Indian Caste System: A critical Study

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Abstract

The Indian caste system has been discussed many a times and is quite a crucial issue. Indian society has been divided among some groups. These groups have different status in society. Earlier known with the names of Brahmmins, Kshatriyas are now called general category people and dalits are called backward or scheduled caste. This paper will discuss the relation among these groups and the effects of categorizing society into parts. These effects are further divided into parts: economical, social and psychological. To put it in different words, this paper will discuss the overall impact of caste system on the society and people’s minds. There has been a big gap between high class and low class people, and this is a major reason why Indian society could not grow to the estimated extent. Many intelligent minds are kept apart just because they belong to low class. This practice does not only effect social growth, but also an individual’s. People are behind psychological bars. They themselves feel that they are not worth to stand with high class people and do not think anything beyond being slaves of the high class. From the very beginning of their life, they are taught to behave as slaves because this is what their parents, grandparents and great grandparents have been doing. This is a psychological impact that they are not allowed to think beyond certain bars. They are not even allowed to marry someone belonging to the other class, as this practice brings shame to not only the family but to the whole class. In an order to avoid such situations, kids are taught to stay away from the kids of other classes. This paper is to discuss this discrimination in detail.

Keywords: high class people, low class people, societal impact, social discrimination, status

India is known for its diversity and secularism. People in this country are known to be very amiable to others. But is it really a case? Past and future of this nation state completely opposite stories: opposite to this myth of India as a secular nation. The true picture of the country shows different colors where people are torn in the caste system. Not only in the recent times, it has been happening to innocents for immortal times. However, these poorly treated casts started being advantaged because of some government laws and reservations. Thus, caste system in India has not only destroyed society but also the academics, politics and economy.

It is usually said that every person is equal. But it is ‘said’ only, not believed, and Indian society exemplifies it. Just a peep into history clarifies how hard it has been for low class people to survive in society. Back in the time, these people used to be taken as slaves and were being treated worse than animals. The reason behind being exploited was not having enough money, enough land, and enough status in the society to escape from this
domination. Landlords used to exploit them, make them feel inferior. Genius were only accepted or expected to be from upper classes. Low class man did not have any right to show his excellence. This domination and treatment did not only spoil the past of India, but even today, when people are so liberal, educated and free-thinkers, they are unable to consider low class people equal to them. Even today, they have issues in the selection of low class people in politics and academics. The mere reason behind is acceptance. They are unable to accept the authority of low class people. This treatment affects both the sides adversely. The time and energy that people can use to do something good for the country, to help the needy, they are wasting in this inferior and superior complex. Even today, a youngster is not free to marry someone of another caste. Still people are recognized by the class they belong to. It is a matter of sorrow that this system has hit Indian society in a way that 85% of the youth has been devastated. It is usually said that music of any country can demonstrate the state of mind of its youth. These days, Indian music can not describe anything more than youngsters’ pride to be a part of upper class and to be affluent. So, the impact of caste system is quite evident. And what does this generation have to give to the next generations: pride and prejudice.

Even today, if observed keenly, the fact is known that in the countryside low class people are still considered to the servants in landlords’ houses. Here, only exploitation by the upper class can not be held responsible, but it is more of people’s own thought. Low class people themselves believe that they are meant to serve others. Even after being advantaged more than general category people, they do not avail these opportunities. This mentality is going to affect generations to come. Except some, these people are not ready to come out of their shells and send their kids to schools. They are following the footsteps of their forefathers. A strong caste identity could provide vibes of belongingness or self-worth, thereby depending on some caste rules. Generally, it is known that high caste people consider caste identity as a more determined construct wherein this identity is inherited at the very beginning of life. It starts at the birth of a child, who is excluded from the social groups, denied to play with the kids belonging to the upper class families, and made contented with the inferiority complex. Ever since immortal times, this has been happening to the people, coming from low class families. People from upper class families consider themselves to be righteous in dominating other people, as this attitude is passed down from generations to generations. In today’s era, when the whole world is connected via myriad available resources, low caste people in India are trying to come out of their given status and the generational shells; however, even after being intelligent and skilled enough to cop-up with the world, they find it difficult not to be known by their caste, but their own capabilities. This is how the life of a Dalit in India can be portrayed.

This dominance does not only affect low class people, but the overall growth of the society. Upper class people take the welfare of society as their own responsibility. They intend to maintain peace among their people, and use their status for the same. However, feeling belonged to a low class, a Dalit never feels responsible of making the same efforts. Numerous reasons can be held responsible for this attitude; however, major one can be their own inferiority complex. Even for their own matters, they bow down to the upper class personalities, as they believe
them to be wiser and more intelligent in comparison to themselves. For example, they advise that those who are renowned in their in-group demonstrate more protective behavior than those who are not so high reputed. We can suppose that high class people who believe in their innate lofty caste would also demonstrate strong high caste distinctiveness.

Thus, what purposely could draw a personality hazard linked to caste? We state that rules and outlook that are connected to caste relationship, when asked, could essentially be a foundation of hazard. In fact, it is most normally seen that a person involved in any kind of rule breach is hated and devalued (Mahalingam, 2007). One of the most extremely ingrained caste rules belongs to marriage. For example, when folks defy the rule of marrying with someone of the same caste by being attracted towards someone of another caste, one who belongs to the upper class is considered to be an embarrassment to the whole blood line and this rule disobedience is considered wicked by many. Branscombe et al. (1999) believed that when a personality linked to the principles value is in jeopardy, lofty identifiers will illustrate more cynical reactions. We therefore state that the menace to one’s own caste, if correlated to ethical values or rules would encourage tough caste identifiers to lighten this menace and shield their identity.

For numerous years, the lofty caste members in general had superior position in the society, and viewed themselves as living to superior ethical ideals, as compared to squat social order folks (Mahalingam, 2003). It is by and large thought that lofty caste folks hold qualities related to wisdom, intelligence, honesty, austerity, and morality while low caste folks hold traits of dreariness, silliness, dissolution, contamination, and other unenthusiastic traits (Deshpande, 2010). These antique well-known rules conceded over into new day Indian society and thus assured rules were overtly close to a caste type. Marrying to someone of another caste can bring disasters in people’s life, and fractions in families. It happens in countries like India where an individual’s life is controlled by parents till the death bed. One is not independent to find a partner with his own choice. This situation gets worse when both parties belong to different social classes. To exemplify it, several Indian cases can be taken into consideration, which prove this condition to be authentic. Such marriages are usually unaccepted and sometimes direct murder (of the bride, groom or their relatives), rape, civic beatings and other sanctions (NYU 2007, p. 11 as cited in Hoff et al., 2009). In fact, in Northern India, inter-caste marriages frequently result in family members preferring to slay the couple (Flintoff, 2010; Goli et al., 2013). Thus, when a lofty caste member commits rule defiance one is devalued in society. This effect can especially be understood by the ‘Black sheep effect’ (BSE) wherein people in broad-spectrum derogate unusual in-group members (Marques and Paez, 1994).

Such actions upset not only individuals or families, but the whole class. Assassination or any brutal step by the other party is taken to be the attack on the pride of the whole class. History is evidence of such actions and their repercussions. Time to time, people stand for proving their existence in the society. But theses brutal actions prove how strong this caste system is. A life has no significance when compared to status. People are ready to kill others
and torture their own people just for the sake of their status and to maintain their hierarchal identity. Such situations can be seen mainly in the villages of India. Although people have reached moon, are searching oceans’ depths, and keen to know more about universe, this caste, creed and color system still overpowers people’s minds.

This mere thought of caste depletes all the young minds. From the very beginning of life, an upper class child boasts of being born in a high class family; whereas, a child belonging to low class family is taught to put up with the social remarks and comments he has to encounter throughout his life. Here certain questions come to mind which need to be answered for the welfare of this world: Do the people pertaining to low class do not have right to live like others do? How can we think of a prosperous world when minds are not healthy? How this world can think of new inventions when so many intelligent minds are just neglected by being tagged as low class? How can we think of positive lives when we nurture lives with a negative thought of discrimination?

All these questions need to be answered, because only a prosper mind can be a boon to society. The social effects of caste system are enumerable. Society is torn into pieces because of this caste system. People’s energy which should be used for a productive task, is actually used to let others down. This has become food to their pride, and without realizing its adverse effect, generations are fed with this. Indian music and cinema is the biggest example to prove this effect of caste system. Many movies have been made to explain the severity of this condition in India. Exploitation of people belonging to low class is very well shown in movies. The irony is, even on knowing that this evil is corrupting our society, it is not being eradicated, but flourishes with time. Discrimination is part of humans’ attitude, but this caste discrimination has become a hereditary disease which needs to be cured at the earliest.

Government took many initiatives to remove this caste system and uplift the standard of low caste people. One such initiative is reservation. Government has reserved some seats for low caste people in every sphere. To help them come out of the traditional outlook, their education is also not so very expensive. Not only education, but in the sector of government jobs, they are preferred even with low marks. This step has not benefitted as much as it has backfired. A new rivalry has entered people’s minds, owing to the fact that they are not getting their due. They envy the low class people. Instead of removing this caste discrimination, this step has added more fuel to the fire. Earlier people had only one reason to look down upon the low caste people; whereas now the count now is a bit long. This hatred has come with the thought that people who do not even deserve for certain seats, are getting due to their caste benefits and are trying to serve the nation, without having proper knowledge. This thought can be heard from many young minds who are the victim of rejections only because of the reason of their belongingness to general category.

This practice again affects people’s minds and their thought about caste system, which should have been changed with the passage of time, is worsening. Government took this step to make low class people feel that they should not feel inferior; however, the condition is still the same. People get admissions in reputed colleges and get good jobs, but they still can not feel liberated in their own minds. They still fell dependent on government’s mercy to
stand in the world. Though this case is not true in all the cases, as intelligence and skills do not know any discrimination or castes, yet this phenomenon is ruining the lives of many and enhancing this caste prejudice. This step by government is not productive, because now people who were far away from this discrimination chapter, feel deceived and develop hatred towards low class people.

This issue of caste system needs to be addressed wisely and on urgent basis because this is ruining our society. No growth is possible if people are divided on the name of caste, creed and color. Government should not implement the policies which widens the gap between two sides. But this should be the teaching to the off-springs to see everyone with equality. A person can be superior with his knowledge and skills but not his caste or class. Without creating more fuzz, teaching should start from the home. To uplift low class people, high class people cannot be punished. There should be some wise ways to eradicate this issue.

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