

'Incredible India' and the Integral Relationship between Caste and Race

Introduction

India, a country self proclaimed as 'Incredible India', has experienced a unique process of racialisation, one that has been far from 'incredible' to many (Mundkur, 2011). Racialisation prevails in the form of the age old caste system, a system which has existed in India for over 2000 years. Caste as a concept is not exclusive to India and appears across the South Asian diaspora as a means of social stratification, relating to class and defined by economic and political domination (Berg and Wendt, 2011). The origins of the caste system are not clear, making historical and cultural discrepancies common. Two conceptions however are of huge importance. The first being 'Varna', the evolution of the caste system. Although directly translating to colour, Varna refers to 'idealized human callings' and divides society in to four groups (Banerjee-Dube, 2014). Varna is the fundamental template for conceptualising social ranks, however it is 'Jati' that determines caste. 'Jati' is the actual reality and refers to birth group or species. One's Jati is ascribed through family descent and is unchangeable. Thousands of Jati exist, all containing rules about acceptable occupations, marriage and social association (Carrier, 2005).

Despite being constitutionally banned since 1947, the caste system is one that continues to thrive. Whilst favouring the Brahmin, the highest of the castes, India increasingly discriminates against the lower castes. This essay will pay particular attention to the racialisation of Dalits, those who are considered 'untouchable' and outside of the caste system. Although Dalits are the numerical majority, with 200 million Dalits living in India, they still experience vast dehumanisation and cultural inferiority (Smith, 2008). As Prime Minister Singh suggests, "Dalits face unique discrimination in society that is different from problems of other minority groups", they are permanently and hereditarily defiled (McNaughton, 2010). This essay seeks to understand how India, a country prided on democracy and equality, has done so little to mitigate the oppression and exclusion of those at the bottom of the caste system through the discussion of four thematic areas. The first will examine India as 'democratic nation'. The second will consider residential segregation. Thirdly, 'Dalits' as semi-slaves will be considered and lastly treatment by institutions.

Democratic India

India is a country renowned for democracy and a nation of free individuals with virtues and rights. The constitution of India pleads the principles of "JUSTICE, social economic, and political; status and opportunity..." (Anand, 1986). The usage of a comprehensive legal framework one would infer would safeguard from racial discrimination. However, modern and progressive India is at bitter odds with these assumptions (Anand, 1986). In reality, India is merely "a democracy of the few, for the few and by the few" (Zezulka-Mailloux and Gifford, 2003; Page 155). Although India has experienced significant environmental changes and innovative movements, the contemporary state sustains the substance and grievances of the past. The independence of India had the potential to act as a pivotal development, however, thus far has fuelled and blunted liberation movements towards helping the lowest in society, the Dalits (Anand, 1986). The superiority, inferiority power relationship that exists as inherent feature in Indian society results in India being one of the largest violators of the Human Rights Act (Nohrlind, 2010).

This power relationship rests on the principles that some individuals deserve less respect and fewer rights than others. This privilege is not because of earned status, but merely a result of social stratification (Bob, 2007). The caste system is rigid, birth ascribed and offers limited individual mobility, making it a disheartening prophecy, that one can do little about (Berreman, 1972). 'Hindutva', is the Hindu religious belief that proliferates the Caste system and contends that "All human beings are not born equal" (Zezulka-Mailloux and Gifford, 2003; Page 157). It is poignant to note, however, it was under European influence that 'caste' became a single term in order to express,

organise and systemise the diverse forms of social identity. Furthermore, during colonialism, it was Europe's fixation with race that led to the explicit linguistic use and concept of a 'good Indian race' linked to Hinduism (Waldrop, 2004).

The caste system is now what can only be described as a hierarchy - a system with differential power and rewards, individuals are ranked and given an intrinsic worth (Berreman, 1972). Caste, in this sense, has been compared to an enclosed class system (Waldrop, 2004). Members are not grouped in terms of identities or aspirations, but in terms of possessing a certain desirable unitary social characteristic (Wintle, 2006). Racialisation in India is a process of exclusion, caste draws boundaries to delineate who is and is not part of a group. Caste is "inflicted by birth, sanctified by religion and glorified by tradition" (Waldrop, 2004; Page 275). It is institutional and durable, to the extent that it has been referred to as "race plus" (Berg, 2007). Racism has previously been understood phenotypically, however this essay will encompass the meaning of new racism (Tafira, 2011).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "All human beings are born free and equal" and the rights outlined belong to everyone without distinction (Hanchinamani, 2001; Page 19). Racialisation within India occurs partially because Hinduism disputes this primary concept. Individuals are not classified as free and rather have assigned duties to uphold, which are said to be suited to one's nature. Duties set an individual's position within society and are interwoven with their amount of personal dignity (Lawson, 1991). Sub-sequentially, the universalistic socialist laws India implements are not enough to challenge racism. Being classified as a 'Dalit' is an imposition of social disabilities, a lack of equality and a form of racial discrimination based on "putatively different social membership" (Tafira, 2011; Page 115).

To many academics, social stratification in India is declared as a form of "hidden apartheid" and is a nationally shaped racism comparable to the treatment of blacks in South Africa (Svensson, 2014). Racism in South Africa and India are analogous as both include factors of binary opposition and mutual repulsion (Berreman, 1972). In India, the caste system relies on the dualistic notions of "purity" and "pollution". The Dalits are regarded as an inferior minority, enabling racialisation to occur in the form of domination (Javaid, Majid and Faruq Zahid, 2014). Racism in this sense arises through not only a lack of political democracy, yet also social democracy. The caste system is a matter of elevating some individuals, whilst degrading others (Anand, 1986). Therefore, although 'untouchability' is no longer a legal act, the nature of the caste system is inherently racist as it discriminates on the basis of difference (George, 2013).

The semantic difference between race and caste has been used to justify the racist nature of India. Although, race and caste cannot be declared as one entity, they are overlapping concepts. "It is not that caste is race, but that racism and casteism have comparable effects; they are both processes of oppression that depend on naturalization..." (Natrajan and Greenough, 2009; Page 18). It is by no coincidence that the Dalit Panthers refer to themselves as such, after inspiration from the Black Panthers (Banerjee-Dube, 2014). Moreover, Dalit political leader, Ambedkar's revolution for the emancipation was heavily influenced by American ideals of equality. In America and India, the same anti-racism jargon resonates in the pursuit for democracy "meritocracy, equality, liberalism" (Narula, 2008).

Democracy in India is limited because of casteism. Caste socially constructs race and enforces inequality through powerful ideologies and unequal distribution of resources (Baber, 2010). Race, rather than being a material entity, is a practice with real and pernicious effects (Baber, 2010). As Flores suggests, democracy is impeded because of power vested significations positioning certain groups above others (Das, 2014). Although, India has persistently tried to distinguish caste from the evils of racial discrimination, both involve distinctions based on arbitrary characteristics that are used to dominate (Hanchinamani, 2001). For this reason, caste and race are equally destructive, caste is comparable, if not paramount to race (Reddy, 2005).

It is well acknowledged that there are wide gaps in knowledge on racism on a larger scale. Globally, the world has been delayed in recognising caste discrimination as a human rights issue. However as new understandings of racial discrimination have developed, Dalit advocacy strategies have followed. Previously, discrimination that could be hidden internally, is being showcased internationally. The

inequality within India has often been dismissed under the premise that people within the same race cannot be racist to one another, instead favouring the terms “communalism”, “regionalism” and “casteism”. (Hanchinamani, 2001). India has used language that has inadvertently eschewed racism in order to avoid critique.

For this reason, many academics have declared racial discrimination is the public secret of Indian secular modernity (Svensson, 2014). The caste system conceals and hides systemic injustices, whilst enforcing them through subtle norms, customs and traditions (IDSN, 2010). The aetiology of the racialisation lies within the nature of the caste system, the ascendancy and racialisation of difference. The World Conference Against Racism examined caste discrimination as a form of racism amongst other types of xenophobia and intolerance. Although, not identical, it was concluded that racial discrimination occurs through casteism on the basis of descent, nullifying their equal enjoyment of human rights and diminishing ‘democracy’ (Muigai, 2011). Regardless of how the abuse is defined, it is clear that “its noxious and pervasive character is sufficient enough to invite international attention and condemnation” (Narula, 2015; Page 260).

Residential Segregation

“The chandalas are named evil men, and dwell apart from others. If they enter a town or market they sound a piece of wood in order to separate themselves; then, men knowing who they are, avoid coming in contact with them”

(Sadangi, 2008; 93)

Sadangi’s statement highlights that race defines what an individual can do, how they are treated and their daily experiences (Goldberg, 2005). In India, racialisation occurs predominately under the form of cultural superiority, resulting in segregation, violence and material consequences (McDuaie-Ra, 2015). Caste and race divide people and block their access to resources accordingly. Higher caste members are able to maintain the status quo. As with colour bar situations, privileged whites asserted that negroes were naturally lower and their treatment should reflect this (De Reuck and Knight, 1967). Racialisation in India illustrates that racism does not have to be constructed exclusively in terms of colour (Baber, 2010). Although, Dalits are not physically different, they experience the same forms of everyday racism. As soon as the veil is lifted, and caste is revealed, the same discrimination occurs (Oommen, 2005). Caste is race in Indian context, it is a process of dehumanisation and is used to limit opportunity (Manoharan, 2016).

Dalits are subject to defacto segregation in all aspects of their lives. The caste system encourages marked frontiers which favour the dominant castes (Human Rights Watch, 2007). This racialisation denies Dalits access to goods and services, however the most extreme form manifests in the penalty of expulsion (Anon, 1913). Dalits are forced to live in segregated colonies away from upper caste residents, they are required to eat and drink from separate containers, attend separate religious services and use different water wells (Narula, 1999). Statistics from one study shows that 53% of sample villages barred Dalits using the common village well and 71% were barred from the the local village temple, highlighting the discrepancies in living standards (Anand, 1986). This form of expulsion is how Rex and Banton believe groups construct and justify beliefs in racial hierarchy (Law, 2010). As Goldberg reiterates, racial differentiation in itself is not always racist, it becomes racism when it begins to include exclusions (Tafira, 2011).

The quasi permanent social separation of the caste system has resulted in heterophobia, a psychosocial fear of difference (Natrajan, 2012). Segregation encourages group formation and conflict resulting in a plural society and unequal power balance. Higher castes enforce inequalities through structural mechanisms such as depriving Dalits of information, resources and fair income levels. Consequentially, Dalits face many obstacles to full attainment of civil, political, economic and cultural rights (Gearon, 2002), which impacts their chances of education, employment and self progression (George, 2013). By depriving Dalits of opportunities, it enables casteism to keep them controlled. Environment is therefore crucial in the process of racialisation.

Castes act as moral mandates and provides individuals with a bond of collective virtues and obligations (Byrne, 2013). In this sense, caste as a form of racial discrimination creates a racist culture that is resilient to change. Culture is a way of knowing and doing and includes social patterns, aggregate behaviour and group norms (Baber, 2010). The Caste structure has been repeated over generations and has emphasised patterns of differential treatment, persistence of older attitudes and practices are therefore common. Many Jati attempt to preserve this racist culture by the way they intermarry, interdine and subsist (Lawson, 1991). This type of racial discrimination is often not considered 'racism' because it makes sense in their world of social meanings (Das, 2014). It illustrates how older racial discourses can persist despite Government activity.

In India, community identity is important as it defines social behaviour through the norms and codes of the caste system (IDSN, 2010). Castes are considered distinct social groups and members of the Jati are viewed as kins men (Desai, 1975). Racialisation occurs through the essential naming and recognising of people's differences. As with the class system, people can identify through individuals characteristics, the way they talk and hold themselves (Berg, 2015). Although, racialisation in India occurs mostly through cultural racism, there is minor overlap with biology. Hindutva believes individuals are categorised in groups through shared bodily substances that define them as pure or impure (Wade, 2015).

Blood passed on through sexual reproduction is said to shape a persons behaviour, place and status (Wade, 2015). In India, as with many countries, racial myths are considered self evident truths. Therefore, as with the one drop rule in colonial history, interbreeding and intermarriage is regarded as deviant and consequential (Tafira, 2011). Europeans used the 'one drop rule' in order to monopolise their social power through exclusivity and white supremacy. Endogamy is used in a similar way as it ensures that Dalits are separated from other communities, limiting their freedom of movement and stopping participation in social activities (Narula, 1999). In this sense, it does not matter whether there was a genuine genetic difference, it is the consequences of categorisation on social actions and group formation that is important.

The caste system is not something Dalits are independent from, race engrosses their lives and has many demonising aspects (Baber, 2010). Racism has ideas of practical adequacy and gives individuals their cultural and social positions. Therefore, derogatory statements, such as, "Don't forget your place, Churhi" are commonplace (Vālmīki and Mukherjee, 2003; Page 12). The affixing of a label has profound social and psychological effects, enforcing Dalit stereotypes and adding to racial hostility. Racism is not a matter of individual prejudice, it is a phenomenon deeply embedded in language and perception (Anthias, 1995). To many Dalits, "Racism is a ubiquitous and inescapable feature of modern society" (Shinde, 2005; Page 2).

Racialisation in India could be described as a process of projection. Higher caste members justify their actions through projecting evil on the lower caste members. (Javaid, Majid and Faruq Zahid, 2014). Du Bois theory of double consciousness believes this segregation and negative projection can cause a loss of Dalit self identity over time (Stone and Dennis, 2003). Dalits are often avoidant, withdrawn and over compliant enabling exploitation by higher castes on a larger scale (Berreman, 1972).

Semi- slavery

As is clear, 'untouchability' is a denigratory mark of identity which Dalits have historically sought to shed rather than preserve (Waughray, 2010). The term "Dalits" is becoming increasingly used as a political category- an assertion of unified class, collective movement and an advocacy for changes in social structure (Banerjee and Marjit, 2005). 'Dalits' no longer refers exclusively to those outside the Caste system, it also includes the exploited and oppressed members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes- those that are of lower caste status.

Dalits political identity is constructed through a joint history of oppression, exploitation and stigmatisation (Sikka, 2012). Dalit advocacy parties are opposed to Indian nationalism on the basis that the caste system feeds racist agenda. Caste allows for graded inequality, polarising sameness and difference, good and bad. A common good does not exist, 'good' is chosen by dominant castes

(Manoharan, 2016). Racialisation has stopped India realising its true nationhood and potential because individuals are alleged to different nations, rather than supporting one.

Historically, for the Brahmin to exist as a caste, there by virtue had to be a “non-Brahmin” caste, or an inferior other. For this reason, “while closing themselves in they closed others out” (Manoharan, 2016; Page 5). Dalit identity does not exist in isolation of the greater caste structure, Dalits are constructed in order to ensure higher caste privilege (Natrajan, 2012) . The construction of a ‘self’ and ‘other’ enables open-ended racism, by which the ‘other’ is always shown as an alienated identity (Stone and Dennis, 2003). To many, this may strike resonance with the racialisation that occurred in the form of orientalism between the West and the East. In order to make the West a stronger colonial power, the East was shown as epistemologically and ontologically different. The East was constructed through selective observations and language to be shown as naive, irrational and undeveloped. In order to strengthen the Occident (the West), it was essential to weaken the perceptions of the Orient (The East). Under this reasoning, it would make sense that Dalits have been reduced to menial tasks, and a life of ‘semi-slavery’.

Patriarchy overwhelms the lives of Dalits. Economically, they are not allowed to possess wealth, politically, they are given little power and moreover they are socially inferior and culturally distanced (Shrivastava and Tanchangya, 2015). For many centuries, Dalits have been treated as lepers or slaves to higher caste owners (Mohan, 2011). Racialisation encourages meritocracy and is particularly common in India. The economic difference is vast with some individuals achieving immense wealth whilst others live in abject poverty (Anand, 1986). Summarised, India is “Superman’s heaven and the common man’s damnation” (Rao, 1993; Page 73).

This pattern reverberates the Marxist concept of the Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. Casteism as a form of racialisation has its roots in economic exploitation and self interest, caste dictates an individuals place on the socioeconomic scale (De Reuck and Knight, 1967). Higher caste wealth is amassed by exploiting Dalit labour, including low wages, poor working conditions and debt bonding (Anand, 1986). To many academics, caste and race are both about the denials of means of production to certain people (Reddy, 2005). Dalit treatment is much the same as how the industrialised world amasses wealth through slave, third world and immigrant labour (Reddy, 2005). Caste hierarchy could thus be seen as higher caste racism.

Furthermore, the ‘semi-slavery’ of Dalits is worsened by the religious justification of caste. It is believed that God created hierarchy and therefore Dalits must not rebel against the social order. Racialisation in India is unique because unlike the traditional phenotypical understanding of racism, caste is not in accordance to physical appearance but is about values legitimised through karma and reincarnation (Oommen, 2005). Hindutva teaches actions in an individuals past life determine their treatment in their current lives. Dalits souls are impure and to be ‘saved’, they must serve their higher caste counterparts. Racialisation is therefore imparted through guilt and monopolisation strategies.

Although slavery has been outlawed, bonded communities exist throughout India. Bonded labour is intergenerational and refers to work in slave-like conditions to pay off debts (Narula, 1999). Statistically, 40 million people and 15 million children are experiencing bonded labour. There is a clear link with race, 71% of Dalit agricultural labours report being in debt to money lenders and landlords (Anand, 1986). Casteism advantages higher castes as Dalits are rarely able to break free of labour obligations and therefore debts are left for the next generation. This highlights the monotonous circle of racism in India and could be described as “criminal materialist” hatred. Racialisation occurs because higher caste members directly gain from their racist actions economically, and there is little security to counteract it (Law, 2010). Labourers face threats, intimidation and violence, whilst officials can be bribed not to investigate cases (Narula, 1999).

India now has one of the largest economies in the world, however, benefits of national prosperity have not percolated down to the lower castes (Lal, 2009). Although, the Government have granted reservations to improve the opportunities of Dalits, they have been unsuccessful (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Reservations could be described as a form of positive reverse discrimination as they are aimed at individuals who have previously been discrimination against because of race, national origin, sex or another handicap (Rana, 2008). The Indian Government implemented reservations to

reverse the inequality in society, however it was done so, half heartedly. Although, India can be said to be a welfarist Government, it has little control over everyday activity and discrimination, creating a tension between action in public and more informal spaces (Rana, 2008). India has pervasive and internalised caste inequality, which acts as a contradiction to the egalitarian theory of a democratic country and produces racism.

These affirmative actions, rather than enduring basic rights have masked the realities of 'untouchability practices' (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Occupational reservations allowed for 15% of state jobs to be saved for Dalits (Rana, 2008). However, fundamental problems resulted from formal recruitment methods requiring higher education and technical skills, areas Dalits have been excluded from. Furthermore, neoliberal India provides more space for racism to operate as jobs are becoming private. Dalits are forced to participate in casual labour, with a decline of salaried jobs (Sadangi, 2008). Similarly, educational reservations face scrutiny as 99% of Dalit children are in Government schools which show high drop out rates and low levels of literacy (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Education is enveloped by racial hostility under the perception that "Dalits are not meant to be educated, are incapable of being educated, or if educated, would pose a threat to village hierarchies and power relations" (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Page 95). Higher castes do not want to lose their advantage, thus discriminate due to insecurity and threat.

Moreover, politically, Dalits are supposed to be assured through the reservations of seats in elective democratic bodies. However, because lower caste do not get equal "status" to Brahmin in society, they are met by public opposition (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Acts of violence, murder and rape, as well as rigging and booth capturing, are used to deter Dalit involvement. Reservations although seemingly promising, are identity markers and act as a tool of subjugation and racialisation (Das, 2014).

Racialisation in India is interwoven with gender and sexuality. Dalit women are considered to be downtrodden amongst the downtrodden. They face an intersectionality of oppressions, firstly because of their descent, secondly because of their gender (Sikka, 2012). The classification of being a 'Dalit' is crucial because group status is said to be dependant on the sexual availability of the women within the group. Therefore, because Dalits are of a low status, Dalit women are considered to be highly exotic and sexual (Gupta, 2015). This recounts with the orientalist discourses in which Indian women were portrayed to live in temporary marriages and have questionable morals. Racialised difference is damaging as statistics show Dalit women make up the majority of sex workers (George, 2013), furthermore, they are often the victims of sexual coercions and rape. Similarly, the selling of young women is one of the fastest growing organised crimes and almost all the individuals that are trapped in sex slavery are Dalits (Sarker, 2014).

Similarly, cases of Devadasi are prevalent. The term 'devadasi' refers to when a young girl is ceremoniously dedicated to a deity or temple. Once dedicated the girl is unable to marry anyone else and is used as a 'sex slave' to higher castes. The ceremony is a tool to legitimise sexual violence (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Dalits are often enticed by prostitution and Devadasi because racialisation confines them to extreme poverty, the promise of a better life is alluring.

Semi-slavery seems absurd in contemporary society, yet is able to prevail through fear. Dalits fear expulsion, the wrath of the elite is a powerful disincentive against the violation of norms. Dalits cannot afford to react as they are dependant on jobs and protection (Narula, 1999). Furthermore, the length and durability of racialisation has damaged Dalits imaginations of who they are, what culture they belong to and how they stand in relations to others (Sikka, 2012). Marx's description of the French peasantry is applicable to Dalits, "they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented" (Christopher, 2014; Page 66). In this sense, Dalits are not only campaigning for material goods, but social recognition and human dignity (Smith, 2008). They have faced the psychological obstacles of upward mobility as well as the physical and financial barriers. Racialisation, to many, has caused an internal helplessness and has stopped them aspiring to join the social and economic mainstream.

Treatment by Institutions

Racialisation in India is unique because it occurs through members of the same race being racist towards each other. In India, the racial difference is illusionary, rather than physically instantiated. The racial component is in the eyes of the beholder, the perpetrator of the discriminatory or negative, intentional racial attitudes (De Reuck and Knight, 1967). Dalits face severe forms of torture by state and private actors, in 1994-1996, there were 98,339 caste of brutality alone (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

The caste system is a larger instigator for racial violence on the basis of emotion. Conflicts arise due to feelings of superiority, pleasure, triumph and angst (Law, 2010). Intragroup violence and racial conflicts are common as status groups try to achieve or defend their position. When Dalits have sought to gain status, have resisted daily humiliations of vindicated socially constitutionally granted rights, they have been met with large resistance. “Hit back”, the Dalit Panther logo would suggest that treatment by institutions is unsatisfactory when dealing with Dalit atrocities, favouring the Brahmin and encouraging racialisation (Gorringer, 2010).

This argument is substantial as the Indian Criminal Justice is emerged in institutional racism. Racialisation occurs because Dalits are viewed by the police, often higher caste members, as criminals at best, and subhuman at worst (Narula, 1999). As Hannah Arendt suggested in ‘poignant irony’, there is a discrepancy between ‘inalienable human rights’ enjoyed by citizens and those of the rightless themselves, the Dalits (Narula, 1999). Institutions deny Dalits information of their rights and often fabricate individuals under acts of terrorism, threats to nation security and specious prosecutions (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

Moreover, when casteism and ‘untouchability’ is established, there is a lack of accountability. Verbal abuse, humiliation, severe beatings, sexual perversities and custodial torture of lower caste members are predominant issues within the criminal justice system. In one year, there were 100 custodial deaths of Dalits from ‘natural causes’, by which no one was convicted (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

This scale of brutality highlights that racism is entrenched among law enforcement agencies that lack apathy in securing redress for anti-Dalit crimes. Racialisation in India is embedded in power relations of different types. It is about more than individuals beliefs and statements, it is about the ability to impose those beliefs as hegemonic (Stone and Dennis, 2003). The Rule of Law in India is far outweighed by the Rule of Caste. As Narula states, “the caste system operates more efficiently, more swiftly, and more punitively than any rights-protecting law on the books” (Narula, 1999; Page 295). The police allow higher caste members to commit and flaunt violent acts with anonymity and impunity (Human Rights Watch, 2007). To many academics, it bares resonance to note that these “abuses are occurring, with virtual impunity, in modern day India- the world’s largest democracy and an emerging superpower”, not in South Africa in the Apartheid era (Tatchell, 2008).

A lack of state apathy results in Dalits continuing to be hidden victims. Attacks against lower caste members are rarely registered and result in distorted statistics, which on an international level do not highlight the true extent of the problem. Integration of the nation is discouraged because the police to fail to protect against retaliatory attacks when Dalits have tried to gain rights (Anand, 1986). Treatment by institutions towards Dalits is best described as ‘excessive’ (Muigai, 2011). Constitutionally, the police under Section 46 are able to use all means necessary when arrest is forcibly resisted, often resulting in excessive violence on the basis of race. Police regularly detain, torture and extort money from Dalits without fear of reprisal. Furthermore, under Draconian security laws, Dalit’s are victims of collective punishment, impeding greatly on their quality of life. Entire communities can be targeted by violent search and seizure operations (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Racialisation in India allows for ‘underground violence’, Dalits are victimised by those that are supposed to protect them. The caste system relegates Dalits to a permanent position of exception and racialisation. They are outcastes and considered stateless in their own country (Narula, 1999).

As with reservations, the Constitution of India outlines laws to protect lower caste members. Under Article 17, the practice of ‘untouchability’ is a punishable offence, Article 14 grants equal protection of laws to any person within the territory of India and Article 15 prohibits discrimination based on religion, caste, gender or place of birth (Narula, 1999). However, the NHRC suggests despite all of these measures, the law enforcement machinery is the greatest violator of Dalit human rights (Human

Rights Watch, 2007). Much like the implementation of reservations, these laws have failed to be implemented properly and have enhanced brutalities. To many, these policies are ‘white elephant policies’, they are imposed as short term measures to derive from group pressures and mask the extent of social realities (McNaughton, 2010). Even when implemented correctly, they are counteracted by immunity laws that shield, thus rendering them counterproductive and allowing racialisation to continue. The amount of immunity enabled by law enforcement is increasingly problematic because Dalits are reliant on them for change. It henceforth makes sense that Dalits are now broadcasting their injustices internationally, rather than relying on institutional help.

Poor treatment of Dalits by institutions is encouraged by the Government’s dismissal of caste as racism. Racism is a concept that has been consistently denied by political elites and projected on to colonial powers, thus allowing discrimination and casteism to exist as normal (Das, 2014). India is unique because it does not classify itself as ‘post race’, it believes racism has never existed. Racism is portrayed as a western invention, a “white mans burden”, one that India is a victim of. As Chakarabarty states, “racism is thought of as something that white people do to Indians” (Baber, 2010). The denial of caste and race is a smokescreen by which the Government is able to hide the internal contradictions and polarities of the caste system (Das, 2014). As treatment by institutions however highlights, race lives through the caste system. Race is an issue that is officially and culturally condemned, the similarities are therefore denied to ignore stigmatisation, whilst allowing the continuation of exploitation and worsening racial equality (Das, 2014).

To many, India is a country known for democracy, praised for modern legislation and admired as a growing superpower. India has advanced in a multitude of areas, excluding their treatment of the lowest caste members. This essay has hoped to illustrate that the nature of the caste system makes the process of racialisation in India individual. Although, racism is dismissed as a western phenomenon, racial discrimination has occurred for generations. Racial inequality is structurally embedded and encourages feeling of superiority and inferiority (Baber, 2010). The polarisation of sameness and difference promotes racial hostility and violence, making casteism a large problem. Dalits are succumbed to lives of racial discrimination and human rights breaches, they are limited in all senses. This patriarchy is only worsened by the Government’s denial of caste as racism. India’s refusal to accept the stigmatisation of racism has allowed Dalit’s suffering to be concealed and naturalised as a normal part of the caste system (Das, 2014).

Dalits receive little support as the majority of those benefiting from the caste system do not want it to change. Dalits identity as an ‘other’ allows for cultural superiority and rewards. This self-righteousness is something that has been passed through generations and makes sense in their world of social meanings. To the majority, ‘untouchability’ is not racism, it is fact (Das, 2014). Henceforth, regardless of constitutional laws, these mindsets are intrinsic and have been practiced from birth. Race and caste in this sense rule above the law. For this reason, racialisation is something that is likely to occur within India for the foreseeable future. The nature of the caste system renders democracy and equality an impossibility.

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