

## A CASTE IDENTITY OF DALIT

**Nishi Kumari**

Research Scholar, Deptt. of Political Science,  
Magadh University, Bodh Gaya, Gaya

The relationship between the two eyes is similar as the caste identity in our country. As eyes blink together, move together, cry together, see think together and sleep together, even though they never see each other, like that caste system is in function in our country. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is witnessing the hyper activity of polarized leadership on the ground of caste in our country. This polarized leadership is being witness in both sections of the society and that is the upper caste and the downtrodden, which identifies themselves as 'Dalit'. These polarized leadership work together, move together, shouts together, see problems together, even though they never want to see each other.

Indian society has been divided into various segments, sometimes as 'Varnashrama' and sometimes as 'Caste'. As time passes the old system yields place for new one, this has always happened with the Indian civilization. It may be said that the specialized professional sectors became birth oriented caste system in India. The caste system has been inherent from the ancient Indian civilization but it has strengthened in the due course of time. The caste system turned as a system to touch or not to touch at its worst. Such type of social deprivation made downtrodden economically weak and socially lower in the social hierarchy and educationally illiterate. Today these are called 'The Dalits'.

In the present social set up the eradication of caste system is very much essential in the best interest of democratic tradition and national unity. But it is not such an easy task to be under taken. So the emergence of Dalit leadership is a path ahead for the achievement of trans democratic set up for national unity. The relevance of caste debate is not important, but social equality is much important than any kind of these debates. The dynamics of polarized caste based leadership is under objective scan of the social scientist. But the contribution of Dalit leadership has not been highlighted till now, so it is quit relevant today to saw the specific presence of Dalit leadership at the national scenario.

But at the same time, it would be relevant to note that various Saints and social reformers have tried to their best to deep-rooted caste system. Undoubtedly everyone should be heartily grateful and obliged to the saints Iike Kabir, Nanak, Dads. Ravidas, Tukaram, Namdev and Eknath, the prophet of the Bhakti movement. During the

colonial age some social reformers and religious leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekanand and others took the charge to fight against the evils of cast system. The Journey of the social reformers turned in to a great movement in and after 1914 with the emergence of half necked faker. This was one of the greatest movements in the history of India. During this period Mahatmas miracle came into being and almost all the dreams of Indian masses could be realized.

He further declared that 'untouchability' is a crime against God and humanity. Ghandhiji strongly condemned the practice of untouchability. He coined a new term 'Harijan' for the deprived classes, who are known as "the Dalits" today. Pt. Nehru and Dr Ambedkar did a kit for the betterment of the Dalits. Unfortunately the condition remained more or less unchanged. Till today the desired goal of political awakening, economic independence and social equality could not be achieved. Politically strong leadership like Dr. Ambedkar did not emerged in the post independence era, when the constitutional privilege in the farm of reservation, was provided to the dalit classes. It may be observed that average people of the very society are not much conscious of their political share or participation in decision-making. Various provisions have been provided in the constitution for the uplift of the Dalit masses. The Constitutional provisions as enacted in the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment facilitate the Dalits to realize their dreams through the Panchayatas and local bodies at grass root level.

In the light of provisions provided by constitution and increasing political share of Dalits. It is often observed that the real beneficiaries of these facilities are very much limited up to the already enlightened people. It is also observed that educationally; politically and economically enlightened people are very much confined up to the urban areas. The rural people are satisfied to have subsidies in educational institutions only. Some time, the rural people who are up to the mark, change themselves to be a part of urban society. The grass root problem of enlighten the masses becomes unchanged in rural arena. Often, it is also seen that so-called rural dalit leaders become an instrument to manage the 'Bheerh' in rallies. There are so many views and counter views, arguments and counter arguments to satisfy and justify their stands on the problem. So far as the question of leadership is concerned, only subjective conclusions are available.

In this scenario we are trying to analyze, assess and evaluate the present working status and people's perceptions regarding the Dalit. The working of leadership is very narrow and failed to achieve the unified identity for the people. The people's perceptions regarding the Dalit also established the separate identity, even the very community also establishing their separate identity. But, it is also presumed that Dalit cannot even vote according to their will in the rural areas. Therefore, it would be

very much relevant and interesting to go into deep to examine that how the Dalit leaders are behaving in the rural political arena for improving the social and political conditions of rural India. Presently there are a number of political leaders of the very community are effecting the policy formulation at every democratic level.

Dalits have always been a subject of interest for missionaries, social historian and Anthropologists. Study on Dalits started as early in 19th century. Though, they were intermittent and fragmentary in nature at the early stage. The post-colonial period witnessed the emergence of problem-oriented studies on Dalits dealing with issues as Dalits social structure, socio-economic caste conflicts and other disabilities of Dalits. The post-colonial era witnessed the studies on the constitutional safeguards and provisions for Dalits. A brief investigation of the related literature reveals that there has been lot of researchers on Dalit and Dalit Identity, its origin and movements for liberation of Dalits. Mahendra Singh (1987) in his study entitled "Dalits in India", explored the origin and root of Dalits. He held Brahmanism responsible as well as the whole Vedic religion responsible for discrimination against Dalits. He stated that divine theory, which govern and suppress the masses, is the product of Brahmanism and Vedic religion, which denied the human rights of Shudras and Chandalas. He walks around entire history, for identifying the position and status of the deprived classes.

He quoted that untouchables and Shudras were in worst position in the Mugal Period. They were the slave and captives of the new rulers and oppressed in the several ways. On the other hand Brahmans and other dominating classes enjoyed all privileges in the eyes of muslim invaders. He favors democratic system for the upliftment of Dalits. He has remarked that democratic systems has empowered the marginalized classes and make them awaken. For Dalit reformers, restoration of human rights and constitutional safeguards are more important than others because Dalits are still abhorrently under-represented in judiciary and other higher positions.

Walter Fernandez (1983) in "Caste, Religion and social change in India" presented some solutions for upliftment of the Dalits. He categorized this solution in two parts i.e. solution within the Dalit culture and outside the Hindu fold. In the first category, he insisted that Dalits should try themselves to remove such barriers as the Dalits of Gujarat and Karnataka represented. In Gujarat, some Dalits organized the cooperatives. They used economic inputs as a tool of organization and depart towards free life. In Karnataka Dalits organized politically and refused to be suppressed. Fernandez takes atrocities as a form of interaction between the force of status quo and of change. In other hand he looks solution outside of Hindu fold as some like 'Mahars' of Maharashtra. They joined British Army and some improved their status just

because of British industrialist needs results in the commercialization of their products. He also gives religion as an alternative for joining freedom which explains Dalit to conversion in to Sikhism, Islam and Christian. During 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century conversion was a tool for achieving equality and identity within the society. Walter agrees to the opinion that the process of liberalization of Dalits and maintaining their identity will get a watershed. He has concluded from the cases and macro studies that new identity is emerging.

But on the other hand, Sivaprakasam (2002) in "Dalits and Social Mobilization" discussed about the origin and development of dalit community. He pointed out that the untouchability is not the result of planned conspiracy of higher Castes against the lower castes but it was only the wrong belief about religious purity. He revealed that non-Dalits initiated Bhakti movements, Hindus in first case and foreign and native missionaries in last instance, with the exception of conversion to Buddhism. Sivprakasam initiated the view that caste system was the result of gradual development that took place in the society with the passing of time. During Vedic age, Varna system was not adopted as conservative idea. Gradually the Hindu Varna System got fashionable and strong and strict measures were adopted to enforce it.

As a result of it, the society was divided in a caste base compartment. He stressed over the institutional change, which developed with time. He quoted Faihian and Alberuni's writings on untouchables. He also pointed the economical aspect of untouchables. Those groups who had controlled over the income and economic resources and political power, turned into privileged caste but others who were failed to do so remained outcast. Without access to vital resources and bargaining power they became the most peripheral groups. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century social reforms and political awakening were mostly urban and upper caste affaires. Although, by getting educate and urbanization, the untouchables has been moved from lower categories, to lower strata of urban society.

He noted that in British period problem of untouchability assumed political significance. Missionaries limited themselves only for conversion of religion and thus they could not make any direct contribution to removal of this problem. He also coded the western concept of humanitarian ism as shown by many followers of Bhakti movement in their thoughts The consciousness in untouchables rose as a result of Ghandhian movement and many volunteer organizations like Ramakrishna Mission, Harijan Sevak Sangh etc. Presently, they have got the religious legitimacy and have become part and parcel of today's Hindu culture by an large.

Although Dalit leaders are educated but they are not very much keen and aware

about the total extinction of caste identity and are not able to keep people conscious towards unified identity. In nut shell it can be said that either knowingly or unknowingly the Dalit leadership not fulfilling the aspiration of all people. It is also evident that a strong polarization in form of castes has taken place. Caste identity has been growing stronger and stronger and caste discrimination coming downwards, but in the form of caste polarization the new era of caste identity we are witnessing. This situation is supported by leaders because it contributes to their election strategies. Ultimately it becomes in favor of leadership in general. But the question of identity is still standing as the same. Unless and until 'The Dalit' word stand for the separate identity (socially or politically), the social as well as political arena of separate identity, in social hierarchy is not going to be end. So for the sack of nation, it is the demand of hour that we should take necessary action for unified identity of human being beside caste, instead of building new separate identity in the name of dalit we should eliminate the each and every mode of separation in the society.

#### References:

- ❖ Fernandez Walter 1983, Caste, Religion and Social Change in India: Christianity and conversion Movement: in Jose Kananaikil (ed.). Scheduled Caste and the Struggle Against Inequality. Indian social Institute. New Delhi.
- ❖ Michael. S.M.I 999, Dalit in Modern India, Vision and Values. Vistaar Publication, New Delhi.
- ❖ Omvedt Gail, 1994, Dalit and Democratic Revolutions: Dr Ambedkar and The Dalit Movement in Colonial India, Sage Publication. New Delhi.
- ❖ Singh, Mahendra, 1987. Dalits in India, Reference Press. New Delhi Siva Prakasam, M.N, 2002 Dalits and Social Mobilization. Rajat Publication. New Delhi.