

Concept of Caste and Class in India: A Theoretical Framework

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Abstract – Caste, the rural community, and the joint family have added to social and social solidarity in India, where contrasts of race and culture were probably going to incite ceaseless conflict. In spite of the fact that they make up an interwoven smaller and strong structure they are plastic, bowing to economic powers. Through the caste system the aboriginal clans have been bit by bit ingested into Hindu social association. As workers, craftsman's, and brokers ascend in the economic scale, they rise likewise in caste, not as people but rather as groups. Relatively persistent are the procedures of separation and combination of castes and sub castes, particularly in the lower rungs of the Hindu social stepping stool. With the growth of urban areas and of industrial development caste has relinquished a significant number of its confinements and has shown its versatility to wind up noticeably the society or exchange union in the new system of industry. Classical examinations on pre-modern Indian social structure have recommended evident contrasts between the Indian caste system and social stratification as one can perceive in different parts of the world. Be that as it may, one needs to question such fanatical statements that such immense contrasts truly existed. An undertaking is made in this exploration concentrate to think about the nature of caste hierarchy in pre-modern India. The caste system forms the huge premise of pre-modern Indian social structure.

Keywords: Caste, Class, India, economic powers, social structure.

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of caste is comprehended from different vantage focuses, and in like manner its origin and significance, and its interpretations and supports contrast among researchers and social reformers. While a few researchers legitimize its relevance as a perfect, utilitarian and firm foundation, others, in light of the field reality, consider it as the most hurtful, coercive and disruptive establishment and contend for its destruction.

"Class" as we see today is historically another phenomenon. Briggs (1983) says that "the idea of social "class" with all its chaperon wording was a result of substantial scale economic and social changes of the late eighteenth and mid nineteenth hundreds of years. Prior to the ascent of modern industry essayists on society discussed positions; 'requests', and 'degrees' or, when they wished to guide thoughtfulness regarding specific economy illustrations, of 'interests'. The word 'class' was saved for various people joined together for instructive purposes or all the more by and large with reference to subdivisions in plans of 'classification'.

In 1824, the Encyclopedia Britannica discussed "classes of quadrupeds, fowls, fishes et cetera,

which are again subdivided into arrangement or orders and these last into genera. It was around the year 1824, that the word 'class' came to be set up as a social mark.

Briggs keeps up that the word 'class' figured so noticeably in the ensuing development of the socialist and of other social-vocabularies that the investigation of origins and early utilization of the term in Britain graduated past a scholastic exercise in semantics. He says that preceding this period there was no shortage of social conflict in pre-industrial social orders, yet they were not considered around then regarding 'class' in that capacity (J.Babdopadhaya, 2008). The adjustment as far as the utilization of the word or idea of class in the late eighteenth and mid nineteenth hundreds of year's reflected an essential change in mens' methods for survey society as well as in society itself.

Briggs joins words and social developments, in an English setting. As a history specialist he has contemplated dialect as a sign of the rise and normal for social developments. He contends for the significance of understanding the social importance of the new dialect of class, which was

developing at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of years.

In caste and estate forms of social stratification, social position is attributed typically. Along these lines, it takes after that both will be undermined by weights having a tendency to advance the estimation of individual legitimacy and its standard reward. Accordingly both have a tendency to crumble under the effect of private enterprise and industrial free enterprise most importantly requires specialization of capacity and effectiveness of performance (K.A.Manikumar 2013). There is accentuation on the attractive quality of advancing individual legitimacy with the outcome that, as per Karl Marx, social classes develop between which there are no lawful or supra-normal obstructions to versatility.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In India the Weberian model of class examination has been utilized by such recognized Sociologists as Anil Bhatt and Andre Beteille. Bhatt (1975) has utilized the Weberian idea of class. He trusts that Indian society is described by 'status summation'. His investigation "Caste, Class and Politics" (1975) at a general level addresses itself to the interaction between customary social structure and modern democratic politics. In particular, he has analyzed in this investigation the degree to which the classical caste model of social stratification, described by status stability and aggregate imbalance acquires summation in the modern period. In Indian society, caste and class as two diverse forms of social stratification have frequently been found to overlap with each other. As Singh (2001) has called attention to, "the class component in the social stratification in India is naturally associated with the caste stratification," He says that for heuristic purposes reasonable qualification ought to be made between the two ideas. In Marxist and in addition non-Marxist human science, class is seen as universalistic phenomenon. The substance of class is accepted to be uniformly pertinent to all social orders independent of their verifiable and social contrasts or discontinuities.

The socio-economic, political, cultural forces let loose by the long rule of British in India and their policies brought about far reaching changes in the society. It affected the castes and classes in India to the extent that a gradual transformation of both took place. The changes brought by the British in India not only changed the political and the economic structure itself to some extent. Earlier existing castes and classes redefined themselves to suit new needs and this process gave rise to some new classes, such as the middle class. This middle class which emerged during that time was a class of English educated elites who were in the true sense "Indian by birth but English in behaviour and attitude". This class was ultimately instrumental in bringing about social and religious reforms on the one hand and on the other

throwing the shackles of slavery from the British rulers. They were the flag bearers during the freedom movement. Leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Ambedkar, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and several others helped shape India as a modern nation with a written Constitution and a parliamentary form of Democracy with every citizen having an equal right.

CLASS AND CASTE:

It isn't the motivation behind this investigation either to discover confidence with the Marxian perspective or to make a mockery of its disparities with the Gandhian technique for achieving social change through productive work and Satyagraha, to which the creator is by and by submitted. The creator has just attempted to give the Marxian perspective view to caste as steadfastly as could be expected under the circumstances. In any case, the conclusion that he touches base at is that the Marxian system is as much a hopeful system, an instrument of social rearrangement, as the Indian system of four varnas happened to be previously (Daniel, Aharon 2010). One may, obviously, assert that Marx worked for 'human liberation, while Mann worked for safeguarding the rights and privileges of Brahmins. That is, nonetheless, a contention which would be able to be changed and disputed from the social history specialist's perspective. That activity, nonetheless, require not be endeavored here. The point that is looked to be made is that class in the Marxian sense is a scholarly instrument of activity, and not an unadulterated portrayal of social marvels into which Weber attempted to change over it.

It is important to draw a refinement between the manners by which Weber and Marx have utilized the term class. Weber endeavored to find by methods for correlation and examination how a few social orders were really stratified into classes. One a player in a community may be recognized from another by contrasts in the level of utilization, or in the conveyance of economic or political power, or in some other way. In the wake of having analyzed different manners by which classes were separated from each other, and furthermore how they had developed in course of time, Weber endeavored to discover an appropriate meaning of the term class, so that the broadest - range of watched wonders may be secured under it with accuracy. By differentiate; the expectation of Marx was something more than a logical portrayal of a specific sort of social phenomenon. Subsequent to having inspected the history of numerous social orders, he reached the conclusion that every one of them was isolated into advantaged and unprivileged classes; in spite of the fact that the partitioning line may be dark much of the time. The genuine contrast between class's lay in the way in which one class worked and delivered riches, while another, which practiced private privileges of responsibility for methods for creation, lived pretty much on the drudges of the workers.

Voluntarily, Proudhon, Tolstoy or Gandhi likewise held that, everywhere throughout the world, men were partitioned into the individuals who work, and the lay that lived on the drudges of others, and were consequently criminals. (For Gandhi see Bose 1994). It is interesting that the perfect refinement of Marx, Tolstoy or Gandhi into makers and non-makers is never conveniently characterized. There might be a hundred manners by which the partitioning line might be rendered cloud. Indeed, even workers might be isolated into sub classes, discernable from one another by the extent between what they deliver and what they devour, or by the power which they practice over their fellowmen, which encourages them in social event for their own interest and utilize, differing parts of the surplus esteem created by the toilers. Likewise, a similar sub-class may work as 'exploiter' in connection to one underneath it, and 'abused' in connection to another above it.

CASTE, CLASS, AND COMMUNITY:

In the 1980s and 1990s, the anthropology of caste in India underwent a radical revision in reaction to the revolution in caste studies that Louis Dumont's Structuralist approach heralded in the 1960s and 1970s. The critiques highlighted three debilitating effects of Dumont's approach: 1) that it thwarts the comparative aim of sociology and anthropology, since Indians are represented as being so different as to preclude comparison, 2) that it makes the reality of caste stand for India, which is far more complex, and 3) that it explains caste in idealist ways as a cultural construct devoid of material content, resulting in the mythology of a single hierarchy based on purity and pollution, along which all castes in India can purportedly be arranged. The last critique has also been extended to show how Dumont mistakenly makes secular power appear as subordinate to ritual status. But, despite the critical import of these critiques, they do not bring class into the study of caste in any systematic manner. Anthropological studies of India seem to remain removed from developing an integrated approach to caste and class.

Fuller and Spencer (1990) note that the decline in the 1970s of the "village studies model" of Indian anthropology enabled a shift of focus from caste and the caste system towards other and larger structures such as class, religion, and violence. But it is noteworthy that debates on class formation in India have long been dominated by economists, historians, Marxists, development sociologists, and some political scientists. There is, however, a small body of classic anthropological works that have dealt with caste and class. The anthropology of India arguably is still weak on discussing political and economic issues, especially those that integrate the traditional strengths of studying caste with attention to issues of class. This article attempts to develop an

ethnographic approach to class using the traditional anthropological emphasis on caste in India (Velassery, Sebastian 2005). Attention to the different aspects of class analysis is perhaps the best way for a focus on caste to enter the debate around class formation in India, for anthropologists can ask questions about culture and capital, community and class, and about class-consciousness and caste-consciousness in ways that elude researchers who neglect the material reality of caste. The materiality of caste needs some emphasizing due to the tendency to treat it as either ideological (as a mask for class or economic exploitation) or as an idealized social structure without any material basis (i.e., as kinship or religious system).

CASTE-CLASS NEXUS:

Earlier also caste was characterized inter-caste differentiation of roles as well as differentiation within particular castes. Thus, differentiation is not necessarily related to the reduction of caste inequalities. Differentiation of roles may bring about certain new inequalities which might strengthen the existing ones, and in such a situation, differentiation becomes a double-edged weapon for the lowest groups in a caste system or for that matter in any type of system. We have a few "proletarian Zamindars" or landlords on the one hand and also neo-rich "neo-influential" neo zamindars on the other, as a result of the emergence of new structures in the village community.

Studies on caste have paved the way to a certain fieldwork tradition, which produced 'synchronic' analysis. The emphasis had been on presenting caste as an equilibrating, harmonic, stable and consensual system. Change was often presented as a shifted in relations from organic to segmentary, closed to open, harmonic to disharmonic. Yet, empirical evidence seems to suggest that change in the caste system has been adaptive - evolutionary.

Changes in the caste system can be analyzed from one Structure of inequality and hierarchy to another structure of inequality. To understand this problem of change in the caste system, we should analyze the "composite status" of people of a given society, either taking 'family' or individual' as the unit of analysis of or both. Such an approach calls for the consideration of caste as a dynamic process; hence we need methodology for the understanding of the process of transformation.

CASTE HIERARCHY AND CLASS-CONFLICT:

The dalits have been attacked, murdered, their women-folk raped and inflicted upon with various indignities. Arun Sinha observes that it is class war' against Harijans and not haphazard atrocities. In a

dispatch to Economic and Political Weekly, Sinha observes that in the villages of Bihar, the rise of a rich peasant class has driven agricultural labourers of all castes—Chamars, Dusaudhs, Kumis, Yadavs, Bhumihars and so on, to forsake their caste organizations and fight along trade union lines. This is to read as “class war” cutting across caste lines. But the fact is that Harijan or Chamar agricultural labourers cannot simply be equated with his Brahmin or Bhumihar counterpart because the two have the same position in the class structure.

The real situation in post-independent India is that a class of rich peasants from the backward castes is at the top of the class hierarchy. This class is struggling against the social and political domination of the upper castes. The backward classes received encouragement for accelerating their struggle against the upper castes during the Janata government regime in Bihar. The backward classes are at level in the caste hierarchy and so is their position in class structure.

The incidents of massacre, loot and rape of the women of scheduled castes in Belchi, Agra. Pantnagar, Marathwada and Bajitpur, among other places, show the role of the caste system vis-à-vis class struggle and class organization as reported by the Atyachar Virodhi Samiti. The Samiti investigated the nature and extent of repression of scheduled castes in Maharashtra. The SCs were also poor peasants and agricultural labourers. The specific oppression and exploitation of the rural poor women, both sexually and materially particularly of the dalit women, have been highlighted in the report by the Samiti. The findings and observations of the Samiti on caste are quite meaningful as caste is seen as a system of relations of production. The ongoing conflict between Ranbir Sena and an ultra-left outfit in Bihar has led to killings and counter-killings of the poor low caste people and the upper caste Bhumihars in particular. The following points may be noted:

- i) The caste system functions as an extremely effective method of economic exploitation. The dominant class also acquires political power and social prestige which further perpetuates and consolidates caste hierarchy. Thus, caste hierarchy reflects ownership of land, and economic hierarchy is closely linked with social hierarchy.
- ii) Caste determines a definite relation to the means of production and subsistence especially in rural areas. Caste riots reflect the conflict of class interests.
- iii) Caste also refers to the relations of production as it controls the access of groups and individuals to the conditions of production and to the

resources, and provides the social framework for politico-ritual activity.

- iv) B.R. Ambedkar rightly observed that the caste system was not merely a division of labour, but also a division of labourers. However, caste prevents labourers from being a class-for-itself. Hence caste is to be viewed as an ideology in the manner of “false consciousness”. I have observed that both caste and class have played a significant role in the emergence of Dalit identity and movement.
- v) Caste and religion are used to perpetuate a particular class structure vi) Caste persists as a part of feudal ideology.

The Samiti further states that “caste is one of the most important aspects of Indian society. It represents a specific form of oppression at the level of relations of production”. To say that there are only class issues, and there is nothing like questions pertaining to caste, is totally absurd. Because caste divisions beyond purely ‘economic’ class do still persist. So issues around specific caste questions must be taken by all the progressive and leftists, dalits and non-dalits and organizations. The reality today is of class interest, developing alongside caste oppression and class exploitation.

CONCLUSION:

The Indian caste system has assumed a noteworthy part in forming the occupations and parts and estimations of Indian society. Religion has been the consistent push towards this stratification system for quite a long time, starting with the Aryans and proceeding down a lengthy, difficult experience of shocking separation, isolation, brutality, and disparity. Hinduism was the foundation of the purity pollution complex, and it was the religion that affected the everyday lives and convictions of the Indian people. Indeed, even following sixty-three years of independence, Indians keep on being in the grasp of caste awareness. Historically, India has been getting by as a country for centuries with shut groups separated by caste, statement of faith and dialect. Work was partitioned and each had his designated undertaking since birth, and heredity of occupation was a decide that assumed a major part in the economics of urban and rural life. Portability of occupation or caste was confined, and an individual leaving the control of his progenitors with a specific end goal to take after his or her own particular way was infrequently seen. It can be seen that caste keeps on assuming a vital part in the dynamic of social and political interactions inside India. Be that as it may, the connection amongst caste and innate occupations has turned out to be less huge now, and there are less limitations on social interaction among castes, particularly in urban territories. The present Indian society is moving from its shut systems

towards a state of progress and movement set apart by the attestation of the human soul independent of castes and doctrines. Various developments testing the shameful acts related with the caste system have urged people in India to be more thoughtful towards other cast members. Huge numbers of the lower castes have picked up a considerable measure from the incomplete disposal of the caste system, and India ought to be cheered for its steady push to kill this system of stratification from its culture. It is, notwithstanding, imperative to take a gander at the significance of how caste status has influenced the personal satisfaction and social portability in India today.

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