

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**POWER-POLITICS FOR DALITS IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE (PANCHAYAT RAJ) IS  
A MYTH – A STUDY**

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**Dr.Shankar Murthy**

Asst. Professor

G.F.G.C-Kengeri, Bangalore-560060.

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**Abstract**

On this Earth exploitation of the weaker by the stronger is as old as mankind itself. No doubt, it is an inevitable component of the power dynamics, functioning in any human situation. Oppression is a process by which a powerful group attempts to control and exploits the marginalized people by using its all power in order to safeguard their interest. Since, the birth of Varna, caste system in India, the dalits have been segregated from the rest of the communities and kept away from power politics in the of name of untouchability. According to Frantz Fanon, the class of oppressions is invariably, inimical to the autonomy of the depressed, their culture and political aspect of life. The framer of Indian constitution, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar knows the role of 'Power Politics' to enable women and socially and economically weaker sections (dalits) of the nation. He has provided provision for decentralization of power. The Government of Karnataka and its policy reforms have given political power to all the communities including Dalits through Panchayath Raj. Reservation and Roster system are the modes of accommodating dalits in power politics. The credit goes to the then Chief Minister of Karnataka, Sri.Ramakrishna Hegde. More interestingly, in the contemporary political consciousness celebrates the same prejudices on Caste, Religion, Gender, Money and Muscle Power. The dominant communities have been encroaching the political power of dalits in choosing and electing dummy candidates and misusing their power in policy decisions and implementation of government schemes. The Dalit elected members have become poppet in the hands of upper caste people because of their helplessness due to poverty, illiteracy and inferior complexity. With this background, my paper includes the Power Politics of Dalits in past, present and future. Secondly Power Politics is a Myth or Real one in Local Governance for Dalits and possible Suggestions.

**Keywords:** untouchability. Dalits, Panchayath Raj. Communities, prejudices

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**Introduction:**

On the Earth, exploitation of the weaker by the stronger is as old as mankind itself. No doubt, it is an inevitable component of the power dynamics functioning in any human situation. Suppression is a process by which a powerful group attempts to control and exploits the less powerful group by using its all resources in order to safeguard their interest. According to Frantz Fanon the class of oppressors is invariably inimical to the autonomy of the oppressed and their culture. It is also constantly attempts to in calculate a sense of inferiority complex of their indigenous culture by obliterating their cultural part. It is due to number of cultural and social-political force that the contemporary human society is faced a problem of 'identity'. More interesting, in the contemporary consciousness celebrates the same prejudice on religions bias and decolonizes the mind of a large section of marginalized people whom they call as 'Dalits'.

Since the birth of Varna (caste system) in India, Dalits have been segregated from the rest of the community through the inhuman practice of unsociability. Dalits have also been addressed as Shudras in common praline. It is pertinent to explore the reasons and the rationale that are used to justify the practice of untouchability in the ancient Hindu social system that is responsible for the ageless and endless pain and suffering of dalits. The four varnas are based on various occupation and social structure.

The classification of these four varnas in accordance with their birth utility and excellence in their religions sacrificial function. Therefore a strict conformity to the prescribed way of life is emphasized by the priest. It is due to discriminatory and based social hierarchy. The ruling class and the class of priest work hard in hand and subjected all sudras to inferior social status The ancient text of Manu Sutra is often used for the justification for the exploitation of lower caste people in India. The expulsion of the untouchables from the social life of the village to its periphery deprived them of then 'dignity' and 'self-respect'. The years of misery, poverty, ignorance, slavish attitude and economic dependence gradually eliminated a desire for any kind of freedom from the collective consciousness of untouchables.

Even for the historiographers, it is difficult to create genesis of the concept of caste and untouchablility in India. They believed that hierarchical caste system and its genesis around 300BC when Upanishads, Puranasand Pursha Suktawere written. Manu and the Priest Yajna Valkya used their scriptures in order to excise social cultural, religious and political life of the people.

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The medieval Indian society had witnessed emergence of an army of religious cults propagating their principles armed it reformates in Hindu society particularly ‘Mahanabhavis’ (sect of people preached mahanbhavicult and warkaris) during Bhakti movement the great humanitarians saints Ramanuja, Gurunanak, Kabir, Basaweshwara and Mira Bai denounced the inhuman practice of untouchability and appealed the people to do away with it.

The warkari unit further convinced the masses that irrespective of one’s caste and gender. God was accessible to any disrupt person (bhakt) it never bothers about devotees social-political and economic background in the society. Therefore the slave woman life Janabai and the prostitute like Kanhopatra were welcomed to its fold. But this type of devotional poetry had led to “Karma-Dharma” theories which would also not bring any changes in the life of ‘dalits’.

The western colonialism with its force enlighten brought a new wave of ideas to the Indian subcontinent. The penal code was introduced in 1851. As a result of this the supremacy of authority of orthodox Brahmins was challenged. The new British rule encouraged the rural artisans, the untouchables and the poor people to migrate to the urban commercial town and cities and started professions of their own choice. Besides formal education, establishment of universities, newspapers, western liberal secular democratic thoughts and electronic Medias which have caused for radical change in social and political status of people. But even in 21<sup>st</sup> century, the social economical and political status of Dalits are not much improved.

The framer of Indian Constitution, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar has given provisions for the development of dalits through ‘power politics’. The 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment of constitution 1992, added a new part IX to constitution. (Articles 243-243/C). The concept of panchayat Raj was introduced by the great parliamentarian and the second chief minister of Gujarat. Balvant Raj Mehta whom people called as ‘Father of Panchayat Raj’. The main objectives of establishing Panchayat Raj to rule of people selected by the government in order to maintain law and order in the village. The Panchayat Raj in India functions as a system of governance in which ‘Grama Panchayats’ are the basis units of local administration. There is a reservation and roster system to reserve seats for scheduled caste/tribes in every village panchayath. The provision of electing the village president /panchayat chairman on roster basis. But the real power is rested with the dominated people of upper caste communities. Therefore in power politics, political power at any level including national, state or even in local level (village) is only ‘Myth’ for the dalits. It is because, in any policy decisions, implementation of government schemes and fund allocation are all dominated and controlled by the upper caste representatives. Dalit representatives are even today are the puppets in the hands of them. It is due to many reasons such as dalits are

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scattered communities and there is no unity among them, secondly illiteracy, thirdly poverty, fourthly, inferior complex and practices of false belief (myth). Hence, dalits can be easily manipulated by other upper caste people and they are misusing and misrepresenting them in power politics even at local level. Dalits are also part of Indian Society who are being denied and deprived socially, politically and economically in the main stream of life. In order to enable and empower them by considering the following suggestions. Firstly, all dalit must be united and get proper education by using the government schemes and scholarship. Secondly they should know the constitutional provisions and the government schemes for the improvement of dalits. Thirdly, dalits have to come out from the stigma of inferiority. Fourthly, they should avoid the practice of supernatural and false belief (Myths) in the name of God or Beast and they have to establish their own self help groups in the form of NGOs and help of their own people without any ill motive.

So, this is the high time that dalit must think, no supernatural element or luck could change their life unless he himself or herself changes for the better society.

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