

FEATURES OF DALIT MOVEMENTS IN INDIA: THROUGH DALIT PERSPECTIVE

Virender*

Ravinder Kumar*

INTRODUCTION

The mainstream literature, culture, media, politics, and religion, in general, ignore the dalit people and their socio-cultural movement. Not only that even the subaltern studies had also ignored and are not paying heed to the dalit and their historiography. This paper is an attempt to mature and propagate common threads of dalit movement through dalit perspective which is quite new in the field of knowledge and literature. The Dalit-Bahujans are historically involved in the production and producing economy. The paper explores the features of the dalit movement like liberty, equality, fraternity, secularism, democracy, egalitarianism, dignity of labor, social justice, Dalit historiography, Dalit agitation. It also finds out how the dalit movement is based on the ideas of Buddha, Kabir, Ravidas, Phule, Pariyar, Narayan Guru, Ambedkar, etc. This paper also reveals that how the Dalit movement have been raising the voice for silent, suppressed and exploited people; how the Dalit movement are working for annihilation of caste; how dalit movement are striving hard for social, economic, and land reforms; how the dalit movement are writing the historiography of sub-ordinate people; and will analyse how the dalit movement are following Ambedkar's idea of 'Educate, Unite and Agitate'.

KEY WORDS: Dalit Movement, Dalit Politics, Dalit Perspective, Social Movement, Dalit-Bahujan, Brahminism.

*** Research Scholar, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, Panjab University, Chandigarh.**

*** Research Scholar, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, Panjab University, Chandigarh**

DALIT MOVEMENT

Dalit movement is an umbrella term that incorporates several different stream of movement into it, for instance, dalit social movement, dalit economic movement, dalits political movement and dalits Buddhist movement. Examples like

Dalit Perspective

It is a perspective of scholars, academicians, researchers, social activists and committed youths who are assiduously working on and with Dalits and other socially oppressed groups and their issues and analyzing things with dalits' viewpoint.

FEATURES OF DALIT MOVEMENT

As mentioned that dalit movement is an umbrella term that incorporates several different stream of movement into it, for example, social movement of dalits, economic movement of dalits, political movement of dalits and cultural or Buddhist movement of dalits. This paper tries to trace out the core and fundamental ideas underlying the dalit movement in India from the ancient period to the medieval to the modern period by integrating or consolidating the core principles of dalit movements. The important features of dalit movements are as under:

One, dalit movements are multidimensional: the socio-economic and politico-cultural reforms are at its core - Dr. Ambedkar demanded separate electorate; this demand led the Dalit movement towards a demand for territorial secessionism. Dr. Ambedkar dealt with the problem of landless laborers, smallholdings, khoti system, Mahar watan, collective farming, nationalization of industries food position, socialism, social equalities and abolition of landlordism. He pointed out that the large part of the Dalit bahun belongs to landless laborers. He pointed out that consolidation might obviate the evils of scattered holding, but not the evils of smallholdings unless the consolidated holding was an economic holding (Kuber, 1973). Ambedkar was the father of the land reform in India. He also explored that Ambedkar has a critical view of smallholdings, collective farming, khoti system, private moneylenders etc. He explores that Ambedkar linked the small land holding with the agricultural productivity, the smaller the land, lower would be the productivity (Jadhav, 2013).

Two, dalit movements follow the ideas of great Dalit-Bahujan saints, social reformer and thinkers: Buddha, Kabir, Ravidas, Phule, Pariyar, Narayan Guru, Ambedkar, and Kanshiramphilosophy - the anti-caste movements from the beginning to the present time and examine the contradiction between the '*Sharman*' culture and then '*Brahminical*' culture. The Dalitbahujan people represented Sharman culture; however, the brahminical culture represented by the present beneficiary of the archaic caste system or Hindu social order. Sharman culture has been based on the principle of equality and democracy. However, brahminical culture has been based on inequality and ideas of Dalitbahujan exploitation. The major school of Sharman culture was Buddhism. However, the core social philosophy of Buddhism is 'Bahujan Hitay, Bahujan Sukhay'. The saints like Kabir, Chokhamela, Namdev, Ravi Das, Guru Nanak, Tukaram and Dhandev, all were the follower of Dalitbahujan or *Sharman* culture and fight against the brahminical culture of exploitation. The work done by the Ambedkar, Jotirao Phule, Ramabai, Tarabai against the brahminical philosophy and devote their life to provide the education and democratic rights to Dalits and Women (Omvedt, 2018).

Three, dalit movements' prominence in writing historiography of the sub-ordinate people: Dalit movements yield 'Dalit historiography' that establishes its own method by challenging the Colonial, Nationalist, Marxists and Subaltern approaches of Indian historiography. Ambedkar was highly aware of the role of historian's social affinity, especially the caste, and writings in relation to history of the downtrodden classes and the problems and notoriety of historiography by the Brahminical writers. Throughout the public life of Ambedkar, the movement for the depressed classes – the dalit if one broader the horizon of dalit identity – historiography was taking place in voluminous writings of Dr. Ambedkar. Kancha Illahia argued that mainstream historiography writing nothing to incorporate the Dalitbahujan perspective in the writing of Indian history; Subaltern Studies is no exception to this. He also argued that to make matters worse, recent Hindu politics and its historiography has sought to wipe out the possibility of a Dalitbahujan perspective and a Dalitbahujan history by simple declaring that the Dalitbahujans are Hindus. Kancha Illahia seeks to challenge that Brahminical historiography by point to the contrariness and differentness of Dalitbahujan perspective and history. Kancha Illahia explored that in earlier time, they treating us as the 'other' and arresting our beings in the cages of our caste was the sacred duty of their present attempt to co-opt us into their Hinduism is undertaken

as a political program (Illahia, 1996). Dalit historiography has potential to fundamentally alter the historiographical map of India/south Asia, asserted noted historian Ramnarayan Rawat (Agarwal, 2016).

Four, dalit movements' goal is to annihilate caste system: Dr. Ambedkar had exhorted his followers to give up dragging dead animals and eating their meat, discard caste-indicated ornaments and practices, and had even launched a famous struggle against Mahar Watans. He reproves the present Dalits ignorance towards the manual scavenging issue and problems of landless laborer Dalits every day. The Indian caste culture and explains the manual scavenging not be abolished unless caste is annihilated Dalit movement have been raises the voice for silent, suppressed and exploited people: Dr. Ambedkar tirelessly worked hard to make India an enlightened society, his struggle for the education and the human rights of Dalits, Round Table Conference, Poona Pact and struggle with Gandhi. The Mahad Satyagraha of Ambedkar was not only for the water for the Dalits but much more than this, it was the struggle for the basic human rights of Dalits. In Round Table Conference, he approached the British government to give the separate electorate to the Dalits, like Muslim and Sikhs and explored that the Dalits are not the part of Hindu Religion. After so many struggles against the caste Hindu (Hindutva Politics) for Dalits rights, Ambedkar's approach to the Dalits to leave the Hindu religion in 1935. After this Ambedkar founded his own party named Independent Labor Party in 1936, he started the struggle against capitalism and Brahmanism. Dr. Ambedkar also focused on the land reform or land to the landless Dalits and start the struggle for the *mil mazdoor* of Bombay. He create the Navayana Buddhism, which was the latest form of Buddhism and that is much more focused on the social, economic and political equality, which makes it Marxist Buddhism and raises the voice of silent peoples (Omvedt, 2005).

Five, dalit movements are striving for de-Hinduisation of Indian society and anti Brahmanism in character: Ambedkar's book "Annihilation of Caste" traced the root of the caste system and untouchability to the Hindu dharma Shastras and asserted that they would have to be dynamited for Indian society to achieve the titles of objectives. Ambedkar had extracted the Dalits to leave Hinduism and had himself taken the famous vow "I born as a Hindu, but I will not die a Hindu". Ambedkar would exhort his follower to shun agitational methods, including

Satyagraha, and use constitutional methods to secure their demands. His belief was that constitutionalism and democracy were capable of bringing about revolutionary change without bloodshed (Teltumbde, 2018). The secular belief that it is human destiny to progress towards a society based on liberty, equality, and fraternity, meant alongside the conviction that religion serves to conserve the moral fabric of society a love for Buddhism its best examples. In addition, Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism shows their idea of De-Hinduization of Dalits and creates their separate identity from the Hindus.

Six, dalit movements flourish the 'dalit identity': The Dalitbahujan like Jignesh Mewani and Chander Shekhar Ravan they directly challenged their oppression and exploitation as shown by the Bhim Army in Uttar Pradesh. It is showing that Dalit Panther (1972) taking rebirth (Teltumbde, 2018). Kancha Illahia argued that we Dalitbahujan are not Hindu. He gives strength to his point through, his childhood activities, i.e. caste occupation trainings by their mom-dad, their caste based languages, their separate gods and goddess, their cultural differences from Hinduism etc. He argued that, the doing payer assumed as the intelligent work in the Indian Society, another side, doing production and making production instrument do not considered as intelligent work. He argued that the elite classes of Hindu society, Brahmins and Banyans are doing nothing to the productive economy of country. However, the Dalitbahujan of the country produced the many things and the production equipments (Illahia, 2006)

Seven, Periyarism as a major feature of Dalit Movement: E.V.Ramaswami Periyar is the radical social reformer and activist of India; he had started the self-respect movement, movement for women's right and for the abolition of caste. E.V.S. Periyar started the Anti-Brahmin movement. He argued that if God and goddess are our exploitation then kill them, if religion is our exploitation destroy this, if historiography of Brahminical tradition, like Geeta, Vedas, Puranas and Manu Samriti, are our exploitation then burn them, if temple, festivals are our expatiator then boycott them, if this is our politics then came outside and to declare it openly (Veeramani, 2005). He also argued that if you have seen the Brahmins and snake at the same time, kill Brahmins first then the snake, these shows his critical thinking. Periyar has put all the Hindu gods and goddess on the truck and beating these gods and goddess with shoes and argued the peoples that they all are unable to help himself how they can help you. Periyar also argued

that there is no god, who invented god is the fool and who popularised god is bastard, who praying the gods are uncivilized. The present Dalit have a need to adopt the thinking of Periyar to fight against the Brahmanism.

Eight, dalit movements follow the Ambedkar's idea of 'Educate, Unite and Agitate': Phule argued that the critical factor behind the brahminical oppression on Shudra-Atishudra castes or Dalitbahujan was the lack of education among them. And same was the case with women. He established the schools and libraries to educate them (Keer, 1974: 14). He educates his wife Savitri Bai Phule to run the following movement; she becomes the first women teacher in the modern India. Phule also inspired Gopalbaba Walanger for the movement of education and upliftment of Dalit-Bahujan mass. But after Phule death, 1891 his follower left the anti-caste and anti brahminical movement and some of them joined the Congress and some joined the communist party (Teltumbde, 2016: 46). After Phule, Vitthal Sinde founded the Prarthana Samaj and established a night school for Dalit children in Pune in 1905, followed by the depressed class mission in Mumbai in 1906 and Somvanshiye Mitra in 1907. However, the main aim of these institutions or organizations was to fight against the untouchability, educated untouchability, provide them health facility and make socio-cultural and religious reforms for untouchables (Teltumbde, 2017: 45). Teltumbde argued that Ambedkar said that we are not going to the Mahad Chavadar tank to merely drink its water. We are going to tank to assert that we too are human beings like other.

CRITICAL EVALUATION DALIT IDENTITY AND DALITMOVEMENT

The idea of dalit identity based on production economy is new, and it expends the dignity of labor classes since the most of Dalit are landless labor. The idea of Dalit identity is also ignoring the caste-based violence by the upper caste Landlords on the landless agricultural labor Dalits. Nowadays, the Jats of Punjab and Haryana, Patidar (Patel) of Gujrat, Kunbis, and Marathas of Maharashtra all are practicing the exploitation and violence on the Dalits. The idea of the Dalit perspective is very useful in the present time because it is destroying the hegemony and dominancy of Brahminism or Hinduism. The hegemony and dominance of Brahmanism and Hinduism has been created by the historiography, which contains the Puranas, Vedas, Manusmriti and Geeta etc. All these historiographies contain the fake glorifying and fake myths,

through which Hinduism or Brahmanism evolved the theory of purity and Varnas, these are the core seeds of casteism in the Hindu society. Through these myths, Brahmins created themselves pure race and the hardworking population of Shudras and Dalits as impure race and divided them. To destroying the caste system and caste-based exploitation, it is necessary to demolish the fake mythology and historiography and a need to establish the true culture or historiography of the working classes or Dalits. Actually, the work, which has expected from the communists of India, has been fulfilling by this Dalitperspective. The idea of Dalit identity may a great initiative to demolished the caste-based discrimination because it arising the dignity of labor thoughts among the masses and opposing the non-working people. The idea is to glorifying the working Dalit and show strength to get together all. The Dalits can become on a common platform to fight with the injustices.

REFERENCE

- Illaih, Kancha. (1996). Productive Labour, Consciousness and History: The Dalitbahujan Alternative. In Amin, Shahid and Dipesh Chakrabarty. (Eds.), *Subaltern Studies IX: Writings on South Asian History and Society*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi. pp. 165-200.
- Jadhav, P.K. (2013). *Ambedkarism: Essays on Select Economic & Cultural Issue*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur.
- Keer, Dhanajay. (1974). *Mahatma Jotirao Phule: Father of the Indian Social Revolution*, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai.
- Kuber, W.N. (1973). *Dr. Ambedkar: A Critical Study*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Omvedt, Gail. (2005). *Ambedkar toward Enlightened India (Hindi)*, Penguin India, New Delhi.
- Omvedt, Gail. (2011). *Dalit Drashti (Hindi)*, translated by Ramanika Gupta & Aqeel Qess, Vani Prakashan, New Delhi.
- Omvedt, Gail. (2018). *Understanding Caste: From Buddha to Ambedkar and Beyond (Hindi)*, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad.

- Prashad, Vijay. (1999). *Untouchable Freedom: A Critique of the Bourgeois- Landlord Indian State*. In Gautam Bhadra, Gyan Prakash and Susie Tharu (Eds.), *Subaltern Studies X: Writings on South Asian History and Society*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Teltumbde and Suraj. (2018). *The Radical in Ambedkar: Critical Reflections*, Penguin Lane.
- Teltumbde, A. (2016). *Mahad: The Making of the First Dalit Revolt*, Aakar, New Delhi.
- Teltumbde, A. (2017). *Dalits: Past, Present, and Future*, Routledge, New York.
- Teltumbde, A. (2018). *Janwaadi Samaj aur Jaati ka Unmoolan (Hindi)*, translated by Rubina Saifi Aadhar Parakashan, Panchkula.
- Veeramani, January 1981 (2005) *Collected Works of Periyar E.V.R.*, Third Edition, Chennai. The Periyar Self-Respect Propaganda Institution, p. 489
- Agarwal, Kritika (June 6, 2016). *The Rise of Dalit Studies and Its Impact on the Study of India: An Interview with Historian Ramnarayan Rawat*. Perspectives on History: the newsmagazine of the American Historical Association. <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/summer-2016/the-rise-of-dalit-studies-and-its-impact-on-the-study-of-india-an-interview-with-historian-ramnarayan-rawat>