

Introduction to Indian Knowledge System

Topic- Politics of Indignity in India

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Introduction-

Indignity- a situation that makes you feel embarrassed or ashamed: the team had to suffer the indignity of being booed by their own supporters.

(Rude Treatment - अपमानास्पद वागणूक)

The term “politics of indignity” :

The term "politics of indignity" in the context of India likely refers to a concept where certain groups or individuals are subjected to systemic discrimination, exclusion, or indignity based on their caste, religion, gender, or other identity factors. This concept is often associated with the historical and ongoing social and political issues in India. Here are some key aspects and examples related to the politics of indignity in India:

- 1. Caste-Based Discrimination:

The caste system in India has been a significant source of indignity and discrimination for centuries. Scheduled Castes (historically oppressed lower-caste groups) and Scheduled Tribes have been particularly marginalized and subjected to social and economic discrimination. Despite affirmative action measures, such as reservations in education and government jobs, caste-based discrimination remains a pervasive issue.

• **What is caste?**

- Caste can be defined as a **hereditary, endogamous group** having a common name, common traditional occupation, and common culture, relatively rigid in matters of mobility, the distinctiveness of status, and forming a single homogeneous community.
- The caste system is a **social hierarchy** in India originally **based on a person's occupation and birth**. It divides society into different groups called castes, which are further subdivided into subcastes.
- The **four varna** - Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra are the classical four divisions of Hindu society. In practice, however, there have always been many subdivisions (**Jatis**) of these varnas, which today connote castes (Jatis) in India.

• What are the main features of the caste system?

- **Segmentary division of Society:** Indian society is primarily divided into different castes. Caste membership is determined by birth and not by accomplishments.
- **Hierarchy:** Castes have a specific scheme of social and ritual hierarchy. A sense of high and low, superiority and inferiority, is associated with this gradation or ranking.
- **Restrictions on feeding and social interaction:** There are restrictions on the kind of food that can be eaten together, received, or exchanged among castes.
- **The ideology of purity and pollution:** The ideology of purity and pollution regulates the interaction between different castes significantly.
- **Restrictions on Endogamy:** Endogamy or marriage within one's own caste or sub-caste is an essential feature of the caste system.
- **Rules governing caste system:** There is a prescribed set of norms, values, and sanctions that govern social behavior within a caste.
- **Restricted choice of occupation:** Traditionally, each caste was associated with an occupation.
- For example: The Brahmins who occupied the uppermost rank were prescribed the duties of acquiring and teaching sacred knowledge and performing sacrifices, while lower castes, such as Dalits, were historically restricted to jobs such as manual labour.

- **What are the factors that contribute to the changes in the caste system?**
- Several factors have contributed to changes in the caste system in India over time, which are as follows
- **Sanskritisation:**
 - It is a process by which any low caste could adapt to the behavior pattern, culture of the high caste and claim membership in that high caste.
 - As lower castes adopt the customs and practices of higher castes, they may be accepted and respected by members of higher castes, which can help to reduce discrimination and social stigma.
- **Westernization:** Western-style education has led to a greater emphasis on merit and individual achievement than traditional caste-based roles and hierarchies.
 - As people adopt **western-style clothing, food, and other cultural practices**, they may also adopt new ideas and values.
- **Modernisation:** It includes establishing scientific, technological, and educational institutions, the rise of nationalism, and new political culture and leadership in the country, which lead to job creation, thereby breaking the occupational rigidity of the caste system.
- **Industrialisation and Urbanisation:**
 - **Industrial growth** and expansion of urban space have provided new sources of livelihood to people and made occupational mobility possible.
 - Taboos against food sharing started weakening when industrial workers from different castes lived and worked together.
- **Political and Economic Reforms:**
 - Various political and economic reforms were initiated after Independence in the country, which led to several changes after Independence.
- The Indian government has implemented policies such as **reservations in education and government jobs** for individuals from lower castes to address historical discrimination and provide equal opportunities.

- **Why is caste-based discrimination continuing even in the present times?**
- Despite various efforts, discrimination and prejudice continue to be prevalent. The following are the reasons:
 - **Lack of enforcement and implementation of laws and policies** to address this issue. Additionally, caste-based discrimination is often subtle, making it difficult to detect and address.
 - **Lack of awareness about the caste system** and its impacts on individuals, which can make it difficult for individuals to recognize and challenge discrimination.
 - **Poverty and lack of education** can exacerbate the problem, as individuals from lower castes may have limited opportunities and be more vulnerable to discrimination.
- **Many people continue to hold caste-based biases and prejudices**, which leads to caste-based discrimination.

- **What are the new identities of the caste system in modern times?**
- The caste system in India has undergone significant changes in modern times, and new identities have emerged that reflect these changes. A few new identities of the caste system are as follows
 - **Caste in governance and politics:** Certain castes have been provided reservation in government jobs and political representation.
 - **Caste system in business:** Certain castes dominate certain industries and control access to resources and opportunities.
 - **Caste association:** Formal organizations often encompass several endogamous castes or jatis of a similar name, occupation, and rank.
 - **Demand for reservations:** Various communities across India, including the **Jats in Haryana, the Marathas in Maharashtra, and the Kapus in Andhra Pradesh**, have demands for reservations in the form of quotas in education and employment.

Casteization of politics

- It refers to the process by which political parties and candidates use the caste system to mobilize voters and gain campaign support.

- This can include appealing to voters based on their caste identity, making promises to certain castes or groups, and fielding candidates from certain castes.

- A negative phenomenon reinforcing the caste system and can lead to division and discrimination.

- Example: the practice of political parties in India to field candidates from specific castes in certain electoral constituencies to garner support from that community.

Politicization of caste

- It refers to how individuals and groups from marginalized or disadvantaged castes use their caste identity for political empowerment.

- This can include organizing and advocating for the rights and interests of their community and pushing for policies that address caste-based discrimination.

- A positive phenomenon that helps to empower marginalized communities and bring attention to issues of caste-based discrimination.

- Example: the rise of political parties in India, which work with the primary agenda to promote the cause of a particular caste or a collection of castes.

What are the constitutional and legal provisions to eradicate caste-based discrimination?

Constitutional provisions

Articles	Provisions
Article 14	Equality before law
Article 15	Prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.
Article 16(2)	No citizen shall on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for any employment or office under the State.
Article 17	Abolish the practice of untouchability and made it a criminal offense.
Article 23	Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour.
Article 46	Promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections.
Article 51A	It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India.
Article 330	Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People
Article 332	Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States.
Article 338	National Commission for the Scheduled Castes.
Article 338 A	National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes.
Article 338 B	National Commission for Backward Classes.
Article 341	The President specifies the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races, or tribes be deemed Scheduled Castes in relation to that State.

Claims of Schedule Castes:

Article 335 provides that the claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State.

Reservation in Local Bodies:

Under Part IX relating to the Panchayats and Part IXA of the Constitution relating to the Municipalities, reservation for SC and ST in local bodies has been envisaged and provided.

Legal provisions

The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955: To prescribe punishment for preaching and practice of untouchability for the enforcement of any disability arising therefrom and for matters connected therewith.

The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989: To prevent the offenses of atrocities against the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation act, 2013: To provide for the prohibition of employment as manual scavengers, rehabilitation of manual scavengers and their families, and for matters connected therewith.

• Effects of the caste system?

- These are steps that can be taken to placate the ill effects of the caste system:
- **Spread of Education:** Caste feelings should be discouraged in educational institutions, and the students should be taught to resist these feelings whether they experience them in daily social interactions.
- **Proper implementation of the law:** Ensure strict implementation of the Atrocities Act as regards victims of violent abuse and other atrocities.
 - Each police station should have a scheduled caste/scheduled tribe **atrocities cell** to handle investigations of abuses and alleged violations of the Atrocities Act.
- **Economic empowerment:** Economic empowerment can help those who have been marginalized due to their caste by providing them with opportunities to improve their economic status.
- **Public awareness campaigns:** Public awareness campaigns can help raise awareness about caste-based discrimination. These campaigns should promote social harmony, a message that everyone is equal, regardless of their caste or social status.

- The UGC (Redressal of Grievances of Students) Regulations, 2023, (SGRC)
- UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations of 2012, Equal Opportunity Cell (EOC)
- Delhi University professor N. Sukumar and former UGC head Sukhadeo Thorat, to note that the new rules will result in unnecessary confusion and that caste-based discrimination cannot be clubbed with general grievances against the admission and academic process.
- Sukumar noted that already existing mechanisms of appointing an anti-discrimination officer and setting up SC-ST cells are not being implemented properly.
- IIT Bombay student Darshan Solanki, Rohit Vemula, Dr. Payal Tadvi
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- **What is the Status of Social Discrimination in India?**
- **About: Caste**, through its **rigid social control** and networks **facilitates economic mobility for some and erects barriers for others** by mounting disadvantages on them.
- It also **shapes the ownership pattern** of land and capital and simultaneously regulates **access to political, social, and economic capital** too.
- According to the **Census (2011)**, there are an estimated **20 crore Dalits** in India.
- **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) Data:** In **2021, 50,900 cases of crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs)** were registered, an increase of 1.2% over 2020 (50,291 cases).
- The **rate of crime** was particularly **high in Madhya Pradesh** (63.6 per lakh in a SC population of 113.4 lakh) and **Rajasthan** (61.6 per lakh in a SC population of 112.2 lakh).
- Further, the report reveals that atrocities against Scheduled Tribes (**ST**) have increased by 6.4% in 2021 with Madhya Pradesh reporting the highest number of cases accounting for 29.8% followed by Rajasthan with 24% and Odisha with 7.6% in 2021.
- **India Discrimination Report by Oxfam India: Decline in discrimination in Urban Areas:** It has been the case due to education and supportive government policies.
- **Difference in Earning:** The average earning of self-employed workers in 2019-20 was Rs 15,878 for people from non-SCs/ST categories, while it is Rs 10,533 for those from SC or ST backgrounds. Self-employed **non-SC/ST workers earn a third more than their counterparts from SC or ST backgrounds.**
- **See: NCRB, IDR, <https://www.newsclick.in/NCRB-Report-Shows-Rise-Atrocities-Towards-Dalits-Adivasis>, <https://cjp.org.in/2022-a-look-back-at-hate-crimes-against-dalits-and-adivasis/>**
- **<https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/hyderabad/2022/aug/30/crimes-against-scst-communities-increase-by-12-per-cent-ncrb-report-2492917.html>**
- **<https://www.mha.gov.in/MHA1/Par2017/pdfs/par2023-pdfs/RS09082023/2301.pdf> etc.**

• 2. Religious Tensions:

India is a religiously diverse country, and religious tensions have sometimes led to indignity and violence. Incidents of religious discrimination, communal violence, and religious-based exclusion have been a matter of concern. Issues related to cow vigilantism, religious conversion, and places of worship have often stoked tensions.

- The history of modern India has many incidents of communal violence. During the 1947 partition there was religious violence between Muslim-Hindu, Muslim-Sikhs and Muslim-Jains on a gigantic scale. Hundreds of religious riots have been recorded since then, in every decade of independent India. In these riots, the victims have included many **Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Christians and Buddhists and Culture of Adivasi's (Nisarg Dharm)**.
- On 6 December 1992, destroyed the 430-year-old [Babri Mosque](#) in [Ayodhya](#)
- On 31 July 2023, communal violence erupted in the Nuh district of Haryana between Muslims and Hindus during an annual Brajmandal Yatra pilgrimage.

- **Riots in Pre-Independent India:**
- Bombay dog Riot – June 1832, Parsi between British in South Bombay
- Parsi–Muslim riots- October 1851, Bombay
- 1857 Bharuch riot, May 1857, Broach and Mumbai, 2 Parsis Murdered
- Salem riots of 1882, Salem in Tamil Nadu, Hindu-Muslim (Objection on Mosq)
- Katarpur Riot- 1918, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, Hindu attacks on the local Muslim community after rumors of an assault on an untouchable boy, around 30 Muslims burned alive.
- Peshawar riots, March 21–24, 1910, At least 4 Muslims and around 6 Hindus dead
- Riots in Kohat, 1924, Hindu–Muslim tension around 155 dead.
- 1924-1925 riots- April 1924- March 1925, Delhi, Nagpur, Lahore, Lucknow, Moradabad, Bhagalpur, Gulbarga, Shahajahanpur, Kankinarah, Kohat and Allahabad, **dead- Unknown**
- 1925–1926 riots, April 1925 - March 1926, Calcutta, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bombay Presidency, Berar, Gujarat, Sholapur, Dispute outside a mosque between Muslims and Hindus, dead-40 more
- 1926–1927 riots, April 1926–March 1927, Delhi, Calcutta, Bengal, Punjab, United Provinces, Bombay Presidency, Sind, Music during Hindu celebrations near mosques, and other causes

- 1927–1928 riots, April 1927- March 1928, in Lahore, Bihar, Orissa, Punjab, Bettiah, United Provinces, Bombay Presidency, the Central Provinces, Bengal, and Delhi. Caused by the publication of Rangila Rasul and Risala Vartman, music during Hindu celebrations near mosques, cow slaughter, and other causes
- 1927 Nagpur riots On September 4, 1927, in Nagpur, Maharashtra Muslims objected to the passage of Hindu procession which resulted in riots
- 1928–1929 riots, April 1928–March 1929, 22 significant riots in this period. Most serious were the Bombay riots. Other riots in Punjab, Kharagpur, and other places. Many riots occurred during Bakr-i-Id, other causes, dead more than 200 (149 in Bombay)
- 1929-1930 riots, April 1929 - March 1930, Bombay, other places. Causes- some significant riots in this period.

- 1930 - 1931 riots, April 1930 – March 1931 Bengal, Nagpur, Bombay, Assam, Sukkur (Sind).
- 1931 - 1932 riots, April 1931 - March 1932, Cawnpore, other places
- 1933 - 1934 riots, April 1933 - March 1934, Benares, Cawnpore, Lahore, Peshawar, Ayodhya,...(Hindus, Sikhs & Muslims)
- 1936 riots, Firozabad, Bombay, other,
- 1937 riots, Panipat, Madras, Amritsar
- 1939 riots, Benares, Cawnpore, Sukkur (Sind), other
- **Direct Action Day August 1946**, in Calcutta, Bengal, Muslim League Council to show the strength of Muslim feelings both to British and Congress. Muslims wanted a separate country.
- **Noakhali riots, October–November 1946**, in Noakhali, Bengal (now in Bangladesh)

- 1964 Calcutta riots, January - 1964, in Calcutta and rural parts of West Bengal, Retaliation against communal riots against Hindus in East Pakistan (present Bangladesh)
- 1966 Hindu - Sikh riots, 9 March 1966, in Delhi, Hindus and Sikhs battled in New Delhi's streets.
- 1967 Ranchi-Hatia riots, August 22–29, 1967, Ranchi Anti-Urdu agitations.
- 1969 Gujarat riots, September - October 1969, Gujarat Desecration of a dargah and subsequently of a Hindu temple.
- Worli riots - 1974, Mumbai, Maharashtra, Reservation issue, Shiv Sena (Hindu) & Buddhist
- 1980 Moradabad riots, August 1980, in Moradabad Policemen's refusal to remove the pig from Idgah. PAC & Muslims
- 1981 Bihar riots, May 1981, in Bihar Sharif,
- Nellie massacre, February 1983, Nellie, Tensions between the Assamese Hindus and Bengali Muslims Assamese Bengalis
- 1984 Bhiwandi riot, May 1984, in Bhiwandi, Placement of Saffron flag on top of mosque.
- 1984 anti-Sikh riots, 31 October 1984 - 3 November 1984, in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar

- 1987 Meerut communal riots, April–May 1987, Meerut, Babri Mosque reopened for Hindu worship
- 1988 Aurangabad violence, 17–20 May 1988, Aurangabad, Objection to Election results
- 1988 Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh), 8–11 October 1988, Rally by the BMAC (Babri Masjid Action Committee).
- 1988 Karnataka Bidar riots, 14–16 September 1988, Bidar Religious procession during Ganesh Chathurti event and over demanding donations from Sikhs.(Sikhs-Hindus(VHP))
- 1989 Bhagalpur violence, 22–28 October 1989, Bhagalpur Religious procession and false rumors about the killing of Hindu students.
- 1990 Gujarat violence April–October 1990, Gujarat, Political procession (miravnuk)
- 1990 Hyderabad riots, Hyderabad, Due to Hindus partly demolishing Babri Mosque
- 1992 Kanpur, December 6–11, Kanpur, Babri Masjid/ Ramjanmabhoomi controversy.
- 1993 Bombay riots, January 6–20, Bombay, Babri Masjid/ Ramjanmabhoomi controversy

- 2002 Gujarat riots, 27 February – 2 March 2002, Gujarat, Godhra which caused the deaths of 69 Hindu pilgrims karsevaks returning from Ayodhya triggered the violence.
- 2007 Christmas violence in Kandhamal, Dec 24-27, & 2008, Aug 25-28 Christmas celebrations (Hindus & Christians)
- 2012 Assam violence, 20 July – 15 September, in Assam, Killing of 4 Bodo youths by unidentified miscreants Bodos, Bengali-speaking Muslims.

- Religious violence in India

- According to the report-2016 to 2020, across India, there were 61,964 cases of rioting in 2016 of which 869 were religious or communal. In 2017, there were 58,880 cases in all, of which 723 were communal or religious; in 2018 the numbers were 57,828 and 512 respectively; in 2019 they were 45,985 and 438; and in 2020 there were 51,606 cases of rioting of which 857 were religious or communal. See: <https://thewire.in/government/india-communal-religious-riots-2016-2020>
- The data revealed that there were a total of 276,273 cases of rioting during these five years of which 3,399 were of communal or religious nature.

• 3. Gender Inequality:

Gender-based discrimination and violence against women are significant concerns in India. Gender-based indignity includes issues such as female feticide, child marriage, domestic violence, and limited access to education and employment opportunities for women.

•4. Discrimination Against Minorities:

India's religious and ethnic minority communities, such as Muslims and Christians, have faced discrimination and violence at various points in the country's history. The situation has been exacerbated by communal politics and controversial laws like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

•5. Freedom of Expression:

Concerns over freedom of expression and press freedom have grown in recent years. Critics argue that the government has used legal mechanisms and political pressure to curtail dissent, leading to a climate of self-censorship and reduced freedom of expression.

•6. Regional and Ethnic Conflicts:

India is a country with diverse linguistic, ethnic, and regional identities. Conflicts related to regional autonomy, resource allocation, and identity politics have sometimes resulted in indignity, violence, and political polarization.

e.g. Kuki and Meitei conflict

•7. Economic Inequality:

India faces significant economic inequality, with a large portion of its population living in poverty. Access to basic necessities like healthcare, education, and clean drinking water remains a challenge for many, leading to a sense of indignity and inequality.

- It's important to note that these issues are complex and multifaceted. India has a democratic system with a robust civil society and a history of social reform movements, but addressing these challenges remains a work in progress. Various social, political, and civil society organizations in India work to address these issues and promote social justice, equality, and human rights.

Thanks