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Advancing Learning and
Innovation on Gender Norms



Annotated bibliography

The intersecting norms of gender and caste in South Asia

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Cover photo: A family group of women in India. © World Bank / Curt Carnemark

Introduction

The importance of the intersection between gender and caste

Any attempt to enhance understanding of gender norms and norm change must use an intersectional lens. Gender norms do not operate in isolation but combine with other forms of social difference based on the local context. And the intersection of different inequalities can cause, aggravate and compound the vulnerabilities faced by an individual on many fronts, such as lack of access to services, experiences of violence, limited financial inclusion, fragile wellbeing, and the absence of voice and decision-making in public life. These vulnerabilities are entrenched in local cultural norms and practices and are governed and maintained by the intersecting structures of power.

An intersectional approach is, therefore, crucial for a recognition that gendered norms cannot be separated from other norms, and for challenging the illusion of homogeneity and sisterhood propagated by mainstream and dominant feminist narratives that ignore the divisions and workings of power that shape gender norms. An intersectional approach also requires efforts to change norms to be grounded in the principles of representation, voice and inclusion. Initiatives must, therefore, be co-designed and implemented with, and incorporate the voice and experience of, marginalised groups.

This annotated bibliography focuses on the intersectionality of caste and gender in South Asia. The Indian (South Asian) caste system is a hierarchical order based on the notion of purity and pollution (Gundimeda, 2013)¹, with Brahmins at the top and Dalits, formerly categorised as the 'untouchables', at the bottom. The caste system is linked closely with a traditional order of occupations that relegates Dalits to jobs seen as 'polluting', such as manual scavenging. Paradoxically, this imposed order has been used to justify and 'legitimise' their 'untouchable' status in the eyes of other caste-Hindus, which results in their systematic exclusion from much of social and economic life (Teltumbde, 2019).²

While untouchability is now illegal and caste has become the central basis for affirmative action in India and Nepal, it persists as a structural cause of inequality that continues to hinder the socioeconomic and political development of the Dalits, in particular. Dalit communities have made real progress on several fronts, yet their relative position in South Asian societies and the stubborn perpetuation of caste-based norms and practices demand a greater focus on caste, particularly in its intersection with gender.

This bibliography, therefore, brings together key resources on the intersection between caste and gender and explores the central significance of gender for the operation of caste, and the impact of caste on gender. It groups the implications of the intersection of gender and caste norms into the

¹ Gundimeda, S. (2013) Mapping Dalit Politics in Contemporary India: A study of UP and AP from an Ambedkarite perspective. SOAS, University of London, (https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/15858/1/Gundimeda_3464.pdf.)

² Teltumbde, A. (2019) Dalits: Past, present and future, *Routledge India*, (<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315526454>).

themes of theory, education, health, violence, politics and work. These themes have been selected on the basis of an initial scoping of the literature on the intersections between caste and gender. The papers included are primarily peer-reviewed publications by feminist and Dalit scholars that address these themes through an intersectional lens. While most are open-access resources, a few critical papers that are not open-access have also been included. The methodological approaches of these papers vary – some are quantitative, some qualitative and some mixed-method. Their scope of analysis ranges from country-level (though even these explore North-South regional differences) to village-level, and a wide range of sample sizes are used.

The use of a norms framework is rather rare in discussions of caste and gender, for various potential reasons. It might, for example, be because the language of norms is used more commonly in discussions in the global North than in the global South. That said, a norms framework is often used separately in the South Asian literature on gender and on caste. But the language of norms becomes less common when the intersections between the two are discussed. The papers do, however, address related concepts such as gendered and caste-based expectations, stereotypes, stigma and notions of masculinity and femininity. A conscious effort has been made to include further intersections, with disability, age and widowhood for example, although the literature on intersections beyond caste and gender is rather thin.

A note on terminology

Various terms are used in the literature to refer to the different caste groups. The most common terms are 'upper/higher castes' and 'lower castes', which refer, in general, to the caste groups that occupy the top and the bottom of the caste hierarchy. The term 'dominant castes' includes those that are socioeconomically and politically dominant in the specific region and may include castes that are not considered ritually 'superior', such as the Jat castes in much of North India. As well as the term 'Dalit', other terms are used, such as 'Scheduled Castes' (SCs; a political/official category denoting Dalit castes) and, less often, 'Harijans' (a term coined by Gandhi). The other official caste categories in India are 'Scheduled Tribes' (STs), which refers to indigenous groups and is grouped with SCs in a few of the studies in this bibliography, as well as 'Other Backward Classes' (OBCs), referring to castes that are socioeconomically or socially disadvantaged (comprising over half of India's population). Finally, the terms 'Savarna' and 'Bahujan' are popular in Dalit feminist discourse in particular, and are used to refer to the upper castes and lower castes respectively.

Thematic structure of this annotated bibliography

A short **theory** section introduces the concept of brahmanical patriarchy (while rejecting the notion of Dalit patriarchy) and discusses Dalit feminism in the context of the MeToo movement in India. The section provides a brief insight into patriarchy and feminism from an intersectional approach; the sections that follow use these concepts in empirical studies.

The **education** section features papers that highlight the additional barriers to education faced by Dalit girls, which range from personal to societal as a result of their caste and gender. Papers also explore the educational dilemmas faced by Dalit boys and men, given the lack of employment

opportunities that are open to them. The literature includes a case study that points to the role of education in maintaining caste dominance through evolving marriage practices among Brahmins in the Nepali village of Ludigaun.

The literature on caste-gender intersectionality in **health** confirms that Dalit women face greater levels of discrimination in maternal and childcare healthcare, and that the intersections of identities can result in worse health outcomes among children. While much of the literature on intersectionality focuses on the exacerbation of vulnerabilities as a result of intersecting identities, Mukhopadhyay (2015) highlights how intersecting identities can also offset vulnerabilities. In the context of health, he shows how one's 'advantageous' identities can sometimes offset poor health outcomes that result from their other 'disadvantageous' identities. For example, a child's geography (regional advantage) can offset their caste disadvantage and result in better health outcomes.³ The literature also sheds light on how migrant Dalit women are often trapped in a vicious cycle of poor health and living conditions, expensive healthcare and financial distress. Though the literature on the intersections of caste, gender and disability is limited, Dutt (2016) provides a brief overview of some of the challenges faced by Dalit women with disabilities, in particular. The section ends with a gendered (though not explicitly) discussion of mental health amongst Dalit students in higher education institutions and how these institutions are often complicit in the poor mental health and even the suicide of a growing number of Dalit students.

Key takeaways from the literature on **violence** are that sexual violence has to be analysed through a caste lens. There is inadequate recognition within mainstream feminist understanding that sexual violence can also be a form of caste violence – all the more so when such violence has an institutionalised form, such as the Devadasi system, where Devadasis – girls who are 'dedicated' to a life of sex work in the name of religion – tend to come from Dalit castes. While these papers highlight the violence faced by Dalit girls and women, some authors challenge their portrayal as victims and explore their agency, whether in the domestic or public sphere.

The papers in the **politics** section explore women's activism through a caste lens and the increasing transition of Dalit women's activists into local politics as a result of their experience of activism and sense of empowerment. While most authors use an intersectional approach to challenge the negation of differences within the category of 'women' by mainstream feminists, Narasimhan (2002) flips this to some extent and suggests many male politicians use caste as a reason to oppose the enactment of the Women's Reservation Bill, which would increase female representation in parliament and state legislatures. The section also explores the impact of increased female political representation on social policies, in particular. Halim et al. (2016) add an intersectional lens to this discussion to show how the impact of women's representation in State Legislative Assembly on primary schooling policies differs by caste.

Finally, the literature on **work** highlights how women from increasingly mobile communities tend to withdraw from the workforce as their status within the family improves. However, it notes that the choice of employment for women who do work is influenced by their reproductive responsibility. On

³ When speaking of health disadvantages arising from a person's identities, it is the socio-economic/political identity that is referred to and certainly not their biological identity. That means that the poorer health outcomes that, say, SC/ST girls experience result from various social, economic and/or political factors and are not inherently biological.

sexual labour that is based on or constrained by caste, the literature argues that the women involved in such labour must be included in debates and discussions about the challenges and solutions. The literature in this section also explores how widowhood practices are linked to caste, production and reproduction under a brahmanical patriarchy that ultimately dictates the experiences of widowhood for women of all castes. Finally, Rao (2020) explores masculinities among lower-caste seasonal migrants and their relationship to both upper-caste farmers (mostly male) and lower-caste women.

Overall, the papers paint a rather varied and sometimes contradictory picture, reinforcing the significance of local context and nuance in analyses of caste-gender intersections. The caste-gender nexus operates differently in different contexts (both cultural and individual) and results in varying norms. Dalit women, for example, cannot be homogenised and their experiences cannot be simplified. Furthermore, some papers emphasise that while individuals are shaped by prevailing gender and caste norms, they can and do resist and reshape these norms in several ways. Recognising these strategies of resistance (whether passive or active) is essential for efforts at norm change.

Theory

1. **Arya, S. (2020) 'Dalit or Brahmanical Patriarchy? Rethinking Indian Feminism'. *CASTE/ A Global Journal on Social Exclusion*. 1(1), pp. 217-228.**

This paper argues that the prevalence of 'Dalit patriarchy' or multiple patriarchies in the literature is the result of an insufficient understanding of the concept of brahmanical patriarchy. No patriarchies, it is claimed, are separate from brahmanical patriarchy, and conceptualising multiple patriarchies is counterproductive for feminist goals.

Dalit patriarchy has been popularised in mainstream Indian feminist discourse as the patriarchal control of Dalit men over Dalit women. It is suggested that Dalit men are taunted about their masculinity by upper-caste men as they are unable to 'protect' 'their' women – causing an 'emasculatation' that results in their aggressive behaviour towards Dalit women and their desire to harass upper-caste women.

Arya highlights two assumptions in this conceptualisation of Dalit patriarchy: that it is distinct from brahmanical patriarchy and that multiple patriarchies exist. However, Arya asks, if Dalit men behave in the same patriarchal manner as upper-caste men, how is their patriarchy distinct and why is a different term needed to describe the same phenomenon? Furthermore, if Dalit men exhibit patriarchal behaviour because of their caste-based discrimination and exploitation, then it is brahmanical patriarchy that women face.

Arya derives six claims from three formulations of Dalit patriarchy in the literature.

1. Dalit women experience patriarchy differently and more intensely than upper-caste women.

2. Dalit men are taunted about their masculinity regarding their 'inability' to protect the 'honour' (women's chastity) of their community.
3. In response, Dalit men oppress Dalit women.
4. Dalit men's practices of patriarchy are no more humble than that of upper-caste men.
5. As a result of brahmanical humiliation, Dalit men harass upper-caste women.
6. There are brahmanical and Dalit or intra-caste patriarchies.

She then challenges these six claims using common logical fallacies:

Fallacy 1

The notion of Dalit patriarchy is as dubious as that of 'Dalit egalitarianism', which refers to the idea that Dalit men are less patriarchal because they understand the pain of oppression. Both notions are presumptuous as they have no empirical foundation and are, therefore, counterproductive for feminist endeavours.

Furthermore, the conceptualisation of Dalit patriarchy is linked to the 'inability' of Dalit men to protect the 'honour' of their communities is based on presuppositions that Dalit women are sexually available because they are present in the public sphere. Positioning this as the inability of Dalit men to control the sexuality of Dalit women is itself casteist. As such, it is a manifestation of the brahmanical patriarchy that is, paradoxically, at the heart of the conceptualisation of Dalit patriarchy.

Fallacy 2

No caste is unaffected by brahmanical patriarchy, with all men – not only Dalit men – 'emasculated' by those from the castes above theirs. If the patriarchal practices of every caste had to be named, there would be an endless number of patriarchies – rendering such an exercise meaningless.

Fallacy 3

The claim that Dalit men seek to harass upper-caste women is a presumption that depends on the validity of all the previous premises. Even if this claim were established empirically, the source of their patriarchal behaviour would be Brahmanism alone, rather than something originating from the Dalit community. Just as it is not fruitful to name the behaviour of women influenced by patriarchal norms as 'women's patriarchy', it is not fruitful to name that of Dalit men as 'Dalit patriarchy'.

Fallacy 4

The conceptualisation of brahmanical and Dalit patriarchies comes from an insufficient understanding of the nature of brahmanical patriarchy, which is not meant to signal the patriarchal practices within the Brahmin caste alone. Instead, it is the form of patriarchy that operates in India to sustain the caste system, with every individual allotted a specific position of either privilege or deprivation. Dalit women, at the bottom of the brahmanical hierarchy, suffer the most. Arya asserts,

therefore, that it is irresponsible of scholars who enjoy caste-class privilege to conceptualise Dalit patriarchy, while disregarding the patriarchy faced by Dalit women, as an internal problem.

Arya stresses the urgent need to rethink Indian feminism. Paradoxically, while mainstream feminism pluralises patriarchy, it follows a single-axis approach and overlooks non-brahmanic feminist standpoints. Violence against Dalit women has been labelled as either a caste atrocity or a sexual atrocity, when in fact, the issue of gender cannot be addressed in isolation from the reality of caste since 'caste determines the division of labour, sexual division of labour, and division of sexual labour' (Rege, 1998).⁴

Instead, a Dalit feminist standpoint is the only way to democratise Indian feminism as a feminism not only for the Dalits but as a standpoint to address the brahmanical nature of patriarchy itself. This means challenging the mainstream Indian feminist discourse that, Arya posits, includes Dalit women in two perfunctory ways: either in the 'feminist-as-tourist' way, where the upper-caste feminist enlightens the 'helpless Dalit women'; or the 'feminist-as-explorer' way, with the upper-caste feminist pretending to treat Dalit women equally while justifying their separation on the basis of cultural differences. Both deny the agency of Dalit women and disregard Dalit feminist scholarship.

Arya concludes by asserting that a gender-just theory cannot be created unless the biases and irresponsibility manifested by most privileged 'representatives' of feminism are overcome. It is necessary, therefore, to develop an emancipatory feminist theory through a Dalit feminist standpoint.

2. Naraharisetty, R. (2020) 'Lesson from #MeToo: Where are We Now?'. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 55(41).

This article reflects on the MeToo movement 'in the larger trajectory of feminist movements in India', particularly in relation to the methodology adopted and its accessibility, which are themselves interconnected. Here, the MeToo movement extends beyond the hashtag movement to include the List of Sexual Harassers in Academia (LoSHA), which originated in 2017 when Raya Sarkar, a Dalit feminist activist, publicly named a list of prominent men from Indian academia who had been accused anonymously of sexual harassment. In response to the list, several well-known Savarna (upper-caste) feminists asserted that norms of due process must be upheld and even questioned Sarkar's caste identity.

Importantly, the list challenged Savarna and nationalist framings of Indian feminism, with Dalit feminists contextualising the list in terms of the power imbalances between Savarna and Bahujan (lower-caste) articulations of feminism. They highlighted how the Savarna feminist strategy of relying on due process for justice for survivors of sexual violence ignores the violence of due process itself for Bahujan and other marginalised individuals.

⁴ Rege, S. (1998). Dalit women talk differently: A critique of 'difference' and 'towards a dalit feminist standpoint position'. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 33(44), pp. 39-46. (www.jstor.org/stable/4407323)

Accounts of experiences with internal complaint committees (ICCs) show that accusers often face negative consequences for speaking up. Two students from Symbiosis Law School in Hyderabad, for example, were evicted from their hostels after making a complaint of sexual harassment against a professor with the ICC and were later banned from entering campus for calling out the ICC's lack of action on social media. These ICCs are even less accessible to Dalit/lower-caste or trans women as the Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act does not cover the informal sector in which they and other marginalised people are over-represented. ICCs are also found, overwhelmingly, to try Bahujan men, deemed as a threat to upper-caste women, for sexual harassment.

Under the Transgender Persons Act passed in 2019, perpetrators who commit sexual assault towards trans women are given a lesser punishment (6 months to 2 years) than those who assault cis-women (7 years). In this context, both LoSHA and the #MeToo movement have provided crucial spaces where upper-caste men – who were previously exempt from due process mechanisms – can be held accountable.

When viewed through an intersectional lens, Naraharisetty argues, the MeToo movement lays bare the failings of due process to make visible the mechanisms that privilege certain castes, classes and genders. Individual narratives form a collective consciousness that exposes the ways in which power manifests itself in the everyday, operating along intertwining threads of caste, class and gender, and institutionalised as due process. The MeToo movement, Naraharisetty goes on to argue, is a transformative 'politics of the feminine', echoing feminist scholar and activist Raquel Gutiérrez (2018)⁵, as it shifts the discourse on sexual harassment to centre on agency and power. This is unlike 'due process feminism', which emphasises the conception of individual victimhood based on outdated concepts of honour and 'modesty', and on an erasure of agency.

The MeToo movement is, therefore, seen as a horizontal movement, in contrast to the hierarchical methodology adopted by the mainstream women's movement of the 1970s. While the MeToo digital platform might be unavailable to the vast majority of women in India, the revelations emerging from the movement are available for and applicable to everyone.

Education

- 3. Bhagavatheeswaran, L., Nair, S., Stone, H., Isac, S. et al. (2016) 'The Barriers and Enablers to Education Among Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Adolescent Girls in Northern Karnataka, South India: A Qualitative Study'. *International Journal of Educational Development*. 49, pp. 262-270.**

There is a broad acceptance that education benefits both individuals and countries – that it can result in greater socioeconomic gains, elevate a sense of agency and improve health. However, girls

⁵ Gutiérrez, R. (2018) Because we want ourselves alive, together we are disrupting everything: Notes for thinking about the paths of social transformation today. *Libcom.org*, 8 March 2018. (<https://libcom.org/library/because-we-want-ourselves-alive-together-we-are-disrupting-everything-notes-thinking-abo>)

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from scheduled castes and tribes (SC/ST) in India are seen to be much less likely to stay in school than other children. Indeed, in the districts of Bagalkot and Bijapur in Northern Karnataka, the areas of interest in this study, SC/ST girls have a higher rate of school dropout – at 12% and 17% respectively – than the rate for all girls in Karnataka (5%).

Despite the importance of education, the authors find that little is known about the factors that drive such high rates of school dropout among SC/ST girls. Their qualitative research involved interviewing 22 adolescent girls, their parents or guardians (22 interviews) and 11 teachers from 11 villages in the two districts on various themes such as education, marriage, entry into workforce and education of girls. This generated a framework that categorised the barriers and enablers to education into macro-societal, educational, inter-personal and individual factors, as shown in Figure 1.

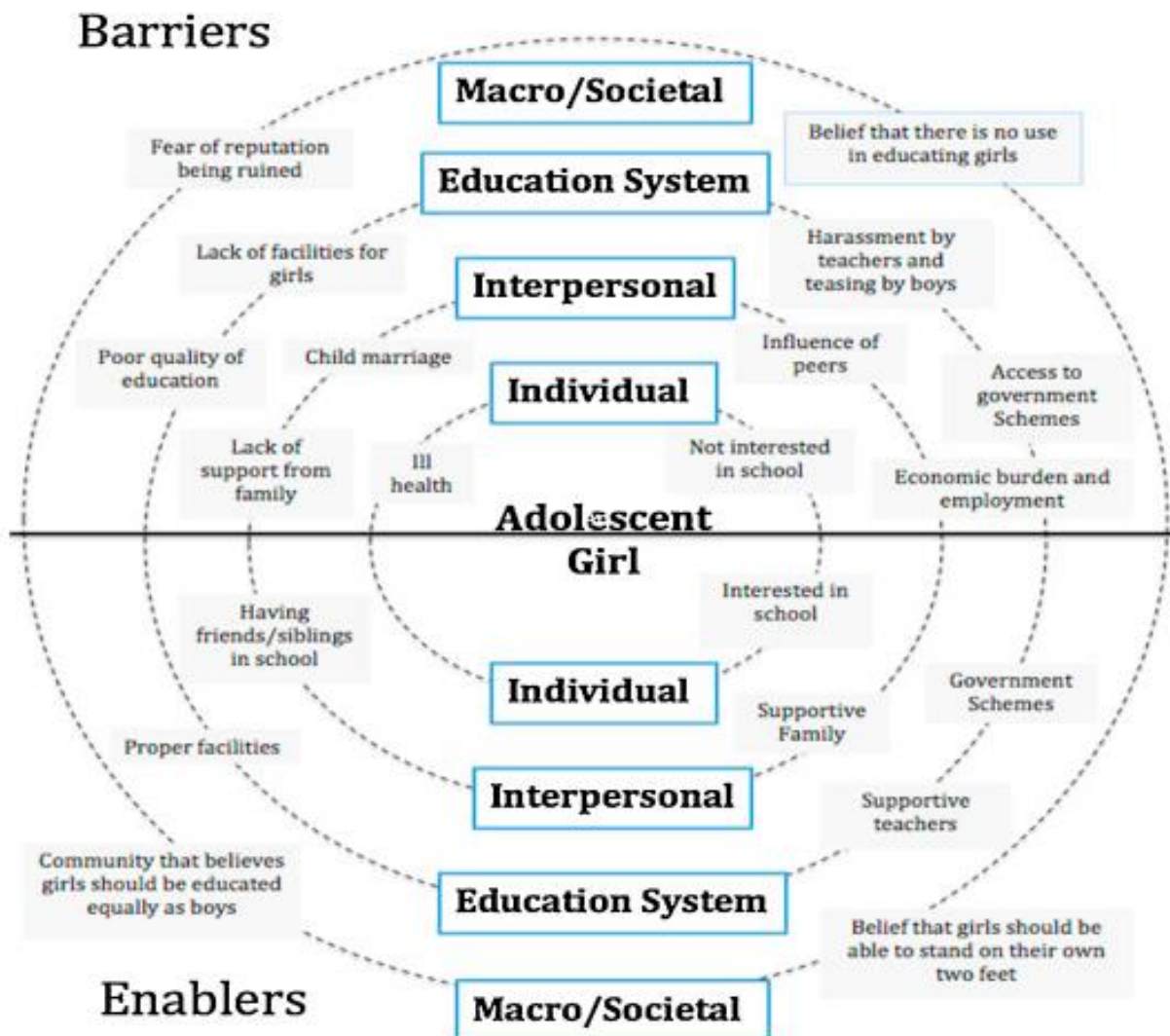


Figure 1: Framework of barriers and enablers to education among SC/ST girls. Source: Bhagavatheeswaran et al (2016)

Key findings

Macro-societal

1. Boys' education was more valued than girls' as parents depended on their sons for support, rather than daughters who would leave home upon marriage. There was also a belief that even if a girl were educated, her livelihood opportunities were limited to farming and manual labour, given the limited alternative options for girls, particularly those from SC/ST castes.
2. There was a strong sense of fear among parents that their daughters would engage in 'love affairs' with someone at school or on their way there, 'tarnishing' the family's reputation and her own marriage prospects. Girls were seen as responsible for their family's honour.

Educational system

1. The poor quality of education was an important factor in the decision to drop out of school. Examples of poor quality included absent teachers for some girls, or their inability to write their names even after completing primary education, which became a cause of embarrassment or disengagement and, therefore, a reason to drop out.
2. Safety concerns often resulted in school dropout, brought on by harassment from teachers and boys. SC/ST girls were also more likely to experience bullying and be socially isolated, creating an environment in which they felt left out.
3. The lack of toilet facilities for girls in some of the schools was a problem for girls, especially after puberty. They were more inclined to stay at home to avoid having to use the field behind the schools as a bathroom.
4. Access to government schemes that provided scholarships, uniforms, stationery and bicycles was crucial to enable girls to continue their education. However, the gaps in coverage and the prevalence of corruption left parents bearing excess real and hidden costs. That said, some teachers supported girls financially to enable them to continue their education – support that proved to be a crucial enabler for some girls.

Interpersonal factors

1. Child marriage was common in this community, despite being illegal. In fact, getting married at an older age was still perceived as undesirable, as community members would question if there were something wrong with girls who were not married by the age of 18.
2. Support from family members was a crucial factor in preventing or enabling girls to continue their education. As noted, lack of support was sometimes linked to fears that girls would engage in 'love affairs'. Some families, however, encouraged their daughters to continue their education, even after they got married.
3. With no positive role models (such as girls who had attained a higher education) and a large number of their female schoolmates dropping out, girls were more likely to see dropping out early as a norm and, therefore, drop out themselves.
4. Economic barriers were also drivers of drop out. The costs of schooling and the perception of girls as an economic asset to the household – either through housework or by working part or full time – resulted in some girls discontinuing their education. However, most of the girls who were still in school mentioned that they continued their education, despite economic pressures, because they had support from their family.

Personal factors

1. The main personal factor was the extent to which the girls themselves valued their own education. Those still in school valued it highly as a way to improve their livelihood options, while some girls who had dropped out were ambivalent about its value. A clear difference emerged from the interviews in the level of confidence among those still in school and those who dropped out. The girls still in school often stated that they refused to leave school to get married, while those who dropped out gave more decision-making power to their parents and were less confident when speaking about their future.

The categorisation of these factors is not straightforward as they are interconnected. For example, while some girls may experience an economic burden as an interpersonal phenomenon, it is shaped by the socioeconomic realities that face many SC/ST families. The authors conclude that multiple stakeholders must be involved to overcome the barriers to education for SC/ST girls by:

1. addressing the status and worth attributed to SC/ST girls, which are shaped by community gendered and casteist norms
2. improving the quality of education and amenities in schools
3. teaching parents the benefits of education for their daughters.

4. Paik, S. (2009) 'Chhadi Lage Chham Chham, Vidya Yeyi Gham Gham (The Harder the Stick Beats, the Faster the Flow of Knowledge): Dalit Women's Struggle for Education' *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*. 16(2), pp. 175-204.

This paper explores the experiences of Dalit women in education. In line with the argument propounded by scholars like Marx and Bourdieu that social hierarchies are reproduced in educational institutions, Paik examines how 'untouchability' is reproduced in schools and how Dalit girls are disciplined and controlled in schools and at home. She relies on 180 interviews carried out with Dalit women in the Maharashtrian cities of Pune, Mumbai and Nagpur, most of whom are first-generation learners (the first in their communities to go to school). The old Marathi proverb *chhadi lage chham chham, vidya yeyi gham gham* – meaning the harder the stick beats, the faster the flow of knowledge – alludes to the corporal punishment that teachers and parents often use to discipline children. To this, Paik adds a caste and gender lens to unpack how different types of control and discipline in schools and at home reflect and exacerbate the social disadvantage experienced by Dalit girls in education.

Caste seemed to determine an individual's capabilities and rank in classrooms. The seating of students tended to mirror the social hierarchy, with upper-caste students sitting at the front while Dalit students would be seated at the back of the classroom or even outside it. This reinforced social division and ensured little to no cross-caste interaction or integration. Furthermore, upper-caste students would avoid interacting with or even coming into contact with their Dalit classmates, and Dalit girls, therefore, could only interact with others from their own caste.

Teachers, who were typically upper-caste, often behaved in ways that would maintain their position of power. Their very demeanour ensured that Dalit girls, facing both caste and gender oppression, could not voice their opinions in class at all. Teachers often perpetuated the belief that Dalit girls had an inherent lack of aptitude for education. For example, one Dalit woman recalled how her Brahman teacher asked her what she would do with education and commented that mathematics was not for her. Teachers were more likely to encourage upper-caste students and rarely acknowledged the good work of Dalit students, particularly girls. This lack of acknowledgement was highly discouraging. Some Dalit women had also experienced explicit discrimination and ignorance from teachers. One woman mentioned being scolded for her 'dirty' uniform and being mocked by her teacher. This led other pupils and school staff to treat her the same way. Teachers also deliberately made Dalit students more visible and exposed by verbally and even physically abusing them. One interviewee recalled how her teacher slapped her for refusing to clean the classroom. That said, some exceptional teachers had played a crucial part in the lives of some of the Dalit women, though these were isolated instances.

The school curriculum also alienated Dalit students as rarely, if ever, related to Dalit society and culture. Upper caste teachers imposed their 'sanitised' culture, dress code, language, food habits and more on to the Dalit students. This went so far as barring students who did not have oiled hair and ribbons in their plaits (which many Dalit students could not afford) from school examinations. School administrations were often ignorant and singled Dalit students out publicly, with one woman reporting that a clerk would visit the class twice a year to ask all students from the scheduled castes to stand up to be checked against their school records. These records covered grants, scholarships, reservations and routine checks for Dalit students, and the concessions given to the students were announced in public, a practice that they found very insulting.

Some Dalit women challenged the '*chhadi*' (stick) of this discriminatory system, some submitted to it, and others attempted to escape it by 'passing' as upper-caste girls (though this would fail, resulting in embarrassment when they were required to identify themselves publicly for the school records). Despite these experiences of discrimination and marginalisation, some Dalit women fought against these obstacles and continued their education in the belief that it would improve their standing.

At home, many Dalit parents adopted an upper-caste attitude towards education as 'something to be forced on reluctant children through strict discipline'. They would even use physical beating to make their children memorise their lessons. Some Dalit parents imposed 'middle-class' notions of feminine domesticity on their daughters, where gendered ideals and expectations were prioritised over education. The long distances to school, the absence of female teachers and the belief that education for girls was useless all combined to discourage them from sending their daughters to school. Many girls were also subjected to the parental '*chhadi*' that imposed strict curfews on them. Some Dalit parents, along with teachers, had low expectations of girls' capabilities, which perpetuated a gendered divide in the subjects into which girls and boys were channelled. At the same time, some Dalit parents wanted their daughters to progress and excel in their education. The girls were, therefore, under constant pressure to perform well and to go further into the academic stream that their parents wanted for them.

In conclusion, Paik asserts that the education system has worked ruthlessly to discourage the entrance and success of Dalits. Dalit girls, in particular, face the double discrimination of gender and caste, which have combined to impose systematic barriers to their studies. Despite this, many Dalits have persevered and have worked hard to provide a counterweight to such discrimination. The practices of patriarchy against Dalit girls, therefore, have to be examined for effective change in their experiences of the attainment of education.

5. Jeffrey, C., Jeffery, R., Jeffery, P. (2004) 'Degrees without Freedom: The Impact of Formal Education on Dalit Young Men in North India'. *Development and Change*. 35(5), pp. 963-986.

This paper explores the ability of formal education to empower marginalised groups (young Dalit men) and raise their socioeconomic standing in the state of Uttar Pradesh (UP). The paper responds to a divide in the literature on the effects of formal education—between, on the one hand, reducing the social reproduction of caste inequality on the one hand, and, on the other, exacerbating that inequality. The study focuses specifically on boys and young men from the Chamar caste (a Dalit caste) to highlight the tensions between gendered societal expectations associated with formal education and employment outcomes. Young Chamar women, for example, who are educated beyond junior high school, are not expected to assume the role of primary breadwinner. Thus, the tensions between education and employment outcomes are not likely to be as pronounced amongst them.

The paper draws on both qualitative and quantitative data from Nangal, a village in UP, where a survey was conducted in 2000–2002 as an update to an identical study carried out in 1990. Interviews were also carried out with Jat and Chamar parents and their children aged 15–34, covering their perceptions of formal education, and their employment and marriage strategies, among other things. These were supplemented by interviews with teachers, politicians and state officials.

In UP in the early 2000s (and possibly to date), there caste and class were closely linked, with castes such as the Jats dominating the economic and political spheres, while Dalits continued to be largely confined to manual labour and dependent on the richer and higher castes for work. Chamar families were increasingly embracing formal education as a route to social mobility, reflected in the sharp increase in the number of Chamar boys in primary and secondary school between 1990 and 2001. Most Chamar young men and parents who were interviewed believed that formal education would provide opportunities to find service employment, referring primarily to government jobs, by conferring formal qualifications and establishing useful contacts. Education was also seen to give the young men self-confidence and individual dignity when interacting with those from the upper castes.

For them, schooling was a source of masculine prowess, as they described educated Chamar men as 'bold and knowledgeable' and uneducated men as 'helpless and awkward'. They differentiated themselves from uneducated Chamar and upper-caste men through their film choices, clothes,

style and language, abstaining from alcohol and drugs, and so on, preferring to present themselves in a 'refined' manner and avoiding bad habits and behaviour seen as crude. Ultimately, educated Chamar young men saw education as a more acceptable basis for establishing their social value than caste and regarded themselves as being superior to higher-caste men who were uneducated.

Nevertheless, these educated Chamar young men were rarely able to convert their cultural capital into secure employment. While the number of Chamar young men with more than eight years of schooling more than doubled between the two studies, the proportion entering service employment declined rapidly from 29% in 1990 to just 9% in 2001. This contrasts with the increase in the proportion of educated Jats in service employment, which more than doubled from 7% in 1990 to 16% in 2001. Jats, especially those from richer households, were able to invest agricultural profits in their sons' education, exploit close social links with local government officials and pay bribes in employment competitions.

Because the educated Chamar men saw manual wage labour as bad for their social standing and sense of self-worth, they took up insecure and low-wage forms of clerical employment in the informal sector while applying for government jobs. These jobs, such as working on car repairs or in phone booths, were preferred as these jobs were more aligned to their image as 'educated' men. However, under financial pressure and a failure to secure government jobs, many were forced to return to slightly more lucrative and regular manual work in their villages.

The humiliation of this return to wage labour was exacerbated by the continued hold of rich Jats over local labouring opportunities. The Chamar respondents stressed that quotas, aptitude and qualifications were irrelevant, and that access to government jobs was determined solely by money and social connections. For them, education had failed to improve the historical lack of social connections, as even the few schools with pupils from different castes and classes did not act as melting pots where they could form lasting connections with those from more powerful households.

This experience of competing for and failing to obtain white-collar employment was experienced as a personal loss and threatened the sense of confidence that education provided Chamar men. Chamar parents pointed to this sense of loss as contributing to a perceived rise in alcoholism and criminal activity. However, the authors assert that it is crucial not to caricature the 'protest masculinities': the interviews with these young men themselves suggest that many have distanced themselves from aggressive and criminal behaviour.

They emphasised the discordance between the sense of self-worth they had gained from education and the reality of their social and economic position, which often manifested in disillusion with and attacks on the notion of social progress through education. As a result, a shift in attitude towards education could be observed, with several Chamar parents stating that it was best to educate boys up to junior high school and then send them for vocational training, as they believed there was little point in investing in formal education beyond that point. This shift was already having an impact on educational strategies for Chamar boys, with the proportion of young men aged 18-22 in formal education declining from 22% in 1990 to 11% in 2001. It appears, therefore, that the widespread inability to obtain service employment in the 1990s led Chamar parents to re-evaluate educational strategies for their sons.

In conclusion, the authors argue that without a substantial redistribution in material assets or economic growth, educational initiatives can only go so far in raising the socioeconomic position of disadvantaged groups. This paper underscores the contradictions associated with formal education – where it can increase confidence and aspirations among marginalised groups, while also creating a crisis of unfulfilled ambitions that result in antipathy or at least ambivalence towards formal education.

6. Munshi, K. and Rosenzweig, M. (2006) 'Traditional Institutions Meet the Modern World: Caste, Gender, and Schooling Choice in a Globalizing Economy'. *American Economic Review*. 96(4), pp. 1225-1252.

This paper explores the ways in which the clash between old institutions (the caste system) and the liberalisation of economies shapes the response of various groups to new economic realities. More specifically, it analyses the role of the caste system in shaping career choices in the new economy by gender in Mumbai, and its impact on schooling choice (with either English or Marathi as the language of instruction).

Historically, individual jatis or sub-castes in Mumbai have controlled particular occupations, particularly for lower-caste men. In the early 1990s, however, the liberalisation of the Indian economy resulted in a shift in Mumbai's economy toward the corporate and financial sectors. However, occupational networking by jati continues to shape individual and gendered responses to the new opportunities that have emerged from this shift. The paper reflects these responses in terms of schooling choice, as this is a crucial determinant for future occupations. An education in Marathi (the local language) tends to channel students into blue-collar jobs, while schooling in English, which is more expensive, boosts the chances of white-collar jobs.

This study involved a survey of 4,900 households in Dadar, a residential area in Mumbai, and the 29 schools in the locality. The surveys collected information on the choice of schooling for 20 cohorts that entered school over the period 1982 to 2001.

Figure 2 and 3 show the changing proportions of students enrolling in English schools over the cohorts by caste group (high, medium, low) for boys and girls respectively. The X-axis represents the cohorts from 1 to 20 and the Y-axis shows the changing proportions of students schooled in English over all 20 cohorts. The figures show that in the 1980s, the high-caste boys and girls were much more likely than boys and girls from other castes to have received English schooling. In the 1990s, the caste gaps reduced drastically for girls, but there was no such convergence for boys, with high-caste boys still much more likely than medium-/lower-caste boys to be schooled in English. The authors suggest the significance of caste-based occupational networks in these patterns of schooling choice.

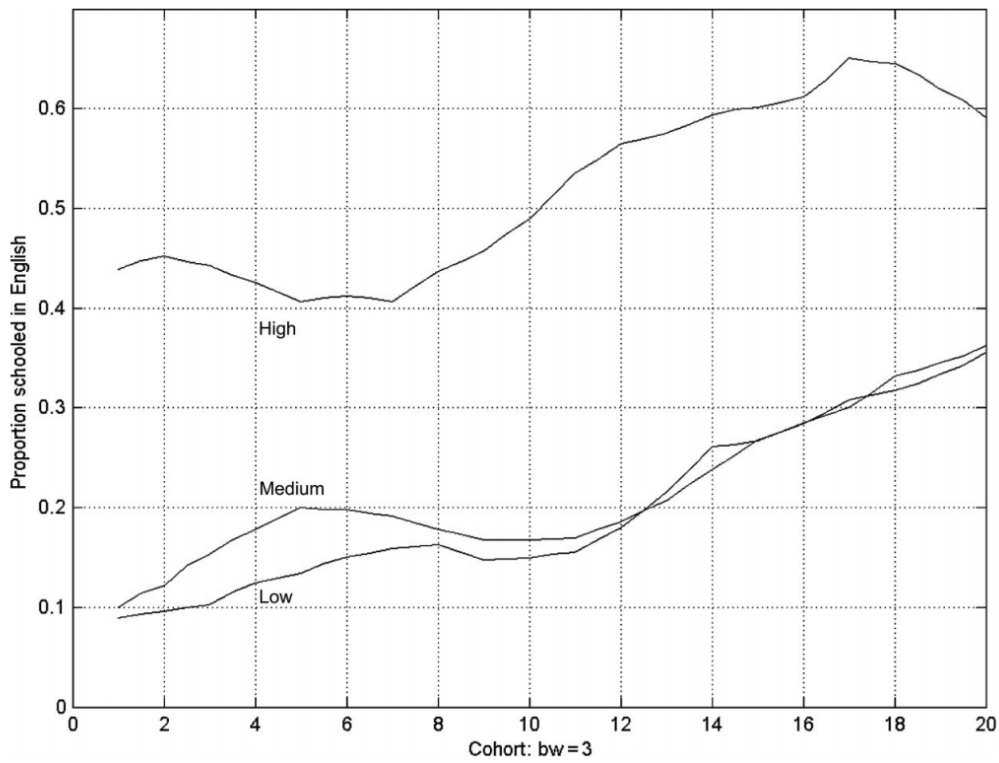


Figure 2: Trends in English medium school among different caste groups over 1982-2001 (boys)

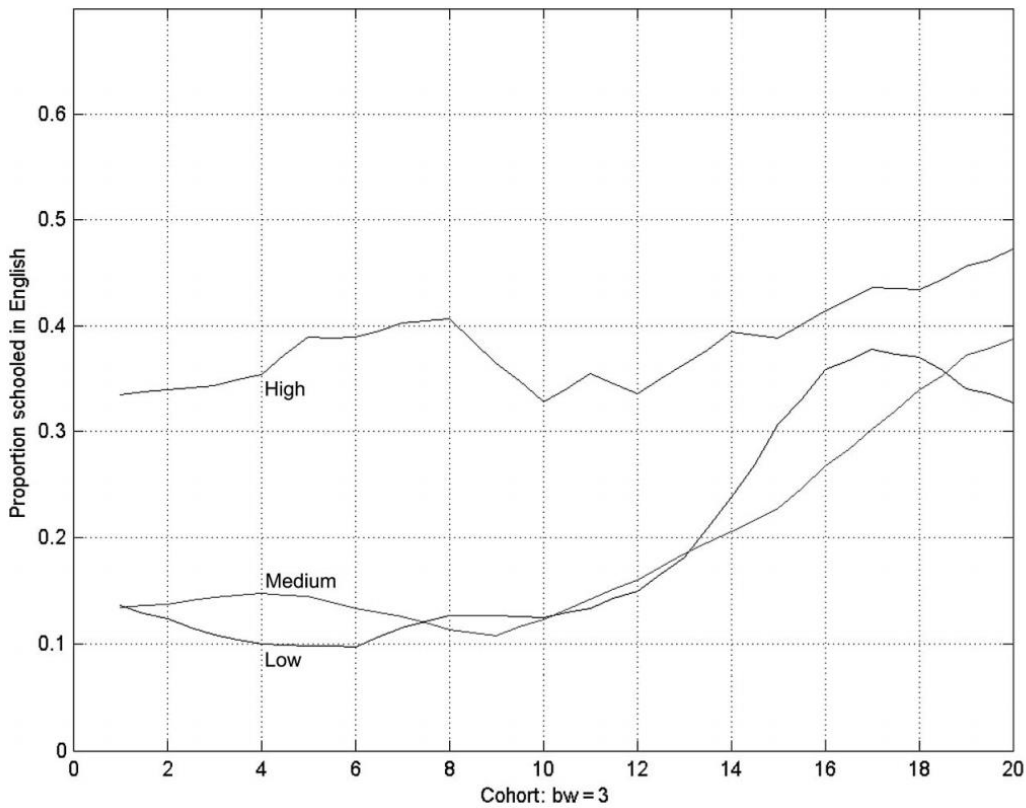


Figure 3: Trends in English medium school among different caste groups over 1982-2001 (girls). Source for both figures: Munshi & Rosenzweig (2006)

Several studies document higher levels of networking in blue-collar occupations. This is largely because of the information and enforcement problems of recruiting short-term labour in blue-collar jobs, which compels recruiters to rely on kinship and neighbourhood connections. This is corroborated in the findings, where 68% of the men in blue-collar jobs found employment through a referral, compared to 44% of white-collar workers. Such occupational networks are typically jati-based.

This resulted in the persistence of particular occupations from one generation to another at the jati level that channelled boys into certain traditional occupations and, therefore, toward particular schooling choices. While one would expect a convergence in schooling choice across castes, given the growing returns to white-collar employment in the liberalising economy, there was no such convergence among boys because of the tacit restrictions that caste networks place on the occupational mobility of their members to preserve the integrity of their networks.

While these networks might have enhanced welfare or been equalising forces when they were first established, they resulted in dynamic inefficiencies in the face of the economic structural changes of the 1990s, with members of occupational networks unable to take advantage of opportunities in the new economy outside their own network.

Occupational choice did indeed shape the choice of schooling medium – a finding corroborated by responses from parents, with 87% of parents who enrolled their child in an English-medium school listing career opportunities as a factor in their decision, while those who enrolled their child in a Marathi-medium school reported closer community ties as a reason. As such, historical occupation patterns maintained and perpetuated by caste-based networks continued to shape occupational choice and, therefore, schooling choices for lower-caste boys in the new economy.

While both lower-caste men and women were more likely to hold blue-collar jobs than their upper-caste counterparts, lower-caste women had long been excluded from these labour market networks. As such, occupational networks had no effect on their schooling choice and they could take full advantage of the opportunities available in the liberalising economy. This explains the convergence in Figure 3 and the greater proportion of lower-caste women than men receiving an English education. While the common belief is that the benefits of globalisation are enjoyed disproportionately by the elites, here, the authors find that a once disadvantaged group (girls) might surpass boys in the most heavily networked jatis in terms of educational attainment and future employment outcomes.

Finally, the authors note that an education in English could undermine caste networks that hinge on endogamy (the custom of marrying only within the limits of a local community or caste). Schooling in English appeared to be contributing to more inter-caste marriage (31.6% of English-educated siblings versus 9.7% of Marathi-educated siblings). Education in English also seemed to have a positive correlation with outmigration, with 13.9% of English-educated siblings working outside Maharashtra, compared with 2.1% of Marathi-educated siblings. Inter-caste marriage and outmigration also weaken caste ties and networks. These trends, suggest Munshi and Rosenzweig, imply that the forces of modernisation could lead to the disintegration of the caste system.

7. Fuller, S. (2020) 'Education, Gender, and Generational Change: The Transformation of Dowry in Village Nepal'. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 31(2), pp. 240-256.

This paper analyses the caste, gender and generational aspects of the evolving relationship between education and women in the Nepali village of Ludigaun. The growing importance of education for Bahun (Brahmin) girls is examined in the context of local Bahun culture, marriage values and status, leading Fuller to contend that the education of women is not a linear progression, and not even 'necessarily a development success story'.

To the people of Ludigaun, a small, well-connected Bahun village, education is perceived as highly valuable to both their traditional Bahun identity and perceptions of being 'modern' (given the developmental mantra in Nepal that education makes someone developed and, therefore, 'modern'). Traditionally, however, access to education was shaped by caste and gender, with its benefits enjoyed by villagers – and only by the men – because of their Bahun identity.

Literacy and education have always been central to the male Bahun identity because of the ritual importance of knowledge, and have reinforced Bahun dominance by enabling Bahun men to hold positions of power in the community. This was not, however, the case for Bahun women, whose traditional *dharma* (duty) was food preparation and provision for the household. As such, girls were not educated in Bahun tradition, and most Bahun women over 39 years of age are illiterate. Until recently, migration in Ludigaun was also gendered and linked closely with education, with Bahun men able to be mobile and to get an education while Bahun women remained in the village and maintained village life.

Recently, however, the need for 'gender equality' in education has emerged in Ludigaun, with a shift to educating young Bahun women and including them in 'modernity' taking place in the space of just one generation. Increasingly, girls are also migrating to get an education. As such, education and migration have also become generational experiences in Ludigaun that has led to the absence of men and women aged 16 to 36 who have left Ludigaun for education and later, employment. This is unusual in Nepal, where education and migration remain gendered as women either leave their homes for marriage (not for education) or the wives of migrant men remain in their husbands' villages.

The discourses on development and equality are as much a caste ideal as a class ideal, given the importance placed on education and knowledge in Bahun society. While education remains gendered, it has now become a space where gender differences are worked out to accommodate the Bahun necessity of educating women, while still enabling Bahun men to maintain their caste dominance.

There are also now strong ties between education and traditional marriage values, where investments in education are thought to enhance family status and, therefore, the chances of a good marriage. Being well educated enables a Bahun woman to marry an educated man in an 'upper position', raising the status of her family as well as that of the man she marries. As a result,

educational attainment has become the most highly regarded attribute in a potential marriage partner. The relationship between education and marriage in Ludigaun remains both a class concern and a caste concern, with Bahun men now unable to achieve a fully complete modern status without a bride who is also highly educated and able to migrate with them.

This has led to a transformation in dowry practices in Ludigaun. Traditional forms of dowry practice like gifts of property have been abandoned, with dowry now taking the form of investments in a daughter's education as an important factor in the status of her future husband. Rather than being an ideal in itself, therefore, education for Bahun girls in Ludigaun has become important to make a 'good' marriage, and maintain traditional caste hierarchies.

Fuller argues that the generational impacts of these transformations on the older generation of women in Ludigaun cannot be ignored. First, the absence of younger men and women means that older Bahun women (aged 36 to 89) have to continue to work hard for longer to maintain village life. Second, they have to keep their *20uhari* (daughter-in-law) status for longer but do not get to act as mothers-in-law. In the Bahun household, the *20uhari* is the most subordinate person, working the hardest while having the most limited decision-making power. As such, older Bahun women in Ludigaun 'are devalued both as the inferior *20uhari*, and as the non-modern subject', even though it is their work that has enabled their husbands and children to migrate and become educated.

Health

8. Khubchandani, J., Soni, A., Fahey, N., Raithatha, N. et al. (2018) 'Caste Matters: Perceived Discrimination Among Women in Rural India'. *Archive of Women's Mental Health*. 21(2), pp. 163-170.

This paper measures perceived discrimination among pregnant women in rural Gujarat to understand the significant role of caste in health inequality in India. The paper focuses on pregnant women because pregnancy is a time of increased medical care and can reveal caste-based disparities in maternal and childcare healthcare.

A questionnaire asked 170 newly pregnant women at Shree Krishna Hospital in Anand, Gujarat about their caste category (SC/ST; OBC; General Caste) and their socioeconomic class (classified by their education level, household income and husband's occupation to produce a validated composite scale). The Everyday Discrimination Scale was used to measure perceived discrimination, which included nine indicators such as 'you are treated with less courtesy than other people are' and 'people act as if they think you are not smart'. This was scored on the frequency of such perceptions, from 'never/less than once a year' to 'at least once a week/almost every day'. The respondents were also asked if they accepted such unfair treatment as a 'fact of life' or if they tried to do something about it, and if they talked about their experiences of discrimination or kept them to themselves.

After adjusting for factors such as age and employment status, it was found that SC/ST women were four times and OBC women were twice as likely as women from General Castes to report having ever experienced discrimination. However, no significant trend was observed across socioeconomic classes. SC/ST women were also eight times more likely to accept discrimination as a fact of life and three times more likely to keep such experiences to themselves. Again, in terms of responses to experiencing discrimination, there was no discernable trend across socioeconomic classes. This underscores the significance of caste in the interpersonal interactions of Indian women, regardless of their socioeconomic class. It also challenges the common assumption that caste is simply a proxy for socioeconomic class when examining unequal health outcomes. Such an assumption may, therefore, conceal the unique risks experienced by lower-caste people.

One explanation for the greater acceptance of unequal treatment as a fact of life among lower-caste women is the learned helplessness theory, where individuals exposed to uncontrollable situations either believe that they lack the ability to control circumstances (personal helplessness) or that circumstances simply cannot be changed (universal helplessness). Those with personal helplessness tend to fare worse as they do not believe their actions will make any difference, which can limit their ability to respond to discrimination, lead to self-destructive thoughts and have an impact on maternal and child health. As such, the authors argue that it is imperative for further research to understand how the experience of being underprivileged affects the development of attributional styles (the way people explain a negative situation to themselves) among those from lower-castes and how that affects their psychological and mental health.

The authors add a note of caution: the findings could, in fact, be under-reporting the extent of discrimination faced by rural Indian women, as women tend to receive greater support and enjoy certain societal privileges while they are pregnant.

The authors conclude that it is crucial to understand the experiences of discrimination among low-caste women and to empower them to deal more effectively with them, as well as to sensitise healthcare providers to such discriminatory experiences.

9. Mukhopadhyay, S. (2015) 'The Intersection of Gender, Caste and Class Inequalities in Child Nutrition in Rural India'. *Asian Population Studies*. 11(1), pp. 17-31.

This study examines the complex interactions across three axes – gender, caste and class – and their impact on child nutrition in rural India, in the context of regional (North/South) variations. The regional context matters, as there are key differences in caste, kinship and gender roles between the two regions. Women in the South Indian kinship system tend to have more autonomy than those in the North Indian kinship system, which is based on village exogamy (marrying outside the village). The paper also explores whether disadvantage in one of the axes can be offset by other advantageous identities.

The study draws on data from the third round of National Family Health Survey (2005–2006), a representative nationwide survey. Child nutrition is measured by the likelihood and severity of

stunting, as this is a long-term indicator of nutritional deprivation from birth and, therefore, allows an examination of intersecting inequalities over the course of a child's development.

Findings

- The likelihood of stunting is far greater among girls, those from SC/ST households and those from poor households. Controlling for all other factors, children in South India are less likely to be stunted than those in North India.
- In the North, girls are more likely than boys to have both severe and any stunting. In contrast, girls in the South fare better than boys in terms of severe stunting and perform similarly to boys in terms of the likelihood of any stunting.
- While SC/ST children are more likely to be stunted than non-SC/ST children in both regions, SC/ST children in the South have significantly better outcomes than those in the North. Regional advantage, therefore, offsets caste disadvantage for SC/ST children in the South.
- Considering households that are both poor and SC/ST, girls have far better outcomes than boys in terms of both severe and any stunting. Considering households that are both poor and non-SC/ST, girls fare significantly worse than boys in North India but significantly better in South India.
- The only girls in South India who have worse outcomes than boys are those from non-poor SC/ST households.
- While poor boys benefit if they are from a higher caste, poor girls do not.

When considering groups in which one has an advantage in relation to two dimensions (e.g. non-poor, non-SC/ST boys versus poor, SC/ST boys), the results are generally as expected. However, interesting dynamics emerge when groups with a mix of benefits and disadvantages are considered.

In North India, class advantages – but not caste advantages – offset gender disadvantages. Class advantages offset caste disadvantages for both boys and girls. And class advantages alone can offset the joint disadvantages related to gender and caste. Therefore, in North India, class inequalities dominate caste inequalities, which in turn dominate gender inequalities for both severe and any stunting (class > caste > gender inequalities).

In South India, both caste and class advantages offset gender disadvantages. For girls, caste advantages offset class disadvantages, while class advantage offsets caste disadvantage for boys. Therefore, in South India, caste and class inequalities have similar importance for any stunting, but for severe stunting, caste inequalities dominate class inequalities, which dominate gender inequalities (caste ≥ class > gender).

Overall, these results should not be interpreted to suggest that caste and gender inequalities should receive less policy attention than the inequalities of class. They do suggest, however, that the complex relationship of the three axes and the way in which they differ across regions cautions against simplistic policy formulations that target a particular group.

10. Nimble, O.J. and Chinnasamy, A.V. (2020) '[Financial Distress and Healthcare: A Study of Migrant Dalit Women Domestic Helpers in Bangalore, India](#)'. *Journal of International Women's Studies*. 21(5), pp. 32-45.

Access to a good and healthy life requires economic empowerment, but Dalits, and particularly Dalit women, are 'deprived of the socioeconomic and financial independence to access basic healthcare services'. Dalit workers are often pushed to migrate to cities in search of better work and living conditions, where most migrant Dalit women work as domestic helpers. This paper sheds some light on the factors that influence the migration of Dalit women to Bangalore city, the health issues they face and the financial distress caused by increased spending on healthcare. The paper draws on interviews with 10 Dalit women who had migrated to Bangalore from different parts of Karnataka and who were working as domestic workers.

Findings

Four major factors (shown in Table 1) emerged from the interviews that influenced the women to migrate to Bangalore: poverty, caste-related discrimination, better job opportunities and migrating spouses or parents.

Table 1. Reasons for migration to Bangalore

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low productivity • Seasonal agriculture • Not enough work 	<p>Low productivity: Arid rural regions from where most of the Dalits are migrating, have some of the lowest agricultural productivity. This is due to a high reliance on rainwater for their agricultural cultivation.</p> <p>Seasonal farming: Most of the crops that are cultivated in rural Karnataka are seasonal in nature, so Dalits who are working on these farms are unemployed and without income during off season.</p> <p>Not enough work: Structural changes in the agricultural sector has reduced the manpower requirements and favoured a move towards mechanised farming.</p>
2. Caste related discrimination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploitation • Lower wages • Discrimination in jobs 	<p>Exploitation: Caste-based exploitation still prevails in Karnataka. Many Dalits are being exploited physically, sexually and emotionally.</p> <p>Lower wages: Dalits usually receive lower wages and marginal work.</p> <p>Job discrimination: India still continues caste-based job classification, especially in rural areas. Dalit women are considered as very low caste and treated differently.</p>
3. Better job opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal sector • Increased wages 	<p>Informal sector: Informal job market in Bangalore is capable of absorbing all migrants.</p> <p>Increased wages: Compared to the rural areas, working in the city offers better wages for migrant Dalits.</p>
4. Accompanied spouse/parents	<p>Many Dalit women migrate to Bangalore accompanying their husbands or their parents</p>

Source: Nimble and Chinnasamy (2020).

The interviewees also discussed the problems they faced in their workplaces and in the city. The main problems reported were discrimination in the workplace, inadequate legal protection or assistance from the government, and various health problems that developed because of lack of care and that had resulted in increased expenses. Table 2 elaborates on these problems.

Table 2. Problems faced by Dalit women in Bangalore city and in their workplaces

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Discrimination and inadequate legal protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment at work • Low wage as Dalit • No bargaining-power 	Harassment at work: Respondents opened up and explained the harassment they face at their workplace. Some of them even complained of sexual exploitation. Lack of support from their family and fear of losing the job prevents them from complaining. Low wages as Dalit: Many employers pay Dalit women lower wage than others. No bargaining power: Fear and lack of education prevent most of them from bargaining for their wages.
2. Lack of measures by the government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal protection • Social security 	Legal protection: Largely due to the prevailing corrupt practices in the legal system, Dalit women find it difficult to get proper legal protection. Social security: They are not eligible or unaware of welfare and social security measures. Lack of identity proofs and documents makes it difficult for Dalit women to avail these benefits.
3. Health Problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue and ill health 	Fatigue and ill health: Body aches, injuries, respiratory problems, allergic reactions, pregnancy-related issues, menstrual hygiene issues and other health-related issues

Source: Nimble and Chinnasamy (2020).

Focusing specifically on healthcare, the Dalit women said that the main problem they faced was the increased out-of-pocket expenditures related to healthcare. This was the result of a lack of health insurance, and was exacerbated by neglect or the inability to ensure personal healthcare, as well as discrimination against Dalits in healthcare services. In addition, the need to borrow for healthcare expenditures increased their financial distress still further. The authors present these findings in Table 3.

Table 3. Problems faced by Dalit women in relation to healthcare

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Lack of knowledge about personal healthcare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unhygienic living conditions • Improper self-care • Caste discrimination in healthcare services 	Unhygienic living conditions: Due to the high cost of living in cities, migrant Dalits choose to live in low-cost housing that lacks basic sanitation facilities. Improper self-care: Dalit women lack basic knowledge of personal hygiene and give little importance to their own health care needs. Caste discrimination in healthcare services: Dalits face discrimination in receiving healthcare facilities, despite the government's policies.

2. Lack of health insurance	Migrant Dalits are unaware of the government insurance schemes and social security measures. Lack of documentary proof doubles the agony of the migrant population.
3. Borrowings for health expenditures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From friends and employers • Loans • Social fundraising 	From friends and employers: Dalit women borrow money from friends and employers to pay for their medical expenses. Loans: Dalits with necessary documents borrow money from organized sectors; others support their expenses by borrowing money from the unorganized sector. This leads to greater financial woes. Social fundraising: NGOs and social workers provide help to Dalit women through cloud funding and social fundraising.

Source: Nimble and Chinnasamy (2020).

All respondents called for comprehensive government insurance schemes and healthcare policies to reduce the financial burdens caused by increased spending on healthcare. In line with this, the authors list solutions to reduce their financial distress.

- policies to control the cost of treatment
- government insurance for all migrant Dalit women working as domestic helpers
- awareness programmes on available government social security measures
- awareness programmes about caste-based discrimination, rights and gender equality at their workplaces
- public-private partnerships to provide cost-effective/free services
- health education, medicines and check-ups for migrant Dalit women
- co-operative healthcare facilities for migrants.

In conclusion, while the government is trying to improve the healthcare system to provide affordable and accessible healthcare to everyone, there are challenges that need to be addressed, such as the lack of awareness and government apathy. The government has to prioritise the good health and well-being of its citizens, and expedite the process of healthcare sector reform.

11. Dutt, P.R.C. (2016) 'Of Dalits, Disabilities and Devadasis'. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*. 8(2), pp. 177-185.

This paper uses the lens of gender and disability to discuss some of the many issues of marginalisation faced by Dalits, particularly Dalit women. It aims to address the lack of dialogue between Dalit, gender and disability rights advocates.

Disability is as much a social condition as it is a physical one. Dalits are more likely to have multiple forms of disabilities and to acquire them at a young age: the result, primarily, of the adverse effects of poorer living conditions such as anaemia, polio, pneumonia and low nutrition levels. Another crucial factor that results in a higher incidence of disability among poorer Dalit households is their inability to procure assistive aids and appliances that could help to manage mild-to-moderate disabilities, as a result of a lack of knowledge, poverty and inequitable distribution of such aids.

This has implications for the education and employment of persons with disabilities (PWDs). It is not surprising, therefore, that Dalit women with disabilities have higher rates of illiteracy than the general population. Dalit children, particularly Dalit girls, already struggle to go to school because of the long physical distances they have to travel to and from school, and their experiences of segregation and discrimination when they are there. These difficulties are compounded when they have disabilities, which exacerbate the deprivation of rights, opportunities and resources linked to their Dalit identity.

Access to employment also depends on social capital, but those with disabilities, particularly Dalits, face severe stigma and negative stereotypes that portray them as dependent and unproductive. The low educational attainment and employment status of Dalit people with disabilities creates a vicious cycle, as their households, where resources are already likely to be over-stretched, are more likely to face greater poverty and consequently, the poorer living conditions that contribute to and exacerbate disability.

In terms of work, Dalit women and girls with disabilities are the most vulnerable, as they are often the ones performing the most dangerous and degrading work that puts their health at further risk. For example, Dalit women and girls who become Devadasis are at increased risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. The stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS mean that they are further marginalised and alienated from access to healthcare and other essential services.

Dalit women and girls with disabilities are also particularly vulnerable to abuse, violence and exploitation, often experienced in silence as 'in most cases, it is difficult for them to even communicate a violent act, much less protest it'. As a result, the majority of cases go undocumented and unreported, and the perpetrators commit offences against them with impunity. Dalit women with disabilities may also be subjected to violence linked to superstitious beliefs (exacerbated by media representation) that brand them as witches and the cause of mishaps in the community. They are subsequently punished in horribly inhumane and violent ways that sometimes even result in death.

As such, it is of no surprise that to date, Dalit women with disabilities fare poorly in most social indicators such as literacy, health, longevity and political participation. Dalit girls suffer disproportionately from the effects of malnutrition and lack of education that also perpetuate the likelihood of disability.

Their vulnerability and marginalisation is the result, in part, of inadequate government policies to protect the human rights of all Dalits with disabilities. Despite the introduction of bills to recognise the rights of people with disabilities, these bills have ignored the unique inequalities and vulnerabilities faced by Dalits – particularly women – with disabilities. They have, therefore, been systematically excluded from all mainstream social activity. Dutt asserts that care must be taken to ensure that the 'marginal within the marginalised' are not excluded, even inadvertently so. They must be given both voice and visibility.

12. Komanapalli, V. and Rao, D. (2020) 'The Mental Health Impact of Caste and Structural Inequalities in Higher Education in India'. *Transcultural Psychiatry*.

While the literature on mental health has started to link gender and socioeconomic power dynamics to mental health, this has, to date, been limited to correlating identity to mental health issues. What is missing is an understanding of how culture shapes psychosocial realities, and particularly, an understanding of how structural caste violence impacts the mental health of Dalits. This paper aims to contribute to this understanding in the context of higher educational institutions, given the growing number of suicides amongst Dalit students, such as Rohit Vemula.

In cases of suicide by Dalit students, psychological diagnoses and practices that privilege individualistic models of 'psychology' 'can become complicit in a legal and political network that actively denies and refuses to change the reality of caste discrimination in modern India'. It is, therefore, crucial to recognise what Kleinman (2007)⁶ refers to as 'subjectivity', denoting processes that fuse both individual as well as collective experience and feeling. To understand the experience of caste and the mental health impact arising from caste-based inequalities in higher education, this paper follows the experiences of Dalit students throughout India's history from the time of independence to the present day, using case studies and ethnographic interviews conducted by other scholars.

When India was newly independent, education became characterised as a way for Dalits to carve their own way out of untouchability, though that characterisation is, the authors assert, a myth. Most girls from Dalit castes were first-generation students who had lived in '*Malapallis*', the segregated area outside a village or town for those from the Mala (Dalit) caste. The shift from familiar spaces and segregated living to the university had a profound impact on their subjectivity. While at home they were accustomed to living by the rules expected of their community regarding their clothing, spatial relations and availability for labour. It was only when they went to college that they understood these regulations as being related to the notions of servility, shame and inferiority of being Dalit.

Furthermore, they felt that they required an extraordinary level of motivation to study as they were constantly being told that education was not for them. Inherited traditions of inequality marked these women as 'undeserving' of their professors' efforts to support their learning or of social interactions with other women, which left them isolated in the college environment. Even those Dalit who had performed well in school found that Brahmin teachers still told them they were not suited for education as a result of their gender and caste.

The subjectivity of Dalit men was shaped by masculinity in such a way that education became crucial as a means to earn a living in a competitive economic structure. Like Dalit women, Dalit men too found themselves excluded, isolated and full of shame in higher education. This sense of shame came partly from gendered expectations – from being unable to provide for themselves despite being male. While the experience of poverty itself was not new for most of them, what was new was

⁶ Kleinman, A. and Fritz-Henry, E. (2007). The experiential basis of subjectivity: How individuals change in the context of social transformation. In B. Joao, B. Good, & A. Kleinman (Eds.), *Subjectivity: Ethnographic investigations*. Vol. 1. pp. 52–65. (<https://california.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1525/california/9780520247925.001.0001/upso-9780520247925-chapter-3>)

the experience of being marked as different as a result of this poverty. Their names were listed publicly, for example, as students who had not paid their fees, and they could not afford the books or the kind of formal clothes required. This often intensified feelings of being 'out of place' that even led some students to skip classes and isolate themselves. While caste was not discussed, the effects of caste discrimination and marginalisation were still experienced intensely.

Today, Dalit students experience 'different but similarly institutionalized, normalized exclusionary practices' in colleges, practices that even hinder their entry into colleges. While there is no formal separation of Dalit students in separate 'Harijans' hostels, their physical and social isolation continues in subtle and abusive ways. Dalit students are often given less time and support than others during exams and classes. The authors emphasise that what Dalit students need to cope with their many problems is often time and confidence, and understanding this is essential to begin addressing Dalit student suicide.

It is important to note, however, that structural violence is not only internalised but also resisted by Dalit students through the processes of identity creation. Student groups provide an important route for identity creation for Dalit students, which the Dalit women in Paik's (2014) interviews experienced as spaces in which their poverty and caste did not mark them as 'other', but simply as peers. Such groups provided a platform to learn about society and various structural inequalities and share their experiences of injustice. However, these safe spaces for Dalit students are commonly portrayed in the media and public discourses as 'anti-nationalist', 'Naxalite' or 'terrorist' groups. This threat to networks of support for Dalit students has to be recognised as a crucial cause of psychological distress and suicide. Simply casting the suicide of a Dalit student as an individual case of depression in a 'weak student' who 'could not cope' with the rigours of academics completely ignores the psychological effects of caste-based discrimination and the removal of support systems in colleges.

In conclusion, the authors urge psychologists and mental health workers to take advantage of the responsibility they are allocated for the 'personal problems' of students (even if misplaced) to put in place institutional infrastructures that welcome and legitimise student organising and incorporate it as part of a collaborative effort to provide support for students. There should also be a focus on integrating indigenous modes of understanding the self and society, in an attempt to move away from the application of 'one-size-fits-all' therapy that draws on understandings that are arguably Eurocentric. All these steps require a redefining of mental health in leading academic and policy institutions and a shift beyond the formulation of structures of inequality as confounders in mental health research and practice. Instead, what is required is an approach that incorporates 'the implementation of care within the realities of intersectional inequalities'.

Violence

13. Patil, P. (2016) 'Understanding Sexual Violence as a Form of Caste Violence'. *Journal of Social Inclusion*. 7(1), pp. 59-71. [Trigger warning: mention of sexual assault, rape and other forms of violence]

This paper explores the interlinkages between sexual violence and caste through an analysis of four case studies of sexual violence against Dalit or lower-caste women. It attempts to address a gap in the discourse among upper-caste women's movements, academia, and civil society on the role of caste in sexual violence.

Patil argues that caste patriarchy is anchored in the regulation of female sexuality and labour, echoing Ambedkar's assertions that women are the 'gateways' of the caste system. Lower-caste women experience patriarchy differently from upper-caste women; while the latter experience a tight control on their sexuality on the lines of purity and pollution to maintain endogamy (marriage within their social and caste group), lower-caste women are made sexually available to upper-caste men through the material structure of caste domination. This sexual availability has been religiously sanctioned through the Devadasi system, where some Dalit women are dedicated to God and 'initiated' into ritual prostitution.

The use of sexualised verbal abuses in reference to the genital parts of mothers, sisters, and daughters, Patil points out, has been discussed in the literature. However, this has not been extended to a dialogue on how verbal abuses also sexualise women of particular castes through language that is both sexist and casteist. For example, there is a phrase among men from the Jat caste (a dominant caste in North India): 'you have not really experienced the land until you have experienced the Dalit women'. Such phrases reiterate the upper-caste patriarchal belief that Dalit women are passive objects whose sexuality can be appropriated, and make evident the level of impunity upper-caste men enjoy in their exercise of power over the sexualised bodies of Dalit women. In one of the cases explored – the case of Lalasa Devi in 2013 – the upper-caste perpetrator was reported to have asked her, 'Chamar [a Dalit caste] what can you do to me?' while raping her in the field where she had gone to relieve herself after nightfall (as Dalit houses did not have toilets in the village). In doing so, he was reiterating, very explicitly, Lalasa's vulnerability as a 'powerless' Dalit woman and his impunity as an upper-caste man.

Such abuse is exacerbated by the flagrant denial of justice based on caste membership, as in the 1992 Bhanwari Devi case, where Bhanwari, a backward-caste grassroots worker for the government's Women's Development Project, was raped by five upper-caste and dominant-caste men of the village for stopping child marriage in a dominant-caste family. However, all five perpetrators were acquitted, and the reason given by the District Court was that the men were 'middle-aged and therefore respectable citizens, while rape is usually committed by teenagers'. More strikingly, the judgement also stated that the rape could not have taken place 'since the offenders were upper-caste men and included a Brahmin...[and] Bhanwari was from a lower caste'. This construction of the men as 'respectable' because of their upper-caste identity and of Bhanwari

as 'un-rapeable' because of her lower-caste identity is a clear illustration that the Indian judiciary is far from free of caste prejudice and patriarchal bias.

In addition, the intentions of many Dalit women who report cases of sexual violence committed by dominant-caste men under the Prevention of Atrocities (POA) Act (safeguarding SCs/STs against atrocities by individuals belonging to non-SCs/STs) are often doubted by the police. The police often suspect that they are misusing the POA Act to defame innocent men from a dominant caste. Courts have also consistently dismissed rape cases under the POA Act, stating that the perpetrator did not know the caste of the victim or that it was an act of 'revenge' (and not, therefore, an atrocity).

Dominant-caste women have also been complicit in violence against Dalits. As a result of their higher social position in the caste hierarchy, they have had access to the labour of lower-caste women, specifically as maids, midwives and manual scavengers in their homes. They too wish to preserve their sense of self-purity, which is based on 'honour' and is marked by social distance from the lower castes. This, Patil highlights, has not been addressed sufficiently in the literature.

In the case of the 2006 Khairlanji massacre, women from the dominant castes cheered on 'their' men as they tortured, paraded naked, gang raped and beat the members of a relatively prosperous Dalit family to death. The dominant castes were irked by the upward mobility of the family and by the assertive nature of the women in the family, who had helped to prevent the murder of a relative by the dominant caste mob in the village.

The social mobility of Dalit women is experienced intensely as an unacceptable loss of power by dominant castes, who react in violent ways against those who challenge their hegemony. In Delta Meghwal's case in 2016, despite her numerous academic achievements and awards, she was ordered by the warden of her college hostel to clean the room of a male teacher, reinforcing her 'place' in a gendered and caste-based division of labour. The rape of this Dalit student by the teacher was covered up by the college, which demanded that both parties write an apology letter to state that the fault was mutual.

Patil concludes by stressing that while the discourse on sexual violence is changing in India, there is still a lack of commitment of the upper-caste feminist movement and left-leaning activist on the issues of caste-based sexual violence and a reluctance to see caste and sexual violence as inter-related. For example, when students of Jawaharlal Nehru University organised a rally about the interconnected nature of caste and rape, a leftist group organised another rally and, paradoxically, admonished the students for being casteist by wrongly linking rape to caste discrimination. Despite these challenges, the author states that Dalit women display incredible courage by increasing their resistance and protest in the face of growing caste-based sexual atrocities and state indifference.

14. Torri, M.C. (2009) 'Abuse of Lower Castes in South India: The Institution of Devadasi'. *Journal of International Women's Studies*. 11(2), pp. 31-48.

The Devadasi tradition is a religious practice of 'offering' girls to deities in Hindu temples, where Devadasis (meaning servant of God) are said to belong to the divinity as 'courtesans in God's court'. They typically belong to Dalit castes. When this practice first emerged in the 6th century, Devadasis had a prestigious status and were given praise and financial remuneration for their sacred role. From the 12th century, however, under the 'warrior kings', Devadasis became symbols of sexuality for the enjoyment of royalty and wealthy donors. Once 'initiated', they are required to become sexually available for community members and cannot marry.

While the Devadasi practice has been legally abolished, it continues to be a form of sex work. Under the protective shield of religion, the upper castes have managed to influence the establishment of a system that facilitates the access of upper-caste men to Dalit women to fulfil their sexual desires. This is evident in the way upper-caste men occasionally bribe priests to convince the parents of a particular girl they desire to dedicate their daughter.

The intersection of class, caste and gender often puts Dalit women in a position of low social status. Paradoxically, the practice of untouchability based on the construction of purity and pollution is conveniently forgotten when upper-caste men engage in sexual encounters with Devadasis or other Dalit women. The sexualised body of the Dalit woman is often the site of cross-caste conflicts, with violence against them used as a tool by the upper castes to inflict political 'lessons' within Dalit communities, and even to settle disputes or debts. The latter is the result, in particular, of the close association of economic dominance with issues of access to Dalit women's sexuality.

The 'availability' of Dalit women is linked to their presence in the public domain, in contrast with upper-caste women, who are more confined to the domestic sphere. For three days a year during important festivals, Devadasis are treated as a receptacle for the goddess herself and are, therefore, worshipped and respected. On every other day, however, Devadasis still face discrimination and indignities on the basis of their caste. For some Devadasis, it is not the sex work alone, but their condition of being Dalit and unmarried that makes them particularly vulnerable.

Torri argues that other factors beyond low social status drive parents to 'donate' their daughters to the Devadasi system. One is economic and is also closely interconnected with their caste status. Dalit parents who are unable to pay their daughter's dowry and who hope that an appeased goddess will give them a son, dedicate their daughter to the deity.

The parents of Devadasis may often have an agreement with a 'patron', an upper-caste man who first 'deflowers' the Devadasi, and who must then provide for the Devadasi and her parents. However, this protection is not secure or guaranteed in the future as the patron can desert her at any time, after which he is no longer required to provide for her family. This often happens when she is no longer young and 'desirable', leaving older Devadasis subject to several vulnerabilities and poverty due to their landlessness, lack of spousal support, illiteracy and responsibility for several children. The children of Devadasis also face additional stigma and are socially marginalised.

Anxious that nobody will marry them, Devadasis often dedicate their own daughters in turn. In this way, it has become an inter-generational, matrilineal-based practice.

Torri concludes by recognising the important work of several NGOs to build community awareness on the health consequences of the Devadasi system but argues that this is not sufficient. These efforts must be integrated with measures that address the multiple needs of Devadasis and the caste-based, gendered and economic discrimination faced by Dalits that push them to dedicate their daughters to this violent system. This means tackling norms and the attitudes of local communities towards caste and gender, as challenging and gradual as such a process would be, given the cultural and dimensions of the Devadasi tradition. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that the children of Devadasi have access to education as this can enhance their ability to break out of their socioeconomic marginalisation.

15. Rao, N. (2015) 'Marriage, Violence, and Choice: Understanding Dalit Women's Agency in Rural Tamil Nadu'. *Gender & Society*. 29(3), pp. 410-433.

Dalit women have been homogenised in the literature, and their triple subordination along class-caste-gender lines has almost been 'taken for granted'. As such, this paper aims to provide an in-depth analysis of Dalit women's agency in their experiences of marriage and sexuality, focusing on their choice of marriage partner and their ability to deal with domestic violence.

Much of the literature on Dalit women also presents a contradiction, where on the one hand, it points to the violence emerging from intersecting caste, class and gender inequalities and on the other, to the advantages Dalit women enjoy in terms of their employment and marriage. The paper attempts to address this contradiction by going beyond the structural characteristics of caste, class, or gender to examine the voice and agency of Dalit women. In doing so, it provides a critical examination of the difficulties of attributing specific patterns of agency to women in relation to their caste position or type of marriage.

While cross-kin marriages, for example, are believed to offer more support for women because of its continued natal linkages and the pressure to maintain respectable behaviour patterns, an absence of marital violence cannot be assumed. Here, by agency, Rao adopts Reader's view of personhood, which recognises the passive – endurance, patience and compassion – as being rational, rather than signs of victimhood. As such, agency takes on the form of not only resistance but of also conformity and consent. Rao draws on narratives from 20 Dalit couples in Pandipatti a rural village in Tamil Nadu, complemented by interviews with 40 couples to understand the socioeconomic and normative context.

In discussing the level of say women have about their choice of marriage partner and, subsequently, their strategies for dealing with marital violence, Rao discusses the specific narratives of four Dalit women. Overall, their ability to choose a marriage partner was shaped not only by their own context but also by their subjective position at the time. This position was comprised of their level of education, their ability to work and their economic independence, the pressures linked to family

status, their degree of poverty and so on. The choice of marriage partner is not only about whether this was an arranged or self-arranged marriage; even in the case of arranged marriage, the ability to consent demonstrates a greater say in the choice of marriage partner.

In the interviews, 60% of the women reported high alcohol consumption and violence (physical, emotional and structural) by their husbands, and the type of marriage (love, arranged, cross-kin or non-kin) did not seem to matter. Despite the prevalence of violence, the women used various strategies to resist, from silence, avoidance, talking back and even contemplating suicide, to seeking the help of family, neighbours and in-laws and even formal support systems such as the police. The strategies of the four women varied widely, as did their linguistic explicitness about their choice of marriage partner.

Conjugal relations also change over time; while there might have been violence earlier in the marriage, the relationship can evolve into something 'calmer' over time, with the arrival of children and then grandchildren. It is crucial, therefore, to recognise the women's persistent struggle for dignity and reciprocity that is based also on relations of companionship and intimacy, rather than simply of violence and appropriation. Gender relations are, therefore, fluid; women's voice and agency are influenced not only by the structures of marginalisation and their individual attributes and experiences, but they also change through their life course.

The narratives in the study highlight how 'passivity' and patience, often seen, mistakenly, as a lack of agency, fall within a continuum of strategies that women use to challenge hierarchy and strengthen their intra-household bargaining power. It is often in their small, everyday actions that they demonstrate that they have not necessarily accepted their subordination to male relatives or, indeed, upper-caste employers in their formulation of selfhood.

16. Brueck, L. (2012) 'At the Intersection of Gender and Caste: Rescripting Rape in Dalit Feminist Narratives'. South Asian Feminisms Duke University Press.

Brueck argues that sexual violence has been portrayed as constitutive of Dalit women's identities in narratives by both Dalit and Indian feminist communities that have completely erased their own perspectives and agency. Such narratives appropriate Dalit women's bodies and silence their voices. This paper examines the way sexual violence is constructed in Hindi Dalit short stories and how this construction is challenged in some Dalit feminist narratives.

Sexual violence has emerged as central to the experience and enforcement of gendered and caste identities, with the expropriation of Dalit women by upper-caste men deemed as a way to emasculate and discipline Dalit men. Brueck asserts that these perceptions necessitate an examination of the way in which sexual violence is situated rhetorically in narratives, through the framework of a 'rape script' as explored by Sharon Marcus. This refers to the idea of rape as a socially scripted interaction; and the rape script as a framework to organise and interpret events and actions. In a script based on a 'gendered grammar of violence', men are assigned as 'subjects of violence and operators of its tools' and women as 'objects of violence and subjects of fear'. While

often taken to be fixed and 'inevitable', Marcus stresses that this script can be challenged and rewritten.

Hindi Dalit short stories often follow a particular narrative pattern, where the rape of the Dalit woman figures as a traumatic and transformative event in the beginning of the story witnessed by the male Dalit protagonist. This serves as a watershed moment in which the protagonist experiences an 'emotional and political reawakening as a Dalit'. The Dalit women, however, have little voice and are often forgotten as the narrative focuses on the male Dalit agent who is seeking to recuperate the woman's 'honour'. Here, the rape of Dalit women is simply a catalyst for male Dalit revolt against their upper-caste oppressors, where the Dalit woman is denied both the identity of a victim articulating her own experience and that of an agent in charge of her own retribution and healing. These narratives perpetuate a casteist rape script that derives meaning and power from the humiliation and invisibility of Dalit women.

This overtly masculinist representation of the Dalit female experience has been challenged by alternative scripts developed by Dalit feminists. Brueck examines the work of one such Dalit writer, Kusum Meghwal, who explores alternative possibilities for female agency in narratives on sexual violence. This often comes in the form of a female-centric rape revenge fantasy in which Dalit women disrupt the normative rape script in various ways by, for example, fighting back and escaping. Here, the psychological liberation from their resistance belongs to *them*.

Brueck concludes by noting that despite the struggles faced by Dalit women writers in carving out a space in the Hindi Dalit literary sphere, there has been a determined emergence of such writers. Their narratives could have an impact on Dalit women, especially rural, uneducated and disempowered Dalit women, who might take strength from them. Ultimately, these Dalit feminist narratives have the capacity to subvert hegemonic narratives of real life.

Politics

17. Govinda, R. (2006) 'The Politics of the Marginalised: Dalits and Women's Activism in India'. *Gender & Development*. 14(2), pp. 181-190.

This article explores the experiences of Dalit women activists and the dilemmas they present for the Indian women's movement, in the context of Uttar Pradesh (UP). It also examines how these Dalit women activists use their caste identity and their identity as village-level activists to go beyond women's activism into local electoral politics.

UP has been the centre of Dalit political assertion under the leadership of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), with Mayawati, a Dalit woman, the leader of BSP and former chief minister of UP, emerging as an icon and inspiration for Dalit communities. However, in response to the rise in power of both the BSP and Dalit confidence, caste-Hindu men and women have been increasingly attacking members of Dalit communities.

These developments present several challenges for the women's movement. Some women's activists are uncertain of how to react to Mayawati as their role model, as she has done little for women or their interests. Furthermore, the involvement of women in caste violence has shattered the movement's assumptions that women are inherently peace-loving and that gender identity trumps caste identity, with a 'sisterhood' prevailing amongst women. At the same time, the movement itself has been criticised by Dalit activists for its lack of engagement with the caste identity of women and the interests of women from marginalised communities. While mainstream women's activists are beginning to acknowledge the significance of other identities and are addressing the concerns of Dalit women, and Dalit women have become increasingly involved in women's activism, new dilemmas have arisen with such engagement.

Dalit women are very involved in women's organisations in UP, which have focused increasingly on marginalised women from rural Dalit communities. They are often employed as grassroots workers, as they are seen as being better able to mobilise other Dalit women than the caste-Hindu activists who tend to head the organisations. Despite the sense of empowerment and confidence that their caste identity provides, however, Dalit women continue to experience discrimination in their interactions with women from other castes in their work.

Upper-caste women activists, meanwhile, benefit from the advantages accrued to them in their work as a result of their caste identity. While caste-Hindu women activists have been appreciated for breaking caste rules (such as inter-dining), Dalit women find that while they can discuss this with women from their own community, they face a backlash when breaking such rules in the presence of higher-caste women and women's activists.

Furthermore, Dalit women have rarely been able to rise past the level of village worker in the organisational hierarchy. The reasons given by members of organisations range from their (the Dalit women's) 'lack' of the necessary qualifications and skills to their promotion not being a priority for the organisation. Of course, some organisations are making efforts to promote Dalit women activists; however, at present, it is clear that the world of women's activism mirrors the structure of society in its caste-based fractures.

Several Dalit women activists are using their caste identity and their identity as village-level workers to move into local electoral politics, using the Panchayati Raj Act, which reserves a third of the seats for women and the marginalised. They tend to be well aware of the processes of governance and village development, of structural power inequalities and of the possibility of effecting more systemic changes in office than through civil society participation. That said, while their experience and knowledge is relevant while in office, factors like strong kinship ties and money seem more important for their election in the first place. The presence of caste-Hindu leaders and dacoits that dominate rural voters often result in these women having to succumb to the pressures they impose. For example, Basania, a Dalit village-level worker running for village-head elections, and who had the full support of her community, had to withdraw from the election due to pressure from local dacoits whose relatives were also contesting the election.

The participation of Dalit women activists in local politics has also posed new dilemmas for women's organisations and scholars. While some welcome these developments, raising awareness about the Panchayati Raj Act and even campaigning for the Dalit women who run for office, others prefer not to get involved in the fear they may be seen as being partial towards a particular group on caste lines.

Some scholars, while supporting the women who choose to contest elections, question sub-quotas for Dalit women. They believe sub-quotas 'divide' women into categories like 'Muslim' and 'Dalit', further entrenching them in their caste identity and segregating them from the mainstream. Govinda asserts that such an argument presumes that gender can be clearly demarcated from other identities, while the challenge to the women's movement's notion of 'sisterhood' by Dalit women demonstrates that such demarcation is not possible.

In addition, the inspiration of Dalit women activists by Mayawati has been, Govinda argues, a matter of concern, as the Mayawati-led UP government did little to ameliorate the condition of women or of Dalits. Women's activists can address this by promoting their own Dalit village-level workers as leaders and role models.

Finally, Govinda argues that the personal experiences of Dalit women activists should also be celebrated as political. These women are using the sense of empowerment derived from their activism to fight for change for their community by capturing political power in ways that their involvement in social activism may not achieve.

18. Narasimhan, S. (2002) 'Gender, Class, and Caste Schisms in Affirmative Action Policies: The Curious Case of India's Women's Reservation Bill'. *Feminist Economics*. 8(2), pp. 183-190.

Narasimhan discusses the class-caste-gender alignments of India's Women's Reservation Bill (WRB) and, in particular, its inability to get through Parliament. The bill seeks to reserve 33% of seats in parliament and state legislatures for women, but since it was first introduced in 1996, it has been scuttled every time it is brought before parliament by a small group of male members of parliament (MPs) who insist that the proposed reservations are 'anti-national'. This group consists of politicians Mulayam Singh Yadav, Sharad Yadav and Laloo Prasad Yadav ('the Yadavs'), who oppose the bill unless it provides a 20% sub-quota for women of backward castes. They assert that the reserved seat will be dominated by 'women of the elite class' who will not promote the interests of lower classes and castes.

Narasimhan argues that this raises three questions.

1. Are reservations an effective way to promote affirmative action for gender equality?
2. Does gender divide along class and caste lines (as the Yadavs claim) or does it unite women across class and caste divisions?
3. How can such a small group of male detractors stall the bill in a country constitutionally committed to women's advancement?

Question 1

The significant gains from India's economic liberalisation have not been shared equitably with women, especially with those in the informal sector (which accounts for about 94% of the female work force). They have been marginalised by the forces of globalisation and by cuts in state expenditure in the social sector as part of privatisation policies. Reservations for women can help to disrupt this pattern as they give women a greater voice in policy-making. The reservations for women in local government (at the village and district levels) introduced in 1991 enabled nearly 1 million rural women to occupy decision-making posts for the first time ever, and one third of these posts were reserved for SCs and STs.

While many of these women were proxy candidates for male relatives and were unfamiliar with governance processes, studies have shown that these women 'learn the ropes quickly' with a little training. Despite their class-caste-gender obstacles and illiteracy, some have shown extraordinary self-confidence and initiative. As such, the WRB simply seeks to extend this to the state and national levels.

Question 2

Narasimhan argues that the demand for sub-quotas for women from OBCs is 'curious on several counts'. First, concerns about domination by the elite class never arise in relation to male candidates, though men from marginalised castes also face barriers to access to power. Second, the proposed bill will also apply within the existing reservations of 22% for SC/STs. Furthermore, among existing female MPs, one third are from SC/ST backgrounds, yet their caste identity has not stopped them being elected to parliament. Lastly, the detractors argue that fielding female candidates is risky for party success as 'women cannot win elections'. However, statistics show that the proportion of female candidates winning is higher than among male candidates. Ultimately, the voices that have emerged during the nationwide debate on the reservations suggest that 'most women want the bill passed and oppose the sub-quota clause', settling the question of whether women from marginalised classes and castes see 'elite' women as allies.

Question 3

The paper argues that the ultimate reason for opposing the bill is one of political-patriarchal expediency. Vajpayee (a former prime minister) has admitted that the men are anxious that they will be unable to return to parliament if a third of the seats become reserved for women. The Yadavs are demanding sub-quotas only with the OBC vote in mind, but not for the advancement of women from OBCs. As Mulayam Singh Yadav has stated, reservations for women are welcome as long as they do not come at the 'cost of men'.

Narasimhan then questions why the Prime Minister refuses to concede to the demand for sub-quotas if this could indeed ensure that the bill passes. According to his opponents, he and his party are not committed to the empowerment of women if it means surrendering seats to female MPs. As such, 'both sides of male players' project themselves as champions of gender equity without actually

yielding any ground. Class-caste factors have, therefore, become 'excuses to strengthen male dominance': as powerful emotional arsenals used for sexist ends.

In actuality, the insistence on sub-quotas for OBC women does not stem from any particular concern for them, as the Yadavs are willing to accept a quota of 10-15% (rather than 33%) without a sub-quota for OBCs. Considering that women already make up 9% of the parliament, this is not a significant concession by any measure.

The response of such politicians demonstrates that without institutionalised guarantees, 'men will not yield space to women'. This points, therefore, to the urgent need for constitutional remedies to alter the status quo towards greater equity.

19. Halim, N., Yount, K.M., Cunningham, S.A., Pande, R.P. (2016) 'Women's Political Empowerment and Investments in Primary Schooling in India'. *Social Indicators Research*. 125, pp. 813-851.

In the literature, support for constitutional mandates to increase female representation in legislatures has often been predicated on the systematic differences between men and women on the priority given to spending on child-related issues. Women, for example, are thought to legislate more for redistributive policies, such as those to improve primary schooling.

This paper argues that such an argument overlooks the fact that legislators have multiple intersecting identities.

In India's caste-based hierarchies, women tend to experience divergent privileges or wants based on class and caste. As such, the paper aims to understand the extent to which women's representation in State Legislative Assembly (SLA) seats, reserved and not reserved for SC/ST, is associated with investments in public primary school amenities and teachers in India. It uses district-level data from across India (with the exception of one state) on investments in primary schooling for the school year of 2007/8 and on state legislators' gender and caste from the 2000-2004 SLA elections. In addition, Halim et al. recognise that context matters in shaping the relationship between the caste-gender identities of office-holders and the implementation of redistribution policies. Historically, Southern states have had more rigid caste hierarchies than some Northern states, but also a long history of social and political movements against caste discrimination, often allied with women's movements. The authors, therefore, include a North-South factor in their analysis.

Indicators for primary school amenities (school quality and quantity) and primary school teachers (qualifications, training etc.) are used to measure investments in primary schooling. The variables that capture legislators' gender-caste identities are the percentages of women in general SLA seats and in seats reserved for SC/ST in the district. The assumption here is that the women legislators holding general SLA seats are likely to belong to non-SC/ST castes. Another assumption made is that it takes about five years for newly elected/re-elected politicians to make policy decisions and for these decisions to be implemented in schools. Five other variables that have the potential to

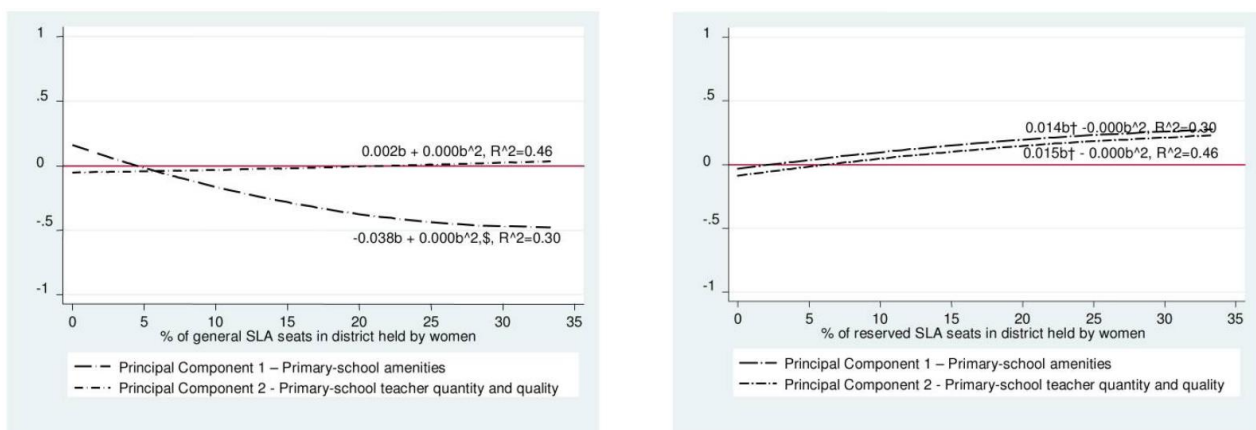
affect the relationship between women's political representation and investments in primary schooling are controlled for, such as the population growth rate.

Findings

In general SLA seats, women's representation was found to have significantly negative associations with 10 of 22 measures of investments in primary schooling (See Figure 4). This means that with greater representation of women in general seats, there was lower investment in primary schooling for measures such as the percentages of schools in the district with a cement building and of women teachers in the district with in-service training. However, at high levels of women's representation in general seats, this negative relationship diminished slightly.

At the same time, the representation of women in SLA seats reserved for SC/ST has a significant association with 14 of the 22 measures, of which 11 were positive, such as for the percentage of schools with a drinking fountain and of female teachers with in-service training. However, all of these positive associations diminished slightly at higher levels of women's representation in reserved seats. Three measures showed a negative association: the percentage of public schools established since 2003, the number of classrooms as well as the number of teachers per 100 pupils.

At the same time, the representation of women in SLA seats reserved for SC/ST was positively associated with 11 of the 22 measures, such as for the percentage of schools with a drinking fountain and of female teachers with in-service training. However, here too, at high levels of women's representation in reserved seats, the positive relationship diminished slightly. This means that the increase in investment in primary schooling slowed at high levels of women's representation in these seats.



Note: † $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$. \$ The null hypothesis of no joint significance, $H_0: b=b^2=0$, is rejected at $p \leq 0.01$.

Figure 4: Associations between percentages of general and reserved SLA seats held by women and predicted principal components for inputs to primary schooling. Source: Halim et al. (2016).

Introducing a North-South analysis, no significant variations was found in the coefficients for female representation in general seats across Northern and Southern districts, showing that the generally negative relationship appeared to be a common pattern across contextually variant

regions. In contrast, for women's representation in reserved seats, 11 coefficients differed across Northern and Southern districts. In six cases, the positive coefficients were larger in the Southern districts. Though the pattern of difference was not large, it suggests that in contexts characterised by greater activism in the interests of women and the lower castes, as in the Southern districts, women's representation in the reserved seats may be associated with more investments in public schooling. This might imply that a broader redistributive culture may enable low-caste female politicians to implement their political interests.

There may be alternative explanations for the generally positive associations between SC/ST women's representation and redistributive policies, one being the unequal ability to translate interests into action. This might, therefore, relegate SC/ST women to so-called feminine issues and marginalise them from other legislative arenas. Further qualitative research with legislators could help to unpack such processes.

Finally, the diminishing correlations for both women in general seats and women in reserved seats necessitate further examination. One possible explanation for the diminishing positive relationship of women's representation in reserved seats with some schooling inputs at higher levels of representation may be that their growing presence presents a 'threat' to the gender-caste status quo in SLAs. This causes a backlash and prevents the consideration of their political priorities. Alternatively, it could be that SC/ST women begin to think and behave more like their colleagues as they gain representation.

As for women's representation in general seats, it could be that at low levels of representation, women align to their privileged caste interests but as their representation increases, their interests may shift to align more with women and children, and they become more willing to invest in redistributive efforts. These potential explanations complicate the critical mass theory, which states that once women achieve a critical mass they may be able to translate their interests into policy. Again, research involving legislators can provide greater insight into the merit of these explanations.

In all, if nothing else, the findings suggest that the implications of representation for redistributive educational policies may differ along caste lines. This paper focuses on the intersection of gender and caste, but further studies on the influence of other identities could advance our understanding of the heterogeneity of women's political interests.

Work

20. Carswell, G. (2016) 'Struggles Over Work Take Place at Home: Women's Decisions, Choices and Constraints in the Tiruppur Textile Industry, India'. *Geoforum*. 77, pp. 134-145.

This article aims to understand women's labour in global production networks by examining the mutually embedded reproductive and productive economies, which are shaped, in turn, by caste identities, life stage and gender relations. It focuses on the region of the Tiruppur garment cluster in Tamil Nadu and aims to shed light on the decisions of rural women about whether to work and how they choose among the types of work available to them. The fieldwork for this study was conducted from 2008 to 2009 in two villages the author calls Allapuram and Mannapalayam, using both quantitative (household survey) and qualitative (participant observation, case studies, focus group discussions and interviews) methods.

Allapuram is 20 km from Tiruppur and its garment industry, but is closely linked to it, with frequent buses and company vans for workers in the industry. About 25% of households in Allapuram rely on the garment industry for their primary source of household income. In contrast, while Mannapalayam is closer to Tiruppur, it has limited links to Tiruppur due to poor connections to the town. It is primarily a powerloom village, where 55% of households rely on the powerloom industry for their primary source of income. In this region, caste constitutes a key factor of differentiation. Gounders are the dominant caste, both economically and politically, owning much of the land and dominating the garment and rural powerloom industries. There are two Dalit groups in Allapuram – Matharis and Adi Dravidas – and one in Mannapalayam (Matharis). There are other classes who do not own land and are considered to be lower to middle-ranking in social terms.

Women have few available options for work in these villages. One option is local agricultural work, which can be paid either on a daily rate or a piece rate (paid by task completed). Second, a non-agricultural option for women in Mannapalayam is local powerloom work in the godowns (warehouses) of powerloom owners. Women are typically cone winders, which pays less well than the operator work dominated by men. Powerloom workers are paid in advance, which is a source of credit for families but also a form of neo-bondage that ties them to powerloom operators. For women in Allapuram, garment work in Tiruppur is available. The wages begin at rates comparable to agricultural work but rise with experience, though working hours tend to be long. The garment industry offers very diverse jobs for women with varying wages and work patterns.

Finally, women in both villages can also avail NREGA⁷ work, 100 days of unskilled work guaranteed by the government. The work is local and flexible in that it does not require a daily commitment, but is also inflexible in that workers have to stay on site until 4pm even if they have completed their work. Most of the workers who take up NREGA work in general are women and Dalits.

⁷ The NREGA is a social security measure that guarantees at least 100 days of wage labour in a year per household to enhance livelihood security in rural households. The work provided is typically low-paying, unskilled manual labour.

The evidence suggests that most women in these villages were involved in some form of paid work. In both villages, the likelihood of women doing paid work was closely linked to both their place in the life cycle and caste. Even though the rates of participation fell as the women aged, the employment rates for women in their mid-50s to 70s is worth noting. It was often only in very old age that women stopped engaging in paid labour altogether. While more women might have been less involved in paid work at some stages in their lives, such as when they had young children, there was no evidence of their systematic withdrawal from the labour force. Many women continued to work to either compensate for the inadequacy of their husband's income or to finance the increasing demands of contemporary life and growing aspirations. Nevertheless, there was one pattern of 'housewifisation' observed, where married women were increasingly withdrawing from the labour market, and this was among the Christian Adi Dravidas of Allapuram.

While wealth group was found to be a relatively unimportant factor in explaining women's participation in the workforce, caste membership was important. First, the rates of work participation between Gounder women and Mathari women were very similar in both villages. However, one important difference was that Gounder women were often employed on their own family farms or family powerloom units, while Dalit women were employed as labourers. Second, the Adi Dravidas stood out in terms of female labour market participation, as only 34% of the women worked – making it the only caste group with a higher percentage of women who did not work than who did.

The Adi Dravidas are a better educated and upwardly mobile Dalit community, with many households benefitting from the employment of male members in the Tiruppur garment industry and low-level government jobs. This had a direct impact on the work participation rates amongst the Adi Dravida women, where younger women were found to be withdrawing from the labour market. This was in line with aspirations of prospering Adi Dravida households for social and status mobility that emulated upper-class behaviour in the 'quest for distinction'. Even when the Adi Dravida women were engaged in paid labour, it was often in family businesses, replicating the behaviour of rich Gounder women. In the interviews, the discourse often associated with such work was that the woman was 'just helping out'; in other words, the family did not need the women to work.

Carswell argues that whether this withdrawal from the workforce is positive or negative for women remains a moot point. On the one hand, the only jobs many of these women could access were low-paying and low-status and, as such, the ability to stay at home was perceived as a good thing. On the other hand, withdrawal was accompanied by greater enforcement of patriarchal values and increased control over women, who lost some of the influence and freedoms they had enjoyed in the past as a result. Carswell asserts, therefore, that the discussion around the women's choice is not a straightforward distinction between being forced to withdraw and it being women's own choice. Women themselves are concerned about the status of their families and are also involved in the 'production of status'. They may, therefore, choose options that are most likely to optimise their family's status and mobility.

In terms of the decisions about what kind of paid employment to take up, what was critical to women of all castes was the ability to fit their work around their reproductive responsibilities. The types of work taken up across their life cycle changed according to the requirements of their

household. The factors considered by women of all castes were the location of work, working hours, flexibility of employment and the degree of commitment required. The wage rates and the nature of the work itself came second.

This is why NREGA work has been so popular among women in Tamil Nadu, even though it is not as financially remunerative; 'they can do it as and when it suits them'. In shaping women's decisions about the type of work, Carswell argues that the gendered demands of the reproductive economy trump other forms of social difference, such as caste or class.

Carswell concludes that with rising levels of education amongst women, it can only be hoped that women's compulsion to work in taxing and demeaning jobs can be replaced with a choice of employment in better quality jobs. That said, it is likely that even then, the main struggles over work will continue to take place at home.

21. Gopal, M. (2012) 'Caste, Sexuality and Labour: The Troubled Connection'. *Current Sociology*. 60(2), pp. 222-238.

In 2005, the Maharashtra State Government announced a ban on women performing in dance bars, with the Home Minister saying that the lure of such bars was responsible for the moral corruption of youth. This generated much debate, with various feminist groups expressing widely diverse viewpoints. Many Dalit-Bahujan activists, for example, criticised the lack of acknowledgment (and thus reinforcement) of the caste-based sexual exploitation of women of lower castes by a section of the women's movement, as most dancers in bars in Mumbai belong to lower castes, particularly the Bedia community. In this context, this paper discusses the challenges and prospects of linking research with practice, given such varied viewpoints, using the case of feminist thinking on caste and sexual labour.

As lower-caste women cannot be controlled in a similar way to upper-caste women, who are mostly confined to the reproductive sphere, their sexuality is sometimes constructed as transgressive, making both their appropriation and control possible. It is for this reason that women dancers in dance bars, typically from lower castes, were banned from performing, while film actresses and models, upper-class/caste women, continue to perform. The latter gain social status with their visibility that is grand and dramatic. In contrast, the very 'availability' of dancers in bars and other lower-caste women renders them 'cheap' and vulnerable for abuse.

While Dalit voices in feminist discourse are emerging, the lower-caste women engaged in sexual labour still remain elusive. This paper, therefore, presents the accounts of these women, showing how they negotiate their work and family lives and the options they have chosen for themselves. Forms of sexual labour, other than prostitution, vary across the different regions in India, with certain castes and communities performing various types of sexualised labour. This paper draws on the accounts of three groups across time whose labour is focused on dance/performance: lavani performers from the Kolhati caste in Maharashtra, Devadasi women in South India and the women of the Bedia community, who now make up a significant proportion of bar dancers in Mumbai. In all

three cases, their art is appropriated and their sexuality is stigmatised by the State, the upper castes and the mainstream discourses about their work.

The lavani, the art of the Kolhati women, began simply as a reflection of the everyday life of the lower-caste communities. It only emerged as a construction of the sexuality of lower-caste women in the 17th century, when the Peshwa state intervened in the production of erotic lavanis and took advantage of the dancers' destitution during famine to employ them as sexual slaves. Even in the 19th century, their lives as dancers remained under patriarchal panchayat control. Their body and art was both symbolically and materially constructed as belonging to the troupe, and they had little control of their earnings and were prevented from marrying.

In the case of the Devadasi tradition in South India, movements for its reforms have attempted to rescue the art and elevate the performers' status. However, concern for the art form often trumped social concern about the Devadasi performers. The debate on the abolition of the Devadasi tradition in the 1930s has several parallels with the debate on the dance bar ban of 2005. On one side were progressives who sought abolition, and on another side were conservatives opposed to the abolition under the pretext of protecting Hindu culture and tradition. The caste panchayats of certain lower castes supported the abolition, denouncing the Devadasi system as a dishonour to their caste and Devadasis as impeding its progress. Finally, there were the voices of Devadasis themselves, who did not want their profession to be stigmatised, and claimed a spiritual and aesthetic genealogy. In these debates, Devadasis were portrayed as either 'unchaste women' or as preservers of art and culture, while their own voices were largely ignored. In response, a 'reformed' woman, Muvalur Ramamirthammal, presented the contrasting voices of Devadasis themselves in her novel, which steered away from stereotypes to reflect diverse women – some in control and some as victims.

In the Bedia community, unmarried women support their family and brother's families via their sexual labour; here, a 'good woman' is one who provides for her natal kin. Family complicity in this profession is evident. About 42% of women performing in dance bars in Mumbai were from Bedia communities, and sought out the work in dance bars in the absence of family or state support in acquiring other skills or an inability to relocate from caste-based professions. That said, most seemed to have a degree of comfort and negotiating power with their customers and were able to define the boundaries of their work. In their accounts and in the context of the feminist recognition of migration in other sectors, they emerged as legitimate migrant workers seeking a livelihood, in contrast to the conventional belief that they have been trafficked.

These accounts of caste-constrained sexual labour demonstrate the different levels of leverage that these women have. The issue of contention, however, is whether these amount to any lasting change in the structures of discrimination and subjugation. Gopal ponders, therefore, whether it is worthwhile to pursue a research and activism framework to address such structures. For this, Gopal stresses the need to work towards an understanding of multiple marginalities and a dialogue across differences. Exposure to the histories, struggles and negotiations of marginalised groups can expose the contradictions and misconceptions shrouding our understanding. Therefore, the ultimate objective of feminist groups involved in the debate around sexual labour has to be 'to develop a strategy of dialogue and alliance building', more than to seek a resolution. While there have been increased voices in various forms of media with respect to sex work that deconstruct the

aura around it, the challenge is to explore avenues to do this for caste-based sexual labour, as this is about the organisation of gendered caste as much as labour and work.

The voices of these performers in this paper, both in history and today, add to a framework in addressing caste-based discrimination. They do not leave structures unaltered, be it the voice of a Devadasi challenging brahminical patriarchy, a bar dancer negotiating the discourse of trafficking or a sex worker framing her labour as being as mundane and strenuous as the labour of other poor women. Further dialogue is needed to enable more voices to emerge that can challenge the hegemony of the centre.

22. Chakravarti, U. (1995) 'Gender, Caste and Labour: Ideological and Material Structure of Widowhood'. *Economic & Political Weekly*. 30(36).

This paper examines widowhood among upper and lower castes, and how the patriarchal practices across castes, though different, are part of a larger rubric of caste, production and reproduction. Among the higher 'non-labouring' castes, female sexuality is strictly controlled, with permanent and enforced widowhood being at the apex of their cultural codes. However, various remarriage patterns practiced amongst lower-caste widows are often imposed upon them by the higher castes. This becomes the basis of distinction and the 'legitimate' hierarchy of caste. Simultaneously, Chakravarti argues that it forms a 'firm demographic basis for production relations'.

Widowhood in India among the upper castes is essentially a state of 'social death', stemming from a widow's banishment from sexuality and reproduction. Chakravarti asserts that since the upper-caste woman is primarily a vehicle for reproduction under brahminical patriarchy, her sexual death is also a social death. Upon the death of her husband, a widow goes through certain traumatic and humiliating rituals that visibly mark the renunciation of her sexuality, such as the shaving of her head and the breaking of her bangles and '*mangalsutra*' (a necklace denoting married status). From that moment on, she is to wear only white, the colour of asexuality. The widow is, therefore, in a liminal state between being physically alive and socially dead, and becomes an outsider to both her marital and natal homes. In this regard, she shares the sense of being an outcaste (a person who has no caste), but the maintenance of social distance from her is dictated by her perceived inauspiciousness, rather than notions of purity and pollution. Lower-caste widows, in contrast, do not shave their heads or dress distinctively. They are not considered inauspicious and they may and often do remarry. As such, the status of widows in lower-castes is relatively higher than that of upper-caste widowed women.

To unpack the manner in which material and social factors govern the conceptions of widowhood across castes, Chakravarti explores the case study of widowhood among high-caste Rajputs and low-caste Chuhras in a North Indian village. This case study is based on that conducted by Pauline Kolenda (1987)⁸. Kolenda observed that the status of women in higher castes is linked to, among other things, men's control over property. To exclude women from a share in inheritance, women are ideologically portrayed as being completely 'assimilated' to their husbands. In contrast, lower-caste

⁸ Kolenda, P. (1987). Regional differences in family structure in India. *Rawat Publications, Jaipur*.

women remain 'equal and opposite' to their husbands, primarily as a result of their economic role, which 'merits' them more equal rights.

It is, therefore, the differences in relation to production that cause the differences between higher- and lower-caste women. Looking more particularly at widowed women, because low-caste Chuhra women work in paid labour (jajmani work), they can support themselves and their children even after their husbands' deaths and there is no dramatic change in their standard of living. However, a Rajput widow in the village is stripped of her jewellery and can only remain in her husband's property if she behaves 'properly'. She is forbidden to remarry and can be banished or even executed if she commits adultery. The main differences relate, therefore, to work and (re)marriage.

While widow-remarriage is a defining practice that seems to confirm the so-called 'impurity' of lower castes, they are expected to conform to the custom. While ensuring a higher ritual status for the upper castes, it also provides a means for the latter to control the demographic structure of *all* castes. As such, patriarchal formulations are tied closely to the formation of caste and class. Patriarchy, caste and class work together, therefore, to organise the sexuality of all women.

Among the Chuhras, widows of reproductive age are *expected* to remarry. This is not to fulfil their sexual needs but is rather a brahmanical patriarchal tool to 'fully' exploit their productive and reproductive labour, ensuring the maximum replenishment of the labouring castes. There is a hierarchy of mating patterns for Chuhra widows: of first preference is remarriage to the dead husband's unmarried brother, if not to a married brother, patrilineal cousin or matrilineal cousin of the dead husband. Though all require the consent of the widow and her father, the patrilineal or matrilineal cousin has the right to sell her (however many times) once she has mated with them. Widows who commit adultery can also be sold. Hence, despite the relative economic independence and security that Chuhra widows enjoy, they are not 'close to equal to men' as Kolenda suggests. Control over their labour and sexuality ultimately lies in the hands of the husband's family.

Just as enforced widowhood is the rule amongst the upper-caste widows, enforced cohabitation could be considered the rule for lower-caste widows. While brahmanical codes prescribe the sexual death of the upper-caste widow as a marker of the superior status of the higher caste, they characterise widow matings as fit for only 'cattle' and low castes. The reproductive practices of the lower castes are, therefore, simultaneously castigated and utilised. The high castes restrict reproduction to ensure that the resources in their control are not strained, while the labouring castes have to increase their reproduction to expand the potential of higher castes to exploit resources.

This structural opposition in the conception and practices of widowhood between the higher and lower castes might be interpreted as the workings of different intra-caste patriarchies. However, Chakravarti stresses that this is only partly true as these differences are arranged within the larger structure of brahmanical patriarchy, where gender, caste, land control and demography are tied together both conceptually and materially.

23. Rai, P. (2020) 'Seasonal Masculinities: Seasonal Labour Migration and Masculinities in Rural Western India'. *Gender, Place & Culture*. 27(2), pp. 261-280.

This paper attempts to understand gender negotiations and masculinities among seasonal migrants through the course of their migration and when they return to their home villages. These migrant workers occupy a marginalised position within structures of agrarian class and caste relations. Upper-caste elites who earn from their land or from white-collar jobs devalue agricultural manual labour, deny labouring men the status of a 'mature male' and infantilise them as irresponsible adolescents.

Not only in work but also in leisure, there is a differentiation between upper-class/caste youth and lower-class/caste youth, as the former can convert their privileged access to well-paying jobs to expensive acts of leisure. For the latter, 'leisure' is the drawn-out search for increasingly scarce employment. Such marginalisation creates the conditions for exaggerated claims of potency embodied in 'protest masculinity'. However, the elite and the marginalised are not fixed, geographically or culturally. As workers migrate, they confront new conditions and are forced to negotiate their gender identities.

The study in Yavatmal district in Maharashtra comprised interviews with 133 landless labourers (both women and men, and of all major lower castes), landowning farmers (mostly men) and labour intermediaries (all men). Here, rural populations have been impacted by long-term agrarian distress, and a large population of landless labourers (typically belonging to lower castes) depend on small landholdings (generally owned by upper castes). These create fertile conditions for out-migration, which has become central to the livelihood of marginalised communities, even though seasonal migrants are still rooted in their home villages.

Migrant destinations are gendered spaces. Paid labour is often divided by gender and where women and men are paid separately (in urban factories), women are paid less than men, regardless of the nature of work. In rural destinations such as cotton fields and sugarcane factories, migrant labourers are not paid individually; instead, married couples are paid as one unit. In rural destinations, employment arrangements often reproduce conditions for migrant labourers to act as 'properly' gendered subjects, with female labourers allowed to start work later so that they can attend to their household responsibilities.

What is interesting is that migrant male labourers are willing to pick cotton, work perceived as 'women's work'. This is in stark contrast to farms in their home villages, where the men would not do the 'women's work' of weeding. This is in line with the theorisation of 'flexible and strategic masculinities' by feminist geographers that allow migrant men to put certain aspects of their gender identity on hold while they are away and emphasise certain other characteristics of their gender identity that benefit them in the labour market.

The gender negotiations of the returnee labourers in their home villages happen through the active gendering of agricultural work, where women's roles are limited to weeding and harvesting while men's role include tilling, ploughing, spraying of pesticides/insecticides and digging of drainage

canals. However, if they are offered wages that are higher than women's wages, returnee men will do weeding. They justify this demand for higher wages by claiming they can find work elsewhere.

One farmer remarked that male returnees simply eat and hang around in the village, while female returnees return to work as labourers for farmers. Female labourers, however, said that men do not return to work in their home village because there is not a lot of work available, and while women are willing to work for the low wages offered by the farmers, men are not.

The ability to migrate and accumulate savings has, therefore, empowered male labourers to decline undesirable work in their home villages. This is a shift from traditional patterns in Indian rural society, where upper-caste farmers expect lower-caste labourers to accept any work offered to them on the farmers' own terms. Similarly, the idling and chatting in the village square, for which farmers have little tolerance, is a departure from the past for the lower-caste men who once toiled in upper-caste farmers' fields all day.

Rai finds the performance of male returnee labourers, in terms of their labour and leisure to be a form of protest masculinity. They are asserting themselves as individuals with social and economic choices: individuals who are not trapped in semi-feudal relations with upper-caste farmers. However, this resistance to historically dominant social relations is gendered and women are excluded. For example, patriarchal norms about gendered access to public spaces for leisure prevent women's access to the masculinised space of the village square. Furthermore, while male labours have refused agricultural work offered by upper-caste farmers, female labourers continue to work for the farmers under exploitative conditions for the survival and maintenance of their households. This is leading to a localised feminisation of agricultural labour.

Rai argues, therefore, that the association of protest masculinities with working-class men is only partial; there is little acknowledgement that these acts of resistance against hegemonic forms of masculinities are sustained on the exploitation of women's labour.