



Fighting Social Inequality
CalsMUN 2023

Research Report

Forum: Human Rights Council

Issue: Putting Measures in Place to Combat the Caste Systems and to Prevent Any Disadvantages for People from Different Heritages

Chairs: Katrin Haliash and Alisa Kabakci





Personal Introduction

Katrin Haliash

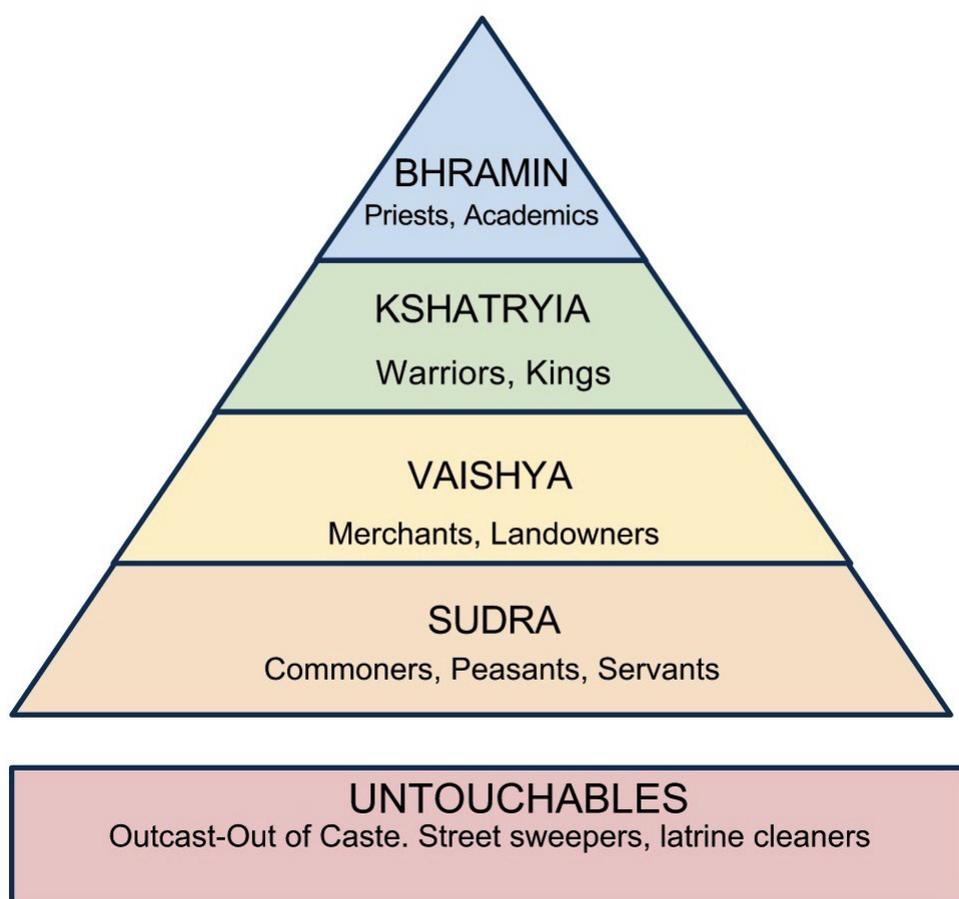
Hello delegates,

My name is Katrin or Kate for short and I am 17 years old. It is my honour to serve as your head chair of the Human Rights Council at CalsMUN 2023! I am currently a year 12 student at the British School in the Netherlands, where I study English Literature, Geography, Psychology, Spanish, Biology and Maths in the IBDP program with the goal of studying politics in university. I am Canadian but was born in the Netherlands. I've been involved with MUN for 4 years now and hope to maybe see you in many other conferences after CalsMUN. However, when I am not debating, you can find me doing many sports such as tennis and basketball. I also play on the saxophone and act. Alongside with Alisa I am really looking forward to having great debates with you all and am sure it will be a great success which will be a lot of fun. See you soon!



Introduction

Disadvantages arise for people from different heritages which is seen in the Indian caste system. The caste system is a way of dividing people into groups based on their birth, occupation, and social status. It originated in ancient India and was influenced by Hindu beliefs of karma, reincarnation, and purity. The caste system has four main categories: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants and farmers), and Shudras (servants and laborers). Below the caste system are the Dalits or the untouchables, who face discrimination and oppression for doing jobs considered impure or dirty. These jobs include carpenters, blacksmith's, servants, waitress etc. The caste system has been challenged by various social movements, religions, and laws that promote equality and human rights. However, the caste system still affects millions of people in India and other countries, influencing their education, employment, marriage, and identity. The tensions have decreased but people are still being treated unequally from different heritages and because of their statuses in society. It is essential that the basic human rights of the Indians and other people are restored.





Definition of Key Terms

Dalits

Dalits, also known as "Untouchables," are members of the lowest social group in the Hindu caste system. The word "Dalit" means "oppressed" or "broken" and is the name members of this group gave themselves in the 1930s. Constitute of 1.3 billion of the Indian population (1/4th of the entire population).

Castes

Each of the hereditary classes of Hindu society, distinguished by relative degrees of ritual purity or pollution and of social status.

Bhakti Movement

The Bhakti movement was a significant religious movement in medieval Hinduism that sought to bring religious reforms to all strata of society by adopting the method of devotion to achieve salvation.

Artisans

A skilled craft worker who makes or creates material objects partly or entirely by hand e.g., Blacksmith.

Brahmins

A member of the highest Hindu caste, originally that of the priesthood.

Vedic Varnas

The Sanskrit word for class

General Overview

This has been an ongoing problem for many years. The origins of the caste system in India and Nepal are not fully known, but castes seem to have originated more than 2,000 years ago. One's caste affects their options regarding marriage, employment, education, economies, mobility, housing, and politics, among others. It affects everyone but some much more than others. Terrible things have been done to people in specific groups, for a few hundred years. In many villages in India, the people who are considered to be lower caste (Dalits) still do not have basic human rights. Though much has changed in the last twenty-five to thirty years, many horribly undesirable things still keep happening in the country which arises from problems in the caste systems. The system essentially began as a division of labour. For society to function, a certain amount of people in the population must



have a certain variety of skills and artisans. Somebody should take care of the administration, somebody should take care of education and the spiritual processes for the community and so on. Thus, like this they made four basic divisions which over a period of time became further and further divided. It is important to note that these skills were transmitted from generation to generation to maintain this caste system, which makes us question whether there was an alternative way of splitting these jobs. Naturally some specialists in their fields begin to think that they are more superior than others and therefore should be treated with a higher status. Over generations this superiority then becomes established, and all kinds of exploitative processes begin to take form. Still in many villages in India the people who are considered to be of lower caste don't even have basic human rights.

Hindu religious and social life has been largely governed by caste for centuries, with each group occupying a particular position within this intricate hierarchy. Caste divisions have long been a feature of rural communities. For example, Brahmins would not accept food or drink from Shudras, upper and lower castes typically lived in separate colonies, and caste-based marriage was the norm. The system granted many privileges to the upper castes while allowing privileged groups to repress the lower castes. It was frequently criticised for being unfair and backwards looking, but it remained essentially unchanged for centuries, locking people into rigid social structures from which they were unable to break free. Despite the challenges, however, some Dalits and other low-caste Indians have succeeded in rising to hold important positions in the nation, including BR Ambedkar, who wrote the Indian Constitution, and KR Narayanan, who became the country's first Dalit president. According to new research, when British colonial authorities used censuses to streamline the system, primarily to create a single society with a common law that could be easily governed, caste became India's defining social feature.

The constitution of independent India forbade caste-based discrimination, and in an effort to right historical wrongs and give the historically underprivileged a fair shot, the authorities announced quotas in government jobs and educational institutions for scheduled castes and tribes, the lowest in the caste hierarchy, in 1950. Following social reform movements, many people in a number of southern states as well as in the northern state of Bihar started going by one name. Despite the changes, caste identities still have a strong hold, and a person's last name almost always serves as a reliable indicator of their caste. The poor people are programmed to be victims who are subjugated.

But the caste system is still functioning in the context of social security. People take care of their own clan and caste. They will always reach out to people in their caste who are in trouble. Until we establish a nationwide social security system for every citizen in this country, the caste system will continue to exist to some extent. Just trying to abolish the caste system and work against it will not produce results. People are still clinging together to the system mainly because of the social security it provides. It is very important that we bring a security system and an education system which will transmit skills to everyone according to their aptitude. When this happens, the relevance of the caste system will completely disappear. Once that happens, the caste systems will die a natural death.



These systems affect more vulnerable groups such as Dalit women who come across violence that is reported every day. Dalit women make up 16% of India's population. They are limited and banned from education and other necessities. They are kept away from the centre of knowledge as once you're born into a caste it is very difficult to grow out of it. Women are also put in uncomfortable positions through marriage, because whoever the man is the woman inherits the work from his caste. The problem of illegal employment can also come in. She has no other chance to have a different job in order to make a living and her identity is created. They are also treated very unequally as they must do what they are told including how they should wear their clothes, limiting any source of freedom. This can also create many other problems including teachers in the upper castes mistreating the children who are from lower castes. It is societies fault as the powerful have made the rules for the rest of the people and they are expected to follow their rules. Children also do not have as many opportunities as the children from the upper castes limiting them to being able to have a better future. Not only are these groups affected, but also men. Men in the lower castes tend to have a smaller income than the upper caste men. They inherit their parents' jobs and do not have the chance to change that. They and their families are therefore forced to live in very poor, unhygienic conditions as they do not have enough money to become financially stable and live in comfort/luxury.

Moving away from the caste systems in specific, creates disadvantages for people from different heritages in general which can create problems and an unequal community. The inequalities that drive poverty and injustice are complex and multi-dimensional. They are created and sustained by unjust, deeply entrenched and interacting systems such as patriarchy, sexism, caste, and racism that can affect anyone, anywhere. We take a multi-dimensional approach which makes us and our impact distinctive. If thought about thoroughly, a clear link can be made with an individual's inheritance and the families financial stability. It is not the individual's fault that they are born into a poorer household, so it is crucial to change this and provide everyone with the same possibilities. So, to say, lower income people have been prevented from realising their human capital potential and therefore are stuck in a never-ending circle of poverty. This also influences inequalities on people's quality of life as they are forced to live in devastating conditions and therefore are more prone to diseases. Coming back to the Indian caste systems, another interesting piece of information to be aware of is that a woman of the higher caste must be a virgin when they marry a man, but a woman from the lower caste doesn't have to be that and they can also re-marry. So not only does this create a problem for the Dalit caste, but also for the Brahmin caste where woman do not have a right to remarry and face severe punishments if not adhered too. So, to avoid breaching human rights a form of inter caste marriages should be established and the laws regarding marriage should change. Additionally, the women who are casteless often get raped, they must do everything that the higher caste tells them to do, and the higher caste really takes advantage of this. There are many other caste inequalities, not only in India, but some places like Nepal where there is a similar system.

Inequalities caused by the caste systems include: the violation of fundamental rights, creation of disharmony and the build up to conflict, a responsibility for groupism, ill treatment to lower castes and the lack of opportunities. There is no interaction or communication between



different castes and strikes out any opinions from the lower castes (in political decisions). Just be aware that if any solutions were to be put in place, it would not involve the law much as it can provide protection from exploitation, but not attitudinal change in upper castes.



Background Information

In ancient times, there were no engineering schools and medical schools or opportunities that are available now to the marginalized societies. Skills were transmitted from generation to generation by maintaining the caste system.

It is known to be the oldest living system. The theology behind the system states that: Within a single lifetime, people in India historically had little social mobility. They had to strive for virtue during their present lives in order to attain a higher station their next time around. In this system, a particular soul's new form depends upon the virtuousness of its previous behaviour. Thus, a truly virtuous person from the Shudra caste could be rewarded with rebirth as a Brahmin in his or her next life.

Practices associated with caste varied through time and across India, but all shared some common features. The three key areas of life historically dominated by caste were marriage, meals, and religious worship. Marriage across caste lines was strictly forbidden. Most people even married within their own sub-caste or jati. At mealtimes, anyone could accept food from the hands of a Brahmin, but a Brahmin would be polluted if he or she took certain types of food from a lower caste person. At the other extreme, if an untouchable dared to draw water from a public well, he or she polluted the water, and nobody else could use it. In religious



worship, Brahmins, as the priestly class, presided over rituals and services including preparation for festivals and holidays, as well as marriages and funerals. The Kshatriya and Vaisya castes had full rights to worship, but in some places, Shudras (the servant caste) were not allowed to offer sacrifices to the gods. Untouchables were barred entirely from temples, and sometimes they were not even allowed to set foot on temple grounds. If the shadow of an untouchable touched a Brahmin, the Brahmin would be polluted, so untouchables had to lay face-down at a distance when a Brahmin passed.

Curiously, non-Hindu populations in India sometimes organized themselves into castes as well. After the introduction of Islam in the subcontinent, for example, Muslims were divided into classes such as the Sayed, Sheikh, Mughal, Pathan, and Qureshi. When the British Raj began to take power in India in 1757, they exploited the caste system as a means of social control. The British allied themselves with the Brahmin caste, restoring some of its privileges that had been repealed by the Muslim rulers. However, many Indian customs concerning the lower castes seemed discriminatory to the British, so these were outlawed. During the 1930s and 1940s, the British government made laws to protect the "Scheduled castes," untouchables and low-caste people.

Lastly, nowadays in India the caste system/negative discrimination has been made illegal. The government is trying to decrease the wealth and development differences between the castes. This means that the Dalits/untouchables have some advantages nowadays, in universities a certain percentage of the students must be casteless. Also, in the local government 33% of the people should be woman and there should be an equal number of Dalits in the government comport with the amount in the population. Although there is this positive discrimination the negative ones didn't stop yet. Still the Dalits are not welcome at some places and other sorts of discrimination are still visible.



Major Parties Involved

Organisations

B.R. Ambedkar



Visionary leader who brought dignity and rights to the most oppressed people in India.

Human Rights Watch

As an NGO dedicated to conducting research on and advocating for human rights, the group has the ability to pressure governments, policy makers, and companies to denounce abuse and begin to respect human rights for all castes. It has published specific reports and sent investigative journalists to the area to discover more about the extent and causes of the problem.

K.R. Narayanan

He was the tenth President of India. He broke the glass ceiling when he became the first Dalit to assume the office of the President. A revolutionary figure that helped to fight the caste system problem.

Countries

India

Being the location where this system is implemented, it is evident that India is one of the sole main parties involved in this issue. Despite many denials and statements saying that this system is organizing the society in a better way rather than a negative law establishment. Nonetheless, it has been active for a long time proven by many reports and individuals who are experiencing unequal treatment.

Nepal

Caste system being a huge part of the society, remaining in action.

Sri Lanka

The caste systems in Sri Lanka are social stratification systems found among the ethnic groups of the island since ancient times. The models are like those found in Continental India, but are less extensive and important for various reasons, although the caste systems still play an important part in the formation of the society.

Mali

The Mali are an occupational caste found among the Hindus who traditionally worked as gardeners and florists.

Japan

Castes Japanese Feudal hierarchy describes the classification of feudal Japan, but on the basis of caste system. Caste system is basically the closed communal stratification system, where people of a region inherit their position on the basis of some specific rules that is followed by that area since historical periodicals.



North Korea

In the caste system in Korea, this social class was largely hereditary and based on certain professions considered "unclean" by the upper classes. This list of unclean professions included butchers, shamans, shoemakers, metalworkers, prostitutes, magicians, sorcerers, jail-keepers, and performers.

United Kingdom

When the British Raj began to take power in India in 1757, they exploited the caste system as a means of social control. The British allied themselves with the Brahmin caste, restoring some of its privileges that had been repealed by the Muslim rulers.

Timeline of Key Events

Date

Description of event

1200-900 BC

Composition of the Purusha Sukta, a hymn in the Rigveda, the earliest Sanskrit text, and a foundation of the later Hindu tradition. This is the first textual representation of a system of social stratification that will later be known as caste.

200-100 BC

Early Buddhist literature describes and criticizes the hierarchical, birth-based division of society. The Buddha, in this literature, argues against the divine origin of hierarchy and institutes the sangha, a monastic order into which members of all classes are admitted.

200 BC- 200 AD

Composition of Manu Dharmashastra, a Sanskrit code of laws and norms influential in the later Hindu tradition. Manu elaborates the four-fold structure of society, prescribes privileges and disabilities according to status, and identifies despised groups outside the four varnas – groups that will later be identified with the “untouchables.”

Mid-12th Century

The Veerashaivas, a radical anti-caste sect led by Basava in Kalyan in South India,



briefly attain prominence, and face violent suppression.

15th Century

Dalit saints such as Ravidas and Kabir among others lead Bhakti movement, challenging the hegemony of Brahminical order.

1950

Independent India's new constitution, written principally by Ambedkar, comes into effect. Its outlaws' discrimination based on caste and the practice of untouchability. It also reserves 22.5 per cent of its educational and civil service seats for "untouchables" and aboriginals.

2001

The World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, becomes a hotly debated topic in India, with Dalit activists determined that discrimination based on caste be raised at the forum, but the government of India manages to keep it off the agenda.

2005

Human-rights organizations collect more than 100,000 reports of atrocities against Dalits in this year alone. They include murders, rapes, and arson attacks on Dalit communities. Only a handful of arrests are made.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

There have been some resolutions which have actually fought these implementations and removed them completely from these areas. However, these groups still face mass discrimination, and it is our job to prevent the disadvantages that these people from different heritages might experience.

Some of the previous attempts to solve this issue include acts that were passed by the Indian parliament to end the discriminatory practices against so called lower castes. The legislations include:

- Protection of Civil Rights Act, in 1976
- Prevention of Atrocities Act, in 1989



- The provision of employment as manual scavengers and their Rehabilitation Bill, in 2013
- The UN resolution RS/123 were stated in the preamble: 'recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.'
- Social reforms made to eliminate the treatment of differences or untouchables from the society.

Possible Solutions

There are many possible solutions that could either improve the caste system or decrease the effects of it. It is very important that we bring a nationwide social security system and an education system which will transmit skills to everyone according to their aptitude. When this happens, the relevance of the caste system will completely disappear. Once that happens, the caste system will die a natural death. Some of the solutions:

- Could involve addressing the barriers in access to justice and simply third parties spreading awareness, where countries can come together to help these countries with the caste systems.
- A concept of fairness that people could use to hold politicians to account. No matter which group people are in if you work hard and succeed you should have an opportunity to get ahead. As these people cannot seek accountability because of who they are and therefore just violating their rights does not seem right.
- The creation of a model of fairness in the development of our societies. The government should be addressed or who created these systems in the beginning.
- Encouragement to inter-caste marriages should develop within the young mass. It will help them to come closer and to develop healthy relations among them.
- Support fairness commissions that present reports to the mayoral candidates which is dedicated to economical fairness. With the creation of a possible welfare state.
- The support of charities such as Jan Sahas that freed 24,000 women from being illegally employed as human waste collectors being bribed by their caste. They help to spread awareness and rehabilitate other low-caste women.
- Promoting more education opportunities for the marginalized in society which becomes a potential source of hope for them.
- Establishing new schools for these marginalized people who are talented and hard-working and deserve better in the society.
- Improving the conditions in the school and making a change which includes training teachers, improving the infrastructure, creating a more equal education system for all genders which would increase the number of opportunities for the poorer families and individuals as they would be able to work in the bigger world as a doctor, engineer and etc, which are higher paid jobs.
- Supporting the residential, educational institutions which also contain extra-curricular activities which help to break down the stereotypes which are recklessly imposed on these people.



- Supporting educational reforms.

So, in conclusion, it's essential to make people aware that it is wrong to discriminate on the basis of their heritage and background.

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