

The massive influence on the indian society religion essay



Caste as we have discussed before is a wide area to look into. It has massive influence on the Indian society in its own way. Though it was officially banned in India there still remains a part of it in the minds of Indian people. It has been much seen in rural areas than in urban areas as the people in urban area are more educated. As a part of this there have situations of lower caste being abused even now in certain regions. Practicing untouchability and caste differentiation is legally forbidden in India. Caste system leads to what is called a social exclusion. It means “ the inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic and social functioning of society” (Thorat, S, Newman, K.(2007). pg4121). Entitlements to all these powers become narrower as it moves farther down to the hierarchical levels of the caste system. Jobs usually regarded as degrading are usually done by the lower caste (dalits) and the best example being the manual scavenging. Manual scavenging is the worst surviving symbol of caste untouchability in India which drives people into degrading jobs just because their birth in particular class. According to one of the leading newspapers in India, The Hindu, there has been an incident of a woman who was born into a family of manual scavenging who physically scraped the human excreta on the latrine floors and carried it away in a basket. While doing her work she slipped from a narrow wooden staircase and broke her foot to which none of her employers were willing to lift her even in this state just because they thought touching her was polluting. She was then picked up by a pincer of logs and her family took her to the local dispensary. Such sickening behaviour of the individuals is as result of the caste system or it can be even termed as evils of caste system. Government of India took steps to outlaw this practice but however these governments have a long tradition

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of insolently disobeying their own laws if they are pertaining to uphold the rights of the poor. Finally an extraordinary campaign named " the Safai Karmchari Andolan(SKA) used non-violent mass-resistance, community organisation and the courts to force governments to end this centuries old practice."(The Hindu, May 9. 2010)

In the western countries like United Kingdom, it is commonly found that people end up marrying the people they work with. But this has not been the case with the Indians. In modern corporate India when people enter into an organisation they do not have the intention of getting married with the people they work with. Moreover they share the relation that of a friend. But that does not mean that none of them end up getting married. I come from a state called Kerala which is situated in down south of India and there are people from lower caste who are educated and hold a white collar job. Some of them might end up marrying their colleague who may not be from the same caste or even from the same religion. This change of attitude in people of Kerala is more or less due to the education and knowledge given to them. To go a little deeper into the prevalence of caste in Kerala back in period, I like to bring to notice a saint and a social reformer named Sree Narayana Guru who battled against the discrimination of the lower caste by upper caste. The caste system was rampant in Kerala during the 19th and early part of 20th century. As mentioned before caste was based on the job each one did. A lower caste had to go through a number of rules such as one should not enter temples, not allowed to wear slippers, should not be seen within a certain distance of the upper caste. Anyone defying these rules are subject to hideous punishment s like cutting of hands etc. All this outrageous

acts by the upper caste was put to an end by this great soul Sree Narayana guru who led a social revolution against this terrible system. However, this movement by this great soul infuriated only the extremely orthodox but was accommodated by the majority (M. S. Joe, March 18. 2010). This revolution was perhaps one of the most nonviolent revolutions the world would have ever experienced. He built temples and wrote hymns which could be used by people in any religion. The government thus changed their legislation wherein the lower castes were allowed to enter temples run by upper caste. This temple entry proclamation was equally accepted by people throughout India including the the Christians and the Muslims(Govt of Kerala. Accessed on 7-7-2010) . Later on he opened the gates of education by building schools where everyone could attend the sessions and thus produced a high proportion of educated people. Though he masterminded this entire peaceful social revolution and achieved freedom for the unprivileged he is little known outside Kerala (Sree Narayana guru Mission of the UK, 1978. accessed on 1-7-2010).

Caste does not pose a great problem in the present scenario. These have been situations were a high caste and a lower caste work together without any chaos. In an organisation, a lower caste can be a manager and a Brahmin can be in the lower cadre and this is entirely based on the talent and skill of the employee and caste system does not actually come in the way. This is the case of modern India thanks to the valuable education system. But when it comes to politics within the organization there may be biasness happening between different individuals of the same caste or religion. However this could been seen across the world and not just in India.

A question might come up in the minds of Non-Indians regarding the functioning of caste system in India which accommodates people with different concepts and ideas of the same. I would like to throw some light on this issue by illustrating certain events that have been happening in India which shows that the two ideologies of caste being important and unimportant co-exists in this same country. In spite of the proclamation of temple entry made by the Maharaja of Travancore in Kerala sixty years ago, there are still issues happening around relating to the caste system. To bolster this argument, an incident that happened in Kerala, where one of the famous playback singers named Yesudas who is a catholic was denied the entry into one of the famous temples in a district in Kerala. The reason him being a non-hindu and the irony behind this is that the temple authorities still plays the songs sung by him in the temple though they may restrict his entry into the temple. Another such incident was witnessed by the people of Kerala when the Union minister for Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi was humiliated or rather saddened due to the fact that a ceremonial purification was done in the temple after he had his grandson's ceremonial first feeding. The reason being his wife who was a Christian is supposed to have polluted the temple by her visit (India today, June 18. 2007). This purification was done by the high priests of the temple who are the Brahmins. There are issues happening in northern India as well. There was an issue which dates back to 1936 before India got its Independence from the colonial British rule. An untouchable in a village called Chawara in the Jaipur state was beaten up because of the fact that he gave a dinner to his fellow untouchables where he served ' Ghee' which was considered as a luxury for the rich(Dr.

Ambedkar. B. R,(1944). Accessed on 7-7-2010). Such disheartening practices <https://assignbuster.com/the-massive-influence-on-the-indian-society-religion-essay/>

are not to be seen now though a glimpse of it still remains in rural parts of India. It is distressing that such system does exist today to a certain extent due to a certain extremely orthodox section of the society. However this small segment is being alienated in the present scenario because of their conventional attitude.

Going back to the caste system and marriages in India, as we discussed before, arranged marriages are accepted more than love marriages. To support the above judgment I would like to bring forth an example of how Indian families find spouses for their children. This is quoted from a matrimony site where a profile of a girl is registered in that particular site for the purpose of marriage.

“ About Me

Sangita is my second daughter and a Microbiologist by profession. She is a simple, well mannered girl, with a kind and compassionate nature. Homely and well versed with household responsibilities. She had the best of schooling and college education available here in Bangalore. She is employed in a leading Bio-Tech Company in Bangalore. She grew up under a joint family environment.

Primary Information

Age 27 Yrs

Height 5 Ft 4 In / 163 Cms

Weight 54 Kgs / 119 lbs

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Body Type Average

Complexion Fair

Blood Group B+

Mother Tongue Malayalam

Physical Status Normal

Socio-Religious Background

Religion Hindu

Caste Ezhava

Sub Caste Ezhava

Star

Eating Habits Non Vegetarian

Horoscope Match Must

Smoking habits Non-smoker

Drinking habits Non-drinker

Zodiac Capricorn

Educational & Professional Information

Education Category Masters - Arts/ Science/ Commerce ...

Education in Detail MSc. Microbiology

Employed in Private Sector

Occupation Scientist / Researcher

Occupation in Detail Microbiologist

Annual Income Rs. 1, 50, 000

Family Details

Family Values Traditional

Family Type Nuclear family

Family Status Upper middle class

Ancestral Origin Mayyanad/Kollam

Father's Occupation Retired PSU Manager

Mother's Occupation Housewife

No of Siblings 1

About My Family

The family is settled in Bangalore for more than 50yrs. We have many relatives both here and in Kerala. My elder daughter is married and settled in Perth/Australia along with her husband and their newborn son. We are simple, God fearing and have liberal views. After my VRS from a leading PSU,

I am self employed in a Small Business dealing in Watches, Solarlamps and Ayurvedic/herbal products. My wife is a teacher by profession but chose to be a housewife . Sangita is simple and homely girl, well mannered and trained to be a responsible wife. Soft-spoken, systematic and disciplined in her work.

Partner Preference Specifications

Age 28 - 33 Yrs

Height 5 Ft 6 In - 6 Ft

Marital status Unmarried

Physical Status Normal

Mother Tongue Malayalam

Educational and Professional Preference Bachelors - Engineering/
Computers, Masters - Engineering/ Computers, Masters - Arts/ Science/
Commerce/ M Phil/ Others, Management - BBA/ MBA/ Others

Annual Income Any

Occupation Any

About My Partner

A Qualified Professional, with clean habits, good health and a sense of responsibility. Honest and easy going by nature. Having a sense of humour.

God fearing , compassionate and considerate . Focused and hardworking to attain his goals in life.

Assistance will be provided to relocate to Australia if interested.

Socio-Religious Preference

Religion Hindu

Caste/Division Ezhava

Star Not Specified

Eating Habits Doesn't matter

Smoking Habits Not Specified

Drinking Habits Not Specified "(Bharat Matrimony. Accessed on 7-7-2010)

The above illustration clearly states that caste does a play its part when it comes to marriages. This phenomenon would be completely alien for a Westerner who does not pass through such stages to find their partner. On the personal front, I come from a Hindu family under the sub caste called Ezhava. Talking about inter- caste and inter-religious marriage, I do have a Christian and a Brahmin members in my father's and mother's family respectively. This might create confusion in the mind of the reader whether Caste system was not being followed strictly even twenty to thirty year back. Conversely, I do not mind saying that I will not be allowed to marry someone outside my religion. Therefore it can be seen that it is the same family which allows inter caste marriage and also at the same time restricts it. At this

junction, I opine that the existence of caste system to an extent depends on an individual's perception he or she holds. It is not always right to say that Indians are adamant in following this system. Moving on to the effect of caste system on the corporate world, I would say that it has hardly any effect on the working of MNC's or any other organisations in India. Talking to folks and friends back home, it can be understood that in organisations like Infosys, Wipro etc it hardly matters what caste you belong to as long as you have the talent and skill to perform the job. This changing attitude of the present generations is due to the valuable education being given. This lets them think out of the box and not emulate the traditional practice which was intolerable at that point of time. As a matter of fact, nowadays there is no restriction on the selection of jobs because one belongs to a particular caste. A middle class family or people belonging to the so called ' Sudra' caste can afford to have doctors or engineers or even scientists evolving, provided he or she has the expertise and ability to do it. To bolster the above argument, I would like to quote a striking example which happened in India few years back when a dalit man named K. R. Narayanan originally from Kerala was elected as the President of India from year 1997 - 2002(Britannica encyclopedia, Accessed 8 July 2010). He hails from an untouchable family where his father was a traditional healer and could not afford a good education. In spite of this he came up the ladder because of his hard work and talent and occupied the most competent post of becoming the President of a Nation. He was the first dalit member to occupy this post. (BBC news, 9 November 2005). Currently one of the states in India called Uttar Pradesh has a dalit women as the Chief Minister. From the above illustration it can be evidently seen that caste system does not come in the way of a person while

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choosing his profession in the modern corporate India. However this modern corporate Indian can be caste conscious in various other situations like marriages. The higher caste manager in an organisation may not have any issues in working with a low caste employee but on the other hand he would not allow his children to marry an outcast. Yet, as mentioned before, it differs from one individual to other.

Hinduism has a noteworthy effect on the Indian society and spirituality is the base of a majority of Indians. The Holy book of Hindus Bhagavad Gita has the true definition of caste system that prevailed in the ancient India compared to which now the meaning of it have been distorted according to the needs of certain individuals or missionaries. To quote a verse from this Holy text and thereby find out the real meaning to the four fold caste system.

“ Catur Varnyam maya srstam guna karma vibhagasah

Tasya kartaramapi maam vidhya kartaramavyayam”(Bhagavad Gita, ch 4, 13 sloka)

The above lines says that the four- fold caste which are Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras have been created according to the ones own Guna(Quality) and Karma(work). They have been divided on the basis of three qualities or Guna's which are mainly Satva(Goodness), Rajas(Passion) and Tamas(Ignorance) and these are attributed to Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, Sudras respectively. These mental temperaments differ from person to person which makes them fall into a particular Varna or caste.

However later on the power politics in the early middle ages in India, the

communal feeling came up in certain individuals mind and therefore
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completely disregarded the meaning of the verse mentioned above. The Brahmin, who comfortably interpreted these lines according to his will and thus changed the whole idea of the caste system. The definition of varnas discussed so far not only helps in removing the present misunderstanding but also showers us with some data to recognize its true significance that a person cannot be a Brahmana by mere birth but only with good deeds, intentions and thoughts that he carries along with him. It also says that he alone is a Brahmana whose thoughts are 'sattvik' (goodness) as his actions are. A Kshatriya who is 'rajasik' in his thoughts and deeds. A sudra who is Tamasic(ignorant) is not only one who lives a low life for satisfying his base animal passions and flesh appetites. Hindus also believe in the concept of re-incarnation which says that " a person's current incarnation and experiences are at least in part, the fruit of past action" (J. R. Milner Murray. 1993). According to the Hindu belief, an individual is said to be born as a Brahmin if he had done good deeds in his past life and born as a lower caste if done something bad. The law of karma or merit is what is considered here. But at present there is no firm evidence that people actually live according to such concepts.