

Foregrounding Differences and Diversity: Dalit Youth of India

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This paper attempts to focus on the changing dalit youth culture in India tracing the socio-historical factors which facilitated the development of the contemporary youth identity among dalits. It focuses on the diverse kinds of motivations and ideologies which are now mostly continued by the youth of the contemporary society. The paper also tries to draw attention towards the fact that youth of India are taking prominent collective action guided and provoked by the changing social institutions (which are more politically active and mobile now) that are creating contradictions and new form of discriminations/exclusivist trends in the Indian society. The paper narrates how youth of contemporary India is getting involved in the new age caste-discriminations based on politics by using their cultural baggage. The rationale provided to the youth, either Dalit or non-Dalit is reasoned on the basis of cultural tools in order to gain a leading role in Indian political system. This paper examines this dichotomy, contradictions and the logic of Dalit politics and the involvement of youth.

Keywords: Dalit, youth, consumer culture, post-reform India, social change, structural violence, Jyotiba Phule, Ambedkar.

Introduction

The primary back ground condition for this paper came from the fact that in the socio-historical and technological features that congregated in the post-economic reformed India, when the country moved from welfare economy to get integrated into the market-driven universal consumer culture, the youth were central to this design, and therefore the dalit youths were not left out of this. The Indian youth in general got progressively lulled into the believing that the market advertised stereotypes with a youth tag that could be adopted and celebrated with emblematic connotation

by them as a means to map a cultural terrain distinctive from the cultural pattern of their parents' generation and from the broader social trends. Contemporary media representation extol the youth for their energy, enterprise, and ability to engage as a change agent on the one end, and on the other denigrate their gullibility as victims and moral panics, which often lead to erroneous assumption about youth culture and the various forms of social practices that young people in India engage with. Youth groupings among dalits in particular whose collective identities are still based on structural determinants such as caste, class, and gender in India are getting further divided around these new aspirations based on consumer sensibilities of standard of living and taste. Young dalits become victims of cultural, structural and direct violence, thus become probable carriers or perpetrators of such violence.

There is, though, a strong tendency among politicians, policy-makers, academicians and researchers to see such issues as specific aberration or anomic situation that needs to be resolved. Also, in such cases the youth are underrated as constructive agents with power and potential to bring social change and work as key player in the process of social integration. The problem of bias has also been observed that dalit youths face, come from the fact that asymmetric judgment the society has about the process of negotiation with new technology they undertake. On-line communication, mobile telephony or gaming has eroded the divide of public and private space, giving a newer meaning to the age old concepts like social group or community or culture among the youth in general in India. However, the dalit youth still at times are debarred from using these because of their socio-economic background. This brings to the fore the fact that contrary to the popular representations and the everyday life experiences of youth, young dalits is still encumbered by their caste legacy, face subjugation and deprivation. Under such legacy, for the dalit youth, new social pressures, like risk and uncertainty that is confronting the youth of contemporary India in general, get further layered and magnified. Therefore, for a dalit youth the popular portrayal of a youth as disaffected, apathetic and apolitical becomes a myth.

Difference in understanding the youth and Dalit youth

Youth are considered to be the backbone of any country, as the adage goes. The change, advancement and innovation rest highly on their shoulders. However, in India, homogeneous connotation of youth as a category is embedded with plural interests and forged with multi-layered identities that abate their collective strength. Youth of India reflect just the same chasms and fractions that India is mired with as a multi-ethnic and multi cultural society. Nevertheless, if a careful look through is made in various programs and policies of post colonial Indian state and/or literature from social sciences, we will observe that similar to the title of the previously cited bill, there is an inherent tendency in the mainstream gaze of the society to homogenize deprivation and marginality among the youth of India. Just like Indian history and politics can never be separated from jati, so is the case of Dalit youth. History of anti-caste movement can be traced as early as thirteenth century starting from various Bhakti traditions throughout India. But anti-caste movement took a prominent shape from early 19th century with Jyotiba Phule. Phule, nevertheless despite forming Satyashodhak Samaj, couldn't mobilize and organize lower caste groups in general, and the youth in particular the way Ambedkar did. Here one cannot ignore Gandhi's mobilization of untouchables though it is argued that he tried to inculcate them into an alternative Hindu-ideology keeping the skewed structure intact. The mobilizing and organizing of lower caste youth, especially the untouchables, took place with Ambedkar in the proper sense of the term. Caste subdivisions and its multitudinous sub-caste bifurcations, hegemonic structures of knowledge and forms of oppression based on exclusive privileges were confronted and challenged by various means, be it political or reformist or contradictory, by Ambedkar to topple the existing social relations and exploitative structures. Where Gandhi focused on a reformist view towards Hinduism, Ambedkar completely rejected Hinduism and called for 'annihilation' of it and conversion to Buddhism.

The mobilization of youth around the issue of caste and untouchability differed from region to region in pre-colonial India despite of Ambedkar's influence and charismatic leadership. Examples can be drawn from various states like West Bengal where

a small section of youth got involved in Namashudra's movement which was later on quite unsuccessful because of lack of leadership and motivations for youths. In case of UP, pre-independence era saw the mobilization of Chamar youth against the caste system. Though they supported Ambedkar but their standpoint and actions were different from Mahars of Maharashtra who were under Ambedkar's direct leadership. If we look at the lower caste youth of other two states prominent in anti-caste movement that is Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, we will again find different political ideologies mobilizing the youth. Where Karnataka was mainly pro-Congress and supported Harijan Sabha, Andhra and the Telengana region was mainly under left ideology. There was no prominent Dalit antagonization in terms of movement but there was Adi-Andhra movement in coastal Andhra and Adi-Hindus movement in Hyderabad region where youth not particularly belonging to Dalit participated but youth of other exploited class and caste participated against the exploitative character of caste. Hence, if we look at the scenario of Dalit politicization and participation of youth in pre-independence period, then we will find that other than massive participation of youth in Dalit movement at Maharashtra there was no significant unified political action carried forward by the Dalit youth in India. Anti-caste agitations and politicizations, though present in various pockets throughout India, but that was dependent on the localized problem of that area and was guided in a specific directions by the dominant political ideology out there. Like for example since, Andhra was dominated by Left politics mainly, hence they ignored many caste realities rather concentrated on the issues related with land which was more economical in nature (Omvedt, 2010). Therefore no exclusivist Dalit politicization took place. There, youth were guided to take part in issues that are being taken up by the leftist parties. The upper caste and non-Dalit youths of colonial period were basically involved in the nationalist movement against the colonial rule and there was no visible involvement of them in the anti-caste and Dalit politics. Moreover, it can be seen that the Dalit youth of India in the pre-independence era were not under one ideology or political affiliation but under many and were scattered in terms of their political action against caste structure and relations producing out of it, since then there existed ideologies of Ambedkar, Gandhi, Nehru, Leftist ideologies and other regional specific motivations. Dalit movement in particular and anti-caste

movement in general, of pre-colonial India, was value-oriented or anti-systemic movements (Omvedt, 2010).

The term Dalit and Harijan both have two different political and social connotations. In the post-independent era the term Harijan lost its achieved popularity among the youth belonging to lower caste and untouchable whereas the term Dalit gained its power and influenced them. It is argued that the term Dalit is not merely a rejection of the very idea of pollution or impurity or Untouchability, it reveals a sense of a unified class, of a movement toward inequality (Michael, 2007). Dalit as a subject emerged as political which does not put forward one unified identity since the concept is having many interpretations and definitions, no one homogeneous interpretations can be found. Youth of contemporary India is getting absorbed but scattered within multiple ideologies, strategies, associations and political parties associated with this term Dalit. Dalit now has no one discourse but numerous divisions which in the process are channelizing the youth into caste politics in diverse ways. Dalit grouping has emerged as a unique kind of political subject taking youth in its folds and enabling constitutive contradictions in Indian political modernity. Political liberalism, democracy, growth of human freedom, neo-religions, media and diverse theoretical discourses have taken away the binary and paved ways to various contradictions, dispersions and dis-aggregations rather than cohesion on the issue, demands and rights among the youths of India.

Ambedkar with his death in 1956 left behind a vast political legacy which nationalized the Dalit identity that further got deep-seated with Dalit Panther movement. Greatest mobilization and agitation of Dalit youth which established the concept Dalit and Dalit Discourse took place in Maharashtra during 1970s with Dalit Panther movement. The members of Dalit Panther movement were young men and women mostly between the ages of 20-30 years. The militant Dalit Panthers Party founded by two writers Namdeo Dhasal and Raja Dhale in April 1972 antagonized and organized the Dalit youth of Maharashtra within its folds (Zelliot, 2010). But this radical movement was unable to mobilize the dalit youth from other parts of India into their fold the way it happened among the Dalit youth of Maharashtra, since there doesn't exist one

homogenized identity, ideology and political affiliations. This can be drawn from the instances that Dalit Panther Party formed only in Maharashtra and in no other state of India. A radical movement carried forward by Dalit Panther Party did not influence the other parties based on Dalit ideology existing elsewhere like UP, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala etc. Rather the Dalit Panther organization got scattered within two years (founded in 1972 and split in 1974) and remained important only in Maharashtra among few youth (Zelliot, 2010).

Understanding the Dalit and Dalit youth

The social asymmetry and injustice rooted on caste/*jati* assigns an ascribed status by virtue of birth, have been engaged with and questioned repeatedly by thinkers and social reformers throughout the history of India. Dalit is the widely used post-colonial term for the former untouchables and Avarna or Panchama of so called Hindu religion belonging to the Indian society. The term Dalit does not have a uniform definition. People from different perspectives have understood and defined it in dissimilar ways. The non-Dalit writers and intellectuals mostly have found its origin in Sanskrit texts locating it in the term 'Dal' which means broken, crushed, scattered, downtrodden etc. In the pre-colonial period, the most prominent figure who raised the issue of untouchability was M.K. Gandhi (1869-1948). Though Gandhi called untouchability an evil but he did not go against Varnashrama Dharma. He believed untouchability as a subversion of true Hinduism. But first time in history of Indian caste system untouchables or Ati-shudras or Pancham were named as Harijans, or children of God, which marked a relative change in status and a new discourse emerged with the terminology.

Although there has been an increasing interest in youth of Dalit descent, most of the studies are paying attention principally on the strong points in their character in comparison to the youths of other (higher) caste groups, especially their high cumulative attainment in production process in primary and secondary sector of Indian economy. The emphasis on mechanisms underlying successes or failure of Dalit youth in the various domains has contributed to the maintenance of the popular myth of the success of Indian democracy. However, recent studies in the first decade

of 21st century India indicate that caste based discrimination continue to remain a salient feature in the experiences of Dalit youth, including those who have converted to other religion like Christianity or Sikhism, and that such discrimination has negative consequences for their psycho-social well-being. Researches that present thick descriptive insight into Dalit youths' perceptions of discrimination, most have focused on high school and college students, and relatively little is understood about the incidence, nature, and correlation of caste-bigotry among youth in contemporary India. Moreover, few studies have examined the extent to which affirmative Dalit identity works as a protective shield and if such identity beliefs provide any form of security to the Dalit youths in contemporary India.

The rate of recurrence and variables of perceived caste discrimination from peers among Indian youths and the aspects of caste identity serve as a protective in-group identity. The Dalit youth even in urban areas of Indian states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh report alarmingly rate of high encounter with caste based discriminatory practices from their peers, which exposes the fact that protective in-group identity of Dalit youth often insulate them from the harmful effects of such exposure, and allow some mental well-being. On the basis of the above, it can be argued that Dalit identity today does shield Dalit youths' mental health in the face of caste based discrimination.

Media hyped stereotypes have made the society believe that caste based discriminations faced by Dalits are only of physical nature laced with violence, though it is our finding that Dalit youths daily experiences from peers some form of rudeness, disrespect and caste bigotry, and discrimination in the form of exclusion and mockery. Salience of caste based oppression of Dalit youth harm their sense of self and creates poor self-esteem, resulting in distorted group and self-identity issues among them. The distance to schools/ colleges is also considered a huge barrier for Dalit children, and a significant part of the explanation for the low enrolment rate and the high dropout rate. Due to the unwillingness of higher caste groups to live side by side with Dalits, Dalit families often live in remote areas, away from the main villages and schools. This residential pattern has two major implications. Firstly, the location

of schools within the main villages, and hence within higher caste areas, makes it difficult for Dalit children to gain access to schools, due to caste tensions. Secondly, the great physical distance to schools often result in Dalit children dropping out, as the distance is simply too far to walk on an everyday basis (UNICEF, 2006: A). Similarly, migratory labour is another factor that adds to the high dropout rates. Many Dalits are landless and are forced into migrant labour, as this is often the only way to ensure the economical survival of their families. The continuous migration in search for labour implies a frequent disruption of the Dalit children's education and makes them incapable of keeping up with the academic advancement of other children (HRW, 2007). The caste bias manifests itself in the way teachers ignore Dalit students and unjustly fail them in exams, in social exclusion and physical abuse, and in the unwillingness of the university administration to assist and support Dalits. As a grave consequence of this harassment, a disproportionate number of Dalit students have committed suicide (*The Death of Merit*, 2011: A). Indeed, in India alone, 18 Dalit students have committed suicide in one of the country's premier institutions between 2008 and 2011, and this number only represents the official cases. Counting all the Dalit students whose families did not protest against the incessant discrimination that eventually led to suicide, the number is likely to be much higher (*The Death of Merit*, 2011: B). According to the *Briefing Note (2010)* by Navsarjan Trust (www.navsarjan.org), more than 200 million people in India are vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and violence simply because of the caste into which they were born. The caste system relegates Dalits, formerly known as 'untouchables', to a lifetime of segregation and abuse. Caste-based divisions dominate in housing, marriage, employment, education, and general social interaction - divisions that are reinforced through economic boycotts and physical violence. Dalits are forced to perform tasks deemed too 'polluting' or degrading for non-Dalits. The reports provide irrefutable evidence that public servants and community members in India - i.e. state as well as non-state actors - violate a number of human rights protected by domestic laws and international human rights treaties. The various rights that are violated for Dalits are: The right against 'untouchability'; deny Dalit children access to an equal education; deny Dalit children their equal right to health by forcing them into hazardous work that includes cleaning human excrement and disposing of

dead animals; child labour and manual scavenging-work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development; teachers and community members force Dalit children into unpaid labour, primarily cleaning schools, homes, and toilets, in what constitutes a modern form of slavery.

However those Dalit youth who have a high self-perceived regard about their caste background are found to be confident and are often engaged in raising the consciousness and standard of living of people from Dalit caste group. Thus, they, by affirming their Dalit identity negate the outcomes that have been associated with discrimination based on caste origin. However, this does not mean that such engagements have dented the overall caste based discriminatory scenario among the youth of contemporary India. Nor has it changed the mental makeup of the educated urban youth of the country because their perception of others opinion about their own is invariably negative and full of suspicion. Those who readily accept their subjugated position in the society among the Dalits, and are still engulfed with prejudice, are a sizable section of the Dalit youths who are socially and mentally better off because they do not hurt the status quo thus, instead of hostility enjoy the security of ordered inequality. The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights and International Dalit Solidarity Network in their 13th Session of the Universal Periodic Review Report of the Human Rights Council - India: 'Caste Based Discrimination in India - Key Recommendations and Questions' found the following to be key areas of human rights violations for Dalits in India: Impunity and non-implementation of laws for the protection of Dalits; Exclusion in access to basic services and extreme poverty; Diversion of economic benefits allocated for Dalits; Lack of political participation; trafficking and forced prostitution of Dalit women; Manual Scavenging and Bonded Labour; systematic exclusion of Dalits during disaster management; Infrastructure inaccessibility and investment related displacement is most acute in Dalit populated area; and Continued Discrimination in Education.

The study: orientations and aspirations of Dalit youth

In a small survey in three districts of sub-urban West Bengal, keeping the above variables in mind, it was observed that dalit

youth perceived their role not as an age-group but a stage in their life where they represent a life-characteristics and optimistic personality stance, thus, have certain option and opportunity to assert their autonomous outlook. It was seen that the dalit youth consider that conditions as ripe to correct the skewed life-chances of their community; however their optimism was tempered by their reading of continued dominance of caste hierarchy and emergence of newer forms of caste-alliances, therefore, there was a sense of meaninglessness among them about their educational attainments and employability. Similar to youth of any place and culture, for the dalit youths, education, employment, travel, friends, music and sensitivity about current social issues were found to be the spot of highest concern and attention, but what was unique was their very high concern about environmental sustainability and distortion of local culture due to 'cultural imperialism' due to spread of mass media. Another cause that was perceived by them with apprehension was the 'homogenizing-tendency' by the market in terms of availability of goods and services, thus, signifying their concern about the fact that unique cultural trends, tastes and skills are getting destroyed, making many from their community unsuitable for the job-market and forcing them to accept unsustainable wage. Though they are upbeat about the enabling and life-transforming role of technology but are very conscious about the 'digital divide', and their limitation in matching the performance of those who have access to technology. With regard to politics and civil society movement, a sense of disenchantment and disregard seems to have crept in among the dalit youth as they feel – the dalit question compounded with reservation issue – has queered the field for them, and personal agenda fulfilling ambition of politicians and civil society workers who do not have much to offer them.

Nussbaum (2000, *Women and Human Development: A study in Human Capabilities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) broadening the capability approach of Amartya Sen indicate that for expansion of human capabilities to achieve the human potentials, various other lived criteria of individual has to be taken into consideration like their life-span, nutrition and health, safe housing and shelter, choice of mate selection and time of procreation, informed decision making, right to education, security against discrimination and threat of violence, and ability to make

choices about ones politics, environment and relationships. Taking these as parameters to check the condition of dalit youth, it was found that they perceive under most of the factors they remain both deprived and excluded, as well as strive much more than other young people because of their caste background. In the long run, such passive condition of exclusion restricts their space for participation in the society. It was also observed that there are numerous and multifarious connection between basic rights and health of the vulnerable groups like dalits. Violations or lack of attention to basic rights can have serious health consequences for certain groups like dalits. The approach with which health procedures and schemes are designed are favourably disposed to higher caste groups for which it fails to protect the rights of accessibility to services, information and awareness, dignity and privacy, and cultural sensitivity of dalits. Empowered dalit youth today are aware of social milieu related abuses, so they can recognize and confront their caste groups' face, understand the reason for which they suffer group-specific health hazards that also affect their health awareness.

Poverty is a significant feature that adds to social exclusion of the dalits. Though poverty has an effect on all poor, it has distinct impact on the dalits. Poverty, illiteracy and age-old caste based domination make the dalit more vulnerable to environmental and health problems as they have scarce ability to take advantage of the facilities of essential services that in last two decades in India have progressively become commercialized and valued in terms of money. Heterogeneity of multicultural India and the accommodation process practiced due to the political compulsions has given rise to newer forms of intense tension, conflict and violence against the vulnerable dalits. The apathetic state machinery is antagonistic and intimidating therefore when their support is sought by such groups they become victims of red-tape and policy inertia, bribery, benefaction and clientalism. The insecurity and inequality that marginalize the youth among the dalit poor in India also deprive them of constitutional rights and social security entitlements. It will be misleading if one fails to see the dalit youth in relational terms because their identity is constructed in relation to other groups, social and economic processes and institutionalization. Freire's, (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1996) argument seems very pertinent for the dalit youths today as he

suggested to recognize the dehumanization process they face that has to be struggled against without taking any 'generosity' from the oppressors who act humane to perpetuate their oppression.

If we analyze the contemporary period, on the basis of our study, we will find that there is no one ideology or one set of motivations that are guiding the youth of India to get involved in the Dalit Politics. The politics which surrounds around the identity of Dalit where youth are taking a leading role in terms of actions is not one but many. Post-independent India rather than extracting out from the situation of caste-exploitation has crystallized new kind of discriminations in terms of creating 'secular-Brahmanism', 'elite-dalits' and as a result fragmented youth political involvement as too many choices and directions are being laid down before them. Dalit youth of contemporary India are placed across different regions, economic standards, educational levels, social groups and sartorial choices. Youth reside in multiple worlds and Dalit youths are no exception in this matter. These numerous worlds socialize youth in different ways. The processes of globalization and modernity have created a huge impact in these worlds. This brings out multiple responses, activities and inclinations.

Situating Dalit dynamics

With the growth of democratic institutions and the so many political parties, the Dalits have begun to assume importance in national politics of contemporary India. The leaders of these political associations by taking advantage of this situation are mobilizing youth in their favour. Hence, the youths involved in these associations are only acting as pressure groups. The political initiatives taken up by Dalit leaders have marked a beginning of a new era of involvement of youth in democratic politics. Rajni Kothari maintains that Andhra Pradesh and Bihar are examples where one can see that there is a rapid succession of various caste groups into factional networks of politics which provided the best channels of mobility (Kothari, 2009). Youth of the contemporary India who are always inclined towards upward mobility and more so true for Dalit youth who has a history of being an oppressed and exploited class are getting easily antagonized under political folds.

Religion plays a major role in forming diverse ideologies and sources of motivations for the mobilization of youth in the contemporary Indian situation. Just like every other social institution, religion has also gone through immense change and we call this new age religion to be 'neo-religious institutions'. The use of religion in politics can be seen from India's pre-independence era but the formation of neo-religious institutions, the mixing of religion and politics has been consolidated with the interdependence on each other. The party organizations and voting habits are significantly getting affected by religious divisions and affiliations. One important reason for having multiple political parties and ideologies is due to this numerous neo-religious associations. One of the key political parties Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) is an example of a dominant political party of India which is closely linked to Hindu-nationalist agenda that is getting strong support from neo-religious association like Rashtriya Sayamsevak Sangh (RSS). India's political - religious divides in turn cross cut caste loyalties. Youth of India being active, politically inclined and ambitious are getting absorbed by these various parties and neo-religious institutions. Institutions like RSS are saffronizing Hindutwa and motivating a large section of youth to participate in their activisms. These institutions are not only attracting youth from upper caste but also from Dalit caste. Hindutva ideology, in a relative subtle manner, is swaying the mind and attitude of lower caste youth into its domain and thus forming an ideology completely contradicting the ideology of Dalit associations and the youths involved there. But in case of Dalit politics too we see acute political motives to gain state power. If we look at the case of UP, BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) first for the sake of votes mobilized the Dalit people and especially the Dalit youth of UP where the Dalit population is very high. As a result BSP came into power and Mayawati became the first Dalit woman to be a chief minister. But later on the ideology of the BSP changed and they tried to incorporate the Brahmins and other upper castes youth into their party ideology for votes.

Caste loyalties are increasingly being taken up by the religious divisions and as a result many youth from the poorest caste are most likely to convert out of Hinduism. One such religion is Christianity where we can find a large number to people formerly belonging to the class 'untouchable'. But the rise of Hindu religious

power in many parties has resulted in lack of inclusion of the Dalit converts to Christianity and Muslims into the constitutional safeguards. A Dalit who is a convert to Christianity or Islam will lose affirmative action rights. Dalit youths are getting fragmented with respect to the issues whether to remain within the Hindu folds or to get converted into Buddhism (but this conversion is more or less restricted to the Dalits of Maharashtra) or to some other religion. Dalit leadership has failed to give one unified direction to them. As a result there are multiple political parties and associations in the country attracting and catering to the Dalit youth. If we look at the state Kerala and Karnataka, we will find Christian-Dalit youths whose demands are different from those of Dalits under Hinduism. Dalit converts into Christianity does not have the privilege of protective legislation. So their main motive is to get included as a category under protective legislation as Scheduled Castes of India. Same is the case of Dalit converts to Islam. Dalit ideology and leadership are unable to take their demands and basic need into account and Dalit youths, are further getting segregated between Hindu, Muslim and Christianity. The religio-ideological and associational position of Dalit youth of India is creating multiple ideologies and thereby dalit youths are picking up political mobilization in order to achieve their personal aims as well as broader associational aim. But no one party or political ideology is all encompassing the diverse issues and as a result multiple political associations are mushrooming. Hence, Dalit youth belonging to Christianity or Muslim has separate path of actions than those Dalit youth who are within Hinduism. As a result not only within the various political parties but Dalit youths are getting segregated within various religions and therefore there is no one unified actions or ideology and reality.

The other important factor which is acting as a catalyst for the further consolidation of youth in Dalit politics is media. Media, rather than focusing on the identity of a youth as simply 'youth', is viewing and constructing their identity with their *jati* affiliations. The political reality is continuously being constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by media, and is being analyzed in terms of emergent power relations invariably cantering on *jati*-quotient. Indian media fail to serve the public in the matter of caste tensions. Indian media does neither have a religious beat nor caste beat, per se, and thus lack reporters with expertise. The media

often fail with poor reporting and mislead and mislabel events and thus create constructed reality. It will be a utopian view if it is considered that media only deal with reality of today's youth and Dalit politics since in fact, reality is far too complex to be comprehended by one single way. The recognition of Dalits and non-Dalit are forcefully enacted by this new age media. Rather than portraying youth as only youth, media is now attaching them with their jati affiliation and giving a new turn to the issue ignoring the reality. Dalit politics as conducted in the mainstream media (now interchangeable with PR, post paid-news) is all symbolism and no substance.

Conclusion

The aspirations of youth of contemporary India are completely different from those of traditional India and it is truer in case of Dalit youth. This change is due to the difference in visions of the 'untouchables' of the past and today. The collective thought and action; philosophical, political, and social are built on the changing visions or self perceptions. Believers in one vision will engage themselves in a set of actions that would be very different from that of the followers of another vision. The ramifications of such conflicting visions extend into economic, judicial, military, philosophical and political spheres (Michael, 2007). Increased intellectual activism has marked Dalit-Bahujan cultural life at both national and the regional levels in recent times (Guru and Geetha, 1997). Under the backdrop of various theoretical and academic discourses, the mobilization and antagonization of youth for/against the Dalit politics is taking place.

There is no one ideological expression and framework for the youth of India for supporting or rejecting the Dalit Politics. Here not only exists an egalitarian framework but also strong pro-religious forces. There is a conflict between political motives, ideologies and motivations which are further getting consolidated by neo-religious institutions, media and numerous theoretical discourses and thereby putting forward options to be picked up by the youths of India as they desire. In one hand there is high militancy of Dalit youth in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, on the other there is lack of involvement of youth in Dalit politics in West Bengal and Punjab, and highly politically mobilized youth of Uttar

Pradesh. The antagonisms between youths belonging to various associations are creating contradictions and conflict in Indian politics now. The recognition and politicization of public space and its all encompassing capacity to involve the youth have been possible due to the state structure, multiple political associations, neo-religious institutions, media and theoretical discourses. This multiple areas have been created due to the tension between Dalit self and individual rights which is enveloping youth into multiple realities of Dalit politics. This politics of identity and recognition of youth is giving rise to politics of difference among the youths of India on the issue of Dalit Politics. This is in turn perpetuating inequality and new age discriminations among the youths. Mainstream political forces, media and discursive interventions in the name of human rights protection are contributing to crystallize the process of exclusion among the youths on the one hand and the rise of Dalit youth identity on the other.

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