Understanding Social Inequality in Hindu Social Order: A sociological Analysis

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Social inequality and poverty are found almost in all societies in the world, although they are visible and manifest in some societies than in others. Social Inequality can be defined as the existence of unequal opportunities and reward for different social positions or statuses within a group or society. In other words it is based on individualistic differences, on the premise of differential value system in a prevanent society. Social inequality is closely related to social hierarchy and stratification. In short social hierarchy developed when inequality is ranked on a large scale and its followed by differential functional expectations it become social stratification at structural level.

The poverty describes an empirical reality, both globally and individual societies, but meaning of which is contested. What constitute poverty depends on how it is defined and measured. The main debates are centered on the material things and income. Poverty should be understood in absolute and relative terms. But the main discourse is that how social inequality is related with poverty and is there is positive relationship between social inequality and poverty? The relationship between poverty and inequality is neither clear nor direct. Poverty and social inequality both are analytical concept. This main objective of this paper will be to describe the how poverty increased the inequality in our society. This paper will be based on the secondary data.

Introduction

Human societies are not imagined in an egalitarian form, it varies individual to individual and group to group. The basic question comes in our mind that how inequality existed in our society, what are the sources of inequality and why it is accepted in some societies? If we want to explore the origin of these questions we have to trace the evolution of the society, because the roots of inequalities are lies in the structure of the society. Rousseau (1967:09) has mentioned that two kind of inequality always exist in on the earth one is made by nature and second is made by the society and even twins has also different kind of mental ability. Stolley (2005: 131) says that inequality is the degree of disparity of values resources distribution within the society. The concept is inequality is related with the stratification. Indian society is also stratified, which is based on caste and Indian society is a product of long and complex historical process. A number of events contributed to the formation of this process are Aryan `advent', the emergence of Indian Protestant religions-Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, the entry of non-Indic religions into the sub-continent as immigrant religions, the Muslim `conquests', western colonialism, anti-colonial freedom struggle and the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 on the eve of the British exit (Oommen 1998: 229-40).

Indian society is known as a multicultural, multi religion society in which a large number of speech communities and more than six hundred tribal communities are founded. But the unique feature of Indian Society is caste hierarchy legitimized through the sacred text. It is notable that after the independence the scenario of the Indian society being changed, because some positive discrimination of affirmative actions are implemented by of the Govt. of India. In the earlier time twice born castes enjoying the all rights and a large section of the society is considered as a disable to use the rights related to power, wealth religion etc.

Hindu Social Order Conceptual Framework

Here I am only focusing upon the Hindu Social order because it is stratified on the basis of caste system and its represent the 82 percent of the population of India according to 2011 Census. The origin of the Hindu Social order is traced by the sacred text of the Hindus which is known as the Rig-Veda. The Varna system is mentioned in the tenth chapter of this text. The Varna System is categorized into four groups. The first group is known as Brahmins which takes the higher position in the system

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The second is considered as Rajanya (later known as Kshatriyas), third is Vaishya and the Sudras comes at the bottom of the hierarchal structure of the Varna System. In this way according to text view there are only four varna. Yet, anthropologist and sociologist have included the fifth group–The Ashprishyas (literary translated as Untouchable) better known as the Dalits. (Kumar 2014). Further , the book view of Hindu Social Order not only describe the hierarchical position of each varna but also mention the various socio, economic , political and religious functions of each varna. However, in this scheme untouchables (Dalits) have been completely excluded from every sphere of life. In this manner the aforesaid Hindu Social Order allocates multiple rights and privileged status to Varnas located higher up in the hierarchy and denies the same to those who are out lower in the hierarchy or to those who are out of the pale of Varna scheme. It is this unequal distribution of rights and privileges in a social structure, which also bears religious legitimacy which produces extreme forms of inequality in Indian society.

Dalit and Hindu Social Order

The logical question then would be how are Dalit different from other groups? At the outset, an economically poor person is different from a Dalit because he (or the group of economically poor persons) may be deprived in economic spheres especially in terms of income necessary to participate in the economy. But he may not be necessarily deprived in social and cultural spheres, i.e. he may not face the same type of exclusion in the social and cultural life either in his neighborhood or in the society at large as Dalits face. We can argue that a poor may be economically or politically deprived or may be in both but he is generally not excluded from the social and cultural spheres. But an ex-untouchable is deprived in all spheres, the social, economic, political, educational and religious spheres. That is why Oommen has rightly pointed out: "If proletarian consciousness is essentially rooted in material deprivations. Dalit consciousness is a complex and compound consciousness which encapsulates deprivations stemming from inhuman conditions of material existence, powerlessness and ideological hegemony' (Oommen 1990:256).

Transformation in Hindu Social Order

Hindu Social Order is too complex and its passes through the four major phases of the transformation. First transitional trend from cumulative to dispersed dominance. In this stage 'wealth, power and all rights are centralized to the hand of twice born castes. These castes represent only the 15-20 percent of the Hindu population, but they occupy the near about the eight percent resources. But now there is an incipient trend toward the dispersal of political power to the Other Backward classes, scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This is the result of the democratization and adult franchise. There is another equation is observed that SCs, STs and OBCs got the political power but they did not enjoying the economic powers. New middle class emerged after the independence and some amount of the wealth dispersal in these categories. The policy of positive discrimination is the main reason behind the

emergence of the bourgeoisie in the SCs, STs and OBCs. Green revolution

The second major trend in social transformation manifests in the gradual movement from *hierarchy to equality* resulting in the decline of traditional collectivism and emergence of individualism. With the emergence of individualism the salience of traditional collectivities manifested through joint family, jati, village etc. are being relegated to the background. While there is no neat and tidy displacement of collectivism by individualism the birth of the Indian individual is clearly in evidence, because conventional wisdom upheld the view that individuals do not exist in Indian society unless one becomes an ascetic (Dumont 1970). The third important trend in social transformation in Hindu social order is the simultaneous *demands for equality and the assertion of collective identity*. The Indian constitution unambiguously assured equality and concomitantly social justice to all individuals irrespective of caste, creed or class. Initially, most of the traditionally disadvantaged groups believed that the implementation of constitutional promise will automatically follow and the maintenance of their group identity is irrelevant. At any rate, the stigma associated with their identity prompted them to abandon it and plumb for assimilation, as the process of sanskritization implied. But gradually it dawned on them that individual equality *per se* will not emancipate them and they need to re-invent dignity in their collective identity. The expressions such as Dalits and Adivasis in the place of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes clearly point to this trend.

While the Constitution does not clearly recognize the identities based on religion, caste, language and tribe, it does not completely overlook these identities either, if these are disadvantageous to the collectivities concerned. This ambiguity is evident both from constitutional provisions and administrative measures as exemplified in special rights conceded to religious minorities (e.g., upholding their civil codes), the policy of reservation in the case of SCs and STs, the recent steps taken to provide representation to OBCs and women in selected contexts, the special treatment extended to tribal communities and the linguistic reorganization of Indian states as administrative units. All these steps have inevitably given fillip to the relevant collectivities to assert their identity when it pays off.

The fourth transition is the movement from *plural society to pluralism* (Oommen 1997(a) : 259-71). Plural society as initially conceptualized by J.S. Furnivall (1948) alludes to an arrangement in which different social and cultural segmenk2ts uneasily co-exist interacting in the economic context but prohibiting legitimate transfusion of blood (intermarriages) or transmission of culture. This arrangement prevailed within the Hindu society through the operation of jajmani system for centuries. Latterly, the twice born castes interact with the OBCs and SCs both in the political and economic contexts but have very limited interaction in socio-cultural contexts. This description also fits in the mode of interaction which prevails between Hindus, particularly the upper castes, and those who profess the non-Indic religions in the rural areas.

Theoretical View of Inequality in Hindu Social Order

In the study of social inequality of Hindu Social Order sociologist and anthropologist used the indological, structural-functional and Marxian approaches. The indological approach focus on the text views in the explaining Hindu social order. The indological approach focus on certain ideals such as dharma, karma, belief in punarjanma and moksha, Hindu traditions, caste system, monogamy as a value and the like. This approach was used to understand the idealist life of the Hindu Social Order. On the basis of indological approach inequality is acceptable accordance to the sacred texts. This approach is only deals the dominancy of the twice born castes and The Shudras have no any right to enjoy the educational, political,economic, religious and various kind of rights. In the third quarter of the twenty century, the structural functional approach of Parsons and Merton was used in which integration was emphasized. The Merton's reference model was become popular in the study of social mobility and Srinivas is the dominant figure who advocating the structural functional approach. Srinivas used the concept of Sanskritization as like reference group. After the independence democratic set was accepted by us. Marxian approaches emerged after the land reform and wage legislation in India. This approach focuses the dialectical relation in the production process in the agrarian social structure. Reformative and Protestant was emerged during the last three decades and the impact of those on the life of oppressed segment has been studied. In these studies on social movements the theory of relative deprivation, value conflict theory and later subaltern approach has been used. All these approaches are not adequate to comprehended the complete reality of the structure. Later non Brahmin social reformers not only critique the Brahmanic Hindu society but developed their ideology and philosophy also. They raise questioned the historical writings and offered interpretation to the Brahmanic production of the knowledge. Their thought has provided the base to develop the formulation of non Brahmanical perspective. Fortunately, in the Maharashtra, Sharad Patil and Gail Omvedt have evolved the non-Brahmanical Perspective. The perspective from below emerged now for the explaining the inequality in Hindu Social Order and Ambedkar's writings are become the base of this approach.

Ambedkar's Strategies toward untouchability and the Caste System

Dr. Ambedkar has tried all kind of strategies during his life for eradicating caste and, more especially, for emancipating the Dalit from this oppressive social systems. In the political domain, he promoted separate electorate, party building and public policies like reservations – and did not hesitate to collaborate with the ruler of the time–be it the British or the Congress for having things done. In the social domain, he militated in favour of reforms at the grass root level – education being his first goal – and reforms by the state – as evident from the Hindu code bill. None of his strategies really succeeded during his life time: he could not have separate electorate introduced, he could not build a Dalit or a labour party, he could not have the Hindu code bill passed – and

he became a bitter man. As a result, conversion to Buddhism became the strategy of last resort. But it was not an exit option: Dr Ambedkar did not take refuge in religion, but looked equality and social reform in religion since Buddhism was likely to endow the Dalits with a new identity and a sense of dignity. More than sixty years later, his contribution to the making of modern India is possibly more substantial than that of any other leader of his generation. He has not only prepared the ground for a silent revolution, but has also played a key role in the drafting of the Constitution of India which has set the terms for the development of the world largest democracy.

Conclusion

The Hindu Social Order is the largest social structure on Indian and caste system is the unique feature of this structure. Caste system is based on birth and in which person is bounded by their customs and tradition. This system based on hierarchy and its shows the inequality based on birth. The human capabilities are totally denied in this structure. In this context a number of perspectives used to describe the inequality. Indological perspective believes in the supremacy of texts those are written by the Brahmins who believes in the hierarchical structure of the society. Marxian approach believed in the humanitarian interpretation of the structure but they only focused on the dialectical process in the production relation. Structural functional views show the functional integration and justify the caste based functional system. Subaltern perspective emerged attack on the writings on the upper castes and raises the voice of Dalits for their rights. In the present scenario inclusive policies are needed for the mitigate inequality in which Ambedkar's ideology is relevant who advocate the education for oppressed class to gain the equal platform in the social structure.

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