

Registration Number:

Date & Session:

**ST JOSEPH’S UNIVERSITY, BENGALURU -27**

**M.A. ENGLISH – III SEMESTER**

**SEMESTER EXAMINATION: OCTOBER 2023**

**(Examination conducted in November /December 2023)**

**EN 9218: Indian Literatures-III**

**(For current batch students only)**

**Time: 2 Hours Max Marks: 50**

**This paper contains THREE printed pages and FOUR parts**

**PART- A**

1. **Answer ANY ONE of the following questions in 200 words. (15 marks)**
2. Article 15 of the Constitution of India prohibits discrimination on the basis of caste among others; Article 17 abolishes the practice of untouchability, and the Civil Rights Act of 1955 further guards against caste-based discrimination. But we still needed a Prevention of Atrocities Act in 1989. Do you think these legal protections are adequate for now and the future? Or are further amendments, acts, and laws required? State your argument. Use specific instances from cases discussed this semester.
3. In 2014, the Tamil Nadu Rainbow Coalition, a group that organizes the annual Chennai Pride March, renamed the event and called it *The Tamil Nadu Self Respect Pride March*. This is in reference to the anti-caste movement of Periyar, the Suya Mariyadhai or Self Respect movement. In what way is the assertion of queer pride similar to or draws insights from the anti-caste movements of Ambedkar and Periyar? Describe.

**PART- B**

1. **Read the following excerpt from an article titled *Caste and Castelessness* by Satish Deshpande, published in The Economic and Political Weekly.**

"Davis has shown, the vast majority of Indians were willing and able to state their caste, including most of those belonging to sects like the Arya Samaj or Brahmo Samaj that were actively opposed to caste. Caste was reported extensively by Muslims – indeed, well over 80% of them reported castes, with 133 castes being exclusively Muslim. Caste was also reported by Sikhs and to a lesser extent by Christians. Equally important, if not even more so, is the question of the electoral significance of caste identities. With the Muslim demand for a separate electorate having already crossed the point of no return by the 1930s, intense attention was focused on the Depressed Classes.

Gandhi and the Indian National Congress had particularly high stakes in this issue because of the way the numbers stacked up. According to the 1931 Census, Hindus accounted for 68.2% of the population of India, while Muslims made up 22.2%. Given that the “Exterior Castes” (mostly corresponding to the Depressed Classes) accounted for as much as 21.1% of the Hindu population, the grant of a separate electorate to them would greatly reduce the Hindu majority (roughly to under 54%). More importantly, this would be a major blow to the moral authority and hence the eventual political power of the Congress as the representative of “India” rather than only a caste Hindu minority. While there were strong inequities marking the relationship of even the so-called “interior castes” (or shudras) with the twice-born minority within caste Hindus, these divisions could be papered over and prevented from emerging into the open.

However, the disabilities imposed on the Depressed Classes were so severe and shocking that no amount of propaganda could hide them. Thus, the distinctness of the untouchable castes was already an established empirical and political fact. It is this fact that Gandhi was addressing in his negotiations over the question of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes being demanded by Ambedkar. By embarking on a pre-emptive fast unto death – the very first time that he had taken such a radical step – Gandhi ensured that Ambedkar would have no option but to succumb. The Poona Pact of 1932 thus cemented the claims of the Congress and specifically of Gandhi to represent all of India, thus helping to conceal the fact that the leadership was exclusively upper caste and the even more closely guarded “public secret” that these castes represented a very small minority of the Hindu population.

The muting of caste identities was thus a necessary precondition for the construction of a Congress “majority” – a development of immense significance in the emerging era of electoral democracy. However, a peculiar and paradoxical twist was imparted to this by Ambedkar’s vigorous championing of the untouchable cause. The Poona Pact agreed to significantly increase the guaranteed political representation for the Depressed Classes, but a very heavy price was paid for this “concession”, as Ambedkar realised only too clearly. Separate electorates could be seen as articulating a consociational demand for a full share in the nation, a demand that underlined the equal claims of the untouchables.

Although this was not immediately obvious, the grant of reservations reduced the Depressed Classes to the status of supplicants for whom a special concession was being made by the majority that “owned” the nation. This effectively positioned the upper caste minority (which was in control of the majority) as the de facto owner of the nation, with the power to grant favours to this or that subgroup. It is this mindset that has shaped upper caste common-sense on issues of caste and especially reservations. This is also the origin of the hypervisibility of the lower castes, with the untouchable castes being at the extreme end of hyper-visibility. Until the eruption of the “interior castes” in their avatar as the “Other Backward Classes” in the Mandal conflagration of 1990, it was the Dalit-upper caste axis that was central to questions of visibility and invisibility."

1. **Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in about 150 words. (2x10=20)**
2. What is the central argument of the essay? Explain how you think it is playing out in contemporary times.
3. The author uses the terms "Interior Castes" and "Exterior Castes" to describe two sets of the population. Would you say that these terms are appropriate? Give reasons.
4. The Union Government introduced a new Economically Weaker Section category eligible for reservations in education, employment and other services. How do you see this impacting the core of why Reservations were introduced in the first place? Discuss.

**PART- C**

1. **Write short notes on ANY ONE of the following questions in 100-150 words. (5 marks)**
2. Caste is not just a division of labour; it is a division of labourers.
3. Nausea as you understand it in Dr. Ambedkar’s essay ‘Untouchability, The Dead Cow And The Brahmin’.

**PART-D**

1. Would you say that the autoethnography is an apt method of research for the subject of caste? Why? Why not? Explain using your project as reference and what you were able to uncover/discover about your family history through it. **Your answer should not exceed 150-200 words.**  **(10 marks)**

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