

Commentary: Caste System good or bad?

The caste system in India is being practised since Vedic times. According to Indian scriptures, namely, manu smriti, people are divided into four varnas, i.e. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, vaishyas and Shudras. They have assigned some work. First in the hierarchy were the Brahmins, who mainly used to teach and work as intellectuals and believed to come from Brahma's head. Below them were Kshatriyas, who were supposed to be the warriors and rulers who came from the arms of Brahma's. The third was vaishyas designated as traders who came from the thighs. At the bottom were shudras came from Brahma's feet. In this, shudras are considered to be more vulnerable. Other main castes are divided into 3000 castes and 25000 sub-castes, each based on their specific occupation. There is also a community named Dalits which basically considered the untouchables in Indian society. There are two perceptions of the caste system, one is good, and the other is bad, and interestingly this has been changed with time. Before independence, Brahmins enjoyed the benefits of the caste system, and after independence, shudras are benefited from the caste system.

The caste system is practised differently in different parts of India. It could be said that at one time, India is living in different centuries in the case of the caste system. The caste system is good if we could understand the basic principles of dividing people on the basis of their profession. This is also written in the holy book Geeta, which is followed by almost every Hindu. The caste system itself made to balance the society in a structural manner, which was achieved in the initial days. Throughout the time, meaning has been changed by the upper caste people so that they could permanently enjoy the benefits of the caste system. In earlier times, shudras were tortured by the upper caste people, namely brahmins. They are said to be untouchables if you

touch them accidentally, even if you need to take a bath and make yourself clean otherwise, so you are "apavitra". In ancient times shudras were the most vulnerable community, and they were socially, economically and physically tortured at every stage of their life. There were many reforms before the independence, which were initiated by many intellectuals.

If we talk about the current time, basically post-independence, the government has made many rules regarding India's caste system and untouchability to stop this malicious practice. But this system is being in the blood of every Indian can not be abolished by just passing a law, this is being abolished to some extent in metro cities, but this is still being practised in most of the villages and towns in India. There have been many mob lynchings and murders, and riots in India in the name of castes in north-eastern India. Many restrictions are imposed on Dalits, like they are not allowed to sit in the classrooms, not allowed to use the same washroom, not allowed to go by the same roads by which other people go. The caste system contains many cruel practices which have been inherited through the times. People living in remote areas are beaten in the name of caste. They have been just used as a vote bank while it comes to politics. There have been many Dalits leaders like KR Narayan, BR Ambedkar and currently Mayawati of BSP. BSP is just using the community as a vote bank for their benefits. To some extent, governments cannot uplift the lower caste people; this you can say is the policy failure. They only remembered them during elections, which made them poor nourished and unaware of their rights. Illiteracy is also among them.

There is another aspect of the caste system in India, which is benefitted the many lower caste people, that is, the reservation system. People who were underprivileged and deprived of the

caste system and hesitated to say their caste suddenly came forward to seek the caste reservation benefits when it comes to the reservation. This tells us about the two faces of people on one side; they show themselves as poor and affected, and if you call them by their names, they start fighting with you, but while reservation, they are the ones who come first.

I agree that this has not benefitted the mass, but this is all due to some people who have upgraded their classes within the lower castes in India. They are the one who controls most of the resources and benefits are given to them. There have been recent riots regarding the reservation on behalf of the caste in Haryana named "JAT ANDOLAN".

I think the caste system is good, if some practices are abolished, these practices are, being in the particular caste by birth, it should not be like this, this should be based on their profession, whatever profession they choose according to that their caste should be decided if we are able to implement the above suggestions, then untouchability will be automatically removed from society. What are your thoughts on this?

I think the caste system can not be abolished from the Indian culture and society. This could only be evolved to some extent; if we can evolve it in positive directions, we could observe a better caste system. Why can this not be abolished? I think this is because it been part of Indian culture throughout history, and this is in existence around 3000 years before the formation of many religions. If we can narrow down the class gap in the lower castes, then the above evolution could come into existence. For this, we need to implement many laws regarding the reservation. Like one family, one reservation. This could help the government in narrowing the class gap among Dalits and shudras.

