Varna system

Varna system was a system of classification present in the ancient times. It was prevalent in a rampant manner in the Hindu religion. When this varna system was first put into place, it was essentially a classification of people on the basis of their occupation. It started as a segregation of the people on the basis of their occupation. But it became a system where people were segregated on the basis of their caste, color and creed. It started as a method of segregation but did not rank any classes higher or lower. But as time progressed the Varna system extended its claws to segregation of people and ranking them on the basis of their caste. The system trickled down generations. It became hereditary after some time and the change of profession was not an option for the people. The Varna system gave way to several sub-castes. This gave away to the major caste system we have in India. Although division on the basis of castes is still banned yet some of its forms are still prevalent in India.

Structure of Varna system

Varna system divided the Hindu society in four Varnas. They were as follows: Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and shudras.

Brahmanas

The highest placed varna of all these groups were Brahmans. Brahmans were the custodian of mythical secrets, rites and chants. They were intellectual people. They bore the responsibility to spread knowledge among all. They interpret the Vedas. They also made sure that these teachings reached everybody in their pure form. They performed rites and sacrifices for the kshatriyas and the upper vaishyan society. They generally prayed for wealth, additional children, cattle and well being of the family also. The Brahmans were the patrons of the Vedas. They did all their chores as prescribed by the Vedas and followed the Vedas strictly.
After Brahmans kshatriyas occupied the next place in social hierarchy. Kshatriyas were the warriors or the fighters. They were given a special place in the social hierarchy. This is because it was believed that they do a noble task by serving in the armed forces of their nation. They were true patriots. They were ready to give their life for their land anytime their land requires sacrifice. Kshatriya clan were known to be very brave at heart. They were strong and were respected in the society for their profession. People reposed their faith in them for the purpose of their safety. This is why kshatriya were quite popular among the masses. It is quite intriguing to note that history has seen many kshatriyas who accepted all people including the shudras as their own. This is because they felt that shudras were their countrymen only. Although there was no love lost between these Varnas yet some kshatriyas are known to have accepted the shudras.

The third position in the social hierarchy was occupied by the vaishayas. Vaishayas were the business or traders, as we call them. They were the heart and soul of cities and kept alive the economy of that place. They made things available to all people and that is why their importance in society cannot be noted out. Most of the vaishayas were wealthy businessman and respected among all. Because money is power and money can have everything you will ever need. This is why the vaishayas were favored by the kings and princess. Because it was very well known that if the vaishayas stopped with their activities, the city would come to a halt. There will be no revenue without their cooperation.

Shudras were the last among the four Varnas. They were cast ‘untouchable’ in the society. This is because they were considered impure and adulterated. They performed the menial functions of society which nobody willing to perform. Their role was to keep the city clean, clean the houses of wealthy, polish their shoes; cleaning the toilets and sewage system etc. they lived in very unhygienic conditions and lives a life full of torture. They built the houses of the rich yet they had no roof
on their heads. They were termed as social outcasts. At times, they were not allowed to draw water from the village wells. Life for them was just brutal. The ‘so-called’ upper classes looked down to the shudras as if they were some kind of rats and fleece, waiting to get rid of. They were excluded from the opportunities of a normal social life just because of the Varna they belonged to. Shudras may perform menial jobs according to the upper castes. But for me, I will put it as that they just cleaned the mess of the other three Varna who could not take the duty of cleaning upon themselves. This is just a display of the incapacity of the other three Varnas who could not perform their jobs themselves and asked shudras to do it for them. Moreover, stomping their self esteem is much uncalled for even when they should actually be the ones doing it.

This Varna system had taken a very bad shape in the later periods. It divided the society along racial lines. It devoid many people of opportunities around them. It created a feeling of superiority and inferiority among people. Essentially the Vedic system was all about trust, faith and affection. Unlike the modern society, there was no competition among the Varnas. But the uncalled implications of Verna system like inequality, hostility, animosity and exclusion itched deep into the minds of society.

This Verna system is uncalled for especially in today’s society because it’s purpose will not be understood by people today. Even they will misinterpret this concept and accept the system as that of a ranking system. It creates hatred among people and till now it is prevalent in the society in the form of schedule castes and schedule tribes. The government has uplifted their status to these titles because they want to provide them all the opportunities that the other people are exposed to. Seats are reserved for them in every institution of government. But the question is do we still need a reservation system for some castes when our India has progressed so much. This is still a question of major debate.
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