

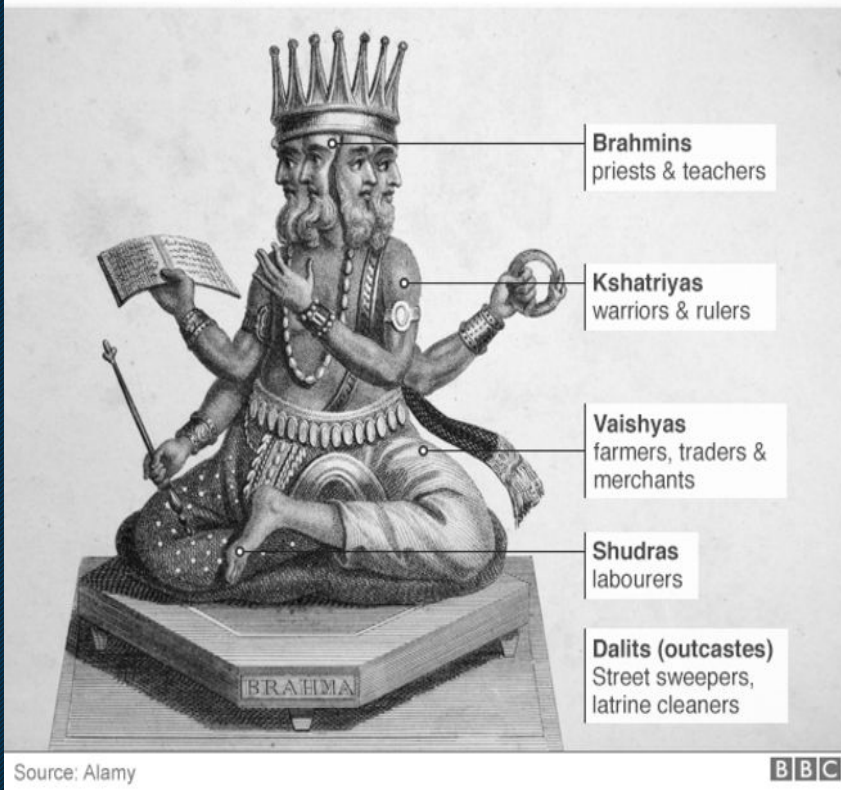
The Fifth and Sixth Castes

Dalit Women

The Indian Caste System

Pre-Colonialism

Brahma and the origins of caste



- Brahmins—mainly teachers and intellectuals (Brahma's head)
- Kshatriyas— the soldiers and rulers (Brahma's arms)
- Vaishyas—traders, merchants (Thighs)
- Shudras—unskilled laborers (Brahma's feet and did all the menial jobs)

"What Is India's Caste System?" BBC. BBC News System. 25 February 2016. Web

Outcastes

Dalits—those outside of the caste system and those in the lowest caste, who, historically, engaged in

- “taking life for a living, a category that included, for example, fishermen,
- killing or disposing of dead cattle or working with their hides for a living,
- pursuing activities that brought the participant into contact with emissions of the human body, such as feces, urine, sweat, and spittle, a category that included such occupational groups as sweepers and washermen, and
- eating the flesh of cattle or of domestic pigs and chickens” (“Untouchables”)

Scheduled Caste/Dalits

Until 1949, the untouchables were formally and legally

- restricted from entering many temples and schools
- forced into segregated housing/water wells
- restricted from participating inaspects of public life
- restricted from certain career fields
- forbidden from moving to a different caste (upward mobility)
- forbidden from inter-caste marriages

Scheduled Caste and Tribes Today

- Roughly 170 million belong to scheduled caste
- 80 million belong to scheduled tribes
- The Indian Constitution:
 - Bans untouchability
 - Provides special educational and vocational opportunities
 - Grants special representation in parliament
 - Penalizes attempts to prevent Scheduled caste members from enjoying equal rights (“Untouchable”)

The Sixth Caste

Sex workers

- Estimates range from 3 - 10 million sex workers/ prostitutes in India 40% are under 18
- 20% are under 15
- 90% are between the ages of 15-35

Dalit

means broken, down-trodden or crushed. The Dalits, formerly known as untouchables, are the people group in India who exist below the lowest caste.



Dalit—derived from Sanskrit, meaning “ground, suppressed crushed or broken to pieces”

- Modern Dalit literary movement began in the 1960s in Maharashtra and in the Marathi language—and later spread to other India languages
- Influenced by Dalit writers (especially Baburao Bagul) of previous generations and by the American Civil Rights and Black Panther/Nationalist movements

Dalit Lit-History, Influences

dalit literature

- Dalit lit includes all literary forms
- The purpose of Dalit lit is to
 - offer “criticism of the caste system and all kinds of discrimination,”
 - “call for destroying social hierarchies,”
 - challenge “the status quo,”
 - “promote equality and human dignity,”
 - “bring about social change.”

Characteristics

Darshini Dadawala and Maharaja Sayjirao, authors of “Dalit Literature—Concept, Origin and Features,” assert that Dalit literature is characterized by

- Realism
- Portrayal of discrimination and exploitation
- Criticism of silence of mainstream literature about social realities of Indian society.

In “Subaltern Experimental Writing: Dalit Literature in Dialogue with the World,” the author, Nicole Thiara sees contemporary Dalit literature, particularly novels as:
“[violating] the conventions of mainstream literature...being rooted in local Indian realities, subaltern vernacular traditions

Dalit Women Writers and Writers from the sixth caste

- *Dalit Women: Fear and Discrimination* by Meena Amand (2004)
- *Karruku* by Bama Faustina Susairaj (1992)
- *The Weave Of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoir* by Urmila Pawar (1988)

Resources

- Acharya, Arun Kumar. "Impact of Cultural and Religious Practices of Prostitution on the Trafficking of Women in India. 2012
- Goyal, Yugank and Padmanbha Ramanujam. "Ill-Conceived Laws and Exploitative State: Toward Decriminalizing Prostitution in India." Akron Law Review. 2015
- Shingal, Ankur. "The Devadasi System: Temple Prostitution in India." 2015.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?"
- United Nations. "Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women Continues Consideration of India Report."
- United Nations. "Preventing HIV/AIDS Among Young People. Fact Sheet. United Nations Special Session on HIV/AIDS.

Youtube Resources

- Caged until Broken: Life for Mumbai Prostitutes
- Child Prostitution in Varanasi
- Red Light Area in Delhi