**Effects of Caste System in India**

Though the caste system initially performed its positive functions well, in course of time it became degenerated and instead of doing social good it caused a great harm to the society. Some of the ill effects of caste system in India are as follows:

**1. It hindered national unity:**

The caste system developed a parochial feeling and made the people unduly conscious of their own castes. Many a time caste interests were given priority over national interest. Thus the whole system stood against the very concept of national unity.

**2. It stood against democracy:**

The caste system ran contrary to the democratic spirit. Democracy presupposes human equality, but the caste system believed in inequality and there was a hierarchical arrangement wherein the Brahmins were at the top, whereas the Sudras were at the lowest rung of the ladder.

**3. It resulted in suppression:**

In the caste system the lower castes were suppressed and repressed by the higher castes. The Sudras were very ill-treated and they were not allowed to come to the public places. Even their shadows were considered profane by the higher caste people. Inter-dining and inter-mixing with the lower castes was not allowed. Thus the system was solely based on exploitation of the lower castes.

**4. It hampered national development:**

Under the caste system only a few got the scope to control the national life and the others were engaged in serving the higher castes, like the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. In the national interest it is essential that all the sections of the society should contribute to the social welfare, but the downtrodden sections did not have any voice in national development and advancement.

**5. It resulted in treachery and the ultimate fall of the Hindus:**

In a traditional caste-ridden society, the Sudras were fully aware that they could not prosper in the Hindu society. As a result, at the time of invasion by outsiders, some of them leaked out the strategic secrets to them. They also cooperated with the invaders instead of their own people. Their treachery ultimately became responsible for the fall of the Hindus.

**6. It resulted in religious conversion:**

The dominance of Brahminism became intolerable on the part of the Sudras, who were the most neglected people in the Hindu society. They were easily allured by the ideology and philosophy of Islam as well as Christianity. Many of them embraced the new faiths. In this way the caste system contributed to the expansion of Christianity and Islam in India.

**7. It undermined the ability and aspirations of the people:**

Since in the caste system one’s status and role are fixed up from the time of one’s birth, one’s ability, personal endeavor or diligence became meaningless in order to bring about any transformation. Acceptance of one’s own hereditary status became mandatory and unquestionable. Thus the aspirations and ability of people were relegated to the background in the caste system.

**8. It created a false sense of prestige among higher castes:**

The higher castes believed that they had the monopoly of wisdom. They felt that all other castes should consult them and work for them. This created a wide gulf between the higher and the lower castes.

**9. It resulted in the creation of a class of idlers:**

The Brahmins, being at the top of the caste hierarchy, were supposed to teach and preach religion. But in course of time they became apathetic to their avowed profession and did not devote themselves to this task. They knew it very well that they would not be thrown out of their castes, despite their insincerity. As a result, they began to live on the labour of other castes without any useful contribution to the society. Thus a class of idlers came into existence in the Hindu social system.

**10. It resulted in the introduction of untouchability:**

The worst aspect of the caste system was untouchability. The untouchable suffered from various social, economic, political and religious disabilities. In the name of religion, they were thoroughly exploited in the most inhuman manner. The lower castes were placed in the category of untouchables. Their children were never allowed to be educated and they were compelled to take unclean occupation.

The Sudra women were prohibited from wearing presses in the manner the Brahmin women dressed themselves. They were not allowed to use public well, ponds, places of worship etc. The fear of the wrath of God and religious conventions made the lower castes follow all the religious prescriptions and proscriptions.

**11. It gave a lower status to women:**

In the caste system, the women were utterly neglected. They enjoyed a very conservative and traditional type of status. They were denied the privilege of higher education. They could not voice their opinion in public affairs.

The women belonging to the higher castes led a still more precarious life due to the practice of child marriage and prohibition of widow remarriage. The desire for a male made women produce more and more children which affected their physical and mental condition. Sometimes the lower caste women were sexually harassed by the higher caste males but they could not protest against them due to the prevailing social pattern. In a nutshell, women enjoyed a very low status in the caste system.