

DALIT AND TRIBAL IDENTITY IN JOURNALISM AND MEDIA (A STUDY ON DALIT AND TRIBAL NEWS PUBLISHED IN VARIOUS NEWSPAPERS AND WEB PORTALS)

DR. RAMESH KUMAR RAWAT*

ABSTRACT

At the time of independence, identity of “Dalits and Tribals” in Journalism and Media was not proper. Few “Dalit and Tribal” journalists and media professionals are working in mainstream media comparative to others sector. In newspapers, radio and TV channels few such reporters, news editors, and editors are working. In TV and radio channels, most of these journalists are not involved in anchoring and news reading work. Media also highlights them in a negative way in most of the news and in some news, they highlight them in a positive manner. Mainstream media and local media publish and broadcast their problems in the form of news. Media publishes news about them and presents them as a voter of political parties and they also publish and broadcast about their lower standard. Media does not portray them as a stronger caste, and even highlights them as lower, poor and neglected strata of the society. If any eminent personality like a politician belonging to general caste goes to a “Dalit’s and Tribal’s” home and eats food with them then it is a big story for media. Media highlights and gives importance to such kind of news story considering the political or election point of view. If any celebrity or politician shows sympathy with them on any negative or positive issue then too it is given a lot of attention by the media. Their image and identity in media is not positive. They try to focus positively but ultimately end up in showing a negative image or negative impression about them. A number of “Dalit and Tribal” students have completed journalism and mass communication (UG and PG courses) from various journalism institutions but only few students are appointed by media houses as journalists. If by chance any such journalism student is appointed by media houses then they are not given a good salary. In Government media, “Dalit and Tribal” journalists and media professionals are appointed in reservation quota. In mainstream media and private media, few “Dalit and Tribal” journalists are working but they are not getting good salary and posts in the media houses and they are not getting more byline stories. Most of media houses’ editor and honors are not giving importance, important assignments, opportunity and responsibility to “Dalit and Tribal” journalists.

* Associate Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Manipal University, Jaipur.

E-mail Id: ramesh10jan@rediffmail.com

Through this research article, I will try to focus on the positive and negative identity of “Dalit and Tribal” in journalism and media. I will also focus on how media can remove negative identity of “Dalits and Tribals” from within itself and create a positive identity in society.

KEYWORDS: Dalit, Tribal, Identity, Journalism, Media, Positive, Negative, Politics.

INTRODUCTION

From ancient time till independence, “Dalits and Tribals” had faced economic, educational, and social problems along with other challenges. In ancient time, the society was divided in four parts as per their work like Brahmin, Vaishya, Kshatriya and Shudra. The Brahmins were involved in teaching, worship and karam kand, Vaishya were the businessmen, Kshatriyas had the responsibility of saving villages, towns, communities, and countries, and Shudras were involved in lower category work like dusting, cleaning etc. So from ancient time Shudras (Dalits and Tribals) were not strong economically. They did not have a high reputation in the society and they did not get a good responsibility or position in the King’s Darbar. During and after independence, same customs were followed but after independence, as per the Constitution of India, various changes came and they got reservations in schools, government jobs etc. After independence, media regularly focused on the development and social evils related to “Dalits and Tribals”. Sometimes media published and broadcasted positive news about them in newspapers, magazines, radio and TV channels and sometimes negative. At present, around 25 crore “Dalits and Tribals” live in India. Hence how to deal with them is a very big issue in front of the media. If media focuses on the positive news, articles, and editorials about “Dalits and Tribals”, then it will have a positive impact on the development of the country. So this is necessary for media to play an important and positive role while publishing news related to “Dalits and Tribals”.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the research is to find out about the image (positive and negative) of “Dalits and Tribals” created by the media through news, articles, and audio-visuals.

HYPOTHESIS

Media creates a positive and negative identity of “Dalits and Tribals” through news, articles, and visual aids.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a pure exploratory research where data will be collected by reviewing news from various regional and national newspapers like Rajasthan Patrika, Dainik Bhaskar, The Hindu, Times of India, and Hindustan Times.

ANALYSIS OF NEWS RELATED TO “DALITS AND TRIBALS”

Various news articles related to “Dalits and Tribals” are published in newspapers. The analysis of such articles is as under:

1. A news article on Kumbh Bath was published in mainstream media like Rajasthan Patrika and many other newspapers. In this news, the newspaper focused on the national president of BJP Mr. Amit Shah, CM of MP Mr. Shiv Raj Singh Chouhan and other party members taking bath with Valmiki Samaj religious guru in Shipra River during the Ujjain Kumbh on 12th May, 2016. This bath event is directly related to the coming election in MP. BJP

want to gain the votes of “Dalits and Tribals” through this bath event. On the other side, various religious gurus criticized this bath event before the bath. So one aspect of this news was equality of all community/ all population living in India, which was clearly reflected in Mr. Amit Shah taking bath with the religious guru of Valmiki Samaj. Another aspect was that “Dalits and Tribals” are not equal to others. It was shown in the protest or criticism of various religious gurus. On the one hand, media presents the right to equality which is granted to everyone by the Constitution of India, and on the other hand, it shows a difference between the upper and lower caste by covering both the aspects separately. This kind of news creates awareness about the equality among all the Indians and also gives a message about the upper and lower caste differences prevalent in the society. So this kind of news has a negative and positive impact regarding “Dalits and Tribals”. [1]

2. Another news published in Rajasthan Patrika was also related to the upcoming election in MP. In this news, the reporter clearly mentioned about the statement of Mr. Bhagawat on reservation during the Bihar Election and BJP got defeated. Suicide case of Rohit at Hyderabad University was also mentioned. In both the cases, BJP was on back foot and hence was worried about its negative impact in the upcoming MP election. So they gave the slogan “One Temple, One Well and One Shamshan”. BJP also gave the responsibility to Mr. Narendra Jadhav for creating positivity among the “Dalits and Tribals” for BJP. So this news shows that “Dalits and Tribals” may support those political parties who take care of their reservation benefit. It portrays a negative image of “Dalits and Tribals”. [2]
3. Another news published by Dainik Bhaskar on 28th May, 2016 was also related to the

election. In this news MP CM Mr. Shivraj Singh Chouhan took food and tea with “Dalits and Tribals”. After this, they were very happy. In this news, their happiness shows that they themselves feel that they belong to a lower caste and CM’s visit also shows the same thing. So through this news, media also demonstrates that “Dalits and Tribals” belong to a lower caste. Here we can see their identity as a symbol of the vote. At the time of election and a few months before the election, politicians try to maintain and develop relations with them because they know that they play an important role in winning the elections. At that time, these politicians commit various things to the Dalits regarding their growth and development, but after the election, only a few fulfill their promise and most of them forget them. [3]

4. Why are India’s Dalit students taking their lives? This was the heading of a news cover by the BBC Delhi Correspondent, Mr. Soutik Biswas on 20th Jan, 2016. In the beginning of this news story he mentioned that the identity of the Dalit is “Untouchable”. This word is definitely unacceptable to other “Dalits and Tribals”, and creates dissatisfaction among them. So use of such kind of words is not good for the society, country and for “Dalits and Tribals” too. Such kind of words create a negativity among the population about Dalits and media transfers this message across the people and urges them to know why in media Dalit means “Untouchable”. This word is not suitable in the present scenario because at present in India all upper and lower class people are equal, all are study equally in schools and colleges, all are moving equally from one place to another in the country by bus, train, plane and other means of transportation. People of all castes live together in government colonies and use the same resources. I agree that in

a few places in rural India, circumstances are a little different and need to change. The word “Untouchable” totally attacks on the acceptability of equality among people. Using these kinds of words gives a chance to the unsocial elements to incite the public to commit violent acts.[4]

5. A news was covered by Zee Media Bureau titled “IIMC students post `derogatory remarks` against Dalit, tribal students; probe ordered” on 4th Feb, 2016. In this news they told how the “Dalits and Tribals” protest against the `derogatory remarks`. This news portrays their strong image. It also shows that the Dalit is not accepted in the society. It is believed that they belong to a lower caste and are not equal to upper caste. So message of “equality” is absent when the upper caste people and Dalits are compared.[5]
6. A news cover was published by India Today titled “Patnaik asks officials to complete Dalit-tribal hostels by March” on 27th Jan, 2016. In this news, Odisha Chief Minister Mr. Naveen Patnaik asked the officers to complete the hostels for “Dalit and Tribal” students. This news shows that “Dalit and Tribal” students need support from the government. This portrays them as poor and shows that they require support for survival.[6]
7. A news was covered by Mr. Gokul Vanna in Chennai, New Indian Express titled “Caste curses Dalit, tribal children to life of slavery beyond borders” on 17th Jun, 2013. In this news, we can see the identity of the Dalit children as “Bonded Labors”. This identity is not right, because child labor exists in every caste and community of India.[7]
8. An Editorial titled “My Tribal and Dalit Friends worship Durga, celebrate Dussehra” written by Mr. Sagar Satapathy was published in odishanewsinsight.com. In this editorial, he wrote how he celebrated various Indian festivals with his Dalit and

tribal friends and there is no conflict among them. This editorial shows that they are equal and this is an example for all to ensure equality among all irrespective of whether they are “Dalits and Tribals” or other upper caste people.[8]

9. A story was covered by Business Standard titled “PM Modi launches 'Stand Up India' initiative, reaches out to Dalits” on 5th Apr, 2016. In this story, the “Stand Up India” scheme for Dalits was focused on. In this scheme, loan facility is being provided to Dalits. So this news also shows their identity as poor.[9]
10. A story was covered by First Post titled “Dalit and tribal oppression forced people to follow Naxalism: Mayawati” on 20th Nov, 2013. In this news story, Dalits are shown as customer or products for political parties. Political parties lure them with the various welfare schemes and use them as vote bank at the time of election.[10]
11. A story was covered by DT Next titled “Dalit Christians allege they are discriminated because of religion” on 31st May, 2015. This news focuses on the social disability of Dalits.[11]
12. A story was covered by News Republic titled “Dalits, Tribal are marginalized labor on large proportion” on 2nd Nov, 2013. In this news, it was mentioned that Dalits did not get a regular job or full time yearly job, or they got a job on marginal amount. So it focused on the unemployment or hidden unemployment or getting job on marginal amount in this news about the Dalit.[12]
13. A story was covered by News Republic titled “Unequal justice on grounds of religion, race, caste and sex in India!” on 13th Sep, 2013. This news clearly mentioned that Dalits did not get justice equally. So this news shows inequality faced by them.[13]
14. A story was covered by News Republic on 11th Sep, 2013 titled “Dalit is capable to

decide the outcome of coming LS polls P. Ramabhadran says". In this news, the capability and decision power of Dalits in the election was discussed. This news showed that they have a strong capability of decision making.[14]

15. Another story was covered by News Republic on 17th Jun, 2013 titled "Dalit children forced into bonded labor". In this news, we can read about Dalit children in ties of bonded labor.[15]

16. Another story was covered by News Republic titled "Growing crimes against Dalit in India despite special laws". This news clearly portrays them as powerless identities.[16]

FINDING

As per the above mentioned analysis of 16 news stories published in various newspapers, it is evident that the position of Dalits is not good. This news shows that Dalits are similar to a ball and anybody can play with them, with their emotions and with their social position.

These news articles show that political parties play with Dalits by promising to provide benefits to them after election. If we will see all these news articles separately, then we can find the following identities of Dalits created by media:

POSITIVE IDENTITY

In a few news articles, we can see a positive identity of "Dalits and Tribals" as under:

- In some areas, Dalits demand equality and do not accept themselves to be inferior to the upper caste people. They also protest many times for equal rights.
- Another positive aspect revealed by these articles is that they have the capability to take decisions.

NEGATIVE IDENTITY

In most of these news articles, we can see a negative personality of "Dalits and Tribals". This has been explained as under:

- a. Difference between Upper caste and Dalits or Tribals.
- b. Reservation benefit also puts a question mark on their capability, quality and eligibility.
- c. As per the news, they are lured by political parties through reservation.
- d. Directly or indirectly, they themselves have also accepted that they belong to a lower caste.
- e. In these news articles, "Dalit and Tribal" is a symbol of election and vote for the political parties.
- f. The usage of the word "Untouchable" by the media totally attacks on the acceptability of equality for "Dalits and Tribals" in the society.
- g. "Dalits and Tribals" are poor and they require support.
- h. Identity of the Dalit children is as a "Bonded Labor".
- i. "Stand Up India" scheme for Dalits shows that they are backward, poor and powerless.
- j. Social disability of Dalits is also mentioned in news.
- k. Unemployment or hidden unemployment or job done by them on marginal amount is also highlighted.
- l. Dalit children have accepted bonded labor.
- m. Dalits and Tribals are shown to be powerless.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As per the above research, my recommendations are as under:

1. Media should publish about the problems of “Dalits and Tribals” without use of any negative word or negative writing skills.
2. Media should not publish political news in which they are treated as vote banks, or usable products in elections.
3. Media should not focus only on their problems like bonded labor, poverty, unemployment, lack of education, being used in form of election symbol etc. At present in many other upper castes, a lot of people come under BPL, many are facing problem of unemployment, and many people are uneducated. So when media discusses about the problems of “Dalits and Tribals”, then media should simultaneously also discuss about other castes and community people who are facing a similar problem. If media publishes in this manner then issues related to their negative identity will automatically finish and the complete population of the country will come on an equal platform and all people will be treated equally.

CONCLUSION

As per the research on “Dalit and Tribal Identity in Journalism and Media”, we can see that a few “Dalit and Tribal” journalists are available in mainstream media. Those journalists belong to “Dalit and Tribal” background. They are not getting good salary or good facilities and they are not working on good posts too. A number of “Dalit and Tribal” journalism students are passing from the educational institutions but few are adopting journalism as a profession. Second side media publishes various types of news related to “Dalits and Tribals” but they do not bother about the impact of that news and which kind of negative identity is automatically created by them. So there is a need for media houses to think, how they should write news to create a positive identity or image of “Dalits and Tribals”. At present, political parties are

using them as a means to win elections in the form of votes. These parties use them with the help of various facilities and use of government resources. National and multinational companies advertise their product in print, and electronic media to generate a good sell of their product. Similarly, political parties plant them as a product with various government schemes and facilities and for this they are using the media. These political parties conduct press conferences, rallies, sabhas, speeches and many other activities. This is a responsibility of the media to put actual facts and aims of all these political parties behind the scheme and facility of “Dalits and Tribals”, so that at the time of elections, they can take decisions and no one will be able to play with them and with their emotions.

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