

SOS POLITICAL SCIENCE & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

M.A POLITICAL SCIENCE IV SEM

HUMAN RIGHT(402)

TOPIC NAME-PROBLEMS OF DALIT

UNIT-IV

Introduction

Dalit is not a caste but a realization and is related to the experiences, humiliation, deprivation, sorrow and joys. It matters with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity, rebellion and loyalty to science. By identifying themselves as its due to the class characteristics, the Scheduled Caste community population in the country embraced an identity that is born in a historic struggle.

Caste is the main cause of inequality in Indian society. The practice of untouchability which began 4000 years ago continues even today in many forms in hierarchy, today the western side of every village in Indian houses the untouchables who cannot be purified. India is one of the World's largest democracy, the second fastest growing economy and the second most populated country. India has managed to convince the World's diplomatic community of its status and has become one of the leading voices in the United Nations, which was reflected in the UN Human Rights Council Elections. For Centuries Dalits have been victims of gross human rights violations. In fact, Dalit have been considered the most degraded, downtrodden, exploited and the least educated in Indian society for various reasons.

They are considered to be 'untouchable' because their touch to upper caste people is considered polluted and unclean. The caste hierarchy has excluded these people from the caste system and therefore they are branded as 'outcaste'. The word 'Dalit' comes from the Marathi language, and it means 'ground', 'suppressed', 'crushed', or 'broken to pieces'. There are nearly 156 million dalits in India who constitute larger population compared to other communities in the country. It was first used by Jyotirao Phule in the 19th Century, in the context of the oppression faced by the erstwhile 'untouchable' castes of the twice-born Hindus. According to Victor Premasagar, the term Dalit, expresses their weakness, poverty and humiliation at the hands of the upper castes in the Indian society. Mohandas Gandhi coined the word Harijan, translated roughly as 'children of God', to identify the former untouchables.

The terms 'Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are the official terms used in Indian government documents to identify former 'untouchables' and tribes. Adi Dravida, Adi Karnataka and Adi Andhra, are words used in the State of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, respectively, to identify people of former untouchable castes in official documents. The word 'Adi', denote the aboriginal inhabitants of the land.

In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure, such as any involving leatherwork, butchering, or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses, and waste. The Dalits community work as manual labourers cleaning

streets, latrines, and sewers. Engaging in these activities was considered to be polluting to the individual, and this pollution was considered contagious. As a result, Dalits were commonly segregated, and banned from full participation in Hindu social life. The various forms of discrimination against Dalits still exists in rural areas in the private sphere, in everyday matters such as access to eating places, schools, temples, and water sources. For centuries the dalits were subject to various sorts of disabilities, social segregation and exploitation.

Some Dalits have successfully integrated into urban Indian society, where Caste origins are less obvious and less important in public life. In rural India, however, Caste origins are more readily apparent and Dalits often remain excluded from local religious life, though some qualitative evidence suggests that its severity is fast diminishing. For decades and until today, they have been barred from sharing water, food and shelter and are forced to live in ghettos, and hence are referred as 'segregated'. They have been socially, culturally and politically subjugated and marginalized through three thousand years of India's history. What is still surprising is that the Dalits experience the agony of untouchability very deeply in all walks of life, social, economical and political spheres problems faced by scheduled castes in India !

Traditionally Scheduled Castes or untouchables were suffering from several disabilities or problems. These problems are discussed below.

1. Social Problem:

These problems pertained to the concept of purity and pollution. The untouchables were giving a very low position in the society

The high-caste Hindus maintained a social distance from them. They were denied many basic amenities of life which were accorded to the high-caste Hindus. They were dependent on the tradition of Hindus for items of food and drink.

2. Religious Problems:

These pertained to the denial of the right of entering temples which were exclusively served by the high-caste Brahmins. The untouchables were neither allowed to enter the temples nor served by the Brahmins. They had no right to worship the Gods and Goddesses in the temple.

3. Economic Problems:

They suffered from many economic problems. They had to face many economic hardships and they were not given proper reward for their service. Traditionally, untouchables were deprived of landed property of their own. They were not allowed to carry on any business. They were not permitted to engage themselves in the professions which were being carried out by the people of other castes.

The untouchables were not free to choose any occupation according to their own ability they had to clean the streets, remove dead cattle and to undertake heavy agricultural work. Mostly they were landless labourers. They worked in the fields of high- caste Hindus as labourers.

4. Public Disabilities:

Harijans had to face many public indignities because they were denied the right to use the services of public utilities like wells, public transport as well as educational institutions.

5. Educational Problems:

Traditionally the untouchables were deprived of getting education. They were not allowed to use public educational institutions. Even today most of the illiterates are untouchables.

Describing the conditions of Harijans, K.M. Pannikar has remarked, their position, when the system functioned in its pristine glory, was in many ways worse than that of slavery. The slave at least was a chattel of the master and therefore, he stood in an individual relation to his owner. Considerations of economic self-interest and even human feeling modified the barbarism of personal slavery.

But these mitigating factors did not apply to the system of untouchability, which was mostly perceived as a system of communal slave holding. Instead of an individual owning slave, each village held the untouchable families attached to it in a kind of slavery. No individual of the higher castes was supposed to have any personal relations with an untouchable.

The Dalit Human Rights Situation

The existence of human beings is not like an animal existence. The human beings required more protection than an animal in the society. For many centuries, the Indian caste system was also to operate as a perfect instrument to keep the untouchable castes and plain tribes under subjugation as providers of labour for agriculture and other purposes.³⁶ Over one sixth of India's population, some 170 million people live in a precarious existence shunned by much of Indian society because of their rank as untouchable or Dalit like really means broken people at the bottom of India's caste system. Dalits are discriminated and denied access to land and basic resources, forced to work in degrading conditions, and routinely abused at the hands of police and dominant caste groups that enjoy the states protection. The protection of human rights of each and every individual is a global phenomenon originated through the international conventions on human rights. Indian history and culture too has an ugly and inhuman part so far as violation of human rights are concerned. It has witnessing atrocities in the institutionalized form on the weaker sections called the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, known as Dalits or Shudras, backed by socio- religious sanctions. The main reason for these people to be degraded is the religious dogma of Karma and Dharma. This was a convenient dogma for the upper caste to keep the lower castes under control. The dogma emphasized that by observing Dharma, they would get salvation and benefit in the next birth. This emphasis on individual salvation led the shudras to be submissive, quiescent and passive. The only Dharma of the shudras was to serve the upper castes.