An Orientation of Caste System and Education: A Discourse

Tek Bahadur Oli

Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Education, Musikot Khalanga Multiple Campus, Rukum West, in Mid-West University, Surkhet, Nepal.

Introduction

The word "caste" has Portuguese and Spanish roots. The Spanish word "casta," which means "lineage," "race," or "a group having hereditary quality," is where the term "caste" first appeared. It comes from the term "Castus," which signifies pure in Latin. The Portuguese introduced it to India at the middle of the fifteenth century, although the Spaniards were the first to utilize it. The word's current spelling is derived from the French word "Caste," which first occurs in the academies in 1740 and is rarely found before 1800. It was previously spelled "cast." As early as 1555 AD, it was used in reference to race or breed of man. The hybrid breed of Europeans, Indians (American), and Negroes was referred to as "Casta" in Spanish. However, it wasn't until the 17th century that the Indian term "caste" was employed. The most popular use at the moment is Indian, and it has impacted all other uses. A caste is a hereditary endogamous group that forms a single homogenous society, has a shared name, a common traditional occupation, a common culture, and is rather inflexible in terms of mobility and rank distinction. However, caste has adopted too many new characteristics in the evolving circumstances, such as official organizations, becoming less inflexible, and a connection to politics. As a result, we can enumerate the following characteristics of the caste system(*Sem_2_Caste_System_in_India*, n.d.). Hereditary in nature: It suggests that the caste system is inherited. It is predicated not on attained attributes but on assigned values. Segmental division of society: This indicates that caste plays a major role in Indian social stratification. Different castes each have their own sophisticated way of living. A caste's membership is established by birth. As a result, caste is inherited. Hierarchy: It ranks different castes from higher to lower positions based on the purity and impurity of their activities. It resembles a ladder with pure caste at the top and impure caste at the bottom. For instance, Brahmins are employed in both education and ceremonial performance. They are at the top of the hierarchy since it is thought to be the purest occupation. However, due of their unclean employment, sweepers, whose jobs involve cleaning and scavenging, are positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy. Food, drink, and smoking restrictions: Generally speaking, different castes do not share food, drink, or hukka smoking. Brahmins, for example, don't eat food from any other caste. It's a difficult procedure. For instance, there are numerous subgroups of Kanyakubj Brahmins in Uttar Pradesh. Food is not taken from one subdivision to another. There are two kinds of food: "pucca," which includes dishes like puri, kachodi, and pulao made with ghee, and "kuchcha," which includes dishes like rice, lentils, and vegetable curries made with water. Some castes solely trade pucca food with one another. The upper caste never steals anything from the lower caste. Smoking is subject to the same rules. Endogamy: This means that caste members are only permitted to marry inside their own caste. Marriages between classes are forbidden. However, inter-caste marriages are steadily rising among educated individuals, especially in urban areas. One of the key aspects of the caste system is purity and defilement.

Deeds, occupations, languages, clothing styles, and eating habits are used to assess purity and contamination. For instance, drinking alcohol, eating nonvegetarian cuisine, ingesting upper caste leftovers, working in leather crafts, lifting dead animals, sweeping, transporting trash, etc. are all considered filthy. However, some members of the upper caste are now employed in all of the aforementioned occupations, such as shoe factories, shoe shops, hair salons, etc. Occupational association: Every caste has a certain occupation that they are not allowed to change. For example, Brahmins teach and serve as priests, while Kayasthas write and keep revenue records. Chamars work in the leather industry, while Baniyas are in business, etc. Some people have changed from their original vocation because of the increased employment prospects brought about by industrialization and urbanization. Nonetheless, traditional jobs are still practiced in rural regions. These situations can also be seen in cities. For example, a barber who works as a peon in an office and owns a saloon where he trims hair in the morning and evening. A few parts' social and religious privileges and disabilities: The lower caste is prohibited from doing a number of things, such as entering temples, using literal language, and using gold decorations or umbrellas, among other things. But things have evolved so much that these limitations are rarely present anymore. Differences in customs, attire, and speech: Every caste has a unique way of life, including customs, attire, and speech. While the low caste uses colloquial language, the high caste uses pure language, often using terms literally. procedures for settling conflicts: Caste Panchayats at the village and inter-village levels are one of the caste's own procedures(*Sem_2_Caste_System_in_India*, n.d.).

The prevailing caste system theory recognizes Dalits as the lowest social class. Due to deeply rooted sentiments of superiority and inferiority based on caste system, Hindu society is mentally split into vertical and segregated groups. The Dalits' social fabric is being destroyed as a result of this pushing society toward a hierarchy. Dalits are consequently weakened and made to bow to their community's social and political structures. The subordination is reflected in the absence of offices and leadership roles in local governments. In many institutions, including as municipal governments, political parties, and social groupings, non-Dalits hold powerful positions of decision-making. Dalits' involvement status in local governments has an impact on decision-making processes. Therefore, even though Dalits are symbolically represented in every aspect of life, the subordination in local politics will not change(Bk, 2023).

It takes more than just organizational or technical changes to promote inclusion and equity. Instead, it is a movement with a distinct philosophical direction that entails creating a friendly and encouraging atmosphere inside school communities. A unified commitment from school personnel is necessary to create such a culture shift. Therefore, it is essential that everyone who must participate understands the purpose. The concepts "equity" and "inclusion" in particular need to be precisely defined in a way that appeals to a wide variety of stakeholders. The process of inclusion aids in removing obstacles that restrict students' attendance, involvement, and academic success. Ensuring fairness and treating every student's education as equally important is what equity is all about. Thus, the main takeaway is straightforward: every student matter and matters equally. But when we attempt to put this theory into practice, the complication emerges. This will probably necessitate major adjustments to school practices and ways of thinking. This goal was taken into consideration when creating this resource pack, which

focuses on the evolution of school policies, practices, and ways of thinking(*Unesco_bie_2021_web_inclusive_education_resrouce_pack*, n.d.-a).

Literature Review

In India, the relationship between caste and education has long been a contentious issue. Because of the qualitative aspects of caste, the inter-linkage is sometimes evident and sometimes not. Therefore, before delving into its connections to education, it is essential to comprehend what caste is and how the system operates. For thousands of years, Indian history and culture have been shaped by the ancient social structure of caste. The social stratification that characterizes Indian society is usually represented by caste. Despite being an institution that is thought to be exclusive to Hinduism, its influence is felt by religious groups to which Hinduism has been converted. The father of the Indian constitution, Dr. BR Ambedkar, believed that the "Origin of Caste" was the same as the "Origin of the Mechanism for Endogamy" and that caste and class were neighbors, stating that "a caste is an Enclosed Class" Ambedkar (2004). Since the Indian caste system is a closed stratification structure, an individual's social standing is determined by the caste they were born into. People from lower castes were not allowed to receive an education in the conventional social system. The privilege of education has traditionally been exclusive to the elite classes. The caste system, which was built on social distinction and believed that access to education was a privilege of the upper classes, is largely to blame for the educational backwardness of the disadvantaged people. Due to their position in the caste system, dalit groups known as "untouchables" were historically excluded from knowledge and education in traditional Hindu culture. Dalits faced extreme hostility when they tried to pursue an education, even though schools for them were formally founded in the middle of the nineteenth century (Nambissan, 2013). The relationship between the caste system and the educational system is intricate and frequently oppressive. Over time, this has been changing, although very slowly(Hari, n.d.).

Deeply ingrained in Indian society, caste discrimination affects many facets of life and sustains societal inequalities. Despite India's efforts to expand and modernize, the education sector is especially impacted. The persistence of historical caste divides has an impact on marginalized groups' restricted representation, discriminatory treatment in institutions, and unequal access to education. These discriminatory behaviors are the result of colonial-era policies that limited educational possibilities and solidified social hierarchies. Even though progress has been achieved in the direction of inclusivity, ingrained prejudices and attitudes in society continue to worsen inequality. Furthermore, caste prejudice exacerbates problems for marginalized communities by interacting with other types of marginalization. Discriminatory behaviors continue to hinder progress toward equality and social mobility in spite of current legislative provisions and affirmative action initiatives. To fight caste-based prejudice in education, comprehensive research and coordinated efforts are vitally needed. This introduction highlights the importance of establishing a truly inclusive and equitable educational system in India and lays the groundwork for additional analysis(Shah, n.d.).

The state had the authority to consolidate the caste system. Hindu texts served as the foundation for Nepal's penal code. Demotion to a lower caste was one of the five harshest penalties that could be applied, and defending the core tenets of Hindu law was an institution of the state.

Early in the eighteenth century, this kind of punishment was common in India; but, in Nepal, it was a state-approved practice that was occasionally applied to Gorkha enemies. The children of the Palpa chiefs who had opposed Gorkha were "given to the most wretched and abhorrent tribe, Sarki, to be educated in their loathsome vocation, as outcastes" when they were put to death in 1762. Hodgson was informed by a justice of the Nepalese Supreme Court that "beneath (on the plains of India), the Shastras are but words; here, they are put into practice." After Nepal's political unification, Stiller believes that the adoption of a standard Hindu law brought the country together. This law also took ethnic diversity and regional customs into consideration, but it did so through a process known as Sanskritization, which originally denoted the rise of castes in the social hierarchy. However, he uses the term to refer to the establishment of the Hindu ideal through the legal system. The two applications are "closely connected, yet distinct enough to justify drawing the reader's attention," according to him. Through his research on the southern Indian Coorgs, M.N. Srinivas popularized the idea of Sanskritization, which has drawn harsh criticism. According to sociologist Munshi, "a crucial difference between the early British observers of the Coorgs and Srinivas lies in the fact that Srinivas emphasises the internal process of the Coorgs to Sanskitise themselves, whereas the British observers have noted an external imposition by the Brahmins in the process of brahmanisation." An analysis of Nepalese history shows that the implementation of the Hindu ideal law was the primary cause of Sanskritization(Sapcotta, n.d.-a).

Methodology

The study followed the analysis of secondary sources of information based on the qualitative research design. The secondary sources of information were based on the interpretation of published sources following the topic.

Findings

Nesfield created the occupation theory, which explains how the caste system came to be. This idea explains the relationship between the occupation on the one hand and the caste on the other. According to the occupation idea, the type and caliber of work done by various social groupings is where the caste system originated. This hypothesis states that if a certain group has a hereditary occupation, it eventually becomes a caste. Based on the concept of relative purity and impurity, occupation theory clearly distinguishes between various jobs. According to this hypothesis, the caste system that governed the extremely strict manner of life of Hindus originated from the partition of society into Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra based on occupations. Each section was given the responsibility of carrying out a rigidly defined task that specified how members of that caste were to make a living. Those who did tasks that were seen as superior and respectable were in a better position than those who worked in low-paying or menial jobs. This theory's rationale is that the hierarchy of jobs is linked to the hierarchy of castes. According to this hierarchy, impure activities are followed by inferior castes and pure occupations by superior castes (Rao, 2004). According to Nesfield, the occupation's social gradation occurred in several civilizations. The oldest phase of the evolution of human industry was the hunting and chasing of wild animals by the prehistoric tribes living in the highlands. The fishing caste comes next in line. The pastoral castes are above these. The agricultural castes and the several tribes that belong to them are ranked above the pastoral castes according to the

order in which these professions were accepted throughout the development of civilization. The numerous occupational castes are situated above them. The higher castes include those who worked with stone, wood, metal, and ornamentation and whose professions coincided with the era of metallurgy. Brahman and the Kshatriyas are at the pinnacle of the hierarchy (Singh, 2003).

Nesfield concluded that functional difference was the primary cause of caste differentiation. Finally, he came to the conclusion that the caste system originated only because of function (Rao, 2004)(Teli, n.d.).

According to conventional wisdom, the caste system has a divine origin. The Purushasukta and other Hindu sacred texts provide support for this notion. According to Purushasukta, the fourfold division of society originated from four distinct aspects of Brahma, also known as the Divine or the Supreme Being, or the Viratpursha. The Brahmans are the highest Varna in the Varna system; according to Purshasukta, they were formed from the mouth, which is the highest part of Brahma. In descending sequence, the Kshatriyas, who were made from arms, the Vaishayas, who were made from Brahma's thighs, and the Shudras, who were made from Brahma's feet, are the final Varna. According to the Purushaskuta, the order of creation became the order of their duty; that is, the Brahmans were tasked with providing education, counseling, and other services to society. The Kshatriyas were tasked with governing and protecting the community. The last creation, the Shudras, were intended to take care of the other segments of society, while the Vaishayas were supposed to provide for the material necessities of the community.

In Bhagavad-Gita chapter 14, sloka 13, Lord Krishna asserts that he only made four Varnas based on Guna and Karma, which lends credence to the system's foundation (Rao, 2004)(Teli, n.d.).

The most fervent proponent of race theories about the caste system's inception is Herbert Risley. Scholars like Ghurye, Majumdar, Westermarck, and others are supporters of this view. This idea states that racial contact and cultural clashes gave rise to the caste system (Rao, 2004). Around 1500 BC, the Aryans arrived in India as a result of conflict with their forebears. The fair-skinned Aryans came from north Asia and south Europe to India. There were numerous ethnic groups in India before to the Aryans, including the Negrito, Mongoloid, Austroloid, and Dravidian. The Negritos share physical characteristics with African people. The Mongoloids are Chinese-looking. The Austroloids have characteristics with Australia's indigenous population. The Dravidians were the greatest group in India and came from the Mediterranean. The Dravidians and the Austroloids were the Aryans' primary contacts when they first arrived in India. The native customs were ignored by the Aryans. They upheld their own beliefs and ceremonial purity while viewing the indigenous people as inferior. Although the Aryans married non-Aryan women, they refused to marry their own daughters to non-Aryans. In addition to pushing the locals southward or toward the north Indian forests and mountains, they sought to conquer and seize control of areas in north India. The Aryans divided themselves into three factions. The initial troop of soldiers was known as Rajayana; thereafter, they adopted the name Kshatria. The second group, known as Brahmans, consisted of priests. Among the Aryans, these two factions engaged in political competition for leadership. The Brahmans became the Aryan society's leaders as a result of this conflict. The third group, known as Vaisia,

consisted of farmers and artisans. When the Aryans overran and conquered portions of northern India, they enslaved the native population. During this transition, the locals became the society's peasants and craftspeople, while the Vaisias, who were the farmers and artisans, became the landowners and businesspeople (Dube, 1996)(Teli, n.d.).

Caste is a complicated phenomenon unique to the Indian subcontinent, not just a hierarchical social structure. The caste system is frequently depicted in a number of ways, such as a complex of ghettos, a pyramid, a multistory skyscraper without a staircase, and a hydra-headed dragon with the ability to change and withstand numerous attacks. It is also depicted through the image of a human body and has its roots, power, and legitimacy in Brahminical Hinduism.4. Thus, caste is a culture, a set of beliefs, a way of thinking, and a collection of customs that cover all facets of life. Caste is based on a notion of self-elevation and a socio-political ideology of dominance and oppression that is approved by some religious systems that maintain that some people are ontologically superior to others and that all people are not created equal. It sustains mistreatment, humiliation, and violations of those deemed inferior by justifying dominance, subordination, and even violence as divinely mandated. To put it another way, caste informs people that, according to their own karma, they have the right to oppress those who are above them and those who are below. One characteristic of the collective Indian mentality is the cumulative effect of such exercise and acceptance of unfair and abusive authority, as well as the glorification of and unwillingness to challenge such(*Dalits-and-Caste-System-Manchala*, n.d.).

Like all significant policy improvements, advancements in inclusion and equity necessitate a successful implementation strategy. In particular, it calls for new ways of thinking that concentrate on the obstacles that some students face that cause them to be marginalized due to contextual factors, such as inappropriate curricula and assessment techniques, inadequate teacher preparation and support, and teaching methods that do not consider learner diversity. The presumptions that underpin practice may also be a barrier. This could be related to highly ingrained marginalization systems that divide and classify students based on socioeconomic level, color, aptitude, gender, language, and ethnicity. All of this indicates that advancement in the area of inclusion is intricate and situation-specific(*Unesco_bie_2021_web_inclusive_education_resrouce_pack*, n.d.-b).

Discussion

Throughout Indian history, the caste system has been a ubiquitous social framework that has influenced the social fabric of the nation for millennia. This study offers a thorough analysis of the caste system's development, looking at its social structures, historical context, shifting dynamics, and current applicability. The study examines the caste system's beginnings in ancient India, its development over time, and its effects on social interactions, economic possibilities, and political processes using both qualitative and quantitative data. The essay also addresses how caste-based prejudice and inequality still exist in modern-day India, emphasizing the problems and disputes that surround the caste system. This essay seeks to increase knowledge of the intricacies of the caste system and its consequences for social justice and equality in Indian culture by a critical examination of historical sources, academic research, and empirical evidence. India's caste system is a long-standing social structure that has

influenced the social fabric of the nation for generations. It is a hierarchical structure that divides people into different social groups according to their social standing, occupation, and place of birth. The Vedic era, between 1500 and 500 BCE, is when the caste system first developed. At that time, it was used to divide labor and organize society. The development of the caste system has been thoroughly examined by academics such as Dumont (1957) and Marriott (1955), who have emphasized its intricate dynamics and importance in Indian history. According to Dumont, the caste system has a strong religious foundation in Hinduism and has impacted many facets of Indian culture, such as social interaction, marriage, and employment. Brahmins (priests and academics), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants and traders), and Shudras (workers and service providers) are the four primary varnas that make up the caste system. Based on kinship, occupation, and geography, each varna is further divided into a large number of jatis, or sub-castes. The presence and organization of the caste system in ancient India are shown by quantitative evidence from historical writings and archaeological discoveries. For instance, references to varna distinctions and the responsibilities connected with each varna may be found in the Rigveda, one of the earliest Vedic scriptures. Furthermore, proof of the caste system's institutionalization in government and administration may be found in inscriptions from ancient Indian dynasties like the Mauryas and the Guptas(Sharma, 2017).

Changes in schools and institutions are necessary for inclusive education to be successful. Nonetheless, a large portion of this transformation is resource-light and design-oriented. It is crucial to stress that inclusive education entails spending most of the day in mainstream classes with all pupils. This is significantly more effective and efficient than special schools and classes, and it has been shown to have positive benefits on social wellness and educational achievement for all children. The phrase "inclusive education" is frequently used interchangeably with education for kids with impairments. Even while this may still be the main driving force behind inclusive education, all children with a variety of characteristics, including gender, socioeconomic position, ethnicity, and language, can benefit from successful inclusive practices. The implementation of inclusive education can be aided by a defined set of equity indicators, such as those from UNESCO (2017). Inclusive education is an ongoing process of educational development. Measures of educational quality, outcomes, and experiences should be included in assessing the success of inclusive education, rather than just counting pupils to gauge access. It is also vitally necessary to comprehend and assess teaching approaches. Although there are various indicator sets and tools available, the Index for Inclusion toolkit, Supporting Effective Teaching project, and Save the Children's Lao Inclusive Education Project (Grimes, 2010) are very helpful inclusive education assessment tools(Schuelka, n.d.).

The obstacles to inclusive education are now widely recognized and include deficiencies in facilities and resources, teacher preparation, pedagogical approaches, flexible curricula, supporting leadership, legislative and legal backing, and cultural attitudes. However, current thinking indicates that rather than concentrating on shortcomings, it could be more beneficial to consider how to identify and scale up good inclusive education strategies that already exist. Implementing inclusive education at the school and classroom levels, such as through school reviews and plans, training and supporting all teachers in inclusive practices rather than just "specialized" ones, and assisting school leadership in enacting an inclusive vision for their

schools are all important components. Enabling policies that clearly define and promote inclusive education, robust data collection and management systems, curriculum flexibility, and collaboration with other facets of society where inclusive education is relevant, like employment, are all necessary for national-level implementation(Schuelka, n.d.).

Concluding Remarks

Nepalese society places a high value on religion. The word for religion in Nepali is dharma. Duty, morality, rule, merit, ethics, and religious activities are only a few of the meanings associated with the word. Within Nepalese society, the term's meaning is more expansive than religion itself. The many different religious traditions practiced in South Asia are together referred to as Hinduism. The many different religious traditions practiced in South Asia are together referred to as Hinduism. In addition to Brahmanism, Nepalese Hinduism has traces of Shamanism and other animistic rites. Despite the fact that this is untrue, there has been a tendency to portray Nepal's religious past as peaceful. High caste Brahmanic thinkers have documented the majority of ancient and medieval history, but they have not added to the most comprehensive and impartial account of Nepali history. The Gangetic Hindu worldview limits their documentation, and it is insensitive to historical elements that fall outside the purview of the Puranic tradition. Throughout the Lichhavi period, the many ethnic groups experienced a process of change brought on by the strong cultural and economic ties to Tibet as well as the influence of the Gangetic Hindu perspective(Sapcotta, n.d.-b).

Indian society's values, duties, and jobs have all been significantly influenced by the caste system. Beginning with the Aryans and continuing down a long path of regrettable discrimination, segregation, brutality, and inequality, religion has been the driving force behind this system of stratification for centuries. The core of the purity-pollution complex was Hinduism, which also had an impact on Indian people's beliefs and way of life. Indians are still plagued by caste consciousness even after sixty-three years of freedom. In the past, India has endured as a nation for millennia with restricted communities separated by language, caste, and creed. Each person was assigned a certain duty from birth, and the economics of both urban and rural life were greatly influenced by the rule of heredity of employment. Occupational or caste mobility was limited, and it was uncommon to see someone leave their ancestors' line of work to pursue their own goals. It is evident that caste still has a significant impact on how people interact socially and politically in India. However, there are now fewer barriers to social interaction between castes, particularly in metropolitan areas, and the connection between caste and inherited jobs has diminished. Regardless of caste or creed, Indian society is evolving from its closed structures to a condition of change and advancement characterized by the expression of the human spirit. People in India have been inspired to treat other caste members with greater civility by a number of groups opposing the caste system's abuses. The partial abolition of the caste system has greatly benefited many of the lower castes, and India should be commended for its persistent efforts to abolish this system of stratification from her culture. Nonetheless, it is crucial to consider how caste status has impacted social mobility and quality of life in contemporary India(Mishra & Mishra, 2022).

The schooling of Dalits was found to face several significant obstacles. Among them was the fragility of their economy. Their socio-cultural positioning did not give them access to other

resources for survival, nor could their family occupation assist them achieve economic independence (Corno, 2013). According to the theory of caste hierarchy, education in this setting takes the form of dominant and dominated forms. Because they are in the majority, the dominants frequently force their will on the dominated. Because of this, those that are dominated seldom have socioeconomic possibilities to make changes in their lives. It was discovered that they had lived in financial hardship. One family member's (the family head's) income was not said to be enough to ensure the family's survival for the entire year. Every member of the family, including youngsters of school age, must work to earn a living. The school-age children were unable to attend school on a regular basis as a result. One of the major obstacles to their schooling was discovered to be their sociocultural positioning(Subedi, 2022).

References

1. Bk, U. B. (2023). The Exclusion of Dalits in Local Governance. *Scholars' Journal*, *6*, 49–67. https://doi.org/10.3126/scholars.v6i1.69994

2. Hari, N. (n.d.). *A Brief Review of Literature*.

3. Mishra, M. T., & Mishra, M. D. C. (2022). The Effects of the Indian Caste System: A Case Study. *Industrial Engineering Journal*, *04*.

4. Sapcotta, S. (n.d.-a). *The History of Caste in Nepal*.

5. Sapcotta, S. (n.d.-b). *The History of Caste in Nepal*.

6. *Sem_2_Caste_System_in_India*. (n.d.).

7. Shah, K. R. (n.d.). *Illuminating Caste Discrimination in the Indian Education Sector: A Case Study Analysis*. *11*(8).

8. Sharma, D. D. (2017). *Caste System Evolution In Indian History: A Comprehensive Study Of Social Structures And Changing Dynamics*. *5*(2).

9. Subedi, B. M. (2022). Exploring Challenges of Dalit School Education in Nepal An Ethnographic Study. *KMC Journal*, *4*(2), 131–148.

10. Schuelka, D. M. J. (n.d.). *Implementing inclusive education*.

11. Teli, A. H. (n.d.). *Theories of Origin and Changes in Indian Caste System*.

12. *Unesco_bie_2021_web_inclusive_education_resrouce_pack*. (n.d.-a).

13. *Unesco_bie_2021_web_inclusive_education_resrouce_pack*. (n.d.-b).