



- Committee:** Social and Humanitarian Committee (GA-2)
- Issue:** To eradicate the exploitation of vulnerable groups in India
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Introduction to the Issue

Undoubtedly, India has one of the world's longest surviving social hierarchy: the Caste System. More than 2000 years of existence, the Caste System is a defining feature of Hinduism. According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) "A person is considered a member of the caste into which he or she is born and remains within that caste until death, although the particular ranking of that caste may vary among regions and over time." From Brahmins to "untouchables" there are specific rules and facilities designated for every caste. Especially, Dalits, who are sometimes called the "Untouchables" are neglected by the government and by higher castes even in times of natural disasters.

On the other hand, LGBTQ+ community, women and children are also exploited and neglected. The LGBTQ+ community experience various forms of violence and indeed, individuals who are identified as gay or lesbian are ostracised and ridiculed by their own family. Moreover, India has the highest number of child laborers in the world and they also face discrimination because of their caste, religion or ethnicity.

Involved Countries & Organizations

India: This country is the focal point of our agenda item. Having a multicultural and multilingual population, India is home for many ethnic and tribal groups and also, for refugees. Its population is affected deeply by the caste system and lower castes are exploited and neglected for many years. As the world's second most populated country, many women, children and socio-ethnic groups are illiterate and face violence. Indeed, the hatred towards LGBTQ+ community is also significant compared to other nations.



United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC): As an inter-governmental body within the United Nations, UNHRC is responsible for strengthening and enabling the security of human rights across the world. UNHRC also prepares recommendations for countries suffering from human rights violations such as India.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF): UNICEF India plays a crucial role in educating children who are unable to access education. On the other hand, experts of UNICEF also publish reports regarding the social issues in India. Discrimination to child labour, their reports and observation include various subjects.

HRW: The HRW is a non-governmental organization consisting of experts, lawyers and journalists which observe vulnerable minorities, refugees, children in need and their rights. The organization publishes every year a report for countries in which there are violation of human rights such as but not limited to discrimination. For India, HRW publishes reports regarding the discrimination and exploitation of vulnerable groups.

Detailed Analysis of the Issue

In this section, the detailed analysis of discrimination and exploitation between castes will be presented. In order to understand the origin of such violence, discrimination and beliefs, we should take into consideration that Hinduism and Hindu culture have a great impact on their way of life. Moreover, India has a diverse multiethnic and multi linguistic culture which makes it a home for thousands of small ethnic and tribal groups. It is a complex situation in which two main civilizations play major roles: Indus civilization and Aryan civilization. These civilizations bear traces of Iranian and European languages and also their culture. Over the years, a cultural complexity is developed from a lengthy and involved process of migration and intermarriage. Also, "among the documented invasions that added significantly to the Indian ethnic mix are those of Persians, Scythians, Arabs, Mongols, Turks, and Afghans" (Britannica).

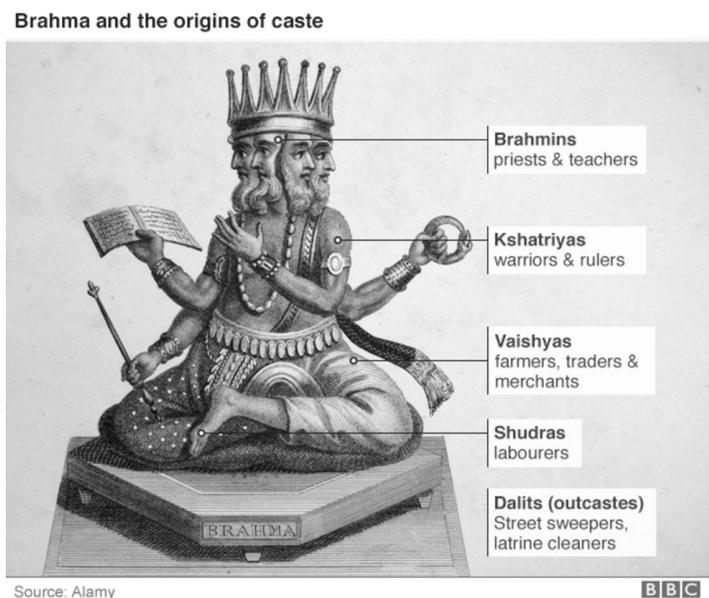
History of the Caste system

Caste System is the name of the social system dividing Hindus into hierarchical groups based on their karma (work) and dharma (duty). Generally, a caste is designated by the term *jati* which is the Indian

world for “birth”. *Jati* refers to a strictly regulated social community into which one is born and can’t be chosen.

Hindus are divided into four groups by the caste system and many believe that these social groups originated from the Hindu god of creation: Brahma. At the top are the Brahmins, which are formed by teachers, priests and intellectuals believed to have come from Brahma’s head. Kshatriyas come next, which are warriors and rulers supposedly came from Brahma’s arms. Vaishyas, the third group, consist of traders, merchants, farmers who were created from his thighs.

Lastly came the laborers and artisans, who did all the menial jobs, from Brahma’s feet: the Shudras. These main castes were later divided into about 3,000 castes and 25,000 sub-castes. A fifth group, the Dalits, are excluded from the caste system because “their occupations and ways of life typically brought them in contact with such impurities” (Britannica).



(Origins of castes in India)

Compared to urban communities, rural communities have long been living with the caste system. Areas in which the upper and lower castes lived separately are arranged based on the castes. For too many years, these castes didn't share the water wells and were married only within their castes. Indeed, the system created many privileges to the members of the upper castes and inequalities for the lower castes. “Historians, though, say that until the 18th Century, the formal distinctions of caste were of limited importance to Indians, social identities were much more flexible and people could move easily from one caste to another” (BBC). New research shows that during the occupation by the United Kingdom, British colonial rulers strengthened the boundaries of the caste system and made it India’s defining social feature.

Definition and characteristics of vulnerable groups



Groups of people that encounter a higher risk of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and violence than the rest of the population are considered as vulnerable groups. These may include ethnic minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, elderly people who are isolated and also, children. According to the World Bank (WB) the definition of vulnerable groups is as follows: “one that has some specific characteristics that make it at higher risk of falling into poverty than others”. In developing countries, the number of people living below the line of poverty is higher than developed countries and in India, according to the data provided in 2018, approximately 26% of the population lives below the line of poverty. This makes it clear that such groups of people do not have access to the basic needs of life such as education, health, food, housing, security, employment and equity. Indeed, these groups face discrimination and subordination; they have physical and/or cultural traits that set them apart; a sense of collective identity and common burdens as well as social rules is shared. As in India, vulnerable groups can be specified such as but not limited to women, the Dalits, scheduled tribes, children, elderly people, disabled people, ethnic groups and LGBTQ+ community.

Dalits, scheduled tribes and disabled people

Dalits, the fifth group of the caste system who are often called the untouchables, often face discrimination due to their position in the caste system. In 1950, India banned discrimination based on castes but various field studies show that the “untouchability” is still being practiced. In rural areas, the majority of the Dalit population suffers from poverty. To meet their livelihood, they are forced to scavenge or practice flaying. Furthermore, Dalit women face the burden of caste, class and gender and suffer from sexual abuse and rape. As the majority of this population is illiterate, landless and poor the Dalits face economic exploitation.

On the other hand, Scheduled Tribes (ST) also face discrimination due to their socio-economic status in India. Their estimated population is about 84 million and they are landless, which makes them more vulnerable and more isolated. They constitute the majority of agricultural labourers, casual labourers, plantation labourers and industrial labourers. Like the Dalits, their educational status is low and they have poor health due to reduced access to healthcare services.



Moreover, disabled people face several forms of discrimination and have limited access to employment, education and other socio-economic opportunities. The disabled population is about 2 % of the Indian population and this 2% includes people who have a disability since their birth. Access to public toilets, public parks, hospitals, government offices, educational institutions, places of worship and public transport are disabled to them. “The society, which is caught up with uniformity, cannot see people with disabilities with the same eye as they see common people” (Telangana Today).

Child laborers and the situation of women

According to International Labor Organization, “the term ‘child labour’ is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.” Indeed, children are being used in severe forms of child labour and across India, can be found in industries such as brick kilns, carpet weaving, garment making, domestic service, food and refreshment services, agriculture, fisheries and mining. These children are also at risk of exploitation such as sexual exploitation and production of child pornography. Many factors such as migration, emergencies, social norms, lack of work opportunities for adolescents and adults are the causes of child labour and exploitation. Therefore, child labor population works mainly in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra states.

Women in India face double discrimination and violence based on their caste, class or ethnic group. “Feticide, infanticide, malnourishment, sexual abuse, child marriages, honour killing, domestic violence, unequal pay for equal work and so on are the various issues that aggravate the vulnerability of women, transcending social, regional, religious and caste and class boundaries” (Telangana)



(A child labor in India)



LGBTQ+ community and refugees

As the LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer these people face criminalization of unnatural sex by Indian population. Therefore, there are no protective legislations for this community and they often experience violence, rejection, discrimination. They do not get the same job opportunities, education, health care and social services compared to other people.

On the other hand, India is at the crossroads of South Asia and is home for many migrants and asylum seekers from Tibet, Sri Lanka, Myanmar (which is politically unstable at the moment) and Afghanistan. “However, India does not have a domestic law for asylum management, nor is it a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention” (Migration Policy). Indeed, the absence of migration policy in India has been clearly seen after the Covid-19 pandemic. They have been neglected by the government for years and during the pandemic, most were unable to access government services such as health care and food rations.

List of Important Events

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
1950	Discrimination on the basis of caste is banned by the constitution
1950	Quotas in government jobs and educational institutions for scheduled castes and tribes are announced by the authorities
1989	Quotas were extended in order to include the Other Backward Classes (OBCs)
1997	KR Narayanan became India’s first Dalit president
2015	Protests by the Patel community to be recognised as OBC in Gujarat



2016	Violent protests in Haryana by the Jat community to be recognised as OBC
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Past Attempts to Solve the Issue

India has long been living with the caste system. Their culture and way of life are adapted to this system and it is problematic to solve this kind of discrimination. From 1950, when discrimination based on caste banned in the country, India has tried to ameliorate the opportunities and government services to those who are in vulnerable position. In urban areas such as large cities, the caste system lost its significance and people from different castes can be married. However, in rural areas, the caste system continues its existence and people are killed based on their caste. For example, in rural areas, people from the Dalit community are killed due to their “inappropriate act”. On the other hand, Indian government refuse to take act in recognition of LGBTQ+ community. “India on July 12 abstained at the vote for extending the mandate of an important U.N. official who reports on violence and discrimination against sexual minorities” (The Hindu). Last but not least, member states of the UN have not taken any action towards India’s attitude on discrimination of LGBTQ+ community and of other vulnerable groups.

Related Documents

- . [Human Rights Watch India Country Report 2021](#)
- . [Human Rights Watch India Country Report 2020](#)
- . [Constitution of a High Level Committee to prepare a report on the socio-economic, health and education status of the tribal communities of India](#)
- . [Child labor in India, Facts Sheet by International Labour Organization](#)



Possible Solutions

Lack of laws regarding refugees, child labour, the discrimination of vulnerable groups such as LGBTQ+ community are the main causes of our issue. Indeed, education and raising awareness to fundamental rights and freedoms play a crucial role in eradicating the exploitation of vulnerable groups. First step towards equality should be made by the Indian government. The government should establish a new set of laws regarding the enhancement of the education system in order to combat child labour and exploitation. Fundamental rights should be explained primarily to children by organizing conferences at their school, neighbourhood or via publicities made by the government. It should be the aim of the government to protect the rights of their vulnerable groups.

Indian government should be encouraged to recognise the rights of sexual minorities, refugees and immigrants, children, women and scheduled tribes. Under the International Human Rights, every individual is equal and should have the same rights. Member countries have to take precautions against countries that do not implement equal rights. Economic sanctions can be suggested to protest countries that permit the exploitation of children, women, sexual and ethnic minorities.

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