THE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF CLEANLINESS: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY INTO MANUAL SCAVENGING

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

CHANDAN BOSE

Center for the Study of Social Systems
Scholl of Social Sciences
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
New Delhi 110067

2008

जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110 067

Centre for the Study of Social Systems
School of Social Sciences

Date: 23. 07. 2008

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**The Production and Consumption of Cleanliness: An Anthropological Study into Manual Scavenging**" submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University has not been previously submitted for any award or degree of this or any other university and is my original work.

Chandan Bose.

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. Tiplut Nongbri
Chairperson

Chairperson
CSSS/SSS
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

Prof. Susan Visvanathan
Supervisor
Professor
CSSS/SSS
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This M. Phil dissertation has been a collective endeavor and I owe much to the support and encouragement from family and friends. I am extremely indebted to my parents for sharing my excitement and enthusiasm during these formative years of my academic career. To Gayatri Koshy, Samuel Chuaungo and Vasundhara Koshy, I am particularly grateful for their relentless patience and affection.

I would like to thank Dr. Deepak Mehta (Delhi School of Economics), Oeendrila Lahiri, Nivedita Ghosh, Rahul Yadav, Sasikumar and Supriya Chotani for providing this dissertation with crucial inputs, material and sources. My gratitude is also due to the UGC/JNU scholarship for facilitating my M. Phil research.

I owe the completion of my dissertation to my supervisor, Prof. Susan Visvanathan, whose guidance has proved indispensable. I am extremely grateful for the encouragement she has shown towards the ideas and thoughts I have presented in the course of this dissertation.

Finally, I would like to thank the administrative staff of the Center for the Study of Social Systems for their concern and assistance during the period of my course-work and dissertation.

Chandan Bose.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

We have Iraq and Vietnam, the student movements, global recession, alarms on the ecological front, and a revival of the faith in 'market forces', which have bought back some of the worst features of nineteenth century-type entrepreneurism. Philosophers and social scientists have always been plagued with doubts about the direction our civilization is taking and the durability of the values that have held it together until now. A symptom of this unease is the fact that, although it is more than half a century since Hiroshima and the Holocaust, the nightmare of these images seem to play more obsessively on our consciousness now than when they had only just happened. Today, it would appear much harder to forget that these atrocities were indeed perpetrated because of their systematic organization, their ideological sanction and global scale.

The spectacular collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989, with the mass conversion of one communist country after another to the ideals of democracy and consumerism, has given renewed hope for 'our' civilization. This gives one an optimistic conviction that human bondage is an unnatural state, from which sooner or later people will manage to break free. Unfortunately, however, what the inhabitants of the communist world were trying to get away from is much clearer than where they wanted to get to. Laying bare the ills of communism does not constitute a vindication of capitalism: 'our' problems remain. But the contemporary awareness of these problems is, alarmingly enough, in inverse proportion to the faith in our ability to find answers to them. There is the loss of intellectual confidence in the direction to which our civilization has been steered, along with a loss of faith in the familiar stories within which we used to diagnose problems and how they should be set right.

From sociology and anthropology we have learnt that values and beliefs are a relative affair; from philosophers of science, that scientists are never less to be trusted than when they announce when they have established something with absolute certainty. The philosopher Alister MacIntyre in his book *After Virtue*[1] claims that we have sunk into this comfortable relativism – the philosophy of 'anything goes' – as into a treacherous

[1] MacIntyre, 1984.

quagmire. His message was that those who still believed in rationality (in the difference between truth and falsity, god and evil) had better start looking around for whatever pieces of driftwood they could find with which to pull themselves out.

This dismantling of certain central convictions of Western thought was seen by some intellectuals as a liberation from delusions which Enlightenment had imposed on the worlds that the West had colonized. Foucault announced the 'death of Man' – the abandonment of belief in a human essence, which could function as a yardstick for social progress. The postmodern subject has no identity, or rather, has as many identities as there are discourses in which to participate. Like the singer in a contemporary video clip, who is metamorphosed by electronic editing technology from a 1930's costume to a hippie garb, from man to woman, from black to white, and from black-and-white to colour again, all in the space of one verse, today's individuals are only glad to find themselves compatible with a variety of forms and meanings. Moreover, in the post-colonial world, events such as the furore over Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* have bought home to us that there are incommensurable gulfs between absolutist and relativist beliefs and values, and no readily available means of bridging them.

This debate between postmodernists and modernists – between relativists and the believers in absolute standards of rationality – is in fact the central issue of contemporary social science. The modernists believe that a diagnosis of human ills can be grounded in an objective conception of what man essentially is. For one of its proponents, Jurgen Habermas, man is by no means dead: he has simply not yet reached adulthood. While Habermas (1989) roots his conception of the 'rational society' in axioms of communication theory with democracy being a necessary condition of full rationality, Erich Fromm (1955: 13), an heir to the Enlightenment and a humanist chooses to anchor his argument in a sort of psychoanalytical anthropology. For postmdernists, however, all these sorts of cultural critique – with heir absolutist, essentialist presuppositions – are not part of the solution, but part of the problem: not a remedy for the ills of cultures, but a terminal symptom of them.

The modernist idea was to move towards infinite progress of knowledge and social and moral betterment. The term 'modern' expresses *"the consciousness of an epoch that relates itself*

to the past of antiquity, in order to view itself as a result of a transition from the old to the new.'[2] However, this movement from the 'old' to the 'new' is not merely a matter of 'style' or 'aesthetics', where the 'now' will be made obsolete through the 'next'. Modernity, in fact, has transcended the framework of chronology and has acquired the status of 'rhetoric'. As Habermas says, *'Our sense of modernity creates its own self-enclosed canons of being classic.'*[3] This is because modernity, by attaching value to the transitory, the elusive and the ephemeral, acts as a subversive force – revolting against the normative functions of tradition. By breaking down the everyday into its subjective fragments, modernity has stressed on an attitude based on self-realization and self-experience. Individual liberty, instead of being a means, has become the end of emancipation, and as a result, hedonism gets condoned by professional life.

Attitudes towards work, consumption, achievement and leisure, then, spill over from considerations of societal modernization to encompassing human consciousness. The production and reproduction of this stock of knowledge places culture to mediate between economy and society. This mediation takes place in three autonomous spheres – science, morality and art. This could then be handled as questions of knowledge, of justice and of taste, thereby appearing as institutionalized structures of cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical and of aesthetic-expressive rationality. Such an institutionalization has led to the emergence of a culture of esoterism, which has divorced expertise as 'enriching' from the facile as quotidian. All forms and means of existence are attached with varying degrees of validity, thereby, excluding any opportunity for truth. In fact the 'real' is steered towards the 'true' through appropriation of the means of communication, which requires a cultural tradition covering the three spheres – cognitive, moral and expressive. The project of modernity has failed to the extent that the structural arrangement of these spheres has led to their private ownership as commodities by the specialists, namely the bourgeoisie. This decentered subjectivity is what Habermas deems as *anti-modernism.* The collective effervescence, he suggests, is disrupted by a *'politics of diffusion'*[4] of perceptions of experience and validation.

---

[2] Habermas, 1993: 4
[3] Habermas, 1993: 5
[4] Habermas, 1993: 15

These perceptions of experience and its validation find their justification in the space occupied between economy and society, namely the market and its fundamental forces of demand and supply. Economic laws clearly state that demand and supply exist in an inverse relation i.e. if the supply of a 'thing' is in abundance there is lesser demand for 'it'. However, economics clubs demand with desire – people do not desire that which is readily available to them. Rather, what is readily available to them or what is abundant in supply presupposes a more fundamental aspect of the human consciousness – need. Since 'desire' in industrial and post-industrial societies is considered to a more evolved state of 'need' due to the overarching philosophy of "ridding the obsolete through innovation", the rendition/renderers and catering/caterers of needs are stripped of their novelty and *taken for granted.* It is this way of thinking about the earth – air, water, land and wildlife – that has placed sustainable development into crisis.

Sustainability and its acquisition through undiscriminating access to the environment have entered the domain of constitutional rights and welfare economics. The chain of birth, nourishment, health and life has been villainously punctuated by certain institutions and logics, both traditional and modern. In India, the hiring of individuals for the task of scavenging, on analysis, demonstrates the twin effect of a nonchalant attitude towards caste and caste based occupation on the one hand, and the valorization of consumption, the consumer and the consumable on the other.

Manual scavenging as a practice is primarily associated with cleaning 'dry latrines'. A 'dry latrine' is, as the name suggests, a toilet without a flushing facility. So it is necessary for a sweeper to periodically clean up the mess manually, with a broom and two pieces of tin mostly, and dump it in a basket or bucket. This is then transported in a wheelbarrow or carried individually to a dump generally situated at the outskirts of the town. Scavengers are predominantly members of the Dalit community and are known by different names in different states – *Bhangi, Balmiki, Thotti, Paki, Madiga, Chuhra* and *Mehtar.* For centuries these groups of people have help the strict monopoly of cleaning latrines and toilets, handling human excreta. An excerpt on the work of scavenging given by Leelaben from Gujarat: *'In the rainy season it is really bad. Water mixes with the shit and when we carry it on our heads, it drips from the buckets on to our clothes, our bodies, our faces. When I return home, I find it*

difficult to eat food sometimes. The smell never gets out of my clothes, my hair. But then in summer there is often no water to wash our hands before eating. It's difficult to say which is worse.'[5]

A conservative estimate of the number of dry service latrines according to the 1989 National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) is 7.5 lakhs in urban areas and 2.48 lakhs in rural areas. That government figures are notoriously unreliable is evident from the instance that when the 1989 Task Force of the Planning Commission estimated the total number of scavengers in the country to be approximately 4 lakhs while a separate state-wise break-up of the National Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their dependents produced a figure of 9.7 lakh scavengers. NGO's, working with and for scavengers, are certain that even this is an understatement.

The fight of various Trust bodies and NGO's against scavenging has one aim – to put a permanent stop to the degrading practice of manual scavenging and rehabilitate the community. It has not to do with increasing wages or improving working conditions. Many of the *Bhangi* households in Gujarat are better off economically than landless labourers or *adivasis* in Tamil Nadu. It has got to do with their constitutional right to a healthy life with dignity. Martin Macwan, a Dalit activist and founder-director of Navsarjan Trust says, *'It's rich people's shit. Only when the stink is overpowering, will the government do something finally. Not out of love for Bhangis.'*[6]

When the Tsunami hit the Indian southern coast, Dalits Municipal Workers were brought to Nagapattinam, Nagore, Vellankani, Tarangambadi, Sirkali and Nellikuppam to do post-tsunami clean-up work – shifting debris, animal carcasses and taking human bodies to ambulances or directly to mass graves. These people are known as Safai Karamcharis, and are the Dalits who have traditionally done the work of clearing drains, bodies, faeces and other manual, dirty occupations. As government employees, their normal work is cleaning drains, sweeping or spraying mosquito repellent. When the military personnel, public volunteers and the police were provided with all safety measures, the *Safai Karamcharis* were not provided with gloves, masks and boots – the basic safety measures required for such work. The NCDRH reported that these workers had nowhere to bathe, no soap or water or disinfectant and had two uniforms for five

[5] Thekaekara, 2005: 2
[6] Thekaekara, 2005: 44

days' grisly work. They worked twelve hours a day removing decomposing bodies without proper equipment or any nourishment, and then had to beg for food from the relief centers set up for the Tsunami victims to eat[7].

Ironically the tsunami despite its catastrophe possessed the potential to rehabilitate the Dalit coastal community, not only from losses suffered due to the natural calamity but also from the pits of being an economically disparaged community for generations. However, proximity to the market, namely fishing rights in the sea determined the course rehabilitation. Dalits are not registered with the government as fishermen since they primarily work under the dominant fishing communities. Consequently, the tsunami left the Dalit community on the coast even vulnerable than ever before. Dalits are not excluded from the market, but their presence is definitely made 'invisible' – they constitute the 'nuts and bolts' of such a machine that allures attention primarily to its phantasmagoria. They are also prevented from being directly involved with food preparation or sales, ruling out for many the markets of restaurants and milk production. Consumption, further, exacerbates such discrimination through market price and by insisting that 'aesthetic intelligence' is in vogue.

In India, the IT revolution and other forms of globalization have drastically transformed the life-world and market trends of production and consumption in recent decades. A major aspect of that transformation is an increased rate of urbanization. The emergence of corporate hospitals, exportable indigenous art, plethora of life-style magazines, satellite cityscapes marking territory for leisure mark the changing marketing and consumption patterns in the country. The department store, global fashion, photography have all becomes icons, rather than commodities, of a advancement related to notions of personal freedom, but at the same time brings with it the complexities and contradictions of democracy and accessibility. Market economy for many, then, is an *"economy of fantasy"*[8], the one in which those unable to pay the market price cannot participate. Jaffrelot and van der Veer (2008) claim that since market economy has ascended as a primary source of value, it disturbs the understanding of 'participatory citizenship' by including only those who possess a certain degree of propensity to consume.

---

[7] Report submitted by Timothy Gill in February 2007 titled *"Making Things Worse"* and commissioned by Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN).

[8] Jaffrelot and van der Veer, 2008: 79

Consumption, media, information and technology, according to Fredric Jameson, are the guardian angels of the post-industrial society or as he coins, *"multinational capitalism"*[9]. The domain is, however, culture, which facilitates conceptualization of the presence and co-existence of a range of different features. Differing from the 'old modernism', mutations have occurred in the cultural realm. Forms and ethos, earlier believed to be ugly, scandalous and dissonant, now not only strike us as 'realistic', but are also received with the greatest complacency, becoming a part of public culture. There exists a dialectic between commercialization and purity of expression, between westernization and traditional form and between colonization and indigenous effort. Aesthetic innovation and experimentation, then, have been integrated into the commodity production to satiate the frantic economic urgency to create fresh waves. Such economic necessities require institutional support and patronage for new art. Thus, history has witnessed periodic dominant cultural logics. Appearance and essence, latent and manifest and siginifier and signified are not considered as established coevals but are theoretically plugged in throughout diachronic spaces and times. Therefore, the style of one becomes the code for another. This results in the norm to eclipse and social life to fragment, which is also demonstrated by the micropolitics revolving around ethnicity, gender, race, religion and class-function.

Dominance of ideology, in fact, in multinational capitalist nations has attained a discursive heterogeneity without a norm. Phantoms continue to steer the economic strategies which constraint our lives, but they no longer need to impose their speech. So what one finds is a pastiche – an imitation of a particular style. So while earlier practices were loaded with overt passion and ulterior motives, the present vocation becomes a satire. It speaks tomes about the omnipresence of addiction: addiction for a consumer appetite to transform the world into images and 'spectacles'. As Guy Debord observed in *The Society of The Spectacle, "the image has become the final form of commodity reification."*[10]

The mode of production that enables commodification, the technological penetration of capital, then, develops as aesthetic representation. The product and the machine of production have their own capacity of representation – the elevators, the conveyor belts, the robots, the laboratory, the digital studio, the rail roads, the computer, the television,

---

[9] Jameson, 1993: 314
[10] Jameson, 1993: 322

the compact disc. The processes of production in the multinational factory exhibit a certain kind of aesthetics not apparently visible in kinetic motion. As Jameson rightly says, *"the technology of contemporary society is therefore mesmerizing and fascinating not so much in its own right but because it seems to offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp."*[11] Thus, the 'silent sophistication' that one experiences in the state-of-the-art and digital laboratories producing hair colour or a musical soundtrack – the production of 'desired' commodities – stands as aesthetically more 'see-able' as opposed to the production of what is 'needed' – cleanliness and sanitation – which requires Leelaben's clothes, hands and face to be stained with night-soil.

Hence, not only is the consumable and consumed produced, but production is also consumed and finds a place in the spirit of man as 'sensual pleasure'. Man is the subject of his desire and enjoyment – production of a new humanity. Organs, the psycho-biological 'home' to man's desires, then, no longer exist in their state of 'neutral purity' but experience glory and misery in all types of shapes and forms. These intensities come from two forces: repulsion and attraction. The opposition between these two forces produces a series of eternal qualities of ideal materialism, putting the subject in a 'meta-stable' state of being. Such neurological condition is, however, achieved after scrutiny of the tripartite schema: disassociation from deficiency, the delirium of disorder and the descriptive state of being-in-the-world.

The following chapters intend to align a chain of metaphors stemming from the practice of manual scavenging – caste and the consumption of cleanliness, moral paralysis and work and democracy – precisely within the framework of the above schema.

Disassociation from deficiency: The first chapter proceeds by deconstructing the empirical structure of *varna* (which the colonial administration perpetrated through their statistical renditions) and locates it in the consciousness of man through dialogues with signs, symbols and icons representing the divine. The doctrine of an 'all encompassing' exclusion/segregation is in fact manifested through the iconoclasm of the constitutional crime of 'Untouchability' – the denial of wealth, education and power, which respectively constitute the source, the means and the object of modern patterns of consumption.

[11] Jameson, 1993: 329

What is therefore put to question is 'caste morality' and whether one still has an obligation towards this morality?

However, when morality is placed within the framework of *praxis*, pragmatism and self-interest on both sides of the social spectrum, a situation like this is met by assertion, which then takes on the cause for social justice. This is what Andre Betteile (1997: 168) and Dipankar Gupta (2000: 14) discuss while suggesting a kind of 'caste patriotism' practiced though political representation on caste lines. As a result, the 'Self' vis-à-vis the 'Other' dichotomy and relation is put into chaos for three precise reasons. First, it is through the 'Other' that the 'Self' constitutes its subjectivity by arriving at an objective assessment of its situation. Second, this subject constitutes its reality by *taking matters into its own hands*. Last, this self-embossed identity, then, in an attempt to participate in what was historically denied, soon itself becomes a cog in the wheel by also expressing its loyalty to the market economy.

However, the pattern of distribution of economic surplus does proclaim that *varna*/caste still acts a principle feature in development. According to the 1991 census report, there are 7.45 crore landless agricultural labourers in the country, of which 3.37 crore, or 45.23 per cent are Dalits. That means while every fourth Indian is a Dalit, almost every second landless agricultural labourer too, belongs to the community. Also, the census commission, while talking about sectors of economy – primary (agriculture), secondary (manufacturing) and tertiary (services) – says, *"The most common use of the sectoral composition of the workforce is its utility as an index of economic development. Shifting workers away from primary into secondary and tertiary sectors generally occurs as economic development takes place."*[12]. However, the workforce shift is still in consonance with the *chaturvarna* order. Of the total Dalit workforce, 23 per cent SC and 9.92 per cent ST have shifted away from the primary to secondary and tertiary sectors, as against 37.83 per cent of non-Dalits.

How, then, is this paradox of lower-caste elite and lower-caste poor expressed in common parlance? Both poverty and success – two existential conditions – are now attributable to all, irrespective of castes, symbolized by an 'absence' and 'presence' – of material consumption. Objects, thus, relate man to the environment, rather assimilate man into the environment. One such item of consumption, discussed in this chapter, is

[12] Dalit Dairies, 2006: 47

'cleanliness', which is both produced and consumed as a 'proof' for the individual's ability to speak a class dialect. Borrowing its rhetoric from the *varna* model, cleanliness, and its subsequent *avatars*, is now a 'moral discourse', a social ritual representing connoisseurship and, through its cultivation, the 'political economy of the sign'.

Delirium of disorder: The second essay is a discourse on the 'affective quality' implicit in principles of justice and truth. Throughout history men have upheld these principles against every kind of pressure brought to bear upon them in order to make them relinquish what they knew and believed. The prophets acted according to their conscience when they denounced their country and predicted its downfall because of its corruption and injustices. Socrates preferred death to a course in which he would have betrayed his conscience by compromising with the truth. Conscience then is manifested as human motivation – a motivation, which not only relates to self-preservation but is also considered to be the law of reason. This reason instills emotion in 'awareness' and constitutes a harmonious relation between the mind of man and the cosmic order. While Kant abstracts conscience from all specific content and identified it with the sense of duty, Fromm thinks of conscience as that which judges our functioning as human beings (Fromm, 1947: 110).

The knowledge produced by this *"re-action of ourselves to ourselves"*[13], then, becomes an expression of man's self-interest and integrity, his obedience, self-sacrifice, duty and his potential for 'social adjustment'. Thus the realm of abstract thought attains the form of feelings and action, which are conducive to the proper functioning and unfolding of our personality producing a sense of 'rightness' and 'ought-ness'. Herein lies the voice that summons humanism – a fight against 'selfish' and 'irrational' authority. It is within this rubric that this chapter reflects on the practice of manual scavenging as part of a larger problem of humanistic ethics and the liberal and progressive prerogatives to eliminate fundamental inequalities in human society – inequalities stemming from the practice of caste.

Reactions to the Orientalist characterization of the Indian civilization by the colonial rule led to other versions of Hinduism as the indigenous cultural repository of identity and value. The social reform agendas, which proliferated in the nineteenth century focused

[13] Fromm, 1947: 119

on Brahmanic practices, apart from Phule's movement in Maharashtra. These worked to assert the primary importance of Brahman customs for the definition of the Hindu community. However there was a growing consensus in favour of the regulation of civil domains and public spaces. The management of temple trusts, the abolition of *devadasis* and the legislative efforts to promote temple entry for the Untouchable groups were all pitched in terms of principles having to do with fundamental human rights. These not only singled out Hindu institutions for state reform but also enshrined enlightened Brahmanic opinion as the basic arbiter of Hindu practice. The net effect, therefore, was to broaden Brahman control and further the hegemonic authority of certain textual traditions and interpretations that could only be described as Brahmanic.

Simultaneously, there was also an emergence of minority and majority languages and movements, around one of the central markers of Hindu identity – caste. Individuals such as Jyotirao Phule, E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, B. R. Ambedkar and Gandhi fought for minority rights while they also steered the ideological charter of the majority. While Phule, Ambedkar and Naicker fought against Hinduism as they did for political rights, they revealed in their own particular ways the extraordinary tyranny of nationalist ideology as it became tied to late colonial Hindu self-representation. Gandhi, on the other hand, responded by insisting that caste had got nothing to do with Hinduism. He acknowledged that caste as a ranked structure of groups was bad, but that the principles of *varna* and *asrama* (stages of life) on which caste was based, and of which caste could be seen as a degraded form, were noble and well worth reviving as ideals. According to him, it defines not one's rights but one's duties and necessarily has reference to callings that are conducive to the welfare of humanity. The politics exercised by these thinkers, then, falls under the purview of human rights activism, which proved therapeutic to the moral paralysis human consciousness was capable of displaying.

Descriptive state of being-in-the-world: The final chapter in this dissertation attempts to unravel the inception, execution and meaning of the process of 'creation'. Man 'creates' through production. It is through this participation in the production process that man is considered social. Industry, then, is viewed from point of view of utility to the extent that it facilitates or at least should facilitate a livable environment, which is a production of man and by man. Thus, production as a process constitutes a cycle – work

– whose relationship with 'will', desire and sanity, if not satiated, shall be a brutal assault on democracy.

Unless human beings usurp the productive power of others, they must work in order to live. Work is not only an inescapable necessity, but it is also woman's/man's liberator from nature, her/his creator as a social and independent being. As Fromm says, *'In the process of work, that is, the moulding and changing of nature, man moulds and changes himself.'*[14] She/He develops her/his power and sense of place, of cooperation, reason and her/his sense of beauty. Fromm, therefore, establishes a direct proportionate relation between work and individuality, viz. the former contributing to the latter.

What, then, of the manual scavenger? She/he spends her energy each day in producing something – cleanliness – in order to make a living. Unlike the industrial assembly-line worker, whose role in the production process is essentially a passive one, the scavenger fulfills 'the' primary function in a complicated and highly organized process of production – whether the caste system or the modern Municipality system. However, on the other hand, the scavenger like the industrial worker is never confronted with his product as a whole. As a producer of cleanliness, the scavenger has her/his hands steeped in filth, and as a consumer of cleanliness and all its representations, the scavenger is subject to historical, social and economic handicaps.

Society, today, is technically engineered and geared to facilitate effortless living. Such technology serves as a rationalization for the appeal to complete passivity and receptivity. The microwave, the toaster, the radio, the television, and the washing machine – all these exhibit the yearning for laziness: the idea of the 'push-button power'. The modern consumer can enjoy the complete bliss of having nothing to do. In this respect then, the manual scavenger also serves as one of the labour saving gadgets. Nothing more is expected of her/him, or wanted from her/him apart from her/his automated function – 'picking up the garbage'. Thus, the modern mode of production not only moulds human relations into the framework of production and consumption, but also transforms the producer (the scavenger) into the product, and the work (sanitation) executed by 'it' as a function of 'its' consumption value.

---

[14] Fromm, 1955: 172

With the scavenger being a part of the global assembly-line production, there is confrontation between the machine and grotesque. The 'cleaning cyborg' embodies the role of a form of technology within the existing transnational capitalism so that its interface between flesh and technology is an extreme form of social control. It is through manual scavenging that one can pick up a narrative of what makes a human, human, and link this to a horrific encounter between nature and 'technology of culture'. The focus of the text concerns itself with the link between the scavenger's experience of the liminality of her/his own body and the discourse of the grotesque that is coterminous with it. According to Bakhtin (1984), the symptom here is not the biographical details with certain theoretical formulations (the scavengers lifelong tryst with his caste conscious) but rather that the scavenger's body is inextricably implicated in the grotesquery, which Bakhtin elucidates in a way that emphasizes the material conditions of the body's question for the social. What is interesting, however, is that through such an analysis of the body of the scavenger one can (like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*) explore the imaginative field of the grotesque, of the monstrous, of the excessively human, as taking revenge on the exploitative forms of rationality. The stress is on a Being at or beyond 'our' normative Selves.

If one foregrounds the scavenger as a historical agent, one is confronting the possibility that her/his transgressive boundaries might form a political space for new tactical alliances. Activists then may be dutifully miffed that the scavenger elbows her/her way into the political arena as focus for delineated struggles of race, gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality. This is, thus, the becoming of consciousness. Correspondingly, Bakhtin suggests that the grotesque body is a body in the act of becoming – it is continually built, created and builds and creates another body (seen in the instances of Rabelais where the body opens out).

At the end of the three chapters there is still a lurking ambiguity with regard to salience and the separation of primary from the secondary. If the method of analysis is anthropological, then, what is the focal point of an anthropology of manual scavenging – distinction, evocation, desire, opportunity and denial or decadence and care? According to Clifford Geertz, anthropology attempts to rescue the 'said' of a particular discourse and fixes it in pursuable terms. Since society and the social system must have a certain degree of coherence in order to be a cultural system, coherence is a loaded measurement

as well as a limited one. 'Tightness' of the interpretation of a cultural logic makes for neither a valid or invalid interpretation. Rather, the anthropologist 'inscribes' social discourse, turning passing events into an account. Guessing at meanings is a given in the interpretations behind the inscriptions. 'Tightness' is irrelevant for the most part. Culture, for Geertz, is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions and processes are attributed. It is in fact a 'context', with inter-worked systems of construable signs, which exposes the generality of mental 'content' without reducing the particularity of the existential 'form'.

The focal point of any anthropological research is, then, characterization – not by way of prediction, but through anticipation and interpretation. It is through trajectory that the anthropologist invariably gets encroached by the problem of representation. According to Spivak (1988: 74), two senses of representation run together: representation as 'speaking for', and representation as 're-presentation'. While the former has a political agenda, the latter lies in the realm of subject-predication. In each sense, however, the anthropologist finds herself, consciously or unconsciously, articulating the relationship between desire, power and subjectivity. Desire exists as one of the most incessant part of man's consciousness. It instills in man fear of inadequacy and of the obsolete before guiding the mind to abundance and the 'new'. Desire, then, becomes a synonymous rhetoric for 'benefit' and 'good' for the one who desires. Foucault makes the relation between desire and interest clear when he says, *'We never desire against our interests, because interest always follows and finds itself where desire has placed it.'*[15] The institutionalization, professionalization and remuneration of the pursuit of desire are the functions of power – it creates the effects of desire. Power, then, is neither given nor exchanged, but exercised; it exists only in action. This exercise of power, however, must be legitimized by what Foucault calls the existing *"discourse of truth"*[16], which in turn has been interrogated, examined and registered by relations of power. Therefore, an agential consequence of power is also produced at the level of knowledge, namely ideology. For example, the struggle of a particular peasant in China is encapsulated under the narrative specificity of 'Maoism'.

[15] Foucault, 1976: 68
[16] Foucault, 1967: 70

Subjectivity, then, is created under the influence of representation or rhetoric. As soon as one enters the domain of the 'descriptive' one is forming the *artificial* due to the operation of impersonal agencies, such as economy and politics. Experience is bought to life by the power and practice of the signifier. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the subject is wrested away from its individual agency by denying it the ability to 'speak'. Rather, the concrete experience that is the guarantor of political appeal of the peasant, worker, soldier or prisoner is brandished by intellectual rhetoric in order to consolidate the international division of labour. Spivak suggests that under this schema of global alliance one arrives at a subjectivity that is collective, that of the consumer. Therefore, solving the dilemmas of this current anthropological endeavor Spivak contends, *"To confront* (the Other outside this circuit of the international division of labour, namely the subsistence farmers, unorganized peasant labour and community of zero workers on the street,) *is not to represent them but to learn to represent ourselves."*[17]

[17] Spivak, 1988: 84

DISASSOCIATION FROM DEFICIENCY

Plato (2000) put forward two contrary imperatives, two incoercible facts about our nature: first, that we must look towards the divine, that it alone is worth contemplating and second, that representing it is futile, sacrilegious and inconceivable. Against such Platonism stands *varna* which is a history of doctrines and ideas having to do with divine representation, and more precisely, of those doctrines and ideas that permitted or prohibited it. Idolatry existed not only in the form of godly images but also in the manner in which the 'innocent' condition of society was endowed with ritual codes. This metamorphosed form of society was subject to a moral interpretation and as such corresponded with the civic religion or its plastic manifestation. This was possible because of the compromise spirituality sought with the imperial and political god, the King. The state, therefore, inherited two contradictory themes, point and counterpoint: the insurmountable existence of the divine and the need for the divine to be asserted.

Varna, therefore, stood as an equivalent of material artwork or artistic labour sculpturing society in the image of the sacred. It was a cosmic framework within which the image of the divine was captured. Art becomes an issue because the four dimensions of *varna* – *Brahmin*, *Kshtriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* – first and foremost create iconic images in the human consciousness, namely sacred texts, arms, wealth and the soil respectively. The syntagmatic unfolding, applicable to any kind of artwork, added the functional prerequisite to each part of the image called *varna*. However, the sacred virtue of *varna* was soon augmented by another philosophy – namely the 'caste system', which became a kind of iconoclasm that voiced the lament of those 'who came from the feet of Brahma'.

This philosophy had its roots in the chronicles of travelers and missionaries and particularly the decennial census the colonial administration conducted in India delineating *varna* into numbers and figures and minorities and majorities (Sharma, 1999: 6). Although the colonial administration was very little concerned with religion and not at all with the problem of the divine image, its own production of this image was

'orthodox', in a sense that can be precisely defined. Writings on *varna* during the colonial period underpinned it as essentially Brahmin and was considered 'absurd', 'degenerative' and 'superstitious'. Much of the literature took the form of works on the 'Tribes and Castes' of various provinces, stimulated by the work of Risley, Commissioner for the 1901 Census of India. These were volumes listing the various castes with descriptions of their customs, occupations and putative histories based on information collected by local census officials and administrators. Risley (1915: 46) viewed *varna* as the result of racial dominance and conquest, subjected groups becoming lower castes. But the rigidity of the resulting institution and the effect of fragmenting civil society meant that there could be no sense of a common good or public interest. Inden (1990: 65) points out that this view of a 'caste society' as pathological justified British rule of India very conveniently, projecting British imperial racialism onto Indians themselves. The classification of the entire Indian population into 'castes', as real identifiable groups, in successive censuses led to the objectification of caste, which actually made it more real and liable to rigidity; members of *jati* groups identified more rather than less with their caste, often forming caste associations in urban areas. Therefore, the most important event was that positivism, realism and scienticism supplanted symbolism and romanticism. The novelty of such classification lay in the subversion of the initial structure. Members of upwardly mobile groups could use the census as an opportunity to attempt their own reclassification and shake off association with more backward branches of their community.

The extended pervasiveness of *varna* with its transformation into caste, then, made it simultaneously material and symbolic – lines could be drawn and lines could be transcended. It is here that *varna* as caste enters the realm of discourse – identity, colonial and orientalist. This 'abstract art' developed out of a religious and, most precisely, a mystical movement. It was the colonial method of reassertion of this doctrine that such symbolic religiosity should have taken the path of iconoclasm via abstraction. This can be said with authority because around the beginning of the twentieth century, the phenomenon of caste made a sideways transition from the colonialist discourse into literature of comparative discipline, primarily through the efforts of Max Weber and Louis Dumont.

Dumont's analysis of *varna*, however, can be credited with novelty because he considered

this divine arrangement as a 'system', which includes and excludes. He, in fact, was the first to initiate discussion on the paradoxical situation of those who were inherently liberated from the 'colonization' of the divine authority – the *varna*/caste-less or 'untouchables' within the Hindu population. Dumont understands hierarchy of *varna* as a structure, particularly as a dichotomy between the 'pure' and the 'impure'. The primary sources of impurity was contact with death and organic wastes – faeces, saliva, urine, perspiration, hair, menstrual blood etc. this hierarchy, based on the distinction between purity and pollution reproduced itself in the social order which led to the emergence of 'closed' status groups called castes that were anxious to preserve their purity. Thus, according to Dumont, the dichotomy between purity and impurity gets translated into the dichotomy between Brahmin and Untouchable – *"untouchability cannot disappear so long as the Brahmin continues to exist."*[18]. The impurity of Untouchables, then for Dumont, is not conceptually inseparable from the purity of the Brahmin where the execution of impure tasks by one group is necessary for maintaining the purity of another. Working as soil tillers, brick and salt makers, road-construction workers, night-soil cleaners, sweepers and renderers, Untouchables fulfilled similar vital functions. Untouchables were, then, perfectly and absolutely a part of traditional economy. Their economic function was an extension of their ritual function, which, as Hocart writes, *"is essential the smooth running of the sacrifice."*[19].

Untouchability, then, was not a social phenomenon. It was political. It related to the questions of citizenship. Those outside the *chaturvarna* order – untouchables and tribals – were not considered citizens. They did not have any rights. They were officially prevented from accumulating *sampatti* (wealth), entering the world of *shiksha* (education) and possessing *shastra* (arms). The doctrine was, therefore, of exclusion and segregation. This doctrine was accorded divine sanction with the practice of purity-pollution as a mere symptom. The modern republic opened up citizenship rights to all, and the erstwhile excluded/segregated were to be represented in all walks of India's public life. It is those who still practice such exclusion/segregation are charged with practicing 'Untouchability'. The epistemology of Untouchability, then, begins at a time in history only when this doctrine of exclusion/segregation was considered as a social and, more importantly, constitutional crime. The problem of Untouchables, according to Oomen

[18] Deliege 1999: 39
[19] Deliege 1999: 121

and Beteille (Deliege, 1999: 21), was above all one of cumulative deprivation. Both believe that socio-economic dependence, material poverty, social deprivation and lack of political power with ritual pollution made Untouchables a distinct group and a social category clearly set apart from the rest of society.

According to Gupta, the plight of the depressed castes, if not classes, in India is caused by the preoccupation with purity, especially ritual purity. This, interestingly he says, is not reflected in the way in which Indians spontaneously create filth around them. Mary Douglas considers dirt as *"matter out of place"*[20] and this opens up a whole new perspective. Dirt, Gupta infers, *"is, therefore, largely a cultural construction, as is the designation of its rightful place."*[21]. According to the world-view of *varna*, people from different castes are different because they are made of different substances not visible to the naked eye. They can invade other beings through the various orifices of the body, which is why there are taboos on eating, living and sexual practices. The caste theory, being a theory of personhood begins from the 'biological' and, hence, it is not surprising that the body metaphor should pervade large chunks of our social life.

Following the *varna* model, the body is a fortress constantly under siege from forces without and hence all openings should be carefully monitored. It also holds that the substances routinely expelled from a person's body are dirty and polluting, even to the person concerned. It is for this reason that *varna* made inroads into an economic system that recommended specialized functionaries whose job it was to absorb these pollutants, namely the scavenger, the barber and the washman, who are called 'ritual specialists'. It has thus been argued that while caste as a system, with its lessons at 'keeping the dirt outside', has led our disposition towards a lack of public hygiene, it, at the same time, has 'employed' sweepers and scavengers to take care of the 'dirt'.

However, the caste system, Gupta believes, is slowly dying but caste identities are still strong. While caste affiliations exist, neither work nor division of labour is organized on the principle of caste. The caste system, in traditional India was enforced by power and not by ideological acquiescence. Political consciousness emerges among castes because certain castes see themselves occupying structurally similar positions. This is what bought

[20] Gupta 2000: 24
[21] Gupta 2000: 24

about the great consolidation of the Kurmi Sabha in the 1930's, when a host of peasant castes came to fight together against landlordism. However, peasant castes also have a genealogy of competing with each in the race for upward mobility as in the case of Gujars and Jats of western UP.

This has led to the emergence of what is called the backward caste movement. The people who fall under the category of 'backward' are educationally less qualified than their urban counterparts but otherwise are fairly powerful in terms of wealth and power. This is why every political party indulges in its own variety of backward caste politics. By banding together, these communities form pressure groups demanding the government for urban jobs and for protective discrimination with regard to educational opportunities. Caste, however, could take the form of an 'alternative' – wherever the level of enthusiasm over ideologies and programmes are low, reliance on caste loyalty is greater.

Democracy and urbanization have hemmed in and constricted caste ideology and 'caste patriotism' is openly expressed by all castes across the spectrum. Urbanization has helped the deprived castes, according to Gupta, to break away from the rural prison. They have alternative sources of livelihood, voting polls act as a handy tool for realizing upward mobility. In this altered setting, it is not hierarchy that dominates the social existence of caste but difference and identity because what determines caste alliance today is secular interests and if a particular caste does not deliver, a new combination is forged. Variations in customs, rituals, mythology and aesthetics clearly segregate themselves from one another. This allows for a variety of political options depending on how individual caste interests are satisfied on the secular plane. However, Gupta's prediction is that with the proliferation of caste politics in India, soon caste identities would strongly correlate with economic status, which in turn could give caste its extra élan.

Betteile (1997: 169), while making a similar claim admits that the loyalties of caste are used for the mobilization of political support in a number of ways: by a generalized appeal to caste sentiment, by activating networks of kinship and marriage and by the organized activities of caste associations. Caste, in fact, came to be used in the electoral process from the very first general election. 'Casteism' in politics is not seen much as a kind of caste preference as it is perceived as social justice.

The meaning of the term 'caste' has, therefore, undergone considerable alteration in contemporary, at least urban, India. Metaphorically, it describes every form of invidious distinction and social exclusion. The 'distinction' is primarily the patterns of deference that grow within and around modern associations, institutions and organizations such as the factory, office, hospital, outside and in work and in public and private places. The city is no less animated by a concern for status than the village. According to Betteile (1997: 151), although the definitions may overlap, there is a distinction between the symbolic form and social expression of status in the city and the village. Betteile, though, does not believe that caste has or is going to disappear from Indian society; accepts that the operation of caste as a corporation in urban India has lost its salience.

It is this 'modernization of caste' that Beteille is concerned with in his essays "Caste in Contemporary India" and "The Reproduction of Inequality: Occupation, Caste and Family" in which he focuses on the question of meaning and legitimacy of caste among the urban population of India. In order to do this, Betteile revisits two contrasting views on caste prior to independence to form an idea of how those perceptions have changed. First, there was the colonial view that caste was not only the pre-eminent institution of India, but that it permeated every area of life, and the idea that caste should be dispensed with was wishful thinking. As against this was, what Betteile calls, the *"nationalist view"*[22] that the importance of caste was greatly exaggerated by the colonial administration, that it was clearly on its way out and that its decline would be greatly hastened once India became independent. For the Indian intellectual it became a matter of pride to confute the colonial view that, however eloquently they might talk of democracy and development, Indians were and would remain under the grip of caste with its exclusiveness, its hierarchy and its ineluctable fragmentation of Indian society.

The writings of scholars of the nineteenth century like Weber, Dumont, Risley, Hutton have projected caste as a more or less complete system (Beteille, 1997: 156). One not only finds an existential order of caste, as something that might be observed on the ground from outside, but also its normative order, as something regarded by its individual members as both meaningful and morally binding. Caste distinctions were considered significant and legitimate by most members of society, particularly those belonging to upper castes whose descendants in contemporary India are precisely the

[22] Betteile,1997: 154

ones who are ambivalent and troubled about its meaning and legitimacy today.

The question of caste morality is difficult to dispose. One of its principle components was a sense of obligation one had towards the caste one was born into – abiding customs, adhering to its styles of life and pursuing the occupation allotted to it. That obligation, according to Betteile (1991: 6), has weakened in urban areas. Among engineers, doctors, scientists, civil servants and managers, the obligation to one's occupation exists independently of the obligation to one's caste and to some extent displaces it. The schoolteacher, the clerk or the electrician no longer feels very strongly that she/he has a duty to encourage his offspring to preserve his own occupation or the occupation of his forefathers.

McKim Marriott (1997), while discussing multiple references in the caste system, analyzes the nuances of modern urban stratification vis-à-vis the rural model. The urban mode of stratification is measured largely according to the qualities – behaviors and attitudes – exhibited by an individual or group. These individuals and groups are no longer regarded as representatives of ritually corporate castes, but as units whose deference, in urban eyes, may contribute to the raising of the average standing of the collection to which the person belongs. Thus, the irrelevance of caste as corporation on the metropolitan scene tends to favour anonymity, individual mobility and reduction of communal control. However, striving for individual prestige, and on the opposite side, declining in prestige through loss of wealth and power do not distinguish the urban from the rural type of stratification.

According to Saberwal (1995), the nuances a society displays in its mode of structuration can be understood by studying how this society reacted to the presence of outsiders. India, he believes, and its changes could be understood when the ordering devices of both – India and Europe – confronted each other, i.e. when Western institutions and codes met the ordering device of caste and *jati*. The European legal system, while regulating the contracts between merchants, contributing to a certain degree of predictability and stability, laid the basis for the rise of capitalism. In colonial India when the two modes of organization came face to face, the limited scale of the Indian *jati* and kinship began to expand due to changes in three aspects – communication, ideas and forms of organization (Saberwal, 1995: 39). All these three organizations combined led to

the potential access of *"open ended social relationships"* (Saberwal 1995: 39) through the emergence of public spaces in the forms of cities, educational institutions and bureaucracy. This could also be seen as a prelude to Sharma's argument (2001) that in India prior to the advent of the colony, classes were not seen as a system of stratification in the same way as castes. While the problem primarily was of a class nature, classes are not perceived as concrete socio-economic units. Class therefore as a 'recognizable' category came into existence with the colonial period. Therefore in this scenario of changing structures and changing actors, at a subliminal level one could find mobilization and transformation of ideas and relationships (Sharma 2001: 41)

While in the urban community the frame of reference is class, in the rural it is caste corporations – both referring to a lifestyle. Where the caste-oriented mode of hierarchy covers zones of ritual dominance, relative standings of castes and four encompassing *varnas*, (Marriott, 1997) the newer national and cosmopolitan hierarchy is based on education, individual achievement, independence and secular dominance. This change/transformation in consciousness, ideas and orientations is what Saberwal (1995: 133) corresponds with the relation between thought and practice.

Ideas, according to Saberwal, go into making institutions; institutions set up spaces in which experiences occur; and the light of one's experiences may serve to persuade one to modify one's ideas. (1995: 163) However, it is through the institutions in a society that ideas serve to give particular meanings to situations, thus defining them. The definitions are undertaken only when ideas fulfill certain attributive characteristics – validity (legitimacy), stability (sacredness) and most importantly availability (scale, mode and orientation). It is along these lines that ideas differ in quality. The differences however do not show in singe acts but in cumulating long-term consequences. During the course of this cumulative process, some particular habits of mind are sharpened and propagated, other suppressed. These outcomes then fit into the evolutionary paradigm, which has three terms – variation in the experience, an agency for carrying out that experience and the criterion for selecting that experience. Whether the evolution is 'good' or 'bad' depends upon the closeness between selection and evaluation (1995: 173). On the whole, evolution is part of the larger category of 'change'.

The ideas underlying our perceptions give meaning to happenings and thus to our experience directly. Their transmission and expression, however, may also be mediated by institutions, buttressed with distinctive norms and charters. Institutions may speed the passage of ideas through space and time, but ideas and institutions can interweave in multiple ways. The general ideas current in a society influence conduct; and this influence often flows through institutions which generate activities and social spaces, directing and organizing them recurrently. Complex banks of ideas go into ordering, legitimizing and explaining recurrent forms of social actions and relationships. The point Saberwal (1995: 177) tries to make is that how the members of a society interpret their misfortunes necessarily depend on the stock of explanatory ideas available to them, bearing on matters of theodicy. Therefore, refracted in a caste order, what was intended to be the mobilization of caste in effect became that of class, primarily through occupation and occupational status.

Beteille believes that the social importance of professionals such as doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, scientists, journalists, which can be linked to the expansion of bourgeois society, far exceeds their numerical strength. Important factors behind their social importance are the high levels of education required for the entry into them and the real or presumed association with specialized knowledge and technical skill. Because such specialized knowledge, due to its acquiring cost, is limited to a few in society, Betteile suggests that the inequalities characteristic of modern societies are associated with modern institutions, modern professions and the modern occupational system in general. The new occupations of professionals, administration, management and non-manual work are considered more important and valuable than skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual work. As result, the individual's position in society – her or his social identity – their economic standing, their social status, their self-esteem are all to some extent dependent on their occupation. A large part of their adult life is devoted to it, and much of their early life is a preparation for it. (Beteille, 1991: 13)

In industrial societies, Beteille considers occupational ranking and occupational mobility as two important and closely interrelated features. Despite the displacement of old occupations by new ones due to rapid technological change, the prestige structure of occupations retains a fair degree of stability over time. The differentiation of occupations and the proliferating intra and inter-generational mobility, however, has not obliterated

class from industrial societies. The working class, in fact, still possesses a clear social identity. A corollary to this is that there is no society in which access to the service class is in practice equally open to persons from all sections of society: social origins and background play some part in restricting or facilitating such access in all societies. The question Beteille concerns himself with is: *"Why is access to the service class almost automatically ensured for some members of society... despite the extensive concern expressed in our society for equality of opportunity?"*[23] However, at the other end of the spectrum the question could also be "why is access to a certain kind of manual work automatically ensured for some members of society?" According to Beteille, the direct influence of caste on occupation or distribution of life chances is changing: no one any longer has automatic access to a particular occupation by virtue of one's caste as was largely the case in the past. Mariott while corroborating with Beteille on the diminishing 'corporative' existence of caste in the urban space, nevertheless adds that movement within both urban and rural hierarchies is based on the giving and receiving of pollution – in the form of ritual symbols in the caste system on the one hand, and a more production oriented division of labour in the urban context on the other.

Continuity and reproduction is what constitutes the concepts of society and culture. In this regard, Beteille assigns great importance to the family. He believes that the family plays a crucial role in the reproduction of social structure, including the structure of inequality. The different kinds and amounts of resources children from different homes are exposed to should be seen from lenses other than wealth and income. In recent years the problem of the reproduction of inequality has been greatly illuminated by the concept of cultural and social capital propounded by Bourdieu (1977). Apart from material capital, and to some extent independently of it, each family has a stock of cultural capital, comprising of its command over knowledge, skills, tastes etc., that are a part of its distinctive way of life. The upper-middle class Indian family, Beteille believes, has shown its strength by the manner in which it has adapted to and retained control over the changing social environment. It has shifted its focus and attention away from caste and sub-caste, while planning for the future, towards school, college and office. Apart from primary socialization imparted at home and cognitive training at schools, children from middle-class milieus are also exposed to a network of tutors and coaches, which has a become a familiar feature of urban social landscape in contemporary India.

---

[23] Betteile 1991:13

With regard to caste and the family, Beteille (1991: 20) calls for a distinction between patterns and forms that exist as residues from the past in a more or less passive way, and institutions that play an active part in the reproduction of inequality. Although caste is no longer enumerated in the decennial census, a multitude of social surveys and case studies bear witness to its continued existence in all parts of India. It is also still manifestly correlated with every form of social stratification, whether based on wealth, income or education. However, even if individuals may feel free to use on occasion their caste connections to further their individual or domestic interests, this does not generally bind them morally to the demands of their caste. In this regard, caste ceases to be an institution of social control. It is in fact the family that plays an important role not only as agent of social control but also of social placement.

Beteille (1991: 22), in fact, questions the legitimacy of caste as an institution. According to him, an institution is not merely a convenient arrangement for individuals to use from time to time in the pursuit of their interests; nor is continuity over time or antiquity a test of its effective strength. Beteille goes on to suggest that the mechanism of social upliftment or downfall is no longer the institution of caste. The onus, in fact, has been handed over to modern institutions, access to which is determined by one's position in the market economy. If 'continuity' and 'reproduction' are the subsequent societal processes, then as discussed by K. L. Sharma (1994), the fundamental distinction between caste (as closed) and class (as open) gets blurred.

According to Levi-Strauss (1969), universal structures of reciprocity are the foundations for all social life. If placed within the rubric put forward by Beteille, education imparted to children by parents involves an exchange, a reciprocity, an economy. The 'gift' of education is given with the expectation of a return – maintenance and upliftment of status and stature. This economy of exchange, according to David Cheal (1988), can be understood from three perspectives: thesis of capitalist transformation, where emergence of capitalism meant that morals are replaced by markets and the value of the *mana* of the gift is lessened. Second, the thesis of emotional sequestration, where generosity in private giving and generosity in public giving are predicted by different factors. Third, the thesis of economic rationalization, where through exchange individuals pursue their self-interests.

In an essay entitiled "The Spirit of the Thing Given", Marcel Mauss observed that in certain societies the nature of the bond created by the transfer of a possession is due to the fact that *"the thing itself is a person or pertains to a person"* and *" is in reality a part of one's nature and substance'*[24]. Hence, what can be inferred is that commodities are alienable, all rights in them are given up when they are exchanged for other commodities. Gifts, on the other hand, are inalienable since the donor's rights in the gift are never extinguished, and it is this quality of the gift that creates the obligation to return. Education, then, which entails consumption, implicitly implies giving, hence, becoming an instance of vicarious consumption. The beneficiaries of the education must conform to the ethos within which such exchange takes places, namely social reproduction.

This reproduction, then, existentially and historically establishes links between economic classes and status communities in the human consciousness, which K. L. Sharma (1994) attempts to decode. He believes that the complexities of the expression and articulation of the relation between caste and class signify the vast ramifications of structured social inequality. Debates on caste and class have covered wide-ranging issues related to status, levels of equality and inequality, cultural and structural interaction, occupational mobility etc. The projection of the caste system in India as rigid and unchanging has qualified for its dysfunction. However on the other hand, despite its dsyfunctionality, the caste system has expressed a certain degree of dynamism. *'The 'ideal' and the 'actual' status was never the same'*[25].

A long history of discontinuities, breakdowns, contradictions and changes in the caste system have negated its absolutist, unchanging and holistic nature. Both inequality and equality have been built into the caste system and change has taken place in both as well as in the nexus between the two. Despite the priestly superiority of the Brahmins over all other castes, the functionary lower castes enjoyed some 'ritual status'. The status and protection accorded to them by the caste Panchayats enabled them to protest against the injustices meted out by upper caste patrons. Hence, a critical re-examination of caste as a system of ideals and rituals, and class as a system of relations between the rich and the poor may be desirable. The emergence of a new middle class disproportionate to the forces of production and the size of the upper and lower classes has forged a new nexus

[24] Mauss 1954: 10
[25] Sharma 1994:2

between caste, class and power. The embourgeoisiement of the families of the principle agricultural castes has given a new direction to the connection between caste, class and politics.

A couple of studies focusing on migration, education, occupation, power, style of life, ownership, control and use of land, inert-caste feuds, competition and bargaining for high wages have changed the criteria of status determination and the caste-class nexus. Agrarian reforms and the Green Revolution have affected caste, class and land relations by creating divides comprising various kinds of gainers and losers, which also have implications for the emergence of a new power structure. How does, then, one come to understand the persistence of caste despite the pauperization, proletarianization and downward mobility of the upper castes on the one hand, and the embourgeoisiement and upward mobility among middle and lower castes? Through Sharma's work it can be inferred that caste is no longer the equivalent of class and class is not synonymous with caste. Castes are discrete, segmentary and flexible, while class relations can be analyzed by juxtaposing them with caste, kinship, marriage and family. However, in order to interrogate into the problems of exploitation, domination, poverty, alienation, distributive injustice etc. one must be sensitive to the fact that caste today is not simply confined to ritual ranking and class is not just a grouping of people resulting from organization and ownership of means of production; both caste and class are corporate as well as individualistic entities; and the two have fixity as well as flexibility.

Within the rubric of dialectics between caste and class, one must first comprehend the structural patterns displayed by such social identities. It has been observed, as evident from movements associated with the 1960s and 1970s, that the increasing or decreasing salience of different forms of social identity has become one of the focal points of Indian polity. What, then, guides the negotiations between the different classes or communities? One of the primary focuses of Sharma's work is to trace the epistemology of human consciousness that influences the relation between caste and class. This epistemology is that of retarded capitalism. Retarded capitalism, Sharma believes, leaves none of the spheres of social life free of its distorting determinations. The stunted growth and stagnation, the infirmities, the under-development along with high technological sophistication leads to the dependence of more and more people on pre-capitalist sectors for social existence, which results in a new significance to pre-capitalist ideologies. These

social forms, then, develop their own inner force and growth patterns. The focus then shifts from epistemology to ontology, from ideals to manifestations, as contexts for the determination of consciousness.

The underlying assumption is that modernization does not mitigate the primordial sentiments but rather it excites them. Capitalism, then, is no longer capable of effectively destroying the political salience of the pre-capitalist or pre-modern social forms and belief systems. The euphemism of 'modern', one can say, is a theoretical fallacy since, even the consciousness compatible with technological mode of production, which, at least, can be credited for initiating debates around modernity, is a false one due to the irreverence or oblivion towards that eventually which accounts for the possible routes of realization towards persistent primordiality.

This 'persistent primordiality' emerges as an unquestioned fact when one confronts the discrimination on the basis of caste in the aftermath of the tsunami. The testimonies of Dalit victims of the tsunami all along the Indian coast of Tamil Nadu show remarkable consistency, pointing to a systematic and predictable type of discrimination. These testimonies[26] are backed up by previously published reports by non-governmental organizations, reports by Indian journalists and dozens of interviews with the various stakeholders. The discrimination was present at all phases of the recovery process, from the denial of rice, the refusal to share emergency shelters, the removal of bodies, and the relief materials provided, through to the compensation and provision of livelihood assistance and housing.

The tsunami hit Indians indiscriminately, with the fisherman caste community, namely the *Meenavaras, Fernandos* or the *Mukkavars*, being the worst hit by virtue of their proximity to the coast. They suffered the most deaths and loss of property. However, Dalits were also seriously affected by the tsunami, a number losing their lives and thousands losing their few possessions and their means of livelihood as daily wage labourers for either the dominant 'caste fishermen' or agricultural land-owners. The caste system prevents Dalits from fishing in the sea, unless they are working for the fishermen caste. They survive from day to day, without savings and mostly deprived of the means

[26] Report submitted by Timothy Gill in February 2007 titled *"Making Things Worse"* and commissioned by Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN).

to earn their own, independent living. They are generally prevented from registering with the government as fishermen, and the few small wooden boats they owned were not replaced.

'Building back better' was one of the catch-cries of post-tsunami rehabilitation[27]. Most of the areas hit by the tsunami across Asia were impoverished before the disaster, and governmental, national and international organizations promised that the reconstruction would aim to seriously improve the lot of those affected compared to their a priori developmental position. However, the discriminatory approach to this 'building back better', focused intently on the dominant caste-group of the Indian coast-line, has meant 'building back worse' for coastal Dalit communities, as their relative poverty and communal powerlessness has increased. The caste fishermen have been given on balance far more and far better boats than they had before the tsunami. They have also had their houses replaced, regardless of the level of damage to their pre-existing houses, and have been provided with important infra- structure. They received a lot of rice and cash, which made them less keen to go back to work – work that the Dalits were relying on. Correspondingly, it must be remembered that rehabilitation must be more than replacement of lost items: it is the reconstruction of a devastated community. The Dalit community was in need of reconstruction even before the tsunami hit – not just because of poverty, but also because of occupational discrimination.

Oversimplification of the problems caused by the tsunami has led to deepened discrimination. The tsunami has exposed the power relations in the coastal communities. The traditional fishing Caste Panchayats (or Village Committees, or Parish Councils, in the case of the Catholic caste fishermen communities) control the use of ocean fishing boats, and refuse to allow Dalits to own or control anything related to the industry. In many cases Dalits are doing the fishing, cooking or labouring on the boats in the sea, but they are strictly forbidden from owning the boats. Dalits may own small boats on inland waters, but not on the sea itself. Caste fishermen claim a customary right to control sea fishing. Though they are rightly considered a vulnerable community, within their own domain, their power is supreme, and government officials, police and elected

[27] Report submitted by Timothy Gill in February 2007 titled *"Making Things Worse"* and commissioned by Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN).

leaders do not dare interfere with their decisions at the local level.[28]

The caste fishermen (known usually as *Meenavars*, or as *Fernandos* in some Catholic villages) are also among the chief landowners of inner coastal agricultural lands, with Dalits the large part of the labourers on these lands. The other large agricultural landowners are the higher caste *Vanniars*, who also rely on Dalits to till their lands. The salt pans which are prepared and harvested by Dalits are owned mostly by the government, who hand over control of the salt pans to cooperatives. Dalits are usually not able to participate in these cooperatives. In sum, coastal Dalits in Tamil Nadu are excluded from controlling the means of their own production. Dalits were also brought in from various areas and forced to do the work of removing dead bodies. The treatment of this community was disgraceful. They were brought by their managers from various districts of Tamil Nadu specifically to remove dead bodies, yet these managers made virtually no effort to ensure they were provided with appropriate equipment, facilities or supplies to undertake this grisly task. They were not even given soap, bedding, or enough clothes. They received immunization, gloves and face masks days after they had begun handling the rotting corpses, even though other higher caste workers had already received these. They had to work the entire day without food and faced harassment from caste fishermen unwilling to do the work themselves.

Virtually all stakeholders reinforced the caste system by stating that 'the fishermen community' was the hardest hit. However, this 'fishermen community' for all practical reasons is primarily a caste group and not a community that does fishing since the Dalits who also do fishing are not counted as part of 'the fishermen community'. Thus, caste was the basis for determining categories of victims, with caste fishermen considered the primary victims, and the Dalits the secondary victims. Caste would not be a basis for recognition in countries that do not have caste. Authorities and NGOs in other countries would have looked at each family on a case-by-case basis. In post-tsunami India, it was a caste-by-caste basis. There are many individual caste fishermen who were far less affected (and many more who were far better able to cope with the impact) than individual neighbouring Dalits, yet, they retained their respective primary and secondary victim status because of their caste. As a result of the relief and rehabilitation, Dalits are

[28] Report of the study on Vulnerabilities and livelihood security options of the non-ocean fishing communities affected by tsunami in Tamil Nadu, PWTN, June-Aug, 2005.

even more dependent and vulnerable than before.

Further, instances of violence in India, which have centered on caste identities, have been chronicled through print and audio-visual journalism. However, since the last three to four decades, attempts have been made to suggest a shift in the social architecture of such violence – from persistence in a world ritually defined in terms of purity and pollution to economic class and class conflict. In 1977, the long simmering dispute between landowners and sharecroppers led to the killing of more than three hundred Dalits in Dharampur village, Bihar when the landowning *Mahant* caste wanted to illegally evict the sharecroppers from their land by maneuvering local police. However, the bloody hand-to-hand combat in the cloth mills of Ahmedabad during the Gujarat riots of 1981 proves otherwise. Conflict here was not between owner and laborer, but between Dalit and non-Dalit laborer. Equally important are the frequent reports of caste communalism in urban India, which immediately invoke images of violent protest relating to the Mandal Commission and the recent twenty seven per cent raise in educational quota for Other Backward Classes.

At one level, all of these seemingly diverse examples of conflict – over urban jobs and education, land, and the ritual purity of the village well – do indeed prove to have much in common. Each in its own way is a dispute over the Indian 'social contract' and the state's role in enforcing that contract. In each of these cases, different sets of relatively higher caste actors come to regard state policy affecting the distribution of both goods and social values as unbearably out of line with their own vision of the normal, expected social order.

Seen from the perspective of this once coherent social contract, the multiplex character of current conflict is easier to understand, for it has been a contract in which the economic and the ritual have been distinctive but closely interwoven elements of Untouchable status. The significance of this relationship has been all too thoroughly overlooked in analyses that have assumed a simple dichotomous equation: economic conflict equals 'class'; only conflict over ritually defined norms equals 'caste'. Unfortunately, 'class' and 'caste' make misleading synonyms for 'economic' and 'ritual'. Especially when used as mutually exclusive opposites, this casual vocabulary all too easily leads one from recognition of very real economic components in conflict to the

unexamined assumption that economically based identity – class consciousness – has superseded primordial identity – in this case, ritually defined caste identity – as the organizing principle of conflict.

Another factor is the peculiar paradox that operates in societies in which prejudice has long been endemic and institutionalized, be that society Indian or American. On the one hand there are disturbing continuities between 'traditional' and 'modern' attitudes about low status minorities. Ascriptive status distinctions that derive from one set of values and institutions have a frustrating ability to survive changes in both ideology and institutions. On the other hand, discontinuities do develop, and individuals begin to pattern their social attitudes and actions in highly idiosyncratic ways. For the minority, this does not mean predictable blocs of allies in Parliament or police headquarters, but it does mean that opposition becomes less cohesive and predictable, making challenges to the status quo more tempting but still precarious.

Dipankar Gupta says:

"... with the introduction of democratic mobilization and urbanization, castes can freely express their identities and their attendant hierarchies... Rarely is a hierarchy expressed in practice today without it being challenged by the very people who were earlier supposed to be quiescent... Castes are proud of their identity, regardless of where textual traditions place them on the 'purity-pollution' hierarchy"[29]

What emerges, then, are fissures in what was considered a bloc by itself. On the one hand there is the lower-caste elite, reflecting a democratic upsurge, but only parliamentary. On the other, one finds a section of the population, which for generations has remained employed in sweeping, cleaning, rag picking and scavenging, namely the *Bhangi* caste. If the philosophy of democracy rests on the freedom of exercising rational choice, then, where would one accommodate the latter, with regards to freedom of choice in work? (to be discussed in Chapter 3) What eventually becomes problematic today is that land, education and political power are no longer exclusively associated with the upper castes i.e. the 'content' has been separated from the 'form'. Moreover, with caste 'on its way out of urban consciousness', and euphemisms such as 'career', 'job' and 'performance' replacing its salience, 'success' and 'failure', then, as claimed and promised

[29] Gupta 2000: 14

by modernity, are not attributed to ascription (ritual status) but to achievement (the Weberian equivalent of 'life-chances').

Success and failure, however, have always been tangible entities due to their correspondence with materialism, namely consumption, which becomes the defining characteristic of cosmopolitanism. One can come to understand how 'class' is estimated not just by consumption patterns but also, to a great extent, by the aesthetics or conforming to 'good taste' – food, beverage, leisure, fashion, literature, cinema, neighbourhood etc. Fundamental or a pre-requisite to an 'aesthetic lifestyle' is the tacit necessity to be 'clean'. It was in the seventeeneth century, with the language of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, that the word 'clean' *(propre)* changed its meaning. It was more often used as a judgement in portraits and descriptions. It gave points to profiles and nuances to comment. It was even something extended to attitudes and behaviour. The fact that the word was thought worth employing and that it was used sparingly confirms once again that cleanliness distinguished. It was not universal, but the marks of a seemliness which was not general. Cleanliness was so often associated with distinction that it became assimilated to it. Because what was clean was partly defined by appearance, the terms became interchangeable. Elegance, soon, was added to cleanliness; they went hand-in-hand, and, in the end, the same adjective qualified them both. Glamour, on the other hand, is a modern invention. In the heyday of the oil paintings it did not exist. Ideas of grace, elegance, authority amounted to something apparently similar but fundamentally different. Wealth, beauty, talent and luck if are a persons own and have been recognized as such does not make the person entirely dependent upon others wanting to be like her/him. The person is not purely the creature of others' envy – which is how, for example, Andy Warhol presents Marilyn Monroe.

Cleanliness, then, when seen through the Peircean prism represents a triadic structure – the *representamen*, the object and the *interpretant* (1987: 32). As the *representamen*, it creates a chain of metaphors in the mind producing 'something' in some other respect or capacity. As the object, it represents what the mind is ought to be directed to. As the *interpretant*, it contextualizes the sign and makes it a part of meaningful reality. The *sign* of cleanliness has its representational capacity in its quality. As a pure potential or possibility it may signify purity. When cleanliness is embodied, either on a body or surface-area, its 'representamenal' capacity reaches another level – hygiene and the absence of dirt. But as soon as it is thus embodied, it calls forth or invokes a more general order or possibility of

representaion; a clean *Brahmin* or an aesthetically decorated gallery invokes a convention. The underlying idea is that convention links a symbol to its object. It is the 'conscious' habitual use of the object that adds a 'kind of meaning'. There is therefore movement from abstraction to precision. The pursuit of cleanliness , then, not only makes it a 'habit', but due to its conscious adherence it is also a 'belief'. This then stretches the human imagination of consumption. If any habit, namely that of cleanliness, is considered 'natural', consumption then is constructed as non-inferential 'natural' habit.

In India, from the nineteenth century caste system where cleanliness was preserved as a privilege for the upper castes to the present day, the focus has become both complex and comprehensive. From clean streets to clean houses, and from clean rooms to clean bodies, the intention is no less than to transform the habits of the most deprived sector of the population, to banish their supposed vices, concealed or visible, by changing their bodily habits. The outcome, however, must be 'seen', since *seeing is believing.* The 'elusiveness of sight' layers the tangibility of cleanliness with something as abstract as an attribute. According to John Berger, *"Seeing comes before words."* (1972: 7) The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. We see the 'garbage today gone tomorrow'. We know that 'someone' cleans it. Yet the knowledge, moreover the explanation, never quite fits the sight.

The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe. Earlier when the *twice-born*, believed in the existence of ritual impurity, the sight of excretion, blood or an *achut* must have meant something different from what it means today. However, Berger adds that this seeing, that comes before words, and can never be quite covered by them, is not a question of mechanically reacting to stimuli. We only see what we look at and we do not see what we don't look at. To look is an act of choice. The night before the garbage bin is placed outside the threshold of the house. The next morning it is removed by a phantom that becomes flesh for us once in a month when she/he collects her/his wages, provided the peon of the 'Residents Association' does not intervene.

Sights, then, embody ways of seeing. These ways result from an increasing consciousness of individuality, accompanying an increasing awareness of history. Forces of attraction and repulsion are first procured, then acquired. It is the presence of the varying degree of these forces that an image constitutes 'art'. Because works of art are reproducible, they

can, theoretically, be used by anybody. Yet mostly – in art books, magazines, films or gilt frames in living-rooms – reproductions are still used to bolster the illusion that nothing has changed, that art, with its unique undiminished authority, justifies most other forms of authority, that art makes inequality seem noble and hierarchies seem thrilling.

Therefore, the possession of this 'art of cleanliness', capable of producing a stratification of sorts, advances to another level of tangibility – it becomes an object, a commodity. By 'evolving' from being a habit to a measure, cleanliness in current society has become a tool of morality as it was in sixteeneth century Europe. Hygiene has confirmed its status as official, taught, knowledge.

Objects, according to Baudrillard, are primarily a function of needs and take on their meaning in the economic relation of man to the environment. However, what is fundamental is not the practical use value but the *"sign exchange value"*[30]. Below the concrete visibility of the social discourse appears the primary. An accurate theory of objects will not be established upon a theory of needs and their satisfaction, but upon a theory of social prestations and significations. In industrial consumer societies, the radical distinction between the signification and economic value, the *Kula* and the *Gimwali*, is blurred. Yet behind all the superstructure of purchase, market and private property, there is always a mechanism of social prestations which must be recognized in our choice, our accumulations, manipulations, consumption of objects, our discrimination sand our prestige.

Cleanliness, as an object then, is not the locus of satisfaction of needs, but of a symbolic labour, of a 'production' in both senses – they are fabricated but also produced as a proof. They are the locus of consecration of an effort, of an uninterrupted performance, of a stress for achievement, aiming always at providing the continual and tangible proof of social value. As objects assimilate man into the environment, 'cleanliness' as a response to the need for social values prepares the body (self) for the external world (non-self). The external world of the non-self is conceptualized as foreign and hostile, which has to be resisted by an intricate pattern of defenses, produced within and without the body, thereby producing a healthy body. Thus consumption serves as a metaphor, which finds itself in the process of unraveling – it doesn't constitute a 'final

[30] Baudrillard 1981: 29

moment'. As one consumes this 'code' one also engages in producing a system. The consumption of cleanliness and sanitation enables the production of healthy and productive bodies. These potent bodies, in turn, serve as an instrument for the very machinery that generated value for its primary raw material (hygiene), namely industry with its Fordist and post-Fordist manifestations. Thus, it is when the human body becomes the focus of the nation-state's economic virility, that such a developed structure of consumption encompasses the relation between man, nature, society and industry. This encroachment of consumption, apart from its operating kinetic motion, involves another breed of labour, *"an active manipulation of signs"*[31], leading to a sort of bricolage in which the individual desperately attempts to locate and organize his private existence and invest it with meaning. In a consumer society, then, wealth, by giving birth to experience, can be lived. What people fight through consumption is 'scarcity', not as an objective quantifiable entity, but as a product of necessity. It is this necessity of objects, which translates into aspiration towards a system.

This aspiration follows a certain trajectory (not to reach its goal but its completion) through two dichotomous realms: intentional mobility and real mobility (objective chances of social promotion). These aspirations are not free but the result of social inheritance and acquired position. Aspiration to ascend the social scale translates the interiorization of the norms and general schemes of a society of growth. But 'excessive' aspirations in relation to real possibilities translate into disequilibrium. Consumption, then, symbolizes both a triumph (one has achieved 'this' much) and also a defeat (one has not achieved 'that' much). This 'defeat' seems dual when one brings into consideration the 'designers'. They exhaust themselves in popularizing audacious, rational and functional forms, being all the while surprised that these forms do not also seduce the mass public. However, these 'popular' creators have an unconscious strategy – beautiful, stylized, modern objects are subtly created in order not to be understood by the majority. However, the plagiarizing of designer wear that one witnesses in the markets of Karol Bagh or Sarojini Nagar would make this point debatable. What, then, is employed to differentiates 'authentic taste' from 'cheap imitation' is the understanding that any sort of reproduction, as well as making its own reference to the image of its original, becomes itself the reference point for other images. The meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately

[31] Baudrillard 1981: 5

after it (Berger 1973: 29). The tapered lanes of Karol Bagh covered by web of electric wires filtering the day's weather would draw one's attention to what the imitation lacks. Alternatively one can forget about the quality of the imitation and simply be reminded, when one sees the original in a sprawling departmental complex, that it is a design of which somewhere one has an imitation. But in either case, the uniqueness of the original lies in it being *the original of the imitation.* It is no longer what its image shows that strikes one a unique; its first meaning is no longer to be found in what it says, but in what it is.

Thus, under conditions of competition for an increase in standard of living, consumption has passed from possession, pure and simple, to stimulation of a more 'soft' area the intellect and not the carnal. To imply, the onus has shifted from 'colour of the skin' to a 'sophisticated' body, as the two no longer are coterminous (the marketable dusky complexion). The form, material, durability and arrangement in space constitute a code for the objects. The maintenance of the purity of the self within the borders of the body is seen as tantamount to the maintenance of the self. Individuals use this code for their achievement, break its rules and speak it with a class dialect. Thus, objects, their syntax and their rhetoric refer to social objectives and to a social logic. They speak to us not so much of the user and of technical practices, as of social prestations and resignation of social mobility and inertia, of acculturation and enculturation, of stratification and of social classification.

This social classification has paradigmatically shifted from the 'moral discourse' of the caste system to the Balance Sheet via the phenomenon of consumption. Borrowing from Mary Douglas' *Constructive Drinking,* consumption can be anthropologically viewed as a social fact. It gives actual structure to social life as surely as if the names of the products were labels affixed upon expected forms of behaviour. Consumption becomes a social ritual, which acts as markers of personal identity and of boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Being able to *"hold your drink"*[32] and possessing connoisseurship are criteria for inclusion into a space characterized by regular work, higher earnings, mutual aid and *"a comfortable place in the tavern."*[33].

[32] Douglas 1987: 8
[33] Douglas 1987: 8

Conformity to patterns of consumption, then, renders exclusiveness to adopted values. There is a rally to protect the fragile world of short, receptive cycles – tea, with sugar and biscuits – from the hostile march of time in the outside world. However, as Simmel clearly states in his article *Fashion*, practices of exclusion are accompanied by those of inclusion. One comes to maneuver the political economy of the sign – attire, food, drink and recreation. Consumption, then, constructs an intelligible, bearable world, which is much more how an ideal world should be than the painful chaos threatening all the time. The industrial society, which has moved towards democracy and then stopped half way, is the ideal society for generating such an emotion. The pursuit of individual happiness has been acknowledged as a universal right. Yet the existing social conditions make the individual feel powerless. She/He lives in the contradiction between what she/he is and what she/he would like to be. Either she/he then becomes fully conscious of the contradiction and its causes, and so joins the political struggle for a full democracy which entails, amongst other things, the overthrow of capitalism, or else she/he lives, continually subject to envy which, compounded with her/his sense of powerlessness, dissolves into recurrent day-dreams.

It is this, which makes consumption remain credible. The gap between what consumption actually offers and the future it promises through its publicity corresponds with the gap between what the spectator-buyer feels herself/himself to be and what she/he would like to be. The two gaps become one and instead of the single gap being bridges by action or lived experience, it is filled with glamorous daydreams. Consumption, therefore, becomes a substitute for democracy.

DELIRIUM OF DISORDER

'This is what we've been doing for generations and nobody gives us other work. There are about 10 dry latrines now. I get Rs.10 per house. Many houses have got 'pucca' latrines now. But the way they are constructed, the sewage comes from a pipe into the open gutter below. And we have to clean this gutter. On many days the gutter overflows with excreta and when there isn't enough water to wash it away, it accumulates and dries. My husband sweeps it into a corner and I lift it out of the gutter using two pieces of plastic and put it into a basket.... I remember the first time I had to carry a basketful on my head. I slipped and fell into the gutter. No one would come to pick me because the basket was so dirty and I was covered with filth. I sat there howling, until another woman scavenger arrived. She hosed me down and took me home.'[34]

The Biblical report of Cain's crime and punishment offers a classic illustration of the fact that what man is most afraid of is not punishment but rejection. God accepted Abel's offerings but did not accept Cain's. Without giving any reason, God did to Cain the worst thing that can be done to a man who cannot live without being acceptable to an authority. He refused his offering and thus rejected him. This structure of authoritarian conscience, of pleasing and displeasing authority, is implicit among the 'twice-born' – *Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya* – because of the susceptibility of their most cardinal *virtue*, purity, to defilement. This hostility between purity and pollution is , as Das and Uberoi (1971) claim, is dichotomous to the hostility between the sacred and the profane. In the case of the latter, it is the profane which is in constant fear of the sacred, whereas within the caste structure, it is the 'pure' which is in constant threat of pollution from the 'impure' – the *Brahman* from the menstruating woman or the scavenger.

In terms of 'presence' of ritual status, then, the lower caste consider the *Brahman* to be powerful and active. On the other hand, whether the *Brahman* likes it or not, the lower

[34] Frontline. 15th February, 2006.

caste is powerful and active in taking away the ritual status. Given the 'eye' is seeing from top to bottom, there is what Das and Uberoi (1971) suggest as *"positive sacredness"* and *"negative sacredness"*[35]. This liminality is explicitly projected on textually analyzing the *Manusmriti*, according to which the hands of the barber and washerwoman are always pure for the purpose of the services they are qualified to render.

Mary Douglas (1966) uses the term *"medical materialism"* to label her understanding that religious rules against defilement, while possessing a symbolic potential, are at bottom practical hygiene rules for avoiding disease. In fact, what emerges is that rituals pertaining to pollution, defilement and dirt – matter out of place – clearly lacked any sense of ambiguity. They, therefore, belonged to the sphere of the sacred, not because they lay beyond human comprehension but because of the exact opposite – it was an indelible part of everyday human intention.

Dirt, then, had to be removed. The destruction of this anomaly was considered the most preliminary condition before liaisons, of any kind, with the Divine. Preoccupation with this material rhetoric of 'purity' and 'pollution' had strongly enveloped two societies – Hitler's Germany and the Hindu caste structure. Both were based on the belief in 'congenital pollution' where a particular human body, by birth, was believed to be, not the object of contamination but the cause for, and embodiment of, contamination – namely the Jew and the *avarna.* However, what distinguished the Indian caste system from Hitler's discourse on 'racial hygiene' (Proctor 1988) was the supplementary necessity of the 'impure' existing with-out the Hindu fold in order to the maintain the purity of the 'pure' with-in Hindu society (Dumont 1966).

Thus emerged the creed of delegating the 'ritual' duty of cleansing off the dirt in society to certain fixed groups – the *hadi, doms, bhangis, mehtars* and so on. The manual task of scavenging, carrying of night-soil on one's head, hips or shoulders, surfaced when civilization introduced Hindu society, as well as American and European societies, to the, then, dry latrine system. In India, unlike other societies, scavenging became a hereditary occupation following the dogmas and the 'functionality' of the caste system – separation ('pure' work from 'impure' work), hierarchy ('pure' ranked ritually ranked above the 'impure') and interdependence. (Dumont 1966)

---

[35] Das and Uberoi, 1971: 69.

The caste system, hence, established an implicit relationship between genetic configuration and work. It was the congenital imposition of this resultant 'historical consciousness' (by the Hindu Vedic civilization) that Ambedkar wanted to unshackle the *avarnas* or Untouchables from when he proposed conversions to Christianity and Buddhism. He said:

"... civilization is a very vital thing, not for one generation but also for the next. The civilization of one generation, when inherited becomes the equipment of the next. This social heritage is absolutely essential for each generation. All progress will die out if this social heritage is destroyed. But it is also true that to those who are possessed of civilization, their civilization may be a hindrance rather than a help. It might have gone on a wrong track; it might have based itself on false values and false premises. Such a civilization might easily cause stagnation of the Community and the stunting of the individual. It would be better to be without civilization than to be burdened and unshackled by such a civilization."[36]

Therefore the indigenous social code of *varna* had to face not only the dominance of the radically Western social codes but also manifold assaults from the reformist ideologies from within India. *Jati*, the elementary unit of *varna* was largely autonomous in maintaining social control internally. *Jati* provided also the social field for mobilizing, for establishing dominance and rulership, for resisting the attempts by the larger state and empire to wedge into the domain of the locally dominant *jati* and by using its authority and stature to advance one's familial interests. *Varna* on the other hand was considered to be a major source for orderliness in Indian society traditionally separating and hierarchizing the *jatis*. It was separative of groups, yet it was metaphorical of the cement there was holding the society together.

However, exposure to Western ideologies, through the colonial period, did deprive *varna* of some of its legitimacy; yet the anthropological literature of the sixties expounded much on the survival of the bonds of *jati* and village caste in coping with larger urban and other settings. The assaults against the caste order entail the ideology of human rights propagated by academicians and political activists. From above this has been matched by a regime of reverse discrimination: in admissions to educational institutions, in employment in governmental and governmentally funded organizations and in elective political bodies. From below, Ambedkar's, Phule's and Gandhi's were the most potent of

[36] Ambedkar, 1936.

calls for the lowest castes to challenge the iniquities of the caste order. The associated assertiveness of the lower castes has been only one of the elements of insurgency, which had drawn inspiration from ideologies of various hues – the Gandhian legacy of civil disobedience, the continuing anti-colonial outpour glorifying the liberating value of violence, and the Marxian challenge to authority, sharpened by Maoist inspiration among the Naxalites.

The ideological basis for maintaining order between the different *varnas* has indeed disappeared today. This brings 'backward' categories of various sorts into active political contention. Yet their expectations do not always find adequate satisfaction, for they have to confront disadvantages presented by the limits of the economy whose surplus for sharing has grown but slowly. There is still a sharp conflict at various levels *"between entrenched insiders and ambitious outsiders in the economic order"*[37] and also between various clusters of *jatis* lying in the debris of the caste order.

The social code of caste order now jostles in shared institutional spaces with diverse codes of other origins – codes derived from Islamic tradition, notions of legal codes and bureaucratic functioning taken from the West. To these has also been added the idea of pursuing familial and personal gains relentlessly buttressed by some version of Western individualism. According to Satish Saberwal, contrary imperatives are arising at levels other than the one at which the difficulties are being experienced. The imperative in the present case arises on one side from the institutions of western inspiration, which go into constituting a civil society in contemporary India. Hence, there is a concern over conditions of public security, democratic processes, human rights and the like. On the other hand, these imperatives also arise form the prevailing metaphysics – the misfortunes one experiences are described and projected to the rules of social intercourse and political conflict.

Herein lies the role of the modern state: maintaining order. However, in Indian academic and intellectual circles generally, any mention of 'order' or 'orderliness' arouses images of bourgeois exploitation. What fuels this notion is the unconsidered underlying assumption that the state is immortal and immune to bankruptcy: there are always people willing to run the state for their own ends. In this vision, all good men and women have to resist

[37] Saberwal, 1984: 149

the state and its machinations. This stance has arisen out of two elements in the India's long-term political experience. First, the state has been seen as an outside agency, a collector of revenue, an oppressor. Second, in the last two centuries, there has been a certain continuity in the state in large parts of the subcontinent. The creation and maintenance of the colonial state did not require that it seek mandates periodically from the governed. This stance, however, ignores the massive historical fact that states, especially in South Asia, have long tended to be fragile. It ignores also the equally massive contemporary fact that the dissolution of the state frequently comes close to being nearly complete in several parts of the country.

Thus, in any long term view of political evolution, the state has crucial roles in generating and maintaining societal orderliness. Threats to citizens' lives and freedom can arise not only from the state but also from the very structures of the society in which they live. The question is one of exercising political will where every citizen has a repertoire for managing his or her everyday life in reasonably civil ways without the state 'spoon-feeding' them. Also Saberwal brings to our attention that structures of government and authority are human artifacts. Infliction of excess of conflicts from within and scoffing at the essential functions of these artifacts will be a kind of suicide since the parts consciously act against harmony with the whole. If we do not generate means for their maintenance and renewal, these structures can all too readily atrophy and decay.

Through such 'political will' practical reasons were institutionalized through norms of reasoned discourse. Rational-critical debates takes place around public issues i.e. sustenance of life becomes an inquiry of normative ideals and actual history. Reproduction of life, then, transcended the confines of private domestic authority and became a subject of public interest, the zone of continuous administrative contact. It was this anticipated conjugality of the state and society that prompted social reformers to incorporate the ideal of 'emancipation' into the agenda of state domination and reification. In India the nineteenth century witnessed reformist ideologies that anticipated the crisis around Hindu civilization, and hence nationalism, and called into question the ideological uses of majoritarian religion. One such political reformer was E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, popularly known as Periyar. He became a critical figure in the mobilization of political agitation in Madras around Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. He also took up various Gandhian causes, from prohibition to polularization of *khadi*. Periyar's campaign concerned the issue of temple entry for the Untouchable

caste of Ezhavas. Temple entry had become an important concern of Gandhi and of the Congress, as an extension of reform activities around the plight of untouchable castes, and also perhaps a reaction to the difficulty of relations with Muslims after the troubled Khilafat alliance.

Periyar, however, radically disagreed with Gandhi on his position that only Hindus should be involved in what was felt was a cause for Hindu shame in the context of an exclusively Hindu quarrel. Periyar defied the inclusion of Untouchables within the Hindu fold and considered Untouchability as a reproach to the nationalist movement rather than Hinduism. E. V. R. reportedly told Gandhi that he believed true freedom for India would only be achieved *"with the destruction of the Indian National Congress, Hinduism and Brahmanism."*[38] For most non-Brahmin political activists, Gandhi's support for *varnashramadharma* was support for Brahmin hegemony.

In 1962, E. V. R. established the 'Self-Respect Movement', an organization that advocated the overthrow of caste and instituted new forms of marriage and other ritual practices designed to encourage inter-caste associations. The movement further engaged in a radical critique of religious beliefs and practices. At various points and in different ways the movement attacked the Brahmin priest and the whole Brahmanic ideology of privilege, spiritual authority in general, and religion either as general ethos or as theological doctrine. Periyar himself advocated outright atheism as the only rational worldview. He also became skeptical about the possible role of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board in either controlling Brahmanic power in temples or seriously reforming the ways in which developing distinctions made between religious and secular activities might work to redress Brahmanic authority over symbolic capital.

For Periyar, the struggle was against Hindu majoritarian nationalism. Nationalism for him was *"an atavistic desire to endow the Hindu past on a more durable and contemporary basis."*[39] He was as contemptuous of the religious fervor used to animate nationalist goals as he was convinced that the underlying interest for both religion and nationalism was Brahmanic privilege.

---

[38] Dirks, 2001: 261
[39] Dirks, 2001: 263

Like E. V. R, Ambedkar was also keenly aware that caste was the principle impediment to social justice, equality and reform; and was in agreement that caste could not be separated from the beliefs and institutions of Hinduism. Ambedkar not only relied on constitutional issues, he made one of his most important marks through the constitution, and was convinced that Untouchables could only thrive thorugh constitutional negotiation around their status as oppressed and disfranchised minority.

Ambedkar first took up the cause of educational access for the Untouchables, turning as well to three major issues: the abolition of traditional duties of the *Mahars* (scavenging) in village societies, the campaign to gain access to common water, and the movement for temple entry for Untouchables. His symbolic assault on Hindu scriptures illustrated his general sense that caste had become an integral component of Hindu religion. His first systematic critique of caste had been made in a paper he presented while a graduate student at Columbia, in an anthropology seminar in May 1916. He argued that caste was first and foremost the imposition of the principle of endogamy, a social system of exclusion that began with Brahmins and was imitated by other groups both because of the privilege accorded by Hinduism to Brahmins and because of the social logic of exclusion. He believed that even if Brahmins did not impose caste as a system by strict force, they nevertheless invented caste to suit their own concerns and predilections. But neither Brahmins as a class nor the great lawgiver Manu could have manipulated social forms to produce caste as a social system; rather, Ambedkar suggested that Brahmins set the ball rolling, and that Manu worked to provide spiritual and philosophical justification for the conversion of a class structure into a system of endogamy.

Ambedkar implicitly critiqued Risley and all those who provided racial explanations for caste by noting that European students of caste had unduly emphasized the role of colour in the caste system. Themselves impregnated by colour prejudices, they very readily imagined it to be the chief factor in the caste problem. He said, *'People are not wrong in observing caste. In my view, what is wrong is their religion, which has inculcated the notion of caste. If this is correct, then obviously the enemy, you must grapple with, is not the people who observe caste, but the Shastras which teach them this religion of caste... the real remedy is to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the Shastras.'*[40] What Ambedlar poignantly tried to demonstrate is that although Gandhi argued that caste and Hinduism were distinct, for an Untouchable, such distinctions seemed irrelevant, wrong and ultimately impossible.

[40] Dirks, 2001: 267.

Ambedkar, then, saw as one of the tenets of Marx's scientific socialism the usage of philosophy to reconstruct the world and not merely to explain the nature of the universe – devotion within a 'real' frame of reference. It is within this rubric that one can plumb Jyotirao Phule's (1827-1890) and Gandhi's discourse on caste, work, religion, ritualism, language, literature, the British colony, mythology, widowhood, conditions of production in agriculture and the lot of peasantry. Both broached these predicaments of Indian society from two planks – acknowledgement of reality in order to re-assert truth as a value in a degenerate, oppressive society, and prohibition in the context of the well-being of the Untouchables.

Phule, who believed that revolutionary thought had to be backed by revolutionary *praxis*, did not look upon the Hindu *varna* system or Brahman orthodoxy as the ultimate cause for the deprivation of the lower castes. This point was made by Rosalind O'Hanlon, who analyzed Phule's play *Tritiya Ratna (The Third Eye)* to conclude that *"he rejected decisively that the sufferings of the lower castes was the product of a social system supported by all except the untouchable castes."*[41] It was Phule's argument at that time that in the *Kaliyuga*[42] there are only two *varnas*, the first (*brahman*) and the last (*shudra*). This was of course supposed to be a sign of the degeneration that society had suffered. Phule turned this notion into a dichotomous structure, in order to emphasize the bipolarity of society. It will be recalled that Marx did something similar in his analysis of capitalism, by emphasizing the bipolarity of modern society between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. However, what can be implied is that Phule was not looking at the *varna* system as a system of endlessly regressing hierarchies, where there is always someone somewhere who is lower than the lowest. In other words, his main emphasis is to demonstrate the basis on which the oppressed could come together and unite, rather than on the divisions and schisms amongst them. Phule elucidates this point by his anecdote in *Gulamgiri*:

"Now some people may object by saying that the number of the shudra and atishudras is almost ten times more than that of the brahmans; then how could the brahmans have destroyed them? The answer to that is that one shrewd man can dominate the minds of ten ignorant people through persuasion; secondly, had these ten ignorant people been of one and the same opinion, they would not have allowed one person to

[41] Deshpande. 2002. Pp. 8.
[42] The last of the four epochs according to Brahmanical Hinduism, and the one in which we live.

dominate them. But since all of them held ten diverse opinions, the wise man had no problems deceiving them.'[43]

Further, in the dichotomous structure, if the Brahman derived his authority not from his *jati* but from his *varna*, it was important for the rest to realize that they could fight this dominance only if they reasserted their *shudratishudra* status, which was, to use the fashionable jargon of our times, the 'Other' of the Brahman. Phule's central point is that the Brahmanical system is bipolar, and this bipolarity is represented by *brahmans* and *shudratishudras*. Therefore, caste or *varna* is a relationship of power and dominance, and has to be attacked at that level. To construct his discourse around a *dvaivarnik* (two-*varna*) structure was thus crucial for Phule, since both the *Smritis* and the *Vedas* talk essentially in those terms. If the caste system had to be destroyed, it had to be done by first acknowledging this bipolarity as the central element of this system.

Gandhi's course of action, though different in 'form' from Phule's, was similar in 'content'. He, too, rationally selected a certain 'central element' of the caste system, the re-assessment of which could lead to emancipation of the Depressed castes and classes. Gandhi linked the issue of Untouchability to his views on the institution of *varnashrama*. Dr. Ambedkar was of the firm belief that the problem of Untouchability could never be resolved until the institution of *varna* was discarded from the fold of Hinduism. Contrary to what Ambedkar advocated, Gandhi interpreted the *varna* and *ashrama* institutions as forces which would effectively bring about social balance and the two derived their strength from discipline. According to Gandhi, *varna* had the potential of removing unnecessary and embittering competition from society and could put a check on the increasing lust for materialism. The *varna* system, as hierarchical gradations assigned to callings and taking to one's profession, not as a duty but, as an instrument for amassing wealth in society based on competition and the institution of private property, was opposed by Gandhi. He, in fact, was of the opinion that the *varna* system wanted each person to secure a place in society through ties of solidarity and allegiance. Thus Gandhi considered the *varna* system as an integral part of Indian society and even went to characterize it as *"the invention of dharma, the result of a continuous search for the truth."*[44] The benedictions of specialization, as one witnesses through the caste system, was given

[43] Deshpande. 2002. Pp. 44.
[44] Gandhi. 1931. Pp. 269.

cognizance by Durkheim in *The Division of Labour in Society.* According to Durkheim, division of labour in society possessed the potential of creating solidarity, which he characterized as *"organic".* Social solidarity, for him, depended on cooperation between specialized functions and their agents. Increased differentiation of functions, correspondingly, could ease the problem of competition for scarce resources and produce greater interdependence.

According to Gandhi, then, *varnashrama* was a 'horizontal plane' on which all individuals occupy the same place. To remove the sense of inferiority that had come to be attached with the occupation of scavenging, Gandhi said that everyone should clean their own lavatory. In his *Ashram* he impressed upon the Ashramites to clean the *Ashram* themselves. Some people argued that as the Untouchables do dirty work, touching them might cause pollution and ill-health. Gandhi retaliated, *'Every mother is a scavenger in regard to her own children, and every student of modern medicine is a tanner... but we consider their's to be sacred occupations.'*[45] Gandhi's approach to Untouchability is closely linked to his ideas on economic equality, which has a two-fold aspect: the ideal; and the practical.

The ideal is what may be compendiously termed 'bread labor'. It is a divine law that humans must earn their bread by laboring with his own hands. Agriculture, spinning, weaving, carpentry, smithery, scavenging, all come under 'bread labor'. According to Gandhi, *'Nothing will demoralize the nation so much as that we should learn to despise labour.'*[46] Intellect is necessary and socially useful, but intellectual faculties must not be used, as it is now done to amass a fortune. They are to be used only in the service of mankind.

Allied to bread labor is the idea that limitation of wants, not their multiplication, is essential for contentment and harmony in society. Nature produces what is strictly needed for our wants from day to day; therefore, if everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, nobody would die of starvation. Anyone who takes more than the minimum is in effect guilty of theft.

Bread labor is the ideal but Gandhi knew that man, being imperfect, would ever fall short of it. Economic equality must in practice mean equitable distribution. Everyone must be

[45] Gandhi. 1931. Pp. 131.
[46] Gandhi. 1921.

assured of a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, sufficient cloth with which to cover himself, facilities for the education of his children, and adequate medical relief. *"To each man according to his needs"* would aptly summarize the principle of equitable distribution. A capable and talented person may be permitted to acquire more; to restrict such acquisition would be a social loss. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and for the remainder will act as a trustee to use it for society, particularly those who are less rich.

But this trusteeship, Gandhi added, is not unilateral. If the rich were trustees, that is, have to use their surplus income for the good of those who are less rich, the latter too have their duties towards the rich. The idea of conflict of interests, Gandhi believed, arose because the poor did not consider the property of the rich as meant for their good. However, once the capitalists consider their property for the good of the workers, the outlook of labor would undergo a transformation. They would not regard the mill and the machinery as belonging to exploiting agents and grinding them down but as their own instruments of production, and would therefore protect them as well as they would their own property. Therefore Gandhi alluded to a deep-rooted correlation between rights and duties. Insistence on the former, he suggested, would lead to utter confusion and chaos. *"Rights"*, he said, *"that do not follow directly from duty well performed are not worth having... A wretched parent who claims obedience from his children without first doing his duty by them excites nothing but contempt."*[47]

In *Sociology and Philosophy*, Durkheim, while concurring with Gandhi and without falling into traps of hedonism, adds that duty, though a vital element, is not a sufficient moral injunction or precept. It must also be augmented with the element of the 'desirable':

"The élan, even the enthusiasm, with which we perform a moral act takes us outside ourselves and above our nature, and this is not achieved without difficulty and inner conflict. It is this sui generis desirability which is commonly called good."[48]

It is with regard to achieving this 'good' that one finds common threads existing between Gandhi's idea of *Satyagrah* and Durkheim's sociological processes as discussed in *Moral*

[47] Gandhi. 1947.
[48] Durkheim. 1974. Pp. 23.

Education: the spirit of *discipline*, which has the double objective of promoting regularity in human behaviour and of providing individuals with determinate goals; *attachment* to groups, which Gandhi proposed through non-violence and 'collective labour'; and *autonomy*, liberation from direct dependence on things, coterminous to Gandhi's conception of *swaraj* or self-governance as preserving man's individuality. Thus, both Gandhi and Durkheim, propagated the development of individuation to the extent that they believed that individuals should be able to develop their talents and capacities to the fullest extent. The main task of any society, then, was not to improve efficiency but to strive for justice, which in turn would lead to the former.

One of the significant aspects of Gandhi's movement against Untouchables was his faith in the fundamental unity of all human life, which he wanted to be realized without any class-struggle. Gandhi did not aim at individual or group mobility but tried to bring in a fundamental change in the mental processes of caste Hindus. He did not see the Untouchables as constituting a separate society but wanted to absorb them in the main fabric of Hinduism by abolishing ideas of inferiority and superiority. Gandhi, thus, along with the likes of Robert Putnam (2000), believed that identity with others in the same social community can make the lives of all go much better in that community; a sense of belonging to a community was, thus, seen as a resource – like capital. Gandhi, therefore, infused the past with his very modern ideas of truth, justice, fearlessness, fraternity, absence of hierarchy and dignity of the individual – values he thought were essential for the revivification of an ancient yet, then, decadent society. He says:

"To try to root out religion itself from society is a wild goose chase. And were such an attempt to succeed, it would mean destruction of society.... Because the existence of the world in a broad sense depends on religion. The ultimate definition of religion may be said to be obedience to the law of God. God and His laws are synonymous terms. Therefore God signifies an unchanging and living law."[49]

Gandhi's philosophy, then, moved beyond issues of Untouchability and economic inequality. He aimed to change the most basic 'condition' of man – materialism and, stemming from this narcissistic psyche, his insular view of the world. Benedictus de Spinoza, the sixteenth century pantheist, formulates, *"factually greediness, ambition and so forth are forms of insanity"* since, like other 'abnormal' or 'schizophrenic' people, *"all his*

[49] Gandhi. 1920.

senses are so strongly affected by one object that he believes this object to be present even if it is not there."[50] The narcissist has only one reality that of his own thought process, feelings and needs. The world of people outside him is not experienced or perceived as existing in its own terms, conditions and needs i.e. a failure to experience human reality as it is. This form of narcissism, according to Fromm, constitutes the most extreme condition of insanity. It is, therefore, suggested that man has *objective* needs apart from his physiological cravings – hunger, thirst, sex. These 'objective' needs are not rooted in his body, but in the very peculiarity of his *human* existence; in the inescapable alternative between regression and progression, between return to animal existence and arrival at human-ness.

Mental health, Fromm formulates, is defined in terms of *"adjustment, not of the individual to society but of society to the needs of man."*[51]. A healthy society, then, is one that furthers a man's capacity to work creatively, to develop his reason and objectivity, to have a sense of self which is based on the experience of his own productive powers. However, what would transpire when society and culture fail to satiate these needs of man – both the need to escape insanity by enabling one to grasp reality inside and outside of oneself, and the need to compensate for the loss of harmony with nature by arriving at a human situation of integration and security? In what way does the 'reality' of manual scavenging help us respond to this?

Over the years several laws have been enacted and crores of rupees have been spent to eradicate the practice of manual scavenging in India, primarily undertaken by persons belonging to the *Han, Hadi, Balmiki, Dhanuk, Halalkhor, Mehtar, Bhangi, Paki, Thotti, Madiga, Mira, Lalbegi, Chuhra, Chamar* and *Balashahi* communities.. Efforts towards achieving the national goal of complete eradication of manual scavenging by the end of Tenth Plan (2007) continues to be the priority commitment. But Governments in several States have denied in courts the existence of manual scavengers despite evidence to the contrary. Despite the implementation of The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrine (Prohibition) Act in 1993, Bezwada Wilson, national convener of the SKA (*Safai Karamchari Andolan)*, notes how it took another decade for

[50] Spinoza. 2001. Pp. 31.
[51] Fromm. 1956. Pp. 70.

some States to adopt it. Further, some States refuse to adopt the law, saying that they don't have any manual scavengers and claimed that most of them had been rehabilitated in alternative professions. In 2002-03, the Union Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment admitted the existence of 6.76 lakh people who lift human excreta for a living and the presence of 92 lakh dry latrines, spread across 21 States and Union Territories.

Haryana too claims that it has been successful in abolishing the practice of manual scavenging. At Sanoli Road, a locality in Panipat town in Haryana, Frontline correspondents came across at least five dry latrines and met three scavengers. Bhagwati, who lives in Deha basti, has spent her whole life doing precisely the task the civic authorities deny the existence of – cleaning dry latrines manually. She says that she carries *narak* (hell, in Hindi). *"I have been doing this ever since I can remember. My mother did it, my sister did it and I am doing it."* The only saving grace, according to Bhagwati, is that there is no lack of water in the area. *"As it is, my hands and feet and waist get marked by the 'narak'. At least, I can bathe after work,"* she says. Bala, 35, lives in what is commonly known as Balmiki basti in Panipat town and has been cleaning dry latrines in some of the houses in the area for the past 18 years. She would gladly stop doing it now if only she had an alternative. *"Who wants to lift other people's filth? But I am forced to because we're so poor. No household gives me more than Rs.15-20,"*[52] she says.

The NCLR notes that according to Government statistics, an estimated one million Dalits are manual scavengers who clean public latrines and dispose off dead animals; unofficial estimates are much higher. By the UP government's own estimates there are 40,000 manual scavengers still working in urban and rural areas of the state. The *Purvanchal Gramin Vikas Evam Prashikshan Sansthan* (PGVS), a non-governmental organization working with Dalits and the disadvantaged, places the figure at 60,000, 85% of whom are women.

---

[52] Frontline. 15th February,2006.

State	No. of scavengers estimated by the Task Force	No. of scavengers identified in surveys by State Government
Bihar	22,398 (5.59)	12,226 (1.81)
Delhi	34,022 (8.48)	17,420 (2.57)
Madhya Pradesh	36,894 (9.20)	80,072 (11.84)
Uttar Pradesh	62,029 (15.47)	1,49,202 (22.07)

***Note:** Figures within parentheses represent percentage of total scavenger population in the country.*

The 'National Scheme of Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their Dependents' introduced in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh marks the convergence of several public initiatives over a period of four decades preceding its introduction in 1992. Initially this Scheme failed in its purpose because it merely sought to shift the mode of carrying night soil from the head to a wheel-barrow and the handling of the wheel-barrow, due to the nature of the roads it was to be carted through, proved impractical. Later this Scheme envisaged that this obnoxious occupation would come to an end if all those who were engaged in this occupation and their dependents were rehabilitated in alternative and dignified occupations through appropriate channels of training. Going by the declarations of this Scheme as well as the schemes implemented by the Ministries of Urban and Rural Development, such liberation would become possible only when the practice of using dry latrines itself is eliminated, thereby eliminating the very need for employing manual scavengers.

As an endeavor on part of the 'Liberation' scheme, during the Eighth and Ninth Plan periods (1992-2002), only 2.02 lakh beneficiaries were trained with the result that the target set for the Eighth Plan could not be achieved even by the end of the Ninth Plan

period. The following table contains the comprehensive picture in respect of 14 States during 1997-2002:

State	No of scavengers identified for training	Target fixed	Trained	Shortfall in training with reference to target	
				Number	Percentage
Assam	40,413	N.F.	2397	-	-
Delhi	N.F.	1000	671	329	33
Bihar	4,508	462	NIL	462	100
Gujarat	16,731	N.F.	NIL	NIL	-
Haryana	32,227	8250	1589	6661	81
Jammu & Kashmir	3,517	N.F.	60	-	-
Kerala	777	777	NIL	777	100
Madhya Pradesh	50,485	45,721	5632	40,089	88
Maharashtra	N.A.	10,000	3194	6,806	68
Orissa	N.A.	15,000	2782	12,218	81
Punjab	9760	6000	NIL	6000	100
Rajasthan	N.A.	N.F.	2290	-	-
Uttar Pradesh	N.A.	44,703	14,641	30,062	67
West Bengal	11,809	3300	82	3218	98

NF: Not fixed

Source: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
National Scheme of Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their Dependents
http://cag.nic.in/reports/reports/civil/2003_3/chapter1.htm

Another effort in tandem with the 'National Scheme of Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers' was the low cost sanitation system, Sulabh International, developed by Bindeshwar Pathak in 1991-92. *Sulabh shauchalaya* intended to serve as a public utility and

conversion of dry latrines into water borne (based on pit system of wet sanitation) in order to help improve sanitation and liberate scavengers from their traditional occupation. However, a report published in *Economic and Political Weekly*[53] illustrates how such a scheme can become skewed and non-operational. In a locality in Delhi, a proposal to bear expenses of conversion of dry latrines irrespective of economic status of residents was rejected because it was anticipated that the better-off residents would also benefit. Under the general policy, the government can bear cost only in case of those belonging to weaker sections of the society who are below the poverty line.

According to a case study conducted in 2000 on scavengers in Mumbai city, apart from what may exist in the municipal corporation by way of rules that are applicable to its Conservancy Department, there is no separate legislation dealing with this category of workers. It is only a section which is employed by bodies like railways, airport authorities, hospitals, universities, industrial concerns, etc. The rest, along with many government employed *safai-karamcharis* in search for supplementary income, seek work privately and, hence, do not benefit from general laws governing employment – for example, the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947; the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

The dismal failure of the state to provide a safe, scientific and efficient system of human waste disposal has been effectively exposed by Gita Ramaswamy in *India Stinking.* Explaining the discriminatory character of the existing system, she writes, *'In 1983, the national sample survey showed that around 50 per cent of people in the higher income brackets had access to flush latrines that are usually connected to sewerage systems. By contrast, fewer than 40 per cent of the poor were found to have access to a latrine and about 70 per cent of those with latrine facilities shared them with others.'*[54] Inasmuch as the local bodies, which manage the sewerage systems, charge only a nominal user fee, she argues, the facilities provided to the middle and upper classes are heavily subsidized. The poor, on the other hand, are deprived of this basic facility.

---

[53] Vivek, P. S. *Economic and Political Weekly.* October 14th-20th.

[54] Ramaswamy. 2006. Pp. 88.

The *Safai Karamchari Andolan's* sample survey in 2006, covered 12 districts of Tamil Nadu. The survey confirmed the existence of both private and community run dry latrines serviced by manual scavengers in many urban areas. Nearly 80 per cent of the scavengers, employed by the government, local bodies or contractors or private homes, are women, most of who have not received any benefits under the government's rehabilitation scheme. In 2003, in association with *Manipakkam*, a media activist group in Madurai, Amudhan R. P. directed a 26 minutes long documentary footage called *Shit*, which portrays one day in the life of Mariyammal, a Dalit sanitary worker with the Madurai Municipal Corporation, who earns her living since the last twenty-seven years by cleaning human refuse from the street nearby a Hindu temple.

According to Fromm, the evolution of man depends on his ability to transmit knowledge to future generations, and thus to accumulate it. Human evolution, then, is the result of cultural development. For that reason, while one would call 'healthy' all forms of human orientation, which are compatible to the adequate state of human evolution, correspondingly one could call 'sick' or 'insane' those orientations whose 'fixations' or 'regressions' represent earlier states of development after society has already passed through them. Fourteen years after the Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993, was enacted, manual scavenging remains unaffected by the legislation. Ironically, Shiv Visvanathan (2006) notes that in 2005 the Supreme Court was informed, during the course of a hearing of petitions seeking the enforcement of the Act, that the number of manual scavengers was 5.88 lakhs in 1992 and it had risen to 7.87 lakhs in 10 years. The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has, however, put the number of manual scavengers in 2002-03 at 6.76 lakhs.

As stated earlier, sanitation and physical hygiene have been one of most rudimentary conditions for civilization and its evolution. Kautilya, the advisor to the Mauryan dynasty during the 3rd century B.C., was the first to introduce the mandatory construction of lavatories in every household. With the establishment of the British colony, the very anticipated and required labour-saving technology, as the dominant form of refuse disposal, was supplanted by local and state administration, which continued to rely on

the caste system for delegating the work. The frame of reference continued to be 'patron-client' relationship. This has been one of the founding basis of Dumont's construction of hierarchy. However, in an extremely critical manner, Das and Uberoi (1971) present a liminal zone that breaks the 'hierarchy' model that Dumont constructed. What hits the Dumontnian foundation – his understanding of European reciprocity vis-à-vis Indian hierarchy – is the 'client-client' relationship. Amidst all the hue and cry over the *jajmani* system existing between the patron caste and client caste, emerges the question *"who shaves the barber?"* (1971: 70) or likewise, who cleans the dirt produced by the scavenger caste. Theoretically then, as Das and Uberoi suggest, a perfectly socialist world is created where all the ills, namely pollution, is removed mutually and reciprocally. The opposition, thus, not only exists merely at the level of 'purity' and 'impurity', but at a more subliminal level – 'asymmetrical exchange' and 'reciprocal exchange' (1971: 72-73)

In contemporary India, refuse still continues to be cleared manually. People defecate in the open, the city's aesthetics is stained by garbage, we estimate our own worth, we wait till technology and welfare policies offer solutions – therein lies the cause and the subsequent need for manual scavenging. The Vedic caste system, on the other hand, has undergone a paradigm shift. It exists as an apparatus for negotiating marriage alliances and electoral politics. The above mentioned Dalit communities, engaged in the task of scavenging, are coerced into this *"narak"* in the sense that the beneficiaries of their services, namely us, consider the task materially dirty and pestilential to undertake, without any connotations at 'ritual impurity'. Theorists, namely Dumont, Shah, Betteile have always believed that the dichotomy between 'purity' and 'pollution' is one of the underlying 'base structures' of the *varna* system, entrenched in the consciousness of its adherents. Today, then, these ideas of 'purity' and 'pollution' no longer exist in the consciousness (creating a chain of metaphors), but have been transmuted into word and *praxis*. It could, therefore, be suggested that the puissance of caste, through its ostensible 'invisibility', has reached its zenith.

According to Durkheim, since morality *"is a human creation, fashioned by men and for men, one cannot see in what way or in what respect it could be shielded from the judgment of reason."*[55] He suggests that reason has never been a motivating force unless it is subordinated to human purposes, feelings and desires. We are, therefore, inhabitants of a society bereft of sound reason and judgement, which creates in us mutual distrust, transforming man into instruments of use and which denies him a sense of self, inasmuch as he becomes an automation. Only to the extent to which we are able to grasp this reality – both external and internal – shall we cure ourselves of our 'mental illness'. Objectively, our world of illusions have made us hostile and apathetic. We are more prone to 'destructiveness' which is conducive to suffering, as opposed to 'creativeness' that leads to happiness. As a result of our incapacity to 'extend' ourselves to others, we remain incestuously rooted in nature, mother and herd yet, on the other hand, due to absence of our individuality, reason, we can never feel one with her. We are, therefore, an aberration of Freud's 'natural' man (1930). We are content not because society and culture have relinquished its authority to quell our instinctual aggression and desires, but on the contrary, society, by denying us the 'desire' for compassion, has given our innate isolated, asocial, greedy and competitive nature an extra élan.

[55] Durkheim. 1893. Introduction to the first edition of *Division of Labour of Society.*

DESCRIPTIVE STATE OF BEING-IN-THE-WORLD

Finding a relationship between the macrosocial level of analysis and the lives of real people has been a basic concern of the social scientist. In attempting to straddle both levels through the study of communities in the city, a variety of problems arise. While studying a community as heterogeneous as the Indian cosmopolitan city, issues of integration, 'passing' and cultural affirmation within the development and democratization process are reasserted. Woman-man, old-young, rich-poor, high caste-low caste – all inhabit the city's landscape. Apart from these 'settled tribes' there are also the 'wanderers' – transgendered, the menopausal woman, the elite Untouchable and literally the rag picker, the scavenger, the beggar, the destitute, the thief and the prostitute. The discourse central to these categories, as is intrinsically evident, is that of mapping. Trends that are abiding, thrifty, careful and temperate are distinguished from the short-lived, improvident, reckless and intemperate and definitely the trend-less. This distinction aids in providing safety valves when consumption is 'meted out'.

According to Sharon Zukin (1995) and other critical readings of culture of the city, the consumption-based turn in contemporary urban policy, however, does not provide the sort of 'glue' or commonality that produces virtuous spirals of growth and dynamism. At worst, efforts to embellish public spaces conceal a design to reclaim them for social groups possessing economic value as consumers and producers and to exclude the less well-off and the hawkers of the street. Indeed, Elizabeth Wilson sees the politics of this social ghettoization of public spaces as part of a subtle undercurrent in which 'invisibility' is a crucial form of modern inequality. Concentrating on the cultural experience of new consumer spaces can often ignore the larger social contexts in which they are produced and the strengthened socio-spatial segregation, social control and surveillance with which they are often associated. *"An interactive focus on the phenomenology of environmental experience in*

consumer spaces", writes Mark Gottdeiner[56], *"can overlook the way these places filter people according to patterns of class, race, and gender segregation."*

As the Indian cosmopolis has become more 'trendy' and 'multiplex', the bourgeoisie imaginary directing the construction of urban geography, produces new forms of regulation and prohibition governing their own bodies. The emphasis upon dirt, then, also traces the concealed links between the boulevards and the factories, which proportionately increases the need for the maintenance of cleanliness and sanitation within the boundaries of the 'civilized' city. There is a growing need in towns for sweepers, scavengers and conservancy workers. This has led to the out-migration of the scavenger caste from rural to urban areas to meet these demands for labour. In fact, in the colonial period, they were brought into urban areas to perform the works of scavenging and sweeping and became an urban community. As Prashad (2000) has amply demonstrated, settling of the *Balmikis* in the cities as sanitary workers, and moulding them into accepting this work has been one of the major achievements, first of the colonial administration, and later on, of the state and political parties. Although they are employed in the organized as well as the informal sector, the state is the largest agency that employs and pays over a million scavengers as its apparatus. (Macwan 2001) However, a niche has been created for them in the cities as official *Safaikamdars*. They have become indispensable for all public spaces, namely factories, hospitals, cinema houses, business establishments – anywhere there are cleaning jobs to be done. Urbanization, then, has bestowed a more secular hue to this occupation of sanitary work.

The sanitary work under any Municipality is distributed into three main departments – conservancy, refuge (solid waste) and sewage (manhole). While the former two come under the Department of Health, the latter comes under the Department of City Engineering (Macwan 2001). The workers involved in sewage network maintenance and disposal include manual workers who go inside the sewer lines for cleaning and clearing operations when machines fail to do the same; and divers who actually swim through the sewer pipelines and find out the blocks and clear it.

In 1997, a medical survey was conducted as part of a scientific study among 400 such workers who work inside the sewer lines in the city. The survey revealed thart all of the

[56] Gottdeiner. 1997:134.

workers were found to have more than one ailment related to respiratory problem, urinary tract infection, eye and ear infection, back ashes and skin infection (Morris and Sarkar 1997). Deaths have occurred from gassing and asphyxation (lack of oxygen). Alcohol serves these workers as one way of dealing with the distressing conditions of work viz. under its influence the smell would not be unbearable.

Until a decade ago, the *Bhangi* community engaged in the work of scavenging, perceived that the occupation was their secured domain for employment, and had not contemplated that other caste groups and private agencies would enter into this occupation in the urban labour market. However, privatization has changed the employment situation in this occupation over the last one decade. So far, sanitary work remained the responsibility of the state and the local bodies who employed people only from the scavenging caste. Municipalities, now, are also moving towards a private contract system where private contractors from other caste groups are also entering the job market.

The inflow of members of other caste groups in the occupation of scavenging in mainly found in the informal sector, especially in private hospitals, dispensaries, offices and institutions. They could be distinguished as 'cleaners'. These 'cleaners' are employed for cleaning and mopping of residential complexes, private bungalows, and in some places they also work as office attendants. These cleaners, however, do not engage in cleaning of toilets within the same complexes. Nor would they engage in sweeping and scavenging work on the road. Thus, the occupational change does not point towards a 'secularization' of occupation of scavenging. This is due to the general perception in the urban labour market that sanitary activities such as cleaning houses and offices, interior sweeping and cleaning private toilets such as hospitals are more secular activities and largely separated from those traditional scavenging activities like carrying night soil, cleaning nuisance spots and cleaning public toilets, manhole cleaning etc. Thus, these perceptions have led other caste group persons to take up to sanitary activities of the first type and distance themselves from 'traditional' scavenging activities. Urbanization, thus, has closed the work of scavenging to the allotted community in a 'residual' form.

Work, then, as an occupation or an act of doing, at a more fundamental level entails ideas of time, need, intention and creation. Scavengers, by an act of 'removal', create or 'give

birth' to a new space. The consequence of doing, which results from the experience of work, endows it with meaning. Like a boomerang, the same trajectory is traced, establishing a dialectic between 'effect' and 'meaning'. Knowing that this 'doing' takes time does not help us understand what is being done, where, how, why, and with what. As one does not dismiss significant work because it is of another time one does, indeed, understand a particular work through time. Endeavor is not justified by knowing that we endeavor in time. When emphasis is shifted from the thing itself (the work) to time, one loses grasp of what is at hand, which is experience. Experience, in this context, is that which teaches, qualifies, and embraces. Time is a constituent factor in the conception and making of a work, but it is relative. The making of a work is tied to other factors: intention, intuition, materiality, and process. These factors must exist for the realization of any creative work at any time. Within the process of making, the constituent factors that allow for the realization of a work are not linear in time or nature, but are accumulative. This accumulated experience is very much an individual reality, and it creates a position of knowing, questioning, and reason from which artistic activity can proceed. The revealing of intention and meaning of a given work is dependent on that work's materiality, on one's relationship to the work, and on its stance. These factors may open the work to us and afford us a relationship with its meaning or they may not, whether the work is of our own time or of the past. To think of time as linear or as a series of discrete frames is to address only the manufacturing and reproduction of a work and not its meaning. The revelatory properties of creative work are not tied to time, but to the integral relationship of purpose and material embodiment. When these properties are inherent in a work, they ensure the presence of qualities that amplify the work and reveal its meaning and nuances. These, in turn, suggest the power and vision contained. As this occurs we begin to see that whatever the work, whenever it was made, wherever it exists. its present voice in the world is as loud as it was when first made. The present evaluates the past by measuring the meaning works have, in and of themselves.

Given this, we can see that linear classification of creative work belongs outside the realm of actually creating or even fully experiencing a work. The appreciation of works is not reserved for those of the time and circumstances of its production. Works of significance tend to transcend time and circumstance as they perpetuate themselves through stance. They place themselves continually in the present with the inquirer; our experience of works of art, architecture, and literature proves this point repeatedly. The

fundamental relationship of idea to material and form is shown to be contained in the purpose of the work. It is necessary that history be seen as part of an ongoing reality that cannot be isolated or fractured by a linear structure. The evolving meaning that results in the making of a work is part of that work's viability; the work is historically connected to its own making not by time but by meaning. That we are excited by a work's inherent qualities and stance, rather than by its relationship to historical factors, proves the viability of the work and of our own stance.

The necessary conditions for creative work are not reached by speculation, as speculation is tied to an *a priori* need to locate oneself in a particular way. These conditions are realized, rather, within a framework of intention, and fact that qualify the path and process of a work's realization. This speaks in a general way to the human needs to produce and to inquire as means of surviving and redeeming ourselves for living.

The selective gathering and shaping of material is a condition of artistic purpose. This condition, when present, allows a work to be experienced, and therefore lived. It enables a richness to be revealed materially and allows the inner world of the individual maker to be manifest in the actual world. This implies that the actual is affected or altered through human intention and structuring. Process is thus preceded by the meaning that conditions give to the maker. The compounding of intention and intuition with actual material gives a holistic richness to a work. The integral relationship of maker to work is important when the maker is willing to accept the divestment of self within process as an opportunity for willfullness to be qualified and enhanced. The objectivity sought is thus related to understanding. Understanding allows the maker to recognize value in each part of the process, and this recognition is crucial to the activity of inquiry. Inquiry is the aspect of making that is not a mere ordering of the world according to mimetic structure or intention.

Taste is an ever-present problem in the understanding of a particular work. It is a mere fragment of what is really involved and, because of its superficiality, can lock one outside of understanding. Taste does not declare much beyond its limited system. It is related to individual, cultural, or class conditions, and cannot aptly address meaning.

The material aspects of a work are part of its intuitive, conceptual, and formal making.

This correlative relationship of thought to material is an essential mechanism by which options are given the status of facts. It allows us to address the process of making in a special way. It is within this that possibility can become more than a notion or option: it becomes a fact. Making provides the fullest opportunity for experiencing the world. Its reality is one of continuing surprise and possibility. Through the activity of making, the world is a place for one's inner being-its existence and import-to materialize as matter. Making is, therefore, a process by which we understand what is needed and appreciated, and why. When there is a substantive relationship between intention and making, purpose is posited for new generations to contemplate and extend. In that we are locked to making through experience rather than through time, the need to make with and through history is a common bond. In the realm of human experience, there is opportunity for possibility, individual and collective, which renews and extends work in its many spheres. As the quality of experience is tied to the making of the individual work, a work and its posited stance are matters determined by the maker and not by chance. When work survives, it continues to embody the conditions, intentions, and sympathies that convey its purpose.

A thoughtful analysis by de Grazia (1962) suggests that modern man works long and diligently because he has no inner resources to fall back on; he does not know how to use leisure. Available leisure is used to consume goods, which in turn requires consistent work habits to obtain more and better goods. Whyte, in commenting on motivation in developed and underdeveloped areas, noted that *'Man is not born loving money. He has to learn to love it. ... In economically underdeveloped countries... they would prefer to work a shorter number of days or hours to make the amount of money customarily earned. American and European businessmen have often been troubled by this phenomenon.'*[57]

While much of the literature on the sociology of leisure consists of descriptions of the non-work activities of various subgroups, it is no longer true that the sociology of leisure is entirely lacking in explanatory studies. Nevertheless, a systematic sociology of leisure has not yet been attempted. One promising explanatory approach, which has received wide attention attempts to relate non-work activity to that portion of the social structure with which it is most often paired conceptually – work. Those who have dealt with the relationship frequently make common assumptions about how work affects non-work.

[57] Whyte. 1955: 210.

Two related problems, which have obscured the effect of work on leisure, must be resolved before an adequate theory of the relationship between work and non-work is likely to be developed. The first of these has been the failure to clearly isolate the relationship between work and non-work from the effects of other confounding variables. The second has been the widespread failure to distinguish between the meanings of work and non-work and the forms of work and non-work.

The first obstacle to a clear understanding of how work affects leisure has been the failure to separate the effects of other variables. Thus the relationship between work and non-work has often been confounded when demographic indicators correlated with work, such as occupational prestige, social class, subcultures, ethnicity, sex, and age are related to leisure. For example, studies have related particular leisure activities to occupational prestige (Clarke, 1956), to general occupational types such as blue-collar workers (Gordon and Anderson, 1964) and to professionals (Wilensky, 1964). Further, the meaning of leisure has been related to various occupational categories (Riesman, 1958). The subculture of the working class is said to affect their leisure patterns (Gordon and Anderson, 1964) while the middle class dominates community cultural, intellectual, and organizational participation (Reissman, 1954). Work has also been related to important non-work activities within a larger theoretical context that includes cultural and societal variables. Patterns of consumption and leisure for various occupational groups may depend upon existing values, social class and on the standardizing of mass institutions such as education and the media (Wilensky, 1964).

Any theory dealing with the effect of work on non-work must account for the influence of such confounding variables and needs to be linked to theories of political sociology, collective behavior, mass society, and stratification which encompass such variables. But it is precisely because work occurs as a critical independent or intervening variable in so many of these theories that we need to clearly specify both the effects that work has on non-work and the effects that other variables have on the work/non-work relationship.

The second obstacle to a systematic theory relating work to non-work has been the widespread tendency to overlook the complexity of the possible relationships between the outward or forms of work and leisure, and the way they are experienced and

interpreted by participants in them, their underlying significance or meaning; that is, whether they are sources of sociability, creativity, tension release, or some form of alienation. All compensatory hypotheses assume that when individuals experience some facet of work as a deprivation, they will choose some non-work activity to compensate for the deprivation; in short, they propose that work affects leisure because of the underlying meaning of each. Despite the frequent attempts to link work and leisure, we are not aware of any attempts to derive common dimensions of meaning for work and leisure from the literature available on this subject. Problems of interpreting and testing compensatory hypotheses arise when one ignores the possibility that similar forms of work or non-work have different meanings for various individuals participating in them or, conversely, that different forms may have similar underlying meanings.

However, most studies of 'work' focus almost exclusively on secular antecedents of 'work commitment', 'work involvement' and work as a 'central life interest'. Repeating the rhetoric that scavenging in India primarily exists as a caste based occupation, one can come to see religion playing a pivotal role in the manner in which one thinks of work. Weber (1958) was the first to argue that Calvinist Protestant churches are more likely than other groups (especially Catholics) to stress the need for an ascetic lifestyle (e.g., working hard, saving one's money) and the need to glorify God in all one does (e.g., viewing one's work as a calling). Emerging from the Weberian model work, then, can be conceptualized by individuals as:

a) Work as a ***calling:*** One's work has special meaning because one has been called to do what one is doing regardless of how much time it takes or how little money one earns; one was put on this earth to do what one is doing.

b) Work as a ***career:*** One is pursuing a lifelong career which one feels is important; one chooses to do this kind of work throughout one's life; one might change where one works, but one is not likely to change the kind of work one is doing.

c) Work as a ***job***: One is paid to perform a service; one has been paid to do other things at other times, and one is willing to do other types of work in the future if the pay and security are better.

Religion, then, is not just a framework that people with poor jobs to convince themselves that unrewarding work is meaningful (i.e., false consciousness). Rather, it provides a context in which some people, especially people with rewarding jobs, come to think of their work in sacred, not just secular, terms.

Therefore, with regards to intention and the experience of work one must also dwell upon 'choice', in other words, 'freedom' exercised in deciding nature of work. With an open labour market characterizing the city, the persistence of the occupation of manual scavenging due to others' unwillingness to 'dirty their hands' draws the discussion towards 'free' and 'unfree' labour. In the literature on plantation development in Asia, the issue of 'free' versus 'unfree' labour has been very much debated. It was during the nineteenth century after the emancipation of slaves in the British colony that there was an expansion of plantation systems to new areas of South and South-east Asia, Africa and the Pacific with the explicit aim of capitalist growth through the production of new crops (Jain 2001: 184). In the 'old style' plantations, labour was bound using some mechanisms of outright coersion. Part of the labour time of the workers was employed to underwrite their own consumption needs and status needs of the owner. The 'new style' plantations on the other hand, are based on 'rational' cost accounting where the consumption needs of owners or workers are no longer relevant to its operations (Jain 2001: 184). Where labour could be availed cheaply, mechanized technology as a substitute for labour intensive methods was not adopted. Indentured labour from colonized parts of Africa and China was transported to various countries. By far the largest number were Indians or 'coolies' who were taken to plantations in West Indies. However, despite 'rationalized' landuse and scientific research to improve agricultural methods throughout the course of the nineteenth century, labour control in the plantation regimes continued to centralize 'unfree' labour, a feature of colonial plantation.

Labour has been the single most important cost item in plantation agriculture and the search for it took a global dimension. Indian labour was sent to work on plantation overseas – tea estates of Sri Lanka and rubber estates of Malaysia. Plantation in South and South-east Asia have made possible the entry of tribal and lower-caste groups from subsistence economies of rural areas in the world of capitalist system.

In most plantation settings all over the world, the industrial organizations around production and market sets the pattern of authority and control over almost all aspects of the lives of the people within their territorial limits. It includes such concerns as where the labourers live, what they eat, how they organize their social and economic life. In the Assam tea-gardens, they have to live by Garden Time, which is set one hour before the Indian Standard Time (Jain 2001: 188).

A group of scholars argues that from the workers' point of view the decision to work on the plantations seems to have been a rational and conscious choice (Galenson 1984; Emmer 1986). They stress that a high degree of social differentiation in the various Asian societies has made low-class people leave their areas whenever an improvement in their position seemed possible. Most plantation workers came from areas where they had only limited or no access to the means of production and where many of them were indebted to local landlords and/or moneylenders. For low-caste Indian labourers, the opportunity to work on plantations meant a way out of their depressed conditions in their caste-ridden villages. The originally town-based labourers also tried to improve their position by accepting work on plantations.

Breman, speaking about the nature of labour recruitment for plantations on Sumatra in the Dutch East Indies, stresses that intimidation played a major role. According to him, it is therefore *"nothing other than a colonial fantasy to maintain that a contract was entered into voluntarily"*[58]. 'Free' refers to *"the freedom whether or not to choose one's employer and therefore one's means of production"*[59]. 'Unfree', therefore, points to all factors that restrict one's choice of employer, such as legal obstacles (like slavery or indentured labour), financial hindrances (indebtedness), a segmented labour market (based on, for example, educational and ethnic/communal characteristics) and geographical immobility.

The reluctance of the agricultural labourers to accept plantation work has been considered as all the more remarkable since reliable historical material suggests that the wages offered to them were indeed considerably higher than those paid by the landlords in the lower parts of south India. In their efforts to explain the labourers' unwillingness, some scholars incorrectly stressed the 'traditional', almost 'passive' and 'irrational'

[58] Breman. 1990: 132.
[59] Brass. 1993: 3.

attitude of the agricultural workers. Saradamoni, for example, stated about the freed ex-slaves in the context of plantation work: *'By habit and tradition they were unused to leaving their huts and hamlets'*[60]. There were, however, many factors which explain the refusal of agricultural labourers to contract for plantation work. For example, although slavery had been completely abolished in a strict legal sense in Travancore in 1855 and in the directly ruled territories of the Madras Presidency in 1833 various forms of labour bondage remained in existence in South India during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Though legally liberated, often the relations between these ex-slaves and their ex-owners did not structurally alter. The agricultural labourers usually remained attached to a particular plot of land and its owner, particularly through indebtedness. In contrast with other authors who dealt with this subject (Saradamoni 1980) what could be argued is that these relations between employer and employee, despite their inherent inequalities, were beneficial not only to the patron. It should also be acknowledged that these 'unfree' labourers, despite being often cruelly treated, were, at least in some respects, better off than the so-called 'free' labourers. The former group of workers, and in particular those attached to paddy land, were assured of employment and food during the greater part of the year. The latter category of workers was indeed 'free' to offer its labour to the highest bidder but could find neither work nor nourishment in cases of lack of employment or scarcity of food. They were 'free to starve'. For this reason, many attached labourers had no reason to break the bonds with their landlords. People's actions, therefore, cannot be understood without understanding their motives, and thus one cannot understand the development of the city, the process of migration of labour and the functioning of the labour market without taking account of the choices of the migrants.

Interestingly, Jain (2001: 190) observes that while on the one hand, plantation settings provide example of an extremely oppressive situation of labour, on the other, they are in some cases found to carry possibilities for a degree of egalitarianism. This becomes apparent when gender relations are studied in relation to power and authority within the labour class. The tea industry, for example, depends on its female labour and correspondingly male labourers in tea gardens perform marginal tasks. Also the property-less and wage-dependent labour of both sexes as a homogenous occupational group share a low economic status and attempt to ensure their survival in a coercive system. To survive and reproduce, they adapt to the plantation system by evolving a pattern of

[60] Saradamoni. 1980: 114.

cooperation and mutual dependence, leading to a relative parity in gender relations. This pattern of gender relations with egalitarian norms helps the workers to cope with and adjust to plantation authoritarianism.

Modernity stresses on individual factors in the process of economic development. In neo-classical economic models, people are supposed to be rational actors, striving for an economic optimum, to choose the best option and move to the job, which would give them the most economic gain. 'Push-pull' models of migration are an example of this strand of analysis: individuals choose between the various gains and losses, which may result from migration. 'Surplus models' of the labour market share with neo-classical models the assumption of a rationally choosing individual, but they do not agree that the labour market forms a homogeneous unity. According to Todaro (1969), decisions to migrate to the city are determined by income differentials between city and rural areas, and the probability of obtaining a job. The migrant is supposed to weigh the difference between the expected earnings from formal sector urban employment, including a period of informal sector employment, and the expected earnings during her/his old age.

Authors of the structuralist strand of analysis argue that migrants and other workers are not able to choose in the way neo-classical and surplus-model theories expect. Migration is not seen as a choice for poor people, but as the only option for survival after alienation from the land. It is emphasized that the mobility of labour is restricted, and that the labour market is not free in the sense of neo-classical models but organized through non-economic forces (Breman 1990). In colonial Asia, labour supply was secured through colonial policies, through the underdevelopment of the countryside and active recruitment by employers supported by the colonial state. With respect to East India, the structuralist strand is represented by Ranajit Das Gupta. In the migration to colonial enterprises, there was no free labour market: *". . . even within the limited capitalist industrial sector a single undifferentiated national market for labour power failed to emerge. The labour market structure remained variously segmented"*[61]. Industries had specific links with particular 'labour catchment' areas, and there was a clustering of social groups in certain occupations. Labour was recruited through the *sardar* system, and *"even the non-indentured labour was subjected to various kinds of unfreedom, dependency relations and servitude"*[62]. After Independence,

[61] Das Gupta. 1981: 1781.
[62] Das Gupta. 1981: 1785.

the labour market remained characterized by lack of mobility. The urban labour market in India is supposed to be strongly segmented, due to scarcity of work and 'lack of access'.

Since the late 70's, the Marxist strand in the Bengal historiography has come under attack by the so-called Subaltern school. Dipesh Chakrabarty, one of the few scholars of this school focusing on industrial labour, emphasizes the cultural aspects of working-class history, communal divisions among workers, ties of language, religion or kinship. New technology of transport and communication draw not only people but also ideas entrenched in *jati* and the village into a larger industrial world. The kinsman who was the subject of a *"multi-stranded intimacy"* (Saberwal 1995: 43) and a source of ones support, tried to keep her/his ideas, skills and durable bonds intact in the large-scale social universe. The Indian workers' culture, according to Chakraborty (1989), is characterized as fundamentally different from the culture of the workers in Europe. The jute worker of Calcutta had not become a free labourer or member of a class as in Western Europe: *"he acted out of an understanding that was pre-bourgeois in its elements, and his incipient awareness of belonging to a class remained a prisoner of his pre-capitalist culture'*[63]. This discussion is related to a wider theme in the labour historiography, which centers around the question how the 'traditional' structure was transformed with the introduction of capitalist production.

Frank Conlon (1995: 46) gives us an account of the changing structure of the small *jati* of Chitrapur *Saraswat brahmans*, a *jati* known for their long-standing skills in writing and accounting. As a result they could build for themselves a strong position in the emerging colonial administration such as establishing schools in Mangalore and securing high paying government jobs. After the spilt of Canara into north and South, the *Saraswats* in Mangalore looked to north to move to the growing metropolis of Bombay. As a result modern occupations and professions such those of lawyers, judges, teachers, civil servants were sought after. Therefore the Saraswats who moved to Bombay could re-create for themselves a caste identity on their shared interests somewhat detached from their affiliation with *math* and its preceptor. Their new loci of 'we-ness' spanned a number of diverse institutions – educational, cultural, scholarship, cooperative and service. In these settings they could then orchestrate a universe of meanings, of social relationships and mechanisms of social support amidst changing circumstances. Thus the

[63] Chakrabarty. 1989: 122.

changing framework of Indian society during the colonial period injected new modes of communication and alternate forms of relatedness.

Most theories on labour migration, however, neglect the possibilities of choice and the perspective of the labourers. To understand why people have migrated or have started a certain job, individual choices have to be taken into account. While the general economic situation explains why people migrated, it does not explain why some people migrated and others did not. Different social and economic groups are represented among migrants, and thus all have different reasons for migration. Chakrabarty has correctly criticized the Marxist framework and has enriched our knowledge with an analysis of cultural aspects of the formation of the working class. My perspective is closer to his than to the Marxist point of view. However, his formulations remain negative: the culture of the working class is characterized as pre-bourgeois and pre-capitalist. This describes what culture is not, what it perhaps may become, but not what it is. The argument is that these definitions of class, caste or other identities ignore the perspectives of the people who constitute these groups, a problem which is partly due to the fact that the 'Subalterns' do not carry out oral history. The working class is, thus, not a class 'in itself': describing the work-force as a proletariat is not sufficient because many workers had alternative opportunities, and the road to the factory was not irreversible. But it is also not a working class 'for itself'. The town and the mills presented an amazing variety of clusters of people with different regional backgrounds, cultures, religions and castes.

Labour market segmentation has historical origins, and is often accompanied by ideas or myths about what groups of people are good at. Many authors have asked the question why so few Bengalis worked in the jute industry in Bengal. As Das Gupta described, they were replaced around the turn of the century. While existing studies have emphasized employers' policies as an explanation for the relative absence of Bengali labour in the industry, one conclusion is that the local population's perceptions of manual labour and of the illiterate up-country migrants were crucial. For a part of the population in Bengal, economically perhaps not better-off, the status of mill work was important: it was considered inferior work, and the fact that it was done by *'Bihari's'* reinforced this opinion. For the local population, it was, and still is, a matter of status not to work in unskilled manual jobs like in jute mills (De Haan, 1994). Even within the mills, groups

formed their own niches. First, many people from Saran, especially Muslims, worked in the weaving department. Many of the Muslims regarded themselves as 'traditional' weavers, as did many of the colonial reports. Associated with such myths is the imposition of a 'historical consciousness' imposed not only on the 'doer' of scavenging, but also on scavenging as the 'doing'. From the practice of caste based division of labour and caste purity and pollution to the practice of a hygienic life, dirt, filth, rags and garbage have always existed in the 'invisible' and seen as 'capable' of being disposed only by the 'right people'.

However, the conclusion that people did not have any choice would not be correct, for two reasons. For example, in Bengal, jute mill work certainly was not an option of last resort. It is important to stress that it was not just the poorest who migrated. Most strata were represented and this points to a complexity of factors which compel people to decide to try their luck elsewhere. Among the migrants in Titagarh one found both people with and without land. Most migrants said that a shortage of land was the main reason why they came, but the people with more land quoted this also as the motive for migration. People migrated out of need, but what constituted a need was different for different people. People came to the town because they thought the situation there would be better. Economically it was better than agricultural work, and the status of work in jute mills commanded respect. For the migrants, getting industrial work itself was a step forward. In the past few people aspired more than that and people did not always look for other opportunities. Almost all agreed that there had been ample job opportunities when they started work; it was not impossible to start somewhere else but many people simply did not consider changing. These occupations were not chosen because of lack of alternatives. Even rickshaw pullers and *biri* workers chose their occupation because the work or the income was better. The prestige of having one's own business is very important, and some of those who chose an informal activity stressed its independence.

Work, then, has a very pivotal dialogue with democracy. Since livelihood is a direct determinant of social well-being, one must assess the level of democracy in a society by the extent of choice exercised in engaging in an occupation. Different definitions of democracy can be identified not only in the meaning systems of cultural subgroups, but also in state discourses and national self-understandings as well. Using a cognitive

anthropological approach, Sabloff (2001) links Mongolians' conception of democracy with their 800-year-old political culture manifested in their knowledge of basic democratic principles codified by Genghis Khan. Aihwa Ong (1999) indicates that in parts of Asia, democracy is presented less in terms of individual rights than as the states ability to provide collective welfare benefits to citizens. Similarly, China identified itself as a *"socialist democratic society"*[64] based on state provision of access to housing, nutrition, schooling, and other benefits, at least until recent cutbacks. The point of these definitions is not to reify an 'Asian' or 'Chinese' cultural essence, but to suggest that democracy may have alternative meanings than elections and governments – in this case, state provision for collective well being.

One must first raise the fundamental question, what is democracy? What is the meaning of this term that so profoundly affects our way of life? The definition may seem a little formal or even forbidding, but in view of all the loose uses of the word, it is important to set forth what we understand.

Democracy is a form of political association in which the general control and direction of the commonwealth is habitually determined by the bulk of the community in accordance with understandings and procedures providing for popular participation and consent. It is the idea that not a ruler or a small group, but the people as a whole determine their own fate and make their decisions pertaining to matters of common concern. Universal suffrage was believed to change the whole character of society from a state of watchfulness, doubt and suspicion to that of trust, reciprocal interests and universal confidence. Its aim is to transform citizenry into responsible, active and independent personalities. The postulates of democracy are (Merriam, 1941):

1. The essential dignity of man, the importance of protecting and cultivating his personality on a fraternal rather than upon a differential basis, of reconciling the needs of the personality within the framework of the common good in a formula of liberty, justice, welfare.

2. The perfectibility of man; confidence in the possibilities of the human personality, as over against the doctrines of caste, class, and slavery.

---

[64] Ong, Aihwa. 1999: 208.

3. That the gains of commonwealths are essentially mass gains rather than the efforts of the few and should be diffused as promptly as possible throughout the community without too great delay or too wide a spread in differentials.

4. Confidence in the value of the consent of the governed expressed in institutions, understandings and practices as a basis of order, liberty and justice.

5. The value of decisions arrived at by common counsel rather than by violence and brutality.

These postulates rest upon

1. reason in regarding the essential nature of the political man, upon

2. observation, experience and inference, and that

3. the fulfillment of the democratic ideal is strengthened by a faith in the final triumph of ideals of human behavior in general and of political behavior in particular.

There are three bases of the modern meaning of democracy:

1. The intellectual foundations – the theory of democratic association.

2. The structural forms and general understandings adapted to democracy.

3. New programs necessary to maintain democracy under new conditions. They cannot all be considered here, but some misunderstandings can be cleared away.

The meaning of democracy involves appreciation of the importance of change and willingness to change. Historically, democracy had to make its way against privilege entrenched by tradition, reinforced by systems of thought, and finally supported by force of arms. Freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of association – economic and social, were all closed against criticism. Over all these barriers the development of

liberty and equality was obliged to advance at terrible cost, often by revolutionary movements of the most sanguinary nature. But it is an old saying that the sons of revolutionists are seldom revolutionists, and democracy once established may find itself attempting to defend itself against change.

It is true that traditions have very great value. Yet traditions are not as faithful servants of democracy as they are of some other regimes. For democracy by its very nature is the foe of any tradition after the tradition has lost its value to the society it serves. Other systems build upon the prolonging of differential advantage through some form of legal status, but democracy does not. In a genuine democracy peoples' status does not require the support of any arbitrary line of traditional succession. Ability is constantly recruited from the mass itself, on the basis of merit which is constantly recreated and constantly rediscovered. Title depends not on the dead past, but on the living present.

One hundred years ago democracy declared the basic rights of life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and the public welfare. These rights are to be protected and preserved, not merely in form but in fact. In our day these must be construed to include (Merriam 1941):

The right to a job at a fair wage;
The right to an education;
The right to food, clothing, health;
The right to housing of a human type;
The right to leisure, to recreation, and to cultural opportunities;
The right to security within the framework of national production, against accident, disease, unemployment, old age.

If these rights are suspended it must not be because some are well born and others not, or because some have special political privileges and others not, or because weakness, incompetence, or corruption enables greed to sack and plunder those who are not able to resist. Pestilence, war, famine, fire and flood, emergencies of various types may call for some temporary but equal diminution of standards of living in the spirit of national sacrifice, but these exceptional circumstances will be well understood and cheerfully accepted if burdens are fairly spread. The greatest problem of democracy in our day is to translate the gains of our civilization into terms of the common good without undue

delay. These gains are not material alone. They include opportunities for the development of the human personality in many ways. In a democracy these gains are set in the framework of the dignity of man and the consent of the governed as essential to the protection and development of the general welfare.

Democracy applies social intelligence to the solution of this problem of ensuring the fullest possible application of human gains to the service of the common good. Democracy is not primarily based upon economic forces or cultural forces, important as all these are, but is a form of association through which all these factors may focus on the development and happiness of the personality and on the promotion of the general welfare. Democracy is not merely a mechanism through which personal development might possibly be achieved, but also a positive force facilitating the fullest development of personalities within the purview of the common good.

Sanitation, cleanliness and hygiene fall under the purview of democracy since, as a participating citizen one has the right to breathe and live within a clean environment. However, one person's right translates into another's responsibility. This unwarranted translation is the result of the 'speed of urban time', the failing nerves of the urban dweller or the 'benevolent' assumption that 'it will get cleaned'. The responsibility, which helps one earn one's right, remains outside one's doorstep as garbage. The cleaning of garbage and refuse from the street, then, becomes a symbolic manifestation of 'dealing' with what the other has discarded. Thus when Castells (1984) shows that research and management functions, which demand intellectual labour, need to be located near universities and cities where 'quality of life' factors are high, one actually comes to acknowledge not only how long the chain of this new international division of labor runs, but also gives cognizance to the dichotomies of liberty and alienation, of passion and repression and of cosmopolitanism and parochialism that screech within this otherwise mellifluous arrangement.

How does this amputated institution of democracy, then, continue to survive? Universal franchise as one of the fundamental tenets of 'true' democracy has ceased to be a doctrine to become a fetish. If a government can prove that everybody has a right to vote and votes are counted honestly, it is democratic – it is the will of the people. Democracy, then, is not a philosophical accolade, which thinkers have sculptured over

ages, but exists as a shield safe within the walls of the parliament. Voting becomes the means and ends of this classical institution. Political questions are limited to the discussion of political rhetoric, political parties and the economy that take the place of leisure-hour indulgence, and not yet the rank of hobbies. This reduced sense of reality accounts not only for a reduced sense of responsibility but also for the absence of effective volition. One has one's phrases, wishes and daydreams, grumblings, likes and dislikes. But ordinarily they do not amount to what is called 'will'. This 'will', in fact, has been clouded by concerns over representation and 'familial' governance.

Following from Chapter 1 on the discussion on elective affinities between caste identities and politics a great deal of confusion exists on how to confer, and theoretically characterize, political developments in India during the last decade and a half. There is, of course, a consensus that the Congress party, a towering political colossus between 1920 and 1989, had, sometime in the middle, unambiguously declined. While there were legitimate doubts about whether the decline of the Congress party would continue to be irreversible, it was clear that much of the political space already vacated by the Congress had been filled by three different sets of political forces. The first force, Hindu nationalism, attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. The second force, regionalism, also spawned considerable research of late. A third force, not so extensively analyzed, covered an array of political parties and organizations that encompass groups normally classified under the umbrella category of 'lower castes': the so-called scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes, and the "other backward classes" (OBCs). How should we understand the politics of parties representing these groups? What are the implications of their forward march, if it does take place, for Indian democracy?

In this century, the South has experienced caste-based politics much more intensely than the other regions of India. If the Hindu-Muslim cleavage has been a 'master narrative' of politics in North India for much of the twentieth century, caste divisions have had the same status in Southern India. The major South Indian conclusion about caste is culturally counterintuitive but politically easily grasped. Socially and ritually, caste has always symbolized hierarchy and inequality; however, when joined with universal-franchise democracy, caste can paradoxically be an instrument of equalization and dignity. Weighed down by tradition, lower castes do not give up their caste identities; rather, they 'deconstruct' and 'reinvent' caste history, deploy in politics a readily available

and easily mobilized social category ('low caste'), use their numbers to electoral advantage, and fight prejudice and domination politically. It is the upper castes, beneficiaries of the caste system for centuries that typically wish caste did not exist when a lower caste challenge appears from below.

Hindu nationalism, though fundamentally opposed to lower-caste politics in ideological terms and quite formidable in the North, has not been able to dictate terms to northern lower-caste politicians. By implication as well as intention, Hindu nationalism stands for Hindu unity, not for caste consciousness. Lower-caste parties are against Hindu unity. Arguing that Hindu upper castes have long denied power, privilege, and even dignity to the lower castes, they are advocates of caste- based social justice and a caste-based restructuration of power. Such has been the power of lower-caste politics in recent years that it has forced Hindu nationalists to make ideologically distasteful but pragmatically necessary political coalitions. For the sake of power, the Hindu nationalists-after the twelfth and for the thirteenth national elections held in 1998 and 1999, respectively-had to team up with other parties, several of whom were based among the lower castes. The latter, among other things, ensured that the ideologically pure demands of Hindu nationalism-the building of a temple in Ayodhya; a common civil code and no religiously based personal laws for minorities; abolition of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, the only Muslim majority state of Indian federation; elimination of the Minorities Commission-were dropped and a program more acceptable to the lower-caste parties was formulated.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a southern-style plebeian politics has rocked North India. The names of Mulayam Singh Yadav, Laloo Yadav, Kanshi Ram, and Mayawati-all 'vernacular' politicians who have risen from below-repeatedly make headlines. They are not united. Indeed, substantial obstacles to unity, both vertical and horizontal, remain. Vertically, though all lower castes are below the upper castes, there are serious internal differentiations and hierarchies within the lower-caste category. And, horizontally, even though caste system is present all over India, each caste has only local or regional meaning, making it hard to build extra-local or extra-regional alliances. Thus, horizontal mobilization tends to be primarily regional or state-specific, not nationwide.

The power of the new plebeian political elite is no longer confined to the state level,

though that is where it is most prominent. The center has also been socially reconfigured. Delhi has twice had primarily lower-caste coalitions in power-between 1989 and 1991 and between 1996 and 1998. In K. R. Narayanan, India had its first ex-Schedule caste President. In a parliamentary system, of course, the President is only a head of state, not a head of government. What lends Narayanan's election a special political meaning is that no political party in India, with the exception of a regional party (the Shiv Sena), had the courage to oppose his nomination. Narayanan was elected President by a near-consensus vote in 1997, a feat not easily achievable in India's adversarial polity.

Government policies and programs have also acquired a new thrust. An enlarged affirmative action program and a restructuring of the power structure on the ground-street-level bureaucracies and police stations-have been the battle cry of the new plebeian elite. By far, their most striking national success is the addition of an extra 27 percent reservation for the lower castes to central government jobs and educational seats. In the 1950s, only 22.5 percent of such jobs were reserved, and more than three-fourths were openly competitive. Today, these proportions are 49.5 and 50.5 percent, respectively. At the state level, the reserved quota has been higher for a long time in much of southern India.

Indian politics thus has a new lower-caste thrust, now prevalent both in much of the North as well as the South. Democracy has been substantially indigenized, and the shadow of Oxbridge has left India's political center-stage. The rising vernacularization could possibly imply that India's democracy is becoming more participatory and inclusive. However, on the other hand, as claimed by India's English-language press, the rise of new plebian politicians could also be responsible for the decline of political standards. The anxious chorus of everyday criticism has acquired standard refrains: how the language of politics has become more coarse and the style more rough; how men of 'dubious provenance' have taken over electoral politics and how the governmental stability of a previous era had given way to unstable and unruly coalitions, in which mutual differences quickly turn into unseemly bickering and intemperate outbursts. Skepticism is also exercised as to whether developments, of any kind, are mere cosmetic changes on the surface, a political veneer concealing an unchanging socioeconomic structure of power and privilege. In other words, can it be said that because certain individuals from historically disparaged groups have acquired the status of (nevertheless)

lower-caste (but) elites that India is undergoing a democratic upsurge?

The issue then is that of selection – the fishing net has shrunk and so one must choose one breed of fish over the other. Similarly, one must undertake the encyclopedic task of detaching metaphors (social) from meaning (economic). Democratic upsurge has taken place to the extent that it is possible for the *Ezhavas* of South India to walk on public streets, for *Nadar* women to cover their breasts when walking in front of higher caste Hindus, for schedule castes to have access to public transport and wells – basic dignity in the pubic sphere characterizes one of the achievements of India's democratic process. However on the other hand the need to stress on economic realities over social inequalities has not been met. The 'larger scheme of things' has been achieved without catering to the immediate or the so-called 'short-sightedness' of the democratic program, namely public policies regarding health and education. Thus, the delusion of progress and welfare is confronted with when one has a Dalit on one's guest-list for dinner (although 'misplaced' sensitivity is *'making it into a big deal'*), while each of the props used on stage contributes to magnification of destitution.

CONCLUSION

Sir Edwin Chadwick, the nineteenth century sanitary reformer, in a document called *Report on an Inquiry into the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (1842) posed the question, *"How much of rebellion, of moral depravity and of crime has its roots in physical disorder and depravity?"*[65] Chadwick argued that disease not only nests physical depravity but also moral. He traced a pattern from slum to sewage, sewage to disease and disease to moral degradation. Implicit in this connection between topography and psychic disorder is also the assumption that a particular topography is home to this psychic disorder – *"the filthy are drawn to the filth."*[66] The degradation, then, is 'self-willed' to which the bourgeoisie is an audience. Interestingly, that segment of society, which desires the dirt to be rendered invisible at the same time also renders the radical social scientist who discloses the dirt. Her hypothesis is that 'all is not honky dory'. She digs and digs till she purposefully finds a hill of dung, which serves her articulation of the social condition. The in/visibility of the sewage, then, becomes a metaphor representing society and its preoccupations. This has in fact been the primary concern of the previous essays. So far, what has been attempted at is to arrive at a construction of the antithesis of the subject of analysis, dirt – attraction. The 'clean', as contended, exists or is reiterated through the absence or the presence of dirt. However, this concluding essay shall keep aside the 'vis-à-vis' frame of methodology and confront dirt, vulgarity and perversion in its unadulterated entirety.

If elegance and dignity are qualities of the aristocrat, then rags and garbage are his natural anithesis. He does not repose in them as a child in nature, but accepts them as a test, the ineluctable antagonist of his instinctive style. If man was ever nature's child, he is so no longer; on the contrary, in an Oedipal violation of colossal proportions, he is either the murderer of nature or its self-conscious, responsible conservator. Thus even the natural is now man-made, man-protected, or man-controlled. Whether we now see the city as a refuge from the idiocy of rural life or the natural existence as an escape from urban

[65] Stallybrass and White, 2007: 270
[66] Stallybrass and White, 2007: 271

uproar, we live always among castoffs and leftovers, on which the mark of some social and practical decision is still legible.

Rags and garbage, a particular stage in never-ending cycles, are nothing but materials momentarily exhausted of their value by human wear or consumption. The polite name for garbage, 'refuse', carries the crucial concept of human rejection. Second-hand clothing bears the implication that it wasn't good enough for someone else, but for the unfortunate without any self-respect it may, even as contaminated by the first owner, still be good enough. The 'higher' a human is in the socio-economic ladder, the higher she/he is in the consumer-chain and greater is the quantity of waste generated. This is on account of her/his being a part of the 'throwaway society': rubbish, in a sense, has become an index of high living standards. The underlying rational of such a society has been that resources of the earth are unlimited and infinite. But, present-day resource utilization and waste generation are far beyond the carrying capacity of the biosphere. This coupled with increasing numbers and increasing wants, has made single-use of resources a thing of the past. What the ecosystem requires is: reduce, recover, recycle, reuse, repair and restore resources.

One of the biggest problems pertaining to India's sanitation schema has been the lack of toilet infrastructure, leading to defecation in public places. This poses serious health hazards and has bogged successive governments. Laws that require all houses to have toilets have been ineffective and impractical. The usual practice was to have human scavengers carry the faecal matter and dispose it some distance away. However, the last quarter century has seen a big movement change the landscape of toilet technology and sociology. A sociologist by training, Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak was committed to solving the plight of those members of society, both the ones who didn't have access to toilets and the ones who acted as scavengers. Through the *Sulabh Sauchalay* he advocated the adoption of two-pit pour-flush toilet, an *"affordable, safe and hygienic system for the disposal of the human waste in absence of sewers and septic tanks."*[67] Of late, *Sulabh* has further expanded into extracting biogas from community toilets through anaerobic decomposition of the waste. Biogas is useful as an alternative fuel for cooking or producing electricity. The movement has been scaled up in the last decade and is a big way of providing sustainable sources of electricity to remote villages.

---

[67] Website of *Sulabh Sauchalay*: www.sulabhinternational.org

Indian conceptions about the earth's recycling of wastes could emerge an important domain for investigation. The use of dust as a cleansing agent leads us to inquire into local notions about elemental processes, the tropic cycle, and the role of the streets as venue and traffic as process in recycling the detritus and castaways of daily life. Our practice to understand traffic as a flow helps us examine the deep implicit meanings of flows and churning. Traffic is transformative, an experience that is further sanctified in the ritual elaboration of some travel as pilgrimage. We relate local expectations about waste disposal to textual sources, utilize Ayurvedic theory[68] and, and examine *Samkhya*[69] philosophical underpinnings for a moral world- view.

Garbage, as what someone has refused to eat, wears even more openly the imprint of the rejected; 'sheol', the Hebrew word for 'hell', originally meant simply the garbage-dump of Jerusalem. Scavengers of all sorts are thus stigmatized as unclean. 'Dog' and 'pig' become terms of ultimate insult, and garbage-men, who simply carry the stuff away, are objects of avoidance; in India, they find themselves segregated into a pariah caste. The word 'pariah,' deriving from 'drum', is itself an avoidance-word at second hand: the caste which it designates carried refuse and cleaned streets, but became known euphemistically by the most reputable of their occupations, the beating of the village drum.

History does not unfold: it piles up and is dug out. That has been true for a long time now. The first and most wonderful of books, the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*[70], tells us that its lore is immemorial, the entire book having been written by the God Thoth, in whose

---

[68] Based on the understandng that *Ayurveda* allows for the harmonious working between the five elements (earth, water, fire, air and space) and the human body-mind.

[69] The *Samkhya* philosophy regards the universe as consisting of two eternal realities: *Purusha*, the transcendental self that is absolute, independent, free, imperceptible, unknowable, above any experience and beyond any words; and *Prakriti*, matter which is inert, temporary and unconscious, corresponding to creation, sustenance and destruction.

[70] The *Book of the Dead* is the common name for the ancient Egyptian funerary text known as *The Book of Coming* (or *Going*) *Forth By Day*. The book of the dead was a description of the ancient Egyptian conception of the afterlife and a collection of hymns, spells, and instructions to allow the deceased to pass through obstacles in the afterlife. The book of the dead was most commonly written on a papyrus scroll and placed in the coffin or burial chamber of the deceased. The name *Book of the Dead* was the invention of the German Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius, who published a selection of the texts in 1842.

divine nature all the thousands of scribes and copyists, who produced the millions of potsherds and papyrus-scraps in which the *Book* subsists, directly participated. The earliest book explicitly declares and rejoices in the antiquity of its wisdom, which is smeared and smelly with man-smell, therefore divine; and it celebrates all chaotic fragmentation as the work of a supernal and lucid intelligence. From these ancient perspectives, our sense that the modern world is exhausted and falling into squalor is not, indeed, negated; but it is qualified as simply one of several styles of feeling. We may actually, in our disappointment with the enlightenment myth, be falling victim to it – our dismay with the bloody mess of history rising from unacknowledged springs of expectation that history can or should be a tidy, sanitary process. Human rags and garbage are then the special badges of our shame, evidence of our willful refusal to be clean, rational, and proper.

The Brecht-Weill *"The Three-Penny Opera"*[71] is loaded with Marxist, i.e., millennial social commentary and expectation. The rags worn by highwaymen and pickpockets are a proletarian uniform, wrongfully imposed on them by a social order which can and will be changed. No particular joke is possible about the interchangeable fine manners of gentlemen and highwaymen, because there are no visible gentlemen, and if there were, they would be moral inferiors of the thieves. The two characters, Peachum and Lockit, representing bourgeois morality, are the loftiest social class in view, and the lessons emerge that bosses are greedy, that proles would be good as gold if allowed to make a clean sweep of bosses and that rags, while emblems of present oppression, promise liberation and revenge in the future. The two versions differ as comedy differs from didactic melodrama. Swift himself in his first full-scale satire, *A Tale of a Tub*[72], not only made use of shifting and overlaid rags as the emblem of modern style in philosophy and

---

[71] The *Three-penny Opera* (*Die Dreigroschenoper*) is a work of musical theatre, by German dramatist Bertolt Brecht and composer Kurt Weill, in collaboration with translator Elisabeth Hauptmann and set designer Caspar Neher, adapted from an 18th century English ballad opera, John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera.* Premiering on August 31, 1928, at Berlin's Schiffbauerdamm Theatre, *Die Dreigroschenoper* offers a socialist critique of the capitalist world.

[72] *A Tale of a Tub* was the first major work written by Jonathan Swift, composed between 1694 and 1697 and published in 1704. It is probably his most difficult satire, and possibly his most masterly. The *Tale* is a prose parody, which is divided into sections of "digression" and "*tale.*" The "*tale*" presents a consistent satire of religious excess, while the digressions are a series of parodies of contemporary writing in literature, politics, theology, Biblical exegesis, and medicine. The overarching parody is of enthusiasm, pride, and credulity.

religion, he became one of the first writers actually to construct a whole book out of verbal tatters (Sterne and Joyce are among his followers). A major point of *A Tale of a Tub* is that it consists of appurtenances and appendages, posturings and apologies, decorations and extranea, overwhelming a notable deficiency of central structure. The comic device Swift learnt depends on a self-conscious and contemptuous view of the modern age as contrasted with the ancients, which converts self-derision into a vehicle of historical criticism. Because modern men are degenerate, they exist in moral and intellectual rags; if they chose to be whole of mind and simple of spirit, they might still emulate ancient magnanimity. But they are incapable of that choice. Far from being an accident or an imposition, tatters represent a permanent spiritual state.

Wearing rags, but wearing them with a deliberate difference, like clowns or mimes, is a way of rising above circumstance by style, a device of levitation, which divides the world into horizontal levels and thereby denies any need for temporal or vertical advancement. If the nadir of misery can be transformed by a knack of gesture or expression into laughter, applause, and pots of money, then the way down and the way up are indeed one and the same; and there's no occasion to climb any visible or invisible ladder. The best way to rise is by falling; and this paradigm has had many applications off the formal stage as well as on. Within our own time, rags have had a very widespread vogue among the young, partly as protest against straight society, partly from a sense that being grubby is a way to be natural and therefore perhaps next thing to holy. Drugs would naturally encourage this sort of display, as in the instance they did; but so would any strong other-experience. Living in a different world, sensual, imaginary, and presumably better, the addict advertises by costume or behavior his contempt for this common and commonplace globe. Rags easily serve such an end; so, though with very different accent and feeling, Saint Simeon Stylites, cultivated rags and filth as a way to express their loathing of fleshly lusts and the world that caters to them. In thus acting out a disdain for middle-class decorums, rags may express an aloofness almost dandy in its sense of extreme style.

To the serious taste of our age, second-hand may really be better than first: less pretentious, more authentic, richer in patina, more revealing of true gust. The principle is perhaps akin to that which declared bastards lustier and more vigorous than legitimate scions, because the offspring of pleasure, not obligation. So, when not encumbered by

any dynastic obligations and pretensions to originality, artistic work may be freer, more vital. Whether formed on these principles or not, the vogue takes the form of mechanically multiplied images, all of which have in common a quality of playing down the uniqueness and originality of the art work. To pick something out of a junk heap or off a street corner and place it on a pedestal shows (or so we are to suppose) greater acuteness than creating after an imaginary model of one's own. The effect is obtained with minimum effort; it is shared in a especially intimate bond between artist and viewer; on both parts, it implies a purer act of intellection, in seeing through a perceptible barrier of unfamiliarity to a shape which is new only because of a common act of eye and mind. Like rags and castoffs generally, second-hand materials are of preference for a thoroughly modern artist. They bear open witness to what scholarship is constantly reminding us, that we never observe objects with totally fresh, i.e., unprepared eyes. Since the experience is already contaminated by the viewer's expectations, themselves formed by his culture, his tradition, his prior definition of an art-object, the frank thing to do is to make unconcealed use of those expectations by crossing them up and doubling them back.

Garbage and carrion, as they remind us intimately of our own imminent corruption, raise more painful feelings than rags, and are the objects of deeper, more intricate taboos. They are closer to the sacred, closer to the accursed, because nearer to organic, as against artificial process. Disintegration and decay are almost the essence of garbage; the basic emotional assumption is that it's all shit. But our feelings on the subject are curiously divided and entangled. When it is called 'compost' or 'humus', garbage takes on immediate overtones of life-giving natural process. Cow- and sheep- manure, guano and rotted vegetable matter are the material of so-called 'organic' farming, healthful, and perhaps ennobling; chemical fertilizers are the antithetical, 'plastic' materials. But what is euphemistically called 'night-soil', though perfectly acceptable fertilizer in large areas of the world, is not so in the germ-conscious West.

Scavengers are considered loathsome, but not uniformly so; the rule may run something like. 'The bigger and more public, the more repulsive'. Buzzards, hyenas, coyotes, rats, roaches, and down to maggot-flies have maintained a generally bad press; but ants are relatively well thought of as cleanly and industrious creatures (they scavenge chiefly the remains of small animals), and worms are accepted because they do their work decently

under ground. The eclectic Egyptians included a jackal in their pantheon along with an alligator, and saw a sacred symbolism in the operations of the *scarab* or dung-beetle. Bacteria, which are such convenient and manageable scavengers, we tend to look on as friends to man, particularly admirable because they can be constrained or induced to do most of their work invisibly.

Human excrement itself is a learned dislike, therefore a source of guilty pleasure, even, occasionally, an emblem of social freedom. Very young children are quite proud of what they can produce, and many 'un-/non-civilized' cultures look upon it with amusement or indifference, not antipathy. Under our conventions, talking about shit openly or covertly is an act of social and psychic revolt, often disguised as comedy. The tradition in literature runs from Rabelais to Swift to Joyce to Freud. Of course excrement and garbage are automatically obtrusive topics any time one gets masses of people in one place; if not in any way urban phenomena, they become prominent in urban circumstances. Under the best of conditions, the megalopolis 'is only a week away from choking on its own crud'; war or strikes bring the prospect immediately closer. And the fact is that industrial wastes, such as a modern city generates in quantity, are a good deal harder to dispose of than traditional trash, excrement, and offal. Slag-piles, ash pits, scrap metal, chemical wastes, and auto-graveyards do not absorb quickly into the natural cycles. They stay on hand, they pile up. There is no way to minimize this sort of thing, even if one wished to do so; it constitutes a vast and terrifying event. Loose talkers blame it on a profit economy, but it seems just as prevalent where production is for use, or is alleged to be so. If mass populations don't invariably equal mass economy, and mass economy doesn't equal mass squalor, the exception has yet to be established. Still, it's too fresh a topic, rooted too largely in statistics and too little in common experience, to have forced its way deeply into the artistic consciousness. Creative artists have a way of not living in areas of heavy pollution; their indignation with a garbage-economy may be genuine enough, but it's a kind of learned indignation. It amounts to ideology rather than lived belief.

What the mournful, magnificent elegies of Samuel Beckett describe is a perishing imagination, the death-throes of mind reduced from all its other enterprises to the desperate repetition of Descartes' minimal assurance: *"I* (still) *think, therefore I* (still) *am"*. That a couple of his characters appear onstage in garbage cans, and another one is named

after a piece of excrement had horrified people; but it fascinated them too, compelling their identification. The condition Beckett's characters share – frozen, immobilized, disintegrating, bored to death – appeals to the fantasy of his audiences because they recognize in it a stage of their own decomposition, actual or potential but inevitable. That people are garbage is no truer now than it ever was, but it is easier for everyone to suppose, for reasons of which the social psychologists can inform us at more length, perhaps, than we really need. We must all be conscious of mass populations and the weight imposed upon us by a commitment to history which has become more pressing as the world has shrunk. A blood-feud in Africa or Asia may at any moment blow-up into intercontinental ballistic missiles. The suicidal terrorist, who is such a special feature of our times, declares in his action that the enemy has made him a piece of trash, worthless for any other purpose in the world except explosion against the object of his hatred.

All this emphasis on disintegration and decay doubtless sounds very gloomy; but in fact rags and garbage, apart from their obvious uses in black humor, provide a soil from which unforced gaiety can legitimately flow. The bourgeois, with his somber, respectable uniform, is the source of authentic high seriousness; his precarious middle eminence, demanding that he be humble, forbidding him to be vulgar, offers no security for derision or exultation. One has to transcend his innocent interest in being told a rousing good story, his desire for a safe and wholesome moral lesson, to reach the thin, high air that's fit to breathe. Hardly anybody in real life would opt for destitution as a way of gaining spiritual insight; but precisely for that reason, it's the business of literature as a surrogate form of experience, a symbolic act, to explore the strategies of total loss by forcing us to feel like Othello, Samson, Ophelia or Oedipus. It is arguable that our literary fascination with rags springs up when the reading public is comfortably clothed, and that garbage, or shit, is the natural fixation of a people with the most elaborate sewage-disposal system since the later Roman Empire. This in fact is the only way that we, the reading public with our easy-uneasy circumstances can come to comprehend destitution, filth, and squalor – by an imaginative reading of them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ambedkar, B. R. 1936. *Essays on Untouchables and Untouchability.* Dalit Sahiyta Academy. Bangalore.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. 1984. *Rabelais and His World.* Bloomington. IN: Indiana University Press.

Bali, Scharada. 2006. "The Other Side of Life". *New Indian Express.* (8th January).

Baudrillard, Jean. 1981. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign.* Telos Press. St. Louis.

Berger, John. 1972. *Ways of Seeing.* Penguin. London.

Besancan, Alain. 2000. *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm.* University of Chicago Press. Chicago.

Beteille, Andre. 1991. "The reproduction of inequality: Occupation, Caste and Family" *Contributions to Indian Sociology.* Vol. 25. No. 1. SAGE Publications. New Delhi.

Beteille, Andre. 2002. *Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in A Tanjore village.* Oxford University Press. New Delhi.

Brass, Tom. (ed). 1993. *Free and Unfree Labour.* International Institute for Social History. Amsterdam.

Breman, Jan. 1990. *Taming of the Coolie Beast: Plantation Society and the Colonial Order in Southeast Asia.* OUP. New Delhi.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 1989. *Rethinking Working-Class History in Bengal 1890-1940.* OUP. New Delhi.

Cheal, David.1988. *The Gift Economy.* Routledge. London.

Clark, Alfred C. 1956. "Leisure and Occupational Prestige." *American Sociological Review.* 21 (June): 301-307.

Daniel, E. Valentine. 1987. *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way.* University of California Press.

Das Gupta, Ranajit. 1981. "Structure of the labour market in colonial India." *Economic and Political Weekly.* November 1981, 1781-1806.

Das, Veena and Ubeori, J. P. S. 1971. "The Elementary Structure of Caste." *Contributions to Indian Sociology.* Sage. New Delhi.

De Grazia, S. 1962. *Of Time, Work and Leisure.* Doubleday. New York.

De Haan, A. and Rogaly, B. 1994. "Eastward Ho! leapfrogging and seasonal migration in Eastern India." *South Asia Research,* Spring 1994, 36-61.

Deleige, Robert. 1999. *Untouchables of India.* Berg. London.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. 1977. "The Desiring Machines" in *Anti-Oedipus – Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* The Athlone Press. London.

Deshpande, G. P. 2002. *Essential Writings of Jyotirao Phule.* Leftword. New Delhi.

Dirks, B. Nicholas. 2001. *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and Making of Modern India.* Princeton University Press.

Douglas, Mary. 1984. *Purity and Danger.* Routledge. London.

Douglas, Mary. 1987. *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology.* Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

Dumont, Loius. 1966. *Homo Hierarchicus.* University of Chicago Press. Chicago.

Durkheim, Emile. 1974. *Sociology and Philosophy.* Free Press. London.

Durkheim, Emile. 1997. *Division of Labour in Society.* Free Press. London.

Durkheim, Emile. *Moral Education.* Free Press. London.

Emmer, P. C. (ed) 1986. *Colonialism and Migration: Indentured Labour Before and After Slavery.* Martinus Nijhoff. Dordrench.

Foucault, Michel. 1977. "Two Lectures" (Lecture One: 7th January 1976 and Lecture Two: 14th January 1976, translated by Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino) in Michel Foucaut's *Microfiscia del Potere.* Colin Gordon, Turin.

Freud, Sigmund. 1930. *Civilization and its Discontents.* Hogarth Press. London.

Fromm, Erich. 1941. *Escape from Freedom.* Farrar and Rinehart. New York.

Fromm, Erich. 1947. *Man for Himself: An Enquiry into the Psychology of Ethics.* Rinehart & Co. New York.

Fromm, Erich. 1947. *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics.* Rinehart & Co. New York.

Fromm, Erich. 1956. *The Sane Society.* Routledge and Kegan Paul. London.

Fuller, C. J. (ed). 1996. *Caste Today.* Oxford University Press. New Delhi.

Galenson, Donald. 1984. "The rise and fall of indentured servitude: An economic analysis." *Journal of Economic History,* Vol. 44, No. 1, Pp. 1-26.

Gandhi, M. K. 1910. *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings.*

Gandhi, M. K. 1931. *India of my Dreams.*

Gandhi, M. K. 1954. *My Experiments with Truth.*

Gandhi, M. K. and Iyer, Raghavan. 1993. *Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi.* Oxford University Press. New Delhi.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *Interpretation of Cultures.* Basic Books Inc. London.

Gill, Timothy. 2007. *Making Things worse: How Caste Blindness in Indian post-Tsunami Disaster Recovery has Exacerbated Vulnerability and Exclusion.* CORDAID, Netherlands.

Gordon, Milton and Charles, Anderson. 1964. "The blue collar worker at leisure." In A. Shostak and W. Gomberg (ed) *Blue Collar World: Studies of the American Worker.* Englewood Cliffs. New Jersey.

Gottdenier, Mark. 1997. *The Theming of America: Dreams, Visions and Commercial Spaces.* Westview Press. Boulder, CO.

Gupta, Dipankar. 1997. *Social Stratification.* Oxford University Press. New Delhi.

Gupta, Dipankar. 2000. *Interrogating Caste.* Penguin Books. New Delhi.

Gupta, Dipankar. 2000. *Mistaken Modernities: India Between Worlds.* Harper Collins. India.

Habermas, Jurgen. 1993. "Modernity vs Post-modernity" in Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutchean (eds) *A Post Modern Reader.* University of New York Press. New York.

Ilaiah, Kancha. 206. "Soiled Tracks". *Outlook.* (16th January).

Jaffrelot, Christopher and van der Veer, Peter. 2008. *Patterns of Middle-Class Consumption in India and China.* Sage. New Delhi.

Jameson, Fredric. 1993. "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" in Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutchean (eds) *A Post Modern Reader.* University of New York Press. New York.

Lock, Margaret and Farquahar, Judith. 2007. *Beyond the Body Proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life.* Duke University Press. London.

MacIntyre, Alistair. 1981. *After Virtue.* Duckworth. London.

Macwan, Martin. 1998. *Lesser Humans: Scavengers of the Indian Republic.* Navsarjan. Ahmedabad.

Mauss, Marcel. 1954. *The Gift.*

Mendelsohn, Oliver and Vicziany, Marika. (eds). 1998. *The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India.* Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

Merriam, Charles. E. 1941. "The Meaning of Democracy." *The Journal of Negro Education,* Vol. 10, No. 3, Racial Minorities and the Present International Crisis. (Jul., 1941), pp. 309-317.

Morris, Alice and Sarkar, Surjeet. 1997. *Sewage Workers of Ahmedabad City.* Kamdar Swasthya Suraksha Mandal and Unnatil Organization for Development. Ahmedabad.

Narula, Smita. 2001. "Untouchability: The Economic Exclusion of the Dalits in India". THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. Seminar on the Economics of Racism. Geneva 24th -25th January.

Ong, Aihwa. 1999. *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality.* Duke University Press. Durham.

Prashad, Vijay. 2000. *Untouchable Freedom: A Social History of a Dalit Community.* OUP. New Delhi.

Proctor, Robert. N. 1988. *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis.* Harvard University Press. Harvard.

Racine, Josiane and Racine, Jean-Luc. 2000. *Viramma: Life of a Dalit.* Social Science Press. New Delhi.

Ramaswamy, Gita. 2006. *India Stinking: Manual Scavengers of Andhra Pradesh and their Work.* Navayana. New Delhi.

Ray, Baren. 1996. *Gandhi's Campaign Against Untouchability.* Gandhi Peace Foundation. New Delhi.

Ray, Rabindra. 2006. *Western Atheism.* Society for Social Research. New Delhi.

Reissman, Leonard. 1954. "Class, leisure and social participation." *American Sociological Review.* 19 (February): 75-84.

Saberwal, Satish. 1984. *Roots of Crisis.* Sage. New Delhi.

Saberwal, Satish. 1995. *Wages of Segmentation: Comparative Historical Studies in Europe and India.* Orient Longman. New Delhi.

Sabloff, PLW. (ed) 2001. *Modern Mongolia: Reclaiming Genghis Khan.* University of Philadelphia. Philadelphia.

Saradamoni, K. 1980. *Emergence of a Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala.* Jullundur Sterling Publishers. New Delhi.

Sharma, K. L. (ed). 1994. *Caste and Class in India.* Rawat Publications. Jaipur.

Shyamlal. 1984. *The Bhangis in Transition.* Inter-India Publications. New Delhi.

Singh, K. S. 1993. *The Schedule Castes.* Oxford University Press. New Delhi.

Spinoza, de Benedictus. 2001. *Ethics.* Kessinger Publishing. London.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakrabarty. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds) *Marxism and Interpretation of Cultures.* Mac Millan, Basingstoke.

Srinivas, M. N. 2002. *Collected Essays.* Oxford University Press. New Delhi.

Swift, Jonathan. 2003. *A Tale of a Tub.* Penguin. New Delhi.

Thekaekara, Mari Marcel. 2005. *Endless Filth.* Books for Change. Bangalore.

Todaro, M. P. 1969. "A model of labour migration and urban unemployment in less developed countries." *The American Economic Review.* 59, 138-49.

Vigarello, Georges. 1988. *Concepts of Cleanliness.* Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

Visvanathan, Shiv. 2006. "Exposing an Abhorrent Practice. *Frontline.* (15th February).

Visvanathan, Susan (ed). 2001. *Structure and Transformation: Theory and Society in India.* Oxford University Press. New Delhi.

Vivek, P. S. 2000. "Scavengers: Mumbai's Neglected Workers." *Economic and Political Weekly.* October 14th – 20th.

Weber, Max. 1958. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* Scribner and Sons. New York.

Whyte, W. F. 1955. *Money and Motivation.* Harper. New York.

Wilensky, Harold L. 1964. "Mass society and mass culture." *American Sociological Review.* 29 (April): 173-197.

Wilson, Elizabeth. 1995. "The rhetoric of urban space." *New Left Review.* 209 146-60.
Yadav, S. K. and Jangira, N. K. 1985. *Dynamics of Social Stagnation: An Excursion into Schedule Caste Families.* Shree Publishing House. New Delhi.

Zukin, Sharon. 1995. *The Culture of Cities.* Blackwell. Oxford.