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THE REALTIES AND DEFENSE OF DALIT HUMAN RIGHTS IN TAMILNADU

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Abstract:

Human Rights violations in the Hindu society have continued to remain an integral factor in India for about 3000 years. Violations were originally the result of strict observance of 'Varunasirama-Dharma' code which was diametrically opposed to the Dalit masses in India. Even after May years of our Independence, the concept of fraternity among Indian brotherhood remains theoretical.¹ The limbs of Indian Democracy, such as the Administrative set up, laws and courts, serve the ruling class of India rather than the welfare of the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes (SC/STs). Hence it is inevitable for Dalits to organize themselves and lead agitations for the promotion of their welfare. But the intolerant higher caste people launch counter attacks on Dalits by mobilizing their socio-economic and political power.² As a result Dalits houses have become the targets of attack, endangering their precious life and livelihood, either overtly or covertly. Therefore, the violations against Dalit Human Rights have assumed higher dimensions.

INTRODUCTION

Hence Dalits have to wage relentless fight for the following:-

- To secure their livelihood
- To recover back panchami lands
- To secure fair wages
- To promote education
- To work for Employment / Reservation
- To have secured life
- To lay claim on the common property
- To secure political power in the domain of politics (Panchayats / Legislatures / Parliament)

The Basic Requirements

The living environments of all Dalits always remain under a sad spectacle of strife torn life.³ The Dalits masses in the rural areas are working as daily wage earners, and as landless agricultural laborers. They have not even been provided with the basic amenities of life. In fact they are struggling to get these basic needs day in and day out. Among these, 60% of Dalits do not have current facilities, 80% of Dalits do not have toilet facilities, and 20% of Dalits do not have protected drinking water facilities. There is poor access to Dalits living areas, as there are not proper roads. Existing roads are under the thick foliage of bushes and choked with rainy water like isolated islands. This has been a recurring phenomenon of Dalits housing complexes.⁴

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

Since half of the Dalit masses are below the poverty line, their health and environment are constantly under threat. Their living areas are under stagnant pools of water without any rudimentary form of health and sanitation.⁵ Their entire living environment is under severe pollution. The death rate among Dalit children under the age of four is 57.4% due to malnutrition and 22% to 45% of Dalit babies pass away during delivery. Most of the primary Health centers and all other rural Government Hospitals are located around the higher segment of society and quite far away from Dalit settlements.⁶

The Question of Poverty

“The virtual opponent of Dalits apart from the affliction caste phenomena is of their affliction towards their poverty. All the poverty alleviation programmes of the Government have not reached the door steps of Dalits.”⁷

REMARKS MANY INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS

The funds allocated for poverty alleviation programmes have been diverted to other Government schemes in a duties manner. Hence, the Dalits had to wage relentless war against the crusade of poverty.⁸ Among Dalits 49.06% of people are working as landless agricultural laborers, while 19% are working as temporary wage earners. However 80% Dalit masses are working in all the unorganized sectors of employment. According to the 1999-2000 census report, 36.25% of Dalit masses are living in the villages while the 39.41% of Dalit masses are living in the cities under the below poverty line.⁹

The Status of Education

The literacy rates among Dalits are not encouraging. Even the present rate of literacy among Dalits was due to the advent of BritaliRaj and the service rendered by the Christian missionaries. “Education for all” is a clarion call of Government that still remains an echo even after the attainment of Independence of India. Compulsory education up to 14 years was a proposal during 1950-1959 for all children. At the International level, India was a signatory to this proposal.¹⁰ But its implementation continues to remain on paper only. The literacy rate of Dalits in the all India level amounts to 37.41% whereas in the rural areas, it amounts 33.25% but in the cities it represents 55.11%. However the school admission among Dalits constitutes 16.2% where as Non-Dalits represent 83.3%. But many of the All India Survey reveals that half of the drop outs are among the Dalits students.¹¹ The drop out Dalit students from primary level amounts to 49.35%. Middle level amounts to 67.77% and at the High school level 77.65%. But there remains no visible effort on the part of the State Government to identify the reason behind these lapses and any corrective measures to be initiated. This issue has been highly vexatious on the part of Dalits concerned.¹²

The Status of Land Holdings

Land continues to be a valuable asset event in the present day society. Hence to acquire this valuable asset, Dalits have to face many problems, constraints and discriminations.¹³ The equal distribution of Natural resources and claims on the public properties under National and International standard of Measurement had not been strictly observed in India. As we have stated already, 85% Dalit population lives in the rural Hamlets of India.¹⁴ Only 25% of land holders among Dalits are involved in agricultural production. Remaining Dalit folks are working as a landless agricultural laborer. The land owners among the Dalits roughly constitute 0.9%.

In this context, we have to remind about the allocation of lands by the British Authorities to Dalits. As per July 1892 Movement of British Parliament, lakhs and lakhs of promboke lands, D.C lands that had been earmarked and allocated for Dalits were now under the occupation of High Caste Hindus.¹⁵ However, the laws to return all these lands of Dalits were really in favor of the High Caste Hindus. If all these lands were recovered, the life of all Dalits would become prosperous once again. The Dalit masses were deprived of their own legitimate land holdings.

The Livelihood Aspects

Every person requires a secure life with an independent outlook. This has to be ensured by an elected Government, but in India there is not security to life and property for every individual in the society. Whereas in the life of Dalit masses, it is absolutely a proven fact of day to day life. Therefore, the problems faced by the Dalit masses are quite high in comparison with other community people. In India, Dalits have not been given due respect. Any Dalit activity in the public places and public access to water resources were treated as untouchable acts by the society.

As per the statistics furnished at the All India Level, up to 1971, Dalit masses were restricted in their movements in 60% of the Indian-Villages. But for the past 25 years, Dalit masses were facing various discriminations ranging from indecent abuses up to physical violence. All these abuses against Dalits are sad reflection of disgrace.

The progressive acts of Inter Caste Marriage, wearing chapels, drinking in Tea shops, utilizing common pathways, drawing water in the common well, Temple worship, and the choosing profession of their choice are all absolutely prevented and censured as an unwritten code in Indian social practice. Whenever they raise their voice against all these atrocities, Dalits are facing repercussions by way of losing their life and property.

PUBLIC RESOURCES

Public Resource at all rural areas have come to be under occupation of powerful Individuals. 32 varieties of public lands were converted into House site Plots and other cultivable lands. Apart from these, temple lands, patta lands, D.C.Lands, Lands under Bhoodham Movement, lakes, trees around villages, as well as yields from these common water resources all continue to remain as Public Assets. But legitimate right on these Public Resources have been denied altogether. Rather all these public resources were on lots leased to private Individuals. In fact Dalits are to be extended access to these public resources.¹⁶

RESERVATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

It is the legitimate duty of the elected Government to provide jobs and to create employment opportunities to every one of its citizens. To be sure, a job is a legitimate right for each citizen. But in the recent past, these basic and fundamental rights were denied. This is due to the priority given to the private sector and the favour of Private Investment. Therefore, the ultimate victims are Dalits alone and none else. All the Indian Administration, Judiciary and the law enforcement wings are under the control of higher caste hierarchy. Hence the fundamental rights of all Dalits were negated. And their job reservation quotas had not been filled up for years for want of suitable candidates from SC/ST's. From the beginning the mentality of the Government has also reflected that the Dalits were to be kept under forever in the field General Administration.¹⁷

Non-filled vacancies in the following Group of All India Service with reference to Dalits candidates.

1st Group of service (I.A.S; I.P.S; I.F.S) 78.84%

'A' Group of service	78.84%
'B' Group of service	51.34%
'C' Group of service	55.89%
'D' Group of service	45.10%
In Public Sectors	88.18%

All these reservation quotas meant for SC/ST's may not be absorbed due to privatization policy of the Government. Hence, an agitation is to be launched even to introduce reservation policies in the private sector too!

The Status of Dalit Women

The state of Dalit women folk to continues to be under constant threat. More over, Dalit women are directly involved in all the avocations of livelihood aspects. In their work spot, all Dalit women undergo tremendous sexual harassment and abuses.

Dalit women undergo tremendous difficulties, even at home. Yet they shoulder heavier responsibilities than their men folk. Therefore, the equality concept among Dalit men and women gave way to the Bredomanicult. Hence, all these Dalit women undergo wider discrimination and atrocities in the

society. However the literacy rate among Dalit women continues to remain at 39%. This remains as a stumbling block to expression of their dissent and disapproval concerning all these vital questions. During caste conflicts, Dalit womenfolk also become the target of the majority of attacks and aggravated sexual abuses by Hindu communities.¹⁸

TRAININGS FOR DALITS UNDER HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD

Many of the investigative reports confirm these basic facts of truth. Efforts have been made to change these phenomena for the past 20 years. All the activities around Human Rights violations have been under close observation. Excessive of these Human Rights violations have been disclosed to the public. But there has been absence of rendering justice through concerted efforts and corrective measures. As ever before, these efforts have resulted in diametrically opposite reactions. Hence it has become acute necessity on the part of Dalits to establish an exclusive Dalits Human Rights Forum and subsequently many Dalits Human Rights Forum groups. HRFDL, DHRM, Dalit women Forum, DPPF are all being formed and involved in the defense of Dalit Human Rights in a meaningful way.

The Activities of this Dalit Human Rights Forum

- These forums record all the Human Rights violations of Dalits in the State and the National Level and bring it to the notice of the general Public.
- Apart from recording these Dalit Human Rights Violations, they initiate appropriate Governmental actions and recover back due compensations to the victims concerned.
- All these Dalit Human Rights Violations are being processed and filed in the appropriate courts for prosecution
- Strict observation of Human Rights Violations against Dalits has become the order of the day
- Now it has turned out to be a collective effort in connection with fraternal Human Rights Forum
- To facilitate speedy actions against these Dalits Human Rights violations, "A Dalit Lawyers Forums" have been formed Human Rights Violations against Dalit Panchayat President and Dalit Panchayat Union chairman were taken up at the appropriate level
- When Dalits were under serious communal violence in

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