

In today's India, the Caste System, Dalitization, and its Ramifications

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Abstract

The caste system and its implications in contemporary India are the subject of this study. It all starts with the origins of caste, as well as religious approval and justification from ancient Hindu scriptures. How the role of caste, which was based on function among individuals at the time, evolved into a discriminating factor of "Untouchability." It elucidates the different aspects that influence the stabilisation and destabilisation of caste in people's lives. Finally, it enables us to comprehend India's Dalitization process, which provides a future direction for Dalit movements. Certainly, they will find triumph on the battlefield rather than imagining it in the future. At this point in the process, India's democratic democracy is in jeopardy.

Keywords: Dalit, untouchability, discrimination, Dalitization, caste.

Introduction

The aborigines were incorporated into the social order during the Aryan migrations to India (1500 BCE). We have reference to a class called the Chandala, who were of mixed descent and were considered as having a specific place in society below that of the Sudras at the time the Laws of Manu were codified. The many components of the Cosmic-being or Creator (Purusha) are mentioned in Purusha Sukta or Purusha Suktam (The Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda, Hymn 10.90). Brahmana became his mouth, Rajanya (Kshatriya) became his arms, Vaishya became his thighs, and Sudra became his feet.

Out-caste communities today include those despised people who occupy a position similar to that assigned by Manu to the Chandalas, such as North and South Indian leather workers, as well as those who have been expelled from caste communities for violations of Hindu social law, such as intermarriage with and acceptance of food from one of the out-castes. Out castes, Avarnas, Panchamas, harijans, schedule castes, milechas, or simply fifth class are terms used to describe these people. They are

regarded as the least privileged, impure, filthy, and loathed of all. Their presence, or even their shadow, on a member of the dominant caste is regarded as a source of pollution.

Religious Sanction and Caste as a Function

Because it is not an Indian word, the term "caste" has the potential to be deceptive. It is derived from the Portuguese word *casta* (Minsheu et al., 1599), which means race, ancestry, breed, or class, and was first used by Portuguese sailors in the 16th century to explain the strange class divides among Indians. Even today, Hindus employ terminology like *varna* (colour), *jati* (birth or descent), *kula* (family), and *gotra* (tribe) (means race). The class divides were obviously solely functional. The priestly and clerical functions are performed by the Brahman. The prince and ruler was a Kshatriya. The trader was the Vaisya. The labourer was a Sudra. Among the Sudra, specific occupations distinguished the various sub-castes. Throughout the years, the system had supported the functional stability of a civilization.

Professions and trades have been guaranteed by birth or ancestry in this close-knit Hindu culture. The individual's occupation and social standing were predetermined by his birth into a particular caste group. Simultaneously, the Hindu religion sanctioned a structure that allowed the dominant castes to benefit from its advantages while perpetuating prejudice against the downtrodden castes. Hinduism, which arose from Brahminic philosophy, taught us that God made humans unequal. The maintenance of the established Hindu social order, rather than any endeavour to increase human welfare and well-being, is the major focus of Hindu society. The only way to advance is to stay within the caste. The accident of birth is assumed to be the sole factor of occupation and social rank. The Hindu philosophy's "Karma theory" strongly supports this viewpoint. The individual is subordinated to the system. Value is determined by where it comes from rather than what it does for the community. It certainly deprives men and women of a powerful motivation: the desire to climb the social ladder and provide their children a better start in life. As a result, a person born into an oppressed caste cannot aspire to higher social rank.

Discrimination and Untouchability Caused By

The untouchables were historically the poorest members of society and were subjected to severe social and civil restrictions. Untouchability is thought to have begun under the tenure of Pushymitra Sunga (Purana, 2002), who took power in 185 BCE, roughly 50 years after Mauryan Emperor Ashoka died. Although Pushyamitra Sunga was a Brahmin, the final Mauryan King's commander-in-chief was Bruhadatra, a Shudra by caste. Pushyamitra assassinated Bruhadatra, establishing Brahmin dominance that lasted until 800 AD. He was afraid of being attacked by the untouchables. As a result, he enlisted the help of Manu, a Brahmin pandit, to put down the uprising. In the pretext of religion, Manu formalised all inhumane and unethical rules against the Shudras. Manusmriti was the name given to his work later on. As a result, the Brahmins attained the highest social standing at this time. The caste divisions were enforced by the rulers. Their rule was to keep Dharma safe. The Upanishads, Sutras, Smritis, and Puranas were frequently used to promote, propagate, and reinterpret Varnashrama Dharma. It was done to protect the interests of the ruling caste. The suppressed castes were subjected to a range of social, political, economic, and religious fines and prohibitions in the Hindu Dharmasastra. The untouchables were denied education and the opportunity to study Sanskrit.

In today's context, the origins of the term "Dalit"

As a result, Dalits are the most oppressed people in India. They're usually connected with jobs that deal with cleaning, toilets, drainage, trash, and carcasses, all of which are considered ritually filthy. They are a people that have long been regarded as "untouchable."

Dalits have internalised all their unpleasant experiences as a result of decades of systematic oppression and denial of opportunities. They are conditioned to believe that they are inferior to others. They are conditioned to believe that they are inferior to others. They are taught to see themselves as ugly, sluggish, disorganised, depressed, incompetent, and mentally unable. Internalization about themselves is deeply ingrained in their brain. They must be made aware of and freed from their own poor self-esteem.

In Marathi, the word "Dalit" means "ground," "supressed," or "crushed," and is derived from the Sanskrit root dal. Mahatma Jotiba Phule and subsequently Dr. B. R. Ambedkar used the Marathi word 'Dalit' to refer to the Outcastes and Untouchables who were persecuted, suppressed, shattered, and crushed by Hindu society. It signified not only economic and political backwardness, but also sociocultural and religious backwardness as a result of their birth into a specific caste in Hindu society. They were not chosen for this inhumane life circumstance; rather, they were forced into it. As a result, the term "Dalit" provides them with a new sense of liberation and assertiveness.

In compliance with a Bombay High Court ruling, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has issued an advise to all private satellite TV networks, requesting them to avoid from using the nomenclature 'Dalit' for individuals belonging to Scheduled Castes. The letter, dated 7 August 2018, was in response to a June order from the Bombay High Court, which asked the ministry to consider issuing a directive to the media prohibiting the use of the term "Dalit." This is entirely a political move by the ruling government to neutralise the word's aggressive connotation. The term "Dalit" indicates an affirmative sense of oppression and clearly identifies the opponent. Because it pricks the conscience of the dominant caste, particularly the Brahmenic hegemony, with Hindhutva doctrine, a deliberate attempt is being made to eliminate the word from use.

As a form of self-expression, "Dalits"

For at least three key reasons, Dalits have selected the moniker "Dalit" for themselves. To begin with, the name implies that the Dalits' situation is not of their own creation or choice; it is something that has been imposed upon them by others. Second, the name has a militancy to it; Dalits aspire to overcome the injustices and indignities that have been imposed on them in order to attain the equality and respect that have previously been denied to them. Finally, "Dalit" denotes that all of these sub-castes, known by various names in various Indian states (Pallas, Pariahs, Chkkalias, Pulayas, Malas, Madigas, Mushars, Chamars, Mahars, Bhankis, etc.) share

a common living condition and should thus unite in a common struggle for human dignity, equality, justice, and respect.

The Dalits claim that the Hindu Manu Dharmasastra succeeded in dividing humanity. According to Manu, Brahmins are superior, followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Sudras, and untouchables. As a result, the entire country is led to believe that certain people are born superior to others. That was even believed by Dalits! The Indian constitution, on the other hand, states unequivocally that everyone is equal.

Factors that keep caste alive

Despite the fact that we are educated and modernised, numerous elements continue to play a part in perpetuating caste inequality. Caste is a fact of life that shapes our perspective, perceptions, and attitudes toward others. Everyone who practises caste has this mindset. In the event of any deviations, the system is maintained through the strict application of social ostracism (a system of social and economic punishments). The caste system is based on inequality. Outsiders to the caste system are regarded as "lesser human beings," "impure," and so "polluting" other caste groups. The stigmatisation they receive from society is exacerbated by the task they conduct. The marginalisation of Dalits and other oppressed people is exacerbated by the exclusion of Dalit communities by other groups in society and the inherent structural inequalities in these social connections.

Purity-Pollution

Due to the purity-pollution notion in people's minds, which was found in Hindu religion advocated by the Brahmins, caste discrimination is extremely strong. Dalits have a negative connotation with death. The Dalits inform the neighbouring communities of a person's death in the village. In the case of burial, a Dalit must excavate the graveyard, and in the case of cremation, he must burn the dead body. They're supposed to eat the corpses. Only the Dalits are responsible for the disposal of deceased animals in the village. They also work in the leather industry. As a result, non-Dalits instantly regard them as impure. It gives the illusion that a pure Hindu will abstain from eating meat and follow a vegetarian diet in order to avoid pollution and

defilement. Cows are revered and regarded as holy by Orthodox Hindus. They feel it is sacrilegious to kill a cow and eat beef (cow meat). Some Hindu extremists have even ruthlessly tortured and killed persons who have eaten beef, according to recent violent occurrences in various parts of the country.

Matrimonial Alliances

Due to caste divisions, Hindu society is predominantly endogamous. The vast majority of people exclusively marry inside their caste. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudras all marry within their castes; the Hindu community still frowns on inter-caste marriage. Endogamy is much preferred even among Dalit subcastes. When a person born into one caste marries someone from another caste, the caste system is maintained. When a couple marries from a different caste, the bridegroom's caste determines the pair's identity. A Dalit man who marries a woman from a dominant caste will never be able to rise up the social ladder.

Inferiority complex caused by colour consciousness

The bulk of Dalit people have a dark complexion to some extent. Because they are subjected to rigorous labour under the scorching heat, their skin is dark. Because they work in low-wage employment, non-Dalits have little respect for them in society. They are looked down upon by the dominant caste, who expect them to be obedient. The Dalits have internalised this colour consciousness and believe they are inferior to the society's fair-skinned inhabitants. They seem to believe that being born black is unattractive and that dark is an unwelcome colour. As a result, they acquire an inferiority complex, which isolates them from the rest of society.

Caste determines which jobs and trades are available

Because caste and caste-based work are intertwined in rural India, the severity of caste is palpable. A cobbler's son will always be a cobbler. Following in his father's footsteps, a scavenger's son takes up the task of scavenging. Because of poverty and a lack of opportunities for education and other skills, most Dalit children end up doing their parents' labour and family trades. The majority of Dalit students are not

considered "dropouts," but rather "pushed out" from school. They are unable to take up any other work because all members of the family are involved in one particular work and are connected with a particular caste. This condition persists in many rural areas of India.

Caste is determined by one's eating habits

In India, the caste structure ensures that what you consume determines who you are. Because the food you consume is a function of your caste, it determines who you marry, where you live, your employment, your social position, whether you are "pure" or "impure," whether you are entitled or destitute, and whether you may hold your head high or let it droop in shame. A dominant-caste person can only eat or drink from someone of a comparable or higher rank than themselves. If someone from an oppressed caste has touched or cooked the food, it must be rejected. To avoid defilement, when a dominant caste person provides food to a suppressed caste member, it is always dropped rather than placed in their hands or vessels. Food habits are still utilised as a mechanism of social exclusion and oppression today. In many regions of our country, wealthy Hindu landlords exploit vegetarianism to keep out disadvantaged -caste tenants (and Muslims, of course) by requiring that flats be rented exclusively to vegetarians. Hindus from the dominant caste can avoid eating meat since they can purchase a variety of vegetables and dairy products. These were products that Dalits could not buy, thus they got their protein from pigs, buffalos, and cows, which were cheaper than mutton or chicken.

Factors that wreak havoc on caste

Despite the fact that caste is an important component of everyone's life in India, there are a number of elements that influence its stability. Unlike rural villages, metropolitan cities have people who have come from all over the country who have settled down and live together without much difference. It is not a problem to be regarded a lesser caste than oneself. People's attitudes of caste have shifted over time as a result of increased social awareness and education. We'll look at how caste is being destabilised as a result of numerous events.

Education

Education and social awareness, in particular, weaken caste hierarchy not only in the case of the educated, but also in the treatment of the less fortunate. People's brains are enlightened and their inherent potential is realised through education. With the advancement of knowledge, a growing number of men and women from the suppressed castes have been trained to take their positions alongside the dominant caste people, and who reject the functioning of any system that would deprive them of the rights they have gained. Education combined with linguistic proficiency causes everyone's life style, attitude, and demeanour to change. They overcome their poor self-esteem and strive to be on par with non-Dalits in all aspects of life. However, establishing equality for everybody is a long and winding road.

The Industrial Revolution and Trade

Economic development is a second factor that contributes to caste deterioration. India has become a significant component of a bigger world under the British Raj. People were able to move outside their caste-based labour thanks to the East India Company, which fostered trade in India with the British and other oversea countries. The working class in India was impacted by the European industrial revolution. Cotton mills controlled by the British in India absorbed a large number of workers, regardless of their typical village jobs. Trade with Europe, America, and Japan has resulted in the introduction of commodities from these countries, broadening the Indian market's possibilities and putting pressure on some Indian industries. This has resulted in a demand for more economic opportunities than caste permits on the one hand, and a necessity to choose occupations other than caste-determined occupations on the other hand, as a result of industrial rivalry.

India's new economic policy

Since 1991, the New Economic Policy has played a vital role in hastening the process of caste corrosion. Our country's LPG (Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization) policy opened the doors to trade and business in India. Foreign trade restrictions were loosened, and structural adjustment policies (SAP) were enacted to

meet their needs. As a result, several Multinational and Transnational Corporations (MNCs) and Transnational Corporations (TNCs) enjoyed easy access to Indian markets through their FDI (FDI). Many people from the middle and lower middle classes were drawn to those MNCs and TNCs because of basic information technology and job prospects. This not only resulted in a rapid improvement in the Dalits' lifestyle, but it also put them on par with other non-Dalits working in the same setting. However, because small scale companies were forced to close, the poor and lower middle class Dalits who did not have access to such schooling were pushed to the periphery.

Modern transportation and communication systems

The recent increase of transportation infrastructure has further accelerated the trend toward caste breakdown. On the one hand, the railway service refuses to take caste into account, and the oppressed caste person who pays for his or her train ticket has the same right to sit in any cabin beside a dominant caste person if space is available. Any transportation authority that reserves seats for Brahmins at the expense of Dalits is insane. Whether a Brahmin or a Dalit, one can eat whatever he or she wants when travelling without questioning the likes and dislikes of others. It is the same for everybody who can afford to travel by bus, tram, rail, shared-auto, plane, or ship without discrimination! In any form of transportation, physical proximity to one another automatically breaks the solid rock of untouchability.

Religion is being viewed in a new light

Another factor that works against caste is a progressive and liberating vision of religion that emphasises human dignity and self-respect. Christianity's presence has been more effective in this regard. Christianity has extended the light of science as well as the teachings of equality and fraternity all at the same time. Many oppressed caste people in Hinduism are drawn to Christianity, much as they were to Buddhism in the 6th century BC, since Christianity guarantees a casteless human society. Unfortunately, those who converted to Christianity brought with them caste biases

and practises. So, in truth, caste prejudice is prevalent in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Sikhism.

India's new legal system and constitution

The caste structure in India has been severely harmed by the new legal system implemented by the British government. Equality before the law has been firmly established, regardless of caste. As a result, the disadvantaged castes have no longer been discriminated against. Furthermore, the ancient caste Panchayats in communities lost its power and sanction to punish deviants with the introduction of law courts. The caste system's negative impacts have been mitigated by legislation such as the Untouchability Offenses Act of 1955 and the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955. Citizens of India, regardless of caste, race, colour, or gender, are guaranteed certain fundamental rights under the Indian Constitution. It provides everyone with the same opportunities. The Hindu social order is directly attacked by Paragraph 15(2) of the Constitution, which mandates all people to be equal and is founded on hereditary inequality spurred by Hindu sacred scripture.

Brahmins have a tradition of consuming beef

Dalits are, on the whole, poor people. This village subsists on the rearing of domestic animals and the cultivation of a tiny plot of land. Meat is a staple in their diet. Though the cow is revered as a sacred animal in Hinduism, there is no prohibition against consuming beef in Hindu texts. Rather, we find references to how necessary it is for a Brahmin to eat beef from a religious standpoint, and how even Hindu gods enjoy eating beef.

The passages in Hindu texts below will explain how Brahmins used to eat beef in the past. Swami Vivekananda, the greatest propagator of Hinduism, claimed that a man cannot be a genuine Hindu if he does not consume beef, according to old Hindu rites and ceremonies. It is not wicked to eat meat from eatable animals, according to Manusmriti, because Brahma created both the eaters and the eatables. He ate meat because it was soft and delicious, according to Maharishi Yagyavalkya.

"Oxen and cows are slaughtered on the occasion of a girl's wedding." – Rig Veda (10/85/13)

"Indra used to eat cow, calf, horse, and buffalo meat." - Rig Veda (6/17/1)

"On the entrance of a guest, on the festival of ancestors' "Shraddha," and on the occasion of marriage, the cow shall be slaughtered." (1/3/10) Apastamb Grihsutram

"A Brahmin goes to hell if he refuses to eat the meat presented to him on the occasion of "Shraddha," or worship." — Dharmasutra Vashistha (11/34)

Cow killing was considered fortunate in ancient India during certain rites. In front of the "Vedi - altar," the bride and groom used to sit on the skin of a scarlet ox (Amritlal BS: 1967). "It is mentioned in Mahabharath that King Rantidev used to kill two thousand additional animals in addition to two thousand cows daily in order to give their meat in Charity," says famous historian R.C. Majumdar. In reality, the Brahmin use the taboo of consuming beef as a weapon to maintain their dominance in Indian caste hierarchical system.

Dalitization Process

Across the country, caste politics is taking on new forms.

Dalitization is not synonymous with Sanskritization or Hinduization. Now, the term has taken on a new meaning: it refers to the process of obtaining provisions for Dalit bahujans. Reservation is one such provision that every community is clamouring for. Dalits are fighting to reclaim their dignity and respect as human beings. The Dalits are moving away from identity assertion and toward societal transformation. People are led to numerous realms as a result of this dalitization process.

As a result, the dignity of labour is being affirmed

Protests have erupted across the country over the designation of 'Backward Caste,' with Jats from Haryana, Kapus from Andhra Pradesh, Gujjars from Rajasthan, Patels from Gujarat, and Marathas from Maharashtra demanding reservation for their own communities. They're all hoping to get added to the OBC list. According to Prof. Kancha Ilaiah, this newfound interest in claiming the backward caste label is referred to as ""Dalitization" is a term used to describe the process of He believes that a

moment will come when people will seek spiritual equality "God has made all humans equal, according to the Dalitized style of thinking. Today, the castes that previously refused reservations (Jat, Gujjars, Patels, and Kapus) are requesting reservations, and he claims that the remedy is to restore their status in the community. "What is an open quota?" you might ask. He slickly pronounces, "In essence, it's a Brahmin quota." The value of human labour will be valued as the Dalitization process progresses.

From affirmation of Dalit identity to transformation

Prof. Kancha Ilaia remarked shortly after the suicide of Dalit PhD scholar Mr. Rohith Vemula at Central University of Hyderabad that Dalit students like Vemula were forging a "new cultural idiom" (Indian Express 19th Jan 2016). It's a transformational journey. "The conflicts at JNU, University of Hyderabad, Jadavpur University, IIT-issue Madras's with Ambedkar Periyar Circle, beef eating festivals in Osmania, or EFLU are "not a struggle for identity," says Prof. Kancha Ilaiah.

He says that eating beef, using one's right to free speech, and being a human free of caste politics are all about societal development with equality as the aim. These are not questions of identity, but of equality; they are issues of Indian democracy maturing. Identity is only the first step; transformation is the next step.

Towards self-respect and independence

"It is increasingly human dignity and worth, and the capacity to be what one can be, that hold the high ground," Valerian Rodrigues says in the Hindu editorial page (Anil, 2016). The reduction of one's freedom to one's birthmarks, as well as the social structures, institutions, prejudices, and relationships that support it, are seen as new types of captivity. A piece of land of one's own, a home where one can live on one's own terms without being forced into specific jobs or considered as low and filthy inspire Dalit imagination today more than ever before."

"The chants that resonate now in the Dalit struggle reflect their choice of food, right to land, Swabhiman and Atmabhiman (Self-respect), Azadi (Freedom), and dignity," Valerian continues. They sound the death knell for historical tyranny and declare their

right to determine their own self-identity. Dalits also boldly proclaim women's equality and their right to choose the kind of life they want to live, while denouncing Hindutva battalions' surveillance of them. The pulling out of Mohammad Akhlaq from his home in Dadri, Uttar Pradesh, and his subsequent death by a local Hindu mob on the suspicion of storing beef at his home has become a major issue in Dalit fights centred on the right to food. As a result, we see a great number of associations of these groups and communities coming together." The Dalits wonder how others (non-Dalits) can decide what they should eat and what they should not.

Resulting in the right to dissent

A Ph.D scholar from Hyderabad Central University, Velupula Sunkanna, refused to accept his Ph.D degree from the hand of the then Vice Chancellor, Mr. Appa Rao, in another occurrence that was widely reported on social media on October 2, 2016. Since then, Mr. Appa Rao has been implicated as one of the perpetrators suspected of being the cause of Rohit Vemula's death. It's simply using one's democratic right to dissent. All Mr. Sunkanna desired was for every dominant caste man and woman's mindset to change.

Assisting in the fight against cow vigilantism

In Gujarat, more than 200 cow vigilante groups have formed. Because of their hostility and the way they take the law into their own hands, they have become a law and order issue in Gujarat. These vigilantes claimed to be gau rakshaks (Cow vigilantes), but they were actually rowdies and hooligans. They fabricate a circumstance in which their primary goal is to preserve cows, which are revered by orthodox Hindus as sacred animals (Gau matha). Armed Gau rakshaks frequently stop animal transport vehicles or invade slaughterhouses if they fear cows are being butchered. According to reports, on July 11, 2016, four Dalit teenagers were flogged cruelly by members of a cow vigilante gang in Una, Gujarat (Indian Express 21st July 2016). As a result of this incident, the Dalits in Una decided not to participate in the disposal of any dead animals in the area. "This is your cow, if it is your mata (mother), please clean yourself and don't throw it on us," they began. It's neither

reactionary nor revolutionary; it's just a matter of fairness. It's incredible that Dalits are not allowed to handle their [upper castes] cows, yet they must carry and bury the dead ones. Saying "no" to their usual job of disposing of deceased animals is a proactive step toward change.

Conclusion

The declaration of Dalit identity and their battle for equality in political, economic, social, religious, health, and education would inevitably lead to societal revolution. It will undoubtedly spark a revolution among people in the near future, which will be documented in Indian history. With regard to caste and its impact on Dalits and other disadvantaged communities, India's democracy is undergoing a significant development.

"The oppressor is only in solidarity with the oppressed when he stops seeing them as an abstract category and sees them as individuals who have been treated unfairly, deprived of their voice, and defrauded in the sale of their labour when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love." Only in the fullness of this act of love, in its existentiality, in its praxis, can true solidarity be established. It is a farce to declare that men and women are humans who should be free, but then do nothing to make this declaration a reality" (Amritlal, 1967).
Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Paulo (2007).

Every Indian carries a strong sense of caste. Even the educated are not free of their caste affiliation in their current location. The tentacles of caste will continue to influence our lives until people's mindsets shift dramatically. However, rather than picturing the victory of the Dalit struggle in the future, the victory of the Dalit struggle is currently taking place on the battlefield.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, said, "We shall have equality in politics, but inequality in social and economic life."

We shall recognise the idea of one man, one vote, and one vote, one value in politics. Because of our social and economic framework, we will continue to ignore the idea of one man, one value in our social and economic lives. How much longer will we be living a life full with contradictions? How much longer will we be denying equality in

our social and economic lives? If we continue to reject it for a long time, we will only end up jeopardising our political system. We must resolve this issue as soon as possible, otherwise those who suffer from inequity will destabilise the political democracy system that this Assembly has worked so hard to establish."

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