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ANTI-CASTE MOVEMENT IN INDIA: A NORMATIVE STUDY
OF MAJORITY CASTE



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Short Profile

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ABSTRACT:

By a normative study an attempt is made to explore the anti-caste movement of India is an ongoing process. The said movement is not only very new but, it has its own long history. The real implementation of the movement we can find in our constitution. To create an ideal society in place of discriminations among the four Varnas by which Indian society would be replaced as an equitable society.

KEYWORDS

Anti-Caste Movement , Normative Study , Majority Caste.

INTRODUCTION :

Hinduism is a major religion of India, with nearly 80% of the population identifying themselves as Hindu. India is one of the three countries in the world- apart from Nepal and Mauritius - where Hinduism is the majority religion. The Vedic culture originated in India between 2000 and 1500 BC. As a consequence, Hinduism, considered to be the successor of Vedic religion, has had a profound impact on India's history, culture and philosophy. As Majority itself means 'the greater number or part or a number more than half of the total'.

According to the 2011 Census, 78.35% of the population of India practice Hinduism. Islam (14.88%), Christianity (2.5%), Sikhism (1.9%), Buddhism (0.8%) and Jainism (0.4%) are the other major religions followed by the people of India.[1][2] There are also numerous minor ethnically-bound faiths, though these have been affected by major religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity.

The saints wanted to annihilate the injustice between upper castes and down-trodden classes. Ramananda fought against caste and creed discriminations. Kabir (A.D. 1440-1518) was said to have been the illegitimate son of a Brahmin widow and was brought up by Muslim weaver foster-parents. Raida-sa was a cobbler of Varanasi. Sri Chaitanya (A.D. 1485-1533) was a Brahmin and he extended the Bhakti movement of Bengal. He opposed Brahmanism. Guru Nanak (A.D. 1469- 1539) was the founder of Sikhism. He was Khatri by caste and was a native of Punjab. He wanted to establish a casteless society. He was a strong supporter of Kabir. Guru Gobinda Singh (A.D. 1666-1708) established Khalsa (the pure) based on fraternity.

Anti-Caste Movement:

Mughal emperor Akbar captured the Chittor and Ranthambor in A.D. 1568-69. He appointed many people into the services from the Rajput. They were given high offices and imperial honours in return for allegiance and loyal services. Akbar also abolished Jizya poll tax which was exacted on non-Muslims by Muslim rulers. He organised a bureaucratic administration popularly known as Mansabdari System. In this system, he provided equal opportunities from all castes based on professional and occupational differences.

Swami Vivekananda was a Brahmin and in 1896 he founded Ramakrishna Mission for the welfare of all people. Upliftment of Shudras was his first aim. Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadar (1814-1882) was a social reformer and he belonged to non- Brahmin community. In his book "Dharmavivechan" (1943) alleged that the Brahmin community of Hindu society is re-sponsible for the national decline and downfall of Hindu society. H Mahadev Gobinda Ranade (1842-1901) established 'Parthana Samaj' and the members of the Samaj were addressed by Keshab Chandra Sen. The leaders of the Samaj established Night School for down-trodden classes. In 1889, 'Maharashtra Village Education Society' was established to spread education among down-trodden classes.

A Non-Brahmin movement is created by E.V. Ramaswamy Naiker. To get self respect and self confidence among down-trodden classes he established this Samaj. He denounced Hinduism and Sanskrit language as instrument of Brahminical control. In 1944, he founded the 'Dravida Kazhagam.' His movement was anti-Hindu, anti-North, anti-Sanskrit and anti-God. Gopal Baba Walangekar belonged to Mahar community of Dapoli in the Ratnagiri District of Maharashtra. After retiring from

military service in 1886 he organised an untouchable movement. He wrote a book entitled on 'Vital Vidhwansan'. The title of the book stands for destruction of touch pollution. He tried to create self-consciousness and self-dependence among the down-trodden classes. He founded the 'Anarya Dosh Parihar Mandali (Association for removing depravity of the Anaryas) to fight against dis-criminative just of Hindu society. In 1892, British Government decided to stop the entry of Mahars in the army. He stood that it is ill-treatment and injustice policy of the Government. Shivram Janabai Kamble was important Dalits leader in Pre- Ambedkar Dalits movement in Bombay. He has convened "All India Conference of Untouchables."

In 1875, Swami Dayanand Saraswati established 'The Arya Samaj.' To him, Vedas had laid down the four Varna division of the society which is truly illogical in nature. He did not claim the eradication of caste system but he strongly stated that the division of society should be determined by merit and not based on birth place. The Arya Samaj propagated social reforms on following issues.

- Denounced idol worship.
- Eradication of priesthood superstition.
- Belief in monotheism, and retained the doctrine of trans-migration and 'Karma'.
- Protest against child marriage and sell of girl in the name of marriage.
- Abolition of polygamy.
- Feudal education and abolition of disparity between Male and Female.

The Namdhari Movement was started by Bhai Ram Singh of Ludhiana and he belonged to an artisan by caste. The aims and objectives were:

- Abolition of disparity of caste among the Sikhs.
- Inter-marriage among all classes.
- Widow re - marriage.
- Belief in monotheism and worship of only the Holy Granth.

The 'Dev Samaj' established by Shiv Narayan Agnihotri and he belonged to a Kanauji Brahmin family in 1887. The Samaj propagated eradication of caste system including untouch-ability and abolition of child marriage, polygamy etc. The Sat Sabha (the society of truth) was organised by Lala Behari Lal at Lahore in 1866 to reform Punjabi society. 'Radha Swami Faith' was established by Swamiji Maharaj who belonged to Kshatriya by Varna. His aim was upliftment of the Dalit masses. Sivanarayan belonged to Brahmin caste at Banaras. He believed in monotheism and will of God. He opposed untouchability, disparity of castes, child marriage and other ill treatment of society. The Satnami Movement emerged between 1820 and 1830 in the Chhattisgarh District of M.P. by Ghasi Das who was a chamer by caste. The movement proposed.-

- i) Believe in one God.
- ii) Forbade idolatry of Hindu deities.
- iii) Eradication of caste disparity and untouchability etc.

Sri Narayan Guru was born in an ordinary Ezhava family of Chembazhanthi in the old Travancore

State in 1857. The Ezhavas were down-trodden classes in Kerala. He founded 'Sree Narayan Dharma Paripalana Yogam.' The Yogam is based on truthfully, cleanliness, integrity and unity. He propounded "for man there is only one religion; only one caste, only one God".

Raja Ram Mohan Roy belonged to Kulin Brahmin family of Bengal and he founded 'Brahmo Samaj' in 1828 in Calcutta. The Aims and objectives of the Brahmo Samaj were:

- Abolition of the caste system.
- Abolition of Sati was made by upper caste Hindus.
- Abolition of polygamy and sale of girls in the name of marriage.
- Introduction of widow marriage and female education.
- Emancipation of Kulinism.
- Opposed polytheism and maintained faith in monotheism.
- Abolition of hereditary priesthood.
- Abolition of various types of superstition.
- Opposed idolatry.
- Emancipation of untouchability.

Rammohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj sponsored collective dining and intermarriage. He established Atmiya Sabha in 1816. He started movement to abolish the Sati from Hindu society and he became successful by Lord William Bentinck who was at that time the British Governor General of India. To abolish caste system and other evil rituals of Hindu society Devendranath Thakur established the 'Tattavabodhini Sabha' in 1838. 'Manav Dharma Sabha' was established by Dadoba Pandurang with the co-operation of Durgaram Manchharam at Surat in 1844. The Sabha came to Bombay in 1846 and renamed the Sabha as Paramhansa Sabha by Dadoba Pandurang. The aim of Sabha was the abolition of the caste system and idol worship.

Mahatma Jyotirao Gavindrao Phule was born in Poona in 1827 in a Kshatriya Mali caste. He had opened three schools for down-trodden classes which were:

- A Girls' School at Budhwar Peth (1851).
- A School at Rasta Peth (1851).
- A School at Vital Peth (1852).

He also opened a Native Library for down-trodden classes. As a teacher he joined the Scottish Mission School in 1854. In 1855 Jyotirao started a Night School at his own house for untouchables and he assisted by his wife. In 1873, Jyotirao founded the 'Satyashodhak Samaj' (Truth Seeking Society) for securing the human rights and social justice for the down-trodden classes. From 1876 to 1882 he was a member of the Poona Municipal body. In 1882, he appeared before the Hunter Commission for Dalits and women education. In 1888, he was honoured as 'Mahatma' by a huge number of people gathering in Bombay. He proposed widow-marriage, against caste discrimination on birth, early marriage, education for lower castes and women and children. In 1878-79, he opened an orphanage at Dhanakwadi Camp both for boys and girls from the age of 2-12 ages for their psychological development. He opened the schools for the children of Mahars, Dheds, Mangs, Mali, Chamars and

other boys. His three Brahmins friends helped to establish his Satya Shodhak Samaj. The aims and objectives of the Samaj were as under:

- Rescue the down-trodden classes from unjust and inhuman Hindu scripture.
- There was no need for intermediary such as priests or a preceptor for prayers to God.
- Caste system from Hindu society should be abolished.
- Equal opportunity should be given to each other without caste, creed religion etc.
- All men are the children of God.
- Avoid idol-worship and caste system.

Jyotirao Phule wrote a book called 'Sarvajanic Satya Dharma.' In this book he criticised all Hindu superstitions and customs, rigid and irrational rites, rituals dogmas and ceremonies etc.

To him, caste of Hindu society is the main cause of unjust, inhuman, disharmony and ruin of the nation. In his views belief in one God, right conduct, equal rights, abolition of caste, equal treatment between men and women etc. are truth. Truth is the home of all things. Truth is the home of all types of religions. Truth is the pillars of all happiness. Eradication of caste system from the Hindu society is truth. The society would be constituted on the basis of liberty, equality and fraternity. The caste system should not be based on occupations. A Brahmin boy may not be meritorious and a Chamer boy may be meritorious and virtuous.

Mahatma Gandhi was the modern emancipator of caste system of Hindu society. In his writings in 'Young India' and 'Harijan' stressed on the problems of untouchability and its removal from its roots. To him, Bhagavad-Gita has never taught that a Chandal was in any inferior than a Brahmin. According to Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindu scripture like Upanishad, Bhagavat Gita, Smritis and other writings were not consistent with truth and Non-violence or other fundamental and universal principle of ethics. We are all the sons of same God. To him, there was only one Varna in India i.e. the Shudras. He desired that, all the Hindus voluntarily call themselves Shudras. Gandhi called them (untouchables) as 'Harijans' which literally meaning is son of the God. For the upliftment of Harijans he founded the "Harijan Sevak Sangh". To abolish the disparities between caste Hindus and untouchables was its main function. The Sangh is truly based on welfare of the society.

It was the credit of Dr. Ambedkar who struggled for his whole life against untouchables. He established All India Scheduled Caste Federation, people's Education Society, Indian Republican Party, demanded reservation of seats, separate electorates at the RTC. As a chief framer of Indian Constitution he has given constitutional safeguards for the upliftment of down-trodden classes.

CONCLUSION:

Anti-Caste movement is an ongoing process to uplift the exterior classes as well as eradication of social evil practices. The constitutional makers of India provided equal privileges without on the basis of caste, creed, religion etc. All social reformists have tried to abolish the rigidity of social barriers. Emancipation from all social evils practices is the ideology of anti-caste movement.

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