ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

INTERROGATING CASTE, SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND SANITATION CONCERNS IN INDIA: A CRITIQUE

Social Science

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ABSTRACT

Various programs costing billions of dollars have been deployed to solve the developing world's sanitation problems, often with little success. This failure is frequently due to prevalence of social inequality, inadequate understanding of people's approach to sanitation, behavioural changes and their lack of education to sanitation. Achieving and maintaining a healthful community environment, however, requires, among other things, control of activities which may adversely affect that environment. It is observed that castes always expressed pride in their tradition. There is no guarantee, however, that the caste perspective is absorbed into the dominant discourse. The urban experience nonetheless embodies the hope for change. The city as pastiche offers space for articulating divergent perspectives.

CASTE AND SANITATION

Social theory provides the necessary analytical and philosophical framework within which the social sciences can develop. Social theory both sustains the achievements of the past, notes the needs and limitations of the present, and points the way to future research issues and questions. Thus there is a need for disciplining the sanitation along with inquisitiveness of various aspects of sanitation at global level. The paper highlights the sociological analysis of the sanitation in relation to caste and associated issues, with special reference to Indian society.

The practice of untouchability is found in the context of the caste system of India. If we separate the practice from its context, it loses much of its meaning. Hence, the practice of untouchability as it is found among the Hindus of India means that high caste people would regard some low castes so low that the former would avoid much contact with the latter. Caste of the priests (the Brahmins) would consider the caste of the street sweepers (the Bhangis) to be an untouchable caste. This does not mean that there is no social relationship between the two. It simply means that the relationship between the two is one of social distance, maintained and guided by the norms set by the Brahmins. Whatever social interactions take place between the Brahmins and the Bhangis will also be bound by such norms of social distance. The tension and conflict between the two usually may not be observable, because they are subdued by the normative situation. Change or disturbance in the latter is a prerequisite for conflict to come into the open. Thus, the priests may not allow street-sweepers to enter their kitchens. In turn, the street sweepers dare not address the priests by their first names. Similarly, the two castes will not dine with each other, let alone intermarry. In the case of an inadvertent breach of such norms, there are remedial actions which are followed by both castes. If the lower caste refuses to obey the upper caste, or if the former violates rules or norms which assert the authority and the power of the latter, there will be an open conflict. Where open conflict does not take place, there are conflicting interests. The interests of the upper caste lie in keeping its power, hence maintaining the status quo. An untouchable caste will be more interested in altering the status quo. When the government seeks to change the rules, or when the position of subordination is challenged by the lower caste, the upper caste may not hesitate to use violence as a weapon to "straighten out" the untouchable caste.[1]

Ghurye"s work, *Caste and Race in India* tries to analyze caste system through textual evidences using ancient texts on the one hand and also from both structural and cultural perspective on the other hand. Ghurye highlights six structural features of caste system as follows: Segmental Division; Hierarchy; Pollution and Purity; Civil and Religious disabilities and Privileges of Different Sections; Lack of choice of Occupation; Restrictions on Marriage. Besides the above characteristics, Ghurye stresses *endogamy* as the most important feature of the caste system. According to Ghurye, society is not just an aggregation of isolated individuals but that group life which provides the bridge between the individual and society. An individual acquires social attributes and is socializes through groups.

Sociologically speaking, feelings of aggressiveness generated during early socialization, admiration of force inherited from parents, lack of education, absence of information, social uprootedness, and alienation are components of the mental set of the poor.. Oscar Lewis notion of the 'subculture of poverty' has come to denote a situation in which people are trapped in a social environment characterized by apathy, fatalism, lack of aspirations, exclusive concern with immediate gratifications, and frequent endorsement of delinquent behavior. The subculture-of-poverty approach envisions behavior in peripheral slums in terms fitting Weber's type of emotional orientation to action. Individuals are guided by the concerns of immediate gratification rather than by the expectation of future goal-attainment. Action acquires an impulsive, unpredictable quality insofar as it is directed either by shifting emotions or by complete indifference. 'Sociologically it is a way of life, a subculture with its own set of norms and values, which is reflected in poor sanitation and health practices, deviant behavior, and characteristic attributes of apathy and social isolation

On the understanding of caste, sociologically; L. Dumont specifies the nature of the opposition between pure and impure by successive approximations. Following Bougle, one of the masters, he chooses the Hindu notion of the fundamental opposition between the pure and the impure as his starting point for an understanding of the caste system. To Srinivas, the idea of hierarchy is omnipresent in the caste system; not only do the various castes form a hierarchy, but the occupations practiced by them, the various items of their diet, and the customs they observe, all form separate hierarchies. Thus practicing an occupation like butchery, tanning, herding swine, or handling toddy, puts a caste in a low position. Eating pork or beef is more degrading than eating fish or mutton. Castes which offer blood-sacrifices to deities are lower than castes making only offerings of fruit and flowers. He said, the entire way of life of the top castes seeps down the hierarchy. the castes occupying the top positions in the hierarchy are more Sanskritized than castes in the lower and middle regions of the hierarchy, and this has been responsible for the Sanskritization of the lower castes as well as the outlying tribes. The lower castes always seem to have tried to take over the customs and way of life of the higher castes. On the issue of distinction applied to hereditary groups, especially the contrast between Brahmans and untouchables, it is generally agreed that the opposition is manifested in some macroscopic from in the contrast between the two extreme categories: Brahmans and Untouchables.

The subaltern studies have immense possibility of projecting, constructing and analyzing the people's lives, institutions, problems, movements, values and the processes of their formation, structuration and restructuration at local and regional levels. The meanings thus need not be viewed from Marxist

perspective but from Indian historigraphical and culturological perspective. In fact, at theoretical and ideological levels, it can provide the basis for explanation of social existence of Indian people and the way people managed their lives.

According to Beteille, though we attempt to ensure equality of opportunity in a competitive society, equality can be there till the end of the competition and not after it. Thus, equality of opportunity need not always ensure equality in result. In fact, it leads to inequality of reward and reproduction of inequality in another form. This is one of the most practical and obvious observation that one can notice in the contemporary India. Thus caste phenomena and process of social exclusion, as shared by Amartya Sen, leads to a state of functioning deprivations (impossibility to reach a certain level of well-being). Therefore, the "process" of social exclusion produces a "state" of exclusion that can be interpreted as a combination of some relevant deprivations. The notion of health and illness, wellness and sickness, as culturally based behaviors and belief systems has been well documented in the literature. It follows that there are broad variations in the way people perceive what constitutes the source of disease or cleanliness. Therefore, health education is a conscious intervention that is aimed at changing existing behavior and practices.

Deliege[2] emphasizes that events of exploitation are by no means uncommon in contemporary India. The Marathi paper carried ten stories of Harijans being burned alive in Uttar Pradesh, and one of a pregnant woman's being sacrificed to bring rain in Andhra Pradesh; there were also stories of women raped by students in Maharashtra, a girl exposed naked in a public square, human excrement dumped into an untouchable well, and so forth. Between six and nine thousand incidents of violence against Untouchables were being reported annually in the late 1970s. Untouchability can be said to be an extreme form of social oppression and economic exploitation, and it could therefore be compared to similar problems found throughout the world.

As we have seen, India's Untouchables constitutes some 15% of the total population. Interestingly enough, their percentage has increased slightly over the years, from 14.67% in 1961 to 15.75% in the 1981 census. In this census, the Scheduled Castes, the administrative term for Untouchables, numbered some 104,754,623 individuals, a truly mind-numbering figure. Between 1971 and 1981, the population of the Scheduled Castes increased by 32.4%, or 3.2% per year, while the overall population of India grew by just 2.3%.

Harijans are split into hundreds of castes dispersed throughout the country. No single organization can claim to represent Untouchables as a whole, and the local associations that do exist have very little power of mobilization. The only national leader of importance to have emerged form their ranks was not even capable, in spite of his charisma, of unifying the untouchable castes of his own There is no denying that this fragmentation is one more curse for untouchables, making it impossible for them to play on their numerical strength to win a significant role in Indian politics. Furthermore, although nearly every village has its Untouchables, they almost never constitute a majority, but tend to be divided into relatively small communities. Such fragmentation is an essential feature of Indian untouchability. Traditionally, Unotuchables even espoused the quarrels and factions of their masters, and therefore practiced vertical solidarity rather than the 'horizontal mobilization' they had always lacked. Thus, in every region, Untouchables are divided into numerous castes and subcastes that are strongly endogamous and very particular about avoiding contact with each other.

The problem of untouchability, as Oommen[4] correctly writes, is above all one of 'cumulative deprivation', and it must be made clear that Untouchables do indeed constitute a distinct group, even if the vernacular has no specific term for them and even though they are highly fragmented. Beteille[5] argues that the population of Tamil Nadu can be divided into three broad categories: Brahmins, non-Brahmins and Untouchables. He argues that this division is significant from a sociological standpoint.

Socio-economic dependence, material poverty, social deprivation and lack of political power combine with ritual pollution to make Untouchables a social category set apart from the rest society.

To Deliege[6], one of the essential features of untouchability in India is the extreme fragmentation of its constituent units…They are divided into hundreds of castes and subcastes dispersed over the entire subcontinent. Some castes contain a scant few hundred individuals, while the major, best-known groups – like the Chamars, Bhangis, Paraiyars and Mahars – count hundreds of thousands and even millions of members. Some castes are highly localized, while others, like the Chamars, are dispersed over vast areas that cut across state boundaries.

PRACTICE OF SCAVENGING IN INDIA[7]:

Indians mainly live in villages. Even today more than 70 per cent of the country's population is rural. In ancient days the percentage was much higher. Being bereft of an enclosed place for defecation inside the house, people generally defecated in open fields, their women using secluded places either surrounded by trees or partly covered with crops of hidden by a raised, grassy mound. The same situation is still prevalent. The people living in towns needed specified places for defecation and hence, there was need for disposal of night- soil. In this way scavenging was not unknown even in ancient days in India. The scavenging work was done by a particular section of society constituting a caste or a sub-caste.

As discussed in Bindeshwar Pathaks (1991) work, the sacred scriptures throw some light on the existence of a system for the disposal f night-soil. According to the content of sacred scriptures and other literature, scavenging, especially the disposal of night-soil by a particular caste or castes of Indian society has been in existence since beginning of the civilization. One of the 15 duties for slaves enumerated in the Naradiya Samhita was to dispose of human excreta (Nagar; 1980: 9). In Vajasaneyi Samhita the Chandals and Paulkasa have been referred to as slaves for the disposal of night- soil. (Nagar; 1980:8). During the Buddhist period also, these two names have been mentioned. During the Buddist period also, these two names have been mentioned. During the Maurya period Patliputra (now known as Patna in Bihar State, India) was one of the five ancient towns where the city mayor as Nagrak was the head of the organization entrusted with the task of looking after the civic affairs of the town. The scavengers and sweepers cleaned the city and disposed of night-soil.

Mainly, there are three forms of manual scavenging in which people are forced to carry out scavenging work such as removal of excreta from public streets ("open defecation") and dry latrines; removal of excreta form septic tanks and cleaning closed gutters and sewage. Especially 95% women are engaged in cleaning dry toilets and public streets whereas men of scavenger community enter into manhole and septic tanks to clean it. However, Delhi Higher Court directed on 27th July 2011 to the Indian Railways to rehabilitate sanitation workers employed into cleaning railway tracks and 1,72000 toilets. Therefore there is urgent need to re define the term 'manual scavenger'.

In 2007, the Government of India estimated 3.42 lakhs manual scavengers still operated in the country. For rehabilitation purposes the Government established the 'Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers' which was implemented from 2007 to March 2010. Through this scheme, more than 40.000 manual scavengers received livelihood training, almost 80.000 received loans for alternative forms of work, while almost 40.000 manual scavengers were not rehabilitated due to various reasons. On 17 June 2011 however, the Prime Minister of India dated urged his Government to eliminate the manual scavenging practice in the next six month which further reaffirms the existence of manual scavenging practice and the difficulty of its eradication.

At the same time, the National Advisory Committee adopted a number of recommendations expediting the elimination of scavenging, while the Ministry of Labour and Employment established a Task Force on Sanitation and Leather Workers which

has also been initiating a number of legislative and policy revisions to assure manual scavenging will be eradicated in India by the end of the current five year plan.

The ILO scavenging project focuses on supporting the implementation of the renewed government policy in five States, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. For this purpose, the ILO organized three consultative meetings (Lucknow, Ahmadabad and Jaipur) with representatives of the scavenger community, trade unions and civil society to gain understanding of the different forms of scavenging; rehabilitation obstacles the scavenger community is facing; and ascertain the impact and effectiveness of the available Government schemes8.

Thus, Sanitation and hygiene are critical to health, survival, and development. Many countries are challenged in providing adequate sanitation for their entire populations, leaving people at risk for water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)-related diseases. Sanitation is observed as an overall reform of any society including physical, social, psychological, economic, political and religious. It encompasses all spheres of human life which directly or indirectly affects the degree of freedom and well-being of the members of the society. It is based on the issue of justice and also removal all forms of injustice leading to better life-chances and life-styles of human being.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND SANITATION
Broadly speaking, social exclusion is a set of processes, including within the labour market and the welfare system, *by which individuals, households, communities* or even whole social groups are pushed towards or kept to the margins of society. It encompasses not only material deprivation but also more broadly the denial of opportunities to participate fully in social and civil life.

Deep exclusion refers to exclusion across more than one domain or dimension of disadvantage, resulting in severe negative consequences for quality of life, well-being and future life chances. According to Amartya Sen[9], we define social exclusion as a process leading to a state of functioning deprivations (impossibility to reach a certain level of well-being). Therefore, the "process" of social exclusion produces a "state" of exclusion that can be interpreted as a combination of some relevant deprivations. According to Walker and Walker (1997, p 8), the dynamic process of being shut out from any of the social, economic, political and cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society is referred to as exclusion.

As an extension of exclusion, Humiliation means the enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honour or dignity. To be humiliated is to be placed, against your will and often in a deeply hurtful way (although in some cases with your consent) in a situation that is much worse, or much 'lower,' than what you feel you should expect. Humiliation entails demeaning treatment that transgresses established expectations. It may involve acts of force, including violent force. At its heart is the idea of pinning down, putting down or holding against the ground. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of humiliation as a process is that the victim7 is forced into passivity, acted upon, and made helpless. Margalit's[11] concept of humiliation rests on that of self- respect. He defines it as "any sort of behavior or condition that constitutes a sound reason for a person to consider his or her self-respect injured".

At this juncture, the need of the hour of social justice. Fundamentally, the basic premise of social justice remains to be the emancipation of the underprivileged, exploited, and oppressed section of society. Its main aim is to liberate mankind from traditional bondages of social and economic exploitation and discrimination. It postulates a social order which can guarantee freedom, mobility and equal rights to all section of society.

Social justice is a specific habit of justice that is 'social in two senses:-
• The skills it requires are those of inspiring, working with, and

organizing others to accomplish together a work of justice. These are the elementary skills of civil society, through which free citizens exercise self-government by doing for themselves what needs to be done.
• It aims at the good of the society and not as the good of one agent only.

According to Sen[12], the effectiveness of government action to improve social justice is judged according to an individual's capability to do things he or she values and the freedom of individuals to choose between different ways of leading their lives. Sen's approach to social justice focuses on assuring individual capacities to gain optimal wellbeing in their circumstances. He defines poverty as the deprivation of these basic 'capabilities' (such as being literate, being active in the community).

MANUAL SCAVENGING AS SOCIAL EXCLUSION[13]:
The *safai karmi*[14] (sewage and sanitation work) is one occupation which has been considered to be the meanest and the lowest in the hierarchy of occupations. It has been the occupation of a certain caste group, which is the lowest within the category of scheduled castes (Scs).

State policy in India has had a long history of trying to abolish manual scavenging, but it continues to this day in many parts of the country (National Commission for Safai Karmcharis 2000). The Barve, Malkani and Pandya reports have been emphatic on the need for providing employment to the customary sewage and cleaning workers in relevant government departments of the municipalities, and on the improvement in their working conditions. The Basu task force report, on the other hand, argued that the employment generation capacity of the government and local bodies is limited and suggested social rehabilitation programmes that would provide alternative jobs (Ravichandran[15] 2011).

In general, manual scavenging is the removal of excreta (night soil) manually from "dry toilets", ie, the toilets without modern flush system. The system of building public toilets and employing people to remove excreta was introduced during British rule in India, when municipalities were constituted. That time, often containers were used in such toilets that needed to be emptied daily. After the invention of flush type toilets, all other types of toilets disappeared from the western world. However, this inhumane practice continues in many developing countries including India.

Contextually, the term social exclusion encompasses a wide range of social and economic aspects. Different scholars decipher this notion in various contexts. Broadly, it indicates the relative deprivation of any person or group of persons on various predetermined criterion. Caste- based occupational groups in India, like that of manual scavengers, constitute one such socially, economically, psychologically and politically marginalized section of the society. Although manual scavenging was banned twice (in 1952 and 1993), this practice still continues in various pockets of the country under different names.

Changing landscape of caste issues in contemporary India:
The rise of the lower castes in North Indian politics in the last decades has gradually transferred power from "upper caste elites to various subaltern groups". It is quite obvious that being a member of a caste or sub-caste does not have the same meaning today for all individuals everywhere, if it ever did in the past; nor do caste sanctions operates with the same force in all sections of Indian society (Betteille,-Caste today,fuller,151).

The new landscapes can be visualized under following heads:
• **Caste, ethnicity and identity:**
• **The Changing Logics of Governance**
• **Caste and Politics:**
• **Caste and wave of subaltern:**
• **Fighting caste with caste**
• **Caste, economy and globalization**
• **Caste as Affective Community**

CONCLUSION:

It is observed that castes always expressed pride in their tradition. There is no guarantee, however, that the caste perspective is absorbed into the dominant discourse. Ursula Sharma speaks of Dalits as ''muted groups'', since their alternative narratives, which often reject the ascribed low status, have little or no bearing on dominant discourses. The urban experience nonetheless embodies the hope for change. The city as pastiche offers space for articulating divergent perspectives. Subaltern voices are not easily suppressed in the way that still occurs in villages, where dominant groups can keep strict vigil over public expressions of caste status. Under these circumstances a new generation promotes positive engagement with caste.

In the relationship between space and discourse in the notion of the public sphere, we have seen how Dalit pamphlet literature serves as an important discursive counter-public for the marginalised Dalit community. Does the spatial shift of the Dalit mela celebrations from the Dalit basti to the city centre mean that Dalits have effectively broken upper-caste hegemony over the public street?

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