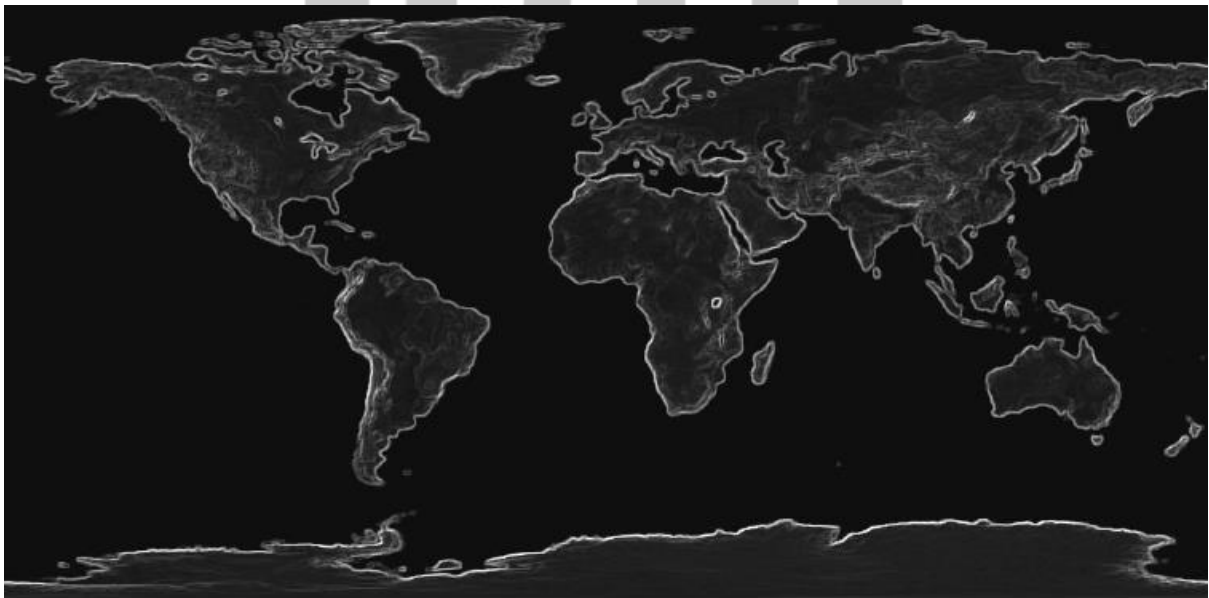




**CASTE: A NON-FACTUAL
OBSERVATIONAL REVIEW OF CASTE
FROM THE EYES OF A TAMIL
BRAHMIN MALE**

Veritas et Aequitas



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In its initial stages, the article started as factual documentation of caste as an important issue of society backed by statistics on honour killings over the last few decades. In consideration of the numerous articles entailing this subject, it felt best to draw up a unidimensional biased view based on a privileged males experience of caste.

A viewpoint that all the people who have the privilege of a smartphone/Laptops/PCs and a stable Internet connection, such as myself, can correlate with. This article also presents a perception that the privileged might identify with.

Most of the assumptions I make in this article are backed by a plethora of literature written after intense research and careful deliberation by thousands of people over nearly a century. While researching the issue, I felt like stroking a dead fire in hopes of kindred from the ashes. With these viewpoints, I seek to state and dissect statements I have heard from my parents/family members/members of my caste and religion and dissect them from a purely observational point of view, so as to enable you to relate with my viewpoint.

So here goes,

“Caste is important to ensure that there is an occupational equilibrium in society”.
(Paraphrased from Tamil)

Dissecting this sentence has left me with the following views. In the current state of lockdown in India, all these conceived “menial jobs” have suddenly become “essential”. With certainty, I can say that no general caste brahmins are out in the streets keeping the city clean, driving garbage trucks, delivering goods.

As I grew older, therefore, I began to understand caste as a tool for occupational segregation. Caste was never meant to ensure occupational equilibrium, **it ensured occupational stagnation and therefore class-stagnation.**

We as a society relegated people to certain jobs because we deemed it historically accurate while giving them the Illusion of opportunity.

For centuries, under various governing systems, caste has been employed as a tool to discriminate against the socially marginalized. Caste became the cornerstone to enabling a social structure that ensured an unequal divide.

The challenge while addressing this is the lack of an immediate solution. This case calls for our endurance and commitment to change and employ a system which benefits the marginalized. It would be worth noting here, that no major political party in India has acted on this issue in a tangible manner. Remembering the words of B. R. Ambedkar;

Caste is not a physical object like a wall of bricks or a line of barbed wire which prevents the Hindus from co-mingling and which has, therefore, to be pulled down. Caste is a notion; it is a state of the mind.

“It’s not untouchability, they don’t come from a good neighbourhood (paraphrased from Tamil)”

This opens up a topic of discussion that is so repugnantly obvious but it is never acknowledged or discussed;

Segregation.

In urban cities and rural townships, certain castes are forced to live together. Before you squabble for evidence, I would like you to reflect on which



society/community/neighbourhood you live in. Is it a diverse neighbourhood that has members of various castes living in it? The answer by a large majority will be no. By the abovementioned occupational stagnation we can observe that: We keep them in jobs that involve hygiene or health risks. The Government does not provide them with adequate facilities and tools they need to do their jobs while ensuring their health and safety. They are forced into the same locality that the government cares for minimally every 4 years for votes. As a society, we are ensuring their separation from our localities. We avail their services at low prices and treat them inadequately. This is a societal problem. It's a systemic idea that is passed on in family in small habits, values, traits, and mannerisms.

Some men say that they should be satisfied with the abolition of untouchability only, leaving the caste system alone. The aim of the abolition of untouchability alone without trying to abolish the inequalities inherent in the caste system is rather low. - B. R. Ambedkar

“This caste-based education is ruining the system – My son or daughter got xx score in xx and didn't get into the school/college he/she wanted because some SC/ST kid got the spot”

This is a well-crafted system. It made me wonder why our systems didn't run on merit. However, I found my answer as average merit “General Caste” student through my path on admissions to college. I might not have made it to the IIT's/IIM's but my parents had the “connections” to get me a seat in several reputed institutions. I with barely any effort managed to secure a seat in 8 colleges for engineering that my family could afford with ease. I was fortunate enough to have my parents pay for me to attend the following additional benefits:

- An extracurricular activity (Karate)
- A high-grade school that had facilities and actively promoted extracurricular activities that I could partake in.
- Additional fees for coaching for classes taught in school, extracurricular preparation for SATs, fees for debates that I attended at the time.

Facilities that inevitably added to my ability to secure a seat in a variety of colleges to choose from without having to worry about the fees or anything else for that matter.

Let's walk down the road of another perspective.

Think of the average SC/ST Student. From a government institution, the majority of the time has no qualitative facilities. Their parents work multiple shifts to make ends meet. The student is likely a first-generation graduate with the parents having insufficient experience, connection and education.

Their way of breaking the cycle is heavily dependent on the advantages designed for them as reparations for centuries of enabling a system that worked to their disadvantage. These are reparations that we as a community owe them. The merit-based selection only solidifies and further enables the disadvantage once created.

Treating people equally in a society where there is innate inequality is the biggest mistake we can make.



"Indifferentism is the worst kind of disease that can affect people." – B.R. Ambedkar

"I have seen a rich Dalit(s), they are just abusing the caste reservation system to get ahead of us"

Here's an unpopular opinion, Let Them Do It.

How many could there be? A hundred? A thousand?

In a country of 1.2 Billion where a majority continue to live below the poverty line, I am okay with a handful of that number abusing a system that is meant to ensure some amount of equality in the country.

A few thousand bad apples cannot be your measuring stick for a 1.2 Billion sized orchard. There needn't be a further explanation for this.

"Do not make examples out of exceptions"

These are just a few statements that come to mind as I write this piece.

While reservations need to end eventually, we are far away from reaching there. The only reasonable time to end reservation would be when we've truly attained justice and equality. It is not utopian. It's a long process but we can speed it up.

Every generation makes vast changes to the society that they take over. The India our parents inherited post-independence is nothing like India today.

In your capacity as an individual and as a citizen, who respects the constitution and the law; respect the people around you. Actively make note of the habits, mannerisms, and practices that propagate caste-based segregation that goes around in your homes and shun them in the future.

Actively make note.....future. Be aware of internalized ideas of caste and make a conscious effort to change for the better. Be more inclusive as a person, fight for the ideals of equality and fairness for all.

A fight for true equality means losing privilege. Accept and acknowledge that change and fight for it.

At any point, if the constitution or the law in whatever form it stops serving its true purpose, disavow it.

Why? Because...

"If I find the constitution being misused, I shall be the first to burn it."

— *Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar*