Discourse on Dalit Identity: A Study of Dalit Politics in Utter Pradesh, 1900-1950

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1. Introduction

Dalit as a social class and voice emerged as visible entity in the contemporary India. The activism, assertion and mobilisation strategies of Dalit attracted the attention of academic and public domains. Particularly Dalit activism acquired prominence in the context of emergence of sharp inequalities driven by globalisation process. This paper proposes that the associational politics of Dalits has a long and rich history in north India. The political activism of Dalits has consciously been created and nurtured by several Dalit caste associations at one level and associations established by prominent personalities such as Gandhi and Ambedkar at another level. This paper confines itself to the domain of identity formation process actively undertook by associational politics in modern India.

The paper is basically an analytical and empirical paper which attempts to capture the genesis of Dalit politics in north India. Source material for this paper has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. So far as primary source is concern, material such as files from the proceedings of different government department have been collected from Utter Pradesh state achieves. Regarding secondary sources, books and articles related to history of Dalits in Utter Pradesh have been consulted. The main objective of this paper is to document the history of Dalit politics by focusing on history of associations established by Dalits and non Dalits for advancement of Dalits.

The aspect of associational politics in this paper refers to the process of mobilisation or organisation of lower castes for pursuance of their demands by the way of invoking unity of caste/class. It was this process that responsible for emergence of political activism of lower castes and their assertion. In academia and public discourse, most of Dalit political activism mainly confined to activities of eminent personalities such as Phule, Ambedkar, Atchutanand etc at one level and important events related to Dalit movement in modern India. As a result of this, the emergence of grassroots level politics and their strategies of identity formation and mobilisation of Dalits remained relatively neglected areas in the domain of Dalit history and politics.

Modern governance generally attempts to create certain homogenised categories of population to govern them with convince. Colonial ethnology for the first time constructed a canonical epistemology on the social groups considered to be impure or untouchables. Diversified untouchable castes were brought under the nomenclature of primitive castes, criminal castes and nomadic castes. Several castes practicing diversified professions were brought under the category of depressed castes which reflects certain common features such as marginalisation, poverty, social exclusion and untouchability etc. At another level, during the colonial period dual identity formation tool place. In the domain of politics, the homogenised identity such as depressed castes and adi Hindus begun to take shape and in the domain of social, several untouchables castes mobilised under their own caste associations. It was this process that shaped identity of class/caste simultaneously in modern India.

2. Representation of History of Dalit Politics

Capturing of political power by Bahujan Samj Party (BSP) in Utter Pradesh initiated a paradigmatic approach in Dalit studies. Scholars attempted to explore the roots of Dalit politics that were responsible for dynamic mobilisation of lower castes and eventual capture of political power in a state dominated by upper castes such as Brahman and Thakur. Wide range of explanations has been offered by them for analysing this phenomenon. Sudha Pai attempted to trace the mobilisation process of Dalits in Utter Pradesh. She gave more importance to Dalit movement from the beginning of Adi Hindu movement (Pai, 2002). Vivek Kumar explored the history of Dalit movement by focusing on nature of leadership in India (Kumar, 2003). Chrisstrofar Jafferlot has brought an elegant analysis of emergence of Dalit as political power which he calls as salient revolution. His analysis overwhelmingly confined to analysis of voting behaviours of Dalits and their ability to align with other castes (Jaffrelot, 2005). Badri Narayanan, on the other hand traces the emergence of Dalit politics to cultural assertion that begun to take shape after independence (Naryanan, 2009). Ramnarayan Rawat aptly proposes that the roots of Dalit politics could be traced to political activism of various untouchable castes in colonial period (Rawat, 2011). The fact...
however is that the emergence of Dalit politics in the context of emerge of caste associations and their role in identify formation of various Dalit castes remained inadequately explored. This paper proposes that several untouchable castes established their caste associations to achieve socio-ethnic collective and used such collectivism to assert their demands.

3. Dalits of Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh is a state located in northern part of India. It was part of United Provinces (Frowde, 1908). Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India, with a population of 199,581,477 million people as per 2011 census.i As per the 2001 Indian census about 80 percent of Uttar Pradesh population belongs to Hindu, while Muslims make up around 18.5 percent of the population. The remaining consists of Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and Jains.ii Lower caste population covered here are those who are listed in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes lists (Modification) Order 1956, for Uttar Pradesh. This order lists 66 castes in the Schedule for the State, of which 64 are Scheduled Castes throughout the State and two Kori and Gond are for a part of the State. Some of the scheduled castes of Uttar Pradesh as follows: Chamar, Passi, Dhobi, Khatik, Dusadh, Basor, Dhanuk, Balmiki, Kori, Dom, Gond, Kol, Dharikar, Khanwar, Musahar, Beldar, Kanijar, Nat, Bhuaiar, Ghasi, Habuda, Hari, Kalabaz, Kapadia, Karbal, Khairaha, Agariya, Badhik, Vadi, Bansphor, Barwar, Bedia, Bhandu, Bauriya, Korwa, Laibegi, Mazhil, Parika, Paradiya, Patri, Saharia, Sansiya, Bahelia, Balai, and Bawaria. Percentage wise scheduled composition of scheduled castes briefly as follows: Chamar (56%), Passi (14%), Dhobi (6%), Kori (5%), Shilpkar (3%), Balmiki (4%), Khatik (2%), Dhanuk and Korwa (1%). The rest of the 57 castes account for a bare 8 per cent of the Scheduled Caste population (Mathur, 1975).

One of the evident features of Dalit movement and activism in Uttar Pradesh is that of emergence of parallel activity of depressed caste associations at one level and emergence of pan Dalit identity movement at another level. While the former devoted for mobilisation of particular castes and latter strives for unification of Dalit castes and strived to make them as class. The political process of colonial India mainly expressed with establishment of associations and political parties. These associations were established for social reforms, cultural assertions, to safeguard the interests of certain groups (caste and religion), and fight for political rights. This paradigmatic change had reflections in the political process of Dalits of the United Provinces. As a means to put forward united voice, several depressed castes established associations to foster socio-cultural collectivity. Some of such associations as follows: the Chamar caste which is numerically largest castes within depressed caste established Chamar Mahasabha, Ravidas Mahasabha, Jatav Maha Sabha:the Passi Mahasabha by Passis in Lucknow: Dhobi Mahasabha by Dhobi and Balmiki Mahasabha by Balmikis. These associations acted as reformist, political and other requirements to particular castes. Besides this, caste associations also engaged in improving their cultural and opposed to child marriage, drinking wine and advocated for education as a means for development. One of the important activities undertaken by these associations was that of identity formation process for based upon their caste. Wide ranges of models are being used by depressed caste for their identity. Those were ranging from sanskritisation, martial race, Buddhist, dalit, harajan etc.

4. Tamta Sudharak Sabha

The Tamta Sudhark Sabha was established in 1905 at Almora. Initially this Sabha was mainly confined its activity in Almora area and focused on mobilisation development of the Tamta caste. Krishan Chand Tamta appointed as president and Hari Prasad Tamat secretary of Tamta Sudhork Sabha.iii The main objective this association is to strive for reforming the Tamta caste and demanding rights to ensure progress of the community. Indeed it is a new dimension in Dalit politics as caste at individual level became aware of need for collective action for achieving requirements.

5. The objectives of the Sabha as follows:

- To strengthen the fillings of devotion and loyalty to the throne of his most gracious majesty by enumerating countless boons and blessings which the British has conferred upon the Indian people.
- To promote the interest of hygiene, secular education, art and Industry, sanitary and hygiene principle.
- To preach importance and social purity in the community.
- To help in providing necessary articles in the shape of utensils and furniture and on occasions of social and religious ceremonies in the community.
- To look after the interest of the community in the development of mental, moral and industrial matters.

The objective of the aforementioned sabha clearly shows the main purpose of their collectivism. Firstly, attempt was made to reform the habits of community which were treated as factors responsible for untouchability and secondly attempt was made to accelerate the material conditions of the Tamta community.

6. Chamar Mahasabha

The Chamer caste constitutes numerically biggest scheduled caste not only in Uttar Pradesh. Traditionally Chamaris are treated as untouchable caste and expected to perform menial jobs in villages. Development of leather industry and expansion of agrarian economy brought about changes in the socio-economic conditions of Chamer society. Improvement in the material conditions motivated them to question their low social status within traditional Hindu social order. The practices such as begari (unpaid lobour) in the form of agriculture work, leather work and personnel service of Zamidar's and Government officials has emerged as domain of resistance (Cohn, 2004).

Construction of historical narratives for invoking respectable identity was a visible feature of the Chamar politics in Uttar Pradesh. A series of histories were written and published in United Provinces on the past of chamar society. During first half of the 20th century, U.B.S Raghuvashi's Shree Chanvar Purana (between 1910 and 1916), and the Jaiswar Mahasabha's Suryavansh Kshatriya Jaiswar Sabha (1926), Pt. Sunder Lal
Sagar’s Yadav Jivan and Ram Narayan Yaduvendu’s Yaduvansh ka itihas (1942) reflects the aspirations of the chamars for material and political progress by the way of alleviating their social status. Sagar and Yaduvendu claimed Kshatriya status to Jatav by associating their lineage to the Yadav Tribe of Lord Krishna. Jatiya Chamar was predominantly located in western parts of United Provinces, with large presence in the Meerut, Agra, Moradabad, and Badaun districts asserted for Kshatriya status by claiming descent from the Chanvar dynasty. Jatiya and Jaiswar are the two major Chamar castes and together they constituted two-fifths of the Chamar population of Uttar Pradesh (Singh, 2016, Briggs, 2009).

The themes that outlined in the Chamar histories of the 1920’s indeed had inspired wider section of the Chamar caste. Weekly police reports give evidence of Chamar protest meetings between 1920 and 1928. The protest by the Chamars describes in great detail in the weekly police reports. Hindi language news papers like Pratat, Abhyudaya and Aaj widely reported upon the political activism of the chammers. The Chamar movement is an indication of the first phase in 20th century, Dalit struggle in north India. A distinguishing feature of this phase is the adoption by the Chamar's of Hindu cultural practices, such as vegetarianism and the abandonment of impure practices like eating beef and doing leather work as part of their claim to Kshatriya status. In 1929 Sunder Lal Sagar referred to the ongoing struggles of Chamars in western parts of United Provinces, which he hoped would succeed in changing their status (Rawat, 2009). The Chamar Sabhas (Associations) and Panchayats (Council) organized such gathering in both eastern and western parts. In Moradabad, Bulandshahr Meerut, Bijnaur, Saharanpur, Jaunpur and Basti such meetings provided a context to establish Chamar Mahasabhas.

Although Chamar protests evident in many part of the state, police report indicate that the most organized and sustained agitation took place in western part of United Provinces. These protests were first noticed in 1920 in the districts of Meerut, Muradabad, Bulandshahr, Badaun, Bijnor, Bariliy, pilibhit, Agra and Aligarh. By 1923-24 evidence of Chamar protest had also appeared in the districts of Saharanpur, Eta, Mainpuri, Mathura, Dehradoon, Lucknow, Unnao, Khiri, Sultanpur and Pratappgarh in central part of United Province. In Eastern part Beanars Jaunpur, Basti and Gorakhpur. But the police report describes the meetings and activities in western parts as a “movement.” In Moradabad we hear of a general revolt of Chamars in Bulandshahr it was reported that most of the villages were affected by protest by the chammers. In Meerut it was noted that “the Chamar movement continues to cause trouble. (Rawat, 2009).

The Chamar Sabhas were the most vocal advocates of abstaining from meet and alcohol. In his novel Karmabhoomi, Premchand identified three factors for Chamar's uncontouchability Daru-sarab, Murda-mans and Chamra (Drinking alcohol, eating beef and doing leather work) one of the main characters, Amerkant, a caste Hindu and Congress activists who settled downs in a Rae dasi Village somewhere in Haridwar, convince the Chamar’s to give up the first two as a way of attaining a pure status of like Hindus. iv In eastern UP, Dalit caste Panchayats of Chamars did pass resolutions not only to abstain from liquor and Ganjha but also meat and fish. In other parts of UP, especially in the western region, Chamar Sabhas propagated the agenda of aspiration to Kshatriya status without outside intervention. At a meeting four thousands chamars gathered from the deferent part of the district at Mawona Qasba in November 1920, a series of resolutions were passed claiming Kshatriya status and committing to a purified life style.

The gross root level political and social activism in different parts of United Provinces converged in the form of establishment of Chamar Mahasaba in Mainpuri in May 1924. This mahasabha tried to undertake multiple measures for development of chamar caste. Those measures were ranging from social reforms to political rights. Chamar's vegetarianism and the purity of their living conditions were repeatedly mention in resolutions passed in meetings held through the 24 districts of the state. Some Sabhas went to the extent of imposing fines to enforce their new rules of purity on larger chamar society. Baba Ram Chandra popular peasant leader in Uttar Pradesh participated in the meetings of Chamar Sabha at Pratappgarh and other surrounding districts. In eastern Uttar Pradesh, the district of Gorakhpur was a major centre of reforms and protest, particularly in Hata and Padraona Tahsil. In July 1926, Chamar Mahasabha passed resolution in different areas of Benaras to abandon the impure and defiling occupation of leather work and the practices of removing carcasses, skinning and tanning. Interesting details include the refusal of Chamar in Moradabad to repair and stitch and shoes, refusal to skin dead animals in the Siana quasba of Bulandshahar and desertion of the occupation of Mochi in the Rajpura quasba of Badaun are being reported. In Saharanpur town chamars sold their annual contract for hide to the Bhangies (Rawat, 2009). The Chamar’s of Awadh region participated in Kisan Sabha agitation of 1921-22 which fought against bedekhali (eviction) and begari. Protest against the begari continued even after the movement ended. There were active protests in many districts of western UP, including Meerut, Moradabad, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Saharanpur, Bijnour, Etah, Kanpur agitations against begari.

7. Jatav Mahasabha

Depressed caste movement took place in Agra region was very important part of Dalit movement in India. This movement consistently fought for social and civil rights of Dalits. Starting from caste movement to caste identity, it became very strong in this region. In this region the Jatava community which is a subset of chamar caste actively engaged in Dalit assertion (Crooke, 1896). In the beginning of 20th century Jatavs of this region started their movement for their social assertion (Nesfield, 1885). This assertion was actively driven by the economic prosperity of some Jatavas on account of thriving leather trade in Agra region (Roy, 1999). Elite People of the Jatav community followed the upper caste Hindu traditions due to influence of Arya Samaj. They emphasized on following sanskritisation process in the form of wearing of Yagyopavita (Ganeu) and abolition on flesh eating (Prasad, 2010). Elites of Jatav community started sending their children to missionary schools, Arya Samaj schools and Government schools. In 1917, they established Jatav Veer Mahasabha (Jatav Men's Associations) and Jatav Pracharak Mandal came into existence in 1924. Its main aim was to change the educational status and to give the new identity as well as consciousness to Jatav caste. First,
Jatav conference was organized by Pt. Sundarlal Sagar on 28 October 1917 in Agra. In this conference, they frame the “Akhil Bharatiya Jatav Sabha”. Boharey Khemchand (MLC) became its President and Seth Banwar Lal was elected as minister. In 1939, Jatav Jan Shiksha Sansthan was established and objectives of this Sansthan were to increase the educational status among Jatav society. Jatav Yuvak Parishad (Jatav youth league) was established in 1930. In April 1930, Ram Swaroop Thekedar forms the Bharat Varshiya Jatav Yuvak Parishad. It was renamed in 1935-1937 as Akhil Bharatiya Yuvak Parishad (All Indian Jatav Youth League). They emphasizes on the progress of Jatav society (Lynch, 1974).

8. All India Razak (Dhobi Mahasabha) Association

Traditionally the Dhobis (washer men) were also known Razaks were treated as untouchable on account of their occupation (Crooke,1896). However, Razaks demanded for more dignified identity by claiming the Kshatriya status. The fact is that they recognized the importance of collective voice and established as association to articulate demands. With the objective of representing the demands of Razaks the All India Razak (Dhobi) Association was established in Lucknow. It had members of leading men of the community from Calcutta, Banaras, Samstipur, Allahabad, Gonda, Almora, Quetta Lucknow Secunderabad (Deccan) Ajmere, mHow, Kanpur, Indore, Jatusana (Punjab) Poona etc.v

The Dhobi's were not originally included in the list of the scheduled caste in the United Provinces. The Dhobi's submitted several representations to this Government for their inclusion among the scheduled castes. This representation did not find any support from the Government and were forwarded to the Government of India April 15, 1933. vi The All India Dhobi Association demanded untouchable status on account of their backwardness. Taking into consideration their conditions and after making necessary enquiries, the Secretary of State of India issued orders to put them included in the list of scheduled castes.vi The collective voice and action thus used by Dalit communities to achieve important political objectives.

9. Akhil Bharat Barshiye Nishad Sabha (Mallah)

That Mallah Community was included in Depressed Class in Central Provinces. Mallah community is connected with Luniya group.viii They were organized by provincial Sabha known as the "Nishada Sabha". It was founded by Rai Saheb Babu Ram Charanj in 1920s at Lucknow. He was General Secretary of the Sabha. The main objective of the Sabha was to organize the Mallah community for demanding civil rights. He started Nishad Samachar, a journal to bring a new consciousnes among the Depressed Classes. The Mallah community appealed to the Governments to issue instructions to district and Municipal Board to put into practice the privileges given Depressed Classes in matters of education. They protested against the decision of government which had removed some communities from the list of scheduled depressed classes. They also demanded the Governor-General and the Governor, United Provinces to make a classification of the depressed classes now as the Franchise Committee had left this work for the Delimitation Committee.ix

10. Balmik Achhut Mandal (Sabha) Association

People belong to this caste were appointed as sweepers and manual scavengers in municipal corporations and urban centers during British rule. Traditionally upper strata of Hindu society treat them as untouchable community. On account of access to new emancipatory and progressive ideas in urban centres they initiated movement for respectable identity and consciousness for assertion for civil rights. The group of castes consist of Bhangi, Lobregi, Hela and Mehtar castes together generally known as Valmiki in United Provinces. They do work of cleaning and identify themselves with Valmiki dynasty. They celebrate his birth day with a lot of joy. The intellectuals of this community started their meeting to improve their society at regional levels. They established "Valmiki Mahasabha" as a reform committee among them for overall development of Valmikis.x

The socio-political history of Balmakis represents a classic example for the emerging Dalit urban class and its aspirations for better life and respectable identity. Some towns in eastern Uttar Pradesh witnessed social awakening among the Balmakis. Particularly the city of Allahabad became centre for political activism of the Balmakis. Among them, the teachings of Saints such as Ravi Das, Kabir Das, and Ramanand were very popular. Due to his background, Ravi Das specially appealed to them. However, unlike the other sub-caste, there was a greater element of Hinduisation among the Balmakis due to their adoption of Rishi (Sage) Valmiki, the author of Ramayana, as their originator. Valmiki was believed be from a lower caste, but he also provided a link with the upper caste Hindu tradition (Pai, 2002). number of leaders arose among the Balmakis such as Chunni Lal, Balmukund, Chaudhary Sant Ram, Lekhram, Pramod Kumar and Ishawar Das. They became members of the Ambedkar Mission and were involved in its activities. Some of these leaders also became member of the Buddhist Society formed in north India during the colonial period. Under the guidance of Ambedkar a Safai Karmchari (Sweepers) Union was formed in Delhi. It proved to be short live and was later incorporated into Congress-supported organization. Another important leader who migrated from Nagpur to Lucknow and was responsible for the spread of Ambedkar's ideas within this community was Shankar Rao Damodar. Babu Mahdeo Prasad played an active role for development of this community. Under these leaders, numbers of strikes were organized by the Balmikis to achieve their civil rights. However despite calling a number of strikes, the Balmikis were not able to increase their wages substantially or improve their working conditions.

11. Koli (Kori ) Mahasabha

In 1910, Bhart Varshiya Koli Sudhar Sabha was established by some Army officers, Railway employees under the influence Arya Samaj. It was organized under the guidance of Lala Lajpat Rai in Lahore. Gradually this association established branches in Syalkot, Ludhiyana, Jalandhar, Karachi, Shimaha and Delhi. This sabha focuses on education and social reforms for Dalits. It strived to stop of child-marriage, dowry, wine-drinking and flesheat and other habits that were perceived as obstacles for development of Dalit society. They use sir name Arya, Verma, Chaudhoury for higher social status. Social wakefulness became an important objective of this association. It was
perceived as necessary condition for development Dalit society. In 1935, this Association converted into “Kori Maha Sabha” of Lucknow. This Association passed resolutions on free education to children and controlling the exploitations of landlord.

In 1935, Kori Maha Panchayat was established in Kanpur. This Mahasabha was converted into Kori Mahasabha in 1940. This association demanded for education, creation of unity among Kori sub-castes and demanded for representation in Panchayat Nikaya and Assembly elections. This Association established the branches in different parts of the United Provinces. Interestingly this community does not want its inclusion in the list of Depressed Castes.

12. The Passi Mahasabha

This caste principally found in the Eastern Districts of United Province and in Oudh region. Their original occupation appears to have been tapping various kinds of the date tree for its sap, which is fermented into tari (Crook, 1896). In the beginning of twentieth century, reformers of Passi Samaj organized a Bhajan-Mandali in Allahabad. The main function of this Bhajan Mandali was to educate the Passis by speeches its members on the occasions of marriages and other social ceremonies.

Inspired by the result of Bhajan-Mandali’s work, in 1915the Passi Mahasabha was established under the leadership of Vishweshwar Das a member of Bhajan Mandali and inhabitant of village Naya Purwa, of Allahabad. Gradually people thought of development of society beyond religious boundary as resultant by reformers of Passi Samaj of Allahabad, established its All India Passi Mahasabha in 1933. Gradually this organization established its branches in Allahabad, Raibarely, Lucknow, Barabanki etc. This Mahasabha still exists in Allahabad area. Another important step for development of the Passi caste was establishment All India Passi Mahasabha in Faizabad district under the presidentship of Narayan Das, social reformer of Faizabad in 1948 (Prakash, 2011).

The apparent fact is that in the context of colonial modernity, Dalit castes tried to transform their socio-economic, cultural and political status. This task was executed by the associations established by various caste and intellectuals of Dalit society. The entire effort of these associations is to engage with the changes that have come about during the British colonial rule. Attempt was made to evolve a networking politics within the provinces at one level and all India level at another level. By all mean this chapter shows that lower caste associations played a crucial role in transformation of Dalit society from meek people to politically vibrant force. The ideological package that governed the ideas and strategies of lower caste associations is the quest for progress. At the same time political associations aimed at pan Dalit identity for depressed castes emerged amalitarianly. The next section of this chapter attempts to demonstrate this trend.

13. Arya Samaj

This association established by Dayanand Sarswati in 1875 to revive the Aryan glory in India. This society also tried to stop the Dalits religious conversion to other religions as a means to make Hinduism as a strong religion. By redefining Hinduism as religion which gives priority to worth not the birth Arya Samaj provided certain space to Dalits. Particularly in United Province, Arya Samaj played commendable job in organizing Dalits by the way of imparting education, reforms, spiritual space and Hindu identity. Aryan Samaj indeed exercised significant impact upon the associational activity of Dalits in north India in general and United Provinces in particular (Kshirasagara, 1994) Further discussion is not required as the second chapter of this thesis mentions various activities of the Samaj in detailed way.

14. Harijan Sewak Sangh

After 1930, precisely after the Poona pact of 1932, M.K. Gandhi seriously engaged in Dalit upliftment. He established Harijan Sewak Sangh in 1933. He opened many branches of Harijan Sewak Sangh in Uttar Pradesh as well as national level and published a news paper named as “Harijan”. This association undertook diversified activities for uplifting of Dalits such as campaigning against untouchability, access to water in villages, temple entry etc. Gandhi had outlined the following measures for upliftment of Dalits which he terms them as Harijans:

- Promotion of cleanliness and hygiene among the Harijans.
- Improved methods of carrying on what are known as unclean occupations.
- Give up carrion and beef eating if not meat altogether.
- Give up Liquor.
- Sending children to school for education (Gandhi, 2017).

15. Adi Hindu Mahasabha

This association was established by Smai Achhutanand in United Provinces. Initially he was associated with Arya Samaj. Having developed differences he moved out of the Samaj and established Adi Hindu Mahasabha to represent the demands of Dalits. He was into active politics from 1912. In Agra he established Achhut School for the children of the Jarat caste. He was also instrumental in establishing Jatav Sabha in Agra which consistently fought for self respect of Jatav caste. In Delhi he established “Akhil Bhartiya Achhut Mahasabha” with the help of untouchable leader Veer Ratan Devisdas Jatiya and Shri Jagat Ram Jatiya in 1917. He also established “Adi Hindu Mahasabha” in Delhi in 1918. Due to his hard work this movement gradually spread to entire north India. After 1925 Swamiji settled in Kanpur which became centre of his movement subsequently. He published monthly news paper entitled ‘Adi Hindu’ and open many branches in other parts of India. In 1928 he organized the conference on ‘Adi Hindu Mahasabha in Mumbai and where Swami ji met to Dr. Ambedkar then both leaders decided to develop the Dalit movements further (Singh, 2009).

In December 1927 the leaders of Adi Hindu Maha Sabha in United Provinces made a claim for a more inclusive achhut or untouchable identity to unite Dalit castes. The Maha Sabha laid out its agenda in the conference held on 27 and 28 December 1927 in Allahabad and this was widely reported and discussed in contemporary newspapers. The conference was proclaimed as the All-India Adi Hindu conference and was attended by 25,000 Dalit from United Provinces and another 350 delegates participated from Punjab, Bihar, Delhi, and the central
provinces, Poona, Bengal, Madras and Hyderabad (Gooptu, 2006).

16. Scheduled Caste Federation

Dr. Ambedkar established this Federation in Mumbai 1942 in order to create a national level political platform for Dalits to articulate their demands. After Maharashtra the branches of this association were opened in Utter Pradesh, Madras, Mysore, Punjab, Gujarat and Karnataka. This association gradually emerged as an umbrella association for Dalits and their political activism. In 1944 it celebrated very big conference of Scheduled Caste Federation in Kanpur in which Dr. Ambedkar also attended. Tilak Chand Kureel, a Dalit activist was made the president of this federation and branches were opened in all districts of United Provinces. The following leaders also played active role: Shyam Lal Bardha, Heera Lal Jaiswar, Kalyan Chand Balmiki, Babulal Vaisya in Allahabad, Gaya Prasad Prasant, Babu Ram Charan Mallah in Lucknow, Bahgat Nepal Das, Ram Autar Passi in Jaunpaur, Dr. Manikchand in Agra, Dr. Dharma Prakash in Barailey, Kanaujialal in Farukhabad and other leaders Sangh Priya Goutam, B.P. Maurya, Mahashaya Bhikhu Lal kureel Swami Mangli Prasad, Swami Ayadhyanand Dandi, Swami Chhamanand etc. were played an important role to build up Dalit movement (Jeffrelot, 2003).

17. United Provinces Adi Hindu Depressed Classes Association

United Provinces Adi Hindu Depressed Classes Association was established on 27th June 1942.xii This association was more concerned with political and developmental aspects of Dalits. In a way it shows the transformation of Dalit discourse and activism from identity centric to political demands. The resolution of this association demanded for formation of a provincial Depressed Classes Advisory Board and District Depressed Class welfare committees in order to have an effective organization both at the centre and in the districts.xiii This association for betterment of Dalits demanded the following facilities:

I. that the Depressed Classes Provincial Federation be recognized by Government.xiv
II. This conference requests the Government to allot more money for reclamation department which is serving a great deal of depressed class’s upliftment.xv

18. Conclusion

Dalit politics and activism is more complicated domain consisting of several hundred castes. This paper attempts to shows that assertion and identity formation process in Uttar Pradesh is created by several depressed caste associations at one level and all India level associations at another level. These associations played a crucial role in mobilisation, demand for civil rights, facilities for depressed castes. The emergence of ethnic and class based collectivism among Dalits could be seen during their period. It was this collectivism that became a crucial background for emergence of Dalit movement and emergence of strong political parties in Uttar Pradesh.

References

End Notes

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