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Emergence of Dalit movement in India

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Abstract

It is an established fact that caste factor, according to some social reformers, is considered as a necessary evil and disease of the mind. Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar once said that the teachings of the Hindu religion are the root cause of this disease. Ambedkar also asserted the idea that until and unless caste system is dissolved in India, we cannot think of bringing equality any kind equality whether it social, political, religious or cultural. So, from time to time, there have been efforts made by Dalits for their upliftment in the society. The present article throws light on the historical perspectives of Dalit movement since colonial period to the present day situation of Dalits.

Keywords: Dalit, social interaction, communication, patron, strife, conflict

Introduction

In terms of caste, class, gender and certain other factors, history testifies the marginalization or the drift between these areas. The presence of these factors has certainly changed the entire socio-cultural environment and fabric of Indian society such as dalits, adivasis and women have been pushed to the other periphery by the orthodox and conservative environment of traditional brahmanical structure based on oppression and suppression. Dalits belong to that category in the society who are the target of exploitation in every field of life social, political and economic. This discrimination can be seen in the society and the root cause of this is the discrimination followed by age old caste hierarchal tradition in the Hindu society. It is the main cause of oppression of Dalits in every walk of life since centuries. The Dalits are referred to as outcaste who are not allowed to live a life of equality and dignity.

Dalit movement is a struggle that tries to counter attack the socio-cultural domination of the upper castes. It is a movement of masses that desires for justice through the speeches. In other words, it is a movement carried out by Dalits to seek their identity and equality with all other castes of Hindu society. The prime motive and goal of this movement was to establish a society in India based on social equality. In the constitution of India, authentic and real picture is not presented as the picture in the papers is entirely different from that.

In the direction of bringing equality between different sections of the society, we have number of great figures who contributed a great deal in this field. The fact is that ideology of Dalit movement varied from time to time as well as from leader to leader. They have interpreted and presented their views according to their own temperament, taste and angle of perception.

The idea of Dalit movements has been change from time to time. Some scholars find Dalits as the original natives of India, while some converted to the ideologies like Christianity, Sikhism and Buddhism. Many Dalit leaders protested against the age old traditions of Hinduism in which Jyoti Rao Phule is considered as the pioneer as he is supposed to lay down the foundation of the term, Dalit as well as to raise the question regarding the caste identity. In his eyes, the shudras are the original inhabitants of India. In his views, India cannot prosper until the caste system is dissolved. After that, Ramaswamy explored the idea of self-respect movement which was totally against the caste system who campaigned for temple entry.

Apart from it, Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar struggled hard to eliminate this evil from the society and championed the cause of Dalits as well as to favour political, social and religious equality. He carried out a series of protest from burning of Manusmriti to drinking water from prohibited tanks to conversion to Buddhism as a repudiation of Hindu religion.

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Gandhi Ji strongly opposed Ambedkar's idea to achieve separate electorates for Dalits.

Dalit movement in Post-Independence period

As far as the Indian political system is concerned, caste became an important and determinant factor. Ambedkar strongly advocated the values of equality, liberty and fraternity in Indian constitution and tried hard to abolish untouchability. After his bitter frustration with the contemporary situation when there was no chance of change and he converted to Buddhism, and he resigned from the post of law minister as a protest when the Hindu code bill was rejected by government.

After that, in 1957 when the republic party of India came into authority and described themselves as 'Ambedkarites.' This period was also notable for the atrocities against Dalits as violence against dalits was infrasound in Kawelada, Bhagana, Dulina through the acts of burning, murdering and raping Dalit women without any fear of punishment. They took the name from the Black Panthers that emerged in 1972 in Maharashtra and this name was derived from black panthers of the African-Americans. They had to struggle on two levels-at the symbolic level against caste Hindu peasants who committed atrocities against Shudras. It was dominated by intellectuals, poets and writers like Raja Dhale and Arun Kamble whose writings are the reflection of oppression of Dalits and their endless struggle to bring out changes.

In 1980, there was emergence of strongest post-independence dalit organization under the leadership of Kanshi Ram who was the founder of BAMCEF which was followed by the Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti founded in 1981. Besides, the Dalit movement was strengthened by the literary movement of Dalit writers like Bama, Imaiyan, Alakiya, and Kancha Illaiah. The fact is that Dalit movement is not confined to a particular time, but it is an endless process which will continue till the abolition of caste system. The problem of caste system has its reflection in one form or other, but the spirit behind this movement has always been as hostile towards the lower class people. So, the relevance of Dalit movement has gained an important part of the contemporary period in which the idea of human rights and development have been the subject of conversation across nations worldwide.

In the contemporary, period, there is a dire necessity for continuing the struggle for Dalits in India as we find how they are deprived of social, religious, economic and every type of equality in the society. The employment of Dalit people in the professions of journalism, judiciary and corporate is negligible. Through the help of mass media, the problems of Dalits can be exposed and highlighted and it can play an active role in contemporary period. Besides, in the field of education also, Dalits are marginalized as well as lagging behind, and the result of this is the backwardness of lower classes. In countries like India where we find caste system as rigid and no doubt, it creates monolithic blocks based on birth and people are not able to change it. Abolition of caste system requires a consideration of multi-faceted mechanism through which there is operation of caste. It needs to be eliminated as soon as possible if we want to grow, develop and prosper in real sense of words.

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