

Perceiving the Political and Social Status of Indian Dalit Women through Literature

¹K. Bhagyamma, ²P. Hima Bindu

¹School of Political Science, Hyderabad Central University, ²Nizam College, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

Abstract: Women as thought of half of the land and sky have never been half in reality but seen as only in the population list. Since centuries, women position or status has never changed in the society. The only change is their modern look but nothing in real face. Many people have tried to change the status of women but it's a mere waste. Many have focused this fact including Dr. B.R Ambedkar, but the non-approval of Hindu Code Bill in the Parliament shows the then views of women liberty in Independent India. Vast literature on women, their rights, equality could not enlighten the brains of majority of Indians. Till today, there are many who object the Women Reservation Bill in Parliament. This shows the narrow mindedness of a class of people so called MEN in Indian society. May it be a Devdasi or Jogin, it's always a women who is victim. Of the women, Dalit women are the most deprived of rights, social status and other basic needs. Mere seminars, lecture or conference would not do any benefit to them but their status should be changed in reality. Many poetesses and writers have tried to express their own grievance and social status of Dalit women through their writings. But more has to be done for the literature part to really enlighten the lives of Dalit women and also women of all classes.

Keywords: Political and Social Status, Indian Dalit Women, the population list.

1. INTRODUCTION

Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Buddhists, toiling-masses, workers, landless laborers, poor cultivators, nomadic, de-notified tribes, tribals, all come under the term Dalit. In the 1930's, the 'depressed cases' were referred in Hindi and Marathi as Dalit ('oppressed' or 'broken'). The British used this term for what are now called the scheduled caste. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar translated the word 'Dalit' in English as 'broken men', to refer to the original ancestors of the untouchables. Dalit Panthers, in their 1973 manifesto revived the term and expanded its reference to include the scheduled tribes, neo Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and also those who are being exploited politically, economically in the name of religion.

Though it is the great Maha Bharatha or The Ramayana, women have been never given social equality. Government advertises the benefits of bearing a girl child. But who listens or cares to it? It is the duty of women and child welfare department of India. So it is being advertised and there ends their job. Even working educated women are afraid of giving birth to a girl child. Look at the pity of mothers in the land where woman is worshipped as Goddess and where we enchant her as "Adi-Shakthi". The increase in number of premature abortions because of being female baby shows the pathetic situation and a great gender inequality in the country.

Dalitism symbolizes marginalization which denies basic human rights and social justice of which Dalit women are one of the most marginalized segments in the society. The condition of Dalit women is more to pity than non-Dalit women. They are suffering from multi disadvantages of being Dalit, i.e., socio-economically and culturally marginalized section and also being women and sharing the gender based inequalities and subordination. To explore the crucial issues concerning Dalit women there is need to discuss some basic facts concerning the vulnerable situation of Dalit women.

2. STATUS OF DALIT

The discrimination that Dalit women are subjected to is similar to racial discrimination. Dalit women are thrice discriminated, treated as untouchables and as outcaste, due to their caste, face gender discrimination being women and finally economic impoverishment due to unequal wage disparity, with low or underpaid labour. According to the Manusmriti, women have no right to education, independence, or wealth. It not only justifies the treatment of Dalit women as a sex object but also promoted inequality between men and women. It also promoted child marriages.

For any historically dominating caste or gender, it has been easier to violate human rights of Dalit women who are at the least step of the hierarchical ladder. Dalit and tribal women are raped by upper caste leaders, land lords and police as part of an effort to suppress movements to demand payment of minimum wages, to settle share cropping disputes or to reclaim lost lands. The infamous case of Bhulka Devi of Samastipur of Bihar in 1994 reflects brutality and atrocity against Dalit women. The incident of Khairlanji Massacre shows the worst situation in democratic India where the two Dalit women who fought for their agricultural land were first attacked with huge iron chains and then abused by the other caste women of the village. Later they were paraded naked and raped, and later, their bodies were mutilated and thrown into a pond. (Hindustan Times, 14th November, 2006). This shows that Dalit women are easy targets for anyone. Upper castes consider them to be sexually available. Hence they are largely unprotected.

There have been many crimes on Dalit women which severely violate their human rights. According to SC/ST commission report, between 1981 and 1986 about 4000 Dalit women became victim of rape. In 1993 -94 this figure rose to 798 and 992 respectively. This number is about 700 every year. Social, religious and cultural practices like Chira, Devdasis and Jogins have made Dalit women victims. In the name of these practices, village girls are married to God by their helpless parents. These girls are then sexually exploited by the upper caste landlords and rich men and directed in' to trafficking and prostitution. Despite of severe exploitation at work place, Dalit women also suffer caste specific ban on drinking water access and entry into temples from upper castes and may be physically punished for doing so. We see only Dalit women as manual scavengers which defames their dignity. A short article 'Dangerous Dalit women and which Hunters' by Meena Kandasamy focuses the helpless vulnerable condition of Dalit women in the present times.

So, in order to improve and get due respect of Dalit women, the various women's forum and organization started as Dalit women movement to protect their rights.

3. POLITICS AND DALIT WOMEN

Women's socio-economic Status directly depends on their participation in politics. They constitute half of total population, but are unable to get equal share in active politics. In the year 1993, 73rd Amendment in the constitution granted reservation to Dalits, tribals and women in local government which made it compulsory that one third of the seats reserved for Dalits to be filled by Dalit women but that has been totally ignored. In some states, there has been little or no acceptance of reservation for the lower castes and Dalit women by the upper castes. Dalits who stood for election were beaten, and Dalit women were raped and ill-treated, their lands were also grabbed.

We can still see many women politicians as nominal leaders whereas their husbands play key role. The incapacity of women, particularly Dalit women, to assert their rights is at the root of the problem. The reservation for Dalits, particularly for women, is accepted only on papers but not in reality. Dalit women's sitting on chairs is seen as threat to social hierarchy. Dalit women also faced many problems in performing their duties due to illiteracy, lack of information and dependency on the male members of their families. This shows that human rights of Dalit women are violated right from her family to the society at large by one and all. All these factors are largely responsible for the precarious position of Dalit women as far as their social, cultural, religious, economic, health and political status in the society is concerned. These factors force them to mutely allow violation of their civic and human rights. Thus they become victims of universal violence. The evolution and triumph of Bahujan Samajwadi party (BSP) under the leader ship of Kanshiram, is a drastic change in Indian politics. Though Mayawati's leadership has been criticized over years, she is an exceptional Dalit woman to overcome all the difficulties facing the upper caste men. Appointment of Meira Kumar as Lok Sabha speaker cannot be exemplified as upliftment of status of Dalit women.

4. MOVEMENTS

In the mid-era, Brahmanical literature degraded Dalits by giving a concept of pre-birth theory. Dalit movement has a rich history of rationalism and humanism. In fact, the historical evolution took place with Buddha's revolt against Varnashram dharma. The emergence of British power brought a drastic change in the lives of downtrodden people. They brought a sense of liberty for the marginalized communities. In Pune, Dalit and backward were not allowed to join schools. Women and particularly of Dalit community could never dream of going to school. Jyoti Ba Phule started a massive work of education by starting various schools in and around Pune. This movement was seriously opposed by forward classes. Dr. Ambedkar made sincere efforts to gain an equal status for women in his life time and even today, Ambedkarism is a living force in India. Babu Jagjeevan Ram has strived through his life to represent Dalits being an outstanding parliamentarian.

In 1960's and 70's there have been Dalit movements and women movements for securing their rights and equality. Vanangana a feminist empowerment organization was formed in the 1980's in UP mainly for women education. The women's wing of Bhartiya Republican Party (BRP) and the Bahujan Mahila Sangha (BMS) set up the Bahujan Manila Parishad. In 1990's National Federation for Dalit Women (NFDW, 1995) and All India Dalit Women's Forum (AIDWF) at the state level were formed. Atrocities and brutality in Bihar led to the formation of Dalit Sena armed women wing. In December 1996, a Vikas Vanchit Dalit Mahila Parishad (VVDMP) was organized at Chandrapur.

The social inequality, suppression and painful life have resulted in the Dalit movements in several states of India including Andhra Pradesh. The women's movement, known as the women's liberation movement has focused primarily patriarchy and equality but there have been many differences and debates inside it. Non-Dalit feminists have not gone beyond paying lip-service. In 1997 The Christi Mahila Sanghatana, an organisation of Dalit Christian Women was established. Tamil Nadu Dalit women movement was launched during the year 1997 by SRED (Society for Rural Education and Development) human rights organization. It coordinated all the women groups into movements or one forum called Tamil Nadu women's forum for promoting and protecting rights among common grass root women. Similarly were the movements of Maharashtra and Karnataka against religious conversions. Dalit women leaders have been reframing their goals and structures since 2002 and Dalit Mahila Samiti was named in 2003. The mainstream Indian women's movement continues to be led by privileged dominant caste, upper-class, urban feminists but couldn't gather the majority class of women. Later many women organizations came into existence. Association forewomen's Rights in Development (AWID)'s and Building Feminist Movements and Organizations (BFEMO) also work for women welfare.

5. REVIVAL THROUGH LITERATURE

Dalit literature came into existence with the inspiration of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar. Anguish revolt and negatism are the distinctive features of this literature, Namdeo Dhansal, Raja Dhale, J.V.Pawar and others brought light to the Dalit Panther movement by their poems and writings which is a Dalit revolt literature. Dalit literature, which stands opposed to the four-fold varna system and capitalism appears to be engaged in the retrospection of ideas regarding women, women's liberation, struggle for women's liberation, the human relationships that transcend woman-man relationship, equality of opportunities and an egalitarian way of life. Many have portrayed Dalit women as competent and capable of overcoming difficulties. Marathi novels present more of Dalit women literature. Rebellious women in Annabhau Sathe's novels provide inspiration to the modern writers. Dalit women's writings have not become a force as yet. Malika Dhasal's autobiography Mala Uddhvasta Vhayachay was in a sense a significant contribution. Barring a handful of exceptions, Dalit women have been shaped as 'indomitable' in their writings. Modern educated working Dalit women have not reached the pen of writers still,

6. CONCLUSION

Here is following, a quote from Manusmriti which reflects the thought of man for women.

By a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house. (Manusmriti V. 147)

Following such books would never allow social equality in our society. The writings are capable to make the world sit and think. Remember the words of Swami Vivekananda, "Think, Arise, and Awake". But till now, the many writings did not

International Journal of Novel Research in Humanity and Social Sciences

Vol. 2, Issue 5, pp: (88-92), Month: September-October 2015, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

bring much change in Dalit's life; the understanding of their lives and social injustice has to be focused more. Not only Dalits, women have to be enlightened more to bring progress in this society. All Dalit women should be encouraged to participate in meetings, seminars, movements and raise their voice against injustice. No women should think that I shouldn't have born as a girl in this male dominated society. Be proud to be a woman who gives birth to male and grows him up.

At the outset, being a Dalit by caste and secondary status of women in the society is largely responsible for violation of human rights of Dalit women. The basic factors responsible for their vulnerability have to be examined thoroughly.

REFERENCES

- [1] Agarwal, S. 1999, Genocide of women in Hinduism. Sudrastan Books. Jabalpur. India.
- [2] Ahuja, R. (1998). Violence Against Women, Rawat Publication, New Delhi.
- [3] Bandhu, P. (2003). Dalit Women's cry for Liberation, My Rights Are Rising like the Sun, will you deny this sunrise? Edited in Rao (2003) Caste and Gender, Kali ForWomen, New Delhi.
- [4] Chakravati, V (2003). Reconceptualising Gender; Phule, Brahmanism and BrahminicalPatriarchy, edited in Rao (2003) Caste and Gender, Kali for women, New Delhi.
- [5] Chitnis, V (2005). Human Rights of the vulnerable groups, Futuristic Digital, Pune
- [6] C.T.Kurien, Tamil Nadu's Dalit Saga, Frontline, November 05-18, 2005.
- [7] J.Dietrich, G (2003). Dalit Movement and Women's Movement, Edited in Rao (2003) Caste andGender, Kali for women, New Delhi
- [8] Dr. Jugal Kishore Mishra, A Critical study of Dalit Literature in India.
- [9] Dr.Vivek Kumar, Dalit Literatureand Politics", January 21-22, 2007, Delhi.
- [10] Hague Declaration on the Dignity and Human Rights of Dalit Women.
- [11] Jogdand, P (1995) Dalit Worsen, Issues and Perspectives, Cyan Publication, New Delhi.
- [12] Kale, R (1994). Kolhatydhrepor, Granthali, Publication, Mumbai.
- [13] Kumar,N, (2004). Dalit Policies, Politics and Parliament, Shipra Publication, New Delhi
- [14] Kumar, N and Raj, M. (2006). Dalit Leadership in Panchayats, Institute of Dalit Studies, Rawat, New Delhi.
- [15] Omvedt, G. (1995), Dalit Women and Communalism, edited in Jogdand (1995), DalitWomen, Issues and Perspectives, Gyan Publication, New Delhi.
- [16] Narender Kumar, (2000) Dalit and Shudra Politics and Anti-Brahmin Movement.
- [17] K. Samu, (2008) Dalits/Scheduled Castes Human Rights Documentation, Indian Social Institute, Lodi Road, New Delhi, India
- [18] PrabhaTirmare Violation of Human Rights of Dalit Women: Issues, Factors and Concerns.
- [19] Rao, A (2003) Gender and cast,Kali for women, New Delhi.
- [20] Thorat, S and Umakant (2004) Caste, Role and Discrimination, Discourses in InternationalContext, Rawat Publication, New Delhi.
- [21] Unheard Voices Dalit Women an alternative report submitted by the Government of Indiafor the session on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Geneva. January, 2007
- [22] V.B.Rawat, (2005) Dalit movement At the Cross Road, Countercurrents.org.
- [23] Webstar, J (1999) Who is Dalit?edited in Michael (1999) Dalit's in Modern India, Visionand Values, Vistar

International Journal of Novel Research in Humanity and Social Sciences

Vol. 2, Issue 5, pp: (88-92), Month: September-October 2015, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

Publication, New Delhi.

- [24] Punalekar, S. (1995). On Dalitism and Gender in Jogadand(1995), Dalit Women's Issues and Perspectives, Gyan Prakashan, New Delhi.
- [25] Sonia Mahey, The Status of Dalit Women in India's Caste Based System, University of Alberta
- [26] Narula. S. Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's "Untouchables." London: Human Rights Watch, 1999.
- [27] Manu. 1920. Manu Smriti: The laws of Manu with the Bhasya of Medhatithi. Translated by Ganga Natha Jha. University of Calcutta, Calcutta, India.
- [28] Ruth Manorama,(2006), The situation of Dalit women formerly known as untouchables scheduled castes, Presented before the Committee on Development of the European Parliament by National Convener of National Federation of Dalit Women.
- [29] Ranjani K. Murthy, Organisational strategy in India and diverse identities of women: bridging the gap, Routledge , 24th June 2010.
- [30] Sonia Mahey (2003), "The Status of Dalit Women in India's Caste Based System", University of Alberta.