

THE DALIT MOVEMENT AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Post-Ambedkarite movements for dalit liberation in India have had diverse currents. In India, the assertion of the Bahujan Samaj Party has begun a new period of democratisation, while the rising of dalit castes via Buddhist conversion has brought about societal upheaval in Maharashtra. Yet, both these different occurrences suffer from the drawbacks of not addressing fundamental concerns identified by Ambedkar. This dissertation aims to synthesize a model out of the dialectics of the socio-political movements in Maharashtra and India from the vantage point of Ambedkarite philosophy.

Keywords: Dalit, Dalit movement, democratization, India, untouchability.

INTRODUCTION

Following the country's independence, a number of anti-discrimination legislation were passed. Dalits still face social shame and prejudice, even in a civilized society. This article examines the evolution of the Dalit movement in India and the role played by its most prominent figures. It's not only in India that the concept of democracy and the issues it faces today—authoritarianism; high polarization along political, ethnic, and religious lines; and expanding economic and social inequalities—are of current significance. In the face of attempts to silence democracy or reduce it to a mere technicality, the necessity to maintain and promote truly democratic regimes becomes clearer than ever. Genuine democratic success requires the active engagement of citizens in the decision-making process. Theories of democracy and representation, the election system, and the success or failings of India's democracy as it has developed over the decades have dominated scholarly arguments on this topic in India. This article takes a different approach by looking at India's democracy through the eyes of rural dalit women, the majority of whom work as agricultural labourers in the fields.

The study's primary goal is to understand how the Dalit movement influences the notion of democracy. Proposals for a new sort of inclusive democracy with a proportionate distribution of advantages go beyond the stalemate of liberal solutions such as reservation policies and affirmative action. Whether or whether India's democracy works successfully for the historically marginalized Dalits is at the heart of this conundrum. A broad range of questions are being asked in an effort to solve this mystery: Post-independence, how much of a conflict is there between the Dalits' belief in inequality and the actuality of that disparity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jadumani Mahanand (2021) Political contract and agreement between people to ensure essential rights such as rights, liberty and equality is what constitutes a contemporary democratic state. Although India has had contemporary constitutional legislation in place for the last seven decades, caste, crimes against Dalits, and subjection of women have been sanctified by the lawlessness of the established Hindu social order, which is mandated in Manu's law in line with the Hindu faith.

Andrew Breiner (2020) Dalit politics in Tamil Nadu were fundamentally altered by the VCK. As a result, its leaders initially lacked trust in the political process and instead pushed their goals via election boycotts and street politics. Disruptive demonstrations, such as human chains obstructing major highways or railway lines, have been planned by activists.

Satyendra More (2019) However, RBM sided with Ambedkar on caste and untouchability, while the party's upper-caste leadership slammed the movement in the 1930s and 1940s as a phenomena of the middle class and the elite. RBM aimed to connect these two threads. The phrase Jai Bhim-Laal Salam, which sums up

RBM's vision of uniting the Communist and Dalit movements, may be credited to him as an early proponent of this notion. RBM's attempt to combine the two strands of information was a failure.

Ishita Mehrotra (2019) Democracies that function well are built on the foundations of citizen engagement and representation. A Dalit woman's viewpoint on democracy in India is presented in this article, which examines how Dalit women in rural areas see the 'political,' including the role of elected officials. The paper makes the case that Dalit women understand politics and representation from the perspective of their daily experiences and from their particular caste, class, and gender positions.

Hugo Gorringer (2016) The Viduthalai ChiruthaigalKatchi, the biggest Dalit movement group in Tamil Nadu, joined party politics in 1999 after a decade-long boycott of elections (Liberation Panther Party, VCK). Institutionalization in political institutions and in socio-cultural means of practicing politics are the main topics of this essay. It will examine both how the party has evolved since entering official politics, and how it has influenced the institutions it has joined. The traditional emphasis on a party's electoral success or failure is problematic when looking at institutionalization in this manner, and it forces us to evaluate its political performance within their unique environment.

THE EARLY PHASE OF DALIT MOVEMENT

Ambedkar was the most prominent Dalit politician during the colonial period, and he subsequently served as the primary architect of India's Constitution. Legal scholar, politician, and outspoken opponent of the Indian caste system, Dr. Ambedkar was a towering figure in India's history. Over the course of his career, he conducted an anti-untouchability campaign in the public and political arenas. Even though Ambedkar is revered as a hero by many Dalit groups today, his legacy has been understood and carried on in many ways. As early as the 1960s and into the 1970s, Dalit politics started to evolve. Not just in the United States, where the Vietnam War period saw the development of the Black Panthers, the Weather Underground, and other radical organisations, but also in India, where the Indian independence movement was in full swing.

Youth from the Dalit community, many of whom were first-generation college graduates, voiced their dissatisfaction with the slow pace of economic progress and social transformation. The Dalit Panthers, who took their name from the Black Panthers of the United States, began as a literary and artistic organisation in Maharashtra before becoming a political one in 1972. It was an anti-capitalist movement that rejected the parliamentary system and advocated for social and economic reform. They didn't last long, to be honest.

In 1975-77, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed a State of Emergency, suspending democratic governance and repressing political dissent inside India. Local chapters were established in late 1970s after the movement had been pushed underground. However, despite their best efforts to unite the Dalits throughout India, they were able to establish local affiliates that went on to become prominent Dalit organizations around the country.

DALITS –HUMAN OR ANIMALS (IN THE LIGHT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND)

People were subjected to tyranny and humiliation due to a lack of resources in many areas of their existence. The caste system, which leads to untouchability, monopoly of resources, and monopoly of knowledge, are the primary causes of the Dalit's degraded position. More over half of the Dalit population falls below the poverty line, compared to less than a third of the rest of the population. Their lives as agricultural or urban labourers are now almost entirely reliant on the ruling caste. The Aryans attempted to control resources throughout the Buddha era. They monopolized resources in order to gain economic and social power. It was widely accepted that a person's rank was linked to their ability to manage land and other resources. The actual exploitation started at this point. As a result of their control over land, the Dalits lost their livelihood and descended into animal status. Untouchability and a lack of understanding caused them to believe in all the Brahmins' superstitious and irrational stories. They had no access to the most basic necessities of life, such as food, shelter, and clothes. They ate stale food and the carcasses of dead animals as if they were not human beings when they were deprived of nourishment. At one point, the Dalits had to fight over even a few bits of bone from a dead beef in Amitabh Bachchan's Dangle's Poisoned Bread. It will take fewer words to describe the plight of the Dalits in that narrative. They hid their bodies with a rag-and-stitch cloak. The Brahmins fed the animals, but not the Dalits, who were considered lower castes. Even if the Dalit women's shadow falls on them, the Brahmins' food will not be contaminated, even if they use firewood from which the Dalit women's chopped fingers have been stuck. This demonstrates that the policies enacted to discriminate against the Dalits are mostly motivated by self-interest. As a result,

the Dalits were forbidden from interacting with members of the four major castes. To be cleansed of this filth, one must conduct a series of purification rites on themselves or, failing that, on a member of the higher caste. Discrimination against Dalits was so severe that it was as if they had a sickness like leprosy. They had to undertake the filthy task since no work was allowed unless it was for the purpose of accumulating money or wielding weapons. Because he can claim nothing as his own, a Brahman has the right to seize everything a Shudra has.

MAJOR CAUSES OF THE DALIT MOVEMENT

The Dalit Movement is the product of centuries of hate for the upper castes' barbarous deeds in India. Because Dalits were entrusted with the responsibility of serving the other three Varnas, that is, all non-Dalits, they were forbidden higher training of the intellect and political standing. Inequality and exploitation arose as a result of the division of labour. Because of the caste system, many Dalit people now live in a diseased state where their jobs have been reclassified as castes. The Shudras were despised by the upper classes. The Dalits were considered to be the lowest of the low Varnas, according to popular opinion. The Dalits have been placed at the bottom of India's rigorous caste system for generations. Other castes feel that Dalits are dirty by birth and that their contact or even their mere presence might be a source of contamination. As a result, they are regarded as indestructible. As a result of decades of discrimination against Dalits, they were confined to low-paying jobs like cleaning dry latrines and sweeping or labouring as landless labourers. This was a group of individuals that tended the land and worked as bonded labour, scavenged, and performed a variety of laborious tasks. Untouchability is the most inhumane practice, as it has forced the Dalits to live in appalling conditions. As a result, they were living a savage existence. The Dalits were outraged because they were going hungry on their own land, even though they owned it. Dalits have risen up in protest against the inhumane practices of Brahmanism as a result of this Dalits were subjected to all forms of discrimination. They were not able to benefit from geographic isolation like tribes since they lived in Hindu communities. The Brahmins had taken over the mainland, forcing them into the forests. They were tasked with serving everyone in the community and doing all the dirty work. In addition to being untouchable, they were prevented from visiting certain mainland locations in any way, including by wearing proper clothing and jewellery. Religion was a factor in many of the crimes. In addition, they poured molten lead into the ears of a Dalit who was listening to a chant while under the influence of the Devadasi system. Monopolizing education was a tactic used to keep control over the populace.

DALITMOVEMENTANDDEMOCRATIZATION

The term "Dalit" gained new traction in India once the Dalit Maha Sabha was established. The term "Dalit" refers to a group of individuals who are marginalised in society and the economy. Harijan, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Minorities, Women, and all other individuals who are subject to caste prejudice and exploitation in Indian society are all included in this broad term. Every new group that arose after that was required to use the moniker "Dalit." A broad unified effort headed by the Dalits and oppressed sections in conjunction with democratic forces has been recognised as a means to liberation and substantive democracy from caste-class oppression.

In Chirala town, the Dalits requested that the Karamchedu victims be rehabilitated, but the state government resorted to oppressive measures instead. On September 8, 1985, the DMS called for nationwide Rail Rokho and Rasta Rokho (protests) to protest the government's apathy. There was a complete breakdown of the state's communication and administrative systems as a result of the unrest. For their part, the government sent in large numbers of police to assault the Shibiram at night, destroying their tents and arresting around 300 of their members as a result. Padma Rao allegedly died in a shootout with the police, according to rumours. DMS president Tarakam sent Padma Rao to carry out covert operations in the middle of this upheaval. Padma Rao conducted covert discussions regarding the DMS's goals all around the state. By contrast, a massive public gathering in Vijayawada on October 6th, 1985, with an estimated attendance of 100,000 people, had been organised. In the moments before Padma Rao was set to speak, the police beat the irate crowd with lathi as they detained him on the dais.

Civil rights and democracy groups slammed the elected government's manner and content. Even when members of the ruling caste were allowed to go about their daily routines, the newly emerging Dalit leader and organiser was arrested and imprisoned. As a result of Padma Rao's public arrest, the Dalit movement

escalated even more. There were roadblocks, enormous rallies, silent marches, and statewide protests used by the DMS and CPI (M-L) PWG. The leadership at the Shibiram exploited the militancy of women as a counterweight to governmental persecution this time around. As many as a hundred thousand women descended to the state capital of Hyderabad, where they staged a dharna protest in front of the Chief Minister's residence, calling for Padma Rao's immediate release from house arrest. In the end, Padma Rao was freed after the Chief Minister agreed to do so.

The DMS also launched a legal fight against the upper caste criminals in addition to their agitation efforts. The state government subsequently filed a lawsuit on behalf of the victims as a kind of pacification, but oddly, none of the suspects named by the victims featured on the list of those implicated in the case. DMS filed a private complaint against this horrible miscarriage of justice, which included DaggupatiChenchu Ramaiah, the Karamchedu landowner, who was the Chief Minister's cousin and the mastermind of the killing. Lawful non-profit Salaha performed a key role. The district court called Chenchu Ramaiah to testify against the DMS accusations. Alisamma, the primary witness in the case, was deposed in court. In light of her detailed account of the horrific events leading up to her son's murder, it seemed as though the primary suspect would face justice. When she was thrown out of her house, Alisamma became a martyr for the cause of Dalit democracy. There was no clear justification given for the slaughter, which is why the matter went on for so long in court and for so long in a judicial investigation commission led by Justice Desai. The Chenchu Ramaiah was assassinated on April 6, 1989, by a CPI (M-L) PWG guerilla squad.

The Dalit Maha Sabha manifesto outlined the long history of systematic oppression and division that the Dalits have endured under the Hindu social structure. Additionally, it stressed how prior political movements, such as the Communist movement of the early 1940s and 1950s, lacked the political efficacy and revolutionary intent to eradicate the caste system. A key component of the platform was a call to support a Dalit-led organic political party. And lastly, the DMS aims to educate Dalits about the worldwide history of working-class struggles and to arouse their emancipationist passion. It is essential to learn about the history of other people's battles if you want to join the ranks of solidarity and become a revolutionary. Understanding oppression requires familiarity with the ideas of revolutionaries who have worked diligently to change society. Ambedkar and Phule's beliefs and battles should serve as the driving force behind the Dalit movement. There has to be a careful balancing act between Dalit and class struggle ideals that have helped the oppressed become free. The first all-India Dalit authors' conference, held in Hyderabad in 1987, was an effort to bring together all the writers who were born in Dalit homes who write for the Dalits on a single platform and devise a coherent and undivided plan of action for Dalit emancipation.

Positive discrimination policies were advocated by the Dalit movement as a way to improve the lives of the downtrodden parts of society. Since the Dalit movement sought to unite other oppressed groups, this was an important consideration. At a period when the state was withdrawing from social programmes due to privatisation, liberalisation, and globalisation, the Mandal Commission's recommendations were finally accepted. Antilabor policies resulting from reduced public sector investment have had a direct impact on the reservation rules offered to Dalits and Other Backward Classes (OBC). "Brahminism" was associated with "globalisation" by the Dalit movement in India, which fought this development.

Political and social mobilisation of Dalits following the Karamchedu incident, as well as the rise in self-creative activity through their own organisations like DMS, BSP, the Poor People's Party, and the highly motivated communication role of Dalit periodicals like Dalita Shakti, Nalupu, and Edureetha. It was a harsh repression of Dalit awareness and assertiveness. More least 10 Dalits were killed in Chundurmandal Guntur district by Reddy landlords this time. A neighbouringTunghabadra drainage channel was used to dispose of their decomposing remains. 77 Changes in Dalit awareness were mirrored in the Dalit's resoluteness and combative temperament. Thousands of Dalits had fled Chirala town and arrived in Karamchedu, where they took charge of the migration out of the area.

The Dalit organisations and Marxist-Leninist groupings once again created a solidarity committee. India ChundurPorata Samithi was created by the CPI (M-L) Liberation, CPI (ML) PrajaPantha, the UCCRI (M-L) Jana Shakti, the Marxist-Leninist Center, the India N People's Front, and the Dalit Maha Sabha. Along with Tarakam and Padma Rao, this time K.G. Satyamurthy, a Dalit revolutionary thinker who had been hiding out for almost two decades, joined the group. Satyamurthy popularised the phrase "self-respect, self-defense is Dalits birth right" and established the Marxist-Leninist Center in Prakasham district's Ongole. A

new revolutionary working caste-class party on the Indian subcontinent was the goal of the Center for Sociopolitical and Theoretical Studies. 78 By rejecting economic determinism and Brahminic and patriarchal male authority, the centre also resolved to go against the currents of conventional wisdom. It contended that a democratic revolution could not be realised until Marxism and Ambedkarite anti-caste doctrines were intertwined with Marxism and disorganised violence.

A variety of arguments about India's history and society and politics have been sparked by the highly driven communication function of Dalit journals such as Dalita Shakti and Kula Nirmoolana. It began as Dalit Shakti, then changed its name to DalitaRajyam. After Padma Rao's departure, the magazine lasted for a long period of time. The Edureetha had four political goals: to raise awareness among the Dalit masses about current events, to foster democratic and socialist theoretical revolutionary consciousness about caste, class, religion, and nationality, to correct the mistakes of previous revolutionary struggles and to strengthen Dalit consciousness, and finally, to begin a long-term theoretical discussion. 81 As a result, the discussions have focused on caste and the significance of caste distinctiveness in India's new democratic movement. Gandhi, Nehru, the Indian national and communist movements, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the worldwide working class movements, and other lessons for India's new democratic revolution, in addition to an awareness of legal rights, civil rights, employment regulations, local, national, and international issues, are all important lessons for India's new democratic revolution.

Publishing the translation of Mahatma Phule and other Dalit intellectuals' writings in Telugu has prompted a response from readers and authors interested in the concepts of the intellectuals. In these dialogues, they sought to reimagine India's past and present from the perspective of the Dalit caste and class. "What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchable" by Ambedkar was published in a series by the Edureetha. In an article published in Edureetha, a well-known Marxist scholar and writer in India argued that Ambedkar and his movement were harmful to the Communist cause as well as to Indian society, and that his caste analysis was unsuitable for the country's actual circumstances. Many of the Communists' obsessions with Babasaheb Ambedkar were made obvious in Ravi Chandar's rejoinder to this in the same newspaper. According to his response, the Communists' good view of Gandhi and negative view of Ambedkar's Caste and unsociability demonstrates the Communists' caste prejudices. He claims that Ambedkar had revolutionary views on caste and oppression, but Gandhi was a reformist who supported the Varna-based caste system. According to Edureetha's description of the Dalit struggle, the movement has progressed from a stage of self-respect and dignity to one of self-protection, and is currently engaged in an analysis of sociopolitical reality within the framework of Marxist-Ambedkarite philosophical thinking. Reiterating the Dalit movement's current goal of understanding Indian society via the anti-caste ideology and bringing together all the oppressed casts, these arguments in these journals reaffirmed this goal.

Anti-caste philosophy and the contributions of Ambedkar's new Dalit leadership were fully debated by the new Dalit leadership. As a caste-based movement, the Dalit struggle was considered insufficient to free the working class and bring about democratic revolution prior to Karamchedu. Class struggle and people's movement have traditionally been held back by caste, and a democratic revolution cannot be established without caste being abolished. The Communists reject these claims as erroneous. However, the new Dalit leadership completely rejected this sort of revisionist reasoning. To put Communists under examination, Dalits have now taken up this cause.

CONCLUSION

Social movements such as the Dalit movement in India have a significant impact on moulding democratic principles and social ties. Because the Dalit movement in India has been the major carrier of the Dalits' dreams and ambitions, we can grasp the essential relevance of the Dalit movement in India for comprehending these developments. The political culture in which Dalits sought to undercut the conventional rational authority while the dominating castes supported tradition influenced the Dalit struggle in India's sociopolitical milieu.

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