

PRESENT STATUS OF DOWNTRODDEN IN INDIA

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Abstract

“Downtrodden” (Oppressed) is the name which the people belonging to those castes at the very bottom of India’s caste hierarchy have given themselves. One of the more confusing mysteries of India is her caste system. The caste system, which exists already for more than 3000 years, seems to have been developed by the Brahmins (priests) in order to maintain their superiority. The Downtrodden perform the most menial and degrading jobs. India is a secular nation but only in documents. We are still the slaves of the caste system which shows the worst condition of India. Undoubtedly India is the developing nation at the international level. But that growth is only in papers, but the reality is we are still suffering from the worst condition which includes castesim, unemployment, worst condition of women, unawareness.



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The word Downtrodden means

“Downtrodden” (Oppressed) is the name which the people belonging to those castes at the very bottom of India’s caste hierarchy have given themselves. Formerly, they were known as Untouchables, because their presence was considered to be so polluting that contact with them was to be avoided at all costs. The official label for them has been Scheduled Castes, because if their caste is listed on the government schedule, caste members become eligible for a number of affirmative action benefits and protections. Downtrodden have chosen the “Downtrodden” label for themselves for at least three important reasons. First, the label indicates that the condition of the Downtrodden has not been of their own making or choosing; it is something which has been inflicted upon them by others. Thus, secondly, there is an element of militancy built into the label; Downtrodden seek to overcome the injustices and indignities forced upon them so as to gain the equality and respect hitherto denied them. “Downtrodden” also indicates that all these castes (Pariahs, Chamars, Mahars, Bhangis, etc.) share a common condition and should therefore unite in a common struggle for dignity, equality, justice and respect under a common name.

Introduction

One of the more confusing mysteries of India is her caste system. The caste system, which exists already for more than 3000 years, seems to have been developed by the Brahmins (priests) in order to maintain their superiority. Eventually, the caste system became formalised into 4 distinct classes (Varnas). At the top are the Brahmins, the priests and arbiters of what is right and wrong in matters of religion and society. Next come the Kshatriyas, who are soldiers and administrators. The Vaisyas are the artisan and commercial class, and finally, the Sudras are the farmers and the peasant class. These four castes are said to have come from Brahma's mouth (Brahmin), arms (Kshatriyas), thighs (Vaisyas) and feet (Sudras). Beneath the four main castes is a fifth group, the Scheduled Caste. They literally have no caste. They are the untouchables, the Downtrodden, which means oppressed, downtrodden and exploited social group.

The Downtrodden perform the most menial and degrading jobs. Sometimes Downtrodden perform important jobs, but this is mostly not socially recognised. Downtrodden are seen as polluting for higher caste people. If a higher caste Hindu is touched by an untouchable or even had a Downtrodden shadow across them, they consider themselves to be polluted and have to go through a rigorous series of rituals to be cleansed. Downtrodden are poor, deprived and socially backward. Poor means that they do not have access to enough food, health care, housing and/or clothing (which means that their physiological and safety needs are not fulfilled). They also do not have access to education and employment. With deprived we would like to underline the injustice they face in every days life. Officially, everybody in India has the same rights and duties, but the practice is different. Social backwardness, lack of access to food, education and health care keeps them in bondage of the upper castes. Nevertheless, in the recent past the Downtrodden society has also thrown up powerful leaders, like Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. He was on of the most powerful personalities to stand for the rights of Downtrodden. On 14 April 1999 Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a lengthy report on the situation of Downtrodden in India called *Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's "Untouchables"* (Dawn 15 Apr. 1999; HRW Apr. 1999a; *ibid.* Apr. 1999b).

On 23rd April, 1999 : an article **Violence Against "Untouchables" Growing** summarised that The Indian government has failed to prevent widespread violence and discrimination against more than 160 million people at the bottom of the Hindu caste system, Human Rights Watch charged in a report released today. The report, *Broken People: Caste Violence Against*
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India's "Untouchables," calls on the Indian government to disband private militias and implement national legislation to prevent and prosecute caste-based attacks."Untouchability" was abolished under India's constitution in 1950. Yet entire villages in many Indian states remain completely segregated by caste, in what has been called "hidden apartheid." Untouchables, or Downtrodden -- the name literally means "broken" people -- may not enter the higher-caste sections of villages, may not use the same wells, wear shoes in the presence of upper castes, visit the same temples, drink from the same cups in tea stalls, or lay claim to land that is legally theirs. Downtrodden children are frequently made to sit in the back of classrooms. Downtrodden villagers have been the victims of many brutal massacres in recent years.

"Untouchability" is not an ancient cultural artefact, it is human rights abuse on a vast scale," said Smita Narula, researcher for the Asia division of Human Rights Watch and author of the report. "The tools for change are in place -- what is lacking is the political will for their implementation." Human Rights Watch is an international human rights monitoring organization based in New York. Since the early 1990s, violence against Downtrodden has escalated dramatically in response to growing Downtrodden rights movements. The release of the 291-page report is timed to coincide with the birthday of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, architect of the Indian constitution and revered Downtrodden leader who died in 1956. The National Campaign for Downtrodden Human Rights, the first of its kind in history, will be marking the occasion with rallies in ten states. Downtrodden throughout the country also suffer from de facto disenfranchisement. During elections, Downtrodden are routinely threatened and beaten by political party strongmen in order to compel them to vote for certain candidates. Downtrodden who run for political office in village councils and municipalities (through seats that have been constitutionally "reserved" for them) have been threatened with physical abuse and even death to get them to withdraw from the campaign.

On 15 April 1999 the Karachi-based English language daily newspaper *Dawn* carried the article, taken from AP, on the HRW report: "**India's 'Untouchables' Live in Sub-Human Conditions: HR Group**" More than 160 million lower-caste "untouchables" in India live in sub-human conditions and face increasing discrimination, violence, rape and murder, according to the Human Rights Watch. In an in-depth report released on Wednesday, the US-based lobby group urged the Indian government to prevent caste-based oppression through new legislation, saying the abolition of the 2,000-year-old tradition of "untouchability" in 1950 had had no effect. It said "untouchables," commonly known as

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"Downtrodden" or "broken" people, suffered from a "hidden apartheid," with caste violence "since the early 1990s ... escalating dramatically in response to the growing Downtrodden rights movement."

Between 1994 and 1996, a total of 98,349 cases were registered with the police nationwide as crimes and atrocities against Downtrodden. Human Rights Watch said that figure was the tip of the iceberg "given that Downtrodden are both reluctant and unable, for lack of police cooperation, to report crimes against themselves." The formal launch of the report coincided with the birth anniversary of B.R. Ambedkar, the "untouchable" author of the Indian constitution and the first leader to rise out of the socially deprived community. India's untouchables, who occupy the lowest rung of the entrenched caste system, have come a long way since 1947. The current president, K.R. Narayanan, is the country's first "untouchable" head of state. However, in large parts of India their lot has worsened, the report said, highlighting the murderous activities of an upper-caste landlords' militia, the RanvirSena, in Bihar. The RanvirSena has been responsible for the massacre of more than 400 Downtrodden villagers in Bihar between 1995 and 1999. Within a span of three weeks in January and February, Sena members killed 34 Downtrodden villagers in two separate attacks.

23 April 1999 HRW press release describes police responses to recent attacks by the upper caste Hindu militia RanvirSena on Downtrodden villages in Bihar: As rival political parties in New Delhi struggle to form a new government, violence against the country's most marginalized groups continues. In a 291-page report released on April 14, "Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's 'Untouchables,'" Human Rights Watch documented other recent incidents of violence in Bihar in which private militias like the RanvirSena have killed Downtrodden villagers with impunity. Extremist guerrilla groups have retaliated by killing highcaste villagers, leading to an escalating cycle of violence. Such attacks on civilians constitute violations of international humanitarian law. Human Rights Watch has called for independent investigations into the killings and for the disarming of the militias. The group has also urged that authorities provide full security to villagers against further RanvirSena attacks.

"The government's failure to stop the RanvirSena this time and protect these Downtrodden villages amounts to criminal negligence," said Patti Gossman, senior researcher for the Asia division of Human Rights Watch. The RanvirSena, which is one of the most prominent militias, has been responsible for the massacre of more than 400 Downtrodden villagers in
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Bihar between 1995 and 1999. Within a span of three weeks in January and February 1999, sena members killed 34 Downtrodden villagers in two separate attacks. On March 19, 1999, members of the Maoist Communist Centre, a guerrilla organization with lowcaste supporters, beheaded 33 uppercaste villagers in retaliation for the sena killings.

According to the 1991 Census there were about 138,200,000 Downtrodden in India and they constituted about 16.5% of the entire population of India. The 2001 Census has now been completed. The total population has risen to over one billion, but we do not know yet what the Downtrodden total is; however, if past trends continue, we may safely assume not only that the Downtrodden population will also have increased but also that the Downtrodden proportion of the total population has risen as well.

Crime against Downtrodden

India is a secular nation but only in documents. We are still the slaves of the caste system which shows the worst condition of India. Undoubtedly India is the developing nation at the international level. But that growth is only in papers, but the reality is we are still suffering from the worst condition which includes castesim, unemployment, worst condition of women, unawareness. We regularly hear the news that in India violence is held against downtrodden in various areas. In this modern times downtrodden are the sufferers. Despite of various provisions given by Indian constitution to the downtrodden. These people are not enjoying freedom. Society's reaction to Downtrodden progress can be gauged from the settings and details of several caste crimes. Whether it was the attack in Rajasthan where a Downtrodden groom rode a horse, in Odisha when Downtrodden decided to vote against the sarpanch's candidate, in Bihar when a DJ played music at a Downtrodden wedding, the social boycott of Downtrodden in Andhra Pradesh for installing a statue of Ambedkar, or the alleged murder of a Downtrodden man in Kerala for marrying a woman from an affluent family, violence against Downtrodden seems to flare in places where social progress has led Downtrodden to narrow some historic caste differences and approximate what the traditionally privileged segments of the society see as their entitlements. Downtrodden, long victim to a caste-based system of social hierarchy that regards them as 'untouchables', comprise around 17 per cent of India's total population. Downtrodden still face severe hardship and exclusion from mainstream society, with prejudicial attitudes and practices underlying much of Indian society today. In November 2015, for instance, after devastating floods swept through Tamil Nadu, hundreds of Downtrodden families who lost their homes and livelihoods found themselves neglected by government relief efforts. In January 2016, for

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example, a deaf-mute Downtrodden woman was gang-raped and thrown from a train in Uttar Pradesh, and at the beginning of February 2016 when a man was arrested for raping a deaf-mute Downtrodden girl in Berhampur, Odisha. With a total of 33,655 cases in 2012, 39,408 cases in 2013 and 47,064 cases in 2014—the rising cases of atrocities on Downtrodden show that India doesn't treat more than the substantial chunk of its population well. On 21 April 2010, 18 Downtrodden homes were burnt and two Downtrodden—17-year old Suman and her 60-year old father Tara Chand—were burnt alive. The incident happened after a dog barked at Rajinder Pali, son of a Jat while he was passing by Balmiki colony at night on his bike. On 11 July, 1996, 21 Downtrodden were slaughtered by Ranvir Sena militiamen in Bathani Tola, Bhojpur, Bihar. Among the dead were 1 man, 11 women, six children and three infants, who were deliberately singled out by the attackers. On 1 December 1997, Ranvir Sena gunned down 58 Downtrodden at Laxmanpur Bathe. On January 5, 2006, Bant Singh, Mazhabi, Downtrodden Sikh, was attacked and beaten by unknown assailants. On September 29, 2006, four members of the Bhotmange family belonging to the Mahar community were killed by a mob of 40 people belonging to the Maratha Kunbi caste in Kherlanji, a small village in Bhandara district of Maharashtra. On May 16, 2015 in Nagaur district in Rajasthan, three Downtrodden were crushed under tractor by Jats over a decade old land dispute. In 1991, a young Downtrodden graduate was beaten up after his feet unintentionally touched a Reddy man in a Cinema hall. On 25 December 1968, the powerful landlords of village Kilvenmani killed 44 people including five men, 16 women and 23 children. The victims were Downtrodden working on the fields of these landlords. On 20 October 2015, two children Vaibhav 3 and Divya (nine month old) were charred to death. On October 9, a Downtrodden family was stripped naked on road including a woman. Gautam and his brothers were robbed on gun point on Tuesday evening while they were watering their farmland.

Even in 2018, Indian society doesn't seem to get rid of caste based discrimination and violence. The National Crime Records Bureau data for 2015 and 2016 showed that the number of crimes reported against Downtrodden had risen from 38,670 to 40,801, with Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan with most instances of crimes against Scheduled Caste people. On 7 May 2017, in Deri village of Madhya Pradesh, a Downtrodden groom, Prakash Bansal, is allegedly beaten up on his way to the wedding venue by four upper caste men for 'daring' to ride a decorated car to his wedding. On June 2017, a farm worker, Mareppa Harijan, and his son Ningappa, from Haligondakanal village in Karnataka were tied to a tree and beaten up by another villager, who suspected Ningappa had eloped with his

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daughter. On September 2017, Two Downtrodden men from a village near Gandhinagar in Gujarat are allegedly thrashed by members of Rajput community for “sporting a moustache”. On 30 September 2017, In Gangur village of Karnataka, five Downtrodden were assaulted during the Vijayadashami procession. Violence breaks out as backlash from the upper castes, who had prohibited entry of Downtrodden in the village temple, only to be overruled by the police. In July 2016, in Una town of Junagadh district, two young Downtrodden who were skinning the carcasses of cows that they had been asked to collect were accused of killing the cows and beaten brutally. Relatives of a young girl belonging to an Other Backward Classes community suspected that she had eloped with a Downtrodden youth in Akoladi village. On the morning of September 13, 2012, a mob armed with weapons and kerosene descended on the house of the youth, who was sleeping inside. The newly elected Downtrodden sarpanch of Loliya, who refused to toe the line of the dominant non-Downtrodden Bharwal caste in the village, was tormented because he faced caste-related harassment on a daily basis to the extent that his harassers were finally extended from the village. Enraged by this, they murdered him one morning in 2014 when he was in the fields. A Downtrodden girl, 15, of Sobhavad village was dragged to her school library and raped. Soon, the friend of the attacker, too, raped her, threatening to expose her ordeal with the first accused. May 26, 2015, a cousin visiting the girls on a religious occasion was also raped by the accused by threatening to expose the video of her two cousins. On December 25, 2015, Laljibhai, who lived at Vadli village with his family of seven, was about to shut his door for the night when a non-Downtrodden man appeared and abused him verbally and physically and abducted his daughter. Satish Rathod of Maua village earned his living by driving a rickshaw. A few non-Downtrodden approached him to borrow money, which he refused. On May 12, 2016, Rathod sold his old rickshaw with planned to buy a new one. On September 22, 2016, members of a Downtrodden family were attacked in Mota Karja village for refusing to remove the carcass of a dead animal. Pravinbhai Rathod of Tadaja village was killed on October 17, 2016, because he refused to lend money to a non-Downtrodden man. On Diwali day, November 4, 2016, two Patel men beat Downtrodden children in Maniyari village for lighting crackers by saying that celebration of Diwali by Downtrodden was not tolerated by them. A 25-year-old Downtrodden man had gone to a soda shop at Hodthali village on November 15, 2016, when a non-Downtrodden man insulted him and asked him to leave the place. A non-Downtrodden man’s buffalo died in Par village and he asked the Downtrodden in the village to remove it. But they refused to do so, as this happened in the wake of the Una

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incident: they told him to dispose of the carcass himself. On April 16, 2017, a Downtrodden passing by a tubewell project in Meta village took photographs of the site for some reason. This enraged the contractors who beat the man so mercilessly that he died. On April 18, 2017, Downtrodden who were part of the celebrations at the opening of a new temple in Malanpur village were segregated at meal time and given separate plates. A Downtrodden woman went every day to non-Downtrodden homes in Vadavalli village to collect vadu, or leftover food. On May 14, 2017, five Thakur men grabbed her at night with intent to rape but were forced to let her go following her loud protests. On September 25, 2017, just as celebrations of 85 years of the Poona Pact were on, two Downtrodden youths were assaulted by Kshatriyas in Limbodra village, 15 kilometres from the State capital. The reason: they had dared to sport a moustache. On October 1, 2017, Downtrodden at Bhadraniya village had gone to watch the garba dance at a temple. At 4 a.m., a Patel man abused them for sitting near the temple. On February 16, 2018, Bhanubhai Vankar immolated himself in protest against unnecessary delays by the Revenue Department. A former revenue official, he was helping fellow Downtrodden get ownership of their land in Dudhka village. Nanjibhai, a young Downtrodden man from Manekwada village, encouraged his wife to fight the panchayat election and she won. Nanjibhai was under constant threat ever since he filed an application under the Right to Information Act for information on certain corrupt practices in the panchayat. A 21-year-old Downtrodden man was hacked to death at Timbi village on March 29. His fault was that he used to ride a horse and continued to do so even though non-Downtrodden had told him to not to do that. There are various other incidents which are happened daily against the Downtrodden in India. Recently one more incident reported by a newspaper that the nose of the downtrodden was cut because of taking meal with upper caste people in a wedding. The navbharattimes newspaper reported a news in which the condition of Downtrodden mentioned, in ahmedabaad Downtrodden were beaten because they bought new clothes on the occasion of new year. These all incidents against the Downtrodden are increasing day by day. As the hindu literature, Downtrodden were born from the feet of Bhrama. But scientifically there is no prove of such type of things. There is still a question that why those people are suffering the caste discrimination and on which basis? Now the time has come to find the answer of this question.

When India got freedom, the population of India was 33 crore but now 33 crore Original inhabitants sleep on footpath. Today 47% children of the age five years are the victims of malnutrition. 83% people do not have food to eat to capacity. They do not have clothes to

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wear. 98% out of total prisoners are original inhabitants of India. We can see the 'Hindu' Newspaper of April 7, 2012 A report was published that in jail the number of shudra women is larger than the number of others because if these women use weapon for their self respect, they are put to jails. Today in India there are 838 industries but no industry is owned by any shudra. According to Crime Bureau Report 2006 every week, three people belonging to scs and sts are murdered, 4 ladies belonging to SC's and ST's are raped. Houses of 11 persons belonging to SCs and STs are burnt. One person belonging to SCs and STs is tortured with in every 18 minutes. This is the situation of shudras even after 65 years of independence, these people are facing injustice but no FIR is registered. 50% children of scs and sts are the victims of malnutrition. They are the victims of physical and psychological diseases. According to Human Development Index, India's number is 134 in relation to development. If we talk of the development of scs, sts and OBC India's number is last in relation to development. Two crore jobs of scs, sts and obcs have been abolished in India. Adivasis are being murdered for the land which is being given to 27000 foreign companies. This has given birth to naxalitemovements which has spread over 212 districts out of 612 districts in India but it is said India is developing fastly.e at 9% growth rate.

Downtrodden literacy rate is low in India. The 1991 census of India reported that Downtrodden communities were one of the least literate social groups in the country, with only 30% of Downtrodden children recognized to have basic reading and writing skills. Throughout the 1800s and into the mid 1940s, conditions for Downtrodden children within the Indian education system were very poor. Due to discrimination from higher castes, the Downtrodden did not feel comfortable attending schools. Downtrodden children were compelled to sit outside the school, listening on the veranda while those in higher castes would be taught inside. Teachers, who refused to touch the Downtrodden children even with sticks, would throw bamboo canes as undeserved punishment while children of other castes were permitted to throw mud. Still this is happening in many areas of the country. The efforts being put forward by the government lost momentum over the next few decades however, as the rate of primary schools being constructed slipped from 5.8% in the 1960s, to 2.1% during the 1970s, and eventually down to only 1.3% through the 1980s. In India, Bihar is in the top five poorest states of India. Abuse of the Downtrodden caste is particularly high in Bihar. This combination of persecution, discrimination and poverty leaves Downtrodden children in Bihar extremely vulnerable. Currently, schools in Bihar are legally obliged to include children from all castes, but because of the prevailing prejudice, most of these schools are either

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abandoned, barely functioning or allowing Downtrodden children to attend, but treating them with cruelty and neglect. Downtrodden children are frequently discriminated against, being made to sit at the back of the class and restricted from touching or interacting with children from other castes. As a result, those who do make it into school often drop out at an early age. According to UNICEF Downtrodden girls have the highest rate of exclusion from school due to social discrimination. 51% Downtrodden children drop out of elementary school as opposed to 37% children from non-Downtrodden and non-Adivasi communities. In a 2014 report, the *Human Rights Watch* found pervasive discrimination against students from marginalised communities in schools across six states of India. In 2013 The Hindustan Times reported that in Madhya Pradesh an elected government official made it compulsory for Downtrodden parents applying for a scholarship for their school going children to submit photos with dead animals. The total number of out of school Downtrodden Children according to the National Sample Survey is a staggering 2 million. The UNICEF report from 2014 notes that in 'areas with a concentration of SC, ST or Muslim communities, civic services like electricity supply, water supply, etc. are poor. A report from Bihar by Community Correspondent Sheila Shekh shows that a Downtrodden village has not had access to electricity for over a decade. The National Crime Records Bureau reported a 19% rise in crimes against Downtrodden between 2013 and 2014. Independent research shows that between 2007 and 2011, just on the basis of cases reported by the media, 18 Downtrodden students in colleges and universities have committed suicide. This is the real 'death of merit'. Students like Rohith have overcome insurmountable odds. PhD students comprise 0.34% of the total number of students in higher education and the All India Survey On Higher Education does not give the numbers of Downtrodden students among the PhD scholars. Illiteracy and drop-out rates among Downtrodden are very high due to a number of social and physical factors. The forms of structural discrimination and abuse that Downtrodden children face in schools are often so stigmatising that they are forced to drop out of school. In addition, Downtrodden children face discriminatory attitudes from fellow students and the community as a whole, in particular from higher caste members who perceive education for Downtrodden as a threat to village hierarchies and power relations. A another case, Rohith Vemula, a highly ambitious, politically oriented, 26-year-old Ph.D. candidate at the University of Hyderabad killed on January 17, 2016. Vemula belonged to a Downtrodden community and was the son of a single mother. Before killing himself, he wrote a suicide note. It provides his deep reflection on the living of a Downtrodden who is

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transgressing societal structures and pursuing doctoral studies. It's 2018 and the untouchability related oppression still continues in many forms and the oppressors reinvent modern methods of discrimination and inhuman treatment. Modern form of untouchability is forcing Downtrodden not to vote; there's an institution of false/malicious/vexatious suit or cases against Downtrodden in government employment. The UGC guideline of prevention of discrimination in higher educational institutions came into light after University of Hyderabad student Rohit Vemula's suicide. As Downtrodden continue to struggle to seek equality in everyday life and in the social order, the mindset of both rural and urban class prevent it. And that is why Rohit Vemula happened, that is why Una happened, and that is exactly why Bhima-Koregaon happened in the second decade of the 21st Century. This fight for equality is going to define the 21st century India for us, whatever might be the economic progress we achieve. We all know India is considered as a secular nation but by seeing this type of discrimination with the human beings, how can we say that India is a secular nation. According to our constitution education is a field which is free for all and everyone has right to take the equal education. But it is not true. We all are still suffering the biggest threat which is discrimination even in the field of education.

Conclusion

As this brief analysis suggests, the present situation of Downtrodden in India is complex and confusing. There are no obvious, agreed upon solutions to the problems which the Downtrodden face; the way forward in the Downtrodden struggle is by no means clear. Downtrodden after even so many years of independence continue to face discrimination and atrocities at the hands of upper castes. Even the redress mechanism is failing to deliver. The conviction rate under SC/ST prevention of Atrocities Act is 15.71% and pendency is as high as 85.37%. This when the Act has a strict provisions aimed as a deterrent. By contrast, conviction rate under IPC is over 40%. On 27th June 2012, BBC News covered a story "**India's Downtrodden still fighting untouchability.**" The story said that Downtrodden are at the bottom of the Hindu caste system and despite laws to protect them, they still face widespread discrimination in India, writes Natalia Antelava. India is well known for its caste system, but not many associate the world's biggest democracy. India is an apartheid-style state. "Unfortunately the Indian government, made up of the upper castes, has successfully convinced the international community that caste discrimination is an internal, cultural issue. But the truth is, it affects the very way this country.

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