

The Caste Concern in Social Work in India

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Abstract

This article's objective is to draw readers' attention to the issue of caste as it relates to the field of social work in India. The caste system is the root cause of many problems, including the limitations that are imposed on women in society, the purposeful exclusion of marginalised communities from mainstream development, the continuation of the practise of untouchability, the rise in economic inequality along caste lines, hunger, and the reinforcement and propagation of the blind faith that serves to maintain sectarian hegemony. It is admirable that it is concerned with advancing freedom, equality, and brotherhood all throughout the globe. The caste system is at the root of almost every issue that can be found in areas such as socioeconomics, politics, education, health, religion, culture, the environment, and sports, to mention a few. It is also at the centre of virtually every problem that can be found in these and other areas. According to the findings of a study that was conducted on certified social work educators and practitioners from renowned schools in India, one of the most significant caste-related concerns in Indian social work is the caste-based hegemony and contempt for other lower castes. This was found to be one of the findings of the study.

Keywords: Social Work Practice and Education, Caste System

Introduction

The caste system is at the root of a number of problems, including the limitations placed on women in society, the intentional exclusion of marginalized communities from mainstream development, the continued existence of untouchability, the rise in economic inequality along caste lines, hunger, and the maintenance of sectarian hegemony through support and blind faith.

The caste system has the greatest influence on the economy, politics, marriage, education, and religion, and this influence extends from conception to death. Manusmriti has a greater impact on individuals than the Indian Constitution does. According to Siddaramu B. (2013), caste membership is unacquirable, irreversible, untransferable, and unachievable. The ancient monarchs and reformers who attempted to fight for social equality were unable to ignore

caste concerns. Buddha, Guru Nanak, and Verdhaman Mahavir have set positive models for society to follow in order to promote equality. The historical setting of social welfare during the medieval age is especially interesting. The people's welfare was the first focus for monarchs like Chandra Gupta, Samrat Ashoka, Harshavardhan, and a few others (Mehta B.H., 1986).

When certain social and political figures played a significant role in social transformation, the caste issue in the modern era intensified once more. It was Rajaram Mohan Roy (1773–1833) who outlawed the "sati" custom. Jyotirao Phule (1827–1890) was an Indian revolutionary who made significant contributions to women's education and the uplift of the lower classes. Maharshi Karve (1858–1962) played a role in women's economic advancement (Joseph J. Fernandes G, 2006). A number of social reformers, including Shahir Annabhau Sathe, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Sant Kabir, Sant Periyar, Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, and Kratiyoti Savitribai Phule, sacrificed their lives for the betterment of communities that faced numerous obstacles as a result of the caste system.

In spite of this, there are politicians and people who call themselves social reformers who, with the backing of the caste group that holds the majority of power in India, continue to promote the caste system and, as a result, make life even more challenging for members of society who are already on the margins. M. K. Gandhi, who participated in a "fast until death" to challenge the oppressed community's demand for "separate electorates," coerced Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar into complying with his recognised demand to withdraw from the race for prime minister. This was M. K. Gandhi's way of challenging the oppressed community's demand for "separate electorates." As a consequence of the circumstances, the oppressed community was now aware of the potential for the group that held the dominant caste position to engage in acts of communal violence against other members of the community.. The "Poona Pact" community's rights demands in Pune are ratcheted up as a direct result of its impact (Seelam S.R, 2016). Halli C.S. and Mullal S.M. (2016) stated that a number of notable persons had opposed the Hindu Code Bill on behalf of women who were subjected to oppression under the Verna system. This opposition was made on behalf of women who were subjected to oppression under the Verna system. The major objective of those who opposed the Bill was to preserve and expand India's caste structure, also known as the verna system.

In their opposition to the Hindu Code Bill, prominent members of the Hindu orthodox community, such as Dr. Rajendra Prasad and AnathasayanamAyyangar, were quite loud (Halli C.S. & Mullal S.M, 2016). Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Pandit Madan Mohan Malvia, Janakibai Joshi, President of the Hindu Women Conference, and Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, a member of the Hindu Mahasabha were some of the other well-known conservative figures that opposed the measure. Because of the impact of the caste system, it was a shame that Jankibai Joshi, the president of the Women's Conference, rejected women's rights (www.drambedkarbooks.com). Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar presented his resignation on

September 27, 1951, citing his profound anguish over the antagonism to women's rights in India as the reason for his decision (Jaffrelot C, 2009). As a consequence of this, a great number of social reformers, despite the fact that they understood the issues with India's caste system, continued to battle for the rights of the nation's residents who were oppressed. Regrettably, the caste system has not yet been totally eradicated and persists in a wide variety of forms, both overt and covert, of discrimination and exploitation. These practises continue to this day.

Social Work In India

Helping society's less fortunate individuals has always been central to social work's history. In order to enhance the quality of life for everyone, social workers strive to "Promot(ing) or restore(ing) a mutually beneficial connection between people and society," as stated by the National Association of Social Workers (1981). Popularity stems from the fact that it used an integrated viewpoint that framed individuals in relation to their physical and social surroundings (Dubois, Brenda L., Miley, Kerla K, 2007:9).

In 1936, Dr. Clifford Manshardt had the foresight to establish the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate Institution of Social Work. This school marked the beginning of professional social work in India. Following his graduation from the University of Chicago with a degree in theology, he emigrated to India in 1925 as a Protestant missionary from a disadvantaged group in the United States. Following in the footsteps of the "Settlement House of America," he established NagpadaNeighborhood House in a Mumbai slum in 1926 as a social worker training institution in partnership with the Protestant Christian group known as the American Marathi Mission. He spoke to the Dorabji Tata Trust after successfully training social workers and proposed a two-year graduate programme after graduation. The Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work, India's first such institution, opened its doors in 1936 after the Trust's approval of the plan. After rebranding in 1944, it became known as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai. Because of caste hegemony in India, professional social work has thus far not produced the desired outcomes in the field. Instead, it has typically emerged under the leadership of individuals from lower social strata who apply professional methods through the protestant missionary. According to M.S. Gore (1988), social work professionals' primary concern for social development in India is the societal structure (Bodhi S.R., 2013).

Caste System

India's caste system is a major barrier to social work and is connected to a number of other issues. The Latin term "Custus," which denotes lineage or heritage, is the source of the Spanish and Portuguese words "caste" (Ketkar S.V., 1909). "A caste is almost invariably-endogamous in the sense that a member of a large circle denoted by a common name may not marry outside the circle; however, within the circle there are smaller circles, each of which is

likewise end Digamous," is how Senart summarizes the concept of caste. This definition can be explained by what i've said regarding the Senart definition "(Ketkar S.V, 1909).

The six most notable features of the caste system, according to Ghurye, are the following: social stratification along hierarchical lines; restrictions on food and social interactions; limitations on civil and religious rights; privileges enjoyed by different sections of society; restrictions on marriage; and a lack of unfettered occupational choice. In India, a person's caste is the primary determinant of their social and economic identity, and a child's destiny is ultimately determined by their birth (Puranik S, 2009:6). India's social structure is largely predicated on the Varna System, in which the caste system serves as a key idea. The four classes that make up society are the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. These divisions are permanent. Second, there is an order of graduated inequality connecting the four classes based on their mutual standing. Above all others, the Brahmins are progressively demoted as Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. It is Hinduism's core essence. Prominent scholar Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar states that "Hinduism is not different from other religions except for Varna Vevastha" (Ambedkar B.R. 1987:189). It could raise questions about other religions and whether or not they have a caste structure. It is also true, though, that because of the caste system's instillation of fear, certain caste societies that have converted to other religions have not yet fully renounced their caste-based identity within the social structure.

The hierarchy of caste determines dominance; Brahmins are at the top of the merit list, and their merit drops as they move up the grades—from A to B to C to D to E, etc. As a result, blessings are assigned similarly to grades. Counting under hindered to evaluate in % is challenging because these numbers are in the thousands. Generally speaking, if an individual receives an A+ grade from a caste that is still in use, they will only be considered for a D grade, which means that their options are severely limited from a meritorious standpoint as well. The caste is divided into numerous smaller castes, each with its own strong hierarchy, rather than being restricted to its primary divisions.

The Brahmin caste is likewise categorized differently, with the Deshashtha, Kashmiri, and Kokanastha (Chitpavana) castes being separated based on their respective regions. Some of them are categorized as Chaturvedi, Trivedi, Dvivedi, and so on, descending in level from higher to lower, depending on vedic recollections. They have no family or marriage ties to other castes, and they are strict about their own caste. The caste system serves a hierarchical purpose in terms of discrimination. Individuals belonging to one caste group will show respect to those in their higher castes, while those in lower castes will take advantage of and treat them with contempt. Even if members of lower castes appreciate them despite the fact that they are exploited by those in higher castes, members of the exploited caste won't be upset or rebel since there are members of higher castes who take advantage of them. In Kulas, where castes and sub-castes are also segregated, the caste system is therefore typically a blessing for communities of higher rank and a veto or a curse for communities of lower caste. Since the caste hierarchy is measured by respect and disdain, and where castes and sub-castes

are also segregated in Kulas, this is the case. This is due to the fact that the caste system normally gives preference to groups that are higher in status.

According to the author of the book *Castes of Mind*, castes are a huge challenge to Indian modernity and are a central emblem for India in both comparative sociology and popular parlance. Nehru stated in *The Discovery of India* that the caste resisted the strong influence of Buddhism and the vocal opposition to caste made by countless Hindu reformers (Dirks, N. B., 2004). Regretfully, social work department professor B. H. Mehta highlighted how the caste structure aids in the grouping of India's socially challenged population. In a desperate attempt to clarify, he said that while the caste system is a significant social action agency nationwide in the history of social work, this is not the case (Mehta B.H., 1986). Variations in caste-based identification, such as particular mental and physical traits, languages, beliefs, names, surnames, and places, are important markers of class and caste identities in society. Every member of the community receives instruction both at home and in society on how to define themselves in accordance with their ingrained identities and discover those of others. As a result of the caste system's foundational role in nearly every issue pertaining to socioeconomics, politics, education, health, religion, culture, the environment, and sports, social workers have grown increasingly concerned about working confidently with communities from diverse caste backgrounds.

Caste Concern in Social Field

Pathological social conditions cause social problems to arise or worsen (Ahuja Ram, 2012). Child labour and abuse, youth unrest, violence against women, crime and criminals, juvenile delinquency, alcoholicism, drug abuse and addiction, and terrorism are a few examples of the more systemic problems that were caused by caste systems. These problems are described from the perspective of society as a whole. There aren't very many situations in which marriage systems and caste systems are connected to one another. People in the society believe that "a person who born in a particular caste or tribe would not able to alter that status over the course of his or her lifetime," according to the 102. A.I.R. 1972 S.C. at 1848 (Grinsell Scott, 2010).

"I killed my educated daughter because she was going to marry with another youth from lower caste though he is educated; I am of no regret of killing my own daughter," a surrendering father of her dead daughter said to police (DNA, 2012). There is a Devdasi tradition inside the system. Even though Rajaram Mohan Ray ended the sati tradition centuries earlier, in September 1987 a 21-year-old Rajput girl named Roop Kanwar was forced to perform sati on her husband's funeral pyre in the Rajasthan state of Deorala village. This incident led to the state of Rajasthan passing a law in February 1988 that stipulated severe penalties for anyone who forced women to perform sati (Ahuja Ram, 2012). According to caste, women are intrinsically considered to be less pure than males due to the

periodic pollution induced by menstruation and delivery. According to D. Leena (Dube L, 1996), discrimination against women based on impurity and purity is more common in higher castes. Background due to the fact that nearly every issue pertaining to health, education, politics, religion, culture, the environment, and sports is linked to and stems from the caste system, which is explained below.

Caste Concern in Economy

Pathological social conditions cause social problems to arise or worsen (Ahuja Ram, 2012). The caste systems gave rise to a number of social problems, including but not limited to: terrorism, alcoholism, drug addiction, juvenile delinquency, child labour and abuse, youth unrest, violence against women, crime and criminals, and juvenile delinquency. Caste systems and marital systems seldom go hand in together. People in the society believe that "a person who born in a particular caste or tribe would not able to alter that status over the course of his or her lifetime," according to the 102. A.I.R. 1972 S.C. at 1848 (Grinsell Scott, 2010).

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Neither the government nor social work professionals take protection seriously while making policy decisions. Additionally, the Social Security Bill does not offer any protection to these unorganized workers (Puranik S, 2009). Eighty-eight percent of the members of India's top 1,000 corporations were insiders, with the remaining twelve percent being directors. Based on caste, the composition of the board shows that 44% of the members are Brahmin and 46% are Vaishya, with roughly 93% being members of the advanced caste. The percentages for obcs, scs, and sts are pitiful, at 3.8% and 3.5%, respectively. This provides compelling evidence that the Indian corporate board is made up of a small universe where forward caste kinship rules and there is not enough diversity (Ajit D, Donker H, Saxena R, 2012). According to Iyer L and others (Iyer L, Khanna T & Varshney A., 2011), scs and sts are still underrepresented in the field of entrepreneurship.

Caste Concern in Politics

The upper caste communities' ongoing domination in all spheres, just as they have always dominated politics and have their own media to emphasize their virtues rather than expose their flaws. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar introduced the Hindu Code Bill on April 11, 1947, with the intention of granting women's rights to the underprivileged, but political parties opposed it (Ambedkar B.R., 1995: ix). Recently, there has been another instance of promotion in quota. The caste system "is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all, including most vocal elements in condemning it, that is everywhere the unit of social action," according to

Professor Srinivas. The caste system had an impact on all spheres of society, including politics and national administration.

A Concern Based on Caste Regarding Health

Many issues in the field of education have their origins in the caste system. Some examples of these issues are widespread illiteracy and limited access to high-quality education. In India, a person's academic performance is often determined by their birth caste. People in lower castes became almost completely illiterate as those in upper castes began to get better education, which included lessons in languages different than their own. The educational opportunities available to any of these groups were severely limited due to the caste system (Puranik S, 2009). Since 1936, a number of educational institutions in India have been established with the express purpose of producing social workers. Unemployment, gender prejudice, untouchability, tribal upliftment, and the specific difficulties of operating in India's unorganised sector are some of the structural issues that social workers have failed to solve despite their impressive progress in improving people's lives (Thomas J, 1996). An eminent activist and social worker who went to an innovative school in India provides a perfect example of why social workers must take caste into account. This individual purposefully lent credence to the cause by ignoring the role of the private sector in the Bill and the marginalisation of certain groups. This individual is remarkable when considering caste in relation to social activity in India. Mr. Dungdung, a famous tribal activist, was able to make the perceptive conclusion that these leaders had turned into leaders of failure with this newfound understanding.

Concerns Regarding Caste and Health

The caste system is cited as the primary cause of a number of issues, including AIDS, relying on God for health and care, traditional healers at temples, and fast tradition. The results of the National Family Health Survey III (2005–06) make caste-based discrimination in health quite evident, as they show that scsand stsutilize contraception at lower rates than advanced castes. Lower caste members' access to prenatal care, institutional immunization coverage, and maternal and child care should all be restricted (Jacob K.S., 2009).

Concerning Caste in Religious Practices

A person of (Dharma) caste who is born into any caste will die in that caste and will live surrounded by caste issues in the political, social, and educational spheres. It is well recognized that caste did not originate with non-Hindus. The caste system is adhered to by many Christian missionaries (Tharamangalam J, 1996). Muslims in India were not exempt from the caste system. When Nambodhari Brahmins became Christians, they were first referred to as Syrian Christians, or St. Thomas's Christians, who thought of themselves as superior or "pure blooded" compared to others. The primary standard used by Kasauly

Muslims to rank non-Ashraf castes according to their level of contamination or impurity (Bhatty Zarina, 1996).

Concerns Regarding Caste in Both Culture and the Environment

The members of the upper castes were threatened by the presence of the members of the lower castes, therefore they compelled the members of the Shudra and Antyaja castes to labour. This strategy was used all during the procedure of isolation.(Bheemaiah J, 2011). The Manusmriti states that the Brahmins are the ones who eat first at any gathering, and everyone else eats after them in the proper order. Members of other varnas, especially Kshatriyas, are not allowed to have a meal with Brahmins. At the entrance to the hamlet, members of the Shudra caste are told that they are not allowed to wear respectable clothing or footwear, and similar types of discrimination may be found both explicitly and surreptitiously across the rural and urban regions of India. During the historical period that came following the Vedic era, Brahmins slaughtered cows as part of the Vedic Yagnas, and the text known as the Manusmriti granted them permission to eat beef and the cow's flesh on certain occasions. People stopped eating cows and ceased slaughtering animals as a direct consequence of Buddha's advocacy against animal cruelty and slaughter, which led to the end of both practises. They started eating vegetarian cuisine, and then, using this as a platform, they started targeting shudras and other individuals. They also started eating vegetarian food (Bheemaiah J, 2011).

Discrimination Based on Caste in Sports

In India, the caste system did not affect any aspect of human life. When word of an Indian badminton player's success at the 2016 Olympics surfaced in the Times of India, Indian Express, and other media outlets, P.V. Sindhu's silver medal was the highest of all the Indian players who competed in the Olympics. It was the ethical responsibility of the entire Indian population to acknowledge her accomplishment and extend their best wishes to her. However, rather than placing much emphasis on her Olympic success, thousands of people were found researching her caste history on Google to find out which caste she actually belongs to. It is evident that members of the ruling caste have a deeply ingrained caste attitude (Verma Tarishi, 2016).

Discussion

In India's multireligious and multicultural society since ancient times, the caste system has managed to endure (Bheemaiah J, 2011). Deshmukh (2011) found in his study that despite 60 years of affirmative action programs in India, the social and economic disparity between the high and low caste groups remains (Ajit D, Donker H, Saxena R, 2012). The caste system infringes against the right to individual choice by assigning someone to a job based on their parents' social standing rather than their education or ability. The caste system also accorded less value to "physical" labor than to "mental" labor, which had the effect of almost

eliminating the dignity of physical labor from the system's work ethics (Ajit D, Donker H, Saxena R, 2012).

In the field of social work, there are certain educators and practitioners who belong to dominant castes who made a declaration about the need of caste in upholding religious beliefs and practises; these people were labelled as "conservative traditionalists." These educators and social workers were deeply religious, rigidly devoted to caste and caste roles, consistently hostile to progressive ideas, and uninterested in looking at historical mistakes that may have contributed to current issues (Bodhi S.R., 2014).

The practise of purposefully supporting the movement while ignoring the inclusion of the private sector in the Bill and the representation of oppressed groups is a significant problem that arises with regard to caste in social work practise in India. This is one of the significant issues that arises with regard to caste. The activist has a background in social work and received their degree from a forerunner in the field of social work education. According to Bodhi, A. Ramaiah was the one who initiated the first push in the direction of promoting an anti-caste social work paradigm (2011: 298 & 2013). Although A. Ramaiah (1998) attacked Indian professional social work for ignoring caste for decades, she refuted the notion that the majority of social workers had an innate prejudice against caste. According to Bodhi S.R. (2014), he counselled them to go their own ways if there was no social work practise paradigm that might really be of use to them. According to Darokar S., fights against caste have a long and troubled history within the Indian subcontinent. These conflicts have often resulted in bloodshed. On the other hand, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar conceptually developed anti-caste as a base, and other disputes subsequently followed him (Bodhi S.R., 2014).

As a result, anyone studying or working in social work must comprehend the caste system's negative effects on society and how it is ingrained in the socioeconomic, political, educational, health, religious, and environmental spheres as well as sports.

Conclusion

Even so, if the social system is influenced by caste-based hierarchies, then this presents a significant barrier to both social welfare as well as the fundamental values of the Constitution, which are liberty, equality, justice, & brotherhood. This presents a significant barrier to both social welfare and the fundamental values of the Constitution, which are liberty, equality, justice, and brotherhood. The field of social work strives to bring about social change; however, if the social system is influenced by caste-based hierarchies, then this presents a significant barrier to both social welfare and the fundamental values of the Constitution. Social work is a profession that aims to bring about social change. Caste, which is a social category, serves as the primary outlet through which people in India express their feelings and perspectives on life. There are a number of basic indications that may be used to define a person's category and caste within a culture. Examples of these indicators include gender, age, and ethnicity. Some of these major indicators include traits that may be seen in

both the body and the mind, as well as language, beliefs, names, surnames, and geographical locations. Every individual in the society receives instruction at home as well as in the larger community on how to determine who they are in relation to their fundamental identity and how to inquire about the identities of others who are in their immediate environment. It does this by instilling in those who do social work a concern for society as a whole, which in turn makes it easier for them to collaborate with clients who come from a variety of socioeconomic castes. As a result, the fear of being discriminated against based on one's caste is a substantial obstacle to growth in the field of social work in India.

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