Volume 19 Issue 36
Originally issued as A9



Global Journal of human-social science: A
Arts & Humanities - Psychology
Volume 19 Issue 9 Version 1.0 Year 2019
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

De-Essentializing the Practice of Casteism as an in human Practice in the Contemporary Times

By Mudasir Rahman Najar

Abstract- This paper is written to attempt to highlight the historical wrongs that have been done to certain mistakenly defined marginalized communities. These communities have been made to suffer due to some social, cultural, and religious myths that have unjustly been consolidated throughout the ages. Factually, there has been some apparent evidence onground situation that are inhuman and illogical from ethical point of view. An urgent need arises to highlight the unjust state of so-called low caste communities and the immediate initiative must be taken by the guardians of the nation to reclaim the lost respect related to these marginalized communities. Only then there would be caste-free society wherein multicultural, and good inter-caste relations would be possible in terms of social harmony and that an elevated mental state with co-operative spirit for tolerance would be a step forward to humanism.

Keywords: *society, class, caste, justice, economy, human right, essentialism.*

GJHSS-A Classification: *FOR Code: 130205p*



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2019. Mudasir Rahman Najar. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

De-Essentializing the Practice of Casteism as an in human Practice in the Contemporary Times

Mudasir Rahman Najar

Abstract- This paper is written to attempt to highlight the historical wrongs that have been done to certain mistakenly defined marginalized communities. These communities have been made to suffer due to some social, cultural, and religious myths that have unjustly been consolidated throughout the ages. Factually, there has been some apparent evidence on-ground situation that are inhuman and illogical from ethical point of view. An urgent need arises to highlight the unjust state of so-called low caste communities and the immediate initiative must be taken by the guardians of the nation to reclaim the lost respect related to these marginalized communities. Only then there would be caste-free society wherein multicultural, and good inter-caste relations would be possible in terms of social harmony and that an elevated mental state with co-operative spirit for tolerance would be a step forward to humanism.

Keywords: society, class, caste, justice, economy, human right, essentialism.

Introduction

It has been proved a gross inhuman error to practice the heinous custom of casteism that too on the tragic basis of religious assertion across the gloomy pages of history. This inhuman practice has initiated under the threat of either political cum economic power or under the assertive references of religious practices. Arundhati Roy in her introduction to the historically appreciated book *Annihilation of Cast*, comments about the practice of Caste as,

> The origins of caste will continue to be debated by anthropologists for years to come, but its organising principles, based on a hierarchical, sliding scale of entitlements and duties, of purity and pollution, and the ways in which they were, and still are, policed and enforced, are not all that hard to understand. (Roy, 15)

There is an utmost need is to raise the voice to highlight the unjust state of so-called low caste communities so that he the tragic wrongs would be rectified for the betterment of human evolution. There are people who understand this wrong but do not dare to raise the voice. As Ambedkar indicates to this reluctance among the historical, social organization called "The Social Conference" in the following lines, "It 'The Social Conference' consisted mostly of enlightened high-caste Hindus who did not feel the necessity for agitating for the abolition of caste or had not the courage to agitate for it. They felt quite naturally a greater urge to remove such evils as enforced widowhood, child marriages, etc. there is a need for an empathetic approach to be taken for the proper understanding of this ill practice. Though the scholastic practices are very much on the track to struggle against the suppressions existing in the marginalized communities, yet there is extra need to project immediate protests on a pragmatic basis. Moreover, the institution of religion is misappropriated across the social structure in terms of economic gains, political ambitions. That means the religious motivations are exploited as a tool for power politics as is emphasised in *Annihilation of Caste* as in the below-mentioned quote, "That religion is the source of power is illustrated by the history of India, where the priest holds sway over the common man often greater than that of the magistrate, and where everything, even such things as strikes and elections, so easily takes a religious turn and can so easily be given a religious twist (Ambedkar, 131-133)." This is to be understood that some deliberate malpractices have been exercised for the utter division on the basis of social casteism.

In this context, David Keane in his work *Caste-based Discrimination in International Human Rights Law* talks about the origin of race from the religious background that has been asserted by some so-called high caste communities. In his introductory chapter, *The Origin of Caste,* he explores the origin of caste the *Purusha Sukta*, found in Book X of the *Rigveda*; the caste system has spread through the *dharma* codes to infiltrate every perspective of Hindu life: religious, social, political, economic and cultural. Nevertheless, the caste system is an explanatory concept channeled through the religious texts to justify a system of exploitation already in place.

> Following the Purushasukta, the next reference to the creation of castes, which named the four divisions, came from the fifth chapter of the second book of the Bhagavata Purana: '*the Brahman* [was] the mouth of Purusha, *the Kshatriya* his arms: *the Vaishya* sprang from his thighs and *the Shudra* from the feet of Bhagavan.'41 In another passage, a similar idea is found: 'The Brahman is his mouth: he is Kshatriya-armed, that great one, Vaishya-thighed; and has the black caste abiding in his feet.'42 (Keane, 29)

Author: Research scholar. e-mail: mudasirmail92@gmail.com

© 2019 Global Journals

So, the above lines give evidence for the legitimation of the Indian caste system by believing in divine categorisation of caste communities. The belief in Karma system appears to be one ideology created in the social structure that instigates the ill ways of human behavior.

K.R. Nayar in *Social Exclusion, Caste & Health: A Review Based on the Social Determinants Framework* exposes on the practice of poverty and social exclusion. These are crucial socioeconomic variables which are often taken for granted while considering ill-health effects. In recent years however, these variables have come to the centre stage in public health discourse.

> The approach to poverty and health vary across different societies. According to Kosa, there are four possible approaches to poverty: (i) poverty is taken for granted and its existence is not perceived; (ii) poverty is taken for granted but its existence is perceived; (iii) poverty is not taken for granted and its existence is perceived; and (iv) poverty is not taken for granted but its existence is not perceived11. We find a mixture of all these attitudes in our societies where despite clear recognition poor are increasingly marginalized from the health sector (358).

For the social exclusion agenda and its policy directions, there may be two approaches, i.e. health and social inequality. While considering the health inequality and social inequality inter phase, the focus has to be on the poorer classes who have a higher risk for diseases as well as higher probability from being excluded from the health services. This is essential given the higher proportion of the poor as well as socially disadvantaged, the magnitude of health problems and the epidemiological profile in the society.

Also, we can say that a mentally motivated impression of caste categories has been developed by naturalizing the idea of caste. This idea has been seriously analyzed by the B.R. Ambedkar in his book *Annihilation of Caste* with the following quote, "As an economic organisation caste is therefore a harmful institution, in as much as it involves the subordination of man's natural powers and inclinations to the exigencies of social rules. (Ambedkar,138)". However, given a social determinants framework, one has also to understand the vulnerability to ill-health which may cut across different socio-economic categories. The priority has to be, however, given to the former approach in the overall health policy. There has been a very sensitive issue of ignoring the hygienic conditioning of poor section of community based on so-called low caste people. This in the long run affects the life-style of this community.

Y.B. Damle in a paper *Caste- A Review of the Literature on Caste* talks about the state of caste across the social structure. In the introduction of the work he talks about the governmental initiative to lessen the level of discrimination in the inter-relational execution. Since, the practice of casteism holds its clutches with vehemence in social interaction regarding the Hindu scriptures. This enhances the ill practices of casteism by the so-called upper-class people. Moreover, among the other religions, Islam preaches the essential quality of all human beings, there, as per the scriptures, is no such fixed system of hierarchy amongst the Muslims in India. But, there also are evidence of casteism, especially on the basis of some hereditary claims of essential traits of their own. This is a tragic state that the same level of discrimination has encroached in the so-called intellectual section of our society. Besides, the economic stability highly determines the inter-relational state of society. This is illustrated by the below mentioned quote as:

> Un-touchability has been regarded as a major impediment to caste mobility. The loss in some cases of economic and political status by the Brahmins has already been referred to. However, due to their ritual superiority their overall status does not suffer a great deal. It is true that Brahmins who have lost their economic and political power accept barbers as their neighbours.35 (25-26).

This clearly indicates that the caste has been asserted in terms of economic status that in turn is linked to the state of occupations hold by the people throughout the time line. So, factually, this is based on the practices of people in the society.

Uma Chakravarti in *Conceptualising Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State* talks about the basis of caste and its causative factors in the various sub-systems of social institution. That means, there is set of issues related to institutions of marriage, celebration, traditions and customs, law, property rights, and authorizations relating to religious rituals- all these prove as the rudiments of social structure. The author denies the essence of caste and left the lot of such people as of the backward mentality because of their narrow minded outlook. This is how she writes, 'It is now time to move away from questions of 'status' whether high or low, and to look instead at the structural framework of gender relations, i e, to the nature and basis of the subordination of women and its extent and specific form in early Indian society.'(579). this is the transitional state that also is applied to the system of casteism. Across the Brahman patriarchy in early India has diffused the inclination of casteism. Hence, it is certain that the ill-side of Brahmanic ideology has enforced the caste based society.

Madhusudan Subedi in *Some Theoretical Considerations on Caste* examines the in human practices of casteim on the hollow basis of religious shadows. Also, there is a practice by ruling class that

© 2019 Global Journals

limit the process of endogamy in an extended way. This phenomenon is responsible for the compart mentalisation of social class and automatically leads to sensitisation of class consciousness and the alienation effect thereof. Subedi links to the causative factors for the emergence of caste in Indian context as in the below mentioned quote:

> In the beginning, caste was a system for the division of labor, and social relations between different caste groups were regulated by the jajmani system. With the decline of the jajmani system and increasing livelihood diversification, caste identity became an instrument to mobilize people for economic and political gains (Subedi81).

The above quote digs on the origin of caste nomenclature and proves that it is an occupation that has apparently divided societies based on routine work. Unfortunately, this routine of occupation by some communities has been historically mistaken as an essential part of those very communities. The same routine engagements have been consolidated and tagged strictly as part and parcel of their identity as human beings. These types of malpractices are fully responsible for the tragic fragmentation of social wholeness.

Dipankar Guptaas an editor of a work *Caste in question: Identity or hierarchy?* has unveiled in depth investigation for the just execution of human society. Under the caption, 7Inventing caste history: Dalit mobilisation and nationalist past, the author has shown that the social force has emerged amongst the marginalised sections that has made them reclaim the respect and social standing that they deserve. Indicating to Dalit community's struggle for their self-respect, the author writes that 'many sources, including archaeological, linguistic and ethno-musical sources, are cited to substantiate their authenticity. These histories are not merely presented as narratives; commemorations, celebrations and festivities are also organised around them so that they are ingrained in the memory of the Dalits XI.' The quest for identity in terms of assertion of their caste with influences from the political, social and economic are na. This obviously changes the course of social execution and made them to reclaim the place in the social scenario. This type of social exercise is largely responsible for creating community determination.

In a preface to the work *Caste in question: Identity or hierarchy?* it is written that 'Though there have been several works that have discussed the impact of caste on democratic politics and how different castes have reacted to growing urbanization and the Green Revolution, there was still a gap that had to be filled. What needed to be done was to analyse these changes within a conceptual framework that would allow for an alternative perspective on the caste order.' Related to this idea, under the caption, *Jains, caste and hierarchy in north Gujarat*, John E. Cort has paid insufficient attention to alternative ideologies of caste, such as found in Jainism, and to understandings and practices of caste among the merchant castes that occupy a dominant position in the so-called middle ranges of caste hierarchies. 'Jain castes are excellent examples of the middle-range castes that have always created intractable problems for theories of caste' (73). It is also pinpointed that not any kind of essential state of caste or natural characteristic but the economic state that makes assertion of caste. It is referred through this quote as,

> Throughout Gujarat, the Vaniyas have traditionally been important and powerful castes due to their wealth. When the Patels started to achieve economic success in the mid-19th century as successful farmers,… they chose to emulate in order to raise their status was not the Brahmans or the Rajputs, but the Vaniyas (80-81)

That means, economic standardization is always in the background of practices of casteism.

Gaurang R. Sahay in *Hierarchy, difference and the castesystem: A study of rural Bihar* reveals the issue of caste in the light of some rural areas of Bihar. There has developed a perceived sphere of segregation on the name of caste that has placed castes in the various hierarchical states. There are economic forces caused with the state of occupations. This economic force gives a zeal of power to discriminate one community from the other as, 'Understanding multiple hierarchies through discrete caste categories also helps us account theoretically for caste wars and caste competition in contemporary India (R. Sahay 115).' Further, Surinder S. Jodhka in *Dalits and their politics in contemporary Punjab* explains the idea of caste with the unequal treatment to human beings. With the reference to Hindu scriptures, most of the communities especially Brahman communities have intensified the level of discrimination. In this connection, the author writes that 'taking a cue from a recent case of conflict between Ad-Dharmis and Jats in a village of Punjab over the question of representation in the management of a religious shrine, the article looks at caste in relation to Sikhism and in the regional context of contemporary Indian Punjab.' (S. Jodhka170). Further, the feeling of caste has been discouraged by Sikhism. Not only the Sikh gurus beyond all doubt has denounced caste. Contemporary Sikh scholars also underline this point very sharply.

Manali S. Deshpande in *History of Indian Caste System and its impact on India Today* also emphasises the delicate nature of social system composed of numerous religions, ethnicities and caste based communities. This is evident from the below mentioned quote as,

© 2019 Global Journals

> Hinduism was the backbone of the purity- pollution complex, and it was the religion that influenced the daily lives and beliefs of the Indian people. Even after sixty-three years of independence, Indians continue to be in the grip of caste consciousness… Historically, India has been surviving as a nation for millennia with closed groups divided by caste, creed and language (Velassery, xi) (32).

Hence, above mentioned quote emphasizes upon the vulnerable composition of India as a nation; and warns her guardians to keep caste free mentality and have mature outlook with inclusive attitude to understand the importance of human values for the integrative social structure

Since the independence came to India, Ambedkar being the Law Minister by Prime Minister Nehru, it has become very crucial to offer respect to every citizen. Thereby, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly had been formed by the 15 August 1947 to manage proper democratic set-up to the so-called free country. Later on the special occasion in 1950 Constitution that gives provisions for a system of reservations for what the Constitution termed the 'Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes', which sought to redress the imbalances caused by historical inequalities in the Hindu social system. Besides, under the canons of 'The United Nations and the Elimination of Racial Discrimination' taken by the United Nations on the nature and meaning of 'race' can be traced to four documents broadly outlining the views of sociologists, physical anthropologists, geneticists and biologists: the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO). Four Statements on the Race Question.1 the four documents are studied in the first section of this chapter. From the first in 1950 to the fourth in 1967, they reflect divergent views on the meaning of race, and the difficulty in gaining consensus on the parameters of race given the concept's ability to straddle several disciplines. Finally, we cannot help to say that 'the biological fact of race and the myth of race should be distinguished. For all practical social purposes race is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth'. Moreover, the religious force has been wrongly placed globally in general and in the country like India in particular. It is in this context that B. R. Ambedkar concludes his argument in his book *Annihilation of Caste* in this categorical way,

> I have, therefore, no hesitation in saying that such a religion must be destroyed, and I say there is nothing irreligious in working for the destruction of such a religion. Indeed I hold that it is your bounden duty to tear off the mask, to remove the misrepresentation that is caused by misnaming this law as religion. This is an essential step for you. Once you clear the minds of the people of this misconception and enable them to realise that what they are told is religion is not religion, but that it is really law, you will be in a position to urge its amendment or abolition. (Ambedkar, 172)

It is obvious that India as a country would cease to exist if the caste discrimination would keep pace with such intense discrimination. There is an immediate need to reconsider the recovery of social tension and to develop Indian society for her integrated and inclusive social set-up.

Hence, as per the arguments put forward, it is categorically unjust that human beings of any marginalized community are attached with unnatural characteristics. And the tragic state is that an unnatural characteristics, and heinous discrimination on extreme level is practised with all theological justifications. Therefore, concluding the argument, it is affirmed that the evil of caste has strongly to be de-naturalized, dismissed and critiqued with vehemence as an evil practice. So, there is an urgent need to appropriate the precepts of justice to low caste communities on the one extreme and the immediate initiative must be taken by this class to reclaim their lost self-respect. Only then there would be society blessed with multiracial, multicultural, and good inter-caste relations. The enforcement to social harmony and the development of co-operative spirit and a need to have tolerance power.

Bibliography

1. Ambedkar. B.R. *Annihilation of Cast*, Navayana Publishing Pvt. Ltd. 2014.
2. Chakravarti, Uma. *Conceptualising Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State*. Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 28, No. 14 (Apr. 3, 1993), pp. 579-585.URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/4399556.
3. Damle, Y. B. *Caste- A Review of the Literature on Caste*. MIT Cambridge. 1961.
4. Deashpande, Manali S. *History of the Indian Caste and its impact on India Today.* Dept. College of Liberal Arts. California Politechnic State University. 2010.
5. Gupta, Dipankar. Editor. *Caste in Question: Identity or Hierarchy?* Sage publication. 2004.
6. Keane, David. *Caste-based Discrimination in International Human Rights Law*. Journal of Social and Political Psychology jspp.psychopen.eu| 2195-3325.
7. Nayar. K.R. *Social exclusion, caste & health: A review based on the social determinants framework*. Review. Indian J Med Res 126, Oct. 2007, pp 355-363.
8. Subedi, Madhusudan. Some Theoretical Considerations on Caste. Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Vol. 7, 2013|51 52|

© 2019 Global Journals