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THE **SOCIAL FACT**

ISSUE NO: 20

A MONTHLY SOCIOLOGY BULLETIN



SOCIOLOGY OF DISASTER



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THE SOCIAL FACT

is a monthly bulletin for sociology current affairs which tries to give aspirants a new dimensions in their sociology preparations. The Magazine has been designed in such away that the reading experience is enriching and insightful for the readers.

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HEAD OFFICE

No.97, AF Block, Shanthi Colony, 12th Main Road,
Anna nagar West, Chennai – 600 040
Ph: 9626364444

TRIRUNELVELI

No.106B, 3rd floor, Gilgal Complex, VOC ground opposite,
Palayamkottai - 627 002.
Ph: 9626252500

TRICHY

No.143, 4th Floor, Lakshmi Complex, Salai Road,
Thillai Nagar, Trichy - 620 018.
Ph: 9751500300 / 9786500300

ISSUE 20 | DECEMBER-2023

INSIDE THIS SOCIOLOGICAL BULLETIN

Connecting the dots :

Sociology is a process in making. Everyday newspapers and weekly have many important news, which have sociological angle in subtle form. This chapter helps you to connect those dots and give a clear picture of the reality.

Beyond Basics :

Going beyond basics in studies for examinations is crucial to foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter, enabling more comprehensive and critical thinking. It allows students to tackle complex questions with confidence and adapt to evolving exam formats.

Perspectives :

Beauty of Sociology, as a social science, is its capacity to offer different perspectives of a same topic. This chapter analyses a current topic with a unique social perspectives.



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CONNECTING THE DOTS

- *More than 730 employees of OpenAI have signed a letter saying they may quit and join Sam Altman at Microsoft unless the startup's board resigns and reappoints the ousted CEO.: Marx discussed how workers might feel disconnected or alienated from the product of their labor and the decision-making processes within their workplace. The employees at OpenAI might feel alienated from the board's decisions, especially regarding the ousting of the CEO, leading to a collective response seeking change.*
- *The UK government announced a five-year pilot program to send some asylum seekers to Rwanda for processing. The program's goal is to discourage illegal immigration. However the UK Supreme Court ruled the scheme unlawful, stating that Rwanda is not a safe third country for the government to send asylum seekers: World systems theory looks at global inequalities and the interconnectedness of nations. In the context of migration, it could examine how economic disparities and geopolitical power dynamics influence migration patterns and policies. The UK's attempt to outsource asylum processing to Rwanda might reflect a global economic and political hierarchy.*
- *A bill to outlaw polygamy will be introduced, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced: Polygamy is often rooted in cultural, religious, or traditional practices. This bill challenges such norms, indicating a shift in societal attitudes toward relationships, marriage, and family structures. It might empower women by challenging practices, that can lead to their marginalization within relationships. It can promote women's agency in making decisions about their lives and relationships.*

- *Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese issued a national apology to survivors of the thalidomide drug scandal and their families. The apology recognizes the government's role in the tragedy and its enduring impact. Albanese called the scandal one of the "darkest chapters" in the country's medical history : **The recognition of the thalidomide scandal as one of the "darkest chapters" in Australia's medical history shapes collective memory and national identity. Sociologically, it influences how societies remember and acknowledge past events, shaping their collective narrative and understanding of their history.***
- *The Integrity Institute, an advocacy group report found that that a "well-crafted lie" will get more engagements than typical, truthful content and that some features of social media sites and their algorithms contribute to the spread of misinformation : **Selective exposure theory says that people tend to engage more with content that aligns with their beliefs or biases. False or sensational content might cater to confirmation bias, leading individuals to interact with information that reinforces their existing views, creating filter bubbles within social media. This is a dysfunctional aspect of the digital society.***
- *An MP was recently alleged to accept bribes to target the Prime Minister with questions. The first hour of parliamentary sittings is the "Question Hour", where MPs question ministers to hold the government accountable. Questions are governed by specific rules and need advance notice: **Rational choice theory emphasizes decision-making based on self-interest. In this case, the MP's alleged acceptance of bribes to target the Prime Minister with questions could be seen as a calculated decision driven by personal gain, weighing the benefits against the potential risks or consequences (undermining of democratic processes meant for government accountability.)***
- *Minister of Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said in the parliament "As a menstruating woman, menstruation and the menstruation cycle are not a handicap; so there is no need for paid leave policy, it's a natural part of women's life journey, creating a paid leave policy specifically for menstruation could potentially deny equal opportunities to women" : **Feminist argues that dismissing the need for specific policies***

or accommodations for menstrual health issues overlooks the potential impact on gender equity in the workplace. It's not about considering menstruation a handicap but acknowledging that some women may experience health challenges requiring support during that time.

- *Yet another minor working as a domestic help has been brutalised in Gurugram. The family of three allegedly held her captive, threatened to push her into prostitution, sexually abused her, hit her with hammers, and instigated their dog to bite her: **It shows the broader societal issues where women and girls are disproportionately affected by violence and exploitation within familial settings. Also, the victim's situation raises questions about social support systems and the marginalization of vulnerable individuals and it points to the need for stronger support networks and interventions to protect those who might be isolated and unable to seek help.** (Vina Mazumdar and Veena Das has written extensively about gender violence in India)*
- *Instagram has in recent years increasingly shifted toward video. It has introduced Reels, short videos meant to compete with the video-sharing app TikTok, and it has launched features to encourage people to make videos together. Many artists cite that this change has been nothing short of harmful to artists, especially those who make still images: **Shorter attention spans align with the attention economy, where attention becomes a scarce resource. In an era of information overload, individuals are bombarded with content, leading to a preference for concise and easily consumable information.***



BEYOND BASICS

DESCENT GROUPS

“Why should we go beyond the basics?”

Kinship is the relationship between individuals who are connected through genealogy, either biologically or culturally. When relationships are created through birth it leads to descent groups or consanguineals.

The intriguing concept of Descent holds significant relevance within the realm of the UPSC examination, drawing increasing attention with a surge in related inquiries. Recent trends highlight its importance, urging us to delve deeper into this subject to gain a comprehensive understanding. Exploring Descent thoroughly becomes paramount, considering its prominence and the likelihood of its recurrence in examination.

Descent theory also known as lineage theory came to the fore in the 1940s with the publication of books like *The Nuer* (1940), *African Political Systems* (1940) etc. This theory was in much demand in the discussion of social structure in British anthropology after the 2nd World War. It had much influence over anthropological studies till the mid-60s but with the downfall of the British Empire and its loss of colonies, the theory also sort of fizzled out. However its presence in certain works even now, like descriptions in ethnographic monographs, or its use by French Marxists to understand the lineage mode of production etc. makes it eligible enough for some intellectual enquiry.

Descent theory when it first became popular, it seemed to be a new idea, a revelation, but deeper studies exhibit that it was actually a part of the ongoing changes in ideas and notions which took place in the study of anthropology.

Descent theory, in order to be explained clearly can be divided into two periods, the classical and the modern. Both these periods have three stages each. The first phase of the classical period involves the creation of the new models of descent which was done by Henry Maine and Lewis Henry Morgan. These models were revised and given a new form by some anthropologists of that time, more notably by John F. McLennan. Finally in the third stage these models were empirically made use of in field studies by students of Franz Boas. The classical phase reached a low and remained mere speculations after this but were revived all of a sudden by British Africanists, and the modern phase of descent theory came up. The main issues in both the periods however were the same even though the approach applied to study them differed. The issues were relationship between blood and soil, kinship and territory, family and clan etc.

Main Exponents and Critical Evaluation

Henry S Maine formulates and discusses the patriarchal theory in his work *Ancient Law* (1861) which postulates how society was formed and grounded by families ruled by the eldest surviving male in it. He also talked about how families formed aggregations. With the death of the father, the sons stay behind together creating extended ties of kinship and a broader polity of sorts which formed the basis of societies. It was much later that attachment to territory created rivalry among blood ties, which became a matter of study of social organisation. This extended patriarchal family is known as a unilineal development. It allowed jural stability and endurance. His opposition towards concepts of societies based on kinship and those based on territory became the accepted norm in his subsequent generation. It was McLennan and Morgan who deliberated that

human societies are fundamentally promiscuous rather than being based on family. In fact promiscuity only led to matriliney first instead of patriliney as it first created the mother/ child bond. Patriliney developed much later with the introduction of marriage and legal paternity. The descent model of society developed in two ways, one in which theorists rearranged the fundamentals in a new way to produce assumed patterns of historical development. The second way was by using the model to cultural sources and to ethnographic work of native communities. For example, McLennan and Morgan stressed about the importance of exogamy in clans or totemism, was found to be a common factor in kin groups. Emile Durkheim, in his *Division of Labour in Society* (1893) tried to understand how clan based societies operated in reality. For him, they would be together through mutual solidarity which he named mechanical solidarity. Clans however also created territorial segments. According to him this comes out from division of labour and the complex groups thus formed were united by function. This is what he termed as organic solidarity.

Another development in this theory took place in the early twentieth century where Boas' students made use of Morgan's model in reference to studies they conducted among American Indians. For Example, John Swanton wrote on the social organisation of American Indians. He questioned the historical validity of matrilineal clans as postulated by Morgan. His work showed that many North American tribes were not matrilineal and if at all matrilineal than they were not advanced than family based units as deduced by Morgan. Another ethnographer, Frank Speck demonstrated in 1915 that the Algonkian hunter-gatherers have families and they are also associated to territories. This evidence too refuted Morgan's claims.

R.H. Lowie summarized the critique of Morgan by noting that all data showed that family has been present in all stages of culture. He also noted that

there is no fixed succession of maternal and paternal descent. Both higher and lower civilizations in many cases give importance to paternal side of the family. His final postulation was, family (bilateral) and clan, sib, moiety (unilateral) are rooted in local and consanguinal factor. The prominent British anthropologists of that time, like Rivers and Radcliffe-Brown were clearly associated in their views with their American counterparts, more so with Maine and McLennan than Morgan. The debate about the historical superiority of 'father right' or 'mother right' was done away with. Family as a group and its existence from a very early time was accepted. Clans for the British anthropologists were associated with territories though for Rivers clans are based on common descent than on territory. Morgan had identified the classificatory kinship terminology, though initially was connected to forms of group marriage, later on got linked to the presence of exogamous clans. Rivers too supported this notion later on, in relation to studying kinship relationships in America, India, Africa, Australia etc.

The British and American scholars only differed from each other when Rivers and Radcliffe-Brown started investigating the corporate role of descent groups. Rivers talked about 'descent' in terms of the way in which membership of a group is recognised and also for modes of transmission of property, rank etc. but the second notion was not accepted as these processes do not correspond to each other all the time. Radcliffe-Brown's essay on "Patrilineal and Matrilineal Succession" gave Rivers' points a concrete basis. He noted that social organisations needed endurance and finality. Hence societies required corporations which can be either based on territorial ties or kinship ties. Such kin based ties are unilineal descent groups which describe group membership on a descent criterion. Radcliffe-Brown based his ideas from his work on *The Social Organisation of Australian Tribes* (1931).

It was A.L. Kroeber who however put forward a critique of Radcliffe Brown's study. His critique was mainly on descent theory of Radcliffe Brown, where he disagreed to his claim of placing descent groups at the centre in Australia. For Kroeber, moiety, clan and any other unilateral descent groups play secondary parts in many societies and are not central. Family or clan did not actually have Descent and Alliance Theories Kinship, Marriage and Family any historical character about who followed whom. In societies where clans played an important role, they were always found with basic family units.

The clan model did not die away but came back to the forefront as a functional model known as lineage model. It was basically used for the understanding of contemporary relationships between institutions, more so to study particular African example of segmentary lineage system. The field studies associated with this functionalist model was aimed at analysis of living societies. Hence relationship between territorial group and descent groups or between families and lineages were with the help of this model deciphered as real problems rather than historical issues. Works on the Nuer by Evans-Pritchard and the Tallensi by Meyer Fortes developed theoretical explorations and definition of typologies. In Fortes "The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups" (American Anthropologist, 1953) he submitted the segmentary lineage model as an important offering of British Anthropology of his times. His formulation suggested that the structure of unilineal descent group could be generalised and its position in the complete social system can be viewed. For example he particularly talked about the existing continuous nature of such lineages in Africa and their political role specially where political centralisation was not strong. Thus the social structure would exhibit how territory and descent would connect with each other. During that time, more classificatory studies continued. They tried to look at the variety and types of descent groups, how corporateness could be recognised and the importance to be devoted to unilineality. Leach

however, was against typologizing and even spoke against basic categories like matrilineal and patrilineal. There were others who supported the pattern of sets of variables rather than the increase of types and subtypes.

Counter Theories

Considering that so much of effort and time was used for creating the perfect descent theories, it nevertheless faded out in the 1960s because of the many complications and misunderstandings created by the ideas postulated by the thinkers. In the 1960s in fact it faced the main challenge from a model which was designed by Levi-Strauss based on the primitive social structure. It was referred to as the Alliance theory. This model too agreed to the existence of segmentary organisation of unilineal descent groups but posited the main arena of the system in exchanges of marriage between such exogenous groups. This alternative also critiqued Radcliffe-Brown by offering another interpretation on the relationship between family and clan. For Radcliffe-Brown the universal family created sentiments which took solidarity among siblings to a larger grouping while Levi-Strauss stated the siblings can be linked through the exchange of sisters in marriage. Similarly Edmund Leach argued on Fortes' complementary filiation. For Fortes, ties of affinity while generating importance to ties of descent came under the expression, which Fortes called complementary filiation. For Leach both segmentary lineage systems and primitive states could be identified by the system of preferential unilateral marriage alliances which finally is linked to local descent groups. A neo-Malinowskian model was introduced during the same time which was called the Transactional theory. In his study of a village named Pul Eliya in Sri Lanka, Edmund Leach postulated that the reasoning behind social action was to be seen at the level of individual management of resources for personal gain. This was in contrast to the segmentary lineage model. Human beings and the community's action are based on kinship and descent principles.

For him human beings are dependent on a territory for their livelihood. Thus the conflict between territory and descent was brought up again in Leach's work. However Leach did not distinguish between kinship relations and between individuals though it works as a significant critique of descent theories.

Conclusion:

In contemporary anthropological study of social systems, the descent model has no credibility. It does not look into the local models or notions that societies possess in their own realm. And it is not a 'repetitive series' of descent groups which are essential for organising political and economic events. It however helps in the study of kinship in anthropology, as it gives us ideas about how earlier societies were made up. It also helps in moulding itself into other boarder models of society. Beyond these Descent theories offer no significant contribution in anthropology today



CRIME AND MEDIA

“Why should we go beyond the basics?”

Given the rising intersection of Social media and crimes, the UPSC examination might feature questions probing the multifaceted influence of social media on societal dynamics, reflecting its growing significance in contemporary discourse. Though we may not get direct questions, it help us to give a multi-dimensional answer to the questions related to social media, crimes.

In this aspect, this book summary by Twinkle Siwach, who has a PhD in Media Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi is crucial as it unravels the intricate nexus between crime, media, and the criminal legal system in the digital era

The book : Crime: Social Media, Crime, and the Criminal Legal System (published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2018) by Rebecca M. Hayes and Kate Luther explore connections between crime and media. The book discusses how the public utilizes new media to learn about incidents of crime, document criminal motivations by perpetrators, aid law enforcement investigations and react to injustices in the criminal legal system.

Important scholars in the field of crime, criminology and media studies such as Ray Surette, Chris Greer, Stuart Hall, Yvonne Jewkes, and others are engaged. It contains a rich discussion on how crime is represented in an era of global interconnectedness. An interesting dimension is introduced about how images are reshaping our universe of information about the world in general and criminology in particular. Intervention by scholars bringing in examples from their local contexts will enrich the discussion and broaden our understanding of the effect, impact and influence of rapidly changing new media technology on the criminal legal system.

Hayes and Luther use keywords like image, iconography, information flows, the counter-visual, social media, signs, and inscriptions of gender, race, sexuality and class in cultural contests to mark the contours of the crime and media nexus. They discuss the characteristics of social media; its nature of amplifying the information, allowing people to instantly see and respond to the information posted online. Also, how social media ties all media together. Additionally, trends in media consumption, and the application of theories such as “social construction”, “moral panics”, “folk devil”, and “cultivation theory” are discussed. The authors make an interesting observation that “the internet should not be seen as just technology but as technologically enabled social practice”.

In the digital age, there is certainly greater use of social media platforms, as the authors argue, with increased access to social media sites with the use of smartphones and tablets. Swati Chaturvedi’s work, “Trolling Trends” published in the Indian context may provide a different perspective in understanding how the rapidly changing new media dynamics are influencing the informational flow, generating fake news or misinformation. Speed and time are important dimensions of these emerging dynamics, giving birth to new forms of criminal activity while constituting potential audiences in a historically impossible manner.

The interactive new media have allowed audience participation, as authors discuss, by sharing real-time information on social media. They are posting live videos, images, locations, times, etc. The authors could enrich this discussion by including a point on how it creates a plethora of information for the police and the state. Besides, as the authors point out, citizen journalism is also intensifying. Individual journalists bringing news coverage reportage on social media platforms is also a unique phenomenon. Barkha Dutt’s MoJo Story, Ravish Kumar’s YouTube channel and Faye D’Souza’s Instagram page “News that Should be Headlines” are cases in point.

The impact of the internet on courts is an under-researched area, although Hayes and Luther discuss it in the US context. However, both police and court are adapting to the new media technology; making it optional for people to register online FIR, telecasting live the courtroom proceedings and uploading the judgment online. Recently, as witnessed how during the COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdown the trials, court proceedings, etc. were conducted online. It reflects the influence of technology on the criminal legal system. However, one must not assume easy access to required resources. Sherry Turkle's work appears relevant here, as the scholar rightly indicates that connecting to the networked systems of communications has become a necessity as it is reshaping our relations and imaginations around the informational universe.

The readers shall agree with the author's point that media representations influence our common understanding of who is and is not a criminal. Visual media representations such as crime serials, cinema, and web series in particular re-enforce our popular imaginations. Likewise, they call attention to changing social construction of victims and see potential in social media to act as a platform for counter-publics. However, such counter-public engagement is often limited and varies proportionately case by case. Instead, it may end in creating an echo chamber, particularly when it lacks mobilisation or support from relevant social networks.

Having said that, one will not be wrong in opining that we live in a heavily media-influenced environment. In that context, the book is a must-read for scholars working in the field of crime and/or media studies. For scholars using the content analysis method, studying effects research or observing media production processes, it is a suggested reference. It is a compact yet easy-to-read book for general readers, college students and classroom references.





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PERSPECTIVES

THE IDEA OF INDIA AND DALIT

This ‘Perspective’ column gives us the idea of India and the idea of Dalit and the complex relations between them. This article is written by Manas Patra, who is a PhD research scholar in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Gandhinagar.

Introduction:

“What is the idea of India”? I posed this question to some of my colleagues and friends at IIT Gandhinagar. The responses I received are personal, positioned, situational, observational and experiential despite the presence of a vast literature on this specific subject.

The idea of India is a murky terrain given that it does not render an appropriate conceptual delineation for every “Indian citizen,”[i] irrespective of their caste, colour, creed and religion. The adhesive structure through which our democratic foundation and the cardinal republican virtues are held together, albeit loosely, is not cohesive. The reason it is not cohesive can be attributed to the fact that the “supposed” and “polarising” idea of India lives in “fragments” (fragments of caste, class, religion, high culture, low culture, elite, subaltern, power, politics and identities) since there is no homogeneous, uniform and singular vision of India. Religious divides, caste politics, ethnic turmoil, hierarchy by descent, and multiple pockets of indigenous identities have disintegrated this very idea into communitarian puzzles and made them a site of contention among various social groups. Along these lines, it would not be far off to stress that an “idea of

India” is an imagined and nonviable idea of India in both theory and praxis, at least in today’s politics. It is a sum of beleaguered loci of propagandist power play among divisive groups, pushed by a common agenda to formulate a singular identity of India predicated on “self-motivated narratives”.

To borrow Gopal Guru’s term, these distinct locales of identity politics are analogous to a “cracked mirror” where separate pieces are clamped together through a common centre of gravity! In relation to such trajectories, does a Dalit envisioned India fall into the same trap? If not, in what ways is it different from the above agendas?

The Idea of India: Nationalist Pontification and Contemporary Renditions

India, as a nation, is long held to be the aggregate of paradox and contrariety. It is a country that, according to Shashi Tharoor, showcases a “nebulous quality which the analyst of Indian nationalism is ultimately left with; to borrow a phrase from Amartya Sen, it is an idea — the idea of India”. However, Amartya Sen is not the only Indian scholar who endeavoured to rediscover and reaffirm this idea of India that is essentially a byproduct of the elite nationalist discourse. Through the writings of Meghnad Desai, Ramachandra Guha, Sunil Khilnani, and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, an attempt was made to reconfigure the scattered nationalist narratives into a unified discourse to re-glorify this “hackneyed” idea in a more academically sophisticated manner by predominantly taking four tropes into account: “antiquity-continuity, diversity-unity, massivity-democracy and multi-confessionality-secularity”. Such attempts to proffer this “Indian oneness” are categorically lambasted by other scholars for narrowly concentrating the idea of India into the binary of Gandhi and Nehru. Perry Anderson is one of those theoreticians whose vitriolic counter-narratives carved a separate niche in historical studies. Condemning Gandhi and Nehru, Anderson, in his book, “The Indian Ideology”, mentioned “the idea of a subcontinental unity stretching back six thousand years” rooted in Nehru’s “impression of oneness” has not gone

away. Further, about the “Congress party’s leap of faith”, Gandhi himself believed that “India was one undivided land made by nature, in which we were one nation before they came to India” and “we Indians are one as no two Englishmen are”. Moreover, Anderson posited that India had never been a united nation, and any idea perpetrated on this line was a fabrication. Also, Indian nationalism had a religious underpinning as the Congress was a Hindu majoritarian party with celebrated leaders like Gandhi and Nehru who could never escape their deep-seated Hindu proclivity. This way, the recent efforts to homogenise the idea of India through Gandhi and Nehru are nothing but a facile and unipartite experiment. Albeit the fact that Anderson has been criticised by scholars like Nivedita Menon for being ignorant of Indian histories due to his colonial hangover, rooted in the superiority of the British ideology, it is nevertheless incontrovertible that “the potpourri of an Indian self”, can be better explicated through “Indian strangeness” than mechanically executed “Indian oneness”.

The Dalit Idea of India

As suggested, the idea of India is essentially a corollary of the elite nationalist discourse. There were no other stakeholders when this idea was being manufactured and promulgated. Later, various social scientists who rediscovered this idea relied heavily on “sacrosanct” nationalist politics. This way, the entire phenomenon was not mutually agreed upon by every Indian citizen, regardless of their social identity and economic standing. Thus, when this idea of India wrapped up in an elitist makeover was highlighted and pushed down people’s throats, the responses and reciprocation were lukewarm from the marginalised groups like the Dalits. Since this very idea is still at play, there are resentments and restricted fulminations against it even to this day! Such an idea of India is exclusionary and invidious that does not pay heed to the Dalit voices and consider their stories and concerns noteworthy. Therefore, the elite idea of India, originating from highbrow nationalist ideologies, has no place for the Dalits. These nationalist ideologies, according to Gopal Guru, are quintessentially

expressed through the language of “Desi”, which is posed as an Indian answer to the language of “Derivative” exported from the West. However, highlighting “Desi” as an “Indian answer” is troublesome because “Desi” incorporates the elements of Western-influenced Indian literati and disregards everything that sits beyond the traditional circle of power. Hence to counter both “Desi” and “Derivative”, a “negative language” was deployed. This “negative language” seeks to dismantle Western elitism. In addition, it negates the mechanical language of unity posited by the nationalist tradition and complements the language of “Beyond”.

The idea of a Dalit India is located in this language of “Beyond” at the fringes and margins of India. The goal of “Beyond” is to discuss anything that does not fit into the paradigm of “Desi” and “Derivative”, such as Dalit literary, social, and political imagination, due to their persistent separation from the belligerent Brahmanical hegemony. Nevertheless, the language of “Beyond” is not given adequate notice in the nation’s scholastic undertakings and customary political practices. Hence to bring this language of “Beyond” to the forefront, scholars like Ambedkar, Phule and Periyar used the idea of “Derivative” since this is the language that literati embrace as it reeks of intellectual snobbery. Nonetheless, “Desi”, being refined and arguably Indian, is like “Derivative” in many ways. Then, why did people like Ambedkar use “Derivative” rather than “Desi”? Postcolonial critics like Ganguly blame Ambedkar for insinuating such hypocrisy. However, Gopal Guru believes, “If Ambedkar did it, what was wrong”? The reason he resorted to “Derivative” is that he was denied access to locally available “Desi”. He did not blindly imitate “Derivative” but used it to shed light on the underground Dalit voices. To Ambedkar, the idea of Dalit India cannot be realised even through constitutional validation if such Dalit voices are not mainstreamed. Because, in most cases, the constitution would only work as a piece of document to subvert humanist ideals, not as a source of equality!

Following the same lines, Sukhadeo Thorat makes a sharp distinction between the constitutional idea of India and Ambedkar's idea of India. According to him, the constitutional idea of the nation is vested in "the conception of nation/nationalism stemming from the Constitution and its Preamble". Ambedkar's idea of India is manifested in the "conception of nation/nationalism through the essence of the constitution" as well as his idea of "consciousness of kind". Ambedkar's idea of Dalit India is imperative since the constitution has failed to uphold its virtues. This idea is impossible without "constant communication", and such communication, in turn, hinges on the idea of fraternity. Since fraternity promotes "a mental attitude of fair play and equality towards one's compatriots", the lack of it "undermines all efforts to strengthen the nation". Therefore, if our nation is devoid of fraternity, we will never be able to achieve the substantial idea of a nation. The Dalit idea of India, manifested in Ambedkarite principles, prioritises this sense of fraternity among Indian citizens as one and united sans the customary hierarchy of power. Yet, caste divides have forced 'fraternity' to remain as a preambular virtue, barring it from coming to fruition in real life and hence rendering the idea of India virtually pointless.

The Idea of a Dalit India:

Another alternative approach against this elitist makeover of the idea of India is the "Dalitization" of India. "Dalitization" is not a radical initiative against people's typical understanding. It is not tantamount to "Sanskritization" or "Hinduization". Instead, according to Selvin Raj Gnana, "Dalitization is the process of getting the provisions vested for Dalit-Bahujans". The term was popularized by Kancha Ilaiah in his book, "Why I am not a Hindu?" Ilaiah believes, as Brahmanical superiority traces their supposed legality in the Hindu scriptures, the Brahmanical nationalism that is evinced through the usurpation of politico-bureaucratic power, similarly seeks its justification through Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. Figures like Vivekananda and Gandhi

shrewdly made attempts to reinforce the Brahmanical hegemony through the systemic reiteration of the Vedas that further legitimised and solidified the “Chatur-Varna” system. Contrary to the Brahmanical forces, the idea of a Dalit-Bahujan India stresses democratic social systems. This democracy is not, however, constitutionally mandated “nugatory” democracy since the actualisation of the constitution remains “the political horizon that Ambedkarite and other humanists fight towards”. Instead, this democracy underscores the egalitarian values through which every citizen can be free and equal, minus their caste identity. Besides, the idea of a Dalit India seeks changes through the reformation of the social order by abolishing private property, instilling faith in its labour power and rescuing the “oppressed” even within the Brahmanical order, such as the women who are only deemed useful for production purposes. I believe the fundamental difference between the “Dalit idea of India” and the “idea of a Dalit India” is that while the former underscores the importance of a reciprocal dialogue between the ‘privileged’ and the “marginalised” castes and equal participation of both to achieve fraternity, the latter takes matter into its own hands and strives to disrupt the Brahmanical order even when the participation in social dialogues is not equal and identical.

Is Indian Democracy the Answer?

Speaking of India’s capacity to amalgamate various heterogeneous units into a homogeneous whole, Nehru once famously remarked:

“India is a country held together by strong but invisible threads ... a myth and an idea, a dream and a vision, and yet very real and present and pervasive” – Jawaharlal Nehru

The Nehruvian idea of India, rooted in the nonpareil principles of democracy, is quintessentially touted as a heterogeneous, cosmopolitan, and broad-gauged idea of India. The socialist and secular outlooks of Nehru, which were petrified

in his lived experiences through a colonial-feudal duopoly and manifested in the Congress juggernaut, had played a significant part in limning such an idea. However, questions like to what extent the idea was successful, or was it successful at all, had catapulted myriads of alternative discussions in India's politico-historical deliberation. If India is a democracy, what kind of, and whose democracy is she? Does constitutionally – validated democracy do justice to her stated ideals of equality and sovereignty? Being astounded by the oddity of the spectacular yet turbulent India, Macaulay called her “the strangest of all political anomalies” (Miscellaneous Writings and Speeches, 2008). Just like the state herself, democracy in India functions incongruously and bizarrely. Shashi Tharoor put it brilliantly: “Amid India's myriad problems, it is democracy that has given Indians of every imaginable caste, creed, culture, and causes the chance to break free of their lot”. Thus, Indian democracy is a source of both hope and hopelessness. It behaves as a gift and a scourge: a gift for those who can manipulate power politics and a scourge for those who are manipulated by power politics.

Despite being a peremptory endeavour to tie India's miscellany into a common thread, the Nehruvian idea of India turned out to be trifling and hollow theoretical sermons of a polarising visionary. India, as we know, has systematically become a nation-state of divides, differences and diversion where the hegemonic social gradation of the “Haut Monde” against the perennially disenfranchised “Subalterns” like the Dalits permeates through every fabric of her being. A remark from Ambedkar in 1949 apropos of such a longitudinal division of power, wealth and capital in favour of a handful of people would provide context to the argument:

“In politics, we will be recognising the principle of one man, one vote and one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man, one value. How

long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions” ? These contradictions, exhibited by Ambedkar, have squandered Indian democracy as the common melting point of assorted social, politico-religious and ethnic identities. Instead, it has exposed a massive hole of how India, through her democratic institutions and constitutional strength, can never survive on and with a single idea of nation and nationality or as a simple geopolitical unit thronged with people. Taking these exact anomalies as a point of reference, Ambedkar commented, “A nation is not a country in the physical sense, whatever degree of geographical unity it may possess. A nation is not a people synthesised by a common culture derived from a common language, common religion or common race.....” This is a radical departure from how a nation is generally imagined in today’s variegated political contexts. The idea of a nation can no longer be demonstrated within a singular framework, at least within the milieu of common nationalist sentiment, since it parleys with power exercised by only a handful. Although a nationalist need not necessarily be a power-monger, they can never deny the deep undercurrents of chauvinism that run parallel with the over-amplified national glory-hunting.

This way, a nationalist often runs the risk of being a “true blue dyed-in-the-wool” conservative in many instances. Unfortunately, though, due to our conventional societal constructs, we tend to glamorise nationalism as the only and true binding force of a nation, irrespective of many socio-economic divides. Suffice to say, this linear, sketchy and cursory understanding of nationalism has quite patently catered to the rise of Hindutva politics in the modern Indian nation over the past decades. Thus, nationalism should no longer be the sole binding agency because, when forced upon people, such an idea may result in the opposite of what nationalism intends to achieve. Rather, the idea of a nation should be an aggregate of the feelings “of the corporate sentiment of oneness that makes those who are charged with it feel that they are kith and kin.....

It is a feeling of ‘consciousness of kind’ that binds those within the limits of

kindred. It is a longing (a strong feeling of wanting together) to belong to one's own group....”

Conclusion – The Negation of an Elite Idea of India

Amid all these fragmented ideas of India, one crucial question takes the most limelight: is the negation of an elite idea of India possible? Does “negation” entail dismantling the entire order, which is dated, divisive and discriminatory? Also, what are the ways to achieve such a state if it is possible? Notwithstanding the ‘Savarna’ chicanery in fabricating dishonest Dalit sympathy in several social, economic, and political spaces, the primary focus of the privileged castes lies in maintaining the status quo for all intents and purposes by propagating their “elite” idea of India. But is this what we need? Certainly not! I believe what we need is a combination of both the “idea of Dalit-Bahujan India” and the “Dalit-Bahujan idea of India”. This blended idea, contrary to its apparent appearance, is not retaliation against the ongoing Brahmanisation in a growing Hindutva paradigm. Instead, it is a recantation from an asymmetry of domination and subjugation instilled in the postcolonial Indian psyche by the contours of Brahmanism. The Dalit idea of India, thus, does not focus on the Dalit hegemony of the country's social order per se; rather, the idea entails equality and equity in every walk of life envisaged by Dalit politics. To what extent we can achieve this idea by negating the Hindutva behemoth depends on the progress of the collective Dalit resistance and the unfolding of future events in India. However, hoping for a positive “peripeteia” in such a large and continuous struggle for equality would be nothing short of a figment of romantic imagination.



SOCIOLOGY OF DISASTER

Sociological study of disasters unveils the underlying social vulnerabilities and inequalities within communities. It highlights how marginalized groups, due to socioeconomic disparities or other factors, bear the brunt of disasters, fostering a deeper understanding of societal injustices. Disasters, whether natural or human-made, unfold within a complex sociological framework, impacting individuals, communities, and societies in multifaceted ways:

Social Vulnerability and Marginalization: Disasters often exacerbate existing social vulnerabilities and inequalities. Sociologically, marginalized communities, often socioeconomically disadvantaged or minorities, bear a disproportionate burden in disasters due to limited resources, lack of access to information, and inadequate infrastructure.

Community Resilience and Solidarity: Sociologically, disasters can foster community resilience and solidarity. They can bring people together, strengthening social bonds, collective action, and mutual support as communities unite to cope with the crisis and rebuild.

Government Response and Social Trust : Sociological analysis of disasters involves examining government responses and their impact on social trust. Effective disaster management builds trust in institutions, while inadequate responses can erode confidence and foster social unrest or criticism.

Media Representation and Perception : Sociologically, media representations shape public perception and responses to disasters. The portrayal of affected individuals, rescue efforts, and post-disaster recovery influences public attitudes, donations, and policy discourse.

Displacement and Social Disruption : Disasters often lead to displacement and social disruption. Sociologically, this can result in temporary or long-term changes in social structures, migration patterns, and challenges in rebuilding social networks.

Psychosocial Impacts and Mental Health : Sociological analysis of disasters encompasses the examination of psychosocial impacts on individuals and communities. Disasters can lead to trauma, grief, and mental health challenges, requiring social support systems and interventions.

Policy and Institutional Changes : Sociologically, disasters prompt reflections on policies, governance, and institutional frameworks. They often catalyze changes in disaster preparedness, emergency response systems, and policy initiatives addressing social vulnerabilities exposed during crises.

Cultural Adaptation and Resilience : Sociologically, disasters can prompt cultural adaptations and resilience strategies within societies. Communities may adapt traditional practices, knowledge, and cultural norms to cope with and recover from disasters.

Long-Term Societal Transformation : Disasters can trigger long-term societal transformations. Sociologically, they may prompt changes in social norms, attitudes toward risk, environmental policies, and community planning to prevent future disasters.

A sociological analysis of disasters involves examining the interconnectedness of social structures, cultural practices, institutional responses, and the lived experiences of individuals and communities, highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of disaster impacts and recovery.

Several sociological thinkers and scholars have contributed to understanding disasters and their sociological implications:

Enrico Quarantelli: Known for his work in disaster sociology, Quarantelli extensively studied the social aspects of disasters. His research emphasized the importance of social behavior, organizational response, and recovery processes following disasters.

Kai Erikson: Erikson's work focused on the sociological aspects of disasters, particularly in examining the social impacts of technological disasters and how communities cope and recover from such events.

Lee Clarke : Clarke's contributions to disaster sociology include research on social responses to disasters, understanding the role of risk perception, organizational responses, and the social construction of disasters in shaping public policies and responses.

Diane Vaughan : Vaughan's work on the social construction of disasters explored how disasters unfold as a result of organizational and institutional failures, focusing on the sociological dimensions of decision-making and structural factors leading to disasters.

Anthony Giddens : While not solely focused on disasters, Giddens' theory of structuration provides insights into how social structures and individual agency intersect during crises, offering a framework to understand the sociological dynamics within disasters.

These thinkers and scholars have contributed to the sociological understanding of disasters, shedding light on various aspects such as social behavior, institutional responses, organizational failures, risk perception, community resilience, and the social dimensions of disaster preparation, response, and recovery.

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FOR CONTACT



SIVARAJAVEL IAS ACADEMY
AN IDEAL INSTITUTE FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAMS

No.97, AF Block, Shanthi Colony,
12th Main Road, Anna Nagar West,
Chennai – 600 040.

Ph: 9626364444, 9626369899

TRICHY

No.143, 4th Floor,
Lakshmi Complex, Salai Road,
Thillai Nagar, Trichy -620018.
Ph : 9751500300 / 9786500300

NELLAI

No.106B, 3rd floor, Gilgal Complex,
VOC ground opposite,
Palayamkottai - 627 002.
Ph : 9626252500 / 9626253300