

## ***'Unseen Birth of Caste' in the interpretation of Gail Omvedt***

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**Abstract:** *Historically, caste plays the lead role in India. Despite, India is known for integration, the weaker section of people undergo a terrible problem in their life. They are segregated, tormented, and treated inhumanly. Even though there were some authorities who endeavor to banish disparity, it was dreadfully ineffective. The supreme being created human being with humanity and not with humiliation. Vedas are the supreme and sacred Hindu writings that act firmly as a foundation for this idea. We must acknowledge that Vedas have not prompted us to racism, which is manifestly said by Gail Omvedt in, Understanding Caste: From Buddha To Ambedkar And Beyond'. We conveniently created havoc in the name of caste and creed. The near sufferers are the dalit society.*

**Keywords:** **Dalit Literature, Gail Omvedt, Hindu Writing.**

India, a nation known for 'Unity in Diversity' means that the caste, creed, and physical appearance should not be the source of petty dispute. In spite of this the caste hierarchy has been prevailing in our nation and became an integral part. Even though the caste system in India is concealed, it is believed that it has been originated more than two thousand years ago with only two great religions namely Hinduism and Non – Hinduism. On the basis of Hindu scriptures Hinduism is divided into four Varna's. When days passed people formed a hierarchy on this and emerged the form of untouchables. The people belonging to this society were treated cruelly as slaves and were restricted to socialize. The people of other caste who violated the norms were made 'untouchables'. Everything of Human race had started to dominate in the name of caste system. These people who were marginalized on the basis of religion, caste, etc... are called as dalits.

The agony of dalits were brought into limelight through the origination of Dalit Literature. Writers like NamdevDhasal, Bama, DayaPawar, UrmillaPawar, Imayam, Siddalingaiya, Gail Omvedt, JotiraoPhule, Periyar, Ambedkar, Sivakamiete., whose works were notable for their voice against the violations towards dalit society.

Gail Omvedt, who is an essayist and popularly known for her social activism is an American born Indian scholar, has published several books that dealt with anti-caste movement and dalit sufferings. Her works are well-known for her concern towards dalit society. Some of her works are 'Dalit Visions', 'Dalits and Democratic Revolution', 'Ambedkar: Towards An Enlightened India', 'Understanding Caste: From Buddha To Ambedkar And Beyond', 'Buddhism In India Challenging: Brahmanism And Caste' etc...

We are coming across many works that deal with caste, discriminations, racism, etc., through which people were categorized into classes. But, the writer Gail Omvedt distinguished her work 'Understanding Caste: From Buddha To Ambedkar And Beyond' by analyzing the historical issue of caste and anti – caste movement. It is one of the most prominent and thought provoking essays that uncovers the hierarchy of caste system which affected the society since ages.

In this essay, Omvedt has meticulously shown us the history of social splitting. In her perception, Hinduism has been taken for granted concept in India. It is known that Hinduism is one of the oldest and main religions of India. Its stability has been attacked many times by Muslim aggressors and the British colonialism; thereby the contemporary states started pampering Muslim and Christian missionaries. Even though there has been hard core of

dominance by invasions, Hinduism has maintained its fair continuity.

As the result of this dominance, many movements have started showing its head out, in which dalit movement was noteworthy. Because this movement started to include non-brahman caste of many areas that has challenged Hinduism. Consequently, the lower caste has been oppressed by the upper class people. In order to vanish these social grading, there were many activists like Ambedkar, Phule, Periyar and even Buddha who had emerged against this social inequality and injustice.

Hinduism has been projected as a national religion centering on Rama. Though there were many stories about Hinduism and the term Hindu, the author Omvedt manifestly stated that the term 'Hindu' is derived from an ancient word 'Sindhu', and has evidently stated that this religion has its root in Vedas, which literally means 'knowledge'. Gradually Hinduism started accepting Vedas and the concept of Dharma.

On the one hand a class of pupils commenced fight for withstanding their own religion by violence and spreading out their religion through propagating, whereas, on the other hand many social activists tried to bring out its consequences to the public. At that time, there were two national distinctive leaders who initiated campaign to put an end to caste system, as the deadly groupism swept the whole world. One was Mahatma Gandhi and the other was Nehru. They both voiced against the arrogance of people in the name of caste and clearly said that people should wake up from these toxic issues and boldly pointed out their thoughts.

The Gandhian solution was to unite India as a whole by throwing religions, whereas Nehruvian solution was to inculcate socialism in the minds of people and chucking out the caste system. Though Gandhian solution emphasized the outcome of social groupings, at a certain point, his solution had a negative impact in the society. After a few years of Gandhian movement, many of the lower class people were segregated from Gandhi's version of Anti-communal Hinduism. So, Ambedkar says that in this movement some were deep down, there was an inner voice that made the separation. Ambedkar also found the same problem with Nehruvian solution.

Omvedt's text also chronicles the caste hierarchy even in the period of Buddhism. Buddha opposed this firmly and stood for equality. From twelfth century many new movements had sprung up manifesting their denial to this hegemony of casteism. The foundation of this is the Lingayat movement by Basavanna, which displayed the nuptial between a dalit and a Brahmin, but due to the opposition of their parents that has geared up conflicts in the society. So, this movement resulted in vain. The second was Varkari movement emerged by Namdev and Dnandev in the same notion to unite everyone and this was also resulted ineffective.

The social activists have been forced to take an immediate decision, as this deadly hierarchy was getting worsened day by day. After some days headed by JotibaPhule, another movement raised. Phule took farmers as his center as they were tremendously oppressed by the dominators. He felt hasty need for an initiation of a religious alternative. One of his famous books SarvajanicSatyaDarma focused on the non discrimination of the people both in the means of religion and in gender. According to Phule the only weapon to destroy inequality is vidhya or knowledge.

Though there were many activists who tried really hard to bring out reformation, some were exploiting their movements. It has not been an easy thing to terminate caste system. In the nineteenth century, Ramabai and Tarabai raised their voices in the opposition to the torments faced by dalit women. They exposed the maltreatment of the higher society towards dalit women and the problems faced by widows. It was during that period, when women were treated brutally, particularly if they are childless. Ramabai and Tarabai portrayed the facets of male and stood for this illicit treatment towards women. They said that the misogynist should end their chauvinism and wanted women to be treated as Human Beings by respecting them.

When activists were trying hard to eradicate casteism from India, the entrance of Aryans put them under pressure. The greatest achievement of Aryans was learning the art of fighting from the local inhabitants. After learning the tactics, the Aryans turned against them. Finally they defeated the local inhabitants and started spreading out their culture. 9

In 1920, a new movement by E.V.Ramasamy, 'Periyar' arose. The soul aim of this movement was allocating a place for non-brahmans and untouchables in legislature. Though, there were several movements the most significant movement was made by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. He was considered to be one of the great democratic leaders of twentieth century. He rejected the casteism and emerged strongly as a dalit leader. He was the one who has seen the necessity of fighting against caste oppression and the requirement of economical and social measures for

the liberation of untouchables. Even though he faced many obstacles, he never gave up. He had been working tirelessly to achieve his goal. He wanted to unite people throwing out the caste believes.

When the country was already facing multiple challenges the political parties slowly came out for shutting down the caste system. But the people started facing a horrifying situation because nobody has really tried to shut down casteism, rather they wanted to gain power. Though there were many movements, most of the movements ended in failure. The politicians in the name of propagation and protest tried to accumulate votes and they did not show any concern towards lower class people and the caste hierarchy. The dalits did not have any desire for money and power. All they wanted was to annihilate the caste system and to be included in everything.

On the whole, from the views of Buddha, Phule, Ramabai, Tarabai, Ambedkar, Periyar and all the other social activists were on the same notion that was to put an end to the caste discrimination. The interpretation of Gail Omvedt about Indian history of caste division emphasized not only on the pessimistic manifestation but also, it brought into light about the rebellions against the lower strata of the society. The caste, creed, discrimination, suppression, racism etc., were not in the creation of God. She thought that understanding our past will have a role in formation of a new society.

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