

# CHAPTER VI

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **STRATEGIES OF NGOS IN DALIT EMPOWERMENT**

In the previous chapter, the attempt has been made to describe in detail the profile of four NGOs to rationalize their suitability to facilitate dalit empowerment process in Gujarat. In the present chapter, researcher tries to review the various strategies adopted by the same NGOs with regard to mitigating caste-based discrimination, practice of untouchability, and atrocities committed against dalits in the operational area and highlight realistic strategies of NGOs in the dalit empowerment process. The chapter has been divided into two sections. The Part-I discusses in detail the extent and situation of caste-based discrimination, practice of untouchability and atrocities committed against dalits in Gujarat and Part-II describes and reviews “NGOs’ Strategies” separately under three categories such as caste-based discrimination, practice of untouchability and atrocities against dalits. The chapter has been concluded with a brief summery.

#### **PART- I**

##### **SITUATIONS OF DALITS IN GUJARAT**

The important feature of Gujarat is despite of its economic prosperity, the human development index of the state is low and lopsided. It unevenly covers all the regions and social groups of the state in the human development. In regards to dalits (Scheduled Castes) the human development index of the state shows abysmal picture of their development in the rural as well as urban areas. They are generally left out of

the economic development and human development due to the practice of the caste-based discrimination in the state.

### **Caste-Based Discrimination**

The Government of India enacted various legal and constitutional provisions for the prevention and protection of dalits from horrendous practice of untouchability, caste-based discriminations and atrocities. However, despite of constitutional provisions the caste-based discrimination and practice of untouchability still continue in the social, economic, cultural and religious sphere of India. The Dalits continue to experience caste-based discrimination in overt and covert manner in the rural and urban areas. The studies have shown that dalits still face most burnt of caste-based discrimination in the rural India. In case of Gujarat, the situation of dalit is slightly better in the urban areas of Central Gujarat but in the Saurashtra and Kuchch region, they suffer severely and discriminated every day. The researcher visits to villages (NGOs operational area) for the purpose of focus group discussion and observation at the dalits 'vas' (quarter) brought to the notice that dalits are discriminated in various ways such as prohibition to temple entry, prohibition to village shop entry, prohibition to sit at village square, discriminations at village milk co-operatives, discrimination at tea shops, denied minimum wages, discrimination at village Panchayat, non-access to the government welfare and development programme, etc. The researcher personally experienced caste-based discrimination at one village, where he was prevented to sit at '*khatla*' (wooden coat) by OBC family because he was accompanied by dalit boys. This experience can be analyzed in two ways. First,

caste-based discrimination is still prevalent in the rural India and dalits bore the harsh of it every day. Second, advocating dalits cause may rebound humiliations and challenges from the higher caste society.

### **Practice of Untouchability**

The origin of practice of untouchability lies in the institution of caste system. Shah writes, “Untouchability is an extreme and particularly vicious aspect of the caste system that prescribes stringent social sanctions against members of castes located at the bottom of the purity-pollution scale. Strictly speaking, the ‘untouchable’ castes are outside the caste hierarchy they are considered to be so ‘impure’ that their mere touch severely pollutes members of all other castes, bringing terrible punishment for the former and forcing the latter to perform elaborate purification rituals” (Shah & etc; 21:2006). The practice of direct untouchability or the practice of avoiding physical contact has been diminishing in certain states but discriminatory attitudes and behaviour towards untouchable jatis (dalits) continue to persist. In the context of Gujarat, the practice of untouchability is still prevalent in different form. Although the practice of untouchability and related discriminations are not visible in the urban Gujarat but at the countryside dalits suffer more due to this age old practice of untouchability. The studies have indicated that practice of untouchability still continues in the villages of Gujarat.

The study of I. P. Desai (1976) ‘Untouchability in Rural Gujarat’ had looked into the practice of untouchability in seventeen spheres of the private and public domains of village life such as water facility, temple entry, house entry, shop entry, giving and

receiving things at shop, buying and selling commodities and service, paying wages, agricultural work situation in the field, service of barber, service of potter, service of tailor, sitting arrangement in Panchayat, behaviour pattern and sitting arrangement at school, delivery of the post, buying stamps in the post office, public transport, public roads (Desai, 1976). However, the study concludes that except in the village Panchayat, the practice of untouchability is no longer problem in the public sphere.

Ghanshyam Shah (1996) restudied the phenomenon of practice of untouchability in rural Gujarat on the same parameters and methodology of earlier study of I. P. Desai (1976). The same 69 villages of Gujarat again selected for the restudy. The study found that the practice of untouchability between the SCs and Non-SCs worker is observed in as many as 58 per cent villages. The situation was almost the same before twenty-five years. The important finding of the study is Untouchability is strictly practiced in the sphere of house entry. However, the practice of untouchability has been considerably reduced in some of the public spheres, which are directly managed by the state laws such as school, postal services and elected Panchayats and in the occupational spheres. Similarly, the study also highlights that since last two decades conflict between SCs and Other Backward Castes have increased in Gujarat. And, the members of the OBCs, particularly in Central and North Gujarat and Saurashtra, strictly practice untouchability in more spheres than Baniyas and Brahmins.

Navsarjan (1997) study also brought out the fact that the practice of untouchability still prevalent in Gujarat. The study is conducted with the help of survey methods and found that the dalits being discriminated in both private as well as public spheres

such as Temple, Shops, Public Functions, Barber Shop, Panchayat, Milk Dairy, Public Road, Wells, Ration Shop, Village Square, Public Transport, School, Dispensary, Mid-Day Meal, etc.

Paradoxically, the Government of Gujarat does not have any reports on the practice of untouchability. It claims that there is no practice of untouchability in the state. However, Shah argues that, “The practice of untouchability both in public and private spheres has not disappeared during the last five decades as expected by policy makers and secular social activists” (Shah; 2000: 467). The researcher’s discussion with many of the dalit individuals and field staff of the NGOs reveals that the practice of untouchability still exists in the overt and covert form in the villages of Gujarat. The present study kept in view the findings of above three studies to understand the phenomenon of untouchability in the operational areas of NGOs.

### **Atrocities on Dalits in Gujarat**

The Gujarat’s Scheduled Castes represent only 7.09 % of the total population of the state and 2.1% of all Scheduled Castes population of India. However, despite of this small number all the crimes against Scheduled Castes were reported in Gujarat in 1999 (NCSCSTs, 2001:288). The Crimes committed against the Dalits are also very high in Gujarat State. The state ranks 6<sup>th</sup> after Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu where crimes committed against Scheduled Castes are very high (Crime in India, 2001). In this regards, Liouis writes, “Significantly, these are only the crimes that are reported. But there are other crimes that go unreported every day. A state in which economic development seems to have

made great leaps, concurrent social reforms seems to be a far cry. This is because economic progress is carried out without making necessary alterations in the age-old feudal, patriarchal and caste ridden social structures” (Lious: 2002:42). The atrocity on dalits is one of the major problems of the Gujarat state. The numbers of atrocity cases against dalits have grown from 563 during 1981-85 to 722 in 1986-90 and to 1681 in 1991-95 (Shah; 2000:467). Table: 3 shows the cases of atrocities against the dalits (Scheduled Castes) during the period between 2001 and 2006.

**Table: 6.1 Cases of Atrocities against the Scheduled Castes in Gujarat**

| Sl. No | Crime                                   | 2001-<br>2002 | 2002-<br>2003 | 2003-<br>2004 | 2004-<br>2005 | 2005-<br>2006 |
|--------|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1      | Murder                                  | 28            | 20            | 21            | 17            | 12            |
| 2      | Rape                                    | 24            | 33            | 30            | 26            | 28            |
| 3      | Disability (Physical And<br>Mental)     | 110           | 126           | 74            | 72            | 56            |
| 4      | Serious Injury                          | 887           | 726           | 673           | 498           | 686           |
| 5      | Insult, Intimidation and<br>Humiliation | 121           | 129           | 94            | 286           | 272           |
| 6      | Fire/burnt houses                       | 3             | 53            | 7             | 8             | 14            |
| 7      | Making one Desert place<br>of residence | 1             | 5             | 10            | 16            | -             |
| 8      | Other                                   | 264           | 195           | 171           | 184           | 130           |
| 9      | Total                                   | 1438          | 1287          | 1080          | 1107          | 1198          |

(Source: Directorate of Scheduled Castes Welfare, Government of Gujarat, 2005-06)

The overall statistical figure of Table-6.1 reveals that the numbers of crimes committed against dalits during last six years (2001-06) are comparatively low and there is gradual reduction in the rates of crime against dalits. The high number of atrocities cases i.e. 1438 reported during the period 2001-02 due to the occurrence of communal carnage in Gujarat in which dalits also shared wrath of Hindu communalism along with muslims. However, the above figures are only registered cases to the police. Many of the incidences are not registered by police and under reported in the official figures.

There are various complex factors behind the atrocities on dalits. Generally, the social and economic factors such as practice of untouchability in public places, insult and humiliation of dalits, resistance of dalits to discriminatory behaviour of caste Hindus, assertion of dalits for civil rights, conflict over wages, forced labour, right over land-private or public, business rivalry, financial transaction, Non-dalits jealous of dalits economic prosperity, etc. leads to atrocities on dalits

Similarly, other factors like teasing and sexual harassment of dalit women, love affairs between dalit boy and non-dalit girl or vice a' versa, assertion of dalits for civil and political rights leads to atrocities and incidents of forced exile of dalits, '*hizarat*' (exile) and social boycott by the dominant castes (Shah, 2001). The discussion with dalit beneficiaries of the villages and field staffs reveals that Patidars(peasant caste) Rajputs(warrior caste), Kolis ( peasant caste/OBC) and Bharwad (shepherded) together has a major share in committing atrocities against dalits.



The above description reveals dalits in Gujarat suffer from multi-dimensional deprivation. The different sources reveal that despite of dalits high representation in literacy rate, their representation is low in higher education. They suffer severe economic deprivation and highly represented in the rural agricultural labour and urban unorganized sector. The less land holding make them landless labour, who always depend on daily wage and remain at the mercy of higher caste community. Apart from economic deprivation, the dalits also suffer from the caste-based discriminations (in social, religious, cultural, political and economic sphere), practice of untouchability (in public and private spheres) and various forms of atrocities and physical violence from the dominant castes in Gujarat. Their assertion for civil and political rights is always thwarted with severe physical violence and social boycott by higher castes. The majority times, the police do not support dalits cause and refused to register dalits cases. The police generally indulged in under-reporting, mis-reporting, and threatening and forcing dalits to compromise in cases of SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act and Prevention of Civil Rights Act. The insensitive attitude of police towards dalits issues and assertion weakens dalits fight for justice. Thus, the multi-dimensional problems of dalits and lack of support from the law and order machinery make their situation grim in the Gujarat and else where in India.

Keeping in view, the above problems of dalits in Gujarat, the selected four NGOs such as AHDC, BDDS, BSC and NT of the present study have responded and developed strategies to mitigate the problems of caste-based discriminations, practice of untouchability and atrocities against dalits. The description of each NGOs strategy

related to caste-based discriminations, practice of untouchability and atrocities against dalits have reviewed and examined separately in the following sections.

## **PART- II**

### **NGOs STRATEGIES**

#### **NGOs No.1 Ashadeep Human Development Centre (AHDC)**

##### **Strategies against Caste-based Discrimination**

The *Legal Awareness and Educations* is the main strategy of AHDC to address caste-based discrimination. This strategy has been adopted with intention to aware dalits about ill effects of caste-based discrimination and civil and political rights enshrined in the Constitution of India. It works at the wider level and covers all age group individuals among dalits. The 'Legal Awareness and Education Program (LEAP)' of AHDC is basically created with intention to execute the strategy of legal awareness and education. The LEAP conducts different activities for dalits such as legal literacy camps, training programmes, free legal aid and assistance, free legal consultation, students counseling to pursue higher education in the discipline of Law, dissemination of information through legal booklets and reading materials, etc. Similarly, AHDC also collaborates with other NGOs working in the field of legal awareness and conducting legal camps in Gujarat. AHDC strategy is innovative, which combines legal aid with legal awareness and involves the dalits of the village in an individual case of caste-based discrimination to strengthen the case and collective protest against discrimination. This strategy is basically policy level

decision, which has taken by the governing board and followed meticulously by the director and staff members. It has been observed that the organizational level staffs are not allowed to participate in the strategy formulation process. The staff generally follows the decisions of the superior and involves themselves in the implementation work of LEAP.

### **Strategies against the Practice of Untouchability**

AHDC doesn't have separate strategy to counter the practice of untouchability. The *Legal Awareness and Education strategy* is also used against the problems of untouchability. The director reveals AHDC at the policy level accepted not to directly intervene into the cases related to the practice of untouchability but will provide all support and assistance through LEAP to the victims to fight for the justice.

### **Strategy against the Atrocities**

The AHDC strategy against atrocities is pro-active and democratic in nature. The AHDC strongly believes that the *atrocities on dalits should be tackled as per the rules of law*. The AHDC strategy although pro-active and democratic in nature but it varies as per the nature and type of atrocity committed against dalits. Before selecting any case for the intervention, the staffs of LEAP investigates in detail the strength of case and seek victims opinion for the possible solution. If the victim wants to fight case in the court of law and punish the offender, then AHDC proceed for the court action and prepare victim for the court procedure. Similarly, to get the speedy justice, it forms rapport with the police and judiciary. It pressurizes administration and

attracts political intervention through the democratic action such as sit-in, demonstrations, hunger strike, rally, signature campaign, networking, advocacy and lobbying etc.

### **NGO No. 2 Banaskantha District Dalit Sanghatan (BDDS)**

The *Mobilization and Community Organization* is the broader strategy of BDDS to tackle the human rights issues of dalits. The other sub-strategies related caste-based discrimination, practice of untouchability and atrocities against dalits are covered under above broader strategy of BDDS, which are as follows:

#### **Strategies against the Practice of Caste-based Discrimination**

The BDDS understands that the caste-based discrimination violates the basic human rights of dalits. It is not only practiced by higher castes against dalits but also practiced by dalits among themselves. The BDDS strongly believes that to counter caste-based discrimination, there is need to create first unity among dalit sub-castes to end their internal differences and caste-based discrimination. In this regards, the first strategy adopted by BDDS is to *form an organization comprising of all sub-castes of dalits* such as Vankar, Chamar, Balmiki, Shenma, Shrimali, Turi-Barot, Bhai-vankar, Tirgar and Sadhu-baba at the dalits quarter, taluka and district level. This strategy has been adopted with intention to make an organization truly represented by all sub-castes of dalits and create unity among dalits to fight against caste-based discrimination together. At present, there are 600 dalit quarter levels, 5 taluka levels and one district level organizations have been formed by BDDS. These organizations

are symbol of dalit unity and work as 'watch-dog' organization to monitor the dalit human rights and practice of caste-based discrimination against dalits in the operational areas. Similarly, legal action against perpetrators, mass awareness and mobilization against caste-based discrimination has been initiated with the help of these organizations.

The second strategy of BDDS is to *create a cadre of volunteers* to address the issues of caste-based discrimination through volunteers and promote broader Dalit Movement in the region. The cadre of volunteer is highly represented by dalits, who addresses the issues of dalits and monitor caste-based discrimination in the 5 talukas of Banaskantha district. Under this strategy, the important role of volunteer is to remain alert about the dalits issues in the area and involved in awareness and community organization against caste-based discrimination. The group of volunteer is not permanent. It's composition changing as and when people join and leave. The BDDS selects only economically secure persons as a volunteer, for whom employment is not an overriding priority. In case of very poor but equally committed individuals are permitted and prepared to take up leadership at the village level.

The third strategy of BDDS is the *mass awareness and mobilization*. Through this strategy the message of organizing and coming together is communicated to a large section of people. This is done by volunteers through appropriate cultural forms which are more acceptable to the people and rooted in the culture and sensibilities of the people and the area. This strategy has been adopted by BDDS with intention to give wider coverage to the incidents of caste-based discrimination among dalits and

general mass and create greater impact in the society. The BDDS used various tools for effective implementation of mass awareness and mobilization strategy such as awareness generation by distributing Newsletters and Leaflets, organizing rallies, sit-in, protest march etc.

The strategy formulation against caste-based discrimination is done at two levels, one at the organizational level and second at the dalits quarter level. At the organizational level, through a day long meeting and consultation among all the staff members, the strategy is evolved against the caste-based discriminations. In the meetings, the emphasis always put on to evolve effective and safe strategy, keeping in view security of dalits in the villages. The dalits quarter level meetings conducted to discuss about scope of organizational intervention, understand the state of dalits in the face of human rights violations and the problems encounter by dalits at the village level. These meetings helped to build contact and rapport with dalits and motivate them to raise a voice against injustice. Importantly, these meetings encourage dalits participation and allow them to express their views, opinion and suggestion to mitigate caste-based discrimination and contribute to the strategy formulation of BDDS. These meetings conducted regularly in every month at late night since the majority of dalits are daily wage worker are not available in day times. These meeting are instrumental to develop a rapport with the dalits and build a relationship of trust between BDDS and dalits.

### **Strategies against the Practice of Untouchability**

The BDDS doesn't have separate strategies to deal with practice of untouchability. In fact strategies of caste-based discrimination are used against the problems of untouchability. The BDDS understands that the practice of untouchability is prevalent among dalits too. The Bhangi sub-caste (scavenger) of dalits is treated highly polluted and impure by higher castes as well as dalits. They suffer severely due to caste-based discriminations and practice of untouchability. In this regard, the BDDS believes that practice of untouchability should be eradicated in every form and efforts should be initiated to establish unity among dalits. To mitigate practice of untouchability, the BDDS has three strategies such as to *form dalit quarter, taluka and district level organization comprising of all sub-castes of dalits; create a cadre of volunteers; and the strategy of mass awareness and mobilization.*

### **Strategies against the Atrocities**

The BDDS strategies against atrocities completely reject any form of violent conflict and committed to legal and democratic forms of social action. There are number of strategies adopted by BDDS to prevent and protect dalits from the atrocities and caste violence. Some of the strategies of BDDS are as follows: First, *the formation of people's committee and forum* to struggle against atrocities. The aim of this strategy is to unite dalits, create awareness and mobilize support against the perpetrators of atrocities. The Banaskantha Dalit Atyachar Sangharsh Samiti (Committee for Struggle against Atrocities) has been established under above strategy to address the problem of atrocities in various talukas of Banaskantha district. The purpose of this

committee is to inculcate values of collective action and protect dalits from atrocities. This committee is consist of various people such as Dalit leaders, retired government employees, professionals, and youths, who are actively protesting against dalit atrocities and making oral and written representations to various government officials, ministers, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), etc.

The *mass awareness and mobilization of support against atrocities* is second strategy of BDDS. The aim of this strategy is to give wide publicity to atrocity cases through rally, protest march, sit in, demonstration, media, etc and highlight the incidents of atrocities at the broader level. Similarly, under this strategy wide networking and advocacy have been created among the civil society organizations and government officials such as District Collector, Social Welfare Officer, Mamlatdar (Block revenue officer) Police personnel, Judiciary, etc.

Third, strategy is to *develop a cadre of volunteers* with the intention to create 'watch dog' among dalits to supervise and monitor caste-based discrimination and incidents atrocities in the villages.

Fourth, strategy of BDDS is to *educate victim's family and dalit community* to take the help of legal remedies against atrocities and not to indulge in physical violence or conflict with the perpetrators.

Fifth, strategy is to *take immediate and strong legal action against the perpetrators of atrocities*. This strategy has been adopted with intention to secure justice in favour of dalit victims and prevent future occurrences of atrocities against dalits. The above



strategies are formulated with the help of series of meetings and consultations with staff members, Community-Based Organization (CBO), dalits and networking organizations.

In the process of seeking justice against atrocities, the BDDS actually intervenes and takes up case, when dalit victim is ready to take action against the atrocities. The role distribution between victim, CBO and BDDS is significant. The victim's major role is to remain committed to BDDS stands and do not get influenced or intimidated by any external sources, sometime it takes written undertaking from the victim to be committed to BDDS stands. The CBO role is as watch dog in the entire process. It keeps detail information about the village dynamics, higher caste counter-action, maintaining unity among the dalits, providing emotional support to dalit victims, register complaint, regular follow up case etc. In this entire process, the role of BDDS is to handle outside work such as building rapport with police, judiciary and administration, providing them information, facts and memorandums, regular follow up of case, building pressure on police and administration for prompt action, advocating and sensitizing political leader about the incidents and expediting legal action etc. At the same time, the BDDS supports emotionally to victim and family, develop their faith and belief in legal action and involve them in the process of securing justice etc. To generate mass awareness and support for struggle, BDDS uses participatory-democratic methods through different tools such as community mobilization/sensitization, promotion of community-based organization, networking (local, regional & national), advocacy, lobbying, capacity building and sensitization of law enforcer, use of legal action and remedies etc. According to the staff members

of BDDS the different programme/activities such as dalits quarter level meetings, discussions, awareness sessions, awareness songs, training of victim and CBO members, pressure tactics- demonstration, protest march, sit-ins, hunger strikes, rallies, street plays, poster exhibition, signature campaign etc. adopted to pursue the cases related to the caste conflict and atrocities and secure justice for the for the dalit victims.

### **NGO No.3 Behavioural Science Centre (BSC)**

The BSC is one of the oldest NGO works for dalits empowerment in Gujarat. It has begun work by awareness and educational training camp to make realize dalits about their caste-based discrimination and exploitation. BSC instead of selecting 'political mobilization' for dalits empowerment decided to bring change in their economic and social status by various innovative strategies. Some of the strategies of BSC related to specific problems of dalits are as follows:

#### **Strategies against caste-based discrimination**

While working with dalits at the Bhal region of Kheda district, the BSC has witnessed to various caste-based discriminations against dalits such as discrimination at work place, denial of minimum wages, forced labour, discrimination in economic sphere, restriction on marriage procession, restriction on social participation, denial to burial land etc. The BSC strategy against caste-based discriminations is specific and selective. It avoids any form of confrontation or conflict with higher castes and adopted constructive and democratic strategies to counter the caste-based

discrimination. The first strategy adopted by BSC is *education and conscientization* to aware dalits about deep-rooted consequences of caste system and caste-based discrimination. By adopting, this strategy the founder members visualized long term impact of education to create critical awareness among dalits and liberate them from the centuries old caste-based oppression. Thus, education and conscientization strategy has been adopted to conscientized and enable dalits to fight against caste-based discriminations. However, the present director also believes that ‘the education and conscientization strategy is safe and sensible to initiate organizational work in favour of dalits in highly rigid caste structure of rural society.

The second strategy has been adopted by BSC is to *promote cooperatives among dalits*. The aim of this strategy is to unit and organizes dalit community around locally available resources and making them economically self-sufficient. The BSC understands that the poor economic condition and dependence on higher caste for survival needs make dalits fall prey to caste discrimination. Hence, the cooperative strategy has been adopted to improve dalit economic condition and subsequently mitigate caste-based discrimination. By this strategy, the dalits control over technology and resources was made possible by providing techno-managerial training to them.

The third strategy of *promotion of Community Based Organizations (CBOs)* is paramount strategy of BSC against the caste-based discrimination. Under this strategy, the various dalits quarter level cooperatives have been federated into an area level federation. The new CBOs have been promoted to handle the economic as well

as caste based discrimination of dalits. These CBOs owned, controlled and managed by dalits but supported by BSC. The *promotion of community based organization* is also core strategy of dalit empowerment, which evolves after series of consultation with staff members and dalits.

### **Strategies against the Practice of Untouchability**

There are total two strategies of BSC against the practice of untouchability namely Education and Conscientization strategy and Support to the victims of untouchability. The *Education and Conscientization Strategy* has been adopted for building socio-political awareness, boosting confidence and developing critical understanding among dalits. The BSC believes that it is one of the important strategies to aware dalits and inculcates the values of self-respect and dignity among them. Similarly, the strategy of *support to the victims of untouchability* is practical approach of organization to tackle the issues of untouchability as and when they occur in the operational areas. This strategy has been adopted with the intention to support and promote the victim's democratic struggle such as legal action against the practice of untouchability to seek justice.

Both these strategies are participatory and democratic in nature. The education and conscientization strategy is formulated and implemented by series of meetings discussion, training programmes, awareness sessions/songs, inter-caste cultural programme, inter-caste dinning programmes, etc. Similarly, the support to the victims of untouchability is the organization level policy of BSC to promote dalit victims

assertion for dignity and justice. Under this strategy, BSC supports victims by various ways such as providing guidance, legal support, protection, financial assistance etc.

### **Strategies against Atrocities on Dalits**

The BSC strategies against atrocities are vary depending on types of conflict and atrocities committed against dalits. The basic aim of these strategies is to resolve the crisis through democratic legal action, prevent the escalation of violence in the village and protect the dalit human rights. The BSC also makes sure that there should be protection against any form of physical violence and prevent atrocities against dalits before and even aftermath of their action. It also takes great care to avoid emotional action, be it by individuals or groups. Some of the important strategies of BSC against atrocities are as follows:

The first and foremost strategy of BSC is *not to intervene directly* when the atrocity or conflict occurred against dalits in the operational areas. This strategy has been adopted with the intention to observe certain things such as how dalit victims perceive atrocities on them? How they plan to solve the problem at their own level? Whether dalits or higher castes are prepared for compromise, as conflict might be settled without police intervention or external involvement? etc. If both parties are agree to resolve the issue amicably in that case, BSC looks for compromise or settlement between dalits and higher castes developed with the intention not to repeat any form of untouchability and caste-based discrimination or atrocities in future. Similarly, through compromise and settlement process, BSC also try to gain compensation in the form of accessing land for cremation and burial of dalits, making

available water and grains to dalits in case of damage to their standing crops. When either side is not ready for the compromise and dalit wants to fight for their justice and dignity, in such situation the BSC suggest victims to take legal action and ask for police intervention.

The ***legal action and police intervention*** against sever atrocities cases is the second important strategy of BSC. The BSC stands against the heinous crime such as sexual harrasement, rape, murder, arson, beating with bleeding etc are non-negotiable and non-compromising due to severity of the act and physical, mental, emotional and social trauma individual undergoes with it. In such cases, the BSC convince victims to register complaint in police station and assist them till they get justice and culprit will face punishment by the court of law. The BSC pursues strong legal action against heinous crime with intention that physical assault should not be tolerated in any circumstances and the rule of the law should govern the society. Similarly to create law abiding society, the BSC never allows dalits to take arms against the higher castes rather it avoids dalits emotional outbreaks against higher castes and advocates democratic legal action against atrocities.

The third strategy of BSC against atrocities is to ***direct Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to understand the village dynamics and assist dalit victim in day to day basis***, while BSC will take care of work related to police, judiciary, and administration and as per situation a political too.

The fourth important strategy adopted by BSC is ***to maintain good rapport with the police and administration***. This strategy has been adopted by BSC with the

understanding that while pursuing any kind of atrocities related cases, there is need to gain the confidence and support of the police and state machinery. The fifth strategy of *mass awareness and mobilization* is another important strategy of BSC against the atrocities and caste-violence. The BSC staff gives wide publicity to the incident of atrocities through the demonstration, protest march, rally, media, etc. The organization also carries out networking and advocacy to seek support from civil society organizations, police, bureaucracy and judiciary.

The above strategies against caste conflict and atrocities have great potentials to protect dalits human rights. They are formulated after consultation with staff, CBOs and dalit community. The responsibility of implementing strategies also shared and distributed among dalit victims, CBOs and BSC. The main role of BSC is to facilitate process and handle more administrative and technical responsibilities for speedy justice. The BSC advocates cause of dalits with police, administration, political leaders and judiciary and takes prompt legal action. Similarly, it creates high level mass awareness and mobilization against injustice through sensitization meetings, networking (local, regional & national), advocacy, lobbying, village level meetings, awareness sessions, demonstration, protest march, sit-ins, hunger strikes, rallies, etc.

#### **NGOs No.4 Navsarjan Trust (NT)**

##### **Strategies against Caste-based Discrimination**

The NT believes that caste-based discrimination is a major deterrent before dalits to live a life with dignity and freedom in the society. It violates all the human rights of

dalits and there is no respite from caste-based discrimination in Indian. It is in this context, *long-term strategy against caste-based discrimination* adopted by of NT. Under this strategy certain activities started by NT such as opening legal aid cells, conducting a public awareness programme, training their cadre on legal issues, encouraging educated dalit youths to take legal education etc. For this purpose, it takes help of other NGOs to train their staff and conduct training programme on legal issues. The NT believes that preventing caste-based discrimination through legal aid is one of the measures but it strongly believes that unless there is positive change in the mind set of dominant castes, there is no immediate solution to century's old caste-based discrimination. However, it has great faith in the long-term strategy to address the caste-based discriminations. Another strategy of NT against caste-based discrimination is the *advocacy strategy*. Under this strategy, surveys, public interest litigations (PIL), rallies, meetings, newspaper articles, etc are used to challenge existing caste-based discrimination and efforts have been made at the organizational level to change mindset of the dalit as well as non-dalits.

The NT believes that the caste system and caste-based discriminations also exist and practiced among dalits. The Bhangi communities (Scavengers) are worst sufferer of internal caste-based discrimination among dalits. In regards to mitigate intra-caste discriminations, two prolonged strategy adopted by the NT under broader *non-negotiable strategy*, which are as follows:

1. The most important strategy is *every single person associated with NT shuns caste practices and taboos*. The people who approach NT for support are first asked to



drink a glass of water from the hands of dalit. Acceptance of this fundamental demonstration of social equality is non-negotiable.

2. Working towards *building alliances across castes and communities*. Under this strategy, the NT insists that all dalits sit together, talk and work together. The sub-caste identities and differences are not encouraged and the Strategies are worked out together. The Community leaders are brought together in activities and programme- showing challenging and breaking sub-caste taboos.

The NT strategy formulations process is basically done at two levels, by the people who are associated directly or indirectly to NT. In regards to caste-based discrimination, the major decisions are taken by the executive board members, which comprises of director and experts from the different field. As mentioned, they meet twice in a year to review the organizational progress and strategies of the NT. The mitigation of caste-based discrimination is one of the important agenda of NT. The executive board understands that any efforts would be limited to bring change in the mind set of those who perpetuate the caste-based discrimination. The *Long-Term Strategy, Advocacy Strategy and Non-Negotiable Principle Strategy* against the caste-based discrimination are the policy level decision taken by the executive board. This strategy formulation is the participatory process, where the board members suggest their opinion keeping in mind prevention as well as protection of dalits from caste-based discrimination and make perpetrators law abiding citizen. To make successful their strategies, the executive board also suggests different tools for effective implementation of the strategies. For example, the long-term and advocacy strategy tools such as Opening legal aid cells, conducting a public awareness

programme, legal literacy activity, training their cadre on legal issues, networking with NGOs for legal support, encouraging dalit youths to take legal higher education, surveys, Public Interest Litigation (PIL), rallies, meetings, newspaper article and so on to challenge existing caste-based discrimination practices suggested by the executive board members.

The NT understands that it would be difficult to work for dalit empowerment without breaking the internal differences and caste-based discriminations among the dalits.

The NT staffs were used to find very difficult to work with dalit community with their internal differences and caste-based discriminations. Moreover, it was one of the biggest hindrances to achieve organizational mission and create dalit unity. To overcome sub-casteism among dalits, the NT director and staff had series of meetings and discussions at the regular basis. It is one of the good examples of participatory method, in which director, state co-ordinators, programme co-ordinators, field staff had brain-storming session at a length and designed measures to mitigate internal differences among dalits. The non-negotiable strategy is one such measure to mitigate caste-based discrimination. To make it more meaningful, the NT at the policy level adopted mechanism to recruit staff from all the sub-groups of dalits such as vankar, rohit, chamar, shenma, balmiki etc. The NT at policy level also adopted a non-negotiable strategy that whoever, associate with NT will have to shun the practice of caste-based discrimination by drinking the glass of water from the dalits. Similarly, to build alliances across castes and communities at the grass root level is also designed at the organizational meetings and the tools such as meetings, awareness

programmes, training, intra-caste cultural festival, intra-dinning programme were suggested. Thus, the aims of this strategy formulation process was to mitigate inter and intra caste-based discrimination and approaching towards the fulfillment of organizational mission.

### **Strategies against practice of Untouchability**

The NT founder member and executive board strongly believes that the notion of purity and pollution still exists in the mind set of the higher caste society. They understand that higher castes pursuance of maintaining ritually high status has caused the origin of untouchability, and the practice of untouchability perpetuate the caste-based discrimination and atrocities against dalits.

The NT at the organizational level understands that to mitigate practice of untouchability from the public and private sphere requires a *long term systematic efforts*. The NT at the organizational level makes an effort to collect information about the practice of untouchability, disseminate information through official and legal channels and register Public Interest Litigation is the cornerstone of NT long term strategy against the practice of untouchability. The NT systematically used different tools to highlight issues of untouchability and take legal action against it. The NT has been using Survey as a tool to generate authentic information about the practice of untouchability and educate the people to fight against the practice of untouchability and caste-based discrimination. So far the NT has conducted series of surveys on various issues of dalits, there are also good number of surveys focused on the practice of untouchability in the private and public sphere covering different

villages, towns and districts of Gujarat. At the time of data collection, the researcher witnessed to the NT Survey was underway on the practice of untouchability in the private and public sphere covering all the districts of the Gujarat.

Apart from survey, dissemination of information and campaign, the important component of NT long term strategy is the education and awareness of dalits. The NT strongly believes that educating the dalit community about their rights has a long term benefits. It gradually builds internal strength and confidence among dalits to protest against the practice of untouchability. To prevent caste-based discrimination and practice of untouchability the NT is building membership organizations, cadre building and developing leadership among the dalits. The NT believes that resistance has to come from the community and unless the community is ready, outsiders can do little. The NT regular pro-active action to register complaints, protest and taking perpetrators to courts instills positive impact on the mind of the dalit community. Similarly, the long term strategy of NT activating the state machinery to acknowledged their constitutional responsibilities and duties towards the dalits.

Another strategy of NT against practice of untouchability is to undertake *Campaign against the practice of untouchability*. This campaign includes Pad Yatra (Foot March) rallies, putting posters on the walls, movies, agitation and awareness building about the various forms of untouchability. In 1995 the NT has launched a high profile campaign to Ban on manual scavenging and rehabilitation of scavengers. This campaign also started with a thorough survey in the Balmiki community to ascertain and record the number of balmiki families that are engaged in the manual scavenging

work. Similarly, the campaign also initiated for the recruitment of large number of trained primary school teachers of scavenging community in the government schools. The NT understands that biased attitude and untouchability is being practiced against the balmiki community due to their traditional caste-based occupation. In this regards, a short film “Lesser Humans” prepared by NT and led National Campaign against the practice of scavenging to highlight the problems of scavenging community and putting complete ban on manual scavenging.

In 2002, the NT led massive campaign by Pad Yatra (Foot March) against two-cup system covering 600 villages of 14 districts of Gujarat. The NT survey on practice of untouchability reveals that two-cup system practice still prevalent in many of the villages of Gujarat. The dalits served in different cups which kept separate for them term as **Ram Patra** in the village tea shop, Panchayat, place of work and higher castes houses. The main aim of Pad Yatra was to abolish the Ram Patra and sensitized dalits not to accept tea in the Rampatra. In the Pad Yatra important slogan came up i.e. “**Ram Patra Chodo Bhim Patra Apanavo**” (through away discriminatory cup of Ram and accept the Dr. Ambedkars Cup of equality). Basically this slogan has been raised to develop self-respect and dignity among the dalits and break the traditional forms of untouchability. The awareness programme has been conducted at the various dalit ‘vas’ (quarter) and Ram Patra has been broken at the tea shops and Panchayats. The effect of this campaign was massive, many of the progressive higher castes also participated and broken the Ram Patra of their houses.

The above strategy against the practice of untouchability evolved over the period of time. The NT stands against practice of untouchability is pro-active but based on the principles of non-violence. According to director, the practice of untouchability is age old problem of Indian society and it will be removed only by long-term systematic efforts. The NT has adopted long-term strategy against the practice of untouchability and developed the systematic mechanism to tackle the age-old horrendous practice. The strategy formulation process of NT is participatory and democratic in nature, and legal methods followed rigorously. All the members and staff of NT have given ample scope to put forward their views and opinion to shape effective strategy against the practice of untouchability.

The strategy formulation takes place at two levels. One at the organizational level, where the director and staff members evolved mechanism through regular staff meetings and assess strength and weakness of existing strategy and suggests modifications for effective results. Second, through the late night meetings, campaign, pad yatra, rallies, awareness programmes, educational and legal literacy programme the NT seeks dalits view and opinion with the purpose to include victim's perspective to the strategy formation. Many of the suggestion from the dalits make NT sensitized about the day to day experiences of dalits about the practice of untouchability and the methods evolved by dalits to deal with it. In a nutshell, the NT has adopted long-term strategy to tackle the problems of untouchability. It is based on the principles of non-violence and equal participation, and adheres to the democratic, legal and open methods.

### Strategies against Atrocities

The history and emergence of NT is associated with the incident of atrocities on dalits occurred in 1986 at Golana village of Kheda district of Gujarat. In order to build democratic struggle by using laws of land against the atrocities the NT has adopted a five pronged strategy, namely:

- (a) **Identify local leaders and train them systematically** in the laws of the land, constitutional safeguards and human rights. To this end, the NT organised an intensive training programme spread over a year (three days session every month in training session and the remaining three weeks in the field).
- (b) **Work with a team of legal professionals and register and fight cases of atrocities** at all levels. Identifying lawyers who are competent and sympathetic to handle the dalit atrocities cases. Similarly, ensuring every taluka level office has access to lawyer on call continues to be difficult.
- (c) **Use survey to collect information** on the extent of discrimination and deprivation-land, water, working conditions (scavengers), wages and other forms of social and economic exclusion and exploitation. The NT believes that generating authentic information was the key to proactive advocacy and public education. Since 1990 the organization has done a range of surveys on various issues of dalits.
- (d) **Mass Mobilization** of dalits and other disadvantaged people (the very poor) leading to public rallies and demonstrations. These “events” are used to educate people and also to break the silence and place caste based oppression, atrocities and discrimination on the public agenda.

(c) *Provide support – legal, moral and organizational* – to victims of atrocities and violence. Here NT has not limited its scope to caste based violence alone. The NT has also provided support to non-dalit poor who come to them for support and advice.

The strategies against atrocities are formulated by the executive board as well as director along with staff as per the incidents of the atrocities. The executive board member in their review meeting generally plan for long-term strategy and suggests measures for the prevention, protection and rehabilitation of dalits from atrocities. Similarly, the executive board also understands that the NT struggle against the atrocities should base on the principles of non-violence and democratic action. The NT Executive Board strongly believes that every struggle against the caste-based discrimination and atrocities should be tackle under the constitutional provisions and rule of law should punish the perpetrators of atrocities.

At the organizational level, the strategy formulation process takes place between director, staff members and dalit victims. NT handles only those cases, when victim wants to take legal action against the perpetrators. NT doesn't take any case out of emotional bonding and select genuine cases by written undertaking from victim to remain with the organization stands. Most importantly, the NT takes care that their action should not escalate further violence and social boycott of dalits in the village. After taking into the consideration these things, NT takes legal action/remedies for dalit victims. It also forms good rapport with the police and administration for speedy justice and uses different democratic tools such as networking, mass awareness and



mobilization, community organization, advocacy & lobbying, capacity building, sensitization of judiciary and law enforcer, promotion of community-based organization against the atrocities.

In a nutshell, the chapter has examined the strategies for working with injustices against dalits of all the selected NGOs under the study. It is observed that all four NGOs namely AHDC, BDDS, BSC and NT have strategies to mitigate the caste-based discrimination, practice of untouchability and atrocities committed against dalits. With regards to caste-based discrimination, there are single as well as multiple strategies of NGOs. Except AHDC all other three NGOs such as BDDS, BSC and NT have multiple strategies to address and mitigate caste-based discriminations. AHDC has legal awareness and education strategy to address caste-based discrimination. BDDS has strategies such as formation of dalit sub-caste organization, creating cadre of volunteers and mass awareness and mobilization strategies. The BSC has multiple strategies such as education and conscientization strategy, co-operative strategy and promotion of community-based organization to mitigate caste-based discriminations and NT has long term strategy i.e advocacy and non-negotiable strategy that implies every person associated with NT shuns caste practices and taboos and build alliances across caste and communities to counter the problem of caste-based discrimination.

To mitigate practice of untouchability, AHDC has only legal and educational strategies to aware dalits about their constitutional rights and indirectly supports to the victims of untouchability. BDDS doesn't have separate strategy against practice of untouchability but using the same strategies of caste-based discrimination. BSC

has adopted two strategies against practice of untouchability such as education and conscientization and indirect supports to victims of untouchability. Compare to other three NGOs, the NT has long term systematic strategy of campaigning to mitigate untouchability.

To deal with the atrocities against dalits, AHDC, BDDS, BSC and NT have specific strategies. AHDC has pro-active and democratic strategy and handles atrocity cases as per the rules of law with the help Legal Education and Awareness Programme (LEAP). BDDS has different strategies such as formation of people's committee and forum, mass awareness and mobilization of support, developing a cadre of volunteers, educate victims' family and dalits and immediate and strong legal action against perpetrators of atrocities. BSC has adopted strategies such as indirectly addressing the atrocity cases, immediate legal action and maintaining good rapport with police and administration, directing CBOs to perform suitable role, mass awareness and mobilization, and initiate compromise and settlement with intention to gain compensation and bring attitudinal change among higher castes. The NT has multiple strategies such as identify local leaders and trains them systematically about the law, work with the team of legal professionals and make access of lawyer at the taluka level, generating authentic information about atrocities, mass awareness and mobilization, provide support such as legal, moral and organizational to the victims of atrocities, etc to deal with problems of atrocities against the dalits.

It has been observed that all four NGOs such as AHDC, BDDS, BSC and NT have strategies to mitigate caste-based discrimination, practice of untouchability and

atrocities against dalits. The strategies such as mass awareness and mobilization, handle the issues of dalits by constitutional provisions and immediate legal action against the perpetrators emerged as common strategy adopted by all four NGOs irrespective of their origin, nature, size and scope. However, the actual mitigation of caste-based discrimination, practice of untouchability and atrocities were achieved through some of the realistic strategies evolved and implemented by the four NGOs such as education and conscientization, long term systematic efforts, building alliances across caste and communities and use of legal and constitutional provisions for the benefits of the dalits.

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