**CASTE DIVERSITY IN TELANGANA**

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**Abstract**

In any society, including European or modern American society, there are four underlying varnalu (colors or divisions or groups), the four groups being, intellectuals and priests (Brahmin varnamu), rulers and warriors (Kshatriya varnamu), agriculturists and business persons (Vaishyavarnamu), and all other workers without whose input the society cannot move further (Shudravarnamu). Caste is a tribal identity that is ubiquitous in every human society.  The caste conflict in Telangana is nothing more than the tribalism that still exists. Today, all the castes in Telanganaare categorized into four groups, viz., Forward Communities (FC), Backward Communities (BC), Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST).  Preferential quotas and reservations are established for BCs, SCs, and STs.  The Constitution of India endorses and enforces such preferential discrimination.  This system reinforces the old caste system, while broadly categorizing them into a new form.  Here again like in Vedic Varnamu, any caste can be included into FC, BC, SC, or ST group if one attains a certain social stature.De-recognition of importance of caste in every aspect of life may be difficult to achieve. The equality clause in the modern Indian Union constitution to protect various groups from discrimination and repression is a positive step.Migration from rural areas to urban cosmopolitan cities and college education might help get rid of some of the social barriers, encouraging the inter-caste/religious/tribal marriages and social intercourse. I am optimistic about the future of our society as the literacy increases, modern college education becomes compulsory, religious and tribal blind beliefs are eroded by modern scientific understanding of life and secular democratic principles, and the discriminatory quotas imposed by constitution become redundant in a very competitive open market economy

**Background**

There is no universal system of caste throughout India.  The belief that the Vedic varnashrama dharma was the “caste system in embryo,” seems to be flawed, since the existence of castes in Telanganapredate the migration of Brahmins to that region. One may argue that in any society, including European or modern American society, there are four underlying varnalu (colors or divisions or groups), the four groups being, intellectuals and priests (Brahmin varnamu), rulers and warriors (Kshatriya varnamu), agriculturists and business persons (Vaishyavarnamu), and all other workers without whose input the society cannot move further (Shudravarnamu).  Without these four broad classes there is no society in this world.1

Thus if the society is the God, his/her head is the intellectuals and priests, shoulders are the warriors and military, the trunk is the business and agricultural community and finally the limbs are the workers who fulfil the basic needs of the society starting from the work in agricultural fields to the temple construction, without which society cannot go forward.  Anybody can become a Brahmin varna (religious/spiritual class), but one has to be born into Brahmin caste to be a Brahmin caste. Caste is not a Varnamu and these should not be confused with each other. Caste is a tribal identity that is ubiquitous in every human society.  The caste conflict in Telanganais nothing more than the tribalism that still exists.

Castes in Telanganacan be divided into two distinct categories.  Brahmin, Komati, Reddy, Kamma, Velama, Kapu, Nayudu, Relli, Mala, Madiga, Yeraka, etc., castes are based on their tribal, cultural and religious differences, while the castes like Chakali (washerman), Kummari (potter), Kammari (smith), Kamsali (goldsmith), Mangali (barber) etc are based on their duties.  With a few exceptions like the Brahmin caste, all these castes are uniquely localized in Telangana.  Each caste has a deity and distinct social formalities. The interaction between various castes is difficult because of these religious, cultural and tribal considerations.

**Caste groups in Telangana**

Today, all the castes in Telanganaare categorized into four groups, viz., Forward Communities (FC), Backward Communities (BC), Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST).  Preferential quotas and reservations are established for BCs, SCs, and STs.  The Constitution of India endorses and enforces such preferential discrimination.  This system reinforces the old caste system, while broadly categorizing them into a new form.  Here again like in Vedic Varnamu, any caste can be included into FC, BC, SC, or ST group if one attains a certain social stature. Even today the tribalism prevails and the social interactions such as marriage and festivals are influenced by caste.  Inter-caste/religious social intercourse is still not accepted.  One can see the power of caste over the society clearly in politics. Even in the North America, the Telugu nationality is divided along the lines of caste, e.g., the Telugu Association of North America is dominated by Kamma caste whereas the American Telugu Association is dominated by Reddy caste.2

**Casteism and Hope**

The strife between various groups is part of a worldwide phenomenon, which affected all kinds of human relations for thousands of years. The reasons for hostilities between different tribes/castes/religions/nationalities are mostly prejudice, jealousy, self-righteousness, partisan politics etc., among the groups. In the primitive tribes most frequently cited provocations for hostilities were abduction of women, rape, theft of crops, poaching, a strayed pig, a slaughtered cow, witchcraft etc. Sometimes friendly tribes begin to build hostilities leading to fights following allegations of such acts.  Vendetta and grief of each casualty fuels a fresh fight providing sufficient motivation for the next.  The cycle goes on forever. Also, the tribal problems involve superiority and inferiority in addition to the group solidarity, e.g., in the Roman empire Germans were considered inferior and were not allowed to intermarry with Romans and were allowed to work as servants and soldiers only. The caste/religious/tribal conflict in modern Andhra is a combination of primitive tribal and modern partisan politics.3

One may broadly divide the human races into a few categories such as Caucasians, Negroid and Mongoloid. The hostilities have not been limited to between such groups, but extended within those groups.  In a larger context of human history degrees of biological or cultural differences have had little relationship to the degrees of strife, repression or violence. Contemporary black and white Americans have lower hostilities than those that exist in all-black or all-white nations such as Burundi or Northern Ireland. Throughout America, Africa, Asia, Europe and India, the racial intermixtures over the centuries have left hybrid populations. For example, in different parts of the world people of Negroid ancestry have been divided into more or less racially pure blacks and colored castes.  In Andhra these caste groups are minutely graded racial designations; the skin color and ancestry are accompanied by marked cultural and religious differences.4

**Conclusion**

De-recognition of importance of caste in every aspect of life may be difficult to achieve. The equality clause in the modern Indian Union constitution to protect various groups from discrimination and repression is a positive step. But, affirmative action and quotas in the jobs and education based on group identity is counterproductive. This short-term prescription to solve the problem automatically became a long-term policy of appeasement that created vote banks strengthening the divisions in the society, leading to an irreversible process of balkanization of the society. Migration from rural areas to urban cosmopolitan cities and college education might help get rid of some of the social barriers, encouraging the inter-caste/religious/tribal marriages and social intercourse. I am optimistic about the future of our society as the literacy increases, modern college education becomes compulsory, religious and tribal blind beliefs are eroded by modern scientific understanding of life and secular democratic principles, and the discriminatory quotas imposed by constitution become redundant in a very competitive open market economy

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