



# THE ROLE OF CAST AS A MAIN FACTOR OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF SOCIETY IN CURRENT SCENARIO

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## ABSTRACT

*Caste was never static even in ancient and medieval period. Caste system began to change largely with influence of British in India setting up modern institutions like law and order, education, reservation, Industries, legislation brought changes in caste system in economic, political and cultural sphere. Social movement also reduces the superiority of upper caste and raised the position of untouchables.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Caste was never static even in ancient and medieval period. Caste system began to change largely with influence of British in India setting up modern institutions like law and order, education, reservation, Industries, legislation brought changes in caste system in economic, political and cultural sphere. Social movement also reduces the superiority of upper caste and raised the position of untouchables.

Culture has close connection with cast which is main an important content in Indian society. Society never complete without culture. Culture is everything for human being.

Culture is everything which is directly assimilated by man in the society. Every society has particular type of society. Culture is a guideline, platform, direction and life or matter for human beings. Culture is a nature of society having vast scope. Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe,

In short, culture is the total content of the physics-social, bio-social and physic-social products. Man has produced and the socially created mechanism through which these social products operate. Culture is

the systems of knowledge and symbolic communication consisting patterns, explicit and implicit trend. Culture is the sum of total of the learned behavior including collective programming towards the society.

Cast and culture are the two sides of same coins.

After Independence caste system in India, began to change at large level due to following reasons:-

- 1) **Urbanization:** Due to Industrialization in India, modern factories began to grow; people started living in cities & towns for earning wages. Due to collective and integrated nature of work caste began to fade away from daily life.
- 2) **Division of Labour :** Change in Economic system led to development of new economic & market reforms. Money as a market economy led to decline of traditional 'Jajmani System'
- 3) **Geography & occupational change :** Due to development of education which become open to all even Non-Brahmins began to do white colour jobs. Jobs started on individual ability not on caste basis. Thus, role of caste in employment started reducing. Land came into market forces Non Brahmins started to own the Land & become dominant over higher caste.
- 4) **Democracy & Political changes:** Constitutional changes, Law & order, democratic



rights protects untouchables & lower caste from atrocities of higher caste. People become aware of their rights & caste consciousness began to develop. Art 17 in constitution considers untouchability as a sin & thus weakens the gap between upper caste & lower caste.

- 5) **Ritual Sphere:** Due to modernization, Industrialisation & urbanization people began to keep caste as a private affair & does not involve it in public life. Thus harmony in society began to improve in public sphere.
- 6) **Social movement:** Social movement had much impact on caste. People began to mobilize against superiority of higher caste. Various movements like SNDT movement, Aryasamaj, satyashodhak samaj reduced the gap between untouchables & higher caste.

Through there are significant changes in the caste after independence, caste began to persist still today. Caste is becoming in ritual sphere but getting stronger in secular sphere. As in higher

castes due to education & employment caste began to fade away but due to reservation policies in education, employment, caste consciousness is increasing among lower castes.

In India caste is thus in constant process of fission & fusion. In fission, there is requirement of separate caste identity for a group of caste. Who has better position in education and employment. In fusion, there is demand for acquiring same caste identity among a group of caste, in order to raise their position in social hierarchy.

Thus, In case of cultural and structural sphere caste is changing continuously but still maintaining its relevance in modern industrial society in India after Independence.

- 1) Try to write minimum 10 points in short.
- 2) Wind up answer with conclusion with specific suggestions and positive concrete solutions.

### **M.N. Srinivas in his study of caste with context to Indian Society**

M.N. Srinivas in his study of 'Village Rampura' given the concept of dominant caste. He identified the importance of dominant caste in economic & Political sphere of society.

According to Srinivas dominant caste are castes which are lower in ritual hierarchy but having high status & position in social hierarchy. M.N. Srinivas studied the Indian tradition with macro sociological generalization & micro anthropological insight. He studied dynamism of caste & society through

field study & empirical, ethnographic observation. He was influenced by Radcliffe Brown's structural functionalist perspective.

He studied caste as a fluid & dynamic concept. He has given the terms like Sanskritisation, westernization, secularization to understand cultural mobility in caste system. For him caste rises through local hierarchy. He finds functional unity in caste system. In his study of Religion & society among coorgs of South India. He studied caste in micro perspective according to him varna is a broader term & caste & Jatis are local terms. Caste is subdivided into Jatis; based on their occupational differentiation caste is essentially an integrated system. There is a tendency among lower caste to raise its position in ritual hierarchy by giving up activities which consider caste as inferior & acquiring behaviour, ritual, beliefs, habits & style of life of higher caste. Srinivas calls it as Sanskritization.

Srinivas views caste as a segmentary system. Which has certain features like hierarchy, occupational differentiation, pollution, restrictions, in ritual & social sphere, caste panchayat as authority body.

Srinivas in his study of village Rampura given the concept of dominant caste. The caste which are economically, politically & numerically stronger dominate the position in social hierarchy.

Thus Srinivas given a brief study of caste system in India in structural functional and anthropological insights; but has some criticism also –

- 1) Ignores conflict approach towards caste. He focused on functional approach & ignores social institutions like caste which can be dysfunctional at times.
- 2) His views are more status quest.
- 3) He focused more on cultural aspects of caste & ignores structural aspect of it.
- 4) His complete study revolves around caste & ignores other social institutions.
- 5) His study accepts the superiority of higher castes & undermines the inferiority of lower caste.
- 6) His study justifies the pattern of inequality & social exclusion of minority & lower caste.
- 7) His study depicts caste as Hinduised & promotes cultural nationalism.
- 8) On contrary to his study of Sanskritisation there are desanskritising tendencies as well.
- 9) Position of dominant caste in society may lead to social evils like dowry.

Having many limitations to the study of caste of M.N. Srinivas. He studied the sociologist to



better understood Indian society in cultural way & understanding caste mobility, order & change.

- 1) It is necessary to define the 'Sanskritisation' definition given by Srinivas.

Srinivas identified some factors which make caste as dominant caste.

- 1) Land ownership.
- 2) Numerical strength
- 3) Education
- 4) Economic & Political sphere
- 5) High position in society
- 6) Administrative jobs.

According to Srinivas, the castes which are numerically, economically and politically stronger try to influence the other castes in social sphere for examples Marathas in Maharashtra, Jats in Haryana, Patel in Gujarat.

There are some importance of dominant caste in social sphere.

- 1) The caste which is dominant always come forward in conflict resolution in village.
- 2) Acts as integrating agents with other castes.
- 3) Caste mobilization among dominant castes leads to social & political awakening among lower caste.

According to Srinivas caste & politics never had same values. It was the British who first used their personal goals. The term 'Vote Bank' was first used by M.N. Srinivas in his writing vote bank means, loyal of votes who consistently support certain candidate or party to secure communal or political gain. It is a type of divisive politics used to please certain communicable groups especially caste groups.

Initially politics in India during early years of independence was more concerned on social and political empowerment of weaker sections. Justice party in south India, Republic party of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar used political platform for the betterment of lower castes; But slowly politics in India changed towards caste mobilization & gaining material gains through it.

According to Andre Beteilly, westernization in caste makes it weaker & caste in politics makes it stronger.

After independence caste associations were formed with the intent of taking part in election; slowly political parties with separate caste identities formed. For example BSP in Bihar, UP for OBC and SC. Political parties usually make promises to influence caste group in election caste mobilization leads to caste consciousness & makes castes even stronger effect of reservation policies also making caste as strong

mobilizing group. Thus, According to Srinivas dominant caste & Vote Bank has strong power to alter the economic & political structure in society.

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