

**Dalit Feminism: Towards a Radical
Feminist Politics in India**
Surajit Senapati
Abstract

The emergence of Dalit feminism as a new sociological discipline has posed a serious ideological and political challenge to mainstream Indian feminism. The inability of the latter to effectively include and pursue the angle of caste beyond a tokenised representation has assumed a bone of contention for these two types of feminism despite their interdependent and complementary nature for prolonged sustenance and wider acceptability. The triple oppression witnessed by Dalit women has never been adequately theorized or politicised, and the issues affecting Dalit women have never found any support across the women's organisation throughout the country, thus testifying the unwillingness on the part of upper caste women in pursuing the tragic discourse on Dalit women under the banner of Indian feminism cutting across the ethnic, class and religion divides. The increasing participation of subaltern women in various political mobilisation movements in the Post-Mandal era in the 1990s, demanding an end to caste and gender-based exclusion and subjugation of women, and an extension of affirmative actions to women of the marginalised groups, leading to the consequent creation of a radical theoretical and ideological framework that attempts to connect caste hierarchies, patriarchies, sexual division of labour and materialist exploitation of women from a gender perspective, and traces subjugation and marginalisation of Dalit women in the intersectional point of caste, class and gender praxis. The quest for gender equality and social justice, and for establishing an egalitarian society remains still elusive, but the gradual visibility of Dalit women on the national and international maps is indicative of an imminent shift in our traditional understanding of India feminism and its relation to caste, which can radically alter the deeply entrenched caste and gender-based prejudices that run deep in psyche of Hindus.

Key words: dalit feminism, egalitarian, patriarchies, triple oppression, caste hierarchies