

Movement for the Changing Social Status of Untouchables in India: A Sociological Study

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Abstract

The identity of Untouchable is multifaceted. It includes a long history of resistance to prejudice and religious discourse, as well as a growing movement against socioeconomic institutions. The untouchable identity is associated with more than just being denied rights; it also represents a demand for dignity and, in certain situations, a yearning for revolution. Therefore, the Dalits' efforts have encompassed concerns of identity, dignity, and self-respect in addition to issues like untouchability, the continuation of atrocities, minimum wages, land rights, employment, and political representation. According to Kothari, the newly formed untouchable's identity now aims to subvert the logic of "casteism," and we discover that people who would typically wish to eliminate caste divisions are ones who are seeking to make use of it to alter social order. According to Articles 330 and 332 of the Constitution, the Scheduled caste is entitled to 315 seats in the Vidhan Sabha and 79 seats in the Lok Sabha, out of a total of 557 seats. Nonetheless, it is evident that those who are chosen to come from the wealthier, more educated class, while party representation is denied to those who adopt a more aggressive stance. However, these chances are remained scarce under the current system, and many MLAs and MPs discover that the ruling class has co-opted them or that they are unable to use their political influence to effect socioeconomic change. Therefore, implementing economic equality or political democracy has proven difficult.

Introduction

There is a historic movement going on right now that fights for all untouchables' fundamental human rights as well as ideas like justice, equality, liberty, etc., not only Dalits'. India, a rising star and a significant player on the international scene, cannot continue to turn a blind eye to injustice and persecution occurring within its own borders. In India's Hindu traditional society, the Dalit status has historically been linked to traditional jobs that are considered ritually impure, like scavenging, sweeping, meeting selling, leather work, hunting, drum beating, butchering, or clearing trash, and disposing of animal waste. Untouchables performed

physical labor cleaning sewers, latrines, and streets. Participating in these actions was seen as contaminating oneself, and this contamination was thought to spread. Dalits were consequently frequently kept apart and prohibited from fully engaging in Hindu culture. For instance, they had to remain outside the village and were not allowed to enter a well, temple, or school.

In this study, Dalits are essentially taken care of by untouchables. The Sanskrit language may be the source of the word "Dalit," which meaning "ground," "suppressed," "crushed or broken to pieces." Mahatma Jyoti Ba Rao Phule coined this term for the first time in the nineteenth century, and he did so in reference to the injustice that the once-called "Untouchable" castes of twice-born Hindus endured. However, a lot of Dalits now use the phrase to distance themselves from more disparaging names like caste name or even untouchable. The belief that, despite having been shattered by oppression, Dalits as a people manage to survive and even flourish in the modern day by finding purpose in their ongoing battle for human dignity. Sometimes, extensive safety measures were taken to avoid unintentional relationships arising between untouchables and upper-class Hindus. The phrase "Harijans" was introduced by Mahatma Gandhi, and it means "children of God." Dr. B.R. Ambedkar suggested the term "nonconformist Hindus," or protestant Hindus. Ultimately, the government adopted the scheduled castes, per the Simon commission's recommendations. Additionally, the formal names used in Indian government documents to identify erstwhile "Untouchables" and tribes are generally like scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SC/ST). Nevertheless, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes declared the phrase "unconstitutional" in 2008 after observing that "Dalit" was being used interchangeably with the official name "Scheduled Castes" and requesting that state governments stop using it. The Chhattisgarh State Government stopped using the term "Dalit" in official documents after receiving the order. The terms Adi Dravida, Adi Karnataka, Adi Andhra, and Adi Dharmi are used to designate people who were once considered "Untouchables" in several states, including Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karala, Karnataka, and Punjab.

Untouchable's In Modern India

Many social, religious, and political movements emerged in India during the 20th century in opposition to the caste system and in favor of the Dalit community's human rights. The adoption of the Indian constitution following the country's 1950 independence was primarily made possible by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's influence. As the head of the committee responsible

for developing the constitution, he ensured that it deviated from the customs and guidelines of the caste system, promoting justice, equality, liberty, and fraternity. The constitution essentially guaranteed human rights to every Indian citizen, irrespective of their caste, creed, gender, or ethnicity. Unfortunately, there has been a terrible lack of success in putting these concepts into practice and upholding them.

The old order based on custom was threatened by the agrarian struggles, social reform movements, and independence movement that occurred in India in the latter half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. These movements introduced ideas of protest and challenge instead of acceptance and submissiveness. Many leaders from the lowest strata emerged as a result of the fights. Many of the actions that the authorities took later became part of the welfare policies for the underprivileged and impoverished were prompted by the agitations and activities they spearheaded.

A significant turning point in the history of the nation was the appointment of a commissioner for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to oversee their welfare and interests. Another step in the direction of eliminating social impairments is the Untouchability Offense Act, 1955, also known as Act No. XXII of 1955, which treats social disabilities as crimes that are subject to punishment. Despite being outlawed by the Indian constitution in 1950, the practice of "Untouchability," which involves placing social restrictions on individuals based solely on their caste of birth, is nevertheless deeply ingrained in rural India. In rural India, "untouchables" might not drink or eat from the same pots, visit the same temples, or use the same wells. Children who identify as Dalit experience discrimination at school. The majority of Dalits are still living in abject poverty and lack access to land, better job prospects, and higher education. Most of the children who are sold into bondage to satisfy debts owed to powerful caste creditors are Dalit youngsters. The national campaign on Dalit Human Rights, which was founded in 1998 by a coalition of Dalit activists and civil society organizations, is currently led by N. Paul Diwakar. Its goals are to address human rights issues, develop solutions for the development needs of Dalits, and fortify the movement to end violence and discrimination against Dalits. The so-called scheduled castes of India, which were formerly untouchable groups but are now known as 167.2 million persons are considered Dalits by most political movements in the nation (census 2001). Furthermore, it is estimated that at least 42 million Dalit Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians are susceptible to prejudice and various forms of targeted violence.

Untouchability A Crime

The Indian Constitution guarantees every citizen equal rights and opportunity and forbids discriminatory and untouchable practices in all its forms. Thanks to the legendary Dalit leader Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who spearheaded the Dalit liberation movement, untouchability was made illegal in India and protections against it were included in the constitution. Untouchability was banned by Article 17 of the Indian Constitution, and its practice is now prohibited in all forms. All Hindu classes and groups are welcome to attend Hindu religious institutions of a public nature, according to Article 25 (2.-b) of the constitution. This clause goes against the customs of many Hindu sects that exclude Untouchables from entering temples. To put these provisions into practice, two significant pieces of legislation were passed. Defending Civic Rights Act, 1955 penalizes untouchability doctrine and practice.

Methodology And Objective

The movement among India's Untouchable peoples to change their social position is examined in this perspective in the current study. The scheduled caste and scheduled tribes of India make up the Untouchable peoples for the purposes of this study. Despite being dispersed throughout the country; Untouchables make up a higher portion of the population than any other group. The goal of our investigation is to achieve equal human rights and to change social and economic status. Such a study could be very helpful in advancing our current understanding.

Objectives

The main objective of the study are following that

- ❖ To find out whether the changing social & economic status among untouchable peoples in India. To identify responsible factors for the improvement of the status, of Untouchables.
- ❖ To find out role of Dalit reformative movement in the changing status of Untouchables
- ❖ To find out improve status development level between ancient and modern periods of Untouchables.

For the study, refer to change among two periods of Untouchables in areas such as social economic, Political & occupational participation, in the society.

Dalits Followers Of Religion & Ideology

According the report of Sachar committee 2006, revealed that scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of India are not limited to the religion of Hindu. The sixty one round survey of the NSSO found that 31.9% followers of Buddhists and 21 % of the Sikhs, and 65% of the

Religion	Scheduled caste	Scheduled tribe	Total
Buddhists	32%	7.10%	39.10%
Christian	9%	56.00%	65.00%
Sikhs	21%	0.90%	21.90%
Hindu	38%	35%	75.00%

Christians, and 75% of Hindus. In India belonged to the notified scheduled castes or scheduled tribes of the constitution.

Most tribes that are scheduled Every society has its own native faiths. For instance, mundas practice a munda religion. These national or indigenous faiths are mixed with parts of the major local religions; for example, the Munda religion incorporates elements of Sikha, Boudh, Christianity, and numerous Hindu features.

While the majority of Dalits in India are Hindus, the majority of them have converted to Buddhism, sometimes known as Neo-Buddhism, and adhere to the philosophy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. These states include Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and other states.

Chokhamela, the first Dalit saint in Indian history, was born from the Chamar caste and became a priest in the 14th century. He belonged to the family of a cobbler. Saint Shri Ramananda Raya welcomed members of all castes, including Untouchables, into his fold in the fifteenth century. for instance, religion. The major religions of the area are blended with these indigenous or native religions; for example, the Munda religion incorporates aspects of Sikha, Boudh, Christianity, and numerous Hindu features.

T. The majority of these saints belonged to the medieval era, which disapproved of caste. Popular belief holds that God welcomed a low-caste Hindu devotee named Nandanar despite the priests' rejection of him. Many Dalits continue to argue whether they are "Hindu" or "Non-Hindu" due to their seclusion from the rest of Hindu Society.

Reformative Movement Of Dalits

The first recorded historical figures to oppose the caste system were Mahavira and Gautam Buddha. Eventually, their teachings developed into the separate religions of Buddhism and Jainism. The first recorded reformation in Hinduism took place in the Middle Ages, when Ramanuja and the Bhakti movement actively promoted the involvement and inclusion of Dalits. Ramanuja publicly welcomed his followers from the dalit community and even led them inside a temple. He presented Nammalvar, a dalit by birth, as the sect's philosophical leader and disseminated Nammalvar's writings under the name Dravidaveda. Guru Ghasidas,

who was born into a dalit family, launched the Sikh reformer Satnami movement. Another well-known guru was the dalit Guru Ravidas. Other reformers who worked for the emancipation of dalits included Iyothee Thass of Tamil Nadu and Jyotiba Rao Phule Ayyankali of Kerala. the 1930s saw the pivotal debate over whether Dalit electors should have separate or combined electorates between Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi. Despite his failure to grasp. Despite Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's call for a united electorate, Gandhi launched the "harijanYatra" in order to assist the dalit community. Cricket player and dalit politician Palwankar Baloo fought for independence alongside the Hindu Mahasabha.

The movement led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar split into two parts. **(i) Social reformative movement:** this movement is associated with Dalit improvement and limitations on non-vegetarian food, Durg's Alkcohol, and other items, as well as forced adoption of religious rites and activities. **(ii) The alternative movement,** which advocates for all Dalits to convert to the Brahmin religion. The 16-year dalit effort to rename Marathwada University as Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University included the Namantar movement. Vasant Dada Patil, the Maharashtra chief minister, assured the Dalit Panthers in 1977 that the name would change. In July 1978, the Maharashtra legislature passed a resolution implementing this commitment. Mannawer Kanshi Ram, the founder of the BSP, and former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Miss Mayawati, are both members of the scheduled castes' political platform.

Dalit Buddhist Movement

The neo-Buddhist movement started by Dr. Ambedkar has influenced Dalits in Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and a few other places. Dr. Ambedkar became interested in Buddhism in the 1950s and went to Sri Lanka to attend a conference of monks and academics. Dr. Ambedkar declared during the dedication of a new Boudh Vihar, close to Pune, that he was writing a book on Buddhism and that a formal conversion to the religion would be arranged as soon as it was completed. In 1954, Dr. Ambedkar made two trips to Myanmar. The second time was to attend the World Fellowship of Buddhists' third congress in Rangoon. The Indian Buddhist Society, or Bharatiya Boudh Mahasabha, was established in 1955. After finishing his last project, the Buddha and in 1956 his Dhamma. Posthumous publication took place. The Buddhist monk Hammalwa Saddhatissa of Sri Lanka was met by Dr. Ambedkar, who then arranged a formal public ceremony for himself and his supporter on October 14, 1956, in Nagpur. Taking the usual route of accepting the three refuges and five precepts from a Buddhist monk, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar finished converting himself. The five lakh fans who

had gathered around him were then converted by him. Dr. Ambedkar and his followers publicly denounced and rejected Hinduism and Hindu philosophy by taking the 22 vows. He subsequently made his way to Kathmandu, Nepal, to attend the World Buddhist Conference for the fourth time. On December 2, 1956, he finished his last draft, The Buddha or Karl Marx.

Prevention Atrocities Act And Untouchability

The Indian government's tacit admission that accidental and systemic violence characterize caste interactions is expressed in the Prevention of Atrocities Act. The prevention of Atrocities Act, passed by the Indian government in 1989, defined certain offenses against scheduled castes and scheduled tribes as "atrocities" and established policies and penalties to combat these actions. The Act was designed to prevent and penalize violence against Dalits. First of all, it made clear what the atrocities were: specific instances of pain and humiliation, such being made to consume toxic chemicals against their will, as well as the ongoing systematic violence that many Dalits, particularly those living in rural India, still had to endure. Forced labor, being denied access to temples, water, and other public facilities, and sexual assault are examples of this type of systematic violence.

Untouchable's Status In Contemporary India

The Indian constitution has appropriately allocated certain measures for the social and economic advancement of the Dalits, which include scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. These concessions are restricted to Dalits who identify as Hindu. To address and put a stop to past injustices, Dalits who have converted to other religions are demanding that they be granted the statutory advantages as well. Through various programs, the Indian government machinery has been actively working to ameliorate the social and economic conditions of untouchables ever since the country's constitution was introduced. The dalits have been given a number of facilities in order to allow them to accept their proper position in society. The government set goals for the five-year plans to improve the social conditions of scheduled caste women in particular and untouchables in general. As a result, the status of untouchable women and men changed, and improvements could be seen in a number of areas, including politics, education, employment, and other sociocultural fields. Affirmative action policies used by the government to promote Dalits through quotas in government jobs and college and university admissions are another significant political issue. The state governments decide about 15% of the seats at the federal

and state levels. a provision that was requested by advocates for the Dalits, including Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram, to guarantee that the Dalits would have a fair and equal say in politics. India elected K.R. Narayanan as its president in 1977. Both Miss Mayawati and her are members of the dalit group, and she was elected chief minister of Uttar Pradesh in 2007. In the Indian parliament, there are 79 seats set aside for scheduled castes, 40 seats set aside for scheduled tribes, and 315 seats set aside for tribes in the state legislature.

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Conclusion

In the past, the Dalit movement has been about locating and eliminating barriers in the current system that prevent productive forces from moving forward with social, economic, and educational advancement and toward equality with higher castes. But with the rise of figures like Mahatma Phule, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and Kanshi Ram, Dalit writing has been revitalized in the modern day. Although Dalits today have achieved success in commerce, politics, education, and higher administrative positions, Dalits today still face hardships from the untouchability policy in a lower proportion than previously. The horrible practice of untouchability in any form is legally prohibited under article 17 of the constitution in order to create social equality, and any impairment resulting from it is an offense that is subject to legal penalties. In addition, article 15 works in tandem with articles 16, 19, 23, 25, and 29 to attempt to outlaw different forms of untouchability. These articles are closely tied to article 17.

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