

An Exploration into the Identarian Theory and Politics in the Context of the Indian Subcontinent: Unpacking the Development of Cultural Integration in the 21st Century

Ashhwika Soni

Abstract: *This research project aims to examine the interplay of race, ethnicity, and caste on the Indian constitution. It will provide an analysis of politics in context of the Indian subcontinent and unpack the development of cultural integration in the twenty-first century. Through critically engaging with secondary literature sources and discussing insights derived from identarian theory and policy analysis, this study uncovers the colonization and decolonization in regard to the Indian legal system. Through this examination, the impact of colonial legacies in perpetuating the disparities rooted in themes of race, ethnicity, and caste has been analyzed.*

Keywords: Race, Ethnicity, Caste, Cultural Integration, Identarian theory, colonization, decolonization, disparities.

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to: a) Examine how identarian theory and politics interject in race, ethnicity, and caste in India. b) Investigate the impact of the history in regard to colonization and decolonization in the Indian legal system. c) Analyze the contribution of key texts including but not limited to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1988), Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), and James Manor's essay "Ethnicity and Politics in India.". d) Review secondary literature and provide an in-depth analysis on the legal policies that shaped the nation.

2. Discussion

The Indian constitution, adopted in 1950 was designed to provide a framework of basic fundamentals, proceedings, rights, and government in regard to the parliamentary system (Constitution of India| National Portal of India). The threads of race, ethnicity and caste continue to weave and shape the legal systems of India and of the world. The constitution was formed as the aftermath of Independence in India. It was a break from the British Colonial rule and the partition of the country through socio-political wars. The assembly, led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar set to create a foundational document that would base the democratic governance of India and protect citizen rights (Prakash and Ambedkar). Additionally, the constitution aimed to build and enhance the rights and duties ("S.R.R. & C.V.R. Govt. Degree College"). This included the right to equality, freedom of speech, and protection from discrimination ("Profile - Fundamental Rights - Know India: National Portal of India"). The constitution also incorporated provision to address the historical injustices faced by social groups and communities through affirmative action and special provisions (Singh). Caste in India has been regarded as a major factor of discrimination since generations (Sankaran et al.). It's a constructed hierarchy that historically determined an individual's social status and occupational rights. In an attempt to rectify these historical injustices, mandatory affirmative action through reservations in education and government jobs for these individuals was

placed. This aimed to promote social mobility and **equality before the law**. Supporting this, the book titled 'Can the Subaltern Speak' by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak critiques the western culture's representation of Subaltern groups and the representation of these individuals (Spivak). In this book, Gayatri highlights the misrepresentation of marginalized communities and subaltern voices through the power and authority of published academics and the colonial discourse. The book highlights the case study: Rani of Sirmur. The Rani (queen) of Sirmur was a female ruler who governed the state of Sirmur which is present day Himachal Pradesh, India. This case study shows that Rani's rule was often undermined and overshadowed by the British colonial narratives. Colonial Archives aid in reconstructing historical narratives but often present bias favoring the British administrators. Her subaltern status and gender bias has contributed to the lack of appropriate and respectful representation of her in the reports. The caste study begs to question what other individuals and voices have been marginalized in traditional historical narratives. It advocates for a better and more nuanced representation of marginalized groups among scholars and academics. Similar themes of western hegemony are presented in the book titled 'Orientalism' published in 1978 by Edward Said (Bierman). Orientalism refers to a term that critiques the western texts that represent the east as exotic and inferior (Shabanirad and Marandi). The book introduces western perceptions of the East, particularly middle east and Asia. It views the concept of orientalism through the way in which western societies have historically viewed and represented the eastern societies. Much like in the book 'Can the subaltern speak' this too explores the colonial domination although it is presented through perpetuations in the role of orientalism. Furthermore, the book highlights the way in which orientalism has permeated in academic and literary disciplines. It also emphasizes the creation of the ideology that the west is civilized while individuals of the east are considered barbaric. It reinstates the idea that the production of knowledge and the distorted view of eastern societies has been molded to serve western interest. This can be confirmed through the article published by Lila Abu Lughod titled 'Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?' (Lughod). In his

Volume 13 Issue 11, November 2024

Fully Refereed | Open Access | Double Blind Peer Reviewed Journal

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article, Abu Lughod focuses on the western portrayal of Muslim woman. Lughod argues that the western media represents these women in a light that suggests they need 'saving' from their culture. However, the reality is that it is a symbol of respect and a part of the culture. This shows the way that western hegemony dominates global perception of individuals. The idea that western media presents is problematic and ignorant of cultural and religious practices of these women. This perpetuates the cultural imperialism and notion of superiority that western cultures believe in. Lughod argues that these representations are based on superficial knowledge of the cultures and focuses on the ethnocentric viewpoint of these western cultures. Ethnic groups are a major factor when looking at Indian politics and the legal system. The book titled 'Ethnicity' and Politics in India" by James Manor analyses the role of ethnicity when shaping political dynamics in India (Manor). It is based in the post-colonial period and explores the historical factors contributing to the ethnic divide in India such as the British colonial rule and partition. In the book, James states that ethnic mobilization is usually intersected with regional issues and influenced by contemporary political contexts. An example of this is presented in various case studies mentioned such as the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu, the Gorkhaland movement in West Bengal, and the Bodoland movement in Assam. These movements derived from similar ethnical motivations and the need for rights under the governance of their political leaders. During many elections, regional state parties like the DMK in Tamil Nadu, and the Telegu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh emphasize ethnic and regional identities to gain support and influence policy. In some cases, political leaders and parties exploit ethnic divisions for electoral gains which can lead to injustice and a greater political divide. Ethnic and religious identities are intertwined and hence some ethnic groups struggle with underrepresentation of their ethnicity leading to violence and in result social imbalance. This calls for greater autonomy and statehood due to regional disparities. The rise in religious nationalism often times influences the management of identities for these ethnic groups. It also explores reservation policies for individuals who are of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). These aimed to promote equality and social justice but has been a topic of debate in recent times. Addressing issues of race, ethnicity, caste through the legal system has been subject to constant scrutiny. The impacts of which can be seen through judicial decisions, law enforcement, and legislative measures. An example of this is the case of Rohit Vemula ("Caste and Higher Education: The Rohith Vemula Case"). He was a PhD student, studying at the University of Hyderabad. His case revealed that the discrimination and social exclusion on the basis of cast is a matter of deep concern. The deceased was harassed, kicked out of university, and denied the scholarship of INR 25,000 per month that he used to provide for his family. The suicide letter written by the deceased explicitly stated the neglect and discrimination of Dalit Individuals during admissions. In the lines, he wrote "Please serve 10 mg of Sodium Azide to all Dalit students at the time of admission... Supply a nice rope to the rooms of all Dalit students.". This statement was key to understanding the struggles he faced as a Dalit student in the university. His death brought about mass protest for equality and gained massive attention from multiple political leaders in the nation.

The protests were to advocate for the rights and dignity of the deceased. Similarly, the Dalit movement led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar advocated for the rights of the Dalits, highlighting the important of education for these individuals. He too fought for the Scheduled Casts and Scheduled Tribes to be recognized as individuals who have a historical and systematic disadvantage. In legal systems, historical laws are still considered while they predate contemporary standards of justice and equality that we see today. In the historically famous case of Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973), the supreme court stated that the constitution of India is a 'living document' and the fundamental rights cannot be altered by amendments (Sikri et al.). This case set a precedent for the protection of fundamental rights which are crucial for addressing discrimination.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper provides an analytical approach to the texts of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Can the Subaltern Speak, Edward Said's Orientalism, James Manor's essay "Ethnicity and Politics in India", and 'Do Muslim women Really Need Saving' by Abu Lughod. It explores the interplay between identity theory and politics within the sub context of race ethnicity and caste in India. The paper examines the Indian legal system, social frameworks, policies and political notions of the nation. The analysis of various cases and case studies provided critical insight into the representation of marginal and subaltern groups. The secondary literature review provides a comprehensive understanding of legal proceedings and the aspects that influence India's development. Overall, these arguments explore theoretical perspectives in addressing and advocating contemporary issues of representation and justice in India.

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