

## Casteism: A Great Barrier to Nation's Progress

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### Abstract

India was said to be 'A Golden Bird' in the past. Why was this country remained under the slavery of the English and the Mughals for many years? Why has it not become a developed country by now inspite of being remaining developing country for many years? Answer is very clear, but none wants to utter the hidden answer. It is long rooted Casteism prevalent widely here. People of India have been divided since the ancient past on the basis of Caste. The English as well as the Mughals took the benefit of this division. When the English first time came in India and saw the people divided on the basis of caste, they felt the weakness of India and took its benefit.

**Key Words:** Casteism, varnas, Indian society, history, etc.

India was said to be 'A Golden Bird' in the past. Why was this country remained under the slavery of the English and the Mughals for many years? Why has it not become a developed country by now inspite of being remaining developing country for many years? Answer is very clear, but none wants to utter the hidden answer. It is long rooted Casteism prevalent widely here. People of India have been divided since the ancient past on the basis of Caste. The English as well as the Mughals took the benefit of this division. When the English first time came in India and saw the people divided on the basis of caste, they felt the weakness of India and took its benefit.

Here people were divided into four Varnas: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishya, and Shudra. Brahmins came on the top of the hierarchy system. They were considered as guru and priest. Below the Brahmins came Kshatriyas whose duty was to fight wars. They were called worriers and nobility. On the third

rank based on caste hierarchy system came Vaishyas whose duty was to deal trades or business. They were called farmers, traders and artisans. On the lower rank came Shudras; the depressed, the downtrodden. They were called tenant, farmers and servants. They were called 'untouchables' or 'Dalits'. Their duty was to serve the upper three classes. The term was used as a translation for the British Raj Classification of depressed classes. It was popularized by economist and reformer Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who included all depressed in the definition of Dalits.

However Dalits remained at the bottom of the caste hierarchy system. They were humiliated and tortured, yet at the time freedom struggle, their contribution cannot be forgotten. They gave a great contribution in Indian Rebellion of 1857 or Sepoy Mutiny. Dalits Indian freedom fighters were heartedly attached to the freedom movement. It was started and joined by

Bhau Bakshi, Pooran Kori, Raghuvir Singh, Tilka Manjhi, Udham Singh, Birsa Munda, Sido and Kanhu, Uda Devi, Jhalkaribai, and Avantabai.

Caste System was a heinous crime in the past. It degraded the value of a person born as a human being. Behaviour of upper castes to the lower caste was unfair as depicted in the lines of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, "Whenever a Dalit becomes a President or Secretary of a trade union under the Marxist Umbrella, the high caste workers leave that union and form another union of their own," (Annihilation of Caste, 3).

Persons were worried not for their own progress, but for the down fall of the low caste people. There was no value of a great learned person if he was born in low caste. Quality was not worshipped, but what worshipped was his caste. If by fault any great person was invited to any occasion, that occasion was cancelled. How in such a position can imagine any progress of the country? "Owing to the cancellation of the Conference by the Reception Committee on the ground that the views expressed in the Speech would be unbearable to the Conference," (Annihilation of Caste, 18).

The condition of the Dalits was so miserable that they could not eat as their own nor wear well. If they did so and it came into the notice of the upper class people, they were publically punished to give the message that no other person of Dalit community should dare eat and dress the same. "An untouchable of Chakwara who had returned from pilgrimage had arranged to give a dinner to his fellow untouchable of the village as an act of religious piety...Meal and the items served included ghee also. But while the assembly of untouchables was

engaged in partaking of food, Hindus in their hundreds, armed with lathis, rushed to the scene, dispelled the food and belaboured the untouchables who left the food they were served and ran away for their lives," (Annihilation of Caste, 18). Such incidents cast the negative impact on the mind of the low caste people. By doing so, the people who torture by giving suffering to the other people, loose respect in the eyes of the suffered people. Respect is not a thing achieved in a single day, but after a long deed of actions done in the favour of the others or the suffered. Once the respect is lost, it cannot be gained for a long time. It is a different thing the same person may respect to the other powerful person due to his power, but such respect is outwardly. In the poem Mercy, Shakespeare says,

His scepter shows the force of temporal  
power

The attribute to awe and majesty,

Wherein doth sit the dead and fear the  
king ...

Honour and respect both are things based on 'give and take'. There is a difference between outward and inward respect or honour. The proverb 'As you sow so shall you reap' holds here true. If we have any servant, he is not paid proper respect, but humiliated and ignored, the master cannot gain the proper output from the servant.

People of the low class were mentally tortured in the past; there was not a single moment to feel something good for them in the society. Man is a social creature. He lives a life different from the other beings of the society. If he feels he is being treated like animals, it gives him negative impact of living his life. People of the low class were

not free to pass through the way in a natural way where the people of the higher class lived, but they had to get down their personality while passing from there. They could not keep their head high. They could not eye at the people of the high caste. Person of the low class had to pass through the street with an earthen pitcher hanging from their neck so that he cannot spit away from the earthen pitcher that may pollute the people of the higher class. Another thing that gave mental tension to the people of the lower class was they had to put on a black thread around the waist or neck to identify the lower class person to keep them away from their touch. In the novel 'Untouchable', Mulk Raj Anand has "expressed his resentment at, and has protest against, the unjust and oppressive caste system which has compelled millions and millions of the people to live like a pigs, "(Untouchable, 165)

Besides Casteism, Untouchability was so much prevalent in the society that none of high caste wanted to see even the shadow of the person of the low caste person. If he comes across the way where high caste people were occupied, he had to announce his arrival so that the people of the high caste should make a distance from him. "Untouchability was so rampant that while it was considered all right to touch dogs and cats or cows and buffaloes, if one happened to touch a Chuhra, one got contaminated or polluted. The Chuhras were not seen as human. They were simply things for use. Their utility lasted until the work was done. Use them and then throw them away," (Joothan, 2). Feelings of love if shown to the persons of the low caste were outwardly, but inwardly they were the objects of hatred.

Condition of discrimination with the low caste people even today has not improved any more. Distinction or discrimination with the low caste people is prevalent in the departments. In the digital era or the era of computer, even with the persons who are in job or service, they are treated as degraded or inhuman. Davison of work is done on the basis of caste. To the high caste persons on job, the work is given that fits to their caste, but the work to the lower caste persons is given as minor or done by the people of low caste in the past as stage decoration, arrangement of the seats in the hall if there is any celebration, but to the high caste persons like receiving the chief guest and guests, their welcome, breakfast or lunch with them, to sit with them and at last to depart them. Time has changed, era has changed, but the mentality of the high class people to degrade the low caste people has not changed even today. This is the case with the people who are high qualified or in jobs. This indicates the miserable condition of the low class people who are living in villages or slum areas. They are treated as inhuman not to let their personality come out.

In his novel 'Untouchable' Mulk Raj Anand has depicted in many scenes when Bakkha passed through the streets, he had to announce his coming through the way. There had been many novelists who had tried their best to improve the miserable condition of the depressed or down trodden. Charles Dickens and Mulk Raj Anand considered all mankind one. There was no place of caste to them. All men were one to them, "Anand is a novelist of the protest against the sordid, ugly, and depressing

social condition which were prevalent in India,” (Untouchable, 162).

In a nut shell, it can be said on the basis of the above discussion, distinction or discrimination with the low caste people whether they are highly qualified, in jobs or illiterate is continue to this very day. Changed time and changed era have brought no changed to them. The very thing that needs change is the change in the mentality of the people that has not changed by far. No nation can progress in real sense if there is not participatory role of all class people.

Nature has made no distinction in the blood of the people. Whether a person is of low caste or high caste, there is no slightly difference in the blood. Then the self-made assumption that this is of low caste or that is of high caste is useless and brings no result, only divides the people on the basis of caste. Rampant feelings of caste hinder in the progress of the country. All are human borne by the one Almighty. There should be no caste distinction. If all people have such feelings, Indian can be then be a developed country, otherwise it will remain the same like a developing country.

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