

The changing pattern of Dalit social mobility in Haryana

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Abstract

The Society in itself is an outcome of the process of social Mobilization. And thus the mobilization is a necessary dynamic process in any society. It describes the nature and amount of change in social position over time. More commonly, the term is used in connection to the common agenda, movement or activity of individuals, families, and social-political-economic-religious and ethnic groups for some common aims. The present paper is concentrated on the changing pattern mobilization of dalits in modern north Haryana. Historically the Dalit mobilization was restricted to *sanskritisation* and *conversion* but in modern times these two phenomenons hardly matters. Now days the new pattern of Dalit social mobility gaining strength, may be called Ambedkarisation.

Introduction

Dalit mobilization historically is a very vast and popular ancient phenomenon in Indian civil society which has gained momentum in independent or free modern India. Dalit is a large section of society which has been discriminated against on various grounds since from the post Vedic age to the present. Caste is the fundamental basis on which the discrimination started from in the ancient India. The Dalits were denied even from the very basic rights i.e. right to reside, right to worship, right to shelter in residential area, liberty and Equality of all kinds. They fought for basic amenities and rights, without which life was impossible on earth. Against this discrimination dalits has used various techniques i.e. conversion to some other religion, sanskritisation and so on to get rid of the problem. The present paper would describe the present scenario or changing pattern of Dalit social mobilization in Haryana by giving a very brief amount of historic pattern and status of Dalit social mobility.

Historically existing Patterns of Dalit socio-religious mobility in India

There have been many modes and strategies of dalit social mobilization in India i. e. many socio-religious and political movements or sort of resistance occurs since from the ancient times. But the two dominant strategies, conversion and sanskritisation had been approached more in the sphere of social science research. Before making sense of the changing pattern of dalit social mobility, let me introduce the existing dominant patterns i.e. conversion and saskritisation. Rooted in the radical philosophy of the satyashodhak movement, Buddhist conversion agenda has aimed at dalit emancipation through 'unequivocal rejection of Hinduism (Owen 1969). It is based on the premise that Hinduism contained the seeds of social exclusion, which prompted the upper caste to perpetrate atrocities on dalits by enlisting support from the oppressive declaration of the Hindu sacred texts known as Vedas, Upanishads, dharamsastras, smritis, puranas, and the epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata. This agenda argues jayashree b. Gokhale, '.....was intended to be a counter-ideology that would combat the penetration of Verna, offer an alternative interpretation of a situation of the untouchable and provide a basis on which they could unite politically (Gokhale). It severs, ties with all social and the political organizations of the upper caste, and accords no place whatsoever even to the bhakti movement, which is often eulogized as a unique movement for the emancipation of dalits. The objection of the Buddhist conversion was to restore a sense of self-respect, dignity, and autonomy of dalits who had reduced to the status of mere 'objects of ideological condemnation and material servitude,' and were deprived of bare minimum human existence for centuries (Gokhale).

The agenda of conversion was propagated and promoted by not less than a man Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the dalit messiah (1891-1956). Social mobility takes place by another mean that is 'Sanskritization'¹. Sanskritization is a traditional channel of mobility for the lower classes. It means that the lower castes follow all those religious rituals, way of living, beliefs, festivals and ethics as performed by the existing dominant religious community because it makes them feel confident, giving them the sense of belongingness and equality among equals. But ultimately the dalit community in modern India is rejecting to all these two techniques or patterns of socio-religious mobilization. It might be because the dalits are making serious efforts to be educated and the process of industrialization, modernization, privatization and globalization has also contributed to their socio-religious mobility as these processes may not be guided or influenced by social hierarchies but the same are giving more or less equal opportunities to all. Having kept this in mind one can argues that because the

¹ M. N. Srinivas (1972), *Social change in Modern India*, (Bombay, Oriental Longman), p. 6.

changing time and space the nature or pattern of dalit socio-religious mobility is changing too. In the present paper the author tried to find out the new emerging factor or pattern of dalit social mobility i.e. the **AMBEDKARISM**.

Status of Dalit Mobilization in Haryana

As far as the socio-religious mobility of dalits in Haryana is concerned one can argue that Haryana has a larger population of dalits (19.35) as compared to the national average of 16.20. (Census 2001) but the mobility among Dalits is very slow if we compare it to Dalit mobilization at national level. Dalits have been historically continued to be marginalized and deprived section who has suffered many indignities. Even in the present time, they are living in a very miserable condition. They are socially, educationally, economically, and politically backward in the state. A huge Dalit population has no land, no jobs, no home, no awareness about their rights, and they have no good economic condition to make their children educate while education and awareness are the basic factors for their social mobility.

Another important point is that the rigid caste system has frozen Dalit mobility of all type in Haryana. The social structure and socio-economic relations do not allow them to be organized. However in the recent past, there is a visible upsurge in the assertion of Dalit identity, which challenges the humiliation that they have faced for centuries. There has emerged a strong urge among Dalits throughout the country to assert their identity and self-respect through their own cultural resources and challenge the cultural hegemony of the upper castes.

The failure of land reforms in the state has also weakened the dalit mobility in the state. As a consequence of it the Jats have overwhelming hold over land, political power, and dominance on economic and social sphere. As the owners of more than 80 percent of all land in the state, the Jats are the only caste group to have cornered the benefits of both, the Green Revolution of the 1970s and the current phase of urbanisation/ industrialization. The caste oppression and caste violence in Haryana is increasingly visible at many levels across the state, as young people from Dalit communities begin to assert their rights to education and express their aspirations for a dignified life. On the one hand, the growing visibility and confidence of these young people.

Dalits have been largely non-participant and less aware of the socio-political milieu. Their poverty, illiteracy, and low socio-religious status have kept them away from the mainstream of social and political life. However, in recent time they have been provided an opportunity to participate in the large political system through the provisions of reservation at state level politics as well as national level politics. Now, they are realizing the fact that the social and economic interests of their community cannot be safeguarded unless they are politically and socially organized.

Throughout the country the lower untouchable castes are organizing themselves to fight against socio-religious disabilities, atrocities, caste based discrimination and the economic exploitations. They agitate for their legitimate rights in economic opportunities, educational privileges and political power. Widespread collective mobilization centered on such interests has led to organize social movements with the defined ideology and leadership, which have brought about significant socio-economic and political parties and human rights movements, Dalits have taken part in struggles against the state and their upper caste counterparts. Now Dalits dream of their sons to be motivated by Dr. BR Ambedkar.

Ambedkar, Ambedkarism and social mobility of Dalits in Haryana

Dr. Bheem Rao Ambedkar has played a very eminent role to mobilize the Dalits in India. He has appeared as the leader of the community in Maharashtra by 1920. He was the first highly educated and active leader from within the community.² He gave the slogan – Educate, Unite and Agitate for the social mobility of Dalits in India. He has organized a movement to accelerate political, religious, social and educational mobility among Dalits at large scale. In 1924, he has formed ‘Bahiskrit Hitkarini Sabha’, an educational and cultural organization which aimed at improving the social conditions of the Dalit community.³ To mobilize the Dalits of India through the political process, Dr. Ambedkar has formed three political parties named Independent Labour Party (1936), The Scheduled Caste Federation (1942), and Republican Party of India (1956).⁴

Through the religious conversion, from Hinduism to Buddhism, Dr. Ambedkar has led the religious mobility among Dalits especially Mahars of Maharashtra. He has declared that I born in

² Lata, Murugkar, (1991), *Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra: A Sociological Appraisal*, (Bombay, Popular Prakashan), pp. 24-28.

³ G. C. Wankhede, (1999), *Social Mobility and Scheduled Castes: Receding Horizons*, (Jaipur, Rawat Publications).

⁴ Ghanshyam, Shah (2005), *Social Movement in India: A Review of Literature*, (New Delhi, Sage Publications), pp.123-24.

Hinduism because it was not in my hand but I will never die as a Hindu. After this declaration he has adopted Buddhism in 1956 and, mobilized and inspired Dalits of India to do so.⁵ Dr. Ambedkar has also launched the movement of temple entry at Kalaram Mandir, Nasik and Parvati temple at Pune in 1920-30⁶ for the equal social status, dignity and self-respect of Dalits.

Dr. Ambedkar has greatly emphasized on education for Dalits with the view that only education could liberate them from their traditional bondage and subordination to the upper castes and classes. In his opinion, education would enlighten them and expose them to realize their long cherished goals of embracing equality, liberty, fraternity and justice.⁷ Since the time of Ambedkar, Dalits in the country have started to achieve education. Along the education and socio-economic achievement, a new form of social stratification has emerged among the Dalits. There is no doubt that Dalits have achieved upward mobility in several domains of their life but the degree of their status mobility is definitely low.⁸ But after his demise the process of Ambedkarism/ Ambedkarisation become popular among dalits of india including Haryana. Ambedkarism refers to the growth of consciousness among Dalits based on the name, life, teachings and works of Baba Sahib Dr. Bheem Rao Ambedkar. The process of Ambekarisation becomes sharpen in Haryana when Kanshi Ram propagated it in north india especially in Punjab Haryana and Uttar Pardesh.

Kanshi Ram was born on 15 March 1934 in the chamar Ramdassia from Khawaspur Village in district Ropar, Punjab. Brought up in Punjab, which was comparatively free from the social stigma of untouchability. He did not experience any of the exploitation that dalits in the north India usually face in their childhood. In fact, he remained unaware of the oppression suffered by dalits in the country, until two events took place in his life: he experienced caste discrimination and was influenced by Ambedkar's writings, particularly "Annihilation of Caste". This made him aware of his identity and instilled pride in – his background (Singh, 1996).

After becoming the member of some minority organizations and formation of some small organizations of working class, in 1978 BAMCEF became a big national federation, and by the mid 1970s. Kanshi Ram had established a broad network of contacts in Maharashtra and the adjoining regions. He moved to Delhi and then on to Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Parallel to his attempts to work among educated dalit employees. He also tried to spread the message of

⁵ James Massey (2003), *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: A Study in Just Society*. (New Delhi, Manohar), pp. 24-30.

⁶ Keer, Dhananjay (1954), *Dr. Ambedkar Life and Mission*, (Bombay, Popular Prakashan), p.

⁷ Ibid., p. 487.

⁸ Nandu, Ram (2009), *Beyond Ambedkar: Essays on Dalits in India*, (New Delhi, Har-Anand Publications), pp. 28-29.

Ambedkar among the masses. In 1980, he organized an oral and pictorial account of Ambedkar's life and views, together with contemporary material and oppression and atrocities called 'Ambedkar on wheels'; between April and June 1980, this road show was carried to 34 destinations in nine northern states (Mendelsohn and Vieziany 1998: 222).

The Dalit Shoshit Sangharsh Samiti (DS-4) was also launched in 1982 which was an agitational and political wing of BAMCEF. The mobilizational methods adopted by DS-4 were aimed at awakening the oppressed sections of the society and make them realize their strength through Jagrans, people's parliaments, Nukkar sabhas, anti liquid agitations and prachar yatras. By overwhelming the success of DS-4 Kanshi Ram decided to form a political party which can enhance the process of social change in India. So, on Ambedkar's birthday (14 April) 1984 the BSP came into existence and now onwards Mayawati the secretary of the party take over the charge of social change in India. In April 2007, the BSP won a landslide victory in the state elections capturing power on its own for the first time and securing 30.6% of the vote. Mayawati a Dalit woman and former School teacher, has led the BSP since 1995 (Jeffrey, 2008).

Under the leadership and Chief Ministership of Mayawati the BSP was committed to bring about the social, economic, political and cultural transformation of dalits. The BSP has persuaded this goal through some political strategies i.e. it has aimed to transform the symbolic landscape of north India especially UP through the creation of parks, statues, and libraries dedicated to Dr. Bhim Rao Ram Ji Ambedkar and other Dalit heroes, and by renaming hospitals, educational institutions, and stadiums on similar lines. Uttar pardesh and Haryana shares their boundaries so the impact of UP scenario influenced the process of Ambedkarism in Haryana too. Dalits in Haryana are looking the example of UP as a model of assertion. Further, Kumari Mayawati visited the state many times to mobilize the dalits of Haryana on the similar lines.

The works and activities of Kanshi ram and Mayawati contributed a lot in mobilizing the Dalits in Haryana. After Kanshi Ram's propagation of Ambedkarism the people of Haryana felt a sense of self respect and motivation for themselves. They realized that Dr. Ambedkar is real hero for them who paved the way for their liberty equality and rights. Further the scheduled castes especially the **CHAMAARS** of Haryana mobilized on the name of Ambedkar as desired by Kanshi Ram. This particular section of Dalits started celebrating the birth anniversary of Baba sahib Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. Further dalits constitute various social, political, and educational organizations or associations named after the name of Dr. Bheem Rao Ambedkar they even wish one another as **Jai Bheem**

(victory to Ambedkar). Moreover they install or establish the portrait or statues of Dr. Bheem Rao Ambedkar at their religious place i.e. Guru Ravidass Temples.

Uncountable number of atrocities on Dalits in Haryana has also paved the way for the mobility among them. Besides the Indian constitution has created many provisions to safeguard the interest of Dalits and government has launched many welfare schemes for them. However, their implementation is a matter of criticism among Dalits. They feel that the welfare schemes have not been fully implemented and not honestly carried out. Such schemes and facilities have tried to grow up political, educational, and at some extent economic status of Dalits in the state. Therefore they tried to be organized for the honest implementation of state policies of welfare.

The functioning of khap panchayats (unconstitutional social formations based on caste) has also strengthen the social mobility of Dalits in Haryana because the said formations are popular among the *jaat* (caste) the upper and dominant caste in the state. Most of the Dalits believe that khap panchayats are anti Dalits as they do not allow inter caste marriages, banned their entry to some religious places (*nagger khedas*) restrict them celebrating festivals with them (i.e. *HOLI*). Therefore the Dalits felt to be marginalized and try to be organized.

Last but not the least in the present day Haryana the process of democratization, liberalization, privatization, globalization, constitutional safeguards, educational attainment, helped the dalits to be mobilized socially. So one can conclude that the community, which had been marginalized from centuries on various grounds, claiming an identity for themselves based on **Ambedkarism**.

Conclusion

Although the Dalit social mobility in Haryana is going on a very slow pace but now onward it is seen visible across the state. Initially it was restricted to **SANSKRITIZATION** and **COVERSION** but after the Ambedkarite movement by Kanshi Ram and Mayawati the community started using agitation as a method to be organized. Now Dalits has started opposing the hegemonic social structure of caste ridden society in Haryana. They are now restructuring or reimagining their past culture, History, civilizational values, religious beliefs, Dalit heros, Dalit Panthers, Dalit messihias, (like Ambedkar, Priyar, Narayana Guru etc.) that is why they are rejecting **SANSKRITIZATION** and **COVERSION** and moving towards **AMBEDKARISM**.

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