

Indira Gandhi National Open University
School of Interdisciplinary and
Trans-disciplinary Studies

MPYE – 006

Dalit Philosophy

Block 1

HISTORICO-SOCIAL BASIS OF DALIT PHILOSOPHY

UNIT 1

Historical Roots of the Dalits

UNIT 2

Dalit Folklore and Cultural Expressions

UNIT 3

Social Problems of the Dalits

UNIT 4

Impact of Scientific Culture and Globalization on the Dalits

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Even while the human history claims to have entered the new era of the third millennium with much fanfare, the atrocities against the Dalits in India remain unabated. They are treated as untouchables and ill-treated as lesser humans and non-humans. Though the Constitution of India has outlawed the practice of untouchability in any form as a criminal offence, the disadvantaged Dalits are ostracised from and even persecuted in the day-to-day life of Indian society. Even the remedial measures of reservation of the jobs and the educational privileges did not suffice to undo the injustice done to the Dalits. The Dalits, constantly underwent the humiliation in the hands of casteist hierarchy and hegemony started asserting themselves with rediscovering the 'lost' or systematically 'destroyed' identity. Dalit journey towards their new identities are often expressed through idioms of revolt against the domination and subordination.

In **Unit 1** we trace the general historical roots of Dalits. It is done with a passion towards their quest for freedom. This narration of the story of Dalit emancipation hopes to see the light at the end of the tunnel soon. Centuries-old historicity of the Dalits reveals that the discriminated people faced denial of basic human rights and human dignity. It tries to give a historical and social evolution of Dalit, beginning with the ordinary myth and evidence for their Indian rootedness.

Unit 2 unfolds the rich traditions of Dalit folklore and culture and their specific communitarian roles. Folklore consists of legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, beliefs, and customs that are the traditions of that culture, subculture, or group. It is also the set of practices through which those expressive genres are shared. It indicates the liberative function they serve in humanising Dalit and non-Dalit communities.

Unit 3 has a focus on social problems of the Dalits who were treated as untouchables. The lesson is not a mere description of woes of the people but a critical analysis of how they are dehumanized through exclusion, denied through exploitation, and defaced through elimination from the main stream of the Indian caste-ridden society. While dwelling on the claims of protecting their human rights, it explains how, in practice, they are treated with the attitude of indifference and callousness.

Unit 4 familiarises the students with the impact of scientific culture or temper and globalisation (including democracy and education) on the life of Dalits. It sees the liberating potential in scientific way of life and globalisation as an economic and cultural phenomenon.