

**‘HISTORY OF DALIT MOVEMENT AND IDENTITY
IN UTTAR PRADESH: 1900-2000’**

SUMMARY

SUBMITTED

TO

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

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SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

This study is basically a narrative on discourse and practice of identity formation process took place among Dalits of Uttar Pradesh. In so doing, an attempt has been made to explore the structures, process and strategies that are manoeuvred in the domain of identity formation by Dalits. In short this study is a documentation of politics of identity formation and its implications in the contemporary times for Dalits of Uttar Pradesh.

E.H. Carr's famous statement of history is an unending dialogue between past, present and future is very much pertinent in case of identity formation in Dalits of Uttar Pradesh. In the British colonial period serious attempt was made by Dalits to carve out a distinctive identity rooted in the notions of self respect and human dignity. Wide range of strategies such as sanskritisation, Adi ideology and Adi-Hindu identity, Buddhist identity etc are used to improve the level of status and dignity of Dalits. This process created massive corpus of knowledge, symbols personalities which articulated the need of new identity. This study proposes that in the post independent period the Dalit Panther movement and Bahujan Samaj Party systematically rearticulated what has already been evolved by Dalit intellectuals in British India. Hence this study adopts a method of historical and contemporary analysis of Dalit movement from the prescriptive identity formation process to explore the dynamics of Dalit politics in the past and present and role of history in shaping it.

Generally it is believed that colonial modernity exercised significant impact upon the cultural and social practices of India guided by reason and rationality. This study proposes that colonial modernity is extremely plural and impacted life-worlds

of multiple communities in general and marginalised communities in particular. It was during the British rule that Dalits of India began to mobilise and redefine their identity in contrast to the traditional identity attributed to them. This mobilisation and assertion resulted in the form of vibrant anti-Brahman and Dalit movement in different parts of India. This movement besides critiquing Brahmanical religion articulated a vibrant discourse on non-Brahmanical identity for lower sections of Indian society. Dalit movement in different parts of India in general and United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) in particular attempted to create dynamic and respectable identity to former untouchable castes generally now known as Dalits.

This study attempts to contextualise the process of emergence of Dalit consciousness propelled by socio-economic, cultural and political forces emerged in the context British colonial rule in United Provinces. Particularly emergence of leather industry, urbanisation and access to modern education brought about new rationalist ideas among Dalit communities and prepared ground for reform movements to do away stigmatised identity ascribed by traditional social values. This study tries to document the emergence of Dalit movement and articulation of new dynamic identity in the form of caste associations such as Chamar Mahasabha, Jatav Mahasabha, Pasi Mahasabha, Kori Mahasabha etc, Adi-Hindu movement and others and their role in shaping identity formation process in Uttar Pradesh.

The main crux of identity formation process among Dalits of United Provinces is that the process of demanding and commending respectable social recognition from non-Dalit population. This manifested into wide range of approaches, methods and strategies. In United Provinces we could see broadly three frameworks for identity

formations. Firstly, Sanskritised identity approach, influenced by the ideas of Arya Samaj, Dalit intellectuals advocated the reformist mission within the Hindu framework. It means within Hindu religion the social and cultural status of Dalits can be bettered by reforming certain unacceptable practices usually done by Dalits. It has been argued that taboo on beef eating, and non-vegetarian food, liquor and adopting the practices of upper caste such as sacred thread the social status of Dalits would improve. This trend could be seen in the strategies of several caste associations which claimed their origins in Surya vemasha, and Chandra vemsha, Raj put and Brahmanical origins. Second trend could be seen in the form of assertion of the theory of sons of soil by Swami Atchutanand and his Adi-Hindu Dharma. This movement proposes a radical ideology of Dalits being original inhabitants of India who were subjected and oppressed by Aryan invaders. This strategy tried to provide Dalits as authors of original and pure Indian culture and civilisation and therefore command respectable identity in India. This Adi ideology in fact provided a political and cultural platform for Dalits to put forwarded their demands to Hindu public and British government. Third trend in the identity formation process is that Buddhist identity trend initiated by Iyoti Thass from Madras and subsequently adopted by Dr. Ambedkar. In United Provinces attempt has been made by Dalit intellectuals to associate Dalits with Buddhism as a means to achieve respectable social status. These are the some of the main trajectories of identity formation process adopted and executed by Dalits castes in Utter Pradesh. This study vividly describes these processes in the chapter one, two and three.

The significant trend to be noticed is that the knowledge and activism of Dalit movement of British Indian and its views on identity formation process transformed

into vibrant cultural and political movement by Dalits in independent India. Emergence of the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra and its ascendancy in different parts of India is in fact a cultural manifestation of the quest of Dalits for respectable identity and strategies to achieve it. The major contribution of the Dalit Panther Movement is that it generated vibrant consciousness among Dalits of India and unleashed a process of translating the thought in the form of literature. This movement in fact prepared a good ground for unity among Dalits and prepared them for political assertion.

The level of assertion and quest for respectable identify among Dalits acquires higher proportion after establishment of BAMCEF by Kanshi Ram. It is a culmination and transformation of Dalit thought into social and political action. It has done a serious work in mobilisation and dissemination of Dalit consciousness among masses by using the services of Dalit intelligentsia. This study demonstrates that BAMCEF penetrated into every nook and corner of India and mobilised and prepared Dalits for a movement to changes their life and identity. Emergence of Dalit as political force is indeed an interesting development in Indian politics. It marks with de-hegmonisation process in which alternative to Indian National Congress emerged to translate the aspiration of lower sections of Indian society into political power. Attempt was made by BAMCEF to organise Dalits by using innovative methods of cycle yatras, public speeches, publication and dissemination of Dalti literature etc.

This study also proposes that emergence of Bahujan Samaj Party is yet another manifestation of the quest of Dalits for respectable identity with transformative vision. Chapter number four demonstrates the context and process of emergence of BSP in

Uttar Pradesh and its heavy dependency upon history, symbols and contents on Dalit movement in colonial India. The party mobilised Dalits and other marginalised sections of Indian society with slogan of power of majority of social groups to transform their lives. Attempt has also been made to show how BSP tried to change of socio-economic conditions of marginalised sections in general and Dalits in particular by the way of executing several schemes and strategies and creation of visual symbolism by creation of massive monuments to immortalise Dalit culture and leaders.

The main propositions of this study are follows: serious attempt was made by Dalit communities to carve out a respectable identity as pre-condition for transforming their lives from Untouchables to a strong political power: several experiments were made by Dalit intelligentsia to situate Dalits in different domains of respectable identity sources: attempt was made to unite multiple ethnic and caste communities traditionally treated as Untouchable under a single identity to make them as formidable political force; in independent India the assertion of Dalit continued and particularly transformed into political power in the form of BSP. In fact the quest of Dalits for respectable identity still continues as oppressive forces still actively doing their work.

This study is basically a history of counter hegemony of Dalits to the hegemony of Brahmanical hegemony. This we locate in the domain of identity formation process in Uttar Pradesh. We tried to assess the impact of history on Dalit politics as sources of inspiration for unity and assertion of Dalits and their claim for political power. This study is thus a documentation of dialectical relationship between

hegemony and counter-hegemony in the historical and contemporary analytical perspective. The concept of identity formation is indeed a vast and complicated phenomenon, this study could be able to provide a chronological narrative on Dalit movement and its influence upon the contemporary Dalit politics. But the fact is this field of study offers immense potential for further studies as role of several caste associations, personalities, organisations and their role in shaping Dalit identity could be studied in a detailed way.

Objectives of study

The various struggles launched by Dalits, whether they are for protesting the practice of Untouchability and perpetration of atrocities, or demanding minimum wages, and land rights, employment, self respect and dignity and political representation, have aimed at raising consciousness among Dalits. However, based on this above research question, the present study tries to historically explore the following objective.

- Understand identity politics among Dalits through its historical and dialectics.
- Analyze the process of political mobilization and its various strategies.
- Understand the process of political mobilization and the emergence of Dalit identity-its genesis, process, linkage and consequences.
- Examine various socio-cultural, political and economic changes among Dalits.
- Study new religious identities that have emerged during Dalit movement in the post-independence period.
- Understand the role of the state and civil society organization in improving the status of Dalits.

- Analyze the socio-economic background of dalits political discourses.

Hypothesis

-Colonial rule has created a dynamic context for emergence of multiple identities among the marginalized sections of India in general and Dalits in particular.

-Colonial modernity enabled Dalits to articulate their identity based upon the principles of dignity and self respect.

-The identity formation process among Dalits was crafted by politically and socially consciousness intelligentsia in United Provinces.

-It the postcolonial period, Dalit identity formation process has mainly been driven by BASCEF, BSP and Dalit Buddhist movement.

- Dalit identity process is basically an emancipatory project to provide not only respectable identity but also laid down a path for progress of Dalit society. This process is critically associated with identity formation process.

Methodology

This study is basically an historical and contemporary analysis of Dalit identity formation process. To construct this picture we depended upon both primary and secondary sources. So far as secondary sources are concern, we have consulted books and articles related to various themes of Dalit history and politics. Primary sources included archival sources such as census, district gazettters, proceedings of government departments, reports of various committees, publications of BSP, BAMCEF in the form of pamphlets, reports, news items etc. Attempt has also been

made to document the popular historical writings and their role in identity formation process of Dalits in Uttar Pradesh.

Brief note on Chapterisation

This thesis has been divided into six chapters. Chapter one introduced the thematically aspects of this thesis including review of literature, objectives of study, hypothesis, methodology.

Chapter two entitled Dalit Identity as Evolutionary Discourse in India documents the evolutionary trajectory of Dalit identity formation in different parts of India in the context of colonial rule and various factors that have influenced the process.

Chapter three named Dalit Discourse and Identity: A Study of BAMCEF focus on historical dimension of Dalit identity formation process and its impact upon emergence of BAMCEF and its role in creation of Dalit identity and politics.

Chapter four entitled Bahujan Samaj Party and Dalit Identity explores the role of BSP in creation of congenial conditions of evolution of Dalit identity in Uttar Pradesh and its impact upon the political mobilization of Dalits.

Chapter five of their thesis entitled Buddhism and Dalit identity in UP concentrates on the impact of Buddhism particularly impact of Ambedkar's conversion into Buddhism in UP and how it impacted upon the religious and social identity of Dalits in UP.

Chapter six is conclusion which proposes summery of thesis and mentions some of the important findings of the study and at the same time proposes future prospects of the areas of identity politics and Dalits.