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Lecture-9



CASTE SYSTEM

Stratification has its classification and caste system is one of those basic types. A society is stratified on many accounts but caste system gave total rights to upper-class people to put lower class people down and humiliate them.

CASTE AND ITS ORIGIN

Caste word is derived from a Spanish language and its meaning is breed in English. We will see caste practice mainly in Hindu religion because there is the broad division of castes in India, total 2800 castes in India. Caste has played a vital role in making many crucial decisions at the time and hence played as an important social institution. According to researchers, it has been found that Aryans from central Asia ruled over South Asia and introduced the concept of the Caste system to control the population, thus dividing people into different categories.

CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIA

In India, caste was firstly classified into four types according to Chaturvarna system. Chaturvarna system is a Sanskrit term which means four kinds of color. The four types are as follows

1. **Brahmins**– They have been most overrated peoples from the ancient times. They have been even worshipped by other caste people. It gave them the authority to be the most powerful people in society. Some of the Brahmins humiliated other caste people. For example, they stopped Shudras to enter temples by giving logics that they are not appropriate people to worship God. They were mostly priests by occupation but nowadays it is not necessary for a Brahmin to be a priest.
2. **Kshatriyas**- They were mainly kings who ruled states and were seen majorly in battles securing their kingdom. They can be seen as leaders of a particular place and they also gave a massive amount of respect to Brahmins.
3. **Vaishyas**– They were merchants and businessman by profession. They were seen lower to Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Their economic condition was although much better than Brahmins but it was not considered as the basis of varna division.
4. **Shudras**- They were also called as Mushars in ancient times and were bounded to not enter temples or wells. Their existence was considered impure by many people thus they were banned at many places.

This was the scenario of Ancient India but coming to present time this Varna system has been abolished and now people are not boycotted anywhere. Now there are three categories which do not account for any kind of superiority regarding caste. The categories are as follows:-

1. General
2. OBC

3. SC/ST

This kind of stratification was mainly discouraged by an anthropologist B.R. Ambedkar who had seen indifferent attitude from a tender age. He demanded the reasons and also made some of the reservation acts for the community which has seen the worst from the beginning. But coming to the today's scenario reservation system is eating our society as well. For example, a general student getting 120 marks in mains is not qualified for the advanced exam but a SC/ST candidate getting 50 marks can sit for the advanced exam. This kind of selection based on caste but merit kills the overall growth our society. The reservation act was made to boost the oppressed communities but now when a there condition is well enough, giving them benefits of act again make our society caste stratified and assures ascribed status more than achieved status.

SOCIOLOGIST VIEW ON CASTE SYSTEM

1. Ghurne depicted caste as a complicated phenomenon and inferred that its definition cannot be put in words.
2. Maclver and Page gave a theory that a person birth cannot be controlled and it is his ascribed status which cannot be changed by any factor.
3. According to Cooley status is a factor of family and the family in which a man is born can be called his caste.
4. Risley believed that caste is an integration of some people who belong to a same family by the title, also can be depicted as coming from the common ancestor and later on forming a community which can be called as their caste too.
5. Durmont also gave his perspective stating that caste is mainly religion driven fact and the people of same level be it economy, same culture and religion come together and forms a caste.

Main features of caste system

Society classification has changed the course of society since ancient times. The features of a caste system itself consist the degree of superiority and a sense of inferiority amongst people of different classes. The caste system effect was so influential that its traces are still found at some corner up to some extent. Mainly a sense of being placed at the top of the hierarchy having all the controlling power made other people suffer in many references.

Lecture-10

FEATURES OF CASTE SYSTEM

1. There was a segmental division of society in which they were classified in several units called as caste. The term caste used to present race or breed of a person. There have been 2800 different castes found in India and they have their own set of norms and beliefs.
2. Hierarchy system was evolved in those times. There has been the degree of highness and lowness amongst people.
3. Endogamy can be seen as a vital feature of the caste system. Endogamy is practicing marriage function in the same caste and it has been followed in India till now up to

maximum extent. For example, even if anyone wishes to marry someone of other caste and class, he/she can face a powerful opposition and sometimes it can lead to Honor Killing. Honor killing is practicing death of people in love with different castes. In UP a couple was killed brutally just to satisfy caste ego which does not permit people to marry someone from other castes.

4. Hereditary Status and Hereditary occupation are some of the basic features which can be called as an ascribed status of a person. It clearly means that caste is not something which is achieved by a man on the basis of merit. Indeed it is clearly a place which cannot be altered or switched. For example, a person born in Shudra category will do chores like cleaning toilets till his/her death. Likewise, a Brahmin's son was bound to follow the priest culture; he was not allowed to go to his career choices.
5. One of the most negative influences of the Caste system is also counted in its feature that is Food and Drinks indifference attitude by upper-class people. For example, if a Shudra prepared food and a Brahmin arrived at a temple where he is hungry. He will die of hunger but will not touch the food prepared by the lower class people. Such was the influence of caste practice in India. They were considered some garbage of society whose presence can be infectious to other people of society.
6. Cultural Difference lingered in every caste and this cultural difference led to some of the major differences. For example in Brahmins, the people do not even touch meat or other non-veg materials but in other cases, people were interested in eating meats which acted as a barrier to cultural practice in different castes.
7. Social segregation was also a deciding factor. It differentiated people on the basis of their economic status. For example, poor people were obliged to stay away from some of the richest people. For example, there was a different path for lower caste people; it was a general practice to not even have a tinge of a shadow of lower caste people.
8. Ascribed status was one of the most fundamental characteristics of a caste system. The caste of a person was assigned to him and this will not change no matter he/she achieves any other things in life or not.

functions of the caste system

A society which had been trapped in the claws of stratification experienced advantages and disadvantages both at the same time. The advantage was that due to caste system peculiarity, Hindu religion saved itself from falling into the trap of changing its religion. It was a popular practice in which other religions forced people of different to change their religion. The beliefs, ideas, knowledge and skills transfer took place for generations in a caste.

We have seen the impact of the caste system in ancient times but the dysfunction of caste system was that it made many people of lower caste suffer a lot. Today's world is full of technology and new ideation, thus dysfunction of the caste system and its practice is highly demotivated and many sociologists agreed that it is the root of the evil destruction of any society.

The functions of caste system were broadly affecting three major aspects of social life which is considered below:-

1. Effect on Individual's life
2. Effect on community or society
3. Effect on Social life

The effects should be cover in a detail view to know how and where it affected the society as a whole or on an individual level.

EFFECT ON INDIVIDUAL LIFE

It is a proven fact that a person caste comes under ascribed status. His caste had decided from the point he enters this world and sticks around till its death. Due to different castes, there are different ways of adaptation. Thus a person caste plays an important role in describing his habits, hobbies, interests, and occupation. For example, a Brahmin boy has seen his family members getting a bath at an early hour to perform some rituals, thus he also set this habit in his behavior. This set the pattern of social behavior of a human being.

Moreover, he knows the pattern of occupation he will be going to involve, thus he follows and observe the details regarding his occupation from a tender age.

Endogamy has been practiced from old times, thus a person knows that his/her partner will be belonging to his/her caste only. Thus, on one hand, it gave a tension free life of not thinking about this function of life but on the other hand, it withdrew the rights of a person to choose a person of his/her choice.

EFFECT ON COMMUNITIES

Communities comprised of many people of the same caste making them connected by an entity. Religion is one of the prime reasons of division and caste makes it's an equivalent factor to divide. Caste makes it possible to keep any religious ideas and beliefs intact. For example, a man practicing azaan in mosque is driven by religious aspect, but a man offering coconut in front of god can be of any caste but the priest receiving at the end of God's image should be a Brahmin, this factor is caste driven which is followed till date in many places of India.

EFFECT ON SOCIAL LIFE

Social life follows a set pattern of caste in which people are generally surrounded by people of their caste only. So in social gatherings and meet up caste plays a vital role. For example, when Indian origin castes meet anywhere, there is a tradition to say Namaste, but when castes of foreign meet up, there is generally cheek kiss two times for greeting.

class system definition,meaning,characteristics,examples

Society has always been stratified and the stratification takes place in the order of subgroup or class. The class in which different kind of people is placed according to their occupation, economy, caste and wealth is termed as a class system. This class system is a global phenomenon in which people of the same order are placed in a particular group which makes it different and specifies relation with other subgroups. This system was first believed

to be classified majorly because of economic strength but then sociologists claimed that there are other factors too.

A basic characteristic of the Class system was that it was not political or religious defined, unlike the Estate system. More than economy other factors also came into the picture in the 17th century. Many sociologists agreed that the class system is purely maintaining an order of groups in a hierarchical manner keeping its classification based on many factors. Within the time, class system emergence, development, and importance emerged as differently by scholars.

Ogburn and Nimkoff explained this system as the union of different people belonging to the same level by any factor, be it caste, wealth or occupation. For example in a school where some of the students belong to age 16 and 17 respectively study and sit in 11th and 12th class respectively due to their age factor. Hence a class system is observed in the above example where people are divided into subgroups.

Father of Conflict Perspective gave another opinion in which he stated that the class system is a relationship between influential people and lower class people in which the former takes the maximum usage of later by any means. Marx claimed that the production rate is in a proportional relation with people in subgroups. More the people have a higher position in the group, more they are accountable for wealth and production rate. For example, a steel company is run by industrialist Naveen Jindal, his position is the highest in the company thus his wealth and production rate is higher than any other employee at any level.

Marxist also studied the pattern of class division and stated that the power lies in the hand of those handful people who can control the production rate. And also there are some people who are a part of production but they are not the controlling factor. Apart from these he also cleared that class system has just modified with passing time, for example, that in the 13th century a peasant who worked day and night to earn some money from the leader of this group is similar to the person working as an employee in any company in the 21st century.

Weber also put his point on the class system that the person who is willing to achieve more and has achieved much than other people gradually becomes the person ruling the class system, whereas the person who lacks behind in the race becomes a commoner. He put this differentiation on the basis of achieved status.

Maclver also put his point on the class system that society will always have a social class that is the society will always be stratified under the notion of high-class people and low-class people.

