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Caste Endogamy: A Multidimensional analogy of Caste in the Indian Society

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ABSTRACT

In Indian society, the Caste System has considered a closed system of stratification and the primary characteristic of it is the endogamous nature that contributes to a socio-economic class structure in which individuals are divided on the basis of attributes that are external to them. The endogamous nature of the caste system, with some exceptions of exogamous marriages specifically in the Indian culture, impacted the lives of Indian people ranging from a variety of classes, regions and religions on a massive scale. The systemic issues dating back in history with respect to Caste and caste endogamy has thus led to significant societal consequences and repercussions. This basic framework defined the relationship between Caste, class and marriage in the form of an institution. This paper seeks to examine the endogamous nature of the Indian Caste System as an institution that is external to these individuals. It also includes the concept of social stratification institutionalisation and goes on to the social mobility of the Indian Caste System. The concepts of 'caste origin' and 'caste destination' are also highlighted in this paper.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a very important aspect in India, and there are certain principles embedded within marriage that have to be followed by those who seek to maintain traditionality, one of the major ones being Caste. (Narzary & Ladusingh, 2019) Endogamy means to marry someone in a prescribed group or a community; such an endogamous nature of the marriage culture followed in India allows Caste to play a primary role in uniting families and restricting exogamous marriages that promote inter-caste marriages. (Fordham, 2007)

Caste is prescribed at the time of birth itself and does not have the ability to detach from the person in their lifetime. It is deeply rooted in Indian culture and society. Caste interplay in marriage is a quintessential social requirement among several communities. Therefore, arranged marriages are massively encouraged in Indian society to be deemed acceptable for various factors such as social solidarity, parental support and approval. (Narzary & Ladusingh,

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Endogamy is a primary tenet of the caste system; this static behaviour of Caste has been dominating Indian culture for centuries enabling a rigid endogamous environment of marriage. The creation of Caste as a society or system can be dated back to certain "caste-like" observations being made in medieval times. Caste has since then taken several forms and manifestations so as to bind people to fulfil obligations perpetuated by the historical, political, economic and most importantly, social developments. (Socjologiczne, 2016)

II. HISTORY OF CASTE ENDOGAMY

The term Caste is originated from a Portuguese word, 'Casta', which means breed, lineage, or race (Rajshekhar, 2002). It is jargon being used to recognise the various social classes divided in the "Jajmani" system, which was based on their occupation and the relationship between the lower class that served the upper class, which in turn rewarded them. It's indeed predominantly the practice of endogamy that has maintained the 'caste system' and discouraged the idea of one Caste from fusing into another, according to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. (Chaudhry, 2013) In India, a Caste is a form of stratification centred on formal sanction of the community, which adhere to the status of different Caste-based on their position in the social order. The functioning of the caste system is outlined by the network of economic, political and ritual relations between castes.

In ancient religious texts and understanding, the Rig Veda theories explain that according to Rig Veda, states that the original man, "Purush", disintegrated his body to create the existence of human societal groups. Thus four different body parts indicated different roles that each varna had to perform. The Verna hierarchy was that the Brahmins of the head had the intellect, Vaishyas from the thigh represented money matter, the Kshatriyas were the hands, and the Shudras came from his feet and performed the menial tasks. Lastly, the Ati Shudras, namely 'untouchables', weren't even a part of the Verna system. They were only supposed to perform occupations that were considered unclean and polluting. This is where the crux of the issue lay; it began when the elements of purity and pollution came into the picture. The traditional values of Hinduism considered being "pure" as the most important value, and the entirety of the caste system is based on this idea. Concepts of 'Untouchability' among Dalits and other socially backward classes are instruments to enforce social stratification in the caste system. (Chaudhry, 2013)

There existed hierarchal standards of Caste in the Indian society even before British rule. The British rule simply made this "ideology" concrete. The glorification of Caste as an institution

of the highest merit and a system of absolute doctrines was encouraged in the imperial period as a way to digress the frustration of people from the actual truth. (Socjologiczne, 2016)

III. ROLE OF CASTE IN MARRIAGE AS AN INSTITUTION OF THE INDIAN SOCIETY

Marriage is an institution. Marriage is recognised as the central and most important feature of human society. It gives a sense of direction and belongingness in the society and is one of the most important social institutions of human society. 'marriage' is an institution that invokes every possible social obligation, kinship, traditional values, and economic resource. (Jain, 2019)The role of Caste in Hindu marriage is that it gives marriage a systematic approach; principles to follow make it an institution within another institution. According to Velassery, "*a society is characterised by such a system if it is divided into a large number of hereditarily specialised groups, which are hierarchically superposed and mutually opposed. It does not tolerate the principle of rising in the status of groups' mixture and of changing occupation*" (Deshpande et al., 2010). In the Indian caste system, mainly the Hindu culture, all the cast members must adhere to certain rules, principles, and traditional values in order to avert all chances of being thrown out or discriminated against by their caste members or, even worse, be born less fortunate in their next lives. The main characteristic of the Indian caste system is the endogamous nature, with the exception of exogamous marriages. It is a requirement for every member of a caste or sub-caste to marry within their own caste. Any violation or failure to follow of this desertion from one's family and Caste. The idea or the belief of purity and pollution is also an aspect that Hinduism considers important in its caste system. It enforces a means of exclusivism, a social instrument that was only pulled into the matrix of pollution-purity to become religious. The higher castes were thus thought to be purer and less polluted, whereas the lower castes were perceived to be less pure and more polluted. This brought an ideology upon the society that foresees the social constructs of Caste, which is based on a myth. (Deshpande et al., 2010)

The inseparability of marriage as an institution and the role of Hinduism and Caste is such there exists no Hinduism without Caste and no caste without Hinduism. Hinduism has played and continues to play a vital role in shaping caste consciousness with respect to marriage. The last aspect of marriage as an institution that remains extremely crucial in order to uphold, maintain and stabilise the Indian caste system is the lack of social mobility. Generations after generations, the birth of an heir to a particular caste, restricts a person to simply maintain this Caste and confine's the individual's ability to exercise mobility up or down the hierarchy. On the one hand, marriage was instituted for the protection of society from harmful and unethical

behaviour and, on the other, for the continuity of the chain of society itself. (Jain, 2019)

IV. CASTE ENDOGAMY IN THE SOCIAL SPHERE

Caste plays its role in marital arrangements more prominently in Hindu culture than in others since the society has created an environment such that it cements these preconceived notions in order to secure each person their "pre-destined" position according to their respective castes. In lower Caste, a society is patrilocal in nature, that is, where the wife moves to her husband's household, and it is a social fact naturally assumed that the wife will either adopt the husband's occupation or adapt to the occupation in such a way that the primary priority is given to the husband's job being the major breadwinner if not sole. The opportunities and chances of pursuing her desired job presented to her are as little as none since she would receive little help from the household she has married into. Besides, to enable the husband to do his work, the extended family would put pressure on the wife to adopt his work even if her skills are mismatched. (Bidner & Eswaran, 2015), this is the embodiment of double lack of opportunity hoarding for women not only from lower caste husbands but also from the society that prefers to hoard exceptional occupational, healthcare, educational opportunities to the "privileged social groups". Bringing gender roles further into the picture, the traditional Indian society is an extremely backward and unsupportive culture for women to have security over anything related to jobs. However, this kind of robbery of chance is faced by the lower caste community as a whole since "Opportunity hoarding" with respect to Caste has created a huge gap between the kind of chances and resources it reserves for the upper caste communities in comparison to the underprivileged communities. (Piras et al., 2017)

V. THE SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF CASTE

Caste is socially stratified by the categorisation of people into groups. This kind of groupism brings with it the problem of inequality, particularly social inequality. The crux of the issue of social inequality is differentiated and formed by specific groups that make up the society itself. These stratifications have blocks of groups that do not have equal requirements to enter and simply exist to be followed. (Cruz-Uribe, 2010). Indian social stratification of Caste is quite ancient; there are approximately 40,000 endogamous caste groups in the country who have been complying with these self-created social inequalities of the society. Upon research and analysis by a geneticist, Harvard professor Mr Reich' and his team found out that one particular Caste from Andhra Pradesh, the Vysya, were intermarrying among themselves for about 30 centuries even though there was no sign of geographic isolation. However, caste laws were so intense that "they maintained strict social isolation from their neighbourhood and transferred

to each and every subsequent generation that culture of social isolation. (*India: Same-Caste Marriages Persisted for Thousands of Years and Are Still Going Strong*, n.d.)

Elements like these portray the impact of a socially stratified caste system that affected the biological aspects of a normal human being and the absolute lack of social mobility. The division of Caste into ranked categories establishes a social order that inherently and actively discriminates among members of different ranks. When it comes to the daily realities of north-eastern villages like Hathras, Haryana then caste-based clustering of houses, fines for refusing to clean the drains, an affiliation of Dalits with food and space contamination, physical abuse and cutting off fingers to raise voices against the 'upper caste' and general approval of unjust caste practices is no shocker, and it is harmful to the point that if stratification of this sort exists then, it's caste culture like is fundamentally violent in nature. (*Caste Impunity Vs Legal Protection For The Hathras Rape Victim | Feminism In India*, n.d.)The disparity among the upper class and lower class speaks volumes about the inequalities in terms of education, job opportunities, fundamental rights like freedom of speech, freedom of movement is dictated by the social order and ranking of a person's class. (Cruz-Uribe, 2010)

The very existence of an institution of Caste typifies several social constructs. Upon analysing the other end of caste endogamy, an example of caste exogamy is brought about. In rural northern India, the Jat gotra or got, are known to be an exogamous patrilineal clan and that they share a common patrilineal descent. Caste exogamy has taken the form of institutionalisation within the got community; it involves embedded notions of any got not being able to marry into the community itself. In order to maintain the institutionalised form of the caste system, the curtailment of inter-caste marriages led to a recognisable caste hierarchy. (Chowdhry, 2004) In a survey that took place in the year 2011, Intercaste marriages were (11.6%) higher in the north-eastern region of India, where Haryana is, as compared to other regions of the country. (Narzary & Ladusingh, 2019) On the contrary, The 'Khap' panchayat of central India is a social institution that is in opposition to inter-caste marriages, which is exactly why inter-caste marriages are much lower in the central location. (Chowdhry, 2004) This institutionalisation of caste endogamy and exogamy followed by people in places like Haryana and central India contribute to the social norms that have to be followed with respect to marriages reflect the oppression towards any marriage against their respective ideals. (*Berger & Luckmann - Society as Objective Reality 2.Pdf*, n.d.)

VI. CLASS AND CASTE IN EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION

Instead of some subjective class affiliation, class refers to an objective socio-economic status

focused on employment relations. The class scheme uses occupational details, with the skilled classes at one end of the scheme and the lower farmers at the other end of the non-land ownership. One of the significant characteristics of Caste is its pursuit of traditional occupations. The relationship between Caste and class shines light upon a concept called 'social disadvantage'. This concept implies access to social mobility opportunities, upward mobility chances and the chance to attain movement between class origin and destination. (Vaid, 2017)

Caste and class are associated in the sense that the higher the quality of education(social mobility) is, the higher the quality of occupation will be (class destination). Due to the 'social disadvantage' that lower caste children are put in, there exists persisting influence of Caste on class as well. Since Caste is ascribed from birth remaining in the lower classes for a lower caste person is an assumed natural consequence. (Vaid, 2017) Upon theoretical analysis of educational opportunities provided to children, sociologist Annette Lareau discusses various aspects of the 'Swan' school for upper-class children and 'Richmond' school for the lower-class children. On one side, there is Swan school that gages in providing the most exceptional quality education including infrastructural resources, extracurriculars, tuitions etc., to their students, which is a stark contrast to how a lower-class child (Dalit) attending Richmond school with the bare minimum resources, would experience school. Education is an essential component as 'life chances and opportunities are dependent on it. (Cruz-Uribe, 2010) The current education system of India does provide better opportunities for people as compared to the 20th century. Certain examples of transition into the current caste system are firstly the 1993 'Mandal Case' that increased reservation to 50% of total seats, and till 2003 reservations could be made in private educational institutions by the Indian government. But in 2003, the Honourable supreme court in T.M. Pai Foundation v. Union of India held that the state could not make the reservation of seats in admissions in privately run educational institutions. The justification for the implementation of the quota clause in India's constitution was to encourage social justice, and The aim behind this narrative was not to discriminate against any citizen on the grounds of backwardness and to provide every citizen with equal opportunities. (*Reservation in Education System in India*, n.d.)

A huge aspect of educational and occupational success that is closely related to each other is kinship. Kinship in this context refers to parents and the kind of "life chances" they can provide for their children. When caste endogamy comes into play, kinship is a burden for certain families. Extending the previous analogy of Annette, a parent's class is used to determine the relationship with Caste. This is due to an individual's two ascribed or inherited origin

characteristics that a connection between upper Caste and higher social class is established and vice versa. When a child is provided with better opportunities, it is due to the fact that their parents' social structural location is higher and could possibly lead to having better "life chances". The lack of 'good' education means that the higher-paying jobs are reducing in the same ratio as the workforce is not as educated, which can also be traced back to the Caste of students and the culture under they grew up if the parents are not part of a higher social caste, it makes it that much harder for the student to climb up, while parents already on a higher social class and provide and support their child to rank up easier. This shows that caste endogamy promotes a lack of social mobility and it is robbing lower caste people of equal opportunities. Caste as an institution is disabling the people to have a choice to have an inter-caste marriage that could potentially eradicate the "social ladder" of the traditional Indian caste system. (Cruz-Uribe, 2010)

One of the noteworthy results of the current study is that in India, education is unable to encourage inter-caste marriage. The indirectly proportional relationship between women's education and inter-caste marriage is apparent. Compared to the illiterate, the chances of marrying across the Caste reduces (odds ratio: 0.808–0.793) with the increase of literacy. (Narzary & Ladusingh, 2019) this is purely because of the fact individuals lack agency over their marriages again. This can be traced back to the dependency of an institutional problem that gives parents and their children a huge burden to carry on for generations. To confirm how important of a role parents play in arranged marriages, a study concluded a decade worth increment in the education level of the groom's mother produces a 1.8% increase in the probability of inter-caste marriage, equal to 36% of the sample mean. (*Inter-Caste Marriages Depend on Education Level, but Not That of the Couple | Business Standard News*, n.d.). This infers that if the social stratification on the basis of Caste continues, there will be social inequalities, insufficient opportunities and a vicious cycle that never ends.

The changes in the concepts of rank and equality, along with the growing distinction in the creation of status, power and wealth within each Caste, lead to a re-evaluation of the relative status of different clans and the breakdown within the caste community of the previous relatively coherent, internally consistent ideology. The effort to transform theoretical and ideological equality within a caste into social-structural equality has generated both a cultural, social and political challenge and a political resistance. (Chaudhry, 2013) As always, the family remains as primary aspect is the provision of resources to their offspring, all the while making sure that they are able to retain all the opportunity to gather limited employment positions in the society. However, it is recognised that even though resources used by families reach beyond

Caste and aspects of merit etc., are considered important; affluent upper-caste families are still able to utilise their wealth and class in terms of access to services were typically a lower caste family can't. (Vaid, 2017)

VII. CONCLUSION

The Caste system and its implications have evolved over time, but Caste is ascribed to a person by birth and does not allow any fluidity. It is only because of India's extraordinary socio-cultural setting and the heterogeneity of its states and political structures that caste dynamism has existed and persisted. Religion politics have changed all Indian lives.

In the present-day scenario, relationships between castes are not as restricted anymore. The socio-historical norms that "food" "buses" can't be shared have become practically non-existent in urban India. One of the biggest social constraints that freed lower caste people of India were occupational pursuits. From a time when they were an obligation to only perform certain jobs like blacksmithing and pottery making, it has been seen that many are able to take up jobs that are not bound by their Castes, such as government jobs, teaching, retail and services, and machine repair. When talking about Rural India, Endogamy is still very much existent, but it is relatively lower than it was a few decades back. Literacy and education have thus far seen the maximum improvement as there is a reservation/quota for SC, ST and OBC that allows them to not be restricted towards only attending "Richmond" schools. In India in 2011, the literacy rate of the total scheduled caste population was 66 % due to the reservation policies of the constitution. (*Dalits and Adivasis in India - Statistics and Facts | Statista*, n.d.) The application of the concept " purity and pollution" has lowered to a great extent. However, there is still the problem of social inequality disguised behind the reservation policies. Often the discrepancies faced by the lower caste people are overlooked by the general public solely due to the fact that there is, in fact, a preferential system that reserves seats and implies its extremely important policies on jobs, politics, education etc.; forgetting the fact that the nation needs to support the people who have been suffering since centuries and how important it is morally, to promote an egalitarian society for all. Locals seem to have strongly supported an increase in representation of SCs, STs, and OBCs in elected offices. In a youth survey conducted in 2016, 15-34-year-olds in 19 states across India in support of reservations for (ST/SCs) in jobs, about 30% upper caste Hindus were in support, whereas about 50% Muslim supported these reservations. (*Dalits and Adivasis in India - Statistics and Facts | Statista*, n.d.)

This shows that the institutionalisation of religion, caste, race etc., is not the issue. Rather the embedded 'traditional values' in the disguise of 'caste discrimination' is the heart of the cause.

And while caste-based discrimination has been abolished in India, it seems that Caste has taken the form of competition in modern India for access to resources and power, such as educational opportunities, new jobs, and improving life chances, not the stratification and social order itself. (Deshpande et al., 2010)

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