

Crisis in Dalit Movement

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Crisis in Dalit movement

As the Editor of *Dalit Voice*, India's oldest and the largest circulated Dalit journal, I congratulate the ONGC leadership for organising this national symposium on the role of PSUs, social engineering and nation building. Some of my observations may be harsh but being an Ambedkarite I have to be intellectually honest.

At a time when even the most red-hot communists led by Chief Minister Bhuddhadeb Bhattacharya of W. Bengal are advocating all-round privatisation and money-driven society, the ONGC call for a value-driven society and the need to strengthen public sector and "social engineering" will only evoke laughter.

Your invitation speaks of the "value of equity and reservation policy in PSUs". What is much more shocking to the ruling class is you also advocate "the need for caring and sharing".

DALITS CHEATED DR. AMBEDKAR

But as a journalist and writer for the past 50 years I am sorry to tell you that all these values are washed out in our ruling class rush towards the American-led money-driven society.

The worst victims of such a money-driven society will be the Dalits, the children of Babasaheb Ambedkar. Even in the current govt. our Prime Minister, Finance Minister and the Planning Commission Vice-Chairman are all very serious advocates of money-driven society chasing the elusive GDP. Not the "gross national happiness" but the

promotion of the Dalal Street.

I can understand India's ruling class, a mere 15% comprising the upper caste society, running after this mirage. But I am sorry to tell you that quite a lot of our own educated, elite Dalits have also fallen prey to the ruling class machinations. As this gathering comprises such an elite class, I would like to deal with the serious crisis facing our Dalit society.

It may be the interest of the rulers to ride rough-shod over us. But is it in the interest of the children of Babasaheb to allow them to trample over us?

So I am going to deal with one of the most serious problems facing the Dalit society which is completely forgotten in the current race for GDP.

DALIT MOVEMENT DEAD

Babasaheb said "Untouchables are not Hindu and were never Hindu". Did he not say that? How many sitting here can touch your heart and confess that you are not Hindu? You have Hindu names, you worship Hindu gods, you go to Hindu temple, you observe Hindu festivals. Yes, you are Hindu.

Babasaheb asked us to quit Hinduism and embrace Buddhism. Did we do it? I embraced Buddhism at Patna 20 years ago. When I was born I was a Hindu but later I kicked this gutter stuff.

It is now 61 years since India became "independent". I have been in the thick of the Dalit movement right from 1975 — even from the days Dalit Panthers movement began in Bombay.

But now all this is forgotten. Republican Party got divided into six or more? Dalit movement itself is dead in Maharashtra, the very home of Babasaheb.

What about the reservations? Have we have been able to fight and force the govt. to implement the constitutional reservations?

Statistics gathered about the Scheduled Castes govt. servants in Karnataka revealed that in the course of the last 61 years, the total number of SCs who have availed the benefit of reservation is only about 5% as against 15%.

And this 5% is all at the lowest level.

HINDUISM KILLED OUR ANGER

But our people are not getting angry. They are not perturbed. They are not agitated because Hinduism has killed our anger.

In fact, our long experience with the Dalit movement has revealed that reservation is used by the Brahminical rulers to kill our spirit of revolt.

Rather, reservation is used by the Hindus as a tool to keep our people under Hinduism.

We no longer demand equal share. We no longer demand equal power and fight for it. We are satisfied if jobs are given to our people — at the lower level.

Now there is a clamour for reservation in private sector. Will the Hindu rulers, who cheated us in constitutional reservation, give us reservation in private sector, which is a family enterprise of some upper caste businessmen?

Quite a number of our senior officers do not disclose they are Dalit. They put on *nama*, *kumkum*, go to Tirupati. Do all sorts of *pujas* to please Brahmins. But no amount of eating Brahmin shit will please the rulers. In fact such cowardly fellows will be the first to be slaughtered.

Do you know that in *Yajnas* and *Yagas* it is only the tame animals like sheep, lamb that are slaughtered and eaten? They don't touch lion and tiger. Babasaheb was a lion. But we his children have become like pig, sheep, lamb. (*laughter*).

BUDHISM IS DEAD

How can we go on living this life of a slave?

Our people will become revolutionaries and take to armed struggle when their reservation goes. But the Brahmins will not scrap the reservations. Because they know the SC/ST will become tigers and eat them if the reservations are scrapped.

I will briefly touch Buddhism. I don't know how many of you have read Babasaheb's book, *The Buddha & His Dhamma*. The Buddhism he propounded in it is different from the Buddhism our people are following.

MEDITATION IS A BRAHMINICAL TRAP

I am often invited to Buddhist functions. The *Bhikkus* at the conversion ceremony insist upon vegetarian food.

Babasaheb was a meat-eater. Budha died out of eating pork. But our Buddhists propagate vegetarianism. (*laughter*).

This is Brahminical Buddhism. The Mahabodhi Society Buddhism is not Babasaheb's Buddhism. It is Brahmin Buddhism.

There is a powerful movement led by Brahmins and a Marwari Goenka to propagate *Vipassana* (meditation). But this again is not Babasaheb's Buddhism. Nobody has seen Babasaheb doing meditation or writing or speaking about meditation. All nonsense.

Meditation is a Brahminical humbug.

But many of our highly placed Dalit officials have fallen prey to *Vipassana*.

Do you know that Budha was holding *kadga* (sword) and openly waging war against Brahmins? Do you know he practised military methods? All these things are suppressed by Brahmin historians.

That is why the Brahmins killed Buddhism and reduced it a non-violent, vegetarian stuff and our people have fallen a victim to this totally false Brahminical Buddhism.

In other words, our people have failed in taking the right path even in Buddhism. And those couple of people who became Buddhists are under the grip of Brahminism.

OUR YOUTH & WOMEN NOT WITH US

I go round the whole country and address meetings. But in all such meetings I hardly find our youth and women.

Women make half the world. The Dalit movement and the Ambedkar thoughts are confined only to men. Even in houses where *Dalit Voice* goes, only the men read it

and then sleep. Their women visit Brahmin temples and influence their children in Hindu superstitions. (*cheers*).

Our Dalit women worship Hindu gods in their houses.

When a person calls himself an Ambedkarite and if he cannot influence his own wife, how can he influence the society? How can he transform his people?

Look at the Hindu terrorist party, RSS. They catch hold of only youth and women. That is how they grow and we become weak and weaker.

WE LACK STRATEGIES & TACTICS

It is true that Truth is with us, justice is with us, history is with us, number is also with us. Yes. That doesn't mean future is with us. No.

Brahmins have nothing and yet they win because they have the right strategies and tactics. Ideology alone is not enough to win a battle. You need right strategies and tactics.

Babasaheb had given us the strategies and tactics — "Educate, Agitate, Organise". But we by-heart and sing the *Thri Sarana* blindly without understanding its meaning.

Dalit movement failed because of male domination. Keeping the youth and women out, we have cheated our Father and killed the Dalit movement. (*loud cheers*).

The subject I have chosen is too vast but the time is too short. I will conclude by referring to one very important point which all of you are familiar with.

RUSH FOR POLITICAL POWER

Today, there is no Dalit movement anywhere in India. The only movement we have is the "political movement" if it can be called a movement. There is a tremendous rush to join a political party and "gain political power".

I never sought "political power". I have successfully fought several attempts to take me into party politics.

One favourite argument with today's Dalit youth is that "political power is the master-key to open all locks". But Babasaheb said political power can come only if it is preceded by a thorough-going socio-cultural revolution.

HINDUS HOLD ALL THE POWER

When the upper castes (15%) are controlling the media, judiciary, bureaucracy, banking, finance, education plus their obedient gods, will they allow us to capture the political power? And even if we capture power, will they allow us to implement the constitutional mandate?

Please note Babasaheb finally opted for religious conversion because he wanted to use Buddhism as a socio-cultural revolution. In other words, Babasaheb gave priority to socio-cultural revolution and not to capture political power. That doesn't mean political power is not important. Along with political movement we must also have simultaneous social and cultural revolution.

KANSHI RAM MOVEMENT

Kanshi Ram spent several decades preparing the Chamars and other oppressed people of UP in socio-cultural movement which finally led him to capture

political power. Our people are mostly in govt. service. Our people are also in political power. There are about 120 MPs in the Lok Sabha. But what have they been able to achieve with "political power" and "govt. power"?

MONEY & CASTE

Did they make any dent on the problem of our people? Our people are still living as slaves of Hindus.

Reservations have helped not even 5% of our people — most of them in lower positions. Those in IAS/IPS are always afraid of the Brahmins. Our political leaders are not elected exclusively by the Dalits. No reserved constituency in India has a majority Dalit population. That means our MPs are elected by non-Dalits. Even if we give priority to capture "political power" even then there will be another problem.

Political power can be acquired only if you have enough money for election and the right caste to get the vote. When our people are having neither the money nor the caste strength how can they get political power?

All this confusion and crisis have come about only because we have forgotten the thoughts of Babasaheb.

URBAN MIGRATION

There is yet another serious problem which missed our attention, caught in the fierce current of the money-driven society operated by the Brahminical rulers. Thousands and thousands of starving Dalits and Tribals and even Backward Castes in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh,

Rajasthan, UP, Orissa etc. are rushing to big metro cities like Bombay, Bangalore, Delhi, Hyderabad etc. In these cities they do get two immediate relief. They get enough to eat, their hunger problem solved, and they are saved from the daily caste atrocities, abuses which are essential part of their village life.

CASTE CONSCIOUSNESS KILLED

But in the natural abode of their villages they were conscious of their caste as they lived in the midst of their caste people and formed part of their caste struggle. Once they move to the urban jungle they forget their caste and joined the millions of struggling "poor". It is a long jump from "caste" to "class", leading to total transformation in their mental make up. This is exactly what the Brahminical rulers want. And they succeeded in killing their caste anger and pushed them to the urban jungle of "class struggle".

From caste oppression to class exploitation. Brahmins love this because it is easier to dupe those singing the song of class struggle. We have the famous example of W. Bengal and Kerala where the *Manuwadi* marxists have killed the Dalit movement.

N.G.O. MENACE

Then we have the menace of NGOs which is the total monopoly of the upper castes. As they get foreign funds, the Home Ministry packed with Brahmins are very careful that these funds do not fall into the hands of revolutionary sections. We have hardly any Dalit NGO in India. Most of the NGOs being upper caste, they make

a song and dance of the Dalit movement and dupe the Dalits.

Today these NGOs have become a real menace to the Dalit movement as they are deeply involved in spotting the best Dalit male or female youth and recruiting them. Once our youth join the NGO, the fire in them is dead. They will no longer use the word "Dalit". They are called "marginalised people". Their entire vocabulary changes.

NGOs are a real menace, seriously engaged by the Brahminical rulers to destroy the last remaining Dalit movement. I found the menace very serious in Andhra Pradesh — diverting our people's anger from issue to non-issue.

But in today's money-driven society who is interested in Babasaheb's thoughts? Will it bring money? Will it bring power? No.

In the absence of both money and power — the twin craze that is driving today's society — I find a bleak future for our people. Babasaheb taught us about the value-driven society. But today that society is dead. ■

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1. V.T. Rajshekar, *The Second Partition of India — Sunset on the Dalit World*, DSA-2000, pp.16

2. V.T. Rajshekar, *Brahminism swallowing Ambedkarite Movement?*, DSA-1999, pp.16

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