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Theorizing anticasteism: A Critical overview of the construction of Caste

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Abstract

In India, the caste system does not have a clear hierarchy because people can rise through political power, land ownership, or migration. Since the 1960s, Dalit and non-Brahman anti-caste movements have fought for the rights of Dalits. Based on B.R. Ambedkar's concept of graded inequality, Dalit historiography ought to be anti-caste. Caste deniers make use of the concept of institutional casteism, which is the subject of the article. Caste-based violence is the result of society's power structures, making it difficult to bring about justice.

Keywords: Casteism, Caste-based violence, anti-caste, anti-caste movements, rights of dalits

Introductions

The following essay starts out by considering casteism as a type of inferiorization and giving a clear definition of race as a disputed social group. It bases its analysis on B. R. Ambedkar's idea that caste is a form of "graded inequality" and views anti-casteism as an intellectual critique meant to expose the immoral practises of caste. The political-legal setting of the incomplete path toward establishing safeguards from caste discrimination in England serves as the backdrop for delving into the anti-casteism movement's conceptual underpinnings. It is highlighted that the particular religio-discursive element of "emergent vulnerability" is what leads to the recent creation of the cliché of "institutional casteism," which is employed as a defence by caste deniers against casteism allegations. Thus, a synthetic language of anti-colonialism usurps and inverts the protest language originally introduced by anti-racists. It is asserted that the failure of the UK to pass caste-related legislation is a result of widespread hypocrisy, a failure to admit caste prerogative, and the persistence of an antagonistic intellectual legacy, which is exemplified by the stark contrasts between Ambedkar as well as Gandhi in the caste-related discourse of Indian nationalism. According to Ambedkar, we can only find this broad solidarity if we're prepared to examine conventional wisdom and traditions. Unfortunately, it appears that while many individuals discuss this problem, very few actually wish to do anything about it. Every voice matter when it comes to the urgent need for institutional transformation to combat caste-based violence.

Discussion

Casteist texts

If a thin line of historical dominance is stretched to the ancient historical eras of the Hindu-evaded India, there will be predominant existence of Casteist verses which h were called as the law book of Hindus. Manu separates Hindus according to caste into four varnas. Hindus are not only divided into four varnas; he also assigns them grades. Manu prescribes rank and occupation in addition to giving privileges to swarnas and punishing shudras. Manu, the Creator of Law and the Creator of Hindu Civilization, established the Shudras' standing in Hindu society. Below are only a few of the many Manu Smriti Codes directed at Shudras. The ultimate creator Brahma created the Upper castes from his face, the Kshatriyas with his shoulder, the Vaishyas from his thighs, and the Shudras from his feet for the sake of humanity. (I-31 in Manu's code). A Shudra would not be to associate with a lady from a higher social level, and Manu regarded adultery between a Shudra and such a woman as a crime punishable by death. Manu's successors went far beyond him in terms of scholarship and knowledge acquisition, as evidenced by the harshness of their treatment of the Shudra

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who had studied the Veda. For instance, Katyayana stipulates that the king must split a Shudra's tongue in two and pour hot, molten lead into his ear if he overheard the Veda or dared to pronounce a Vedic term. Men and women really aren't born equal, according to Manu's code of law and the Brahmins' strict adherence to it. The caste system is the root of Ambedkar's criticism of Hinduism. A social system known as caste separates people into four major categories. The priests, or Brahmins, who are regarded by Hindu literature as being the most intelligent group, are at the summit of the pyramid. According to these scriptures, only Brahmins are entitled to education. The Kshatriyas, or the warrior family who serve in the armed forces and are rulers, are situated next to them. The Vaishyas are the third group. Their main occupations are farming, raising cattle, trading, and running businesses. The upper castes must be "served" by them. The Dalits, also known as "Untouchables," are the final group to be left out of the Brahmanicalvarna system. The upper castes view them as slaves since they are forced to bear the weight of the caste pyramid. Understand that I am referring to "varna" rather than "caste." They are different from one another. Varna is a division of the Brahmins, whereas class or jati refers to a person's place of birth. When I say "caste," I really mean "varna." Valmiki has traditionally worked as a sweeper and cleaner. Adherents are always responsible for clearing clogged septic tanks and sewer lines in urban areas. The three two times borne (Dvij) categories of Brahmin, Kshatriya, as well as Vaishya are separated from Shudras who made up lowest rung by the old Varna system. According to all ancient authorities, a person's caste is determined at birth that cannot be altered. Even every caste also has an occupation associated with it, and all castes are organised in a hierarchy. A Brahmin who committed rape or molestation was only punished with a fine (Manu Smṛti VIII.385). However, regardless of whether the deed was voluntary or not, a Shudra who engaged in sexual activity with a Brahmin lady would be put to death (Vasishtha Dharma Shastra 21.1). When a Brahmin disparaged a Shudra, he either paid a modest fine or nothing at all (Manu Smṛti VIII. 268). (Gautama Dharma Sutra XII.10). In contrast, a Shudra's tongue was to be amputated in the opposite situation (Manu Smṛti VIII. 270). Reasonable prayashchit (atonement) was required in the instance of a Dvij being killed by another Dvij. The prayashchit for murdering a Shudra was the same as that for murdering a frog, cat, dog, cobra, or owl.

Anti-caste Works

I think the phrase "Bahujan," which merely means "the majority of the people," highlights the fact that caste is not a "Dalit problem." The majority of people on the continent are caste-bound and under the control of "upper"-caste minorities, despite the fact that Dalits and Adivasis are among the most vulnerable groups in a caste society. The name "Bahujan" refers to the modern Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Shudra castes, which cross all boundaries of geography, ethnicity, and religion. Also on purpose is the substitution of the terms "Brahminism/Brahminical" for "Hinduism/Hindu" These are the proper name for the religion of ancient (and contemporary) India, which has the Varnashrama Dharma, a Brahmin-created institution, at its centre.

Critical Study of Anti-caste thinkers

The most obvious sign of the Dalit demonstrations in recent years stands out as blue flags. Be it during the sizable Dalit demonstrations that accompanied the Khairlanji slaughter in 2006, the Una floggings in the same year, the assassination of Dalit academic Rohith Vemula in Hyderabad, or even the Bhima-Koregaon battle bicentennial commemoration in a distant Maharashtra village early this year. Blue flags aren't simply used during protests; in July of last year, a group attempted to seize 12 acres of land which belonging to four Dalit people in the Gujarati village of Lavara. To ensure that the land was returned to its rightful owners, they placed a blue flag there. The reasoning behind it was that the colour blue, which is associated with the sky, stands for equality and the absence of prejudice. There are numerous ideas around this, but Raosaheb Kasbe, a former political science professor at the Savitribai Phule Pune University and an expert on Dalit hero B.R. Ambedkar and the Dalit movement, claims that there is no established history on why blue came to symbolise Dalit opposition. In a 2017 article titled Fabric-Rendered Identity: A Study of Dalit Representation in Pa. Ranjith's Attakathi, Madras, and Kabali that appeared in the journal Artha-Journal of Social Sciences, Ambedkar is credited with having established the blue Mahar's Flag as the Independent Labour Party's party flag. The majority of Maharashtra's Dalits are Mahars. In numerous villages and towns around the nation, you may find statues of Ambedkar clutching the Indian Constitution while donning a three-piece blue suit. For the Dalits, the suit and the colour blue have special resonance because historically, upper-caste persecution "found expression in sartorial supremacy," according to a Mint Lounge article from April of last year. Ambedkar's blue suit, according to BeenaPallical, national coordinator of the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights, was a key factor in the Dalit community's decision to adopt the blue flag. While Dalits have traditionally associated the colour blue with empowerment, there have also been occasions in which it has been used to socially exclude and discriminate against them. According to the publication Civil Society, Public Domain and Citizenship: Dialogues and Perceptions, edited by Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld, the Shiv Sena-BJP partnership in Maharashtra enforced a policy in 1995 that required Dalit children to wear blue uniforms to distinguish them from other children.

The word "anti-caste" is used in this article in the same sense that it is used by Gail Omvedt in Seeking Begumpura: The Social Vision of Anticaste Intellectuals. She views the "nonbrahman movement" and the "dalit movement" as the anti-caste movements. This article makes the case that Dalit genealogy should only be built on and motivated by a framework of thought that is categorically anti-caste. This paper argues that in order to create a radical Dalit chronology of Bengal, nationalist and Marxist historiographies that symptomatically brushed over Dalit history in order to create Bengal's intellectual history must be critically rejected.

Anti-caste Thinkers in Bengal

The first Dalit thinker in colonial Bengal was Harichand Thakur. He was born in the East Bengal village of Safaldanga in 1812 to a family of Chandals, who later adopted the name Namasudra. The radicalism of Harichand showed up in a variety of contexts, including politics,

religion, the economics, and education. Though he was critical of Buddhism, Vaishnavism, and Vedantism, it can be said that he combined Vaishnavism with Shaktism to create Matuaism, his own religion. According to Harichand, Buddhism, while once popular among the general public due to its anti-caste conviction, degraded as a result of its emphasis on an austere existence away from the family, or grihodbhormo (literally, family-centric religion). The theology of Harichand was a spiritual discourse organised around the material needs of the Dalit underclass. Therefore, it is appropriate to view his famous adage "work with hands, proclaim God's praise with lips" as a warning against metaphysical, non-materialistic, and abstract theologies. This is how, to use a phrase from Karl Marx, the Matua religion of Harichand Thakur avoided becoming an "opium of the people." According to Marx, eliminating religion as the cause of the people's false happiness is a requirement for their genuine happiness. Contrary to Brahmanical religions, Harichand's religion did not pledge illusive bliss. It did not demand that followers focus on their future bliss while experiencing hardship in the present. Harichand encouraged the Dalits to organise, take part in, and be political leaders because he believed that administrative and political power was essential for their freedom. He desired that they develop into "raj-shokti." Harichand underlined that the Namasudras were not the only people who were intended for the Matua faith. It preached communal meals for all Dalits and welcomed even Muslims. It intended to become a Bahujan religion in this way. Guruchand, arguably Harichand's son, is credited with applying Matuaism substantially to the fight of Dalit freedom. Due to the fact that education was a tool for emancipation and empowerment, Guruchand placed the highest significance on the education of Dalits. He established the first Dalit school in his own home in Orakandi, eastern Bengal, in 1880, following his father's advice concerning the importance of schooling for the Dalits (around 30 years after the Phules did so in Maharashtra). Raghunath Sarkar of Dhaka, a Dalit, came over and offered to educate because no teacher was readily accessible because the Brahmins would not instruct the "lower castes."

Analysis of caste-based violence

In India, the caste system, which ranks people according to their occupation and ancestry, is a historical system of strict social classification. It is a complicated social grouping system based on ceremonial purity in which a person is considered to belong to the caste they were born into and stays there until they die, despite the fact that the caste's specific ranking may change over time and between locations. The use of physical violence, economic boycotts, and the threat of social exclusion maintain caste distinctions in housing, marriage, employment, and general social contact. To grant Dalits numerous privileges, the state has enacted a number of laws and constitutional provisions, including exclusions (quotas) from government employment, positions, and bodies. However, very few individuals have benefited from the legislation, and welfare programs and development initiatives designed to improve Dalit economic conditions have largely had little effect. According to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, "untouchability," or the imposition of social disadvantages on individuals due to their birth in particular castes, was being practiced across the nation in numerous forms. The prevalence of

"untouchability" practices was also brought to the attention of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Dalits are expected to offer free types of assistance during seasons of memorial service, marriage, or other town event as a feature of nearby custom. Even during the Marama village festival in the state of Karnataka, Dalits are coerced by caste Hindus to slaughter buffaloes and consume their blood. Then, at that point, sans their chappals, they should run into the town fields and blend the backbone with cooked rice. "Communities where Dalits are a minority uphold "untouchability" even more strictly. Social boycotts and the aforementioned acts of retaliatory violence frequently respond to individual attempts to undermine the natural cohesion.

Anti-caste movements

The Dalit community in India has long struggled for their fundamental rights, such as equality, dignity, and respect. However, many Dalits have turned to militant and violent means of defending their rights due to the government's neglect and established political parties. The Naxalite movement, which began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, is just one example of the political groups and movements that have resulted from this.

In the West Bengali village of Naxalbari, the Naxalite movement was born out of ideological disagreements between the Communist Party of India and a breakaway Maoist group. The Naxalites fought against exploitative landowners and other class enemies because they believed that armed conflict was the only way to effect change. Land seizures, targeted killings, kidnappings, bombings, and arson were all carried out by them, harming innocent civilians and forcing landlords and police informers to flee their homes. International law is flagrantly broken by these actions.

Dalit issues have not been effectively addressed by the government's top-down hawkish approach. Independent Dalit leadership and movements like the Dalit Panthers have emerged as a result of the established political parties' inability to win over Dalits at the local level. These developments challenge the current power designs and supporter for the freedoms of the lower positions and in reverse ranks.

While some Dalit initiative has supported for taking care of their issues inside a protected framework, numerous rustic Dalits accept that assailing battle is the best way to address their complaints. The main driver of this conviction lies in the monetary strength of upper-station individuals and the dependence of Dalits on them for their business. As a consequence of this, Dalit girls and women are frequently regarded as the possession of upper-caste individuals and are the targets of sexual exploitation and violence.

Theorising Anticasteism

Caste hasn't proven to be an entirely strict system for individuals in the four main varnas. Those lower rankings are able to ascend up the local hierarchies through the appropriation of political power, the purchase of land, or migration to other regions, just as the greater ritual status of Upper castes doesn't really translate directly into political or economic supremacy. These tactics, together with India's quota or reservation policies, have helped the Shudras, or so-called backward castes, in particular. Backward castes are referred to as "other backward classes" (OBCs) in

administrative jargon and are individuals who, while having a ceremonial rank and occupational position above "untouchables," yet experience social and economic deprivation. Contrary to popular belief, which holds that OBCs are members of the underprivileged segments of Hindu society, very few organizations in Indian Independence have made advancement on a par with the OBCs. It should be mentioned, nonetheless, that the classification of OBCs poses some issues. According to one author, OBCs cover a structural and cultural spectrum so broad as to be essentially meaningless. The dominant, land-owning peasant castes, which control the Vaishyas and Brahmins in the area, are at one extreme, while the poor, nearly Untouchable communities that live just below the pollution line are at the other. Numerous artisanal and service castes are also included in this group.

Conclusion

The power structures of society are the source of caste-based violence. Dalit women and girls, who are seen as property by many Dalit men, are particularly vulnerable to violence due to the economic dominance of upper-caste people and their reliance on them for survival. They have this mindset because they work in upper-caste homes, businesses, schools, or farms, where they are frequently exploited and sexually assaulted due to their perceived lack of respect.

During the British colonial era, numerous Bengali Dalit communities formed and mobilized, producing a substantial body of work that challenged Marxist, Brahmin/Brahmanical, and nationalist, and urban historians' dominant narratives. The authority of Bengal has disregarded the commitments of Dalits and standing subalterns to the locale's reconstruction endeavors.

Self-sensitization and knowledge development must be taken seriously by individuals in order to combat caste-based violence and prejudice. By pooling resources with groups and activists working on these issues, people can help the movement grow and stay alive. In any case, while numerous people examine the issue, scarcely any make a substantial move to battle it.

Caste-based violence and discrimination must be addressed immediately through institutional transformation. In this movement, every voice matters, and it is essential to educate future generations with well-informed viewpoints in order to affect the much-needed shift in public perception.

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