



---

## Positions Of Dalits In Indian Societies

**Dr. Nilesh Chandrakant Adhav** Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science M. S. Kakade College, Someshwarnagar Tal: Baramati, Dist: Pune **mEmail:** [nc.adhav@gmail.com](mailto:nc.adhav@gmail.com)

---

### ABSTRACT

The Dalit Movement started as a protest movement in India. The Dalits (previously appropriately known as "Untouchables") alongside the "Other Backward Castes" represent the majority of the Indian population. The term "Dalit" means "crushed" or "Crushed into a mass". Socio-cultural marginalisation, economic suffering and political exploitation of centuries led them to break free of such types of age-old biases. Hence, they started to resist with the use of literatures, or organizing organisation, which came to be known as the Dalit Movement. This dissertation is an effort to bring out the different features of Dalit's life that lead to the movement, in the splendour of Dalit literatures and their contemporary populations, positions and constitutional remedies in the society. As untouchability was outlawed under the Constitution of the Republic of India, when that Constitution was adopted in 1951, and as a policy was put in place of reserving a few seats for Dalits in government schools, hospitals, bureaucratic jobs, and so on, the fortunes of some Dalits improved to the point that there is now a so-called "Creamy layer" among Dalits.

**Keywords:** Caste, Dalits, Sudra, Untouchable, India.

### INTRODUCTION

Formerly known as the "untouchables" of India, the Dalits were so named because of the nature of their labour, which included handling dead materials (such as animal skins, tanning, and hair cutting) and faces. A long-standing battle has been waged against untouchability. It was two great modern Indian leaders, Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar, who had the greatest impact in bringing awareness of the need to eradicate this acute and particular form of oppression: Ambedkar, who was himself from an untouchable caste, and Gandhi, who called them "Harijans" or "children of God." However, despite the fact that the Indian Constitution prohibited all forms of untouchability and required the government to take affirmative action to make up for past wrongs done to untouchable castes, the stigma they face persists, in both subtle and overt manifestations. As a result, the oppressed castes' fights have continued via militant groups and lobbying. The caste system in India is

closely tied to the economy and the job market (e.g., Vaid, 2014). Caste is mostly defined by the inheritance of employment, which leaves little space for breaking free of one's involuntary status. Castes as colonially structured categories and castes as subjectivity validated in phenomenology and historical contexts of humiliations are two features of identity claims that have been used to frame modern arguments on castes in India.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Mayur Jaideo Gaikwad (2021) This decade has witnessed a significant shift in Dalit political preferences, which have played a significant role in Uttar Pradesh (UP) politics in previous decades. Many lower-caste parties, such as the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and identity politics have risen to prominence in recent decades due to the establishment of political awareness and robust social movements among these historically marginalised groups including Dalits.

Surinder S Jodhka (2021) A community-based representational space was advocated by Kanshi Ram, who developed an additive technique for visualizing Indian society. An essential consequence of this political process vision was to shift the logic of caste from a vertical to a horizontal framework.

Chetan Sinha (2020) This essay critically examines and analyses the emerging categories of Dalit leadership, collective pride, and social class mobility, three main conceptually interrelated and contentious components. High-achieving Dalits participate in the current project because they are inspired by Ambedkar's visionary leadership and believe in the power of collective action to effect social change.

David Mosse (2018) This assessment examines whether or not international agreements like the Sustainable Development Goals should include measures to reduce inequality and discrimination based on caste. Caste has been portrayed as an ancient institution and source of historical disadvantage due reparation via affirmative action in ways that neglect its continued role as a structure of advantage and discrimination in the contemporary economy, particularly post-liberalization from 1990s onwards. Modern caste life is examined through the lens of anthropological research as well as economic, historical, and political theory.

V. Basil Hans (2016) There is an ongoing dispute over the role of dalits in Indian society, and this study aims to shed light on this subject by using the lens of "inclusion" to examine it. By and large, India's 167 million disadvantaged and marginalised sectors of society have been overlooked and disregarded for millennia. This book focuses on their current situation. For centuries, the dalits have endured oppression, exploitation, governmental indifference, and poverty.

## **THE CASTE SYSTEM**

There is a caste system in India that is a terrible thing. It splinters Indian society along racial and religious lines. Even now, despite the development of culture and civilisation, it continues to play a significant part in our society.

- When previous untouchables or tribes were classified as SC/ST, they were referred to by these formal designations in official government papers. When the National Commission for Scheduled Castes noticed in 2008 that the term "Dalit" was being used interchangeably with the official term "Scheduled Castes," it advised state governments to stop using the term "Dalit" in official documents and replace it with the phrase "Scheduled Caste" instead.
- The caste system has its origins in ancient times. As a result of this, the caste system is divided into higher and lower castes based on origin, while the caste system is divided into upper and lower varnas based on function. It has now been discovered that the portion of individuals with an upper hand and a voice in the society took advantage of the weaker members of the group, resulting to discrimination and exploitation.
- One-sixth of India's population, or 160 million people, are considered 'untouchables,' and they face prejudice and isolation because of their status as members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

## **DALIT MOVEMENT**

For millennia, Dalits have been exploited economically, socially, and politically in India. They were unable to function in human society and were exiled to the outside of the settlement, where they were treated as 'untouchables.' This exploitation is a result of the Hindu society's centuries-old system of caste hierarchy. For generations, this social structure has been the source of oppression against Dalits in many walks of life. They now live in abject poverty and shame as a result of it. Pre-independence India referred to the Dalits (ex-untouchables) as outcasts because of their treatment by the so-called "upper castes," who violently exploited them. The Dalits were not permitted to enjoy a life of dignity and equality after India gained freedom. The Dalit Movement in India began as a response against the centuries-old injustices done against them because of this ideology of 'equality.' An attempt is being made by the Dalit movement to challenge the socio-cultural dominance of the higher castes in India. When people are fed up with injustice and want something better, they turn to the crowds for inspiration. This may be described as a Dalit-led campaign to achieve equality with the other Hindu castes. It was the major goal of the Dalit Movement to create a society in India that was based on equal opportunity. Although the constitutional identity fails to capture the whole picture, it is nonetheless a useful tool. In view of the four works, namely Debrahmanizing

History, Poisoned Bread, The Prisons We Broke, and Dalit Visions, the genuine picture will be portrayed in this article.

### **THE POLITICAL STRATEGY**

In order to achieve their goals, the Dalits have historically and now used four different techniques, some of which they've combined. At the top of the list is obtaining power for its own sake (because once you do, people will flock to you instead of you having to beg for their favour), but it has also been used as a means to other purposes (e.g., greater economic and educational opportunities). Frontier Missions: A Journal of International Scholarship There has been disagreement among Dalits as to whether they should seek political power on their own, independent of other castes and communities, or in cooperation with those groups and individuals who share their objectives and concerns. Even in the Bharatiya Janata Party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which has a conventional Hindu worldview and is hostile to Dalits, there are Dalit members of Parliament and state legislatures, as well as Dalit party employees. Regionally, the Bahujan Samaj Party of Kanshi Ram and Ms. Mayawati, as well as the Republican Party of India, both of which are headed by Dalits, have representatives in Parliament. To date, no consensus has been reached on the Dalit question of how to best gain power for themselves and other marginalised groups (such as tribals, religious minorities, women, and the poor in general) by forming whatever alliances are most expedient, or how to best maintain pressure on those in power from the outside by maintaining some ideological and programmatic unity, at least among Dalits themselves. As the above summary implies, Dalits are not united politically at the current moment, and many question aloud if the political process can deliver on the promises that Dalits have every right to expect from it. Every person of India is guaranteed equality, rights, and justice under the Indian Constitution. Discrimination based on a person's perceived untouchability is expressly forbidden under the Constitution. Equal rights and social justice in India have become associated with helping the scheduled castes, those who have suffered from caste prejudice for centuries, and their descendants today (SCs).

### **THE SOCIAL STRATEGY**

The word 'Dalit' has no social meaning. Dalit is a literary or cultural word that has been developed by sociologists. The political group 'Dalit Panthers' adopted the word 'Dalit' in their manifesto in 1973 to describe the phrase 'Dalit Panthers' (Murugkar 1991). What is the significance of developing a new definition of Dalit? As a result, it is impossible to accurately describe the character and makeup of the people that the name Dalit connotes without a precise definition. To begin with, it's difficult to determine the exact population that the term "Dalit" refers to because the "Dalit Panthers" proposed a class definition that included people from Scheduled

Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), landless labourers, impoverished farmers, and women as well as those who were exploited politically, economically, or religiously (Murugkar 1991:237). On the basis of these characteristics, Kumar (2005, 2010 b) has attempted to define the word Dalit sociologically

1. One-of-a-kind position within the Hindu social hierarchy
2. Because of their structural placement, they have been subjected to a long history of social marginalisation.
3. There has been a long history of exclusion from social groups.
4. Caste-based social standing that cannot be changed.
5. Building a conscience rooted in the historical exclusion of social groups due to structural location.
6. From Buddha and Ravidas through Ambedkar and Ambedkarites to the Jai Bhim salutation and festivities that transcend caste, language barrier or geographic location.

Further, it is important to point out that Dalits face a cumulative social exclusion that affects all aspects of their lives, including their economic, political, religious, and educational spheres of influence. Even if the members of such communities attain economic or educational mobility, or relocate overseas, the exclusion has a lengthy and unalterable history that spans thousands of years (Kumar 2004, Kumar 2009 c). Individuals from these disparate groups are bonded together by their shared structural location, lengthy history of exclusion, and unchangeable social position. On top of all of that, they've evolved a particular brand of consciousness as a result of these traits, leading them to create their own icons like Buddha and Ambedkar, their own greetings and celebrations like Buddha Jayanti or the birth and death anniversaries of Babasaheb.

### **AMBEDKAR'S VIEW ON DALITS**

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's contribution to Dalit understanding is critical. Before beginning his crusade against untouchability and the caste system, he studied Hindu civilization and the caste system. Before he became a scholar, he was a man of action as well as a scholar. For the sake of his struggle against injustice, Ambedkar devoted much of his literature to illuminating the workings of the caste system and elucidating the genesis of the concept of "untouchability." The lower castes' inability to remove their oppressors, according to him, was due to two factors: their partial internalisation of hierarchy and the inherent qualities of caste-based inequality itself. He argued that M.N. Srinivas would later refer to this as the sanskritization

process, although Ambedkar had already noticed this before. In 1916, Ambedkar presented his first research paper at Columbia University and explained that the caste system could not have been imposed by the Brahmins over society, but that it took shape when they were able to convince other groups that their values were universally superior and that they had to be emulated by other persons of the society, including endogamy, a marital rule that closed the system upon itself. Ambedkar describes the kind of inequality produced by the caste system as "graded inequality." In *Untouchables or the Children of India's Ghetto*, he compares it to other forms of injustice that were easier to eliminate or remedy. The Third State was able to rise up against the nobility and monarchy under the Ancient Regime. During the industrial revolution, the working class was able to organise against the capitalists. Inequality in a caste-based society is different because it separates the upper caste groups that govern society and prevents them from toppling the oppressor because of this rationale. For example, the Bahujan Samaj, which includes the majority of society, is split into two lower castes: Dalits (lower-caste Dalits) and Shudras (lower-caste Shudras). Dr. Ambedkar's principal goal was to unify the Dalits and the Bahujan Samaj, and then to provide them a distinct identity that would allow them to pursue a path away from sanskritization.

### **GANDHI'S VIEW ON DALITS**

Gandhi ji often used the phrase "harijan," and his harijan upliftment movement played an essential role in the program's constructive elements. A few readers of *Navajivan* recommended Gandhi adopt the term Harijan as a synonym for the word *Antyaja*, which meaning last-born, in his speeches. Harijana is a Gujarati poet's term for god-fearing persons who have been rejected by society. An anti-untouchability campaign was launched as a method to aid in the Indian national struggle in an indirect manner. Most of the local movements that began and grew were favourable to the continuing Indian national movement, which was taking place. It aided in the mobilisation of individuals who had hitherto been kept out of political affairs. Later, it was crucial in instilling a sense of unity among the untouchables, allowing them to be more organised. Varnas were the foundation of Indian social structure and society in the pre-colonial era.. The individual's religious, economic, political, and social life was shaped by the Varna in which he was born. By being born in a certain Varna, he or she has already established his or her rights and responsibilities. The Brahmins occupied the highest social positions, while the Shudras were relegated to the lowest. The caste and the Varna are clearly distinct. The term "Varna" refers to a person's colour and, as a result, the responsibilities they are expected to do. The profession a person chooses is referred to as a person's Caste. As a result, a single Varna may have a plethora of occupations. Initially, people chose their vocations based on their physical and mental abilities, but this practise remained restricted to the Varnas in which they lived for a long time. Throughout his life, Gandhi ji never

questioned the value of the Varnadharma. To him, Varnashrama is not a graded system of untouchability; it does not represent grades to me. The divide is not vertical. In this case, it's a horizontal design. I believe that all Varnas are on the same level, if not the same level, of equality. As a result, there is no such thing as untouchability. Varnadharma is a powerful economic rule that, if adhered to, might rescue the planet from the impending doom. The lower castes of society were denied certain advantages enjoyed by the caste-Hindus. Namasudras, a new category, was later added to the original four. They were even lower on the social ladder than the sudras, if not lower. Also known as Panchamas, or "pariah." They were known as untouchables because of their status as individuals who were considered lower than even the sudra. Scavenging and sweeping were among the tasks they were expected to do. Untouchables' shadows were seen as a kind of pollution in certain regions of South India. The situations of the untouchables were the similar in rural and urban places. Those from rural regions who moved to the cities were almost solely employed in low-paying, menial service positions or in leather-handling vocations, in line with their typical poor or impure professions. Due to a lack of financial resources, the untouchables were unable to attend educational institutions and relocate to other parts of society, both of which made it difficult for them to do so. Because they were uneducated, they were seldom hired in the lowest levels of the administration as clerks. Until 1934, they were not allowed to join the ranks of the police department's lower echelons. However, even though there was no direct cast-domination in employment relations in the urban region, the occupational distinctions along caste lines were being duplicated in the rural area. Depressed Classes of the Madras Presidency had more severe limitations when it came to utilities like wells, roads and temples or status markers like clothes and jewellery. Those who moved to cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were therefore subject to two opposing currents. On the one hand, workplace interactions no longer featured caste dominance in the same way they formerly did. In addition, it is plausible to assume that this also sparked hopes and ambitions for more economic growth, better living circumstances, and educational opportunities. Untouchables' overall poverty and persistent caste inequalities in career and education possibilities, however, as well as their settlement patterns, are all improving. The term "untouchable" refers to a group of individuals who are viewed with scorn and hostility. Because it was a part of Hinduism, it was able to thrive. The following are examples of how this mentality was put into action:

1. public places of worship, educational institutions, and public employment are prohibited from admitting people with disabilities for enforcement of disability in reference to watering places, public charity institutions, public transportation, and such other locations.

2. crimes committed against the untouchables as a form of retaliation or retribution for exercising their legal rights, such as boycotting or starving them
3. public and private buildings and organizations discriminating against the untouchables
4. limit their usage of Jewellery and finery to a few items
5. for being forced to conduct low-status and menial tasks like foraging.

Hence 'Untouchability was sanctioned by Hindu customs and considered a fundamental element of Hindu faith.' Tradition has it that some Hindu groups, such as the Bhangi and other Anlyaj, Pancham, and Achhut subgroups, are considered untouchables. Even if it is an accident, Hindus from other groups feel they will be defiled if they come into contact with a member of one of the above-mentioned sects. The Indian National Congress, led by M. K. Gandhi, kept the issue of caste and untouchability alive while working to eradicate them. In 1932, Gandhi founded the All-India Anti-Untouchability League, which he later renamed the Harijan Sevak Sangh in order to better carry out his fight. To mobilise and integrate Dalits into the larger society, the Congress used the Sangh to travel into Dalit communities and villages, introducing the concept of "Harijans," or "children of god." A network of Harijan Sevak Sanghs arose throughout the country. Andhra Pradesh and Hyderabad both saw a flurry of branch openings. 'Harijan uplift' or 'constructive programmes' were aggressively pursued by the Sangh.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are many Indians who believe that the issue of caste prejudice and uncleanness has been overcome because of the presence of this Creamy layer and the existence of what one may term a Dry layer among other castes. Many are even attempting to repeal the Dalit reservations. Additionally, non-Untouchables have had them labelled as Dalits in order to take advantage of the reservation system! Dalits have a very thin Cream layer, and the great majority of Dalits continue to endure prejudice in their daily lives and in the workplace.

## **REFERENCE**

1. Beteille, A. (2002). Caste, class, and power: Changing patterns of stratification in a Tanjore Village. New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.
2. Ambedkar, B.R. 1979. Annihilation of caste, in Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches ( Vol. 1) (23-96). Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra.



3. Ambedkar, B.R.1989. Untouchables or the children of India's ghetto, in Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches (Vol. 5) (1-27). Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra.
4. Gail Omvedt (1994). Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India, Sage India.
5. Dumont, Louis. 1999. Homo hierarchicus: The caste system and its implications. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
6. Mayur Jaideo Gaikwad, "DALIT POLITICS IN UTTAR PRADESH AND THE EMERGENCE OF BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY", IJOMER, ISSN:2277-7881; IMPACT FACTOR :7.816(2021); IC VALUE:5.16; ISI VALUE:2.286
7. Surinder S Jodhka, "Leadership Legacies and the Politics of Hissedari", Vol. 56, Issue No. 3, 16 Jan, 2021
8. Chetan Sinha, "Dalit Leadership, Collective Pride and Struggle for Social Change Among Educated Dalits: Contesting the Legitimacy of Social Class Mobility Approach", February 6, 2020
9. DavidMosse, "Caste and development: Contemporary perspectives on a structure of discrimination and advantage", World Development Volume 110, October 2018, Pages 422-436
10. V. Basil Hans, "DALITS IN INDIA – FROM MARGINALISATION TO INCLUSION", An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal, Vol. 1, Issue-IV April 2016
11. Ghurey, G.S. 1979. Caste and race in India. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
12. Guha, Ranjit. 1982. 'On some aspects of the historiography of colonial India', in Ranjit Guha (ed.): Subaltern studies – I: Writings on South Asian history and society (1- 8). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
13. Gupta, S. K. 1985. The scheduled castes in modern Indian politics: Their emergence as a political power. New Delhi: MunshiramManoharlal.
14. Amit Ahuja (2019). Mobilizing the Marginalized Ethnic Parties without Ethnic Movements. Oxford University Press.
15. Christophe Jaffrelot (2010). Caste and Politics. India International Centre Quarterly Vol. 37, No. 2: 94-116