



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

The Exclusion of Dalit's Human Values in India

Navneet Kaur

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science,
University School of Open Learning (USOL), Punjab University, Chandigarh, India

Abstract:

The existence of different cultures makes India rich in diversity. The irony of richness is that these cultures are not separate from the with hold of differences. Since centuries, Indian culture was dominated by Aryans and Dravadians were forced to live as their subordinates. On basis of culture, the Indian society was divided into various castes. With the formation of these castes a new orientation of human values took place. Through the observation method, the paper will look into the development of these human values in India particularly in context of Aryans (upper castes) and Dravadians (lower castes) since centuries till the present scenario. The issue is important because the values which a human being adopts from his parenthood, carries forward to build a Nation and if there exists a lot of difference in human values then it increases a gap between different communities and effects the progress of the Nation.

Keywords: Culture, differences, castes, human values, nation

1. Introduction

The world is full of diversity and no doubt, these diversities make differences. The human being born in a particular family is recognized by the name of his father, forefather and so on. A child born in a rich family entertains all the facilities on the other hand the child born in a poor family has to struggle for fulfillment of his basic necessities. He may devoid from education and healthy atmosphere which plays an important role in grooming the personality of child. Though the Government of India has adopted the role of 'Welfare State' and in each Five Year Plan, a large amount of budget is allocated with an objective of uplifting these deprived sections of society but the irony is that neither the benefit of allocated fund reach to the ground level nor the government as well as the people from upper castes are interested to reduce these differences. Particularly in context of India, one cannot deny the fact that the people from lower castes suffer more due to their identity and these are the people who face poverty and discrimination till their death. India is a land rich in various cultures. It is a land belongs to different communities. The Constitution of India promotes the unity among all these different communities. To bring the 'inclusive growth' of each community, various provisions have been framed in the Constitution and policies have been adopted. The Indian Constitution also promotes special privileges to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (the lower castes in India) through Affirmative Action and brings this section of society into education and public offices through Reservation. This section needs these special privileges because they are far behind the upper castes. The people of these sections were deprived from all basic necessities since centuries. Neither was they given any rights nor liberty to live with their self-respect. At many occasions the upper castes are seemed to raise their voices against these privileges to this particular section. There also prevails a section within the upper caste Indians who still believe that their values and community are more superior. No doubt, the people from the upper caste communities progress a lot in every field whereas except a few number of people from the lower castes, the poor sections of these communities still have to struggle for their self-respect and a life with dignity. At many occasions, due to one or the other reason, the conflicts emerge between the lower castes and upper castes. These conflicts have their roots in the values that have been passed from one generation to other for centuries. This paper is an attempt to evaluate the struggle of these lower castes in their everyday life. The focus of the paper is on the transformation of the definition of human values since the beginning of the civilization particularly in context of caste based divisions.

2. Caste Based Indian Society: A Cause to the Division of Humanity

In the beginning of Indian civilization, the people in India lived in unity. There was no selfish interest lie within the different communities of that period. All of them had equal share in the resources. Thus, the human values existed within the communities of that period were of cooperation, brotherhood, love and sincerity for each other. The question arises then- what lead to the division of Indian society on the concept of pollution and sin? It was with the emergence of Aryans from the Northern part into India which changed the scenario. Their communities were rich, they had arms of extraordinary quality and moreover, they were active and intelligent because their communities progressed a lot as compared to already existed Dravidian communities in India. Due to all

these qualities, it was obvious that the powerful, intelligent and active community succeeded in creating its dominance on the Dravidian communities in India. As a consequence, the values based on brotherhood, love and cooperation had transformed into hatred, superiority and non-cooperation. Many researches indicate that even after the invasion of the powerful Aryans, there were few rulers existed who belonged to Dravidians communities. But one cannot deny the fact that their (Dravidian rulers) number was very small as compared to the Aryan rulers. The establishment of their rule over the native Indians (called Dravidians) led to the beginning of new relation known as Master-Slave. The Dravidians become slaves and they are facing slavery in many forms at different occasions till the 21st century of Independent India.

With the setting up of new relation between the rulers and slaves, the human values deteriorated. The Aryans considered themselves the higher castes and pure blood. To make their control on the majority of native-Indians, they divided the whole Indian society into various castes. This division is called the Varna division in Indian context. The Aryans were superior in activities like ruling, warfare and extending their territories, thus, they transformed themselves into Kshatriyas (a community meant for rule and defending the territory). These Kshatriyas had a strong faith in God, therefore, they needed a mediator between them and God. This role was performed by the Brahmins or priest of temple (a community who considered itself the messenger of God on earth). There was the existence of third community in the Indian society. This community was known as Vaisyas and the people belonging to this community were business oriented and the fourth community was of Shudras whose main contribution was to fulfill the demands of the upper three communities (Kshatriyas and Brahmins and Vaishyas) through their production. One cannot deny the fact that this set-up of Indian society was similar like the theory of Functional Specialization described by Plato to establish a society under the Philosopher King. No community was allowed to perform the work of other communities or interfere in each other. All these communities were described under Varnas or the caste system in Vedas, Manusmriti and various religious manuscripts. The Indian literature of Vedic period particularly the Manusmriti were the main source behind the establishment and strengthening of this caste based division of Indian society. One last community left was that of the Ati-Shudra (known as Untouchables or impure). The Ati-Shudra community was not considered to be a part of Indian society; therefore, they did not lie in the Varna System. This impure category (Untouchable) mainly consisted of butchers, hunters, removers, cremators, hangmen, sweepers, drum beating in funerals and festivals, grave digging, making slippers, and manual scavengers etc.. This section could not enjoy its rights and was dominated by the four Varnas. The people belonging to this section were forced to live out of the localities of the four Varnas and thus faced social ostracism. These people were neither allowed to get education nor could they enter the temples, shops and public places. These people had their own rituals and Deities and they were not considered to be the part of society. In a nutshell, this section was the most deprived section of society. The facilities were not meant for them. During the Feudal System, these people were forced to work in the fields of Feudal Lords (higher castes). Neither the proper wages were given to them nor did they offer proper food. This section had to undergo the severe sufferings at the hands of their feudal lords when these people raised their voice against the atrocities committed against them. The feudal lords were dominant on this section because they were afraid of losing their control on them. They tried their level best to keep this section away from education and basic facilities. They did not want these people to become conscious of their rights. This was the reason behind that with the change of rulers and the ruling conditions in the Indian history, the caste based professions did not change and atrocities to this particular section continued. The other reason behind these atrocities was that the King granted large landholdings to the Brahmins or priests which strengthened their position in the society. The upper castes particularly the Brahmins and Kshatriyas were active enough to mould the society according to their benefits. They wanted to remain at the higher positions without any conflict and therefore, on the name of spreading education and providing defence to the society, they maintained the Brahmanical order based on caste division. The upper Varnas had shown their closeness to the rulers so that the rulers could listen and build the strategies only in their favour. Therefore, no ruler had ever thought to remove the sufferings of the poor 'Untouchables'. Thus, the structure of hierarchy based on occupational and endogamous castes was completely legitimized by the dominant religious categories of Samskara, Karma and Dharma. The foundation of this structure was entirely determined by birth and it was sanctified by the dominant Braminic religio-cultural system.

3. Human Values Vis a Vis a Notion of Superiority and Inferiority among Indians

The notion of superiority and inferiority on basis of caste system has its roots in the Brahmanism. The Brahmins (priests of temples) read Vedas and wrote manuscripts in Sanskrit language. Though this language was not in common use and the factor behind using this non-popularized language by this particular class was to make the innocent and illiterate native Indians befooled by telling them that this is a language of God and only they are allowed to preach this language to the common men. The people from lower castes (Untouchables) were not allowed to speak this language. The other reason behind the use Sanskrit by Brahmins was that in this language, they could easily mould the teachings of written texts according to their vested interests. They knew the people did not have knowledge regarding these texts neither could they read, therefore, the clever Brahmin class had given its own meanings to these texts. The Brahmins taught that the upper castes were pure and the Ati-Shudras (the Untouchables) were impure. The latter were considered impure because they had to perform their duties manually. This section had to perform all those functions which the Brahmins and the other upper castes denied to perform. It was of great surprise that those who were getting education since centuries and learned the Vedas and names of various Gods and Goddesses were considered themselves superior than those who were skillful and belonged to productive class. The Brahmins, thus, molded the Indian society according to their own interests. They preached the common men that their God and Goddesses were superior. Children born in the families of upper castes were taught since their childhood that they should be away from the children of Untouchables (Ati-Shudras). Neither were they allowed to talk to them nor were they permitted to

share their things with them. Even, they were not allowed to come in their (untouchables) contacts. In case, they did it incidentally then as a solution they had to wash themselves from a pure Gangajal (water of river Ganga considered pure in Vedas).

No doubt, the radical caste based division of Indian society developed the two communities in opposition to each other. All the higher castes united and undertook all efforts to maintain their control on the lower castes. On the other hand, the lower castes considered themselves inferior and in order to protect their rights and dignity particularly in the colonial India, they adopted various efforts to sustain their identity in Indian society. There was a lot of difference in the language of both these higher and lower communities. The higher Hindu communities made the regular use of Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharat, Purans and teachings in the religious Hindu manuscripts in their day to day works whereas the lower communities only concentrated on their routine work like looking after their farms, their domestic animals, to mend the shoes and so on. The lower communities neither had any knowledge regarding the Vedas or Manusamritis nor were they interested in such teachings. They were skillful; they knew the names as well as the use of instruments used to build blankets or wool etc.. They taught their children to be skillful and hardwork. The condition of women in the higher communities to that of lower ones was also different in many ways. The higher communities particularly Brahmins and Kshatriyas were of the belief that women should not go for work outside their homes. The Brahmin family was mostly of the view that their ladies should get up early in the morning and before preparing the breakfast, they should pray the God for maintaining their purity. Even while making the meal, the Hindu women took the utmost care of cleanliness of their kitchen. The woman in Brahmin ideology was considered as an individual whose duty was to take care of the home, to prepare the meal for the family, to devote her for his husband and children. This was the reason behind that only after giving the meal to her family the Hindu woman was allowed to take her meal at the end. The Hindu Vedas depict women as a subordinate. According to Brahmins, they (women) could not participate in the decision making. Therefore, families were always male dominated. The Brahmin preached that with the death of her husband, she should also die in the bonfire of her husband. In India, this was known as Sati. No doubt, during the colonial period due to sincere efforts of a social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the colonial rulers, the Sati was banned in India but one cannot deny the fact that even in present scenario, there are a few backward states in India, where the Sati is still performing. In order to set up their dominance in the psyche of innocent public, the Brahmin priests exploited the religious sentiments and sincerity of the common men. In most of portraits of Hindu Gods and Goddesses, the Goddess like Lakshmi can be seen sitting in the feet of God Vishnu. Neither the Brahmanism protected the dignity of women nor was it interested to consider her at the equal level of the male. The lower communities, however, were far from these types of male dominance and sacrifices like Sati. A great feature of these communities was the independence of women. The ladies of these families worked with their men in the fields. They were supportive earning hand with their male members. The lower caste ladies neither had time for remembering God nor were they too much concerned about the cleanliness. Moreover, these ladies usually had their meal earlier than the other family members because then they had to rush to their workplaces. These ladies were not considered as subordinates and they did participate in the decision making process of their community. They were resorted to smoking and drinking in company of male members. Even the widows in lower communities worked in the fields and they also acted as the leaders of their groups. It is again an irony that the religious text of Sikhism and Christianity etc. teach that God creates all the human beings as equals but the God of Brahmin priest preaches that children are born unequal i.e. the child born in Brahmin family considered to be superior than the child born in inferior family.

The upper castes kept themselves away from the manual work and scavenging done by lower caste people. They considered their (lower castes) work as impure. Due to this impurity, they were known by various names like Chhandals. For the upper castes even in the present scenario, the term 'Heaven' has a lot of importance. Therefore, their efforts are mostly concentrated on keeping themselves away from sins. According to them, talking or coming in contact of lower castes was sinful. Bhagvad Gita is the sacred book for Hindus and the lower castes were banned to keep this religious manuscript in their homes. The reason was that they were known as impure. Similarly, the lower castes did not show any interest in going to Heaven or attaining sins. Their ideology seemed to be different. For them their manual work was important and they did not have time for prayers or religious activities.

Though India entered into the era of globalization of 21st century but the lower castes is still deprived from entering into the administrative jobs. In the independent judiciary of India, hospitals and educational institutions, the dominance of higher castes can be seen and on all the lower jobs like manual scavenging, cleanliness etc. the lower communities are still appointed in majority. India is a secular State where no difference exists in distribution of resources on basis of caste, color, religion and gender then why not the upper castes share these lower jobs with the lower communities? One should not surprise to see the higher castes majority at all the higher administrative posts. Here the Marxian concept seems to be accurate that the class which has resources since centuries uses the State as an instrument for fulfilling their own demands and thus, exploitation of the lower classes continues as it is. Most of the times, the lower castes raises voices against the violence committed to them by the upper castes but neither the State nor the common men are interested to look into the issue.

In 1989, the Mandal Commission which was appointed by the Government of India had submitted its report favouring 27% Reservation to Other Backward Communities (OBCs). A huge hue and cry was made by the upper caste Hindus against this Report. They come into streets and protested against the Central Government. Many students of higher castes set themselves on fire against this Report. The reason made by the higher castes for this protest was that providing benefits to the lower castes is a reverse discrimination with them (higher castes). Within a few days after the implementation of the Report, the Central Government had to resign because all the political parties also stood against the verdict of the Central Government and they favoured the higher castes. This type of unification against a particular community (lower castes) in India was not a new phenomenon. Even during the framing of Constitution of India in 1947-49 by the Indian leadership in the Constituent Assembly, there was a consensus made between the some higher caste Indian leaders not to provide special provisions in the Indian Constitution for the upliftment of these lower communities.

Some of them were of the view that the lower castes have no right to reach to their level and if they are brought to their (higher caste) level then their monopoly on these lower castes will be declined. The other reason behind opposing the special provisions to lower castes was that the higher castes felt that equal provisions should be framed for all. In real, they did not believe in treating equal equally and unequally. There was also a fear among the higher castes that uplifting the lower castes will bring encouragement to them and one day they will demand representation, therefore, it is necessary to snub their voice as much as it can. On the name of maintaining law and order and protecting the State from internal division, many Indian leaders stood against the rights of lower castes in the Constituent Assembly. During this period, Mr. Gandhi who is also known as the Father of Indian Nation, was among the foremost personalities who favoured the existence of caste based division in Indian society and opposed any type of separate provisions for lower castes. He propagated that the lower castes are part of Hinduism which is based on the theory of 'Functional Specialisation' and discrimination. It is surprising that on one hand Gandhi was talking about equality within the humanity and on other hand, he had complete faith in Varandharma (caste divisions). Even though he knew that Hinduism is based on the division of castes, he was not willing to keep the Dalits out of this Varna system.

The discrimination with the lower castes in India can also be seen in present scenario. The education system in India is completely Hindu oriented and the struggle of lower castes has been completely deleted from the curriculum. One can read a chapter on Hindu culture, leaders promoted Hindu ideology and rhymes of Gita but why the students are kept away from getting knowledge about the culture of these lower castes? Why there is no chapter at school or university level dealing with the life or history of leaders belonging to these lower castes? Are the leaders from these castes are not capable enough like the upper caste leaders? Recently, the Government of Madhya Pradesh decided to teach the Gita and Ramayana to the students upto 12th standard. Why only the Gita and Ramayana and why not the other religious manuscripts?

India is the world largest democratic country. One cannot deny the fact that the minorities in this largest democracy are seemed to be struggling for their dignity. The 2014 Lok Sabha elections made Narendra Modi the Prime Minister with the largest number of votes polled in India but at many occasions his own political party- the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) can be seen promoting the ideology of Hindutava. At many occasions, the leaders of BJP can be seen making statements like each and every citizen of India is a Hindu. The fact is that in the present scenario, the dalit community is considered as a vote bank for these parties. The leaders are not interested to know the real condition of downtrodden dalits. The feature of Indian democracy is that during the period of elections, the tickets are provided to the party candidates on basis of caste and religion. Once the candidate elected on basis of caste, he never has any say in the party decisions. This is also an important factor behind that Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar favoured the Separate Electorate for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. He knew that the lower caste people cannot live with dignity unless they are kept outside the fold of Hindu religion and Hindu dominance. Though the UPA – I (United Progressive Alliance) and UPA- II Government had framed many policies in the favour of dalit community but the benefits of these policies have not reached to the most downtrodden section. Due to corruption and non-sincerity of Indian bureaucrats, the policies remained in files. One cannot deny the fact, that the Indian political parties talk about the upliftment of these castes only in their manifesto and when the time arrives for taking action on it; they seemed to be at the back foot.

4. The Lower Castes in Contemporary India

India seems to be separated on basis of two communities as a whole- the people belonging to upper castes and the people belonging to lower castes. There is a lot of cultural difference between these two types of communities. In India, the upper castes are mostly dominated in the higher professions. They are living in good localities and their children are mostly convent educated. They have large landholdings and all facilities in their homes to fulfill their needs. They celebrate each Hindu festival in their homes and participate in the decision making process in large number. Their families are male dominated. Whenever the issue of providing benefits to the lower castes emerges in India, all these higher castes show unity against the Affirmative Actions in context of the deprived and many times, the State Government has to bow itself under the pressure of higher caste majority. The political parties are also seems to be more honest for the interests of these higher castes because they see the vote bank in them and moreover, the leaders of these political parties are themselves belonging to the higher castes so they do not want to sacrifice the benefits and position of their own community on the name of 'Welfare State'.

The lower castes on other hand, is still seems to be sufferer in all spheres. These castes are mostly belonging to the middle as well as the lower class of society. Majority of them are poor and work as the labourers in cities as well as in the fields of their rich landlords in the rural areas. The irony of democratic India is that the people belonging to these castes have no right to raise their voice against the violence committed to them. They cannot raise their demands and the justice is not meant for them. In the villages of India, these castes are still living outside the localities of the higher castes. They enter in the locality of higher castes only for the work purpose. The poor section of these castes is exploited at the hands of rich landlords of the village. They have to face a sever poverty and many times these people have to sell themselves or their daughters for their survival. Many villages in Bihar and Rajasthan are the perfect examples of this. Neither these downtrodden dalits have any reach to good education nor are the State governments or the Panchayats interested to provide any infrastructure to the lower caste people of these villages. The reason behind that the Panchayats are dominated by the rich high caste landlords and the officers who are given responsibility for upgrading these villages seems to be more interested in providing benefits to the party and Panchayat high caste leaders of that village. In such a deteriorate condition, these lower castes have been forced to live at the conditions of higher castes and in case the lower castes do not show it's convince with the higher castes then they have to get ready to face severe punishments. At many occasions particularly in Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, the higher castes burnt the houses of dalit locality and the women and daughters of lower castes have been raped publically

and the police and administration remained silent. Neither the administration helps these lower castes nor do the police lodge any FIR (First Information Report). As a whole, justice, administration, education and politics are not meant for the deprived section of the Indian society.

The condition of these lower castes is also not much good in the cities. In metropolitan cities, this deprived section of society reaches for the search of jobs and many times they become victims of exploitation. They work in the factories at low wages and without any proper atmosphere and medical facilities. Neither there is appropriate representation of this section in the Trade Unions nor do they have any say in the management decisions. As a whole, the dominance of the higher castes also prevails in the factories or associations in cities. Even the same conditions prevail in offices also. Though through the provision of Reservation, the lower castes have entered into these offices and start working with the higher castes but at many occasions the lower castes have to undergo humiliation and boycotts on basis of caste. The upper caste calls these people the 'Quotawallas' (a name given to those who got the jobs through special provisions). It is a mindset of a large majority of upper caste employees working in industries, factories and offices in big cities that the lower castes do not have capacity to come in the merit, therefore, they (lower castes) requires special provisions in their favour. The problem is that neither the Indian education makes the higher castes aware about the struggle of the deprived nor it has succeeded in creating the sensitivity in the children towards the deprived. At many occasions the lower castes seems to hide their castes from the people or they adopt the behaviour, dressing sense and names that are prevalent in higher castes to protect their dignity. One cannot deny the fact that this process of 'Sanskritisation' destroys their (lower castes) own rich culture and values.

5. Conclusion

Neither the education system nor the policies of Indian Government has succeeded to end up the caste system in India. No doubt, India is emerging as the most powerful country in the world, its GDP is rising day by day, it adds a large number of billionaires and millionaires in the Forbes List and the creamy layer of the highly qualified Indians is providing its services in the foreign countries but the question stands as it is- Has these developments led to decline of caste system in the world largest democratic country? Has this progress inculcated the human values of equality, liberty and fraternity among all the castes (higher and lower)? The irony of the 'Shining India' is that the educated Indians are still not ready to break the caste based ideology. The marriages are held within own castes and the poor lower castes whenever demands their rights, the higher castes unified against them. When the atmosphere of love, brotherhood and humanity will exist in India is a question having no answer. The caste and religion based violence is common phenomenon even after 65 years of the independence of India. Need is to be sensitive on this issue and not to play any politics with the sentiments of the common people particularly the downtrodden poor dalits. There is also a need to implement a partial education so that all the cultures should be given equal treatment. When all human beings without any superiority and inferiority will come on one platform only then we are able to say that India is the Largest Democracy of the World and Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar's dream has been fulfilled.

6. References

1. Aloysius, G.1997. Nationalism without a Nation in India (Delhi: Oxford University Press).
2. Alte, I.D. 1992. Rural Employment of Scheduled Castes (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications).
3. Becker, Gary S. 1957. The Economics of Discrimination (USA: The University of Chicago Press).
4. Dhar, Trilok N., Alice Stone Ilchman and Warren F. Ilchman. 1976. Education and Employment in India (Calcutta: Minerva Associates Publications Pvt. Ltd.).
5. Illaiha, Kancha. 2003. Main Hindu Kyun Nahi Hoon (Why Am Not A Hindu) (Delhi: Arohi Book Trust).
6. Iverson, Vegard and Raghavendra P.S. 2007. What the Signboard Hides: Food, Caste & Employability in Small Indian Eating Places. Sage Publication.
7. Jaiswal, Suvira. 2000. Caste: Origin, Function and Dimensions of Change (Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors).
8. Judge,Paramjit S. 2010. Changing Dalits: Exploration Across Time (Jaipur: Rawat Publications).
9. Meshram, Vaman. 2010. Nigamikaran: Ek Brahamani Shadhyantra (Pune: Moolnivasi Publication Trust).
10. Mishra, Anil Dutta. 2013. Journal of Gandhian Studies (Delhi: Radha Publications).
11. Namishroy, Mohandas. 2009. Dalit Utpeedan ki Parampara Aur Vartman (Delhi: Gautam Book Centre).
12. Nirula. 2009. Dalits- A Bruised Dignity- Recasting Casste (Vol.II) (Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation).
13. Prasad, Chandra Bhan. 2006. Dalit Phobia: Why do They Hate Us? (Delhi: Vitasta Publishing Ltd.).
14. Rao, Parimala V . . . 2009. 'Gandhi, Untouchability & Post Colonial Predicament: A Note' in Social Scientist, Vol.37, No.1/2.
15. Rath, Prabodh Kumar. 2010. 'Gandhian Sarvodaya' in Orissa Review, 36-39.
16. Shah, Ghanshyam. 1985. 'Caste, Class and Reservation' in Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.20, No.3 (Jan.19), pp.132-136.