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UNTOUCHABILITY AS A FUNCTION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL VARIABLES

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Indian Society is composed of various religious and caste groups. These castes and religions carries and creates social and cultural diversities. The key to these diversities among the perceptions of people of different regions involves not the level of mental ability, but the culture in which they were brought up. These socio-cultural diversities are directly related with the forces of integration and disintegration of the nation. Therefore, the attitude of untouchability which is directly related to the disintegration, should be discouraged.

In this paper an attempt is made to determine the nature and effectivity of some socio-cultural variables in affecting the attitudes of people towards untouchability and their consequent behaviour. The selected socio-cultural factors under the study refer to (i) Urban-rural strata of culture (ii) Culture determinism of conformity versus rebellion (iii) High and low levels of economic status and (iv) High caste and scheduled caste.

The variable of 'culture stratum' refers to culture as it exists in various strata due to variation of material possessions and technology and science as means of such productions.

Being cultural to the Indian context refer to actualization of culture through religion which stands for forgiveness, control of passions and ideas, abstinence from property misappropriation, cleanliness of mind, body and spirit, control of senses, cultivation of reasonableness, acquisition of knowledge, truthfulness, mastery over anger and many others like this, whereas the uncultural means non-conformity of cultural traditions in the name of progress, enlightenment and modernity.

Another variable of study is culture determinism which means that culture determines personality either by conforming or rebelling the socio-cultural norms prevailing in the system. It plays a crucial role in the development of personality, especially in influencing the frequency with which certain traits will be found, within the various cultural groups.

Economic status, as a variable, possesses cherishing of things because of their material value. It procures the person a place in society and stratifies the society according to the amount and source of income which are usually derived from a set of occupational activities, the ownership of the property or both.

The variable of caste exists both as a group and social system. It, as a concept, is based on a segmental division of society, a hierarchy with restrictions on feeding and social intercourse. It has civil and religious disabilities and privileges for different sections of society.

Untouchability

The practice of untouchability in the Indian Caste System, though racial and ritualistic in origin, also derived from economic relations and the conflict of interests of upper and lower castes. However, since untouchability was ideologically sanctioned, its abolition depends not only on proletarianization of untouchables, but also on the westernization and secularization of the Indian masses. Until the impact of westernization, secularization, urbanization and industrialisation is fully felt, untouchability is likely to persist unofficially in India regardless of legal abolition. (Gandhi 1983). During the last 40 years, scheduled caste people have been given privileges less on humanitarian and more on political grounds. Therefore, caste has emerged as a strong political factor due to its linkage with democratic value (Madan et. al. 1967) and caste prejudices remain stronger than religious prejudices in possession of power (Prakash and Reddy 1967). It has been noted that people of high caste are more advanced economically and politically and have stronger attitude towards untouchability. It has observed that high caste people are less ethnocentric than those of scheduled castes but people of scheduled castes try to develop greater prejudices against high caste people (Dubey 1978). It has been noted that education demotes the attitude to untouchability (Jha 1974).

There are not two opinions that untouchability will not be removed even by the force law. It can only be removed when the majority of Hindus will realize that it is a crime against God and men and will ashamed of it.

Methodology

The respondents of the study were both male and female literate adults of rural and urban areas of Meerut district. These were selected through a multistage sampling. In the first stage 500 respondents each were purposively selected from urban and rural areas respectively, constituting an equal number of high castes and scheduled castes. These respondents were administered 'culture determinism scale' and 'socio-economic status' scale and based on the scores of these two tests 200 respondents were selected in each category of high and low levels of economic status and culture

conformists and culture rebellions. Thus a final sample of 400 respondents was selected and administered the 'Attitude Scale' to measure untouchability. This scale contains 150 items, in which each dimensions of the attitude viz., Nationalism, Liberalism, Social Revolution, Social Change, Social Distance and Untouchability has 25 statements. It is an equal appearing interval scale resembles with Bogardus Social distance scale. The split half reliability of the test is .83.

Before the data treated by ANOVA, the data tested for homogeneity of variance and the results revealed that the assumption of homogeneity was upheld. The normality of distribution was also measured and found that skewness do not exist in high castes and culture conforming adults. While Kurtosis for the sample was negligible and the sample remained sufficient to provide facts to be generalised for their respective universe. Effect of independent variables upon untouchability was examined with 'F test' and among group differences were measured with the help of DRT statistics. The 2x2x2 factorial design was equipped with potentiality to reveal the effectivity and interactions of four highly generalised independent variables.

Résultats

It was evident from the ANOVA that the main effects of ϵ , $F(1, 384) = 24.50, p < .01$, trivariate interaction of $A \times C \times D, F(1, 384) = 11.04, p < .01$ and fourvariate interaction of $A \times B \times C \times D, F(1, 384) = 4.60, p < .05$ were found significant whereas the other combinations were insignificant.

When the fourvariate interaction was broken up into bivariate combinations only the aforesaid four bivariate combinations were again found significant.

Significant main effect indicates that high caste adults have higher degree of untouchability than their counterpart scheduled castes and the finding is supported by the study of Ruth (1960). Significant trivariate interaction analysis shows that caste independent of economic status and culture stratum leads to promote the attitude to untouchability. It means that high caste people maintained the distance with scheduled caste adults and this relationship is least affected by their economic status in both the rural and urban areas. Fourvariate interaction results also support the trivariate interaction results which indicate that culture conformist and culture rebellion adults do not show any specific trend towards the attitude to untouchability.

DRT results shows that among the sixteen sub-groups under study the group of the culture rebelling, urban; high caste adults of high economic status have the greatest amount of this attitude whereas the least affected group is culture rebelling, rural scheduled caste adults of low economic status.

ANOVA SUMMARY (P < .05)

Source	SS	df	MS	F
A	961.00	1	961.00	
B	510.76	1	510.76	
C	16,926.00	1	16,926.00	24.50**
D	2,430.49	1	2,430.49	
AxB	2,332.89	1	2,332.89	
AxC	179.56	1	179.56	
AxD	1,049.76	1	1,049.76	
BxC	129.96	1	129.96	
BxD	1,444.00	1	1,444.00	
CxD	882.09	1	882.09	
AxBxC	118.81	1	118.81	
AxBxD	479.61	1	479.61	
AxCxD	7,603.84	1	7,603.84	11.04**
AxCxD	876.16	1	876.16	
AxBxCxD	3,169.69	1	3,169.69	4.60*
ERRMR	2,64,441.12	12,384	688.57	
TOTAL	3,03,505.75	399		

ABBREVIATIONS USED

- A-Culture Stratium
 B-Culture Determinism
 C-Caste
 D-Economic Status
 R-Rural
 S.C. Scheduled CasteS
 ECOH-High Economic Status
 ECOL-Low Economic Status

1. R (Cx D), $F = 9.92$, $p < .01$
2. S.C (Ax D), $F = 10.39$, $p < .01$
3. Eco H (Ax C), $F = 3.95$, $p < .05$
4. Eco L (Ax C), $F = 7.35$, $p < .05$

Summary

Based on the above discussed findings it can be inferred that untouchability is maintained at a higher rate by the high caste people and this relationship is insignificantly affected by their economic status both in

rural and urban areas. Culture determinism does not produce any specific trend towards the attitude to untouchability.

Implications

In the foregoing study, a few critical aspects of the problem were examined and the following points were made.

1. The elements of socio-cultural climate should not be aligned with cultivation of undesirable attitude of untouchability because it not only hampers the growth of healthy social values but also neutralizes the effects of the other positive attitudes.
2. It can also be suggested that a guided economic prosperity with right and effective type of education in culture, values and attitudes to people of high caste and scheduled caste can mobilize them for greater tastes of national reconstruction.

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