

CASTE/CLASS CONFLICTS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN SCENARIO

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Abstract

The present paper deals with how Cast/class conflicts in India are raised out of post modernism. There is a comparative study on caste/class conflicts between modernism and post modernism in literature. Post modernism has become a fashionable topic of discussion among a section of the intellectuals in India. A cultural progressive movement today decides caste positions and its conflicts in post modern literature. It becomes a vague and obscure today. It reflects Existentialism. The ideas of post modernism is upheld and nurtured by European renaissance and Enlightenment – ideas of humanism, rationality, and centrality of reason, scientific temper, objectivity, onward and upward progress of history.

Modernists believed in progress and constant widening of the horizons of innovation. They claimed that life is changing, the world is changing, ideas are changing, many technological revolutions have occurred which is known as Modern ideology of renaissance and enlightenment. There is a social inequality in democratic India. It is based on caste. Caste inequality is modified. It is stepped into class inequality. Economic status give rises to class conflicts. It is movement of caste into class conflicts. It is result of individual freedom out of post modernism and globalization. In the process liberty means eternal liberty to do, think, and express anything and every thing.

Excessive freedom leads to anarchy in any system that probes into conflicts like caste and class. The progress of post modernism is the transformation of caste into class which is based on progress and profit. It becomes a watch word of corporate culture today. The paper brings out that the fundamental and philosophical ideology behind conflicts is to be changed.

The present paper traces light on what is caste? Origin of caste, Caste and its conflicts, what is class? Class and its conflicts, difference between caste and class, interrelated nature of caste/class and position of caste in the contemporary Indian context and how post modernism defines caste/class today.

No country can be easily indentified and marked like India in the world. The easy mark of India is caste. No other aspects can draw one's attention towards great country like India.

Caste was a social stigma in India as 'A' was a religious stigma in puritan society in New England. It is a rigid social evil in Indian society. It is deeply rooted in the minds of the people. It is supported by the sacred texts of Hindus. Hindu religion itself justifies and demonstrates in attempting the upper class to suppress the lower class. Indian society is divided into different sections on the basis of different castes. It is believed that Hinduism began about three millennium B.C. During this period the Aryans of Persia (Iran) and brought with them their class system. I class of Aryans treated dark skinned Dravidians as IV class and slaves. To justify hierarchy, the Brahmin priests enforced their class divisions when they wrote their religious book 'VEDAS' in Indian society as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, farmer's, craftsmen and businessmen. The major castes broadly classified as I Brahmins, II Kshatriyas, III Shudras and IV untouchables.

'Conflict' is a psychological term that deals with a situation in which people or group of people or countries are involved in a various disagreement is raised and of complexities. The complex which is created in the minds of the Aryans who are white skinned. They think that they are superior to the rest. This superiority complex enforced, created and imposed inferiority complex in the lower caste people in India. They are black skinned and they are called dirty people. As 'Bakha' the untouchable sweeper boy in the novel Untouchable by Mulk Raj Anand says to his father "They think we are mere dirt because we clean their dirt". The superiority complex of white skinned, exploited and humiliated the dirty people as they are black and having no privileges in the social system. This over ill-treatment and humiliation leads disagreement. Thus social conflicts are created in Indian society. The conflict involves inequality, injustice, ill-treatment of the upper caste people over lower caste people. It becomes a religious complex for religion itself supporting caste system and widens its conflicts out of different levels of complexes in the Indian society.

Karl marks, the founder of the conflict theory believed that the rich used social institutions to keep the lower classes suppressed. The present day caste system is the product of the Aryans sense of racial superiority and become ingrained in the beliefs of Hinduism is that of Karma. Karma is the doctrine that holds that the fate of a person has been determined by the deeds of the past life. The inability to escape from caste is supported by the belief in Karma with that of Dharma. Dharma is the moral code or duty that each caste has. It is the concept of dharma that maintains that the correct behavior for a warrior is not necessarily the correct behavior for a priest.

The role of dharma in the caste system can be exhibited by punishments. In ancient times the punishment for crimes was adjusted by caste. A thief who was a Brahmin was punished eight times severely as a Shudra thief. To be good Hindu one supposed to fallow their karma and dharma and by doing this it is impossible to escape their position on life.

The untouchables are the lowest of the Indian groups. Originally they had the darkest skin and were suspected of being pure Dravidian. Today they are the people born into worst type of poverty often the untouchable life in isolated villages outside the towns and are required to use their own temples and wells. Because of their station in life they are required to be extremely

careful in avoiding “polluting” members of the other castes by any sort of physical contact or sometimes even sight.

The modern industrial society of India has begun its reforms, the first of which has been altering the concept of the untouchables by abolishing it in a separate clause in Indian constitution. Although this has helped the situation a little, the problem of caste prejudice still exists. To escape the caste system many Indians of today as well as in the past have converted to Christianity. Unlike the doctrines of Hindus, those of Christianity hold that all men are equal. Though those Indians have escaped the caste system within their religion they still have not escaped the discrimination of their society.

Lohia recognized that caste, more than class was the huge stumbling block to India’s progress. Lohia believed that India suffered reverses throughout her history because people had viewed themselves as members of a caste rather than citizens of a country. Caste, as Lohia put it was congealed class. Class was mobile caste. As such, the country was deprived of fresh ideas, because of the narrowness and stultification of thought at the top which was composed mainly of the upper castes, Brahmins and banyans and tight compartmentalization even there the former dominant in the intellectual arena ended latter in the business. A proponent of affirmative action composed it to turning the earth to foster a better crop, urging the upper castes as he put it “to voluntarily serve as the soil forever castes to flourish and grow”. So the country would get profit from a broader spectrum of talent and ideas.

In Lohia’s words “Caste restricts opportunity. Restricted opportunity constricts ability. Constricted ability further restricts opportunity. Where caste prevails, opportunity and ability are restricted to ever narrowing circles of the people. To eliminate caste, his aphoristic prescription ‘Roti and Betti’ that is people would have to break caste barriers together (roti) and be willing to give their girls to boys from other castes (betti). Inter caste marriage and its result is found today India.

When revolution is taken place in education untouchable letters in India are being liberated and universalization of education is recommended. Most of all castes people started getting education and job in different sectors today. It modifies the economic status to different castes of people. The move from caste is changed itself in its form and position. Gradually economic insecurity is changed instantly. People of all strata of Indian society begin to stepping to new state of life. There is a social and psychological movement towards class and class to caste. In the wider sense the consciousness of different caste of people is modified. Today in the context of globalization caste works even in the civilized minds. Hence, Socio-Psychological movement in caste is being under process in Indian minds.

Ram Manohara Lohia aptly said in this context that caste, English language and power are very important for the progress of the country. But if any caste/class of society has any two of the three aspects, he will certainly become an exploiter. Any two aspects in any hand is a tool of exploitation. The caste which is exploited and humiliated for years, if it gets any of the above two out three, he will definitely become class and that class begins to exploit in Indian system. The very education and civilization of man is destroyer and preserver of class and caste system in India today.

On the one hand globalization today does away caste system and its conflicts and on the other hand it consciously and widely increases more conflicts than before. Even the political power can create and establish caste conflicts and destroys caste and class conflicts. Because it is a movement of changes from one to another. In the arena of global village, there should not be any room for caste conflicts but preserves because global market today stands on excellence and

efficiency but no preference for humanity. But when it gives opportunities for only efficient and excellence no other low caste people immediately compete and get the chance to work. Then gradually and deliberately the multinational companies with the privatization do away all inefficient people and prefers only highly so called intellectual caste and class to work with. Hence naturally class goes back to caste conflicts.

There is a static position in separating caste from class. When class is static there is no question of caste. Caste becomes class when his earning increases in the progressive atmosphere of society. If there are no changes in the income and profit, caste becomes increasing to get good economic position in the social status. Though there is a shift from class to caste and caste to class conflicts remain as it is in the positions. The movement from caste to class and class to caste happened in Rome at different levels. Caste was the strength and wealth for Romans. They wanted to establish equality among all class of people. Caste became a tool to prevent internal conflicts and protect wealth of the land.

There are constant variations in the changes of the positions in caste itself and it is identified with earning only. The conflicts and competitions started with in the caste to meet the end. There is a revolution in the Indian society to search for integrated society. There is a conflict even in the upgrading caste/class system. There is an external [civilization] and internal conflicts [caste/class] today organized and technical ability provides and binds both internal and external conflicts in the society. There is a relationship between caste and class conflict in any society with the internal and external forces. These cannot be separated. As monkey swings from one branch to another, so caste swings from class to caste. No civilizations in the history witness the complete development of any country. But either as a part or as a whole development in the country is possible. There is a forward movement of caste/class and reversed movement of caste/class. It seems as the process of progressivism.

The intensity of untouchability is enormously decreased and almost it is removed when the constitutional privileges are given with universalization of education and economic freedom. Interchange of caste into class and class into caste is a fact. Many a times they become strength of the country. When class becomes inactive, caste dominates and caste intern become inactive in the place of class. Suppose if person wants to change his caste always depends on his inactiveness and statues of his caste. Class occupies the place of caste when it has become a movement. Hence there is a forward movement of caste and class and reverse moment of class and caste is the fact.

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