

# **The Trajectories of Dalit Uprisings in Post Independent India**

**Dr. Laina P.**

**(NO.2272-MRP/15-16/KLCA034/UGC-SWRO, 31/3/2016)**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The social stratification that developed in India based on the practice of untouchability was different from the social stratification that existed in other countries. It is supported by religious scriptures.

The Dalit movement has not received any serious attention from the modern Indian historians. Studies on the Dalit movements and protests since independence started appearing from 1990s onwards. A dominant trend among a group of sociologists to view the Dalit movement as a protest against the reactionary practices of upper- caste Hindus.

The history of the Dalit movement and protests of Post Independent India are also seen from different angles. There are two dominant approaches in understanding the Dalit movements of post independent period. A major attempt is to classify the variety of recent Dalit activity. The complexities and diversities in the Dalit movements after Independence make it difficult to generalize these movements. The Dalits who were undergoing oppression in different parts of India tried to overcome those oppressions through regional movements. Though all these movements were to overcome those deprivations we hardly find any ideological or organizational unity among them. Nevertheless, these diverse regional movements were aware of each other and influenced each other over time.

Independent India made reservation policy for Untouchables as part of its constitution. The social and economic inequality that exists in India can be ended only through reservation for the lower castes. The reservation system had created a strong and articulated middle class among the Scheduled Castes. A government job provided both economic security and social prestige. By 1995 more than 2 million Dalits were thus advantaged.

We see a steady progress of Dalits in the recent years. Statistical data shows an increase in the number of Dalits who got appointed in the higher posts in public sector. This resulted in the rising self-consciousness of the Dalits. The educated and economically well off Dalits are not ready to slavishly follow the orders of the caste Hindus. Any assertion of their constitutional right by the Dalits often ended up in confrontation. The police and government machinery often protects the strong.

Affirmative programmes were initiated to put an end the segregation based on caste system. It benefitted only a comparatively well off section of the Dalits. But the number of castes included in the backward list also increased. And recently we could see the protests of many caste groups to get included in the backward caste category, so that they also could enjoy the privileges of reservation. This rivalry also contributed for the escalation of violence against the Dalits.

In spite of the protective measures that Indian constitution assures, the successive Governments has failed to implement its own declared programmes and policies to protect the Dalits from upper caste oppression. The outlay for the empowerment of SCs is not in accordance with their population and magnitude of poverty and under privileged status. Delay in the implementation of welfare measures also adversely affected. While the reservation policy, political

reservation in various bodies, reservation in government services, admission to educational institutions and in several other areas, of the government has helped a miniscule of Dalit population, the non implementation of various announced policies have deprived Dalits of their basic human rights.