



CHRONICLES OF CASTE SYSTEM AND ITS IMPRESSION IN INDIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract: Ambedkar was an Indian jurist, economist, social reformer, and political leader who headed the committee drafting the constitution of India from the constituent assembly debates and inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement after renouncing Hinduism. He fought to eradicate social inequalities like untouchability and for the rights of the Dalits and other socially backward classes throughout his life. The caste had its foundation in ancient scriptures of smriti, which was put in place for the eternal subjugation of the so-called untouchables. In his life, he has put his heart into reforming age-old traditions which were codified through subjugation. This article is related to Ambedkar's notion of the caste system and its discourse and Caste system prevalent in present Indian Society.

Keywords: Annihilation of Caste, Caste system, Education, Untouchability.

1. Introduction

Rigveda, a religious text is an ancient Indian collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns describing that Brahma is the creator of the universe and that Brahma destroyed himself to different body parts or varna or category to form humans. Brahma's head is categorized as an intelligent person and it is believed that they are responsible for our education. They are also regarded as Brahmin, priests, and teachers. From the arms of Brahma, it defines Kshatriyas who were powerful and considered as warriors or rulers. From the feet came out the Shudras who do menial jobs in our society or are considered as laborers. And Dalit category is not regarded as the creation of the body part of Brahma. That is why they are also called Avarnas. That means people who do not have any varna and give them the work of cleansing. Another theory states that the caste of a person depends on his past deeds. Therefore, if we did good deeds in our past life, we would be born as a Brahmin in the present life. But if did not do good deeds in our past life then we would be born as Dalits in our present life. During the 6th century, many people from lower castes converted themselves to Buddhism because Buddha belonged to the warrior caste and also, he rejected the caste system. In pre-independence, many people took concrete measures against of caste system. Some of them are Shahuji Maharaj who was the first person in India to implement reservations in his Kolhapur reign and give reservations about 50% of Government posts for the backward class candidates,

Jyotirao Phule, who was born in the Shudhra caste was very inspired by the struggle of the slaves in America. In 1873, he established the “Satyashodhak Samaj” for the upliftment of the lower caste, and the biggest contribution against the caste system was made by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He has written popular books like “Annihilation of caste” and “The Emancipation of the Untouchables”. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar became the chairman of the drafting committee of the constitution of India and it is the supreme law that includes rules of political organization and rights to citizens. The constitution of India was adopted on November 26, 1949, which is also celebrated as the constitution day.

Dr. Ambedkar was the one who defined well about the origin of the caste system in India. He was against the caste system in India. Ambedkar was a Dalit himself and he strongly prescribed to put an end to the caste system and hold up Dalit struggles. He believed that India could not advance on the values of ancient scriptures, which authenticate the takeover of masses based on graded inequity. In the meantime, Mahar satyagraha, the constitution of freethinking labor, and many others played the role of traditional reforms put forward precisely by Ambedkar. All these aided Dr. Ambedkar in securing his dreams of creating a society that was shaped through equitable social justice for all.

1.1. Statement of the problem

The research paper is entitled

“Chronicles of caste system and its impression in Indian society”

1.2. Objectives

- i. To study about the Ambedkar’s interpretation of caste system in India.
- ii. To explore the present caste system prevalent in the society.

1.3. Caste system in present Indian Society

Caste system is prevalent in India for more than 2000 years. It is a social evil which disbalance the society. It is also a system of social stratification which divides people into different groups based on their race, birth, caste, occupation, and social status. Caste system can be compared to racism where people discriminate other people on the basis of their skin colour which is mostly prevalent in western countries. Likewise in India, people discriminate on the basis of class, place, religion, tribe, language etc., and when a child is born his caste is fixed in which caste his parents belong. In modern times, there has been many changes in the society, as per the constitutional provision given by Government of India, Article 15(1) stated “there shall be no discrimination against any citizen of India on the basis of religion, race, caste, gender, or place of birth”, and if any individual or group of people practice untouchability then according to Article 17 sated “Abolition of “untouchability” and making its practice in any form a punishable offence”. In the 21st century, caste system is not much seen in urban areas as compared to rural areas, due to changes in the society people also changes according to the time. But in rural areas people still believed in classes like upper caste and lower caste, if an upper caste Hindu marry a lower caste it is seen as a sin and not accepted by the society. They believed inter-caste marriage is wrong. There have been also many clashes between different caste, gang rape has been increasing in present times. All India Democratic Women's Association said that under Modi’s Bhartiya Janata Party government, Uttar Pradesh has become “the rape state of India” and rank Uttar Pradesh as the most unsafe state for women in the country. In 2019, Ayushmann Khurrana starring the movie Article 15 which is seen as the first Bollywood blockbuster to show the issue related to caste-based prevalent in the society. One of the major issues related to caste system in 2023 is Manipur Violence which is between Hindu Meitei and Christian Kuki tribe. It is due to Manipur High Court directed the State Government to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the Meitei community based on a 10-year-old recommendation. The UN expert reported “about serious human rights violations and abuses in the Northeast State of Manipur in India, including alleged acts of sexual violence, extrajudicial killings, home destruction, forced displacement, torture and ill-treatment”. It also reported “We are appalled by the reports and images of gender-based violence targeting hundreds of women and girls of all ages, and predominantly of the Kuki ethnic minority. The alleged violence includes gang rape, parading women naked in the street, severe beatings causing death, and burning them alive or dead”. The caste system present in the society can be only removed by removing reservations in different sectors, jobs, politics, education etc. It should be based upon ability, selection must be based on merit basis, then only there will be complete equality in the society. As, Article 16(1) states that “there shall be equality of opportunities for all the citizens in matter relating to

employment to any office under the State". Right to Education, Article 21(A) states "the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children between 6-14 years of age". That means to prevent discrimination towards lower caste and upper caste and get education equally. Payal Tadvi was a 2nd-year Post Graduate resident doctor at the BYL Nair Hospital (BYL-NH), Mumbai. She was the first woman from her family to become a doctor, and the first woman from the Adivasi Muslim Bhil Community, a scheduled tribe, to pursue a post-graduation in medicine. Harassment on Dr Payal by the three accused included persistent derisive remarks about her caste, and on her being from a backward community, being an Adivasi, and having been admitted to medicine through the reserved categories. These accused would often wipe their feet on Dr Payal's bed after using the washrooms/toilets and would also made casteist remarks which led her to suicide. In 2013, the UGC (University Grants Commission) released regulations for the 'Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions' where it directed higher education institutions to take measures to safeguard the interests of students without prejudice to their caste. As per the regulations, the institute was supposed to penalize differential and discriminatory treatment based on caste and instate a mechanism through which caste-based discrimination such as revealing someone's caste, calling a student "reserved category", separate seating amongst students, or discriminatory grading could be reported. (IAS, 2023)

2. Review of related literature

Hari (2021) in his research paper "Caste and Education: A Brief Review of Literature" observe from the literature that education and caste is very much in-tertwined and makes it even more complex. Studies have suggested that there has been inequality in education due to the huge disparity in other socio-economic characteristics between the advantageous (Upper-caste) and disadvantageous (Lower-caste) groups. This dis-parity has been developed through the practices of discrimination like untouchability and slavery. Though, there are studies that suggested a convergence in the socio-economic characteristics among the ethnic groups, there are still evidences of discrimination even today.

Jaipal (2018) in his article "Caste system and its impact on Indian society" stated that the caste system in India has had a significant impact on the social, economic, and political landscape of the country. It has created a rigid hierarchy, with the higher castes enjoying more privileges and opportunities than the lower castes. This has led to discrimination and marginalization of the lower castes, who have been denied access to education, employment, and other opportunities. The caste system has also had a negative impact on economic development and politics in India, leading to a widening income gap and lack of representation for the lower castes. It is important to note that the caste system is still present in India, and despite some progress made in recent years, it continues to shape the lives of many Indians today, perpetuating discrimination and inequality. Caste system has had a far-reaching and long-lasting impact on Indian society, shaping its social, economic, political, educational, health, family, gender relations, cultural identity, mental health, political atmosphere, business and employment, rural and urban areas, public services, and international relations.

Kahali (2021) in his research paper "Education and Caste Based Discrimination: A Sociological Understanding" finds that Scheduled castes are mostly humiliated, lynched, threatened, harassed, and finally killed. The scheduled caste female's condition in the society is very poor where they are easy to bullying for their caste by upper-caste; their intelligent is judged by their caste, where reservation is helping them to develop their condition through the education reservation there are also upper caste people who are against this and make lower caste believed that they are inferior to them and they are less intelligent like them because of their caste quota they are studying with them there is no intelligent, innovation, and creativity that a scheduled caste student have.

Meharia (2020) mentioned in his article "History of Indian caste system and its prevalence post-independence" that today, OBCs, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have good representation in offices and electoral bodies. They have gone on to form reputed political parties all over India and stand in elections on an equal footing with the higher castes. Interaction between people from different caste is more visible today. People from these disadvantaged groups have largely made their way into government jobs as well as all levels of educational institutions (Sekhon 50). Many people have gained their deserved respect and stand in the society due to this partial elimination of the caste system post-independence, till today

3. Methodology

Methodology of a research is a technique of explaining how a researcher will carry out a research work. It is a systematic and logical plan to solve a research problem. This article is based on the secondary sources based on books, journals, newspaper and articles in relation to Dr. Ambedkar and his view regarding caste system.

4. Analysis

On the basis of the analysis of his writings and actions we found following domains of Babasaheb's notions on the caste system in India.

4.1. Study of caste

The term "caste" has its origin from Hispanic roots i.e., "caste" which means "lineage or race". It is imitative of the Latin terminology "castus" which means "pure". These terms appear in French academics in the mid and late 1700s. This was employed for the mix breed of European, American and Negroes. In the case of India, the term was employed in the 17th century.

Babasaheb's eminent work "caste in India, their mechanism, origin and development" created a pattern shift on the belief of caste in India. He noticed that endogamy is the only discriminate feature of caste. The conjoining of endogamy on exogamy means the concept of caste. Numerous scholars, have provided their own versions of caste as an institution. Babasaheb refuted their argument, according to him, they have taken caste very lightly as though a breadth had made it. According to Ambedkar, the idea of caste was widespread post facto Manu's scriptures. Manu, in his Manusmriti, arranged all the prevailing codes and organized them for sermonizing. He examined that exogamy is the cause for the continuance of the tribal system; totem is the equal of the Indian gotra, and the individuals who belong to the same sagotra or sapinda are consequently of a similar clan. Hence the unity of society is winded up to be reality, i.e., caste live together only in a plurality of demography.

4.2. Annihilation of caste- B.R. Ambedkar

In annihilation of caste Dr. B R Ambedkar openly talks about atrocities faced by the Dalits, the untouchables and it also criticizes the Hindu and demand that caste discriminatories should be abolished and should be destructed and should be annihilated. At the beginning Ambedkar mentions that annihilation of caste was a speech he prepared specially for 1936 annual conference of "jaat path todok" mandal of Lahore which is now in Pakistan but before he could deliver the speech he wrote it as an essay under the title annihilation of caste and send it in advance to the organisers in Lahore for printing and distribution. The organizers at their end had found some of the content objectionable towards the orthodox Hindu religion and requested Ambedkar to remove certain sections. In response Ambedkar very confidently and very explicitly said he would not even change a comma of this text because of which the committee organizers decided to cancel their conference as they feared violence by orthodox Hindus at the venue the conference was in itself in favour of "jaat path todak" mandal which is a Hindi term that in English means caste destruction society but all they wish was for peaceful execution of the conference therefore Ambedkar subsequently published 1500 copies of this speech as a book on 15th of May 1936 at his own very expense and even today this text is widely published and whenever it is published the books are sold in no time. In annihilation of caste Ambedkar talks about annihilation where he explicitly mentions the step to annihilate that is to destroy or to wipe out the caste system and he also suggests the way to reform Hinduism of its discriminations. Now how the caste system was emerged at the very first place? it was from the Vedic culture from where the society was divided into four different varnas. this was Brahminic ideology which was meant to have a hierarchy in the society that was on the basis of classes that was purely based on birth of an individual. These are as brahman, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and then at last the Sudras. Ambedkar says this division earlier was purely based on the division of labour and for a long nobody dared to come together to do away with it and that's how it got culminated into the rigid caste system and through this text Ambedkar is now showing us how the caste system had brought destruction in the Indian society.

4.3. Caste as a division of labour

According to defenders of caste, division of labour is a necessary feature of every civilized society and there is nothing wrong in it. But according to Ambedkar, the caste system is not only division of labourers. The caste system is a hierarchy and this division of labour is not spontaneous. For example, if a person wishes to do a certain occupation based on his best capabilities and make his own decision in his career

in a particular field will the caste allow to do so, it is certainly no. “what efficiency can there be in a system under which neither men’s hearts nor their minds are in their work?” the division of labour is generated by the caste system is neither morally acceptable nor desirable.

According to Ambedkar Hindu religion is not a missionary religion while some believes it is and some it is not. But its spread across nation.

5. Suggestions

- i.Focus on humanity more than casteism. Awareness programmes should be done in rural and urban areas to spread positive approach and make them learn to be empathetic towards other people so that it can focused to be humanistic rather than being judged on the basis of their prosperity.
- ii.By doing inter caste marriage it will help to respect and value each other’s culture and rituals. There will be no discrimination among caste and everyone will be considered equal and important in functioning the society. The taboo of inter-caste marriage would not come up in society.
- iii.The government of India should take a major step to remove the reservation and caste system permanently and bring a classless society.
- iv.Different Policies or schemes should be developed by the government to bring equality in the society and also by modifying the existing schemes basically focussing on unprivileged people.
- v.The EWS certificate should only be provided to those who are eligible i.e., economically weaker section and in a fair basis. EWS certificate should also be given only for financial purpose to get into admission in educational field.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion it is seen that Babasaheb’s notion of caste brought out the truth from the shadows, and the prevalent discrimination that was being faced by the Dalits. Ambedkar was a reformer who introduced Hindu traditions render him to be a ‘traditional reformer’. But there are still the casteism is seen in our society. What Ambedkar has said cannot be denied from a socio-scientific point of view. The assumptions that the lower caste imitate the upper caste despite of being subjugated by the higher caste. Caste system is still a burning issue in India. It is an ever evolving entity that is fuelled by some individual for political benefits. There are various problem associated with the caste and Ambedkar finally provides solution for a casteless society. First, he says abolishing the sub caste but why does he say so? because even if we assume the fusion of sub-caste is possible there is no guarantee that it will lead to the abolition of caste. On the contrary, the caste system abolished in that sense abolition of caste will only help to strengthen the caste and make them more powerful .Therefore more harmful also so if we truly want to do away with the caste then start it with abolishing of the subcaste at first place another way is to start inter-caste dinner but Ambedkar feels this was inadequate because many caste allow enter dining , however, that has not destroyed the spirit of caste and consciousness of caste then he is convinced that the real remedy is inter-caste marriages. He believes that fusion of blood can alone create the feeling of being kith and kin. Ambedkar says that it may take ages before a bridge in casteism is made but whether it takes time or it is done quickly. Caste system is the barrier, it perpetuates discrimination and marginalization, resulting in less opportunity and access to resource for certain communities. Caste determines social hierarchy and restricts people’s access to fundamental human rights and right to education.

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