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# Caste and the Power Elite in Allahabad

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This article examines the social composition of public institutions in Allahabad, and specifically, the share of different castes and communities in positions of power and influence – the Press Club, the university faculty, the Bar Association, the police, and the commanding positions in trade unions, non-governmental organisations, media houses, among other public institutions. These turn out to be heavily dominated by a small group of upper castes – Brahmins and Kayasthas in particular. Disadvantaged castes, for their part, are largely relegated to subordinate or menial positions. The findings raise troubling questions about the resilience of caste hierarchies. Aside from better enforcement of reservation norms, there is an urgent need for more voluntary attention to diversity in public life, of the sort that has significantly reduced ethnic or gender imbalances in other countries.

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## 1 Introduction

Moving from Delhi to Allahabad, as each of us has done at different points of time, is an enlightening as well as unsettling experience. Delhi looks (deceptively) like a melting pot of sorts, where people of all regions, castes and communities of India live and work. The caste composition of the population, in particular, is quite diverse and tends to get a little blurred in the immense variety of surnames. In some circles, like the university where we used to hang out, one is not supposed to talk about caste or show any awareness of it. The hold of caste on social life is not as glaring, brutal and pervasive as it would be in a village or small town.

In Allahabad, things are a little different. It does not take very long to notice that public institutions tend to be dominated by people (mainly men) with conspicuous north Indian upper-caste surnames such as Sharma, Tripathi or Srivastava. As familiarity with local caste names grows, the caste-based compartmentalisation of the society comes into fuller view, like a blurred image that becomes clearer as the lens is adjusted. For better or worse, one becomes more caste conscious.

Of course, this situation actually applies to a large extent in Delhi as well, as would be obvious to many Dalit observers. It is just more glaring in Allahabad. The relatively transparent caste structure in Allahabad also makes it possible to examine the caste composition of public institutions in a more systematic fashion. That is the purpose of this article.[1]

Before we proceed, a word of caution is due. The findings presented in this paper are based on guessing caste from surnames. As discussed below, this approach (already used with good effect in earlier studies) seems reliable enough for the purpose of identifying broad patterns, but it also involves a significant margin of error. One of the basic purposes of the Socio-economic and Caste Census (SECC), conducted in 2011, was to collect more comprehensive and reliable data on the socio-economic characteristics of different castes. Hopefully, SECC data will be available relatively soon and facilitate more in-depth enquiries of this sort. Meanwhile, we are constrained to adopt the more tentative approach of guessing caste from surnames.

## 2 Caste, Occupation and Power

One of the earliest enquiries into caste inequalities in positions of prestige was done by none other than B R Ambedkar, about six decades ago. He highlighted the fact that in the Madras Presidency, Brahmins represented only 3% of the population but captured a much larger share of the positions of power and privilege. In 1948, they occupied 37% of the gazetted posts of

the government and 44% of the non-gazetted posts with a salary above Rs 100 a month (Ambedkar nd, Table 12.1).

The skewed caste composition of government jobs continues to this day. A recent examination of top-level central government jobs reveals a near absence of Dalits and Adivasis (Varma 2012). For instance, there were no Dalits at all at the secretary level at the time of this study, in March 2011. Even at other senior levels, the share of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) was minuscule (Table 1).[2]

**Table 1: SCs and STs in Top-Level Government Jobs** (as on 14 March 2011)

| Level | Total Number of | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Posts | SC Officers[a] | ST Officers[a] |
| Secretary | 149 | 0 (0) | 4 (2.7) |
| Additional secretary | 108 | 2 (1.9) | 2 (1.9) |
| Joint secretary | 477 | 31 (6.5) | 15 (3.1) |
| Director | 590 | 17 (2.9) | 7 (1.2) |

a In brackets, percentage of SC/ST officers in the total number of posts.
Source: Varma (2012).

The representation of disadvantaged castes in higher government jobs has slowly improved over time with the spread of education as well as due to reservations. In 1965, the proportion of SCs and STs in government jobs was just 2.4% in the Group A category (corresponding to highest rank, status and level of responsibility), 3.4% in Group B and 10.3% in Group C. By 2003, these proportions had increased to 16.1%, 18.6% and 22.8%, respectively.[3] Employment of Dalits and Adivasis at a senior level in the government not only gives them a sense of dignity, but also contributes to their financial mobility and access to social networks (Jodhka 2010). Further, it helps to bridge the social distance that often separates civil servants from the people and ensure that the administration is sensitive to the needs, rights and interests of the underprivileged.

There has been a glaring absence of Dalits and Adivasis in the media as well. In 1996, B N Uniyal, a senior Indian journalist concluded that "in all the 30 years I had worked as journalist I had never met a fellow journalist who was Dalit" (Uniyal 1996). Uniyal's findings were submitted in a memorandum by the president of the Dalit Shiksha Andolan and the convenor of the Dalit Writers Forum in 1998 to the Editors Guild of India and the Press Council of India. The memorandum demanded creation of a national commission aimed at ensuring that the caste composition of the Indian media would be somewhat similar to the caste composition of the population by 2005 (Jeffrey 2001).

However, these demands were not met and the 21st century continues to witness a sore lack of diversity in the Indian media. In 2006, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies surveyed 40 national media organisations and failed to find a single Dalit or Adivasi person in key decision-making positions. Seventy-one per cent of these positions were occupied by upper-caste Hindu men (Sethi 2007). More than five years after this study, Dalits and Adivasis remain virtually absent from the country's newsrooms (Jeffrey 2012). The exclusion of SCs and STs from the media has a direct impact on the news and stories that come out, and the light in which they are composed. It also reinforces social prejudices against these groups and the denial of their entitlements (Sethi 2007).[4]

The under-representation of Dalits and Adivasis also applies in the higher education system. According to data obtained under the Right to Information Act, 48.5% of the teaching positions reserved for SCs and STs were vacant in 24 central universities in 2010-11. As the rank of the posts becomes higher, the share of vacant positions increases. For instance, over 84% of Reader positions and 92% of Professor positions in the SC/ST category were vacant in that year (Gaikwad 2012).

Upper castes dominate the country's business community as well. In 2010, 93% of the members of the corporate boards of the top 1,000 Indian companies (based on total assets) belonged to "forward castes". The dominance of upper castes in corporate boards helps them to secure not only economic power but also political clout, given the influence of businesses on policy decisions (Ajit et al 2012). Findings from successive economic surveys reveal that the proportion of Dalits among entrepreneurs (9.9% in 1990 and 9.8% in 2005) is much below their share in the total population.[5]

Among the country's 46 billionaires in 2012, there were no Dalits or Adivasis, and only one was a Muslim. Twenty-eight of them were from traditional merchant classes – Bania (including Marwari), Parsi and Sindhi. A few belonged to other upper castes and a small number were from Other Backward Classes (OBCs) (Gandhi and Walton 2012). According to *Forbes* magazine data reported by Aakar Patel (2012), eight of the 10 richest persons in India are Banias – a privileged trading community that accounts for barely 2% of India's population.

Upper castes have an overwhelming presence even in prestigious sports. In 2008, seven of the 11 players in the Indian cricket team were Brahmins. Asked to comment on this, the chairman of the national cricket academy – also a Brahmin – dismissed it as a "coincidence" (Stevenson 2008). Tejpal (2012) writes poignantly about his struggles to be accepted as a polo player by Rajput school friends who thought that only they were entitled to play polo.

The counterpart of this dominance of the upper castes in privileged occupations is a preponderance of disadvantaged castes in jobs requiring hard labour or menial work. For instance, 40% of government-employed *safai karamcharis* (also known as "sweepers"), hired to clean public spaces, are Dalits (Varma 2012). Almost all of India's more than 3 lakh manual scavengers are Dalits (Tharamangalam 2012).[6]

**Table 2: Share of Major Social Groups in Different Occupations in Uttar Pradesh, 2004-05** (%)

| Occupations | High Caste | OBC | Muslim | Dalit | Other[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Managers in private firms | 74 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Engineers, scientists, doctors | 63 | 21 | 10 | 5 | 1 |
| Clerks and clerical assistants | 47 | 26 | 14 | 9 | 4 |
| Lawyers, teachers, accountants | 42 | 32 | 12 | 12 | 2 |
| Police | 32 | 46 | 6 | 13 | 3 |
| Technical workers | 24 | 37 | 18 | 18 | 3 |
| Drivers | 19 | 27 | 36 | 17 | 1 |
| Cleaners and waiters | 10 | 38 | 13 | 38 | 1 |
| Skilled manual workers | 7 | 31 | 31 | 28 | 3 |
| Unskilled manual workers | 6 | 35 | 15 | 42 | 2 |
| Agricultural labourers | 3 | 36 | 11 | 48 | 2 |
| All occupations (i e, share of each group in the population) | 21 | 37 | 19 | 22 | 1 |

a Adivasi, Sikh, Jain, Christian, etc.
Source: Authors' calculations from India Human Development Survey data. Figures apply to persons aged 18-60 years. Row entries add up to 100.

Table 2 (p 46) presents the share of major social groups in various occupations in Uttar Pradesh, according to the India Human Development Survey 2004-05. The data clearly shows that prestigious and well-paid professions such as business management, engineering, law, teaching and accountancy are dominated by the upper castes. For instance, the upper castes account for one-fifth or so of the population of Uttar Pradesh, but about one-half to three-fourths of privileged occupations such as private-firm managers, engineers, scientists, doctors and clerks. As one moves to positions involving manual work, the proportions of OBCs, Dalits and Muslims rise significantly. Occupations involving unskilled manual labour or agricultural work are performed predominantly by Dalits, followed by the OBCs and Muslims.

## 3 Caste and Public Institutions in Allahabad

### 3.1 The Survey

To take a closer look at these issues, we conducted a little survey of the caste composition of public institutions in Allahabad between June and August 2012. We began by collecting names of people in "positions of power and influence" (POPIs) from various institutional websites, lists of office employees, a directory published by the Allahabad Press Club, and related sources. The reference institutions include educational institutions (e g, Allahabad University and the Indian Institute of Information Technology Allahabad), administrative institutions (e g, the district administration and the municipal corporation), judicial bodies (e g, the Allahabad High Court), trade unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). For purposes of comparison, we also looked at a few manual occupation groups such as rickshaw pullers. Further details of the reference groups and corresponding sources are given in the Appendix (p 51).

A total of 1,852 names were collected. Most of them were men, reflecting the highly patriarchal nature of the society in Allahabad – an issue not unrelated to the caste hierarchy but nevertheless beyond the scope of this article. The next task was to associate each name (more precisely, each surname) with a particular caste or community, as accurately as possible. In some cases, this is quite easy. For instance, it is common knowledge in Allahabad that someone called "Srivastava" would normally be a Kayastha. Of course, in principle nothing prevents a member of another caste from calling himself or herself Srivastava (whether to masquerade as a Kayastha or for any other reason). In practice, however, the chance of a Srivastava not being a Kayastha is so low – at least in Allahabad – that it can be ignored for our purposes.[7]

There are also cases where the caste connotation of a particular surname is not a matter of common knowledge, but can be inferred with reasonable confidence by consulting scholarly sources or knowledgeable persons. Johri, for instance, appears to be a Kayastha surname, at least in eastern Uttar Pradesh.[8] We have sought and used as much expert information as possible, trying to avoid any unreliable guesswork.

Finally, there were cases (325 out of 1,852) where it was not possible to link a surname to a particular caste group or community with any confidence. For instance, the name "Sanjay Kumar" has no particular caste connotation. In some cases, we had an opportunity to resolve the ambiguity through direct enquiry from the person concerned. Since very few of these remaining cases looked like they might be Muslim or Christian names, we classified them as "unidentified Hindu".

### 3.2 Main Findings

Table 3, based on this survey, indicates the share of upper castes (more precisely, of persons identified with reasonable confidence as upper caste) in various positions of power and influence in Allahabad. This share has been calculated in two ways: in the entire sample (for the relevant group), and in the subset of those (within that group) whose caste could be identified. The former can be seen as a lower bound on the actual share of the upper castes in POPIs, since some of those whose caste could not be identified may be upper caste as well. The latter, on the other hand, is a plausible upper bound, because the share of the upper castes among the "unidentified" is likely to be lower than their share among the identified.

**Table 3: Share of Upper Castes in Positions of Power and Influence, Allahabad** (%)

| Reference Group[a] | Upper Castes | | Brahmin and Kayastha | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | In Entire Group | Among Those "Identified" | In Entire Group | Among Those "Identified" |
| Leaders of teachers' unions (17) | 100 | 100 | 76 | 76 |
| Allahabad Press Club, office-bearers (16) | 100 | 100 | 75 | 75 |
| Proprietors of advertisement agencies (11) | 91 | 91 | 55 | 55 |
| Hospital doctors (99) | 89 | 94 | 37 | 39 |
| Bar Association, executive committee (28) | 86 | 96 | 68 | 76 |
| Prominent publishers (12) | 83 | 100 | 42 | 50 |
| GBPSSI faculty (15) | 80 | 80 | 60 | 67 |
| Advocate Association, executive committee (14) | 79 | 100 | 57 | 73 |
| NGO representatives (30) | 77 | 88 | 47 | 54 |
| Union leaders (clerical & manual workers) (49) | 76 | 88 | 55 | 64 |
| Allahabad University faculty* (112) | 76 | 77 | 54 | 55 |
| CDOs and BDOs (20) | 75 | 88 | 40 | 53 |
| Reporters of media houses (62) | 74 | 85 | 53 | 61 |
| Ashok Nagar residents (62) | 74 | 82 | 32 | 36 |
| Former presidents, AU students' union (79) | 73 | 89 | 44 | 54 |
| Prominent artists (55) | 71 | 89 | 47 | 59 |
| Allahabad Press Club, members (104) | 71 | 80 | 56 | 63 |
| Police officers (district and block levels) (28) | 68 | 100 | 39 | 58 |
| IIIT Allahabad faculty (47) | 68 | 100 | 36 | 56 |
| High court judges (75) | 68 | 81 | 32 | 38 |
| High court lawyers* (100) | 67 | 88 | 44 | 58 |
| Traders' association (6) | 67 | 80 | 0 | 0 |
| College principals (16) | 56 | 69 | 19 | 23 |
| Junior engineers, Allahabad municipality (20) | 55 | 79 | 30 | 43 |
| Total (1,077) | 75 | 87 | 46 | 54 |

AU = Allahabad University. BDO = Block Development Officer. CDO = Chief Development Officer. GBPSSI = G B Pant Social Science Institute. IIIT = Indian Institute of Information Technology.

a In brackets, size of the group. Asterisks indicate cases where a sample was taken, due to the large size of the group; in such cases, the number in brackets is the size of the sample. The first column indicates the proportion of persons identified (with reasonable confidence) as upper caste in the entire group. The second column indicates their proportion in the subset of all those (within the relevant group) whose caste could be identified. These figures can be interpreted as lower and upper bounds, respectively, on the actual proportion of upper-caste persons in the relevant group. Similarly with Brahmins and Kayasthas in the third and fourth columns.

Starting from the last row of Table 3, the overall share of upper castes in this list of POPIs is at least 75% , compared with around 21% in the population of Uttar Pradesh as a whole.[9] Brahmins and Kayasthas alone have cornered about half of the POPIs – more than four times their share in the population of Uttar Pradesh. These are approximate figures, given the possible inaccuracies involved in guessing castes from surnames, but the pattern is clear enough: the upper castes continue to have overwhelming control over public institutions. It is not that other castes (or communities) are completely unrepresented, but with such a large majority, it stands to reason that the upper castes must be calling the shots.

An attempt was also made to identify Dalits in the sample. This required further enquiries, since Dalits often do not have recognisable surnames. In fact, many of them do not have a surname at all, or, at any rate, are listed in official documents (such as employee registers) under names – or nicknames – such as Chhote, Savitri or Guddu. That itself is quite telling. More importantly, there was no evidence of any significant presence of Dalits in the sample institutions, except a few – such as the university faculty – where mandatory quotas are supposed to apply. On the other hand, Dalits were consistently over-represented in menial jobs. For instance, a large proportion of safai karamcharis are Dalits. And among 30 rickshaw pullers who were surveyed, almost half were Dalits.

It is worth noting that the dominance of the upper castes seems to be, if anything, even stronger in institutions of "civil society" than in state institutions. For instance, in Allahabad the share of the upper castes is close to 80% among NGO representatives and trade union leaders, close to 90% in the executive committee of the Bar Association, and a full 100% among office-bearers of the Press Club (which is, in fact, made up almost entirely of Brahmins and Kayasthas). Even trade unions of workers who belong mainly to disadvantaged castes are often under the control of upper-caste leaders. There is some food for thought here about the grip of the caste hierarchy on social institutions, including some that are otherwise anti-establishment. There is a little (not much) more balance in state institutions such as the Allahabad Municipal Corporation or Allahabad University. Even there, however, the share of Dalits among POPIs is minuscule, especially in the more prestigious categories such as "head of department".

### 3.3 Beyond POPIs

For purposes of broad-brush comparison, we also collected similar data from an informal sample of persons involved in a range of intermediate and subordinate occupations. Examples of the former include peons, clerks and security guards. The latter refer mainly to occupations involving hard manual labour, such as rickshaw pullers, gardeners and safai karamcharis. The data we collected on intermediate and subordinate occupations are a little patchy, since our main focus was on POPIs, but some basic patterns emerge (Table 4).

For instance, it was interesting to find that even in intermediate occupations the upper castes are heavily over-represented (at least in the public sector – our main source of information on intermediate occupations). Many of these occupations, e g, peon or security guard, do not require special skills beyond elementary education. Yet, jobs in that category tend to be considered as a privilege of sorts, especially government jobs which are comparatively well paid. At least 36% of those in our sample of intermediate occupations were recognisably upper caste – almost twice their share in the population.

**Table 4: Share of Upper Castes and Others in Different Occupation Groups** (%)

| | Positions of Power and Influence[a] (1,077) | "Intermediate Positions"[b] (399) | Occupations Involving Hard Labour (225) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Upper castes | 75 | 36 | 8 |
| Persons without surname | 1 | 13 | 50 |
| Other | 24 | 51 | 42 |

a See Table 3.
b Mainly Class 4 staff, accounts clerk, second and first grade clerks, *safai nayak* (cleaning supervisor), *nayab moharrir* (revenue collection officer) and "helper" at the Allahabad Municipal Corporation, and also guards and junior clerical staff at the G B Pant Social Science Institute.
Size of each group (number of persons) in brackets; this table omits 151 cases (out of 1,852) that did not clearly fit into these categories.

As soon as manual labour is involved, however, the pattern is reversed: upper castes virtually vanish and most of the workers seem to belong to SCs or other disadvantaged groups. We say "seem" because, as mentioned earlier, a large proportion (about half in our sample) of those in subordinate occupations have no surname in official records. It is a reasonable guess that someone listed as Chhote or Kalu in the employment register is not upper caste.

A particularly telling case is that of the "Dome" working for the Allahabad Municipal Corporation. The term Dome is used to refer simultaneously to (1) workers employed by the municipality to remove dead animals, and (2) the caste (a SC) to which these workers belong. No need is felt, apparently, to distinguish the caste from the occupation – it is taken for granted that all those working as Dome for the municipality belong to the Dome caste. Most of them are listed without surname in the municipality registers.

## 4 Discussion

The survey findings raise an obvious question: how do the upper castes manage to corner such a high share of the positions of power and influence?

One lame explanation, sometimes invoked by the upper castes, is that there is a shortage of qualified persons for these positions among disadvantaged social groups. This is a partial explanation, at best, for specific positions that require exceptional qualifications. But as a general explanation of upper-caste bias among POPIs, it has little merit.

**Table 5: Educational Attainments of Major Social Groups in Uttar Pradesh** (2004-05)

| | Share of Adult Population | Proportion of Adults Who Have Completed Graduation | Share of Adult Graduate Population |
|---|---|---|---|
| High caste | 21 | 16.3 | 49 |
| OBC | 37 | 4.7 | 27 |
| Muslim | 19 | 3.8 | 11 |
| Dalit | 22 | 3.0 | 10 |
| Other | 1 | 3.6 | 3 |
| Total | 100 | 6.5 | 100 |

Source: Authors' calculations from India Human Development Survey (IHDS) data. Figures apply to persons aged 18-60 years.

To illustrate, Table 5 presents some information on the educational attainments of different social groups in Uttar Pradesh, again based on the India Human Development Survey 2004-05. As one would

expect, the proportion of graduates in the adult population is much larger among the upper castes than among OBCs, Dalits or Muslims. And yet, because the upper castes account for a small share (about one-fifth) of the population of Uttar Pradesh, their share in the total population of adult graduates is not more than half. In other words, almost half of all graduates in Uttar Pradesh are OBC, Dalit or Muslim. Thus, there is no shortage of persons qualified for white-collar employment and related jobs among the disadvantaged social groups.

Having said this, relatively high levels of education among the upper castes certainly contribute to the upper-caste dominance of POPIs. In fact, in some cases it seems to be the main explanation. For instance, the share of different social groups among "clerks and clerical assistants" in Uttar Pradesh is not very different from their share in the graduate adult population (Tables 2 and 5). Thus, in principle, if disadvantaged groups were able to secure fair educational opportunities, they would also have a fair share of these occupations. In practice, there are massive social inequalities in access to education (especially quality education), and these play a key role in the upper-caste dominance of public institutions. The other side of the same coin is that universal quality education would be a powerful weapon against social exclusion.

Aside from higher education levels, upper castes also enjoy more extensive and powerful social networks. Upper-caste persons tend to have friends and well-wishers in influential positions, not just because they are relatively affluent and well educated but also by virtue of their caste and family ties. The role of social networks in securing employment opportunities and access to positions of power and privilege in places like Allahabad is reasonably obvious from first-hand observation, and has also been studied by various scholars.[10] These privileged social networks tend to be self-reinforcing and have helped to transform POPIs into a virtual upper-caste bastion.

In addition to the role (legitimate or illegitimate, depending on the situation) of social networks, plain discrimination against disadvantaged groups is also likely to play a part in their exclusion from POPIs. Discrimination begins with the schooling system, which is far from impartial between different social groups.[11] It is also common in the labour market. Recent studies, for instance, have shown that job applications tend to be treated quite differently depending on the surname of the applicant (presumably because the surname acts as a hint – or more – of the applicant's social background).[12] Even seemingly impartial concerns for "merit" or "family background" on the part of employers often have discriminatory undertones (Jodhka and Newman 2007).

Finally, poor implementation of reservation norms (applicable mainly in the public sector) has probably contributed to the over-representation of upper castes among POPIs. We did not study this issue in any detail, but we did hear of various means that are sometimes used by public institutions in Allahabad to circumvent reservation norms. To illustrate, consider an academic institution where the norms require every third faculty appointment to be made from a reserved category. If the faculty size is relatively small, this restriction can be avoided by dividing the faculty into small "centres" with one or two members each, and making faculty appointments centre-wise rather than for the institution as a whole, so that a third appointment rarely comes up.[13] Quite likely, public institutions in Allahabad have found many other ways of undermining the reservation norms. Further research on this as well as on other factors of unequal access to POPIs would be useful.

One thing is clear: there is little evidence, in Allahabad, of any voluntary effort on the part of the upper castes to ensure some social "diversity" in public institutions. Independently of reservation norms, nothing prevents (say) the Press Club, the Bar Association or local NGOs from taking steps to ensure that disadvantaged groups are not excluded. The idea may sound naïve, but voluntary attention to diversity in public institutions is an accepted norm in many countries today.[14] Even in India, it has made some inroads in specific contexts, e g, in some media houses.

In Allahabad, it seems to be the reverse: the upper castes guard their privileged access to positions of power and influence. Resistance against reservation norms is one obvious example. But quite likely, many other barriers are used to guard caste privileges.

One of the most effective barriers is endogamous marriage. Every time an upper-caste person marries within his or her caste without good reason, he or she helps to perpetuate the caste system and the privileges of the upper castes. Of course, there may be a good reason, for instance being in love with someone who belongs to the same caste. But when endogamous marriage is practised simply because it is considered the norm, it is a form of caste discrimination. The resilience of this norm in Allahabad is one symptom, among others, of the tendency of the upper castes to guard their privileges, consciously or unconsciously.

This points to another interesting aspect of upper-caste attitude towards caste. When the case is made for voluntary attention to diversity, a common response is that caste is "best ignored". In our experience, many upper-caste persons pride themselves, in good faith, in not being "caste conscious". Obliterating caste consciousness is certainly one possible way of fighting caste prejudices. The problem is that ignoring or pretending to ignore caste tends to play into the hands of the upper castes: not only does it leave intact most of their power and privileges (including social networks, cultural affinities and shared norms), it also hides these privileges and protects them from being challenged. Besides, if ignoring caste is the best way to fight the caste system, what better place to start than marriage? Yet endogamous marriage remains the norm.[15] Clearly, most of the upper castes do not ignore caste at all. And if they are caste conscious, why not exercise that caste consciousness in a constructive manner, by paying more attention to diversity in public institutions?

## 5 Concluding Remarks

Positions of power and influence in Allahabad are overwhelmingly dominated by upper castes, while disadvantaged castes and communities are largely relegated to menial or subordinate

occupations. The latter's inability to secure an adequate presence in public institutions is not just a reflection of historical disadvantage, but also a symptom of active resistance from the privileged castes.

This situation has many adverse social consequences. It undermines the constitutional right to equality of opportunity, restricts upward mobility for disadvantaged castes, and reinforces class divisions and economic inequalities. Social exclusion can also be an important source of conflict as well as economic inefficiency. Last but not least, the hold of the upper castes on positions of power perpetuates the caste hierarchy.

The continuing exclusion of disadvantaged castes (and communities) from positions of power and influence calls for more effective and extensive reservation policies, and also other means of affirmative action such as universal quality education. But there is also a strong case for greater attention to diversity in public institutions, of the sort that has significantly reduced ethnic or gender imbalances in other countries. Nothing prevents the Bar Association, NGOs or trade unions in Allahabad from ensuring that they do not become upper-caste clubs. When they fail to do so, they become effective guardians of the caste hierarchy.

No one can be blamed for being born in an upper caste, since it is not a matter of choice. But perhaps this privilege entails a special responsibility to fight the caste system, instead of leaving that to the disadvantaged groups – or worse, obstructing their struggle for equality.

NOTES

1 Shorter comments based on the same data were presented in Drèze (2012) and Drèze and Sen (2013).

2 Although there are no reservations for these posts, central institution quotas are applicable for SCs, STs and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) while entering the civil services.

3 For the proportion of SCs and STs in Groups A, B, C and D of government jobs every year from 1965 to 2003, see Thorat and Senapati (2006).

4 On Dalit exclusion from the media and its social consequences, see also Prasad (nd), Varadarajan (2006), Kandasamy (2008), Balasubramaniam (2011), Mishra (2014), Rajpurohit (2014), among others.

5 See Iyer et al (2013) and Teltumbde (2013). In an early case study of entrepreneurs in Visakhapatnam, Nafziger (1978) concludes that "a highly disproportionate number of entrepreneurs (especially successful ones) are from high castes and families with a high socio-economic status" (p 123). Damodaran (2008) argues that the social base of Indian business became more diversified after the liberalisation of the economy in the early 1990s, though mainly in southern India and "not so in the North, where businessmen tend to be uniformly Bania-Marwaris or Khatris" (p 312).

6 For an eye-opening account of the lives of manual scavengers in India, see Singh (2014).

7 Similarly, we ignore the possibility that a woman from another caste might become "Srivastava" by marriage, and be wrongly counted in this survey as a Kayastha. Inter-caste marriages are rare in Allahabad.

8 The caste connotation of a particular surname often varies from region. We have tried to ascertain the patterns applicable in eastern Uttar Pradesh. This means that there may be inaccuracies in the caste classification of persons who migrated from other regions. But these inaccuracies are likely to be relatively small.

9 Perhaps it would be more appropriate to compare the share of the upper castes among POPIs with their share in the population of Allahabad. However, we were unable to find any data on the caste composition of Allahabad. Quite possibly, the share of the upper castes in the population is a little higher in Allahabad than in Uttar Pradesh as a whole. In that case, restricting the comparison to Allahabad would diminish the contrast between their share of POPIs and their share in the population. On the other hand, the fact that the population of Allahabad has a relatively high share of upper castes (if applicable) can plausibly be seen as another indication of the ability of privileged castes to capture centres of power.

10 See, e g, Vanneman et al (2006) and Munshi (2012). On the role of social networks in Indian business, see also Das (2003), Ajit et al (2012), Mahadevan (2012), among others. The India Human Development Survey 2004-05 shows that social networks (defined as knowing people in medical, educational or government institutions) vary across castes, tribes and religions. Brahmins had the most extensive networks, followed by other high castes, Christians, Sikhs and Jains. Next in the social networks ladder came OBCs, then Dalits and Muslims, and at the bottom were Adivasis. See Vanneman et al (2006).

11 On caste discrimination in the schooling system, see Nambissan (1996, 2010), PROBE Team (1999), Thorat and Lee (2005), Human Rights Watch (2014), among others.

12 See Thorat and Attewell (2007) and Siddique (2011). On caste discrimination in the labour market, see also Jodhka and Newman (2007), Thorat and Newman (2007, 2010), Madheswaran and Attewell (2007), Deshpande (2011), among others.

13 This practice was adopted at one time at the G B Pant Social Science Institute, though it was later discontinued.

14 For instance, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) conducts a yearly census of minorities – Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans and women – in the newsrooms of the country's major media houses. This practice has contributed to an increase in the proportion of minorities from 4% in 1978 (at the time of ASNE's establishment) to 12% in 2012 (see www.asne.org).

15 According to National Family Health Survey data, only 10% of marriages in India took place between different castes in 2005-06 (Das et al 2011).

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**Appendix: Sources of Names**

| Category | Source |
|---|---|
| Faculty members of Allahabad University | Ten departments (out of a total of 33) were selected at random. The lists of faculty members of these 10 departments were obtained from the website of Allahabad University. The caste composition of each faculty was ascertained from informal discussions with faculty members, clerical staff and students of the relevant departments. |
| Faculty members of the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Allahabad | Website of the institute. |
| Members of the governing body of Allahabad Nagar Nigam | Website of Allahabad Nagar Nigam. |
| Non-governmental organisation (NGOs) representatives | NGOs India website (www.uttar-pradesh.ngosindia.com). |
| Lawyers, Allahabad High Court | Hundred lawyers were randomly selected from the list of high court lawyers, available on the court's website (allahabadhighcourt.in/advocate/memberlist.htm). |
| Members of the Executive Committee, Advocate Association, Allahabad High Court, 2011-12 | Website of Allahabad High Court (allahabadhighcourt.in/advocate/advAssoHCAlld.jsp). |
| Members of the Executive Committee, Bar Association, Allahabad High Court, 2012-13 | Website of Allahabad High Court (allahabadhighcourt.in/advocate/barAssoHCAlld.jsp). |
| Judges, Allahabad High Court | Website of Allahabad High Court (allahabadhighcourt.in/service/judgeListSeni.jsp). |
| Faculty members and senior clerical staff, G B Pant Social Science Institute | Staff list from the institute's administrative officer. |
| Office-bearers of the Allahabad District Administration | List of office-bearers from the district administration office. |
| Chief Development Officer (CDO) and Block Development Officers of Allahabad district | List of officers from the CDO's office. |
| Employees of Allahabad Municipal Corporation | The employee categories selected for study include Dome, accounts clerk, *beldar*, cleaner, first-grade clerk, guard, helper, junior engineer, *khalasi* (persons who accompany garbage collection trucks), gardener, peon, revenue inspector, safai karamchari (cleaner), safai nayak (supervisor of safai karamcharis) and second grade clerk. For nine of these 15 categories, a random sample was taken as the entire list was too long. |
| Former presidents of Allahabad University students' union | Information board at the university's union hall. |
| Rickshaw pullers | Informal discussion with 10 rickshaw pullers at each of three locations: Hanuman Mandir, railway station, Katra market. |
| Residents of Ashok Nagar (an affluent residential area) | Name plates in front of the houses. |
| Other categories[a] | A 2008 directory obtained from the Allahabad Press Club. |

a Mainly trade union leaders, proprietors of advertisement agencies, traders' association, college principals, Allahabad Bank management, hospital doctors, members of Allahabad Press Club, reporters and other staff of media houses, prominent artists and publishers, and police officers.