



Ambedkar International Center

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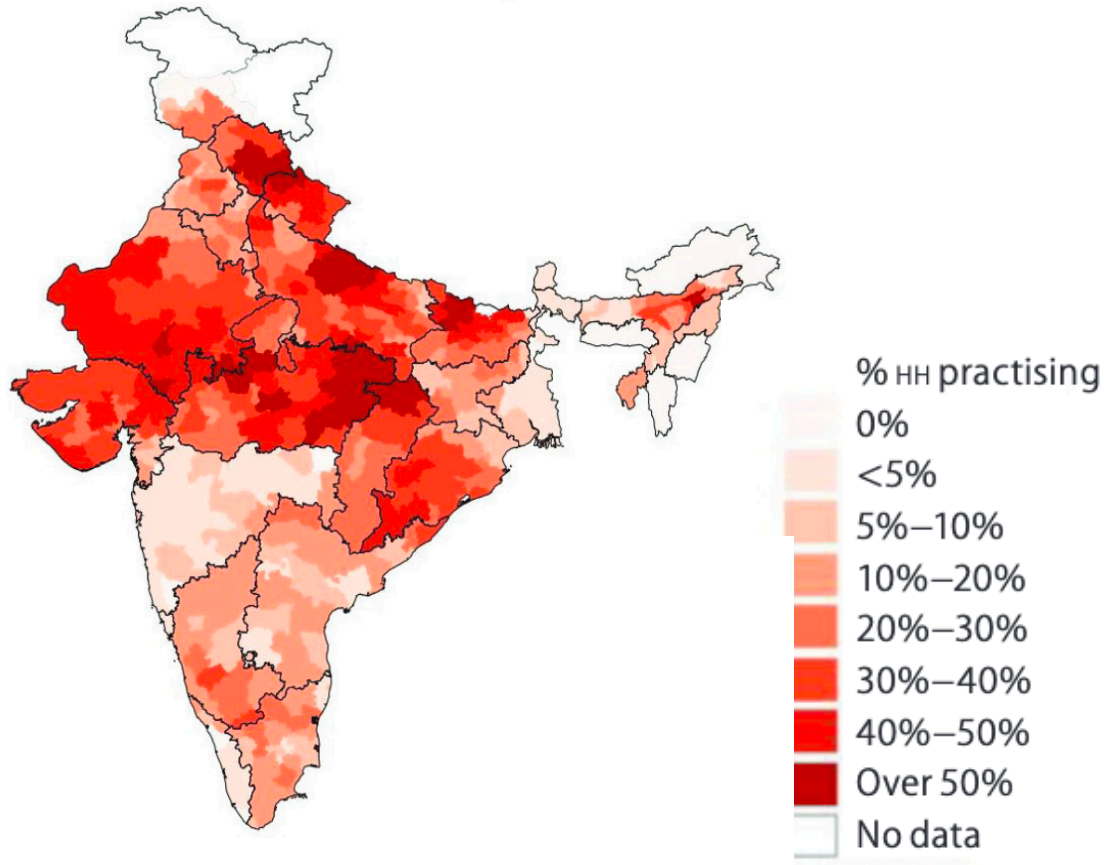
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What you think when you think of India?



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Caste Discrimination



- Untouchability is a debilitating form of caste discrimination.
- The Indian Constitution adopted in 1950, outlawed Untouchability.
- But it is still widely practiced across India.

Based on the India Human Development Survey-II (2011-12) data set, generated by Reeve Vanneman, University of Maryland

[Reference](#)



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Untouchability & Caste discrimination leads to...

- Dehumanization
- Denial of access to commons
- Segregation
- Discrimination in housing, education, employment



Scheduled Castes are:

Underpaid

- 56% of upper caste earnings

[Reference](#)

Crime

- Every 15 minutes a crime is committed against a Dalit
- Every day, 6 Dalit women are Raped
- Source: India's National Crime Reports Bureau data,

[Reference](#)

Sanitation and Manual Scavenging

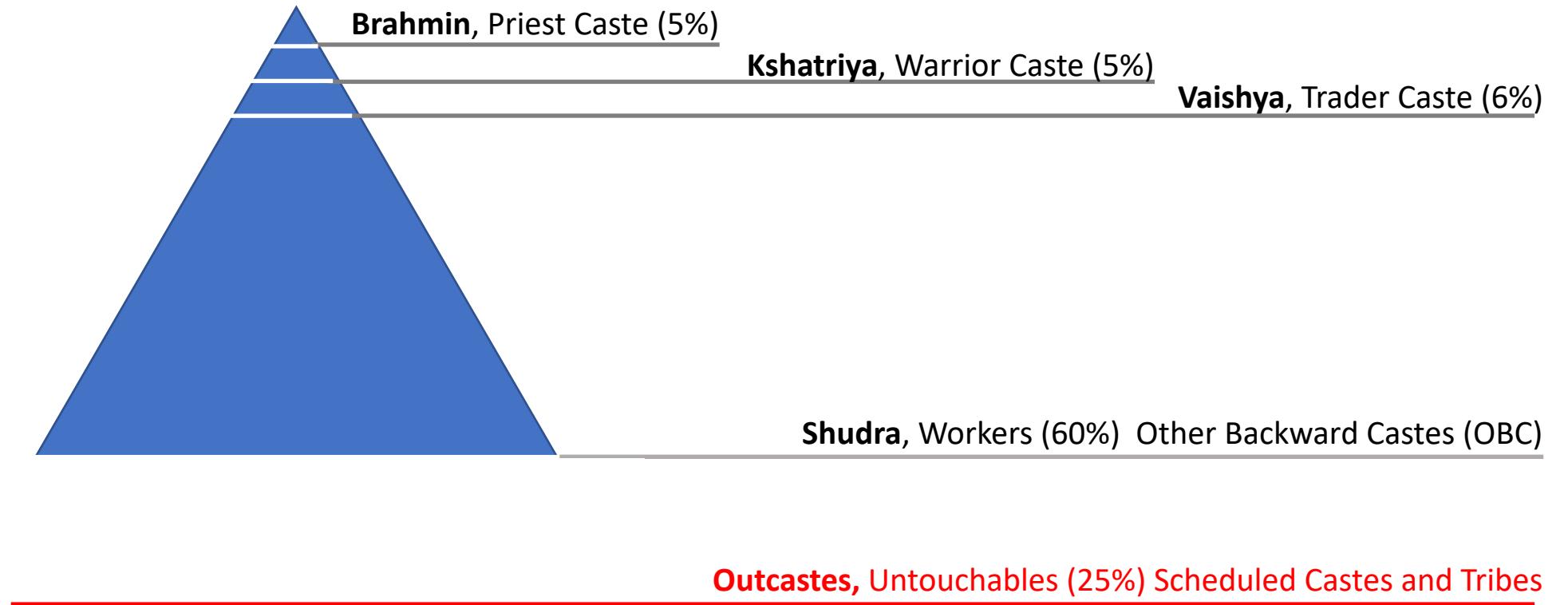
- Around 5 million workers are predominantly Dalits.
- One person has died every 5 days
- Source: India's National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK), 2017-18

[Reference](#)



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What is Caste?



What is Caste?

Text Thirteen in Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda

brahmanosya mukhamasitbahu
rajanyah kritahauru
tadasya yadvaishyahapadhyagam
shudro ajayata

- From His face (or the mouth) came the brahmanas.
- From His two arms came the rajanya (the kshatriyas).
- From His two thighs came the vaishyas.
- From His two feet came the shudras.



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“Manusmriti” (Ancient Hindu Legal Code)

- If a Shudra listens to “Vedas” (another ancient scripture), molten lead should be poured into his ears.
- If he recites the “Vedas”, his tongue be chopped off
- The Oppressed caste person’s shadow should not fall on the so called “touchables” .
- The Oppressed person’s footmarks should not be on the road. Hence he should tie a broom to his waist to erase their foot prints
- He shall not pollute the road by his spit and hence should have a pot hung in his neck to collect his spit



“Manusmriti” (Ancient Hindu Legal Code)

- They had to survive on leftovers
- Handouts of the “touchables”
- Menial jobs
- Clearing carcasses
- Carrying human excreta of others (manual scavenging)



“Manusmriti” (Ancient Hindu Legal Code)

- Serving others
- Prevented from accumulating wealth
- Living outside the village
- Not permitted to have weapon
- They had no access to common water sources.
- They were obviously not allowed in the temples



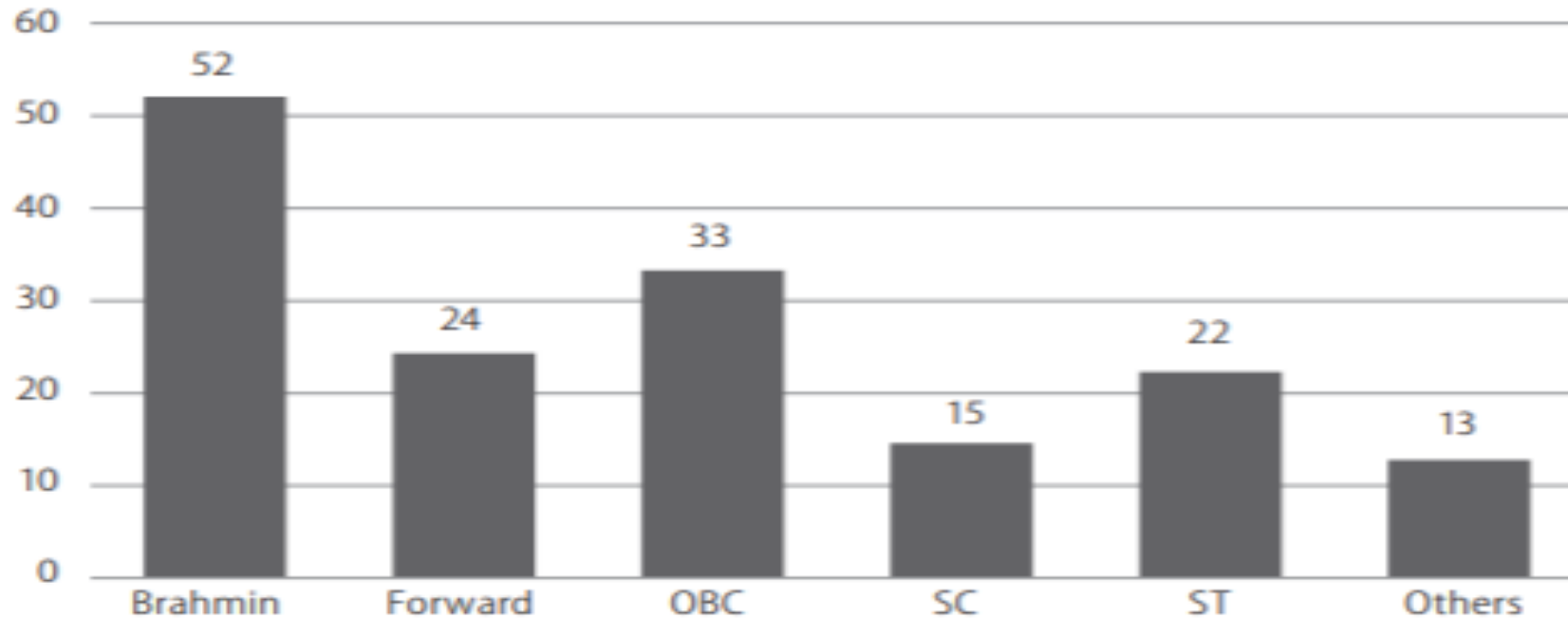
What is Hindu/Hinduism?

- Geographic nomenclature to describe the region and the people beyond “Sindhu (Indus)” river.
- It is not a religion, but a society dictated by Brahminical supremacy
- The Brahmins created religious and legal rituals and a continuous process of amalgamating various groups of people under “castes” and establishing a rigid caste hierarchy.
- Caste is inherited from the father of the child
- Caste can not be changed
- One can't convert into Hinduism since one doesn't know which caste one can get into
- Caste is enforced by rigid endogamy rules barring people marrying outside their caste



Isn't untouchability illegal?

Figure 2: Percentage of Households Practising Untouchability, Social Groups, All India



Y-axis: Percentage of households practising untouchability.

X-axis: Share of household by social groups practising untouchability.

Source: Authors' calculations based on IHDS 2012 data.

[Reference](#)



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Share of SC, ST, OBC - In Academia

- Faculty Percentage at 23 IITs (total 6,043)
 - **Only 2.5% (149)** are from the Scheduled Castes
 - **Only 0.4% (21)** are from Scheduled Tribes
- **Just 6%** faculty members in the IIMs. SCs, STs, and OBCs **put together**.

[Reference](#)

This lack of caste diversity creates **extremely difficult conditions** for oppressed caste students who are typically first generation students, with not much of English medium background, who become **victims of vicious caste bias** of both faculty and students on the campus leading to **high dropout rates and suicides**.

[Reference](#)
[Death of Merit](#)



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Share of SC, ST, OBC - In Central Govt

- 78 ministries and departments in the central government (till January 1, 2016)
 - **Only 17.49%** of Scheduled Castes (SC),
 - **Only 8.47%** of Scheduled Tribes (ST)
 - **Only 21.57%** of OBCs

This near proportional representation is due to “Affirmative Action” prescribing “quota” in government jobs.

[Reference](#)

However, let this not fool you. As one moves up in the hierarchy, one can't find Oppressed caste people.

- **Only 1** of the 89 secretaries posted to the Scheduled Castes (SC),
- **Only 3** belong to the Scheduled Tribes.

[Reference](#)



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Share of SC, ST, OBC - In Private Sector

There is NO Affirmative action in India's private sector which remains a citadel of upper castes who vehemently oppose the affirmative action



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Share of SC, ST, OBC - In Judiciary

- Instead of questioning why the abolition of untouchability has failed in India, the apex court has upheld and reiterated false stereotypes against Dalits and Adivasis.

Reference

- Only 1 of the 30 Justices of the Supreme Court of India belongs to Scheduled Caste (15% of population).
- 26 (90%) of the 30 justices belong to “forward” caste (15% of the population).

Reference



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Share of SC, ST, OBC - In Judiciary (contd.)

The convicts of caste violence by the lower judiciary are invariably set free by the higher judiciary.

Reference

While diluting the provision of the Prevention of Atrocities against SC, ST, the Supreme Court said “It is necessary to express concern that working of the Atrocities Act should not result in perpetuating casteism which can have an adverse impact on integration of the society and the constitutional values,”

Reference



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Myths on Caste

LOOKING for Educated, Good Looking, Beautiful and Homely Bride below 30 (5' – 5'4") for Bengali Boy 35 (5'7") WB Govt Engineer from Educated Upper Middle Class Family of Kolkata. Caste No Bar (EXCEPT SC, ST, OBC). email- [REDACTED]@gmail.com with Photo and family details or contact: [REDACTED] / [REDACTED]



Myths on Caste

Myth: It was brought by British or Muslims to divide Hindus

Fact: Caste existed in Indian subcontinent much before invasion by Muslims or British.

The religious texts like Manusmriti, Mahabharat, Ramayan have references to caste.

Buddhism was in response to caste based discrimination to preach equality, justice and fraternity.



Myths on Caste

Myth: But for affirmative action, the caste system will be eradicated

Fact: Affirmative action has indeed improved SC ST population. However as seen in earlier, even today, untouchability is practiced.

(Dalit man killed for riding a horse during marriage procession - [Ref](#)).



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Myths on Caste

Myth: It is based on the trait and not by birth

Fact: It is totally based on birth.



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Myths on Caste

Myth: Caste is Rural

Fact: It is very much practiced in urban areas. [Ref](#)



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Hindu Caste System in USA

The Caste so ingrained in Indians, they always try to find caste of the person.

- They are always interested in the Surname, which is a clear indicator of caste (95% certainty)
- Scheduled Caste people in North India do not have surnames which again gives away their caste.
- People try to find out if one is wearing thread. How, they put a hand on the right shoulder of the person to feel the thread.
- They want to know which Deity one prays to. Many literate SC people tend not to pray or abhor Hinduism.
- They celebrate caste in the garb of culture



Hindu Caste System in USA

- They will ask if one is a vegetarian? Brahmins tend to wear vegetarianism as a pride
- All the referrals from Indians will typically be from their own caste.
- Nearly 90% of Indians in US are from upper caste.
- Opposing Affirmative action is a form of casteism.
- JEE Rank is asked to determine if one is coming through reservation
- Caste based discrimination became so prevalent in UK that the govt attempted to bring legislation to ban Caste based discrimination



The Cisco Caste Discrimination Case: Hindu Caste System in USA

The infamous Cisco Caste discrimination lawsuit brought by Dept of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH), CA govt, [Reference](#)

- The John Doe (anonymous) belongs to Scheduled Caste.
- Sundar Iyer and Ramana Kompella, the defendants are believed to belong to Brahmin caste
- Sundar Iyer and John Doe both belonged to IIT Bombay. Sundar was aware that John Doe was a beneficiary of Affirmative Action.
- John Doe was denied opportunities and discriminated based on his untouchable caste
- This violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and California's DFEH act.



Caste Question in the USA.

- It's new problem and new challenge.
- New Problem: Caste is not understood by the non-Indians where as Indians practice in their cultural life.
- New Challenge: Practice of caste extends to the workplace – Cisco and HCL and University. Entering into the workplace means enters into the class domain – The problem is much confined to the social organizations and unknown to the class organizations – Disproportionate representation of the dominant caste esp in hiring and firing position.
- Approach: Caste in tech has to be discussed as race in tech.



Dr. B. R. Ambedkar



- Jurist
- Economist
- Political Leader
- Leader of the Oppressed



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Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

- Jurist and Economist



- Architect of Indian constitution
- His PhD thesis “Problem of Rupee” led to formation of Reserve Bank of India (equivalent of Federal Reserve in the USA)
- First Law minister leading to major labor reforms
- Author of Hindu Code Bill to reform equal rights to women



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Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

- Political Leader and Leader of Oppressed



- Converted Millions to Buddhism out of Hinduism that promised Liberty, Equality and Fraternity
- Represented Oppressed people to get separate electorates, affirmative actions from British
- Fought to annihilate caste from Indian Society



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Dr. B. R. Ambedkar



- Author of more than 20 books and 18 volumes of his writings and speeches were published after his death by the govt.
- PhD from Columbia, US
- D. Sc. from London, UK



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Suggestions on Resources

Books

- Annihilation of Caste by B R Ambedkar
- Ants among Elephants by Sujata Gidla
- Caste Matters by Suraj Yengde
- Republic of Caste by Anand Teltumbde
- The Untouchable by Mulk Raj Anand
- Caste by Isabel Wilkinson
- Sebastian and Sons by T.M. Krishna

Films/Documentaries

- The Untouchables – India
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LD3HrIRPVhw>
- Death of Merit –A documentary
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2L3y9O1HCBw>
- The Discreet Charm of Savarnas (short film, English) -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJBkmtpu1sQ>

Websites and Social media handles

- <https://www.ambedkarinternationalcenter.org>
- www.dalitcamera.com/
- <https://roundtableindia.co.in/>
- <https://akscusa.org>
- www.dalitdastak.com
- Cisco case: https://akscusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/cisco_caste_discrimination_complaint.pdf

Twitter Handles: @ambedkar_center, @aanausa



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Thank You



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