



ATROCITIES ON DALITS IN ANDHRA PRADESH WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO EAST GODAVARI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This work aimed to deal with the major Dalit conflicts and their response in East Godavari district Andhra Pradesh. Many previous atrocities inflicted on Dalits by the upper castes produced only sympathy which did not result in the requisite revolutionary combative spirit. The Karamchedu and Chundur incidents changed all that. Karamchedu marked a distinctive break in the Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh. It became the glorious historical symbol of the Ambedkarite movement like that of Naxalbari of the Marxist Leninist struggle in India. East Godavari District played a vital role in the dalit movements because it is densely dalit populated and well educated district.

KEYWORDS : Dalits, Non- dalits, Atrocities, Caste System, Social Reformers, Movements, Untouchables.

INTRODUCTION:

The traditional Hindu society is based on the Varna system and the society was divided into four orders (i) Brahmins, the priestly Varna; (ii) Kshatriyas, the warrior Varna; (iii) Vaishyas, whose occupation was trade; and (iv) Sudras, whose occupation was service to the preceding three varnas. Outside this Varna framework were placed the avarnas also known as chandals or untouchables. These untouchables have been oppressed by the Hindu society for centuries together. The untouchables are a socially alienated lot.

With the advent of British rule in India, the British made deep impact on the politics of the country as well as the society. Various factors like introduction of western education, communication facilities like Railways, Posts and Telegraphs and the propaganda by Christian missionaries. Hindu reformers wanted to offset both Christian missionaries and Islamic influence among the lower castes. After the 'mutiny' of 1857, the British attitude changed towards both Hindus and Muslims.

Contributions of Social Reformers and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar

Social reform movements started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswathi, and non-Brahmin movement started by Jyotirao Phule of Poona who began to advocate the very un-Hindu idea of "asserting the worth of man irrespective of caste" catalyzed the social change in the Indian society. Jyotirao Phule challenged the Brahminical authority first by opening a school for non-Brahmins in Poona in 1848 and three years later established a school for untouchables. This was the first school in India for untouchables. There was also self-assertion among the non-Brahmins against the Brahminical domination. All these factors helped the lower classes to become conscious of their social existence. With that awareness, small sections of untouchables got encouraged to get formal education. Several Indian princes, particularly Baroda, Mysore and Travancore princes showed interest in this matter both under the influence of Hindu reformism and of their British advisors. The maharaja of Baroda established a school for untouchables in 1883, and it was the scholarship he offered that enabled Dr. Ambedkar to go to Columbia University in New York in 1913.

For the first time, the Untouchables were receiving education, a privilege that had been denied to them by the Hindu society for centuries. Dr. Ambedkar, a product of modern western education, realized the nature of exploitation and oppression of his kinsmen in different spheres of life and started fighting against the oppressive system. With the enforcement of the Constitution of India on 26th January, 1950, the caste system lost its quasi legal basis. Equality of all citizens before law was envisaged. Being patronized by the dominant caste leaders, the dalits remain subservient to them. Their attention

is drawn more by the non-dalits rather than dalits. Their future career depends on the furtherance of patronage by the non-dalits.

Atrocities on dalits in the study Area

Atrocities are taking place against dalits from time to time across the state. The flashpoint of the movement against the atrocities was East Godavari district where the dalits mostly Malas who claimed the nomenclature of Adi-Andhra were placed in group 'D' with a mere one per cent of reservation out of the total 15 per cent. At the same time mostly caste issues are reported from East Godavari district. Assertiveness and social articulation of the dalits became intolerable to the dominant castes. The dalit movements inculcated consciousness of rights and safeguards. Adi-Andhra movement predates the Harijan upliftment and has been instrumental in enlightening them. Ambedkar's leadership contested the hegemonic nationalist ideology propounded by the upper caste intelligentsia. Some of the post independence incidents on dalits illustrate how hegemony of non-dalit castes prevailed over dalits.

Some of the incidents recorded in East Godavari District:

In a village called Pottilanka in East Godavari district, the dominant caste Kapus beat up one Ambadi Rajaratnam as he allegedly misbehaved with a Kapu girl near a hotel on the Highway on June 20, 2008. He was beaten again severely after he visited the same hotel for break-fast on the following day. Anticipating the reaction of SCs on the incident, nearly a hundred Kapus raided the SC locality with lethal weapons and attacked the helpless dalits. Palli Veerapandu died with his skull broken and Vemula Yesu was grievously injured and whoever came to the rescue of those under attack also received injuries. The police did not register case against the Kapus till 26th of June though false cases were foisted against dalits to downplay the violence perpetrated by the dominant caste. For any political party to win in East Godavari district, the support of Kapus is vital. Hence, the Congress government headed by Y.S.Rajasekhara Reddy did not espouse the cause of dalits in this event. The case slowly was hushed up. No dalit Legislator reacted to the incident in adequate measure excepting issuing some statements in support of victims, and against the offenders in a display of bravado. Antagonism with Kapus meant sealing one's own political career. It is incompatible to note that the Kapu caste which practices open discrimination against dalits and does not hesitate to perpetrate atrocities against them is sought to be included in the backward castes list.

In 1996 Thota Trimurtulu an independent MLA of Kapu caste representing the Ramachandrapuram constituency in East Godavari district got two dalit youth forcibly tonsured at his residence for their alleged uncomplimentary remarks against

Kapu women. Though, the dalit organizations agitated against the government to take action against the MLA, the political elite remained silent except condemning the incident through newspapers. No issue was raised against him in public when the same MLA abused the dalit women in unparliamentarily language when he descended on Namavaram village in East Godavari district to forcibly take with him a dalit youth who allegedly attacked someone who complained to the MLA. This incident took place in May 201334. But no legislator felt the need to pursue the issue of the abducted youth.

Thalla Satyanarayana, belonging to Mala (SC) community used to work as a tenant servant for Chikkam Sivaiah in Kamaraju peta village of Uppala guptham mandal. Chikkam Viswanatham, an adjacent land owner, gave a complaint to the police about the theft of his green-gram Dahl. The police took Thalla Sathyanarayana into custody on 17.6.2000. Thalla Sathyanarayana was found dead by 18.6.2000. Police said that Sathyanarayana consumed pesticide. Dalits say it was murder, and started a large scale agitation over this case. Two police head constables were suspended. The Government gave Rs. 100,000/- financial support to the family members of the deceased. 2 acres of land near S.Yanam and a house site were sanctioned by the Government to the family members of the deceased. No F.I.R, No Charge sheet.

Ananda Kumari aged 16 years, SC by caste, r/o Peravaram village, Aatreypuram mandal, East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. She is an agricultural worker. She was gang raped after being sedated. She died on the same day, i.e., 27th December 2007. Mariyamma, SC by caste resides in the same village. Mariyamma is living with Matta Srinu, Gowda by caste. Matta Govindu, S/o Matta Satyam, Gowda by caste is relative of Srinu. Srinu's agricultural field lies beside the field of Attili Veeraiah. Prasad, SC by caste works as a bonded labour with Veeraiah. Mariyamma has taken Ananda Kumari to work in Matta Srinu's field on 26th and they returned home. On 27th, Govindu and Srinu engaged Mariyamma and Prasad to get Ananda Kumari to work in their field.

Vemagiri Raju and Lakshmi are living in Tapeshwarapuram and were working as labourers in Brick kiln. They have two daughters and younger daughter Bhavani was studying 5th standard in Kapileshwarapuram Social Welfare Hostel. On 27th August 2008, at around 12:30 pm, Bhavani went upstairs to dry her clothes and while coming down, she noticed Karri Tatabbai on the stairs. He pushed her down and attempted to rape her. Bhavani started shouting for help. On hearing her screams, Kranti, 9th class student, has reached there and immediately Tatabbai left Bhavani and ran away. Bhavani immediately informed the incident to the warden Prabhavati. Instead of consoling and taking immediate action, she threatened Bhavani not to reveal the incident to anyone.

On 3rd September 2008, Raju has come to take his daughter Bhavani on the occasion of his elder daughter's birthday. Bhavani narrated the incident to her father. Raju asked Prabhavati about the incident but she denied happening of any such incident in the premises of the hostel and moreover threatened him to leave the premises or she would beat him with foot ware. Raju immediately approached the police station and informed them about the incident. Karri Tatabbai was arrested and Hostel warden Prabhavati was suspended.

Nalli Sunitha (19), D/o David Raju and Sarojini are a resident of Antharvedepalem village, Sakinetipalli Mandal, East Godavari District. On the date of incident i.e., on 5th Nov08 Adabala Srinu S/o Bulli Satyam OC Kapu by caste, resident of same village sat in the veranda of the victim's house. Sunitha who was alone in her house was preparing for her exams the accused started staring at her. Feeling conscious she

requested the accused to go back to his house because he was intoxicated. She pressurized him many times saying that he was not in a good condition.

For this the accused abused her in the name of caste and scolded her in filthy language. The victim tolerated while he was abusing her. At last she revolted when he was coming towards her to assault. With that the accused sister, mother and his aunt joined him and attacked her. They gathered dry leaves and pour kerosene on her. By that time the victim's mother came back from her workplace and saw her daughter and immediately went for her rescue for which even she was attacked.

K Satyanarayanamma (50) w/o Kushalaiah (late), SC madiga by caste is the resident of SC colony in Annavaram. Satyanarayanamma sells sarees by profession. She also does social work by helping out the dalit women of her area. On 14.4.2010 an announcement was made that the gram sabha will be organized at 10am by the gram panchayat. Satyanarayanamma went to the meeting along with the other dalit women of her colony to raise the issues of the community. While she was entering into the meeting, Narasaiah h/o of the Lakshmi - Sarpanch stopped her from entering into the meeting. Satyanarayanamma objected saying that she has come to discuss with the sarpanch regarding many pending issues of dalit colony such as roads, electricity etc and that Narasaiah has no right to stop her. This irritated Narsaiah and abused Satyanarayanamma on the name of caste, humiliated her in front of all, said that there is no need to give any reply to her and pushed her down by lying his hands on her chest. The victim has stated that though Narasiah's wife is the sarpanch, he only discharges all the duties and Lakshmi just signs. Later she lodged a complaint in Annavaram PS. A case was registered bearing Cr No. 76/ 2010 U/s 509 of IPC and 3(1)(x) of SC/ST (PoA) Act.

Two Dalit brothers are in hospital in Andhra Pradesh after being stripped, tied to a tree and thrashed after they were seen skinning a dead cow on Monday night. Police say the attackers, eight in all, who have now been arrested, were not members of a cow protection squad, but owned a group of cows who had gone missing. "When they saw a dead cow being skinned in the graveyard on Monday night, they suspected it was a stolen cow and beat up the brothers," said senior police officer M Ravi Prakash. The attack took place in Amalapuram town of East Godavari district in the southern state. The victims, Mokati Elisa and his brother Lazar, have head and somebody injuries.

A series of attacks by self-declared cow vigilante groups provoked strong remarks over the weekend by Prime Minister Narendra Modi who said most cow vigilantes turn out to be people who are involved in anti-social activities and masquerade as cow protectors to save themselves. His critics say that killings in the name of protecting cows, which are sacred for Hindus, have increased since he won power in 2014. Dalit woman was allegedly assaulted while her 11-year-old daughter was stripped over a land dispute by a bank's branch manager and his relatives in Dalitpet village of Andhra Pradesh, East Godavari district on Monday. The mother and daughter were also tied to a tree by the accused. The prime accused, Raju, is a manager with SBI's Visakhapatnam branch. Police said Raju's and the woman's family are battle over a land. On Monday, an altercation broke out between them over fetching water from a municipal tap in the village, after which Raju and his kin tore off the woman's clothes and threw chilli powder in her eyes. The woman's husband, who is bedridden, urged their 11year old daughter to help her mother. When she rushed to her mother's aid, the assaulters stripped her and tied them both to a tree. The entire episode was video-recorded by the woman's seven-year-old son. The

video was later handed over to cops.

In one village in East Godavari district one person was killed and six others were grievously injured when caste Hindus attacked the dalits who wanted to enter into a temple. It is important to note that the instances of Backward Castes attacking the dalits still continues despite they are enjoying reservations and demanding the privileges on par with the SCs. several instances of caste Hindu violence against Dalits reported from the East Godavari District. The growing movement of Dalits for self-respect, social justice, dignity and egalitarian social order necessitated a serious reflection and resolution of the problems of caste and nation.

Thus, these movements raised many critical questions of caste and had shaken even the revolutionary parties to come out with their stand on caste. But alas, however, the movements remained only male dominated though dalit women were active participants in the movement, they remained invisible and their issues neglected.

CONCLUSION:

Atrocities continued on dalits even after got the independence infact caste issues increased. Freedom to the India did not mean freedom to the dalits. Though Hindus attained freedom from the Britishers, the dalits did not attain freedom from the discriminatory tradition espoused by the Hindus. Thus the social reforms had to be imposed in the form of constitutional guarantees, for the reforms could not gain social acceptability. The upward social mobility of dalits which is a departure from convention provoked the non-dalits whose mindset remained conventional despite the changes in the law facilitating the uplift of the dalits. Even today this developed region is also not free from the atrocities and much discrimination.

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