



LAW AND SOCIAL
POLICY REVIEW

VOLUME 1 AND ISSUE 1 OF 2023

INSTITUTE OF LEGAL EDUCATION



Law and Social Policy Review [ISBN - 978-81-960677-7-9]

(Open Access Journal)

Journal's Home Page - <https://Ispr.iledu.in/>

Journal's Editorial Page - <https://Ispr.iledu.in/editorial-board/>

Volume 1 and Issue 1 (Access Full Issue on - <https://Ispr.iledu.in/category/volume-1-and-issue-1-of-2023/>)

Publisher

Prasanna S,

Chairman of Institute of Legal Education (Established by I.L.E. Educational Trust)

No. 08, Arul Nagar, Seera Thoppu,

Maudhanda Kurichi, Srirangam,

Tiruchirappalli - 620102

Phone : +91 94896 71437 - info@iledu.in / Chairman@iledu.in



© Institute of Legal Education

Copyright Disclaimer: All rights are reserve with Institute of Legal Education. No part of the material published on this website (Articles or Research Papers including those published in this journal) may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher. For more details refer <https://Ispr.iledu.in/terms-and-condition/>



The History of The Indian Caste System and Its Consequences for Current India

Author - Palak Jain, Law student of Career Point University of Kota Rajasthan.

Best Citation - Palak Jain, The History of The Indian Caste System and Its Consequences for Current India, *Law and Social Policy Review*, 1 (1) of 2023, Pg. 46-49, ISBN - 978-81-960677-7-9.

Abstract

Indian society has historically divided its citizens along a number of lines, including language, tribe, region, class, and religion. One of these subcategories includes the Indian Caste System. Even while all human civilisations engage in some type of differentiation, it is problematic when one or more of these characteristics overlap and are used as the only basis for systematic ranking and uneven access to valuable resources like money, income, power, and status. A person's social standing is determined by the caste they were born into since the Indian Caste System is so rigid. There are restrictions on how one should engage with and conduct themselves around those in lower social statuses. Depending on where they fall in the social structure, people are separated into four castes, or varnas. Their vocational classification determines their access to riches, power, and privilege. At the top are the Brahmans, who are mostly priests and academics. The Kshatriyas, or political and military leaders, make up the following group. The Vaishyas, or merchants, come in at number four, followed by the Shudras, who mostly comprise labourers, peasants, artisans, and servants. Those who are regarded as untouchables are the lowest tier of people. These people are perceived as outcasts because they work in unclean, polluting businesses like scavenging and skinning dead animals. They are not regarded as belonging to the upper classes. Even while caste was no

longer a dominant factor in money and power, there was still some caste-based prejudice and hierarchy in place. While caste still affects daily life in urban areas differently depending on socioeconomic position and job, this influence is far less pronounced than it is in rural areas. Among urban middle-class professionals, particularly when it comes to marriage arrangements, caste is not explicitly acknowledged and is often unimportant. Even then, adjustments are done while taking things like religion, language, employment, and money into consideration. Despite being against the law in India, caste-based prejudice is nevertheless present in the community today.

Keywords: Caste System, Rural areas, Human societies, India today, Discrimination

Introduction

Indian society has historically divided its citizens along a number of lines, including language, tribe, region, class, and religion. One of these subcategories includes the Indian Caste System. All human civilisations exhibit this and other types of diversity, but problems can occur when one or several of them overlap and serve as the only standard for systematic ranking and uneven access to resources like money, wealth, power, and status. In the closed system of stratification known as the Indian Caste System, a person's social rank is determined by the caste they were born into. There are restrictions on how one should engage with and conduct themselves around those in lower social statuses. Hinduism, one of India's major faiths, has had a tremendous influence on its history. Additionally, the Buddhist movement and British rule have brought about a number of changes. The hierarchy, background, and current effects of the Indian caste system will all be covered in this article.⁸⁶.

The varnas gave rise to the specialised subcastes known as jatis. Each jati consists of a

⁸⁶ Vallabhaneni, M. R. (2015). Indian caste system: Historical and psychoanalytic views. *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 75(4), 361-381.



group of people whose major source of income comes from a certain occupation. A person's birth castes them into that group. They then decide on the ideal vocation for their jati. It is believed that a complex ceremonial system governing the social interactions amongst the jatis maintains this hereditary vocational specialisation and hierarchical ordering of jobs. The Brahmans' compilation, legitimisation, and interpretation of Hindu religious books known as Vedic literature give the justification for social hierarchy and ritualistic rules. There were and still are standards governing what constitutes a proper career, what constitutes proper conduct within and among castes, and what constitutes a proper marriage⁸⁷.

Religion, Culture, and Caste

One of India's social structure's most essential components is the classification of people into castes. Caste distinctions in Hindu society affect both real-world interpersonal relationships and the idealised set of principles. Members of different castes are expected to behave differently and to adhere to distinct attitudes and standards.. The Hindu faith supports these distinctions. Traditional Hindu religious writings, particularly as interpreted by Brahmans, were used to justify the caste system of stratification in India. "As much a social structure as a religion, Hinduism. Its caste system, which has been associated more and more with Hinduism as a whole, has served as its social structure since its infancy. The caste system in ancient India was supported by a variety of distinct factors. The Vedic defence was one of them. The Vedic people would not have supported the caste system even if it had not been mentioned in the Vedas. The Purushu Sukta, which is a section of the 10th Mandala of the Rigveda, describes how the castes were created after a significant sacrifice by the gods from various components of the Purusha, the Cosmic Soul. Reincarnation is crucial in helping individuals

avoid from rising up against the caste system hinduism's central concept is that your present circumstances are a direct reflection of your past choices. The Aryans invented reincarnation to keep the populace from revolting against the system and to provide justification for the terrible practises they were inflicting on the locals. In two ways, reincarnation supports caste oppression Although the initial purpose of Varnas was not to establish caste, it is regrettable that this purpose has changed to emphasise the concept of the caste system. Despite the fact that Varnas are influenced by one's behaviours and ambitions based on Gunas, people sometimes confuse Varnas with caste and view them as being the same. While Varnas were created by God, caste was developed by men. Only the social institution of caste is easily adaptable to changing societal needs (Lahiri). Caste by birth was never the initial goal or assumption upon which the Varnas were founded; instead, it was designed for individuals to only engage in occupations that they are capable to complete (Lahiri).The Varna System has nothing to do with birth and was founded on the Gunas and karmas of the person.

Movements and Political Policies against Caste

Pre- and post-independence, there were several movements and governmental initiatives to combat and try to eradicate the injustices and inequities brought on by the caste system. Gandhi started referring to the untouchables as "Harijans" (God's people) during the national movement to promote a change of mindset towards inferior castes. However, many members of lower castes believed the term was demeaning. In the latter half of the 19th century, the British began the Census of India. In 1935, "the British Indian government arrived at a list of 400 organisations designated as untouchable, as well as several native groups, that were to be granted special rights in order to overcome

⁸⁷ Deshpande, M. S. (2010). History of the Indian caste system and its impact on India today.



struggles and racial bias." These groups were then referred to as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. But many untouchable caste leaders began referring to themselves as Dalits in the 1970s. Within beginning of the nineteenth century, Jyotirao Phule began a campaign for education and the progress of women, Shudras, and Dalits. The movement swiftly spread to other parts of India. In addition, he worked to integrate Dalits into Hinduism and abolish the idea of "untouchability," which involved lifting restrictions on entry to temples.

After 1910, though, Dalit campaigners emphasised their independence from Hinduism and pushed for a separate Dalit electorate. Gandhi, a prominent member of the Indian National Congress, worked to advance the inclusion of Dalits in reformed Hinduism.⁸⁸

Modern India

In current times, caste dynamics have become more relaxed. The change in men's vocational interests was one of India's most significant developments. Historically, the majority of men worked in caste-related occupations like pottery and blacksmithing. Today, a large number of individuals are employed in newly growing, non-caste-related fields including government, education, retail and service, and machine repair. The community has become more varied in terms of land ownership, and caste is no longer as strongly associated with money. Less people also feel that lower castes are responsible for pollution and cleanliness. Despite a marginal decline in public practise, caste-related purification procedures continue to be performed in private and at ceremonial occasions. Endogamy is still illegal in families but less rigidly than before. India has experienced a significant rise in the education of women and awareness of their rights, despite the fact that there is still a strong association between a woman's status and that of a male.

Even while preferential policies have generated a great deal of debate and discussion, many lower castes and classes have felt their consequences rather intensely. There are more SC, ST, and OBC candidates now, and the community is very supportive of them. They have also grown to be a key element of electoral politics and have established powerful political parties in several places. Most members of these disadvantaged groups have been successful in obtaining employment at schools of higher learning and at all governmental levels. Unfortunately, these preferential policies have only helped a very tiny percentage of the lowest castes. Even though lower caste people are more often accepted, they nonetheless face more open hatred and violence in many areas of India. For example, higher caste landowners in parts of the Indian state of Bihar founded the Ranvir Sena, a private army, in 1994 to "protect" themselves against the lower castes. Even though it was against the law, the Ranvir Sena had killed 20 Dalits by the start of 1999. A sizable number of individuals have also voiced objection to the abolition of reserved government positions and at technical education institutions, notably those from traditionally upper castes who are economically destitute. The economic position, achievements, and value of people are still significantly influenced by caste.⁸⁹

Conclusions

The values, obligations, and occupations in Indian society have been profoundly impacted by the caste system. Since the time of the Aryans and for ages prior, religion has been the continual driving force behind this system of stratification. This division, brutality, and injustice has been a terrible by product of this religion. The Hinduism that had a significant impact on the way of life and worldview of the Indian population provided the foundation for the purity-pollution complex. India still has a

⁸⁸ Srinivas, M. N. (2017). Mobility in the caste system. In *Structure and change in Indian society* (pp. 189-200). Routledge.

⁸⁹ Leo, I., & Panigrahi, D. (2021). Caste Discrimination and Social Change In India. *Journal of Social Responsibility, Tourism and Hospitality (JSRTH)* ISSN 2799-1016, 1(02), 1-6.



caste awareness issue 63 years after gaining freedom. India has traditionally been able to continue to exist as a nation for thousands of years because to caste, religious, and linguistic constraints. Each person was born with a certain work, and this practise of occupational heredity had a big influence on both the rural and urban economies. It was difficult to move across castes or professions, and it wasn't common practise for someone to quit their ancestors' line of work in favour of pursuing their own interests. It is clear that caste continues to have a significant role in determining social and political ties in India. Caste social interaction is less restricted today, especially in metropolitan areas, and there is less of a connection between caste and hereditary employment. A condition of growth and improvement typified by the assertion of the human spirit across castes and creeds is replacing the constrained institutions of Indian culture. People have been asked to treat other caste members with more respect in a number of initiatives to eliminate the injustices caused by the caste system in India. The partial abolition of the caste system has greatly benefited many members of the lower castes, and India should be commended for its ongoing attempts to do so from within its culture. The influence of caste position on social mobility and the standard of living in India today must thus be taken into account.

Reference

1. Vallabhaneni, M. R. (2015). Indian caste system: Historical and psychoanalytic views. *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 75(4), 361-381.
2. Deshpande, M. S. (2010). History of the Indian caste system and its impact on India today.
3. Leo, I., & Panigrahi, D. (2021). Caste Discrimination and Social Change In India. *Journal of Social Responsibility, Tourism and Hospitality (JSRTH)* ISSN 2799-1016, 1(02), 1-6.
4. Srinivas, M. N. (2017). Mobility in the caste system. In *Structure and change in Indian society* (pp. 189-200). Routledge.
5. Sharma, K. L. (2012). Is there Today Caste System or there is only Caste in India?. *Polish sociological review*, 178(2), 245-264.
6. Leo, I., & Panigrahi, D. (2021). Caste Discrimination and Social Change In India. *Journal of Social Responsibility, Tourism and Hospitality (JSRTH)* ISSN 2799-1016, 1(02), 1-6.