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### **Caste System and Untouchability**

*“An inter-caste marriage was his legal right, yet he was prohibited. When he dared, he was assaulted and killed, just because he was a Dalit.”*

A caste system is defined as a class structure that separates society into exclusive hereditary groups and assigns individuals to different groups based on their occupations, skin tone, or level of income. Untouchability is the act of excluding a specific group of individuals from the mainstream of the society. It is more than just being unable to touch someone; it is a phenomenon in which those who are untouchables are seen negatively at all levels of the social hierarchy. Untouchability including caste-based discrimination is mostly unique to South Asia, despite similar types of discrimination being present around the world (Definition of Untouchability). While it has previously been forbidden in several South Asian nations, including Nepal, it is still up for discussion and has led to widespread oppression and hereditary entitlements that persist to this day. This essay seeks to describe the harmful impacts of untouchability that are common in Nepal which includes crimes committed against them, a lack of legal responsibility, and discrimination in educational opportunities.

Crime against the untouchables is the first negative consequence I'd like to talk about. The caste system in Nepal was divided into four Hindu categories: brahmins (priests, instructors), Kshatriyas (warriors, rulers), Vaishyas (farmers, traders, merchants), and Shudras (laborers, sanitary workers), commonly known as Dalits. They always fear that the upper caste, who want to maintain

them in their place, may beat, rape, and publicly humiliate them. Since the police, village councils, and local government officials frequently support the caste system in rural areas, there are many crimes that happen against Dalits. On May 23, 2020, the body of a 12-year-old Dalit girl was found hanging from a tree, one day after the community elders in the Rupandehi district demanded that the rapist, a 25-year-old man from a different caste, marry her as his "punishment." On the same day, a young Dalit guy, age 21, and four of his friends were reportedly murdered by locals in the Rukum West area after the young man arrived to get married to his girlfriend who was from an upper caste family (Sharma).

Laws and accountability are not being enforced, which is the second impact I want to bring out. On the one hand, Dalit protection laws are either poorly enforced or never enforced at all. 79 percent of the country's population lives in rural areas, where the practice of untouchability is most prevalent. In such place, Hinduism's core religious values rule. On the other hand, a lot of crimes go unreported because people are afraid of being intimidated by the police, can't afford the bribes the police want, or just know the police won't do anything. The police frequently refuse to record crimes against Dalits or classify them as accidents in isolated places (Sharma).

Discrimination in the educational system is the third effect. Whether a school is backed by the government or an NGO, untouchability is still practiced there. Dalit pupils are not cared for by their teachers. In rural regions of Nepal, Dalit pupils were not permitted to sit next to students of the so-called upper caste. There are documented instances of Dalit kids being isolated while eating meals provided by the school and being mistreated at institutions backed by NGOs. Scholarships offered to Dalit students are insufficient, if not inconsistent. The so-called high caste instructors feel the same way about Dalits entering the teaching profession because they do not wish to provide them the conventional respect. Additionally, they don't want to dine and drink with them as professors often do. Competent Dalit educators are discouraged from taking on more senior administrative roles in

schools (Shrestha). Dalits in Nepal often have far lower levels of schooling than other groups. The average literacy rate in Nepal is 65.97%, compared to only 34.5% among Dalits.

It is true that current efforts to reverse the damage caused by such medieval methods have become increasingly successful. Untouchability is a filthy behavior, and attempts are being done to spread awareness and educate about it. For both the municipal elections and membership in the parliament, the government has reserved seats for both the Dalit men and women. Marriages between members of the same caste are honored, although inter-caste unions are also encouraged by all possible means. In comparison to earlier times, crime rates are also declining. The privilege inherited from their ancestors is still present today, though, not just in most rural areas but even in some regions of large towns. The untouchables continue to be hated and viewed with universal hatred. Caste-based discrimination is not even acknowledged as a human rights concern by the court, the state, or society (Pradhan).

To sum up, despite Nepal appearing to be quite progressive, Dalit prejudice persists even now, and Nepali society is still regressive (Pradhan). Everyone should be treated equally under the law in this day, and no one should be oppressed or discriminated against because of factors like race, color, caste, or physical characteristics, among other things. It is important to teach kids about the value of diverse occupations in society. As they are the ones who will contribute to the development of society and occupy a significant position within society and in political organizations, seeds of sensibility, kindness, and equality should be sowed into their young brains. In the long run, this will guarantee social harmony and peace, as well as everyone's happiness.

### **Works Cited**

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