

# CHAPTER II

## **CHAPTER II**

### **NGOs AND DALITS: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

Efforts have been made in this Chapter to review literature related to the area of present research study. The Chapter has been divided into two parts: Part-I, reviews the existing literature pertaining to the contribution of 'NGOs for welfare and development of Dalits' and Part-II, highlights the contribution of 'NGOs for the dalit empowerment' in India. The aim of the present chapter is to throw light on the existing studies and the conclusions that were drawn out from them on the aspects of contributions of NGOs towards improving the life situation of dalits in general and the empowerment of dalits in the particular. This exercise has been carried out with the intention to take an insight into the research problem of the proposed study and helps in establishing a meaningful rationale for the same.

The Non-Governmental Organizations have been around us for long time and working for the welfare and development of weaker sections of India. However, information and literature on the various aspects of Non-Governmental Organization are lacking in the social science discipline. Baviskar writes, "Systematic studies are required to say anything with confidence about them. In the absence of such studies, our understanding of NGOs will remain vague, superficial and hazy" (Baviskar, 2001; 12-3). The following section therefore intends to systematically review and analyse available literature on the aspects of contribution of NGOs towards the welfare and development of dalit community.

## **PART- I**

### **NGOS AND DALITS IN INDIA**

The UN World Conference against Racism (WCAR) was held in Durban, South Africa in September, 2001 will be remembered for many reasons such as the continuous practice of racial discrimination and slavery in some parts of the world, the inhuman treatment of palestinianians by the Israel, the walkout of America and Israel from the UN conference, etc. The conference was unfortunate events for those believes that the 'caste' is root cause of India's backwardness and that is why UN should take initiatives to eradicate caste-based discrimination but ironically, the caste-based discrimination has not been included in UN conference agenda. The exclusion of caste-based discrimination from UN conference definitely disheartened the dalit activists and NGOs, which work for dalit cause. However, it has been known to the world community that the Untouchability and caste-based discrimination are still practiced in India as well as other South Asian countries. Similarly, it is also highlighted by media that the Non-Governmental Organizations played a major role in publicizing caste-based discrimination at the international forum for advocating cause of dalits and asking justice from international court.

The significance of WCAR, 2001 for the proposed study is that it highlighted the efforts of NGOs striving for the dalit human rights in India and other south Asian countries. In the UN conference NGOs forum has described India's centuries old caste discrimination against millions of dalits. The concern over the 'caste system' is reflected in the NGOs forum's 18 pages declaration, as a result of the active

participation of more than 300 Dalit activists from all over India representing over 50 NGOs. Thus, the WCAR has revealed two realities of Indian society, One, the multiple sufferings of dalit communities in India, and the Two, NGOs take initiatives for advocating the cause of dalits. The review of literature below highlights the above realities with the help of limited literature on the subject.

Kothari (1990) discusses the role of state and rise of people's movement in India. The author particularly examines people's movements initiated by voluntary and grassroots organizations, which try to provide alternate to bourgeois state. The author refers these grassroots organizations and activists groups emerged due to the failure of state and liberal polity, and they are primarily fight for people's rights and democratizing process for the communities. The author further examines the types, levels and contributions of Non-party political formations i.e. voluntary organization involved in the constructive work; struggle-oriented group, fighting against the government on behalf of the deprived and underprivileged such as dalits and tribals, and whole range of social movement such as women's movements, ecological movements, peasants movements and dalits movements, religious and ethnic movements etc. Out of these three grassroots initiatives, the author seems to be more concerned about the, social movements which are alienated and unprotected by the state. At the end, the author emphasis that these movements represent three major points of departure such as First, they are an effort to scale the grass-roots and national boundaries. Second, they are truly attempted and showed solidarity with the victims of the contemporary system. Thirdly, they are voluntary and originated out of diverse people and cultures.

Rajasekhar (1999) emphasizes the importance of continuous interaction between the NGOs and Panchayat Raj Institutions are required to strengthen Panchayat Raj Institution and to achieve effective local development strategies. The case studies of several South Indian NGOs such as Praxis in rural Bangalore, Young India Project and Sanghamitra in Andhra Pradesh and SHARE and ROAD in Tamil Nadu describe their contributions as well as problems and strategies for strengthening Panchayati Raj Institution. Some of the experiences of NGOs show that despite 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments of Indian constitutions the marginalized communities such as SCs, STs, OBCs and Women are under represented in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and their participation is less in the grassroots democracy. The author describes the NGOs take initiatives and implement activities such as participation in local self-governance, capacity building and awareness generation of SCs, STs, OBCs and Women about 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments. Similarly, the author suggests NGOs should use different strategies and resources to promote participatory development in rural areas and avoid duplication of work to achieve Indian's welfare and development.

Jha (2000) discusses the condition of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the context of Socio-Political dynamics of Bihar. The author developed certain questions such as: How far can the policies adopted so far by the government and by those spearheading the struggle of SCs against landowners, be effective in transforming the status and conditions of those identified as SCs today? What is the direction of their social transformation? Are they going to remain captive of their historically given social formation simply with better socio-economic conditions? Or, is there any possibility for them to move to the higher stage of social formation? On the basis of these

questions, the author provides the historical overview of situation of SCs in Bihar, situation of SCs in the Colonial and post-independence India, different governmental policies and programmes for the upliftment of SCs, emergence of elite among SCs and contributions of NGOs and political activists in the welfare and development of SCs etc. The author finds varied hindrances in the welfare and development of SCs in Bihar and see only ray of hope from Non-Governmental Organizations. The author further mentions more than 12,000 NGOs are registered in the state under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 of which there are about 380 NGOs objectives are to serve exclusively the cause of Harijan but the activities of most of such NGOs are not available. However, at the end, the author highlighted briefly the contributions of NGOs such as Sulabh International, Dalit Vikas Samiti, Samanway Ashram and Prayas for the welfare and development of SCs and emphasised that the better future of dalits is the responsibility of higher order socio-economic formation, NGOs and political activists.

Pandian (2000) highlighted the politics of castes violence and forms of dalit assertion in the Southern and Northern districts of Tamil Nadu. He describes the castes violence is mainly between backward castes and dalits, and he tried to explore the conditions and reasons behind the castes violence among them. The author provides information about changing configuration of power among the backward castes involved in caste-violence in Tamil Nadu; forms of Dalit assertion in south and north Tamil Nadu; responses of the state to the newly emerging assertion of the dalits; contemporary history of autonomous dalits mobilization etc. The author also highlighted the role of NGOs in the castes violence by citing the example of Social

Action Movement (SAM) an NGO, which mobilizes dalits against castes violence as well as has given rise to a network of organizations for protecting the rights of marginalized communities including dalits.

Sachchidananda (2001) studied the practice of scavenging and socio-economic deprivation of scavenging communities in India. The scavengers a small group of scheduled castes considered as highly polluted and impure in Indian society. The author tries to analyze the socio-economic conditions of scavengers and identify the causes of the prevalence of age old system of scavenging with the sample of 2500 household of scavengers in the urban and rural settings in Bihar. Similarly, the study also makes an assessment of the welfare measures adopted by the government and the different NGOs working for the upliftment of scavenging community. The role and contributions of NGOs such as Sulabh International Social Service Organization, Ambedkar Institute of Research and Rehabilitation, T.M.Samajik Sewa Sansthan, Ambedkar Suraksha Manch, Bihar Harijan Sevak Sangh and Mahila Vikas Samiti in addressing the issues of scavenging community have been described by the author. The book is one of the important and useful source materials on the socio-economic condition of scavenging communities.

Dabhi (2004) highlights the origin and factors behind the emergence and growth of Non-Governmental Organization in India. The author describes that apart from implementing the developmental activities at the grassroots level, the role of NGO is also to facilitate people's movements and grassroots organizations, to ensure good governance practice and participation of people in decision-making processes. At the

end of the paper, the author suggests prospective role and NGO intervention for addressing the issues of marginalized communities such as dalits and tribals in India.

Dabhi (2004) highlights the significant features of Indian social structure and existence of deep-rooted caste system especially in rural India. The author examines the concept of human rights from dalits perspective and focused on the human rights violation of dalits in the social, economic, educational and political sphere. The author finds that dominant castes and different government machinery are responsible for the violation of dalit human rights in India. The government machinery especially police supporting the perpetrators but also blunts the resistance of the dalit victims and justifying the caste-based discrimination and caste violence. At the end of the article, the author suggests that the struggle for a dignified human life and human rights must continue and multifaceted efforts should be initiated for the protection of dalits human rights. The author especially mentions the prospective role of NGOs in the dalit human rights protection.

Pundir and Kumar's (2004) case study highlighted the positive contributions of voluntary organization of 'Scheduled Castes (SCs) Youth Welfare Association' (SCYWA) in Kishtwar block of Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir. This organization has played a role of mediation institution between the government agencies and SCs for securing the fruits of planned rural development for the SCs. The author writes a mediatory effort of voluntary organization has brought some social change among SCs beneficiaries in general and political co-option of members of organization in the various political parties in particular. However, in nutshell the



SCYWA mainly plays mediatory role for securing the schemes and programmes of planned rural development for SCs.

Pundir's (2004) case study discussed the role of voluntary organization of the Scheduled castes (SCs) elite for the benefits and welfare of their own community members. In this study, the author has examined a number of voluntary organizations from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, which have been started by SCs elites. The author observes that some of these organizations have failed to deliver the services to SCs. Still others are doing better and delivering the goods, channelising gains of programmes like Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), establishing educational institutions, providing residential facilities to their young students, getting the employment for the educated unemployed on reserved seats and admission in the educational institutions of higher teaching. Thus, these voluntary organizations of SCs are doing social service and charity work for SCs, but don't address empowerment issues of SCs. Similarly, the study reveals that the sufficient numbers of the founder members of these organizations are active-politician in different political parties at the national and state levels. They use voluntary organization for their individual political elevation rather than collective benefits of their own community.

Dabhi (2005) examines the role of voluntary organizations or NGOs with special reference to violence against the Marginalised and Discriminated Communities in India. The article highlights the philosophy and reasons behind the emergence and existence of these organizations and draws the attention towards the relation between

the reasons behind the emergence and existence of these organizations and their actual commitment and degree of involvement in responding the issues and violence against the marginalized and discriminated communities with whom they claim to work. The article also illustrated brief profile of the Behavioural Science Centre an NGO and it's involvement in protecting the human rights and social justice of victim of caste violence in the state of Gujarat. In the conclusion, the article suggests prospective role NGOs can play in addressing issues and protecting the human rights violation of marginalized and discriminated communities such as dalits and tribals.

Ramaiah (2007) discusses despite of implementing special protective legislations such as the protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, the practice of untouchability and atrocities against dalits still prevalent in many parts of India. The author highlights the uses and abuses of above protective legislations in the state of Tamil Nadu. Based on the empirical and qualitative data collected from multiple stakeholders such as victims, accused, police, government agencies, judiciary, NGOs and people in general, it discussed about the 15 cases of atrocities against the dalits in the Tamil Nadu. The author highlights various factors such as gaps in the prosecution processes, structural limitations, caste prejudice in police station and special courts/judiciary etc. mainly responsible for majority of untouchability and atrocity cases resulting ending into acquittal of perpetrators. At the end of article, the author provides some suggestions for effective implementation of these protective legislations and prospective role of NGOs in preventing the practice of untouchability and atrocities cases and protecting the dignity and human rights of dalits. In the next

section, the specific literature related to the NGOs and Dalit Empowerment in India has been reviewed.

## **PART- II**

### **NGOS AND DALIT EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA**

The researcher has come across with very limited literature on the aspects of NGOs and Dalit Empowerment in India. The literature has been reviewed below with the intention to understand and analyze the NGOs led empowerment process of dalits in India.

Franko and Parmar (1996) examine the theoretical understanding of organizations as generators of particular discourse to the creation of concrete Dalit organization. Based on the case study of two grassroots dalits organizations of Gujarat, the author tried to analyses that these organisation are rational organization that create a particular culture in the society. The author highlights the organizational discourse can effectively challenge the varna ideology of Hindu social system and provides an opportunity and constructive strategy to oppressed masses such as dalits to liberate them from caste-based discrimination and bondage. In conclusion, the authors stress that the pro-active role of organization has generated new dalit identity and new dalit discourse in the society. However, the authors did not deal with the different strategies of NGOs/GROs in mitigating the caste-based discriminations, practice of untouchability, issues of atrocities and overall issues of dalit empowerment.

Sommer (2001) illustrates the unique examples of NGOs, which have started grassroots empowerment movement in India. The author provides brief profile of fourteen such NGOs, their initiatives and activities and their experience of struggle for human rights and social justice of women, dalits and tribals. The author describes these NGOs initiated their work by developmental approaches but over the period of time they gave more emphasized on the process of empowerment. They defined and conceptualized the term empowerment by their own understanding, experiences and while addressing the issues of oppressed communities. More importantly, the author highlights the important contributions of NGOs for improving the lives of oppressed and poor communities, also provides the broader and varied approaches of NGOs that are not only applicable in India but also for other developing countries. The author also presents prospective role of foreign donor agencies in the empowerment approach of NGOs to end poverty and promote social justice for oppressed and marginalized communities. The author also provides brief information of 'Navsarjan Trust' an NGO working especially for the empowerment of dalits in rural Gujarat is also one of the sample units of proposed study. Navsarjan is one of the organizations committed to fighting against caste and community-based discrimination. The organization works with dalit community on land, water, minimum wage, scavenging, legal matters and related issues. The primary role and contribution of Navsarjan is to focus on the psychological bases of oppression and help in building up confidence in Dalit communities, so that they, may assert for their rights and overcome their condition. This book is important source material for the proposed study. However, it lacks in dealing with various issues of dalit community and different strategies

adopted by the NGO. Similarly, the book doesn't highlight the programme of NGO for the social, economic, educational and political empowerment of dalits community.

The above exercise of review of literature shows that there are lack of academic information and research studies on the subject of contributions of Non-Governmental Organizations for the welfare and development of dalits in general and NGOs contributions in dalits empowerment in particular. In the existing literature on the subject, the NGOs have addressed selective welfare, development and human rights issues of dalit communities. The two articles on the aspect of NGOs and dalit empowerment mainly highlight socio-psychological consciousness of dalit communities and haven't addressed the overall empowerment issues of dalit communities. The limited literature on the subject shows that there is neither national level nor state level research study available, which could highlight and examine the strategies of NGOs to mitigate the practice of caste-based discriminations, practice of untouchability, atrocities and understand the programmes of NGOs for the overall empowerment of dalits in India. Thus, the proposed study is evolved and designed to highlight the above academic vacuum of the social science discipline and examine the contribution of NGOs in the dalit empowerment with specific reference to state of Gujarat. The next chapter deals in detail the rationale and methodology of proposed study.

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