



Research Paper

Casteism And Communalism in Indian Federal System

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ABSTRACT

"When we choose a mobile network, do we check whether Airtel or Vodafone belong to a particular caste? No, we simply choose the provider based on the best value or service. Then why do we vote for somebody simply because he belongs to the same caste as us?"

-Chetan Bhagat

We are proud to be the largest democracy in the world. For more than sixty-five years we have witnessed the conduct of successful elections, peaceful changes of government at the Centre and in the States, people exercising freedom of expression, movement and religion. India has also been developing and transforming economically and socially. At the same time we, quite often, listen complains about prevalent inequalities, injustice or non-fulfillment of expectations of certain sections of the society. These people do not feel themselves participative in the democratic process. You may ask why it is so. You have already read in earlier unit that democracy means 'government of the people, for the people, and by the people'. It means democracy is not limited to just a process of election, but also fulfilling social and economic aspirations of the people. In India we keep on debating these various aspects of democracy and its achievements and challenges. Indian democracy has also been struggling with regionalism which is primarily an outcome of regional disparities and imbalances in development. We all know that India is a plural country with diversities of religions, languages, communities, tribes and cultures. A number of cultural and linguistic groups are concentrated in certain territorial segments. Although development process in the country aims at growth and development of all regions, the regional disparities and imbalances in terms of differences in per capita income, literacy rates, state of health and educational infrastructure and services, population situation and levels of industrial and agricultural development continue to exist. Existence and continuation of regional inequalities both among States and within a State create feeling of neglect, deprivation and discrimination. This situation has led to regionalism manifested in demands for creation of new states, autonomy or more powers to States or even secession from the country.

Keywords: *The feeling of caste prestige, Cenobium, Lack of scientific worldview, Lack of urbanization.*

Casteism:

The Indian social system is caste bound. Though the forms of caste oppression have Under gone changes, the content of caste domination, subordination, oppression and Exploitation remains the same. A number of castes are placed in subordination and super ordination to each other in relation to the status of Brahmins. Stratification based on Caste system not simply implies division of labour in Hindu society but this pattern of division in Hindu society solidified its base and members of a particular caste identified themselves only with their own caste. Thus narrow caste loyalties developed the feeling of superiority / inferiority among the members of a particular caste and simultaneously undermined the interests of other castes and ultimately led to the ignorance of human values and social welfare.

Characteristics of Casteism

The following characteristics may be deduced from the definitions cited above:

- Casteism is the extreme caste or sub caste loyalty in the most irrational form. It Completely undermines the interests of other caste or sub caste groups.
- Casteism ignores human values and social welfare.
- Casteism acquires a new lease of life through the provisions of constitutional Safe guard to the deprived sections of the population.

- d) Casteism contrasts with the aim of bringing about a casteless society. Hence, it is anti-democratic.
- e) Casteism is contrary to the spirit of our Constitution.
- f) Casteism adversely affects the outcome of elections.
- g) Casteism hinders the process of national integration.

Causes of Casteism

There are multiple causes of casteism:

1. **The feeling of caste prestige:** The feeling of superiority / inferiority by the members of a caste over the rest may be construed as an important cause of casteism. The Hindu society is divided into many castes on the basis of super ordination and subordination. The members of any caste want to enhance the prestige of their own caste group. Therefore, they Endeavour to stabilize the position of their own caste, which ultimately results in casteism.
2. **Cenobium:** The practice of caste endogamy, which proclaims that a person can marry only within her/his caste, has been responsible for the emergence of the feeling of casteism. By restricting the circle of marriage to one's own caste, people have developed different degrees of social distance within and outside their own caste.
3. **Lack of scientific worldview:** Though science and technology have advanced in India, we have not been able to develop scientific worldview in our practices. A nation becomes stronger based on its scientific and technological outlook, not on the basis of superstition, orthodoxy and obscurantism propagated by casteism.
4. **Lack of urbanization:** Urbanization, and to a lesser extent industrialization, emerged in colonial India. Even after India's independence, the mode of production hardly changed. The ruling class in India has used casteism for its political mileage. The sluggish pace of industrialization has resulted in the continuity of caste feeling in the Indian psyche.

Characteristics of Communalism:

- a) Communalism is an ideological concept,
- b) It is a complex process,
- c) It has a broader base which encompasses social, economic and political aspects for its manifestation.
- d) It causes rivalry, violence and tension among masses,
- e) It is used by the higher class people and elites as an instrument for division and exploitation of the communal identities of the poorer sections of their co-religionists.
- f) Communalism is simply engineered by opportunistic political and economic interest of contending groups and factions within a political party or by political parties.
- g) It strikes at the roots of democracy, secularism and national integration.
- h) Its effects are disastrous.

Causes of Communalism:

There are a number of causes which are responsible for the prevalence of communalism. Some of two important causes of communalism are discussed below.

1. **Tendency of the Minorities:** The Muslims fail to be intermingled in the national mainstream. Most of them do not participate in the secular nationalistic politics and insist on maintaining tor separate identity the elite among the Muslims have failed to generate the appropriate national ethos.
2. **Orthodoxy and Obscurantism:** The orthodox members of minorities feel that they have a distinct entity with their own cultural pattern, personal laws and thought. There are strong elements of conservatism and fundamentalism among the Muslims. Such feeling has prevented them from accepting the concept of secularism and religious tolerance.
3. **Design of the Leaders:** Communalism has flourished in India because the communalist leaders of both Hindu and Muslim communities desire to flourish it in the interest of their communities. The demand for separate electorate and the organization of Muslim league were the practical manifestations of this line of thought. The British rule which produced the divide and rule policy, separate electorate on the basis of religion strengthened the basis of communalism in India Ultimately the partition of the country into India and Pakistan provided further an antagonistic feeling towards each other.
4. **Weak Economic Status:** A majority of Muslims in India has failed to adopt the scientific and technological education. Due to their educational backwardness, they have not been represented sufficiently in the public service, industry and trade etc. This causes the feeling of relative

deprivation and such feelings contain the seeds of communalism.

5. **Geographical Causes:** The territorial settlement of different religious groups especially Hindus Muslims and Christians causes in them wide variation in the mode of life, social standards and belief system. Most of these patterns are contradictory and this may cause communal tension.
6. **Historical Causes:** The Muslims, all over the subcontinent, are converts from Hinduism, which was facilitated due to the caste-hate relations and under the compulsions of Muslim rulers. The problems of social segregation, illiteracy and poverty that had set apart the low caste people remain unresolved for them, as the foreign elite that rubbed never shared power with them. Their work ended with the conversion of the Indians and the converts began by imitating the masters in thought, speech and dress. It caused their alienation. Gradually, elements of communalism entered in the Muslim community. The separatist elements in the Muslim community, from the very start of the national resurgence had discouraged others of their community, from associating themselves with it. As a result Muslim league was formed which demanded partition of the country.
7. **Social Causes:** Cultural similarity is a powerful factor in fostering amicable relations between any two social groups. But the social institutions, customs and practices of Hindus and Muslims are so divergent that they think themselves to be two distinct communities.
8. **Psychological Causes:** Psychological factors play an important role in the development of communalism. The Hindus think that the Muslims are fanatics and fundamentalists. They also believe that Muslims are unpatriotic. On the contrary, the Muslims feel that they are being treated as second rate citizens in India and their religious beliefs and practices are inferior. These feelings lead to communal ill-feeling.
9. **Provocation of Enemy Countries:** Some foreign countries try to destabilize our country by setting one community against the other through their agents. Pakistan has played a role in fostering communal feeling among the Muslims of our country. Pakistan has been encouraging and promoting communal riots by instigating the militant sections of Indian Muslim community. Kashmir youths are trained by Pakistan to destabilize India's internal security by spreading communal venom.
10. **Negative Impact of Mass Media:** The messages relating to communal tension or riot in any part of the country spread through the mass media. This results in further tension and riots between two rival religious groups.

Suggestions for the Eradication of Communalism:

The following measures may be taken for the eradication of communalism.

1. **Abolition of Communal Parties:** All the political parties which thrive on religious loyalties should be banned or abolished by the government. Even non-political cultural organizations should always be kept under constant vigil so that they cannot preach communalism.
2. **Transmission of the Past Heritage:** Feelings of nationalism should be inculcated in the minds of people by reminding them about the glorious moments of history in Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were combined to safeguard the interest of the country.
3. **Public Opinion:** Efforts should be made through mass media for changing the attitude of people towards other communities. People must be aware of the evils of the communalism.
4. **Inter-religious Marriage:** Youth organizations and other types of associations should be formed in every locality to give opportunity to people of different communities to come closer and know each other. This may help them to practice inter-religious marriages which will lessen the social distance among the members of different religious groups.

Conclusion:

The most detrimental and inhuman example of the prevailing caste system is the practice of untouchability which is continuing in different covert and overt ways in spite of the constitutional ban imposed on it. The Dalits still bear the brunt of discrimination and deprivation. This has led to segregation of so called low castes, depriving them of education and other social benefits.

The second example relates to politicization of caste system. Casteism has become notorious as a strategy of exploitation of caste consciousness for narrow political gains. The caste system acts against the roots of democracy. Communalism: It disrupts quite often the smooth process of co-existence in a multi-religious Indian society. Communal riots happening in the country since independence have been dangerous for peace order and social harmony. Secondly the misuse of religion by fundamentalist people during elections and even in other situations has always been proved to be counter-productive.

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