

An overview of Varna system in India

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Abstract:

The Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras are the four varnas that make up society according to the Dharma-shastras. People who are expelled from this system because of their horrible sins are regarded as outcasts (untouchables) and as existing outside of the varna system. Hindu society is built on the Varna system. It is also a component of one's identity and has given rise to a number of caste and class disputes. Objectives of the paper are as followed, To understand the varna system in India, To know the theoretical context in connection to varna system and To understand the Annihilation of Caste with the perception of Dr Ambedkar. In conclusion, the primordial state of the aborigines would continue to be justifiable if Hindus lacked any sense of duty. Ambedkar contends that shudras are not entitled to the bodily, political, or moral liberties that are essential for self-preservation because of the Varna system, which was created to safeguard people.

Key Words: Varna System, Theories on Varnas, Annihilation of Caste

Introduction

The concept of varna serves as the cornerstone of the Hindu social order. In addition to being about the way in which society is structured, it has evolved into a component of a man's identity. The caste and class battle that is ongoing in India may be traced back to the Varna system. Therefore, it is essential to be aware of where it originated. The search for the truth is an essential precondition for the study of history, just as it is for any other field of academic inquiry. Secondary sources, such as books, journals, and websites, were used to compile the information that is presented in this page. The purpose of writing the research paper was to achieve the goals of the study as well as to conceptualise the idea.

Objectives of the paper

1. To understand the varna system in India
2. To know the theoretical context in connection to varna system
3. To understand the Annihilation Of Caste with the perception of Dr Ambedkar

Methodology

The paper is based on secondary source from books, journals, websites etc. The research paper constructed to fulfil the objectives of the paper in an appropriate and conceptualization the concept.

Conceptualization of Varna System

Varna refers to any of India's four traditional social classes, also known as vara in Sanskrit. Despite the fact that the word "varna" literally means "colour" in Sanskrit, the idea that class distinctions were originally based on differences in skin pigmentation between an alleged group of lighter-skinned invaders known as "Aryans" and the darker indigenous people of ancient India has been debunked since the mid-twentieth century. The concept of "colour" was most likely a classification technique. The Yajurveda, a Vedic text, is divided into two groups of works, White and Black, demonstrating how frequently colours were used as classifiers.

The Rigveda, India's oldest surviving literature, features a hymn describing how the primaeval person's mouth, arms, thighs, and feet liberated the Brahman (priest), Kshatriya (noble), Vaishya, and Shudra (servant) at creation (purusha). The males of the first three varnas are "twice-born" (dvija): after the upanayana ceremony, they are initiated into manhood and are free to study the Vedas, the ancient Hindu texts. The Shudra spend their entire lives helping the other three. The Vaishya, on the other hand, are commoners, grazers, and cultivators in contrast to the ruling classes, notably the secular Kshatriya, or lords, and the sacerdotal Brahmins. Brahmins and Kshatriyas differ in that the former are priests and the latter have actual dominion. In contrast to caste, which promotes heredity over function, the older idea focuses on the roles of the classes rather than hereditary membership.

Theoretical background of Varna System

Western Theory: Varnas emerged around 1500 BC, when the Aryans came to India. This theory held that the native Dashud inhabitants of the subcontinent were at war with the Aryans. Dark-skinned dashuds were held as slaves by the Aryans when they conquered India (varna is a racial term). The fourth varna caste, the Shudras, descended from the Dashuds. Rajayana (later Kshatriyas), Brahmins, and Vaishyas were the three main groups of Aryans. Ksatriya iti kseeyate traayate. These people maintained the peace and safeguarded the nation. niyati brahman iti brahmin Brahmins were believers and teachers of spirituality. Vaishya is defined by visati iti vaisya. These people include entrepreneurs, traders, and farmers. Division of labour was the concept. The indigenous were forced into servitude as the Aryans conquered more territory in order to benefit the three classes, known as the Shudras. Aryans had pale skin, while Shudras had black skin. Caste outcasts with dark skin. Given that the

word "varna" means "colour," the caste system was based on skin tone. This idea holds that Aryans forced Dravidians into southern India. Some contest this idea, arguing that by splitting Indians into Dravidians and Aryans, it compromises our nation's integrity. The "truth" that Aryans and Dravidians symbolise north and south Indian origin may be false because all Indians share a genetic connection. Other detractors of this theory contend that cults, not race, were to blame for the violent conflict between Aryans and Dashuds. According to Hindu literature, Shudras are not born into servitude. It is possible that Shudras were banned from Aryan religious ceremonies because of social and political hostility rather than racism.

Brahmanical Theory: Varna receives heavenly approbation in brahmanism. Four socioeconomic strata are mentioned in the Purusha Sukta. Rigveda 10.90, known as the Purusha Sukta, is devoted to the "Cosmic Being." Brahmana is thought to have come from the purusha's lips, Kshatriya from his arms, and vaishya from his thighs, the world spirit or primordial giant who represents the ideal "Man" or "Man". Shudra got to his feet. The Varna organs were arranged in descending order, which created the hierarchy. This theory was considered to be the Manu, and it received religious penalties akin to the existing legal penalties.

Varna, according to the Bhagavad Gita, was determined by karma and was not inherited. According to Krishna, "I constructed the fourfold order based on guna and action" (karma), as stated in the Gita. This statement suggests a division based on action and quality. The Upanishads support Varna's way of thinking. The Chandogya Upanishad states that a man's Varna is retaliation for prior transgressions. According to the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata, a person might achieve a higher Varna by doing good deeds and upholding Varna, Ashram, and Moksh. Detractors of the purusha theory contest the inherent superiority of the Brahman and the divine basis of the birth-based classes. The fact that the varnas were born from various areas of the same purusha demonstrates how interdependent they are. The Purusha-born thigh and foot support the weight of the body. They serve as the foundation of the body. Varnas are set up to unite society rather than to separate it. According to academics like Max Muller, this passage was added at a later date.

theoretical understandings that Although the authors of the traditional Hindu laws (Dharma-shastras) frequently treat jatis as social classes and occasionally attempt to explain jatis as the offspring of alliances between the four varnas (Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras) and their descendants, a clear distinction should be drawn between jati as a small regional endogamous group and jati as a social class. Jati is a recognised varna abnormality.

ANNIHILATION OF CASTE

The premise that social change must come before political and religious reform is shown in Annihilation of Caste by examples of upper-caste Hindus oppressing India's untouchable minority. When talking about social reform, Ambedkar underlines the need for Hindu society to be reconstructed, for the caste system to be abolished, and for Hindus to understand that one caste is not appropriate to control another caste. In this well-known

speech, Ambedkar exposes the socialists' error. Despite the fact that he is not anti-socialist, he believes that the Indian proletariat would never unite to support economic change and spark a socialist revolution. Since the caste system will remain in place until there is a sense of equality, fraternity, and justice, they won't be able to agree on any topic.

Speaking of freedom, he claims that the division of labour is not based on personal desire and that caste has become a monster that causes unemployment by blocking job categorization. The concept of equality is viewed as a myth in Hindu society, where there is no such thing as morality or reason, and disagreement is punished by excommunication. The book contends that Hindus lack compassion consciousness and only have caste consciousness, which has led to Hinduism's history of loss and disaster.

Dr. Ambedkar used a variety of strategies throughout his life to end caste and, more especially, to free the Dalits from these oppressive social systems. In the political sector, he supported a separate electorate, party structure, and public policies like reservations. He also did not hesitate to cooperate with the in charge at the moment, whether it was the British or the Congress, in order to accomplish his goals. With education as his major focus, he supported both state-led reforms (as indicated by the Hindu code bill) and grassroots social reforms.

Varna and the Hindu Marriages: In India, Nepal (the only other Hindu nation), and various cultures all over the world, it is taboo to marry outside of one's Varna. Marriage rules and social customs are described in Hindu literature. Women are seen as being spiritual and religious, hence their status should only ever rise. As a result, it is against the law for a woman to wed someone who is from the lower Varna; instead, she must choose someone from the high Varna or from her own Varna. When a woman marries someone of a lower Varna, it is known as a Pratilom marriage, which makes the woman an outcast and occasionally an untouchable. Anulom marriage occurs when a woman marries someone of a higher Varna. Such societal restrictions were imposed to protect all women and to stop the reproduction of Varna Sankars. Over time, the fundamental principles of the Varna Ashram have been flagrantly disregarded, and the number of unwanted children has increased. In the Mahabharata, Satyawati, a fisherwoman, was married by Bhishm's father, King Shantanu.

Varna and the Social Context: The Varna Vyavastha, which was first founded on "attributes" and "actions," is now focused on dynasty and hereditary privileges, leading to caste-based conflicts and the creation of social division. Later, vices like untouchability, social boycott, and politics based on reservations immobilised the strongest social structure in history. But social boycott and untouchability were not ideas in ancient times. In the Ramayana, Lord Ram requested assistance from the Guh tribe and asked Kewat to cross the river. In addition, he took the fruits that Sabari, a woman from a lower Varna, sent him out of loyalty and love. This implied that social boycotts and untouchability were later established into Indian society.

Discussion and Suggestions:

Caste conflicts in modern society are mostly a result of incorrect interpretations of the varna system. Whether the Varna system has acquired divine permission is up for debate and open to interpretation. The hierarchies that have been built in society over time have become deeply embedded in order to serve the interests of the ruling and powerful class. True, the upper class of Indian society backed the varna system, which gave rise to the caste system, as a basis for upholding order and exercising direct or indirect control over the community. However, because all of these answers are open to interpretation, the precise information of how the varna system came to be will remain a closely held secret. The best description of the Varna system is found in the Bhagwat Geeta, where Lord Krishna explains its purpose. It is so plainly clear that these varna systems were not based on organic divisions but rather on a person's desire for a particular karma determined by his guna. The word "Vri," which describes a person's occupation, is the ancestor of the word "Varna," which literally means "colour." Varna cares about a person's occupation or skin tone because of this. The root of the phrase "caste" or "Jati" is the word "Jana," which refers to birth. Consequently, birth has an impact on caste.

Conclusion

No amount of obligation has allowed a Hindu to escape his commitment to perpetuate caste, which has resulted in the aborigines' primitive state being justified. Ambedkar rejects Chaturvarna, stating that the Varna system, which was created to protect people, contradicts the supreme requirement of self-preservation by depriving shudras of physical (military freedom), political (against suffering), and moral (education) rights. Tryavarnas abuse the shudras (brahmins, kshatriyas, and vaishyas). Hindus who defend the caste system by stating that it occurs in all religions should be aware that each caste has religious support in Hinduism rather than being only a sociological construct. His impact to the creation of modern India may be larger than that of any other leader of his day more than sixty years later. He not only built the framework for a silent revolution, but he also played a critical role in the formation of India's Constitution, which defined the conditions for the world's largest democracy's development.

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