

Marxism, Anti-Class and Anti-Caste Movements: Rethinking the Dichotomy in Indian Context

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Class and caste two inextricably bound categories in Indian society. Indian Marxists are often charged with neglecting and avoiding the caste question and relegating all such questions to the superstructure by focusing more upon the issues of the economic base. This duality of class and caste among the Marxists and other schools of thoughts, has actually done more harm than good, it has diverted any movement aimed at annihilating the both. In Indian society, the class is considered to be an abstract while caste as a lived reality. The debate of class vs caste automatically is related with the question whether to wage a war against classes or castes as most of the economically deprived classes belong to the marginalised social sections as well. But all those belonging to the upper castes can not be denoted as the 'haves' and not all those belonging to the socially marginalised groups (lower castes) as the 'have nots'. However, largely the class notion, which is related with economic exploitation, can not be isolated from the notion of social hierarchy. Ironically, the issue of anti-caste movements have become more of the political agenda to reap the benefits of winning votes from certain segments of the society and so they work more upon strengthening these categories than abolishing them. Actually, delving upon a single idea of caste or class will not lead to any social change. There is a need to rethink this dichotomy to find ways to free the society from such categorisation and its resultant exploitation. It calls for a need to expand the boundaries of caste as well as class to understand the current mode of exploitation in the country. This can happen only through the thorough understanding of the intersection of two categories. The struggle has to be waged from the axis of exploitation of both the categories. Hence, this paper is an attempt to highlight the inner contradictions of the heterogeneous category of marginalised social sections and how they changed their essence over a period of time and how the experience of humiliation or indignity replaced it with the experience of exclusion and deprivation which in its essence is a class question. A few arguments are put forth upon the ways how and why the struggle against caste can be unified with the class struggle.
