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Socio economic status of Dalits and Dalit movement in Hyderabad Karnataka and Bombay Karnataka

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Abstract

The present study aims at studying the Dalit movement and their SES in the HK and the Bombay Karnataka regions, and the history of categorizing castes systems is according to the Government of India Act, 1935. Further, the status of Dalits during the British colonial period in HK Karnataka and Bombay Karnataka were the major areas where most of the Dalits have been exploited and discriminated from social relations and political participation. Thus the roles of local leaders, upper castes involvement and the social status pertaining to the study have been discussed in each subheading.

Keywords: Dalit, SES, HK region and Bombay Karnataka

Introduction

This is been said that the rise and development of Dalit movement in Karnataka is quite different as compared to other parts of India, the studies have also said that the societal composition of Karnataka itself is largely accountable for this variation in the Dalit Movement of Karnataka. However Dalits are demoralized and discriminated against, as they were in the Hindu social order, the counterpart enemy were the dominant castes like Vokkaligas and the Lingayats who were the richest and the landlords had kept Dalits under exploitation for many years. The dominant castes subscribe to significantly different relations compared to landed dominant castes elsewhere although they share land relations in common.

The circumstance of Dalits is not harmonized across various states in India. Even during the British rule issues tackling Dalits varied in different areas of the country. This is one of the reasons why their problems are called region-specific. Nevertheless, Dalits in Karnataka have a different concept of social history as compared to the Dalits living in other states. Dalits in Karnataka have been using local dialects which themselves keep them away from other Dalit groups who also make use of their language distinctly. The linguistic dissimilarity as the cultural indicator has kept the Dalits across the states apart in many respects. There are sub-castes within the Dalit category known for distinctive cultural differences. The major two famous groups among Dalits in Karnataka are the 'Balagai' and the 'Yedagai' meaning the right and left hand, and are officially known as the Adi-Karnataka and the Adi-Dravida respectively.

Despite the fact that the people agree that they have been instructed and guided by the upper caste social practices, but the Brahmins are not directly influenced and also the Lingayats and the Vokkaligas who imposed them as bonded laborers. The circumstance of the Dalits by and large has remained the same compared to what it was under the name of untouchables. The people were untouchables earlier, and then after they have become as Harijans, subsequently they were called scheduled castes and now they are called Dalits. The revolution has been mainly in name but not in their social conditions. Their social conditions bear heavily on Dalits in Karnataka in Comparison to Maharashtra and Tamilnadu states of India, however Dalits in Karnataka were not only poor and landless but they remained relatively uneducated. One of the earliest ways that was invented by the landlords to subjugate the Dalits was to make them landless. Thus the Dalits began to depend upon their laboring work. Many of them became bonded laborers in Karnataka and later that became a family livelihood.

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In some regions Dalits enjoyed a space, however minimal; distinctive to themselves and in some regions which came under colonial influences such a space gradually emerged for them. Dalits in Karnataka were not fortunate in this regard.

The cultural influences also plays a major role in social status. The food habits per say consuming left-over food, eating the meat, and also the dress codes which also mark the Dalits of Karnataka are different from other castes. Moreover, the condition which was influenced by Dalits has not significantly changed their status.

According to Kalvekar. K. K report says that Brahmins, even though they were small in number, had dominated all the sectors opened by the British to Indians. As the Brahmanas have become stronger and dominant by getting hold of powerful administrative positions. It was in this background that the non-Brahmin movement came up in India which began to challenge the domination of the Brahmanas. Nevertheless, such a development in Karnataka did not open up any considerable space for Dalits.

Regional variations

The plurality of the Indian social set-up and its implications are much more telling in terms of Dalits. Every region is so different from the other that bringing them on to a common platform of analysis becomes difficult. It is more so with people who are not settled anywhere, and had not been so at any point of time. Although the untouchables have remained largely unaffected in their socioeconomic conditions, they are different from one place to another leading to high degrees of regional variations. A brief sketch of this regional variation helps us to bring home the variations in the Dalit Movement itself.

The situation of the Dalits in Karnataka can be traced by focusing on the following regions (a) Mysore princely state (Shimoga, Chitradurga, Chikmagalore, Hasan, Tumkur, Mandya, Kolar, Bangalore and Mysore), (b) Hyderabad Karnataka (Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur), and (d) Bombay Karnataka (Bijapur, Belgaum and Dharwad).

Status of Dalits during the influence of the princely state of Mysuru

The status of Dalits during the Mysuru princely state After the British victory over Tipu Sultan, the State had been restored to its earlier Hindu rulers, the Wodeyars, who had originated from a small low caste which claimed Yadava descent. Wherein, Vivekananda wrote to the Maharaja in 1894 stating that he wanted the Maharaja to form a policy for the upliftment of the Antyajas. The Maharaja initially opened separate schools for the untouchables in Hosur of Anekal Taluk and Narasapur and Malavalli of Malur Taluk in Mysore in 1890. Later, these schools were named 'Panchama Schools', and helped the educational development of the Antyajas.

The influence of Arya Semaj in the Hyderabad Karnataka Region

The social composition was significantly different in Hyderabad Karnataka region, the condition of the untouchables remained not markedly different. The landlords like Deshmukhs or Jagirdars are basically the former Revenue officers, who emerged as very big landlords who kept untouchables almost as their slaves. The social relations derived from the land holding pattern

emerging from such social composition gave rise to a huge gap between not only the upper and lower castes but also between the land owners and workers.

Arya Samaj took on political importance and qualified the Congress movement to give it a 'Hindu Nationalist' tenor. A few local Muslims and Hindus formulated an ideology of a multi-religious pluralistic Deccan Hyderabad culture, but this came under the attack by both Hindus and those Muslims who sought to promote a more orthodox Hindu and Islamic identity respectively. Thus, even as the Dalit Movement developed, it did so within a dangerously polarizing Hindu-Muslim cleavage.

Dalits have faced pressure on either side to recognize themselves as Hindus or to be with Muslims. It was found that there was a closeness in Dalit and Muslim relations in Hyderabad-Karnataka region, especially in Gulbarga, Bidar and Yadgir districts. Under the Devadasi system prevalent among the Malas and Madigas, the Basavis or Matangis often formed relations with affluent Muslims in the area. When Dalit reforms moved to stop the custom in the 1920s, it led to an increase in Muslim antagonism. The 'closeness' of the Muslims with Dalits had a clear element of sexual exploitation in it, though Muslims did not observe untouchability. Under the influence of the movement the exploited sections identified both Hindus and Muslims as oppressors, while others were led into the Hindu fold by the reformist activities of the Arya Samaj inspite of the impact of Muslim culture on some sections of Dalits in Hyderabad Karnataka.

The anti-Nizam Movement in Kannada and Marathi speaking areas of the Hyderabad state is less well-documented. It was the Arya Samaj under Swami Ramanand Tirth which came into the leadership of the Anti-Nizam Movement and brought the untouchables into the Hindu fold. Most of the followers of the Arya Samaj joined the Congress by 1946-47. The leaders of the Arya Samaj gave a communal colouring to the struggle. The message of the Arya Samaj - India for Indians; except Hindus, all are foreigners on the soil of Hindustan - was meant to instill courage in Hindus to oust the rule of Nizam and face the atrocities of Razaakars.

The autocracy of the Nizam undoubtedly had a pro-Muslim and anti-Hindu aspect to it. The Nizam's administration was largely Muslim, Urdu was imposed on his subjects, and the Razaakars' actions were targeted against Hindus. The Arya Samaj which took up cudgels for the 'Hindu masses' against Muslim oppressors, took over the leadership of the anti-Nizam Movement partly owing to the late arrival of the Congress. Until 1940, the National Congress did not take up people's struggle in the princely states.

The Bombay Karnataka – the status of Lingayats and the Reformist Ideology of Veerashaivism

The social reform movement took drastic shape in North Karnataka during the 12th century, especially in establishing an alternative orientation to Hinduism, a religion that took shape within the broader fold of Hinduism with certain distinct beliefs and practices.

During the 17th century a follower of Basava called Siddaveera Swamy, the fourth Acharya of Sunya Simhasana, had converted twelve thousand members, including untouchables to the Veerashaiva religion. Further during the 18th and 19th centuries there were few Dalit poets such as Chennabasava and Siddaramaiah who fought

for their rights in the regions of Bombay-Karnataka. They launched not only an intellectual and spiritual awakening among their brethren but also gave them strength and confidence to step into the temple.

In the British Raj we initially do not find mass movements to uplift Dalits in Bombay Karnataka region. The recent records have said that a few progressive Lingayat leaders who were inspired by Gandhian Ideology came up to support the untouchables.

Through the Gandhian ideology and the national level movement the leaders of lingayat community took interest in transforming the untouchable's situation. As part of such efforts Sardar Veerana Gowda Patil - one of the founders of the Karnataka Lingayat Educational Society, also started a boarding house for Harijan boys in Belgaum in the 1920s and met Gandhi, requesting permission to join the movement. Similarly, in 1928 Harijan Balikashram and Harijan Vaachanalayas came into existence to provide education to the untouchables in Dharwad. In August 1930, the Veerashaiva Parishat was held at Haveri. Hardekar Manjappa presided over the Parishat. He urged the Veerashaivas to join the Congress and work for the upliftment of Harijans. Veerashaiva leaders like Hosamani Siddappa,. Patil K.S and M.P. Patil of Hukkeri joined the Congress and actively propagated its ideals by conducting Harijan Seva tours.

Gandhi have been sent to Yerawada jail for protesting against the communal award in 1932 and he undertook fast for the cause of the Harijans, at the same time a movement was prepared for the untouchables that was also launched by the Congress in Belgaum.

Some of forefront leaders of Lingayat community members along with Annu Guruji and Jayadevrao Kulkarni carried out a Padayathra with five volunteers in the District, and in nearly 100 places arranged for temple entry and opening of wells and tanks for Harijans to draw water. They also given a message that cleaning the public latrines in Belgaum for one month to astonish that scavenging is not a low profession.

Conclusion

The Dalit movement in Karnataka was totally different. This distinctiveness is not merely on account of the social structure and social relations in which Dalits were situated and which qualified their agency but also the specific cultural traditions and legacies and the trajectory of the Dalit Movement itself. The Dalits were discriminated, and also were social deprived.

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