

India: Caste System Amercia: Race Bias

By Sudhakar Bhat

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Sudhakar Bhat is a reporter on The Times of India of Bombay and recently spent three months as a reporter on the Oregonian, Portland newspaper daily. He was with this paper under the auspices of the United States Department. This guest article is his last written work before returning to his native land.

Whenever an Indian (from India) visits the United States, he is inevitably faced with questions regarding what is termed untouchability and the caste system.

Conversely, an American writer in India is deluged with questions regarding the status of the Negro in the United States.

India, a colored country itself, is hypersensitive and touchy about racial and color discrimination wherever it may exist, particularly in the United States which is wedded to the dictum "All men are created equal."

Max Yergan, an American Negro, who was in India in the early part of 1951 to attend the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Bombay, declared that today the Negroes in the United States can claim complete equality with white Americans.

Perhaps they can. But it is undeniable that discrimination to a deplorable extent exists in some of the southern American states.

Good News in Paper

A few days ago I had a discussion with a white American regarding the status of the Negro in the United States, and he said that I could send a news item to my home paper, The Times of India of Bombay, that in 1952 there was not a single lynching in the United States.

While I admitted that it was good news I related to him what a friend of mine once said. "The only time good news will get into the newspapers will be when people become so bad that they do nothing but crazy things and good things become the exception." From that point of view the news was worthy of publication.

There are countless people in the United States who denounce color discrimination and make every effort to get rid of it. And, possibly, such good people outnumber the bad ones who want to perpetuate color prejudice.

But so long as the abominable thing exists even to a small extent, it constitutes a blot on the fair name of any country, however great in other respects.

But while an alien like me condemns color prejudice, I am not blind to the great many exceedingly good qualities of all Americans—white and non-white.

Caste System Noted

People in the United States and elsewhere are likely to point the finger at India and say that my country has the caste system. But the caste system, deplorable as it is, does nobody any harm, except that part of it which is called untouchability.

But we Indians are proud of the fact that the untouchables today have not only equality before

the law in every respect, but certain exclusive privileges which the "touchables" do not have.

Untouchability has been made a cognizable offence and has been statutorily abolished by our constitution. If a restaurant, or a temple or any other place normally open to the public refuses to admit an untouchable, the person or persons responsible are liable to arrest, and upon conviction, to a fine or imprisonment or both.

The untouchables, who along with other backward people have been grouped together in the Indian constitution as backward classes, are given reservation of seats in the federal and state legislatures, get preference in regard to admission in educational institutions and in recruitment to government service. It is statutorily necessary to have a backward class minister in charge



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of backward class welfare in every Indian state—and such ministers exist.

Untouchability Going

These and other privileges, and the supreme inspiration and leadership of Mahatma Gandhi for the betterment of these people whom he called Harijans, meaning God's people, have served to alleviate their condition, and today by and large untouchability does not exist in India.

And what greater proof can there be of the better condition of the untouchables today than that an untouchable should have been the chairman of India's constitution drafting committee. He is Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, M. A., Ph.D., LL. D., a brilliant alumnus of Columbia university. A few months ago, he came to the United States to receive an honorary doctorate from Columbia university for the invaluable work he has done for India. And Dr. Ambedkar is not an exception, though not the rule either.

That shows the heights to which untouchables have risen. But, it must be admitted that large numbers of them still live in poor conditions. But we in India expect, and pray, that their condition will come up to the level of the others in the next five or ten years. After all, centuries of neglect cannot be wiped out overnight.

Last Rites Held For Ethel Harris

Funeral services were held Saturday, February 14, at Bethel AME church for Miss Ethel Mae Harris, 20, who died February 10 at The Dalles, Ore.

Miss Harris had been confined to the hospital in The Dalles for the past five years.

The daughter of Loomis Harris, she had been active in Sunday school activities of Bethel church prior to her illness.

Rev. Jesse L. Boyd officiated at the services. Robert Herndon

Jr. was soloist.

Palbearers included: Edd Webb, Buster Rivers, James Thompson, Booker T. Taylor, David Lanier and Seth Hill.

Survivors included: sisters Christine Wilson and Jeanette Taylor, Portland; Bessie Leacock, Berkeley; brothers Lonnie, Portland; Loomis Jr., U. S. army; Leonard, U. S. air force, and Lawrence, Portland.

Concluding services were at Lincoln Memorial Park.

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PRICE 10 CENTS

Chemawa School Employs Negro

Miss Lucy Fugham Hendrick of Norfolk, Virginia, became the first Negro teacher to be employed at the government-operated Chemawa Indian school near Salem, Oregon. Miss Hendricks began work at the school December 8 following a civil service appointment.

The new appointee is teaching 9th and 10th grade classes in nutritional home economics. She is a 1951 graduate, with a B. S. degree, of St. Paul's Polytechnic Institute, Lawrenceville, Va. She took advanced work at Virginia State college, Petersburg.

Miss Hendricks was formerly employed as an assistant dietitian at Norfolk Community hospital.

Chemawa, a boarding school for Indian students from Pacific Northwest reservations, employs about 70 teachers and vocational instructors, the majority of whom are Caucasian, and a few Indian.

Officials believe Miss Hendrick's application was the first ever received from a Negro. They found Miss Hendrick outstandingly well qualified for the appointment.

The new teacher finds her work interesting and reports that the Indian children are as eager to learn about her racial background as they are to know about vitamins and food values.

Nelignce Cited In Discrimination

That Portlanders are negligent about the problems of local discrimination was emphasized by Mrs. Aldridge Johnson, guest speaker at a program sponsored by the Intercultural Friendship club at First Baptist church, 909 N.W. 11th avenue, Wednesday morning.

Mrs. Johnson said also that the concept exemplified particularly during brotherhood month should be practiced throughout the year and that by closer cooperation between individuals and groups much more significant gains could be made toward erasing the local discrimination problem.

Mother of two girls, Mrs. Johnson is quite active in civic affairs. She serves on the administrative staffs of the Portland Council of Church Women, Chairmans Day Camp Committee of the Girl Scouts, Portland Council of Parents and Teachers and the Boise elementary PTA.

She resides at 623 N. Morris street.

Racial Ban Hit By Olympia Bill

A unanimous vote of the Washington state senate approved a measure banning racial discrimination in athletic tournaments in senate action last week.

Introduced by Senator Patrick D. Sutherland, Seattle Democrat, the bill would prevent any municipality or other organization from denying use of any playground, or other facility on racial grounds.

The bill specifically would ban such groups from preventing any contestant from entering tournaments because of his religion or racial origin.

Archibald F. Carey Notes Dangers in Race Hatred



Archibald F. Carey, left, minister, attorney and alderman from Chicago, told a Republican crowd that discrimination hurt American prestige abroad in a talk at Lincoln Day banquet at Lincoln high school Saturday. William C. Robison listens.

Archibald F. Carey, Methodist minister, attorney and Chicago alderman, urged minorities to put their best foot forward and to "permit the character of excellence to permeate everything you do," in a 55-minute talk at the Lincoln Day celebration in Lincoln high school cafeteria last Saturday night.

Carey told the majorities they should abandon the practice of discrimination in America. "It's just sheer enlightenment of self interest to cease discrimination in order to release the talent and treasure of all America's people," said Carey.

He noted that every crisis in

Equality Measure Still in Committee

Action on the proposed civil rights bill, which was introduced to the legislature by Senator Phil Hitchcock of Klamath Falls, is still forthcoming. The bill is presently in the judiciary committee.

Nineteen out of 30 senators have endorsed the bill, while 27 out of 60 representatives have signed an indorsement of the bill.

As the bill now stands before the legislature, it would make it a misdemeanor to discriminate against members of any race in any place of public accommodation, resort or amusement. The victim of such discrimination would have basis for a civil suit.

Board to Hear Eliot Opponents

Opponents of the Flint avenue cite for the proposed new Eliot elementary school will have a chance to present their views to the school board Thursday, February 26.

Both the Portland branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban league have gone on record favoring the construction of two neighborhood schools instead of the two-story New Eliot structure.

America has seen the Negro citizen come forward. Carey cited great Negro men in American history that made the grade when given the opportunity.

Discrimination Hurts

Carey illustrated with such known Negro men as Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, and Percy Julian, medicine; Dr. George Washington Carver, science; Joe Louis and Jackie Robinson, sports; and Matt Henson, explorer.

The active Chicagoan said that continued practice of discrimination is causing irreparable damage to United States prestige in world affairs.

He saluted the people of Oregon for the enactment of a fair employment practice law which, Carey said, enables employment by skill rather than by skin.

More than 700 people heard Carey, who spoke in 25 cities in behalf of President Eisenhower during the 1952 Presidential campaign.

Carey spoke under the auspices of the Multnomah county Republican central committee. Donald Walker was general chairman of the banquet.

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