

ISSN 2349-4948

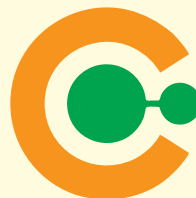
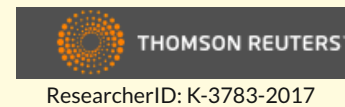
THE CONTEXT

International, Peer Reviewed & Indexed Journal of English Studies

Volume 11 Issue 1, January 2024

Chief Editor

Wamankumar Wani



Published by



Parbhani 431401. MS, India.

www.thecontext.in





THE CONTEXT

Quarterly e-journal of English Studies

International, Indexed & Peer Reviewed / Refereed Journal

Publication details and instructions for authors:

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Prominent Features of Indian Society

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ABSTRACT

As a true Feminist and the true Nationalist Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's work for the women depicts his nationalism. His feministic approach is based on the nation point of view. For him, no nation can be liberal, if their women are slaves. Therefore, to liberate India, the women are freed from bondage of life i.e. religious, social, and economic. He contemplated on the social, economic, political, caste and creed-based identity of women in Indian scenarios. He always tried to establish equality among the men and women in every general life. This research paper aims at the study of women empowerment with feministic point of view. India is a plural society. It is rightly characterized by its unity and diversity. An huge cohesion of cultures, religions and languages of the people belonging to different castes and communities has upheld its unity and coalition. Due to several foreign invasions, Mughal rule and the British rule, national unity and integrity have been maintained. It is this synthesis which has made India a unique mosaic of cultures. India fought against the British Raj as one unified entity. Foreign invasions, immigration from other parts of the world, and the existence of diverse languages, cultures and religions have made India's culture tolerant, on the one hand, and a unique continuing and living culture, with its specificity and historicity, on the other. Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity are the major religions. There is diversity not only in regard to racial compositions, religious and linguistic distinction and in patterns of living, life styles, land tenure systems, occupational pursuits, inheritance and succession law, and practices and rites. The form and proportions may vary but its essence is permanent.

Keywords: *Caste, Subaltern, Religion.*

FULL PAPER

The Indian social system stands on three systems the caste system, the joint family system, and the village community and the caste system appears to be the most significant feature of the Hindu Society. So, the Hindu society can be described as the caste society. Here we find a unique system of social classification based on birth.

The term 'Caste' is rooted in a Portuguese 'Casta' which means breed, race. In this way the caste refers to people belonging to the same breed or a race. A person is born in a caste, and he carries his status for life time. In comparison to west, it is only in India that multiple castes are found. The term 'caste' is defined differently by many scholars. According to G.S.Ghurye

"Castes are small and complete social worlds in themselves marked off definitely from one another though subsisting within the larger society."

According to MacIver

"When status is wholly predetermined so that men are born to their lot without any hope of change in it, then the class takes the extreme form of caste."

According to A.W.Green,

"Caste is a system of stratification in which mobility, movement up and down in the status ladder, at least ideally, may not occur."

Features of Indian Society

1 Multi-Ethnic Society

India has cultural unity which runs through every aspect of Indian Social life. The fundamental approaches to philosophy, art, literature and the traditions and customs are typically Indian in character. Social institutions like caste and the joint family which are found throughout the length and breadth of the country are typically Indian. So, the social institution of caste provides a common cultural idiom to all Indians. Every Indian, whether he is a Hindu, a Muslim, a Sikh, a Jain, a Buddhist or a Christian finds himself in a universe of caste.

2 Multi-Lingual Society

India is a multilingual country, since ancient times many languages and dialects have been practiced in India. At present, 18 national languages and about 1,652 dialects are found in India. In India. The people living there speak so many languages and dialects because this subcontinent is a long time immemorial, various ethnic groups have been districting.

Indian languages can be grouped into four different speech families such as:(1) the Indo-Aryan, (2) the Dravidian, (3) the Austric and (4) the Sino-Tibetan.

Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Assamese, Bengali, Odia, Gujarathi, Marathi and Kashmiri are belonged to the Indo-Aryan speech family. The Dravidian linguistic group includes

four southern languages namely, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. The tribes of central India speak Austric languages and the tribes of the North Eastern India speak the Sino-Tibetan languages

3 Multi-Race Society

The caste system is existed due to clash of cultures and the contact with races. The Aryans came to India as warriors, due to their physique and culture they put them superior. In compare with the non-Aryans, they placed themselves as a superior race to non-Aryans. Therefore, the Aryans considered the natives as inferior, marginalized by maintaining their own ideas and rituals. The Aryans got married to the non-Aryan women. The non-Aryans had the lowest position in the society. Thus, the nontraditional union between races and racial superiority were responsible for the origin of caste system in India. Thus, Indian society is multi-race society.

G.S. Ghurye found the origin of caste system into the race. "He has related the caste system with Brahmanic system. The system originated in the Gangetic plains due to the conquest of the Aryans. According to him, the conquered race began to be considered as Sudra. The Sudras were excluded from all religious and social activities of the Aryans. The Aryans did not allow them to participate in Indo-Aryans social activities. According to him the Brahminic variety of this Indo-Aryan civilization was developed in the Gangetic plain. Ghurye believed that it is this multiplicity which has resulted in the formation of castes and sub-castes. In this regard, he adds, the various factors that characterize caste society were the result in the first instance of the attempts on the part of the upholders of Brahminic civilization to exclude the aboriginals and the Sudras from religious and social communication with themselves".(Ghuray 173)

4 Multi-Caste and Class Society

As a form of classification, the caste is distinct to the Indian society. It is called as an extreme form of class system. The status of a person in the social system is controlled by birth. The Indian caste system is divided into the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. There are many classes in a caste in Hinduism. The castes and classes are also found among other religions like Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. It is said that there are about 3,000 castes in the nation. Every society classified its population on the basis of occupation, land, wealth and education, which are prominent features of class. Persons belonging to particular segment of society are pronounced as a separate class. They formulate their own values and aspirations for the smooth run of their community.

5 Tribes

Tribe is a term for communities that are very ancient, being among the oldest inhabitants. Tribes have their roots in the soil dating back to an ancient age. They live in relative isolation in the hills and forests. Their socio, economic and educational development need to be given priority. In terms of their cultural ethos, vernaculars, institutions, beliefs and customs, their lifestyle is very different from the other section of society. Tribes are indigenous people. These peoples are the

descendants from a country's aboriginal population and today they are completely or partly deprived of the rights to their own territory. Indigenous peoples are strikingly different and diverse in their culture, religion, social and economic organizations. They are still being exploited by the outside world. By some they are idealized as the embodiment of spiritual values, by others they are designated as an obstacle impeding economic progress. They cherish their own distinct cultures. They are victims of past colonialism. Some live according to their traditions, some receive welfare, some work in factories, some in other professions. They have maintained a close living relationship to the land in which they live. In India, tribes are generally called adivasis, implying original inhabitants. The ancient and medieval Indian literature mention a large number of tribes living in India. Before the introduction of the caste system during the Brahminic Age, people were divided into various tribes.

6 Dalits

The concept 'Dalit' is derived from Marathi word with Sanskrit root 'Dal' that means 'to grind,' 'to split,' or 'to crush.' It means 'ground' or 'crushed.' It is both singular and plural in Marathi, but plural of 'Dalit' in English is 'Dalits.' The word can be used in all genders. It is the denotation applied to a particular community who lived under the suppression and impression of upper castes of India down through the ages. Therefore, 'Dalits' are those people of India who are suppressed and depressed, marginalized socially, economically and mentally in society. They are also called as Dasyu, Das, Depressed classes, Untouchables, Outcastes, Scheduled Castes, etc. These people deliberately kept away from the mainstream of the society by imposing restrictions upon them by upper castes.

Many eminent scholars have defined the term 'Dalit' from time to time, which developed its scope and meaning in the course of time. In 1931, Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur R. Srinivasan sent some supplementary demands to be presented before the Round Table Conference, which included sub-article (ii) (Defined by Shinde) which clearly states that 'Depressed Classes mean untouchables' now this is an Appendix-II attached to the book *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables?* by Ambedkar.

According to this definition, it is clear that depressed classes mean untouchable castes, and untouchable castes mean scheduled castes. No difference has been made between class and caste denotatively. All these untouchable castes were near about 429 that enlisted in the schedule for electoral purposes that later on termed and confirmed as 'Scheduled Castes' in the Indian Constitution, the new identity of untouchable castes having a constitutional base.

7. FAMILY

Family is the most important primary groups of the society. It is a small social group consisting ordinarily of a father, mother, and one or more children. Family in India has remained an important institution. It is backbone of the patriarchal power on the one hand, and a protector and defender of individual member's right to property on the other. Due to many changes in Indian society, the synthesis between collectivism

and individualism, the Hindu family continues to be joint, partly structurally and mainly functionally. The Indian family system is thus like a socialistic community in which everyone earns according to his capacity and receives according to his needs. The concept “family” has been taken over from the Roman word, “famulus,” meaning a servant. The concept ‘family’ is used in several different ways such as according to Iravati Karve,

“A joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred.”

8. Kinship

Human being is a social animal. Man does not live alone in society. From birth till death, he is surrounded by a number of people. Some of these people are his relatives, some are friends, and some are neighbors’ while all others are strangers and unknown to him. He is bound to all those people who are related to him either on the basis of blood or marriage. The relations based on blood or marriage may be close or distant. The bond of blood or marriage which binds people together in group is called kinship. According to the Dictionary of Anthropology,

Kinship system includes socially recognized relationships based on supposed as well as actual genealogical ties. These relationships are the result of social interaction and recognized by society.

9. Unity in Diversity

India is a multicultural, multireligious, multiracial, multicast and multilingual society. It is characterized by its unity and diversity. A huge cohesion of cultures, religions and languages of the people belonging to different castes and communities has upheld its unity and cohesiveness. In spite of several foreign invaders, Mughal rule and the British rule, national unity and integrity have been maintained. It is this cohesion which has made India a unique structure of cultures. India fought against the British Raj as one unified entity. Foreign invasions, immigration from other parts of the world, and the existence of diverse languages, cultures and religions have made India’s culture tolerant and a unique. Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity are the major religions. There is diversity in racial compositions, religious and linguistic distinction but also in patterns of living, life styles, land tenure systems, occupational pursuits, inheritance and succession law, and practices and rites related to birth, marriage and death. India is cultural heritage. India is a secular state. Its Constitution provides the guarantee for people of diverse regions, religions, cultures and languages and all socio-economic strata.

The sources of diversity in India may be traced through a variety of ways, the most obvious being the ethnic origins, religious, castes, tribes, languages, social customs, cultural and sub-cultural beliefs, political philosophies and ideologies, geographical variations and others.

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