

A Contrast of Muslim and Hindu Class System in Sub-continent

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ABSTRACT

Class system the main characteristic of all the communities of sub-continent but prominent classes are Hindu and Muslim classes. This paper overviews the tradition class system prevailed in sub-continent especially Hindu and Muslim class. There was huge difference between both the classes as well as their custom, tradition, religious festivity, etc. are concerned but many tradition and festival are common in them. But the said class system has decomposed with the passage of time not only in Pakistan but also in Hindustan education and globalization has played vital role in decomposition of the said class system. But still we can say that the image of the said class system can be seen in the countryside of both the countries India and Pakistan. There is suitable condition in the countryside of both the countries for flourishing of this class system. Even globalization cannot fully decomposed and eliminate this class system and glimpses of this class system can be seen in the remote areas of both the countries even after independence of both the countries.

Key words: **Class system, Contrast of Muslim & Hindu, Subcontinent, Inflexibility, Urbanization.**

Introduction

The class system is used for class structures which is of inflexible in any society. This class system gives raise to different status, groups based upon the color, race, ethnicity, nobility etc. but such kind of class system and status create a division in the society in shape of social division and many other differences amongst the different community of the societies.

As far as Hindu's point of view, class system is special kind of socio, economic, political, and other customs, tradition and rituals. Even in Hindu class system we will find many variation such variations are based upon the concept of purity and impurity, superiority and inferiority. In Hindu class system Brahmans are considered as superior and pure whereas other classes like Khashtari, Vash and Shudhar are considered inferior and polluted in comparison to Brahmans. There was a proper hierarchy of class system in Hindu class system. Even people of inferior classes are not allowed to have direct interaction with the people of superior class. And in most of the cases people of superior class considered their body polluted one if any person of inferior class accidentally touch their body.

It was strictly banned upon the people of superior class to physically touch the bodies of people of inferior class, besides, people of superior class were kept at distance from the ritual of superior class. It is also the matter of fact and proved

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from the evidence that the said class system had gone through many variation and alteration with the passage of time. Rajendra Kumar (2004) argues that the class system will eventually reduce and eliminate with the passage of time due to education and modernity of the time and globalization.

It is true that Muslims and Hindus in the subcontinent had been practicing class system but with significant variations (Pnina, 1989; Sikand, 2004). But when we closely monitor the class system in India we shall come to know that the said class system was under great influence of religion. (Joanna L. and Rama J., 1986), whereas, on the other hand when we closely monitor the class system in Muslim community we shall come to know that holy books of Muslim teach about of equality and brotherhood an humanity. Despite these differences, the class system is an necessary characteristic of both Hindu and Muslim societies in the subcontinent (Pnina, 1989; Sikand, 2004).

Overview of class system in subcontinent context

It was Herbert Hope Risley western writers in the books 'The Tribes and Castes of Bengal (1892)' discussed class system of Indian society in detail. He has discussed that specific names were given to people having specific occupations names of people of superior class were not be given to the people of inferior class and it was considered a crime on the part of inferior people to have the name of superior class. From his point of view we can draw a conclusion that class system in India was a highly rigid phenomenon prevailing in sub-continent especially in India. He discussed that there were very limited option were available for the people of inferior class as far as their life style was concerned.

But now the things have changed dramatically because even the people of inferior class has started changing their name, occupations, life styles, etc. due to education and globalization and no restriction to have the name of superior class and most of the people of inferior class has made progress in their lives and settled in the city areas.

Now the People have started to opt occupations as per their talent, education, competency and strength. Now even due to drastic change in class system to urbanization even the Brahmins are becoming depressed of their past respect and status. Urbanization and globalization is the key reason which has given a big blow to the class system and it has broken the class structures in Indian society. But still it has been observed that class system still exists and can't be summed up across the rural and the urban areas. And existence of this class system is based upon many reasons but the main reason is the geographical isolation and long established social structures of rural India where there are the supportive atmosphere for the presence of class system in India even in the modern time. On the other side, Fredrik(1960)has also found out class system in Pakhtun societies of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Province of Pakistan. He has stated that hierarchical differences exists in class system is present in KPK in shape of wealth, privilege, power, social status, and tribal association.

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In literature, there are a number of other factors or things which may be helpful to realize class system in Pakistan. Contrary to the Hindu Indian perspective, class system in shape of quom or zaat exists in Pakistan.

He discussed the main reasons of class system is differences in wealth, privilege, power and respect for the class system in Swat. Here serving class is considered as the poorest class even if this class is successful in acquiring some assets or property does not helpful in raising their social status. The word is used for them is Kammis. Economic gains even do not play any role to change the social status of people of rural area of Pakistan.

Characteristics of class system

The main characteristics of class system are birth place, social status, power, tribal association, occupation, etc.

Birth-place

Birth-place is the essential feature of class system which was practiced in both Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India. An individual was given specific class status or membership of particular group based on his or her birth in a particular class. Even, once inclusion of an individual in specific class group even cannot be changed with changing into his or her occupational, educational, financial and social status on the later stages. Birth in a lower class group gives an identify of inferior class and this identity cannot be changed even acquiring higher education in later stage or by joining respectable professions later in their life. But it is also reality that the class structures having been decomposing with the passage of time. So, the factor of birth-place is still a persistent factor which is the main differentiation of various class groups in rural India and Pakistan (Emma and Agha Imran, 2003).

Professions

Class system is defined according to the professional specializations of different groups. Hindu has divided professional specialization in different groups like Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. High ranks were given the highest professional work whereas lowest ranks were given lowest professional work. (Npendra,2014; Govind, 1961). Class system even prevails in Pakistan and this class system is divided into landlords and poor tenants and service giving class. In Pakistan, most of the villagers have left their ancestors' professional groups and now settled in other areas, therefore, class system in Pakistan is decreasing every passing day. But, it does not mean that class system does not exist as many class groups are identified on the basis of their parentage. Notwithstanding, the members of different class groups are yet recognized through their parentage occupational specializations, for example barbers or cobblers. The parentage

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identity plays a central role in defining their social relationships with others in the village setting (Stephen, 2004).

Categorized groups

Class groups are positioned based on occupations related with their standing. A person's social position relies upon his participation in a rank gathering (Morton , 1993). Hindu social groups are ranked in order of Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra (Sikand, 2004). In the current India, a person's societal position is the blend of his accomplishments and class. As recently referenced, the essential class divisions exist among landowners and administrations class in country Pakistan.

Class purity

The class groups in India and Pakistan are based upon the theme of to preserving class purity. Even in the rural area, if lower class person gets married with the family of upper class it would be considered as polluting the upper class by the lower class. In traditional Hindu communities it is stilled considered as crime or pollution of upper class but in modern India now there is permission of getting marriage in mixed classes. (Sikand, 2004). Similarly, still in Pakistan, there are some classes in which out of class marriages are not allowed and one class has to find out life partner from its equal class not the lower class. So, the class difference still exists and is an important feature of the class system practiced in rural Pakistan (Peter, 1996).

Social interaction

Even in Hindu class system, there is restriction to have any social intention with member of lower class. Member of upper class is not allowed to mix with the members of lower class. Even, members of upper class do not accept any gift or any occasional item from the member of lower class. While there was a condition under which members of upper class are allowed to have an interaction with the member of upper class only. They can accept fruits, milk, butter, dry fruits etc., bread and certain other foods from the members of one's own or higher class. The class difference exists in throughout India in the beginning but such kind of class difference does not exist in Muslim Pakistan. People from different class groups eat and drink together and also share food (Zekiye,1960).

Distance from lower class

Keeping distance from lower class person was an essential part of Hindu class system. Brahmins keep up their group predominance by not contacting lower class individuals or by keeping them at a specific separation. But such practices are in declining as a result of the increasing urbanization trends (Zekiye, 1960).

Beradari & quom system

Beradari system and Quom system are also characteristics of class system of Pakistan and India.

Members demonstrate loyalty to their Baradari and Quoms, specially in the struggles for power and leadership e.g. in elections. While the dynamics of the class system in Pakistan and India are changing but Baradari and Quoms are still an important factor in marriage practices and mate selection (Vinay, Borin, 2005).

Conclusion

The main characteristics of traditional class system are birth place or group, occupational group, social status and economic status. Baradari and Quoms are the most important principles of class organization in Pakistan and India. Members of upper class groups, for example Brahmins, maintain their class superiority by not touching the members of lower class gatherings. Class system in both Pakistan and India is declining with the passage of time as urbanization and modernization. However, geographical isolation and long established social structures in rural Pakistan and India are the favourable conditions to maintain class practices.

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