

NEWS FROM AFLC INDIA



MINISTRY IN THE CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIA

For us in the West, the culture of the caste system is a very foreign concept. We asked Pastor Luther Sastry, president of AFLC- India, some questions to give a better picture of how the gospel is shared in India.



How does the caste system operate in India?

The Indian caste system is a hierarchical social structure that categorizes individuals into groups based on their birth occupation and social status leading to historical discrimination and inequality. Hindu religious books Ex. Bhagavadgeetha, purushasooktham, puranas etc., also strongly impose the message that god himself created and divided people into caste systems for the benefit and sustainability of the society. Traditionally the caste system was divided into four main social classes. These are in descending order of prestige down to the fifth one, Panchamas or Daliths. In addition to these castes, there are thousands of sub-castes.

Brahmins		Kshatriyas	Vaishyas	Shudras
Priests	Scholars	Warriors	Merchants	Labourers
		Rulers	Landowners	Servants
				Panchamas Untouchables

How does the gospel of Jesus conflict with the caste system?

The Indian Caste system has brought divisions, inequality, and social discrimination among people. Fighting between caste groups has gone on for many years, and is even encouraged by political leaders. Whereas Christianity never shows partiality, so we see Christians in all caste groups. The Indian Caste system brings misery to life and insecurity among untouchables. In contrast, Christianity brings dignity among the untouchables.

Have you seen restoration between the castes because of Christianity?

Intercaste marriages are strongly condemned in Hinduism, but Christianity bridges different caste groups to be united together through Christian marriages. Even the untouchable groups are having fellowship with another caste group because they have accepted Jesus Christ. Jesus builds these bridges of unity between people.

How is the ministry of AFLC India reaching out to other groups?

As the Caste system is very strong and sensitive in our society. The church has been taking precautions to reach out to non-Christians. At first, a person of a certain caste is sent to the same group so that the person who brings the gospel will be accepted by the group and there will not be immediate rejection. One example is at the church at Bodduluripadu village who have Yadava caste group. These believers are reaching out to their relatives and preach about Jesus Christ. Groups going to same groups is one way to open the doors to the gospel in our area.



Pastor Luther and Vardhini Sastry

Luther's passion for evangelism in his nation is a great example of learning how to live as a Christian in the culture where God has placed you.

-- Madison Greven, AFLC World Missions Communication Coordinator