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Documentary of the Contemporary Society of India.

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2016 -2020

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Abstract

The objective of the research is to understand the major changes that have occurred during the 20th century to the Indian contemporary society and understand the roots of all sorts of disorder and based on the findings, figure out what is the current state of the society today and if there is a way in which the society can be improved ?

Introduction

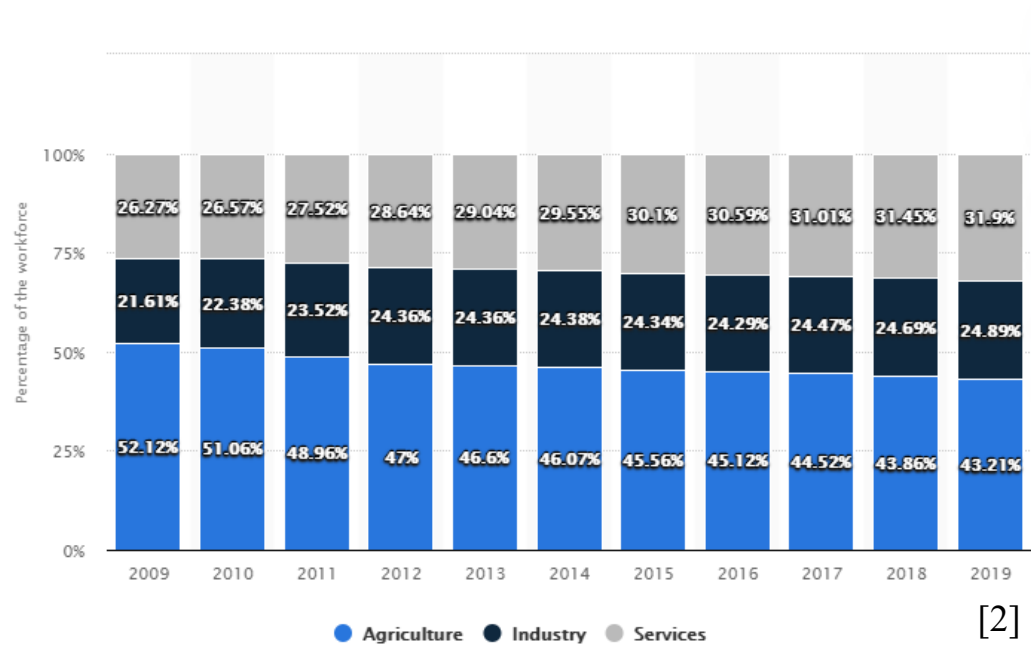
The 20th century has been a huge turning point when we talk about the contemporary society of India. With the population of India exceeding one billion, various technological, political, economical, environmental, judicial and sociological changes we must answer the following questions-

- What are the main sources of livelihood today ?
- What kind of Hierarchy exists in contemporary society ?
- Does the caste system still exist ?
- How do we define the class system in the 20th century ?
- How and why women empowerment still exists ?
- Are we more or less independent than we were before ?
- Impact of Globalization to the Indian society in the 20th century ?
- How technological advances have changed and impacted our society ?
- Environmental changes and how is it affecting the society today ?
- And most importantly, where are we heading ?

What are the main sources of livelihood today ?

Agriculture in India is still the primary source of livelihood in India today. The percentage of the workforce in the agriculture sector which includes forestry and fishing is about 43.21%. Indian food and grocery market is the 6th largest in the world with retail contributing 70% of the sales. The second largest source of livelihood in India is the service sector. The percentage of the workforce in the service sector is 31.9%. This service sector is the key to the economic growth of India. Manufacturing sector is the third source of livelihood in India. The percentage of the workforce in the Manufacturing industry is 24.89%. India is expected to become the fifth largest manufacturing country in the world by the end of 2020. [1]

Since the primary source of livelihood in India is agriculture (about 43%), Half the population of India in the contemporary society lives in Villages/Rural areas. Meanwhile when we talk about the living conditions of these farmers and their families, it's horrible in the present times. About 80% of the farmers in India are small or even marginal farmers (1 - 2 hectares or less). In today's society it has become very common to hear reports of farmer suicides from the different parts of the country. There are many factors that are involved which leads to the poor living conditions of these farmers. Money lenders are one of the main reasons why farmer suicides is an issue in India as they trap these farmers into their schemes in which the amount of interest will always be more than the profit earned from the cultivated crops

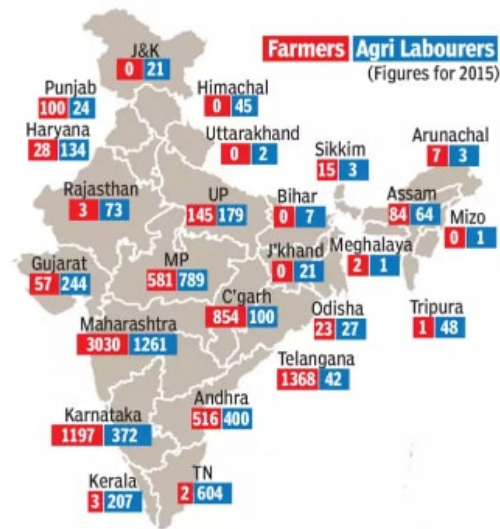


[2]

which results in the farmers being on heavy debt. The second factor which affects the yielding of crops is climate change which results in the unpredictability of the rainfall. Since the climate conditions are so bad, the rainfall is either too much or too little which destroys the crop and yields poor crops.

There has been a major decline of the agriculture sector in the past ten years, It has declined from 52% in 2009 to 43% in 2019. The difficulty in agriculture and the struggle is the reason why farmers do not want their children to get into agriculture.

State-wise suicides committed by farmers and agricultural labourers



This decline can be harmful as agriculture is an important part of the economy in India as it adds about 17% of the absolute GDP. It also gives employment to over 60% of the population.

When we talk about the manufacturing sector, working conditions aren't great there either. According to a research on the Indian garment workers [3], due to the rise of high demand, the work pressure on them is really high with the employees working overtime, working hours are way more than what a healthy worker of an average skill can produce. It was even reported that one in five people worked seven days

a week and more than ten hours a day. Overtime in these industries have become very common, are involuntary and unpaid . There have also been many cases of harassment to these employees by the supervisors and upper management.

Thus the reality is the fact that more than three-fourth of the population of India are middle class families or lower who struggle in their daily livelihood.

What kind of Hierarchy exists in contemporary society ?

Hierarchy does exist in contemporary society and it might be the most strict hierarchical society in the world. The hierarchical system is almost everywhere whether it's the office, home or just outside. It can also be said that hierarchy has a strong cultural relevance which impacts the people behaviour in which people roleplay their birthright privileges. These hierarchy exists in the form of Region they are from, Whether they are rural or urban, what caste-like group they belong to within a certain religious groups, hierarchy also exists based on an individual wealth and power which is often described by what class do they belong to, these forms of hierarchy also exists between genders in which mens are considered superior than women, hierarchy also exists within what age does an individual has and the older they are, the more superior they are considered, hierarchy also exists between people who are considered more educated than others which forms a certain sense of superiority.

Based on all the above factors which dictates hierarchy, an individual is considered superior or inferior to the other which often lead to different kinds of classification, discrimination and sense of inequality within the society.

Inequality based on Caste

Almost 80% population of India follows Hinduism out of which 22.8% comes in the general category, 52% comes in the OBC, 16% are SC and 8.6% are the ST. These are the caste which depends upon an individual lineage which has been followed for thousands of years and they cannot be changed. Today, the total no. of Dalit (SC and ST) population is around 200 million.

According to a research which was done in by Indian Journal of Applied Research[4] done in 2016, Less than 10% of the Dalit households can afford safe drinking water, electricity and toilets. Basically their living condition is terrible. There are still many crimes and acts of violence which take place to these people but are mostly unreported due to omnipresent fear and the ones which are reported are ignored by the police or end up languishing in the backlogged court system. The literacy rate of the female is 57% for Dalit while the no. is slightly higher for men. Females in the Dalit communities are still mostly engaged with the household activities and are not even included in the working population by the census of India. A very small percentage of womens are engaged in non-agriculture activities.

The Social system even today provides occupation to the Dalit groups which is not only considered lower in the society but also characterized by low productivity.

Therefore most of these groups still remain in the lowest end of the economical hierarchy. In 2004-2005 more than half of the Dalit population in the Rural area was still below poverty line.

According to a research, 50% of the child labour in the cottonseed farms in India are Dalits or Adivasis.

Our constitution allows equal opportunities to all the citizens of India, By recognizing the social injustice the system must support the backward castes and the Dalits to move them up in the social ladder. Thus reservation of seats have been given to these castes so that they can share equal power in politics and administration and move up the ladder socially and economically. Once the castes start moving up the social ladder, the reservation system can be slowly phased out.

Sadly, These backward classes have still not moved above the ladder as discrimination still exists within these castes when we talk about inter-caste marriage. Most of the people within our society will still not accept an upper class marrying a lower class. If done so, the children either abandoned or in the worst case scenario killed for inter-caste marriage. Cases of couple being killed for marrying a Dalit man/woman is still very relevant and has become so common that is most of the time ignored. This is a case only four years old[5] in which a young 22 year old Dalit man name V.Shankar married a girl from upper cast in July 2015, eight months later V.Shankar was brutally

murdered to death in crowded road in full public view. The murderers were a gang of men including the wife's father.

Still many countless young Indian men and women have been destroyed because of inter-caste marriage and cases like these are proof that there is still inequality which exists based on caste when we talk about the role of hierarchy in contemporary society.

Inequality based on Class

In Indian society, people are classified on the basis of their economic status of their family which also defines their standard of lifestyle. These classification involve the research done by a Pew research center to break up income levels across the world. According to it, if the family income is less than Rs.140/day then they are classified as below the poverty line. If the family income is in between Rs.140-Rs.700/day are classified as Lower/Poor class. If the family income is between Rs.700-Rs.1120/day are classified as Middle class. If a family earns between Rs.1120-Rs.1400 then they are classified as Upper Middle class. If the family earns more than Rs.1400/day then they are classified as Upper Class.

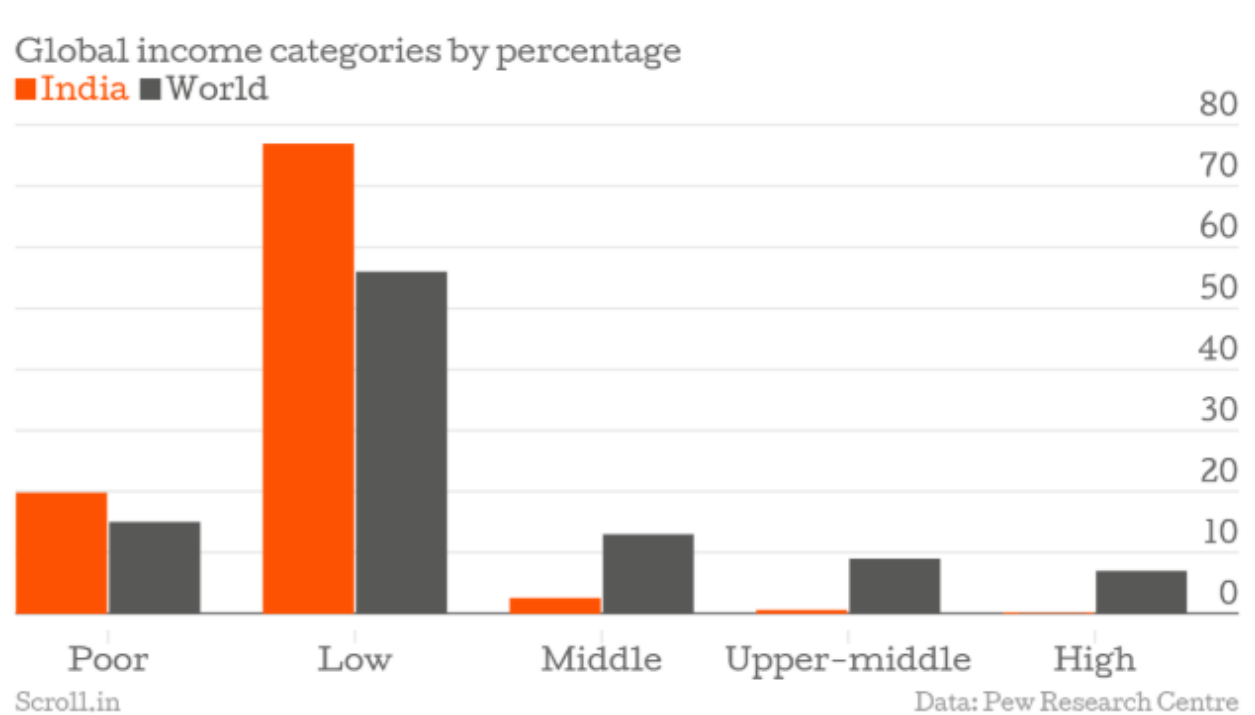


Image above is the Visual representation of Global income categorized by percentage.[6]

In India's contemporary society in which the population is more than 1.3 billion more than 95% of Indian population falls under lower/poor class or below poverty line which is a very disappointing number.

The high gap between the rich and poor also leads to our society being more and more corrupted.

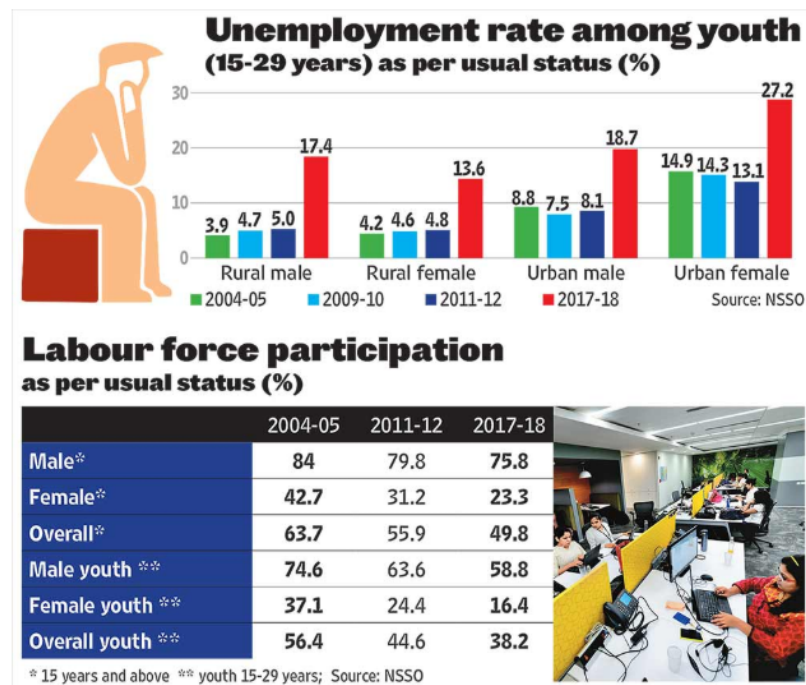
Inequality Based on Gender

In March 2020, The recorded female population in India is 48.08% and the male population is 51.96%. Throughout the Indian history, women were not given equal political, economical or social and religious rights. Many religious views portrayed women as the main sources of Kama which was considered evil. The scars from the historic and religious beliefs are clearly visible in the society today. Social and cultural norms with a certain value system are still very relevant and harmful. Even today dowry is still very relevant, after marriage it has become a part of a culture that a Woman is sent to their husbands house and more importance is given to the Men to continue their family name has strengthened the male dominating social system. Even today a female widow is looked down upon and is deprived of many social and cultural activities where as a Male widow is not penalized for anything.

According to the educational statistics report by MHRD in 2018[7]. The Overall literacy rate in Rural India is 64.7% in which 56.8% are females and 72.3% are males. Meanwhile the literacy rate in Urban India is 74.8% in which 74.8% are females and 83.7% are males. The overall literacy rate in India is 69.1% . The overall literacy rate gap between male and female is an approx of 12%.

Household has become a very common vocation for the women in contemporary society. When we talk about the woman in the workforce, many employers still would not prefer to employ women because of maternity reasons. The patterns are clearly

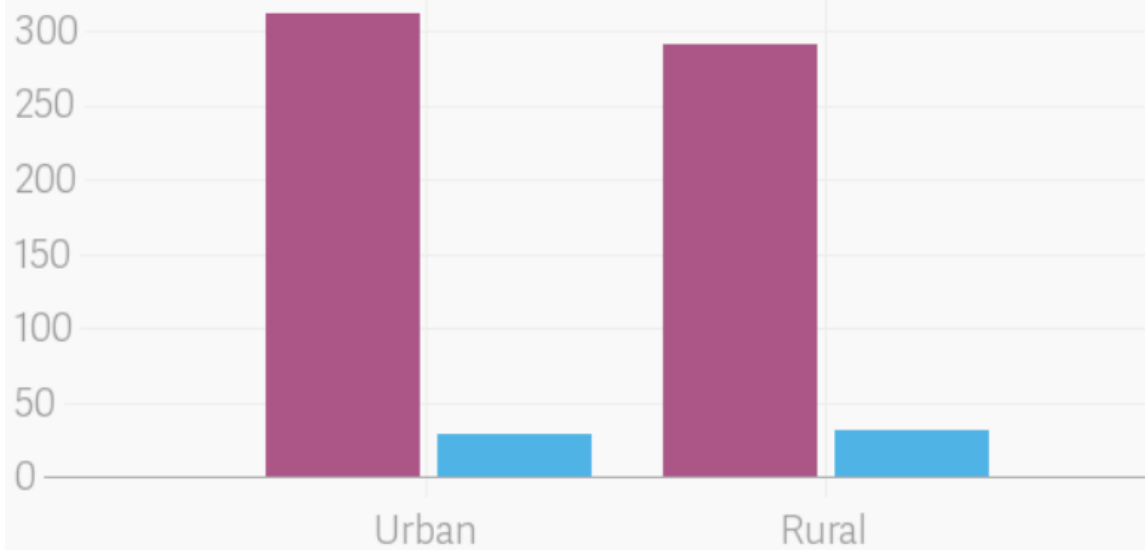
visible in the labour force participation among the youth of both sexes.
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Indian women put in many more hours of unpaid work than men

■ Women ■ Men

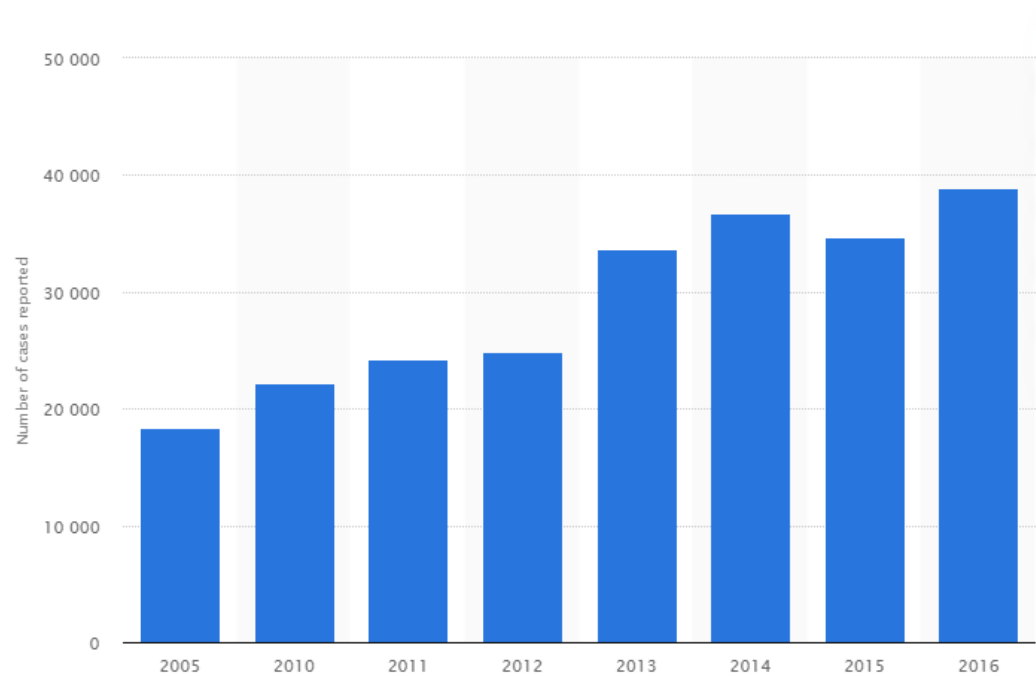
350 minutes per day of unpaid care work



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| Data: Oxfam Inequality Report 2019

[9]



Another major issue in today's society is the increase of rape towards woman. More than 32,500 cases of rape were registered to the police in 2017 in 90 days. Meanwhile Indian court disposed only 18,300 cases related to rape that year, leaving more than 127,800 cases pending at the end of 2017. [11]

The disappointment comes because of the fact that the no. of rapes and the cases of brutality is becoming worse every year. Making our society not just unfair to the womens but also extremely unsafe, most of the rape cases are left pending making the guilty roam free. While the woman who is the victim of rape is shamed in the society rather than the society being sympathetic. At this point the contemporary society of India might be one of the worst places to be a woman.

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Impact of Globalization to the Indian society in the 20th century ?

Only after Globalization, the belief system and the cultural norms were highly questioned as we started to expose ourselves to different beliefs and cultural norms. In the end globalization has made everyone more aware and educated. There has also been a lot of positive and negative impact of Globalisation. The no. of Jobs have significantly increased as there has been a rapid growth of the service sector.

Now the customers, the consumers have more choices unlike the past. We have more choices in terms of food, clothing, media etc but on the negative side it has highly increased the needs of people, more like created unnecessary necessities. Like having certain possessions because of the advertisement industries make a person move up the social ladder, the food that people are having is extremely processed and unhealthy and only focuses on the way it tastes, making people addicted to these foods. When we talk about the Indian society, following western traditions has become a trend. People who speak english more frequently are now considered more educated and superior than the person who does not. Amongst the youth, the one who still follows the Indian tradition in contemporary society is now associated backwards and uneducated.

The biggest problem with Globalisation is the fact that now we are exposed to so many different cultures especially the western, people are forgetting their own culture.

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How technological advances have changed and impacted our society ?

Major technological advances which have impacted our society are the growth of the smartphone market which changed everything and the rise of affordable internet like Jio which has not connected India like never before and made everything fast phased. There has been a lot of positive changes and negative changes to both the Rural and Urban society of India. There has been huge development in terms of the business and Information Technological department. Opening a lot of areas of employment and entrepreneurship.

Using the Internet and smartphones is extremely easy and has also impacted and changed the course of the education sector completely. Now every information is just a search away and anyone can learn anything at any time. In the midst of Pandemic online classes are what is to be considered now the future of education. On the negative side, it also allows you to play games or be busy with just unlimited browsing of content. It has also given rise to a lot of cyber bullying and harassment which due to the platform has become more difficult to track. Fake news in India is another major issue which came to the rise due to the accessibility of smartphones. People these days have lost trust in the legitimate sources of information and now propaganda is done through the use of fake news which emotionally manipulates people to act on the basis of the particular person's personal agenda. Another downside which is affecting the Indian youth is the over usage of social media platforms in which

has become a main source of comparing each other, making a certain social hierarchy based on their social presence which is really bad for the mental health of the current youth.

Environmental changes and how is it affecting the society today ?

As mentioned before, India has reached the population of 1.3 billion and is consuming resources at a rapid speed and the consumption of the resource/demand of each citizen is way more than what the limited non-renewable sources that are available in India. For example , according to a research done by the Institution of transforming India, being that 40% of the Indian population will have no access to drinking water by 2030.

Conclusion

Nothing in today's society is black and white, no topic is just one sided. Every side of argument has its own sets of justification when it comes to ethics, culture or sociology. People are mostly the product of their genes with respect to their environment. People are born into castes, sub-castes and certain religious communities. There is a sense of interdependence among these communities. When you talk about family, there is a very strong sense of interdependence which forms their core ethics and philosophies and the way we see the world. From our childhood itself we are dependent upon these communities to teach us these cultural, religious and social norms and going against these norms and beliefs can take away that sense of interdependence from these communities with a great fear of us being left alone or forsaken. We cannot really be independent unless we question these norms and beliefs and the way the current society is, It is very difficult to go against these norms.

The world is changing at a rapid speed and so is our society. Unemployment and means of income is a huge issue among each caste, class, gender and religion some are less fortunate than others but the main issue comes when the people are so concerned with food, cloth and shelter, thinking and philosophising about a socialist democracy is beyond the rational of the struggling class.

Every action that an individual makes, makes a difference whether it's good or bad. Each individual should contribute the best they can to demolish the sense of Hierarchy within the society and make a positive difference demolishing all kinds of injustice and by educating the youth better in the hope that they repeat the same mistakes we did.

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