

Casteism in INDIA (1)

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Caste in INDIA means an artificial chopping off of the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy.

- Dr.Bhim Rao Ambedkar

In every modern , democratic nation , people want to feel fully alive rather than merely survive . In order to for them to do so , the polity is required to imbibe a sense of socio - economic and political equality , as well as *liberty*. However in India this is not , and has never been , the case , and there is no way to know how long ,in the ongoing civilizational process , this human frees for adoring and enjoying certain privileges over others is going to last . But as long as inequality and discrimination exist , a struggle to get rid of this yoke by the deprived masses will certainly continue to be part of the socio - political fight for generations to come .

According to the Hindu shastras, four hereditary castes exist in India, namely :-

- Brahmin (The Brahmins were at the top of the caste hierarchy and comprise of scholars and priests.)***
- Kshatriya (Kshatriyas who were regarded to be soldiers and political leaders.)***
- Vaishya (Vaishyas were the traders and merchants.)***
- Shudras (Shudras was last in the hierarchy.They were usually servants, labourers, artisans or peasants.)***
- There were also the untouchables. (The untouchables do not fall in the ranked castes)***

Every individual has to follow the same occupation as their ancestors did as per their caste and jati.

There are many theories relating to the origin of caste system in the country. While a few of these theories are historical, some are religious or biological. There is no universally accepted theory on caste system.

According to the ancient Hindu book, the 'Rig Veda,' human body was created by 'Purush' by destroying himself. The different castes or varnas have been created from different parts of his body. It is said that the *Brahmans* were originated from his

head, *Kshatriyas* originated from his hands, *Vaishyas* from his thighs and *shudras* were originated from his feet .

There is another theory pertaining to the origin of the caste system that states castes originated from the different body parts of '*Brahma*', the Hindu deity referred to as the '*Creator of the World*.' According to this theory, inter-caste marriages, mixture of blood or contact of members of different races is regarded as a heinous crime.

Historically, it is believed that the caste system began in India around 1500 B.C during the arrival of Aryans in the country. It is believed that the Aryans, who possessed fair skin, came from northern Asia and southern Europe that contrasted with the indigenous natives of India. They started conquering regions all over north India and the locals were driven south towards jungles of mountains in northern part of the country at the same time. Aryans followed a specific social ordering called *Varna Vyavastha* which eventually resulted in four hierarchical divisions of the society.

There were several implications of the caste system in India. As per the dogma of the caste system, people hailing from the lower caste could only marry within their caste. They were not allowed access to temples and other religious buildings. At the same time, there was also restriction on their use of food and drinks. They were not allowed to touch the same vessels as the ones used by the members of the upper caste. It was believed that if a person from the lower caste would touch a vessel, the food would become polluted. They were treated as the animals and servants of upper class . There was no respect given to them. They were not allowed to even draw water from particular wells which were meant for the upper castes. Even their shadows were considered as pollution .The treatment meted out to members of the lower caste was so harsh that it led to scholars fighting for the need of reforms.

The factors that have contributed to the caste system in India since the ancient time, the first one happens to be patriarchal mindset and superiority complex of a particular section. This type of caste system in India aided the Kings and priests (religious authorities) to exploit the lower sections and manipulate them to their benefits.

Strict adherence to old customs, traditions, and superstitious beliefs, have played a vital role in nourishing the caste system in India. Even in modern times, such conventional practices exist on a large level in society.

Lack of education also strengthens the caste system in India. As many people are uneducated their mindsets remain orthodox and they never question these kind of unfair practices prevailing in the society.

Indian politics also plays a significant part in the existence and flourishing of the caste system in India. In the greed for votes politicians take advantage of caste system and ask people to vote for their caste candidates.

After several amendments in the constitutional rights and resulting influence of human rights, the scenario of the caste system in India is still same. Yes many things are

changing . People questions the existence of caste because of the education given to them in the schools.

For this change Huge credit goes to social reformers like Dr. B R Ambedkar and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Mahatma Gandhi was also against the practice of untouchability and tried his best to end the caste system in India.

But there are recent examples which shows that still caste system is prevalent in India.

1: 2018 Samrau violence in Jodhpur, Rajasthan

On the evening of 14 January 2018, clashes between Jats and Rajputs in Samrau village of Rajasthan's Jodhpur district burned shops and houses of many innocent people, and destroyed the Rawla (king's residence).

2: May 2018 temple incident in Kachanatham, Sivagangai, Tamil Nadu

On May 28, 2018, Dominant caste Hindus were “enraged” that Dalits did not present temple honours to an upper-caste family, and a Dalit man sat cross-legged in front of upper-caste men. Dominant caste members also were enraged when Dalits protested the sale of marijuana in the area by people from a neighbouring village and intimidated and threatened the Dalits. When the Dalit caste protested the intimidation and threats from the dominant castes in the village with the local police in retaliation a gang of 15 dominant caste members raided the Dalit village at night attacking people indiscriminately killing three and injuring six.

3: 2019 suicide of Dr Payal Tadv

On May 22 2019, Dr Payal Tadv, a 26-year-old Schedule Tribe gynaecologist died by committing suicide in Mumbai .For months leading up to her death, she had told her family that she was subjected to ragging by three “upper” caste women doctors however, the accused denied of having any knowledge of Dr Payal's tribal background .They allegedly went to the toilet and then wiped their feet on her bed, called her casteist slurs, made fun of her for being a tribal on WhatsApp groups and threatened to not allow her to enter operation theatres or perform deliveries. A few hours before she took her life, she had reportedly told her mother, once again, about this harassment.

There are many more examples which shows that even now in 21 St century caste system is prevailing in our country .

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution ideates India as a country that practises political, economical and social justice; a nation where the dignity and equality of status of the citizens is secured.

Caste discrimination has been declared illegal by the Indian constitution. In 1950 to rectify the historical injustices .the authorities introduced the system of reservation or

quotas in educational institutions and government jobs for the lower castes referred to as scheduled tribes and schedule castes.

There are many acts that prohibits caste system

1. The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Bill 2013.
2. The Untouchability (Offences) Act 1955. In 1976, it was renamed as Protection of Civil Rights Act.
3. Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989.

'...turn in any direction you like , caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform , you cannot have economic reform , unless u kill the monster .'

In a nutshell , the constitution of India and various programmes in pursuance of constitutional provisions have sought to abolish caste system and improve the social and economic conditions of weaker castes. E.g. Reservation of seats for other backward classes (OBC) in educational institutions and public sector is the latest step taken for the welfare of the Dalit classes. The influence of caste system is slowly decreasing, yet the change has to be in the attitude and mortality of the people.

One has still to depend very largely on one's caste for help at critical periods of one's life, like marriage and death. The elections in India are contested very much on the basis of casteism. We find casteism persisting in government services. E.g. seats are reserved for backward and schedule castes in govt. services as well as in legislatures. Special scholarships are given for education. In the name of minority caste, institutions have been given legal freedom to maintain their separate identity. So we see that Indian democracy has encouraged rather than discouraged the caste system in practice.

With the spread of education, political reforms and changes in economic position it is hoped that Indian people will rise to this problem and throw off the caste system.....



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