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**From Constitutional Rights to the everyday lived reality: Conceptualizing ‘Dalit’ as a Citizen in the Indian nation.**

The Indian constitution under its Fundamental Rights and several other legal rights has given specific provision stating the rights and legal powers to the historically excluded community refereed to as SC/ST within Constitution of India. These communities popularly refer themselves as ‘Dalit’ as they consider this term as more empowering and inclusive. However despite the constitutional rights and safeguards, there are reports from sources like IIDS, NCRB etc. about the violence and everyday exclusion that these communities are subjected to. They are subject to newer forms of ‘untouchability’ practices within public sphere leading to their alienation and exclusion from the mainstream society. It is thus significant to understand the ways in which their ‘citizenship’ and belongingness to Indian state is compromised through the everyday lived reality in which they are excluded and distanced from the mainstream society.

This paper will particularly look into T.H. Marshall’s concept of citizenship and social right. It will further explore how far these social rights are ensured to ‘Dalits’ in particular within Indian nation. An institution or an institutional value does not becomes accessible to an individual by its mere presence but the state needs to ensure that an individual or a social group has access to these institutional processes. While Indian constitution gives constitutional and legal provision to protect the interest of Dalits, the violence against Dalits remains to be on continuous rise. The Dalit community has faced rise in violence against their community women in particular, reflecting the denial of dignity to them. This violence and newer forms of untouchability has thrown open the question of ‘citizenship’ in terms of how far they are able to actively negotiate with state and its institutions. Further, how far the principles of ‘welfare state’ as enshrined within Indian constitution have actually reached to these historically deprived communities. Thus this paper will explore the dimensions of citizenship and how well they are negotiated in the everyday lived reality of Dalits in India.

Keywords: Citizenship, Dalits, violence, exclusion.