

Sociology of Health in a Dalit Community

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Axes of Exclusion of Hadis

By

K. M. Ziyauddin

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For
Abbu and Ammi

And all my field respondents including Gandhi Hadi

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2024

K. M. ZIYAUDDIN

FOREWORD

This book is a pioneering work exploring the issues of health concern of the *Hadis* and *Bauris* – two communities that have been traditionally engaged in the cleaning occupation. The book delves into the health problems that have plagued certain Dalit communities in India for years. While there is vast literature existing on workers in construction, garment, and even hazardous industries, very little is evident for the workers who ransom their lives and health, for sure, to provide cleanliness to the living spaces of people who label them as unclean and often ‘polluted’. A sincere endeavour to trace the social history of these communities and connect it with the current public health system is visible through the work in different chapters. The book has very neatly established the relationship between caste-based occupations led exclusion of this group of people (*Hadis* and *Bauri*), and the consequent denial of opportunities which have led to their poor education, skill, and economic potential. The social, cultural, political, and economic exclusion of these people exists in many forms and nature. The book captures these through experiential evidence and reflects on the inequalities which have existed historically on varied axes of social, economic, political, and cultural indicators.

This book is a timely contribution to the research on caste and occupation inter-linkages. It is also well-timed to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar, whose untiring efforts have ensured some affirmative action for the underprivileged people through constitutional safeguards in inclusive development processes. At present, when a lot of emphases are being given on cleanliness and sanitation, almost in the mission mode, the present book is a strong comment on the status of those who ensure the provisioning of clean and sanitised surroundings. A socially conscious readership will welcome this book, for it triggers the minds of all those who are concerned with social equality, the environment, and the upkeep of constitutional safeguards.

January 2024

(Sanghmitra S Acharya)

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PREFACE

This book elaborates on aspects of the health situation of certain Dalit communities (in India) who have suffered and have been suffering for generations. The case is given for the Hadi caste with a focus on Bauris as a brief point of reference. The book is primarily based on the fieldwork conducted as a part of my M. Phil programme at the Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The newest data has been systematically integrated into the present book, collected during the field visits conducted over the past few years.

Where necessary, the experience of the researcher in the field is added to elaborate on the Bauris and their life at the margin. The chapters not only describe the health conditions in detail but also how a myriad of experiences shapes the community as a caste group and as “untouchables”. The state of Jharkhand has been home to the Bauri caste as one of the largest Dalit communities, and they comprise a small chunk of the population among the other Scheduled Caste groups there. Occupation, customs, rituals, social interaction, and many more aspects have been covered in the book to enhance the generalisable capability of the present work.

The book also looks into the health of the studied population as seen from a public health perspective. The traditional occupation of the *Hadis* helps us to build an understanding of the accessibility and availability of health services in India. The experiences of illness do not describe the reality; rather, a long-term negative impact occurs due to community experiences at health care centres and hospitals. The elaboration on these Dalit castes reflects the historically committed mistake within the larger spectrum of the Hindu caste society in India. The socio-religious sanctity of the unequal and discriminatory social arrangement for different occupations changed the course of Indian social life. How occupation and caste can become the only identities of a social group, which in turn leads to several consequences affecting the basic fundamental rights of the deprived populations, is also discussed here in this book.

It is important to examine caste and occupation-based exclusion, but the systemic and constitutive exclusion carried for years requires serious examination in itself. This is experienced on social, cultural, political and

economic fronts because exclusion exists in complex forms and is multi-dimensional. Interestingly, the book attempts to analyse also the problem of being a field researcher and provides an account of researchers' experiences in this particular domain. This will help all research bases and initiatives focusing on caste and occupation as variables.

The multidisciplinary nature of the book will be helpful for students and researchers of sociology, anthropology, public health, historical and political studies, demography, social work, and gender studies, social exclusion in particular and humanities in general.

K.M. ZIYAUDDIN
Hyderabad, India

CHAPTER ONE

SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

1. Background

The heterogeneity of Indian society and the Indian state remains a silent reality of contemporary society. Nevertheless, this cannot be accepted as recognition of the state's achievement; instead, the masked brutalities of lost and damaged lives are the crude reality of excluded groups in India and demand a scientific inquiry to understand the problem. The majority of sufferers belong to the Scheduled Castes, referred to as Dalits in the present writings. The state has grossly maltreated these people in critical health, nutrition, public safety, assurance of employment, and education.

This gross negligence appears as a point of social exclusion. The most discussed concern about the caste system remains its influence in every sphere of life, health, education, employment. Dalits have been seriously affected in terms of health and quality of life. The experience of untouchability did not vanish from the Dalits' social context and still appears in debates on the sociology of health. The larger picture in this book is to understand the sociological dimensions of Dalits' health and approach the field from public health questions.

Another point of social exclusion is seen in census enumerations. Even the Census of India enumerated and classified only the untouchable caste of the Hindu religion and not of the other religions practised in India such as Sikhism, Christianity, and Buddhism. In particular, untouchable castes that converted to Christianity or Sikhism, and even in limited context amongst Indian Muslims, continued to be untouchable despite their change in religion.

Without any inhibitions, studies proved (such as Shah et al., 2002) that caste oppression, particularly in rural areas, remains acute; also, infringements of caste rules on moral and sexual conduct have been known to lead to the death of those who dare to transgress and break these rules. The unwritten rule of touchability is still the standard norm experienced in the lives of both

rural and urban Dalits. Despite promises made by ruling parties, abuse of women continues virtually unchecked. It is a severe problem for Dalit women in India.

The debate on Dalits' health and especially of those engaged in "unclean" or "polluted" occupations emerges when factoring in the context of other aspects of their life and examining caste-based social surroundings they live in.

The concepts of equal and free education, food and shelter, and health facilities have been repeatedly designed in every five-year plan since independence. According to the 1991 census of India, however, this appears to remain a distant dream for the 138 million people belonging to Scheduled Castes (SCs) that constitute 16.48 per cent of the country's total population (Shah 2001) continues further. Thus, it becomes vital to understand their socio-economic conditions, regional distribution, perception of health and access to various resources, including health care. In this regard, a very distinct observation is that most of the menial and low-ranking jobs are either reserved for or occupied by Dalits, i.e. very few occupy high-ranking jobs profile. More often than not, the shares of the reserved posts are not fulfilled in various state departments and institutions. Why is it that advertisements are constantly put out for low-ranking jobs? The reason varies from "non-availability" of a suitable candidate or popularly known as "Not Found Suitable (NFS)" to actual lower levels of education and general awareness that restricts the *Dalits* from availing the opportunities.

Persistent negligence has affected the health status of Dalits in India. The present book is neither about the history of Dalits nor about the exploitation and discrimination do they face. Already there are a few facts and realities of Indian society. Before we discuss the basic concept of Dalits' health status, it will be necessary to briefly trace the history of the caste system in India and its different faces since its inception. Without examining the caste system as unique to the Hindu social system, it may be difficult to understand the various factors related to the life under Hindu social structure. The "one-man theory" based on Shastras has not served to launch a dialogue and conversation among Indian social scientists; however, a few western scholars, probably not much disposed of/inclined to hero-worship, have tried to provide a scientific explanation. The "nuclei around which have "formed" the various castes in India are (1) Occupation; (2) Survival of tribal organisations, (3) the rise of new belief, (4) cross-breeding and (5) migration" (WSBRA 1979).

In Indian society, socio-community and spiritual and traditional occupations override all class factors. In contrast, in western countries, the significant factors that determine the different strata of the society, viz. wealth, education and vocation, are fluid and Catholic (general or universal) and tend to modify the rigidity of birth and hereditary position.

Understanding the sociology of health in a Dalit community is important while examining the interactions with doctors, health professionals, and patients at present. It was a different context when sociology of health emerged in the 1950s as a specialised area of sociology. However, the continued increase in the narrative in illness and health has made this area of research much more serious and significant. The exclusion of a Dalit community is reflected when one deals with power issues between doctors and patients, between health and the state (Nagla, 2014). The discussions on the questions to access and utilisation of health care and the kind of discriminatory experiences of Dalits bring the sociological importance on health and health care. Several studies have brought the core value of the discipline in contrast to purely non-sociological studies. We have a few references to benefit from the ethnographic details on fever in Kerala (George, 2014), Prasad's (2014) study on Malaria, among other studies.

1.1 Class and Class Inequality

Social inequality is a universal phenomenon. It either exists in the form of a hierarchy of groups or individuals, or it may exist without the creation of a hierarchy. In the former case, it is called social hierarchy, while in the latter case, it is known as social differentiation. On the other hand, if social inequality manifests itself in the form of a hierarchy involving a ranking of groups, then it is known as social stratification. Thus, social stratification is a particular case of social inequality. The different forms of social inequality generate tensions and create conflict in the basic fabric of any society. However, the existence of class in society helps to function into the evolving mechanisms, and they decrease the rigidity of caste hierarchy based on birth and occupation.

Further, Gupta (1991) adds that "class is a system of stratification that is economic in character". His commentary on the caste system with its myriad forms of superordination and subordination, its many customs and taboos, perhaps most responsible for conferring on India. But this is not all. India is also economically stratified.

In the context of class formation, Karl Marx talks about the different stages in the history of society. Marx views class as a group whose members share the same relationship to the forces of production. He argues that in every society, there are two groups: the “haves” and the “have nots”. In his important book, Benedix and Lipset (1996) state that, “a social class in Marx’s terms is an aggregate of persons who perform the same function in the organisation of production”. Like Marx, Weber also sees class in economic terms. He argues that classes develop in market economies in which individuals compete for personal gain and benefits. He defines it as a “group of individuals who share a similar position in the market economy and by that fact receives economic rewards”. Thus, in Weber’s terminology, a person’s class situation is his “market situation”. Hence, those who share a similar class situation also share similar life chances.

Now, if we look at the post-independence era in India, planned development has been an important model for the benefit of all classes but has only benefited certain classes, leaving aside the groups of deprived and weaker castes. The “trickle-down” theory was adopted by the Indian government to provide opportunities across caste and class, but at the grassroots level, it seems to have failed. In fact, the “trickle-down” process has narrowed connotation for a similar reason. It means that as a result of macro processes, such as economic growth, certain benefits may accrue to the downtrodden, who may be a little better off than before. But it may not reduce the differences between those who possess the power of social, economic, and political influence and others who don’t deserve these. The trickle-down theory “does not suggest empowerment and achievement of equity” (Nadkarni 1997). But the process created a huge gap between the classes and castes.

Beteille (1977) provides a new paradigm to understand the historical distinction of inequality, “neutral inequalities” among men and inequalities among “their conditions of existence”. Now the discussion will move on to examine the interdependent variables such as caste.

1.2 Genesis of the Caste System in India

The Indian concept of caste is different from those of other countries where it exists. The complexities surrounding the concept of caste and its origin are not new to us. Most of the theories which explain its origin have not been able to prove and satisfy the emerging queries because each theory has its causal explanation. There are few approaches to understanding the origin of caste in India.

One of the most common words for the genus in most Indian languages, “*Jati*,” is derived from an Indo-European verbal root meaning “genesis,” “origin,” or “birth”. It is applied to any species of living things, including gods and humans. Among humans, *Jati* can designate a distinct sex, a race, a caste or a tribe; a family, a lineage, or a clan; an ethnic group, a regional population, the followers of an occupation or a religion, or a nation (Encyclopaedia of Britannica 1969).

The fate of the history of caste and *Jati* is manifested in the Vedic Age (1750-500 BE) and can be traced throughout history. Gupta (2000) argued that in “realities there are thousands of *Jatis* that caste injunctions on marriage, occupation and social relations are conducted”. It is essential to understand the genesis of caste in the Varna system in India. *Varnas* is the dominant theoretical explanation (Gupta 1991). *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Shudras* (Jhunjunwala 1999), were all created by *Varna* from the *Lord Brahma*’s mouth, arm, thigh, and soul, respectively. Each group consists of different castes, and they are restricted in terms of food, marriage, rituals, and festivals.

The four-fold division of the caste system has resulted in sharp distinction, and thus it is a strong expression of social stratification. Marriott (1973) “sketches the idea regarding caste and its functions through the ethnographic approach”.

1.3 The Question of Caste and Class

The uniqueness of Indian society lies in the caste system, which has managed to maintain the hierarchical system very smoothly, but this fact is the crudest form of social exclusion. For quite a long time, it has been argued that this is the best functioning of social activities. Caste provides a critical paradigm to locate an individual and a group’s social, political, economic, and religious life. The attempt in this volume is not to portray caste as the most functional system instead to critically question and understand the entire discourse that has perpetuated the caste system even today. Undoubtedly, the changing global economy has made the process of change faster and created a new consumer class, where the uniqueness of caste is being diluted into class. As an institution of considerable internal complexity, caste has been oversimplified by those seeking an ideal rigid hierarchical social stratification based on extremely closed criteria based on an individual’s birth in a family. Consequently, we see that the complexities of the caste system have remained troublesome to the entire Dalit population and other marginalised groups.

According to Andre Beteille (1997), “Caste is a small and named group of persons characterised by endogamy, hereditary membership, and a specific lifestyle that sometimes includes the pursuit by the tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system, based on the concept of purity and pollution,”

Caste structure has its distinct features compared with other forms of social structure. Ghurye (1969) has divided these features into six categories—choice of occupation is not an option for an individual or family belonging to the Dalit caste. The basis of the conceptualisation of any particular occupation has been pollution and, in consequence, how pollution is linked to certain caste groups. Beteille (1997) cited, from *Homo Hierarchicus: the Caste System and Its Implications* (Louis Dumont, 1980), that “the principle of purity provides the key to the understanding of evaluation and hierarchy in Indian society. Objects, beings, events, places, conditions, individuals and groups are all invested with varying degrees of purity-impurity and are arranged in hierarchical orders”. This illustrates the status of groups fallen into the polluted category due to hereditary occupational associations such as manual scavenging.

The *Varna* System provides the system of values; the *Jati* is the functional organisation and practice. *Jatis* may seek promotion within the caste hierarchy by adopting the practices of the higher *Varna*, which can result in promotion within their *Varna* but not between *Varna*, a process known as Sanskritization. In a nutshell, “Sanskritization” is “the process of adopting the practises, rituals, food habits, and dress styles of the Sanskrits or upper castes.” The term was coined to describe the changes occurring in a village among the Coorgs in Mysore.

Since independence in 1947, India has attempted to break down caste divisions, though, in practice, caste retains a vital role in a social structure. Some sociologists have attempted, amid controversy, to extend the term beyond Indian society and apply it (not only) to the analysis of the South African system of Apartheid, but even to the system of the United States during the twentieth century. The period after the assassination of King Martin Luther witnessed a phase of the civil rights movement taking an aggressive phase in America. Andrews (1997), in his study on the impact of social movements on the political processes, does identify the underlying reasons that gave support base to the civil rights movement in America. Some of the legislations of the American government paved the path of the civil rights movement and their demands. From 1954 to 1968, American society gave rise to the demands of civil rights within society, and it was

also directly linked to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on *Brown vs Board of Education*, culminating after the assassination of King Luther. The same period also had barriers towards blacks from realising first-class citizenship in America. In most studies, it was deliberated how the civil rights movement made (Luders, 2010) its presence, showed the effectiveness and tried to measure the presence of racial groups in the neighbourhood. However, it did not understand why people were racially segregated USA. However, the recent efforts as a new approach "based on growth mixture models can be used to identify patterns of racial change that distinguish between durable integration and gradual racial succession. The detailed writings of Michael and Warkentein (2016) on 'The Fragmented Evolution of Racial Integration since the Civil Rights Movement' talk about the mixture models, a helpful approach to identify the various patterns of racial change. One does find the typical trace of neighbourhood racial change found among several groups, namely blacks, whites, Latinos, and Asians, from 1970 to 2010. This pattern is seen in the New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston Metropolitan areas showing nominally integrated neighbourhoods that have experienced a gradual succession. The effort in this section is to precisely refer to the changes that took after the civil rights movement in America, which has also given some direction to future studies on Dalits in India.

However, in India, the birth-based ascribed status of all those in Hindu religions has a strong impact that governs the everyday life of each individual on the line of caste principles, which was regressive. It was used to exploit already deprived classes in a very systematic way, in all aspects: socially, economically, and politically and had no other avenues that could help the lower castes to escape from their traditional identity throughout Indian history.

2. Dalits, their Evolution and Background

The oppression and exploitation of Dalits as untouchables has been a phenomenal practice, dating almost three thousand years. They are the people who have to do menial and degrading jobs. They are segregated in all spheres of social life: places of worship, education, housing, land ownership, use of common wells, roads, public transport, and accessibility of health services. All this suggests that it is imperative to measure the socio-economic factors which have forced Dalits to stay in a condition of exploitation.

The question of the Dalit caste is susceptible and carries much debate in itself. Why are Dalits “Dalit”? Who are the people being deprived of social status in terms of having a high ranking in the social order? The pertinent question raised by Webster (1994) about the ancestors of today’s Dalits; how and why did they become untouchables in the particular religious framework are significant. It is also essential to understand how academia understands the ruptured social fabric based on caste hierarchy. There are occasions to put the question of Dalit identity at the forefront of the mainstream debate among scholars is utilised.

Dalits are defined as “downtrodden, deprived and exploited”. They are discriminated against socially, economically, and politically. The most frustrating obstacles in their life are the concepts of “purity” and “pollution”. They symbolise “pollution” and thus “untouchability”. Theological explanations generally do not provide or accommodate any space to scientificity because theology believes that one must surrender before the unseen fact. At the same time, science needs logical explanations and applicability in contemporary periods or societies on vivid and different grounds (Massey 1997).

According to the code of Manusmirti (1500 BC), the untouchables were not supposed to own property. Manu states that concerning the Shudra or servant castes, he should not amass wealth even if he has the ability for a servant who has amassed some wealth to annoy the priests. The social, political, and economic discrimination based on religious sanction was glorified and explained through the theory of divinity and Karma. The origin of the caste system is in the *Varnasram* Dharma, the division of society into four *Varnas* (four castes), viz. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. It is believed that for the world’s prosperity, the Creator created four *Varnas* from different parts of the body. He created Brahmins with Gayatri (metre-Vedic meter refers to the poetic meter used in the Vedic literature), the Kshatriyas with trishubh (tripudium), the Vaishyas with Jagati, and the Shudras without any metre (The Bhopal Document 2002).

The first three *Varnas* are twice-born (dwiji). The first birth is from the mother and the second from the investiture with the sacred thread. In the second birth, Savitri is the mother, and the teacher is the father because he gives instructions in the *Vedas*. Therefore, the first three *Varnas* are born twice while the Shudra is born only once. The Shudra is placed outside the accepted social hierarchy in the society and loses the sacred rights, unlike the three twice-born castes. In today’s society, essentially the same Shudras comprises Dalits of today, including a few other social groups.

2.1 Understanding Dalits and Dalit Identity

The term “Dalit” is derived from the Sanskrit root “dal”, which means burst, split, crushed, destroyed. Though the term has ancient roots, its contemporary usage to specify a section of the people of India who have suffered oppression throughout history under the prevailing religious and social norms goes back only a few decades. The well-known Hindi dictionary *Bhasa-Shabd-Kosh* describes Dalits as “an undeveloped or backward section of people, such as among the Hindu untouchables (*achut*) or serving caste (*Shudra*)”. In Punjabi, however, the *Mahan-Shabd-Kosh* dictionary of Bhai Kahan Singh defines a Dalit as “One who belongs to the lowest caste (*hiniJati*) and has been trampled down by or broken under the feet of the upper caste (*unchijatan*)” (Massey 1997).

The term “Dalits” generally encompasses the communities known as untouchables, Scheduled Castes, and tribes officially treated as Scheduled Tribes (The Bhopal Document 2002).

The ancient root of the term Dalit in Marathi is generally defined as “ground” or “broken to pieces”. With the emergence of the “Dalit Panther” movement, the term “Dalit” emerged to have connotations far beyond the simple meaning given above. Eleanor Zelliot illustrates that the underlying implications of the concept of Dalit refers-the people who have been broken, ground down by those above them deliberately and in a playful way. The word in itself has an inherent denial of pollution, Karma, and a justified system of caste hierarchy (cited from The Bhopal Document, 2002).

Through the identity assertion of the Dalits, the word Dalit came to act not only as a definition of a state of degradation and deprivation but also as a significant source of identity and pride. Further, this gave an impetus to use the word “Dalit,” the socio-political importance (of which) has increased drastically over the past decade.

The seeds of this understanding lie in the writings of two great Indian personalities, the nineteenth-century reformer and revolutionary Jyotiba Phule, and the twentieth-century intellectual and revolutionary B. R. Ambedkar. In 1973, the Dalit Panthers movement of Maharashtra published its manifesto, “Who is a *Dalit*?” The manifesto answers: “members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Neo-Buddhist, the working people, the landless and the poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion” (Massey 1997).

In historical development, many restrictions were imposed on the Shudras. They were prohibited from milking a cow whose milk was to be used in the *Agnihotra*, from taking *Soma* (drink- a drink that produces immortality), from the *upanayana* initiation (or wearing the sacred thread), from studying *Vedas*. The *Vedas* could not even be cited before Dalits or Shudras by law.

The concept of *Varnas* in the context of manual scavengers seems invaluable because they are never considered within the periphery of caste structure, based on *Varna Vyavastha* (Varna system). Dalits, being scavengers, stay at the outskirts of mainstream society. The four *Varnas* based on the hierarchical setup are divided very sharply. The concerned literature suggests, the meaning of *Varnas* is colour, and it was used to define the features of different groups of people, particularly concerning fair Arya with Dark Dasa. The lowest *Varna* was not given a clear and well-defined work to perform, which paved the way to exploitation.

Very briefly, if we study the nomenclature of manual scavengers across the country, it varies irrespectively. As a result, they are known neither as “manual scavengers” nor “sweeper up of dust”. The Chuhra is termed “Khakrob”. As a domestic servant, he is ironically styled “Mehtar” or “Chieftain”, which is an honorific title of various social groups “Bhatiyara,” “Qasai”. As a worker in the skin or hide, he is called a “Dhed” (literally, “crow”) in Gujarat; as a weaver, he is styled “Megh” at least in Rajasthan and, as an executioner, he is known as “Jallad”. Further, as a tanner, the Chuhra is called a “Khatik” in Punjab, and as a breeder of swine, he is known as “*Hali*” (Lal, 1999).

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The concept of Dalit is operationalised for this study as follows: “those Scheduled Castes and untouchables who are at present engaged in paid work which is designed as ‘polluted’ and ‘unclean’. These jobs include scavenging, sewerage cleaning, night soil carrying, removing carcasses and dealing with dead bodies at cremations”. The following chapters discuss this in detail.

Against the backdrop of the description in the last section, Dalits seem a very special category. This idea will have more significance when the socio-economic conditions of Dalit scavengers are revealed. There has been little work on the communities involved in scavenging, especially on the issues related to their health status. Historically, in every aspect of social life, Dalits and Dalit scavengers have been forced to carry out the most degrading jobs in society. Manual scavenging as an occupation has multiple

exploitative phenomena and forms in society. They are the people who generally belong to the lowest strata of Indian society, i.e. of the caste system. They perform the lowest ranking and most degrading jobs in society. The entire urban settlement is based on the continuous cleaning and scavenging taken up by the Hadi community. The neighbouring Bauri caste is not engaged in menial jobs.

A certain kind of occupation is concerned and attached with the operational definition of *Dalits*. The concepts of pollution and purity, especially, have a clear and direct implication on the lives of Dalits. As there are several theoretical understandings about the origin of caste in India, the emergence of the lower-ranking communities within the caste fold is found in all explanations.

Functional sociologists are concerned with the question of order. This theory believes that every society is a well-integrated structure. Every element as a member of a society has a function that contributes to maintaining the social system. The functioning of the social structure is based on a consensus of its members' values. Exclusively, this school believes that every society is a relatively persistent, stable structure.

The above theory focuses on the functional approach to understanding the caste system, which the dominant Hindu ideology has propagated. **There is always discrimination within the caste system resulting in economic inequality.** It seems necessary to understand the magnitude of caste-based economic inequality in this context. There are three broad theoretical approaches, which attempt to see the economic basis of prevailing institutional consequences of the caste system, the economic efficiency, and income distribution.

Thorat (2001) gives three basic theories in the context of economic efficiency and income distribution:

1. Neo-Classical Approach: This theory assumes that under the prevailing form of the caste system, occupations are hereditary, compulsory, and indigenous. These distinct features of the caste system force immobility in the factors of production, particularly labour, across caste-attached occupations and thus give rise to segmentation in the labour market. The argument is that discrimination exists because of economic incentives.

2. Marxist Approach: This approach focuses on the efficiency aspect of the institution to distribution, as it traces caste-based inequality in the unequal distribution of property. This approach considers the economic

structure of the society as the foundation for all the institutions. Focus is given to the dialectical relationship between the changes in the forces of production, i.e. means of production and technology, and the relation of production to the technology. The force of production is supposed to provide a more potent and dynamic source of institutional change. This approach does not feature caste in the arguments relating to the perpetuation of inequality.

3. Ambedkar's Approach: Ambedkar's view on the caste system and untouchability results from the interaction between the Neo-Classical and Marxist theories mentioned above. Ambedkar looked closely at the role and impact of social, religious and philosophical elements in Hinduism in the origin, perpetuation, and sustenance of the caste system. He also analysed the economics of the caste system and untouchability from allocative economic efficiency and income distribution. However, he arrived at a different conclusion. In Ambedkar's view, the Hindu social system involved a framework of a production organisation and a scheme of distribution at a theoretical level.

Hence, different social thinkers have raised the issue of Dalits, but the recent school of Dalits have come up from within the same community as discussed in the study of Thorat (2001). A little clarification is necessary. A few occupational and social groups do not belong to Hinduism. However, they have been carrying out the work and duties of Hindu Dalits because of the importance placed on occupation in the determination of one's life or identity. Many of them have their deities and some practice Buddhism in everyday rituals and rites.

This conceptual understanding is based on the occupation of certain caste groups, which has implications for the health of that same community. The differentiation in health status among different caste groups is found to be because of differences in the socio-economic condition of the respective caste groups.

Similarly, the argument could be applied to the Indian context; the lower socio-economic condition of Dalits and unhygienic environmental living and working conditions means Dalits always have a higher risk of getting exposed to various diseases due to their occupation. No doubt, the health of this section of our population is worse and horrible. Hunger is an important aspect that affects the health of an individual. Rakku's story of Zurbrigg (1984) is a testimony that reflects the live presentation, which reflects the trivial relationship between hunger, health and illness.

The intention behind this study on Dalit health is given in a preliminary sketch to help orientate the readers.

3. Objectives of the Study

3.1. To analyse the socio-economic profile of the Dalit community engaged in “polluted” jobs to locate the overall health conditions and various indicators of the socio-economic condition.

- (i) The level of literacy among the Dalits compared with that of the total population is stressed.
- (ii) The living and working conditions among Dalits against those of the general population are analysed; other types of work available are stated.
- (iii) The total number of the workforce (Dalits) employed, unemployed, or semi-employed is considered in the study.
- (iv) The jobs that are viewed to be or considered as “polluted jobs” and the castes involved in these are to be analysed.

3.2. To consider the implications these “polluted jobs” have on the health of this particular community.

- (i) How much of the population is adequately housed and the different kinds of housing facilities available.
- (ii) How many people still do not have proper food every day.

Accordingly, the traditional occupation of each Dalit caste is being asked and analysed in their current jobs and occupational association.

3.3. To understand or paint a broad picture of the perception about ill health according to the following steps:

- (i) The pattern of reported ill-health among this community,
- (ii) The utilisation of health care services,
- (iii) The socio-physical accessibility to health care services.

4. Area of the Research Study

The place of the study was chosen by enquiring about the caste-based population engaged in the degraded works such as scavenging, cleaning and carrying night soil on their heads etc.

Chas is a township of the district Bokaro in Jharkhand, comprising a total population of 565,290, among which the Scheduled Castes population numbers 66,712. Chas Municipal Corporation has a total Scheduled Caste population of 6,624, and among this, males account for 3,487 and females for 3,137 (Census of India 1991), which has increased to 109,837 in the 2011 census enumeration.

On discovering the above figures of the Chas Municipality, it was decided to undertake a comprehensive survey of the area around the Municipal Corporation. It was found that within this area, Hadi Cooli, a Dalit-populated locality (Cooli refers to a small settlement Dalits), is engaged in scavenging, cleaning latrines and carrying night soil etc. So the Hadi Cooli was selected for the research study, which consisted of only forty-eight households in the year 2001, all of them from the same occupation.

Mehtar has a significant space in this area of exploitation. *Hadi*, a sub-caste of Mehtar, is found in the Chas Township of Bokaro district. People from both of these castes preach Hinduism.

5. Methods of Data Collection

Primary and secondary have been used to attain the overall proposed study objectives. Earlier only forty-eight households settled in Hadi Cooli were selected because of their rugged, congested housing conditions and the surrounding environment.

5.1 Tools

5.1.1 Interview schedule: The interview schedule was applied to gather factual and quantitative data from the respondents. Out of the total 48 households, 36 were interviewed. Interviews were supplemented and helped by a prepared checklist to guide and facilitate the interview schedule and discussion with the respondents.

5.1.2 In-depth interview: In-depth interviews were carried out with selected respondents to increase the reliability and quality of the field data.

5.1.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): This technique had some difficulty; gathering community fellows in one place at one time was extremely difficult. FGDs were done with other Dalit communities, who live near the Hadi Cooli area, known as (the) Bauri Cooli (Bauri is a caste that belongs to the Scheduled Caste but is not involved in scavenging). This was helpful to relate the issues to broader socio-economic factors.

5.1.4 Case Study

The case study method helped bring hidden aspects of Dalit's life to light. For this purpose, five individuals were selected who had significance in manifesting a higher mortality rate of those in their families. This method revealed the factors responsible for their lower health status.

The data collected was related to their living conditions, healthcare-seeking behaviour, availability and accessibility of health services, the reasons for non-accessibility, the diseases prominently occurring in the settlement area, their employment, nutrition, and housing problems.

6. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study area was not significant regarding the number of settled households. Out of forty-eight, only thirty-eight (38) respondents were interviewed because the rest could not be found even after many visits, and a few did not want to talk. Most of the time, especially in the early morning and evening hours, they were not available at home because of their busy work hours. To catch the men at home, the researcher had to inform them one day in advance, but the women were available most of the time except when they would go out to collect drinking water from the public tap.

The tools and techniques of data collection applied, such as In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions, were the most effective methods for collecting qualitative data. However, these methods demand a long time and energy for the intensive and comprehensive study.

Another thing that needs to be mentioned here that may have affected the study was the relationship with the community. In the first few days, the researcher had to enter the community with the assistance of the Registered Medical Practitioner (RMPs) and a few other local interactive and vocal community members. However, later the researcher succeeded in building up his rapport with the community. However, a non-participant observation

method was used as a supplementary instrument throughout the research study.

7. Scheme of the Chapter plan

This book is based on a study done in the Chas Township, a part of the Bokaro district in the newly formed state of Jharkhand. It is about a community of Dalits engaged mainly in the occupation of scavenging who carry the night soil and clean the toilets of the thousands of houses in Bokaro city, located on the banks of river Garga. The city is the site of a large government-owned steel plant, which started its production in 1978. After failing to gain financial and technical aid from the United States to construct the steel plant, in 1965, the Indian government reached an agreement with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which provided the necessary support. A major rail line and a national highway link Bokaro to other cities. The nearest domestic airport is Patna, about 225 kilometres to the northwest, in Bihar state.

The research study is based on primary data collected in the field and secondary sources such as various government documents, books, journals and magazines, newspaper clippings, etc.

The first chapter deals with the study's rationale and its conceptual framework. It also gives an idea about the hypothesis prepared to go into the field, the research methodology adopted for data collection, and the sociology of health and social exclusion.

The second chapter comprises socio-historical accounts of Dalits' particular reference to *Hadis*. The third chapter provides a socio-demographic and economic profile, and the fourth chapter describes the socio-demographic profile of the study area and explores Dalits' health. The fifth chapter, "The Axes of Denial", explains the data on the perception and reported morbidity among the selected study population and the links between health and social exclusion of *Hadis*. The final chapter discusses practices, findings and conclusions based on observations of the research.