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Gender and Caste Intersectionality in the Indian Context

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Gender and Caste Intersectionality in the Indian Context

The current paper deals with the concept of intersectionality, with specific emphasis on interconnectedness of gender and caste discrimination situated in the Indian society. While globalization brought along with it development and prosperity, it also increased the gap between the rich and the poor. Gender and caste inequalities have been deeply rooted in the Indian culture and the sudden surge of prosperity lead to power politics by some oligarchs, depriving basic human rights for individuals from the minorities. Women with multiple identities are still not represented and their opinions not voiced in the parliament. There is not much research on the effect of the convergence of multiple identities on the life of individuals, and this paper is an attempt to address this gap in literature. To address the needs of the downtrodden in India, we explore the intersectionality of gender and caste using a lens of cultural conflict as a means to identify the systems, structures, and experiences that can be ameliorated through HRD intervention.

Keywords: gender, caste, intersectionality, Bourdieu, cultural conflict, India.

Gender and Caste Intersectionality in the Indian Context

Almost after 60 years of independence, quality education, fair pay, and equal opportunity are some aspects of affirmative policy in India that need to be examined further in research and practice. Globalization in the recent years produced lots of money for a privileged few, while it increased the gap between the affluent and poor (Symington, 2004). Colonial education system, where the eligibility for quality education was determined by an individual's ethnic, racial, and gender classifications, was one of the initial practices that perpetuated inequality (Jauch, 1999). New technologies, policies and processes of globalization are further fostering these inequalities and discrimination against caste, racial, gender and sexual minorities.

In spite of women's autonomy being the predictor of the performance of programs and policies for international development, gender based discrimination is one of the burning issues that needs to be addressed commonly across boundaries, and various disciplines (Singh, 2010). Apart from gender discrimination many factors like caste, sexual orientation, ancestry, socio-economic class, religion, and geographic location play an important role in determining the social position of an individual (Symington, 2004). In spite of being one of the biggest democracies and having the longest history of Affirmative Action policies in place, Indian minorities still face many unfair practices due to a few oligarchies that have risen to power politically, socially and financially.

The roots of Affirmative Action policies in India can be traced back to 1905 when they were first introduced by Vice- Roy Curzon for banning the employment of Hindu Bengalis (Basu, 2006). These policies known as reservations or quotas were further amended to favor the individuals from the down trodden and discriminated castes in 1950 by the Constitution of India

(Moses, 2010). Despite all the reservations gender and caste still continue to be the major barriers of development for many individuals and the society as a whole.

Need for the paper

Several issues were observed through the review of literature. First, with the increasing number of feminist studies on the changing roles and status of women, studies on the exploration and meaning of gender have gained paramount importance. Research by feminist scholarship has revealed that gender plays an important role in shaping basic functioning style of a society (Torri, 2009). Despite lot of research on women studies and gender studies, not many of them have examined the interconnectedness of gender with caste, race, and sexual orientation. Researchers working in feminist economics have made some progress in this regard, but there is still a long way to go (Brewer, Conrad, & King, 2002). This paper attempts to take the research in this field a step further. The paper aims to tailor a conceptual framework of intersectionality and cultural conflict to specifically encapsulate the interconnectedness of gender and caste in the Indian context.

Secondly, there is a lot of emphasis on the need for research that is more bottom-up or participatory in nature, as opposed to the traditional male dominated top-down discourses (Torri, 2010). Grappling between unrealistic expectations of the society and individualistic interests, women in India have been constantly facing and fighting discrimination. In a society dominated by patriarchal ideologies women in India have been struggling to create an identity for themselves apart from being known as a daughter, wife or mother (Razvi, & Roth, 2010). As a result of their multiple identities depending upon their caste, religion and socio-economic background, some women have experienced profound forms of discrimination and unfortunately are considered as outliers in most researches and studies (Symington, 2004).

Thirdly, most of the current research available on intersectionality is based in the Western contexts of gender and race or gender and class. Extending the focus of current research to the international arena (India for this paper) is useful for understanding the effects of intersectionality of gender and caste on the dynamics between individuals in an organization. Caste system being the most predominant inequality in the Indian society further warrants the focus of this paper.

Purpose of the paper

The purpose of the paper is to propose intersectionality to specifically encapsulate the interconnectedness of gender and caste in the Indian context in order to be viewed through the lens of cultural conflict. This paper mainly focuses on gender minorities in India, who also are further discriminated due to their caste, thus revealing multiple identities of women that face different types of discrimination as a result of the combination of their identities. Choosing an under-explored context for the paper represents my effort in filling the knowledge gaps as identified in the previous section.

This paper gives an opportunity for HRD professionals to understand how the organizational policies, programs and services impact the lives of employees who have converging identities. Being familiar with nuances that are culture specific would help HRD professionals to make meaningful distinctions between different groups of employees and take informed decisions about policies to ensure that all individuals fully enjoy their human rights.

The remainder of the paper is divided into three parts. Part One provides theoretical perspectives regarding gender, intersectionality and caste, particularly in the Indian context. Part Two discusses the conceptual framework based on intersectionality grounded specifically in the

Indian context of gender and caste and viewed through the lens of Bourdieu's cultural conflict theory. The article concludes with discussions and implications for future research and practice.

Theoretical Perspectives

This paper is shaped from three major bodies of literature: (1) gender, (2) intersectionality and (3) caste. All three of these concepts are explored below in the Indian context.

Gender

Concepts like race, gender etc., refer to different groups and conceptions in different cultures, but are often used with little reference to the context under discussion leading to misconceptions and confusion (Thurnau, 2008). Gender has long been defined by many feminists, as a concept evolved around reproductive differences of individuals that shape's societal relationships, identities and meanings (Connell, 1989). Researchers like Lorber (1994) further consider gender as an organizing principle or a social concept which goes far beyond just the reproductive differences, some others view gender as a concept that is constantly evolving depending on our everyday lives and the roles we play (Torri, 2009).

Gender, as a fundamental principle underlying societal behaviors affects major areas of life like work, family, sexuality which are organized on gender principles and the interests of power, hierarchy and privilege. The classification based on the concept of gender in societies is more than often manifested in many forms like gender specific symbols, images, allocation of resources and autonomy based on gender. Thus to gain a holistic understanding of gender one needs to know the context in terms of structure and meaning relevant to the society or culture under study (Torri, 2009).

Recent studies on gender have further analyzed this concept in terms of sex-gender distinction, which assumes that something real exists based on which cultural meanings and social relationships are developed. This interpretation of gender received many critiques from post structural feminists who argued that the concepts of sex and sexuality are in themselves constructed on cultural values and beliefs (Butler, 1990). Lorber (1994) further distinguished sex, sexuality and gender by explicitly defining them: (1) sex – biological or genetic characteristics, (2) sexuality – sexual interests or orientation, and (3) gender – identity and social status, thus emphasizing that all the three concepts are culturally and socially constructed.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a feminist theory, which can be used as an analytical tool to study and understand the convergence of multiple identities with gender and to respond appropriately to alleviate the discrimination against oppressed classes. The theory is based on the premise that individuals simultaneously belong to multiple communities (that have emerged from social and power structures in the society) and would experience oppression and privilege both at the same time (Symington, 2004).

Multiple identities tend to push women to extreme fringes and make them more vulnerable to discrimination in terms of access to basic human rights, opportunities, resources etc. Intersectionality as a theoretical paradigm helps us gain a better understanding, by voicing the opinions of the victims themselves, as opposed to self-interest groups. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework has been used for more than a decade and is different from diversity management in its research focus, intended outcomes and methodology of implementation. Its main focus is to advocate for the basic rights of minorities like women, disabled, colored, LGBT's, and indigenous individuals (Symington, 2004).

Intersectionality plays a particularly important role in this paper as this tool, when properly implemented can overcome historically existent gaps and inequalities. Gender and caste based discriminations have been deeply rooted in the Indian history and their origins can be traced back to thousands of years. Work of many social reformers, academicians and policies by the government have alleviated the problem to a small extent, but there is still a long way to go in order to break these barriers. In order to be effective a framework needs to be developed that offsets the defects of the previous frameworks and better conceptualizes the provisions of equality (Symington, 2004).

Caste System and its Origins

Caste based discriminatory structure is unique to the Indian society where individuals are grouped into different castes depending on their family names, descent and it correlates to the skin color of the individual. In spite of many laws in the legislation against untouchability, it is still prevalent in India, where individuals especially from the *Dalit* clan are ostracized (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Indians living in the urban areas are mostly categorized by their wealth, and caste though is not seen as a major obstacle to opportunities of advancement, many of the matrimonial advertisements specifically mention caste preferences for the spouse. In the rural areas, social status, access to education and basic necessities is all based upon the caste of an individual (Baker, 2006).

According to the ancient texts, Indians follow three major themes. One of the themes is the adherence to hierarchical order. Everything in the Universe, animate and inanimate, according to Indians, is arranged in a strong hierarchical order with human beings being at the top of the hierarchy. Among human beings the order is based on castes; within castes the order is based on gender and age (Sinha & Kumar, 2004). The origin of caste system dates back to 3000

years, where it was mentioned only once in *Purush Sukta*, a part in the famous *Rigveda*.

However social reformers like B.R.Ambedkar and Max Muller have argued that caste system in the Vedas is an inclusion done for the interests of specific group of individuals (History of the Indian caste system, n.d).

Caste system in India consists of four groups known as *varnas*, which are further divided into sub categories (Dumont, 1980). Individuals were initially grouped depending on their occupation, priests (*Brahmins*), warriors and kings (*Kshatriyas*), businessmen (*Vaishey*), and manual labor (*Shudras*), listed in their position in the hierarchy (Gupta. 2006). These categories have been further divided into numerous sub-categories, and were strictly codified into the society, to cater the selfish interest and power politics of a few (Baker, 2006).

Gender and Caste Discrimination in India

On December 2nd, 2011, the state of Uttarpradesh, India woke up to the shocking news of a *Dalit* boy being strangled to death because he shared his first name with a person from a higher caste (BBC, 2011). According to the news article a 14 year old *Dalit* boy named Neeraj was strangled to death as his father would not change his name in spite of continuous threats from Mr.Chaudhary who is from a higher caste. Though the caste system has been abolished in India after the country's independence in 1947, prejudice still exists and has a profound impact on individuals from lower castes like *Dalit* Scheduled Caste (SC) and Schedules Tribe (ST) (Pandey, 2011).

India from an ecological perspective is a continent with over one billion people, 1600 languages and dialects (out of which 16 of them are recognized), thousands of castes and tribes, many major religions (Hinduism is the dominant one) and ethnic groups of the world, extreme poverty, varied geographic and climatic conditions, low human development index, the largest

democracy in which members from minority religions are elevated to highest positions, and so on. It is rated as the fourth biggest economy on its PPP index, by the World Bank and has a higher gross national income than Germany, Canada and Russia (Sinha & Kumar, 2004).

Discrimination in the name of caste is equally bad in the Indian society. In spite of being the house for *Dalit* communities with 200 million people in them, they are still treated as untouchables and discriminated against. In a recent report on untouchability conducted in 565 villages in 11 States in India, the public health workers were not willing to enter the houses of the *Dalit's* in 33% of the villages. It has also been reported that

- In 37.8% of the government schools, *Dalit* children had to sit separately while eating.
- 27.8% of the villages had police stations where *Dalit's* were restricted entry.
- 23.5 % of the villages do not deliver mail to a *Dalit's* home.
- In 48.4% of the villages *Dalit's* did not have any access to drinking water. (Razvi, & Roth, 2010).

Looking at the negative aspects of the Indian economy, it has been reported that more than one third of the Indian population is living under the poverty line, with 80% of them surviving on less than \$2 (Re.100) per day. India's economy does not favor women from low – income group who are forced to take up unregulated informal work as the economic reforms of the 1990's could not reach out to 90% of the female workers in the informal sector. Even in the formal sector there is a huge gap between the percentage of employed males (23%) and females (7%) (Razvi, & Roth, 2010). To add to an already dismal situation, there is lot of gender discrimination in organizations in India where promotion and retaining prospects for women are not so good as compared to their counterparts (Rajadhyaksha, 2002).

Caste and gender being the major forms of discrimination in the Indian society make life even more difficult for individuals who belong to both the minority groups. The conditions for existence become even worse in the rural areas where the literacy levels are lower than 55% for individuals coming from lower-castes (Pandey, 2011). Statistics have revealed that there has been an increase in the violence rate in the recent towards lower-caste individuals from people from higher caste. It has been reported that on an average three *Dalit* women are raped per day by individuals from higher-caste, and this is done primarily to reinforce their power and hierarchical position in the society. Even shocking reports by Human Rights Commission have revealed that rape is a custom in many villages, where girls from lower-caste are forced to sleep with the village head man who invariably is from a higher- caste (Orchard, 2004).

Social activists from the *Harijan* or *Dalit* tribe, girls from lower-caste families that are not economically sound are the major targets of land owners. Many of the land disputes and debts are resolved by the action of sex or rape (Orchard, 2007). According to Sahoo (1997), women from lower-caste are forced to sleep with the village head man on the first night of their marriage in some parts of Bihar. The irony of the situations being that women from *Dalit* and *Harijan* clan are ostracized as untouchables, but when it comes to sexual pleasure untouchability is not a restraint. This in turn is resulting in the increase of child marriages, as a girl once raped is rendered unmarriageable (Torri, 2009).

Women from upper-castes who live in the same villages and economic conditions do not face as much sexual assault as women from lower-caste do. Also male counterparts from the same caste enjoy better life and safer living conditions when compared to the female clan. The conditions become intolerable when an individual simultaneously belongs to both the minority groups (Orchard, 2007). Government and social workers have looked at issues of caste

discrimination and gender discrimination, but have not been able to efficiently deal with the intersections of both the identities.

Women from higher-castes, have different battles to fight, which are unique to them because of the status attained by being born into a higher-caste. There is a strong opposition to reservations given by government intended for the upliftment of women. The opposition to the bill which reserves one third of the positions in universities, governmental organizations for women is not solely due to the patriarchal orientation of the society. Indian ruling class which was once dominated by individuals from higher-castes has undergone drastic changes and currently represents the population of India encapsulating individuals from different classes, castes, religion and educational backgrounds. The fear of upper-caste women replacing lower-caste men in the reason behind the strong opposition the bill is currently facing (Menon, 2009).

Studies have shown that better social status in terms of caste hierarchy comes with an expense of loss of mobility, freedom of decision making, risk of domestic abuse after marriage and many more restrictions in terms of dressing, education etc (Malhotra et, al., 2002). Many women in South East Asia, who belong to higher-caste face oppression in many aspects of life and many times do not come out in public due to the fear of losing face. Ironically, women educated or earning more than their spouse are at a higher risk of domestic violence, as the spouse would see a better social status of his wife as a threat to his dominance (Yick, 2001).

Indian society known for its patriarchal orientation is one of the prime reasons for widespread violence against women (irrespective of their social status), which manifests itself in low literacy rates, high female mortality rates, deaths resulting from domestic abuse, high female malnutrition etc (Heise, 1989). Long rooted social customs like dowry, *devadasi*, *pardah*, make violence against women more prevalent. While some of the customs affect women specifically

from the lower-caste, others affect women in general irrespective of their position with regard to caste, social and economic status. Being brought up in a patriarchal society controlling women is perceived as a birth right from men, which is the main reason for violence against women apart from the social customs which have been put in place by men (Heise, 1989).

Failed Affirmative Action in India

Affirmative action policies in India have not been able to reach economically and socially backward communities, as the policies were majorly concerned with backward castes and only individuals belonging to castes that are considered as backward are qualified to enjoy the reservations. As a ripple these reservations and quotas are increasing the rivalry between different castes, as individuals from higher caste feel that it is unfair to them as the quotas are not based on merit but are based on the caste of the individual (Basu, 2011).

In spite of the reservations, the seats allotted to backward castes and SC's remain unfilled in many universities and governmental organizations. Only 3% of the students that receive their degree from fields like Engineering and Medicine in India are from SC and ST. (Sowell, 2004). The main reason behind this is the expense involved in schooling (books, tuitions, housing and boarding) and the funding provided by the government is not sufficient to cover all the expenses incurred. While some categories of backward castes are doing better than the remaining due to their financial status, the governmental policies still need to be revised to reach the marginalized population suffering due to multiple identities (Basu, 2011).

In spite of legislations attempting to protect the basic human rights of discriminated minorities since more than a decade, the statistics on discriminatory practices and their effects on minorities are alarmingly high. Thus calling for a framework to help understand the effect of

current policies on the lives of the down trodden, so they can be reframed to work from the grass roots level of the society.

Intersectionality and Cultural Conflict: Conceptual Framework

Most developmental frameworks are focused on gender relations and fail to recognize that women are a heterogeneous group and the extent of impact is different for women in different groups. Problems of women, who are at the margins facing the maximum oppression most of the times, tend to go unnoticed. Legal frameworks understand gender and caste discriminations as two distinct concepts and fail to realize that they intersect, as a result of which victims in many cases of discrimination as discussed in the previous sections do not get the justice they rightfully deserve (Symington, 2004). It is very unfortunate that one of the biggest democracies in the world is not able to ensure that all its citizens have reasonable access to their basic human rights.

Frameworks based on tools like intersectionality help expose complexities involved in multiple identities and address women's issues analyzing them specifically with relevance to structure and context. Design and implementation stages of frameworks like this should be advanced with caution and care should be taken to encapsulate social, political, economic and cultural situations to ensure results from the grass roots level. An effective framework would help develop rich analyses regarding the various factors involved in creating a situation, thus challenging the dominant beliefs of the society in terms of hierarchy, patriarchy, power politics and colonialism (Symington, 2004).

Doing intersectionality framework involves two major stages. The first stage involves focusing and defining the points of intersection, dynamic patterns and complex structures that define the access to resources of the focus group. Caution should be applied not to analyze the

causes for the issues categorically. Eradication of the epidemic called discrimination and providing access to basic human rights to all should be the goal of the intervention. The second stage involves considering the voice and opinions of the victims themselves which is a bottom – up approach. As opposed to analyzing issues at the surface level using middle range theories, individuals from the dominated groups must be contacted to get a better idea of the impact of multiple identities, existing policies, and societal structures on their lives (Symington, 2004). The intent of this paper is to present a theoretical lens that will enable the exploration of this intersectionality of caste and gender as influenced by policy and social structures—Bourdieu’s (1980; 1987) cultural conflict theory.

Bourdieu’s structuralist conflict approach (Morrow & Torres, 1995; Turner, 1991) incorporates subjective schemes of self-embodiment within context—*habitus*—and objective orientations of positions within a common network—*fields*. Individuals’ positions within any given field are partially determined by their habitus; interactions occurring between positions result in unequal distributions of power, or *capital*. In turn, the use of capital to maintain dominant positions within a given field results in *symbolic violence* toward those in less powerful positions.

Habitus is not simply a representation of belief systems; rather it is the whole range of ways of thinking, feeling, and acting (Reay, 2004). In short, these dispositions are both persistent and deeply embedded, serving as our “common sense” or seemingly “natural” responses and personalities. They are also adaptable enough to be generalized to guide behavior, thoughts, and feelings in fields outside of the one where they were originally developed (Topper, 2001). Habitus influences how we walk and talk, how we make decisions, what entertainment we pursue, when and how we display anger or joy or sorrow, and all of the other elements of

“being” within a network of interconnected relationships. Some examples of habitus experienced by lower caste women include the demeaning remarks they suffer, domestic abuse, or dowries.

In turn, those interconnected relationships are known as fields (Grenfell & James, 1998; Menchik, 2004). A field is “a structured system of social relations” (Grenfell & James, 1998, p. 16), and that structure encompasses power relations as well (Topper, 2001, p. 39). Fields are comprised of differential positions that compete for capital, which results in conflict. Various positions within fields are held by individuals, institutions, or *actors*, and the relationships and interactions (or conflicts) between different positions shape how the field is structured (Topper, 2001). Actors occupy positions within these fields based on their habitus, which is learned through familial socialization and previous education exposure. In turn, the thoughts, feelings, and actions that form habitus serve to either reinforce or reshape the structure of fields. Fields are relatively autonomous; however, multiple fields exist within any given society and new fields can emerge (Menchik, 2004). Lower caste women experience two dominated fields—gender and caste. Their habitus as members of these oppressed groups reinforces the existence of social structures that continue their oppression, such as restricted entry to places such as police stations, temples, or hospitals and the lack of basic amenities such as water, electricity, or postal service.

As actors interact within their field positions, they enact capital (Grenfell & James, 1998). There are four types of capital—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic—which are interpreted as symbolic products of habitus in action (Grenfell & James, 2004). The root of all capital is economic in nature; however, the economic underpinnings and implications of cultural, social, and symbolic capital are frequently overlooked. All positions within a field have capital; however, the nature and influence of that capital is different and unequal and results in a hierarchical field structure (Naidoo, 2004). In other words, different positions within a field are

determined by the extent to which individuals or institutions possess certain forms of capital that are considered valuable in any particular field (Topper, 2001). These different forms of capital exist within clusters of classes—dominant, middle, and lower classes—and within each class are dominant, intermediate, and dominated factions (Turner, 1991). Evidence of capital inequality include the devadasi systems, sanctioned sexual assaults by individuals of higher castes, restricted access to education for dalit women, and child marriages.

The obscuring of economic capital through social and cultural values legitimizes unequal power relationships (Grenfell & James, 2004). As a result, those who are dominated come to accept their positions as normal and natural. This application of capital to control the field of conflict is referred to as symbolic violence; those with more capital within a field are able to control symbolic meanings and to “impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its forces” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 4). Symbolic violence refers to a kind of violence, oppression, or coercion that is not physical; rather, symbolic violence is “a gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 127). Examples of symbolic violence against lower caste women include aborting female babies, forcing girl children into the flesh trade for family subsistence, and preferential treatment of male children.

Implications for Research and Practice

This paper has valuable implications for international and domestic HRD professionals and organizations. Intersectionality as a theoretical lens illuminates how different Indian women’s experiences and contexts are depending on their class in caste system. This demonstrates the reasonable reason why HRD professionals should not consider their experiences as ones in a simply homogenous women group.

In addition, the framework is a useful tool to help employees in the organizations deal better with discrimination and oppression, which in turn can increase the commitment of the employees towards the organization. It would create awareness among the employees and would help foster a working environment that is minority friendly, thus increasing the productivity and efficiency of the employees. With enhanced knowledge on the hidden impact of policies on different aspects of an individual's life due to multiple identities, HRD professionals and organizational leaders can take informed decisions while revamping their policies.

Basically, the barriers of many women caused by the caste system are directly connected with social structure in Indian society. It means that in order to alleviate the problems more active and practical interventions of Indian government, the highest level of organization in nation, are required beyond the failure to the affirmative action. In this sense, this paper highlights the importance of responsibilities and interventions of Indian government from national human resource development (NHRD) perspectives, keeping pace with the socio-economic change in the global and domestic context. Cho & McLean (2004) state that desirable outcomes of excellent NHRD: the increase of education opportunity and higher quality, low illiteracy rate, the decline of employment in socially undesirable occupations (prostitution, drug dealing, and illegal activities), and the improvement of health situations through education and training. Although NHRD may not be a perfect solution, the dream of NHRD which pursues developing individuals and organizations so that they can be productive, safe, supportive, successful, and ethical (Cho & McLean, 2004) will be a positive alternative for minority women's better conditions and their individual career development.

Last, this paper also provides valuable insights into the Indian culture and societal norms for feminist and critical researchers. According to McLean (2006), the field of HRD can make

valuable contribution to community development and is not confined to the boundaries of organizations. This paper can contribute as a guiding framework for the NGO's working in India towards the betterment and human rights of the down trodden. Informed interventions would result in designing programs that a wider reach thus ensuring individuals at the fringes are represented.

Future Research

This paper is an attempt to address the gap in the literature of intersectionality that is grounded in culture specific context (Brewer, Conrad, & King, 2002). More research and studies need to be done in this direction. The current paper talks about Indian culture in general, but India being a diverse country practices and culture vary from State to State. Inter-State analysis of intersectionality would help provide better insight into the problems faced by minorities and help design interventions that are specific to each State, thus making them more efficient and effective.

Another area that needs further research is to look into different kinds of intersectionality like gender and literacy, gender and class (social, economic etc). Also the effect of literacy, marriage, career, and financial background on gender and caste discrimination can be studied to give a better understanding of the interrelations. The scope of this paper has been limited to introducing a conceptual framework that can be used to empirically study the phenomenon of caste and gender. Conducting qualitative and quantitative studies among the communities of the target group can further enhance the knowledge and spread awareness regarding gender and caste discrimination.

Conclusion

In a developing country like India which has undergone a lot of change in terms of its economic, industrial and technological structures it is very distressing to see the condition of minorities which make up to one third of the country's population. In spite of women being worshipped as goddesses and equality being preached in its Vedic verses, the reality seems to be harsh and ironical. Weak theoretical frames addressing the issue of discrimination at the intersections, male dominated governing body, and corrupted structures have been found to be the main reasons of oppression (Singh, 2010). A strategical framework which is sound in its basic building blocks is needed to address the burning issue of gender and caste discrimination especially as this practice has been rooted historically into the Indian society.

A framework of this magnitude if not implemented accurately can be a dismal failure like the existing policies and reforms currently in place. The main objective of the program should be development of the human resources both at the societal and the organizational level depending upon the magnitude and context of the intervention. Foci of the program should be individuals at the fringes and data sets collected should include their specific experiences. Project resources need to be allocated to benefit the target group in particular. Empowering the individuals to access their basic human rights and educating them on informal and formal employment opportunities would to a great extent solve the problem of extreme oppression and violence (Symington, 2004).

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