



THE NEW IDENTITY MOVEMENTS AND BAHUJANISATION PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

Bahujanisation has a new dimension to the process of suppression and the exploitation which has been taking place in different layers of the society. Earlier we discussed that the suppressed and oppressed sections of people are called Dalits but that definition confined to only untouchables. Though the Dalit panthers of Maharashtra and Dalit Mahasabha of Andhra Pradesh used that term to include all exploited castes, the scholarly literature did not treat it that way. Hence a new term Bahujan is being used to refer to the other lower castes. The concept of Bahujanisation came into use in the 1990's. In a way Bahujanisation was provoked by Joti Rao Phule (Sudras, Ati-sudra) and developed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (oppressed classes) even without achieve saying the concept Bahujanisation.

It is only from the 1990's that in the process of Mandal and post-mandal commission period that intellectual who started developing the concept of Bahujanisation. Prof. Kancha Ilaiah used the concept Dalitism and analysed how Dalitism has come to stay as the only alternative to the contending theories of Gandhi and Marx. He also used the concept Dalitization to establish a relationship between different classes and castes and between men and women.

Key Words: ideology, identity, Collective Mobilization, Organization, Leadership etc-.

INTRODUCTION

Dalit-bahujans have been winning their battle against designator and gaining in form of reservation benefits from the days of British rule of India. By 1980s the dalits included Sudras in their camp and began united fight against Casteism with identity and demanding proportionate share in various fields. This is turn triggered sub-caste identity movements demanding responsible identity and equal share in fields of education employment and politics in India. In this article an attempt is made to discuss Dalit-bahujan movement, its growth in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It is worth to note that bahujan Movement in Andhra Pradesh is shaped and guided by some of that most distinguished Leaders of the Backward Classes.

Deprived sections of society in different parts of the world have organized themselves into protest movements to fight against discriminations of various kinds based on colour, religion, Caste and tribe. Their problem has been one of establishing a new identity, the kind of image that they want to protest in order to gain self-respect, honour and status, while question of identity has been common to all the deprived sections, the answers that they have sought to provide have been different but homogeneous.



MEANING OF BAHUJAN

The term '*Bahujan*' was coined many years ago Goutham Buddha used it first. He used the concept '*Bahujana Hithaya and Bahujana Sukhaya*'. He advocated total Bahujan happiness and not just the happiness of a few people. The present attempts of Bahujanisation reflect the advocacy of Buddha and are more relevant. The concept Bahujanisation has its roots in the Buddhist era with the objective of establishing a society based on the values of equality, including that of women's equality. This term was used occasionally by Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule.

As pointed out earlier, the concept '*Bahujan*' indicates the majority in the society. After Kanshiram popularized the term Bahujan by naming his party Bahujan Samaj Party. The concept Bahujan became popular as it includes the minorities in addition to the SCs, STs and OBCs.

The caste identity movements like the Madiga Dandora Movement and its influence on other caste identity movements. An attempt is made to analyze caste identity movements in Telangana the trends and limitations of these and the role of political parties and non-political organizations in the mobilization of Bahujans. In addition, focus is laid on how these movements aligned with each other and led to the process of '*Bahujanisation*'.

The Madiga Dandora Movement which started during the 1990s in caste identity movements in Andhra Pradesh in general and Telangana in particular, led towards '*identity establishment*' and also once again brought awareness among other Dalitbahujan communities. This movement brought about sea changes among lakshs of Madigas and led them to realise their rights, as a consequence, it occupies a unique place in the history of caste identity movements in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The Madiga Dandora Movement significantly contributed to strengthen and increase caste awareness among Dalitbahujans. The era of caste identity movements which received inspiration from Madiga Dandora Movement realized the significance of an organized articulation of their specific demands, and more often, for their space in the socio-political scenario. The *Erukala* community started the '*Erukala Kurru*' demanding categorization among STs. On the same lines, several Other Backward Castes (OBCs) made efforts to start their respective caste identity movements. The major caste based organizations which emerged are the '*Dolu Debba*' of the Golla-Kurumas (Yadavas), '*Poosalakeka*' of the Pusala community, '*Chakirevu Debba*' of the Chakali (washerman), '*Moku Debba*' of the Gouda Community, '*Sammeta Debba*' of the Vishwabrahmins, the Kummari (potter), '*Tudum Debba*' '*Nangara Bheri*' of Lambadas and so on. These caste based organizations besides asserting their caste identities by organizing their communities, also articulated their concerns towards a number of socio-economic demands due to their respective occupational or caste groups.



During the post-Mandal period, growing consciousness among BCs raised several questions relating to their socio-political rights from all over the country. BCs being the majority, consider themselves the creators and producers of all wealth. They started articulating, 'Votes are ours, seats are yours'. Such questioning was influenced by the ideological postulations of their leaders, including Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule, Periyar Ramasami Naikar and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. During the same period in Andhra Pradesh, an OBC movement was emerging and gaining political importance. Identifying with movements led by Phule, Periyar and Ambedkar, this OBC movement attempted to assert its identity and voice its demands. It has emerged as another significant identity movement after the Madiga Dandora movement.

With the influence of the Dandora movement, Dalits and Backward Caste people began adding their caste titles to their names such as Madiga, Mala, Mudiraj, Goud, Yadav and Nayak, similar to upper castes, which suffix Reddy, Chowdari, Rao, Sastri, Sharma, etc. This was an international form resistance and assertion of caste identity to assert identity and self-respect. The leadership of these caste movements perceived it as an attempt to shed the inferiority attached to these social groups which were classified as pollutant castes. In the process, these movements also highlighted the cultural injustice of OBCs.

MADIGA DANDORA-STRATEGIES AND ARTICULATIONS

The effort of the Madiga Dandora in building a caste based mass movement is in an important milestone in Indian political history. Its success lies in its strategy in bringing self-respect to a caste which hitherto, was neglected in society. The idea of identifying with their caste name itself was an innovative strategy. It all started with a few people taking of a Padayatra, earlier, the movement was confined to Dharnas, Meetings and public rallies etc.

The identity of a caste depends upon its consciousness in turn, it also enlightens other downtrodden castes. The idea of having a militant group for each of these lower castes emerged with the influence of the Madiga Dandora. The leadership of Manda Krishna Madiga inspired many other caste leaders. The need for fighting for their own problems and building leadership within caste ranks evolved among these lower castes. These castes understood that there was no necessity for other political parties to lead them. Gradually they started questioning the mainstream political parties on various issues. Thus, for the rightwing movements and Communist parties in Telangana region, it became necessary to build affiliations with Dalits and BCs.

The important implications from the above theoretical framework are that caste identity movements are the instruments of organization, mobilization, and articulation. They are instruments to train leadership as also the instruments for spreading ideas through its publications. In the line of these implications, the changing profile of caste identity movements in Andhra Pradesh in general and



Telangana in particular is examined. For this purpose, four caste identity movements are chosen for analysis, the Dolu Debba, Nangara Bheri, Chakirevu Debba and Moku Debba. There are, of course, many caste identity movements like the Erukala Kurru, Pusalakeka, Thudum Debba, Sammeta Debba, etc.

DOLU DEBBA MOVEMENT (YADAVAS)

Ever since the Dandora Movement started, the Golla-Kuruma, one of the leading backward castes and an important occupational community in Telangana Region. It has been organizing and consolidating itself. In 1997, the Golla Kurumas organized themselves under the name “Dolu Debba” under the leadership of Belli Krishna, Belli Lalitha and Gunda Ravi. They conceived the movement to align with other caste identity movements and subsequently build their ‘own caste movement and articulate their specific demands.

IMPACT OF DOLU DEBBA MOVEMENT

The impact of this movement is seen more in the Telangana, where they have united all members of the caste and established caste societies and unions at different levels. This movement may be viewed as a movement of self-respect, state government after viewing the Dolu Debba movement in Telangana. The Dolu Debba movement has emerged as an important caste movement. For them, caste struggle means to rebel against Brahmanism, question upper caste domination and deny the customs and traditions of Hindu caste system. They considered the caste identity as a weapon against exploitation by upper castes and upheld caste identity with pride and the movement as the vehicle to express their assertion.

NANGARA BHERI (LAMBADAS)

Inspired by the Dandora Movement the *Nangara Bheri* (which means the sound of the conch in Lambada language) movement has come to the forefront in early 1998. This movement was started for realizing the rights of Lambadis, who are a scheduled tribal group in Andhra Pradesh. We should get our share as per our population’ is the slogan of the Nangara Bheri, which was initially to be known as the Lambadi Hakkula Porata Samithi (LHPS). In order to achieve their rights, they felt that a movement should be built within Lambadis and consequently a united oppressed caste front can be formed. They recognize that such a front may lead to the Bahujanisation process. The mutual understanding between the Lambadi Hakkula Porata Samithi (LHPS) and the people of Dalit-Bahujan movements is to initiate a common platform for the organizations and protect their rights under the banner, ‘Ummadi Hakkula Porata Samit’.

The Lambadas have started ‘Nangra Bheri’ under the leadership of Bellaiah naik, with the slogan hapan thanda hapan raj (self-rule in our thandas) this movement has raised many questions particularly that of the failure to realize, despite constitutional guarantees rights and entitlements pertaining to schedule Tribes.



DEMANDS OF NANGRA BHERI

Some of the important demands put forth by the Nangra Bheri are as follows. Government should bring out a law to recognize Lambada thandas as special gram Panchayats. Reservations should be implemented in the private sector. Backlog posts should be filled immediately. All political parties should extend cooperation to realize the Demand of recognizing thandas as separate Panchayats. Government should not amend the rules of Act 1/70 which protects the rights of tribes on lands and other resources.

CHAKIREVU DEBBA (WASHERMAN)

The Chakalis (Washerman) traditionally known as Rajakas. Render services of washing clothes to people. They wash clothes of people of all castes. Except of the Mala and Madigas communities. Their livelihood is linked with the village as they are paid either in cash or in kind. Due to the collapse of the agriculture based village economy after urbanization, traditional occupational groups were also affected adversely. Chakalis left their traditional occupation and migrated to nearby towns often change their occupation.

The Chakirevu Debba movement was inspired by other caste identity movements. This movement felt that at first the caste should organize within and then join other Dalit-Bahujan castes to come under one umbrella. The Chakirevu Debba movement identified that each caste has specific problems and differentiated such problems as per caste hierarchy to solve them. The Chakirevu Debba movement came forward with the slogan 'share as per population' and informs government about financial and social problems on a regular basis.

MAJOR DEMANDS OF CHAKIREVU DEBBA

Some of the important demands put forth by the Chakirevu Debba are as follows.

In India, the Chakali (Washerman) community is included in the Scheduled Caste list in 16 states, whereas in Telangana State, they are in the B.C. list. Hence they demand inclusion in the S.C. list. This is the major demand of the Chakirevu Debba. The Chakali are economically, educationally and politically backward and should be protected against such treatment. Separate and residential schools for Chakali children must be established.

MOKU DEBBA (GOUDS, TODDY-TAPPERS)

In Telangana one more major population in the backward class community. The Gouds are facing similar problems as are the Lambadas, Golla-Kurmas, Chakali and weavers, but it in different form, most Gouds depend only on their occupation. Their main livelihood is to draw toddy and sell it. Gouds toil to draw toddy thrice a day. They usually climb the toddy trees even in the rainy season, though it involves rick, their back and limbs become as hard as stons. With the new economic policies and modernization, Gouds are losing their identity and



occupation in the era of 'globalisation'. The occupation should be protected and modernized, cooperative societies developed and plantation of toddy trees developed. As well development and preservation of toddy technology. Not only Madiga, Mala, tribal, Yadava, Chakali and Gouds, all Bahujan Communities are facing similar problems in Telangana state.

Caste identity, polarizations self-respect all these have contributed in a professional based unity among BCs, SCs and STs and laid a bridge for Bahujanisation process. They have conveyed a message that caste awareness is not enough; it is the awareness of Dalit-Bahujans that can enable them to make inroads into the political arena. This is the background for the various caste identity movements which began struggles in the name of caste and professions. Among these identity movements. The Madiga Dandora stood in the forefront and inspired Bahujans belonging to different castes.

Today no single caste can achieve political power. But only when the unity of a single caste takes place that the process of Bahujanisation will start. There is a close relationship between these castes if one sees their work culture. There may be differences which can be resolved. So long as the upper caste high-handedness exists, the upper and lower caste differences exist. Phule, in order to rescue Shudras and ati- Shudras from the supremacy of Brahmanism, started Satya Shodak Samaj. Shudras and ati- Shudras means Dalit-Bahujans. These kinds of movements helped to evolve a process of Bahujanisation.

BCs Population – 1931 Census in Telangana

V. Satyanarayana estimated the population figures of Telangana on the basis of 1931 Census (see table-1). The Backward Castes constituted a very large proportion of the population in the ten districts of Telangana constituting 46 percent in 1931. Backward Classes were unevenly distributed, and divided into a large number of small groups. The most populous among them, the Munnurukapus & Muttra's (23.9 percent) were spread more or less evenly in the Telangana region. Among BCs Yadavas constituted 12.1 percent followed by Goudas with 10.4 percent Padmashalies (Weaver community) occupy fourth place with 8.6 percent followed by Chakali (Washer men) with 5.9 percent. All other BCs communities constitute ranging from 0.52, 10.3, and 3.4 which are numerically significant.

Estimation of Population in Telangana

According to the Telangana region estimation itself, the BCs population is 48.68% SCs 15.85% STs 8.87% Reddys 4.5% and, Kammas 3% Christians 1.24% Muslim BCs 12.43% others 9.95%. Official caste census statistics in India are available only up to the year 1931 and later only after several years an organized effort has been made by Mandal Commission to assess the strength of backward castes. Census statistics during the post-independence period cover only details about the populations by region and especially data relating to SCs and STs. Mandal Commission has relied mainly on the 1931 census data as the base and worked out



projections of population growth of OBCs on all India bases while Muralidhar Rao commission did the same for the data relating to Andhra Pradesh

Table -1 BCs Particulars in Telangana – 1931 Census

S. No	Caste	Population	%	S. No.	Caste	Population	%
1	Munnurukapu & Muttra's	9,43,712	23.9	16	Arekatika	71,953	1.8
2	Yadav	4,76,825	12.1	17	Satani	55,564	1.4
3	Gouda	4,09,742	10.4	18	Darji	44,850	1.1
4	Padmashli	3,36,761	8.6	19	Waddera	44,712	1.1
5	Chakali	2,33,448	5.9	20	Baliya	43,219	1.1
6	Kuruma	1,36,113	3.4	21	Uppara	32,138	0.8
7	Noobhasrladdaf, Dudekula, Mehtar, etc.	1,53,000	3.9	22	Perika	29,264	0.7
8	Bestha	1,39,582	3.5	23	Viswabrahman	27,704	0.7
9	Magali	1,07,132	2.7	24	Gandla	26,268	0.7
10	Vaddera	1,03,106	2.6	25	Medera	24,503	0.6
11	Kumari	98,643	2.5	26	Kanchara	20,805	0.5
12	Kamsali	94,791	2.4	27	Bhatraj	12,715	0.3
13	Vadla	88,099	2.2	28	Others Ramgreji, Hatkar, Male, Parthi, Veera Musti	35,158	0.9
14	Kammari	68,128	1.7				
15	Jangam	79,926	2.0		Total	39,37,861	

Source: Samajikanyayam – Andariki Adikaram, Author: K.V.Satyanaarayana

Another organized estimate of caste projections has been made by the government of Andhra Pradesh to conduct the local body elections based on caste reservations of elected positions in both rural and urban local bodies. Both Mandal and Muralidhar Rao Commissions estimated the BC (OBC) population at 52 percent, while the government of Andhra Pradesh estimated exclusively for the purposes of local bodies' elections at 48 percent. The Sri Krishna committee (2010) on Telangana while quoting the government sources put the BCs population figure at 44.5 percent in the state. Provides the details relating to the general caste composition of the state as estimated recently

According to the state estimation itself, the BCs population Census statistics during the post- independence period cover only details about the populations by region and especially data relating to SCs and STs. Mandal commissions has relied mainly on the 1931 census data as the base and worked out projections of population growth of OBCs on all India basis while Muralidhar Rao commission did the same for the data relating to Andhra Pradesh .So the figures



presented here have been obtained by projections of the 1931 data and can only be taken as estimates.

Tabel-2 Estimate Population in Telangana

	SC	ST	Christians	BC	Muslim BC	Others
Adilabad	18.54	16.74	0.59	45.94	2.85	6.87
Nizamabad	14.84	7.7	0.69	53.04	4.32	10.12
Karimnagar	18.62	2.60	0.59	60.51	1.80	4.32
Medak	17.58	5.4	1.30	53.63	3.33	7.77
Ranga Reddy	14.55	4.09	2.51	47.07	3.43	8.00
Mahabubnagar	17.10	7.93	0.54	55.11	2.54	5.91
Nalgonda	17.73	10.55	1.00	51.11	1.58	3.67
Warangal	16.99	14.10	0.95	52.26	1.64	3.82
Khammam	16.5	26.47	1.19	31.00	1.61	3.77
Hyderabad	8.21	0.90	2.43	37.70	8.23	32.94
Total	15.85	8.87	1.24	48.68	12.43	9.95

Source: Samajikanyayam – Andariki Adikaram, Author: K.V.Satyanarayana

**Table – 3 Population of BCs in Andhra Pradesh
Distribution of Social Groups by State and Region (percentage)**

Region	SCs	STs	Muslims	Other Minorities	OBCs
Andhra Pradesh	16.2	6.6	9.2	1.7	44.5
Telangana inc Hyderabad	15.8	8.9	12.4	1.5	50.7
Telangana [ex. Hyderabad]	16.9 8.0	10.0 6.9	8.4 41.2	1.2 3.2	53 35
Rayalaseema	16.7	2.9	12.5	0.9	43
Costal Andhra	16.3	6.0	1.5	2.2	39

Source : Census 2001 and NSSO 64th round. Sri Krishna Committee Report

Table–3 also indicate that there is variation in the formation of social groups between various regions within Andhra Pradesh. The upper castes constitute only 10.7 percent of the total population of the Telangana region, while in Rayalaseema and Costal Andhra it is 24.2 percent and 32.0 percent respectively. BCs constitute 44.5 percent in the State of Andhra Pradesh while the Telangana region excluding Hyderabad holds 53.00 percent of population. In Coastal Andhra, BCs constitute 39.0 percent (Srikakulam, Vijayanagaram and Vishakapatnam districts cover a large majority of BC population), while in Rayalaseema, it is 43.00 Andhra Pradesh has very nearly the same distribution of SC population as in the rest of the country in general and from within its various regions.

However, the minorities especially Muslims constitutes 41.2 percent in Hyderabad city alone, while in Telangana excluding Hyderabad it has been 6.9 percent. Tribal population in Telangana excluding Hyderabad constitutes 10 percent. In the overall sense in Telangana BCs, SCs, STs and Minorities constitute slightly more than 89 percent, while in overall in Andhra Pradesh it was 78 percent,



while BCs in the whole of Andhra Pradesh constitute slightly more than 44.5 percent. This data clearly indicates that the upper castes or dominant castes constitute less than 11 percent in Telangana and only 22 percent in the whole of Andhra Pradesh. This makes very clear that BCs consisting of 140 different castes together with common interests and common problems constitute the single largest group of population as well as voters and spread over in almost all constituencies ranging from a maximum of 85 percent to a minimum 35 percent

CONCLUSION

In Telangana State the Dalit Bahujan caste consciousness was growing, even before Telangana merged in to Andhra Pradesh. Because of the Telangana Armed Struggle a class consciousness was formed. But subsequent particularly in the 1980s and 90s. The Dalit Bahujans who organized themselves in to the independent caste identity movement slowly created a consciousness of communing identity and spread the consciousness about the need for reservations. By various of the Muralidhar Rao and Mandal Commission Dalit Bahujans started to think on Bahujanizing themselves by referring of 60th SC, ST, OBC as Bahujans. The Madiga Dandora movement has significantly contributed to strengthen and increasing the caste awareness among various Dalit-Bahujans.

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