

EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF YOUTHS: A STUDY OF DALIT LIFE

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Abstract

The awakening of the lower caste for the emergence of the idea of liberty, social justice, and equality ignited the Dalits to begin the Dalit movements in India it is a collective agitation against the caste, creed, cultural and social exploitation to fight against the atrocities upon them from the age old tradition of Hinduism to get a new self image and new identity. Education plays a key role in the development for the empowerment of the Dalits. It is through education the Dalits were able to voice out against the atrocities and discrimination which the caste Hindus imposed on them. The Dalits were not able to fight with the higher caste people instead they used the pen as sword to question the ideologies imposed on them. Education has played a vital role in the development of the Dalits and it was through education the real emancipation of the Dalits began in India. It broke the chains of caste and social exclusion. The proposition of the paper will deal with the how the education has paved way for the development of the Dalits and what are the changes that took place in the life of the marginalized people after gaining education.

Keywords:

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Dalits are the people who are economically, politically and socially exploited and are forced to live as untouchables outside the village doing all the low level jobs offered to them by the privileged people of the society. They were not allowed to live a life with dignity they were treated as the suppressed class of Indian society. In Indian constitution the Dalits come under the category of 'scheduled caste'. They are given different names like asyu, Dasa, Atisudra, Panchama, Tirukulattar, Adikarnataka, AdiDravida Pariahs, Chamars, Mahars, Bhangis etc. State wise they claimed different name as Mahars in Maharashtra, Malas and Madigas in Andhra, Holeyas in Karnataka, Chamars in Western North India, Pallar and Paraiyans in Tamil Nadu. The minority Aryans who settled in the river of Ganges defeated the majority indigenous Dalits. Hindu scriptures and religious texts treated Dalits as slaves. Caste was not God created ideas but it was manmade ideologies to suppress and to dominate the other which is deeply rooted in the Indian Hindu tradition

The privileged Brahmin was treated with high respect and had the superior power in hand and the less privileged Dalits were treated equal to animals and mere slaves. Vedas are ruling the Hindu religion even now and the Brahmins considered themselves as pure and Gods people which were totally done on the basis of the karma and dharma done in the previous birth. They considered the Dalits as impure and low by birth. The Brahmin speaks about 'punarjanma' which mean 're-birth' and they propose a rule towards the Dalit and make them believe that their situation as a slave is due to the adharma done by them in the previous birth and they have to obey the Brahmins and do all the odd jobs imposed to them in order to attain a prosperous birth next time.

Lack of knowledge made the Dalits to believe the Brahmins and the Brahmins made them believe that the only God who will help them attain salvation is Brahmins so they have to obey them and follow their words and should consider them equal to God. Dalit are denied to enjoy the mankind's basic needs and rights such as food, shelter, clothing and they have to depend on the dominant class to do all the agricultural and other labour work in order to have their livelihood.

The dominant caste created the rule in the form of religion and they considered themselves high and the sight, shadow, touch of the Dalits were considered as impure but the Dalit did all the odd works in their field, cleaned the household, brought firewood to cook, washed their clothes etc in spite of all these things the Brahmins considered them as untouchables. The exploited classes included all the people who do all the odd jobs in at the lower level in the society and they are named as the 'Scheduled Caste' by the government.

Dalit were not exposed to the Vedas and Hindu religious texts they were made to blindly follow the law created by the Brahmins and their writings in the Hindu religion in the form of God and the Brahmins were well aware that if the Dalits were made to read the Hindu text they know the reality that they will not obey them and so they were deprived of the education.

Dalit movement was organised with the strength of Dalit literary movement as they had only pen to fight against the social inequalities. Their writing started in the times of Mukti movement and it flourished into various genres in the time of Dalit Panther movement which started in 1970's with the influence of Black Panther movement from the west. These writings were to break the long silence of the dalits of thousand years they found the space to express their revolt against the social evil imposed on them for centuries. Majority of writers who wrote the brahminical text wrote with a Brahmin touch in order to sustain their mode of living in the society and they occupied the upper positions and leaving the dalits to do the lower job by subjugating them from the top in the form of religion, birth, caste etc.

The pioneers of many Dalit movements were commoners and they brought about a great radical and revolutionary change in the life of the Dalits as the upper caste people never realized about their hard work and stole the fruit of the poor so the importance of movement played a surgical role in the society. Non-brahmin movement, SatyashodhakSamaj, and Self-Respect influenced the people of Maharashtra and Madras, Aryasamaj influenced the Punjab by initiating the Ad-Dharm movement, BrahmoSamaj instigated the Namashudra and Adi-Andhra movement and in Kerala the Ezhava were influenced by Narayana Guru likewise the Dalits initiated various movements in different states. Through the movements the Dalits broke the caste imposed ideologies and they broke down the restriction like taking water in the common well and water

tanks, bathing in the river of the upper caste. Most important things that changed the ideology are the Mahad tank satyagraha of 1927 which led to burn the Manusmriti, satyagraha of parvati temple in Nasik from 1930-35 and in keralavaikom temple road satyagraha 1930-32. They no more were slaves to the Hindu people they rebelled against the oppression and subjugation of the upper caste.

KanchaIlaiah points out two aspects of knowledge. They are: the oppressor's knowledge and the knowledge of the oppressed. Ilaiah considers Brahma's knowledge is the oppressor's knowledge:

The Dalitbahujans have their own knowledge, reflected in several of the ideas of the Charvakas (Dalitbahujan materialists) of the ancient period. The ancient Brahmins hegemonized their knowledge and marginalized the knowledge of the DalitbahujanCharvakas, using the image of Brahma. Brahma, thus represented the Brahmin patriarchs, and Saraswathi represented the Brahmin women who had been turned into sexual objects. (28)

The Dalits are sent to school and what is taught to them in class is different from the life they face:

Childhood formations are important for a person-female or male-to become a full human being. But our childhoods were mutilated by constant abuse and by silence, and by a stunning silence at that. There was the conspiracy to suppress the formation of our consciousness...Even after schools were opened to us because of independence or swaraj, a word which even today I fail to understand, the school teacher was against us, the textbook language was against us. Our homes have one culture and the schools have another culture...The gap between the two was enormous. There was no way in which one resembled the other. In fact these two cultures were poles apart. (30)

Caste is the major factor in education:

Uma Chakravathy argues that, The monopoly of the upper castes' scared knowledge', book knowledge', intellectual inquiries' like astronomy, were superior.¹⁴ The lower castes, who

labored, developed and preserved the knowledge of agriculture, of plants, animals, domestic livestock, weather, soil, pests, tools used in goldsmith, fishing and hunting are not considered as skilled professionals. Even the crafts skill, one of the primitive skills of the Dalits which is also implied knowledge of the materials used like metals, wood, clay bamboo, reed and bricks is also considered as an outsider's profession. (31)

Religious conversion helped dalits to learn as the missionaries established schools in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Many students joined and gained knowledge. Ambedkar's involvement in Indian socio-political scenario made a major mark in Dalits' lives across the country. Ambedkar gave more importance to educate the Dalits. His clarion call 'educates, organize and agitate' made an indelible impression in Dalits lives. Before him it was Phule who fought for the education of Dalits and he established schools especially for Dalit students. He was pioneer to start school for the Dalit girls too.

First of all the Dalits belong to the lower strata of the society and they are unaware about the importance of education. Secondly the distance between the school and their living is far and they don't make necessary move to pursue education. Thirdly it is the elite class people who are the teachers and they may treat the Dalits differently and it is the main reason for the drop outs of the Dalits in higher education level. Fourthly the Dalits are unaware of the government policies and schemes for the development and even though they become aware of it the institutions don't support them to reach it. The major drawback is poverty their life depend on daily wages and they send their children to work as laboures for leading daily life.

The government schemes for Elementary Education are: SarvaShikshaAbhiyan, Mid Day Meal, Strengthening of Teachers Training Institute Schemes for Infrastructure Development of Private Aided/Unaided Minority Institutes (IDMI), MahilaSamakhya, Strengthening for providing quality Education in Madrassas (SPQEM).

The schemes for the emancipation of education for Dalits in Secondary Education are: RashtriyaMadhyamikShikshaAbhiyan (RMSA), Inclusive Education for Disable at Secondary Stage (IEDSS), Incentives to Girls at Secondary Stage, National Merit cum Means Scholarship,

Financial Assistance for Appointment of language Teachers, Adolescence Education Programme, Girls Hostel, Model School, ICT at School, Vocationalisation of Secondary Education, Model School Under Public- Private Partnership(PPP)Mode.

Various schemes for Adult Education are: Saakshar Bharat, State Resource Center (SRCs), Jan ShikshanSansthans(JSSs), Assistance to Voluntary Agencies.Schemes for University and Higher Education are: RashtriyaUcchatarShikshaAbhiyan (RUSA), National Initiative for Design Innovation, National Research Professorship (NRP), Establishment of New Central Universities, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Establishment of 14 World Class Central Universities, Setting up of 374 Degree Colleges in Educationally Backward Districts, Scheme for incentivising state governments for expansion of higher education institutions, New central sector scheme of interest subsidy on educational loans taken by students from economically backward sections to pursue technical/professional education in India under the educational loan scheme of the Indian banks' association, Construction of girls hostels, Supporting uncovered state universities and colleges, Additional assistance to about 160 already covered universities and about 5500 colleges, Strengthening science based higher education and research in universities, Inter universities research institute for policy and evaluation and Schemes Implemented through Autonomous Organisations.

It is only through education the real emancipation of the Dalits will assert to break the caste based discrimination. Dalit literature itself emerged as a new form of literature only after the advent of the Dalit Panther movement in Maharashtra in 1970 until then the Dalits were unaware about the alphabets and texts. Being the original inhabitant of the land their lamentation, sufferings were not registered in the elite books and they were kept away from the society and from gaining knowledge. The Indian English Literature also failed to portray the life of the Dalits in their genres. Totally the lives of Dalits were unrepresented and unvoiced. To break this ideology religion acted as a tool to empower the Dalits even though as a political cause but in reality it paved way for the Dalits to gain knowledge. Government after independence established various schemes for the welfare and the development of Dalits. Today Dalit literature marks as a true form of literature through representing the Dalit lives. Dalit youths are getting empowered through education and they reform their culture, attitude and life style and strengthen

their standard of living. As per the words of Ambedkar education is really a true emancipation of Dalits his vision has come true. As Nethaji stated ‘One individual may die for an idea, but that idea will, after his death, incarnate itself in a thousand lives’. So is Ambedkar to Dalits and on other hand Dalits emancipation for the movement to ignite the souls of the Dalit youths.

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