

# Triple Marginalization and Struggle for Autonomy: A Study on Dalit Women in Bangladesh

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**Abstract** - Dalit people have been marginalized in different spheres of life since the dawn of modern civilization. The situation of Dalit women is even more complex. This paper aims at understanding the marginalization of Dalit women at a local context in Bangladesh based on empirical evidences. Data for the study were collected using mixed-method approach. The findings of the study reveal that Dalit women have to confront different forms of discrimination both in their own community as well as wider society. They face various types of patriarchal customs, such as dowry, domestic violence, dehumanization, and child marriage within their society. In addition, they frequently face inequalities in job and not treated with dignity in the wider society. The findings of the study reveal that these realities are constantly changing and Dalit women are continuously working for the betterment of their community as the soulful agents.

**Keywords:** Dalit, Women, Marginalization, Caste, Agency

## I. INTRODUCTION

What drives us apart is greater than what binds us together. Class divisions, religious or ethnic marginalization are such an ingredient that widens the barrier and drive people apart. Dalit community is such a marginalized religious-and-ethnic community in Bangladesh who have been unattended, unnoticed, or even discriminated since the very birth of this nation. Dalit Community is generally thought to be a caste or a group of castes who mainly constitute a group of population in South Asia and are historically marginalized by religious sanctions and have been suffering from unlawful and unjustifiable social and economic deprivations. There are two types of Dalit ethnic groups in Bangladesh: (a) Bengali Dalits and (b) Non-Bengali Dalits. About 3.5 million Dalits live in Bangladesh (Banglapedia, 2021). Of them, the untouchable sections of Bengali-speaking people are called 'Bengali Dalit'. The non-Bengali Dalit are basically migrated from Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa, and Madras to Bangladesh before 1947 (Banglapedia, 2021). They are entitled to work as cleaners, tea gardeners, jungle cleaners, and other cleaning jobs in the middle of British Rule (Banglapedia, 2021).

Though the exploitation of Dalit community has its root in Hindu caste system, they are facing different types of socio-economic deprivation. The condition of Dalit women is worse than that of their male counterparts as their

victimized identity is rooted in three interrelated dimension: Religion, Ethnicity and Gender. Dalit women have to confront difficulties at multiple levels (Valarmathi, Jaiswal, & Jaiswal, 2017).

The present study revolves around the marginalization Dalit women have faced in Bangladesh. It also highlights the agency of Dalit women. The questions that guided the study are

1. What difficulties Dalit women face in both wider society and their own community?
2. How do different factors (such as Dalit identity, socio economic condition, gender) contribute to create a complex reality?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mainstream feminists sometimes tend to consider women as a monolithic category. But in fact, several factors (for example, caste, race, class, or ethnicity) make the lives of some women more vulnerable than others. Dalit women are no exception. They are facing multiple discrimination in terms of caste, class, and gender identity (Valarmathi, Jaiswal, & Jaiswal, 2017).

### A. Caste System and Dalit Marginalization

Ambedkar (1936) identified the caste system (more specifically Brahminism) as the root cause of Dalit marginalization. According to him, the caste system creates a graded system of inequality (Ambedkar B. , 2014). The caste system has its root in Hindu influential scriptures. According to the caste system, there exist four main 'Varnas' divided by numerous subcastes. Each caste has specific duty and prestige. Outside these four Varnas, a class of people (at present known as Dalits) exists. These people have been historically marginalized. They were considered untouchable, unseeable, and unapproachable. They were not permitted to use public utilities that higher castes used. They were forced to live in dirty and isolated colonies (Roy, 2014). Ambedkar (1993) described the oppressive nature of Dalit marginalization by using six case studies. The three case studies deal with his personal experiences. Through these case studies, he expressed how he got humiliated for his untouchable identity. The other

three case studies also portrayed how people of that class got deprived of their basic rights due to untouchability. In this book, Ambedkar also indicated that people of other religions also practiced untouchability (Ambedkar B. R., 1993). At present, untouchability is formally abolished. Still, they are deprived of basic rights. Even in Muslim countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan, they have to lead miserable life (Roy, 2014). Panda (2011) negates the popular notion that untouchability is not a social problem in West Bengal, Bangladesh. Based on an anthropological field inquiry on untouchability, there exists a strong feeling of untouchability in the interrelationship between Hindu higher castes and Doms. If Doms want drinking water the servants of the house will pour water into their pots (carried by the Doms). Comparatively, Muslim men are more liberal on the issue. But Muslim women consider the Doms impure. In the past, Doms was not allowed to draw water from tube well and dug wells in the village. At present, they have permission to draw water from sources, but they are not allowed to take baths in front of the tube wells and dug wells in the Muslim para. They can't take entry into the temples. But nowadays, Doms have permission to worship the Hindu God and Goddess at the domestic level. Brahmin priests can also come to their houses for their rituals. But Brahmins have to clean their bodies and clothes before entering their houses. He also shows that the attitudes of other people (including Hindus and Muslims) towards the Doms in the public sphere have changed a lot over the years. Some years ago, the Doms don't have permission to enter public spaces like tea stalls and small food shops. But they can easily enter those places. Still, they can't do jobs in those places because they are considered 'unclean' (Panda, 2011).

Rahman (2016) explains the process of marginalization experienced by urban Dalits in Bangladesh. Traditionally, urban Dalits (associated with cleaning) live in segregated colonies near the railway colonies. Nowadays, due to changing socio-economic conditions, Bengali tend to grab their lands by hook or crook. Dalits don't have enough power to resist it. Moreover, they can't easily buy or sell the lands because of their 'untouchable' stigma. Besides land eviction, these people also face discrimination in the job sector. Despite having qualifications for required white-collar jobs, they have to do traditional jobs for their social stigma. Nowadays, getting these traditional jobs also requires a definite amount of bribes. So, they have to lose their traditional jobs also. Moreover, even at present, Dalits don't have much access to public spaces such as shops, restaurants, barbershops, playgrounds, social gatherings, temples, etc. (Rahman, 2016).

## B. Dalit Women and Triple Marginalization

1. *Caste System, Poverty and Deprivation in the Wider Society*: Valarmathi et al., (2017) describe the disastrous effects of the caste system on the educational, social, and economic status of Dalit women in modern India. They consider Dalit women as one of the largest socially

segregated and oppressed groups in the world. The literacy rate of Dalit women is very low. Their suppression is often legitimated by the religious scriptures. They have tried to show how Hindu religious scriptures justify the treatment of Dalit women as sexual objects, child marriage, and several violent behaviors against women by mentioning its verses. These scriptures close all kinds of channels through which Dalit women can uplift their position. The laws of these religious scriptures have a disastrous effect on the education sphere of Dalit women. The main reasons for the lower literacy rate are lack of educational resources, privatization of educational resources, intense poverty, and increased demand in the dowry for educated girls, humiliation, and bullying (Valarmathi, Jaiswal, & Jaiswal, 2017).

Sabarwal and Salankar (2015) show that Dalit women are the least beneficiary of development projects. They belonged to the bottom of the caste hierarchy. That's why they are denied the rights of property, education, and civil and cultural rights. Due to the 'untouchable' stigma, they are confined to polluted occupations and socially segregated. Due to the caste-based concept of pollution, Dalit women in India are prohibited to work as cooks or nannies. On the other hand, Dalit women are victims of social and religious practices (such as Devadasi/Jogini). Indian feminist discourses largely ignore caste or religious differences. The main challenges that Dalit women face in India are economic deprivation, educational deprivation, poor health, caste and untouchability-based discrimination, caste-based atrocities, and violence, temple prostitution, and gender discrimination. They are facing discrimination in different state development schemes such as mid-day meals in schools, state kindergarten centers, and safe motherhood schemes. They belong to the lower rank in human development indicators. There exists patriarchy in Dalit communities. Dalit women are often suffering from domestic violence (Bhuvanewari & Prabhu, 2020).

2. *Dalit Patriarchy as an Ultimate Problem*: Gopal Guru (1995) expresses the complex reality of Dalit women understood not only in terms of class and gender but also in terms of caste identity. They are also victims of two different patriarchal structures. They are:

- a. Brahminic forms of patriarchy
- b. Male domination in Dalit's movement (Guru, 1995).

But he largely ignores the patriarchy within the community. There exists patriarchy in Dalit communities. Dalit women are often suffering from domestic violence (Bhuvanewari & Prabhu, 2020).

Sharma (2021) expresses the triple marginality of Dalit women in India by analysing the autobiographies of Dalit women. These autobiographies create a new domain of knowledge that negates androcentric knowledge construction. Despite caste marginalization, they had to face many challenges. Dalit women suffer from two-fold patriarchal oppression: internal patriarchy within the Dalit

community and the extended patriarchy of the higher caste. For the maintenance of caste and gender ideology, women get prevented from going to court. The decision of Panchayat opposes women's interests. Due to the gendered division of labour, women had to work with their male counterparts. Also, they had to perform household work. Women's everyday work is taken for granted. Many girls can leave the school untimely. Child marriage is quite prevalent among Dalit girls. Dalit males strictly oppose women's persuasion of their own identity. Considering poor economic conditions and peripheral locations, they have to perform difficult labor.

'Dalit motherhood' seemed to be considered a 'sacrifice'. Due to their social position, they are suffering from a lack of essential facilities and awareness. In that case, women's silent suffering is preferably considered the sign of ideal motherhood. On the other hand, child-rearing seems to be a difficult task due to their poor socio-economic condition. Still, Dalit female authors portray their motherhood as empowering. Women don't have autonomy in spending their income. Dalit men spent their earnings by drinking alcohol. Wives have to bear the sole responsibilities of households. Even the voices of Dalit female authors are silenced by Dalit male writers (Sharma, 2021). Though several empirical studies have been conducted on the socio-economic deprivation of Dalits in Bangladesh, they don't exclusively focus on the situation of Dalit women. In this study, the complex of Dalit women has been analysed in the local context.

### III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study is to draw out the difficulties and challenges Dalit women have to confront in Bangladesh mainly based on empirical evidence. It also focuses on the agency of Dalit women.

The objectives of this study are

1. to know the socio-cultural and socio-economic difficulties faced by Dalit women in the wider society
2. to explore the changing situations and agencies of Dalit women
3. to identify other factors that contribute to make the complex reality of Dalit women

### IV. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Sampling and Population

This is an empirical study following the mixed method approach mainly based on primary data. The main focus of the study was to highlight the complex nature of marginalization of Dalit women in Bangladesh. Primary data were collected from both the people of Hindu Dalit and Muslim community since Dalit women don't belong to an isolated and static community rather, they constantly interact with the people of wider society. A total of 150 respondents (among them 20 are for the interview) were

reached for qualitative data while conducting this study. A household survey was conducted on two colonies (where Dalit cleaners at Bhairab, Bangladesh reside) following the convenient sampling method to know their demographic information and socioeconomic status. Later the study method was headed to the qualitative method for descriptive and in-depth data through case study, observation, and Key Informant Interviews.

#### B. Data Collection

Case studies were taken from the selected participants having the capability to provide us with in-depth and insightful information. In order to collect data from field, snowball sampling method was followed to select the participants. The 'purposive sampling method' was employed to collect data from the Muslim respondents about the Dalit women. Observation method was employed in order to know about the social and inter-personal behaviour of the people of Dalit community with the people of non-Dalit community. This method provided some useful hints and information to proceed the study further.

#### C. Case Study

In regard to Case study, the case study method was used for gathering qualitative data. A total of 17 cases were collected from the field.

#### D. Key Informant Interview

A total of twenty key informant interviews (KII) were conducted. Among the interviewee, ten were from the Dalit cleaner community and the rest were Muslim people in Bhairab. While choosing the member from Muslim community, it was considered if they are attached to the Dalit community very strongly. KII was conducted in order to know the perception and impression of the Muslim community about the Dalit women in that respective study area.

#### E. Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis -in fact, all analysis -is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain the existence of those patterns. It starts even before you go to the field and continues throughout the research effort" (Bernard, 1995). Both qualitative and quantitative data have been analysed in the research. Frequency distribution was made to calculate percentages (which have been presented with tables, graphs, and charts). But narrative analysis is preferred in the case of qualitative analysis

### V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. About Dalit Cleaners at Bhairab

There exist three Dalit communities at Bhairab. They are: (i) Cleaners or Methor, who are also popularly known as 'Harijans', (ii) Ravidas Community, and (iii) Rishi

Community. Dalit community (traditionally associated with cleaning) constitutes a very small portion (0.2%) of the population of Bhairab municipality. Dalit cleaners mainly live in two segregated colonies. In these two colonies, 35 households are having 195 inhabitants. But this small community has vast diversity. There exist three distinctive sub-castes. But people belonging to the ‘Bashphor Community’ are predominant in number.

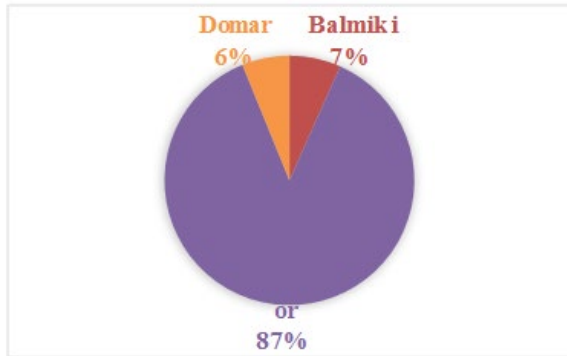


Fig. 1 Principal Sub-castes in the Dalit Community

Fig. 1 indicates that there exist some fundamental differences among the sub-castes in terms of language, ritual, and cultural practices. Apart from these, there are some differences in terms of economic ability, education, lifestyle, etc. But a majority of the people stick to their traditional cleaning profession.

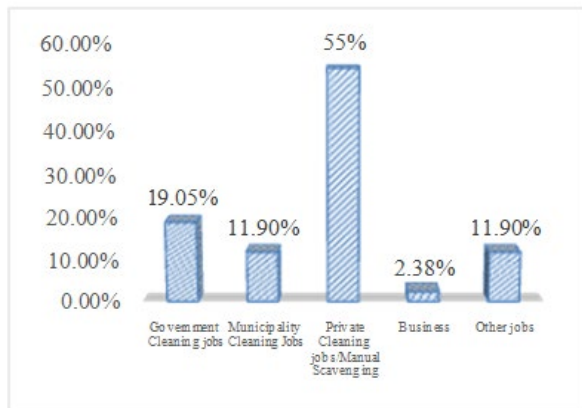


Fig. 2 Main Sources of Household Income

Fig. 2 illustrates that 55% of households depend mainly on private cleaning jobs/ manual scavenging. 11.90% of households depend on municipal cleaning jobs as the main source of income. And others (2.38% and 11.90%) depend on business and jobs. Besides, these main sources, people of the community earn their livelihood from other sources (such as the rearing of pigs and other domestic animals, liquor business, private callings, etc).

Like other Dalit communities, Dalit cleaners of Bhairab migrated to Bangladesh from India in the British colonial period. When they are asked about the origin, they all give the same hint.

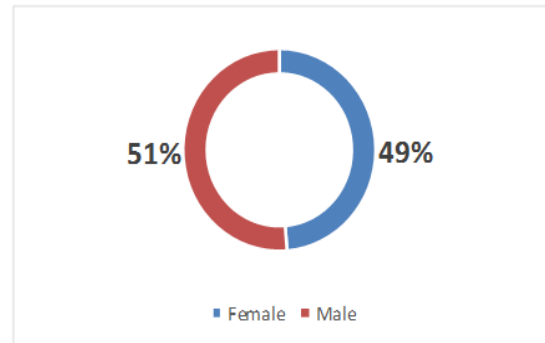


Fig. 3 Male-Female Ratio in the Community

In the community, the ratio of the male and female population among Dalits is nearly the same. In the community, males constitute 51.28% of the population. On the other hand, females constitute 48.72%.

### B. Difficulties and Challenges of Dalit Women

Due to caste identity and socio-economic conditions, the Dalit people of Bhairab face different forms of deprivation in the economic, social, and political spheres. Dalits are deprived of their traditional jobs for- inclusion of Bengali in their traditional job sector, their traditional jobs grabbed by bribes and corruption. Moreover, due to Dalit identity and poor socio-economic condition, they can't get entered into another job sphere. Poverty is also one of the major impediments of getting basic amenities (such as: education). In the same way, they can't buy or sell lands for their identity and socio-economic conditions. But the gender identity of Dalit women forces them to confront a harsher reality. They have to struggle against different types of difficulties not only in the wider society but also in their community.

### C. Discrimination in the Wider Society

Dalit cleaners at Bhairab are facing marginalization in their traditional job sector. Government jobs of cleaners at Bhairab are very little in number. So, the field is very competitive as Bangali Muslims can now have the access to enter the sector. On the other hand, managing a government cleaner job becomes very tough because of corruption. So, many cleaners mainly depend on manual scavenging. Their main source of income is Bhairab municipality. But nowadays municipality also appoints Muslim cleaners which reduces their work possibility.

The situation of women is even worse than their male counterparts. Government jobs are too rare to manage. Moreover, Bhairab municipality doesn't appoint any women. On the other hand, their opportunity in the other job sector is also very minimal due to their caste identity.

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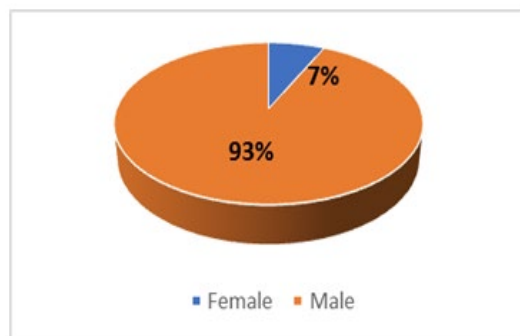


Fig. 4 Gender identity of Formal Job Holders

From Fig. 4, we can know that only 7% of women are formal wage earners. But some of them have an earnest desire to work outside and support their family. A Dalit female participant expressed her grief about it.

*“In all places, municipalities appoint women. In those places, women can do hard work for supporting their families. We don’t have any chance here to do so. Our mayor is very nasty. We, 4/5 women did a lot of work for a few days in his office. But he didn’t pay us. When we went to him for the payment he misbehaved with us, all places including Dhaka, Chittagong women sweep the streets. But here women have no chance to do work. Now we are in a such condition that we don’t have any shame in doing work. Is there any shame in doing work to earn a livelihood? But where will we get the opportunity? Indicating another woman, she also said, ‘You have heard that her husband has heart disease. He can’t do any hard work. But if they would render her a job wouldn’t she do something for supporting the family? She would have. But they don’t appoint women’.”* (Participant, Case Study, Dalit woman, Age 32)

From the narrative, it is quite clear that women of the Dalit cleaner community are deprived of their rights to do their traditional jobs in the municipality because of their gender identity.

Sometimes, they have to endure the misbehaviour of Muslim people due to their identity. Even though maximum Dalit women don’t have much mobility, they have to confront such abusive behaviours.

*“Actually, what happens, we don’t go out for jobs. If we would go out to work, we would have understood how they behaved toward us. But on the road, they often taunt us from the back, say that we are ‘Methor’. They also tell rubbish talks which they will never tell you or other girls, belonging to well-to-do families’.”* (Participant, Case Study, Dalit Woman, Age 32)

This narrative indicates the vulnerability of Dalit women. Indeed, women of our country (regardless of their socio-

economic position) have the possibility of getting abused in the public sphere. But Dalit women tend to have more possibilities than other women due to the stigma associated with their identity. Even in the past, they had to face extreme types of violence by Muslims. An elderly woman from the Dalit community shared her experience regarding this.

*“They offended us to a large extent. But they did it because we sold liquors. Don’t you understand? They had the courage as we sold liquors. Muslims abused us a lot in the past. But it has been decreased”.* (Participant, Case Study, Dalit Woman, Age 69)

This narrative tends to reveal the relationship between the liquor business and harassment. It also provides another hopeful information. However, this trend is decreasing gradually.

#### D. Inherent Problems within Dalit Community

It is true that like other Dalit communities, the community is inherently patriarchal and patrilineal. Daughters don’t have any rights on their parent’s property. One of the Dalit key informants of the study gave a hint about it.

*“In our community, wealth is inherited from father to son. But if the father wants, he can give his property to the daughter. It rarely happens.”* (Participant, KKI, Dalit Male, Age 22)

His statement indicates the patrilineal nature of the Dalit community where women generally don’t have access to their father’s property. Even, baby girls are often not welcomed in the community.

*“Now some have two children, some have three. In earlier time, we gave birth 4 children. Many had more children too. Now some have 2 children or others have 3 children. Those who have 3 children (2 daughters and 1 son) will not take further children. On the other hand, people who have 2 daughters, but no son may take another baby for a son.”* (Participant, Case Study, Age: 40)

Apart from these, another exploitative practice exists in their community. That is dowry. One of the key informants of the study told in detail about the practice.

*“In our community practicing dowry as a custom in weddings is prevalent. In the time of weddings, the Bride parents have to give a certain amount of money and ornaments as well as pieces of furniture.”* (Participant, KKI, Dalit Male, Age 22)

His statement reveals how dowry as a custom works within the community. This custom sometimes makes their lives difficult. One of the participants in the study describes the difficulty.

*"In some cases, the bride can be reached at 25/26 years old. Sometimes they can be older than this. Poor people can't marry their daughters off because sometimes they cannot arrange dowry for marriage."* (Participant, Case Study, Dalit Woman, Age 23)

From this narrative, it is quite clear that these types of patriarchal norms make women's lives difficult. Besides, male dominance in decision making can be identified. While identifying the gender identities of household heads, the ability of maximum decision-making in the household has been used as an indicator.

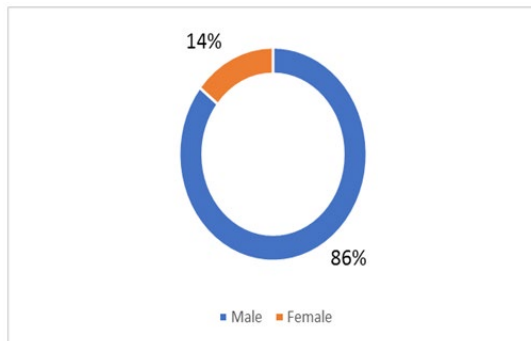


Fig. 5 Gender Identity of the Household Heads

From Fig. 5, it can be seen that only 14.29% of household heads are female among the community. Others (85.21%) are male. This result indicates the male dominance in decision-making within the Dalit community.

From the writings of some Dalit feminists, it is known that women of Dalit communities often face domestic violence from their in-laws. Women of Dalit cleaner communities at Bhairab are not any exception. But this trend is also decreasing day by day. An idea can be gotten from the statements of a participant who lived for a long time in the neighbourhood of the Powerhouse colony.

*"The condition of their women are far better than our slum areas. As they are clan-based communities, they have strong harmony. Also, they maintain some strong laws, yes, it is true that after drinking husbands often beat their wives. But you should understand that after drinking human brain doesn't work accordingly. Males have more strength. Then what usually happens- husbands beat wives"*. (Participant, Case Study, Muslim male, Age: 45)

Eventually, he tries to 'normalize' domestic violence against women. But from his statement, we can understand the fact that women of the Dalit community at Bhairab often face domestic violence.

#### E. Exclusion of Women from Dalit Local Movements

It is true that the movements of Dalit cleaners have no organizational basis at the local level. But it is also true that this movement is also male-dominated. Women don't usually participate in those movements. The main demands

of those movements are to remove the inclusion of Bengali Muslims in their municipality's job and to have an isolated space for funeral

Women also agree on this matter. These are actually collective demands of the community. But these movements largely ignore the inequality women face in the job sector of Bhairab municipality.

#### F. Changing Situation and Dalit women's Agency

Even a few years ago, child marriage was prevalent in the community. Girl's education was not encouraged. But nowadays situations have been changed. One of the Dalit participants tells elaborately about the tendency from her personal experience.

*"I was the younger sister of Tara Rani. Then I became her sister-in-law as we got married into the same family. When I got married, I was 13 years old. I read till class nine. Then I was forced to get married. But now this practice is not being continued. In earlier days, even our people didn't want to get admitted girls into school. Girls were told to do household chores because it was their job in their in-laws. But now it has not happened. We are also interested in getting girls admitted into schools. Girls from our colony are now reading in Hons. Some are doing Masters. Some are reading in intermediate. Some are preparing for SSC. Now we don't practice child marriage. In the past, we practiced this. Now I don't arrange marriage at such tender age (below 18). We married our daughter off after reaching 18. Suppose, I have three daughters and one son. My elder daughter failed the SSC exam, so I married her off. But only when she reached her twenty, then we took the decision."* (Participant, Case Study, Dalit Woman, Age: 40)

From the narrative, it has been quite clear that the impediments against girls' education have decreased day by day. But this positive trend doesn't date long back. One of the key informants in the study provides a hint about it.

*"It's true that women in our generation are getting many chances to get educated. But our earlier generation didn't get the chance. In our colony, my mother is the most educated of all women. She could pass SSC. But she failed in Intermediate exam. That's all."* (Participant, KKI, Dalit Male, Age: 22)

His statement proves that girls have only enjoyed this privilege recently. But in this case, the economic condition of the specific family plays a vital role. One participant illustrates this fact. As the economic condition

*"Now girls can do many things. Actually, it depends on the economic sufficiency of parents. If parents have the ability girls can do many things. But poor parents can't do so, see, my daughter- how grown up she is. Still, we can't get her admitted to the school."* (Participant, Case Study, Dalit Woman, Age: 32)

From the narrative, it can be understood that sometimes poverty appears to be a major obstacle in Dalit girls' quest for education. From many secondary sources, it has been known that the birth rate in Dalit communities is very high. In addition, sometimes, recurrent childbirth can make women's life and health more complicated. In the past, the birth rate among the traditional cleaners was very high. But recently people in these two colonies have followed family planning to control their population.

*"Now some have two children, some have three. In the earlier time, we gave birth to 4 children. Many had more children too. But now we all know about family planning and try to follow this. But till now no NGOs come here to do any program on family planning."* (Participant, Case Study, Dalit Women, Age: 40)

Her statement indicates they have been successful at controlling the birth rate without any external assistance.

*"In earlier days, physical violence against women often happened. But now it is decreasing day by day'. 'Yes, these things happened in the past. But now these are decreased. Nowadays these people don't drink much. Actually, females sell liquor. Now they don't have the courage to abuse women. Because many women are engaged in the business of liquor. They are self-sufficient. Rather males are often getting abused by the females."* (Participant, Case Study, Muslim Woman, Age: 50)

From this narrative, it can be assumed that physical violence against Dalit women is being decreased day by day. One of the reasons of this decreasing tendency is women's economic empowerment. Interestingly this empowerment is closely related with liquor business.

The most worth mentioning fact is from reading secondary sources about Dalit communities one can start imagining Dalit women as isolated, submissive, shabbily dressed, oppressed women. But my field experience was fundamentally different from my imagination. The women of two colonies were very well dressed. They represented themselves strongly, even sometimes more clearly than the males. From one of the participants, I came to know that in the Powerhouse colony one of the most dominant person is a woman. Though she is not educated, she is now the leader of their clan. Her husband was famous for his spiritual power. She has two sons-one lives in Italy and another lives outside the colony. But Chuni Rani doesn't want to leave the colony because she enjoys living in this colony. Mentioning Chuni Rani, I don't want to claim that all women are equally empowered like her. Rather she should be considered an exception.

## VI. DISCUSSION

The marginalization of Dalit women has to be understood in terms of class, gender, and Dalit identity. Women of Dalit cleaner's community at Bhairab are no exception. It is true

that the community is heterogeneous in terms of economic conditions, sub-castes, customs and even languages. But it is also true that as a class most of the members in the community depends on physical labor for their livelihood. They have to face subordination in different spheres for their 'lower' class identity.

On the other hand, they have been historically marginalized because of their Dalit identity. In the past they were isolated from the 'mainstream society'. Even now-a-days they are socially stigmatized. That's why they have to face different forms of discrimination. So, in general, it can be said that women of that community have to face harsher reality than the other women. In addition, they have to face inequalities for their gender identity. For example: for the intrusion of Bengali Muslims in their traditional job sector people are getting marginalized.

In this case women are facing double marginalization. Because Bhairab municipality (which is their major workplace) don't appoint women. Moreover, they have to tolerate the offensive behavior of Muslims. In addition, sometimes women have to suffer from some internal characteristics of Dalit community (such as child marriage, recurrent childbirth, physical abuse etc). But these traits are also decreasing day by day. But it has to be recognized that Dalit women are very much connected with wider society. Moreover, they have strong voices to express their opinion.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study shows how Dalit women face marginalization in terms of class, gender, and Dalit identity. Like other Dalit communities, Dalit cleaner's community at Bhairab is inherently patriarchal. Patriarchal customs like dowry, expectation for male child, physical violence against women as well as patrilineal property system create severe difficulties in the lives of Dalit women. In the wider society, they have to face more discrimination than males. The number of government jobs is very limited. The main sector for the employment of Dalit community at Bhairab is municipality cleaning sector. But there is no work opportunity for women. So, Dalit women are facing crisis. On the other hand, they have limited access to other job sectors for their caste identity and poor socio-economic conditions. So, they are getting marginalized in the economic sphere.

On the other hand, they have higher possibilities to be harassed by Muslims, at present this trend tend to be decreased. In the same way, customs like physical violence and high birth rate have been decreased gradually. Still, they are excluded from Dalit local movements. But from the analysis, it has been proved that community is not static and isolated. Change is inevitable for them. Moreover, these women (as well as their male counterparts) are not 'oppressed object'. So, they gradually empowered themselves to face the difficulties.

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