

1 De-Essentializing the Practice of Casteism as an in human 2 Practice in the Contemporary Times

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5

6 **Abstract**

7 This paper is written to attempt to highlight the historical wrongs that have been done to
8 certain mistakenly defined marginalized communities. These communities have been made to
9 suffer due to some social, cultural, and religious myths that have unjustly been consolidated
10 throughout the ages. Factually, there has been some apparent evidence on ground situation
11 that are inhuman and illogical from ethical point of view. An urgent need arises to highlight
12 the unjust state of so-called low caste communities and the immediate initiative must be taken
13 by the guardians of the nation to reclaim the lost respect related to these marginalized
14 communities. Only then there would be caste-free society wherein multicultural, and good
15 inter-caste relations would be possible in terms of social harmony and that an elevated mental
16 state with co-operative spirit for tolerance would be a step forward to humanism.

17

18 **Index terms—**

19 **1 Introduction**

20 It has been proved a gross inhuman error to practice the heinous custom of casteism that too on the tragic basis
21 of religious assertion across the gloomy pages of history. This inhuman practice has initiated under the threat
22 of either political cum economic power or under the assertive references of religious practices. Arundhati Roy
23 in her introduction to the historically appreciated book Annihilation of Caste, comments about the practice of
24 Caste as, The origins of caste will continue to be debated by anthropologists for years to come, but its organising
25 principles, based on a hierarchical, sliding scale of entitlements and duties, of purity and pollution, and the ways
26 in which they were, and still are, policed and enforced, are not all that hard to understand. ??Roy, ??5) There is
27 an utmost need is to raise the voice to highlight the unjust state of so-called low caste communities so that the
28 tragic wrongs would be rectified for the betterment of human evolution. There are people who understand this
29 wrong but do not dare to raise the voice. As Ambedkar indicates to this reluctance among the historical, social
30 organization called "The Social Conference" in the following lines, "It 'The Social Conference' consisted mostly
31 of enlightened high-caste Hindus who did not feel the necessity for agitating for the abolition of caste or had not
32 the courage to agitate for it. They felt quite naturally a greater urge to remove such evils as enforced widowhood,
33 child marriages, etc. there is a need for an empathetic approach to be taken for the proper understanding of
34 this ill practice. Though the scholastic practices are very much on the track to struggle against the suppressions
35 existing in the marginalized communities, yet there is extra need to project immediate protests on a pragmatic
36 basis. Moreover, the institution of religion is misappropriated across the social structure in terms of economic
37 gains, political ambitions. That means the religious motivations are exploited as a tool for power politics as is
38 emphasised in Annihilation of Caste as in the below-mentioned quote, "That religion is the source of power is
39 illustrated by the history of India, where the priest holds sway over the common man often greater than that of
40 the magistrate, and where everything, even such things as strikes and elections, so easily takes a religious turn
41 and can so easily be given a religious twist ??Ambedkar, ??131) ??132) ??133)." This is to be understood that
42 some deliberate malpractices have been exercised for the utter division on the basis of social casteism.

43 In this context, David Keane in his work Castebased Discrimination in International Human Rights Law
44 talks about the origin of race from the religious background that has been asserted by some so-called high caste
45 communities. In his introductory chapter, The Origin of Caste, he explores the origin of caste the Purusha

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46 Sukta, found in Book X of the Rigveda; the caste system has spread through the dharma codes to infiltrate every
47 perspective of Hindu life: religious, social, political, economic and cultural. Nevertheless, the caste system is an
48 explanatory concept channeled through the religious texts to justify a system of exploitation already in place.

49 Following the Purushasukta, the next reference to the creation of castes, which named the four divisions, came
50 from the fifth chapter of the second book of the Bhagavata Purana: 'the Brahman [was] the mouth of Purusha,
51 the Kshatriya his arms: the Vaishya sprang from his thighs and the Shudra from the feet of Bhagavan.'⁴¹ In
52 another passage, a similar idea is found: 'The Brahman is his mouth: he is Kshatriya-armed, that great one,
53 Vaishya-thighed; and has the black caste abiding in his feet.'⁴² ??Keane, ??9) So, the above lines give evidence
54 for the legitimization of the Indian caste system by believing in divine categorisation of caste communities. The
55 belief in Karma system appears to be one ideology created in the social structure that instigates the ill ways of
56 human behavior.

57 K.R. Nayar in Social Exclusion, Caste & Health: A Review Based on the Social Determinants Framework
58 exposes on the practice of poverty and social exclusion. These are crucial socioeconomic variables which are often
59 taken for granted while considering ill-health effects. In recent years however, these variables have come to the
60 centre stage in public health discourse.

61 The approach to poverty and health vary across different societies. According to Kosa, there are four possible
62 approaches to poverty: (i) poverty is taken for granted and its existence is not perceived; (ii) poverty is taken
63 for granted but its existence is perceived; (iii) poverty is not taken for granted and its existence is perceived; and
64 (iv) poverty is not taken for granted but its existence is not perceived¹¹. We find a mixture of all these attitudes
65 in our societies where despite clear recognition poor are increasingly marginalized from the health sector (358).

66 For the social exclusion agenda and its policy directions, there may be two approaches, i.e. health and social
67 inequality. While considering the health inequality and social inequality inter phase, the focus has to be on the
68 poorer classes who have a higher risk for diseases as well as higher probability from being excluded from the
69 health services. This is essential given the higher proportion of the poor as well as socially disadvantaged, the
70 magnitude of health problems and the epidemiological profile in the society.

71 Also, we can say that a mentally motivated impression of caste categories has been developed by naturalizing
72 the idea of caste. This idea has been seriously analyzed by the B.R. Ambedkar in his book Annihilation of
73 Caste with the following quote, "As an economic organisation caste is therefore a harmful institution, in as
74 much as it involves the subordination of man's natural powers and inclinations to the exigencies of social rules.
75 (Ambedkar,138)". However, given a social determinants framework, one has also to understand the vulnerability
76 to ill-health which may cut across different socio-economic categories. The priority has to be, however, given to
77 the former approach in the overall health policy. There has been a very sensitive issue of ignoring the hygienic
78 conditioning of poor section of community based on so-called low caste people. This in the long run affects the
79 life-style of this community.

80 Y.B. Damle in a paper Caste-A Review of the Literature on Caste talks about the state of caste across the
81 social structure. In the introduction of the work he talks about the governmental initiative to lessen the level of
82 discrimination in the inter-relational execution. Since, the practice of casteism holds its clutches with vehemence
83 in social interaction regarding the Hindu scriptures. This enhances the ill practices of casteism by the so-called
84 upper-class people. Moreover, among the other religions, Islam preaches the essential quality of all human beings,
85 there, as per the scriptures, is no such fixed system of hierarchy amongst the Muslims in India. But, there also
86 are evidence of casteism, especially on the basis of some hereditary claims of essential traits of their own. This
87 is a tragic state that the same level of discrimination has encroached in the socalled intellectual section of our
88 society. Besides, the economic stability highly determines the inter-relational state of society. This is illustrated
89 by the below mentioned quote as:

90 Un-touchability has been regarded as a major impediment to caste mobility. The loss in some cases of economic
91 and political status by the Brahmins has already been referred to. However, due to their ritual superiority their
92 overall status does not suffer a great deal. It is true that Brahmins who have lost their economic and political
93 power accept barbers as their neighbours.³⁵ (25-26). This clearly indicates that the caste has been asserted in
94 terms of economic status that in turn is linked to the state of occupations hold by the people throughout the time
95 line. So, factually, this is based on the practices of people in the society. Uma Chakravarti in Conceptualising
96 Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State talks about the basis of caste and its
97 causative factors in the various sub-systems of social institution. That means, there is set of issues related to
98 institutions of marriage, celebration, traditions and customs, law, property rights, and authorizations relating to
99 religious rituals-all these prove as the rudiments of social structure. The author denies the essence of caste and
100 left the lot of such people as of the backward mentality because of their narrow minded outlook. This is how
101 she writes, 'It is now time to move away from questions of 'status' whether high or low, and to look instead at
102 the structural framework of gender relations, i e, to the nature and basis of the subordination of women and its
103 extent and specific form in early Indian society.'(579). this is the transitional state that also is applied to the
104 system of casteism. Across the Brahman patriarchy in early India has diffused the inclination of casteism. Hence,
105 it is certain that the illside of Brahmanic ideology has enforced the caste based society.

106 Madhusudan Subedi in Some Theoretical Considerations on Caste examines the in human practices of casteim
107 on the hollow basis of religious shadows. Also, there is a practice by ruling class that limit the process of
108 endogamy in an extended way. This phenomenon is responsible for the compart mentalisation of social class and

109 automatically leads to sensitisation of class consciousness and the alienation effect thereof. Subedi links to the
110 causative factors for the emergence of caste in Indian context as in the below mentioned quote:

111 In the beginning, caste was a system for the division of labor, and social relations between different
112 caste groups were regulated by the jajmani system. With the decline of the jajmani system and increasing
113 livelihood diversification, caste identity became an instrument to mobilize people for economic and political gains
114 (Subedi81).

115 The above quote digs on the origin of caste nomenclature and proves that it is an occupation that has apparently
116 divided societies based on routine work. Unfortunately, this routine of occupation by some communities has been
117 historically mistaken as an essential part of those very communities. The same routine engagements have been
118 consolidated and tagged strictly as part and parcel of their identity as human beings. These types of malpractices
119 are fully responsible for the tragic fragmentation of social wholeness.

120 Dipankar Gupta as an editor of a work *Caste in question: Identity or hierarchy?* has unveiled in depth
121 investigation for the just execution of human society. Under the caption, 'Inventing caste history: Dalit
122 mobilisation and nationalist past, the author has shown that the social force has emerged amongst the
123 marginalised sections that has made them reclaim the respect and social standing that they deserve. Indicating to
124 Dalit community's struggle for their self-respect, the author writes that 'many sources, including archaeological,
125 linguistic and ethno-musical sources, are cited to substantiate their authenticity. These histories are not merely
126 presented as narratives; commemorations, celebrations and festivities are also organised around them so that
127 they are ingrained in the memory of the Dalits XI.' The quest for identity in terms of assertion of their caste with
128 influences from the political, social and economic are na. This obviously changes the course of social execution
129 and made them to reclaim the place in the social scenario. This type of social exercise is largely responsible for
130 creating community determination.

131 In a preface to the work *Caste in question: Identity or hierarchy?* it is written that 'Though there have been
132 several works that have discussed the impact of caste on democratic politics and how different castes have reacted
133 to growing urbanization and the Green Revolution, there was still a gap that had to be filled. What needed
134 to be done was to analyse these changes within a conceptual framework that would allow for an alternative
135 perspective on the caste order.' Related to this idea, under the caption, *Jains, caste and hierarchy in north*
136 *Gujarat*, John E. Cort has paid insufficient attention to alternative ideologies of caste, such as found in Jainism,
137 and to understandings and practices of caste among the merchant castes that occupy a dominant position in the
138 so-called middle ranges of caste hierarchies. 'Jain castes are excellent examples of the middle-range castes that
139 have always created intractable problems for theories of caste' (73). It is also pinpointed that not any kind of
140 essential state of caste or natural characteristic but the economic state that makes assertion of caste. It is referred
141 through this quote as, 'Throughout Gujarat, the Vaniyas have traditionally been important and powerful castes
142 due to their wealth. When the Patels started to achieve economic success in the mid-19th century as successful
143 farmers,? they chose to emulate in order to raise their status was not the Brahmins or the Rajputs, but the
144 Vaniyas (80-81) That means, economic standardization is always in the background of practices of casteism.'

145 Gaurang R. Sahay in *Hierarchy, difference and the castesystem: A study of rural Bihar* reveals the issue of
146 caste in the light of some rural areas of Bihar. There has developed a perceived sphere of segregation on the
147 name of caste that has placed castes in the various hierarchical states. There are economic forces caused with
148 the state of occupations. This economic force gives a zeal of power to discriminate one community from the
149 other as, 'Understanding multiple hierarchies through discrete caste categories also helps us account theoretically
150 for caste wars and caste competition in contemporary India (R. Sahay 115).' Further, Surinder S. Jodhka in
151 *Dalits and their politics in contemporary Punjab* explains the idea of caste with the unequal treatment to human
152 beings. With the reference to Hindu scriptures, most of the communities especially Brahman communities have
153 intensified the level of discrimination. In this connection, the author writes that 'taking a cue from a recent
154 case of conflict between Ad-Dharmis and Jats in a village of Punjab over the question of representation in the
155 management of a religious shrine, the article looks at caste in relation to Sikhism and in the regional context of
156 contemporary Indian Punjab.' (S. Jodhka170). Further, the feeling of caste has been discouraged by Sikhism.
157 Not only the Sikh gurus beyond all doubt has denounced caste. Contemporary Sikh scholars also underline this
158 point very sharply.

159 Manali S. Deshpande in *History of Indian Caste System and its impact on India Today* also emphasises the
160 delicate nature of social system composed of numerous religions, ethnicities and caste based communities. This
161 is evident from the below mentioned quote as,

162 **2 Volume XIX Issue IX Version I**

163 **3 (A)**

164 Hinduism was the backbone of the purity-pollution complex, and it was the religion that influenced the daily
165 lives and beliefs of the Indian people. Even after sixty-three years of independence, Indians continue to be in the
166 grip of caste consciousness? Historically, India has been surviving as a nation for millennia with closed groups
167 divided by caste, creed and language (Velassery, xi) (32).

168 Hence, above mentioned quote emphasizes upon the vulnerable composition of India as a nation; and warns
169 her guardians to keep caste free mentality and have mature outlook with inclusive attitude to understand the

170 importance of human values for the integrative social structure Since the independence came to India, Ambedkar
171 being the Law Minister by Prime Minister Nehru, it has become very crucial to offer respect to every citizen.
172 Thereby, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly had been formed by the 15
173 August 1947 to manage proper democratic set-up to the so-called free country. Later on the special occasion
174 in 1950 Constitution that gives provisions for a system of reservations for what the Constitution termed the
175 'Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes', which sought to redress the imbalances
176 caused by historical inequalities in the Hindu social system. Besides, under the canons of 'The United Nations
177 and the Elimination of Racial Discrimination' taken by the United Nations on the nature and meaning of 'race' can
178 be traced to four documents broadly outlining the views of sociologists, physical anthropologists, geneticists and
179 biologists: the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO). Four Statements
180 on the Race Question.¹ the four documents are studied in the first section of this chapter. From the first in
181 1950 to the fourth in 1967, they reflect divergent views on the meaning of race, and the difficulty in gaining
182 consensus on the parameters of race given the concept's ability to straddle several disciplines. Finally, we cannot
183 help to say that 'the biological fact of race and the myth of race should be distinguished. For all practical social
184 purposes race is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth'. Moreover, the religious force has been
185 wrongly placed globally in general and in the country like India in particular. It is in this context that B. R.
186 Ambedkar concludes his argument in his book Annihilation of Caste in this categorical way, I have, therefore,
187 no hesitation in saying that such a religion must be destroyed, and I say there is nothing irreligious in working
188 for the destruction of such a religion. Indeed I hold that it is your bounden duty to tear off the mask, to remove
189 the misrepresentation that is caused by misnaming this law as religion. This is an essential step for you.

190 Once you clear the minds of the people of this misconception and enable them to realise that what they are
191 told is religion is not religion, but that it is really law, you will be in a position to urge its amendment or abolition.
192 ??Ambedkar, ??72) It is obvious that India as a country would cease to exist if the caste discrimination would
193 keep pace with such intense discrimination. There is an immediate need to reconsider the recovery of social
194 tension and to develop Indian society for her integrated and inclusive social set-up.

195 Hence, as per the arguments put forward, it is categorically unjust that human beings of any marginalized
196 community are attached with unnatural characteristics. And the tragic state is that an unnatural characteristics,
197 and heinous discrimination on extreme level is practised with all theological justifications. Therefore, concluding
198 the argument, it is affirmed that the evil of caste has strongly to be de-naturalized, dismissed and critiqued
199 with vehemence as an evil practice. So, there is an urgent need to appropriate the precepts of justice to low
200 caste communities on the one extreme and the immediate initiative must be taken by this class to reclaim their
201 lost self-respect. Only then there would be society blessed with multiracial, multicultural, and good inter-caste
202 relations. The enforcement to social harmony and the development of co-operative spirit and a need to have
203 tolerance power. ¹ ²

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²De-Essentializing the Practice of Casteism as an in human Practice in the Contemporary Times

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