THE COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES : A STUDY OF KABIR PANTH AND KAYASTHA

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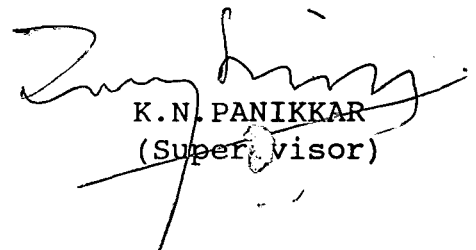# JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "THE COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES: A STUDY OF KABIR PANTH AND KAYASTHA" submitted by Amitabh Tripathi is an original work and has not been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other university. We recommend that this dissertation be presented before the examiners for consideration of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

SATISH SABERWAL
(Chairperson)

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(Supervisor)

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

I have often wondered about the extent to which a research can be programmed.In my case coincidences and chance have had their fair share and I am thankful to them. I fortuitously came across sources which consequently became an integral part of the argument drawn out here, and all I can really lay a claim on is, patience. The involvement with research in the last two years has been a rewarding experience both in academic and personal terms. I in the process discovered the writings of my grandfather. I take this opportunity to express my sense of gratitude for the help that I have got from people.

I thank Dr. Manager Pandey and Purushottam Agarwal for the insights into Kabir and the Bhakti movement; Prof. K.L. Sharma, Dr. Dipankar Gupta and Dr. Anand Kumar of the Centre for Study of Social Systems for helping me tread the "sociological frontier" cautiously. Dr. Kumar's association with my research is as old as mine and I think, he would be relieved to get rid of my persistent queries. I am thankful to Prof. J.P. Mishra of Banaras Hindu University and Dr. Sushil Srivastava of Allahabad University for the long discussions with them and for their immense help during my stay in Banaras and Allahabad. I am grateful to Prof. Satish Sabarwal for the leads he gave me in exploring identities.

Libraries formed a key to my research and for a rewarding and thoroughly refreshing experience I acknowledge the appreciative and sympathetic attitude of the staff of the various libraries; Sachidanand Sinha Library in Patna; Car Michael Library, Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Central Library of BHU at Banaras; Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, K.P. Intermediate College Library, Kayastha Pathasala and Bharti Bhavan at Allahabad; Sahitya Academy and National Archives Library, Delhi. Few repositories of information can possess finer environment and more accommodating staff than the Nehru Memorial Museum Library, while our own University library always had its stock of surprises. My special thanks to the staff of both these places.

Sustenance through the period of my research was provided by Mitu who was unusually patient and reassuring that one day I would have left the dissertation behind me; by Paras who silently played the music and made cups of tea. Rakesh was most stimulating in the

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study, an attempt to tentatively probe the problem of power-culture- construction. The tentativeness informs not only the choice of the subject but also the way in which I have gone about studying it. I have worked with no preconceived ideas (which has had its own advantages and disadvantages) on the subject, period and the sources, and the ideas have been formed and formulated during the period of my study. The primary concern in the beginning was with the problem and not with the quantity or quality of sources that I was supposed to discover. I have had no illusions regarding the intrinsic worth of the topic nor have I worked with the idea that "my" period is a "turning point" or it marks a "watershed", nor do I see this work as filling a gap- (I think, we "know" enough, to succumb to such tall claims) for that matter the fear that the area on which I am working, is over-worked, has not deterred me either. Lest this exercise in self effacement be misinterpreted I hasten to add that it is both a reaction and a response. It is a reaction to the kind of consciousness that has guided history writing- the idea that most historical research is done because there is a known body of source material available, is depressing. It is a response to the insightful portrayal of the historian by Bernard S. Cohn in his article- "An Anthropologist among the Historians: a field study."[1a]

[1a] Cohn, B.S., "An Anthropologist among the Historians : A field study", in <u>An Anthropologist among the Historians and other essays</u>, Delhi, 1987, pp. 1-17.

To start with I did not have a clearly chalked out programme about what I was going to do. The agenda became clearer in the process of working my way through. To an extent I fortuitously strayed into the problem but then I do not have any doubts about the usefulness of the experience. The first foray was made during my Masters Programme at this University while doing a seminar paper in my fourth semester. This was the time when the works of Ronald Inden and Nicholas B.Dirks appeared, the scene was foregrounded by the decision of the national government to implement the Mandal Commission Report which sparked off the agitation- another construction was in the making. It is against this background that I studied caste as reflected in the writings of Premchand. Thus, I too came to the issue of "construction" through literature, but this similarity also became the reason for my departure. What started of as an attempt to go back to Premchand gave insights and I hung on to them, feeling my way through. I did, like most of my colleagues, start with a bibliographic list but soon had to give it up-- reading on themes proved to be more rewarding and it also gave important leads on which I worked, sometimes forward and sometimes backwards.

Conventionally, an Introduction serves the function of introducing the subject and laying out the plan of the work

but here, the Introduction I make transgresses some of these limitations. " To introduce " says the Concise Oxford Dictionary is to "occur just before the start of" . Thus, I take the opportunity to discuss briefly two related aspects which are in vogue- the trends in the writings on social history and the much emphasized inter-disciplinary approach. But first the conventional aspect.

I

Investigations into the nature of colonial power in South Asia, in recent times have come to question its epistemological and representational dimension. Thus, the discussion has zeroed on the colonial production of new forms of knowledge about these societies and their histories, new arrangements and classifications, and of new text-based uniformities in previously flexible and heterogenous legal and religious traditions. What is examined here is but one aspect of this burgeoning field: that which has emerged as the "colonial construction of caste". Caste, in the Indian society, is an enigma (because it persists with a consciousness of its being) and this enables it to acquire a potential of being subjected to various kinds of appropriations. This enigma is also a part of our culture and has been constructed time and again, no doubt with a greater frequency in the last hundred years- a period which has seen the production of many new histories.

The first chapter is a statement on the historiography of the subject. It is primarily an analysis of the writings of Bernard S. Cohn, Ronald Inden, Nicholas B. Dirks and Shekhar Bandyopadhyay.[1] Here, the attempt has been to put forward the main strands of the arguments of the respective authors and to examine (in the light of the allied literature from which all of them draw their arguments) the similarities and differences in their concerns, the arguments set forth and the sources used. For instance it is important to distinguish between what Cohn calls "objectification" and what Dirks and Inden call "construction". Towards the end of the chapter, I evaluate the approaches vis-a-vis the direction I propose to take.

The second chapter is primarily based on the secondary sources- a survey of the literature existing on caste- discussion of the various aspects related to caste, that have generated a familiar debate, the various approaches to the study of caste, aspects of mobility and change and the relationship between caste and class. The emphasis is however in locating the role caste plays in identity-formation and the different levels of its operation. If only in an analytical framework, a

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1   Cohn, B.S. op.cit., Dirks, Nicholas B., The Hollow Crown : Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom, Cambridge, 1988. Inden, Ronald., Imagining India, Oxford, 1990. Bandyopadhyay, Shekhar., Caste, Politics and the Raj Bengal 1872-1937, Calcutta, 1990.

distinction has to be made between jati (the endogamous caste), jati (the caste cluster) and varna levels. The word jati however, does not have one single meaning given to it, but a plurality of meanings including one which equates it with varna. In the study of these different levels, I draw from the writings of Anthony Giddens and his theory of structuration. Caste is thus studied as functioning at the interactional level and at the mobilisational i.e. associational level, vis-a-vis the census categories which get classified and objectified in the interplay of the construction and its contestations.

The third chapter deals with "caste" and its place in the colonial construction. The "construction" as it comes out does not appear to be a monolith; there are dissenting voices which have implications which cannot be ignored. There are limits also, to the extent that these constructions can be seen as reflecting the "administrative needs" of the colonial power. Too much here cannot be concluded on the basis of the statements of the census officials which could be self justificatory in nature. Moreover, the intentionality of the construction in terms of policy making would be revealing. Here, the colonial state appears as very tentative and responsive not only to practical considerations but also to social pressures- detracting not only from the "autonomy" of the construction, but also from the alleged political purpose of the census operations. The colonial construction is studied for

two categories, that of the Kabir Panth and Kayasthas, the basic sources are the Census Reports, starting from 1871-72, the provincial census reports of the United Provinces and Bihar, the District Gazetteers[2] and the accounts of other Europeans. A word of explanation is perhaps required for the choice of these two categories. I am not at all equipped to contend that evidences regarding these two categories can be replicated or represented for other categories. Neither can they be used to substantiate or dismiss the arguments regarding the colonial construction of caste. The problem of power-culture-construction is too complex to warrant any such conclusions. But still I think that the study of "construction" and the response of the "natives" is fruitful in the case of these two categories. To an extent the choices have been fortuitous. The Kabir Panthis, on the other hand, are an amorphous category - they do not have strictly, caste like features but have appropriated symbols from the past to bolster their self-image. This consciousness,in contrast has existed at the margins of the society. The Kayasthas boast of a very high degree of literacy, a long standing organisation almost as old as the Indian National Congress[3] and a very old caste journal. They thus

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2 .The choice of the districts has been guided by the concentration of Kayastha in the district as discerned from the census reports and the districts where the Kayastha Conference-s were held in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

3 These claims I have repeatedly encountered during the numerous meetings with Kayastha respondents in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, basically Allahabad,

claim to be a very conscious category and have been a part of the mainstream society. What is common to both is a certain ambiguity regarding caste position. This ambiguity pervading the categories, one of which lie at the mainstream and other at the margins, is I think, a favourable terrain to study the central problem of the process of construction and its acceptance or contestation.

The fourth chapter deals with the self perception of the Kabir Panthis and Kayasthas. In the case of the former, I study the attempts that have tried to relocate Kabir. As for the latter, kind of caste histories that start coming out in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are analysed. The nature of antiquity traced, the nature of mythology and symbols invoked- and the extent to which these can be seen as a response to the colonial construction are the themes studied. Our concern here is not only with the question of a suitable historic past but also the extent to which it fits into the contemporary social matrix- the kind of consciousness that develops involving some and submerging other identities. The last part of this chapter deals with the articulation of these identities through conferences, newspapers and organisations. All three can be examined in relation to the issues of the time. Here I rely on the Kayastha

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Banaras and Patna.

Samachar, the resolutions of the Kayastha Conference and the papers of the Kayastha Pathsala.What beomes important here, is the category which is being mobilized, what is the range of mobilization and its purpose. Whether, identity can be limited to the "name" of the caste alone or whether it would involve a sense of shared experience? Then one could grapple with the question, whether a sense of community (and its level of operation) predates its articulation, in the process studying the operational category of caste. On the issue of identities and identity formations, I draw from the writings of Abner Cohen and Roland Barthes.[4]

II

Social history in the last couple of decades has moved through complex debates, and arduous setting of agenda[5] and seen attempts at strong condemnations and even

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4   Cohen, Abner, Two Dimensional Man, London, 1974 Barthes, Roland, Mythologies London 1973 and Barthes (ed.), Ethnic Group and Boundaries.

5   Burke, Peter., "People's History and total history "in Samuel, Raphael., (ed) People's History and Socialist theory, London, 1981; Hobsbawm, E.J., "From social history to history of society", Daedalus, V, 100, 1971; Le Goff, Jacques., "Is Politics still the backbone of history", Daedalus, V, 100, 1971; Thompson, E.P., "Folklore, Anthropology and Social History", Indian Historical Review, III 2, January 1971.
In the Indian case see Presidential addresses of the Indian History Congress by Sabyasachi Battacharya 43rd session 1982 and Sumit Sarkar, 45th Session 1984.

stronger valorization. This is understandable keeping in mind its marginalization in the history writings of the 19th and early 20th centuries and also the vast amount of unmapped territory. It has also fed on developments in social theorizing which of late have come to challenge almost everything, so much so that sometimes, one wonders, with Tony Judt if it is a good moment to do social history.[6]

Even then one shares the concerns for events, processes and agency though, one may not be at entire consonance with what is being produced under the rubric of "recovering the agency" or "popular history". "Agency" and "people" are amenable to so many appropriations, readings and perceptions[7] that it is very probable that one becomes satisfied with the study of any one of these. Against this background one has to realise that what is important is the study of a problem in all its depth and dimension. Social history differs not so much in subject matter as in approach and methods.

Social history, till very late in India, remained a neglected subject informed by what has been called the

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6   Judt, Tony., "A Clown in Regal Purple : Social History and the Historians", History Workshop, 7,Spring, 1979.

7   Some of which are pointed out in O'Hanlon R., "Recovering the subject : Subaltern Studies and histories of resistance in colonial South Asia", Modern Asian Studies, 22(1); 189-224; Battacharya, S., Presidential address Indian History Congress Proceedings, 1982, pp. 397-417.

"residual" approach- studying either the essentialized social institutions or the social reform endeavours[8]. This has been common to the various schools of history writing that developed till the first half of this century. Things have been written more to look at why the region did not develop rather than studying the society in its own terms. To understand why social history did not take the direction which it seems to be taking now, one has to look at the milieu in which modern history writing developed-under the British auspices in colonial India.[9]

All this has been changing or at least appears to be changing under stimulus from two types of work. One is the "history from below" in the Subaltern Studies Volumes[10] and the second is the attempt aimed at "deconstruction",[11] both working with the aim of "recovering the subject". There is a

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8   A representative list would include: Dutta, K.K., Dawn of Renascent India, Calcutta, 1959; Survey of India's social life and economic conditions inthe 18th century 1707-1813, Calcutta, 1961; A Social History of Modern India, Delhi, 1975; Narain, V.A. Social History of Modern India, Meerut, 1972; Ingham, Kenneth., Reformers in India 1793-1833, Cambridge, 1956; Ballhatchet, Kenneth, Social Policy and Social Change in Western India 1817-1830, London 11961; Panigrahi, Lalita, British Social Policy and Female Infanticide in India, Delhi, 1972.

9   A discussion of which is found in Bhattacharya. S., "Paradigms Lost : Notes on social history in India", Economic and Political Weekly special annual Number, April, 1982, pp. 690-96.

10   Guha, Ranajit, (ed.) Subaltern Studies Vol. I-VI, Delhi, 1982-89.

11   All works being inspired in one way or another by Foucault, Derrida and specifically Edward Said.

growing preoccupation with questions of otherness - a problem that exists, not only for the historian as a participant-observer but more immediately for the social object designated as the "other". For, as the ones directly subjected to the universalising mode of enquiry, they constantly face either the threat of assimilation or equally the silence of obscurity as eternal "stranger" on the margin of the historical narrative. But yet, one has to be watchful about equating the characterization of the "other" with power. This is not always true and one could end up seeing the "other" as either too powerful or too powerless. Both positions being as essentializing and totalizing as the approaches they have earlier debunked.

The new vistas that have been opened have derived a lot of impetus from an emphasis on an inter-disciplinary approach. Infact "new" History is almost synonymous with an inter-disciplinary understanding where related disciplines of social sciences have helped in the broadening of horizons in terms of questions asked, methods followed and answers given. But as with everything in vogue one has to tread carefully and not go overboard- the temptations being far too many. Cohn points out that it is not a multi-disciplinary approach but a biculturality that "prepares us better".[12] But it is the

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12   Cohn, B.S., op.cit., p.17.

"immersion" that is problematic and the historian has to be cautious, about the limits within which he can allow his naiveté to operate. Often the historian moves outside his discipline but also beyond the limits of his naiveté and it is then that he ends up with "contradictory postulations of widely separated academic provenance."[13] It is this that has to be guarded against if an inter-disciplinary approach is not to be just a conventional nod to the other discipline. That is why the path of an inter-disciplinary approach, though important, remains difficult.

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13   Gupta, Dipankar., "Altering the ego in Peasant History", Peasant studies, Vol 13, No. 1, 1985, pp. 1-24, provides a critique of Ranajit Guha's The Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency, Delhi, 1983 and others of the genre of history from below on this, count. He has tried to show how most of these writings base themselves on the structural functional premises of anthropology, despite laying claims to writing "new" history.

CHAPTER I

COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION : APPROACHES AND ANALYSIS

In the aftermath of the census operations, writes G.S. Ghurye,

"various ambitious castes quickly perceived the advantage of raising their status ... the leaders of all but the highest castes frankly looked upon the census as an opportunity for pressing and perhaps obtaining some recognition of social claims which were denied by persons of Castes higher than their own ... the total result has been a livening up of the caste sprit." [1]

M.N. Srinivas is voicing a similar opinion when he writes,

"An indication of the widespread desire for mobility among the backward castes comes from an unusual source, namely the census operations", when getting the names recorded in the census became a part of the struggle to achieve a higher status than before so much so that "the attempt to use the census to freeze the rank of castes had the opposite effect of stimulating mobility and also increased inter-caste rivalry." [2]

The two quotations cited above are just a pointer to the fact that the problems of "construction" being raised in our

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1   Ghurye, G.S., Caste and Class in India, Bombay, 1950, pp. 158, 169-70. (First published 1932), London.

2   Srinivas, M.N., Social Change in Modern India, Delhi 1972, p. 94,99.

field are not new, even though, they are now being posed and examined in a different manner. What was being examined as an impact of the census operations in the British times has come to be seen as an important site for the exercise of colonial power in the broader field of "constitution" of cultures. The last decade, most observers would agree, has seen a change in the assumptions and concerns of Indian socio-cultural history. The change has however, not led to the emergence of a new dominant framework or direction of research. There could be two reasons for this - one that we are in a period of experimentation and innovation which is often marked by some false starts and uncertainties. The second reason is not so apparent and leads us to an examination of the assumptions on which this "new" research is based, which forms a part of the second half of the chapter. The first half involves an analysis of writings that have emerged from the "Chicago School" - as typified in the writings of Bernard S. Cohn, Nicholas Dirks and Ronald Inden.[3] I also include in this section a recent work by an Indian author, Shekhar Bandyopadhay's, Caste, Politics and the Raj - Bengal 1872-1937.[4] The ordering is neither alphabetical nor chronological - it is based on the role that

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3   Cohn, B.S., An Anthropologist Among the Historians and other Essays, Delhi, 1987. Dirks, Nicholas B., The Hollow Crown : Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom, Cambridge, 1988. Inden, Ronald., Imaging India, Oxford, 1990.

4   Bandyopadhyay, Shekhar, Caste Politics and the Raj - Bengal 1872-1937, Calcutta, 1990.

Cohn has played in his capacity as a mentor for both Dirks and Inden. He had through his writings laid down the agenda for both of them in the 1960's and the subsequent writings have not only developed but also departed from the initial agenda

I

Of the authors studied here, I must admit at the outset that I find myself closest to Cohn and I hasten to add that Cohn, inspite of his simplicity has been the most complex - more because of the way I got to read him - in a collection of his essays. A collection comprising of writings done over a couple of decades on themes which feed into each other and yet elude coherence - a function perhaps of the way in which the essays are presented. And, yes, "an order is imposed" as Ranajit Guha says in the Introduction "by aggregation and seriality ... and reveals an identity which is comprehensible in parts",[5] but not so easily for someone who is getting Cohn in a packaged form. More so because Ranajit Guha flounders badly in his Introduction to the volume. Apart from situating Cohn in the broad anthropological tradition and yet setting him apart - Guha transcends the functional limitations of providing an introduction. Far from realising the complexity of the "joint frontiers" which Cohn talks of between anthropology and

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5 . Guha, Ranajit., "Introduction" to Cohn's An Anthropologist ...., p.vii.

history which get articulated in his writings, Guha sees "confusion". The objectification of social life and its constitution and construction through contest, is the subject matter for Cohn and is best studied through representations. But representations not in the "Durkhemian sense" of the term as Guha would have us believe.[6] The attempt of studying these representations Guha says, leads Cohn "to generate a kind of metonymic skid so that each operation even as it nominates a theme for itself will by that very act constitute and posit another"[7] or better still "Cohn's work point thus towards a direction where a robust hedonism of the mind will again animate the field of South Asian studies by a new sense of 'wonder' and the play of an insatiable doubt".[8] Blasphemy at best. The attempt here would be to avoid such pitfalls.

Guha is perhaps right when he is talking in terms of an evolution in Cohn, a process whereby the forces of colonial contact cease to fall into an impact - response model. But Cohn is always aware of the dangers inherent in, a one sided scheme of things (either in form of top down or bottom up history), and is always drilling home the point that cultures are historical

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6 · Ibid., P.xx. It is to be understood here that for Durkheim these representations, forming a part of the collective conscience, were seen as fostering consensus and social solidarity. On the other hand Cohn would be more interested in how these representations get articulated through contest.

7 Ibid., p. xxiv.

8 Ibid.

because they are constructed constantly; they are invented or modified without being totally transformed. And thus, Cohn argues, contrary to Inden and Dirks "we cannot deal with history only as the reconstruction of what has happened and as the explication of the native's own understanding of the encounter with Europeans"[9] but, also in the manner, the objects and subjects of colonial control system participated in the definition and constitution of identities.

My understanding of Cohn is based on the assumptions that his idea of "networks of relationships" and "relationships with centre" provides a key to his method (and I hope that my reading does not become a reading "for" Cohn) the integrative functioning of which can be examined at various levels.[10] Networks of relationships refer to local rural networks of social relationships and are distinct from those denser nexus of relationships which may be called centres, and there is a multiplicity of them. This structure can, with some prudence, be transferred to the different levels of caste where Cohn draws a distinction between jati (the endogamous caste), jat (the caste cluster) and varna levels. He though, recognizes that this is only an analytical distinction and that the word jati

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9   Cohn, B.S., op.cit.

10   Cohn, B.S. and Marriott, McKim, "Networks and Systems in the Integration of Indian Civilization" in Cohn, B.S., op.cit., pp. 78-87.

does not have one single meaning given to it, but a plurality of meanings including one which equates it with varna The ultimate sanctioning in terms of interactional pattern, says Cohn, nevertheless takes place at the village or circle level of the caste, and the caste categories used by the British "in taking census or in the discussion on policy are not those operating at the functional level of Indian social system but those broad cultural categories much shaped by the British themselves." [11]

Before we go on to discuss the impact, the census had in terms of the " symbol systems" of the colonized, we must in terms of Cohn make a crucial distinction between what he calls "objectification" and what Dirks and Inden call "construction" (for the latter it becomes a fetish). Objectification literally means (according to the New Websters world Dictionary) the process of minimizing the subjective factors in answering and grading or anything external or independent of the mind. It is in this sense that Cohn talks of the impact of the census so that the subject can "stand back and look at themselves, their ideas, their symbols and culture and see it as an entity".[12] What had previously been embedded in a whole matrix of custom becomes something different, the

11   See Cohn, B.S., "Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture" in Cohn, B.S., op.cit., pp.136-71.

12   See Cohn, B.S., "The Census, Social Structure and Objectificatin in South Asia in Cohn, B.S., op.cit., pp. 224-54.

"unconscious now to some extent has become conscious."[13] It is in this process of reducing the social structure to a " thing" that Cohn chooses the census-- because it touches every one and socially it asks new questions - to raise methodological questions about techniques of measuring attitudes, so popular in the late 19th and early 20th century anthropology. He then goes on to discuss the problems involved in the development of a classification system, standardization of the terminology and the aggregation and presentation of data. For Inden on the other hand, 'construction' as it gets represented in his book acquires an autonomy where the interaction of the subject in the formation of identities is not taken into account.

What is best known in Cohn is his treatment of the colonial state - shown in all its tentative intrusions and probings- whether be it his discussion on census or on law and judiciary. The incompleteness of its power gets amply reflected, though not explicitly stated - so much so, that though, the colonizers knowledge is never seen to be neutral to the relation of dominance, it is the constitution and contestation of the representation that is accorded primacy. Infact Cohn points out the danger inherent in the scheme which accords primacy to the relation of dominance, when he talks of

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13   Ibid., p. 229

the problems of history from top down where all of the modern society seems to have been designed to keep objects and persons in their place." What started as a new kind of social history will bring us back to the questions about the construction of culture.[14] It is this sensitivity to culture,[15] this according of primacy which is absent in Dirks and Inden - where the emphasis is on historicising, which one feels, gets reduced to a rhetoric.

Nicholas Dirks's, "The Hollow Crown' comes out of what Cohn would call a fruitful interaction between "fieldwork" and "archival material" in the small principality of Pudukottai. Apart from offering us an unusually detailed glimpse of an hitherto neglected locality, the book has a frame of reference that is much wider than the boundaries of the area being investigated and Dirks does use the local data to question prevailing generalisations about the organisation of Indian society both in the pre-modern and colonial period. As the study of an Indian Kingdom, "The Hollow Crown" naturally has a lot to say about the institution of kingship and, more

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14   Cohn., B.S., "History and Anthropology : The Study of Play in Cohn", B.S., op.cit., p.40.

15   Cohn has borrowed the definition of culture from Clifford Geertz which runs thus "it denotes an *historically transmitted* pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of *inherited conceptions* expressed in forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life" quoted in Cohn, B.S., op.cit. p.224 (italics mine)

generally about the process of state formations. What we are concerned with here are his formulations regarding the colonial construction of caste, as it comes out in his book and other papers published by him.[16]

The invention of caste in civil society of colonial India is seen by Dirks as a part of the larger process , which gave birth to the civil society and modern state in the west.[17] Here he differs sharply from Inden, who as Aijaz Ahmad points out, "treats colonial process not as a process at all but as a discreet object, unrelated to the pasts, in the plural both of England and India, and largely unrelated also to the ongoing process of class formation and gender construction in both the colonising and colonial formation."[18] The determination, codification, control and representation of the past have been central to the establishment of modern state and Dirks views "this process by viewing colonialism as an extension of nationalizing activity".[19] It is in this context that colonialism is seen by Dirk as producing new forms of civil society which

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16   Dirks, Nicholas B., "The Inventionof Caste : Civil Society in Colonial India", in Social Analysis 1989. "The Original Caste : Power, History and Hierarchy in South Asia" in McKim, Marriott, (ed.), India through Hindu Cat egories, Delhi, 1990

17   Dirks, Nicholas B., 1989, Ibid, pp.42-43

18   Ahmad, Aijaz., "Between Orientalism and Historicism : Anthropological Knowledge of India", in Studies in History, 7,1 (1991), Delhi, p. 150.

19   Dirks, Nicholas, B., op.cit., p.43.

have been represented as traditional forms; chief among these is caste itself.

Colonisation thus emerges, working through the " slow blunted chops' disguising its own intervention, creating masks that continue to deceive."[20] The hegemony for Dirks works through the creation of new forms of social relations and communal tensions, or the formalization of a colonial sociology in which the immediate pasts of India was represented for the purpose of controlling and appropriating the political dynamics of Indian society. The concern of comparative sociology thus are not only products of 19th century Orientalism, but also of colonial intervention that actually removed politics from colonial societies - a choice not merely of convenience but of necessities, of ruling an immensely complex society by a variety of indirect means. The study of the history of Orientalism, argues Dirks, not only reveals the participation of early knowledge about India in the project of conquest and control, it also helps to document some of the most crucial aspect of the colonial enterprise in India. This is for Dirks, demonstrated in the career of Colin Mackenzie - "where the history of collection, demonstrates the hegemonic appropriation of native voices and meanings by

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20 Dirks, Nicholas, B., 1988., op.cit., p.404.

colonial force and logics of knowledge."[21] But, this is not supposed to be understood as a well worked out plan " the assumption that the colonial state could manipulate and invent Indian tradition at will and that a study of its own writings and discourse is sufficient to argue such a case-- is clearly inadequate and largely wrong",- he adds as an afterthought . The power of the discourse, Dirks now says is not located in the fact that "it created new meanings but that it shifted old meanings."[22]

To recover the pre-colonial dynamics of Indian state and society is the main concern for Dirks and the reasons he gives for the choice of Pudukkotai are illuminating " in all its marginality ... it is possible to detect the forces that were at work elsewhere ... because Pudukottai was not brought under the patrimonial control, neither that of the Islamic rulers in the south nor that of the British..... caste thus was never set completely loose from kingship."[23] The assumption Dirks shares with Inden is not only the Durkhemian search for the "pure" but also that caste and Hindu kingship are directly

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21 Dirks, Nicholas, B., 1989, op.cit., p.45-6

22 Dirks, Nicholas, B., 1989, op.cit., p.50

23 Dirks, Nicholas, B., 1988, op.cit., p.9. However, the conclusions drawn by Dirks have been challenged recently by a scholar doing a similar field study in Rajasthan. see Peabody, Norbert., "Kota Mahajagat or the great universe of Kota : Sovereignty and Territory in 18th Century Rajasthan", Contribution to Indian So ciology, Delhi, 1991, pp.29-56.

related. He goes on, "many current theories of caste, particularly those emphasizing Brahmanic obsessions concerning purity and impurity , or the proper and improper mixing of substances, are in large parts, artifacts of colonialism, referring to a situation in which the position of the king has been displaced and sometimes destroyed."[24] and this demise has a corollary in the ascendancy of the Brahman. It is not only the matrix, in which caste was rooted, that has been displaced and hence, has to be reconstituted but the textual emphasis also must shift away from texts which have been generated only after the demise of the kingship. The legitimate concern to explain the complex interplay between colonial knowledge, ideology and institutions often produces, as has been in the case of Dirks and Inden, a picture of Indian actors *helpless* to do anything but *insensibly reproduce* the structures of their own subordination. Culture for Dirks is thus, "recuperated precisely through rescuing its political moment, ... studied as a particular conglomerate of construction set in motion by agents operationalized through agencies of the state, contested through institutional means that themselves have been naturalized through the very project of state formation."[25] What in Cohn was historicization and contest becomes for

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24 Dirks, Nicholas, B., 1988, op.cit., pp. 9-10.
25 Dirks, Nicholas, B., 1989, op.cit., p.43. Compare the definitions of culture which Cohn is working with, with that of Dirks. See footnote 15.

Dirks, "invention", "production" and "creation".[26] So at times he seems to be saying that the basic forms and the structures of the society remained in place, at others however, he says that the "institution of castes, temples and states were radically and irrevocably altered". It is this dilemma which remains unresolved in Dirks as a result of which the colonial project becomes both "totalizing and individualizing."

Ronald Inden's is the most interesting work probably, because of the nature of the agenda he has set for himself in his latest book - of how European rationality's brightness is a result of the "construction" of the dark rock of Indian tradition and how an essentializing western intellectual tradition which pigeon - holes any and every one - right from Hegel, moving through the Marxists, Structuralists, Colonialists, it even includes Cedric Robinson, the reviewer of the film "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" - a task daunting, yet in the ultimate analysis trivialising (thankfully he spares the tourist guides on India!) And sometimes one is left wondering about the nature of audience Inden has in mind. The book resembles those exotic hard bound totalizing projects on India which have a market in the west. Going through the

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26 See, "*Invention* of civil society" or "the colonial state *produced* new forms of civil society which has been represented as traditional forms; chief among them is caste itself" or "colonisation seems to have *created* much of what is now accepted as Indian tradition", in Dirks, 1989, op.cit., pp. 43-5.

book, something that always stayed with me, was Romila Thapar's opening lines of A History of India- Volume I, where she talks of the proverbial "rope tricks"[27] - hallucinations continue, though at a different plane. In the exercise that Inden undertakes, almost like sexual intimacy, that which seems most private and original turns out to be, indiscreetly, public knowledge.

Virtually all of the hegemonic accounts of India, Inden argues, beginning with Mill and Hegel have made castes into the central pillar of their constructs - " caste they have held is the type of society characteristic of India"[28] This characterisation gets expressed through "hegemonic texts both, through their "descriptive" and "commentative" aspects. Caste thus gets displaced onto every area of Indian life; it is associated with race and occupation, religion and taboos, land control and psychic security, with birth and death, marriage and education; Indian thoughts and actions are separated with each other : there are always discrepancies between caste-rules and actual behaviour.[29] I need to say that it is this displacement that Inden seeks to correct, and Imagining India has to be seen in

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27   Thapar, Romila, A History of India, Vol. 1, London, 1966, p.15.
28   Inden, Ronald, 1990, op.cit., p.82.
29   Ibid, pp.9-10

the context of his other writings, writings which today could embarrass Inden.[30]

The chapter on caste in <u>Encyclopedia Britannica</u> written jointly by Inden and Marriott[31] - no less hegemonic a text by any standards - argues against a socio-centric approach. There is an emphasis on the understanding of the cognitive assumptions and this is done through an examination of the Indian social concepts "that are first known from Vedic texts". The social concepts examined are the substance (*sarira, rakta*) and the code (*dharma*), in the relationship among the castes, the varna categories in the Vedic sacrifices and the Hindu worship in relation to caste. The conclusion runs thus "every genus (and therefore every caste) thought to have as shared or corporate property of its members, maintains its substance morality and correct exchanges with other castes."[32] It is this conception of caste which gets reflected in his history of caste and clan in the middle period Bengal. This book is important for the kind of periodization it entails. The period covered is 1500 to 1850, the starting point being defined by the demise of

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30 Inden, Ronald. and Marriott, McKim., <u>Encyclopedia Britannica, Micropedia,</u> vol. 4, 1974, entry on Caste Systems; Inden, Ronald., <u>Marriage and Rank in Bengali Culture</u>, California, 1976; "Ritual authority and Cyclic theory in Hindu Kingship", in Richards, J.F., (ed.), <u>Kingship and Authority in South Asia,</u> Wisconcin, 1977

31 Inden and Marriott, 1974, <u>op.cit.</u>

32 Caste thus gets defined by body substances, almost acquiring a genetic tinge.

the Hindu kings of Bengal after which the "Muslims ushered in a new period of misconduct and disorder among the Brahmans and Kayasths"[33], who in the absence of the Hindu king as the adjudicator and donor of gifts, narrowed the standard of good conduct to marriage alone and collectively took up the functions of the single Hindu king. And in this way they nourished and sustained their embodied vedic ranks and maintained order among themselves. He concludes, "the distinctive institution of Indian civilization does not appear until the 13th/14th century, at the earliest, and castes are not the cause of the weakness and collapse of the Hindu kingship but the effect of it"[34] Inden however, is dismissive of" his early luring by the siren of caste", though not in the same condemnative tone. Caste now is not seen as an immutable principle, but as an inclusivist institution defining categories of citizenship within a polity, made up of overlapping societies connecting village, district and court. At the social level, this principle of overlapping was expressed through a cultural concern with maintaining flexible and incorporative relations with higher and lower lords. At the wider cognitive and theological level, it emerged in the acceptance of opposites, of good and evil as part of the same continuous reality, in contrast

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33   Inden, Ronald., 1976, op.cit., p.151.
34   Inden, Ronald., 1990, op.cit., p.82.

to the dualisms characteristic of the post-Enlightenment thought.

In his scheme of periodization, the relationship of Hindu kingship with caste persists and he sees the "construction" of caste being based on the literature coming out of the period in which Hindu kingship had declined - as the source of misrepresentation and hence, we see in him a quest for "reconstruction" of "real" India before it got tainted. The object of this reconstruction is the "imperial formation" of the Rashtrakutas and the sources range from family genealogies, Vishnudharmottara Puran, Arab accounts, Imperial charters and one wonders whether this collection is less tainted than the colonial accounts of the 19th century. In the last chapter titled "Reconstruction" he attempts to do for Indological studies what Said has not done for the Orientalist studies. The chapter is revealing because it points out the limitations inherent in such a programme. Inden's recovery of agency leads into locating it pre-eminently in terms of the action of corporate institutions (that range from village unions, council of citizens, castes, royal courts and religious sects, to trading companies, universities and professional associations) - a contradiction of sorts.

This chapter also sees a change in tone, and this is important. The condemnative tone involved in deconstruction

changes to one which is wary and tentative - a realisation perhaps, of the fact that he is on slippery grounds. This comes out clearly in his concluding remarks where he is very honest, "some will no doubt consider that I have done here a retreat from social history, a turning away from the study of the oppressed to the study of the oppressors, the ruling classes of the ancient India. To a certain extent I plead guilty".[35] But, he begs the indulgence of the social historian - " It is precisely where the ideas and practices of the Indian ruling classes are concerned that Orientalist discourse differs from the discourse of the social sciences about its own European and American worlds."[36] Are we then to believe (and we have enough reasons for doing so) that the "agency" is located within the ruling classes and the "construction" which Inden says constitutes the "imagined India" has an effect only at the level of social sciences? What then of the issues of power, culture and construction? An examination of these "constructions" vis-a-vis the identity formation of the colonised does not figure in Inden's scheme of things, where he studies representations through constructions and not the other way round. India is thus, seen as having been produced by "their" ideas and not

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35   Inden, Ronald., 1990, op.cit., p.270.

36   Inden, Ronald., 1990, op.cit., p.270. Within Inden's own intellectual position it is difficult to sustain the kind of intellectualism he practices - privileging medieval travelogues over the voluminous researches of later generations, western and Indian alike.

"ours" ; "in many respects the intellectual activities of the orientalists have even produced in India the very Orient which it produced in the discourse".[37] And one wonders if imagination is that powerful. Inden invokes Gramsci for his defence, "if rulers and ruled were overlapping classes that were mutually, if not symmetrically, defining, a point Gramsci made again and again, we can not do the history of one without also doing the history of the other"[38] - hegemony thus, at the hands of Inden gets reduced to a Parsonian value consensus.

There are however, two other problems with the kind of arguments put forward by Inden. One, relates to the nature of agenda that Inden has set for himself and second, to the kind of texts he uses to construct a monolith of the colonial discourse and its adherents. This limitation he shares with Dirks. Inden is at his best when demonstrating the deficiencies of a too hasty reification and exposing the succession of Indianists who took refuge in it. It is his choice of the Indianists which is problematic. Imagining India is a history of the "intellectual practices" or what Bayly calls "a genealogy of ideas"[39] and I beg to say, even the genealogy is not complete, a look at the Bibliography of the book reveals it.[40] Inden is

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37   Inden, Ronald., Ibid., p.38

38   Inden, Ronald., Ibid., p.270.

39   Bayly, Christopher., "Elusive Essences", Times Literary Supplement, Dec. 7-13, 1990, p.1313-14.

oblivious (whether it is unconscious or deliberate is any one's guess) to a particular genre of writings on caste - writings which like Inden challenged the "essentializing" views.[41] Of the works seen as part of 19th century tradition, Dirks and Inden only create a villain in Dumont[42] whose views have received a very critical evaluation in this country. It would be very facile, I think, to argue for an unchanging construction of caste, working just against the ghost of Dumont.[43] But this is very endemic to this kind of analysis - "colonial discourse" gets reduced to such simplifications - almost to a paper tiger, so that its slaying becomes very easy. But then there are no laurels to rest on.

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40   Inden, Ronald., 1990, see the bibliography.

41   The works which Inden takes into account are only of M.N. Srinivas, Rajni Kothari and Veena Das - a selection hardly worthy of the kind of generalisation that Inden makes. The works of G.S. Ghurye, N.K. Bose, Y.B. Damle, Andre Beteille, T.N. Madan, A.M. Shah, Y. Singh,. K.L Sharma., Dipankar Gupta, et al are not taken into consideration. Even the western writers, such as F.G. Bailey, Bouglé, Berreman, Jan Breman, Harold A. Gould, E.R. Leach, Owen Lynch are left out of this purview. All these are sociologists working in the field who have gone a long way in challenging the Orientalist conception of caste. The list is revealing because of two reasons: firstly it detracts from the monolithic conception of caste which Inden has erected and ssecondly it challenges the view that "Imagined India" goes on producing itself. It also points out that the "construction" which existed may be at the beginning of the century has long been discarded by sociologist and anthropologists working in the field. The "agency's" recovery had started long before Inden took upon himself the task of this "recovery". The "construction" thus cannot be attributed to the timeless machinations of the "other" in the western episteme. Western interpretations have been as divergent as the indigenous ones.

42   Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus, Delhi, 1988 (First Published 1970, London)

43   Not only Inden, Dirks is also guilty of the same. See Dirks, N.B., 1988, 1989, op.cit.

The first problem stems from seeing "essentialisation" and the use of elaborate taxonomies to describe the world as a particular western and post-Enlightenment form of thought.[44] It can be pointed out that the study of India has produced as much essentialism and misguided speculation as any other field of enquiry and it is not only related to the study of Orient. Indological debates were almost always occidental debates as well; Orientalism of the early 19th century was attacking the older order in Europe through the image of India as Eric Stokes has shown.[45] The 19th century debate about the Eurasian village community, sparked of by Maine, referred back to gathering conflicts about agrarian society in Great Britain and Ireland. Many of the characterization of Hindus found in these pages are indistinguishable, says Bayly, from what contemporaries were saying about the Demon Drink, the working class, the Irish, the Roman catholics in general, or indeed about women.[46] They were generically related to the understanding of quite specific historical situation in Europe. At some level processes of objectification - of identities, institutions, traditions - may well be indispensable to any form of collective social life.

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44 Invoking Collingwood, Inden argues that social sciences have to watch against lapsing continuously into a spurious essentialism.

45 Stokes, Eric., The English Utilitarians and India, Oxford, 1959.

46 Bayly, C.A., Elusive Essences, op.cit., p.1314.

Indological studies had and continue to have, clear origins in Indians' "essentializations" of their own society; they were not simply external impositions. From the time of Al Beruni onwards one finds Indian sources referring to Hindu society as effeminate, riddled with superstition, its polity neutralised by caste. Hindu scholars and administrators, before, during and after British rule depict tribals, unsettled people and lower castes as ungoverned, dangerous and magic-ridden. Thus, through an argument against "essentializations", Inden returns to the same, though after the detour of "deconstruction" - "I now reject the idea that *makes caste rather than kingship or a polity the constitutive institution of Indian civilization from its very inception down to the present*" [47] (italics mine). Hardly less essentializing.

Shekhar Bandyopadhyay's <u>Caste Politics and the Raj, Bengal 1872-1937</u>,[48] does not quite fit into the class of literature discussed above for two reasons - first, it does not have the same agenda of an anthropological history, ethno-history or deconstruction and secondly, because its frame of reference does not include Edward Said, Foucault or Collingwood. Not only this, Bandyopadhyay has worked, aware only of the writings of Cohn, with no reference to either Inden

47   Inden, Ronald., 1990 <u>op.cit.</u>, p.82.
48   1990, Calcutta

or Dirks. So though he refers to the necessity of "looking at the problems from below",[49] in passing, he does not find it imperative to elaborate his position methodologically.

Bandyopadhyay starts with the assumption that the national movement in Bengal was an "exclusive preserve of high caste Hindus"[50] and aims to explain how and why the lower castes were left behind. The explanation which he provides for the same relates to changes in the caste system as a result of alterations in the opportunity structure during the British times (this however, he does not bring out in detail), study of British conceptions and policies towards caste and lastly the grievances and perceptions which fuel the politicisation of the backward castes (namely the Namasudras or Rajbansis and Mahisyas).

His analysis of the changes in the caste leaves much to be desired and here, the dilemma is common to historians - the dilemma of relatively emphasising, continuity or change. It is convenient to bring out the change as striking if the background is "frozen" but a pronounced emphasis on change sees the historian quickly beat a retreat. And this is what the author repeatedly does.

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49   Bandyopadhyay, S., op.cit., p.2
50   Bandyopadhay, S., op.cit., p.1

In his study of the colonial discourse on caste, Shekhar Bandyopadhyay shows how the colonial ethnographers looked at the caste system and discovered in it a central dichotomy, with the privileged higher caste at one end, the deprived lower caste and the untouchables at the other end of the spectrum. He goes on to delineate how on the basis of this assumption, the colonial policy of protective discrimination was evolved to provide concessions and special privileges for the deprived sections of the Hindu community, along with the Muslims, "in matter of education, employment and constitutional rights".[51] This formulation is based on two questionable assumptions - one, that in the overall policy of "divide and rule", the two categories of "Depressed Classes" and Muslim can be equated; secondly, that the policy of protective discrimination is synonymous with the policy of "divide and rule". I see protective discrimination more as a policy of the State which is not willing to carry out more structural changes which would render protective discrimination meaningless. So first, it is a policy of maintenance of the status-quo, of favouring the elite and only in the second order of things, a policy of "divide and rule". After all, the meagre concessions under the cover of protective

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51   Bandyopadhyay, S., Ibid., p.52.

discrimination where not enough to keep the depressed caste in the colonial camp.

The first assumption of equating the categories of Depressed Classes and Muslims stems from a position where Bandyopadhyay is perhaps weakest - a conception of caste that is unclear, at best eclectic and by that logic contradictory. Without locating studies in their respective traditions, he collapses them and with a sociological naiveté speaks of Dumont, Beteille, Irawati Karve, Inden and Lynch in the same vein.[52] He simplistically talks of the various dimensions of the caste system viz functional, religious, normative, structural and then defines caste as "status groups or aggregates of individuals who shared a particular set of norms of social and ritual behaviour and a consciousness of community identity and to which membership depended by birth",[53] - at best a cultural definition. Bandyopadhyay fails to distinguish between jati, a constituent unit of the caste structure and the caste structure and it is because of this that he misreads change in one as change in another and is unable to bring out the structural

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52   Bandyopadhyay, S., Ibid., pp.3-5, 200-202

53   Bandyopadhyay, S., Ibid., p.4; or when he is talking of the impact of the British policies "what was essentially a social and cultural dichotomy, was now given a political shape", p.53; or "caste was still an important ... because ritual rank was still an important index of social status", p.200. Though his study moves in a different direction, he frequently lands up with a Dumontian conception when he attempts to define caste.

implications of the caste system. He concludes thus "....caste increasingly became a rallying symbol for political mobilisation, a social category was thus transformed into an interest group",[54] as if caste in pre-British times did not function as an interest group.

All this is not to detract from what is best in Bandyopadhyay's book - the treatment of lower caste politics of Bengal. Here, he successfully demonstrates how the nationalist party was unable to accommodate the interests of Depressed Castes in its programme. As a result of which the caste associations of Namasudras or Rajbansis and Mahisyas rose to articulate the community consciousness. He rightly refuses to equate the express identity with the "caste" identity and provides insight, (useful for my last chapter) as to how the upwardly mobile sections of these caste came to the helm and only because of the convergence with the grievances of the masses, were able to forge a viable identity because of their location in the structure of Bengali society.

II

The "colonial discourse analysis" as it has emerged owes its "paradigmatic" break to a host of other influences and

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54   Bandyopadhyay, S., Ibid. p.203.

so a word about them would be important. It was really from

the late 1970s that dominant perspectives on Indian culture,

with their explicit or implicit assumptions about modernity

began to break down. Interestingly, this stemmed not so much

from the changing perceptions about India, as from the gradual

erosion and collapse, across range of fields and discourse, of

assumption about modernity and cultural coherence of western

societies themselves. Emerging from this milieu, post-

structuralist perspectives exemplified, particularly for

historians, by the works of Michel Foucault, launched a very

direct attack on the project of modernity itself, dissolving

unitary histories and emancipating those of the marginal and

possessed.[55] It was this complex set of ideas which found

fruition in the extremely influential work of Edward Said, with

its emphasis on how the very representation of "Oriental"

culture as "Other" was itself the product of western

epistemology and colonial projects of power.[56] Said defines

Orientalism as a body of knowledge produced by text and

institutional practices. According to him, Orientalism was

responsible for generating authoritative and essentialising

statements about the Orient and was characterised by a

mutually supporting relationship between power and

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55   A useful introduction to these debates for historians is in Attridge, D., and
      others (ed.,) Post Structuralism and the Question of History, Cambridge, 1987.

56   Said, Edward., Orientalism, New York, 1978.

knowledge. As I, reflect on Said's analysis, there are three elements, that in my view give Orientalism its coherence : first, its authoritative status; second, its fabrication of the Orient in terms of founding essences immutable to historical change and prior to their representation in knowledge; and third, its incestuous relationship with western exercise of power over the third world.

Said's works sparked off a new genre of scholarly literature for India, focusing on the ways in which colonial knowledges were seen to objectify, manipulate and dominate aspects of society and culture.[57] This opened up a whole range of institutions and relations within Indian Society to a new examination. It has been marked by attempts to make cultural forms and even historical events contingent above all, on power relations - rather than seeing these events as important because they were so well regarded in the past, it interrogates the past's self evaluation.

But, as we have seen, the application of these radical insights have not been without limitations. Here, we

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57   They are reviewed in Parry, B., "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse", Oxford Literary Review, 9, (1-2), pp.27-59. Mani, L. and Frankenberg, R., "The Challenge of Orientalism, Economy and Society, 14 (2), pp. 174-193, 1985, Bhatnagar, Rashmi, "Uses and Limits of Foucault : A study of theme of origins in Edward Said's Orientalism, Social Scientist., 1986, 158, pp.12-21. Prakash Gyan., "Writing Post-Orientalist histories of the Third World : Perspectives from Indian Historiography", Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 32, n. 2 April 1990, pp. 383-408.

examine critically Said's own paradigm which, as pointed out by critics, has been deeply ambiguous.[58] Aijaz Ahmad has pointed out the contradictions inherent in the paradigm of Said and Inden.[59] In these essays he has shown Said's work to be flawed; how Said has established an uneasy set of relationship with colonialism and Marxism and how Said has reduced Foucault to only "terminology", how the digits of debate set forth by Said are in contradiction with Foucault and Derrida though Said claims to draw from both of them and how the three definitions of Orientalism given by Said are in mutual contradiction with each other.[60] Said's methods, are borrowed from the High Humanist tradition of comparative literature and this we are told is a radically anti-Foucaultian position. Ahmad has also demonstrated the dangers inherent in Said's approach in so far as it can and has been easily appropriated by the conservative right wing positions, as in the case of Ronald Inden.[61]

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58 See for example the critique in Clifford, James., The Predicament of Culture : 20th Century Ethnography, Literature and Art, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 255-76.

59 Much of this is based on Aijaz Ahmad's analysis. See his "Between Orientalism and Historicism : Anthropological Knowledge of India", Studies in History., 7, 1, 1991, Delhi, pp.135-63. See also, his "Orientalism and After : Ambivalence and Cosmopolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said", Occasional Papers on History and Society, Second Series, No. XLIV, 1991, NMML.

60 Said, Edward., Orientalism, New York, 1978, pp. 2-3.

61 Ahmad, Aijaz., op.cit.

However, the major problem in these approaches arises from their primary focus on "representations", hence underplaying the subject's own capacity for agency and change. And, it is precisely this recovery of agency that was supposedly the prime mover for such approaches. The assumption seems to be made too often that the flow of power was all in one direction - so a recovery of "agency" in the ultimate analysis ends up without "agency". This leaves us in a not so comfortable position handling the question of power, culture and construction. What we would examine in the later chapters would be this process and nature of "construction", try and see if these can be located in the pre-colonial times and in the end, the force of this construction - as to how hegemonic a form does this take.

CHAPTER II

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF CASTE

Caste has a kaleidoscopic character. It's mention evokes different things. It evokes concepts, images and identities; concepts of race, varna and jati; images of the Purusukta hymn, of the injunctions of Manu and other Dharamsastra, of the observations of Megasthenes and Al - Idrisi, of the response generated to the British census operations, of the restrictions which limit day to day interactions; identities as expressed in the mythic legends of Epics and Puranas, in the right and left hand castes of South India , in the caste association of modern times and in contemporary times in the passions generated around the Mandal Commission Report. It is not that the concepts, images and identities are unrelated to each other- they feed into each other and each at a higher level gets expressed in "identities". It is in these process of "identity formation" and the interaction of concepts, images and identities that caste emerges as an enigma.

This chapter, I need to point out at the very beginning, is not a statement in so far as it does not have a single theme. It has several of them-- I have picked up aspects and studied them in the light of the existing literature[1a] - these

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[1a] The idea has not been to portray the totality of "caste" but rather, to have a thematic discussion. For an introduction to the literature exising on the subject see Gupta, Dipankar, (ed), Social Stratification, Delhi. 1992.

aspects are also, those which have aroused much debate among sociologists. In the latter half of the chapter I would raise questions which interest the historian in my line of enquiry.

I

The sociology of social stratification inheres many basic and complex theoretical issues- those related to the nature of social order, social equality and inequality , social justice, power and the nature of man. These issues are strategic to sociology and also influence the postulates and presuppositions of other social sciences. In sociology, these issues relates to question of theory, structure and process of social stratification - these three being organically interrelated though heuristically distinct. The theory of social stratification implies a set of concepts, presuppositions and assumptions that are verified and validated and constitute an explanatory system.

When we analyse, the theoretical approaches in the sociology of social stratification on this criterion, we find that stratification studies rarely reach the formal level of theory. Consequently, there is a theoretical divergence about the explanations of social stratification: it is explained either, in terms of the need in society for ranking the roles and statuses of its members, commensurate with their relative normative-

utilitarian significance for society and the consequent rewards or, the ranking and differential rewarding of roles and statuses is seen as being commensurate with their access to the extent of institutionalized power. The first explanation roughly corresponds with what is known as the functionalist theory and second, with the conflict theory of social stratification.[1] Both, have many theoretical variations. A common presupposition in all functional theories is that social stratification results from value consensus in society about the ranking of roles and statuses for rewards. Similarly, all conflict theories assume that the "consensus of values" manifests only the sanctions that the power elites in a society impose upon men entering into various roles and status situations. The stratification system is therefore inherently unstable, involving perpetual conflicts for the mobility of status and challenge to the established structure of power. Both of these theories are generally speaking not without ideological bearings and it is not without significance, however that the popularity and acceptance of the conflict of social stratification is high among the sociologists of the Third World. Of late however there has been an attempt to move away from the formulation of master theories to the analysis of social

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1   For elaboration of both viewpoints see Davis, Kingsley and Moore, E. Wilbert, "Some Principles of Stratification", American Sociological Review, 10, No. 2, April, 1945 as excerpted in Gupta, Dipankar, (ed.), op.cit., 441-454. Smith, Gavin, "The Use of Class Analysis" in Turner, D.H. and Smith, Gavin, (ed.), Challenging Anthropology, Toronto, 1979.

stratification with the help of a limited set of conceptual categories such as "status", "wealth" and "power" (and the primary influence here, has been of Max Weber). Despite shortcomings, this approach has theoretical validity as it can take account of the normative, as well as the economic and political aspect of social stratification.[2]

The second issue in the study of social stratification is that of structural units through which the system of stratification may be conceptualised. Here, the emphasis is not on the "why" of social stratification which is the relevant context of theory, but on the "how" and "what" of the phenomena. It is here that issues of "nominalism" and "realism" in theoretical presupposition have relevance.[3] The unit comprising the system of stratification might range from roles to groups and categories such as family, caste, class, occupational groups and elites. In the nominalist framework the unit of stratification is a role or a status which is normatively defined. Even when stratification is analysed in terms of categories such as occupational types or classes, these concepts are derived inductively with the help of nominalist components. These components may consist of a set of

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2   See Runciaman, W.G, "The Three Dimension of Social Inequality" in Beteille, (ed.), Social Inequality, Penguin, 1969.

3   Aron, Raymond, "Two definitions of caste" in Beteille, (ed.), Ibid.

attributes such as income, nature of role and social origin etc.
In the realist frame of analysis , the units of stratification are
inclusive categories or groups such as social classes, elites and
status groups or caste, and these categories are assumed to
enjoy substantive autonomy and logical priority over their
attributional components.

The third aspect in the study of social stratification
relates to its processes. By processes we mean changes in the
differentiation, evaluation, ranking and rewarding patterns in
social stratification. The extent to which increased
differentiation of social strata contributes to the merging,
mobility and emergence of strata, classes or categories, the
degree to which the system of social stratification is
transformed, the degree to which the system of social
stratification increases or decreases social inequality, are
problems which belong to the processual aspect of social
stratification.

It is with these theoretical premises in mind that
studies on social stratification of caste have been carried out.
Question can be raised about the relevance of applying certain
approaches and methods for studying social stratification. The
foreignness of theory and method in the study of Indian society
has been a point of discussion. Another point of debate
questions the "fit" between theory, method and data and often

the lack of fit between these three has been pointed out. The social scientists have been well conversant at least with the apparent character of western theories and methods of study as they have amply used them in their analyses of Indian society. However, it is still an open question whether they have done so with a proper awareness of the implications of borrowing - ideological, political as well as material. Concepts have been borrowed without weighing their relevance. It has been more an exercise in sophistry and superfluousness than in genuine sociological research and understanding. If a question is posed about the relevance or otherwise of Marxian and Weberian concepts and theories in the Indian context, I would prefer to maintain that both are partly relevant and partly irrelevant. However in the dichotomous, trichotomous or the continua concepts, one would discover more of irrelevance than relevance.The concepts such as vertical and horizontal mobility, reference group and Sanskritization are partly useful and partly futile.

The concepts of "integration", "conflict" and "social mobility" have been at the centre stage of a large number of studies on caste, class and status emulation in Indian society. Lack of indigenization is a major drawback. What is being argued is not an abhorrence to borrowing but one has to ascertain its application in terms of time and space. Transnational, regional variations and historical-ideological

moorings are, basic to any scientific and objective study of social inequality. Marx gave a call for the application of historical materialism; Weber impresses upon us the value of using *Verstehen*, Durkheim advocates the cause of structural-functionalism. We have been influenced by all of them at different points of time, and sometimes, in contradiction to each other, in our attempts to understand Indian society.

An overview of all the caste studies by Indian sociologists suggest that we are competing with each other in imitating approaches, models and methods used by British and American scholars. M.N. Srinivas's study of the role of religion among the Coorgs[4] is clearly an extension of Radcliffe Brown's functionalism. Religion is sui generis for Srinivas, caste and religion are intertwined and hence religion becomes the basis of caste hierarchy. Andre Beteille's study[5] in trying to go beyond caste through his "caste- class- power" analysis is explicitly guided and inspired by Weber's trilogy of class, status and party. The distinction between these three is justified by Beteille's observation of the "differentiation of the institutional structure" and also because he does not find summation of statuses. Beteille also noted that there is very

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4   Srinivas, M.N., Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India, Oxford, 1952.

5   Beteille, Andre, Caste Class and Power : Changing Social Stratification in a Tanjore Village, Delhi, 1966.

little preoccupation with purity - pollution and rituals in general. The problem, I think, is not regarding the application of Weber's approach to social stratification nor is it in connection with incongruence between social, economic and political aspects of rural people, instead it is regarding the a priori acceptance of Weber's theory and its inherent ideology. The theoretical core of Weber's formulation is constitutive of rationalism, subjectivity and objectification, where as its substantive inspiration comes from his experience of Germany's political and economic situation. These points have not been kept in mind while trying to understand the Indian situation through the application of Weber's theory. For instance *Verstehen* does not constitute a part of Beteille's research strategy. In fact the research strategy adopted by Beteille is "foreign" to Weber's theoretical apparatus. Hence, there is a contradiction between Beteille's approach and his method of study.

More important than these endeavours[6] would be the one which having recognised the historicity of Indian social stratification seeks to identify its present character accordingly. A "sociology of knowledge" view of social reality is the foremost requirement for studying social stratification.

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6   This critique can be extended to other works, but I have chosen the two most well known of them.

The protagonist of caste studies show a bias for its continuance and functionability. The advocates of class have different ideological upbringing. A combination of concepts with analytical synthesis may ensure a deeper and realistic understanding of social stratification in India. These are concepts of culture, structure, history and dialectics. Normative standards, social relations, specificity and levels of change in regard to social stratification can be explained by these concepts. One can have a vision of social formation of Indian society or a part of it, by using the concepts of culture, structure, history and dialectics. Here the attempt of Anthony Giddens to redirect sociological theorising becomes important.[7] After providing a consistent critique of existing forms of theorising - particularly Functionalism, Marxism, Structuralism, Phenomenology, portions of traditional Symbolic Interactionism, and Role theory, he attempts to create a theoretical approach that eliminates the shortcomings of these perspectives. The novelty of his approach lies in his attempt to blend interactionist concepts with an understanding of the structural properties of society. Rejecting the "covering law" view of sociological explanation, he visualises "the concepts of theory ...... as sensitizing devices, nothing more."[8]

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[7] See Giddens, Anthony, New Rules of Sociological Method : A Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociology, London, 1976. Central Problems in Social Theory, London, 1979.

It is in this context that Giddens has elaborated his theory of structuration, which he says "is not intended to be a theory of anything in the sense of advancing generalisations about social reality. Rather, it is an attempt to provide the conceptual means of analysing the often delicate and subtle interlacing of reflexively organised action and institutional constraints.[9]

II

Having discussed the implications of the theoretical "bases " we now move on to a discussion of concepts - that of race, varna and jati. The racialist view of caste reaches a high-water mark under the directions of the Census Commissioner (1901 Census) H.H. Risley. Risley regarded caste chiefly as a matter of race and he claimed that the caste status had a simple correlation with the nasal index of its members.[10] It is well known that Risley had an imperialist outlook and was influenced in his formulation by the practice of racial segregation prevailing in America and South Africa.[11] But the theory of racial origin was accepted with some modifications

8   Giddens, Anthony, The Constitution of Society : Outline of the Theory of Structuration, Oxford, 1984, p.326

9   See Giddens in Bryant,G.A. Christopher and Jary, David (ed.), Giddens's Theory of Structuration - a critical appreciation, London, 1991, p. 204.

10   Risley, H.H., Tribes and Castes of Bengal - Anthropometric Data, Calcutta, 1891, People of India, London, 1908.

11   Malik, S.C., Indian Civilisation : The Formative Period, Simla, 1968, p. 106.

by a number of scholars which included G.S. Ghurye.[12] Most of these authors examined the origins of caste system in terms of the conquest of Aryans over Dravidians and of Dravidians over pre-Dravidians and their views continue to find echo.[13] The theory of racial origin implied a conscious effort on the part of the Aryans to keep their blood unsullied by aboriginal contamination and Ghurye emphasised the role of the Brahmans in developing the caste system for maintaining the purity of the Aryan race. For Risley, his anthropometric data showed correspondence between social ranking of a caste and nasal index of its members and were broadly valid for north India. However, this has been questioned by other scholars who have pointed out that an equally good and perhaps even better case can be made for differentiating Indian physical types on the basis of area rather than of caste.[14] The interpretation of caste in terms of the Aryan-Dravidian opposition got a fresh lease in context of south Indian politics where it was seen as a clever device of the Brahmans for imposing their racial superiority. The racial argument has some explanatory primacy because of

12   Ghurye, G.S., Caste and Class in India, Bombay, 1969.

13   Thapar, Romila, History of India, Vol. I, London, 1966, pp. 37-38.

14   Guha, B.S., "An Outline of the Racial Ethnology of India" in Guha, B.S., (ed.) An Outline of the Field Science of India., Calcutta, (undated). Jaiswal, Suvira, "Studies inthe Social Structure of the Early Tamils" in Sharma, R.S. and Jha, V. (ed.) Indian Society : Historical Probings, Delhi, 1974, pp. 126-127.

the kind of conje ctures and speculations that riddle the subject of the origin of caste.[15]

Of late however, the concern has shifted away, from an emphasis on the study of origin of caste. There has been an increased awareness among Indologists and historians to define and clarify the concepts used for interpreting India's present, and at the center is the debate around varna and jati, and their respective workability. Thus, Trautmann criticised those who confused varna with "caste" or "class" and remarked that varna is a sacred concept which is better understood with reference to "estate" in medieval European society than in terms of "class" which is too objective, scientific and modern to represent adequately the notion of varna. The varna are divine creation and immutable, but castes may fuse together or get split into smaller castes, new castes may also be enrolled. Thus the relation of varna to caste is that of, sacred and enduring to the empirical and ephemeral.[16] The controversy is however, not new.[17] Sociologists point out that the studies of ancient Indian culture and society have largely projected a "book view" based on Sanskrit text and this has led to the conclusion that the

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15 For a useful discussion see de Reuck, Anthony and Julie Knight, (ed.) Caste and Race : Comparative Approaches, London, 1968.

16 Trautmann, "On the translation of the Varna", Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, vii, 1964, pp. 196-201.

17 Senart was the first to distinguish between varna and caste. J.H. Hutton later endorsed his views.

multiplicity of castes have grown out of the four-fold varna division of society in Vedic times. M.N. Srinivas is of the view the varna concept is inadequate to explain the fact of castes as they exist today in the various regions of India and, has drawn attention to the differences between the varna-model and the jati-model; the latter is shown to operate at the local level but the varna model remains the same all over India. Theoretically, the varnas are divided on the basis of their functions, but the jati hierarchy is organised on the principles of absolute purity of the brahman caste and the relative impurity lower down the order.[18]

There is no doubt that in modern times a distinction between the jati and the varna is easily perceptible - varnas become visible as broad categories subsuming within them a large number of jati s in a rather loose fashion. However, if we look at the concepts in form of identities, the issue I think, stands clarified. Bernard Cohn and McKim Marriott in their article "Networks and Centres in the Integration of Indian Civilization[19] seek to give a different paradigm. They talk of "networks of relationships" and "relationships with centre", the

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18   Srinivas, M.N., Caste in Modern India and Other Essays, Bombay, 1970, pp. 63-69.

19   Cohn Bernard, op.cit., Delhi. See also Marriott, McKim, "Multiple Reference in the Indian Caste Systems" in Silverberg, (ed.) Social Mobility and the Castes System in India an Inter disciplinary Symposium, Hague, 1968.

integrative functioning of which can be examined at various levels.[20] The word jati does not have one single meaning given to it, but a plurality of meanings, including one which equates it with varna. This means that each Indian is a member of an expanding series of groups or categories and that the caste system enables people to shift from one refer ent to another, and to apply the same term jati to all of them resembling in structure, the cross-section of an onion. So one cannot really point to any particular level of segmentation, and regard that, as representing caste or jati. What is constant is the principle of segmentation, not its basis or degree. The ultimate sanctioning, in interactional terms says Cohn, nevertheless takes place at the village or the circle level of the caste.[21]

What then are the general principles of caste interaction which inform the "functional categories"? I must stress right away that what follows is an idealization - a culling of details in the "ideal typical" Weberian sense and a certain "freezing" be permissible. Caste is at once, a social and cultural category. It is an identity, a label. But it is something more. As Edmund Leach has stressed "a caste does not exist by itself". It can only be "recognised in contrast to other castes with which its members are closely involved " , in a network of

20   For an elaboration of the two concepts see Chapter I.
21   Cohn, B.S. op.cit., 1987

relationships which extend to economic, religious and political spheres.[22] Caste is also a quality which resides in the blood, which is graded from very pure to extremely defiling,[23] or better still it is treated in terms of body substances (*sarira* and *rakta*) and the enjoining code of conduct (*dharma*).[24] In classical terms, Ghurye's analysis of the features of caste system, to me, remains the best. He talks of "six outstanding features of Hindu society when it was ruled by the social philosophy of caste unaffected by the modern ideas of rights and duties."[25] The features are : the segmental division of society on the basis of birth; hierarchy, which is characterised by ambiguity and regional variation, especially among the intermediate ranks; restriction on eating and social intercourse; civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections; lack of unrestricted choice of occupations and the restrictions on endogamy. These features are an "idealization" and their "resilience" would be studied in the section dealing with change. Bouglé on the other hand talks of three

22 Leach, E.R., "Introduction - What should we mean by caste?" in Leach, E.R., (ed.), Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North West Pakistan, Cambridge, 1960, pp. 5, 7, 11.

23 Yalman, N., "The flexibility of caste principles in a Kandyan community", in Leach E.R., (ed.), ibid, p. 87.

24 Inden, Ronald and Marriott, McKim, "The Caste System", Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropaedia Vol. IV, 1974.

25 Ghurye, G.S., "Features of the Caste System" in Gupta, Dipankar, (ed.), op.cit., pp. 36-40, 1991.

characteristics, that of occupational specialization, hierarchy and repulsion.[26] Dumont though drawing from Bouglé tends to emphasise one of these - hierarchy. His book in the last couple of decades has been a marker and works have been done against its background even if they define their position in opposition to Dumont.[27]

Rooted in the French intellectual tradition and borrowing from varied sources, Dumont comes to repeatedly emphasise the principle of hierarchy over the principle of separation and division.[28] He sees hierarchy in terms of "a relation between larger and smaller or, more precisely between that which encompasses and that which is encompassed".[29] He goes further to delineate Indian civilization and even Indian personality in terms of hierarchy - epitomised in the title of his book - Homo Hierarchicus. I should hasten to add, however, that he does not rule out completely the possibility of separation existing as an independent principle. He writes "it is not claimed that separation or even "repulsion", may not be present somewhere as an independent factor".[30] He does not give

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26   Bouglé, C., Essays on the Caste System, Cambridge, 1971, p.9

27   Dumont, Louis., Homo Hierarchicus : The Caste System and its Implications, London, 1972.

28   Dumont, Ibid., pp. 30, 66, 68f, 81, 98, 151, 162, 16, 173.

29   Dumont, Ibid., p. 24.

30   Dumont. Ibid.. p. 346. n 556

importance to this possibility, because, as he goes on to state, " what is sought here is a universal formula, a rule without exceptions."[31] Thus, the opposition between pure and impure, becomes an immutable principle informing hierarchy and it is this principle by which elements of the whole are ranked in relation to the whole. It is not the historicity of the evolution of the caste system that concerns Dumont, instead, change is seen only as amounting to a change *in* the system and not *of* the system. Apart from the fact that Dumont relies solely on, what has been termed as the "brahmanical sources", the fieldworks on the subject have gone a long way in challenging Dumont's thesis - that there is a clear and consistent, universal and fundamental disparity between what the author terms traditional or simpler societies and modern ones; that power and economic factors are distinct from and epiphenomenal to caste; that ritual hierarchy is the central fact of caste, independent of power; that caste occurs only in India and is not subject to cross-cultural comparisons.[32] And, as Gerald D. Berreman's respondent aptly remarked - having heard Dumont's view on caste, from Berreman, - "you have been

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31 Dumont, Ibid., p. 346.

32 For a representative critique from among sociologists see "A Review Symposia on Louis Dumont's Homo Hierarchius", Contributions to Indian Sociology, n.5, 1971.

talking with Brahmins."[33] Dumont's view thus, remains a Brahmanical one and hence incomplete and partial.

A major allegation against Dumont has been that his "Hierarchicus" fails to explain change in the caste system and social mobility. Historians working on this theme have given evidences to the contrary.[34] It is in this context that Sanskritization needs to be discussed. The term was first used by M.N. Srinivas to describe the process of cultural mobility in the traditional social structure of India. In his study of the Coorgs of Mysore he found that lower castes, in order to raise their position in the caste hierarchy, adopted some customs of the Brahmins and gave up some of their own, which were considered to be impure by the higher castes. For instance, they gave up their deities, they imitated the Brahmins in matter of dress, food and ritual. By doing this, within a generation or so they could claim higher positions in the hierarchy of castes. To denote this process of mobility Srinivas, first used the term "Brahmanization" later on he replaced it by Sanskritization, which he says is a much broader concept.[35] The higher caste

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33 Berreman, D.G., "The Brahmanical View of Caste", Ibid., p. 25.

34 For a representative opinion see Thapar, Romila, "Social Mobility in Ancient India with special reference to elite groups", in Ancient Indian Social History : Some Interpretations, Delhi, 1979, pp. 122-151. Also Stein, Burton., "Social Mobility and Medieval South Indian Sects" in Silverberg, (ed.) op.cit., 1968, pp 68-94.

35 Srinivas, M.N., "Note on Sanskritization and Westernization" in Caste in Modern India and Other Essays, op.cit., pp. 42-62.

could now be Kshatriya, Jats, Vaishyas etc., as long as the
impulses were the same - emulation and conformity to ideal
Hindu conduct norms. In the social structure of the caste
system, the hierarchy of social positions coincided with the
hierarchy of expectations about the conformity to the ideal
Hindu conduct norms. Not only some form of deviance was
tolerated but at one level their effort to follow the norms was
stubbornly resisted. Status in caste being ascribed by birth, the
chances of smooth mobility to high positions were more or less
closed at the ideological level. Despite this closure there have
been changes in the caste hierarchy and its norms, from time to
time.

The concept of Sanskritization surfaced in the work
of historians, much later than it acquired credence in
sociological formulations. Some of the essential components of
this approach were anticipated in a cruder form by historians
and British Indian ethnographers. As Ramkrishna Mukherjee
has pointed out, the historian Alfred Lyall and H.H. Risley had
anticipated Srinivas's concept of Sanskritization.[36] Moreover,
Sanskritization has come under criticism at the hands of both
contemporary historians and sociologists. Both Hetukar Jha
and C.Y. Mudaliar argue that an attempt to Sanskritize on the

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36   Mukherjee, Ramkrishana., "Trends in Indian Sociology: in Current Sociology,
     Vol. 25, n. 3, winter 1977.

part of Yadavas and Marathas respectively, were made not in the context of socio-economic prosperity, as argued by Srinivas. Yadavas were motivated by economic and social oppression whereas for the Marathas it was an assertion in face of their decline in the politico-economic structure.[37] It becomes important thus, to pay attention to the "why" and "where" of Sanskritization. Sanskritization, I think provides merely a label for a process that may be sometimes an expression of socio-economic oppression and sometimes an expression of upward social mobility linked with betterment of economic position. The model itself yields no hypothesis, it merely helps us recognise and put a name to a phenomena.

Sanskritization is the process of cultural and social mobility. From a socio-psychological perspective, Sanskritization is a culturally specific case of the universal motivation towards "anticipatory socialization" to the culture of a higher group, in the hope of gaining its status in the future. However, as Yogendra Singh points out, there are two levels of meanings which are implicit in Sanskritization - "historical specific" and "cultural specific". In the first sense, it refers to those processes in Indian history which led to changes in the

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37   Jha, Hetukar., "Lower Caste Peasants and Upper Caste Zamindars in Bihar, 1921-25" in Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. xiv, n. 4., 1977. Mudaliar, C.Y., "The non-Brahmins in Kolhapur", in Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. xv, n.1., 1978.

status of various castes, its leadership or its cultural patterns in different periods of history. In the context of the specific sense, however, it denotes contemporary processes of cultural imitation of upper castes.[38]

.The nature of this type of Sanskritization is by no means uniform. Srinivas reports as to how in southern Mysore, smiths claim the status of Vishwakarma Brahmins, Coorgs emulate customs of Brahmins, and Lingayats too identify with Brahman ritual status.[39] The emulation of Rajput customs by the lower castes has been reported by Cohn and by Rowe; of both Rajput and Vaishya model by Shah and Shroff in their study of Gujarat - in both cases the upper caste after initial resistance showed indifference.[40] What accompanies borrowing and emulation of customs of the upper caste is an adaptation of aspirations, values and cultural performances.. Sanskritization thus, sometimes takes place through increased puritanism and traditionalism in a caste along with rejection of the superiority of the "twice born" castes. The Koris of eastern

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38   Singh, Yogendra., Modernisation of Indian Tradition, Jaipur, 1986, pp.6-7; pp. 53-54.

39   Srinivas, M.N., op.cit., pp. 44-46.

40   Cohn., B.S., "The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste" in Cohn, 1987, op.cit., pp. 255-283. Rowe, "The new Chauhans : A Caste Mobility Movement in Northern India" in Silverberg, (ed.) 1968, op.cit., pp. 66-77. Shah, A.M. and Shroff, R.G., "The Vahivanca Barots of Gujrat : A case study of Genealogists and Mythographers" in Singer, Milton, (ed.), Traditional India : Structure and Change, Philadelphia, 1959, pp. 40-70.

Uttar Pradesh refused to accept water even from the Brahmins, considering them less pure[41]. In case of many other lower castes too, the process of Sanskritization includes the rejection of some models of the Great tradition. Such processes of deliberate reaction against Sanskritization; sometimes called "de-Sanskritization" have been recognized by many,[42] but its implications for hierarchy are only recently being brought out.[43] Dipankar Gupta arguing against the primacy accorded to hierarchy in the analysis of the caste system emphasises, difference. What is striking is not perhaps the originality of the approach but, rather the thrust of the arguments. Analysing the various caste legends of origin, what he calls the "discrete ideologies, " he goes on to suggest that hierarchy is arbitrary and makes sense only from the point of view of a particular caste. This is significant not only from the point of view of debunking Dumont but, also from our point of view -the role of

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41 Singh, Y., "The Changing Pattern of Socio-Economic Relations in the Countryside", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Lucknow University, 1958, quoted in singh, 1986 op.cit., p.53.

42 Cohn, B.S., "Changing Traditions of Low Caste", (1958) in Cohn, op.cit., pp. 284-298. Srivastava, S.A., "The Process of Identification and Desanskritization", Fourth All India Conference of Sociology, Calcutta, 1959. Mazumdar, D.N., Caste and Communication in an Indian Village, Bombay, 1958. Mencher, Joan P., "The Caste System Upside Down or the Not-so Mysterious East", Current Anthropology, Vol. 15, n. 4, December 1974. For a recent exposition see Khare, R.S., The Untouchable as Himself : Ideology, Identity and Pragmatism, London, 1984, pp.40-49.

43 See Gupta, Dipankar, "Hierarchy and Differnce : An Introduction" and "Continuous Hierarchies and Discrete Castes" in Gupta, Dipankar, (ed.) op.cit., pp. 1-22, 110-141.

"construction", in late 19th and early 20th centuries in the formation of these " discrete ideologies" our primary concern here. But one has to take into account the objectification and self-definition that takes place in the 19th century. So what could be taken as a form of sub-cultural identity and rejection of cultural forms of the upper castes derived from high traditions, might turn out to be a response to a different kind of milieu that was taking shape in the aftermath of the colonial rule. What cannot be denied is that in structural terms this self-perception has contributed to new horizontal solidary groups which aim at greater economic and political mobilisation and we can draw out some general principles which are constitutive of situations where Sanskritization is attempted . These are: that the groups or castes whose customs are being emulated are more often than not economically better off than the emulating caste or group itself; that the group/caste which attempts Sanskritization has high aspiration to improve its social status; that such a group is in close proximity of the higher group or the reference group for Sanskritization and has many occasions to interact with it at social, cultural and economic levels; that such a Sanskritizing group is generally less politicised, in other words, it still positively values the customs of upper caste,thus indirectly accepting their cultural superiority and covets vertical mobility rather than horizontal

solidarity and identity -projection which generally follows the phenomena of politicization.

Today, as the formal closure of the system is being rendered open through democratisation and politicization of the social structure at large and through land reforms and developmental measures, the former configuration of power is also changing . This constitutes a potential area of structural change in the system of caste in India .Changes in the distribution of economic and political power resulted in the emergence of elites among castes that were traditionally placed low in the ritual hierarchy . These men were confronted with the dilemma of status inconsistency and apart from "Sanskritizing" , in many cases they created new organisational forms to pursue these interest: a voluntary association which restricted membership to their caste members.These are known in literature as caste associations and sprang up in various parts of the country in the late 19th century and made their presence felt in Indian politics, especially in the 20th century . Starting of as a response to the British census operations they have been viewed as interest groups called into a competitive existence by the revolution in communications and the transformation of the political order during the period of British rule - changes which cut across the territorial segmentation and localism of caste in pre-British times.[44] This has led credence to the belief about the resilience of caste, implicitly suggesting that both in

organisation and in caste sentiment, the caste associations are an extension of traditional forms . The Rudolphs, despite their insistence on the novelty of these organisational forms came to view them as a continuation of old identities and solidarities . The caste association is represented as an adaptive institution in which traditional and modern social features can meet and fuse . In their view it has been a "vehicle of consciousness"and functioned as a para community which has bound previously autonomous jati s into geographically extended associations enabling its members to "pursue goal of social mobility, political power and economic advantage". By democratising and homogenising caste, and by facilitating mass mobilisation the caste associations contributed to the working of political democracy. Though they focused on Sanskritist symbols and status raising goals, their aims were basically secular and they came to represent a democratic reincarnation of caste.[45]

These writings have attracted a large body of criticism . Using data from social and political movements among north Indian caste formations, Lucy Caroll[46] has

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44   Hardgrve, Robert., Nadars of Tamil Nadu, Berkeley, 1969, p. 106, 204.

45   Rudolph, Lloyd I. an dSussane H. Rudolph., "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations", in Pacific Affairs, 33, 1960, pp. 5-22. The Modernity of Tradition, Bombay, 1969.

46   Carroll, Lucy., "Caste, Social Change and the Social Scientist : A note ont he historical approach to the Indian social history, Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 35, 1975; "Sanskritization, Westernization and Social Mobility, a reappraisal of the relevance of anthropological concepts to social history of modern

revealed how, one cannot identify a temporal evolution from Sanskritist sacred goals to westernised secular aims because the strategies of caste associations were mixed and because ritualistic symbolisation was sometimes evoked well after the stage when pragmatic economic advantages were at the forefront of associational activity . She indicates that several of the apparently Sanskritist ascetic reforms advocated by the caste associations derived from the influence of Victorian puritanism and other western values. She is insistent that from their inception, the primary interests of most associations were "economic" and "educational",and argues that the battles over symbolic prerogatives "overshadowed and masked " what were essentially power struggle.[47] This as we shall see in Chapter IV was not so.

David Washbrook[48] takes one of these themes further. Arguing against M.N.Srinavas that modern caste organisations are fundamentally different from the traditional, localised social organisation of caste; and functioned

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India", Journal of Anthropological Research, 1977; "Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society and Emergence of Caste Association" Journal of Asian Studies, Feb. 1978.

47   Carroll, 1977, op.cit., pp. 367-368.

48   Washbrook, D.A. "A Review", Modern Asian Studies, v.n.3, 1971; "The Development of Caste Organisation in South India 1880 to 1925" in Baker, C.J. and Washbrook, (ed.), South India : Political Institutions and Political Change 1880-1940, 1975; The Emergence of Provincial Politics : Madras Presidency 1870-1920, Cambridge 1976.

differently because they are active at a different political and territorial level, and within a radically different context . Employing a rich body of material from the history of the Madras Presidency, Washbrook explains how, very few castes had the type of extended kin network and caste organisations at the level of a locality (whether village or sub-region) which could be developed into a provincial level organisation . Washbrook emphasises four interlinked factors as an explanation for the appearance of such organisations in South India in the late 19th century : improvement in communication and growth of literacy; material interests of rural and urban notables; ambitious young men and educated publicists; perception of Indian society held by the British which led to a simplification and redefinition of social categories and the eventual penetration of colonial administrative structures to the locality and the devolution of local governmental authority - processes which not only contributed towards the linking of locality and province but also structured the flow of resources. Washbrook thus, underlines the fact that these associations were not at the centre of provincial or district politics .The basic nexus of politics was that of the vertical patron-client relationship. These were often cutting across caste lines and were dominated by shifting interests. It is the factional network which is the organising concept of Washbrook's analysis. He ignores the existence of a collective caste identity as a

consequence of attributes and social interaction. The "localised factions" as pointed out by Marriott, were penetrated and permeated by numerous indigenous "channels of cultural transmission"[49] which maintained a two way flow of values and messages between the cultural traditions of the locality, linguistic region and Indian civilization. It was through these means that the segmentary structure of Indian caste entered each locality, the villager was made aware of the regional and varna categories and was taught to operate the concept of jati in multivalent way, shifting from one frame of reference to another. The villager was provided with a mental ordering of the caste universe which constitute the cultural typifications. The subjective understanding of human beings and how they structure their relations with each other becomes important. It is for this understanding that I draw on the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens.[50]

The process of "structuration" is intended to emphasise that the individual-society, subject-object, micro-macro dichotomies do not constitute a dualism, but a "duality", that is people in interaction use the rules and resources that constitute social structure in their day to day

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49   Marriott, McKim., "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization", in
        Marriott (ed.), Village India, Chicago, 1955, pp. 171-222.
50   Giddens, 1984, 1991, op.cit.

routines in context of copresence, and in so doing, they reproduce these rules and resources of the structure.[51] This, individual, action, interaction and social structure are all implicated in each other, for the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems. The structure thus becomes both constraining and enabling. The structration theory of Giddens is marked by his insistence on bringing time and space relations into the very core of social theory. Caste would thus not be a property of individual people but a phenomena intrinsic to the organisation of definite types of social practice. It is therefore not an overriding dichotomy but a series of oppositions in terms of which, forms of belief and social relationships are organised. It is not simply given, but repeatedly gets reconstituted and reformed in the context of power differentials.

Another issue which has aroused much debate, centres around caste and class. The category of class operates in a double faced manner. It on one hand, inferiorizes, the caste

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51 Giddens contends that lay actors are also "social theorists who alter their theories in the light of their experiences and are receptive to incoming information,"in Giddens, 1984, op.cit., p. 35. Sociologists working in the field have arrived at similar conclusions with regard to the knowledgeability of caste rules and norms. See Khare, 1984, op.cit., Khare, "The One and the Many : Varna and Jati as Symbolic classification" in Vatuc, Sylvia, (ed.), American Studies in the Anthropology of India, Delhi, 1978, pp, 35-61.

system of stratification (in terms of it being made out to be a characteristic feature of backward and traditional society) and on the other, by the same logic predicts its demise in face of the coming up of "class", as India moves on her path of economic development. The view that caste and class are polar opposites is really not correct. One has to acknowledge that the "class" as we know it today, is an early - 19th century invention, where as caste has been a part of the lived in reality. Moreover, both have been inseparable parts of India's social formation, hence the study of their nexus, continuity and change. The view that the recent changes have seen a movement away from the caste to the class basis of social stratification is untenable. Caste is a very complex system precisely because caste is not simply a ritualistic equation. If it gets weakened (as it has in the last century in the interactional realm) in one aspect, it also gets strengthened in the other with certain alterations and accretions. Therefore, what we need to emphasise here is the dynamics of this complexity, a discussion of which falls outside the scope of this work. One obvious inference however, is that there is a caste basis of class and class basis of caste, hence both are variable as well as a consequence of one another. There is a class basis of rituals, purity-pollution and other apparently non-material aspects of social life in India. It is a myth that caste is mainly a rural phenomena. In fact all the caste association that have come up,

draw upon the urban milieu. Since caste incorporates class and class incorporates caste, neither a "caste view" nor a "class view" can explain the complexity of Indian reality. Both of them are real and overlap existentially, representing to a large extent the same structural reality. The situation, writes Yogendra Singh corresponds to a "prismatic model of change where the traditional sentiments of caste and kinship undergo adaptive transformations without completely being defracted into classes or corporate groups. Classes operate within the framework of castes."[52]

However, caste is different in one aspect - as a more endurable part of identity. It is this process of identity formation that interests me, the process of its formulation, expression and more significantly, its internalization become valid points of enquiry. The preceding treatment of caste as is clear, emphasises not on the changes in the socio-economic formation and its influence on caste (I assume my study to be foregrounded in these), but with the expressions and responses to such changes. The attempt was to have a broad overview of how the changes have been studied - I reserve my own formulations however, for the next two chapters.

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52   Singh, Y., "Caste and Class : Some aspects of Continuity and Change", Sociological Bulletin, Vol. xvii, n.2, 1968, p. 171.

CHAPTER III

NATURE OF COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Middleton one of the Census Superintendents of the census operations of 1921 remarked thus, about the effects of the British administration on caste in Punjab :

> "I had intended pointing out that there is a very wide revolt against the classification of occupational castes; that these castes have largely been *manufactured* and almost entirely *preserved* as separate castes by the British government. Our land records and official documents have added *iron bonds* to the old rigidity of caste. Caste in itself was rigid among the higher castes but malleable amongst the lower. We *pigeon holed* every one by caste and if we could not find a true caste for them, labelled them with the name of an hereditary occupation. We deplore the caste system and its effects on the social and economic problems, but we are *largely responsible* for the system we deplore. Left to themselves such castes as Sonar and Lohar would rapidly disappear and no one would suffer ... governments's passions for *labels* and *pigeonholes* has led to a crystallization of the caste system which, except amongst the aristocratic castes were really very fluid under indigenous rule ... "[1] (italics mine)

It is significant that this statement comes from within the much abused "episteme". The observation made by the Census superintendent of Punjab prempts, in more ways than one, the arguments of Inden and co. Not only is the vocabulary similar, the logical unfolding of the argument takes

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1   *Census of India*, 1921, Punjab Report, p. 434

both to the same conclusion -- implied in one and stated in the other. That, "if the government would ignore caste it would gradually be replaced by something very different amongst the lower castes".[2]

I

It is paradoxical that the two kinds of history writing in vogue today - the "colonial discourse analysis" and the "Subaltern school" have a dissimilar trajectory. If the subalterns have argued against the alleged "grand narratives" of hegemonising nationalism in exploring "popular culture" and "consciousness", the adherents of "colonial discourse analysis", on the contrary have coalesced all forms of power into the command structure of the colonial state. Thus a "heterogenisation" of popular culture is paradoxically, paralleled by a "homogenisation" of power and state.[3]

This homogenization of the colonial discourse, sees every voice as doing nothing but adding another layer to the already obfuscated reality. It is my contention here that the

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2   Ibid.

3   So much so that the colonial texts are also selectively appropriated, the 1872 Census is not deemed to be a part of the construction by every one including Cohn, because it was not a regularised census. And even of the other census those associated with Risely are given prime importance - a convenient choice I think. The neglect of the 1872 Census is also a colonial exercise - the subsequent Census Commissioners are as dismissive of that, as the "constructionists".

colonial construction is not a monolith, it contains within it
different traditions. They are not only three, viz. orientalist,
administrative and missionary as Cohn would have us believe.[4]
Infact each of these three are in themselves not monoliths, they
have fissures. The construction which supposedly started in the
accounts sponsored by the East India company undergoes
shifts, both in themes and assumptions.[5] There are
particularities, which cannot be glossed our -- of difference in
the context in which the voices are operating -- for instance
Buchanan and Risley were differently placed on the scale. Even
among the Census Reports there are differences in nature,
between the All India and Provincial reports as much as there
are dissenting voices.[6] The result is that there are different
"hegemonic texts" at different points of time and none can lay
a claim to be hegemonic, once and for all.

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4   Cohn. B.S., op.cit., p.141, Cohn goes on to examine the three view points and
     says that each had a characteristic view, tied to the kind of roles which foreign
     observers played in India and the assumptions which underlay their views of
     India.

5   For an analysis of this see, Smith R. S., "Rule-by-Records and
     Rule-by-Reports : Complementary aspects of the British Imperial Rule of law"
     in Contribution to Indian Sociology, 19.1, 1985, pp. 153-176. For an analysis
     of attitudes and policies of missions (vis-a-vis the colonial government) on
     caste, see Forrester, D.B., Caste and Christianity, London, 1980.

6   It is not that authors have been unaware of the dissenting voices, Cohn quotes
     a passage from Colebrooke, Cohn. op.cit., pp.150-151. Inden also says that
     Hocart was a "dissenting Voice", Inden, op.cit., pp 74-75 but then they are
     manginalised in face of the repressive" episteme of which none can come out.

Before we go to discuss how the colonial sociology sees caste, let us first understand our point of emphasis. In the argument regarding the colonial construction one has to choose as to which element one wants to emphasis - "colonial" or "construction", because logically and historically one cannot emphasize both. For Inden,the emphasis is on colonial, as he sees the construction operating at the level of the Western episteme through the "imperial formations". Dirks also emphasizes the "colonial" aspect and sees "construction" as coming out of the equation between power and knowledge. Cohn in his earlier writings emphasized the "modern" element of the colonial construction.[7] I, have worked with the idea that the colonial perceptions on caste are a construction in so far as every perception of "reality" is one, that the nature of the construction is related partly to the fact that those constitutive of the discourse[8] were part of a different cultural system and partly to the fact that they belonged to, and exercised power on behalf of the colonial state. The way the "construction" got operationalised and its impact, was partly colonial and almost wholly modern. And last but not the least construction can and

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7   See Cohn, "Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture, op.cit., pp.136-171. Contrast this with his more recent essay "The Command of Language and the Language of Command", in Subaltern Studies, Vol. IV, pp. 276-329 whre he shifts the emphasizes, I think to the colonial and is talking in terms of the "episteme".

8   The word, discourse, unless within quotation marks is used in an ordinary sense of the term.

should be seen in context of the social formation of pre-colonial India to see what the colonialists *did* to caste.

I am concerned here with only the tradition of ethnographic researches in colonial India. This was mainly a late 19th century development, though in the socio-economic surveys of Buchanan Hamilton a beginning had been made. This ethnographic tradition found a flowering in the ceases operations starting in the last quarter of the 19th century, and forms what Cohn calls the "official view" of caste.[9] It is true that the earlier writings of the orientalists and missionaries on caste provided a backdrop for the latter works which almost always drew from their predecessors. Caste in the earlier conceptions emerged as a rigid system of social stratification responsible for the disunity of the country, some however conceded that it had a useful purpose to serve as a mechanism for social control. These views which saw caste as an integral part of Hinduism relied almost totally on the scriptural sources giving credence to what has been called the "Brahmanic view of caste". However, this bias in the use of a particular kind of sources, started undergoing changes with the unfolding of the Census in the last half of the 19th century. The disjunction revealed by the empiricist writings, between the idealized accounts provided by the scriptures and the ground reality led

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9   Cohn, B.S. op.cit., , p.154.

to a revision of perceptions. Not only was the caste system no longer considered a rigid one, the Census reports started questioning the pronounced reliance placed on the classical texts i.e. a Brahmanic world view. As Dr. Cornish remarked as early as 1871 :

"Politically it is not to the advantage of the government that every question connected with the progress of the country should be viewed through the medium of Brahman spectacles. The contempt which the Brahmans evince for the lower classes is in itself a serious bar to the usefulness in many phases of official life, and the true policy of the state would be to limit their number in official positions and to encourage a larger proportion of non-Brahmanical Hindus and Mussulmans to enter official service, so as to allow no special pre-eminence or great preponderance of any particular caste".[10]

Whether the advice was followed or not is a different matter, what is important is however the fact that the alleged scriptural bias had started developing fissures, and this was not to be an isolated example. The writings of ethnographers and census officials further substantiate the point made here. If the ideas which the colonial power developed about the caste system in India progressively moved away from a scriptural reading it cannot be denied that the cultural categories through which they operated and the assumption that they had were to an extent influenced by the

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10   Census Report of 1871, p. 197, as quoted in Murdoch, J. Review of Caste in India, Jaipur, 1977, p.68

classical sanskritic texts. One has to allow for the cognitive difficulties, the nuances of social distinctions posed for the foreign observers of Indian society. The table given below contains varying presentations of the Hindu social devision employed by three observers - Buchanan in his survey of the districts of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh in the early 19th century, Risley in his Ethnographic appendices appertaining to Bihar in 1901 Census of India and J.T. Marten the Census superintendent of 1921 Census.

Social Divisions among Hindus

Buchanan 1811	Risley 1901	Marten 1921
1.Brahman	1.Brahman	1.Brahman
2.Degraded Brahman	2.Other castes of	2.Intermediate
3.Alleged Brahman	twice born rank	castes or non
4.Kshatriya	3.Cleanshudra	Brahman castes
5.Alleged Kshatriya	4.Inferior shudra	3.Depressed classes
6.Vaishya	5.Unclear castes	
7.Pure sudra	6. Scavengers and	
8.Impure sudra	filth eaters	
9.Vile castes		

Source : Francis Buchanan, An Account of the Districts of Bihar and Patna in 1811-1812 Vol. I, pp. 313-352; H.H. Risley, "Ethnographic appendices", in Census of India, 1901, Vol I (microfiche NMML), pp. 56-57, J.T. Marten Census of India, 1921, Vol. I, p.224.

All three observers tried to resolve the disparity between actual social differentiation and classical social theory according to the four tiered Varna model. The difference in listing however is due to the mode of operation and the milieu in which the observations were made. The general design of Buchanan's hierarchy was influenced by the opinions

of Bengali pandits (Brahman scholars) who accompanied him on his tour as informants and by his interest in Hindu treatises on the origin of Varna.[11] Consequently, Buchanan placed more emphasis on the differentiation between all four varnas in his lengthy discreption of Hindu castes, and he arrives at conclusions by a strict interpretation of the Varna hierarchy. Risely on the other hand based his classification on the survey responses of the district level officials and therefore represented a more practical illustration of the social distinctions free of the theoretical constructs. Thus he is able to include the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas within the twice born. This was the time also when Kayasthas and Bhumihars were defending their "self". However Risley is talking in terms that are similar to Buchaman when he is writing about the United Provinces.[12]

Marten is working on similar kind of information provided by the district Census officials but now the practical aspect has become more important, "we have therefore to treat castes individually or in small combinations framed in each, according to the purpose for which they are to be used", and he

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11   Buchanan, An account of the District of Bihar and Patna 1811-12, pp 313-315.

12   Ethnographical appendices, pp. 55-56. Risley talks of three categories of castes : Castes allied to Brahmans who are considered to be of high social standing, castes allied to Kshatriyas though their claims are not universally recognised and the castes allied to Vaishyas but their claim is not universally recognised.

lists three large subdivisions of the Hindu social system -- divisions which he says would be possible and useful to make, the Brahmans, Depressed classes and the Intermediate castes whose number could be had by subtraction from the total figure, the number of the first two.[13] What is significant is that the Brahman seems to be the only category which stayed unchanged, and the classification generated essentially is a Brahmanical one at the elementary level. As from the Brahmans point of view there are only three divisions -- dvija, shudra and untouchable and this is where the Census classification seems to have reached.

It is against this background of continuity that we go on to attempt a detailed study of the meta-text of colonial construction - the Census Reports. Initiated essentially for informational purposes in the mid 19th century, they became regularised and evolved as an institution.[14] The British approached the Census from several directions. If the antiquarian interest were predominant before 1891, later on, it became a source of information on the basis of which policies could be formulated, implemented and assessed. Within this broad characterisation concerns varied from time to time and

13   Marten, Census of India, 1921, Vol I. p.224.

14   For an insight into the Census see Barrier, N.G. (ed.), The Census in British India - New Perspectives, 1986, Delhi, and for its role in the construction of caste see Cohn, B.S. "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia, "in Cohn, op.cit., pp. 224-254.

according to regions. To assume that Census Reports form one continuous whole is to overlook a lot of crucial variations.[15] In its process of evolution the Census emerged out of complex dialogue which the colonial masters carried out, not only with the Indians but also with themselves. And what are taken today to be the "racial" "functional" stereotypes of caste themselves came out of contest. More than that has been granted, depended on the individual personalities of the Census Commissioners. Risely the Commissioner for the 1901 Census was I think the most enthusiastic. Other commissioners as is revealed from the tone of the reports, found the duty too onerous and drab paying even by loss of their health.[16] Thus it is not surprising that Risley should be picked up for attack in the Colonial Discourses Analysis for his "racist" bias vis-a-vis caste, because it not only "essentialises" but also "inferiorizes". What is not realised is that the racialist conception had its detractors and the Administrative Volumes with the Appendices of 1901 Census are a witness to it. The correspondences between Risely and Government of India and the disagreement even among the

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15   A shift in emphasis of the census operations can be ganged from the number of pages allotted to each theme in the Census Reports. The chapter on Religion and caste varied in length, 29, 269 pages (1881) 71, 93 pages (1901), 34, 31 pages (1911), 17, 15 pages (1921) 15, 35 pages (1931).

16   Hutton in his Introduction to the 1931 Census records the name of Superintendents who burnt out their health. Hutton, J.H., Census of 1931, Vol I. p.xi.

census officials suggests that all was not easy and smooth for Risley.[17]

No sooner had Risley come out with his tests that criticism started mounting. And Hutton in 1931 was speaking for all the Census officials when he wrote, "all subsequent Census officials in India must have cursed the day when it occurred to Sir Herbert Risely, no doubt in order to test his admirable theory of the relative nasal index to attempt to draw up a list of castes according to their rank in society. He failed, but the results of his attempt are almost as troublesome as if he had succeeded. ..."[18] Apart from being inconvenienced substantive criticism were also put forward,[19] by the census officials. Caste because of its nature was most difficult to be subjected to data collection and Census Commissioners were not uniformly in favour of its retention in the Census. It is not surprising that

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17   J.A. Baines the Census superintendent for the 1891 Census, Mr. Cotton and Baille incharge of the census in Assam and North Western province were in favour of omitting caste from Census enquiries let alone approve Risley's plan of determining the relative purity of the castes through the anthropometric tests. Census of India 1901 Administrative volumes, appendix 1, p. 26 (microfiche)

18   Hutton, J.H., Census of India, 1931, Vol I. p. 433.

19   The findings were challenged by Crooke in the United Province, Enthoven in Bombay, Thurston in Madras and even in Bengal by O'Donnel, see Gait, E. A., Census of India, 1911 Part I, p. 386; Hutton, J.H., op.cit., p.6, pp. 438-40, p.428 - 429.

such pleas came mostly from the Provincial Census Superintendents.[20]

We had in the last chapter, distinguished between the endogamous jati, caste clusters and the varna categories and seen how the individual operates in a multi refferent frame of reference shifting from one to other. It is the overlap and fissures between the three levels and the manner in which he constitutes caste identity, that becomes important. One would thus have to probe as to which of these levels are being utilised by the Census for collection of information and its aggregation. It is only in this that the issue of social identities via-a-vis colonial construction can be examined. Collection and presentation involves a choice of categories and as Gait points out, they were "selective" rather than "comprehensive".[21] A scheme adopted for the whole of India had to be broad and overlook minute classification. Despite the fact that the Census Commissioners operated, with the varna hierarchy at the back of their mind, these were not the ones used for enumeration and classification.[22] This problem of classification, was not

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20 See <u>Census of India, 1921</u>, Part I, p.222; <u>Census of India, 1931</u>, Vol 1. p.432. They expressed their willingness to "assume the functions of a modern Ballal Sen". The provincial Superintendents faced the most difficult tasks of classification of castes, the all India reports being mere aggregate of these classifications.

21 <u>Census of India, 1921</u>, Part I, p.221

22 Apart from the 1872 Census which acknowledged in its disscussion and tables the categories of Kshatriya and Kayasthas none of the subsequent Census

limited to caste, it included other returns as literacy, religion, language, education, marriage etc and the Census officials were as wary choosing them. Often the practice of the previous Census continued or some new criteria borrowed from the experience of Census elsewhere in the world were added. There was a recognition since Risley about the impossibility of operating with varna and recognised that the endogamous jati was the real operative unit. He defined caste, thus : "a collection of families bearing a common name which usually denotes or is associated with a specific occupation, claiming descent from a mythical ancestor ..... and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogenous community... invariably endogamous ... within this they have a number of smaller sub-divisions which are also endogamous.[23] Thus the enumerators were given instructions to record the endogamous castes. Once the returns had been made, the process tabulating the return started and here the principle of selectivity became important and involved a set of criteria which were a mix of numerical strength and "special interest" which the group might hold for the Census.[24] The

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reports took cognizance of the varna categories.However, Brahman was the only varna unit which figured in the Census reports.

23   Census of India,1901, Vol. I,, p. 517 (microfiche)

24   To be recorded the caste strengh in a district was to be more than 10,000. For a list of Criteria on which castes were seleted see Census of India, 1901, op.cit., p. 351. This figure kept being raised in the subsequent Reports.

Census however, did not always record the endogamous
sub-division and larger caste group such as Kayastha,
Brahmans or Rajputs also figured but as to this, there was no
consistency. E.A. Gait was soon pointing in the 1911 Census,

> "it has been suggested by some that the sub-caste or smal-
> lest endogamous, ought really to be regarded as the caste
> ... (but this is not so) ... all minor sub-divisions (of the
> larger caste) ... regard themselves as forming a single
> community ... take joint action to defend their interests. ....
> (after all) the endogemous groups is unstable.[25]

It was at this level as we shall later see that
identities coalesced. This was aided to some extent by another
classificatory function of the Census, "of associating together
many castes which are nearly related in function and origin
instead of divorcing them entirely on account of an alphabetical
chasm between initial letters of their appellations.[26] This was
significantly, done because it avoids any semblance of
arrangement by order of social precedence.[27] The Census also
involved a third order of clasification which though not
operationalized in enumeration reveals the kind of assumptions
officials and ethnographers had about caste and its various
"aspects" - racial, tribal, funcitonal and occupatinal. If Risely

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25   Census of India, 1911, op.cit., pp. 368-371

26   Census of India, 1931,m op.cit., p.433

27   Ibid., Examples of such expressions in terms of organisation are those of the
     Goalas of North India and the All India Kurmi Sabha established in the second
     decade of the 20th century.

listed seven types of caste : tribal, occupational, sectarian, those formed by crossing, national type, migratory, those formed by change of custom or occupation.[28] Obviously there was a tendency to freeze the intra-caste details and the entire unit was taken to be a caste of one type or another. This was not surprising since every one had to be classified in either of the types. E.A. Gait distinguished between four kind of social divisions in Hindu society: the four varnas and untouchables, modern castes (jatis) or social groups bearing a common name and having a common traditional occupation, subcaste or endogamous group into which each was divided and lastly the minor subdivision or exogamous group; the question of social precedence however was decided on the basis of the varna affiliation of the caste.[29] This order of classification had important influence on the social scientist till around the 1950s and as we saw in the last chapter, has no or less negemonic influence now. It did influence the self perception of the caste in so far as it did make it known, (on a scale much larger than even before) traits through which castes could be recognised and placed in a hierarchy. The best example of which is available in the tests which Blunt expected the cenus officials to carry out in determining the "exterior castes".[30] These were

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28   Census of India, 1901, op.cit., pp. 521-523
29   Census of India, 1911, op.cit., p.365
30   Census of India, 1931, op.cit., p.472

simply put, "purity" or rather "impurity" tests. These are the "characteristics" of caste or castes that acquired a new meaning and the castes through various means tried to handle these traits to their own advantage.

But how did these traits get objectified in the process of enumeration? This brings us to a very important but largely neglected section of the Census machinery -- that of the enumerators.[31] It was they who asked "new" questions and filed in the returns taking the whole process of classification and objectification to the entire population. Their numerical strength had crossed the two million mark by the 1931 Census.[32] With their work being largely unpaid for, one wonders as to why they participated in the entire exercise. They did get a "sanad" for their work which might have helped them in securing employment in the lower reaches of the government. Some reason could be attached to the attraction, which the association with the government might have held. However, nothing can be said. If one goes -intutively by what Cohn suspects, " that in many instances the questions were not even asked",[33] Cohn, op.cit., p. 248 then one can be sure that

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31 Cohn is the only one who seems to recognised their importnce, He says that "if there was a direct effect of the Census on the masses of the Indian population it was on the enumerators". I howver, feel that this need not always be true. Cohn, op.cit., 248.

32 Census of India, 1931, Part I, Introduction ix.

33 Cohn, op.cit. p.248

the returns made, were mediated by the social differentials of the Indian society. The fact that these enumerators had some scope for manipulaton despite the instructions given to them has also been recognised by the Census Superintendents .[34] It would be important to study for instance, the influence which the national movement had on them.[35] Not much is known of their social composition.[36] and one can only guess about their caste composition. But as of now, it cannot be ruled out that the caste affiliation of the enumerators must have influenced the returns filed by them.

We have so far examined how through the entire operations, of the Census the various "levels" of caste were classified. Though the entire process of assigning labels and categories were informed by assumptions Census Commissioners had of caste, a major role was played by what I call, the convenience of classification which had a logic peculiar to itself. Caste became a focal point of all

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34   Census of India, 1921, op.cit., Introduction X, p.232

35   In the initial Censuses, men who were ready to work in capacity of enumerators were easy to get, Census of India, 1891, op.cit., p. 34. However Hutton in 1931 was reporting their relative unavailability, Census of India, 1931, op.cit., Introdduction p.xi.

36   The only information we have regarding their social composition is in the Census of India, 1891, NWP and Oudh Part I. p.34. The break up of the enumerators is given as follows: Patwaris Rural 21179, urban 290; other officials rural 4728, urban 4215; Zamindars rural 36304, urban 1475; Zamindars agents rural 8212, urban 642; School boys rural 2367, urban 781; other non-officials rural 78726, urban 740; unspecified, rural 5892, urban 740; Total - rural 156408, urban 19014.

demographic indices whereby every so called secular variable of marriage literacy, infirmities, religion and family was interpreted and analysed through the blinkers of caste. So much so that adverse sex ratio in India, ie. the prepondence of males was seen to be a function of the caste system. Hutton argued that caste system with its principle of endogamy tends toward a preponderance of masculinity. He substantiated his argument with observation from Westermarck and experiments of Dr. Nagel and Dr. Heape, on bulls, horses and dogs which concluded that "inbreeding increases masculinity".[37] Similar absurd essentializing view are found in the Census, but there are un-essentializing views also. Census superintendent of Madras reacting against the notion that Indians were fatalistic and ignorant as regards their age, writes,

> "the peculiarly practical and realistic out look on life of the average Indian, who yet is often thought to be impractical and visionary. After all, years are a mere convenience for reckoning; to exalt them into an absolute standard as is done in western countires, is to give them an undue importance, capacity is what matters. Thus to the Indian, our appreciation of age limits to govern retirement and general insistence on birth certificates seen probably to show a defective, and to use a popular word in India, bureaucratic attitude towards life".[38]

Apart from statements of such kind I can assure the reader that the tenor of the report is eclectic and general, where

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37 Census of India, 1931, Part I, op.cit., p.197
38 Ibid., p.82

the majority of phenomenon is interpreted as being partly ...'
(everything).

II

A treatment of the colonial construction of Kabir
Panth would constitute an examination of the viewpoints of the
missionaries and the British government officials. The
perception of missionaries involved the larger questions : of
the relationship between caste and Hinduism, Islam and
christianity, and it is through these filters that Kabir Panth is
seen. The missionaries however are not alone - the government
officials, Census commissioners not only drew from similar
kind of sources but also borrowed from each other's writings.[39]
This overlap and the reasons for it have already been discussed
in the chapter.

The discourse follows a familiar trajectory -- an
attempt to locate Kabir panth in the broader context of
Hinduism. A distinction between classical and popular
Hinduism is made and the Panth is seen as forming a part of the
latter.[40] The writings of the missionaries, ethnographers and
administrators were ordered by a determinate cultural scheme,

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39 As discussed above every succeeding work hangs over its predecessors.

·40 Crooke, W., Popular Religion and Folklore of North India, (Reprint) Delhi.,
     pp. 1-4; Wilson, H.H., Religious sects of the Hindus, 1861 (reprint 1958), p.15.

whereby a religion had to be situated within a history which was deemed to be linear and chronological[41] and the essence of a religion lay in its basic tenets. Thus the basic tenet of Kabir (and by a curious logic, of the Kabir Panth) which was taken to be monotheistic faith, was seen in opposition to caste, idolatory and Hinduism through an ethnocentric act of will, be found to resemble Christianity. The writings were shaped in the crucible of this "cultural order of things". This was the second element of the discourse. The attempt was to thus to locate Kabir and the Kabir Panth not only in the Hindu traditions but also in the Christian one.

A persistent strain was the inhumanity and persistence of caste, which apparently nothing could shake. The Bhakti movement was an attempt at reform and thus as a parallel to Protestant reformation of the west, Kabir being seen as the Indian Luther. Westcott had prepared a chronological table comparing the Hindu and Christian saints.[42] Concerned with conversion, many Missions were almost simultaneously carrying out researches and publishing books on Kabir and Kabir panth, notable among these were G.H. Westcott of the

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41 The most representative and the earliest of these was Abbe Dubois' argument that "the sect aways tends to become a sub-caste". See his Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies (tr. H.R. Beauchamp), Oxrod, 1906

42 Ramananda (1300-1400) - Wyckliffe (1324-84); Gorakhnath (1420-1485) - Erasmus (1467-1536); Kabir (1440-1518) - Luther (1483-1546); Nanak (1469-1538) - Cranmer (1489-1555) in Westcott, G.H. Kabir and the Kabir Panth, Christ Church Mission press, Cawnpur, 1907, p. vi.

S.P.G. Mission Kanpur; Ahmad Shah of the S.P.G. Mission Hamipur and Rev. Prem Chand of the Baptist Mission of Munger. The attempts form part of an endeavour to draw parallels between Christianity and the Indian strands of monotheism especially that of Kabir, suggesting that Christianity had an important impact on these tendencies and to that extent fraternising with Islam.

R.V. Russel drawing from Westcott, Wilson and Crooke writes; "In many ways Kabir Panth resembles Christianity just as the life of Kabir contains one or two episodes parallel to that of Christ.[43] Drawing from Christianity these authors stress one aspect of Kabir Panth the most -- the emphasis on virtuous life. Russel goes on,

> " the resemblance of some of the above ideas to the teachings of the Gospel is striking, and as has been seen, the story of Kabir's birth may have been borrowed from the Bible, while the Kabir Panth Chauka has one or two features in common with Christianity. These facts raise a probability, at any rate that Kabir or his disciples had some acquaintance with the Bible or with the teachings of Christian missionaries. If such a supposition were correct it would follow that Christianity had influenced the religious thought of India to a greater extent than is generally supposed. Another interesting though accidental resemblance is that the religion of Kabir was handed down in the form of isolated texts and sayings like the Logia of Jesus and was first reduced to writings in a connected form by his disciples".[44]

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43 The two episodes mentioned are; birth from a virgin mother and miraculously supplying bread to the poor. Even the confrontation with Sikandar Lodi is taken to be simlar to Christ's trial before Pilate. Ibid., p.237

Not only this, the concern with equality is also seen by Westicott as being a part of the Gospel of Creation, "that all men have spiritual powers which should find their natural expression in communion with God, now in this life.[45]

It is in dealing with the census operations that the efficacy of the argument of colonial construction of caste can be best examined because it is here that the identities are "objectified". And it is here also that the incompleteness of the construction is demonstrated. We have already examined the classificatory and enumerative problems for the general categories in the Census. In the context of the Kabir Panth matters reach a point of ridicule. There is no clarity as to whether the Kabir Panth should be classified as a religion or a caste; two categories which were the main pillars of construction in colonial sociology, through which identities are "invented". The 1872 Census classified it as a mendicant caste[46] and in the North Western Province the number given is 25, all of which are males. The 1881 Census which has been acclaimed as exhaustive, classifies Kabir Panth as a religion outside the feld of Hinduism and Mohammedan and the

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44 Russel, R.V., The Tribe and Caste of the Central Provinces of India, London, 1916, p. 237

45 Westcott, op.cit., p.107

46 Census of British India of North Western Province, 1872, Vol. I, p.130 (on microfiche, NMML)

numerical strength to given as 344,944.[47] 46 The 1891 Census in its tables does not have an entry in the name of Kabir Panthis.[48] The 1901 Census lists it as a main caste along with Dadoo Panthis, who are also classified in the same category.[49] The number given in the 1901 Census of the Kabir Panthis is 932 (655 males and 277 females) and their area of concentration is Andaman, Bengal and Rajputana!![50] In the 1911 Census they come back to the religious fold being classified as Vaishnavas, their number being given as 49,605 in the United Province and Oudh.[51] The said passage of a sect to a caste has been transcended totally.

Obviously explanation are added for the basis of classification. But, inconsistency is revealed and the apparently monolithic nature of the construction is detracted from. This however, also calls into question the penetrability of the construction to the level of identities, which also was recognised by the Census officials. The 1911 Census report states : "it seems sufficiently obvious that a mere entry in a Census schedule implies no theory, either on part of the person

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47   Census of British India, 1881,Vol. I., p. 23 (on microfiche NMML)

48   Both in all India Report and that on the North Western Province and Oudh. (On microfiche, NMML)

49   Census of India, 1901, Vol. I - A, Part II, Table XIII, P. 280-288 (micro fiche, NMML)

50   Ibid.,

51   Census of India, 1911, Vol. XV, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part II, p. 156.

making the return or the Census staff, as to the nature of a religion or is relation to any other religion".[52]

This is not to say that there is no movement in the colonial perception regarding the Kabir Panth. H.H. Wilson in early part of the 19th century could doubt the very existence of Kabir - "I think it not at all improbable that no such person as Kabir ever existed, his name is a mere cover to the innovations of some free thinker amongst the Hindus".[53] By the end of the century the existence was not doubted and enough had been written on the subject, which in more than one way was enforced by the self image of the Kabir Panthis, rather than being the other way round. An interesting case is given in Russel's book which throws light on the force of the colonial state. In the Central Province branch of the Kabir Panth there was a conflict between Ugranam and Dhirajnam as to who would be the Mahant. Their dispute led to a case in the Bombay High Court which was decided in favour of the latter. But Dhirajnam was unpopular and little attention was paid to him. "Ugranam enjoys the real homage of the followers of the sect".[54] Power, thus, does not always flow from the colonial state, if nothing, it is circumscribed by the milieu in which it

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52 Census of India, 1911, Part I, Report, p. 105.

53 Wilson, H.H., Religious Sects of the Hindus, 1861, p.36, 40.

54 Russel, R.V., op.cit., p. 238

operates. It is contested and in the process, constantly altered and transformed.

We have in the first section, the colonial attempts at constructing caste which are not always determinate. The problem of identities would also entail an examination of the British perception of *a* particular caste and through it chart out the process of identity formation. On this issue however, the construction arguments are rather deficient - attempts have not been made to study a single caste unit and its symbolic universe to see, where and how it corresponds to the process of construction. It is however, this recogntion that takes me to Kayasthas. I need to point out at the outset that colonial accounts which abound in discussion on the caste system are not so well provided when it comes to a particular caste - a function perhaps of the generalizing nature of the studies. The information thus available to either peripheral or too localised, but still some elements can be discerned.

The "term" Kayastha with connotations of it being a caste, predates the British intervention in the late 18th century.[55] We will see here how this category came to be described in the colonial accounts of the 19th and 20th

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55   See Khan, Majida, 'A Kayastha Family of Mughal officials in the Reign of Aurangazeb in The Indian History Congress Proceedings Bombay 1980, pp 386-393. The author says that Kayasthas had consolidated themselves as a caste. Her account is based on the Abul Fazl and Bhimsen.

centuries, which borrow heavily from each other and the indigenous accounts (which we discuss in the next chapter). Francis Buchanan writing at the beginning of the 19th century was the first to describe in some detail the Kayasthas.[56] Relying on the book Jatimala written by Rudrayamal he classed the Kayasthas along with the pure sudras. Though in his account of Purniyah he acknowledges that the Kayasthas "are unwilling to admit that they are Sudras and are rejected by the three higher castes".[57] In this account of Patna and Bihar he says Kayasthas "are by all considered as pure sudras", and they themselves, "do not reject the appellation".[58] Their occupation is that of physicians and accountants and all Kayasthas are dutifully engaged in their profession acquiring a knowledge of Persian and Hindi; some in Purniyah are also chilitz printers and tailors. Of the subdivisons, Buchanan mentions only the Mathurs, Ambastha, Bhatnagar, Srivastava and Gour apart from the regional categories of Mithila Kayasthas,Bengali Kayasthas etc.[59] The restrictions on the interaction between these subdivisons are not rigid, as for the relations with men of other castes and religion, "they do not scruple to smoke a pipe, to

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56   Buchanan, F., An Account .... of Purniyah 1809-10, op.cit., pp.213-14 and, An Account .... of Bihar and Patna 1811-12, op.cit., pp.329-330.

57   Ibid., Purniyah, p.212

58   Ibid., Patna and Bihar, p. 329

59   Ibid., p. 329-30. Later however, as we shall see there came to be twelve recognized subdivisions within the North Indian Kayasthas

drink water nor to chew betel at the same table with an infidel, on which account some allege that they are impure; but, they abstain from marrying their brother's widows which all the lower tribes in this country do.[60] They were disposed to the various religious sampradaya of the time and their ancestor Chitragupta, had not acquired the divinity that came much later. In fact Buchanan makes no mention of him.

The rather diffuse nature of this category was getting concretised in the colonial accounts of the latter half of the 19th century.[61] All of them emphasised the ambiguous social position of the Kayasthas in the caste hierarchy, tacitly recognizing that they have a respectable positin in the society because of their education and learning. The story of their birth from a Vaishya father and a Sudra mother is repeated and invariably the reliance is on the Indian accounts.[62] So much so that it is difficult to separate the contributions of authors. The preponderance of Kayasthas in government employment and their educational achievements was a constant refrain in the

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60   Ibid., pp.330-31

61   Sherring, M.A., Hindu Tribes and Castes of India as represented in Benaras, 1872 (Delhi 1974) p.30; Nesfield, J.C., Brief view of the caste system of North Western Province and Oudh, 1885, p.46, Campbell Ethnology of India, 1866, p. 118, Oudh Gazetteer, Vol II, 1877, p. 375.

62   Crooke for example relies on the notes by Munshi Ram Saran Das, Faizabad; Pandit Baldeo Prasad, Deputy Collector, Cawnpur, Munshi Ummed Lal; The Tawarikh Qaum Kayastha by Munshi Awadh Bihari Lal, and Tawarikh Gaur Kayastha by Munshi Kishori Lal. Crooke, W., The Tribe and Caste of the North West India, Volume III, 1896, p. 184.

colonial stereotype of the Kayastha and almost the entire caste was designated as that of writers and accountants.[63] It is this stereotype and the self-perception of the Kayasthas coupled with the fact that their positoin according to the "text" was ambiguous saw a change in Buchanan's categorization of Kayasthas as pure Sudras. Already in 1872, the Census placed them among the high castes[64] and the Superintendent J. Charles Williams explained thus,

> "they are properly Sudras but from their abilities and education have long held a high social position (this is not always conceded to them. I have before me the proceedings of a meeting of native gentlemen presided over by Colonel Barrow. L.C.B, now Financial Commissioner and held on 14th December, 1867 to consider the distribution of relief to distressed persons of good family in Lucknow. A discussion arose whether the women of Kayasthas were entitled to be considered *parda nashin*. Maharaja Sir Man Singh was referred to as arbitrator and it was finally agreed that the privilege must be conceded to them) and so I have included them among the higher castes".[65]

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63   The Report of the Census of Oudh 1872, Vol I, pp.91-92; The Census of British India 1881, Vol I, p. 298; The Census of British India, North Western Province and Oudh, 1881, p. 136, The Census of India, North Western Province and Oudh, 1891, Vol XVI, Part I, PP. 262-263, appendix XXX, p. 230; The Census of India 1901, Vol I, Table IX, pp. 151-152, The Census of India, 1911, Vol I, Part I - Report, pp. 314-316, pp. 428-30; The Census of India, 1921, Vol.I, Part I, Report, p. 182.189-191. The Census of India, 1931, Vol I, Part I - Report, p. 332; L.S.S.O'Malley, Bihar and Orissa District Gazetteer, Patna, 1924, pp. 58-59; Shahabad, 1906, p. 123., Hunter, W.W., A statistical account of Bengal, 1877, Tirhut p. 44, Bhagalpur, p. 231, Monghyr, p. 58, Purniah, pp. 245-246; Champaran, p. 292. Nevil, H.R. District Gazetteer of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 1904-1905, Agra, p. 94-133; Allahabad, pp. 146-147; Aligarh, p. 157; Bareli, p. 192; Meerut, p. 111; Lucknow, p.75; Moradabad, p.93; Drake, D.L., Mathura, A Gazetteer, 1911, p. 121, Gazetteer of the Province of Oudh, Vol II, 1877-78, p. 364, Provincial Gazetteer of Assam, 1903, p.93.

64   The Report of the Census of Oudh, 1872, Vol.1, p.86.

However, this inclusion was not granted as yet without doubt, as William went on to record the opinion of Deputy Collector of the Distict of Bijnour, Lachman Singh who argued that the Kayasthas were Sudras their penmanship being confined to the Kaithi script and it is only with the coming of Mughals that they acquired a respectable position.[66] What is important is that both the opinions regarding the social position of Kayasthas were informed by the existing "native" opinion. It was towards the end of the 19th century that such reliance was done away with and Kayasthas in their own right were seen as members of the higher caste, a functional category, obviously indispensable for the Raj. William Crooke writing in 1896 says,

> "it is, of course, not difficult to do, as some advocates of a higher status for the caste than others are disposed to admit have done, to produce texts in support of their views; *but it is obvious that the question cannot be settled by reference to writings, the authority of some of which is not quite free from suspicion.* The matter is one of purely physical conformation, and, before it can be finally settled, the anthropometrical data must be much larger than they are at present. At the same time it may perhaps be said that most competent observers of the physical appearance of Kayasthas are not prepared to accept the conclusion of the writers of the Jatimala and similar authorities, which deny wholly or partly their Aryan descent; and so far as the

65 Ibid., p. 90

66 Ibid., p. 91 Lachman Singh as we shall see in the next chapter became the target of attack by the Kayasthas and he later apologised had to change his opinion.

evidence from customs and manners goes, the result is the same."[67] (italics mine)

And despite the fact that Risley's anthropometrical data did not give a clean chit, to the purity of Aryan blood in the Kayasthas, the Census Reports in the 20th century continued to describe the Kayasthas as those belonging to the upper caste.

III

Having examined "construction" in general and particular terms, we now will examine the "why" of construction. It has often been assumed that what was written and produced by the "colonialist" was done with a conscious design of keeping everything in order, of perpetuating the British rule. The transition which Cohn makes from the "command of language" to the "language of command" if anything is tenuous.[68] The arguments which sees a complicity between colonial attempts at acquiring knowledge and exercising power *assumes* that there was an administrative need for such knowledge. I, say, assume, because instead of examining the actual use of this knowledge in administration and policy making, it puts forth as proof, the statements of

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67 Crooke, W., op.cit., 185

68 Cohn, B.S., "The Command of Language and the Language of Command", Subaltern Studies IV, Delhi, pp. 276-329.

ethnographer - administrators, as saying that it was so.[69] I am

not arguing that the acquisition of knowledge about Indian

Society was free from the logic of power. All I want to stress

is that the issue is too complex, for it to be assumed that it was

naturally so. There were different kinds of government records

which had different usage both in terms of nature and level of

application.[70] The statements (quoted as self evident by the

constructionists) of the Company officials and Census

Superintendents could well be self justificatory. Often all the

projects incurred huge expenses on the Exchequer and what

better justification could be given than the one which said that

this knowledge was indispensible for the day to day

administration of the country. The Census Commissioner's

office after all was a part of the Government and had to justify.

its existence.[71] The idea that colonial state was not exercising

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69   For such quotations see Cohn, op.cit., , p. 157, 242, Cohn, Ibid., p.295, 309, 310, 311, 315; Inden, op.cit., 1990, p. 16; Bandyopadhyay, op.cit., p. 23, 26, 34, 35, 36, 38. More often than not the quotations are repeated. Scriptural accounts to some extent have found a replacement in the colonial texts which can prove almost anything.

70   Smith, R.S. op.cit., has shown the difference between village records, district reports and Census reports.

71   One only has to look carefully at the nature of correspondence between the Government of India and Risley and Co. to realise that a straight motive in administrative necessity cannot be imputed, See Ethnographic appendices to 1901 Census pp. 424-435. The importance of economizing can be gauged by the repeated claims of Census Commissioners, to the effect that their "Census is the Cheapest one", Till 1911, detailed accounts of the expenditure was being published in the Census Reports. Moreover I wonder how much one can rely on the policy statements issued by the Governments of independent India and read in them the government's intention.

power, ignorant of reality but it knew India, went on well with the benefactory image which the state wanted to further. I argue here that the colonial construction emerges *within* the administrative needs of the state, rather than the other way round. The construction cannot be given an ontological primacy vis-a-vis the administrative requirements.

We have seen in our discussion on the Census the interplay of convenience and the logic of statistical classification. The British attempts in the Census have often been seen as part of the overall imperial policy of divide and rule. One cannot however assume that everything could be divided or that all the divisions within Indian society were of a similar nature. After all the policy put forward by Risley of ranking the castes according to social precedence, was not implemented. One wonders if anything else would have divided the society better. The Census accorded different treatments to religion and caste--the "two main pillars" of the policy of divide and rule. But they were not identically handled, despite Bandyopadhyay's contention to the contrary. Census wrote. J.T. Marten, in his report to the 1921 Census, " is an attempt to record religion in its communal aspects, merely distinguishing those who lay claim to one or other of the recognized sectional labels without looking to closely into the validity of their claims." Thus a person could be recorded as belonging to any one of the listed religions without the Census bothering about

it. On the other hand claims to castes, other than those of the persons were not so indifferently handled. In the early 19th century, the texts could have been consulted but towards the centuries end the claims were granted only if they were not made in terms of the Varna categories, or they did not add to the classificatory problems. They could also be granted if the name claimed was a new caste name, as of Namasudras in Bengal.[72] Apart from the apparent administrative convenience, it reveals to what extent the colonial authorities could pursue the policy of divide and rule. The claims to a particular religion did not disturb any hierarchy in the existing Indian society while those relating to caste in more ways than one disturbed the hierarchial ordering of society, it tended to alter at least, the *notions* of power distribution in society. The implicit assumption in the treatment of the claims of caste for a higher status is that they are false. We have already seen how the cultural notions of Var na hierarchy informed even the census operations and the Census officials were not prepared to alter it. What is often missed is that a recognition of the caste claims involved three parties -- the colonial state, the claimant caste and the other dominant caste of the locality. Identity could in positive manner not get fixed only by the first two, it had to involve the recognition, at least tacit, of the third party.

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72   The Census of India, 1911, Vol I, Part I, p. 379.

The Census officials were aware that a recognition of the higher status would involve a change in the power equations of the society, "these changes would have obliterated distinctions which actually exist", or as Hutton remarked ... its recognition, if awarded would be socially value less[73] and this was something which the state with its already shrinking base of collaborators,, was not ready to do. If at all, divide and rule, as a policy defined attitudes towards caste it was through the maintenance of status quo, which made non-recognition or at best indifference to the caste claim being made.

As pointed out before the relationship of construction and administration has to be examined in context of policy and would involve two aspects of -- construction, in the process of information collection for policy making and construction, in the process of implementation of the drafted policy. I would here examine the place of "caste" in the British Administration of Hindu law.[74]

After the close of the East India rule and the establishment of the High Courts, the judicial system got a considerable uniformity throughout British India. This was true both of the administrative structure and of laws of

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73 Ibid., p. 379; Hutton, J.H., Census of India, 1931, Vol I, p. 433.

74 I have not been able to find instances where policies were made on the basis of caste, in civil administration. I acknowledge although that may be I have not looked hard enough. This remain a very important line of enquiry though..

evidence,civil and criminal procedures, which were established by legislation that affected the whole of British India.[75]

During the colonial rule there were three conceptualizations of caste which were in overlapping use.[76] and the model which became dominant, differed according to the category of law, governing the issue at stake. The personal law of Hindus -- the general law of Hindu marriage, inheritance and related behaviour -- was derived from certain manuals and texts which had been translated from Sanskrit and were seen as legitimate by judgements delivered in the various courts and in the Privy Council in London. Here the courts operated with the Varna categories which assigned ranks to the caste. The normative standards for this assignation were derived from certain rules of Hindu law texts concerning behavioural ideals for each of the Varnas. But there were "customs" which were

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75   There were significant judicial effects on caste organisation before 1861, and these are documented in Derret, J.D.M., "The administratin of Hindu Law by the British", "Comparative Studies in Society and History, IV, 1961, pp. 10-52; Patra, A.C., The Administration of Justice under the East India Company in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962.

76   The first was the sacral view which saw caste as a component in an overarching sacral order of Hindu society where rights and duties could be determined in relation to the whole. The second was the sectarian view which saw caste as an isolable religious community distinguished from others by idiosyncratic doctrine, ritual or cultural and here the rights and duties were seen not in relation to any large religious order but by reference to internal order. Third was the associational view which emphasized the internal autonomy and rule making power of the caste and based itself on a constellation of affinities - religious, economic educational and occupational, See, Gallanter. M., "The religious aspect of caste, a legal view in Smith, D.E., (ed.) South Asian Politics and Religion, Princeton, 1966, pp. 278-279.

pointed out by the courts as being departures from the textual behaviour suitable to a particular rank. However, the status of customary law relative to the personal law of Hindus was guaranteed to the effect that the custom of parties to a dispute should be followed.[77] In other words the courts accepted a presumption that for each "caste" there was one distinctive set of customs or "culture" and this point of view came to acquire prominence.

Operationally however, for most purposes of Hindu Law of inheritance, adoption and maintenance, the four classes were telescoped into a simple moiety division, with the higher, three "twice born" on one hand and the Sudras on the other. In most cases the problem before the courts was to determine "who were the shudras?". And recourse was again taken to Sanskritic texts, from which lists were drawn up, of diagnostic customs regarding the ideal conduct for "twice born" castes.[78] However, this was not always the case, and decisions were sometimes taken after assessing the local opinion about a caste's Varna identification. Thus, the position of the caste in that particular area in terms of exercise of influence must have became an

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77 However as Derrett and Patra have pointed out, a "confusion" existed in the courts between Sanskritic textual laws and customs in "practice" and in the administration of customary law. A part alleging "custom" to be legitimate exception to the general and textual Hindu personal law was required to prove the custom. See Derrett op.cit., pp. 24-26; Patra, op.cit., pp. 158-64.

78 For a discussion on special law for Sudras in this period, see Derret, Introduction to Modern Hindu Law, Bombay, 1963, Sec. 592.

important factor. As is evident from the judicial decisions of Subordinate courts in the United Provinces.[79] All the cases were related to inheritance of the illegitimate children of Kayasthas and their property claims. It is significant that all of them were decided in favour of the Kayasthas, that is they were held, not to be Sudras and hence their illegitimate issues were not entitled to any share in the property. However, it was the Calcutta High Court decision which was to arouse the ire of the Kayasthas.[80] The judgement given by Macdowell and Field held that Kayasthas are Hindus of the Sudra class and may as such adopt their sister's son . Going through the judgement, it is clear that the Judges do not directly refer to the Kayasthas as Sudras, by birth. All that was held, was that the "Kayasthas of the present day, having given up the rigid observances of the ordinance of shastras, must be treated as Hindus of the Sudra class".[81] In delivering this judgement the judges took into

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79 (i) Radhey and others vs. Rukman, decided on 9th August 1861 by Maulvi Md. Habibulah Khan, Subordinate judge, Gazipur (ii), Gauri Lal vs. Bahadur Lal and others, decided on 22nd June 1875 by Babu Kashi Nath Biswas, Subordinate judge of Allahabad (iii) Ram Charan vs. Pran Sukh decided on 17th July 1866 by M. Safdar Husain Khan, Extra assistant commissioner, Bara Banki (iv) Harakh and Jai Mangal vs. Subodha and Alop, decided on 17th August, 1877 by Mirza Abid Ali Beg officiating Subordinate Judge of Mirzapur, (v) Ram Raoli Koer vs. Rukmin Koer, decided on 9th October, 1879 by Babu Abinash Chandra Mitra, Subordinate judge of Patna. All these castes are quoted in the English translation of Munshi Kali Prasad's Kayastha Ethnology, pp. 44-46.

80 In the case of Raj Coomar Lal and others vs. Bissesun Dayal and other. ILR.10 Calcutta 88, The case again, involved property rights and was related to whether the defendant could adopt his sister's on.

81 ILR 10, Cal. 88.

account the following particulars : wearing the sacred thread,

ability to perform Homa, the rule as to the period of impurity

and the incompetence of illegitimate sons to succceed. The

judgement however was not acceptable to the Kayasthas and it

did not have an influence on the perception of the Census

commissioners. The judgement was soon struck down by the

High Courts of Allahabad and Patna.[82]

IV

The interpretation of caste in judicial judgements

was not differnt from that inherent in the Census Reports. This

calls into question the cognitive problems the ethnographer -

administrators faced tackling a society, different from their

own. Here the essentializations by the colonialists seem

familiar to other accounts by foreign travellers. The most

readily available example would be that of Al-Biruni who is

talking of the "self conceit of the Hindus", or of the "castes

called colours"[83] Related to this otherness are the difficulties

encountered in handling words in an alien language which like

any other medium of communication is culturally defined. And

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82 Tulsi Ram vs. Behari Lal, ILR, 12, Allahabad, 328 deceded by bench headed
    by Justice Muhamad. Perbati Kumari Debi vs. Jagdish Chandra Dhabal. AIR
    1927, Patna 145 decided by Justice Jwala Prasad and Justice Bucknill.

83 Al Biruni, India, abridged edition of Edward C. Sachau's English Translation,
    Delhi, 1983. Related to our problem here see, pp. 7-15, 44-50, Curiously, he
    like Jones et. al. has a plan to "command the language" also

it is significant that decade after decade the Census Commissioners are complaining of the difficulties encountered in making the tabulations or handling apparently absurd replies. Gait is voicing a universal opinion of the Census officials when he writes,

> "..... when a man is asked the name of his caste, his first impulse is to give the answer which experience tells him will satisfy the ordinary questioner. When one goes further and makes it clear that enquiry is being made as to his social group, and not the country in which he was born or the occupation which he follows, he is still in some doubt as to the information which is required of him, whether it is his general social status or his caste properly so called, or the group to which intermarriage is restricted, or his family, group or gotra".[84]

However, Gait attributes these difficulties to the "vague ideas of the subject on the part of the people themselves and their indifference to social distinction".[85] This is more due to the kind of interpretations that the Census returns are being subjected to, without realising that the word jati had ascribed to itself an array of meanings equating it with birth, race, family, lineage, rank, caste, tribe and religion.[86a] It is this multiplex set of meanings which

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84 Census of India, 1911, p.365.

85 Ibid.

86a See The Practical Sanskrit English Dictionary, V.S. Apte, Poona, 1890, p. 511; A Dictionary, Hindustani and English, Duncan Forbes, London 1858, the entry on Jati, A Dictionary, Marathi and English., J.J. Molesworth. Bombay 1837, p. 313. Dictionaries also have words having jati as their prefix, viz. Jati anger, Jati paksha, jati sena etc. Similarly the Kayastha with whom we deal in the next chapter, refer to themselves not as a jati but as a" Kaum" which can only mean a community and whose nature is not embedded in the word it uses to describe itself

gets interpreted in a singular way, by equating it with caste. It is with this recognition of the foreigness of the discourse, we come to examine the antecedants of the digits in pre-colonial times.

One cannot agree with Cohn when he says, "that the discursive formation ..... was to establish and regularize a discourse of differentiation which came to mark the social and political map of 19th century India".[86]   The differentiations did already exist, albeit in a different form. There is an implicit agreement on the point, and we agree with it,[87]   that the colonial construction was similar to a Brahmanical one. This characteristic of the colonial construction we shall now examine on three points - first, try and see the nature of Indian participation in this conception; second, to what extent are they pre-empted in pre-colonial India and third, the extent to which essentialiazation is only confined to the colonial discourse.

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86. Cohn B.S., Subaltern Studies, VI, op.cit., p. 284. At best it was an attempt to "re-establish" and "re-regularise" the discourse.

87. The construction was a Brahmanical in so far as the supremacy of the Brahman was acknowledged and the idea of purity - impurity established in judging the relative status of other castes especially the lower ones.

There is much to suggest that, what has come under attack in the name of "colonial knowledge" emerged in the late 18th century, as a jointly authored project of officials of the East India company and their chosen and interested Indian informants. Dirks has described how South Indian brahmans, as the British appointed "specialists" in interpreting Hindu society, helped to give East Indian Company law and sociology the strongly caste - oriented and Brahmanic flavour that came to be so striking a feature of colonial understandings of India in the 19th century.[88] As Christopher Bayly, and others also have reminded us, the legal codes of the Company drawn up in the later 18th century were often put together in consultation with Brahmans at the old centres of orthodox learning, which had themselves been flourishing during the 17th and 18th centuries as the new dynasties of regional successor states sought legitimacy through their scribal skills.[89] In overlooking the participation of Indian in projects of colonial knowledge we not only ignore a considerable body of evidence, we are also deprived us of important insights into continuities from the pre-colonial period and hence of reasons, the "esentialized knowledges" of early colonialism appeared to

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88 Dirks, N.B., "The invention of caste : Civil society in colonial India" <u>Social analysis,</u> Vol. 25, 1989, pp. 47-48.

89 Bayly,C.A., <u>Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire</u>, Cambridge, p. 156.

find such ready recognition among at least, some of the Indian audiences.

Historians working on the 18th century have argued for a revision of views on pre-colonial India.[90] They draw our attention to a set of parallel processes at work during the 19th century, instituting not so much a progressive or dynamic modernity in colonial society, but rather the gradual development in the early and middle decades of the eighteenth century of those features which colonial contemporaries often took to be the characteristic of much older traditon. Bayly draw attention as to how the Brahman ritual and scribal specialists during the 17th and 18th centuries had come to occupy a powerful influence. It is debatable whether the resurgence of the Brahmanical world view was peculiar to 17th - 18th century or whether it could be pushed back further. It is significant that Shivaji in the 17th century employed a large number of Brahmin ritual specialists from Banaras to support his claim to Kshatriya and twice born status, arranging in 1674 for the recognition of his lineage as descendants of the Rajput houses of Udaipur and Chittor and for his royal consecration as an independent Hindu sovereign. Wink has shown how the Chitpavan Brahmans far from remaining purely spiritual and

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90 The works notably of Bayly, C.A., Ibid, and Wink, A, Land and Sovereignity in India: Agrarian Society and Politics under the Eighteenth Century Maratha Swarajya, Cambridge, 1986.

other wordly, emerged as the overmighty peshwa ministers of purely nominal Maratha kings employing new scribal techniques in the creation of an increasingly centralized military and fiscal state.[91]

As for identities, Buchanan in the early 19th century, apart from viewing the hierarchy through the varna model, reported in the districts of Bihar, categories such as "alleged" Brahmans and "alleged" Kshatriyas etc, an indication perhaps of the claims and counter claims vis-a-vis status ranking in society. Caste identities have come into a clearer focus in Narendra Wagle's study of the dispute between the Pancal Devajna Sonars and the Brahmins of Pune. As Wagle reveals the "dispute had been going on for at least a century", and it was the Census which came during the dispute in 1824, that reinforced identities and sharpened their self-awareness.[92] One can safely assume, and not only on the basis of these two cases, that a sense of community predates its particular form of anticulation in the 19th and 20th century. The Britishers did not *invent* caste, they just developed ways of thinking about it.

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91 Wink, Ibid., pp. 67-85

92 Wagle, N.K., A Dispute between the Pancal Devajna Sonars and the Brahmans of Pune regarding Social Rank and Ritual Privileges : A case study of the British administratin of Jati laws in Maharashtra, 1822-25; in Wagle (ed.), Images of Maharashtra, a Regional Profile of India, London, 1980, p. 129.

Now we come to the third issue, of essentialization as a specific feature of the Western episteme and colonial construction. As I had argued in the first chapter essentialization is not only related to the "Orientalist discourse". Indian cultures had and have their own forms of objectification and essentialism. At the most superficial level, what is striking about the Indian regional cultures from the 19th century evidence at least, is the extraordinary range of classifications they posses. For western India and much of the north, we have, for example, the three properties of all created beings, the five classes of the affections, the six qualities proper to soldier, the six things that corrupt women, the six things that cause women and low caste people to fall into hell, ten sorts of gifts, ten classes of women, the thirty - two qualities of excellence visible to palmists, and so on.[93]

Thus, while it is important to remember that societies have to be seen, as made, rather than constituted by mysterious collective traditions. But it is equally important, not to go overboard, and examine the extent which the motifs of construction are new and how they have come to acquire this

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93 Classifications abound in many of the vernacular dictionaries compiled by Company officials and pandits in the early 19th century, see for example Molesworth, English Manathi Dictionary, op.cit. Also see Smith, Brian K. "Classifying Animals and Humans in Ancient India", Man Vol. 26, No.3, 1991. Basing himself on Jaiminiya Brahmana, has demonstrated how Gods and animals were classified according to the anatomical parts of the body.

newness. At one level, institutional disjunctions did take place between newly objectified domains of administration law and domestic or religious life. This leads us to the question of how the process of cognitive identification of communities changed due to colonial rule. And here, I distinguish with Sudipta Kaviraj between what he has called a "fuzzy" and an "enumerated" identity.[94] Kaviraj argues that the main difference between traditional communities and the modern community is not of their size, but an internal constitutive principle of which size was a function. Earlier, says Kaviraj, "people belonged to communities which did not make claims on their identity and strategies of self-description of the type modern states would make.[95] Rarely, if ever, people would belong to a community which would claim to represent or exhaust all the layers of their complex selfhood.[96] It was this which changed through the British intervention which brought a highly symmetrical apparatus of control. It is in this sense that caste got objectified and acquired a "thinghood" which could be quantified and measured.

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94 Kaviraj, Sudipta., "The Imaginary Institution of India", Occassional Papers on History and Society, Second Series, XLII NMML, August 1991, pp. 531-60 and "On the construction of Colonial Power : Structure, Discourse and Hegemony", Occasional papers on History and Society, Second Series, XXXV pp. 29-36.

95 Kaviraj, Occassional papers ... XXXV, p. 26

96 An index of this is the multitude of meanings attached to the word "jati" as shown earlier.

As to the level of operation of caste identity there are a lot of variations. For the Kayasthas as we shall see, the category preceded colonial intervention; in other cases the classification did provide a scale on which some identities could operate. Although its effect and effectiveness is a different matter. At the core of these and other formulations engendered by the census operations emphasised the "attributional" aspects of caste.[97] Whether it was the varna scheme which informed the census authorities, or the features of relative purity or impurity, or the assigning of a particular function, castes were being conceptualised as a set of attributes which could be recognised and on the basis of this, their status determined. This affinity for attributes found an echo in the self perception of castes. It filled a growing need for cultural symbols through which individuals could establish contact, pattern social behaviour, as social relations and their scale increased, both spatially and across the social hierarchy. Thus castes, could and did develope interactions with those having

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97   For a distinction between attributional and interactional aspects of caste see Marriott, McKim "Interactional and Attributional Theories of Caste Ranking, "Man in India, 39 1959, pp. 92-107. Not only attributes became important, I suspect surname of an individual came to denote the caste to which he belonged. A surname in Europe implied a hereditary name common to all members of a family as distinct from a Christian namé, an idea not part of the cultural universe of an Indian. But through a process, which needs to be explored, it came to be seen, cognitively both by Europeans and Indians themselves as part of a caste identity and now it is a universally accepted practice in India, where in particular surnames are attached to particular castes.

similar kind of attributes and sometimes they did establish an organisation of a pan-Indian nature. All this in a time when the statistical content of a category and the numerical weight it exercised, were becoming crucial.[98]

At the level of colonial ideology the representations were connected with European social theory and practice. And this I think was "modern" in so far as it can not be attributed solely to the evil machinaions of the Occident. The Census was after all, also a modern phenomena relying on the modern methods of statistical aggregation and logic of classification. And the community and the contingent identities expressed themselves through these very means. An illuminating comparative question concerns the operation of parallel processes in 18th and 19th century Europe which some critics have characterised as forms of internal colonialisim. The exercise of definition, construction and exclusion at work in India have parallels in the metropolitan case of Nation construction itself.[99] The Census drew a lot from the prevalent

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98 It is significant that the Kayasthas were one of the last to have established such an organisation. It came in 1912 well after they had established themselves as an independent higher caste, after almost 25 years of organised activity. The Kurmis and Goalas had established their organisation in 1894 and 1909 respectively

99 See Hechter, M., Internal Colonialism : The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, London, 1975; Nairn, T., The Break up of Britain : Crisis and Neo-nationalism, London 1981; Enchanted Class : Britain and its Monarchy, London, 1988 Glass, D.V., Numbering the People : 18th century Populatin Controversy and Development of Census and Vital Statistics in British, London 1973.

theory of structural functionalism, methods of data collection and other social theories prevalent in Europe at that time.[100] This brings us to a curious choice. If the colonial construction of caste was rooted in the western episteme of the 19th century, the arguments of the constructionists are as much rooted in the post structuralist theories of today. Would we be wrong in arguing then that both, on that count ,are constructions? Thus if one has to talk about caste or religion as taking a new form in the 19th century it is better to study them as a "re-construction" rather than construction, which I think has connotations of a state operating unilaterally.

Apart from the fact that the construction was a reconstruction, colonialism did impinge on its nature. As I have already argued the construction as it came to operate was mediated through the power differentials of Indian society. The Bhumihars of Bihar had, the highest nasal index, according to the results of Risley's anthropometrical findings and on that count were the purest of the Aryan race.[101] Risley had also clarified when he wrote that they were neither degraded Brahmans nor Non-aryans.[102] Bhumihars themselves were organised and laid a claim on being returned as Bhumihar

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100 Census reports have copious quotations from Westermarck, Morgan, Frazer, Tylor, Malthus etc.

101 Census of India, 1901, op.cit., part I, p. 504.

102 Census of India 1901, Ethnographic Appendices, Vol. I, Part IV, pp. 186-187.

Brahman in the 1911 Census, a claim which was recognised in 1921[103], but to this day in Bihar their identity remains that of Bhumihars. There were limits thus to the extent that the construction could define identities and operate autonomous of the Indian society. What had changed was the character of the colonial state, which was "self-consciously" neutral.[104] This in a valid distinction that Pandey has made between pre-colonial and colonial states. Hierarchy was embedded so deeply and pervasively in the pre-colonial state that there was no contest over legitimate authority,nor was the state remotely "neutral". But, with the formal equalisation and that came up, different communities could now press forward with their own histories in order to make claims on the state. In this process of equalisation of communities, the state was able to detach itself as an arbiter being over and above the claimant communities. The self-perception of castes informed by this equalization and the detachment of the state gave powers to the latter of defining relationships not only between castes but also between castes and the state. The construction and its details were however, the product of that British Indian cultural system which

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103   Blunt, E.A.H., The caste system of Northern India, 1969, (first published 1931) p. 227

104   Pandey, Gyanendra, The Construction o f Communalism in Colonial North India, Delhi, 1990, p.16.

emerged in the 19th century, no doubt, implying a political validation of cultural knowledge.

CHAPTER IV

IDENTITIES : FORMATION AND EXPRESSION

It is against this backdrop of the treatment of the colonial attempts at the construction of caste - its processes, authorship and antecedents, that I attempt in the last chapter to examine the process of identity formation[1] for the two categories of the Kabir Panth and Kayastha. I should however, add that this seriality (that the treatment of construction precedes the one on identities) in the order of presentation is dictated only by convenience. It should not be seen as neatly falling in an impact-response model. The problem of power-culture-construction is too dynamic, complex and historical a process - I hope to show further in the chapter - to preclude any such models. Social life is so varied and complex that one can legitimately isolate any social phenomena on any level for a detailed analysis. The question is not, which isolate or what level, is more valid to study than other but which is helpful in tackling a particular problem, leading to further analysis and generating new hypothesis. It is this understanding that takes me to a study of social identities.

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1   I understand that the views presented here have their limitaions in so far as they are primarily representational, having a textual bias. I have nevertheless tried to draw from field studies of other scholars and supplement them with my own experience in the field.

Culture at a higher level of analysis and abstraction is articulated through symbols. The concept of culture, as defined by Clifford Geertz "denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitude towards life".[2] It is this "historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols", that are constitutive of identity and are my preliminary concern here. I am not suggesting that the two categories discussed here have their own cultures, but that, in so far as they are socio-cultural categories, they do define their own self-perception through symbols. Identity I understand is not only defined by the self, but also by the other and both are dialectically related and emerge in the process of "boundary maintenance", as shown by Fredrick Barth,[3] in which symbols acquire a significance.

Symbols are, according to Abner Cohen, "objects, acts, relationships or linguistic formation that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of meanings, evoke emotions and impel men to action".[4] They function as mechanisms for

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2   Geertz, Clifford., "Religion as a Cultural System", in Banton, Michael, (ed.), Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, London, 1966, p.3.

3   Barth, Fredrick, "Introduction", in Barth, (ed.), Ethnic Group and Boundaries

4   Cohen, Abner., Two Dimensional Man, London, 1974, p.23.

the development of self-hood and for tackling the perennial problems of human existence. Thus, though, they seemingly exist in their own right, they are nearly always manipulated consciously or unconsciously and are both, "expressive" and "instrumental" at the same time. Man, thus for Cohen, "is also a symbolist man .. a two dimensional man.",[5]

It is through this symbolic order that we study identities here. A word of caution, however, is essential. Abner Cohen's and other such writings on the theme are situated in a different milieu. They come out of highly industrialized societies where the degree of symbolism is very complex and thus generalisations is drawn from them cannot be applied in toto, for an understanding of our society. They however provide insights and sensitize us to an understanding of culture. For instance the distinction which Cohen makes between "symbolic force" and "symbolic function" is very valid.[6] The symbolic forces are product of creative work and have symbolic functions, viz. "objectification of relationship between individual and group, ... which are vital for continuity and stability of social life.[7] This distinction, I infer, allows for accommodating within the analysis, cultural specificities that

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5   Ibid., p.xi.

6   Ibid., p.26

7   Ibid., pp.30-31

would define the "symbolic form" and yet enables us to arrive at generalizations via the concept of "symbolic function". The dilemma between the specific and general is thus, to an extent resolved. It is through this specific "symbolic form" that tradition is invented.[8] Traditions, Hobsbawm says in the "Introduction", which appear to be old are quite recent in origin and sometimes, invented.[9] Hobsbawm however, is concerned only with the appearance and establishment" of tradition[10] but we are also concerned with the chances of its survival, not the concern of Bobobawen. It is not only the questin of a suitable historical past but also the extent to which it fits into the contemporary social matrix - the kind of consciousness that develops, invoking some and submerging other identities. It is thus, this tradition or symbolic forces (which functions in this manner) that survives.

A study of social identities in the 19th century is bound to be tenuous because of the nature of the sources available.[11] What is attempted here is to try and capture some

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8   See for an insightful analysis Hobsbawm, E.J., and Ranger, Terence, (ed.), The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.

9   Ibid., p.1

10   Ibid., p.2

11   There are a lot of chronological gaps in the sources. I managed to get the Kayastha Conference resolutions for the period 1887 - 1905; caste histories of the Kayasthas of the late 19th and the early 20th century and the Kayastha Samachar (later Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar, still later Hindustan Review) 1899 onwards. There are only half a dozen copies of the Kayastha Samachar, available prior to 1899 reports Lucy Carroll (1975) but I

parts of the dialogue that is emerging. The emphasis is not so much on a sequential advance in terms of chronology, rather the analysis moves in short spurts. At no point of time in the analysis can one claim that the picture is drawn in its entirety fissures are bound to be there because identities are always shifting and tenuous.

I

Kabir's couplets have been sung and recited throughout Northern India by learned pandits and illiterate villagers, by wandering ascetics and classical muscians for 500 years. He is quoted, and mis-quoted by people and his "sayings" are supposed to be a repertoire of wisdom. Almost any and everything goes under the cover of *Kahat Kabir Suno bhai sadho....* "He is famed for his rough and powerful voice, his uncompromising challenge to individuals to shake off their delusions, their stiff orthodoxies and pretentious pieties, and to find out the truth for themselves. But the mode of his transmission - in the oral form and his reach in terms of the influence he has exercised has seen the emergence of parallel traditions of Kabir and his "teachings". The "search" for the authentic text has become more frantic. The results, though are not gratifying, and meaningless for our kind of analysis.

was unable to find them as she does not refer to the place of their survival.

Moreover, Kabir and his message have transversed a full circle - coming from the oral, folk tradition, they have again passed into that stream - such was their range and veracity.[12]

There are written collections that have been preserved in roughly the same form over several centuries. The effort of compiling these collections were made by panths that had some particular interest in the "sant" poet whose saying they set down. It is here that caution has to be exercised. As Gajanan Madhav "Mukti Bodh" has pointed out, "any literature should be seen from three points of view; which social and psychological powers produce it, what is its internal nature and which social forces have used or misused it and why".[13] It is the third point which serves as an explanation for the choice of Bijak. In Kabir's case there are three major collections put together by sects in three widely seperated regions of North India: the modern states of Punjab in the West, Rajasthan in the mid-west and Uttar Pradesh / Bihar in the East. The oldest is the Guru Granth, the sacred book of the Sikhs which has been in its present form sinc about 1603. The Granth compiled in Punjab, contains utterances of the early Sikh Gurus and of the other saint poets whom they admired. The Rajasthani collection called the Pancavani includes sayings of the five saints exalted

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12 This insight, I owe to Dr. Manager Pandey of the Centre for Indian languages, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

13 Jain, Nemichandra, (ed.), Muktibodh Rachnavali, Delhi, 1980, p. 293.

by the Dadu Panth.[14] The third is the Bijak, which has come to occupy the position of scripture's for the Kabir Panth and contains works only attributed to Kabir. The dates of origin of the Pancavani and Bijak are uncertain, but according to Linda Hess, both, can be assumed to have taken shape in the 17th Century, rather later than the Guru Granth.[15]

The three collections have much in common, but show some what different character. In all traditions - eastern and western, oral and written - Kabir is known for his toughness and iconoclasm. But, in the western based tradition of Guru Granth and Pancavani, there also appears a softer more emotional Kabir who sings out of ecstatic insight, who experiences passionate longing for and tormented seperation from a beloved, or who offers himself in utter surrender, as a servant or beggar, to a personified divine master. And as Linda Hess opines, "often the western poet's expression are coloured by the terms and forms of the Krishna bhakti (devotional) movement which was then dominant in those regions.[16] The Bijak presents a more austere and dramatic personality, a poet of sudden brilliance and rough edges rather than subtle emotinal hues. Above all, he is an intense teacher, striving to

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14 Hess, Linda., and Singh, Sukhdev, (ed.), The Bijak of Kabir, Delhi, 1986, p.6
15 Ibid., pp.6-7
16 Ibid., pp. 7-8

shake his listeners out of their false sense of security, their dishonesty and their superficial belief that everything in this world is omnipresent. Thus Kabir's passion, as Hess points out is to awaken, "so that his personal drama has receded into the background, and the great truth or supreme being he urges us to understand shows almost no trace of anthromorphism or personality".[17]

What is clear from her discussion is the fact that all the three traditions are appropriations and the search for the "authentic" would be in Kabir's own words : "akin to a ton of tangled thread that won't go straight". Bijak, as a text has not got its due attention.[18] The alleged tampering by the Kabir Panthis is the reason for this avoidance, but it is for this very reason that I choose it as the chief text. I think it is on this very, "tampered grounds" that the self image of the Kabir Panth and the contingent identity formation can be best studied.

Given below are some verses of the Bijak on the related subject of caste and untouchability[19]. The choice is meant to be representative and they are not presented in a

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17 Ibid., p. 7

18 Bijak does not find favour among scholars in the field of Hindi literature.

19 I did at first try my hand at translation but the results were not encouraging, more so when I compared notes with Linda Hess and Sukhdev Singh's work and it was then that I resorted to their work. The translation given here are from their work. op.cit.

contrived manner - many more abound in the Bijak and are as forceful as those that appear here. The idea is primarily to provide an insight without attempting to locate it in a context, that is why a seemingly abrupt manner of presentation, sacrificing the flow.

> Pandit, look in your heart for knowledge
> Tell me where untouchability came from
> Since you believe in it
> Mix red juice, white juice and air-
> a body bakes in a body.
> As soon as the eight lotuses are ready, it comes
> into the world.
> Then what is untouchable?
> Eighty four hundred thousand vessels
> decay into dust while the potter
> keeps slapping clay on the wheel
> and with a touch cuts each one of
> we eat by touching, we wash by touching
> from a touch the world was born
> so who's untouched? Asks Kabir
> only he who has no taint of maya (Sabda 55, p.41)

> ... where does milk come from
> That's what you drink after lunch, pandit
> and you call clay untouchable
> Throw out your holy scripture, pandit,
> those fantasies of your mind
> Kabir says, listen Brahmin
> All this
> is your own doing (Sabda 57, p.47)

> It's heavy confusion
> Veda, Koran, holiness, hell, woman, man
> a clay pot shot with sperm
> when the pot falls apart, what do you call it?
> Numbskull you've missed the point

It's all one skin, and bone, one piss and shit
one blood, one meat
From one drop, a universe
Who is Brahmin? Who is Shudra?
Brahma-rajas, Shiva-tamas, Vishnu-Satva
Kabir says plunge into Ram!
Thre is no Hindu, no Turk (Sabda 67, p.75)

You splash yourself
if you touch somebody
but tell me who
could be lower than you...
.. Drop family, drop status
seek the non existent space
destroy the shoot, destroy the seed
reach the unembodied place. (Sabda 85, p.35)

Qazi...
Feeling your power you circumcise
I cannot go along with that, brother
If your God favoured circumcision,
why did not you come out cut?
If circumcision makes you a Muslim
What do you call woman?
If putting on the thread make you Brahmin
What does the wife put on? ... (Sabda 69, p.84)

And now, to continue with the narrative. It is commonly understood that the followers of Kabir have undone what Kabir did, in building up a non-literate cultural tradition, so much so that a modern author feels that Kabir in English is a contradiction[20] Kabir in his own life time had disciples, but there is no evidence of a panth.[21] more so when we consider

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20 Das, Nirmal, Songs of Kabir from the Adi Granth, Albany, 1991, p.20.

21 I take the panth here as an institutionalised form of a cultural tradition.

his sayings, wher there is a constant attack on any form of institutionalised religion. The Kabir panth came much later and there also developed a large number of sects which owed their origin to the ideas which Kabir had promulgated.[22] And, that is why perhaps Lorenzen has observed that the Kabir Panth before the 19th century is known almost exclusively from tendentious sectarian tradition - Nabha Das's Bhakta Mala (1600) Anantdas's Kabir Parichay (1588), Dabistan-i-Mazahib (1650), Raghodas's Bhakta Mala (1660), Commentary by Chaturdas (1794) and a number of Kabir Panth texts of an uncertain age.[23]

My concern here is with the symbolic forms and the cultural logic of the myths, rituals and practices of the Kabir Panth, not with the abstract philosophical and theoretical positions. What follows here is a discussion of differing hagiographical interpretation of life and formation of the Panth. Modern Kabir Panthis recognise two main divisions one at the Kabir Chaura Math, Banaras, other of Dharm Das at Dharamkheda in Madhya Pradesh. The former is referred to as

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22   The list given by Saraswati, Baidyanath, includes in the 15th 17th centuries - Dadupanth, Lal Dasi, (Rajasthan) Baba Lalis (Gujrat), Dharanidas (Bihar); in the 18th century - Charan Das, Shiva Narayanis, Garib Dasis, Satnamis of Jagjiwan Das and in the 19th century Radhasoami Satsang. See Saraswati · "Notes on Kabir : A Non-literate Intellectual in Malik, S.C., (ed.), Dissent, Protest and REform in Indian Civilisation, p.180

23   Lorenzen, David N. "Kabir Panth and Social Protest" in Schomer, Karine and McLeod, W.H., The Sants : Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India, Delhi 1987, p.288.

the Bap section and the latter as the Mai. However, as Wilson points out earlier, the sect split into a variety of sub-divisions and he traced twelve branches to the founder in places far and wide in Jabalpur, Cuttack, Bombay and Baroda[24]. The myths studied here are those given by Ahmad Shah, who gives a cosmology of the Bijak,[25] Baidyanath Saraswati[26] and G.H. Westcott's account which is based on the book "Sukh Nidan" and "Amar Mul".[27]

The myth which underlies the cosmology of the Bijak runs thus :

> "In the beginning there was one essential Being Sat Purush who of his own will created a unverse out of nothing and to rule the Universe he created six Bramhas, who failed to preserve discipline and so he created the seventh - Nirguna, who in the process of bringing order, fought Kumarjiv and created the Sun, Moon and Earth. Niranjan begot Bramha, Vishnu and Mahesh and later disappeared with his wife, becoming Maya. For the recovery of the Veda, Saraswati was sent and to check the confusion Sat Pursh sent Kabir, who has come in the four different ages under different names".[28]

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24 Wilson, H.H., Religious Sects of the Hindus, 1861, (first published in Asiatic Researches 1828-32), p.54

25 Shah, Ahmad., The Bijak of Kabir, New Delhi, 1977, (first published 1911) p. 43.

26 Saraswati B., op.cit., pp 182-183.

27 Westcott, G.H., Kabir and Kabir Panth Delhi, 1980 (first published 1907) pp. 141-168.

28 Shah, Ahmad, op.cit., pp 41-43

The account as is evident, is confused and unclear, and so are the other accounts.

Baidyanath Saraswati basing himself on the <u>Kabir Mansoor</u> (which was written by Sadhu Parmananda, a Kabir Panthi of Ferozpur published in Urud in 1857, consequently translated into Hindi by Makanji Kuber of Bombay - painter and Kabir Panthi in 1903) takes the account further, listing the name of Kabir in all the four yugas.[29] In <u>Kabir Mansoor</u>, Kabir is also supposed to be the author of "Svasamveda" from which the four vedas have originated. All this being embroiled in a series of leelas, Kabir is treated as the Param Purush linked to the Puranic Hindu gods and goddesses and as an avtar of Vishnu, Kabir Panthis have increasingly moved towards a self-image of themselves as a "Hinduized" Vaishnava Sect, as Ganga Sharan Sastri pointed out to David Lorenzen, "I am a Hindu, I am a Vaishnava"[30] That is why perhaps the fact of his being a disciple of Ramananda has been highlighted.[31] Each branch of the Panth however, actively fosters its own variant

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29   Saraswati B., <u>op.cit.</u>, p.182. The list runs thus : Satyug - Satya Sukritaye; Treta yug - Mumindrajee, who taught yoga to Ram and Ravan; Dwapara Yug - Karunamay; Kaliyug - Kabir.

30   Lorenzen D., <u>op.cit.</u>, p. 294. The earlier name of the respondent was Ganga Sharan Das, later Das was replaced by Sastri, an indication perhaps, of the trend pointed out by Lorenzen.

31   For a discussion on the importance of clan and lineage in the sant tradition see, Gold, Samuel, "Clan and Lineage Among the Aaints : Seed, Substance Service", in Schomer and Mc Leod, (ed.), <u>op.cit.</u>, pp.305-307.

of fanciful stories of Kabir's former births and a matching, rather eclectic theology. And, to reflect on the cosmology, here is a verse from Bijak:

> Seekers what comes and goes is Maya
> The Guardian knows no time
> never went anywhere, never came. ...[32]
> ... The maker won't become Kalki
> Won't beat up a future friend
> The ten avtars are divine malarkey
> for those who really know,
> Kabir says, pay attention saints:
> only second things bloom and blow.

The "Sukh Nidan"[33] starts with the creator who made all things and is portrayed as omnipotent "the seed, root, branch and the tree itself". The second chapter deals with Dharam Das's habit of worship before he met Kabir he used to bow down to Bhagats and Bairagis and to entertain sadhus of all kinds, he read Gita and honoured Gopala. He used to wear tilak on his forehead and round his neck a mala of tulsi wood. He went on pilgrimages and sang praises of Rama and Krishna but all in vain. At Mathura, Kabir appeared and told him that both he and the Gods he worshipped had been deluded by Maya and had no right to be considered omniscient. Dharam Das's reaction is typical - disdain and distrust directed towards a low caste man, doubts and questioning. Meanwhile, Kabir keeps on

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32 The details of the ten avtars have been deleted by me.

33 Sukh Nidan is associated with the Dharam Das section of the Panth.

appearing and rebuking Dharam Das for his habits. The series of question that follow are regarding the meaning of Nirakar, immortality, heaven and hell, places of pilgrimage, salvation and it is only after getting all his answers that Dharam Das is satisfied and becomes Kabir's disciple and get the "divine order: save yourself and save others"[34] from Kabir himself.

The theme is familiar : a figure new to the mythic tradition, in this case Dharam Das passes through a process of doubt, inquiring till the final moment when the mythic figure recognises the deity's powers and is simultaneously incorporated into the mythic trdition.[35] Similarly Amar Mul follows the same pattern but here the explanatory discourse is on the significance of the ritual order and rites de passage. Apart from the explanation on Sabda, Karma, Maya, there is also the assurance on the part of Kabir that Dharam Das's descendants would be the "chosen one", after him[36] The Kabir Panthis deploy plots and sub-plots drawn from a repertoire that is common among the lower castes of the region. The attempt is to identify with the high Vaishnava tradition, but there is a difference, too. The identification with Kabir and his placement in the Hindu cosmology is not accompanied by

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34   Westcott, op.cit., p.145.

35   For similar treatment see Obyesckeu, Gananath, The Cult of Goddess Pattini, Chicago, 1983.

36   Westcott, op.cit., pp 162-163.

claims for a higher caste status in previous times - a function perhaps of a stronger renunciant streak.[37]

The Kabir Panth apart from these philosophical discourses has also incorporated rites and rituals which Anthony P. Cohen would call the symbolic construction - "a community symbolically constructed as a system of values, norms and moral codes which provide a sense of identity within a bounded whole to its members".[38] The process has not to be seen as being contrived, but as an expression of the way in which people cognitively map out the past, present and the future.

Apart from the fact that at Kabir Chaura Math, Banaras, a picture of Kabir hangs in the pride of place and is worshipped along with the Bijak - the Kabir Panth's have developed their own institutionalised variant of "religious" service and the best account is available as early a in Westcott.[39] He talks of both the Maths at Maghar - the Hindu

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37   As has been found by William L. Rowe, "The New Chauhans : A Caste Mobility Movement in North India" in Silverberg, James, (ed.), Social Mobility in the Caste System in India, 1965; Mandelbaum, D.G., Society in India II, Berkeley, 1970, pp. 442-467 and more recently in Prakash, Gygan, Becoming a Bhuinya, "Oral Tradition and Contested Domination in Eastern India" in Prakash, Gyan and Haynes, Douglas, (ed.), Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia, Delhi, 1991, pp. 145-174.

38   Cohen, A.P., The Symbolic Construction of Community, Sussex, 1975, P.12.

39   Westcott, G.H., op.cit., pp.98-134.

and the Muslim - the two sections receiving "prasad" from their own Math.[40] The service offered at the Muslim math are rather simple while those at Banaras more elaborate, involving - daily morning and evening services, a performance of aarti, charanamrita, tulsi leaves, fasting and chanting of mantra. Similar processes are at work in the Raidas Panth also as painted out by Jagbir Singh.[41] The wearing of rosary made of Tulsi wood and tika is also common to both and externally makes them resemble the bairagis. Proper initiation ceremonies are prescribed involving betel leaves and coconuts with even their number being specified. The initiated are also required to abstain from meat and liquor. It is not surprising that these practices are replicated cutting across regions, and are found in the different Panths.[42] What is evident is an appropriation of symbols drawn from various sources and the construction of a sacred complex, with the aim of giving sanctity to the Panth and legitimizing its members and their activities.

The expanding universe of this symbolic construction also covers the legends that are drawn around Kabir and the places (which acquire the status of pilgrimage)

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40   Saraswati in a more recent study points out the declining number of Muslim affiliates. op.cit., p.184.

41   Singh, Jagbir, (ed.), Sant Raidas - Mahatmya, Shri Rai Das Sant Ashram, Merrut, 1977, p.48.

42   This also includes the Satnamis, See Singh, J., Ibid., p.52

that are supposed to be connected with him. The questions that are raised about the "life and times" of Kabir are almost the same since the 19th century -- place of birth and death, guru, parentage, disciples and the miracles which he supposedly performed, form the starting point of each work. Kabir's Julaha parentage, story of the brahman widow, birth on a lotus, name giving, tricking Ramananda into accepting him as his disciple, conflict with Sikandar Lodi and Saint Taqi[43] have to be seen as attempts to relocate him in a given tradition. These legends serve as symbols in attaching him to one or the other of the traditions.[44]

In this entire gamut of "symbolic construction" the Panth is apropriating for itself, symbols of purity. The purified and the transformed body at one level constitutes the "new self" of the Kabir Panthis. But at the same time, there are limits to the newness of the self and it, in a way reproduced the significance of old meanings. This, I study in the interaction of the ideology of caste as drawn from the "Amar Mul", the caste

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43   For an insight to the various legends see Dwivedi, Hazari Prasad, Kabir, Delhi, 1971, pp. 17-36.

44   Almost the same type of questions are raised regarding Raidas. His birth as a Chamar which forms a part of the Chamar self-esteem, and the adherents of the Raidas panth, today reject the legend of his being a brahman in the previous birth (Briggs however in the early part of this century had written to the contrary) and that he was a disciple of Ramananda. An attempt perhaps to shake off the brahmanical lineage today. Not only this, he is not seen even as a house holder, Jagbir Singh is emphatic - "Kisi ko virya nahin diya". See Singh (ed.), op.cit., pp 18, 187-192; see also Briggs, The Chamars, 1920, p.210.

identities of the members - both seen as being foregrounded

against the Bijak.

The Sat Guru's, discourse on the four castes runs as
follows:

"The special duty of the Brahman is to gain a knowledge
of Brahma. He in vain repeats the Gayatri, performs
Sadhna and reads the vedas, if he is devoid of knowledge.
Why do Brahmans confine their attention to Sanskrit? Is
the vernacular unsuited to spiritual instruction? The Brah-
mans in pride of heart depise the sadhus who are true
seekers of God and taunt them with having given up caste
for the sake of their stomachs. Those who know not Bram-
ha and neglect to practice devotion cannot obtain salva-
tion.

The special duties of the Kshatriya are to protect cows,
Brahman and women. But, in an age when cows are
s,lughtered, Brahman draw their own water and men com-
mit adultery; of what use are the Kshatriyas? They commit
murder and receive the praise of men, but the true
Kshatriya is he who exercises forbearance and has true
sympathy with others.

The special duties of the Vaishyas are to have pity upon
the hungry and to go on pilgrimage, but it is vain to strain
water before drinking in the desire to save life, if there is
no faith in Hari.

The Sudras whose duty is to render service has discoverd
the Bhakti of the Sat Guru. He serves the Brahman and has
cast forth from his heart all desires of the flesh, anger and
avarice. He serves also the Kshatriya and the Vaishyas and
is well spoken of in Bramha Lok. Other castes neglect
their duties but Sudra prostrates himself at the feet of the
Sat Guru and so finds his way to Satya Lok".[45]

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45   Cited in westcott, op.cit., p.160-162.

In comparision to Bijak's discourse on caste, there is both a similarity and dissimilarity. Sarcasm is there in both, Bijak's however, is more biting. Both attack the caste system but where as Bijak goes outside the system itself, <u>Amar Mul</u> stays much within it. More or less the dominant discourse is followed - the varna order, the traditional duties, concernd with dereliction of duty but then we see within this, an inversion too. While the other three varna have deviated and so have fallen, the shudras have been exalted. Not withstanding the fact, that their exaltation is not able to go decisively outside the discourse of hierarchy and dependence (in so far as the "exalted" Shudra is still following his traditional duties and needs the Sat Purush to find his way to the Satya Lok), we see here attempts to fissure and prise open the "original" scheme of hierarchy. But, how far does this foster or restrict caste identities is a different question altogether.

A strong element of social and religious dissent in Kabir's teaching, whatever its original intent and function has been used by the adherents of the Panth - mostly marginal groups such as shudras, untouchables and tribals to express their rejecton of certain aspects of the hierarchical caste ideology.[46] At the same time however their membership in the

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46   Lorenzen has given an account of the proselytizing activities of Kabir Panth among the tribals, Lorenzen, D. <u>op.cit.</u>, pp.296-299.

Kabir Panth has fostered their actual assimilation within the same society by internalizing portions of the high caste ideology. The caste composition (and here a distinction has to be made between the mahant and the lay followers) has been region specific but generally speaking a similar pattern can be discerned. Crooke reports that the sect is open to both Hindus and Muslims and perhaps in consequence of this it is not a favourite with men of high caste. Most of its adherents in these Provinces (in this case the North West Province) at least are drawn largely from the inferior castes - lower Banyas, Sunars, Lohars, Koris, Kurmis, Barhais, Chamars, Julahas, Kachhis and Kumhars.[47] R.V. Russel writing about the Central Prvinces also includes Ahirs, Teli, Panka, Lodhi, and Mahar.[48] In a more contemporary work of Saraswati, a similar picture has been drawn "sudras are the most numerous, Ahirs, Kunbis, Dhanuks, Manjhis, Dusadhs, Suris, and Telis.[49]. He however also notices a change, since Crooke and Westcott wrote[50] that there are not many Muslim Kabir Panthis. Saraswati also points to the increasingly important role that the Brahman has come to play in the Panth and the concerns with purity and pollution.[51]

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47   Crooke, W., The Tribe and Caste of the North Western India, Vol I-IV, Delhi, 1978 (first published 1896), Vol IV, P. 338.

48   Russel, R.V., The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, London, 1916., p. 243.

49   Saraswati, op.cit., p.184

50   In 1896 and 1907 respectively.

51   He reports Brahman Kathabachahas (story tellers) from Bihar, Saraswati,

Brahmans have come to head the "maths" and restrictions exist on marriage and commensality on caste lines, the clean and unclean castes, for instance do not eat together. The upper caste involvement, with the Panth is rather old, Dharam Das the leader in Central Provinces was a vaishya and significantly, the manuscripts of Bijak were recovered from the Raja of Rewah, but then, this has been peripheral. Kabir Panth and other similar "orders" have largely been the domain of lower castes. This has been possible inspite of the persistence of caste identities and contrary to Alfred Lyall's assertion the sect has not become a caste. Such Panths have had a dual attraction for the lower castes - they form a part of their repertoire from which they build up a positive self image and secondly, they have been attracted to the role of the renouncer in Indian culture and society.[52]

The following, which the Kabir Panth acquired in the 19th century has to be seen in context of a general revival of the Vaishnava world view which found a reception among all the lower castes.[53] The universe of Vaishnava culture

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op.cit., 184.

52   For the latter see Ghurye G.S., Indian Sadan, Bombay, 1952.

53   See Pinch, William Ralph., "Being Vaishvana, Becoming Kshatriya : Culture, Belief and Identity in North India 1800-1940, University of Virgienis, 1991, (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation) NMML. Pinch has shown through a demographic analysis of Central Gangetic Zone, that the villages with a predominantly shudra population had the sampradaya settlement pp. 128-136.

provided, even as early as the beginning of the 19th century,[54] a powerful legitimising context within which lower castes could give meaning and direction to social change. Secondly, the loose populist structure of the Panth encouraged participation. But even then, Kabir Panth did not acquire a large following as compared to others (as shown in the last chapter). Kabir and Raidas are supposed to be the disciples of Ramananda.[55] But there is, I think a distinction between the liberal religious ideas of Ramananda and the radical social equalitarianism of Kabir and to a lesser extent Raidas.[56] While Ramananda probably encouraged the diminished importance of jati and varna in matters of religious devotion, there is no evidence that he at any point advocated the disintegration of the system of social differentiation encompassed in the notion of varna in matters beyond the pale of religion and this could be a reason for the larger following.[57] Kabir and Raidas, on the other hand, are all too well known for the rhetorical challenge

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54   See Buchanan, An Account of the District of Bihar and Patna, in 1811-12, Vol I, and An Account of Shahabad District in 1812-13.

55   Because of chronological impossibilities, where the dates of Ramananda and his alleged chelas are irreconciliable. See Vaudeville, Charlotte, Kabir, Vol I, 1974, p. 114.

56   For a discussion of the term equalitarianism as applied to South Asian social relations, see Khare, R.S., The Untouchable as Himself: Ideology, Identity and Pragmatism among the Lucknow Chamars, Cambridge, 1984, p.2.

57   Shyam Sundar Das makes this very point when he says that despite having disciples from lower castes, Ramananda never broke completely with the strictures of Varnashram. See Das, "Ramavat (Ramanandi) Samparaday" Nagripracharini Patrika 4,3 (1924) p. 337.

to the very idea of social differentiation which permeate their verse. This similarity apart, the Raidas Panth has managed to stay in mainstream because of the kind of backing it got from the single largest caste - Chamars, of North India;[58]whereas Kabir Panths's strategy, as pointed out by Lorenzen, is that of bringing itself within the orbit of "non-caste Hinduism", implying an "acceptance of the behavioral forms or structures of caste Hinduism, while at the same time infusing them with an ideological context that is in direct opposition to basic socio-religious values characteristic of caste Hindusism.[59]

It is agreed that there is a contradiction between the "teachings" of the Bijak and the professed ideology of the Kabir Panth. But how is this resolved in the own rationale of the Kabir Panthis? Baidyanath Saraswati has drawn attention to attempts at reconciliation in one direction: Kabir Panthis may be, have now realised that <u>Kabir Mansoor</u> kind of mythomania does not appeal to the masses, much less to the literate devotees. Hence the recent trend to systematise and philosophise the doctrines of Kabir and to establish him, as equal in position to the Vaishnava acharyas.[60] Despite this, a contradiction remains vis-a-vis the Bijak. Why then, have they

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58   For a reinterpretation of Raidas by the Chamars see Khare, <u>op.cit.</u>, p.48.
59   Lorenzen, David, "Traditiions of Non-caste Hinduism : The Kabir Panth, "<u>Contribution to Indian Sociology,</u> 21, 2, 1987. p. 267.
60   Saraswati, <u>op.cit.</u>, p.183

not tampered with their *own* text, Bijak to resolve the apparent contradiction? I would seek the reader's indulgence, to put forward tentatively some answers -- answers which are, at best hypothetical. To start with,the equation of Bijak as *the* text of Kabir Panth may not be as straight and simple[61] Bijak could be older than the supposed "contradiction" (which I think emerges in the second part of the 19th century). And by the time this "contradiction" acquired currency the Bijak had become too popular, pre-empting any resolution of the "contradiction". Here, I raise a question about the dominant perspective on the Bhakti movement, in general and Kabir in particular. Kabir has been seen as a part of a movement which was a "failed" attempt at reformng "Hinduism". This does two things - it presumes the existence of certain traits of "Hinduism", traits drawn from the movement's "anti-Hinduism" and secondly, it collapses the regional specificities of the movement. Both, are generalization, one has to be wary of studying cultural traditions. One has to distinguish between the "ideology" of Kabir, the perception and aspirations of his followers and then try, to relocate the trajectory of the movement. Moreover, the characterisation of the attempt as a "failure" makes the problem of resolving the "contradiction", redundant. And this perception is there at the Kabir Chaura Math.

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61   It was with great difficulties that it was located.

In the end, I would like to talk about the way in which developments in the Kabir Panth have been characerised by Lorenzan "as a movement from heretics to Hindus"[62] under a blanket term, "Hinduisation". I am uncomfortable with the term, first, because of the ambiguous nature of the term Hindu[63] and secondly, because of the difficulties inherent in locating the process of "Hinduisation" in time. Does the process precede the consciousness of being a Hindu? What is called "Hinduization", started with the formation of the Panth, it has no doubt accelerated in recent times but it is definetely older than "Hindu" consciousness. It is significant that, Tulsidas's Ramcharitamanas (of a much later period) whose "Ram" today is part of the Hindutva bandwagon, does not have the word "Hindu".[64] Caste names and identities are there, so much so for the colonial construction of caste. A "Hindu" culture did emerge in British India which was in many

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62 Lorenzen, David, "The Kabir Panth : Heritics to Hindus' in Lorenzen (ed.), Religious change and Cultural Domination, Colegio de Mexico, Mexico, 1981. pp 151-171.

63 The word Hindu is a generic term and it requires some historiographical explication. The Persian and Arabs were the first to use the term to describe the people east of the Indus(Hind) river; it later came to be used by the Britishers as a religion describing someone who followed the "tenets" of a religion, the British called Hinduism. As opposed to the more familiar Islam. See, Stieteneron, Heinrich von., "Hinduism : On the Proper Use of a Deceptive Term" in Sontheimer G.D., and Kulke, H. (ed.), Hinduism Reconsidered, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 11-13.

64 This information I owe to Dr. Purushottam Agarwal of the School of Languages, Jawaharlal Nehru Unversity.

ways British as well as Indian, because the form it took, was significantly influenced by the British attempts at understanding the subcontinent. But then, how does one understand the process of change in the Kabir Panth, better? The movement is towards the sacral. The matrix from which symbols are chosen by Kabir Panthis, Raidas Panthis, Radha Soami Panth, Satnamis *do not* incorporate only a *religious* realm (though the adherents might deny it) but a "sacred" realm which encompasses the symbols and myths of Islam Christianity and Hinduism. This also could be a partial explanation of the strength and endurance of the syncretic tradition in India.

II

"Kayastha is not a caste, it is a culture it has an aura and aroma that is all pervading. We are above the varnashram, it is said that the four castes came from the four parts of Bramha, we on the other hand are descedants of Chitragupta who emerged from the Kaya of Bramha. Kayasthas and culture are synonymous and it is through us that the Indian heritage is enriched. You can recognize a Kayastha from a distance. I will remind the new generation of the basic qualities of "raftar", "guftar", "nashast", "barkhast", the traditional manners, behaviours and the way to present ourselves, which distinguishes us from others in social gatherings, If we had been a caste, we would have been confined into a camp. Kayastha and casteism do not go together".

This is a part of the speech delivered by the Reception Committee chairman,Chitransh K.N.Sahay[65a] at

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65a Chitransh is the title through which the Kayasthas today address each other. K.N. Sahay is an active Kayastha leader. A graduate in Agricultural Sciences, he has been a member of the legislative assembly and council of the Bihar State Legislature. A business magnet, he has also been the President of Akhil Bhartiya Kayastha Mahasabha (hereafter ABKM) in '1975, 1976, 1978.

Patna, to the 108th national conference of the Akhil Bhartiya Kayastha Mahasabha.[65] He went on in Hindi,here and there reciting couplets in Urdu, to welcome the delegates, guests which included the chief minster of Bihar and his local caste bretheren who had collected for the conference. The setting was festive with coloured bulbs and festoons adorning the venue - Lady Stephenson Hall, Patna. The hall was full and the crowd, in the precints would have been any where between seven to eight thousand. Proceedings had begun earlir with flag hoisting[66] and singing of Bande Matram and Citragupta vandana. The centre of attraction however was the huge statue of Chitragupta which had been installed in the hall and the enactment of the ritual turned out to be elaborate, with K.N. Sahay calling the celebrities on the stage, one by one to garland the statue. This is just a part of the symbolic repertoire of the Kayasthas today. We will now go back to the 19th century to study in a greater detail, the processes at work through which the symbolic embellishment started in the modern times.

Among the castes, Kayasthas were the first to start the process of "history" writings or collecting evidences to prove their social status in society. Munshi Kali Prasad[67] the

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65 · Held last year on 14th - 15th of November.

66 The ABKM has its own flag and emblem which is widely displayed at its conferences and on the cover of its magazines and souveniers.

67 Biographical sketch of Kali Prasad, See Carroll, Lucy., "Kayastha Samachar

"greatest benefactor" of the Kayastha "community"[68] published in Urdu, in the year 1877, a pamphlet called "Kayastha Ethnology; Being an Inquiry into the origin of the Chitragupta vansi and Chandraseni Kayasthas" from Lucknow.[69] The objective as Kali Prasad writes was to "refute erroneous facts and reveal the truth" which is as follows: "This Chitraguptavansi jati is a very superior dvijdharmi writer jati and its religious observances are similar to other arms wielding jatis, that is both are of the Kshatriya varna but their work and their descendants are different"[70] It is within these broad parameters that caste histories were witten on the part of the

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: From a caste to a National Newspaper", Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol X, 3, Sep. 1973, pp. 280-92; Caste, Social change and the Social Scientist, Journal of Asian Studies, XXXV, 1975, pp. 63-84. For an English translatin of Kali Prasad's will see Dhar, Murli, The Kayastha Pathasala, Allahabad. Its origin, objectives and Progress, Allahabad, Kayastha Pathsala, 1912, pp. 16-18. The will is preserved with the Kayastha Pathasala, Allahabad. In fact that is the only document they have relating to Kali Prasad. Also see the Hindi translation of Kayastha Ethnology (written by Kali Prasad in 1877) by Lala Sita Ram, Kayastha Pathsala, Allahabad, 1906, pp. 5-7.

68   Ram, Sita, English preface to the Hindu translation of the Kayastha Ethnology, op.cit., p.4

69   Significantly it was published by the American Methodist Mission Press, Lucknow and its Hindi and English translation was published by Kayastha Pathsala (hereafter KP), Allahabad only in 1906 and 1915 respectively. The former was done by Sita Ram and the latter, jointly by Sita Ram and Ram Saran Das. Apparently Sita Ram, as he writes in the Preface had translated the pamphlet in 1881 and given it to Kali Prasad for perusal but before it could be published Kali Prasad died. The translation was also lost. Subsequently in the first decade of the 20th century, Sita Ram translated the pamphlet again at the request of Rai Bahadur Ganga Sahay. Sita Ram's preface, op.cit., p.1. Apart from the two copies that I was gifted at Allahabad, to my knowledge the only copy available is at the Sinha Libraray Patna. The pamphlet was also serialised in Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar 1901-02, and is available in that form.

70   Author's preface p.2, in Sita Ram's translation, op.cit.

Kayasthas.[71] Not only were procedures of collecting the evidence same, the arguments also were similar. All of them borrowed substantially from <u>Kayastha Ethnology</u> but there was also an elaboration, the inference of which would be drawn in our analysis.

Kali Prasad's analysis begins against the background of the Varnashramdhrama and he cites other jatis[72] whose position in the varna scale is debated. In the preface itself, Prasad gives five reasons for the persistence of "difference of opinion" on the position of Kayasthas in the varna order. They are :

> 1. This jati has a peculiar enterprise. 2. It has a special kind of story for its origin. 3. During the reign of Musalmans they left Sanskrit to protect the enterprise of their ancestors. They started studying Arabic and Persian, using Persian Arabic words in their day to day interaction to the extent that they started using "bandagi", "dua," "salaam" instead of "pranam", "namaskar" and "ashirwaad". 4. Because of working in the courts of Muslim kings and rich, this jati lived in very close proximity of Muslims as a result

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71 The ones studied here apart from Kali Prasad's work are; Ram Saran Das's <u>Note - Regarding the Origin and Status of the Kayasthas, Lucknow,</u> 1888; Verma, Manoharlal., <u>Kayasthas and their origin, Varna and Social position,</u> Kayastha Sadar Sabha, 1901; Rai Hari Prasad Lal's, <u>Santan Dharama ki Vyavastha and Jati Nirnay or Kayastha Jali Sambandhi Mithya Bhramoched,</u> Hitichintak Press, Banaras, 1908. Srivastava, Kamta Prasad, <u>Chitravansh Martand and Tit for Tat,</u> 1925. <u>Chitravansh Nirnay</u> in three volumes, 1930, Hitkari Press, Banaras, (here after CVN); Raghuvar, Mitho Lal Sastri's <u>Kayastha Kaun Hain,</u> Chitragupta Press, Allahabad, 1972, also his essay, "A comprehensive study into the origin and status of Kayasthas, "<u>Man in India,</u> XI, NO. 2, 1932, pp. 116-159.

72 I use jati because it occurs in the caste literature of the 19th century offen interchangeably with community.

their behaviour increasingly began to resemble the Muslims. 5. Because of certain government orders, the people of this jati could not follow some rules of their religion.[73]

In the account which he goes on to give Kali Prasad's emphasis is on the first two points, the last three are not at all explained and elabrated. The pamphlet is divided into five parts, each part explaining and elaborating a theme,[74] themes being divided according to the kind of sources/evidences used and the kind of legitimacy invoked - the end result is an admixture of "Sanskritic" and "Western" arguments. It included Sastras, Vyavasthas of pandits and the accounts of the colonialists. All aimed at proving the dvij, albeit Kshatriya status of the Kayasthas. The collection and the arguments are not cogent, but then cogency was never the primary consideration, an assortment of myths and legends borrowed from diverse texts get incorporated into the argument.

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73 Prasad Kali, Preface, op.cit., p.2

74 The five parts are : 1) Origin and occupation of Kayasthas according to sastras, pp 1-4, 2) Extracts from the works of European writers with refernce to origin and duties of the Kayastha tribe, pp. 5-10, 3) Refutation of erroneous statements against the true nationality of the Kayasthas, pp. 11-18, 4) Decision of pandits on the nationality of Kayasthas, pp. 12-25; 5) Existing custom among the Kayasthas, pp. 26-30. I need to point out here that the copies of Kayastha ethnology now extant have undergone additions and changes probably at the hands of translators. This conclusion, I arrived at, by carefully comparing notes and dates of the material in the original text and the translations.

From among the sastras three lines of arguments can be perceived.[75] The first is of a deductive nature : accountants and scribes in the past have been Kshatriyas, Kayasthas are accountants and scribes and so Kayasthas are Kshatriyas. Quotations are of Vishnudharma sutra, Brihat Parasara Smriti. Yajnavalkya Smriti, Naradsmriti, Vrihaspati smriti, Sukraniti etc. The second, shows Chitragupta, the first Kayastha as having emerged from the Kaya of Bramha (hence the new Kayastha) after Bramha meditated to ease the burden of Yam Raj who alone could not manage the world. The texts quoted are Shristikhand of Padma Purana Bhavisya Purana and Garuda Purana. The third draws on the legend of Chandrasenivanshi Kayasthas (Prabhus of Maharashtra), as in the Renuka Mahatmya of Skand purana.[76] The story of Parasuram as having killed all the Kshatriyas but one who was left in the womb of the queen of Chandrasena and from him the Kayasthas descended. The claim of being the true and the only "Kshatriya", surviving has been current among a lot of other castes claiming a Kshatriya status and all of them invoke the same legend. The common denominator at all the three levels being, the establishment of the fact that Kayasthas were Kshatriyas

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75   See Prasad's Ethnology ... Ibid., pp 1-4.

76   This story was current among the Prabhus of Maharashtra. See the note of Baines, J.A., on the "Prabhu Kayasthas", Census of India 1881, Vol. II, Part III appendix 4, p. Xc.

because they were born out of the communion between Kshatriya father and mother.

The second section deals with the works of Arthur Steele (1826), M.A. Sherring (1872) Colebrooke (1796), George Campell (1852) and the Census of 1865. The conjectural parts of which are appropriated to prove Kshatriya descendance.[77]. This appreciative tone becomes condemnative in the next section where he refutes the erroneous statements made against the true "nationality" of the Kayasthas. Statements of the same authors are picked up and argued against. The focus of attack is a book called 'Jatimala' (on which Wilson, Elliot, Colbrooke and Sherring and as we have seen Buchanan based their arguments) which says that Kayasthas are born of a Brahmin father and sudra mother and so are of the Shudra status. Jatimala, says Kali Prasad is of a dubious origin and can carry no weight, "had it been opposed only to Padma, Bhavisya and Skanda Puranas, it was understandable but it is opposed to Mitakshara and Virmitrodaya, which are books of great authority on Hindu law and are admitted to be so even by the Privy Council" and so

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77 The Parasuram legend in Steele and Sherring's discussion of the Padma Purana, Colebrookes, section on the emigration of Kayastha with Brahmans to Bengal, Campbell's emphasis on the literary traditions of the castes and the Census of 1865's reference to the race which eagerly responded to "attempts which have been made to civilize in the European fashion the natives of this country", Parsad, Ethnology, op.cit., pp.5-10.

conclusion drawn on the basis of Jatimala can in no way be accepted.

The evidences and proof given in the fourth and fifth section draw on more indigenous traditions - that of getting Vyavasthas (declarations) issued by the Pandits and of quoting the existing customs prevalent among the Kayasthas. These Vyavasthas have a long tradition in the Indian history, albeit in a different form.[78] A total of 626 Pandits are cited in various Vyavasthas emanating from different places to argue that the Kayasthas were of the Kayastha varna.[79] The Brahmans had, through a procedure of knowledge exercised by the colonial power, come to occupy this position. Not that they did not exercise this influence in the pre-British times but now they could be independently appropriated by the East India Company the European travelogues and jurists, the colonial

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78 The Brahman with the backing of a secular power, as an enterloper, to enhance the status of an individual or group is a common feature. See Wagle, Narendra, Ch. III, op.cit., and Bayly, C.A., Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire, Delhi, 1990. This was common in times especially when the political authority was fluid. What had changed probably was that with the support or indifference of the secular power, in this case that of the colonial state, the once monopolized mechanisms of status legitimation were thrown open to different castes. Anyone could now get one issued. See Census of India 1911, Vol. I, Part I, pp. 379-80.

79 The list given in the Vyavasthas includes information regarding the name of the Pandit, his place of residence, the place of publication of the Vyavastha or where the copy can be found; meaning perhaps that it was easily verifiable. The list includes : Vyavastha of 80 pandits of Poona, dated 1858; 39 Pandits of Bengal dated 1864; 95 Pandits of Banaras dated July 1873; of 14 Pandits of Oudh (Undated); 22 Pandits of Mathura (undated); 332 Pandits of Kashmir (undated). See Prasad's Ethnology op.cit., (pp.19-25).

state, and hence also by the Kayasthas. The last section gives an account of the existing customs among the Kayasthas and by way of substantiation it records a statement signed by 2900 leading Kayastha men.[80] It has the following points to make:

> 1."Kayasthas are and have been according to Padma Purana Chitraguptavansi Kayasthas. 2. We have been pursuing the respectable occupation of writing, reading and learning arithematic and have been serving the royal courts. 3. Are not sudras but dvijas. 4. Weddings in our caste are according to the rule of sastras and contracted only between persons of respective classes, which is the practice prescribed for high caste people. 5. No women of different caste or her descendants are allowed to partake of food with us, nor can they do so; they do not and cannot according to custom share inheritance. 6. We are authorised to put on the sacred thread to recite the Gayatri and read the Dharama sastras, see the Matsya Purana.[81]

This thus was the broad thrust of Kali Prasad's Kayastha Ethnology. A further examination of other works of this genre would help us discern a movement in the self perception of the Kayasthas in terms of shifts/elaboration in/of these arguments. But before going on to the other writings, a brief comment on the translation of Kayastha Ethnolgy which appeared in 1906 and 1915.[82] The additions and changes which the text underwent at the hands of the transalators reveals how the book was being interpreted and used by the Kayastha

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80 The author (Prasad) reports that this statement exists in the records of the Kayastha Samachar office, Lucknow.

81 Prasad, op.cit., p.30

82 Cited above, see footnote no. 17 and 22

ideologues at the turn of the century, a gap of three decades, since the Urdu edition of the text appeared. The authors in the preface to the 1915 translation admit that they had problems in locating a copy of <u>Kayastha Ethnology</u>, "there is no copy of the Ethnology in the Pathsala library nor could it be found anywhere in Allahabad", and they worked on the translation which appeared in the <u>Kayastha Samachar</u> 1900-1901. What they do not acknowledge,however is that they have tampered with the text. The parts of the book appear in a reordered fashion - the Vyavastha which comes towards the end in the original is, second, in the new sequencing, a reflection perhaps of the changing priorities. The Census, by 1901 had reconciled to the position of the Kayasthas as one of the higher castes and so, the section on European authors could come later. The importance assigned to the Vyavasthas could be a function of the Kayastha - Brahman rivalry developing in the United Provinces during this time.

Apart from a reordering of the sections , an elaboration of pre-colonial history was also taking place. Kali Prasad had explained in his Preface the reasons for there being difference of opinion, regarding the origin of Kayasthas and one of them was the nature of relationship the Kayasthas had with the Muslims. This relationship was elaborated and incorporated into a view on Indian history.The confusion now is attributed to the "disappearance of Hindu law during the

Mahomedan rule". What was for Kali Prasad an adoption into

the Indo-Islamic culture and effects of some government orders

became for the translators a question of law, within the bigger

attempt of interpreting the medieval period : "it is reasonable

to conclude that the Hindu law, had at the time the British

obtained possession of the country, became nearly extinct and

antiquated" and rationalizing the British rule : "under the

British rule, Hindu law is being restored to the Hindus in all

matters relating to succession, inheritance marriage, caste and

all other religious usages and institutions.[83] So what was to be

contested under the British law was the basis on which Hindu

subjects were governed and these were not the Hindu sastras

themselves but their translations. These translations were

made out to be faulty both in quality and quantity and this could

be shown by quoting Colebrooke extensively[84]. In this

enterprise, the Brahmans who helped the Europeans were seen

as manipulating things. It was in the last decade of the 19th

century that an anti-Brahman tinge emerged but curiously this

did not render the Vyavasthas useless, infact they were used to

expose the "Pandits".

The argument was now being formulated in

"historical" or rather "pseudo-historical" terms, the subject of

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83   Preface, op.cit., pp.3-4
84   Ibid., , pp. 3-5

the origin of Kayastha caste was introduced by "tracing the creation of the world in accordance with the Vedas and other Hindu religious authorities".[85] History was not limited to this, it sought the support of "facts" in form of extracts from inscriptions, historical texts etc.[86] mostly of the medieval period. The text emerges as a much enlarged and "updated" version having extracts of other works and Vyavasthas of the intervening period, for instance it has the extracts of the Tagore Law Lecture, 1880. The legal implications of the endeavour were also highlighted, with the text containing several court cases (in fact a chapter was added) leading Carroll to "read, legal implications of the pamphlet".[87] She bases her argument on the Preface which was written in 1915, Prasad's text however has no such reference. The motive behind Prasad's effort was to prove the Kshatriya status of the Kayasthas. After all, the judicial decisions cited by Sita Ram and Ram Saran Das relate to the property rights of the illegitimate children of the Kayasthas and in most cases they went in favour of the Kayasthas.[88] Once decided in their favour, they became ideal evidence to prove the dvija status of the Kayastha[89] I am not

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85 Ibid., Introduction, p.i

86 Ibid., pp.60-62

87 Carroll, op.cit., Ch II, 1978, p.37

88 Sita Ram's translation of the Kayastha Ethnology, op.cit., pp.23-37. Apart from the one in which the Calcutta High Court declared the Kayasthas to be Sudras.

89 Being premised on the logic that illegitimate children of the twice born were

arguing that these decisions had no impact on the Kayasthas but to see legal motives in Kali Prasad's attempt is to read too much into the preface written after thirty years and to undermine the importance the Kshatriya category had for the Kayasthas in the 19th century.

Ram Saran Das's <u>Note regarding the Origin and Status of the Kayasthas</u> proved to have a wider circulation. The changes introduced by Sita Ram and Ram Saran Das's translation of <u>Kayasthya Ethnology</u> were pre-empted here. It was seen by the author as being written "in hope that (it) they may be of some use to the officers engaged in the approaching Provincial Census of 1901", who even offered his help :

> "I am prepared to place myself unreservedly at the service
> of Mr. Crooke and the Procinvial Census officers for any
> further information that they may require on the subject by
> furnishing them with quotations from the original Sanskrit
> works or otherwise".[90]

Crooke is pulled up for "unwittingly" falling into some errors and chided for "making no direct reference to the original Sanskrit authorities".[91] The book however, is

not entitled to the property of their fathers. Thus,the judgements dealing with property rights brought into question the bases on which the rights were perceived.

90 Har Gobind Dayal, Secretary, Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind, Lucknow, informs in the preface that within two years of its publication (1898) a second edition was issued.

significant for different reasons : firstly it contains the details of the correspondence between William Crooke and Ram Saran Das (1891-93) on the subject which resulted in the replies to the Ethnographical and Folklore Catechism regarding the Kayasthas, prepared by Das.[92] It also refers to Raja Lachman Singh's Memoirs of Bulandshar district in which he had put the Kayasthas in the Shudra category, a remark which he later withdrew in light of the "powerful" evidences put forth in the Kayastha Ethnology and beat an apologetic retreat.[93] A reading of the correspondence reveals the kind of dialogue in which the British ethnographers and caste leaders were engaged in the late 19th century. The Catechisms,on the other hand, reveal what had through a process come to be established as *characteristics* of the twice born castes.

All the digits of dialogue are captured in its fullest by Manohar Lal Verma's "Kayasthas and their Origin, Varna and Social Position" (1901). It is after almost a quarter of a century since Kali Prasad wrote his Ethnology that the finest exposition of the Kayasthas comes out. Obviously it draws on

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91   Das, Ram Saran, op.cit., p. 3 and p. 9

92   See Appendix B

93   His review of Kayastha Ethnology forms a part of the English translation of the same, op.cit., pp. 66-69. He also attended the 1893 Mathura conference of Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind and rendered his apologies.

all the material that came out in the intervening period. Issued

from the office of Secretary, Education Committee, Kayastha

Sadar Sabha and subtitled as the "Kayastha Educational Reform

Series No. 3", it has a comprehensive presentation. The book

is divided into three chapters, each dealing with origin, varna

and social position of the Kayasthas.[94] Even the sources are the

same; Hindu scriptures, customs, history and contemporary

authority, "we lay no claim to originality" declares the

Preface.[95] However, the previous writings of the Europeans are

rejected in stronger terms; being described as serious blunders,

ignorance, confusion. The first confusion which the book

purports to correct is to establish the three distinct classes of

the Kayasthas viz., Chitraguptavansi Kayasthas,

Chandrasenivansi Kayasthas and Bengali Kayasthas, out lining

in brief the three different traditions to which they belong and

to point out that the book deals with the Chitraguptavansi

Kayasthas.[96]

The Chapter on origin cites a new text in describing

the origin of the Chitraguptavansi Kayasthas - Yama Samhita.[97]

94 See the title of the book.

95 Verma, Manohar Lal, op.cit., p.1

96 Ibid., p 1.

97 Uncited till now in other books. However, KayasthaEthnology's later edition
    of 1906 and 1915 have the text quoted right in the beginning of Chapter one.
    The text was not cited in Kali Prasad's original work and it was in the

It describes in great detail Chitragupta's association with Bramha and Yama who is referred to as Dharmaraja and the physical features of the first Kayastha. There is an etymological discussion of the word Kayastha and Chitragupta.[98] and a meticulous explication of the genealogy of Chitragupta and his twelve sons,[99] which is new in form and presentation. There is another new trend which is visible-earlier, for the "erroneous statements" of the European ethnographers, the translations were blamed[100] but now the

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subsequent period that it came to become a part of the Kayastha's repertoire of evidences. This text also provided the famous Chitragupta Yam Dwitiya Vrata Katha which is heard annually today on the day of Yam Dwitiya, the day when the Kayasthas of North India worship their ancestor Chitragupta. A detailed discussion on Chitragupta is available in the latter part of this chapter.

98 "Kayastha" is explained as Kaya (body, in this case of Bramha) + stha (sustained in it) and Chitragupta was the name given by Bramha because he had been concealed (gupta) by him like a picture (Chitra). Jatimala on the other hand relates Kayasthas to Bhutidutta who was a Sudra and got that name because he managed the house of a rich man very properly; Kaya (house) + stha (to settle). Bhutidutta had three sons Chitraguna, Chandrasena and Chitragupta whose descendants are the present day Kayasthas. Jatimala however, came under strong criticism in the literature of the Kayasthas. See the Raja Lachman Singh affair, foot note no. 42.

99 Chitragupta is said to have married twice, once to Irawati daughter of Susarma rishi and the second time to Dakshina -Irawati bore him eight sons and Dakshina four sons. These twelve sons are supposed to have, settled in different areas and thus developed the twelve sub-castes of the Kayastha . Their names being derived from the name of the sons and from the area where they settled. This dispersal theme had implications which we will discuss later. Suffice here to say that these convenient divisions became convenient when a homogenisation was sought, within the Kayastha categories and still reverberates in calls to unity voiced frequently in the ABKM conferences. They also have formed the digits on which a call for reform has repeatedly been given since the last quarter of the 19th century. op.cit., p.3.

100 Prasad, Kali, Ethnology .. op.cit., pp. 11-18

interpretation of the text is being blamed,[101] an indication
perhaps of the "self confidence" of the discourse.

The chapter on the varna position quotes the now
familiar texts and follows the same pattern of deductive logic.
Apart from the sastras, Vyavasthas of Pandits and judicial
decisions, a survey of existing customs and practice of
samskars is added to bolster the self image of the caste.[102] The
previous Vyavasthas are repeated with the additions of the two
most recently issued, under the initiative of Rai Jai Prakash
Lal, Diwan of the Dumraon Raj (1894)[103], and the second at
the initiative of the Maharaja of Jeypore (1901) to the effect
that Kayasthas are Kshatriya.[104] The discussion on customs and
samskars in detail covers all the sixteen samskars and forms of
marriage, ishta devta, claims of illegitimate children etc., the
place of pride no doubt being assigned to the upanayana.[105]
However, it is recognised that no dvija jati to duly performing
the samskars and if their performance is made the sole criteria
for judging the varna of a group then, one cannot help but
conclude that dvija jatis do not exist at the present day.[106]. We

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101. He questions Nesfield's interpretation of Manu. Verma, op.cit., pp. 10-11.

102 Verma, op.cit., pp. 13-38

103 Rai Jai Prakash Lal was one of the moving spirits behind the Kayastha
      Conference since its inception. We cannot agree with Carroll when she says
      that there are no linkages between the said force at work, see Carroll, (1975),
      op.cit.

104 Verma, op.cit., pp 33-34

105 Ibid., pp 17-23

thus, have reached a point where both scriptural behaviour and their modern aberrations are incorporated in the discourse which is arguing for a better social position in the society. It is significant that the European emphasis on samskars and customs as the criteria for judging the varna position of a social group is being questioned and attacked   caste, which in other spheres of activity emerged as a loyalist one. This questioning takes within its ambit, the Calcutta High Court decision which had categorised the Kayasthas as shudras. In a detailed examination of the High Court judgement, the primacy accorded to the samskars is questioned.[107]

The third chapter on the social position of the Kayasthas draws on

> "Shastras and other Sanskrit books, more recent books written during the medieval period and the books written under the British rule".[108]

The author argues,

> "It is admitted on all hands that the Kayasthas occupy a social position, in no way inferior to men of other castes. We have ample shastric and other evidences to prove that the Kayasthas have always been the chief functionary of the stte and occupy a high position since time im-memorial.[109] and significantly the chapter ends with a list

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106   Ibid., p. 20, 38

107   Ibid., pp. 36-38

108   Ibid., pp. 39-49

109   Ibid   p 40

of "important names of Kayasthas who distinguished themselves in different branches of administration during the Hindu, Muslim and British rule",

no distinction being made between mythic and historical figures.[110] However, their contemporary social position is shown also through the European accounts and Kayasthas are presented as the most educated, intelligent and enterprising of all the social groups.[111]

The "historical" or "pseudo-historical" flavour of the discourse reaches its flowering in the writings of Kamta Prasad Srivastava.[112] The influence of the contemporary milieu marked by the Brahman-Kayastha rivalry and the increasing communalisation of society is clear. Kamta Prasad Srivastava writes: If I disclose the secret, the Brahman society will be displeased, but if I do not the public will remain in darkness and this will be a sin, so it behoves me to shed a vivid light on the subject" and as if gripped he cannot but, tell the truth and so he does.[113] The tentative approach of the late 19th century has undergone a change as reflected in the title of his book.[114] The caste histories, from an "enquiry" have become a

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110 Ibid., pp.40-49, This is established as a standard practice (of enlarging the list of activities of the caste in every field) in caste discourse today.

111 Ibid., p.42

112 He wrote   four volumes on the subject, cited above see foot note, n. 19.

113 CVM, op.cit., p.4

114 Chitra Vansh Martand and Tit for Tat, Being marvellous - Replies to the attacks on Kayasthas by P.N. Patankar, a well known Dharma Pandit of Hindu

"nirnay" and are now an arena for inacting the caste rivalries. Not only this, they are being seen "as civilizing nation's search for its past history, literature and ethnography".[115] The search however, is stamped by the communal historiographical approach; interpreting the entire history through the blinkers of Brahman-Kayastha conflict and Kayasthas are made to be the saviours of Hinduism, both in the Buddhist and Muslim period. Kali Prasad who was the first to reveal the truth becomes a Sanatanist.[116] The tone also has become aggressive, "awake, awake, Kayastha from your slumber, otherwise the remaining part of your history as well as your honour wi be extinguished from the surface of the earth forever".[117] A process of glorification of the caste is cl ly at work, when he argues that the categories Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra are indicative of duty whereas Kayastha is not, thus it is not possible for everyone to be a Kayastha.[118] "Kayastha" denotes

University, Banaras (here after CVM) and Chitra Vansha Nirnay in three volumes. Hindu Sociology or Kayastha sociology, Being a treatise on the social position of the Kayastha community, 1928. This controversy reached its climax in Sampoornanand's Brahmah Savdhan undated, Nagri Pracharini Sabha, Banaras. Patankar had apparently accused the Kayastha of many things, one of them was incest, because the Kayasthas are descendants of the Twelve sons of Chitragupta and the Srivastava or Mathurs marry among themselves they stand accused of the same. This conflict however, is outside the scope of this work.

115 Srivastava, op.cit., CVM, p.1
116 Srivastava, op.cit., CVM, pp. 6-10, CVN, Vol I, pp. 31-33, Vol III, pp.24-76
117 Srivastava op.cit., CVM, p. 19
118 CVN op.cit., Vol II, p. 44 compare this with K.N. Sahay, equation of Kayastha and culture, quoted earlier in the chapter.

a lineage says Srivastava and the sub- divisions are in reality, adjectives which have taken the form of jatis, who still follow the Kshatriya dharma.[119] There is thus no contradiction in being a Kayastha and a Kshatriya, in fact Srivastava taking resort to the Parasuram legend argues that Kayasthas are the only Kulin Kshatriyas[120] in Kali Yug. And it is only because of his contempt for the Brahmans that Kamta Prasad Srivastava does not claim for the Kayasthas, the varna of the former, he writes :

"Thus the Kayasthas being the descendants of Bramha Chitragupta are similar in rank or varna and social status to Brahmans, but their religious observances and duties have been prescribed to be those of Kshatriyas, especially in Kaliyug, because the Brahmanhood in this yuga is simply observed by taking dan or charity".[121]

We thus have an overview of caste histories, written by the Kayasthas over a period of six decades. Some tentative generalizations can be put forward, on the following; one, the dialogue our ideologues carry out vis-a-vis the colonial discourse and second, how this comes to influence their perception about the "self" and other castes. What is obvious is the vibrance of the native response. It does both, first incorporating the colonial discourse and then attacking it on its

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119 Ibid., CVN, Vol, II, pp. 46-49

120 Ibid., CVN Vol I. p. 32

121 op.cit., CVM, p.3

own terms, evident in the changing importance, which is attached to the views of the ethnographers. An attempt to correct erroneous beliefs leads in a process of time to their rejection. Though the methods resorted to are the same, but then, that does not deter the Kayasthas from an elaboration of their own perception. And here I see a movement, a movement common to other castes as well, which has not been conceptualized. The movement in terms of identities I think is mediated and expressed through the various levels of caste progresses thus : caste-varna-caste (and if I may endorse K.N. Sahay's idea) to culture. The lowest denominator remains the endogamous jati (as we will see later) despite efforts to the contrary. There is a movement from a Kayastha category[122] to its avowed claims of Kshatriyahood. Culminating in its independence, as a caste, not reconciled to hierarchy.[123] The aggressive nature of identity invoked in 1910s and 1920s was a function perhaps of this "independence" when it was recognised as an upper caste with the varna identification gradually getting submerged. This dalliance with the trappings of Varna did not however prove to be futile. Combined with

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122 Which I think predates the colonial attempts at defining caste, as the treatment of Buchanan shows. Though it appears in the late 19th century on a different scale and in a different form.

123 Here I distinguish between caste, as a unit of the caste system and casteism, the former I think denotes hierarchy while the second negates it by asserting its own identity. See also Gupta, Dipankar, Continuous Hierarchies and Discrete Castes, op.cit., ch. II.

their secular advances in terms of education and employment,it hastened their advance to "independence".[124] It is significant that the first caste to organise itself, the Kayasthas established late in the day their pan-Indian organisation. It was only in 1912 that the All-India Kayastha Association was established - when a Kayasthas identity did not involve a Varna. The Kayasthas of today are not concerned about their varna identification. It is shrugged off casually. This tendency, albeit in a nebulous way is present in the writings of Kamta Prasad Srivastava. This schema I understand is conjectural but can be substantiated to some extent by studying one of the constituent elements of the symbolic universe of the Kayasthas - that of Chitragupta. Chitragupta is peculiar to the Kayasthas, his divinity being limited to only the Kayasthas.

Chitragupta today is established as the ancestor of Kayasthas and is surrounded by a halo of divinity. On the day of Yam Dwitya, the Chitragupta Katha[125] is heard by the Kayasthas and they worship their Pen and Inkpot "giving their pen a day's rest". The mode of worship draws on, what is associated today with any puja in north India and include Chitragupta Archana, Chitragupta Vandana etc. There are even

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124 I am not suggesting though,that it was a well planned out exercise, my analysis I understand is defacto.

125 Chitragupta Katha is drawn from the Yama Samhita and follows the familiar theme of the kathas prevalent in North India viz. Satyanarayan, Rattea, Santoshi Ma Katha etc.

mandirs in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar whose antiquity is rather obscure.[126] The naturalness of the divinity of Chitragupta as put forth by the Kayasthas today, has only arrived through a process of symbolic appropriation and embellishment, the accumulating layers of which can be delineated.

Francis Buchanan writing at the beginning of the 19th centur y does not report among the Kayasthas the worship of Chitragupta.[127] As for their religious beliefs, he writes that the Kayasthas were mostly of the sect of Sakti.[128] Buchanan is otherwise quite penetrative in his analysis of the religious practices of the Hindus. Infact, he writes of the Govardhan Puja as being prevalant but does not mention the Chitragupta puja which takes place on the same day.[129] After about half a century Watson and Kaye in their <u>People of India</u> Volume III, report that the "Kayasthas worship Vishnu and are ordinarily non-vegetarian".[130] I am not trying to argue that Chitragupta,

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126 Kayasthas in Patna claim that there exists in Patna City an "ancient" temple of Chitragupta the idol of which was stolen in the age when idols were being stolen en mass. The "ancient" temple was supposedly built by Raja Shitab Rai in the late 18th century. The Kayasthas however, agree that the present idol which is their in the temple was installed only in 1963.

127 Buchanan, Francis, <u>An Account of the District of Bhagalpur in 1810 - 11</u> Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna, 1939; <u>An Account of the District Puraniya 1809-10,</u> Bihar and Orissa Research Society, 1939; <u>An Account of the Districts of Bihar and Patna in 11-12,</u> Bihar and Orissa Research Society, 1936.

128 Buchanan, Francis, ... of Puraniya, <u>op.cit.</u>, p. 262

129 Buchanan, Francis, ... of Patna, <u>op.cit.</u>, p 366-67

130 Watson, J.F., and Kaye, J.W., <u>People of India</u>, Volume III, 1868, p.125 (Reprint, Delhi, 1987)

was invented by the Kayasthas. After all, the chroniclers could be deficient, but then the relative importance attached to the tutelary deity is revealed. I think the importance attached to Chitragupta is indicative of the nature of caste self perception. In the late 19th century as we have argued, the identity of Kayasthas operated through a varna category and so the caste histories even when they regard Chitragupta as their ancestor, do not attach any divinity to him. The Census of 1891, mentions Chitragupta as the "hereditary deity of the Kayastha caste" who is worshipped daily and thrice annually, with greater reverence.[131] It recognises though, that few Kayasthas worship Chitragupta (1967 out of the total Kayastha population of 574327) and in general Kayasthas are orthodox Saivites or Vaishnavites.[132] In putting forward a claim to Kshatriya status, the symbolic universe of the Kayastha was made to conform to the supposed traits of the Kshatriyas and hence Chitragupta had less relevance.[133] All this is changing at the beginning of the century - the stage in which I have shown, the Kayasthas start pressing forth their independent, positive identity. The books of Ram Saran Das and Kamta Prasad Srivastava have pictures of Chitragupta, addresses from where the Yam Dwitiya Katha

131 Census of India, 1891, Vol. XVI, North Western Province and Oudh, Part I, p. 262, Allahabad, 1894.

132 Ibid.,

133 The Catechism cited in the Appendix, reveals Chitragupta only as a minor God in sharp contrast to how he is perceived today. See Appendix B.

and photographs of Chitragupta can be bought an

exhortations, "every Kayastha should have a copy c

Chitragupta Utpati, Chitragupta Puja Vidhan,a photograph c

Chitragupta and should worship pen and inkpot.[134] O'Malle

writing in 1924, reports, "they have a special festival, th

Dawaat Puja, on which they worship their pen and ink pot an

observe a general holiday".[135] Thus, the Kayasthas throug

Chitragupta have attempted to define their community. Wha

may be, was confined to the private domain not only become

public, it also becomes a caste symbol which arouses stron,

community sentiments.[136]

The Kayastha Conference which started in 1887 i

a source of pride among Kayasthas today. Its resolutions giv(

an insight into the "Kayastha World" of the period.[137]

Resolutions of any Conference differ in nature, from text:

already discussed. Apart from the difference in tone, the caste

histories are more abstract in nature giving mythological

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134 Srivastva, CVN, op.cit., p.8. The emphasis shifts from Kayasthas to "sons oi Chitragupta".

135 O'Malley, L.S.S., Behar and Orissa District Gazetter Patna, 1924, p. 59.

136 Raj Narayan Nirkhi, a resident of Chak, Allahabad informed me of the debates that went into deciding what Chitragupta should look like in the photographs, how many hands should he have, what should be bold in each of them etc.

137 The resolutions of the period 1887 - 1906 are covered here. The same are attached also. See Appendix - C. The conference was not held in 1900 and 1902, informs Rai Hari Prasad Lal. see his Shri Sanatan Dharma Raksha Ki Vyavastha aur Jati Nibandh ya Kayastha Jati Sambandhi Mithya Bhrmoched, Hitchintak Press, Banaras, 1908.

details, the resolutions on the other hand,are expressions of concrete principles and more directed towards getting a response vide action. They invoke principles and ideas which they see as being implemented by the adherents of the Conference.

The sessions of the Conference had a wide reach, the orgnsation and procedures of which were common to other conference of the time.[138] It was decided that the sessions be held annually at different places. The Kayastha Sabhas were to be organised at the following levels; a local sabha in the locality, all of which were to be a part of the Provincial Sabha which, in turn, came under the Kayastha Sadar Sabha, were under the overall supervision of Kayastha Sadar Hind.[139] They were expected to work through consultation and coordination aiming to achieve unanimity and consensus among the members of the community.[140] The method of working, as is revealed

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138 They were held mostly in the last week of December, around the same time, as the Indian National Congress held its sessions. The sessions were held at Lucknow, Allahabad, Patna, Lahore, Bareilly, Ajmer, Mathura, Banaras, Moradabad, Aligarh, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, Monghyr, Lucknow, Motihari, Gorakhpur, Gazipur, Dumraon. On 15 occasions it stayed within modern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and of these nine sessions were held in Uttar Pradesh.

139 There is a similarity, for instance with the sessions of the Indian National Congress. Organisational details are still paid particular attention, K.N. Sahay informed me of the attempts being made to organise the ABKM on lines of the Rotary club.

140 This was repeatedly stressed by the sessions of the Conference. see Appendix C, I, 1, XIII. 3. (The Roman number denotes the number of the Conference and the next the number of the resolution)

from a study of the resolutions, was such that it retained a semblance of democracy within the overall control of the Kayastha Conference. It was democratic to the extent that members and delegates were to be elected, discussions on matters were emphasised, resolutions passed were often preceded by an attempt to create and gauge public opinion. But then, the journals, sabhas and members of the community, to be considered a part of Kayastha Conference had to abide by the rules and regulations of the same. All this was part of an effort to create a consciousness among the members of the community and had to conform to the dictates of the Conference.[141]

The subjects of the resolutions are wide ranging but they eschew what are called "state affairs and religious matters" and the government also is kept informed about the proceedings of the conference.[142] This stance, points out, the booklet issued by Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind, Lucknow, in 1899,

> "is necessary to impress the reader with this negative aspect of the institution to prevent it beng confounded with the political movement which goes by the name of the Indian National Congress or with the several religious

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141 That the dictates were not always followed, as we shall see later, was a different matter. The Conference however sought to define and defend its idea of a community.

142 The state was always kept in good humour by the sessions. Apart from passing resolutions welcoming the foreign dignitaries and congratulating the King on coronation,the resolution also wished victory for the battle in Transvall.See appendix C, V,2; V,9; XIII,12.

movements which are at present being propagated under the name of the Arya Samaj, the Brahman Samaj or the Bharat Dharma Mandal respectively. With none of these has the Kayastha conference any direct or indirect connection, *its main object being simply to spread education to sow seeds of homogeinity, to pioneer needed social reforms and to try to gain material prosperity by the adoption of commercial and other respectable pursuits"* (italics mine)[143]

The conference thus was carving out a different constituency - that of a "Kayastha community".[144] Who are the Kayasthas referred to in the Conference proceedings? They are defined, thus : "are Chitragupta vansi, are scribes and accountants by profession and next to Brahmans, they form the hereditary literary caste of India and their community is estimated to consist of 25 lakhs of people scattered all over India".[145] The Kayasthas, thus have defined their attributes and through the Census have become a demographic entity.

A substantial proportion of resolutions relate to social reform, education and economic upliftment. These activities[146] sought to make caste an operational category for

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143 The Kayastha Conference - its Aims, Objects and Achievement, Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind, Lucknow. p.1.

144 I pointed out in the last chapter, the problem of language in defining a caste as "jat", "Jati" etc. Here I need to point out that throughout the literature, Kayastha see themselves as a "Kaum", which I have taken to mean community.

145 The Kayastha Conference ... 1899, op.cit., p.1

146 And there were numerous of them, the schools, boarding houses, funds designated as the National Fund, Mutual Family Fund, Marriage Provident Fund. These and related activities form a part of our discussion here, only in so far as they further the caste's self perception - as constituting a community.

all such endeavours. The relative success of these, helps in evaluating the extent to which caste could in real term become a basis for activity in the secular realm. The Conference, as is reveal ed in the Abstract Report of the Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind, for the year ending 30th June 1899.[147] worked through a plethora of committees.[148] The social reforms advocated were, against child marriage, consumption of liquor, marriage after the age of 45, unnecessary rituals, extravagance on social occasions, keeping mistresses etc. We are however interested in the more contentious issues - that of abiding by the, dvijdharmi code, sea voyages and language to be used. These have to be seen in context of the argument made, earlier about the transition in the evoked categories. The dvijdharami code was emphasised in the first Conference and there are echoes in the later conferences. There is a difference in tone however, the rights of the Kayastha to the dvij dharmi satatus is not taken up, it is spoken off in a taken for granted manner, as part three of the third resolution says : "to strengthen and publicize the dvij dharmi code of conduct.[149] The issue of undertaking a sea

147 See Kayastha Conference .. 1899, op.cit., pp.1-10
148 For details see, Ibid., pp. 5-10. The list includes sub-committees on, Mutual Fund, Marriage Fund, National Fund, Sabhas, Education, Social Evils, Finance, Ways of livelihood, on management of jagirs, on Newspapers and Journals and Memorial Fund and Directory. More or less there exists a unanimity regarding the usefulness of these, the differences are related to lack of proper functioning, mismanagement, allegations of which are evident not only in the resolutions of the Conference but also in the caste journals of the time.

voyage was the most contentious issue, and the Conference only allowed it in its fifteenth session and that too, indirectly by issuing an appeal to raise money for sending a student abroad; direct invocation of declaring passage abroad as legitimate was made only in the next Conference, in Gorakhpur.[150] and that too, with a condition that those who have gone abroad, after returning should follow the dvij dharmi "aachar" and only then will they be accepted back in the community. The language issue was handled in an even more perplexing manner, an emphasis was laid through resolution on the development and use of Sanskrit and Hindi.[151] But the resolutions of the Conference,year after year were being passed in Urdu, which was highly Persianized. We have here an indication perhaps, that the "language controversy" did not cause so radical a break in emotions as to necessitate a change in the script of he language being used.

The homogenisation of the community also emerges, through the resolutions of the Conference.The critical · years of the Conference implicitly recognise the differences within the sub-divisions of the caste. In fact, the Bareli session of 1891 approvingly informs the establishment of the Nigam

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149   See appendix C, 1,2; III,2; IV,10; XVIII,2.
150   Ibid., XV,5; XVI,3
151   Ibid., VIII, 5,6; XII,3; XVI,7.

Conference and the Mathura session thanked Munshi Radhey Behari Lal and Pratap Narayan Saheb for the establishment of the Nigam Conference.[152] There is a recognition also of the difference between the codes of conduct of the sub-divisions[153] but, increasingly these are getting homogenised and the Munger Conference asserts that the names of those following/not following the conformed customs should be put in a register and advertised.[154] It is only in 1905, at the Gazipur session that the Conference declares commensality between the sub castes as legitimate and interestingly, the same resolution also talks of the sea voyage.[155] Needless to say, these 'liberal' attitudes are related. However, marri between the sub divisions of the Kayastha community is not talked of. These restrictions still persist and resolutions continue to be passed against them, in the Conferences of the ABKM.

Beneath the veneer of consensus lie the fissures of the discourse. What are projected as unanimous resolutions in the sessions of the Conference came out of a milieu characterised by dissent. The dissent, ideally speaking takes three forms, of those like Sachidanand Sinha who stand to speak from outside the discourse, another like Rai Hari Prasad

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152 Ibid., V,8; VII,5.

153 Ibid., VII,7

154 Ibid., XIII, 16

155 Ibid., XVII, 7

.lal who speaks from within it and the third are those uneasily located between the two.[156]. I cannot hazard a guess as to which group of dissenters dominated, that however, is not the question here. The fact that they co-exist (maybe many-more do) forces us to rethink the way in which scholars have spoken of caste, caste solidarity, caste consciousness, caste identity and the modes of their expression.[157]

Sachidanand Sinha came to be attached to the Kayastha Samachar in June 1900.[158] and, he had different ideas about conducting the journal: "on such lines that while serving as an Organ of the Kayastha community, it may at the same time, appeal to the educated community at large... (and thus) ... supply that great need of Upper India - a really good and upto date Monthly English Journal, which, without identifying

156 For Sachidanand Sinha's views see his editorials in Kayastha Samachar, later Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar and his speech as President of the All India Kayastha Conference, 35th Session, Delhi, 1929, "Caste Conferences and National Progress" in, "A Selection from the Speeches and Writings of Sachidanand Sinha" Patna, 1942, pp.727-752. Hari Prasad Lal's CVM, op.cit., Benaras 1908. For the third response I draw on the issues of Kayastha Samachar, Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar, 1899 onwards. For the earlier issues, which are not available I rely on Selection from the Vernacular Newspapers Published in Punjab, North Western Provinces, Oudh and Central Province (hereafter VNWP) year by year from 1883 onwards.

157 Lucy Carroll has studied one of them, see her "Kayastha Samachar : From a Caste to a National Newspaper", Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. X, No. 3. Sept. 1973, pp. 280-292. The title of her article is borrowed from the Tribune, dated 1st September, 1900. The assumption underlying her exposition is that a caste paper is totally devoted to caste news. A look at any of the caste journals shows the assumption to be false.

158 For the related details see Carroll, ibid and also her "Caste, Social Charge and the Social scientist." in Journal of Asian Studies, XXX, 1975, pp. 63-64.

itself with any particular set of opinions, will open its columns to all, irrespective of caste, creed or colour, for the discussions of all questions of current and general interest to the Educated Community of Upper India.[159] The journal changed its image and became a part of the critique of the colonial regime more in line with the nationalist movement of the time. It did serialise the Kayastha Ethnology written by Kali Prasad but the news related to the Kayastha Community became limited to the column "Kayastha World", the content of which kept on decreasing. This was a reflection of the priorities of Sinha as Carroll argues and the management sold off the journal to Sinha in 1905. The change however, came in for a complaint by the respondents of the Samachar. Munshi Chhail Behari Lal, headmaster of the district school in Fatehpur, expressed apprehension about the journals reception in the Kayastha community:

> "I was astonished to read the October November *issue* abounding as it did in matters which ... should be ouside the scope of a paper which is merely the organ of an insitution of caste ... It was not at all necessary that the organ should go into politics and criticise the measures of government.. (if this continues) ... I am afraid Kayasthas in government employment will not be as ready to help it as they would be if it were to perform its legitimate duty... I am quite sure that if criticism of government measures were excluded from the scope of the paper it would receive great help from the Kayasthas".[160]

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159   Kayastha Samachar, II, 1900, inside front cover.
160   Ibid., II 1900, p.25

Sinha asked Lal to read the "Prospectus", though he did not always reply to such complaints. It was however, in his Presidential address to the All India Kayastha Conference that he came out, very critical and its activities, questioning even, the very existence of a caste Conference. He quoted Ramkrishna Bhandarkar, in saying that the Conference has a function as a –

"introducer of social reform in those communities, but the assertion of the exclusiveness of the community involved in the holding of a Conference... serves to harden the caste distinction instead of softening them ... and are retrogressive ... (and so) ... we should be guided only by the feeling of a united nation:.[161]

For the Kayastha Conference,Sinha had this to say,

"I have watched the practical working of your movement in Bihar and United Provinces ... resolutions of this Conference are no better than scraps of paper they are written upon. Our committees/sabhas where they at all existed, at any rate in these two important provinces are mere paper transactions. They do not work and are absolutely moribund".[162]

Sachidanand Sinha could "afford" to be critical of the Kayastha Conference given his background. In the 1890s he was the first Bihari Hindu student to cross kalapani, he married outside the Kayastha sub-caste and was unrepentent about these

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161 Collected works op.cit., p. 730
162 Ibid., p. 741

actions. This would not have found favours with the vanguards of the dvij dharmi code within the Kayastha community, but then, Sinha had his other secular credentials to bank upon. Everyone was not so well placed and it is here that the response of my second protagonist assumes importance.

Rai Hari Prasad Lal, President, Kayastha Sadar Sabha, Gaya was not as well placed and he comes out, critical of the functioning of Kayastha Conference but, as an upholder of the the Dvijdharmi code. Apart from providing useful information for this dissertation, his book gives insights into the working of the Kayastha Sadar Sabha and Kayastha Conference. The Kayastha Conference,he argues has not been able to fulfill its objective of uniting the community and getting the resolution implemented. The delegates participating. in the session of the Conference have not been duly elected, they do not go back and work for the implementation of the resolutions, rendering the Conference inactive.[163] The main complaint, however which Hari Prasad Lal had, was on the issue of sea voyages[164] and I suspect that this was the main motive for writing the tract. He proves by quoting shastric texts that sea voyage was prohibited, that the resolution of the

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163 Rai Hari Prasad Lal, op.cit., 1908, pp. 8-10
164 The persons who are condemned for the same include, Roshal Lal Saheb, Dr. Laxmi Narayan Saheb, Sachidanand Sinha, Ganesh Prasad. A detailed case history is given of the passage of Parmeshwar Lal of Gaya. Ibid., p.16.

Conference on the same has proved to be ineffective, that unity

has not been achieved within the Kayastha caste because of

this reason and finally, that salvation is not gained by going

abroad but by staying here and upholding the Dvijdharmi

code[165]. He talks, in detail about the proceedings of the

Motihari (1903) and Gorakhpur Conferences (1904) "exposing"

the bonafides of the delegates and questioning the democratic

nature of the Conference[166] It is not as if one expects the

Conferences to have been democratic, but then it does throw

light on the nature of sentiments involved within a caste

Conference. Lal shows how the acts of "prayaschit" "beradari

bhoj" and "vyavasthas" of pandits, were being manipulated by

caste men to gain a re-entry into the caste[167]. That, these were

live issues and attracted a lot of attention at levels, different

than those at which Sinha was operating, is significant. In

Gaya, as President of the Kayastha Sadar Sabha, he must have

held ample influence because he did manage to create a furore

on the voyage of Parmeswar Lal, an account of which is

available in the pages of his book.[168]

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165 Ibid., p. 26

166 Ibid., pp. 18-22. Of the 40 delegates at Motihari and 50 at the Gorakhpur session, no one was elected, he reports.

167 Ibid., pp. 29-56

168 Interestingly, apart from debating the Shastric validity of sea voyage, Lal also questions, the credibility of pandits who are writing the Vyavasthas accepting the "villians" back, the signatures of the community members of Gaya attesting that a prayaschit was held. He gives Vyavasthas and signatures to the contrary. Ibid., pp 29.34.

It is obvious that sea voyages and the related responses were related to a lot of other factors,[169] and sometimes people who did give a beradari bhoj did it under the cover of something else. The issue was real and attracted diverse opinions in the pages of Sachidanand's Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar. Despite the fact, that Sinha described those who were against sea voyages as the "fossilised geological sub-strata"[170] the matter surfaced repeatedly in his journal. An interesting case was reported in the pages of Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar (here after HRKS) which helps in exploring the consciousness of the time. It relates to the return of Dr. Ganesh Prasad after finishing his studies abroad. The news in Kayastha Messenger welcomed him, and reported that Dr. Prasad was willing to conduct prayaschit to satisfy a section of the community. The editor of the HRKS however, interjected that this was untrue and there was no question of Dr. Prasad doing prayaschit.[171] The report of Kayastha Messenger attracted a lot of attention. The incident

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169 For instance it was important as to who was going abroad, what was he doing after coming back, the place to which he belonged, the importance he assigned to the community, and prayaschit. The responses varied from case to case and to expect that a caste could respond as a whole to such an issue is tantamount to chasing sparrows, as nothing definite can be concluded from the resolutions as we do not have the details of the proceedings of the Conference. The Motihari Conference however, had to suspend proceedings on this issue. HRKS, Vol IX, I, Jan. 1904, p. 91-92

170 Kayastha Samachar, III, 6, June 1901, p. 508.

171 Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar IX, 3, 4, 5, 1904.

came under a lot of criticism, nationwide and <u>Indian Social</u> <u>Reformer</u>, Bombay and <u>Indian Mirror</u>, Calcutta carried reports condemning Dr. Prasad's action and <u>Indian People</u> carried the letter Dr. Prasad had written to Babu Braja Kishore Prasad of Chapra expressing his willingness to repent and reported in detail the bhoj that was given.[172] The debate now turned to the way in which the ceremony was interpreted and HRKS could do nothing but cite Dr. Prasad's reply :

> "he had done nothing on the occasion referred to which can by any stretch of language or interpretation be regarded as prayaschit, that he was not present at the Katha and he participated only in one or two ceremonies ... just to humour his father".[173]

An abrogation of caste restrictions by an individual becomes an important issue and Dr. Prasad resolves it by interpreting his act in a different manner. Other individuals in times of similar abrogations might not have found similar surreptitious means, but then their abrogaton might not have got the kind of publicity Dr. Prasad's act got.

The fissures of the caste discourse are revealed most clearly in the issues of the Kayastha Samachar, later

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172 <u>Ibid.</u>, Vol IX, 3, March 1904, pp. 307-308.

173 The bhoj and ceremony conducted at Jalalpore in Ballia district included; Satyanarayan Katha, Hom, Rakshabandan, Godan, chanting of Vedic hymns, and benedictions to Dr. Prasad. Brahmans were also fed and Dr. Prasad distributed puri and salt. <u>Ibid.</u>, Vol X, 4 April p. 407.

HRKS and still later HR, the change in nomenclature reflecting changes in editors, management and priorities. A journal, in terms of being an expression, is different from both caste histories and resolutions of the Conference. It holds together rather diffused view points, and here, Sinha has to be credited for his fair editorial policy. The changes that I have already talked of with regard to the Kayastha Samachar, were not as dramatic as Carroll would have us believe. The transition from a "caste to a national newspaper" was not that complete.[174] Apart from the "Kayastha World" which remained a part of the journal till 1917, the samachar (later Review) did carry reports on the Kayastha Conferences held, though in a different vein. They became increasingly critial of the functioning of the community organisations but were not able to make the *break* which Sinha was able to. Through the reports we get an insight into a multitude of existing organisations and journals at different places not always working in tandem. The numerous funds established at the behest of the Conference are short of finances, revealing the enthusiasm they generated among the caste brethern. The Conference news find ample coverage, with the proceedings of the Chapra, Motihari and Lucknow Conferences being reported in great detail. This reporting

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174 The contradiction which Carroll assumes, between the two categories of caste and nation does not really exist Carroll, op.cit., 1973. This perception is also voiced by the President of the Lucknow session of the Conference.

however, is critical of the ways in which the things are being conducted a suggestion comes up also of scrapping the Conference,[175] another of merging the Kayastha Pathsala with the Conference so that the latter could further the interests of the Pathsala.[176] These suggestions were not accepted. What is important for us however, is that each of these organisations, the Kayastha Conference, Kayastha Pathsala and Kayastha Samachar were manned by people who had diverse intersts and perceptions and it is not possible to speak of a unfractured caste consciousness or caste identity, relying on a study of any or all of these.

The relatively less importance assigned to caste in the journal and the accommodation of diverse views could also be related to the fact that this was the period when Kayastha had established themselves as an independent upper caste category and relatively less attention is being paid to pure caste matters. This is revealed in the attitude which the organisation had towards the census operations. Babu Ram Chandra, Secretary, Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind wrote in response to the scheme of classifying castes in 1901 census :

> "In the opinion of this sabha a correct and just classifica-
> tion of different castes on the principle adopted, is *imprac-
> ticable* and the best view that recommends itself to it is that

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175   Kayastha Samachar, Vol. II, July & August, 1940. p.9
176   Ibid., Vol II, Nov. 1900, p.22

the *proposed grouping may not at all be effected*. To hold
that the sentiments in sastras and other authoritative books
are matter of interest only and to attach exclusive impor-
tance to the actual sentiment regarding each caste at the
present day would not, the sabha respectfully submits be a
safe and satisfactory process of ascertaining the true state
of things.... *No determination of this question on the part
of the census department can have a binding authority*, but
it can and will surely tend to unnecessarily prove a bitter
caste feeling..." (italics mine).[177]

An attempt to get the Kayasthas returned as
Kshatriyas has transformed itself and now questions the
validity of such classification and even the authority of the
census to do so. Moreover, the primacy accorded to the
category of Kayastha, enabled the members of the community
wider scope for manipulation and the caste identity could now
operate free of the dvij dharm code at least ideologically. And
even this, as we have seen was not unfissured. Conference had
delegates mostly from the area in which the session was being
held and the nature of Conference and community
consciousness must have varied. A study of the resolutions of
the Conference reveal that sessions in Bihar had a less liberal
stance towards the issues - than those which took place in the
United Proinces. The holding of three consecutive sessions in
Bihar (1897-1898-1899) was complained against, in the
columns of the Kayastha Samachar and was seen as a reason for
the orthodoxy of the Conference during that time.[178] Babu

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177 Ibid., Vol. III, 4, 1901. pp. 253-54

Jagannath Saran questions the holding of repeated sessions in Bihar and gives the "true explanation", for the same : "the movement as at present conducted is completely played out. There is at present very little sympathy and enthusiasm about it in the United Provinces and still less in Punjab, Rajasthan, and Central Provinces.[179] The report could be biased but there is some truth in the allegation. When the Conference finally does come out of Bihar in 1901 and the session is held at Lucknow, controversies break out over the issue of sea voyage, an issue which had so far been obfuscated by the Bihari Kayasthas.[180] That the Conference was facing problems is also revealed by the fact that sessions were not held in 1900 and 1902, and the pledge which every member of the Conference had to sign came after the crisis period.[181] An indication perhaps of a homogenised community being put forth and forces being regrouped. The role of updesaks (social preachers) was emphasised and they were to function as tools of homogenisation.[182]

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178   Ibid., Vol. II, Nov. 1900, pp. 21-23.

179   Ibid., p.23.

180   See Appendix C, XIV and also Kayastha Samachar, Vol. III, 5, June, 1901, pp. 507-508.

181   The pledge was a part of the Motihari Conference (again Bihar) 1903. See appendix C, XV.4.

182   See apendix C XI,11, XVI, 6.

The preceding account can lead one to conclude that caste had replaced the nation (given the fact that it had become the basis of so many secular activities and caste patriotism is also discernible). But one can only do so at one's own risk. The relative success of the activities which the Kayasthas undertake, help us understand the degree to which the category of nation can be brought to the level of a caste or similar caste groups. Education seems to have been the only area where some success was achieved and as we have seen the Kayasthas were the most literate of the castes in Northern India. Other committees and Funds failed to generate enthusiasm and an understanding seems to have been there, at the level where existence is fought for, that a caste identity cannot exhaust the identity of an individual, it reaches only a part of his total whole.

III

In the beginning I had tried to locate the frame of reference for the argument outlined in this chapter. I had argued that symbols can be manipulated and have meanings which are crucial to the suitability of the past which is being invented. In the manner of summing up let us examine how our frame of reference is congruent to our analysis.

For both the categories studied here, ambiguity has been marshalled to serve symbolic needs. In case of the Kabir Panth, Kabir and his association with Ramananda and Ramanuja are part of the symbolic formation wherein his "birth" as a Muslim has come to be de-emphasised. Peter van der Veer argues that Ramananda stood in the spiritual, guru-parampara and descent from Ramanuja was a ploy to garner greater social respectability. However, today not only Ramanuja but also Ramanand, do not feature as a part of the uncontested legitimate descent.[183] However the "secular" appropriation of Kabir has emphasised his Muslim lineage. But Kabir Panth, our primary concern here and its adherents under Vaishnava influence emphasise the "Hindu" element of Kabir. The morning and evening services offered at Kabir Chaura Math resemble the conventional puja, and the bhaktas are seperated on caste lines. It is significant that Kabir's critique of the caste system has not become a part of the lower caste ideology despite the fact that the Vaishnava culture provided a powerful legitimizing context within which lower cast jati reformers could give meaning and direction to social change. Here a brief comparison with Raidas and Ramananda would not be out of context. The Kabir Panthis ultimately embraced varna

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183   Veer, Peter van der, Gods on Earth : The Management of Religious Experience and Identity in a North Indian Pilgrimage Centre, p.100, London, 1988.

distinctions, then they manipulated it to suit the social needs of their own Shudra and Untouchable constituents.[184] The full historical irony of his apparent doctrinal contradiction was evident in Patna during the All India Sammelan of the Kabir Panth, as it was held under the auspices of Yadva Mahasabha. While the followers of Kabir seemed to mould his radical anti-establishment message to suit their understanding of social relations, a process of radicalization seems to have occurred with respect to Raidas. The modern Chamar followers of that saint have developed a clean social agenda and are reluctant to see reform.[185] The social message of Ramananda, however can best be characterised, not as anti-varna but as multi-varna, where in the bairagi element is emphasized. It is the location between these two positions of radical condemnation and ambivalence that the lack of popularity of the Kabir Panth can be explained. Another reason perhaps is the Panth and its organisation which set the limits of its support.

As for Kayasthas the process of appropriation of symbols is clearly visible. We have seen that, in respect of the operational category of caste and Chitragupta Yam Dvitiya, the day on which Chitragupta Puja is done is not mentioned in the resolution, but for the Munger session of 1899 which exhorts

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184 An example of this is the religious tract by Nirguna Sinha, Varnashram Vichar Dhara, Patna, 1938-39.

185 Rhare, R.S., The Untouchable as Himself, op.cit., p.48.

Chitraguptavansi Kayasthas to give donations on that day to the Kayastha Pathsala.[186] Chitragupta fits into their *present*, both in their own perception and that held by others. Because of the ambiguity of their social position and as the most literate caste they are able to monopolise him. The *clerk* of Yam, has become a God in his own right. But the attached divinity comes through a process. Symbols sometimes acquire autonomy and do exist in their own right. The legends surrounding "Chitragupta" are ambiguous and flexible, he symbolizes a trait of Kayasthas and in this process he also provides a rationalisation. What has not change in the discourse of the Kayasthas is the constant refrain, of having too much reliance on the services sector and neglecting trade and business as means of livelihood. This has been voiced right from 1887, irrespective of facts. Either nothing has changed, and I doubt it to be so or the argument has acquired an existence of its own - being not only expressive but also instrumental. It expresses the association of Kayasthas with the service sector and also exhorts them to go in for other pursuits.

Towards the end of the chapter, I would draw attention to a neglected aspect of social mobility through the Kayastha "model" which, to an extent detracts from the concept of Sanskritization. A point repeatedly made by the ABKM

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186   Appendix C. XIII,6.

ideologues is the omnipresence[187] of Kayasthas throughout the country, "even fishermen in Tamilnadu are Kayasthas, before they go out to brave the seas they worship the pen and ink pot"[188] This omnipresence, I understand is related to the dislocation of population due to the logic of modernisation, but it is mainly a function of how groups having a lower social position have tried to gain respectability by becoming a Kayastha.[189] This claim is strengthened by the earlier ambiguous position of Kayasthas and the amorphous yet well defined internal structure of the Kayastha caste.[190] So much so, that it was possible to get into any one of the sub-divisions and become a part of the Kayastha category which was increasingly getting homogenised.[191] And, this is our analysis coincides

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187 The term used is *Sarvavyapi.*

188 As revealed by K.N. Sahay in a personal interview. The Presidential addresses and souveniers released on the occasion of the Conference and other caste journals repeatedly voice this opinion.

189 A popular saying goes thus, "Go and stay in the the city for some years and you can safely claim yourself to be a Kayastha" or "If a family in urban areas claims to be a Kayastha you can easily doubt his lineage and most of the times you will happen to be right".

190 This I suspect to be peculiar to the Kayasthas. The broad divisions on an All-India level would include the Bengali Kayasthas, North Indian Kayasthas and Prabhoos all of which are internally differentiated. The second level of divisions are also numbered and defined viz., the twelve sub-castes of the Chitraguptavansi Kayasthas, all of which are not similarly ranked.

191 There are several examples of such tendencies, groups calling themselves Kayastha Darzi, Kayastha Mochi, Kayastha Senduriya, Kayastha Bharbhunja. See Blunt, E.A.H, op.cit., p.109, 216-237. Also The Report of the Census of Oudh, 1872, Vol. I, p.100, Census of India, 1891, NWP and Oudh, p.320, Census of India, 1911, p.377; this was however, not a one sided movement, some "lower caste" Kayasthas also converted to Islam, see Ahmad, Imtiyaz, "Endogamy and Status Mobility Among the Siddique Sheikhs of Allahabad"

with the third stage when Kayasthas have been recognised as an independent higher caste. The caste-wise populaton figures of Assam and Bengal reveal this clearly.[192]

	1911	1921	1931
Kayasthas in Assam	81,967	121,711	135,590
Bengal	1,113,684	1,297,736	1,558,475

Source : Adapted from Cenus of India, 1931, Subsidiary Table I, pp. 462-468.

The increase of 65% and 40% in Assam and Bengal respectively is striking and "real", to the extent that the Kayasthas show the maximum increase in population, while not being the most numerically preponderant caste.

The increase in the ranks have also been encouraged by the Kayasthas themselves. They have sought to detract from their ambiguous social position by proving their omnipresence. It is significant in so far as the aims of returning themselves as Kayastha are not "Sanskritic". They signify an attempt to improve the social position through a "caste" which with a passage of time has come to be acknowledged as a higher one.

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in Gupta, Dipankar, (ed.), op.cit.,pp.19-22.

192 A dramatic increase in population of a particular caste in the census returns has been interpreted by scholars to indicate that individuals are returning themselves as belonging to that caste. For a similar tendency among the Bhumihars of Bihar see Blair, H.W., "Caste and the British Census in Bihar : using old data to study Contemporary Political Behaviour" in Barrier, N.G. (ed.), op.cit., pp.157-59.

The adorned symbolic universe of the Kayastha is recognised among other castes and more after than not the dialogue between the two is held at this symbolic level. The chief minister of Bihar, Lalloo Prasad Yadav in his speech to the 108th session of ABKM described the Kayasthas as the most cultured community and tried to fraternize his own caste, with that of the Kayasthas by pointing out that Yam Dvitiya and Godhan (the festival of Yadavs which has undergone similar transformations at their hand) are celebrated on the same day. The concessions which the Chief Minister granted to appease the Kayasthas were -- holiday on the day of Chitragupta Puja, grant of five kathas of land for the Chitragupta Temple and Lal Bahadur Shastri's statue to be built in Patna -- all symbolic in their own right. The discourse of the Kayasthas as laid out in the preceding section is that of the more articulate sections of the caste, but because most of the caste men are urban and literate, their consciousness has the imprint of the discourse, coming out often in form of a pride and in the politics of vote banks but otherwise lapsing into the humdrum of existence. This perhaps is a function of the multi-variate nature of social identities, the multiness of which has an overlapping character.

CONCLUSION

If exhausting the sources is the highest compliment that can be paid to any researcher, then, I do not deserve it. When I had started working on the subject I did not know as to what kind of sources existed and in trying to finish everything in the scheduled time,I have come to realise that one can still find more. Sources, I know do not define arguments, they more often, have a facilitatory function. Yet one cannot but be aware of the limitations -- some of which are inherent in the nature of the study, others are related to my work. The studies on culture-power-construction as we have seen often tend to accentuate the details on one side failing to explore the many fissures that exist. It is these fissures which are distinctive to a study of identities.

The major limitation of this study is its representational character in so far as I have taken texts to represent the voice of the subjects, an assumption which can only be partial.[1] Moreover there is always the danger of reading too much or too less, into the text and it is difficult to draw a line. As we have seen in the section on the Kayasthas, there is a difference in the nature of the structure of the texts

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1   It is the section on Kabir Panth which has suffered most due to this, more so when I have not been able to supplement a textual reading with an extensive field work.

and so a difference in handling them. One would be reading too much if one was doing so, through one's own categories and too less if one was dismissive of the texts. After all, if "selectivity of facts" is the dictum for historians then one could select almost anything and formulate an argument. This selectivity thus has to be honest and the validity of the argument can only be evaluated by its logical consistency. This logical consistency is defined by the assumptions which the author holds. I have moved ahead from two such assumptions - one regarding the State and other regarding Identities -- which in my analysis have an explanatory primacy. Some might say that I have reversed the order of moving from facts to generalizations, but then that's the only way I could have worked.

The first assumption sees colonial state and the colonial construction as tentative, responsive and of an inchoate nature, contrary to what the "constructionists" have argued, and though I have followed the same methods, i.e. of citing "colonial" texts by way of substantiation, my study is not defined by such quotations. I question in the first place the very premise regarding the flow of knowledge -- of the "colonial discourse analysis", that the state could at, will "define", "invent" and "construct" reality. The colonial state does exercise power but not in the manner we are made to believe.

The second assumption is regarding identity and it
articulation viz-a-viz construction. I take identities as alway
being in flux and are more often than not, contradictory mode
of expression. They operate at various levels and a single on
of them cannot be seen as exhausting the expressions o
self-hood. At different points of time and at different plane
they get articulated in a different manner. I draw on th
literature pertaining to both the social groups to build m
argument, I cannot claim that the treatment is complete. Cast
in the 19th century, was only one of the existing identities an
the literature that I draw upon, gives an insight to that identity
in singular. One cannot choose to study social groups an
identities as "isolates" until and unless one adopts :
conventional stratification model, of one kind of sociology
There will thus, always be an "incompleteness" of micro leve
studies, as Foster has detected.[2]

I have thus argued that much of the colonia
construction and its impact is related to what we understand a:
"modern", in terms of an enlarged base of resources
Moreover, there does not exist one single "construction" but :

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2   Foster, John., Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution : Early Capitalisn
     in Three English Towns, (London, 1974), talks of two levels of incompletenes
     : "There is that of the individual "community" -- never much more than ar
     arbitrary geographical bite out of a larger political system and there is that o
     the system itself -- seen statically at a particular moment in time," pp. 2-3.

plurality of them and of these, the one which gets incorporated in a new form in the native's own discourse, is rooted in the indigenous construction. And that is the rationale behind the acceptance of the "newly" constructed reality. As I have shown, it is not only the acceptance but a contest and reformulation that takes place. The Kabir Panth and Kayasthas have tried to reformulate their ambiguous position and the degree of their success is dependent upon the extent to which the choice of tradition has fitted into their own contemporary needs. An examination of the symbolic universe which is constitutive of identities of the two social groups, reveals that the choice of symbols and its permanence is culturally defined. I suspect, that sometimes symbols acquire an autonomy which cannot always be explained by referring to the "source" of construction. So studying power-culture-construction one need not always talk in terms of "invention", to remain in vogue, one can with satisfaction study how the already existing traditions are being reconstituted and redefined.

It cannot be denied that in the 18th - 19th century, cultural traditions get reconstituted.[3] I have come across some interesting studies on culture and ethnicity in the overseas

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3   This has come under study in Freitag, Sandria; (ed.), <u>Culture and Power in Banaras : Community, Performance and Environment, 1800-1980,</u> Delhi, 1989, see the articles of Philip Lutgendorf and Christopher King.

Indian communities in Fiji and Guyana.[4] Though, not specifically on the theme of construction, the findings of these authors help us see construction in a clearer perspective. The immigration to Guyana started at the beginning of the 19th century while those to Fiji, in the late 1870's.[5] Rooted differently in the temporal scale the respective populations carried different "Indian" traditions to the respective countries. As revealed by Jayawardane and Drummond, there are differences in the way "India" survives in the psyche of Indian population in these two countries. The Guyanese Indians in contrast to those in Fiji have a mythic conception of India -- as a composite of folk tales and legends of Ramayan and Mahabharata. The relations among the former cuts across caste and religious lines, Hanuman is the most popular deity, Arya Samaj movement is seen as causing a Schism in Hinduism. In contrast, among the Fiji Indians relations along the lines of caste, relations, region are rigid and Hindi survives as the, language of communication. These differences could also be

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4   See, Jayawardane, Chandra, "Culture and ethnicity in Guyana and Fiji", Man, 15,3 1980, pp. 430-450; also "Religious Belief and Social change : Aspects of the Development of Hinduism in British Guyana" Comparative Studies in Society and History, 8,2. 1966, pp. 211-240. Drummond, Lee; "The Cultural Continnum; A Theory of Inter-Systems", Man, 15, 1980, 352-374

5   Guyana thus, would have had a substantive Indian population by the 1830's. Where as the same would have been possible in Fiji only at the turn of the century. As noted by Jayawardane, the immigrant population was in the age group of 25-35 years, we can assume that the respective populations that' migrated to Guyana were born towards the end of the 18th century and those who went to Fiji, around the mid 19th century.

related to the kind of incorporation the Indian population underwent in the two countries but is definitely related to the milieu from which the population migrated. Immigration to Guyana started around the time British rule was in the process of evolving a state system. While those to Fiji took place when the colonial state system had established itself and the earlier, loosely collated traditions had been codified and objectified. However, the extent to which the construction was colonial in nature would require a more detailed examination of how and to what extent the construction is a part of policy making.

Writing a conclusion to something which as yet, is far from being "concluded" is a paradox of sorts and leaves me uncomfortable. It is with this feeling and the resolve of coming back, that I come to the end.

Extracts from the correspondence between W. Crooke and Babu Ram Saran Das. (Aug. 1891 to Dec, 1893)[1]

From W. Crooke, Collector, Mirzapur, to Babu Ram Saran Das, M.A. dated 20th August 1891.

... In fact, for my purpose the controversy is worthless and unmeaning. You are, of course aware that all modern scientific ethnologists utterly discard the division of the Indian race into Brahmin. Kshatriya, Vaisya & Sudra. The present population is mainly sprung from two sources - the Aryan invaders, who are now represented by a few tribes of Rajputs and Brahmins and the aboriginal races, which by uniting with the Aryans have formed the mixed tribe. The only trustworthy test is the physical one, consisting in the shape of head and nose etc.

It is possible that the Kayasthas maybe of pure or comparatively pure descent but before this can be settled a long series of measurements with scientific instruments must be taken. But that matter is not quite so clear as you appear to think. You will see by looking at the article on the tribe by the recent authority, H.H. Risley in (Bengal Vol I. page 439) which has just been published. There you will see that the case is put even more strongly than I care to do.

On the whole I hardly see that you have much to complain of. It is clear that the Kshatriya origin of the tribe is not universally accepted though further inquiry may possibly confirm it. But for scientific ethnologists, the matter will never be cleared up by reference, vernacular authorities of comparatively modern date and doubtful value.

Meanwhile if my book reaches another edition I shall be happy to refer to your protest but you can hardly expect me to assert that all Kayasthas are of Kshatriya descent until the question is placed on a much more scientific basis than it stands at present.

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1   As given in Babu Ram Saran Das's, Note regarding the 'origin and status of Kayasthas, Lucknow, 1900.

Meanwhile if you can establish your claim satisfactorily no one will be better pleased than me.

2. **From W. crooke - Magistrate and Collector, Mirzapur, to Babu Ram Saran Das, dated 2nd Dec. 1891.**

... I am in the process of preparing the second edition ... and as you are apparently, from you pamphlet on your own caste, not satisfied with a very innocent remark, I made as to their status at the same time fully referring to the arguments on the other side. I would be very glad to get a complete authoritative account of the tribe describing fully its origin and sub-division with explanation of their name & origin and complete details of the rules regarding intermarriage between the sub-castes as well as full account of all the tribal ceremonies at birth, marriage and death.

... if among Europeans incorrect statements are made about Hindu life and customs, perhaps you will allow me to say, mainly because so few of the Hindu gentlemen who can read English books will take the trouble to correct us.

3 **From W. Crooke - Magistrate and Collector Mirzapur to Babu Ram Saran Das**

..... received your letter,. dated 17th, where you have enquired about the points of enquiry .. In order to make the account of your caste complete, a careful list of questions have been prepared. They bring out the information needed to ascertain the social position of the caste.

4. **From W. Crooke - Magistrate and Collector Mirzapur to Babu Ram Saran Das, dated 20th Jan. 1892.**

I am sorry I cannot send you the copies of the questions you want as this matter is under the consideration of Government and the questions may be revised. But we hardly want them answered separately for all division of Kayasthas. I presume the tribal customs are fairly uniform and the one set of answers, noting any special difference or any tradition of the origin of the sub-division would be quite enough. About the Suryadhwaj I know nothing except what I quoted from Raja Lachhman Singh's book on Bulandshahar.

Your criticism of the definition of "caste" and endogamous sub-division is acute. Of course where there is no endogamous sub-division they both come to the same thing.

5. <u>From W. Crooke - Magistrate and Collector, Mirzapur, to Baba Ram Saran Das, dated 3rd Nov. 1892.</u>

I am not in any way urgent hurry for the account of the castes about which you are inquiring and I would prefer if you could keep them for revision and correction a month or two longer.

What has been result of the enquiries made by the Kayastha about their caste.

6. <u>From Babu Ram Saran Das to W. Crooke - Magistrate and Collector, Mirzapur, dated 28th Nov. 1893.</u>

.... included here are a set of replies to your ethnographical catechism regarding Kayastha. I am sorry I was unable to send the answers earlier, as the material on which the answers are based did not reach me in time ... To make my replies authoritative I have got the signature of the secretary, Kayastha Sabha of India and this also has been published in Kayastha Conference Gazette, of the Kayastha national organ.

... and now have the pleasure of handing you in a condensed form, after eliminating a good deal of matter, replies to your shorter list of questions. Replies to your longer list was found impracticable to procure.

The matter that I am sending you at present will be quite sufficient for the second edition of your ethnographical hand book.

Replies to the Ethnographical and Folklore Catechism Regarding the Kayasthas.[1]

Q1.   What is the name of the caste in English and vernacular? Are there any synonyms in use?

Ans.   The name of the Caste is Kayastha for which there are no synonyms in common use. Sanskrit lexicons like those of Halayudha mentions Lekhaka, Lipikara and Aksharajivka, while Hemachandra mentions Aksharachana, Akshara, Chunchu and Lipikara. There are two principal Kayastha groups namely the Chandrasenavansi (Prabhoos in the Deccan) and the Chitraguptavansi.

Q2.   Are there any exogamous sub-divisions of castes among Kayasthas?

Ans   No exogamous sub-division exist among the Kayasthas.

Q3.   Show the endogamous sub-divisions among the Kayasthas.

Ans.   There are 12 endogamous sub-divisions which trace their origin from the 12 sons of Chitragupta. They are Srivastava, Bhatnagar, Asthana, Valmiki, Mathur, Karna, Nigam, Kulshrestha, Gaur. Saksena, Surajdhwaj, Ambastha. These are further sub-divided: Srivastavas into Khare and Dusre, Asthanas into Mashraki and Maghkadim, Valmiki into Bombay, Kachchi, Bhatnagar into Kadim, Gamsa, Bhatnagari, Mathur into Mathuria, Pancholi and Kachchi, Karan into Gayawala and Tirhutwala Nigam into Kadim and Unnayan, Kulshrestha into Barakhera, Chhahkhera Gaur into Khare, Dusre Bangala, Dehlavi Badaoni. These sub-divisions are also endogamous.

Q4.   State the limits within or beyond which marriage is prohibited.

Ans.   The limits within which marriage is prohibited are same as

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1   As given in Babu Ram Saran Das's, <u>Note Regarding the origin and status of Kayasthas Lucknow,</u> 1900

the above mentioned sub-divisions. Other limits are propounded by Yajnavalkya as expounded by Mitakshara.

Q5.   Whether any prohibition is based on social status, geographical position, difference of religious beliefs, difference or change of occupation?

Ans.   No prohibition regarding marriage is based on any of these factors.

Q6.   State the popular tradition as to the origin, part of the country originally inhabited, time of migration.

Ans.   There are various traditions regarding the above contained in the Yama Samhita, Padma Purana, Bhavisya Puran belonging to the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries.

Q7.   Is the habit of the caste settled or wandering?

The habit of the Kayasthas is settled but marked with a stronger aptitude for moving in search of jobs. The shape and material of their dwellings are same as of other high caste Hindus.

Q8.   Do they admit outsiders? If so, from what classes and by what forms and under which conditions?

Ans.   They do not admit outsiders. If some member has been out-casted, he is admitted after prayaschita.

Q9.   Whether the norm is for infant or adult marriage? Is pre-marital sex recognised or tolerated?

Ans.   Adult marriages are the norm. Premarital sex is neither recognised nor tolerated and it calls for excommunication.

Q10.   Is polyandry or polygamy permitted?

Ans.   Polygamy is permitted but very spraingly and rarely permitted. Polyandry is not allowed.

Q11.   Which forms of the marriage ceremony prevail? Which are the essential and binding portion of the ceremony.

Ans.   There are 8 forms of marriage of which Brahma is the most desirable.

Q12. Whether widow remarriage is permitted or not?

Ans. No the practice is not permitted and is considered unchaste. The guilty members are outcasted and looked upon as culprits too.

Q13. Whether the practice of divorce is allowed?

Ans. The practice is not allowed and adultery leads to the members being outcasted.

Q14. Which law of inheritance is followed - Hindu, Muslim, or Tribal?

Ans. With regard to the law of inheritance, the Hindu practices of the Kshatriya class is practised.

Q15. What is the religion of the caste?

Ans. The Kayasthas are Hindus recognising or upholding the sanctity of the Vedas. They are followers of one or the other Hindu sects - Saiva, Sakta, Vaishnava, Nanakshahis, Kabir-panths, acharis, Arya samajists.

Q16. Do they have any minor or patron God? When is he worshipped?

Ans. Chitragupta the progenitor of the caste is worshipped daily in places where a temple in the honour of the God exists. In other places, Chitragupta is worshipped annually on the second day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kartik on the day known as the Yamadvitiya Chitragupta being one of the 14 Yamas. He is also worshipped on the second day of the dark fortnight of the month of Chaitra. Offerings in the shape of fruits and sweet meats and copper and silver coins are made, the last being appropriated by the pujari or person in charge of the temple or by Brahmans. Worship is also performed of the Kuladevta or family Gods which are different in different families. The other Gods worshipped by this caste are the same as those of other high caste Hindus.

Q17. Do they employ Brahmins as priests?

Ans. Yes, they do and these Brahmans are received on terms of equality by other Brahmans and are generally known under the appellation of Purohita, Padha, Acharya.

Q.18 Does the funerary rite consist of burning, burying or exposing?

Ans. The bodies of the dead are burnt except the bodies of unmarried females and males which are buried.

Q19. Whether the Kayasthas worship animal, plants, weapons or implements?

Ans. No they do not worship any animal or plant. They do however, worship sword inkpot and pen.

Q20 What is the original occupation of the caste?

Ans. The Kayasthas were originally writers or accountants and the majority still cling to it.

Q21. If agriculturists, which of the following positions do the Kayasthas occupy-zamindar, tenure holder, occupancy or non-occupancy raiyat, nomadic cultivators, landless day labourers?

And. They belong mainly to the first two and those in the third category do not plough the fields with their own hands but employ labourers of other castes. None, however are from the last two categories.

Q22. What other occupations do they follow? Are they artisans, hunters, fisher men or sweepers?

Ans. They do not follow any of these occupations.

Q.23. Do they habitually prostitute their unmarried or married women?

Ans. No, they do not.

Q24 Whether the Kayasthas habitually consume flesh & wine?

Ans. Non Vaishnava Kayasthas consume flesh and followers of the Sakta sects consume wine. Non vegetarians do not eat monkey, beef, snake, pork, crocodile, lizard, rat, jackal and those doing so would be outcasted.

Q.25 Name the lowest well known caste with which the caste will eat Pakki kacchi food and also name the highest well known

caste with which the caste will eat, drink or smoke?

They cannot eat pakki or kacchi food in the same dish or drink from the same vessel, or smoke hookah with a member of any other caste other than their own.

SD/
Ram Saran Das, MA
Fyzabad
28th Nov. 1893.

Resolutions of the Kayastha Conference Held Between 1887 - 1906[1]

First Conference Lucknow 27th-29th Nov. 1887 : President, Rai Jai Prakash Lal Saheb Bahadur.

1. Resolved that in every city and Kasba where the community is in sufficient numbers a community sabha will be established, which will through discussion and negotiation foster communal unity.

2. Resolved that a Sadar Sabha is to be established at Lucknow with its own constitution, which will be made responsive to the changes, through additions modification and amendments. And after ratification by all the Sabhas, this constitution be issued by the Sadar Sabha.

3. Resolved that the rationale and objectives of the community Sabha would be as follows (i) spread and make available resources which will develop moral values and education among members of the community. (ii) strengthen and publicise the dvij dharmi code of conduct. (iii) spread and develop resources related to the means of livelihood.

    It was unanimously resolved that for the growth of, coordination among all the sabhas and unity among the members of the community, community journals should be published in Hindi, English and Urdu and the existing community journals be sustained.

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1   The Resolutions given here have been taken from Rai Hari Prasad Lal's Shri Sanatan Dharmaraksha Ki Vyawastha Aur Jati Nibandh Ya Kayastha Jati Sambandhi Mithya Bhramoched, Hitchintak Press, Banaras 1908. Rai Hari Prasad Lal held the office of the President, Kayastha Sadar Sabha, Gaya. The resolutions from one part of his treatise and are recorded in 19th century Urdu transliterated however, by Lal in the Devnagri Script.

I thank Mumtaz Beg of the National Archives, New Delhi for his immense help rendered in the translation of the resolutions. Responsibility of errors in translation are however totally mine. In the insistence for "exact" words, the flow of the translation has suffered sometimes.

4. Resolved in the opinion of this session, that in light of the fact that traditionally reading and writing has been the source of livelihood for the members of the community, education of, the kind, necessary for all sorts of development be encouraged. Because education of that kind is scarce, it becomes imperative to make it available for the community.

5. Resolved that the old system of education prevalent in most places, be reformed and instead the governments method of education be encouraged.

6. Resolved that in every district headquarters and cities where students of the community are in a substantial number a boarding house be established under the supervision of the Kayastha Sabha of that place and in big cities night school should be established.

7. Resolved that in the opinion of the session it is imperative that moral education should be proclaimed as an important element of primary education.

8. Resolved that a suitable method should be devised for the help of the needy students of the community by establishing a scholarship.

9. Resolved that in the opinion of this session, a special centre for education upto the college level be established for the members of the community and since Kayastha Pathsala already exists it should be developed.

10. Resolved that in the opinion of this conference, the basic reason for the poverty of our community is that generally speaking, members of the commuity are satisfied and restricted to the services sector and they do not feel attracted towards trading and other respectable professions. Therefore, the members of the community should be encouraged to inculcate the habit of trading and other professions.

11. Resolved that in the opinion of the conference, in order to promote trading among the members of community joint stock companies should be established at different places.

12. Resolved that every year, session of this community conference be held at different places.

13. Resolved that the second session of the conference be held at Allahabad.

Second Conference Allahabad 16-17 Sept. 1888 : President, Rai Harshukh Rai Saheb.

1. This session of the conference resolved to second, whatever was decided by the community's. Conference at Lucknow and resolves that till the time, a chief Sadar Sabha is established as proposed by resolution number three of the said conference, the Lucknow Sabha should be deemed as the Sadar Sabha for all practical purposes.

2. Resolved that in every province which has sabhas, a Provincial representative society should be established and all elected representatives of these sabhas would become members of that society.

3. Resolved that a select committee be appointed to codify the rules relating to beliefs of the Provincial Sabha and the annual conferences and suggest ways for the proper implementation of the same.

4. Resolved that a community directory, i.e. a list of the entire members of Chitragupta vansi Kayastha community, be prepared.

5. Resolved that this session declares the following traditional practices as unfavourable and directs that these retrogressive measures, wherever and in whichever dimension prevalent, should be done away with. i) ceremonies and rituals in marriage, (ii) unnecessary expenditure connected with marriage and other social gathering (iii) child marriage.

   Hence this session urges that members of this session should cooperate with the community members in thinking and acting, about how to do away with these practices.

6. Resolved that a community fund should be established by collecting donations and subscription, for the following purposes. (i) assistance to needy students through scholarship, (ii) development of the community, educational centre that is Kayastha Pathsala, into a college, (iii) assistance for such interested students who want to go in for higher studies for getting a high office.

7. Resolved that an elected committee, comprising of following persons (Rai Jai Prakash Lal and 27 other members) be constiuted with reference to resolutions numbers three and six, within a week it should frame its code and by the next session of the Conference it should be implemented.

8.   Resolved that till the time the above mentioned code i formed the communisty's resources raised for the Nationa Fund should be kept under the supervision of the President o Kayastha Pathsala - Munshi Ram Prasad Saheb.

9.   Resolved that the next session of the Kayastha conference bi held at Patna.

Third Conference - Patna 5th-6th Nov. 1889 - President Rai Jayant Prasad Saheb.

1.   This session of the Conference thanks the efforts of all the community sabhas and the members of the community, whc through their efforts have helped in reducing the incidence ol the following rituals (i) tilak in marriage (ii) unnecessary expenses on marriage and other such occasions (iii) infant marriage. Apart from this, the session declares, consumption of wine/ other intoxicants during occasions related to marriage and birth of a son, as illegitimate and without any doubt proposes that the members of community should make practical efforts to reduce the incidence of such customs.

2.   The session of the Conference declares the dvij dharmi code as legitimate on a general level and efforts should be made to strengthen and popularize it.

3.   This session of the Conference not only supports the resolution of the ealier conferences but also declares that moral education and physical training is a must. The session advices that a particular portion of every student's time should be spent on such education and calls upon the sabhas and community schools to encourage the students to seek the knowledge of Sanskrit or learn vernacular so that they are able to perform the dvij dharmi conduct.

4.   In the opinion of the session of the Conference, it is necessary that girls should be instructed upto the primary level in their local language and for encouraging such education, arrangements should be made in accordance with the choice of their guardians.

5.   This session of the Conference regrets that all those people who are ignorant of Urdu and English do not know of the reforms in the community. So this session proposes that local provincial sabhas should try to attract those people through the publication of journals and books in Nagri or anyother

suitable measure.

6. For the progress and development of the community it is imperative that trade and commerce should be encouraged as much as possible and so this session of the Conference proposes that : (i) sample of Hindustani products should be sent for exhibition to the local commercial centres and other centres of annual conferences. (ii)Students should be encouraged to go to different schools of commerce and accounting and other such local centres for learning the skills of commerce and accounting. (iii) help such needy and deserving students for going to Bombay and Calcutta or anywhere which is not prohibited by the dvij dharmi code, to learn as apprentice at factories and other private works. And if learning at such places involves expenses, they should be met by the National fund, that is the resources of the community. (iv) a committee of the following members and a secretary should be constituted for the said purpose and it should give its prposals and recommendation at the fourth session. (Munshi Jayanti Prasad & 22 members).

7. The session of the Conference proposes that method of mutual discussion and concensus should be used among the members of the Kayastha community for decision making and resolves that a committee of the following members of the community including a secretary be appointed, and it should compile its proposals in form of a report and present it two months before the next session. (Secy : Laxmi Narayan Saheb & 33 members)

8. This session of the Conference resolves that the consideration of the proposals compiled by the select committee of the Allahabad Conference and other reports be postponed till the next session. But till the time of the next sesion they should be deemed as implemented.

9. The session of the Conference draws the special attention of the communities Provincial Sabhas to the following two measures. i) For the maintenance of consensus in the community the functioning of the provincial sabhas should be conducted in a proper manner. ii) Implement the necessary measures to bring into being a National Fund as soon as possible.

10. This session of the Conference resolves that the next session of the Conference should be held in the province of Punjab, the date of which will be decided later on.

Fourth Conference - Lahore, 22nd - 23rd October 1890, President, Babu Baldeo Sahay, Vakil, Bareli.

In this session of the Conference the report of the Sadar Sabha Hind were tabled and the dates and place of the organisation of provincial Sabha and Sadar Sabha Hind Conference were decided. Apart from this, resolutons regarding settlement of internal differences, trade and National Fund etc. were accepted and office bearers for the province were elected. A resolution was passed for the collection of funds for the expenses of Sadar Sabha Hind.

Apart from this the following resolutions were passed :

9.   It was resolved that the community's attention should be drawn towards the expenses of community Sabha and its conferences. And for this the community members should make donation through either of the following measures, according to their will.i)any amount as subscription - monthly, annually or for life membership ii)any percentage of the income iii)on occasion of any ceremony or marriage or any other happy occasion expenses should be met by self.iv) the money value of the flour which is taken out every day.

10.   This session accepts that the writer of Kayastha Ethnology, Jenab Munshi Kali Prasad Saheb, Kayastha Kulbhaskar has given proof to the effect that Kayasthas belong to the Kshatriya varna. The session proposes that for the spread of moral code, dvij dharmi in the community, the Sadar Sabha should try and get a translation of Kayastha Ethnology issued in both English and Hindi.

11.   For the welfare and development of Kayastha Pathasala, Allahabad this session of the Conference resolve to request President, Kayastha Pathsala to inform the Sadar Sabha about the matters.

12.   This session of the Conference resolves that the next session be held at Bareli.

13.   This session of the conference condoles the sad demise of Rai Harsukh Saheb, (President Second Kayastha Conference) and Munshi Shiva Ram Saheb, B.A. Barrister at law President Kayastha Provincial Sabha, Punjab.

This session decided to charge fees from delegates

Fifth Conference - Bareli, 29th - 30th Dec, 1891; President, Munshi Gajadhar Prasad Saheb, Vakil, Patna.

1. This session of the conference resolves that visitor's fees should not be taken from the students of the community.

2. This session resolves that the Conference and lower committees will have no rights to debate state affairs and religious matters apart from discussing dvij dharmi behaviour.

3. This Conference resolvesthat the passed resolution of the provincial *Sadar* Sabha be tabled in the session. Hence the following resolution were tabled and accepted.

4. This Conference resolves that the communal committee should give due attention to Kayastha Pathsala by arranging for aid and good members.

5. The Conference resolves that the money realised from delegate or visitor's fee after sub tracting the expenses of Sadar Sabha Hind be deposited in the National Fund.

6. The resolution passed by the Lahore Conference was rejected. In place of this resolution it was declared, that a paper which is dangerous to the community and is the cause of difference and discontent among the Provincial Sabha should be placed in the session and the conference would decide the case.

7. The report of the trade select committee which had been established at Patna Conference under resolution 6-A and under section B and C and in which it was decided to give scholarship and aid for education, should be deemed as passed.

8. The session thanks the Nigam gentlemen of Oudh and North western province for the establishment of a Nigam Conference. This conference will take practical steps for education.

9. The session of the Conference resolves that the entire activities of the Conference should be translated in English and sent to the government and other officials for perusal.

10. The Conference expresses great saddness that the Kayastha gazetteer, Bankipur which was a journal in English is being closed down as revealed from an advertisement. Because the community needs at least one journal in English, this session advices the Sadar Sabha to think about an English journal which can reach the people. And till such a journal starts coming out, the Sadar Sabha should try to maintain Kayastha

gazetteers on the condition that the gazetteer accepts the terms and conditions of the sadar Sabha.

11. This Conference resolves that the next session of the Conference be held in Rajputana and the Beradari there, will decide the place.

Sixth Conference - Ajmer, 28th - 30th Dec, 1892, President, Murli Manohar Bahadur Saheb, Hyderabad.

1. It was resolved that minus the expenses , the money after each session of the Conference should be deposited in the National Fund.

2. It was resolved that the total money saved with the Conference and the National Fund should be merged and Secretary, Sadar Sabha should take necessary steps to bring this about.

3. It was resolved that the last year's expenses of the Sadar Sabha Hind on the Conference Gazette was Rs. 1680. To meet this the members of the community are asked to pay an annual membership fee of Rs. 12 and an annual subscription of Rs. 3 for the Kayastha Conference Gazette.

4. It was resolved that the Kayastha Provincial Sabha, Central India established at Gwalior should duly be considered as a Provincial Sabha.

5. It was resolved that the mechanism of Mutual Family Pension Fund is good for helping the orphans and disabled. So the fund in quesstion should be opened with registered Provincial Sabhas. It was also resolved that those Provincial Sabhas which have not been registered should make efforts to do the same.

6. It was resolved that the constitution of lcoal Kayastha Sabha Hind and Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind after amendments seeking opinion of the provincial office bearer should undergo adequate charges. After this, through the Sadar Sabha Hind they should be brought into effect in the local Sabhas.

7. It was resolved, under the earlier passed resolution 6 of Bareli, that Kayastha Mitra of the Kayastha Provincial Sabha, Punjab because of its ambiguous and unfair thinking is dangerous for the community, the Conference declares that the aforesaid journal is not a community paper.

8. It was resolved that in everysession of the Conference, an appeal be issued in the name of National Fund.

9.   It was resolved that the next session of Kayastha Conference would be held in Mathura.

Seventh Conference, Mathura, 26th - 28th December 1893, President, Rai Bahadur Munshi Gagan Prasad, Vakil, Agra,

1.   This session declares that for making available National Fund the following resolutions should be quickly implemented. i).

through delegation ii). through updesaks and journals iii) Through lottery if accepted by the government

2.   This session resolves that a committee constituted by the following members should be named so that it can draw the attention of community towards the expenses of the Conference, point out unnecessary ones. and give its opinion in the next Conference. But before this the report should be published in the community paper to gauge the general opinion on the subject.

This committee will have as its member - Presidents and the secretary, reception committee of all the previous conferences.

3.   This session resolves that Dr.Lakshmi Narayan Saheb, Barrist er-at-law, LLD Lahore, Kayastha Bhatnagar be given the title of "Kulbhusan" for the services rendered to the community in Europe and America.

4.   It was resolved that the Kayastha Mutual Pension Fund of the entire community be merged into one and the Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind should supervise it. It should be registered and the constitution should be accepted by all local Sabhas.

5.   The session of the Conference thanks Munshi Radheybehari Lal and Munshi Pratap Narayan Saheb for the establishment of the Nigam Conference and its working.

6.   One committee of the below said persons be constituted for the purpose of implementation of the resoluton passed regarding the profession of trade and commerce, at previous Conferences. They should also think about a second path of implementation and. with the idea of tabling it in the next Conference, it should be published in the newspaper one week in advance - so that a public opinion can be brought to bear upon the subject.

7.   This session of the Conference resolves that for the implementation of resolution number 3, Kayastha Conference Bariely, all the sub-divisions should make a sub-committee, they should prepare a code for their sub-division and get it

passed after deliberations and incorporating opinion. After this the sub-divisions should send their reports to the next Conference where a correct point of view would emerge.

8.   The session resolves that the suggestion of a community bank by Babu Swami Dayal Saheb, because of shortage of time could not be tabled. Instead this is being submitted to the committee on trade which after consideration will be tabled at the next Conference at position number one.

9.   This session of the Conference resolves that the next session of the Conference be held in the vicinity of Banaras and Gorakhpur.

Eighth Conference - Banaras, 28th - 29th - 30th December 1894, Babu Shri Ram Saheb Rai Bahadur, M.A., LLB.

1.   It was resolved that the resolution suggesting the establishment of Central Bank moved by Swami Dayal Saheb was cancelled.

2.   The i guration of the Kayastha Mutual Family Pension fund on 1st Jan 1895.

3.   The following objectives were fixed for the National Fund: i) To raise Kayastha Pathsala, to the status of a college imparting first rate education ii) To make available resources and donations for the students of the community for providing them with first rate education. iii) To aid students so that they pursue education to get into high posts. iv) To look after the disabled. v) To look after helpless daughters of the community.

This session praises the efforts of Raja Jayanti Prasad Saheb to make available resources to the national Fund and make it clear that if the life members ask for the money to be spent on a particular purpose their wishes will be complied with.

4.   This session resolves that the sub committee on trade according to the second resolution of the Mathura Conference, accepts the following:i) From the community, one organisation by the name of Kayastha Sabha Technical Education Company be established and duly registered. Its total amount be fixed at Rs one lakh of which 10000 bonds of Rs 10- each be issued. From this total fund, the students of the community be given loan on interest. The debtors should also sign a bond promising to return the loan when they get employment. And

because one is eligible for technical education after primary education i.e. when one is an adult and has capability of grasping things, this process does not have any legal problem and those going against the signed bond could be taken to the court. ii) According to the regulations it should be left to the Board of Directors. And the profit accruing through the interest should be divided among the bond holders on an annual basis. Rules willhave another condition wherein every student receiving aid should get his life insured so that the company does not incur any losses due to their death. As there are many arts and professions which required only one or two years of education, the company should pay attention on a priority basis to students going in for such arts and professions as they will quickly be able to return the loan they have taken.

5. This session of the Conference resolves that the attention of students in the Madarsas should be drawn to the study of, Sanskrit. It further requests the authorities of Kayastha Pathshala that those students getting scholarship in the Pathshala should be bound to study Sanskrit like any other language, including situations where Sanskrit is the second languge or if it is not taking too much time the student. The session also resolves that the Sadar Sabha or provincial Sabha should through donations, scholarships medals and prizes encourage the students of the community to study Sanskrit.

6. This session of the Conference resovles that Hindi language should be popularised within the community and primary education of the children should be imparted in this language.

7. This session of the Conference resolves that a Marriage Provision Fund be created for the assistance in the marriages of the girls of the community. The terms and conditions of which may be presented in the next Conference.

8. According to the 2nd Resolution of the Mathura Conference the draft regulation was presented before Babu Baldev Prasad Saheb, Vakil, President Sadar Sabha Committee. This session, resolves that the draft should be published in community Newspapers and thereafter be presented in the coming Conference.

9. This session accepts the Mathura Confernce Report as follows: The Kayastha Conference in short had the following objectives:i)Develop in the community agreement and consent; ii)Develop morals and educaton; iii)Remove poverty so that prosperity returns; iv) Good relations to settle the dis-

putes among members of the community. The session feels that for development, consent is required in everyvillage, kasba and city. Members of the community should establish one or more local Sabhas and in the provinces, the Provincial Sabhas should head the former. Above the Provincial Sabha would be the Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind which should be duly registered. Conferences should be held, wherein, annually members of the community meet each other. Journals should be issued in English, Hindi and Urdu which should aim at spreading consensus among the community. A community Directory or list containing information regarding the size of the populaton, its condition, its requirements. As regards education, the Conference is of the opinion that the education system should be on the lines of the government system. Emphasis should also be on physical and moral training. Sanskrit and Bhasha should be encouraged. Boarding Houses and Night schools should be established in cities, Kayastha Pathshala should be raised to the status of a college. Poor and needy students should be given scholarships. Emphasis should be on first rate education . To fulfill these objectives, a National Fund should be opened. It is important in the opinion of this session that the professions of trade and commerce should be encouraged within the community. A Kayastha Mutual Famly National Fund should be opened through which members of the community can make arrangements for their children's livelihoood, even aftertheir death. To popularise trade, the sessions feels that the best way to do so is through Joint Stock Companies and through holding exhibitons of community handicraft products. Consensus and mutual dispute settlement are the bases of the Conference. The practices of Tilak, very early or late marriage, child marriage, use of liquor, uncalled for expenditure should be stopped. And, members should adopt the code prescribed for "Dvij Dharmi Kshatriya Varna".

10. This session resolves that the next Conference will be held at Moradabad.

11. This session resolves that a memorandum be sent to Maharaja Saheb Bahadur, Benares on behalf of the Conference seeking his assistance.

12. That a congratulatory letter be sent to Maharaja Saheb Bahadur, Gwalior on his accession to the throne.

<u>Ninth Conference, Moradabad 28th, 29th, and 30th December 1895,
President, Lakshmi Narayan Saheb, Barrister at Law Lahore,</u>

1. This session through amendment of the resolution of Ajmer
    declares that the money left after the Conference should be
    given to the Provincial Sabha of that province on the condi-
    tion that the Provincial Sabha is registered. If the Provincial
    Sabha is not registered then the money should be deposited
    with the Sadar Sabha Hind for getting the Sabha registered.
    If the Provincial Sabhas are at places where there are no
    provisions for registration then these Sabhas be considered
    outside their resolution.

2. The session of the Conference resolves that if any person of
    the community is proved guilty in the court and his crime is
    such that it is a blot on his character and his public image
    then he should not be considered as a member of any com-
    munity association.

3. This session of the Conference resolves that the constitution
    of the Conference with the amendments put forth by Babu
    Baldeo Prasad Saheb, Vakil and the social draft put forth by
    Babu Gopinath Saheb sbould be submitted to Sadar Sabha
    Hind so that it is tabled at the next session of the Conference.

4. The rules and regulations of the Natinal Fund are accepted.

5. This session of the Conference resolves that the rules and
    regulations of the Marriage Provident Fund has been dis-
    cussed through the journals and it should now be
    implemented from the next year.

6. The next session of the Conference be held at Aligarh.

<u>Tenth Conference, Aligarh, 28th, 29th & 30th December 1896, Presi-
dent, Rai Braj Mohan Lal Saheb, Tezpur, Assam,</u>

1. The rules and regulations of the National Fund were accepted.

2. The session resolved that the Kayastha Mutual Family Fund
    should be registered separately.

3. The session accepted the constitution of the Kayastha Con-
    ference.

4. This session of the Conference resolves that on behalf of the
    Kayastha Conference a Greetings be send to Her Highness
    Queen of Hindustan and Sadar Sabha should make arrange-

ments for the same.

5. This session of the Conference resolves that the next session of the Conference be held, which the Sadar Sabha, after deliberations would notify within the next three months.

Eleventh Conference - Gaya 25th, 26th and 27th December 1897, President Rajalndra Karna Saheb Bahadur Mathur, Hyderabad

1. The resolution for the development of the Kayastha Mutual family fund.

2. It was resolved to develop the Kayastha Marriage Provident Fund

3. This session of the Kayastha Confernce strictly forbids the consumption of liquor.

4. It was resolved to develop the Kayastha Trader Association

5. The session thanks Shri Hazoor Maharajadhiraj Shri Colonel Pratap Singh Saheb Bahadur, K.C.S.I. of the court of Jodhpur.

6. The session thanks Hazoor Purnoor Aali Janab Moalla Itkab Nizam ul Mulk Hyderabad Dakshin.

7. The session thanks Raja Murli Manohar Saheb of the court of Maharaja Asif Nawaz.

8. This session of the Conference decorates , Nigam, Shiromani Munshi Radhey Behari Lal Saheb, Raees, Vakil, Bareli with the title of "Kayastha Kul Deepak" for his services rendered to the community.

9. This session of the Conference resolves that the Kayastha Provincial Sabha and local Sabhas should motivate and draw the attention of the elders of the community (in their respective areas) to the donation of Jagirs for the development of the community. One fourth of the income accruing from the Jagirs should be spent on the development—Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind and Conference under the supervision of Sadar Sabha Hind. The remaining three parts should be spent on local necessities as aid for orphans and widows by the local Sabha of the areas where the jagirs are located.

10. This session of the Conference resolves that the Kayastha Provincial Sabha should spend the amount left after the Gaya Conference on the kind of education which is less time taking and less expensive, but provides for quick employment. This would enable quick realisation of the loan. Such education

includes calligraphy, homeopathy, survey, watch repair etc.

11.   This session draws the attention of Sadar Sabha Hind to the establishment of one hundred Sabhas through the activities of updesaks and members of the provincial Sabha. The Sabhas should give Rs. 12 annually to the Sadar Sabha Hind as membership fees and Rs. 10 to the expenses of the session of the Conference. They should also buy Conference Gazette and participate in the proceedings of the Conference.

From now on expenses on food of visitors and delegates should be on the reception committee while the expenses on the visitors and delegates of the province where the Conference is being held should be on the delegates themselves.

12.   The Ambastha marriage rules were accepted.

13.   Condolence letters should be sent to the following:

Honourable Janab Rai Jai Prakash Lal Saheb Bahadur C.I.E. Diwan, Dumraon; Janab Babu Guru Ballabh Sahai Saheb, Government pleader, Aligarh; Munshi, Raghunandan Lal Saheb, Collector, Gaya; Babu Nagvant Sahay Saheb Vakil BA, BL Gaya.

14.   This session of the Conference resolves that keeping in mind the proposal of the members of Bihar, the next session of Kayastha Conference be held at Muzaffarpur.

Twelfth Conference - Muzaffarpur 25th 26th 27th December 1898, President, Babu Tota Ram Saheb, B.A., BL., Vakil Aligarh.

1.   The session expresses regret on the untimely death of His Highness Maharaja Lakshmieshewar Singh, Saheb Bahadur of the Darbhanga Raj.

2.   The session resolves that memorials be established in the name of Rai Shaligram Saheb Bahadur Saheb. Post Master General NWP; Hon'able Rai J.P. Lal, Dumraon and Babu Awadh Behari Lal Saheb, Deputy Collector.

3.   Because Nagri is prevalent in government offices, a sub-committee be established to arrange for financial resources for the development of the same. Efforts should also be made to develop the Mutual Family Pension Fund, Marriage Provident Fund, Conference Budget, Sadar Sabha Press and division for trade. The Kayastha Pathsala deputation should be given assistance along with the Temperance Cell and the Dispute Settlement Cell. The session proposes that an English newspaper named Kayastha Messenger should be started after

establishing a company. Modern education for women, reduc
tion of child marriage and tilak in marriage, spread of div
dhami code and marriage customs of the Srivastava sub
division should be encouraged.

Thirteenth Conference Munger, 24th, 25th, 26th December 1899
President Nigaim Ratnakar Babu Pratap Narayan Singh, Vakil, Barel

1. This session gives a call for giving help to Kayastha Sada:
    Sabha Hind

2. This session gives a call to the community to abide by the
    rules of Kayastha Conference.

3. This session of the Conference regrets that the inactive
    Provincial Sabhas have not yet been activated and request:
    the members of the community to activate and establish them
    again.

4. This session resolves that the Kayastha Marriage Providen:
    Fund should be duly registered.

5. This session of the Conference repeats to that the number of
    active / permanent members in the local Sabhas is very less
    and proposes that all the Sabhas which are existing at present
    or are going to be established should get themselves
    registered with their respective Provincial Sabhas. And, if
    their Provincal Sabhas are not registered, they should get
    themselves registered with the Sadar Sabha Hind and all the
    Sabhas should abide by the constitution accepted by the
    Kayastha Conference.

6. This session of the Conference proposes that every
    Chitraguptavansi Kayastha should, on the day of Yam Dvitiya
    give donations to the Kayastha Pathsala.

7. This session of the Conference resolves that, helping the
    orphans, widows and the helpless and primary education of
    the children of the community should be included among the
    objectives of the National Fund. And, along with this the
    present rules of the Kayastha Sadar Sabha should be
    amended.

8. This session also makes a proposal for increasing the mem-
    bership to the Mutual Pension Fund.

9. It was resolved that the resolutions of the Conference and
    Kayastha Conference Manual should be translated in English
    and Hindi from the point of view of publication. The members
    of the community should readily accept the subscription of

Kayastha Conference Gazette. The Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind and the provincial Sabhas should appoint at least one updesak each. A committee named Kayastha Messenger company has been established and the session urges Angrezi Khan Saheb to help it.

10. The bond letter for giving aid and grants was discussed.

11. The session thanks Lord Curzon Saheb Bahadur Governor General of India.

12. The session wishes victory in the war in Transvall etc.

13. The session emphasises education of children for the success of the community.

14. The session urges the community to join the Kayastha Traders association as members.

15. The session declares the following customs as illegilimate: i)the marriage of boys before 16 years; ii)marriage of old men after 45 years.; iii)the recitation of obscene poems on the occasion of marriage; iv)feeding people after 10 o'clock in the night on the occasion of feasts; v)keeping mistresses

16. The rules and customs of marriage of the Ambastha subdivision as passed in the Conference should be properly implemented and the names of those marrying against and in accordance with the aforesaid customs, should be written down in black and golden ink respectively.

17. i)Condolence letters should be sent on the death of the following : Rai Braj Mohan Lal Saheb, Babu Hariharnath Saheb, Vakil, Gaya, Babu Sukheshwar Prasad Saheb,Babu Sajeevan Lal Saheb Raees, Gaya

ii)Congratulatory letters should be sent to the following, on their getting decorated : Rai Tarani Saheb Bahadur, Vakil, Bhagalpur, Rai Vinayak Prasad Saheb Bahadur, Purnea, Rai Brajmohan Lal Saheb Bahadur, Tezpur, Assam. B.A. Executive Engineer.

18. The next Conference be held in Chapra.

Fourteenth Conference - Lucknow 26th, 27th, 28th April, 1901, President Kedar Nath Saheb, Vakil, Gaya

The resolution of this Conference were not available in original and that is why a detailed report has not been written. Babu Baldeo Prasad, Vakil, Bareli gave this statement about the session at the Motihari Conference :

"The honourable members of the caste will remember that at the Lucknow Conference a controversial situation had developed which gave rise to accusation and anxiety as a result of which people were angered. At that moment it was decided that a commission be constituted to study the resolution passed till then and other difficulties that have come up. The commission should then present the detailed report of its proceedings in the next session of the Conference. But three months before the Conference this report should be published in the newspaper for the knowledge of the community."

Commission had honourable Rai Bahadur Shri Ram Saheb and 11 other members.

Fifteenth Conference - Motihari 27th, 28th, 29th December 1903, President, Nigam, Shiromani Kayastha Kuldipak Radhebehari Lal Vakil, Bareli

Number of delegates 36+25 = 61

1. It was resolved by this session of the Conference to send a congratulatory telegram on behalf of Kayastha Conference to King, Kaisr-e-Hind, expressing happiness at his coronation.

2. The Report of the Secretary, Commission which had been constituted at the 14th session of the Kayastha Conference, Lucknow was not tabled because the members of the commission had not yet signed the report. It was resolved that the Secretary of the Commission after getting it signed should publish the report in the newspaper before the next Conference.

3. It was resolved that an Appeal should be issued to the community from the Conference, Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind asking for monetary help, Jagirs and other donations.

4. It was be made essential for the members and office bearers of the Conference to sign a written acceptance or pledge, a sample of which is given below:

   "I through this written pledge, do swear that of the following acceptances that I have had written down, I will abide by at least two. I will not, either knowingly or under any excuse go against them, and as far as possible, will motivate others to abide by them" i) I will help the Kayastha children of poor families in getting education to the best of my ability, ii) I will abide by the dvij dharmi code iii) I will not either

knowingly or under any excuse give or take tilak on marriage. iv)I will not incur unnecessary expenditure on the occasion of marriage etc.v)I will abide by the marriage code which is being implemented. or will be implemented for my sub-division.vi)I will take practical steps to reduce the incidence of child marriage.

5. This session resolves that through community donation, Babu Ambika Charan B.A. Ambastha (who afer studying in Patna College is the Second Master, High School Siwan) should be sent to Japan to study metallurgical engineering. The Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind should quickly make available through donations and aid, money for his expenses and get a pledge signed by him, to the effect that after coming back from Japan he will help in the establishment of a technical class in Kayastha Pathsala, Allahabad.

6. This session resolves that in the community Sabha, a register be maintained containing names of those who are abiding and those who are not, by the resolutions of the Conference and by the code of the sub-division.This register should be up-dated from time to time and should also record the explanation given by people for not abiding by the same. The local and provincial Sabhas should, along with their annual reports send a copy of this register to the Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind. The latter should prepare a list of names for expressing thanks and displeasure and this should be tabled at every session of the Conference and published in the newspaper.

7. It was resolved that under resolution number VI of Kayastha Conference, Lucknow, a boarding house should be established at Motihari.

8. The session thanks the community paper, Kayastha Hitkari, Gwalior for the service rendered to the community.

9. The money left after expenses should be deposited with the Sadar Sabha Hind.

10. This session resolves that a condolence letter be sent on the death of Mr. Caine Saheb Bahadur, M.P.

11. Because of the financial condition, lacunae in the system and in collection of the Kayastha Marriage Provident Fund, this session of the Conference advices and permits the Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind to write off the fund, if within three months the condition of the said fund does not improve.

12. The next session of the Conference be held at Gorakhpur.

Sixteenth Conference - Gorakhpur 26th, 27th 28th December 1904, President Akhauri Babu Lakshminarayan Saheb, Vakil Gaya.

1. Since the members of the commission constituted at Lucknow have not completed and submitted its report and because the said commission is not required now, this session of the Conference dissolves the commission and permits that the related documents be submitted to the office.

2. Resolved that a select committee having Munshi Radhe Behari Lal Saheb, Vakil of Rai Bareli, Babu Fateh Bahadur Nigam, Vakil of Lucknow and Munshi Manoo Lal Saheb Raes of Kanpur as its members be constituted. This committee is given permission to cancel the membership to the Kayastha Marriage Provident Fund of members who have not paid their subscription and the amount so left be given to the office bearers.

3. This session accepts through a resolution that the previous voyages to England and America are legitimate and resolves that those who, after coming back are following the dvij dharmi code or abiding by the restrictions can be without objections, admitted back into the brotherhood.

4. This session of the Kayastha Conference declares as legitimate- commensality (regarding kacca food) among the twelve divisions of Chitraguptavansi Kayasthas.

5. It is clear from experience that the passed resolutions of the Conference have not been duly implemented. So this session of the Conference resolves that the implementation of the following resolution be given priority and advocates that till the time, better results come. Conference should keep its attention towards them i)reduce tilak and dow ry and other accessories on the occasion of marriages ii)reduce unnecessary expenses on the occasion of marriage iii)reduce the incidence of child marriage.

6. It was resolved that for the implementation of the aforesaid resolution updesaks be appointed and funds be made available.

7. It was decided to prepare the report of the Conference in the script of Urdu and Hindi.

8. The Conference resolves to have a holiday on the day of Easter.

9. Babu Harihar Prasad Singh has given a grant to Babu Ambika Charan.

10. The annual report of Sadar Sabha Hind was tabled at the Conference.

11. Resolved that the VIIth resolution of Mathura Conference be amended.

Seventeenth Conference - Gazipur 24th 25th, December 1905, President, Bal Krishna Sahay, Vakil , Ranchi,

1. This session of the confernce resolves to send a telegram on behalf of the Kayastha Conference to His Royal Highness Prince of Wales expressing loyalty and welcoming him to Hindustan.

2. This session of the Conference resolves that a telegram be sent welcoming the Viceroy Lord Minto Saheb.

3. The report of Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind was accepted.

4. The report of Educational Committee, Aligarh was tabled and accepted.

5. The additions to the Motihari Conference Pledge were accepted.

6. It was resolved to make two sub-committees for (i) education and (ii) for reducing bitter relations among the members of the community; so that the Conference becomes more useful.

7. This session draws the attention of the community to seavoyages abroad and commensality and appeals for making funds available to the Japan Fund.

8. The session issues an appeal to raise funds for the Kayastha Pathasala, Allahabad and Japan Fund.

9. The resolution regarding the inauguration of closer interaction among the twelve divisions of the Kayastha community, was suspended after discussion,

10. It was resolved that the next session of the Conference be held in Arrah, Sahabad.

11. Resolved that a condolence letter be sent to Munshi Raghunandan Prasad Saheb and his family on the death of his relatives.

Eighteenth Conference - Dumraon 24th 25th Dce. 1906 President Babu Baldeo Prasad. Vakil Bareli.

This Conference was to be held in Arrah but because of disagreement it could not be held there.

1. It was resolved to send a deputation thanking Maharani Sahiba, Dumraon.

2. It was resolved by this session to draw greater attention of the community to dvij dharmi code of conduct.

3. Resolved to congratulate Mister Pannalal Bareli for passing the civil services examination and Mister Mah esh Charan Singh, Lucknow for getting the degree M.C.B. from America.

4. The session expresses regret and sadness at the death of Akhauari Lakshmi Narayan Vakil, B.A. B.C.L. Gaya.

   The session resolves to implement the Gazipur resolution regarding comensality between the divisions of the Kayasthas.

6. Resolved to appoint a committee to end useless ceremonies with regard to marriage.

7. Resolved to establish the Japan Technical Education Fund.

8. The report of Kayastha Sadar Sahba Hind 1905-06 was tabled and accepted.

10. It was resolved to send a telegram thanking the Lt. Governor, Agra and Oudh.

11. It was resolved that the money saved after the expenses incurred at the Gorakhpur Conference be given to the Kayastha Sadar Sabha Hind.

12. It was resolved that the next session of the Conference be held at Aligarh.

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