriented at relocation and rehabilitation to one of eviction and demolition. Little attention is paid to the fact that the majority of slum inhabitants are migrants to the city who are in turn the victims of unbalanced growth processes, social injustice and inequalities. Here, the need for a holistic approach that takes into account the various dimensions: social, economic, political, cultural, etc., in framing any slum improvement policy/scheme ought to be stressed.