

CONTRIBUTION OF DR.P.SUBBARAYAN FOR THE ELEVATION OF DALITS – A HISTORICAL STUDY

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Abstract

During the ancient period, the Hindu society was divided based on caste system (varna system) in which the untouchables were termed as our Avaranas or those who were outside the varna system. This system is very ancient in origin and through the passage of time it has undergone profound changes, but the caste is still a very powerful institution in our socio-economic, religious and political organization. The most disquietening and disturbing feature connected with the caste system and it is the cause of untouchability. They were engaged in unclean occupation and they were considered as polluted persons and had to go with this stigma in the prevailing reality and had to accept for themselves the status of untouchables. Social workers and reformers, Political Leaders, began to take various steps for the Dalits Elevations. In Tamil Nadu, Some of the leaders started Reforms movement and Associations in different fields viz, economic, educational, political and social. These leaders came from all walks of life and from all castes and creeds. This article explores the role of Dr. P. Subbarayan for the elevation of Dalits.

Keywords : Dr. P.Subbarayan, Untouchability, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Temple

Entry Bill, Education.

Introduction

All are equal in the Society. Historically, Indian Society is divided as caste based system from ancient period. According to Manuscripts, Varna system followed by Hindu Society and also Avarna (Dalits) are neglected in the Varna system. Traditionally, Dalits or Scheduled Castes were suffering from many more problems. Socially, they were treated as Untouchables by the Upper caste peoples. They were faced various social discriminations. Economically, they were

not choose any occupation. By higher Hindu caste, they worked hard exploited. Particularly, they were living landless laborers in the village and urban areas. Dalits could not reach the educational rights. Most of the Dalit peoples are illiterates. From the 19th Century, the social reformers started the activities for the development of Dalits. During the British period, the British government involved welfare of scheduled caste peoples. This article analyzed the role of Dr.P.Subbarayan for the elevation of Dalits in Tamil Nadu.

Dalits

The untouchables had different nomenclature in different parts of the country, such as Depressed classes, Dalits and Harijans. The Harijan word was coined by Gandhiji. The term “Untouchability” is the English Equivalent of expression like, ‘Asprasya’ in Anskrit, ‘Theetu’ in Tamil¹. According to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, untouchability underlines “the notion of defilement, pollution and contamination and the ways and means of getting rid of that defilement². Nowadays, ‘Dalits’ is a popular term used to denote the untouchables. Their touch, site and even their shadow were deemed to be polluted by the Caste Hindus. Even the breath of a member of the depressed classes was regarded as polluting the higher caste³. The use of public well, tanks, roads, was prohibited for considered as a depressed people, they were also not allowed into temples. Generally, they were considered as bonded slaves of the Higher classed were extremely pathetic⁴. They are known as Scheduled Caste in our Constitution. Our parliament enacted the Untouchability Act of 1955 to legally abolish Untouchability. Dr. P. Subbarayan was one of the great political leaders of time who worked for the elevation of Dalits.

Dr. P. Subbarayan

Dr. P. Subbarayan was born on September 11, 1889 as son of Mr. Paramasivam Gounder, Zamindar of Kumaramangalam and M.Papammal. His family originally Zamindar Kumaramangalam area situated at Salem District. Now this Taluk located at Namakkal District. He graduated from Madras Presidency College for Arts in 1908 and after that studied at Wadham College, Oxford While studying, he developed friendship with Raja of Panagal, R.K.Shanmugam Chettiar and Ranganadha Mudaliar . His friendship between Radhabhai and Subbarayan while they are studying at Presidency College paved the way for marriage with the consent of both their parents in 1912 and with the blessings of Rajaji and thus introduced inter-caste marriage amenable to a Hindu Society⁵.

He became a member of the Madras Legislative Council, representing the South Central Landholders. He was also inspired for a few years by the ideals of the justice party in Madras and also inaugurated the first session of Madras provincial self-respect conference held at Chingleput on 17 and 18 February. He

according to the founded an independent party after the Government of India Act of 1919, the Justice Party was Countertrend election. He was the chief minister of Madras from 1926 to 1930, minister for law in 1937-39 in the Government formal by C.Rajagopalachari and later minister for home affairs in the Omandur Ramaswamy Reddier Cabinet. He was appointed Indian Ambassador to Indonesia 1949. On his return in 1954, he became a Rajya Sabha Member and was elected as a member of the Privileges Committee. In 1957, he was elected to the Lok Sabha from Tiruchengode Constituency and in 1959 he became the Union Minister for Communications and Transport in the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's Cabinet. He was appointed as Governor of Maharashtra in 1962⁶.

Harijan Sevak Sangh

Gandhiji founded the All India Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1932. Through this organisation he popularized the movement for the eradication of untouchability and elevation of the Harijans to the level of equality with the high caste Hindus. Also the liberation of Scheduled Castes from the shackles of social, economic, educational and political disabilities. The Tamil Nadu branch of the Harijan Sevak Sangh faithfully carried out the ideals of the Central Organisations in Tamil Nadu. The Harijan Sevak Sangh was kept as a Social and Cultural Organisation. Gandhiji believed that social equality could be established only gradually by education the masses and creating the necessary public opinion. He acted as Provincial Executive Committee Of Tamil Nadu Harijan Sevak Sangh.

Dr.P.Subbarayan had extraordinary worked hard for the abolition of untouchability and the upliftment of Harijans. For the overall development of the Harijans, he had curiosity to work with dedicated leaders and Sevaks. The Government of Tamil Nadu has been extending its helping hand to the Sangh for achieving its aims and goals since 1932. The Ministries of P.Subbarayan brought number of legislations for the abolition of untouchability and the upliftment of Harijans⁷.

The Temple Entry Bill

The right to enter the temple was denied to the Dalits for the long time. In the first half of the twentieth century, the social reformers highly felt that temple entry movement was of primary importance in the agitation against the eradication of untouchability. From 1920's with the rise of E.V.R as a messiah of the non- brahmins and depressed class people in Tamil Nadu, a demand for their entry into temple also began to gain momentum. EVR's self respect movement believed that the depressed class people were not only entitled to enter the temples but also they could go up to the sanctorum of the temples in the capacity of Hindus and as human beings. The Self-respecters induced by a Brahmin Phobia attitude, with a desire to acquire equal rights for the depressed people, made some provocative attempts that earned the opposition of the orthodox and other Brahmin priests of the temples.

In the special session held at South Indian Reformers Conference on November 28, 1928 E.V.R., as the president of the conference gave a clarion call to the Self-Respectors to fight tirelessly for the establishment of equality in temples. Dr.P.Subbarayan participated as a member in the session⁸. He also gives political forum to the Self-Respectors in order to ventilate their ideas on the temple entry issue. The Self-Respectors commanded the move of the temple entry bill of Dr. P.Subbarayan as a wise move and acclaimed it. During the 1930, Dr.P.Subbarayan elected as leader of the opposition on behalf of the United Nationalist Party. At that time, Justice Party formed the Ministry under the headship of Mr. Munisamy Naidu. During this period, the temple entry question of the depressed classes featured in the MLC by Dr.P.Subbarayan. He brought the Temple Entry Bill Disabilities on the 1st November 1932. But the British government not accepted it⁹. The temple entry bill was passed in the MLC on 1937. He started Harijans Temple Entry Movement with the volunteers of Congress in Arthanarieswarar Temple at Tiruchengode on September 1947 for implementing the Madras Temple Entry Authorisation Act 1947.

Education for Harijans

During October 1937, the president of Manjaprabha district board of Paighat district wrote to Dr.P.subbarayan about the plight of communal differences that existed in the schools¹⁰. Referring to that letter Dr.P.subbarayan assembly that the president had allowed some depressed class pupils to join the district board girls high school Manjaprabha while became the Chief Minister of Madras Presidency. Castesism and Orthodoxism were reigning supreme there this act

of the president was criticized by some caste Hindus¹¹. In pretest, they withdraw their wards from their schools. The district board President was rather insistent to see equality being established in the educational institutions¹². He called those parents and explained his stand. Further, he kept open the school in spite of the fact that those students had never turned up. The four Nayadi girls belonging to the depressed classes were admitted into the schools to pursue their education¹³. To convince the caste Hindu population he was trying to convene the Parents Association¹⁴. Dr.P.Subbarayan was equally interested in that affair. Having read the letter of the president carefully, a copy of which was also submitted to the DPI, he said that such injustices would never be tolerated¹⁵. At a later time, Mr.E.Kannan, a Harijan MLA from Malabar wanted to know the Madras Educational Rules relating to the recognition of schools with respect to the admission of Harijan into them. Dr.P.Subbarayan said that the Madras Elementary Education Act of 1920 had already laid down certain conditions for the recognition of schools. According to this, the schools which refused to admission for pupils merely on grounds of caste and community, recognition to them were withdrawn. The same rule was received 1935-36 and sent to the District Educational Councils and has continued that those rules were still in vogue. Repeatedly, the managements of schools whether public or private were asked what here they were strictly following them. Because of the vigil of the Government, Dr.P.Subbarayan opened that there had been considerable improvement with regard to the admission of children of the depressed classes in schools, not specially intended for them¹⁶.

Conclusion

Dr.P.subbarayan played a vital role for the development of Dalits. He brought number of legislations in the MLC for the abolition of untouchability and social progress of scheduled caste peoples. He joined with other political leaders worked hard for the upliftment of Dalits in Tamil Nadu. He wanted that untouchability could be abolished only by the socio-economic and educational development among the Dalits. He was one of the prominent leader worked hard for the elevation of Dalits.

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