

The Living Conditions of Rural Dalit Woman Labourers in Mahendragarh District of Haryana

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In the present study, an attempt has been made to discuss the living conditions of rural dalit (SC) woman labourers in the Mahendragarh district of Haryana. The present study relates to the year 2020-21. The study based on a sample of 129 rural dalit woman labour households selected from eight villages of Mahendragarh district of Haryana. The investigation of living conditions of the Dalit woman labourers reveals that the majority of the respondents are living in semi-pucca houses and most of their houses are in dilapidated conditions. It clearly imitates that the Dalit woman labourers have to live under miserable conditions due to their economic pressures. They

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find it hard to even get their houses renovated. Majority of the Dalit woman labourers (72.86 per cent) have no separate kitchen in their houses. More than 90 per cent of respondent woman labourers are in the age group of 30 to 59 years. More than 60 per cent of the Dalit woman labourers are illiterate. Among the literate, majority of them are educated up to the primary level. Most of the Dalit woman labourers (62.79 per cent) are living in nuclear families comprising mainly of husband and their children.

[**Keywords** : Dalit, Woman labourers, Living conditions, Rural areas, Haryana]

1. Introduction

In a communist society, there would be no need for a private family unit as there would be no private property. As a result, women would not be subject to male control for the purposes of reproduction (Marx and Engels, 1988). According to the socialist analysis of the economic system, the bourgeoisie have every incentive to pay workers the lowest wage possible (and offer the poorest working conditions) in order to maximize profit. If an employee refuses to accept this planning, they can be threatened with the release and be changed by members of the reserve army of labour. Work undertaken by the reserve army of labour is characterized by low-status, low-wages, slight or no job security, zero-hours contracts and pitiable working conditions (Marx and Engels, 1988).

In reality the women are responsible for the majority (76.2%) of unpaid care work, spending an average of 201 days on unpaid work during a year, compared to 63 days spent on unpaid work by men (International Labour Organization, 2018a). Worldwide, the report shows that out of the 136 million workers in the health and social care sectors, 70 per cent are women (International Labour Organization, 2020a). Around 80 per cent of the world's domestic workers are women (International Labour Organization, 2018b). Women's experiences in the workplace are shaped by intersections between age, race, gender, class and migration status. If capitalism is overthrown, women could be freed not just from the capitalist society but also the patriarchy (Lokot and Bhatia, 2020). The Capitalists speculate on the two following factors: the female worker must be paid as poorly as possible and the competition of female labour must be employed to lower the wages of male workers as much as possible (Zetkin, 1896). What made women's labour particularly attractive to the capitalists was not only its lower price but also the greater

submissiveness of women (Zetkin, 1896). It is out of the question that the task of socialist women's activity should be to alienate proletarian women from duties as wives and mothers; on the contrary, it must operate so this task is fulfilled better than before, precisely in the interests of the proletariat (Zetkin, 2011).

2. Methodology

The present study is describes the analysis of living conditions of rural dalit woman labourers in Mahendragarh district of Haryana. It is a cross-section analysis related to the year of 2020-2021 that includes the data related to the social status of the rural dalit woman labourers in Mahendragarh district of Haryana. The sampling design is selected by stratified sample. Mahendargarh district is part of Southern Haryana.

On the basis of random sampling method, one village from each development block of the district has been chosen. Mahendragarh district has eight development blocks. Thus eight villages are selected from the district. Thus 129 dalit woman labour households have been randomly selected and investigated by taking 10 per cent households from the total number of dalit woman labour households in the villages. The study is based on primary data. The primary data were collected from the selected villages and households through two types of well-structured questionnaires. One questionnaire was prepared for collecting the information related to the sampled villages and other for obtaining the information about the sampled households. Since majority of the respondents were illiterate, so the questionnaire was filled by the interview method.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Age-wise Distribution

Age is an important factor which determines the physical ability to work as a labourer in the unorganized sector. So age of the dalit woman labourers is the main aspect of this study. The age composition of the dalit woman labourers (table-1) suggests that majority of the dalit woman labourers, i.e., 46.51 per cent are in the age group of 30 to 44 years. Less than one-third, i.e., 31.78 per cent of the dalit woman labourers are in the age group of 45 to 59 years. As many as 12.40 per cent of the dalit woman labourers are of less than 30 years. About 9 per cent of the dalit woman labourers are in the age group of 60 and above.

Table-1 : Age-wise Distribution of Rural Dalit Woman Labourers

Age (in years)	Mahendragarh	
	Number	Percentages
Less than 30	16	12.40
30-44	60	46.51
45-59	41	31.78
60 and above	12	09.31
Total	129	100

Source : Field Survey, 2020-21.

3-2 Educational Status

Education creates awareness among woman about their rights and prepare them for choose their occupation/jobs. However educational qualification of the individual hence was dependent on the caste identity of the individual as the lower caste were supposed to be performing menial jobs hence no education was required for them, also they were considered to be untouchables and hence were discriminated in educational institutions as were not allowed to sit with the students from upper castes. Being deprived of education led to the economic exploitation of the lower castes (Kumar, 2020).

Table-2 : Educational Status of Rural Dalit Woman Labourers

Educational Level	Mahendragarh	
	Number	Percentages
Illiterate	80	62.02
Primary	29	22.48
Middle	10	7.75
High	7	5.43
Senior secondary	1	0.77
Graduate and above	2	1.55
Total	129	100

Source : Field Survey, 2020-21

The analysis of data showing the level of education of the respondents (Table-2) indicates that about 62.02 per cent respondents are illiterate. Thus, above 38 per cent have acquired

some formal school education. The table shows that 22.48 per cent of dalit woman labourers are educated up to the primary level, 7.75 per cent up to the middle level, 5.43 per cent up to the matric level, 0.77 per cent up to the higher secondary level and 1.55 per cent up to graduation level. It has been observed during the field survey that all the adult members and in some cases, children in these household are contribute to enhance the family income and turns out to be drop out of the education system. India, home to one-fifth of the world's children, has the highest rates of child labour: an estimated 33 million children under the age of 18 are engaged in work in various sectors across the country, from domestic service and agriculture, to textiles and mining (Mukhopadhyay, et.al, 2020).

3-3 Type of Family, Family Size and Family Head

Marxists believes that the family is a prop to the capitalist society. The capitalist system is based upon the domestic labour of housewives who reproduce future generations of workers. He also believes that family has become a vital unit of consumption. The family consumes the products of capitalism and this allows the bourgeoisie to continue producing surplus value. In this respect, people are not simply being socialized into “society”, the socialization process is directed towards the integration of people into a specific form of social relationship, one that reflects the fundamental, structural, inequalities of capitalism. The ruling class ideology makes the family as an institution help to maintain and reproduce basic social inequalities by presenting them as “normal” and “natural” within the socialization process. This creates a false class consciousness as they are not aware of their true identity as exploited workers. The family is a safety valve for people's frustrations whereas the vast majority of males are relatively powerless in Capitalist industry, the family structure serves the purpose of disguising this powerless condition. Males within the family have traditionally been powerful figures in relation the females. Marxists contend that this “illusion of power” within the family serves as a safety valve for the build-up of tension and frustration at work (Zaretsky, 1976).

Table-3 on next page reveals that most of the dalit woman labourers i.e., 62.79 per cent are living in nuclear families with their husband and children. Only 37.21 per cent of the respondents have a joint family system. The table shows that the number of nuclear

families is on a higher side which as per the Marxian concept of family. They continue to serve as the unit of consumption for the bourgeoisie.

Table-3 : Type of Family among Rural Dalit Woman Labourers

Family Type	Mahendragarh	
	Number	Percentages
Nuclear	81	62.79
Joint	48	37.21
Total	129	100

Source : Field Survey, 2020-21

Though most of the respondents belong to the nuclear families, yet majority of them, i.e., 69.76 per cent have 4 to 6 member in their families. About 11 per cent of the respondents have 6 or more family members. Further, average family size of the respondents comes to 4.92 members (Table-4). It shows that the large family size supports the Marxian view that it provides work force to the capitalists. Despite of the awareness, campaign of the government regarding the family planning, the family size is still very large.

Table-4 : Family Size of Rural Dalit Woman Labourers

Family Size	Mahendragarh	
	Number	Percentages
Less than 4	24	18.61
4 to 6	90	69.76
6 to 8	7	05.42
8 and more	8	06.21
Total	129	100
Average family-size	4.92	—

Source : Field Survey, 2020-21

Table-5 on next page reveals that a large majority of the dalit woman labour households, i.e., 80.62 per cent are headed by male members of the family. This indicates that only 19.38 per cent of the households are headed by females. The female-headed households are those where the woman labourers are either widows or divorcees. It can show that a large majority of the dalit woman labour

households are headed by males of the family. This proves that the dalit woman labourers are living in a patriarchal society. The Marxian view tells us that the male dominated family serves as a safety valve for the building of tension and frustration at work. Majority about 80 per cent of the families being male dominated are fully in support of this view.

Table-5 : Status of Family Head of Rural Dalit Woman Labour Households

Family head	Mahendragarh	
	Number	Percentages
Male	104	80.62
Female	25	19.38
Total	129	100

Source : Field Survey, 2020-21

Gender is yet another ground for discrimination in Indian society. The Indian society is of patriarchal nature and hence the role and right of women is limited primarily focusing around household and housekeeping. Traditional Indian families rely on women for their housekeeping. Women had no right to get an education or to get jobs outside their homes. Pre-independent Indian society gave no right over immovable property to women. Therefore, women too had been exploited both economically and socially. Though seven decades have passed since India's independence, incidents of caste and gender-based discrimination are often reported (Kumar, 2020).

3.4 Housing Conditions

The living conditions of dalit woman labourers in the rural areas of Haryana are very bad (table-6). The housing in which they are living are of very cheap condition; and there is no proper provision of drinking water which creates many health hazards for the inhabitants. Out of the total respondents 33.33 per cent live in semi-pucca houses, whereas 65.12 per cent live in the katcha houses and only 1.55 per cent households live in the pucca houses.

The table further reveals that majority of the respondents, i.e., 89.14 per cent are living in dilapidated housing conditions, while the houses of 09.31 per cent respondents neither in a good nor bad condition. Only 1.55 per cent respondents have relatively better houses to live. The table clearly reflects that the dalit woman

labourers are living in miserable conditions due to their economic compulsion. Field survey has show the fact that dalit woman labourers find it hard to even get their houses repaired.

Table-6 : Housing Conditions of Rural Dalit Woman Labourers

Particulars	Mahendragarh	
	Number	Percentages
Types of House		
Katcha	84	65.12
Pucca	2	1.55
Semi-Pucca	43	33.33
Total	129	100
Condition of House		
Good	2	1.55
Moderate	12	9.31
Dilapidated	115	89.14
Total	129	100
Status of Kitchen in Dwelling House		
Yes	35	27.14
No	94	72.86
Total	129	100
Average number of rooms available	230	1.78
Families having access to bathroom/toilet	101	78.29
Condition of Bathroom/Toilet		
Good	2	1.55
Moderate	19	14.72
Dilapidated	80	62.02
Total	101	78.29

Source : Field Survey, 2020-21

The table also shows that 72.86 per cent of the total Dalit woman labour households do not have separate kitchen in their houses. On an average, only 1.78 rooms are available per woman labour households. Out of the total 129 respondents, 78.29 per cent

have access to bathroom/toilet. But, bathrooms/toilet is extremely in bad condition in 62.02 per cent dalit woman labour households. Only 14.72 per cent of the respondents have neither good, nor bad bathrooms/toilet, whereas 1.55 per cent respondents have bathrooms/toilet in a relatively good condition. It clearly reflects that the Dalit woman labourers have to live under pitiable conditions due to their economic compulsions. They find it hard to even get their houses repaired. After whole day work they get nothing.

The caste system not only places individuals one over other in social hierarchy but also dictates the lives of the individuals as it provides for division of labour i.e. it prescribes occupational monopoly to every caste, the lower castes are prescribed to perform menial jobs requiring no expertise; matrimony rules, places of residence i.e. the caste system prescribes that individuals of the same caste should reside together and that such residences were to be located as per the status in the hierarchy and hence is the reason why Dalit localities are located outside the villages and prominent locations being occupied by Brahmins, Kshatriya, and the Vashyas. (Kumar, 2020)

4. Policy Implications

Policy implications on the basis of the conclusions of the study can be summarized as under :

- ▶▶ The housing conditions clearly show that the Dalit woman labourers have to live under pitiable conditions. To overcome this problem, the rural housing programmes chalked out by the government should bring more and more needy and poor people, particularly the Dalit woman labourers, in its ambit.
- ▶▶ The study shows that, despite of the fact that most of the families are nuclear in nature, still the family sizes are quite big. An important policy implication is that, the family planning programmes must be implemented more effectively.
- ▶▶ As the study reveals that the Dalit women labourers has to start work at an early age, government policies must ensure that nobody is forced to leave school in between, it may or involve improvement in economic conditions of the families.
- ▶▶ As per the political economy approach the woman labourers should organize themselves in the form of unions and associations to fight for their rights.

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