ETHNICITY, CULTURAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

The process of social change in Indian social culture and traditions has entered a new phase of transformation. The cultural change in India has its roots in consciousness of identity and self-awareness of the various groups. Thisconsciousness of identity gives rise to many social problems and conflicts in Indiansocial structure and system. Ethnicity is one of them that lead to many ethnic conflicts in India. The ethnic conflicts due to ethnicity in India damage the social fabric of India. Ethnicity actually viewed as a threat for national integration. So this study mainly focuses on the consequences of Ethnicity in Indian culture and tradition.

KEY WORDRS: Ethnicity, Ethnocentrism, Social change, Identity crisis, Self-awareness, National integration, Ethnic movement.

INTRODUCTION:

The phenomenon of social change in India is very vast and extensive and often used in the modification and change in Indian culture, traditions and practices.The notion of social change in the Indian culture and traditions has entered a newphase of qualitative change. In recent times many remarkable and significant socio-cultural changes have been seen in Indian social structure and system since independence.[1] Since then we notice significant changes of culture and traditions of Indian society across the regions and cultural boundaries. Factors may have varied for social change in these areas but they actually fuel self- consciousness

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[1] Singh Yogendra, "*CULTURE CHANGE IN INDIA, IDENTITY AND GLOBALIZATION*", Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2000, reprint 2002, page no-2

about their own ethnic group identity among some ethnic group. The consciousnessand awareness of group identity strengthen the notion of ethnicity. So this study isan endeavor to examine to the structural and cultural denial of the ethnic groups which actually fuels the Ethnicity by which an ethnic group starts some ethnic movement. The present study is based on the literature review doctrinal methodology.

OBJECTIVES: The following objectives have been framed for the present study-

1. To examine the emergence of the concept of Ethnicity.
2. To examine the consciousness of Ethnicity in Indian social system.

The very term ethnicity is derived from the Greek word 'Ethnikos' which means Alienate migrates. The word came to be widely used sometimes covering the nationalities of different countries of Europe, Middle East, South Africa, and South East Asia etc. The people of these countries migrated to USA during 1940 and early part of the 20th century and the faced identity crisis in the new country.

As a socio-cultural phenomenon Ethnicity simply refers to the socially created and culturally determined process by which a particular ethnic group conscious about their identity and cultural self-awareness. So Ethnicity means a social group that mainly shares a common and distinctive culture, tradition, usages, practices, religion, languages and so on. It is an ideology that provides a psychological formula which migrates the uncertainty of state-society relations.[2] Ethnicity is always viewed as one the bases of social stratification. Ethnic group is a group whose members have some physical and cultural similarities. Physical means size of the nose, lips, color, size of the body, hair etc. Cultural means dressing patterns, food habits, religious beliefs and practices, languages, marriage system, family system etc. So Ethnic groups are like these. Bodos, Mishings, Karbis are the Ethnic groups. So the members of the group shared a common cultural trait such as- language, religion, values, beliefs, food habits, dressing pattern, traditions, practices etc. Actually

Ethnicity generally based on the cultural traits that reflects to which a nation, a group of people belong. So it is important to say that on the basis of such

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[2] [2] https://dictionary.cambridge.org, assessed on 8th of June 2022 at 7.20pm.

commonly held cultural traits in heterogeneous nation the people have developed a sub culture within the larger society. This sub culture is recognized as being distinctive both by the members of the ethnic group or by the society at large. From the stratification point of view Ethnicity is a feeling of an ethnic group when they become aware of their identity. They feel that they lost their identity. The feeling of peoplehood or oneness shared by members of an ethnic group is rooted in a common national origin or historical tradition. It is maintained by a strong 'we' as against 'they' feeling of in-group loyalty against out-group encroachment. Sometimes ethnic conflicts are due to the distinction made between 'outside' and 'inside'.[3] It actually implies a belief in a common destiny. So when they feel their identity is in trouble they get united and start some movement and this ethnic movement is known as Ethnicity. Until and unless if a particular ethnic group do not feel any identity crisis then Ethnicity will not develop among them. At the moment they start raised their voices and start revolt then the notion Ethnicity developed among them. So Ethnicity has its roots found in the level of consciousness of the various ethnic groups about their identity and cultural self- awareness of an ethnic community

who particularly share a common political and economic destiny.

In recent times Ethnicity is a burning question for all over the world. Manydeveloped countries of the word have already experienced Ethnicity. The very termEthnicity is not given rather it is socially created problem. So it is a product of thehuman society. It is known through two dimensions- 1. Ethnicity is the important base of social stratification, 2. How Ethnicity is developed or emerged in the humansociety.

It is a fact that inequality is the ever present phenomenon in human society.Inequality prevails in human society in terms of unequal distribution of power, prestige, privileges and property or wealth. In this inequality some groups get someprivileges and some are not. The elite section of the society is considered as a privilege group or class and they are the mainstream of the society. Often it is observed that elites are more benefitted by Ethnicity. So it is a fact that the elite section of the society created ethnicity for their better interest. On the other hand, the ethnic groups feel that they are relatively or comparatively deprived from the

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[3] Sharma K.L., "INDIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND CHANGE', Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2007,reprint 2011, page no-11

elites or mainstream of the society. So Ethnicity is viewed as an ideology which emerged among some groups and often considered as one of the driving force for bringing any change in the cultural dimensions of Indian society. Ethnocentrism isimportant in Ethnicity. It is equally important to remember that Ethnocentrism is found in all human groups or all human society.

A by- product of the feeling of oneness shared by members of Ethnic groups are varying degrees of Ethnocentrism. It is the price a member of a particular ethnic group pays for the emotional satisfaction, an identity and a way of life such membership affords. Paul Brass in his famous work 'Ethnicity and Nationalis Theory and Comparison' also mentioned that Ethnicity is not given it is socially created. According to him Ethnicity and Nationalism are not givens rather social and political construction. This Ethnicity is a threat for national integration. It gives rise to various ethnic movements. So the consequences of Ethnicity are that various ethnic movements have been developed. In India basically among the Hindus there is a caste system.

In this caste system there is Ethnicity. So in recent times it is viewed that Ethnicity is developed among the lower caste people and the consequences are that there are various backward caste movements started in India.In this main theme is deprivation not identity. But in some cases we find that Ethnicity is emerged among some groups as a result of identity crisis. The anthropologists observed that Bodos of Assam are one of the largest

ethnic groups living in Assam. They also observed that there are some small ethnic groups who have been living in Assam before Bodos and Ahoms. In recent times it is seen thatnow Ethnicity is developed among the Bodos of Assam and for that Bodosmovement started in Assam. As a result of this movement 'Bodo Territorial Council(BTC)' has formed. In this context it is important to understand about the KashmiriPandits issue. Since late 1989, the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir has been inthe grip of a violent and brutal movement of Islamist extremist terrorism. In this conflict many lives have been lost. This movement is often viewed as a process ofethnic cleansing and as a result of which Kashmiri Pandits were harassed out of theKashmir Valley.[4] In this context we can also mention the Subaltern studies. Ranjit Guha has also discussed about the subaltern studies. Simply subaltern means the mass people and they challenge the elite section of the society. This new approach highlights the masses.

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[4] www.satp.org, assessed on 8th of June 2022 at 7.40pm.

CONCLUSION:

So Ethnicity is viewed as an instrument of social transformation or mobilization for realizing the facts of social, economic, political and cultural goalsof a particular ethnic group. It is often used as a cultural phenomenon. Relative deprivation is the root cause of Ethnicity. In this Relative Deprivation theory, we find that some social groups may take undue advantage because of their superior social origins and on the other hand some groups may feel deprived by the privilegegroups or by the mainstream of the society. This relative or comparative deprivationand identity crisis are the two main domains which actually fuel Ethnicity in Indian society and create threat for national integration. So it is important to discussall these things. Government has to initiate some positive steps to decrease the feeling of Ethnicity.

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