



Role of Humanities in Indian Society: Contemporary Issues and Challenges

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Abstract:

India offers astounding variety in every aspect of Social life. With ethnic, linguistic, regional, economic, religious, class, and caste diversity, Indian Society is also permeated with immense urban-rural differences and gender distinctions. Differences between north India and south India are significant. It is more like an area as varied as Europe than any other single nation-state. Adding further variety to Contemporary Indian Culture are rapidly occurring changes affecting various regions and Socio-economic groups in disparate ways. Despite these complexities of Indian Society, there is co-existence with harmony and order. Intention of this paper is to highlight different stages of Indian Society throughout the History of India and how it has been shaped by major events.

Keywords: *Social Life, Diversity, Socioeconomic Change, Co-existence, Harmony and Order.*

Introduction:

When studying the History of Indian Society, we need to refer to documents such as government documents, archaeological surveys, and accounts of ancient traveler's and the culture of the Society. And if you wonder why you should study the History of Indian Society, the answer is simple. To know where we came from so that we can figure out where we went to go. That is how challenges and issues that are present for a long time and those that are contemporary can be mitigated. Indian Society is result of different cultures and religions which makes it complex yet divers.

History of Indian Society:

While studying the History of Indian Society we will look at it in three different phases. They are Ancient, Medieval and Modern.

Ancient India:

The study of Ancient India History is important for several reasons. It tells us how, when and where people developed earliest culture in our country. It indicates how they started agriculture which made life secured and settled. It shows how the Ancient Indians discovered and utilized natural resources and how they created the means for their livelihood.

The food gathering society of Paleolithic age was succeeded by the food producing society of Neolithic and Chalcolithic communities. Eventually the Peasant communities developed into the Harappan urban societies. Then we have a break followed by a society of horse users and cattle-herders. The Rig Veda indicates a social formation which was largely pastoral and tribal. The pastoral society became agricultural in later Vedic times, but its primitive agriculture did not yield much, and so the rulers could not get much at the cost of the peasant. The class-divided society comes into full view in post-Vedic times. It came to be known as varna system. This social organization rested on the producing activities of the vaishyas supplemented by those of the shudras. By and large, the social system worked well from the age of the Buddha to Gupta times. Then it underwent a change on account of internal upheavals. Priests and officials began to be granted lands for maintenance, and gradually there emerged a class of landlords between the peasants and the state. This undermined the position of the vaishyas and caused modification in the varna system.

Medieval India:

A number of important changes took place in Indian Society during this period. One of these was the growing Power of a class of people who were variously called samanta, ranak, rautta (rajput), etc., by the contemporary writers. Their origin were very different. Some were government officers who were

increasingly paid not in cash but by assigning to them revenue-bearing villages. Others were defeated rajas and their supporters, who continued to enjoy the revenue of limited areas. Still others were local hereditary chiefs or military adventurers who had carved out a sphere of authority with the help of armed supporters. Still others were tribal or clan leaders. The actual position of these sections varied. Some of them were only the village chiefs, some of them dominated a tract comprising a number of villages, while a few dominated an entire region. They constantly contended against each other, and tried to enhance their sphere of authority and privileges.

In the field of social life, the cast system continued to dominate, despite the challenges posted to it by Islam and loss of political power by the Rajput rulers who were duty bound to protect dharma, which implied among other things, the upholding of the four fold division of society. Although the Nath Panti Jogis and the Bhakti saints vehemently criticized the caste system, they could hardly make a dent in it. A tacit agreement was arrived at in course of time. The criticism of the caste system by saints did not, with some notable exceptions, extend to day-to-day or secular life. While the Brahmans acquiesced in the advocacy of the path of devotion as the way for salvation for all casts, especially for the shorts. However, the Brahmans continue to claim a privileged position for themselves, including the exclusive right to break an educate.

Modern India:

The presence of a colonial government on Indian soil was a complex yet decisive phase in Modern Indian History. Indian Society was caught in a vicious entanglement of religious superstition and social obscurantism. The position of women was distressing. Casteism sought to maintain a system of segregation, hierarchically ordained on the basis of ritual status. During this time, there was a section enlightened Indians started to come forth for the betterment of Society due to spread of education and increased awareness of the world. The middle class and western educated intellectuals started chain of Social Reforms.

Contemporary Issues and Challenges:

We have seen how today's Indian Society has been shaped throughout the History. Now we will take a look at some Issues and Challenges faced by Indian Society.

- Unemployment is a major problem for a Society of this scale. India has the largest number of youth but lacks sufficient jobs for the workable population.
- Education System has not changed in decades. A wide gap between academic education and practical education exists that leads to educated yet unqualified candidates. The New Education Policy 2020 is an attempt by the government to change this scenario.

- Illiteracy presents another challenge. Although free education for all is offered, not everyone is able to free themselves from the jaws of Illiteracy because of structural and social conditions.
- Infrastructure is being developed at a rapid rate but has not reached every corner of the country yet.
- Healthcare is being made affordable by the government for all. But not every component of Society is being benefited by it. Healthcare still remains a challenge for different parts of the country.
- Sanitation is a basic necessity of human life. Having a clean living environment is essential for healthy population. But the issue of cleanliness, even in large cities, remains a challenge to be dealt with.
- Agricultural Distress refers to the economic and social challenges faced by farmers and rural communities due to factors such as low crop yields, fluctuating prices of agricultural produce, high input costs, and indebtedness.
- Environmental Issues such as air pollution, water pollution, food and water shortage, waste management and bio diversity loss pose a major challenge to the Society.
- Digital Divide between urban and rural areas is a major issue for a Society that aims towards a digital world.

- Cast System presents a challenge that has plagued Indian Society since the ancient times that divides people on the basis of their cast for the sake of hierarchy in the Social structure.

Conclusion:

Being one of the oldest Societies in human History, Indian Society has come far. Yet it faces many challenges and issues that are needed to be fixed. Some challenges have been there for millennia and some are contemporary, that come forth with increasing need to mitigate them. The part of the humanities with respect to social legacy is additionally exceptionally important, but it ought to be dealt with care. As has long been the case, political weights can lead to mishandle of scholarly benchmarks in this space

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