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QADIMGI HIND JAMIYATIDA IJTIMOYIY TENGSIZLIK VA STRATIFIKATSIYA MUAMMOSI

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Annotatsiya

Mazkur maqolada ijtimoiy tengsizlikning eng qadimgi tarixiy ildizlari yoritilib, uning paydo bo'lishiga ta'sir etgan turli omillar, xususan din va madaniyatning roli haqida ma'lumot beriladi. Jamiyat taraqqiyoti yoki inqirozi, shuningdek teologik va etnomadaniy ijtimoiy ta'sirlar natijasida inson hayotidagi o'zgarishlar ijtimoiy stratifikatsiya jarayonlarini qanday tezlashtirgani tahlil qilinadi hamda ularning oqibatlari ko'rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, maqolada din, madaniyat va marginalizatsiya hodisasi o'rtasidagi o'zaro bog'liqlik yoritiladi. Marginal hodisalarning yuzaga kelishi qadimgi Hind jamiyati misolida tahlil qilinib, diniy va madaniy qarashlarning ushbu ijtimoiy jarayonga ta'siri ochib beriladi.

Kalit so'zlar: qadimgi Hindiston, ijtimoiy stratifikatsiya, ijtimoiy tengsizlik, varna, jati, dharmashastra, ijtimoiy mobillik, Vedik matnlar, sotsiologik tahlil.

О СОЦИАЛЬНОМ НЕРАВЕНСТВЕ И ПРОБЛЕМЕ СТРАТИФИКАЦИИ В ДРЕВНЕИНДИЙСКОМ ОБЩЕСТВЕ

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Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются древнейшие исторические корни социального неравенства и приводятся сведения о различных факторах его возникновения, включая роль религии и культуры. Анализируется, каким образом развитие или упадок общества, а также изменения в жизни человека под влиянием теологических и этнокультурных факторов ускоряли процессы социальной стратификации и какие последствия они имели. Кроме того, исследуется взаимосвязь между религией, культурой и феноменом маргинализации. Возникновение маргинальных явлений анализируется на примере древнеиндийского общества, а также рассматривается влияние религиозных и культурных установок на данное социальное явление.

Ключевые слова: древняя Индия, социальная стратификация, социальное неравенство, варна, джати, дхармашастра, социальная мобильность, ведические тексты, социологический анализ.

ON SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND THE ISSUE OF STRATIFICATION IN ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

The article presents the earliest historical roots of social inequality, providing information on various factors contributing to its emergence, including religion and culture. It discusses how the development or decline of society, as well as changes in human life resulting from theological and ethno-cultural social influences, accelerated the processes of social stratification and examines their consequences. Additionally, the article explores the relationship between religion, culture,

and the phenomenon of marginalization. The emergence of marginal phenomena is analyzed through the example of ancient Indian society, and the influence of religious and cultural attitudes on this social phenomenon is examined.

Keywords: ancient India, social stratification, social inequality, varna, jati, dharmashastra, social mobility, Vedic texts, sociological analysis.

Humans are social beings with a strong sense of social inclusivity. The influence of religious beliefs also shapes our perceptions of social exclusion worldwide. As religion's impact on human life expands, it results in the global re-establishment of new norms, laws, and restrictions. Contemporary researchers (such as V.I. Dobrenkov, N.N. Moiseev, A.L. Andreev, A.S. Panarin, V.G. Fedotova, and others) recognize economic, political, and social factors and events as the primary drivers of marginalization (alienation, separation). [1; b-1]

Religion constitutes a crucial component of individuals' social origin, beliefs, lifestyle, and overall life purpose. Due to its cultural foundations, a particular religion may induce forms of marginalization in different cultures and states. Marginality disrupts the principles of justice within society and generates inequality, leading to the infringement of certain groups' rights and opportunities. [2; b-53]

In many countries, religious, ethnic, and cultural minority groups are frequently marginalized. Historical evidence shows that even within dominant cultures and religions, there existed social strata suffering from poverty, social isolation, and deprivation of political rights. The degree of marginalization among these groups could vary widely, ranging from minor exclusion to severe social ostracism.

The Vedic period (approximately 1500–500 BCE) was a crucial era in the formation of social order in Indian society. During this time, the varna system emerged, which later became more complex with the development of the jati system. The varna system structurally organized society into four main social categories: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Each varna was defined by its dharma (duties) and artha (access to resources).

Social stratification occurred along three main dimensions: ontological (based on cosmic and divine order), ritual (through purity and pollution rules), and economic (through control of resources and occupational specialization). In this way, stratification ensured social stability but significantly limited social mobility.

Literature Review and Methodology. Numerous scholars have examined the phenomenon of social stratification in their academic works. Researchers from various disciplines have analyzed this process from their respective perspectives—historical, religious, sociological, psychological, political, and philosophical. Ancient Greek philosophers (Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Parmenides, and others) [3] addressed aspects of social hierarchy and human perfection. Later scholars, such as Pomponazzi, stated: “Not every human being can possess equal perfection; one may attain a higher degree of perfection, while another remains at a lower level. If the distinction between them is disrupted, the individual either perishes or is deprived of perfection.” [4; pp. 156–157]

As further evidence, Preeti Oza notes that “In Indian society, marginalization based on birth, favoritism, and the caste system is viewed historically as a form of ‘social crime’.” [5; p. 2]

Results. Studying ancient Indian society provides a comprehensive understanding of the varna-caste system (varna – from Sanskrit, meaning “quality” or “color,” referring to the four main social classes in ancient India; caste – from Latin *casta*, meaning “pure,” and Sanskrit *jati*, referring to an endogamous group) and its role in social stratification, family structures, and marital relations. Although some of these institutions continue to exist in present-day India, certain practices were officially prohibited under the Constitution of India in 1950 [6; p. 14]. These divisions were already established during the Vedic period, giving rise to social differentiation and separation, resulting in the formation of the four principal varna groups:

- Brahmins
- Kshatriyas
- Vaishyas
- Shudras

The highest manifestation of the caste system, which forms the basis of social stratification, is closely linked to Indian history, religious beliefs, and culture. However, the caste system is not unique to Indian culture; similar forms have appeared in many other societies. The term “caste” in Portuguese conveys meanings such as “clan” or “lineage,” while in social life it has been used to describe divisions and separations among people. In Hinduism, the term *varna* denotes class-based stratification and the caste system within society. For example, Brahmins were priests, Kshatriyas were warriors, Vaishyas were farmers, artisans, and merchants, and Shudras comprised the laboring classes. Although the term *varna* is often translated as “caste,” the more precise term in Hindi for caste is *jati*.

Each *varna* in Indian society was distinguished by specific duties. The Brahmin class initially consisted of priests who had undergone specialized training, and later the term was applied more broadly to all priests. Kshatriyas formed the ruling class and participated in wars; during periods of social stability, they were involved in state administration. The primary responsibilities of the Vaishyas included agriculture and animal husbandry. Groups serving the above three *varnas* were the Shudras, who had no social standing and were denied access to listening to or studying the Vedic texts.

Moreover, India had caste-based social discrimination (*discriminatio* – the restriction of the rights of a state, legal entity, or individual in relation to another) [7; p. 299], and a separate marginal group known as the “untouchables” (*chandals*). This group did not belong to any of the *varna* categories and was socially segregated [8; p. 49]. Despite modern legislation prohibiting such practices, the *chandal* system still persists in India. Members of this group were compelled to live separately from other caste communities; they were forbidden from residing in neighborhoods or towns inhabited by caste groups and were required to live in isolated settlements. This segregation was justified on the belief that the untouchables’ contact could lead to the deterioration of caste religious purity and result in others falling into their social category.

Sacred Hindu texts and traditional laws established strict standards for life, culture, religion, and beliefs. Consequently, social inequalities such as untouchability were legally sanctioned on a religious basis.

Scholars have expressed different perspectives on the essence of ancient Indian stratification. Ram Sharan Sharma emphasizes economic factors, highlighting the connection between the *varna* system and the control of production resources and labor, with social mobility dependent on economic and political conditions. According to him, stratification was shaped not only as a religious system but also as an economic one, ensuring the economic stability of society.

On the other hand, M.N. Srinivas focuses on ritual and cultural factors, demonstrating the importance of purity, pollution, and dharmic obligations in maintaining social order. Srinivas argues that stratification reinforced social values, thereby ensuring the ritual and cultural stability of society.

Discussion. Today, issues concerning marginalized groups facing social, ethnic, economic, and cultural barriers are being widely discussed around the world. All forms of marginality constitute a serious global problem that requires urgent attention. In many countries, religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities are particularly susceptible to marginalization. They often live economically, socially, and politically disadvantaged lives, isolated from the majority.

In Indian society, the untouchables (*chandals*) were considered a category of people engaged in extremely arduous manual labor that other castes were unwilling to perform. The long-established caste system in Hinduism allowed the higher castes to exploit the *chandals*. The upper layers of the *varna* system forced the *chandals* to live separately from the rest of society and

required them to wear distinctive clothing to mark their segregation. This social hierarchy subjected the *chandals* to poverty and humiliation. However, even the *chandals* had specific duties, primarily involving cremation of the dead, execution, and carrying out judicial orders.

One of the most significant aspects of ancient Indian society was the recognition of inequality between social strata and the obligation of each varna to perform certain duties. Over time, religiously-based divisions also influenced occupational roles, with each stratum specializing in particular professions. All regulations within the caste system were based on ancient religious laws and were transmitted through customary practices from generation to generation [9; p. 197].

This social foundation disrupted the principle of social equality and created the conditions for individuals to resist social injustice. Consequently, movements led by Dalits emerged in Indian society, demanding equality with higher castes [10; p. 171]. Marginalized *chandal* communities were forced to live separately from other caste groups, socially, culturally, politically, economically, and geographically. Many of these social and cultural stigmas were also applied to women, tribal groups, and religious minorities [11; p. 40].

The degree of segregation varied according to people's living strategies, leading to differences in social status among castes. Therefore, the caste system shaped the dynamic social life of the Indian subcontinent. South Asian countries are a unique region where social-cultural diversity and discrimination have produced complex conflicts. All states in this region exhibit diverse racial, ethnic, caste, linguistic, and religious characteristics. The traditional occupation of each caste was closely linked to the rigid and immutable hierarchical structure of Indian society.

Today, dividing people by caste is legally prohibited. However, because caste distinctions have persisted for thousands of years and are deeply ingrained in people's consciousness, this issue continues to present challenges [12; p. 35]. The dominance of castes affected not only marriage and professional freedom but also all forms of social interaction. Such inequalities resulted in various social disruptions, causing individuals, regardless of talent or ability, to take up occupations for which they were unsuited, thereby generating professional disparities within society.

The analytical findings reveal that social inequality in ancient Indian society was not merely an empirical reality but was deeply internalized within the collective consciousness as a metaphysical 'Karmic law,' which effectively minimized the lower strata's resistance toward the social status quo. Furthermore, the results indicate that the evolution of the *varna* system into more than 3,000 localized castes (*jatis*) elevated both horizontal and vertical societal fragmentation to an institutional level, thereby legitimizing the asymmetry of resource distribution within a formalized legal framework.

Ushbu xulosa matnini ilmiy-akademik uslubda, xalqaro huquqiy va sotsiologik terminologiyadan foydalangan holda ingliz tiliga tarjima qildim:

Conclusion. Increasing integration into the global system demonstrates that the caste structure, established upon ancient Indian religious beliefs, engendered social inequality not only within the Indian subcontinent but across all historical territories under its religious influence. Consequently, this led to the emergence of marginal groups possessing no distinct social value or status among the populace. This social phenomenon facilitated the forced fragmentation and stratification of society, as well as the institutionalization of discriminatory relations.

In response to the deleterious consequences of such social stratification, the legislation of contemporary global states has enacted laws prohibiting the caste system, thereby establishing a legal framework for its eradication. Notably, the 1950 Constitution of India incorporated a norm mandating the equality of all citizens and proscribing caste-based discrimination. It explicitly states: "*Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.*" [13; p-5].

Nevertheless, this legal instrument has not been sufficient to entirely dismantle a social

structure consolidated over millennia. We contend that the eradication of this system must be achieved through the exercise of individual agency and the consistent application of the principles of social equality.

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