

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

**MPYE – 006**

**Dalit Philosophy**



## **Block 4**

# **DALIT PHILOSOPHERS OF INDIA**

## **UNIT 1**

**Ancient Dalit Philosophers**

## **UNIT 2**

**Medieval Dalit Philosophers**

## **UNIT 3**

**Modern Dalit Philosophers**

## **UNIT 4**

**Contemporary Dalit Philosophers**



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## **BLOCK INTRODUCTION**

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The Dalit rebellion against caste system is as old as the caste system itself. But the power structures- legislature, judiciary, and executive- right from the ancient era up to the present neo-colonial era of market globalization are deployed as the handmaids serving the needs of the oppressive caste minded people. As part of the self-assertion of the victims of untouchability against the derogatory treatment imposed by the caste people, they have chosen the self-designation as Dalits to empower themselves by annihilating the caste system. As the multiple forms of protest against the hegemony of those practicing casteism and untouchability down the centuries in the Indian soil we try to record the prominent traditions and individual thinkers in the history of India from ancient to contemporary period. Buddhism and Jainism (B.C.E.), Bhakti Movements and Protest Movements (Siddhars, Sufism, itinerant mendicants) from the subaltern cultural soil (A.C.E.), the Mass Conversion Movements towards Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism, and the Counter-Cultural Movements initiated by Mahatma Phule, Iyothee Thass, Ambedkar, Periyar, Vaikundasamy, Ayyankali, Narayanaguru (18-20 centuries A.C.E.), and many other contemporary Dalit intellectuals stand the test of time for upholding a profound social philosophy of the Dalits.

The rebellion against caste system is as old as the caste system itself. The **unit 1** has a assumption that *Sramanic* thinking is Dalit thinking. It tries to look at Buddhist, Jaina thinkers, Ajivikas, Bhutavadins, and Tiruvalluvar as Ancient Dalit thinkers as they ideologically opposed to Vedic Brahmanical system of thought. They were the ones who philosophized against oppression, domination, discrimination and had a vision of egalitarianism, equality, material oriented thinking, this worldly thinking.

Bhakti Movements in medieval period, as gross root movements, opposed caste system. Unlike Vedantic speculations, these movements believed that salvation is accessible to one and all through simple devotion to the divine irrespective of one's creed or colour, and cult or caste. The **unit 2** deals with this people's philosophy as thought pattern of the subjugated people along with famous saints of Bhakti movement in both North and South India.

The modern period roughly from seventeenth century in India is considered Indian renaissance, for its reformatory measures in socio-religious fields. **Unit 3** picks up some prominent Dalit personalities who voiced such reformatory measures and are not generally given much attention in Indian modern philosophical discussions.

In India atrocities against the Dalits continued unabated even after independence. **Unit 4** rightly captures this continual struggle of the Dalits in the ideology and activism of the contemporary Dalit thinkers. Along with Dalit religious and social movements, it is important to know about Dalit political struggle.