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Position of Dalits after independent India: A study

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Abstract

The visible progress of the Dalits, moreover, appears impressive when compared with their own past. However, the progress of the Dalits ought to be measured in relation to the others. It is the distance between them and the others that is of relevance. If one uses this perspective, one may not be too sure about whether they made any progress. The contemporary Indian society reflects both continuity and change. The continuity with its past is reflected in its feudal caste culture and the change in its treading the path of capitalist development, which has inevitably met the neoliberal highway. The post-colonial political economy has had serious impact on the caste structure, collapsing ritualistic distinctions among the dwija castes which had adopted the capitalist mode first. Later, when the government implemented the capitalist strategy of Green Revolution, the Shudra bandwagon also got hitched to theirs. While these aspects are discussed later in. it needs to be noted here that the contemporary caste system no longer depicts its classical form, as a system of graded inequality or a continuum of hierarchy. Rather, it reflects a class-like division between the Dalits and the non-Dalits. Since the Dalits are the signifier of this division, and being at the bottom, they assume critical importance. More importantly their very existence serves as the source of psychological solace to many, who are existentially harassed by the persisting economic crisis. As such, they serve as the prop for the social status quo, holding up classisation of the society. It is important for the ruling classes that Dalits remain fragmented, mired in caste identities. They cannot afford a united Dalit grouping with a radical consciousness discarding their baggage of past attributions. The class unity of the Dalits is the biggest threat to the ruling classes of India.

Keywords: Jotirao Phule, Bahishkrut, Mahars. Adivasis

Introduction

There have been momentous changes that took place in and around castes over the last century. One of the changes is that the castes today are shorn of their systemic feature and ritualistic base and are reduced to a class-like divide between Dalits and the rest. The main prop of the contemporary castes, paradoxically, has been the modern constitutional state, which is mistakenly taken as anti-caste and pro-Dalits. While these aspects have by and large escaped the literature on the Dalits, there is a serious dearth in literature of the perspective that could provide direction for the Dalit struggle. Another dimension that is conspicuously missing in the literature is the evaluator approach, which could throw up questions to keep the struggle energized. Why, for instance, are the majority of Dalits found mired in relatively the same state as that of a century before? Why do the backward castes, which were expected to be natural ally of the Dalits, become the biggest perpetrators of atrocities on them? Why is there an antipathy among the Dalits towards their own material well-being? Why do the Dalits enthusiastically befriend the rightist reactionaries but cannot bond with the communists? Has religious conversion really liberated them from their caste bondage? Can Dalit capitalism be their liberator? What are the pitfalls of identity politics? Many such questions have been dealt with in the book.

The chapters will steer readers chronologically from the origins of the Dalits to their struggles for liberation to their culmination into Ambedkarite schemata for their liberation emancipation and will finally land them at the contemporary forms of their movements. The final chapter will provide the way for their 'as is state and hint at what would be needed for their 'to be' state.

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Objectives

1. To identify democratic thought of Dalit’s
2. To identify political changes of Dalit’s
3. To identify green revolution effects on Dalit’s
4. To identify industrial revolution on Dalit’s

What is Dalit?

The etymology of 'Dalit' is traced to the root dal in Sanskrit which means split, break, crack or crushed [1]. As an adjective Dalit came to signify broken or ground down and evolved to mean oppressed, exploited and downtrodden. The present usage of the term is attributed to the 19th-century social reformer Mahatma Jotirao Phule (1826-1890), who used it to describe the outcastes and untouchables as the oppressed and exploited people by the dwija castes [2]. Probably, it was in use in colloquial Marathi and he, as the first person creating a public discourse taking up cudgels for the victims of Brahmanism, picked it up. Ambedkar (1891-1956), the towering Dalit leader, who revered Phule as one of his three gurus [3] used this term particularly in his Marathi speeches and occasionally in his Marathi writings along with Bahishkrut (boycotted) and Asprushya varga (untouchable class). His followers in Maharashtra used it as their identity.

By the late 1960s, the first generation of university-educated Dalit youth in Mumbai, inspired by the black literature movement in the United States (US), began expressing themselves in writing. The resultant output, which was difficult to fit the norms of the mainstream Marathi literature, completely hegemonies by the Brahmins, therefore, assumed different identity for itself as "Dalit Literature". As in the US, this literary outburst of indignation soon gave birth to the Dalit Panthers in 1972 taking inspiration from the Black Panthers [4] in the US. The shock waves created by the Dalit Panthers spread all over the country giving currency to the term 'Dalit' and inspired the Dalit youth to adopt it as their rebellious identity for themselves. Dalit came to symbolize change as revolution [5]: the quest for equality, self-dignity and the vanguard in the battle against Brahmanism.

In the following year, in 1973, in the neighbouring state of Karnataka the Dalit youth formed the Dalit Sangharsh Samiti (DSS) in the wake of a bitter controversy created by the statement of a Dalit minister B. Basavalingappa, trashing the mainstream Kannada literature as Bhusa (cattle feed) [6]. It went on to become organizationally the strongest Dalit movement in the country [7]. Later, Dalit Panther groups were formed in other states too.

Demography of Dalits

There are no reliable estimates of total Dalit population. However, as they are identified in India as scheduled caste (SC), which includes the ex-untouchables in Hindus, Sikhs (from 1956) and Buddhists (from 1990), their population is recorded in decennial censuses from 1951. In India, according to the latest census in 2011, the population of SCs was 201.3 million, which is 16.6 per cent of India's population. If one adds to it the estimated population of Christian Dalits at 20 million [8] and the Dalit Muslim population estimated at about 100 million [9], the total Dalit population in India itself may exceed 320 million, which will make them more than a quarter of the total population of India.

Table 1: Percentage of schedule caste population in districts, villages and urban areas/towns

| | No. of districts | No. of villages | No. of cities/towns |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Nil | | | |
| 13- | | 152,796 | 62 |
| Up to 4.9 | | 92 | 71,479,506 |
| 5.0 to 9.9 | | 68 | 61,275,105 |
| 10.0 to 19.9 | | 271,110,590 | 1,876 |
| 20.0 to 49.9 | | 148 | 153,481,856 |
| 50.0 to 74.9 | | 1 | 28,672,220 |
| 75.0 and above | | 0 | 15,322,323 |
| Total | 593 | 593,615 | 4,378 |

*_ No SC list applicable in 11 districts.
Source: Primary Census Abstract, Census of India 2001.

If one were to compare it with the populations of countries, it would be more than the cumulative population of the bottom 150 countries of the world [10], and if they were a country, they could have been third most populous country in the world after China and India. Unfortunately, they are dispersed all over the country as shown in Table 1. As a result, in every denominational unit they become a minority. As Table 1.1 shows, 46 per cent districts of India have Dalit population ranging from 10.0 per cent to 19.9 per cent; 25 per cent districts have it in the range of 20.0 to 49.9 per cent; and the rest 29 per cent have just a sprinkling of them ranging from 0 to 9.9 per cent. At the village levels, they constitute a majority (more than 50 per cent) in only 43,994 villages out of a total of 5,93,615 (7.4 per cent) in the country. Out of these, 15,322 villages (2.6 per cent of the total) have a preponderance of Dalits comprising more than 75 per cent of the population. They perhaps are the Dalit hamlets mostly found in south. In terms of concentration, only 4 states (Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar and Tamil Nadu with 20.5 per cent, 10.7 per cent, 8.2 per cent and 7.2 per cent population, respectively) out of 29 in India account for nearly half of the Dalit population.

Table 2 gives the trend in their population for the last five censuses with its break-up in terms of rural and urban. It shows that the decennial

Table 2: Scheduled castes population - India 1971-2011

| Class/year | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 | 2001 | 2011 |
|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total | 79,092,841 | 104,754,623 | 138,223,277 | 166,635,700 | 201,378,372 |
| (per cent) | (14.8) | (15.7) | (16.5) | (16.2) | (16.6) |
| Rural | 69,620,416 | 87,996,992 | 112,343,797 | 133,010,878 | 153,850,848 |
| (per cent) | (16.4) | (17.3) | (18.0) | (17.9) | (18.5) |
| Urban | 9,472,425 | 16,757,631 | 25,879,480 | 33,624,822 | 47,527,524 |
| (per cent) | (8.8) | (10.6) | (12.0) | (11.8) | (12.6) |

Source: Various reports of Census of India, Government of India.

Growth of their total population has been consistently more than the total population, which is reflected in the consistent rise in the proportion of their population from 14.8 in 1971 to 16.6 in 2011. Similarly, their urban population has also been rising except for a slight decline in 2001, reaching 12.6 in 2011. Thus, Dalits are predominantly a rural people; the

extent of their urbanisation in 2011 was 23.74 per cent as against 32.42 per cent for the country ^[11].

Dalits are not a homogenous or monolithic people. They mirror similar social hierarchy as of caste society among themselves. There are a number of castes as enumerated within the schedule for each state, but each of these castes is further divided into sub-castes with the same notional hierarchy as that of the castes. The original schedule drawn up in 1936 it enumerated a number of castes within each province. For instance, there were 74 castes throughout the province and additional ^[12] castes for the 'special constituency constituted under the Government of India Act, 1935 for the election of a representative of backward areas' enumerated under the schedule for Madras Province. Similarly there were 35 castes throughout the province and two more castes within some districts for the Bombay Province. There were 70 castes for Bengal, 61 castes for United Province, 27 castes for Punjab, 19 castes for Bihar (with a number of other castes for specific districts), 43 castes for Orissa and again a number of castes for certain districts in Assam.¹² This schedule was reissued after including some more castes in 1950 in the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950 ^[13]. for the new states in place of original provinces. The constitution of the schedule itself illustrates that Dalits were not a homogenous or monolithic people but were divided into a number of castes, which observed hierarchical difference in matters of marriage and food transaction. Besides, many of these castes had their sub-castes, which also behaved like castes with hierarchical notions and the custom of eating and marrying among themselves ^[14]. For example, there are many sub-castes within Mahars ^[15] (as many as 64) ^[16], a major Dalit caste in Maharashtra, to which incidentally Ambedkar belonged. Even after undergoing the radical turbulence of his movement, and after adopting a new identity as Buddhist in 1956, the sub-caste consciousness among Mahars survived to the extent that intermarriages across the sub-castes face resistance in rural areas even today. Even the political factions of the Republican Party of India (RPI), formed posthumously as per his wishes, were approximately identifiable with the sub-caste of Mahars.

Like castes and sub-castes, there existed even class differences among the Dalits. While all of them were socially excluded and oppressed as untouchables, certain castes by virtue of their caste vocations had acquired significant amount of indispensability in the village production system. For instance, the leather working castes like Chambhars in Maharashtra making footwear and accessories related to agriculture (e.g. pakhal - a leather container used in olden days in well irrigation) or Mangs, who specialised in making brooms and ropes for households and agriculture were valued in a village. Within them, Chambhars were more valued than Mangs because they had more specialised skills. The value also depended on supply and demand. In the Marathwada region of Maharashtra, where the Mangs are a populous Dalit caste as compared to Vidarbha where they have only a couple of families in every village, they are reduced to being low-skilled general workmen, working as farm labour, quite like the Mahars. In vocation-specific castes within villages which were approximately a closed economic unit, surplus population of a couple of Dalit castes is perplexing. It indicates varying salience of vocations in economy over the years and/or mergers of castes and/or the addition of non-caste

populations to these castes. Castes tended to rise up the hierarchy with their economic strength and in reverse faced degradation, with their immiseration. The number of sub-castes within the populous Dalit castes alludes to general economic decline of the caste society.

Socio-Economic profile

Despite the constitutional proclamations made against caste-based discriminations over six decades ago, Dalits still suffer all kinds of social exclusion and discrimination. The starkest feature of social exclusions is their physical segregation. Dalits continue to live in separate localities outside the village in rural areas and in specified areas in cities, even though most villages and cities have undergone growth and renewal with government schemes like Indira Awas Yojana and Rajiv Awas Yojana for them, respectively. They still do not have access to common public amenities such as wells, tanks and temples. They still have limited access to capital assets like agricultural land and non-land assets (and/or low productivity of those assets). As a result, they still constitute the lowest strata of the society on all socio-economic dimensions including household income, education and occupation.

In rural India, land is the most important asset which signifies not only economic well-being but also the social status. The distribution of land is so skewed in India that the top 5.2 per cent rural households own 42.8 per cent, per cent households own 56.6 per cent and the balance 90.5 per cent households own 43.4 per cent of the total cultivable land. Amongst them, 10 per cent of the households do not own any land. If homestead land is excluded, then 41.6 per cent households are landless ^[17]. Much of this skewed distribution is due to the extreme landlessness among Dalits. According to Thorat (2009), 70.11 per cent rural Dalit households were landless or near-landless (0.01-0.40 ha) in 1982, and this has gone up to 75 per cent in 1999-2000. For the categories of landholding, the percentage figures for these two years show a distinct decline, gradually increasing as one goes from 'Marginal' to 'Large Farmer' category. In the 'Marginal Farmer' category (0.41-1.00 ha), it has gone down slightly from 14.90 to 14.70 ha; in the 'Small Farmer' category (1.01-2.00 ha), it has gone down from 8.40 to 6.50 ha; in the 'Medium Farmer' category (2.01-4.00 ha), it has declined from 4.52 to 2.82 ha; and in the 'Large Farmer' category (4.01 ha and above), it has fallen from to 1.10 ^[18]. The decline in the figures, moreover, had been sharper during the period of 1992-2000 than during 1982-92, which may be attributable to the agrarian crisis created by the neoliberal economic policies adopted by the government in July 1991 ^[19].

Naturally, it reflected in the higher incidence of poverty among them. According to Planning Commission estimates, for 2009-10, poverty for the rural Dalits was 42.3 per cent as against 33.8 per cent for general rural population. For the urban areas it was 34.1 per cent as against 20.9 per cent for the general urban population, in the same year. It is further corroborated by their consumption deficit vis-a-vis the others. The latest National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) data shows that in rural areas, for five-member households, the average monthly expenditure in 1999-2000 was Rs 2,095 for Dalits as against Rs 2,885 for upper-caste households. In 2011-12, Dalit households were having an average monthly expenditure of Rs 6,260, as against Rs 7,150 for upper-caste households ^[20]. In urban areas, the

corresponding figures of monthly expenditure for Dalit and upper-caste households were Rs 3,455 and Rs 5,025, respectively, for 1999-2000, and Rs 10,140 and Rs 16,210 for 2011-12, respectively. These figures tell us that over the 12-year period the gap between the monthly household expenditure for the upper castes and the Dalits for the rural areas reduced by just a percentage point from 37 to 36 per cent and for the urban areas, although it declined relatively faster (by five percentage points), it was a whopping 60 per cent. A comparison of these figures shows that while in the rural area, the monthly expenditure for Dalit households increased from 73 per cent of that for upper-caste households to 87 per cent in the urban area, it has actually decreased from 87 per cent to 62 per cent. It should be noted that expenditure is not a good proxy for income in a country like India. On income, which unfortunately is not measured in the country, the chasm shall be far wider.

Despite poverty, the Dalits have made good progress in education at all levels following the role model of Ambedkar, and also as the only investible opportunity to better their life for their future generations. The latest gross enrolment percentages for them at various levels of education are consistently better than for the country as a whole right up to 12th standard, that is (I-XII). At the higher educational level, however, it shows considerable lag - 15.1 per cent as against 21.1 per cent for the country. Since these percentages for the entire country shall be dampened on account of the inclusion of scheduled tribes and minorities like Muslims for whom the enrolment figures are expected to be even worse than that for the Dalits, they do not reflect the real gap between the Dalits and the upper castes. Nonetheless, the gap is expected to be insignificant except for higher education, despite its spectacular growth from just 4.2 per cent in 2001-2 to 11 per cent in 2011-12. The gap would be still wider in the professional segment of higher education. A section of Dalits has made good progress, thanks to the policy of reservations, to be represented at all echelons of bureaucracy. However, the majority of the Dalits still languish at the lowest socio-economic level of the Indian society.

Practice of untouchability

Article 17 of the Constitution of India abolished untouchability, and its practice in any form was made punishable under the law amid the cries of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai'. In order to further strengthen the constitutional provision in Article 15 (Prohibition of Discrimination on Grounds of Religion, Race, Caste, Sex or Place of Birth) and Article 17, the Parliament of India enacted the Untouchability (offences) Act in 1955, which was further amended and renamed in 1976 as Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955. Right from the promulgation of the act in 1955, all the surveys conducted have revealed untouchability being practised to a significant degree ^[21]. There have been at least three surveys in recent times: (1) the All India Action Aid survey of 550 villages in 11 states in 2001, ^[2] the Navsarjan Trust survey ^[22] of 1,589 villages in Gujarat published in 2009 and ^[3] the survey of 42,000 households across India by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and the University of Maryland, US, as part of the India Human Development Survey (IHDS-2), carried out in 2011-12 for economic and social variables across multiple categories ^[23]. All of these

reports expose the continuing prevalence of untouchability in India.

The Action Aid survey had categorised the discriminatory practices into three categories: (1) residential segregation, (2) denial of access and discriminatory treatment in basic public services and (3) discriminatory restrictions on public behaviour. With regard to residential segregation, it found that the concept of separate SC wadas or cheri or colony was extant in villages across the country. Even the government programmes for SC housing such as Indira Gandhi Awas Yojana for rural areas and Rajiv Gandhi Awas Yojana for slum dwellers in urban centres were unable to escape spatial segregation dictated by the upper-caste tradition. The Dalits faced widespread discrimination/restrictions in most spheres of public life such as access to water resources, village shops, restaurants and hotels; and public transport and most public services to a varied but significant extent. The discriminatory restrictions or sanctions served to reproduce and sustain the institution of untouchability. It is done through observance of an array of customs and practices such as banning marriage processions through public roads, standing in front of an upper-caste person and not being allowed to wear new clothes. The survey noted varied amount of such customs being observed all across the countryside ^[24].

The findings of the Navsarjan Trust survey revealed that untouchability, both in public and in private spheres, was widespread in interaction between the Dalits and non-Dalits, as well as within Dalits, in fact, among several jatis in rural Gujarat ^[25]. It noted percentage of the subjects observing various types of untouchability and found them ranging from 10 to 98 per cent, with average at 70.0 and median value at 66.7 per cent. It, thus, exposed the ugly face of Gujarati society, when there was widespread euphoria about 'Vibrant Gujarat' created by the then chief minister Narendra Modi ^[26]. In another instance relating to the practice of manual scavenging, the Gujarat government was again badly exposed. It had filed an affidavit before the Supreme Court in 2003 claiming that there was no manual scavenging in Gujarat despite the published evidences documented by Praful Trivedi as well as by Mari Mareel Thekaekara and documentary film Lesser Human by K. Stalin. The government reiterated its stand in 2007 in response to a study by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, which identified 12,000 manual scavengers in Gujarat. Interestingly, the study was sponsored by the Gujarat Safai Kamdar Vikas Nigam (GSKVN), its own undertaking ^[27].

The NCAER survey revealed that 27 per cent respondents - and they belonged to all castes and communities - agreed that they practised untouchability in some form. Among them, expectedly, Brahman respondents were maximum (52 per cent), but the lower-caste OBC respondents were the next (33 per cent), beating the non-Brahman forward caste respondents (24 per cent). Even the SC respondents figured at 15 per cent and the scheduled tribe (ST) respondents were at 22 per cent. The practice pervaded all religious communities too: Jains topping the list at 35 per cent (perhaps because of their small base, the percentage worked out more) beating Hindus at 30 per cent, followed by Sikhs (23 per cent), Muslims (18 per cent) and Christians (5 per cent). It clearly showed that neither religious precepts nor religious conversion has any effect on the traditional mindset of people with regard to their lifeworld of castes. Spatially, untouchability was most widespread in the Hindi

heartland, according to the survey, Madhya Pradesh being on top (53 per cent), followed by Himachal Pradesh (50 per cent), Chhattisgarh (48 per cent), Rajasthan and Bihar (47 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (43 per cent), and Uttarakhand (40 per cent) [28].

A question of identity

Is Dalit a viable identity? Ambedkar tried to bind all untouchable castes with a single identity 'Dalit', but it was not to be. Deep entrenched hierarchical caste consciousness as well as material interests of various Dalit castes thwarted it. While his own caste men (Mahars) enthusiastically followed him, not many from other Dalit castes supported him. In the early phase of his movement, when the struggle reflected an assertion of social and religious-cultural rights of Dalits (e.g. Chavadar tank satyagraha, temple entry satyagrahas) mainly focusing on the feature of untouchability, it appeared to work with other Dalit castes. But once he turned his sight to politics, the ruling classes could easily lure them away. What happened in Maharashtra was replicated in other states. It is only with the passing of time, as the advanced elements in other Dalit castes, largely a product of reservations, realised Ambedkar's contribution to their own advancement and also the organisational strength of the Ambedkarite Dalits that these castes began to respect him as their leader and began to accept the Dalit identity. From the late 1960s, with the increasing competition in electoral politics ruling classes began competitive promotion of the Ambedkar-icon to woo Dalits and thereby expand his appeal across Dalit castes. Even then the next most populous Dalit castes (anywhere) do not seem to have accepted him wholeheartedly. The ruling classes have used this sentiment in promoting their own caste leaders as an alternative to Ambedkar. For example, Mangs in Maharashtra were given Annabhau Sathe, paradoxically, a communist balladeer, as their caste icon. In Andhra Pradesh and even elsewhere, the attempts to build up Jagjivan Ram as the icon for the next populous castes were tried for quite some time without much success. Notwithstanding these undercurrents, over the decades, 'Dalit' has emerged as the overriding identity for all scheduled castes.

'Dalit' had transcended its etymological boundaries long back and came to represent the quasi-class combatant identity which is against the prevailing Hindu social order. As Baburao Bagul (1930-2008), a radical Marathi litterateur and major ideologue of the Dalit Panthers, had articulated, 'Dalit' was a revolutionary category [29]. Guru (2005), buttressing Bagul, writes:

They [Dalit Panthers] view it [Dalit] as a revolutionary category for its hermeneutic ability to recover the revolutionary meaning of the historical past of the Dalit and its great capacity to reach out to larger sections of people. Not as a linguistic construction, it is based on a materialist epistemology. On the contrary, it is historically constructed through revolutionary struggle of the Dalits. And finally, as the Panthers and Bagul define, this category has an ontological ability to encompass within itself the lower castes - Adivasis, toiling classes and women. Thus the Panthers' understanding of the Dalit category is radically distinct from that suggested by the category's opponents [30].

Conclusion

There is a noticeable trend among some sections of the

Dalits against this identity. One section of the educated Dalit middle class argues that Dalit is a demeaning identity, that after conversion to Buddhism they are no longer Dalits. They derive support from Ambedkar that in his last days he had given them a new identity and therefore all Ambedkarites should discard 'Dalit' and adopt 'Buddhist' as their identity. While these arguments lingered in incipient form, Kanshi Ram had valorised bahunjan (meaning 'majority people'; which has a legacy in Buddha's dictum, bahunjan hitaya, bahunjan sukhay) as an overriding political identity for the Dalits combined with the non-dwija Shudras and religious minorities. He used it to name his party 'Bahujan Samaj Party'. A faction coming out of his founding organisation Bamcef, an acronym he himself coined for the 'All India Backward (SC, ST, OBC) and Minority Communities Employees Federation', argued that 'Dalit' connoted weak, decrepit, piteous and did not evoke confidence, determination and resolve. They propose mulnivasi (the original inhabitant) as the aggressive identity for the Dalits, same as bahunjan, but connoting aggressiveness as against the passivity of the former. They source support from Ambedkar's exhortation to Dalits to become a ruling tribe. The upper middle class Dalits who by virtue of their class elevation would prefer to shun any of these identities with their class aspiration and dissociate themselves from the Dalit masses. However, being a miniscule minority, this may not be significant. Nonetheless, it does show a class-associated trend that cannot be ignored. A faction of them, graduating to business, has come out with another identity 'Dalit bourgeois' or 'Dalit capitalist' for themselves and a slogan 'Be a job giver, and not a job seeker'.

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19. Anand Teltumbde, 'Globalization and the Dalits', <http://www.dalitstudies.org/> Last accessed: 27 December 2016.
20. See Table 7: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Educational Statistics at a Glance, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, 2014 http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/inhrd/files/statistics/EAG2014.pdf- Last accessed: 27 December 2015.
21. Thorat (Dalits in India) provides information on four such regional surveys: (1) the Karnataka survey (1973-74 and 1991), (2) the Andhra Pradesh survey (1977), (3) the Orissa survey (1987-88) and (4) the Gujarat survey (1971 and 1998). All of them pointed out the existence of the practice of untouchability in significant degree in most public spheres. See Thorat, *Dalits in India*, p. 134.
22. The survey was done by Navsarjan Trust, a Gujarat-based NGO working among Dalits, and the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice & Human Rights (RFK Center), a non-profit organisation in the US over three years.
23. Only the preliminary results of this survey were released by NCEAR in November 2014, which expectedly created shock waves in the country. The full results are yet not out. See *The Indian Express*; c2014.
24. Ghanshyam Shah, Harsh Mander, Satish Deshpande, Amita Baviskar. *Untouchability in Rural India*, Sage Publication, New Delhi; c2006.
25. See the Study Report: *Understanding Untouchability: A Comprehensive Study of Practices and Conditions in 1589 Villages*. Available at <http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/UnderstandingUntouchability.pdf>. Last accessed: 27 December 2016.
26. The government was hugely embarrassed and tried to counter this study through a committee under the chairmanship of a Dalit minister for social justice, Fakirbhai Waghela, but could not succeed except for creating some confusion in certain corners. See Subhash Gatade, 'Silencing Caste, Sanitising Oppression Understanding Swachh Bharat Abhiyan', *Economic & Political Weekly*. 2015;1(44):29-34.
27. Ghanshyam Shah. 'Construction of Cultural Nationalism: A Case of Gujarat', *Indian Journal of Secularism*. 2014;18(1):2-13.
28. http://www.ncaer.org/news_details.php?nID=91. Last accessed: 27 December 2016.
29. Bagul Baburao (ed.), *Dalit Sahitya Ajche Kranti Vidyanay (Marathi)*, The Buddhist Publishing House, Nagpur; c1981.
30. Gopal Guru, 'Understanding the Category Dalit', in Gopal Guru (ed.), *Atrophy in Dalit Politics*, Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, Mumbai; c2005. p. 67.