

Varnaless & Casteless Social Harmony-Based Society: The Demand of Changing 21st Century Indian Society



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Abstract

The caste system is a system of social stratification in India that goes back as far as 1500-500 BCE. The roots of the long prevailing caste system lies in the ancient Varna system which is said to have been generated by Lord Brahma from his various parts of his body in order to serve the various purposes of the day. The Brahman Varna came out from the mouth of the Brahma; the Kshatriya Varna was generated from the arms of the Lord; the Vaishya Varna was created from the thighs of the Lord, and the Shudra Varna came out from the feet of Lord Brahma. The caste system is comprised of four hierarchical classes or varnas, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Within each varna are thousands of castes or jatis, which are believed to have crystallized later and were originally organized as occupational guilds. For a long time, the rigidity of caste system prevailed in the Indian society and formed the basis of the Indian social system. It was then that the caste decided the occupation, food habits, relations and interaction and marriage of the members. Of course, for a long time, it had a tremendous relevance as the system brought about social control.

Later the caste system came to be known as a tool of exploitation in the hands of members of the higher castes who maintained differences and distance from the members of the lower castes. The Indian caste system forced the thinkers to rethink over it and to abolish it in the interest of the exploited members who were deprived of their rights that nature conferred upon them.

The paper surveys the prevailing caste-feeling in the Indian society; focuses on the evils of the caste-based Indian society, and emphasizes the need of the harmony-based society in India in order to link it with the globalizing world.

Keywords: Social Transformation, Stratification, Harmony, Loyalties, Varna System, Gapping and Ungapping, Enditch, Globalization, Harmony-Based Society.

Introduction

The twenty-first century with several of its gifts to all the people of all the castes and sections, is a revolutionary era which is bringing about several unexpected changes in the lives of the people providing them the best imaginable on their part. Through modernity, education, job opportunities, individualistic approach, sexual equality and almost abolished superstitions of the past, it has allowed the individuals to breathe in the breeze which allows them all human rights to enjoy the dignities of life, link up with the main stream of education, job and career, and to enjoy every form of freedom and liberty. The most revolutionary thing that has occurred in the era is the social transformation. The caste-based Indian society seems to be changing in the class-based society. However, despite all this still there is much to be changed and reformed for the upliftment of the existing Indian social system.

The Constitution of India guarantees an equal status to all the citizens of India irrespective of caste and religion, and law considers all equal, but in practice the things are different. Theory and practice still maintain difference which needs to be ungapped. It can be possible through awareness and faith in the world culture when all the individuals in the country forget their own interests and when they collectively work for the interests of each other. The casteism hinders it and promotes only the working for the interests of the people belonging to particular castes. The worst and most disfigured picture of casteism in India can be seen at the time of elections when the incompetent public representatives for Lok

Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and Panchayati Raj are elected on the basis of the caste they belong to, setting aside their abilities and efficiencies. It reveals social and political failure in India.

If India is to be linked to the process of globalization, it is essential to abolish the long-prevailing Indian caste-system, and to replace it by some other better system that can recognize the abilities and efficiencies of all the people, and that can ensure the respect to all the individuals irrespective of caste or religion.

In the modern-era context, it can be asserted that the caste-system in India has crippled the Indian social system keeping the members of the different castes and sub-casted away from each other through an ungapped ditch. It is the need of the day to abolish it in order to ensure equality of social status to all. The harmony-based society is the need of the day. Only this form of society can bring the members of the entire society together and make them work for each other. The times demand that now all the people of the Indian society whether Hindus, Muslims, Christians or Sikhs, or whether from Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra castes or sub-castes, should forget their caste-differences and caste-based enmities, and join hands with each other with a determination that they are going to strengthen the Indian society.

Rationale of the Study

The twenty-first century which is proving itself to be a revolutionary century in social transformation has several demands from the Indian society so as to link it with the process of globalization. The first and foremost demand is of its being a casteless and social harmony-based society. The reason is that the casteism in India has resulted into several malpractices and social evils that have divided the entire society into stratified sections. The time demands that the individual in the society should not be identified on the basis of the caste he belongs to, but on the basis of the sense of harmony he possesses. The past of the Indian society witnesses that caste-system has given nothing but humiliation, exploitation, inferiority to the members of certain so-called low castes on the one hand, and on the other, privileged life, superiority complex and dominance to the members of certain so-called higher castes. The title of the paper is all full of rationale as it produces the picture of the transformation of the Indian society and moving from the caste-based society towards the social harmony based one.

Objectives of The Study

1. To study the Indian society through historical ages
2. To peep into the caste-inclined spirit of the people in the past
3. To make a focal study of the Varna and the Caste-system prevailing in the past
4. To explore the causes that gave rise to the Varna and the Caste system in Indian society
5. To spot and point out the causes of the prevalence of the Varna and the Caste system
6. To find out the positive effects of the caste system

7. To find out the negative effects of the caste system
8. To evaluate the relevance of the caste-based society in the twenty first century
9. To focus the causes why caste system should be abolished
10. To bring forth the public opinion about how the caste-based society should meet transformation
11. To study and interpret the concept of social harmony based society
12. To compare and contrast the caste-based and the social harmony-based society
13. To interpret the cause and effect relationship of the problem
14. To hypothesise the expected outcome of the transformation of the Indian society into social harmony-based society
15. To emphasize the relevance of the social harmony based Indian society

Review of Literature

Besides several issues, Dipankar Gupta (2000) observes, agrarian relationship between the labourers and land lords has been the crux of agrarian tensions across India. For instance, the main reason for caste atrocities in Bishrampur was the right of share croppers over cultivated land, and the Kurmis (a middle caste group) were the main attackers. The Kurmis were supported by several upper-caste land lords to attack not only the Scheduled Caste people, but also the Yadavs (a lower caste group) who are closer to them and traditionally considered to be of the same rank.

The study, "The Untouchables in Modern India" (2001) by Bhagirath Poddar is based on a systematic investigation of the socio-economic problems faced by the scavengers in general and their women folk and children in particular of the scavengers 108 residing in the Lucknow city. The author feels that there is a need to find out the ways and means to enable these working females to harmonize happily and successfully. The situation suggests that it is high time to make them socially conscious. Their political awareness should be improved and must be properly informed of the welfare schemes in order to grab their claims.

K.A. Manikumar (2001) in another paper entitled "Caste Clashes in South Tamil Nadu" discusses the clashes between the Thevars, a dominant agricultural caste, and the Pillars, a chronically oppressed Dalit caste. He attempts to trace the causes and consequences of the conflict between these caste groups. He avers that both the previous and present State Governments have aggravated this conflict through their tactless moves. He emphasizes that unless a basic structural transformation is attempted through drastic land reforms thereby changing the production relations, violence will continue to escalate across the State.

An article entitled, "One Who Dared to Fight" by S.Viswanathan (2002) describes the relentless fight of a Dalit president of a village against a Thevar Vice-President of the same panchayat. When the latter had encroached the Government land and diverted the drinking water to the land, the former was

unable to take action against the latter whose caste is dominating in the village because of its numerical majority.

Another article by S.Viswanathan (2002) describes how the Dalit chiefs of local bodies in Tirunelveli District with their endurance and perseverance have withstood the onslaughts of the Caste-Hindus and how the Caste-Hindus have understood the realities of the age and accepted the Dalits as presidents of their panchayats. These two articles give a vivid picture of the caste scenario of Tirunelveli District at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Sukhardeo Thorat (2002) in his article on "Oppression and Denial: Dalit discrimination in the 1990s" examines the enactments of constitutional provisions in India to protect the rights of the Dalits. Human Rights violations against the Dalits committed over a period of 42 years since 1955 culled from secondary sources are enumerated. The author has painstakingly analyzed the crimes and atrocities committed against Scheduled Castes between 1981 and 1997 separately in four States viz., Karnataka, Andra Pradesh, Orissa and Gujarat.

An attempt has been made to understand the Dalit Leadership and many other related issues with them in India by Vivek Kumar in his work "Dalit Leadership in India"(2002), The study tries to trace its origin, growth and development and examine its nature and dynamics, besides inquiring into its strategy or strategies adopted for mobilization and empowerment of the Dalit masses.

Starting with characteristics of Indian society, the book "Indian Society: Institutions and Change" (2004) by Rajendra K. Sharma deals with Hindu Muslim, Christian, Rural, Tribal and Urban social systems and institutions. It describes major religious groups in India and also discusses various trends in contemporary social changes such as Industrialization, Urbanization, Sanskritization, Westernization etc.

In the study "Caste Based Reservation in India" (2006), Seema Pasricha attempts to discuss the extent of reservation which has contributed for the upliftment of the section of society. It discusses whether the benefits or the gains of reservation are being appropriated by the creamy layer among the depressed classes or have percolated down to the deserving persons and whether reservation is leading to the generation of social tension in the society. The study also focuses on Gandhi's response to this problem.

Sharma's study on "Social Stratification and Mobility" (2006) presents that in structuring of social stratification, a multiplicity of forces and factors operate including ideology, ascription, achievement, technology and economic development. This volume examines the main analytical standpoints with regard to theory, method and data in the study of social stratification in India. The caste model in Indian society, reference of caste to both structure and process are presented. Social mobility in caste structure in terms of levels such as individual, family and group is discussed in terms of inputs from the

study of six villages in Rajasthan. Caste, class and social mobility among the Scheduled Castes and the role of constitutional safeguards and welfare measures and socio-cultural movements are also discussed in relation to social mobility.

Sonalde Desai and Amaresh Dubey (2012) - 'Caste in 21st Century India: Competing Narratives' observe that there is an intriguing picture of caste stratification in modern India. On the one hand, there are promising signs of change as observed in high civic and political participation on the part of dalits and adivasis and lower levels of disparities in metro cities, on the other hand, it is impossible to claim that caste has ceased to define either the opportunity structure or outcomes for a vast proportion of Indian population. The caste background continues to define opportunities available to individuals. Landownership patterns remain unequal; lower castes have low educational status; have lower consumption expenditure resulting in lower access to nutrition, healthcare and private education; and have fewer social connections to seek help in emergencies or to provide access to information and connections to important social institutions such as government services, healthcare and medical services.

Sarita Biyana (2017) in the article entitled "COMMUNALISM AND THE TRADITION OF INDIAN NOVELS: A PHENOMENON" observes- Bapsi Sidhwa shows how Partition affected women, families and communities. Khushwant Singh shows how Partition encouraged communalism and affected community and society. Chaman Nahal and Shauna Singh Baldwin effectively trace the painful exodus that followed the announcement of Partition, the separation of lifelong friends, the reluctance of people to leave their homes, and the travails the displaced refugees faced while reluctantly making their way to India. They maintain that Partition on religious grounds should never have happened. It is ever present in our lives even today. The country still thinks in communal terms resulting in violence every now and then. Politicians exploit this factor and we have been witness to the anti-Sikh riots and the demolition of the Babri Masjid that caused a lot of communal turmoil.

Hypotheses

1. The Indian society is traditional and caste-based
2. The caste-based society was the need of the ancient times
3. The casteism divided the entire society into several upper and lower sections
4. Caste-feeling in the individuals brings them closer to their own caste and takes away from the other castes
5. Casteism is responsible for the social and class struggles
6. Caste based society is a narrow concept while the social harmony based society is a wide one
7. In the twenty-first century, the caste based society is obsolete
8. The present times demand the social harmony based society
9. Caste based society promotes violence, struggle, agitations and chaos

10. Social harmony based society promotes unity, harmony, mixing of the people and brotherhood
11. Social harmony based society is better than the caste based society
12. It is only through the social harmony based society that the unity of the society can be revived
13. It is only through the social harmony based society that the challenges can be faced successfully
14. It is only through the social harmony that the Indian society can see horizons of prosperity and progress
15. It is only through the social harmony that law and order as well as peace can be brought about and happy life can be assured to all the members of the society
16. The demand for the harmony based society is very high these days.

Research Questions

1. What is casteism, and how does it make the Indian society hollow?
2. What is the public opinion about the Indian caste system?
3. Where is the caste-system prevailing more, in the Indian rural or the urban society?
4. What are the evils of the caste-system?
5. What is the ongoing trend of the caste-system in the Indian urban society?
6. What is the ongoing trend of the caste-system in the Indian rural society?
7. Can the deeply-rooted caste system be replaced by some other system?
8. What trends are going on in the European and other countries?
9. What is globalization?
10. Is globalization good for the Indian society?
11. If yes, why?
12. If no, why not?
13. Are all the people in India following global trends?
14. If no, why?
15. How can the approach of the people of India be changed about the caste-system?
16. Which is the most suited social system for India at present?
17. What differences between the caste-based society and the harmony-based society be laid down?
18. What will be the results if the caste-based Indian society is replaced by the harmony-based society?
19. Will the harmony-based social system support India be globalized?
20. If yes, how?
21. If no, why not?

Methodology

The study is based on the primary and the secondary data and non-participant observation of the members of the society belonging to various sections and castes of the society. Both the urban and the rural folk in the Dholpur Tehsil in Rajasthan were included in the study. For the purpose, after a careful study and content analysis of the literature found suitable and appropriate for the study, hypothesis was formulated

which led the researcher to focus the research on the particular study area, select tools for the collection of the primary data, classify the data according to the nature of the collected data, analyse the data using statistical tools, and finally arrive at a fruitful conclusion on the basis of the findings. A sample of 50 urban and rural people in Dholpur Tehsil was taken for the study.

Study Area

Dholpur Tehsil

Number of Units Studied

50

Type of Research

Qualitative

Tool

Interview schedule that comprised of 21 questions, discussion and debate with the people whether the caste-based society be replaced by the harmony-based society.

Major Findings

1. Casteism is a popular concept in India which promotes the supremacy of the caste of the individual, and makes him have a strong belief that the other castes are inferior to his castes
2. Casteism has long since divided the Indian society giving the superior and inferior hierarchal status to the members of the various Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra castes
3. The history of India makes it important to note that the members of the higher castes have exploited the members of the lower castes
4. The members of the Shudra castes meet severe and unbearable exploitation
5. The Constitution of India guarantees an equal social status to all the members of the society, and does not recognize casteism
6. The fundamentalists want the caste-based society to continue, while the modern ones want it to be replaced by some better system that can respect humanity over caste
7. The caste system is prevailing more in the Indian rural society than in the urban society
8. The rural folk is in the strong grip of hollow customs and superstitions, and is not ready to accept modernity
9. To urban folk is ready to accept the change in the long prevailing Indian social system
10. The caste system in India has several evils. Its worst evil is the deprivation of the members of the lower castes of their rights and social respect
11. The ongoing trend of the caste system in the Indian urban society is enthusiastic because for the sake of interdependence the urban people easily mix up and develop social relations with the members of the lower castes
12. The ongoing trend of the caste system in the Indian rural society is still embarrassing because they are not ready to allow the members of the lower castes enter their life
13. Change is inevitable. The Indian caste-based society too needs change. The change is possible in it
14. The caste-based complex Indian society can be replaced by some other effective system

15. The harmony based society should be established in India in place of the caste based society
16. The other countries in the world including the European countries do not follow and observe the caste system
17. The European countries observe class-based society where in the individual is identified on the basis of the class he belongs to on the basis of his financial status
18. Globalization, the widely ongoing process, is the demand of the time
19. Globalization aims at bringing all the nations and societies of the world at the one and same platform
20. Globalization is good for every society, and the same is true for the Indian society
21. Globalization can make the Indian society a Varnaless and Casteless society
22. In the Indian context, globalization can be called bad because it can cause threats to the long established customs and traditions
23. The approach and mentality of the Indian people can be changed through awareness
24. At present the establishment of harmony based society in India is the best solution
22. The replacement of the Indian caste-based society by the harmony based one can bring positive results allowing the members of all the castes to enjoy their life and existence harmoniously
23. The communal harmony is the best key to solve all the problems being faced by India
24. The Maoists, Aishis and Kabir Kala Manch who are playing a dominant role in developing enmity and differences between the members of the higher and the lower castes through their baseless theories, principles, implications and teachings, must be checked from doing so in the interest of the nation.

Conclusion

Since times immemorial several great personalities of India have been trying their best to reshape the Indian social system. Some of the persons that have become immortal in the field are- Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, MK Gandhi, Mahatma Jyotiva Phoolle, his wife Savitri Bai Phoolle, Swami Dayanand, Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Swami Vivekanand etc. The reference of Lord Rama's relishing Shabri's left-out eaten plums confirms that even Lord Rama whom the members of all the castes worship, did not believe in the caste system. It is loyalty and dedication that matter, not the caste of the individual.

Moreover, the Shrutis, Vedas, Upnishads and Puranas make reference to the hierchal order Varnas, and not to the castes or subcastes of the individual, and they refer to Karma, and not birth as the basis of the Varnas. In the monumental inscriptions in the Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh, the Shudras have been called the descendents of the lord Barah. The example of king Singh Bhoopal Dev in the South who belonged to the Shudra dynasty testifies it.

If caste had been the basis, Satyagama, Valmiki and Rishi Swapach, won the status of being Rishis or sages despite being born in the so-called lower castes.

It is the British who promoted caste-based differences and untouchability, but now the demand of the changing scenario is that in India there is an utmost need of bringing the neglected marginalized at the same level at which the members of the higher castes are already there; they deserve their active participation in the social life, not the respect by the members of the higher castes; they require a natural respect, not an artificial one; they want their rights, not any sympathy.

Since the caste-based society in India fails to safeguard the interests of the members of all the castes, it is obligatory to abolish it and to replace it by the harmony-based society. It is only through the harmony of the members of all the castes that India can get a new identity as a globalized nation. The harmony based society is capable of freeing the people from the caste-curses, discriminations, atrocities, exploitation. The Indian society can see a new dawn of equality, fraternity and brotherhood, interdependence, homogeneity and peace only through a harmony-based society. It is the demand of time to check the exploitation of the SCs and STs, and that is why, the SC & ST Act needs to be continued; it is the demand of time to replace the traditional Indian caste based society by the harmony-based society. Banwasi Kalyan Parishad & Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh's constant efforts to abolish the caste system from the Indian society are noteworthy.

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