

Summary

A survey of total ten people^A was conducted with the aim to know their mindset regarding 'Prajā'. These people generally belong to villages of Uttar Pradesh, India but for their livelihood they have been residing in Delhi for the past few years. These people were from different backgrounds pursuing different occupations such as pandit, dhobi, mali, housewife, etc.

It is amazing to know that all these were well aware of various categories of 'Prajā' and its popularity in villages. Out of these some refer seven types of 'Prajā' whereas with a wider view one of them refers people of a country as 'Prajā' and its government as 'raja'. Overall they mentioned 'Prajā' as pandit, dhobi (washerman), barber, badhai (carpenter), kumhar (potter), lohar (blacksmith), chamar (leather-maker), mali (gardner), kurmi (agricultural-caste), Dhanuk (manufacture of bamboo baskets), mochi (cobbler), Khatik (butcher), passi. Then they discussed in detail the duties performed by these above categories of 'Prajā'.

Following details were unanimously given by all –

1. Service providers (sevaka-varga) to society are termed as 'Prajā'. These are considered lower in caste.
2. The 'Prajā' is a group of skillful people who inherited the skill from their family or ancestors.
3. 'Prajā' plays a significant role during several occasions in village. Such as in marriages etc - 'suhag' offer to bride by washerwoman, barber's wife put alta on bride's feet & make her ready, barber cuts the umbilical-cord of new born, washerwoman sprinkle the water in the house where birth takes place, mundan-ceremony is performed by barber, etc.
4. On performing their routine duties 'Prajā' used to get grains twice a year but now they get and enjoy cash in return. Whereas clothes, utensils, grains, food & cash are offered to them even today on chief occasions like marriages.
5. 'Prajā' is self-reliant these days. Their work depends upon their own creativity & work schedule. In some cases, they are supervised by the owner/customer/client.

6. 'Prajā' is independent to look after their family and in decision-making but still they have to maintain a protocol.
7. These days people of 'Prajā' is feeling low in pursuing their ancestral skills.
8. Now-a-days as people are getting more conscious of being educated, so culture of 'Prajā' even in villages is fading away.
9. These days due to various reservation policies, 'Prajā' groups enjoy various benefits from the government.

^APeople interviewed –

1. *Thakur Prasad Tiwari* (Pandit) from Dist. Shravasti, Lucknow
2. *Pushpa* (Dhobi) from Katolli Village, Lucknow
3. *Renu Singh* (Housewife) from Amora Village, Gorakhpur
4. *Ram Naresh Tiwari* (Pandit) from Ratanpur Village, Dist. Balrampur, Lucknow
5. *Ram Kumar Yadav* (Mali) from Raebareli
6. *Manju* (Maid) from Bacholi, Dist. Unnao, Lucknow
7. *Karan* (Dhobi) from Sandila Village, Dist. Hardoi, Lucknow
8. *Harish Chandra Mishra* (Pandit) from Dist. Shravasti, Lucknow
9. *Arjun Singh* (Job) from Baas Village, Gorakhpur
10. *MatadeenMaurya* (Mali) from Dist. Sultanpur