Caste in Indian Society

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Abstract

In this world of globalization, everyone is connecting with the stars of development, progress, growth and are communicating with the end of one side of planet with another one but, other coin of this imperative is very calamitous and astonishing to think about; where people are denied their existential rights of being human only because of their birth, their clan, communities in which they born and so on. And emphasizing on the fact of discrimination, atrocities and communalism; these all 'conservative ideas' are existing in the new "sophisticated idea of caste"- which deliberately stands for oppression, suppression and criminalization within the cohesive fabric of our collective society. This paper puts some genuine arguments about moderately accepted, if not fully diminished, abolished notions of caste. Some historical roots of the origin of caste with diverse points of view from the Vedic era to the 21st century's globalization, including colonial attempts as well. In India, caste not only plays the game of 'Inferior-Superior complexities' but also facilitates the progress and engagement in the flow of economy and entrepreneurship. It's well-formed concepts as 'social capital' and 'political capital', in today's world, while noting the fact that counter perspective is something on which this paper is mostly based. By encapsulating the multidimensional sides of caste, this paper is a well-formed attempt to provide limitations, past prospects, and future steps on secondary resources.

Keywords: Discrimination, atrocities, oppression, suppression, social capital, political capital

Introduction

Caste is an indispensable and perhaps ingrained, entrenched part of Indian society since ancient history. Thus, being entrenched, it has penetrated each stratum of discussion- historical stratifications, social principalities, political ambitions, and undoubtedly most deeply, the economic development of cumulative strength generally and the specification of community as particular. It has favorably driven the reaction against the action of favor against disfavor and vice versa. As a common part of history, it has taught us various antagonisms about exploitation, oppression, domination, systemic biases, stereotypes, and, unfortunately, a succinct, humiliated, and socially accepted (imposed) notion of purity and pollution - caste. Though the value and significance of caste has continued its decline, still the prevalence and its usages as a political tool in Indian political expansion have been driven to its utmost mobilizing ability. As a comprehensive and institutionalized concept of caste didn't appear from the start of history, rather it took an innumerable period to get it joined as a well-defined, recognized, and well-categorized concept in Indian society.

Initially, the division of society was based on intangible stratification in the form of 'varna system' and 'Ashramas', which had its significance and relevance in those times' societal needs and inception of establishments. Indian society was mainly divided into four varnas. These were Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. There are different perspectives on the origin of the varna system in India. Rigveda's

10th mandala writes that all four varnas are born from different body parts of Lord Brahma. Brahmin originated from the mouth of Brahma, who performs the functions of a priest and teacher. Kshatriya was born from the arm of Lord Brahma, who is a warrior class. Vaishya was born from the thigh of Lord Brahma, who is a merchant and trader. Shudras were born from the feet of Lord Brahma and were peasants and laborers. But the fact of the matter lies in the pointedly quoted statement by someone which says "History is the politics of past and present politics is the history of present"- It depends on the various interpretation and research on origin of terminology and the political patronage provided for those writing happened and perhaps deliberately made it happened. Thus, by knowing the fact of historical ambiguity, does caste affect us today, or not? Ought to be the main deliberation of our understanding. Today, in the 21st century, everyone has seen some sort of injustice, discrimination, prejudices, and ultimately the denial of constitutional entitlements, especially in our rural areas, in the name of caste. Often, we have seen that 'Dalit'. i.e., Schedule Tribe, people have been forced to behave in a certain way in certain situations as per the discretion of the dominant class; the same situation is concerning to "Adivasi", i.e., Tribal (Schedule caste). At the time of constitution framing, our constitution fathers were aware of this frivolity of inequalities of our society, for which they have included the egalitarian principles, abolition of untouchability, and safeguards of our constitutional premise while emphasizing on the constitutional endowment as the fundamental rights to get full and justifiable self-realization regarding our aims and aspirations.

Research methodology: This paper is the manifestation of some incongruencies that are embedded in our socio-political boundaries concerning mobility and progress. In this endeavor, this paper will encounter some argumentation based on secondary data and some minute observations.

Objectives of the study:

1. Analyzing the peculiarity of caste as a driving force behind the socio-political upheavals.
2. Delving into scrutiny of political propaganda and Agendas of deliberate manipulation and handling the caste-as a weaponry tool to fulfil decided norms and aspirations, especially regarding political attributions.
3. Examining the new forms of caste identities and their characteristics while producing some concrete historical root causes behind caste.

Definition of caste

Since Caste is an institutionalized form and hence, its pervasive traits, attributions, and therefore characteristics are very ambiguous to define. Its refined and accepted, understandable, and recognizable concepts are very debatable and vary according to the respective contextualization of concrete time phenomena. However, sociologists tried to interpret their understanding to give their own perceived definition of caste as a concept. The etymological origin of caste as the word can be traced to: The word "caste" is derived from the Spanish and Portuguese word 'casta', meaning lineage, breed, or race, and casto, meaning pure and unmixed (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023) (1). In the 15th century, the Europeans used the term for the first time in India, but the credentials to their adjudication of caste were different from what we use as our caste. Many times, if not regularly, most of the travelers, writers, especially western and sometimes Indian, have also used the word varna and jati interchangeably, but neither one stands for the actual context in which we are using now. The concept of Jati is more closely link to the typical Western concept of caste, originating as it does from the word Jana (birth), and to the

social identity ascribed by birth. Many Western and Indian political philosophers, as well as reformists, have defined the caste according to their understanding and context of time.

The definition of Sir Edward Arthur Henry Blunt (2) is the most significant of all the definitions of race that are available. According to him, a "caste is an endogenous group and a collective of groups with a common name, whose membership is hereditary, imposes certain restrictions on its members in terms of social intercourse, either follows a common traditional occupation to claim a source of income, and is generally a homogeneous community".

Ambedkar, B. R. (2014). Annihilation of caste (Annotated Critical Edition). London: Verso. (3) As B. R. Ambedkar, the main personality behind the constitutional framework of India and an active Dalit leader who fought for everyone but especially Dalit community to ensure their desired privileges and entitlements - stated: "Caste is not a physical object like a wall of bricks or a line of barbed wire which prevents the Hindus from co-mingling and which has, therefore, to be pulled down. Caste is a notion; it is a state of the mind" (Ambedkar, 2014).

According to G.S. Ghurye (4), "Castes are small and complete social worlds in themselves marked off definitely from one another though subsisting within the larger society."

According to MacIver (5), "When status is wholly predetermined so that men are born to their lot without any hope of change in it, then the class takes the extreme form of caste."

According to A.W. Green (6), "Caste is a system of stratification in which mobility, movement up and down in the status ladder, at least ideally, may not occur."

M.N. Srinivas (7) "Caste is a system of social stratification that is based on birth and occupation." (Source: "Caste in Modern India")

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy (8) "Caste is a system of oppression and exploitation.".

By understanding the above-mentioned definitions, we can draw an inference that caste is a social setup that stratifies our society based on some intangible distinctions like occupation, marriage, and descent to solidify the various groups apart from each other on these lines.

However, it is not clear what caste stands for. But by analyzing the above statements regarding caste, we can cite some inherited characteristics of caste.

Acknowledging the varying trends of caste, it is quite difficult to come up with certain applicable characteristics of caste, but Mr. Ghurye, G.S. (1969). Caste and race in India, 5th ed Mumbai: Popular Prakashan. (1969, 9) delineated six defining characteristics of caste:

1. Society is segmented into a system of groups that are predetermined at *birth*
2. The system is *hierarchical*, although the hierarchy is often disputed
3. The system *restricts social interactions* between upper and lower castes, such as eating together
4. Different castes are segregated, with lower castes living on the periphery of the town with *restricted access to resources* such as wells
5. Occupations are generally *inherited*
6. *Endogamy* (marriage within one's caste) prevails, although hypergamy (marriage into a higher caste for women) is permitted. However, formal definitions of caste have been criticized, given regional variations in practice and the flexible nature of day-to-day interrelations between castes.

Characteristics of the Caste System: (10)
Segmentation within the collective society serves as a tool of exclusion and ostracization.
The definition of caste itself depicts its peculiarity that it exists in a collective forum, but as a distinct and

therefore exclusive identity to serve the desired purpose of their value systems and principles. It could be a historical aspect or cultural, or socio-political as well. For instance -

Some collective tribes faced injustice in history as a part of exploitation and discrimination; later, they might represent their voice by becoming a collective voice of their conscience. It has often been found that the concept of caste is divided based on prescribed traits of birth, due to which the common pursuit and mobility would not have been possible to get into.

They represent their own distinct culture, appearance, occupations, customs, rules, and regulations. We have also witnessed having a particular caste's own decision-making body, i.e., panchayat. Each one has its unique, distinct recognition.

Hierarchical configurations

In India, caste is a social construction of a hierarchical arrangement where one caste dominates over others. That means there exists a superior-inferior relationship between different castes. For example, as I earlier mentioned that Brahmins were superior -Kshatriya, Vaishyas, and Sudras- which is often called untouchables, though there is a difference between the two words, but on a slight note, we often use both Shudra and untouchables interchangeably. This dominating calculus often gets reflected in political participation, wherein some dominant castes dominate the decision-making authority and political representativeness. If we go deep into this calculus phenomenon, then we'll see that the rising demands of reservation are also somehow caste-based rhetoric.

Restrictions on Interaction within Intra-- and Inter caste

In the caste system, each caste has its jurisdiction of mobility and interaction where they are confined to their premise while preserving their distinct identity from others. The members of one community are not getting accommodated and easily assimilated with others' way of living due to some restraints. Each one only tries to abide by their predetermined notion of purity and pollution. We have witnessed the denial of access to educational classrooms to the Dalit girl due to her Dalit caste. These restrictions are becoming rigid, due to which the demand for separate land tendencies and our unity in diversity are being threatened.

Exclusion and specification of food and drinks

It has invariably been found that the meal or any other cooked substance by the lower caste is not preferred to be taken by the higher caste, especially in rural areas, where most people treat them differently, excluding them from commensality with them. 20 years ago, especially, in rural areas, there were different institutionalized, derogatory and perhaps illogical rituals and customs - for example: If someone from the Dalit community is coming to your home, and after that, you had to clean the place where he or she had resided. Also, there is the preconception about having different vessels for different communities - Bronze, silver, copper and so on. These were and to some extent are the depicted symbol of caste domination and hierarchy. The prevailing debate about beef eating has a root cause in caste only because beef wasn't allowed by most of the caste except Harijan.

Social-Political and Religious Disagreement and Disabilities

These are very compelling and existential characteristics that Indian society has had to face since the 18th century. As history shows, the two facets of power, the oppressors and the oppressed, were in the caste system as well. Some were dominating, and others were being oppressed. Some incidents also show the

inhuman practice of caste where the 'Dalit-Shudra-lower caste people' were denied access to social platforms like cities, temples, and worship places, not only this, but also the religious book as well. B.R. Ambedkar witnessed this injustice that was intentionally imposed on him by upper caste people

Imposition of restrictions on commensality

People from lower castes were not given access to sit and share their company with higher varna people, but somehow, it is diminishing, and everyone is respecting everyone irrespective of their caste, place of birth and other primordial identities, but some exceptional cases are also rising frequently which we cannot deny, undoubtedly.

The Ideology of purity and pollution

The rationale behind this purity and pollution was because of the 'ritualism and 'Sanskritization' concept given by M.S. Shrinivas. Which says that the upper caste people were performing the rituals and divine reactions to show their purity and sanctity. To my understanding, it was a strategy to get legitimate support from lower castes to whom the former ones were treated as inferior, impure ones. Even the common touch of the same human being, but from a lower caste, was understood as an attack on their purity. That is why even the shadow of a Dalit man was considered impure and consequently, it created two not different, but antagonist strata of society based on these identities, and caste was one of those.

Restrictions on Occupations:

Different castes were assigned different roles as per their social recognition and political status at that time. Initially, the Varna system was based on occupations and not on birth, but later it became hereditary. The birth of anyone in any community has been the deciding factor of their work, whether he/she will engage in this or not. A Shudra had no power and social acceptance to do the priestly works of Brahmins, in fact, even by having the required expertise as well. Alongside, Brahmins were debarred from doing manual work, scavenging, animal killing, cleaning, and other impure occupations, which were mostly done by lower castes.

Marital Restrictions:

As B.R. Ambekar criticized Hindu religion as the exploited and culminated in inequality, his main argument and criticism on Hindu tradition in his book 'Annihilation of caste' was that the prevalent practice of '*Endogamy*' is the root principle of the caste system in India. Which means the person from one caste should marry the person from the same caste; otherwise, she will be forced into the situation of being boycotted or ostracized by the collective society at large and her caste in particular.

However, '*hypergamy*' (the practice of women marrying someone who is wealthier or of higher caste or social status) and *hypogamy* (marriage with a person of lower social status) were also prevalent, but the extent was very less, which is now drastically changing, especially in urban elites. '*Gotra exogamy*' is also maintained in each caste. Every caste is subdivided into different small units based on gotra. The members of one gotra are believed to be the successors of a common ancestor, and hence the prohibition of marriage within the same gotra.

Hereditary Status:

In the Indian caste system, you don't have a choice to get turned into another caste instead of your previous

one. The caste system is based on the ascriptive pattern, which implies that the birth of a person in a particular caste decides their caste and their status in society. It is usually difficult or rather impossible to change one's caste despite the acquisition of qualifications or disqualifications; the membership of a particular caste continues and does not undergo any change.

Own Conflict resolving mechanism

As we have seen at a time of the Rig Vedic era, where different socio-political and economic representative bodies were conferred with juridic power to legislate on common and perhaps important issues of their time. Same, in the 21st century also, we have 'Gav panchayat' though more or less representative, cumulatively but undeniably, most power resides in the hands of the dominating caste only.

Disabilities & Privileges:

As expected, everyone has some experience when they talk about any caste. When we think about organizing any rituals, the first thing that comes to our mind is Brahman, because the word Brahman has had a legitimate or illegitimate privilege to do so and participate in it on a priority basis. Contrastingly, when someone thinks about any manual jobs, scavenging, shoe-making work, and so on, the first identity that comes to our mind is of so-called Dalit people. Thus, caste still shows the notion of frivolity in terms of disability and privileges of society and within society.

Origin of the caste system
History of Indian social structure, especially caste

In the book "*varna jati caste- A Primer on Indian Social Structures*" by *Rajiv Malhotra* and *Vijaya Vishwanathan* (11), they have comprehensively encapsulated the development of caste as a social and political identity throughout Indian history. According to it:

"The chronological sequence of the evolution of Hindu social structure can be represented as follows: Varna ⇒ Jati ⇒ Caste ⇒ Political Vote Bank ⇒ Global Caste Wars."

According to this prospects, presumably, comprehended by, many historians and sociologist especially in this context Mr.mlahotra and Ms.Viswanathan have been enunciated though, not distinctively demarcated but, in early Vedic period (1500 - 1000 BCE roughly) was characterized by intangible but presented varnas had some least extent of hierarchy, fair to say, no hierarchy as such, occupation wasn't bestowed based on caste and other identities, marriage concept was somehow feasible i.e.no as such established restriction on accommodation for family assimilation; especially, noting one, was, obliviousness of endogamy; And, everyone was living their life collectively without any discrimination or exclusionary thinking about someone else.

Later Vedic period (1000-600 BCE) and Itihas period (700 BCE - 500 CE) were witnesses of the same overlapping attributions as above, but now the differentiation and equality had started inadvertently. Socio-political mobility was fluid and more accessible to many people. Now, some birth-based entitlements and recognition are handed down as identities, but they were not pronounced like the endogamy-based caste system. Economic consolidation was at its nascent age, which couldn't have made any unescapable competition.

"Even *during the later Vedic and Itihasic period, the idea of varna was in its nascent form and not rigidly dependent on birth. Artisans such as metalworkers, chariot-makers, and carpenters were not necessarily birth-based occupational jatis. The Mahabharata states that one does not become a Brahmin by birth*

alone but also by conduct. It declares that a Brahmin could be born of a Kshatriya or a Vaishya mother.2 There was also some ambiguity regarding the relative position of the varnas, and these were fluidly related to each other.

The Greek traveller, Megasthenes, who came to India during the time of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya (reign c. 321-297 BCE), affirmed that slavery was unknown in India, that no Indian slave existed, and that all Indians were free. "

However, this era, majorly, stood for inclusiveness and collective progress without any hatred and divisive tendencies based on, as such, prescribed notions of identities.

Dharmashastra period: 1600 BCE to 1800 CE

Now onwards, the jati were getting formalized, but the mobility was accepted and was prevalent. Marriage became a crucial duty to be performed, due to which the intermarriage started taking place between different varnas, which had given birth to another subcaste within the broad jatis at that time. Religious scriptures also were talking about the moral and dharmic duties to be performed in a decided dharmic tradition, and for which, a particular ritual system with a particular community.

*"**Jati** was largely ignored in ancient texts and appears to be a later phenomenon. Initially, jati generally meant a kinship group whose people followed the same occupation and shared lifestyle. This jati structure within the varna system seems to have evolved a few centuries before the Common Era. Only later did these structures become more formalized. The Manusmriti explains that jatis originated due to intermarriage between different varnas. This shows that different varnas did intermarry. Thus, sixty-one jatis are mentioned in the Manusmriti, and more than one hundred are mentioned in the Brahma Vaivarta Purana. Kautilya (more commonly known as the philosopher Chanakya), author of the celebrated Arthashastra, also refers to at least fifteen jatis, which were the result of marriages between different varnas. During the post-Mauryan period (187 BCE-320 CE), there were intermarriages between different varnas, and jatis were giving birth to newer jatis.*

Thus, the Manusmriti mentions that in times of distress, people switched from their traditional occupations to that of other varnas and jatis. It was documented that people changed their professions to suit their needs. Buddhist texts also narrate that a jati was not rigidly tied to a particular profession."

This time was, therefore, an initial starting point from which the later development of caste as a social concept got created. Later, we can see the birth-based caste system, and some minuscule examples of endogamy existed. But the rigidity as such was not; instead, the fluidity was enjoyed by them.

History of Indian Social Structures
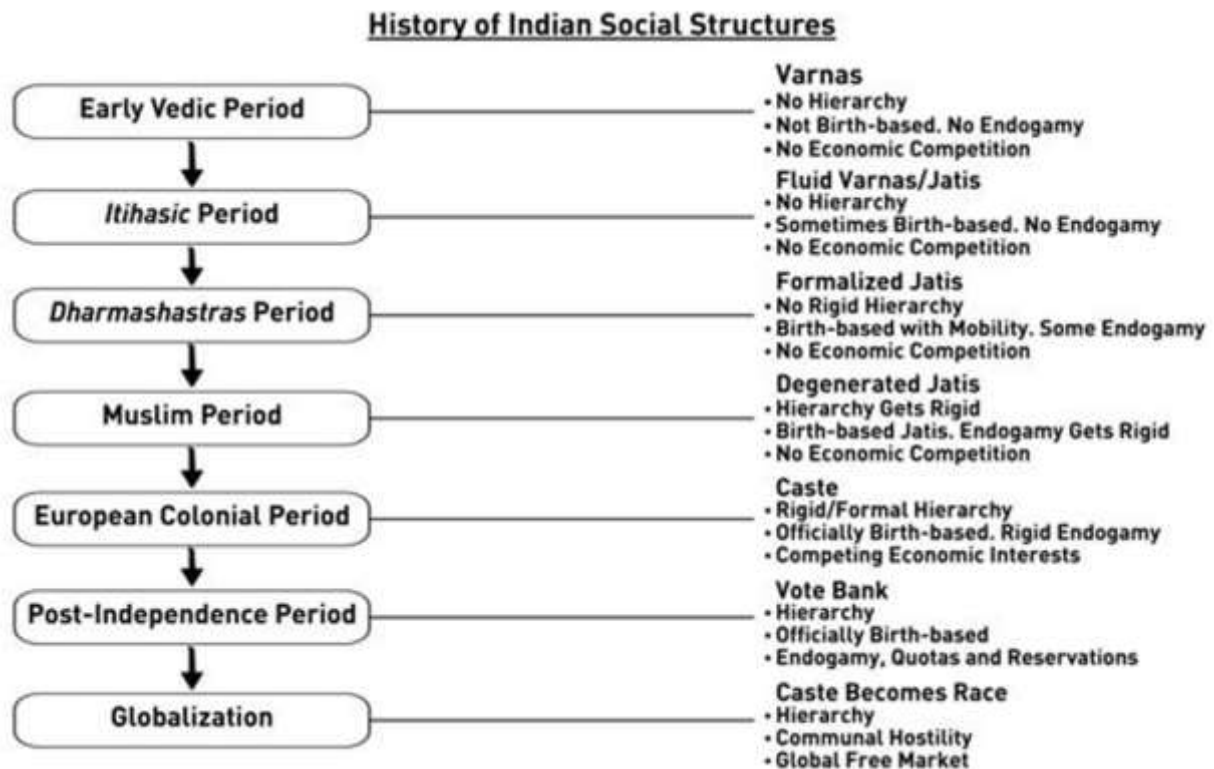
After various invasions, especially Muslim invasions, according to Rajiv Malhotra, had created the jati system more and more entrenched further because of their exploitative policies, the common man got consolidated in different identities, diverse cultures, and not. Their identity was collective as a defensive tool to control and safeguard their interest from invasive exploitation. Muslim came up with their distinct culture and practices, which paved the way for the disintegration of social capital in a moderate manner, due to which the hierarchy system took place for administration and then, automatically, for societal stratification. Jatis were conceptualized on the rigid, birth-based. Marriage got divided into confined communities -Rigid endogamy. Later, these birth-based identities got formal recognition from Europeans when they came to India.

"The *jati system became more rigid in matters of marriage and sharing food and disintegrated into opportunism and social stratification. There is considerable evidence that in the Muslim period, jati groups became defensive for survival, and there was a collapse in social mobility. By the time the Portuguese came to India in the sixteenth century, they found the society (both Hindu and Muslim) to be organized into various occupational jatis. They called them casta, meaning tribe, clan, or race. There is no precise equivalent for the word 'caste' in any Indian language. Gradually, the term 'caste' became accepted as equivalent to jatis. During British rule, jatis got re-characterized as the formal 'caste system'."*

European colonial period

This was the period when the formalized concept of jati as equal to caste had emerged, and till now is …when the Britishers started demarcating communities for their vested intentions.

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or race. There is no precise equivalent for the word 'caste' in any Indian language. Gradually, the term 'caste' became accepted as equivalent to jatis. During British rule, jatis were re-characterized as the formal 'caste system'. Even during the colonial period, Indians had complex and multiple identities. Depending on the situation, one or another identity could take prominence. Therefore, when colonial censuses attempted to ascertain caste affiliations, the responses ranged from names designating endogamous groups to occupations, titles, and surnames. There was no single category that people universally claimed affiliation to, which corresponded to the Western framework of 'caste'..."

Britshers had conducted a caste census and Census Commissioner J.H. Hutton in their jurisdiction in 1931, where they enumerated the caste calculation of that time and provided below inferences out on those findings.

They were of the perception that, if we managed to know the social stratifications of Indians, it would be easy for them to administer the whole of India, which later on they did, though not directly by caste but by religion as a divide and rule policy. This was a very crucial census conducted in 1931 by the British colonial government in India. It provides, paradoxically, comprehensive but least data on different castes, where *Other Backwards Classes (OBCs), who constituted around 52% of India's population at the time.* It was the time when India was dependent on the Britishers for most things, if not everything. And it was a fight against us and them, which gave rise to the further consolidation of communities based on region as well as castes. We have seen the different rebellions by different small but profoundly strategized groups, tribes, clans, and communities -they were fighting against British exploitation. It was not only about the economic fight, which later was called 'drain of wealth.' But after that, especially after post-independence, it became a political tool in the hands of politicians to mobilize the masses for their causes. We have witnessed different caste-based political parties that were chanting caste ideologies for political gain. For this, they have established various regional political parties like *the Bahujan Samaj Party, Samajwadi Party, Shiv Sena, Shiromani Akali Dal, Rastriya Janata Dal, Lok Janshakti, Nishad Party,* and various pressure groups as well.

As India progressed on its path, we have decided to create our distinct image in and at international forums and discussion and deliberately, we are using the platform of globalization to make particular thing globalized and vice-versa (Particularization of globalization and globalization of particularism) but on the other hand, we have also been witnessing different impediments in our vision of strengthening, fostering and eventually leading an inclusive idea of India ahead in the forms of little but very calamitous, if not many, communal riots, religious fundamentalist approaches, discriminations and undeniably caste discrimination in our society.

As the statistic tells us about atrocities and practices of discrimination happening in India:

The data mentioned below shows how these atrocities are still emerging from within this ecosystem today as well.

State /UT-wise cases registered under crime against SC and ST communities during the mentioned period. (12)

States	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Arunachal Pradesh (Scheduled caste)	1836	2071	1950	2014	2315
Arunachal Pradesh (Schedule tribes)	330	330	320	361	396
Bihar (Scheduled caste)	7061	6544	7368	5842	6509
Bihar (Schedule tribes)	64	97	94	103	146
Rajasthan (SC)	4607	6794	7017	7524	8752
Rajasthan (ST)	1095	1797	1878	2121	2521
Uttar Pradesh (SC)	11924	11829	12714	13146	15368
Uttar Pradesh (ST)	145	36	3	4	5
Maharashtra (SC)	1914	2150	2569	2503	2743
Maharashtra (ST)	526	559	663	628	742

(Data has been taken from a parliamentary question asked to the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Ramdas Athavale, 19/12/2023. The above chart is prepared by the author based on the answer given by the Honorable Minister.)

Explanation of the above data:

The above data shows that, still, the primordial identities are creating minuscule but very disastrous repercussions in our social cohesive fabric of Indian society. Maharashtra, especially as a well-developed and sophisticated state, is where caste discrimination is very rampant, though not more than Bihar and Uttar Pradesh especially against Scheduled castes.

The above table presents data on cases registered under atrocities and discrimination crimes against Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in these selected Indian states from 2018 to 2022. Uttar Pradesh invariably reports the highest number of crimes against SC communities, with a clear and sharp rise from 11,924 cases in 2018 to 15,368 in 2022. Rajasthan also reflects a significant upward trend, where cases against SCs increased from 4,607 to 8,752 and cases against STs from 1,095 to 2,521 during the same period. Bihar results in fluctuations, especially in crimes against SCs, dropping in 2021 but rising again in 2022. Arunachal Pradesh, though reporting lower figures compared to other states, also shows a gradual increase in cases against both SC and ST groups. Maharashtra exhibits a steady increase in crimes against both communities, particularly SCs, with cases rising from 1,914 in 2018 to 2,743 in 2022. Overall, the data reflect a rising trend in the number of reported crimes against SC and ST communities, possibly indicating increased awareness, better reporting mechanisms, or a concerning persistence of caste-based violence. Having said this, however, globalization has also created an equal platform to a major extent for becoming oblivious to this discrimination, though not fully. Now, everyone cares about time utilization

and performance based on meritocracy and not on caste, and so on. Today, historically oppressed peoples are leading some recognized ventures and are millionaires in different domains of the Indian economy, where they are applying their expertise and encouraging others to do so.

Today, globalization has created a cumulative platform to come up at a place where everyone will be a stakeholder in development and progress, as well as responsibilities. Everyone is so busy and has hardly any time to ask anyone about their background, including caste and sexual orientation. Everyone is besotted with their competition and profit maximization, and no one cares about anyone; they just care about whether their work gets done or not. This is where caste obliviousness comes into play and makes us optimistic about the future, but as I stated before, caste is an abstract concept, but having a concrete reality which we have experienced throughout our journey, especially in the 19th century, with calamitous implications on our social fabric. The Indian government has taken various policy decisions to make it possible for everyone to do whatever they want to do via different welfare schemes as well. There is a need for a multi-pronged approach while focusing on legal protections, strengthening judicial laws, and economic empowerment of the weaker section towards social change.

Caste as a social capital

Caste as a social capital: The complex place of caste in Indian Society - Pro.Vaidyanathan (13)

As I stated before, caste has been very entrenched in our society for a long time, and it has played numerous roles at that time, and today, it is still working as a bridge to somehow fill the gap of inequality. Professor Vaidyanathan has written a very well-researched book on this, named Caste as a social capital: The complex place of caste in Indian Society, where he argues about the role of caste as a social capital. Defining this concept rather than this phenomenon is quite complex due to its pervasive nature, but we have some well-accepted definitions in the following manner:

"*social capital (14) as networks and cultural norms that will foster trust, cooperation, and social cohesion*"(*Cécile Mouchel, research assistant: The Observatory of Rural Dynamics and Inequalities in South India (ODRIIS), 14/03/2025, in her thesis entitled "Caste as social capital?)*

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (15)defines social capital as 'Networks together with shared norms, values, and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups.

Swaminathan Aiyar defines social capital (16) in the following way:

This is social capital. Unlike financial or human capital, it cannot be owned by individuals, only by social groups. Being less tangible than financial or human capital, it is difficult to measure and so has been ignored in the past. Yet it is an invaluable asset.

Lyda Hanifan (17) (1879-1932), who was the supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia referred to social capital as *'those tangible assets (that) count for most in the daily lives of people: namely goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit.'* The 1916 book, The Rural School Community Centre, was published in the United States. (caste as a social capital)

While there are different facets of caste as a collective identity and social capital but for the sake of consolidation, these three parameters might cover the whole conceptualization of social capital.

1. *Bonds: Links to people based on a sense of common identity (people like us')—such as family, close friends and people who share our culture or ethnicity.*

2. *Bridges: Links that go beyond a shared sense of identity. For instance, distant friends, colleagues, and associates.*

3. *Linkages: Links to people or groups further up or lower down the social ladder*

From the above definitions, we can say that caste has a collective identity that resides in the same culture, social intercourse, common shared values and principles, and cooperation within their group. It has been seen that caste works as a mobilizing force collectively from a particular society towards the economic activities within any country, especially a developing one like India. People from the same caste are continuously providing innumerable opportunities for their caste related people on a priority basis so that these people can have their ensured upward mobility, which eventually leads towards total upward mobility of that particular caste.

As M.N. Shrinivas has rightly quoted, *'An important feature of social mobility in modern India is the manner in which the successful members of the backwards castes work consistently for improving the economic and social condition of their caste fellows. This is due to the sense of identification with one's caste, and also a realization that caste mobility is essential for individual or familial mobility.'*

Today, many people are getting job offers and recruitment based on their caste, especially in India, in particular, and other developing countries as well.

In the United Kingdom, for example, a government survey found that more people secure jobs through personal contacts than through advertisements. (According to pro.Vaidhyanathan in his book caste as a social capital)

Gurcharan Das, the corporate chief-turned-author and analyst, says, 'In the nineteenth century, British colonialists used to blame our caste system for everything wrong in India. Now I have a different perspective. Instead of morally judging caste, I seek to understand its impact on competitiveness. I have come to believe that being endowed with commercial castes is a source of advantage in the global economy.'

For example, Today, our market has been overrepresented by some Marwari, Jain, and Bohra in a positive sense. They are managing this whole business mindset and management within their caste and are hiring their people in this competitive world, mainly.

"Sociologists like Robert Putnam have demonstrated that enormous economic benefits flow from social capital."

"It is important to understand that the shared sense of community and trust that the Indian commercial castes like Marwaris, Jains, Bohras, Chettiars, and others have traditionally demonstrated has acted as a major social capital for them."

Fukuyama notes that trust has an economic value. He says, 'The ability to associate depends, in turn, on the degree to which communities share norms and values and can subordinate individual interests to those of larger groups … trust results in social capital.'(Fukuyama, Francis, Trust: The Social Virtues and The Creation of Prosperity, Simon & Schuster, 1996) (18)

This caste as a social capital also plays a very crucial role in cultivating the entrepreneurial spirit and innovative tactics in the young generation throughout the whole economic flow, as argued by Professor. Vaidhyanathan as follows:

Developing and sustaining the Provision of initial capital:

A substantial portion of financing for enterprises in small and medium sectors comes from family and community. We find that in India, around 90 per cent of the financing of enterprises takes place through

their own sources, namely self, family, extended family and community. We have data for the Economic Census of 2005 as well as 2013, undertaken by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO). In 2005, the Census found that out of 41.8 million enterprises, more than 95 per cent were financed by family and community. Another survey of 58 million non-agricultural unincorporated enterprises in <u>the 67th survey of the NSSO conducted in 2009-10 showed that more than 95 percent of them were financed by non-institutional finance, that is, the family or community</u>. As per the Economic Census of 2013, 58.5 million establishments were found to be in operation. 34.8 million establishments (59.48 per cent) were found in rural areas, and nearly 23.7 million establishments (40.52 per cent) were found to be located in urban areas. Among these establishments, 45.37 million (77.55 per cent) were engaged in non-agricultural activities while the remaining 13.13 million (22.45 per cent) were engaged in agricultural activities other than crop production and plantation. 41.97 million (71.74 per cent) of these were own-account establishments, and the remaining 16.53 million (28.26 per cent) were establishments with at least one hired worker. Own account establishments grew at the rate of 56.02 per cent while the growth of establishments with hired workers was 15.11 per cent (since 2005). About 30.13 million (71.81 per cent) of the total 41.96 million own-account establishments were found engaged in non-agricultural activities, whereas around 11.83 million (28.19 per cent) were engaged in agricultural activities.

Major source of finance:
A total of 11.37 million agricultural establishments were self-financed, with a concentration of 91.89 per cent in the rural areas. In rural India, 86.5 percent of the agricultural establishments were self-financed, whereas this figure was 88.2 per cent for urban India. Self-finance includes funding from family, extended family, and caste sources. 38 Donations/transfers from other agencies, mainly consisting of benefits from extended family members and others during occasions like Marriage/childbirth, etc., were the next major source of finance with a share of 9 per cent. Financial assistance from government sources and borrowing from financial institutions as a major source of finance were 2.1 per cent and 1.1 per cent respectively, at the all-India level. There were 45.36 million non-agricultural establishments (22.71 million in rural areas and 22.65 million in urban areas) in the country, which accounted for 77.55 per cent of the total establishments. Out of these, 30.13 million (66.43 per cent) were own account establishments, and the remaining, about 15.23 million (33.57 per cent) were establishments with at least one hired worker. A total of 35.48 million (78.2 per cent) non-agricultural establishments were self-financed, with a concentration of 53.44 per cent in the urban areas. In rural India, 72.7 percent of the non-agricultural establishments were self-financed, whereas this figure was 83.7 per cent in urban India.

Donations/transfers from other agencies and financial assistance *from government sources were the next two major sources of finance respectively, reported as supporting 11.2 per cent and 6.9 per cent of the establishments.*

Assistance to women entrepreneurs:
The 2013 Economic Census also collected data on women entrepreneurs. The total number of establishments owned by women entrepreneurs was 8 million, out of which 5.2 million, constituting about 65.12 per cent of the total establishments, were located in rural areas, and the remaining 2.8 million (34.88 per cent) were located in urban areas. Almost 79 per cent of these women-run establishments were self-financed.

Caste mobilizes further ambitions into the realm of market access and management.

Access to market opportunities and innovative ideas :

It has profoundly found that social capital extends to entrepreneurial attraction within one's community. It facilitates access to new market opportunities. Successful people encourage the remaining ones, whether they are interested or not in the business domain, which eventually creates a conglomeration of caste domination in a particular venture or business. For instance, if someone has already opened her restaurant in any city area, then she will prefer to recruit her own community's people as her restaurant's servants. In this sense, it is an attempt to train the new entrepreneur's spirit within one's own caste culture.

Becoming aware of rules, regulations, and expertise in market values informally:

It has been often found that, most of the time and most of the people are afraid about dealing with market risks and pertaining rules and regulation and reason behind this could be lack of formal education but the caste affinities provide the informal teaching to get indulge into this market phenomena where automatically, people become aware about all the system because the caste networks provide enormous amount of advantages in this regard.

Loyal affiliations in the supply chain:

Many times, people come to join various ventures from various backgrounds, and over the period, they get settled. Over the decades, they work and then they get the chance, be it by increased trust or domain expertise and excellence, to recommend new people in that venture, if not direct recruitment. At this time, the preference will go to the family or extended family members or at maximum, from their caste affinities, and it is so often not because they have required skills or other requirements, but social capital, which further excels the further community to come into contact with that particular venture or business.

For instance, a substantial portion of the electrical retail trade in Bangalore is run by people from Rajasthan, mostly people from the Mewar region. Undoubtedly, caste mobilizes the people from rural areas to urban ones especially, in the quest of job opportunities.

Easy accessibility of credit:

Around 60 per cent of the credit needs of our economy are met by non-bank sources. In any case, it is easier to get credit from chits, moneylenders, kuri, and other sources from within the community. Credit is sourced much faster and with less paperwork, often using gold as collateral. The assurance of other members of the community, though informal, makes it easier to provide credit since social pressure will work when it comes to recovery. In their pioneering study on household repayment behavior, The Role of Social Capital, Institutional, Political, and Religious Beliefs, Dimitris Georgarakos and Sven Fürth state the importance of social capital in repayment behavior. They state the following: *We examine the influence of social capital, beliefs about corruption, public perceptions about the justice system, religiosity, and political views, on household repayment behavior after taking into account household-specific and legal or institutional factors that existing literature has identified as important. We find that households living in regions with more dense beliefs about corruption in the country or in authorities that have immediate power of execution (police) are more likely to delay or skip scheduled payments. We also show that arrears are more common in regions where more people find it difficult to win a dispute with a bank, political views are more left-wing, and people are less religious. Furthermore, we show that high stocks of social capital induce good repayment behavior, net of the influence of informal borrowing, of beliefs about*

corruption and the legal environment, of religiosity, of economic growth, and social stigma considerations related to the observed repayment behavior of other households in the region. This remaining effect can be consistent with the fact that households in high social capital communities have strong ethical considerations and face a higher hazard of losing their standing in the group and access to the positive externalities of social capital.'

Having configured these merits of caste as a unique fascination in the market domain, however, it has also created hatred, contention, and groupism in our inclusive fabric of society. People are getting isolated and disenfranchised from the other communities, and this mode of conservatism and localism further exacerbates the contention and uncivic indifference between various communities.

Thus, by encapsulating the arguments of various scholars, political scientists, and especially renowned sociologists, it has proven that caste, although somewhere exceptionally, is working as a social capital. It is empowering the vulnerable castes, SC's, STs, and OBCs, by giving them the opportunity provided by their community-related people.

Caste as a political capital

In India and ipso facto in other countries as well, the caste or the groupism tendencies are active in socio-economic upheavals, especially political ones. From our birth to the end of life, our caste identity defines our different ideologies and public-political stands, for which people often tend to call 'political ideologies'. As I stated before, initially the purpose of caste was different though not fully contrasting from today's usages of caste but today it has become 'unavoidably, the political tool to extract, distract the opinions and for use, abuse and misusing the political mobilization of masses towards a preconceived notion of political biased views.

The role of caste as a driving force in shaping, reshaping, and misshaping the political stands and inclination can be cited as follows.

Perception building and political socialization:

Fred I. Greenstein (19) offers a comprehensive definition of the socialization process: "Political learning, formal and informal, deliberate and unplanned, at every stage of the life cycle, including not only explicit political learning, but also nominally non-political learning of politically relevant social attitudes." by definition- it's a long term process to foster our understanding about political perception but similarly, the upbringing and our parenting plays a very pivotal role in cultivating the political sense by imbibing different attitudes which they have had conceived, be it by their own or most probably by being manipulated by political tactics or the same inherited notion of preconceived attitudes from parents, where parents had to make their understanding about politics by not only from their observation but majorly by accepting societal stratification and most importantly the caste position in which position you reside at.

If you born in a very " elite caste " then your attitudes towards politics would be elite one and you will certainly have a optimistic approach towards politics or you would follow the same line of ideology that your parents have been following but on the other hand, if someone 'Dalit' have a very draconian and malevolent experience since her parents time then she might have a different view towards politics and would demand what Marx had said the ' revolution ' in liberal term. Thus, caste is a very crucial social obligation that often forces people to shape their socialization differently, inadvertently.

Caste and party politics interchanging relations:

It has been vociferously said very often in public discourse that Indian politics, in particular, is not indifferent to caste; rather, it has been entrenched into the party politics and every politics, so to speak. In India, we have witnessed a remarkable change in Indian politics roughly after the post-independence era. Since that time, many political parties have been raised with the aim of caste-based politics. Essentially, it was a turnover where we had different levels of political representation, especially from different states, which were representing the particular voice of a particular caste.

Today, many states, if not all, have their regional parties which have been controlled by so-called "Dominating caste" from those states. For instance, Most regional parties like the Janata Dal Secular in Karnataka (Vokkaligas), the AIADMK (Thevars), the PMK (Vanniars), and the DMK (OBCs and Muslims) in Tamil Nadu, the TDP (Kammas) in Andhra Pradesh, the Shiv Sena (Marathas) in Maharashtra, the Samajwadi Party (Yadavs and Muslims), the Bahujan Samaj Party (Scheduled Castes), and the Rashtriya Lok Dal (Jats) in Uttar Pradesh are dependent on caste mobilization for gathering votes. These are not only the political parties but the dominating ones who have been dominating the whole gamut of politics of that state for a long time. While Thai is about the open caste based political representation at the upper level, but it has also penetrated the major organizational level where the leader or president is been selected from the dominating class only. While formulating its policies and decisions, each political party of India in India almost always keeps in view the 'Caste Angle'.(20)

Caste in election and way of assimilation

As someone has pointy stated, *'In India people cast their vote to their caste'* mean to say, most of the people are only concerned about caste of that particular candidate whether he/she is from my caste or not; doesn't matter and hardly concerned about development, growth, education and other duties of that political leaders whether performed or not; especially in rural areas and reason might be due to high illiteracy rate, conservative thinking and limited exposure to other world while preserving isolationist identity. From the selection of candidates to the ' prachar Sabha - speech', everything must be planned according to the demographic dissolution of the caste population in the concerned areas. There are higher chances and probability that a candidate for any election will get the same area seat from which the majority population comes from that candidate's caste and vice versa. Most constituencies have a 60 per cent voting record out of the total registered voters. So, if there are, say, three major contestants, then getting some 25 per cent of the vote may take you to the winning post if the other two opponents split the remaining 35 percent of the votes. Again, to get the votes of the other major castes, one should be perceived as a balanced leader of the major caste, but not antagonistic to other castes. (21)

No one can disagree with N.D. Palmer, when he observes that "Caste considerations are given great weight in the selection of candidates and the appeals to voters during election campaigns."

Caste and policy formulation, administration, and governance:

As everyone knows, caste has a distinct position in formulating any public policy, especially in the hands of the executive, because of the fact of election discourse. That means, if any government comes with such a policy which is against the will of the majority caste (Dominant caste), then there are high chances of losing that seat in the upcoming election. We have often seen that irrespective of the ideologies of any established political party, they have an electoral compulsion as well as a moral compulsion to support the conscience of the majority caste, whether they are interested or not, hardly matters in 'vote bank politics'.

Sometimes, if bureaucrats have to implement any rule or initiative, they must consult with the so-called 'caste panchayat' in some parts of the country. It is also important to note that, due to caste calculations, major national or, for that matter, regional parties, apart from caste affiliations, don't have inclusive participation. Entry of the lower caste is restricted due to some hierarchy or domination of the major caste. Interestingly, most of the bureaucrats chosen for top positions in various departments are also often chosen based on caste factors since it is believed that it will facilitate 'smooth functioning' of the processes. (22)

Dipankar Gupta has emotionally exposed this ambiguity when he elaborates the differences between Ambedkar and the Mandal Commission's view of caste. While the former designed the policy of reservations or protective discrimination to remove untouchability as an institution from Indian social life and polity, the latter considered caste as an important political resource.

Caste has become a very important driving force in politics, and politics has also become a crucial part of caste. From party formulation to candidate nomination, caste consideration has decided everything. Different political parties are trying to manipulate the cohesive fabric of our society by raising some partial slogans for and against some caste communities, which further divide the communities and destroy our harmonious society. To progress further and strengthen our democratic values and principles, we should be oblivious to caste from politics in particular, if it is not possible from every walk of life as of no. because the leader to whom we have chosen to decide our future for representing our voice in the house of parliament has to be understandable and justifiable. And if we are electing someone who doesn't have sufficient abilities to present our voice, but she is getting elected only because of her caste affinity, then it is a first step towards destroying our destiny in our own hands.

Vaishyavization and Sanskritization of caste:

Srinivas, M. N. (1956). A note on Sanskritization and westernisation. Far Eastern Quarterly 15, 481–496. doi: 10.2307/2941919 (23)

M.S. Sriniwas coined the term ' Sanskritization as a new concept in his various writings, where he focused on 'how the process of assimilation and accommodation is taking place within different communities, especially caste, taking the 'Brahmanical way of life', adopting Brahmanical ritualism and other aspects of higher mobility. Today, many communities, including 'vulnerables', are improving their socio-economic status via different modes of engineering, including Sanskritization; however, the incidences of untouchability and caste discrimination are not at bay. 'Dalits' are not allowed to perform the things on which the 'dominant class' has a controlled monopoly, due to which various incidents of atrocities have occurred and have been seen.

M.S. Shrinivas defined Sanskritization as - "Sanskritization *refers to the process through which caste upward mobility was made possible; albeit upward mobility through Sanskritization was more possible for the middle than lower castes. In practice, Sanskritization was the process of taking on aspects of the Brahminic way of life (e.g., adopting vegetarianism and abstinence from alcohol), as well as adopting Brahminic rituals and beliefs (e.g., concepts of karma, dharma).*

The Vaishyavization of India

'*The Vaishyavization of India 'a*s a concept became famous and has been used by professor. R Vaidyanathan in his book 'Caste as a social capital' where he stated that, after 1991 reforms or from before as well people have started becoming 'Vaishya' means merchant class. The information technology (ICT)

revolution has brought numerous splendid opportunities for first-generation entrepreneurs to become recognized entrepreneurs. These concepts collide with the ideas of Shrinivas, where he enumerated the concept of 'Sanskritization', but both concepts are different, though the essence behind both is common. He has given a profound example of **"Dalit Entrepreneurship"** - How Dalits are indulging and leading the entrepreneurial platforms.

Today, most scheduled caste communities are continuously getting into entrepreneurship. Dalit Indian Chamber and Industry (DICCI) is playing a very important role in this regard. Dalits are selecting their path of ambition and are creating their own business and venture without being concerned about reservations and other stimuli. For instance,

Kalpana Saroj, who heads Kamani Tubes with an estimated turnover of Rs 500 crore, and Ratibhai Makwana, whose Rs 300-crore Gujarat Pickers is one of the country's largest polymer distributors. Other Dalit entrepreneurs include Bhagwan Gawai of Dubai-based Saurabh Energy DMCC that supplies petroleum products, petrochemicals and provides consultancy and support services in the aviation sector, Raja Nayak, who runs enterprises across diverse sectors including international shipping and logistics, corrugated packaging, packaged drinking water, wellness and chia rice products and Ashok Khade, the Managing Director of DAS Offshore, an engineering company that builds and refurbishes offshore rigs and platforms. Having said this, it is not easy for everyone to accept caste as an empowering tool, especially for the vulnerable, and consequently, they would not be respected by the fundamentalists or so-called conservative people. Today, as a society and the young generation particularly, we must acknowledge the potential growth and progress of communities that faced injustice and were depressed by history as a stimulus for our economic growth and a future major contributor to our nation's ambitions and aspirations.

Reservation:

"The worst form of inequality is to try to make unequal things equal." - Aristotle.

As many of us are aware of the reservation policy at least from the outer level of its essence and purpose, to be implemented. The reservation policy in India was originally developed by William Hunter and Jyotirao Phule in the year 1882. (24) Today's prevalent reservation policy can be traced to its historical roots since 1993 by British Prime Minister Ramshey Mackdonald in the form of communal awards where some specific communities were given separate electorates for Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and the Dalits. But after that, in 1932, in the famous 'Poona Pact between Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar, where the demand for separate electorate was diminished, and instead of that, 148 seats were given as reserved for the depressed classes (Dalits). When the constituent assembly was discussing the socio-economic rights of citizens, caste discrimination and 'historical injustice' as a solidified hindrance came out of the discussion, and then it was decided to sanction some reservation for some socially backwards classes in our constitution after so much argumentation and deliberation.

Reservation has been provided to the 'marginalized section of society'- SC, ST, OBC, women and Economically weaker section (EWS) categories as recognized by the Indian constitution subsequently .reservation was aimed to empower the marginalized section and beginning them into the flow of development, progress and future success in India but today, it has also become a political tool to extract the votes and raising, mobilizing the voice of common people to some sort of political pursuits. SC and ST have been bestowed with certain reservations in public institutions, the legislature, local bodies, and

some government colleges, as well as in exams. The core facet of reservation is rotating around and amplifying only around the caste identities .some caste are enjoying the benefits of reservation and on other side others are continuously agitating and re-agitation for the demand of reservation - recent Maharashtra 'Maratha Reservation agitation led by Mr.Jarange Patil .these calculations are like the 'zero sum game theory' where everyone is considering that someone is progressing on the disposal of someone else which creates the situation of relative deprivation and communal riots.

The Supreme court and various government committees have suggested that the main benefits of reservation are being reaped by the 'creme layer' people where the antagonist of reservation would argue that the reservation should be based on economic position of community rather than caste calculations because of misleading the aim of reservation due to creamy layer issue. The main bone of contention emerged when the Mandal Commission came up; thereafter, Mandal politics is the very issue of contention and adjudication in our judicial machinery. The Mandal Commission (25) was set up on January 1, 1979, by the Janata Party government under Prime Minister Morarji Desai. B.P. Mandal, a Member of Parliament, chaired it. The Commission was tasked with identifying the socially and educationally backwards classes in India and recommending measures to improve their conditions, including reservations in government jobs and educational institutions. The Commission used 11 social, educational, and economic indicators to identify OBCs. It identified 3,743 castes as socially and educationally backwards, comprising about 52% of India's population. It recommended a 27% reservation for OBCs in public sector jobs and higher educational institutions. This was in addition to the existing 22.5% reservation for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), bringing the total reservations to 49.5%. Later, in a subsequent Supreme Court judgment, the ceiling for reservation was decided at a 50% level. Reservations were initially introduced for 10 years and only for SCs and STs, but they kept on extending with several changes. The period of reservation was further extended to 2030 by the 104th Amendment.

Caste and the Indian Constitution:

Since our Indian constitution is based on the liberal framework of socio-political, economic justice, equality, freedom of speech, and most importantly, the democratic principles where everyone's voice has a profound meaning to be heard and raised. This constitution stands for egalitarian principles, but not by abridging and encroaching upon the right to liberty and personal dignity of every individual of this nation state. We have a balanced and foremost respect for the rights of individuals while balancing the rights of communities as well. As history has taught us, every document of provocation has had a background as a consideration factor to consider. The Indian constitution is also embedded with the socio-political background of our historical struggle for independence, and having a distinct historical background, our constitution has ensured that everyone gets the justice they deserve. The Indian constitution has secured some special provisions for vulnerable sections who had to face injustice and discrimination in their history to empower them and bring them into the flow of development and further progress.

Some Articles (26) from the Indian Constitution ensure equality and work as a tool to empower weaker sections (vulnerable sections) of society.

Article 14. Equality before the law. -The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Article 15. Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. -

1. The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, or any of them.
2. No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition about
   1. access to shops, public restaurants, hotels, and places of public entertainment; or
   2. The use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads, and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the public.

3. Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

4. Nothing in this article or clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backwards classes of citizens or the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Article 16. Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. -
(1) There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

(2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.

(4) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favor of any backwards class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.

Article 17. Abolition of Untouchability. -"Untouchability" is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of "Untouchability" shall be an offence punishable by law.

Article 19. Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc.
(1) All citizens shall have the right-
(a) to freedom of speech and expression;
(b) to assemble peaceably and without arms;
(c) to form associations or unions;
(d) to move freely throughout the territory of India;
(e) to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India; and]
(g) to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade, or business.
(2) Nothing in sub-clause (a) of clause (1) shall affect the operation of any existing law, or prevent the State from making any law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or about contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.
(3) Nothing in sub-clause (b) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India or public order, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause.

(4) Nothing in sub-clause (c) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India or public order or morality, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause.

(5) Nothing in sub-clauses (d) and (e) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of any of the rights conferred by the said sub-clauses either in the interests of the general public or for the protection of the interests of any Scheduled Tribe.

(6) Nothing in sub-clause (g) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, in the interests of the general public, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause, and, in particular, nothing in the said sub-clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it relates to, or prevent the State from making any law relating to,-

(i) the professional or technical qualifications necessary for practising any profession or carrying on any occupation, trade or business, or

(ii) the carrying on by the State, or by a corporation owned or controlled by the State, of any trade, business, industry or service, whether to the exclusion, complete or partial, of citizens or otherwise.

Article 20. Protection in respect of conviction for offences. -

(1) No person shall be convicted of any offence except for violation of a law in force at the time of the commission of the Act charged as an offence, nor be subjected to a penalty greater than that which might have been inflicted under the law in force at the time of the commission of the offence.

(2) No person shall be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once.

(3) No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.

Article 21. Protection of life and personal liberty. -

(1) No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

Article 23. Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labor. -

(1) Traffic in human beings and beggars, and other similar forms of forced labor are prohibited, and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable by law.

(2) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from imposing compulsory service for public purposes, and in imposing such service, the State shall not make any discrimination on the grounds only of religion. Race, caste, or class, or any of them.

Article 24. Prohibition of employment of children in factories, etc.

No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment.

Article 39. Certain principles of policy are to be followed by the State. -

The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing-

(a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;

(b) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good;

(c) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment;

Article 43. Living wage, etc., for workers. -

The State shall endeavor to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organization or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise, work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities and, in particular, the State shall endeavor to promote cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis in rural areas.

Article 44. Uniform Civil Code for the citizens. -

The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.

Article 45. Provision for free and compulsory education for children. -

The State shall endeavour to provide, within ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

Article 46. Promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections. -

The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Article 51A: Fundamental Duties. -

It shall be the duty of every citizen of India—

(e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India, transcending religious, linguistic, and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Article 243D. Reservation of seats. -

(1) Seats shall be reserved for

(a) the Scheduled Castes; and

(b) the Scheduled Tribes, in every Panchayat and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the, total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes in that Panchayat area or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

(2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes,

(3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

(4) The offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village or any other level shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide:

● Provided that the number of offices of chairpersons reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayats at each level in any State shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of such offices in the Panchayats at each level as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State bears to the total population of the State:

Provided further that not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women:

Provided also that the number of offices reserved under this clause shall be allotted by rotation to different Panchayats at each level.

Article 243T. Reservation of seats. -

(1) Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in every Municipality and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Municipality as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the Municipal area or of the Scheduled Tribes in the Municipal area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

(2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes,

(3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

(4) The officers of Chairpersons in the Municipalities shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide.

(5) The reservation of seats under clauses (1) and (2) and the reservation of offices of Chairpersons (other than the reservation for women) under clause (4) shall cease to affect the expiration of the period specified in Article 334.

(6) Nothing in this Part shall prevent the Legislature of a State from making any provision for the reservation of seats in any Municipality or offices of Chairpersons in the Municipalities in favour of the backwards class of citizens.

Article 330. Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People. -

(1) Seats shall be reserved in the House of the People for

(a) the Scheduled Castes;

(b) the Scheduled Tribes except the Scheduled Tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam; and

(c) The Scheduled Tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam.

(2) The number of seats reserved in any State or Union territory for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes under clause (1) shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats allotted to that State or Union territory in the House of the People as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or Union territory or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State or Union territory or part of the State or Union territory, as the case may be, in respect of which seats are so reserved, bears to the total population of the State or Union territory.

(3) Notwithstanding anything contained in clause (2), the number of seats reserved in the House of the People for the Scheduled Tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam shall bear to the total number of seats allotted to that State a proportion not less than the population of the Scheduled Tribes in the said autonomous districts bears to the total population of the State.

Article 332. Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States. -

(1) Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, except the Scheduled Tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam, in the Legislative Assembly of every State.

(2) Seats shall be reserved also for the autonomous districts in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Assam.

(3) The number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly of any State under clause (1) shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats in the Assembly as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State or part of the State, as the case may be, in respect of which seats are so reserved, bears to the total population of the State.

(3A) Notwithstanding anything contained in clause (3), until the taking effect, under article 170, of the readjustment, based on the first census after the year 2000, of the number of seats in the Legislative Assemblies of the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland, the seats which shall be reserved for the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly of any such State shall be,-

(a) If all the seats in the Legislative Assembly of such State in existence on the date of coming into force of the Constitution (Fifty-seventh Amendment) Act, 1987 (hereafter in this clause referred to as the existing Assembly) are held by members of the Scheduled Tribes, all the seats except one;

(b) In any other case, such number of seats as bears to the total number of seats, a proportion not less than the number (as on the said date) of members belonging to the Scheduled Tribes in the existing Assembly bears to the total number of seats in the existing Assembly.

(3B) Notwithstanding anything contained in clause (3), until the re-adjustment, under article 170, takes effect based on the first census after the year 2000, of the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Tripura, the seats which shall be reserved for the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly shall be, such number of seats as bears to the total number of seats, a proportion not less than the number, as on the date of coming into force of the Constitution (Seventy-second Amendment) Act, 1992, of members belonging to the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly in existence on the said date bears to the total number of seats in that Assembly.

(4) The number of seats reserved for an autonomous district in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Assam shall bear to the total number of seats in that Assembly a proportion not less than the population of the district bears to the total population of the State.

(5) The constituencies for the seats reserved for any autonomous district of Assam shall not comprise any area outside that district.

(6) No person who is not a member of a Scheduled Tribe of any autonomous district of the State of Assam shall be eligible for election to the Legislative Assembly of the State from any constituency of that district

Article 334. Reservation of seats and special representation to cease after [fifty years]. -

Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provisions of this Part, the provisions of this Constitution relating to

(a) the reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People and the Legislative Assemblies of the States; and

(b) The representation of the Anglo-Indian community in the House of the People and the Legislative Assemblies of the States by nomination shall cease to have effect on the expiration of a period of [fifty years] from the commencement of this Constitution:

Provided that nothing in this article shall affect any representation in the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of a State until the dissolution of the then existing House or Assembly, as the case may be.

Article 335. Claims of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to services and posts. -

The claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration, constantly with the maintenance of the efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State.

The above articles are enshrined in the Indian constitution with some reservations and encouragement to the vulnerable section of society.

Education and caste relationship

Education (27) and caste have a very long relationship in Indian history. Initially, education was a privilege and was reserved for some dominant caste. 'Dalit', 'Untouchables' were denied access to education, and still, we have seen different examples of conflicts between lower caste and higher caste based on whether lower caste/class people should get access to education at large, as the dominant people do. Today, we have seen that students from lower communities are not enrolled in full capacity into the education system; their enrollment ratio differs from the dominant class. Substantially, the reasons behind this paradoxical intercommunity disparity in enrollment rates could have been - low level of literacy among the lower class. However, when parents are literate then this disparity rate essentially, does not exist. Sometimes, the work done by parents is also an indirect factor that might have some different repercussions on the education of their children. For instance, if someone is doing manual work, then of course, he/she couldn't afford the simple education due to other issues of 'crony capitalism', middlemen business in admission roles. But the major point here to consider is why these people are least literate, if not illiterate, or engaged in annual jobs?

Reason might be hidden in our history as I earlier stated, Initially education system was based on privileges which were not given to the oppressed class by 'oppressors'- lack of education turned into lack of socio-political representation and eventually the attempt to boycott these communities were made by imposition the notion of purity and pollution. Today in 21st century also, we have been witnessing the educational access to the 'Dalit' communities or frivolous discrimination against them only because they are from lower communities; The well-educated and renowned professors are also part of this discrimination (28) The rise of artificial intelligence and Information Communication Technology (ICT) has provided splendid opportunities to the lower-class students, especially from rural areas, to dream big and succeed in their desired career option. To dissociate from this blot of caste, education is the foremost important tool which can make some people aware and conscious about this ongoing discrimination and exploitation.

Recommendations:

1. The origin of caste, as I stated above, is not the universal origin of caste, especially in India. The Hindu tradition is not fully responsible for this eruption of the caste system because, as Dr. Dipankar Gupta pointed out, 'In fact, it is more realistic to say that there are probably as many hierarchies as there are castes in India. Thus, different communities could have different origins of the caste system, and only emphasizing particular religious scriptures would not give us a multidimensional understanding of the caste as an institution. Therefore, for understanding the caste as a concept, there is a need to view the different - different points of view and phases in different frameworks.

2. It has found that, in our common discussions and deliberations into our society that people tend to criticize each other's religions and for that mattes are as the responsible one for the respective exploitation but very oftenly, they forget about the deliberate actions of Britishers of institutionalizing the caste system for creating the split between Indians' collective conscience. Moreover, many times we directly follow the source created by British writers or others to put forward our point of view, which, in my understanding, is something for which we should be careful. For instance, James Mill, a famous British historian, had written a three-volume book on Indian history where he demarcated the history of India in three phases based on religion as - 'Ancient India - Hindu History, medieval India - Muslim History and Modern India - British History. But this is not true. We should be rational while using the colonial sources while interpreting our arguments.

3. Governments, irrespective of their ideological affiliations, should come up with more and more encouraging and motivating programs for the vulnerable sections so that they will become sustainably strong while not having to be dependent on the reservation policy.
    Today, dominant classes are also claiming a lower status to improve their economic status, which means today caste has been losing its taboo-related identity and has become a source of income.

4. In the context of India, the Diaspora plays a very pivotal role, especially in the economic sphere, where many NRIs are leading renowned firms and businesses abroad. The government should formulate an organization where NRIs and Indian representatives will work together while sharing good practices from all over the world to make a collective attempt to eradicate discrimination at large and caste discrimination in particular.

5. The most important remedy to eradicate this taboo of purity and pollution is by promoting the healthy flow of education. Our curricula should have dedicated chapters on caste without any colorization, and on the other hand, as the government has come up with NCP 2020, where students must learn in field work rather than just understanding the theories. Such initiatives should be taken on a required basis so that the new generation can have a ground-based understanding about caste discrimination, which might deter them from doing so.

6. As continuously argued and demanded by the 'middle class intelligentsia' that no political party should use any caste based or religion-based slogans in political campaigning at a time of election. "Section 123(3) of the RP Act provides that appeals by a candidate or any other person, to vote or refrain from voting on the ground of his/her religion, race, caste, community or language is a corrupt electoral practice. Section 123(3A) denounces any attempt by a candidate to promote feelings of enmity or hatred among citizens on these grounds during elections." These sections ought to have a dedicated follow-up mechanism which will have the mandate to check and act according to the cause.

7. As Satish Deshpande (29) concludes that to annihilate caste, it must be formally acknowledged and spoken of, and that members of the upper caste must lead the way in doing so because they wield the most power in the public sphere.

8. Reducing caste terminologies may further de-legitimize the caste and its usages.

9. Ensure that states establish special courts in every revenue district and appoint special public prosecutors to try cases arising under the Atrocities Act. (30)

10. Provide required training to police officials working with atrocities and discrimination-related acts, having provided a copy of the rules and regulations in the vernacular languages.

11. Ensure that each police station has adequate female police personnel, consistent with recommendations made by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Female police officers should record complaints submitted by women. Each police station should also have adequate scheduled caste and scheduled tribe personnel and enough financial resources to carry out investigations.

12. Incorporate education on relevant legislation for Dalits and women into school curricula (including education on the Atrocities Act and the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993)

13. Ensure that adequate financial resources are allocated to the proper functioning of the newly constituted government bodies under the seventy-third and seventy-fourth amendments to the Indian Constitution. These amendments provide that in every panchayat (village council) and every municipality, seats shall be reserved for scheduled-caste and scheduled-tribe members in proportion to their representation in the population. Among the seats reserved for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, not less than one-third shall be reserved for women belonging to those castes or tribes. The government should work with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to provide appropriate training to elected members of rural and urban bodies, including gender and caste sensitivity training. Women should take part in legal literacy workshops, and all those appointed to reserved panchayat positions should be provided legal protection to ensure that they can perform their duties.

14. Strengthen the capacity of the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Women to operate branch offices in all states with enough financial resources and powers to initiate prosecution of cases. Amend the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, so that national and state human rights commissions are not automatically exempted from inquiring into matters already pending before a state commission or any other commission duly constituted under any law.

Conclusion

Given the fact of abstract concepts as concrete realities, primordial identities, of course not to a great extent, but are deciding the mobility of our society at large and weaker-vulnerable sections as particularly in new developing nations, especially countries like India. Today, our cohesiveness and 'civic sense of humanity' is somewhere getting jeopardized by such "re-fundamentalist" concepts of caste. Today, envisioning the progress of our society, we ought to have recognition for space where individual merit, dignity and equality take precedence over caste discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices against a particular community. Inclusive institutions, multilevel public participation and a well-accepted mind will ensure the inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth of our country internally and externally, especially from rural areas to urban ones.

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