

Caste Class Continuum in Bangalore: A Colonial Legacy **Suja S.B.**

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ABSTRACT:

Colonial legacy is almost visible in all walks of life in all the imperialised social structures across the globe with no exception to India, which has had a long history of over three centuries of foreign rule. The geographical and socio-economic structure of Indian society has ever since witnessed dramatic changes. A society which weighed heavily in terms of its culture and tradition saw sweeping pragmatic changes brought forth through external sources. Fortunately or unfortunately internal factors also played a major role in accelerating this change.

The impact of which is experienced even to this day. One such impact was seen in the system of social stratification. The so-called 'Caste ridden Indian society was liberalised through the colonial legacy'. Which means to say that India was existing without a proper social structure; the European imperialists were great enough to assume the role of a global saviour and were here to emancipate and ensure egalitarian power to all the citizens. Having done this they administered a new system of stratification namely class into the Indian social structure. This as a colonial legacy is carried on to this day. The striking feature of introduction of this system was the concept of caste class continuum. A colonial form of social differentiation thus emerged. Even more evident was the nature of changes that took place in the nature and forms of mobility of different castes.

The concepts of Sanskritisation and dominant caste as mentioned by Prof. M N Srinivas is seen as a consequence of such influential forces. The concepts of universalisation and Parochialisation too can be seen as examples for changing the nature of Indian Society.

The process of change has been influencing society not only as a whole but also in parts.

This article is concerned in bringing to light the factors that contributed to changes in one of its parts, that is Bangalore and how it got into the process of caste class continuum.

KEYWORDS:

Colonial Legacy, Caste Class Continuum, Bengaluru, Cantonment and Pete, Social Stratification.

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HYPOTHESIS: Colonial legacy contributed to caste class continuum in Bangalore.

OBJECTIVE : Identify the traces of colonial history of Bangalore to test with the hypothesis.

METHOD OF STUDY: Method of Understanding, Observation and Analysis.

KEY CONCEPTS:

Colonial Legacy:

It expresses the power of colonialism that contributed to the changes in and creation of a new socio-cultural evolution of India.

Caste class continuum:

Caste as a rigid form of social stratification that featured the period of pre-colonialism determined extreme form of social inequality and class as a feature of the post colonial period was considered to be an open system based on some form of equality.

Caste Class Continuum refers to the process whereby caste and class is seen as an inclusive phenomenon, which is seen to overlap or blend and continue to exist by compromising some of its elementary features. Therefore, the caste class continuum can be understood as caste being identified in the class or the continuing existence of caste within the class system.

INTRODUCTION:

Understanding a phenomenon of long-standing change and the impression it has on the entire society for a long term is what marks the beginning of this study. Colonialism, as we all know, is a process of enforcing power on a native group with their own standards, be it social, political, religious or economic by nature. The colonial force, which entered the Indian soil in the early 1600's made their stay prolonged for the availability of rich soil, abundant natural resources and cheap labour. The most important feature was their racial supremacy and ability to manipulate the Indian minds with their advanced and individualistic tendencies. The legacy thus began by their ability to capture and fortify the native regions for developing their Company. The vested interests brought changes in administration and planning in India. They advocated changes in land holdings and taxation policies. Archives and documentation as a

source of research was their contribution. Understanding of the caste class continuum thus becomes significant as a consequence of colonial legacy.

COLONIAL LEGACY OF BANGALORE:

Bangalore, now popularised as Bengaluru, is the capital city of the state of Karnataka. The history of Bengaluru dates back to 890 CE. Bengaluru as a city, was founded by Kempe Gowda I, who built a mud fort at the site in 1537.

Bangalore's colonial legacy is visible in its divided urban layout, infrastructure, and architecture. The establishment of the British Cantonment in 1809 created a separate, military-focused area next to the native Pete area, influencing urban planning and physical divisions that persisted after independence. This period also introduced modern infrastructure like railways, postal services, legal services and so on.

URBAN PLANNING AND STRATIFICATION:

Cantonment and Pete:

Cantonment was the Military Station and Pete, the Civil Station which was formed in 1809. It created a physical and administrative divide between the British-controlled area and the native Pete area.

Strategic planning: Colonialism contributed to the development of urban infrastructure and paved the way for economic growth of the colonists rather than the natives.

ARCHITECTURE AND HERITAGE:

Mansions and Bungalows: The British developed huge mansions and bungalows, an architectural style that blended the elements of Indian and British design. It was meant for their officials and was symbolic of their culture and status.

Street names: Many streets in the Cantonment area were named after military units, such as Brigade Road and Cavalry Road. Other streets like Residency Road and South Parade were named after significant colonial residences and areas.

Legacy buildings: The colonial period left behind numerous heritage buildings, many of which are now public spaces., like the Bangalore Palace, Central College, High Court, Central Library, the Carlton House, Victoria Hospital and so on.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT:

Cultural divisions: The separation of the Cantonment from the native town created distinct socio-political and cultural environments within the city.

European settlement: The Cantonment area became a settlement for a large number of Europeans, Anglo-Indians, and missionaries.

Cultural adaptation: The colonial architectural styles were often adapted and adopted by local builders and artisans, creating a unique blend of style.

FAVOURABLE GROUNDS FOR ESTABLISHING THE BASE:

Favourable climate: Bangalore's elevation of about 3, 000 feet above sea level provided a consistently cooler and more pleasant climate compared to the plains, which was an advantage for establishing the military and its officials.

NATURAL FACTORS:

Elevation and geography: The city's location on a plateau, combined with the lakes and greenery, resulted in a more comfortable microclimate.

Lakes: Bangalore's artificial lakes, built for the purpose of irrigation and drinking water, were expanded and used to supply fresh water, which influenced the region's microclimate which became an important factor for the prolonged stay of the inhabitants.

Green spaces: The colonial power enhanced existing green spaces and created places like Lalbagh and Cubbon Park, making Bangalore a planned "Garden City" that supported the desirable climate.

CASTE AND CLASS CONTINUUM IN BANGALORE:

During British rule, the social structure in Bangalore was characterized by a dual system that combined pre-existing indigenous castes with new divisions based on race, class, and colonial administration. The city was essentially divided into two distinct areas, which reinforced these social layers:

CANTONMENT AREA:

This area was a planned British enclave designed for military and administrative efficiency, located on higher ground with better sanitation and infrastructure. The social classes here were stratified primarily by race

and colonial status:

British Elites: Occupied the upper strata, consisting of military officers, civil administrators (like the British Resident), and their families. They lived in well-planned areas with modern amenities and social organisations.

Anglo-Indians: Formed a significant middle strata within the Cantonment. They had a distinct culture and were often employed in specific professions valued highly by the British, such as the railways, customs, and post/telegraph services, acting as a crucial intermediary class.

Indian-labour Class: A lower-income group of natives, often migrants, lived in the surrounding areas of the Cantonment. They were basically unskilled labourers who performed menial caste based work for the British residents.

THE PETE AREA:

This area remained largely under the traditional administration of the Princely State of Mysore. The major occupants were the native Indians. It was characterised by the caste based hierarchy evolving towards the emerging economic classes.

Upper Castes/Indian Elites: The affluent and often elite castes elevated their economic status through modern education and choice of modern professions and organisations. They occupied the planned extensions of the Pete namely Malleshwaram and Basavangudi.

Middle Class: The new middle class emerged largely with the influence of western education and availability of new job opportunities in service sectors, like schools, hospitals, law courts, government offices, post and telegraph, railways and other commercial organisations.

Lower Castes/Working Classes: The majority of the population, including the lower castes and classes, lived in more congested, often low-lying areas that were prone to disease and lacked hygiene, sanitation and basic infrastructure. They included artisans, traders, and various labourers. Their livelihood was often disrupted due to the constant intervention of the colonial policies and practices.

CONCLUSION:

The British colonial administration, through the policies of urban

planning and land management, reinforced existing caste and class divisions, creating a deeply segregated urban landscape that resulted in a more stratified society. The caste class continuum thus becomes the predominant feature of Bangalore. The areas like Malleshwaram and Basavangudi saw a higher concentration of the upper caste who also happened to enjoy the status of the elite group. There was circulation of the elite in the sense that Pareto had viewed change. The change is evident as most of them were educated and could easily be driven to the sources of urban planning and infrastructure. . Thus, the colonial legacy, natural serenity, linguistic diversity, climatic conditions, ultra-modern infrastructure etc., has resulted in Bangalore emerging as a global city, one of the sought after places for making a living. A closer look into Bangalore in its present sense elaborates upon the blend of tradition and modern attributes of culture. Colonial legacy in fact has played a significant role in making Bangalore more accommodative.

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