The Caste System: Continuities and Changes

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**The Caste System: Continuities and Changes**" submitted by Swapnil Singh to the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Masters of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any University.

We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

PROF. SURINDER SINGH JODHKA   PROF. ANAND KUMAR

CHAIRPERSON   SUPERVISOR

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"In that country the laws of religion, the laws of the land, and the laws of honour, are all united and consolidated in one, and bind a man eternally to the rules of what is called his caste." – Edmund Burke (Dirks, 2002).

The word Caste (from Latin castus, pure) was loosely used by the Portuguese to denote the Indian social classification as they thought that the system was intended to preserve purity of blood.

This dissertation as entitled-"The Caste: Continuities and Changes" is an effort to bring to the fore the deep embedded institution of caste in India and moreover the kind of importance given to it and the role that one's caste plays in our day to day life. Today every social institution is entrenched with the feeling of 'caste solidarity', be it political institution, or the so called "sacred" institution of marriage.

Continuity and the change, the cliche which are so often applied to modern India, captures a fundamental problem which is more than a basic truth, because the relation between continuity and change is becoming complex in the face of the rapid and far reaching developments which are so apparent in each and every domain of contemporary Indian society, including the caste system. "Indeed, on the subject of caste, one of the most distinctive of India's social institutions, anthropologists and sociologists have generally been far more confident about the structural continuity than contemporary change, and analysis of the relation between them has persistently posed serious intellectual problems" (Fuller, 1996).

According to Sir H. Risley, "a caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name; claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give opinion as forming a single homogeneous community. The name generally denotes or is associated with a specific

occupation. A caste is almost invariably endogamous in the sense that a member of the large circle denoted by the common name may not marry outside that circle, but within the circle there are usually a number of smaller circles each of which is also endogamous."

Dirks suggested that, it was under the British that "caste" became a single term capable of expressing, organizing, and above all "systematizing" India's diverse forms of social identity, community, and organization. In short, colonialism made caste what it is today. As Dirks says that when thinking of India it is hard not to think of caste. "In comparative sociology and in common parlance alike, caste has become a central symbol for India, indexing it as fundamentally different from other places as well as expressing its essence. Caste has been seen as omnipresent in Indian history. Caste defines the core of Indian tradition, and it is seen today as the major threat to Indian modernity. If we are to understand India properly, and by implication if we are to understand India's other core symbol- Hinduism- we must understand caste, whether we admire or revile it"(Dirks, 2002).

Louis Dumont believed that the West's excessive individualism was the single greatest impediment to the understanding of caste. Dumont in his book, *Homo Hierarchicus*, mentions critique of individualism, claiming "Marx and Durkheim as his sociological ancestors". For Dumont, "the true function of sociology is….to make good the lacuna introduced by the individualistic mentality when it confuses the ideal with the actual…To the self sufficient individual it (sociology) opposes man as a social being, it considers each man no longer as a particular incarnation of abstract humanity, but as a more or less autonomous point of emergence of a particular collective humanity, of a society." Dumont wrote that "To adopt a value is to introduce hierarchy, and a certain consensus of values, a certain hierarchy of ideas, things and people, is indispensable to social life…no doubt, in the majority of cases, hierarchy will be identified in some way with power, but there is no necessity for this, as the case of India will show…in relation to these more or less necessary requirements of social life, the ideal of equality, even if it is thought superior, is artificial." He believed that caste is the sign of India's fundamental religious nature, a marker of India's essential different feature from the west and from modernity at large (Dumont, 1980).

Caste is believed to be the defining feature of India. It is the single most powerful symbol for the Indian social world, rural and urban. Although this 'caste as India' assertion has been questioned and critiqued during the last three decades by anthropologists and historians alike for distorting our understanding of Indian society (Appadurai 1986; Inden 1990; Chatterjee 1993; and Dirks 2001), it remains alive and kicking in everyday consciousness in India and abroad. For social scientists, even when caste is not the sole emblem of 'modern' and 'traditional' India, it is still believed to be central to understanding Indian social reality (Marriott 1969; Fuller 1996a). Two images of caste are central to this understanding of Indian society: caste as community and caste as maker of dominance and hierarchy laid down at birth.

Thus, caste identities, and the existence of castes as independent units, are getting reinforced while at the same time rivalry among different castes is increasing. Our interest in the latter (rivalry) is only due to its influence on the former aspects, related to strengthening of internal community-solidarity within individual castes. The process of substantialization is supposed to have started during the colonial period and was intensified in post-colonial India. The reasons are related to increased connections of the village to the outside world and greater power in the hands of the people as opposed to the rulers – a consequence of the intrusion of modern fields of politico-economic activity such as multi-party democratic elections and a system of production relations driven by an integrated market (Dumont 1980: 226).

According to the most prevalent belief the Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras are said to have been separately created from the mouth, arms, thighs and the feet respectively of the Creator. The oldest extant passage in which this idea occurs is the Purusha Sukta of the tenth book of the Rigveda, though the representation there is somewhat vague. The idea gains wide circulation in the Dharmashastras and the Puranas, and the Manu accepts it without questioning, which is often cited as an authoritative pronouncement on the subject.

Politics is a 'competitive enterprise, its purpose is the acquisition of power for the realization of certain goals, and its process is one of identifying and manipulating existing and emerging allegiances in order to mobilize and consolidate positions'. The

important thing is organization and articulation of support, and where politics is mass based the point is to articulate support through the organizations in which the masses are to be found. It follows that where the caste structure provides one of the principal organizational clusters along which bulk of the population is found to live, politics must strive to organize through such a structure. The alleged 'casteism in politics' is thus no more and no less than *politicization of caste*. (Kothari, 1995)

Kothari has specified three typical stages in the relationship between caste and politics in a region. Stage one involves the politicization of a powerful elite caste, usually one which responded earliest to the opportunities for western education. In Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, this was the Brahmans; in Bihar, it was Kaysthas. With some political success on the part of the entrenched caste, the members of other high castes in the area would respond with resentment, feelings of relative deprivation, and possibility antagonism. These castes then challenge the entrenched caste as what Kothari calls an "ascendant caste." Stage two talks about factionalism and fragmentation which takes place within the competing castes, and multi-caste and multi-factional alignments develop. Lower castes are often brought in to support high caste leaders and to strengthen the faction. Stage three mentions that caste identity tends to languish with the progress in education, urbanization and the development of an orientation toward individual achievement and modern status symbols. Individuals participate in networks which include persons of several castes.

It is rather difficult to say that it is *"caste and politics"* per se or *"caste in politics"* because in today's political scenario, people are talking about the development and inclusive growth in India…but the hitch being that they link each and every form of development strategy to the reservation or quotas based on one's caste and minority status rather than looking into the real problems behind the present society- whether it may be chronic poverty, lack of health infrastructure, poor functioning of MGNREGAS or anything.

The never ending debate on caste system and different perspectives as a solution to end the discrimination based on caste is brought to the fore in the second chapter.

As Dipankar Gupta mentions that the "book view" of the caste system is derived largely from sacerdotal Hindu texts, members of the upper castes find it extremely agreeable. It justifies the caste system in terms of purity and pollution, giving the impression that all castes-high and low- abide by this single, overarching textual hierarchy. Several Hindu texts also imply, when they do not say so bluntly, that a person's position is determined by his or her karma. In other words, the fact that one is born into a certain caste is an outcome of one's past deeds in an earlier incarnation. Thus members of high caste have no reason to feel that they are being unduly over privileged, as the perks of their caste status in this life are just rewards for their good deeds in their past ones. That book view has received tremendous ovation in literary circles is not surprising. As the authors of these texts and their believers come from upper castes, what they say and write quickly passes on to the academic work.

Our research using a macro-perspective and qualitative research methods suggests that using a sociological framework does indeed underscore that 'tradition' is only one part of the Indian story, and future work needs to also focus on the 'modern' aspects of Indian society to have a clearer account of social change in contemporary India. The existence of caste or rather its reinforcement in the form of so called "*caste sabhas*" is also an important issue to look at along with how the system still persists.

Despite many problems, the caste system has operated successfully for centuries, providing goods and services to India's many millions of citizens. The system continues to operate, but changes are occurring, which can be very well discussed through how occupational mobility has taken place in Indian society and is rather taking place. The space of "*castelessness*" can be viewed through the changes of occupational choices of contemporary India and to some extent also with the emergence of new middle class which, although in few cases but is indeed accepting inter-caste marriages.

<u>**OBJECTIVES:**</u>

- To trace the origin of conceptualization of caste in colonial India.
- To look into the role of caste in politics and the politics of reservations in India.
- To look into the intellectual interrogations on the issue of caste.

<u>**RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**</u>

- How caste as an institution did emerge in colonial India, for the benefit of colonial state and how did it gained legitimacy as a way of living?
- What are the ideological interrogations regarding the Indian caste system?
- How does the caste exist in contemporary India in various spheres of our life?

<u>**CHAPTERISATION:**</u>

The first chapter is the introduction of the dissertation. It gives a brief overview about what this dissertation is going to be with objectives, research questions, research methodology, sources and limitations of the present dissertation are also mentioned.

The use of "caste" as an "identity" and instrument for discrimination is what will be looked into detail in the second chapter, along with the ever increasing importance of caste based politics in India and some highlights about the issue of "reservations" and "quotas" along with the presence of "caste" in a strong form in Diaspora and also about triple oppression among females will also be touched upon in the chapter.

I propose to look also into the details of debate between the two colossi on the topic of caste based discrimination- i.e. dialogue between Gandhi and Ambedkar in the third chapter, along with the other intellectual interrogations on the issue; such as Periyar, Phule, Lohia and Nehru. Without fail, it can be said that their contribution apart from being unique, were rooted in the vocabulary of the Indian tradition. All the issues that Gandhi and Ambedkar wrestled with, in general and the caste question in particular- are still haunting

the imagination of scholars and laymen alike. Thus, here is an effort to rediscover and reassess their work, in the context of "caste question"

How does "caste" find its presence and relevance in contemporary India will be looked into in the fourth chapter and also that how does it exists in contemporary India and in a way being reinforced and stringent reactions towards "inter-caste" marriages.

The conclusion will be drawn upon in the final chapter on how this institution of caste existed, is existing, changing and its future course also along with other continuities and changes of role of caste in politics, marriages, reservations, oppression, discrimination and much more.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Nicholas B. Dirks in his book entitled "**Castes of Mind**"; traces the career of caste from the medieval kingdoms of southern India to the textual traces of early colonial archives; from the commentaries of an eighteenth-century Jesuit to the enumerative obsessions of the late-nineteenth-century census; from the ethnographic writings of colonial administrators to those of twentieth-century Indian scholars seeking to rescue ethnography from its colonial legacy. The book also surveys the rise of caste politics in the twentieth century, focusing in particular on the emergence of caste-based movements that have threatened nationalist consensus. It uses the idea of caste as the basis for a magisterial history of modern India. And in making a powerful case that the colonial past continues to haunt the Indian present, it makes an important contribution to current postcolonial theory and scholarship on contemporary Indian politics. The main proposition he advances is that political changes under colonial rule especially the replacement of local kingship by colonial power-resulted in the creation of 'caste as we know it' from antecedent fluid and political forms of social identity. Caste then went on to become a colonial representation of Indian 'civil society' that, in turn, justified colonial presence. It lives now as the 'modernist apparition of India's traditional self' (p.60).

C.J Fuller in his edited book "**Caste Today**" incorporates views of Adrian Mayer on how caste functions in an Indian village, where commensal relations are more or less decided upon by one's caste and also traces the changes and continuity from 1954 to 1992 in the behavior patterns of people. He has also mentioned about Andre Beteille's article on caste in contemporary India, where he throws light upon the meaning and legitimacy of caste along with its religious definition, he also talks about the process of erosion of legitimacy of caste as a system and role played by caste in Indian politics. Beteille concludes with stating that he does not believe that caste has disappeared or is likely to disappear from even the sections of society about which he has written so extensively; but in the same breath he also mentions that shifts are taking place in the meaning and legitimacy of social relationships and social activities among many members of it.

G.S Ghurye's "Caste and Race in India" starts with Ghurye saying that a foreign visitor to India is always struck by Indian caste system and he also mentions that the foreigner may not understand the detailing of this caste system but is surely aware that Hindu society is divided into number of groups with "varying degree of respectability" and their course of social interaction. He also mentions about the relation of caste and politics in India but the major contribution of his book being how he identifies the basic features of the caste system and analyze the nature of caste groups. The chapters are largely descriptive and consider caste as it was in the 1920s. They are quite frank about the fluctuating nature of caste and sub caste in their constraint of social life and cultural patterns, but above all in their prescription of endogamy. Ghurye notes the very loose affiliation of caste with occupation, sect, and other forms of difference, but emphasizes the looseness rather than the affiliation.

Dipankar Gupta's "Interrogating Caste", depicts how the caste system has conventionally been perceived by scholars as a hierarchy based on the binary opposition of purity and pollution. Challenging this position, he argues that any notion of a fixed hierarchy is arbitrary and valid only from the perspective of the individual castes. The idea of difference, and not hierarchy, determines the tendency of each caste to keep alive its discrete nature and this is also seen to be true of the various

castes which occupy the same rank in the hierarchy. It is, in fact, the mechanics of power, both economic and political, that set the ground rules for caste behavior, which also explains how traditionally opposed caste groups find it possible to align in the contemporary political scenario. With the help of empirical evidence from states like Bihar, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, the author illustrates how any presumed correlations between caste loyalties and voting patterns are in reality quite invalid.

Rajni Kothari in his book "**Caste in Indian Politics**" rejects the prevailing dichotomy between traditional society and modern polity and examines the interaction between the two. The social system in India is organized around caste structures and caste identities. In dealing with the relationship between caste and politics, it would be wrong to put forth the question: is caste disappearing? In reality, no social system disappears. Those who complain of "casteism in politics" in India are really looking for a politics which has no basis in society. According to Rajni Kothari, these people probably lack a clear conception of either the nature of politics or the nature of the caste system. The process of politics is one of identifying and manipulating existing structures in order to mobilize support and consolidate positions. Since the caste structure provides one of the most important organizational clusters in India, politics must strive to organize itself through such a structure. The alleged casteism in politics is nothing but politicization of caste.

Pauline Kolenda's "Caste in contemporary India-Beyond organic solidarity" emphasizes the idea that the endogamous birth-descent group, the jati- the basic unit of the caste system- is essentially a large scale kin group. Despite the gradual demise of the occupational aspect of the caste system, the solidarity of the jati is intact. The book starts with the origin of caste where Kolenda mentions that the caste system of India, as a system of division of labour and land control, may have developed in the early kingdoms of northern India. What makes the Indian caste system unique is the feature of closed endogamous descent-groups as the social unit for occupational specialization. This feature has no parallel in other societies. Kolenda also analyzed caste system through the concepts of purity and pollution and mentions about the

social and cultural mobility within the caste system along with the Hinduism and caste system with the role of caste in politics.

METHODOLOGY USED:

This dissertation is based primarily on secondary sources and I will be employing qualitative and comparative research type, which also focuses on the pattern of change in caste system in contemporary times. Although there are various modes of data collection but I will be using secondary sources of data collection such as books, newspaper articles, journals and etc.

SOURCES:

Books, journals, reports, newspapers and articles.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The first limitation of the study is that it is not based on any empirical work. The second being, that I have not covered all aspects of Ambedkar and Gandhi's thought and work though I have tried to bring out the essence of their views on caste system. There is plethora of material available on Ambedkar and Gandhi, of which only few works have been covered in this dissertation.

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Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Population:2011 CENSUS

Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Population		
Scheduled Castes :	166,635,700	16.2%
Scheduled Tribes :	84,326,240	8.2%

Scheduled Castes	
State with highest proportion of Scheduled Castes	Punjab (28.9 %)
State with lowest proportion of Scheduled Castes	Mizoram (0.03 %)
UT with highest proportion of Scheduled Castes	Chandigarh (17.5%)
UT with lowest proportion of Scheduled Castes	D & N Haveli (1.9%)
District with highest proportion of Scheduled Castes	Koch-Bihar (50.1%)
District with lowest proportion of Scheduled Castes	Lawngtlai Mizoram (0.01%)
Scheduled Tribes	
State with highest proportion of Scheduled Tribes	Mizoram (94.5 %)
State with lowest proportion of Scheduled Tribes	Goa (0.04 %)
UT with highest proportion of Scheduled Tribes	Lakshadweep (94.5 %)
UT with lowest proportion of Scheduled Tribes	A & N Islands (8.3 %)
District with highest proportion of Scheduled Tribes	Sarchhip, Mizoram (98.1%)
District with lowest proportion of Scheduled Tribes	Hathras, Uttar Pradesh (0.01%)

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, CENSUS 2011.

CASTE AMONG MUSLIMS IN INDIA

ASHRAFS

SAYYADS

SHEIKHS

PATHANS

MUGHALS

AJLAF (CONVERTS FROM HINDUISM)

ARZAL

BHANAR

HALALKHOR

HIJRA

KASBI

LALBEGI

MEHTAR

MAUGTA

CASTE AMONG CHRISTIANS IN INDIA (KERALA):

SYRIAN

LATIN

MALANKARA MARTHOMA SYRIAN

SYRO MALABAR CATHOLIC

SYRO MALANKARA CATHOLIC

JACOBITE SYRIAN

MALANKARA ORTHIDOX SYRIAN
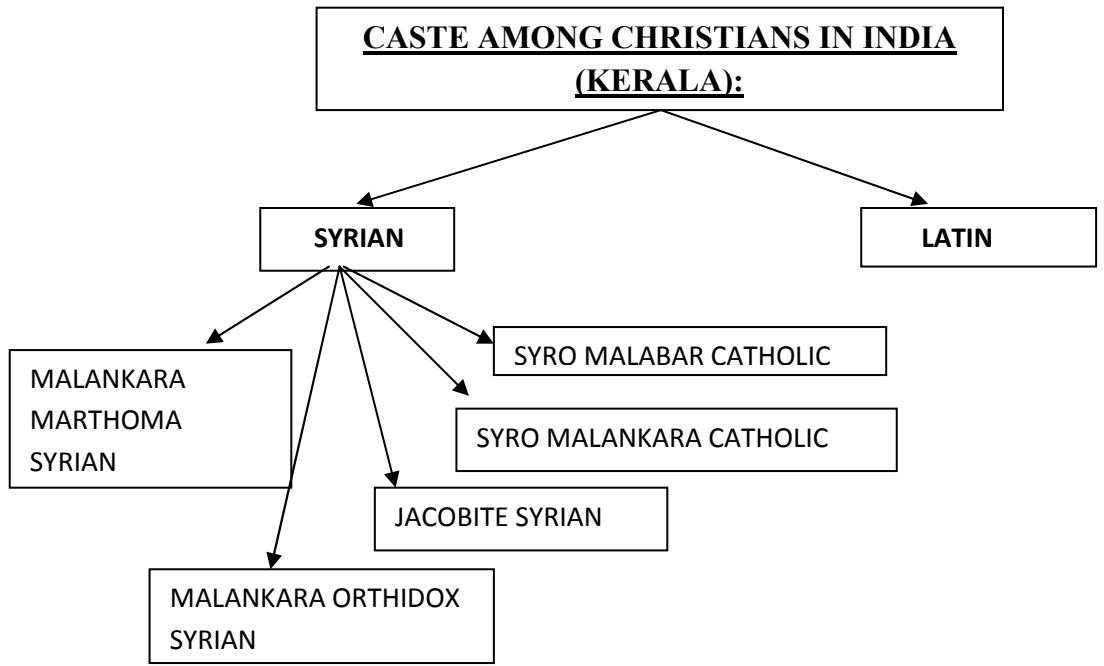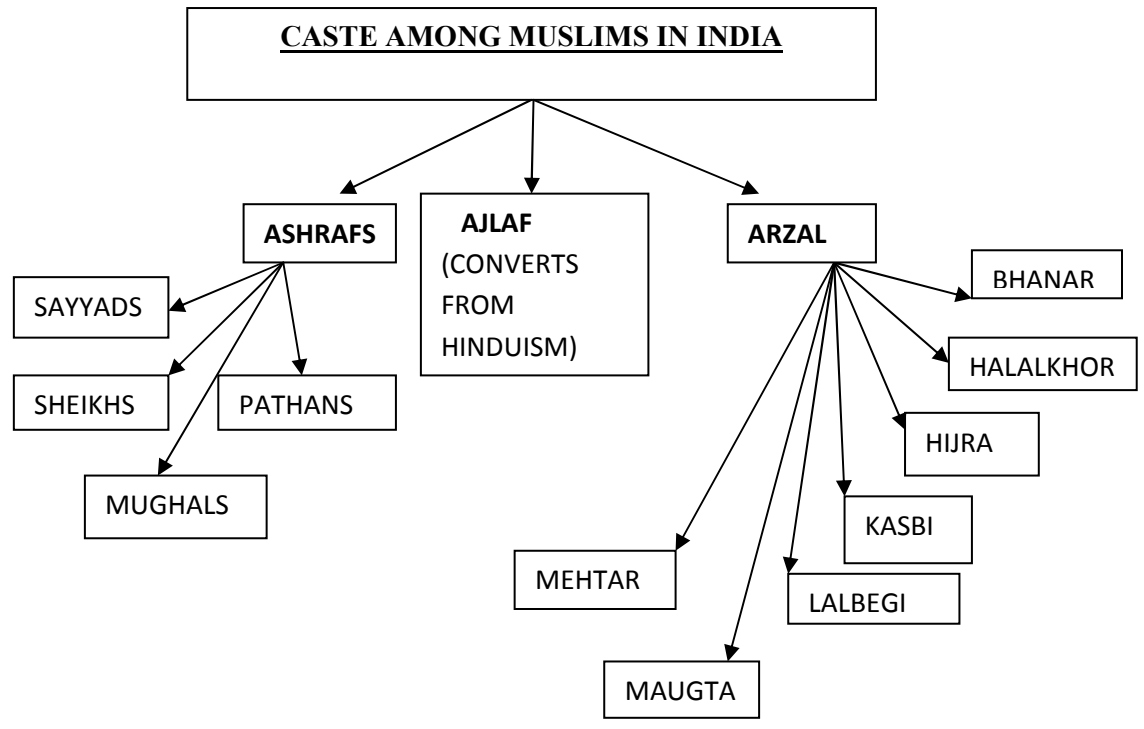
CASTE AMONG SIKHS IN INDIA:

JAT SIKHS

MAZHABI

RAMGARHIA

RAMDASIA

RAVIDASIA

CHAPTER TWO

CASTE AND ITS FACETS

The present chapter focuses on the caste system in India and its various facets. This chapter brings to the fore that caste is also present among non- Hindus in India and also the deeply embedded nature of caste in India's political institution. The triple oppression of a *Dalit* female is also talked about in the chapter along with the caste-class nexus and also the fact that caste system finds its presence even in Diaspora.

In the Discovery of India, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote, "Almost everyone who knows anything at all about India has heard of the caste system; almost every outsider and many people in India condemn it or criticize it as a whole."

No society today can be characterized as being entirely closed, yet there are many societies where the ideology of a closed society is still not a historical relic. India is certainly one such society and the manner in which the caste system is constantly manipulated for sectional and personal advantages is good enough reason to examine the relationship between closed and open systems of stratification in some detail.(Gupta 2000)

Surveying the impact of social and political movements on the Indian caste system in the mid-20th century, theorists of caste were beginning to aver that while castes might still exist, the caste system was dying. Caste groups, they argued, were moving away from their more traditional relationships of socio-economic interdependence, and toward more competitive models of social interaction. Citing the writings of Edmund Leach and F.G. Bailey, Dumont writes: "If interdependence is replaced by competition, caste is dead.... There remain groups that one continues to call 'castes'; but they are set in a different system".

What these theorists of caste do not refer by their focus on Indian village society, however, is the fact that the "substantialization of caste" had, by then, over a century of history in the subcontinent, with roots in colonial strategies

of enumeration and arrays of related projects to produce systematic, statistical knowledge about the people of India. Since these had specific implications for governance and increasingly also for social reform, enumeration and the census played no small role in setting the stage for the substantialization (and politicization) of caste. In privileging the *chaturvarna* system and issues of social precedence and rank over functional explanations, the colonial census effectively reinscribed a Brahmanic ideal of caste, thereby ironically "[giving] rise to a competitive politics that began to make caste the basis for political mobilization on a new scale" in the late-19th and early-20th centuries (Dirks 2001: 235- 6). Strong anti-Brahmin movements emerged in Madras, Mysore and Bombay.

As early as 1918, the Princely State of Mysore instituted what was to become a precursor to modern Indian affirmative action policies: reservations in colleges and state services for non-Brahmin communities or the "backward classes" (Galanter 1984: 27). Indeed, by the 1920s, what Eleanor Zelliot calls the "principle of special attention," was so well established that some caste groups even began educating themselves on how best to answer questions about religious, sectarian, and caste-affiliations (Zelliot quoted in Galanter, 1984:28; Dirks 2001:49). Largely owing to the growing contest over delineations of caste rank, which varied almost as much as caste-relations did amongst the nearly 2.5 million groups listed at the time, caste was eliminated as a category after the 1931 census (Dirks 2001:243).

The word "caste" was first employed by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century to describe the Indian social divisions. The Indian terms Varna (colour) and Jati (birth) emphasise two of the most ancient and fundamental aspects of the institution. Throughout India's long history the principle of Caste, which combines social exclusiveness among groups with a capacity to come together for common concerns, has dominated Indian society and has somehow united people in a common allegiance to a separatist trend. Islam and Christianity have had to accommodate themselves to its pervasive influence in India, and almost every attempt to abolish Caste and to "reform" Indian society has only led to the formation of new castes.

He also describes successively the different aspects of Caste-its structure, its strictures, its sanctions and its functions. Caste is still fluid enough in parts of India for persons to acquire a Caste into which they were not born and for new Castes to come up. Marriage restrictions, an essential feature of the structure of Caste, are exhibited in all of their complexity. The Vedic Varnas were classes rather than Castes, and any attempt to revert to them and do away with the 3000 or more endogamous groups of the Caste system would, if successful, "tend to fix a hard and fast line of social cleavage between classes" and impede the important functions which Caste still performs in the integration of Indian society. Hutton thinks that "the taboo on marriage is the necessary and inevitable outcome of the taboo on food and drink, rather than the cause of it". He rightly points out that the effectiveness of Caste tribunals (panchayats) in their operation depends on the territorial concentration of the Caste, and compares the *huqqa pani* band (pipe, water, stopped). The integration of Indian society has been the primary function of Caste, and "as a scheme of social adjustment it compares rather favorably with the European system of warring territorial nationalities". It has acted also as a political stabilizer and has been called "the only Social System ever proposed upon a basis stronger than Force" and "entirely independent of any form of political government" (p. 105). Again, "it does provide for the various functions necessary to social life, functions ranging from education to scavenging, from government to domestic service of the most menial kind", and this it does under the sanction of religious dogma, belief in Karma. Hutton's surmise that the doctrine of Karma is not inherent in the Caste system but has been grafted onto it in the course of its development to keep the interior and exterior Castes in their respective stations would be difficult to sustain and contradicts the main argument of his book. The treatment of exterior Castes is an obvious blot in the system, and improvement here, to be permanent, must be gradual and peaceful. An excess of males in the population, generally indicative of a declining population, is in India possibly the result of inbreeding resulting from the marriage rules of the Caste system.

Dirks asks in the introduction of his book, Castes of Mind, that why it is that caste has become for so many the core symbol of community in India, whereas for others, even in serious critique, caste is still the defining feature of Indian social organization. As we shall see, views of caste differ markedly: from those who admire the spiritual foundations of a sacerdotal hierarchy to those who look from below and see the tyranny of Brahmans (all the more insidious because of the ritual mystifications that attend domination); from those who view it as the Indian equivalent of community to those who see it as the primary impediment to community. He says that it was under the British that "caste" became a single term capable of expressing, organizing, and above all "systematizing" India's diverse forms of social identity, community, and organization. In short, colonialism made caste what it is today.

British colonialism played a critical role in both the identification and the production of Indian "tradition". Current debates about modernity and tradition fail to appreciate the extent to which the beliefs, customs, practices, and convictions that have been designated as traditional are in fact the complicated byproduct of colonial history. Bernard Cohn has argued that the British simultaneously misrecognized and simplified things Indian, imprisoning the Indian subject into the typecast role it assigned under the name of tradition: "in the conceptual scheme which the British created to understand and to act in India, they constantly followed the same logic;…India was redefined by the British to be a place of rules and orders; then the Indians had to conform to these constructions" (Cohn, 1996).

When figures such as Ambedkar in western India or Periyar in the south organized political movements around caste, they worked to transform both the cultural meanings and the political uses of caste in ways that went well beyond the colonial mandate.

Under colonialism, caste was thus made out to be far more- far more pervasive, far more totalizing, and far more uniform- than it had ever been before, at the same time that it was defined as a fundamentally religious social order. In fact, however, caste had always been political- it had been shaped in fundamental ways by political

struggles and processes; even so, it was not a designation that exhausted the totality of Indian social forms, let alone described their essence.

The idea that Varna- the classification of all castes into four hierarchical orders with the Brahman on top- could conceivably organize the social identities and relations of all Indians across the civilizational expanse of the subcontinent was only developed under the peculiar circumstances of British colonial rule. Hierarchy, in the sense of rank or ordered difference, might have been a pervasive feature of Indian history, but hierarchy in the sense used by Dumont and others became a systematic value only under the sign of the colonial modern. (Dirks 2001)

According to Dirk 'the way British officials understood caste reflected in the census categorization and enumeration, and it affected the way caste was practiced. This led to some quite innovative relations between Jatis (castes) all over India' (Dirk, 2001:10). Contrary to this proposition, some researchers also believe that it is not correct to say that colonialism created the religious and caste categories in India; they were already present before the arrival of the British, but it did make a difference in the formation of communal and caste identities in the country (Gupta, 2004).

Although complete caste enumeration was discontinued in independent India, there was a strong debate to include caste in the 2001 census in light of the Government of India granting reservation of jobs to the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the early 1990s (Pinto, 1998; Deshpande and Sunder, 1998). This new situation warranted examining the caste question afresh in censuses of both British and independent India.

Since the very first census of 1872 the colonial Government incorporated caste and religious categories in the enumeration of the Indian population. Along with caste, the census also incorporated the categories of tribe and race, but the distinction between them was often obscure. For example Jats and Rajputs two important castes of northern India were also mentioned as tribes in the 1891 census (Baines, 1893). However, as of 1901, the category of tribe was

incorporated for the first time in the census schedule along with race and caste. The category of race or tribe was applied to religious groups not belonging to the Hindu and Jain religions, whereas the category of caste was applied only to Hindus until 1891, and since the 1901 census *Jains* were also added. From the census side, no attempt had been made to define caste, race or tribe. For instance, the Census Commissioner of the 1931 census, J.H. Hutton, clarified that "the term 'caste' needs no definition in India; tribe was provided to cover the many communities still organized on the basis in whose case the tribe has not become a caste; it was likewise determinate enough, and no attempt was made to define the term race which was generally used so loosely as almost to defy any definition." However, the category of race was primarily included to "obtain a return of Indians to whom the terms like 'caste' and tribe are inapplicable" (Hutton, 1931:425).

In independent India, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) were accepted as new official social categories under the provision of article 341 of the Indian Constitution. According to this article, the President of India, after consultation with the Governor of a State/Union Territory (UT), may declare castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races of tribes as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes belonging to that State or UT. The official listing of castes and tribes was justified on the grounds that these social groups have remained underprivileged and discriminated by the higher castes. It was therefore essential for the state to protect their interest. Accordingly, the Govt. of India as well State Governments granted them reservation of jobs and other benefits and privileges. It is believed that the state granting privileges to the SCs and STs has strengthened caste identities. On the other hand, democratic politics based on number gave them a new lease on life, as they constitute nearly one-fourth of India's population (Randeria, 2001).

VARNA AND JATI:

Caste and Varna are two separate concepts. The Hindu theory of social organization has referred to *Varnashram* organization, where Varna and the ashram organizations

are perceived as two separate organizations. Ashram organization refers to the conduct of individual in the world in different stages of life, while the Varna organization refers to the work that an individual would undertake in society according to his position in relation to group and with reference to his innate nature and his tendencies and dispositions. Though in Rig Veda, there is mention of two varnas- *Arya* and *Dasa*- and the division of society into three orders-Brahma(priests), Kshatra(warriors) and Vis(common people) but there is no mention of the fourth order, i.e. Sudras. However, there is a reference to groups despised by the Aryans, like *Ayogya, Chandal*, and *Nishad*, etc. these four orders ultimately became four varnas. There was nothing like lower or higher Varna in the Vedic period. The division of society in four varnas-Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra-was based on the division of labour. Members of each Varna performed different functions, worshiped different deities and followed different rituals but there were no restrictions on the commensal or social relations or even on the change of membership from one to other Varna. Later on, however as pass from the Vedic period (4000-1000 B.C) to the Brahmanic period (230 B.C to 700 A.D), the four Varnas came to be arranged hierarchically, with Brahmans at the top. According to one view, Varna means colour and therefore, perhaps the division of society was based on fair and dark colors respectively. Hutton (1936:66) believes that it is possible that this colour distinction is in some way associated with race. According to Hocart (1950:46), however, the colour has a ritual and not a racial significance.

Like the origin of Varnas, the origin of castes is also explained by scholars like Risley, Ghurye etc., in terms of racial factors but it cannot be said that castes are the sub division of Varnas. The origin of castes has nothing to do with Varnas, though in the process of development of castes, they came to be associated with Varnas. The hierarchy of castes and mobility of a caste came to be stated in Varna terms. Varna, thus, provided a framework which conditioned all Indian thinking about and reaction to caste. Srinivas (1962:69) also suggests that Varna has provided a common social language which holds good for India as a whole, i.e., it has enabled ordinary men and women to grasp the caste system by providing them with a simple and a clear scheme which is applicable to all parts of India. He further holds that the importance of the

Varna system consists in that it furnishes an all India frame into which the jatis occupying the lower rungs have throughout tried to raise their status by taking over the customs and rituals of the top jatis. This has helped the spread of a uniform culture throughout the Hindu society.

The four fold Varna scheme does not readily operate on the ground and because of this; it is often dismissed as a fiction. Varna categorizes Hindus into four orders- Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishyas and Shudra. The reality, however, is that there are thousands of jatis, and not just four varnas. It is at the level of jatis that caste injunctions on marriage, occupation, and social relations are conducted, there is no such jati as Brahman or Vaishya, but a large number of jatis claim to belong to different sections of the Varna system. Thus we have jatis like *Kanyakubja* Brahmans, *Saraswat* Brahmans, *Rrhi* Brahman, *Sarjupari* Brahmans, and so forth. Though they are all Brahmans it is not as if they intermarry, nor is it that all these claims are uniformly accepted, as we have already discovered. In this connection it is necessary to underscore the fact that though Varna categories may not operate with the kind of practical import as jatis do, notions of hierarchy and ascriptive status (based on putative 'natural differences') are clearly spelt out in this fourfold schema. Jatis draw their ideological rationale of purity and pollution, endogamy, commensality, and so forth, from the Varna model (Gupta 2004).

Singh (1974:316) has referred to four approaches to caste by distinguishing between the two levels of theoretical formulation, i.e., cultural and structural, and universalistic and particularistic. These four approaches are: cultural-universalistic, cultural-particularistic, structural-universalistic and structural-particularistic. While Leach (1960) using structural-particularistic view of caste has maintained that caste system is restricted to the Indian society, others who view caste as a structural- universalistic category hold that caste in India is a general phenomenon of a closed form of stratification. The third position of sociologists like Ghurye (1957, 1961) who treat caste as a cultural universalistic phenomenon, particularly in terms of hierarchy which forms the basis for ranking of persons or groups, maintains that caste- like cultural bases of stratification are found in most traditional societies. The fourth view on caste,

that of cultural particularistic is held by Dumont (1966, 1961) who holds that caste is found only in India.

To describe the caste system as it exists in India today. It is necessary to understand that the system, as it operates in most villages is an inheritance from a period when a marital caste protected other castes. When there was continual warfare between rulers or clans as they struggled for territory. In such situations, a local social structure developed which centered about a 'dominant caste'.

M.N. Srinivas first introduced the concept of 'dominant caste'. The concept of dominant caste has been used for the first item in sociological literature by an eminent Indian Sociologist M.N. Srinivas in his essay social system of a Mysore Village, which was written after his study of village Rampur. The concept occupies a key position in the process of 'Sanskritisation' as propounded by the same sociologists in his book, Religion and society among the Coorgs at south India. The term dominant caste is used to refer to a caste which "wields economic or political power and occupies a fairly high position in the hierarchy." These castes are accorded high status and position in all the fields of social life. The people of other lower castes look at them as their 'reference group' and try to imitate their behavior, ritual pattern, custom and ideology.

The interface between the caste system and Hinduism has for long been mediated by a process subsumed under the concept of Sanskritisation propounded and refined by Srinivas. No doubt the concept of Sanskritisation can be and has been contested on empirical as well as theoretical grounds. Nevertheless, the general significance of the logic of Sanskritisation as a cultural process for both the caste system and Hinduism can hardly be denied. On the one hand, Sanskritisation has played what Srinivas calls, a 'cohesive role' vis-à-vis Hinduism. And, on the other hand, it has emphasized the open-ended nature of Hinduism, and the highlighted the 'tremendously flexible' dimension of the 'tremendously persistent' caste system. As a cultural process, Sanskritisation is a pan- Indian phenomenon, and it has even affected non- Hindu groups and communities which have come into contact with Hindus and Hinduism (Omvedt, 1978).

CASTE AMONG NON-HINDUS:

Before independence, the Census Commissioners had reported the existence of caste like endogamous strata and occupational specialization among non- Hindus in India (including present Pakistan). According to N.K Bose (1949, 1951), why Muslims, converted from Hinduism, adhered to caste patterned endogamy and hereditary traditional occupation was because they found in it economic security. Several studies conducted between 1956 and 1965 by R. Gupta (on 'Muslims of a village in North western Uttar Pradesh' in 1956), G.Ansari (on Muslim Castes in Uttar Pradesh in 1960), Z.Ahmed (on 'Muslims Castes in Uttar Pradesh' in 1962), U.Guha (on Rural Bengali Muslims' in 1965), M.K Siddiqui (on 'Caste among Muslims of Calcutta in 1970), Sangare (on Jains in 1959), I.P Singh (on Sikhs in 1958), Schifra Strizower (on Jews in 1959) and by McKim Marriott in 1960s have pointed out the prevalence of caste system among non- Hindus (Sinha, 1974:243). Dumont, Leach, Pocock and Madan studied people outside Indian civilization and found social structural features of caste amongst them. Leach in his study (1960) found caste among Buddhists in Ceylon and Muslims of Swat in Pakistan. Berreman (1966) also have referred to some characteristics of caste system in racial stratification in Europe and America and Pariah castes in Japan.

Along with 'village communities' and 'joint family', 'caste' has often been viewed as a defining feature of' traditional social order' of India. Though it was only in the Hindu religious philosophy that the practice of caste was formally justified, social relations, as the popular sociological understanding of Indian society goes, were organized hierarchically almost everywhere in the sub- continent. The Christians, the Muslims and the Sikhs all practiced caste even when their religions decried it. This was believed to be the case particularly in rural India where caste differentiation was seen to be required for the working of the agrarian economy and for the social integration of the village community. Even conversions of ex-untouchables to another faith did not make any difference to the material relations of production or the social structure of jajmani system.

Imtiaz Ahmad, in his overview of the issues raised in the volume, notes that certain basic features of caste like endogamy, occupational specialization and hierarchy exist among Indian Muslims. There is some belief in purity and pollution but it is quite weak and is determined by regional factors. He also notes that unlike the Hindu caste system, the pattern of stratification among Muslims does not enjoy any ideological sanction or justification. That is because the egalitarian ideology of Islam is at odds with the notion of a pre-ordained hierarchy which is the backbone of caste.

Ahmad concludes by saying that there exists a system of caste among Muslims but it differs from the Hindu mode in certain important respect. This conclusion raises the question whether this system: is due to the influence of Hinduism or there is something in Islam itself which tacitly encourages the idea of-caste. Ahmad's answer is that it is due to the acculturative influence of Hinduism. It says that caste among Indian Muslims is due to the acculturative influence of Islam. Ahmad's overall conclusion is that caste among Indian Muslims is directly due to Hindu influences, but it has been reinforced by the justification offered for the idea of birth and descent as criteria of status in Islamic law. This contradicts his earlier statement to the effect that the acceptance of the caste principle by Indian Muslims does not enjoy any sanction or justification in the Islamic Great tradition. Ahmad also remarks that Islamisation (the process whereby Muslims supposedly purify themselves by shedding un-Islamic customs and practices) serves to reinforce rather than weaken or eliminate caste distinctions. Unfortunately, he does not cite any evidence to substantiate his assertion, which makes it highly questionable. Yogendra Singh (1973) has noted, that the process of Islamisation is essentially directed against the principle of hierarchy and that it tends to Lead to increased egalitarianism (Ahmad 1978).

Islam, supposed to be an egalitarian religion, is not free from castes at least in south Asia. Dumont himself refers to different communities within 'ashrafs', who are supposed to be high caste, and also 'non-ashrafs' who have a lower status. Among the non-ashrafs also, there are three levels of status: '(1) the converts of

superior caste, who are mainly *rajputs* - except for those who have been admitted into the *ashraf*; (2) a large number of professional groups corresponding to the artisan castes of the Hindus, ...;(3) converted untouchables who have preserved their functions. These groups indeed seem to be endogamous... (Dumont 1999:208). There is no commensality also between ashrafs and non-ashrafs, due to difference in their status (ibid: 207). There is caste system among Buddhists of Sri Lanka also. Some *lingayats* claim that they are non-Hindus because they do not accept the Vedas and the Varna dharma, and yet they too are not free from castes and ritual gradation. Basaveshwara (Basavanna), who led the Bhakti movement whose followers became known as *veerashaiva or lingayats* in Karnataka, was truly against caste system. But unfortunately, he could not succeed in preventing caste system among his latter-day 'followers' (Nandkarni 2003).

The largest concentration of Christians in India is in Kerala where they constitute 21% of the population. According to tradition, Christianity was founded in Kerala as early as the first century by Apostole Thomas himself. The modern history of Christians in Kerala to a great extent started with the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. The church was locally administered but its bishops were consecrated at Antioch in the Middle East. Local Christians, who were referred to as '*Nazranis*' and '*Syrian Christians*', occupied a relatively high status in the society. It seems that at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese the Christians in Kerala were a more or less homogeneous caste like group, living within the framework of a caste society.

However, the situation changed with large scale conversions to Christianity in Kerala from the sixteenth century onwards. Conversion to Christianity was mainly from the ranks of lower castes. Even though converts from higher castes were absorbed into the ranks of the Syrian Christians, such integration was not achieved in the case of lower caste converts.

As in other parts of India, caste system was the main feature of the social structure of Kerala. Brahmins occupied the highest rank in it, whereas castes like *Pulayas* and *Parayas* were placed at the lowest rung of the hierarchy. *Nairs* and Syrian (*Nazrani*) Christians occupied a status in the middle of the hierarchy. *Izahavas* (toddy-tappers)

and *Mukkavas* (fishermen) were the important backward castes, ranking between the *Nairs* and the untouchables.

Christians in Kerala are divided into various denominations on the basis of beliefs and rituals, and into various ethnic groups, on the basis of their caste background. Both these factors entered into the regulation of social relations so that active social life was among the members of a denomination belonging to the same caste. However, compared to the caste boundary, the denominational boundaries were weak so that the marital relations were frequent across denominational boundaries, but within the caste boundary. Thus, the marriage between Catholic and *Jacobite Syrian Christians*, between *Jacobite* and *Mar Thoma* was common. But the same relation across the caste boundary, within the same denomination was rare. For example, inter marriages between Latin and Syrian Catholics are rare. So also marriages between lower caste *Marthomites* and *Syrian Marthomites* never take place in the *Mar Thoma* Church.

However, even after conversion, the lower caste converts were continued to be treated as *Harijans,* by all sections of the society, including the Syrian Christians, even though with conversion the former ceased to be legally *Harijan* and untouchables. Lack of integration between Syrian Christians and converts from lower castes is revealed both at the social as well as its denominational level. The old Christians are known as Syrian Christians whereas the *Harijan* converts are known as *Putu* Christians (Neo Christians), *Chermar* Christians, *Pulaya* Christians, etc. Conversion to Christianity for many of the *Pulayas* was merely a change of name and adoption of a Christian name without a corresponding modification in their religious beliefs and behavioral pattern. For many it was the material benefits that accrued through conversion which were the dominant motives for conversion and this might have been the reason why conversion very often failed to bring about the changes in their religious beliefs and practices and thus even today caste as a form of stratification is present among Christians.

Similarly there is caste within Sikhism also although the superiority or inferiority was not recognized in Sikhism when it was founded. The holy book of the Sikhs, the *Adi Granth,* succeeded the tenth guru as the guru of the Sikhs, contain writings not only of

the Sikh gurus, but also of the Hindu and Muslim *bhagats* belonging to various castes: tailor- Namdev, butcher- Sadhan, vaisya-Trilochan and etc Sikh religion tried to establish a casteless society and took into its fold persons belonging to various caste giving them equal status but there exists caste in Sikhism in contemporary times as the people belonging to various caste professing Sikhism may be divided broadly into two groups: the *Sardar* (the upper castes) and the *Mazhbis* (the scavengers). The first group includes the agriculturists as well as the artisans e.g. *Jats, Kambohs, tarkhans, sunars, cheemba and nais.* These caste groups can be identified in the same manner as in a Hindu village and the membership of each caste is confined only to members born into it. The *Sardars* can be sub divided into two groups- agriculturists and traders. Since the predominant numbers of Sikhs are agriculturists Jats, they consider themselves to be superior to traders and other castes. Most of the Sikh values are Jat values and they assert that they occupy the highest position among the Sikh castes. Their claim is strengthened by the fact that they are masters of the land, and some of them even belong to the ex-ruling families of Punjab. Ownership of land is definitely a major criterion for determining the status of various people in Indian villages as most of its adherents are agriculturists, who at one time were warriors and conquered large tracts of land. (Singh 1977)

CASTE AND POLITICS:

While rejecting the recommendations of the Mandal Commission for caste based reservation I P Desai coherently argues his case in favour of class based reservations (Economic and Political Weekly, July 14, 1984). His argument is based on two counts. One, he believes that if the state accepts caste as the basis for backwardness, it legitimizes the caste system which contradicts secular principles. Two, he observes that the traditional caste system has broken down and contractual relationships between individuals have emerged.

Everyone recognizes that the traditional social system in India was organized around caste structures and caste identities. In dealing with the relationship between caste and politics, however, the doctrinaire modernizer suffers from a serious xenophobia. He begins with a question: is caste disappearing? Now surely, no social system disappears

like that. A more useful point of departure would be: what form is caste taking under the impact of modern politics and what form is politics taking in a caste oriented society. Those in India who complain of 'casteism in politics' is really looking for a sort of politics which has no basis in society. They also probably lack any clear conception of either the nature of politics or the nature of the caste system. (Kothari 1995)

Several decades prior to Indian independence, then, "the caste system" of academic writings was already giving way to a system of another kind, based on the politics of recognition, in which castes increasingly become corporate identities vying with one-another for recognition and resources, all through an emergent discourse about "backwardness." This transformation was evident even in the manner in which caste society was categorized by the modern Indian State: onto the more traditional Varna-jati distinctions was mapped a new caste nomenclature, which divided society into forward Castes (usually Brahmins and other propertied communities) and Backward Classes (BCs), and Scheduled Castes and Schedules Tribes (SCs and STs). The long and complicated history of the evolution of these new categories reflects the complex diversity of caste practices across the country and the difficulties of determining the constitution of "backwardness" at any level beyond the most intimately local.

Interestingly, at the national level the new nomenclature developed from the bottom up, with the first groups to be specifically identified being the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Once both lumped together in a category of "depressed classes," these groups continued to be described in terms of "untouchability" (itself variously defined) until long after 1936, when they were scheduled by the British. At that time the castes were listed for purposes of giving effect to the provisions for special electoral representation in the Government of India Act, 1935," and the tribes "to permit a policy of insulating them from exploitative or demoralizing conduct with more sophisticated outsiders" (Galanter,1984:130,147). But if these groups were relatively straightforward to identify, the same was not true of the Backward communities, since the term "Backward" had been used variously as a descriptor of educational and

economic backwardness (identifying all those in need of special treatment) as well as caste backwardness, to signify an intermediary status between "forward "communities and "untouchables," and as a synonym for "untouchables."

Following the listing of the Scheduled communities, Galanter observes, two usages of the term become apparent: the first is broader, including all groups who are educationally and economically backward; the second more specifically the "stratum higher than the untouchables," but still not forward (1984:159), nowadays referred to--quite confusingly-as the category of Other Backward Classes (OBCs). "Backwardness" had very specific meaning in local contexts, but remained "vague and unprecedented" at the national level, with "no definite meaning," and with no backward class organizations or spokespeople to "attempt to define it or employ it" (Dirks 2001:281; Galanter 1984:159).

Nonetheless, the Commission produced a list of 2,399 backward communities in 1955, recommending that the upcoming 1961 census gather caste-related data, and indeed that women, too, be regarded as the equivalent of a backward community. When Kalekar submitted the Committee's report to the President, however, he effectively disavowed its conclusions by suggesting "it would have been better if we could determine the criteria of backwardness on principles other than caste" (quoted in Galanter 1984:172). In this, he reflected not just his own views, but also those of other members of the Commission who had previously recorded their dissent. The Home Minister would later remark that such emphasis on caste as the Report had would only heighten the "dangers of separatism," and that although caste was without doubt the bane of Indian society, the official recognition of specific castes would serve only to perpetuate, and not to dismantle, caste as a social institution (Galanter 1984:173). The Report was introduced in Parliament, but tabled indefinitely. Consequently, in 1961, the Home Ministry delegated the responsibility of evolving criteria on backwardness to individual States, ordering that lists of backward communities be drawn up, and State quotas of reservation be fixed accordingly. Within the next decade, ten

states had followed the Ministry's order, and reservations for the educationally and socially "backward" were becoming commonplace (Chatterji 1996: 296-7). At the same time as the debate over the issue of reservations was separating and classifying caste groups, caste organizations were drawing these same diverse groups together politically. The late 1960s and 70s were years of Marxist agitations and Communist Party-led agrarian uprisings all over India, largely in response to the failures of post-independence land reforms to effectively dismantle feudalism. A Marxist group calling itself the Dalit Panthers- clearly inspired by the Black Panther movement in the United States-was one such, convened in Maharashtra in 1972, at the same time as Dalit writers were transforming the literary landscape through "little magazines" movements. While such movements emerged quite independently of one-another, they were each in some measure spurred by the perceived failure of the Republican Party of India to speak to the interests of the "Dalit masses," and the emergence of backward caste "kulaks" and a new class-caste hierarchy in the reorganized agrarian landscape. At least some Dalit Panther ideologues and several Marathi Dalit writers therefore linked the issue of untouchability with that of class, finding natural allies amongst the poor of any religious or caste group: otherwise put, their critique was far more anti-bourgeois than anti-Brahmin (Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998:214). By the time that Kanshi Ram established the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP; literally, "Party of the Majority") just over a decade later in Uttar Pradesh, however, the foci of caste- based politics were clearly shifting. On one level, there was still the critique of new class hierarchies among caste groups, this time those that were being produced by State-adopted policies of reservation. The BSP was also instrumental in gradually expanding the term "Dalit" into "Dalit-bahujan," borrowing terminology from the non-Brahmin movements of the 1920s in order to forge a political unity between Dalits, OBCs, and indeed also (religious) minorities (Omvedt 1996: 343). But the rhetoric of Dalit-bahujan social critique was growing ever stronger, and it was focused far less on class than on caste: one BSP slogan claims "naming all the upper castes thieves, and all the rest victimized-but now politically organized-Dalits." Even cursory analysis of BSP

rhetoric indicates that the Party saw only one battle-line, and it fell between the upper castes and Dalit bahujans. In fact, the BSP's critique of class was interestingly framed in terms of caste, representing a near-complete reversal of the Dalit Panthers' analysis: even though the ruling classes were by now comprised of diverse castes thanks to reservations, Kanshi Ram argued, ruling ideologies were still Brahminical, and it was this Brahmin hegemony, far more than caste structures themselves, that needed to be dismantled.(Reddy 2005)

The politics of caste-based reservations gained an added edge with the decision of the union government in 1989 to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission Report extending the reservation of government jobs for the 'backward classes'. The reservation of jobs and seats in educational institutions has now become a politically sensitive issue. No political party can afford to oppose reservations as it may lose its popular base by doing so. To gain popular support, political parties now compete with each other to extend reservations to castes hitherto excluded from the list of scheduled castes or backward classes. Just as pressure to accommodate more and more castes in the reserved categories grows, resentment has been building among castes that have not been able to take advantage of the reservation policy. Leaders of these castes complain that the more educated and socially advantaged castes in the reserved categories have monopolised the privileges of reservation. Hence, there is now a trend to demand separate quotas for each of the castes within the reserved categories. This trend is sharpening the identity of castes and of even sub castes within castes. In Tamil caste riots of Tamil Nadu, widespread caste riots of early 1990s demonstrated the emotional appeal that these identities have acquired as well as the inability of the state apparatus to put them down. Another recent trend in Tamil Nadu politics is the emergence of political parties formed specifically to cater to the interests of particular castes or sub castes among the backward classes and the scheduled castes. Thus, the policies aimed at eradicating caste seem to have succeeded in reinventing a state sponsored caste system that is elaborating itself along caste and even sub caste lines. The difference that this new officially recognized version

of caste system has vis-a-vis the traditional caste system is that it is organised around modem, egalitarian politics.

Another dimension of the politics of reservations has been the demand for extension of reservations to members of backward castes and of former untouchable castes among the Muslims and Christians. This demand also reflects the reality that conversion does not wipe out caste discrimination. Not so long ago, church leaders as well as Muslim clergy were unwilling to admit that widespread caste discrimination prevailed in their respective religions. Unfortunately, this demand does not find favour with the castes that are already enjoying the privilege. If the forthcoming Durban conference accepts the view that caste discrimination is a form of racial discrimination the demand of Christian dalits for inclusion in the scheduled castes category will gain strength. (Panini 2001)

CASTE AND GENDER:

The significance of gender in understanding the caste system and the way caste impinges on women's lives is increasingly drawing the attention of scholars of various hue. A plethora of writings has emerged in the recent years that attempt to understand the intricacies of operation of caste, patriarchy and gender in interaction to one another. The context of this academic shift is manifold. On one hand, scholarly parlance of caste has changed a great deal leading to questioning of dominant models of caste system. On the other hand, upsurge of identity movements, the articulations and claims put forward by the hitherto marginalized sections for inclusion and autonomy has posed challenges to various "universal" claims.

The basic priorities and problems, for Dalit women are different from both upper caste women and Dalit men. They share the brunt of Dalithood equally along with their men in sharing the pain and agony perpetuated by the Brahamanical society, their problems are multifaceted. Unequal wages, food, living, shelter, basic dignities of life, sexual abuse by upper caste men, are some of the problems faced by her. However, a Dalit woman is marching ahead to write her own destiny. Dalit feminism's emergence in the nineties accounts the culmination of the trials and tribulations of these women.

Leela Dube emphasizes on the male dimension of the link between caste and occupation. The occupational contribution of women has generally received only cursory treatment when it is not been totally ignored. Since the1950s, the concepts of purity and impurity have been seen as central to caste not only in indicating the rank of a jati in the local hierarchy but also in several other areas. Women are more directly concerned with purity- impurity than men, and the kitchen may be described as the heart of the purity- impurity system. It is women who have to prepare and serve the food, and among many castes they have to be ritually pure while handling food. The rank of a caste depends on the avoidance of some impure foods (and liquor). Food is an important part of domestic ritual and it varies according to caste and domestic traditions. Women are expected to know the special foods that need to be prepared for each important ritual, and women are the *de facto* custodians of tradition.

Punishment for the violation of the rules of purity- impurity in matters of food and sex operate far more harshly against women than men. As Leela Dube puts it, 'Sexual asymmetry (between men and women) is bound up with the maintenance of the hierarchies of caste.' Also, 'caste is not dead. Gender is a live issue. The principles of caste inform the nature of sexual asymmetry in Hindu society, and hierarchies of caste are articulated by gender' (Srinivas, 1996).

Family structure and patterns of kinship are tied to the institution of caste. In the caste system the fact that membership of discrete and distinct groups is defined by birth entails a concern with boundary maintenance through regulation of marriage and sexual relations. Although group placement in most of Hindu India is governed by the principle of patrilineal descent, in the attribution of caste status to the child the caste of the mother is not irrelevant. The onus of boundary maintenance falls on women because of their role in biological reproduction. Caste, then, imparts a special character to the process of growing up female in Indian society (Dube, 1988).

Uma Chakravarti points out that a marked feature of Hindu society is its legal sanction for an extreme of social stratification in which women and the lower castes have been subjected to humiliating conditions of existence. Caste hierarchy and gender hierarchy

are the organizing principles of the Brahmanical social order and despite their close inter connections; neither scholars of the caste system nor the feminist scholars have attempted to analyze the relationship between the two. Uma Chakravarti with a critical insight asserts that "purity of women has a centrality in brahmanical patriarchy because the purity of caste is contingent upon it." (Chakravarti, 1993)

The caste system restricted and suppressed female sexuality with the concept of endogamy. Thus, gender was and is crucial to the maintenance of reproduction of caste inequalities.

The principle cause of Dalit women's oppression is the caste factor, which correlates with patriarchy. At the outset Dalit women is located at the lowest ebb of the caste hierarchy. That is why she is triply exploited in terms of caste, class and gender. It is because of this structural location the Dalit woman was accorded statuses like- *Devadasi*, *Dai* (midwife), *Dayan* (witch) etc. It will be worth mentioning the wretched condition of the Dalit women in the different aspect of the Indian society here.

Analyzing the exploited situation of Dalit women Omvedt argues that, "the Dalit girls were dedicated to the goddess *Yellama/Renuka*…Following this 'marriage to the god' most of the girls remained in their own village; they were considered accessible to any men but at the same time not bound to or polluted by sexual relations…These girls were as '*Murali*' and among *Mahars*, '*Matangi*' among the *Madigas* and '*Basavi*' among *Holeyas*…whatever the 'matriarchal' or 'matrilineal' remnants that can be seen in the custom, by late feudal times it also helped to institutionalize the sexual accessibility of the Dalit women for higher caste men (Omvedt 1994:72). Vijayshree (2004) explains the prevalence of custom of *Devadasi* among Dalits. She argues that because of the existential condition of *Devadasis- Sule/Sami* customs in the Telugu speaking area*, Jogin or Basavi* in Andhra and Karnataka calls them as 'Outcaste sacred prostitutes'. There was no ritual space for them and marginalization was more starkly signified through the imposition of beginning as they were not granted land rights, she opines. Further, she explains that outcaste *Devdasis* were forced to dance

during funeral procession and were forced into prostitution as they had no alternative way of earning once they were out of their youth.

Bhriggs has also highlighted the vulnerable condition of Dalit women in his study of *Chamars*- an untouchable caste of North India. He wrote in 1920s that, "There are other social customs, more or less objected to but often allowed and not considered wrong, which are gradually disappearing under modern conditions. Such are the jus prima noctics of landlords and gurus. The Zamindar often has liberties with *Chamar's* wife in consideration of his payments to the *Chamar*. Further in Tamil Nadu, Rudolph & Rudolph (1987:39) have also revealed the pathetic condition of *Shanan* women in the area. They argued that a riot broke out in 1858 when *Shanan* women emulated to cover their breasts like locally dominant Nair caste. The next year, Sir Charles Terevelyan, the governor of madras, granted them permission to wear a cloth over their breasts and shoulders. The hegemony on the Dalit women has been so overpowering that even as late as 2002, Arun (2007) while doing his field work among the *Paraiyars*-a Dalit caste of Tamil Nadu, reported that the older *Paraiyar* women do not wear blouse and Sandals in front of higher castes of the village.

Apart for this, looking at the occupations of the Dalit women, they range from cleaning of human excreta to helping women of every caste in her delivery she performs unique occupation in which women of other castes do not perform. For instance at every household birth, especially in the villages the Dalit women performs the role of Dai (midwife). According to pinto (2006: 214)," …this work…involves tasks which others (including, usually, the persons who delivered the baby) do not perform: cutting the umbilical cord, removing trash and offal, rubbing the baby with dirt, massaging the baby and mother, and bathing the infant…These women remove pollution from home by removal of trash" . In certain areas the Dalit women clean human excreta on their heads just for few *Chapatis*a days or she collects the *Joothan* (left over) from some party organized at her client's house (Valmiki 2003).

CASTE AND CLASS:

Caste and class are the two integral aspects of Indian social structure. Both are inter related in such a way, that they are regarded as the most significant social formation in Indian society. Caste and class are not polar opposites. Due to factors there are some aspects of caste which have undergone changes. As Y.Singh notes, "caste has been a dynamic system full of adaptation, accretion, contradictions and transformation, hence resilience and change."

Andre Beteille suggested a sort of modification of the caste model. He emphasized on the study of economic and political conflicts with certain degree of autonomy for the economic and political activities of inter caste relations. As he notes, "The hierarchies of caste, class and power in the village overlaps to some extent, but also cut across."

In his study of the village of Sripuram in Tanjore district of Tamil Nadu, Beteille noticed the phenomena of status incongruence. Here, he found that traditional upper caste owned land and monopolized political power in the village. But now due to various institutional changes they have lost control in political affairs to inter-mediate castes without losing their land to any substantial extent. Beteille also states that many areas of social life are now becoming to some extent caste free." (Beteille, 1965).

Neither caste nor class can give a full understanding of Indian society. Although rigidity was highly marked in the ancient period, but mobility and migration was also in vogue. Caste is becoming increasingly segmentary in nature. Various aspects of the caste are becoming differentiated. Many new elements are absorbed into the system. It has encountered innumerable diverse situations. This has added to its uniqueness.

According to Beteille, the significant characteristics of caste are its hereditary nature, the pursuit of traditional occupations, hierarchical rank, and endogamy (Beteille, 1965). As mentioned earlier, four *varna*s make up the Hindu caste system: Brahmins (priests and professionals such as teachers and doctors), Kshatriyas (warrior groups), Vaishyas (business persons and money lenders), and Shudras (service occupations and laborers). The "Untouchables" operate outside this system. This is the formal

theoretical division of caste, which also extends beyond Hinduism and leads to a hierarchy of "pollution and ritual" status in other religions as well. In everyday life in India, the division of caste is not so rigid, nor is it restricted to these five categories. Each *Varna* is further divided into *jati*s. Thousands of *jati*s can exist among and across each *Varna,* and these *jati*s too may be ranked by ritual purity, at least theoretically. In practice, however, many of these *jati*s may be considered to be at similar levels for the purpose of social interaction and so on (Srinivas, 2003). Class is one of the most vigorously debated concepts in the social sciences. In contrast to hereditary caste, class has generally been "defined primarily by property, wealth, occupation, income, and education." Because the literature on caste has often theorized the association of caste with occupation. It is necessary to emphasize that here class is conceptualized as an objective measure, rather than subjectively. That is to say that it is not based on any notions of identity or class consciousness. Castes have been historically associated with particular occupations, and any movement of a caste from its hereditary occupation to another has been treated as a form of social mobility within the caste structure. Some authors have concluded that the type of occupational mobility is quite restricted.

With modernization, it is expected that besides the dwindling of importance of characteristics such as one's father's class, as is theorized in the West, in India caste will also decline in significance in job recruitment. Srinivas seems to support this view, but he extends the argument beyond economic liberalization to include various changes that are occurring simultaneously such as the "spread of education" and "political mobilization of the people," which have spurred declining relations between "jati and traditional occupations." He adds: "Even where it lingers in an attenuated form, monetization and market forces have combined to free economic relations from the baggage which they have traditionally carried." (Srinivas, 2003). Srinivas's view of the changes that liberalization and modernization may bring to the caste system is not universally supported.

There are certain characteristics within caste which are class like and vice-versa. There is a shift of power from one caste to another. This is the case in other parts of India

also. The intermediate and lower caste groups have emerged in the new power structure. The upper castes have considerably lost their power in the new situation. This can be related to Andre Beteille's findings of Tanjore village. There incongruities existed between caste, class and power statuses.

The fact is that Marxist and radical scholars have reacted against the overemphasis on caste and its idealistic interpretation by bourgeois scholars by tending to deny, in practice, its reality. Caste is seen simply as an element of the superstructure and so neglected; as an "appearance" that can be discarded to get at the under-lying class or national "reality"; as a secondary (cultural) category that can be superimposed on an analysis after "class" has been discussed; as a conspiratorial (hence ideological, political, that is, superstructural) weapon of capitalists, landlords and kulaks used to divide the working class. This is inadequate, and in fact erroneous.

Most Marxists today probably agree in seeing caste as an aspect of Indian feudalism, so that a struggle against caste is a crucial part of the democratic movement, a struggle that requires wiping out the material base of feudalism (particularly in agrarian relations) as well as cultural "survivals." In fact, the specificity of the feudal mode of production in India was largely related to "caste"; to the role of the jajmani/balutedari system, to the relations between high caste landlords and low caste serfs and tenants. Caste, in other words, existed not simply at the level of the cultural superstructure not only in terms of "ideas" of purity and pollution or "rules" about intermarriage and interdining but as part of the relations of production themselves. And when feudalism was maintained in a trans-formed form under colonial rule, caste also was maintained at the level of "economic" relations as well. But we need to know exactly how this was true, what the specific characteristics of Indian feudalism were, how precisely these were transformed in the process of being subjugated to and maintained under colonial rule and also under post-colonial imperialism (Omvedt, 1978).

CASTE AND DIASPORA:

It is true," that caste as increasingly an aspect of culture rather than of social stratification per se..."(Jain 2003). But caste identities were (are) strong within the Indians Diaspora which restrict the interaction pattern of non-dalit with the dalit Diaspora. For instance, "there is evidence that some of the traditional methods of showing differences between status still exists. Thus in Trinidad the residence of lower castes is restricted. In South Africa there [persists] some idea about unclean occupations. There is also some restricted commensality, for example that of the Trinidad in Brahmin priests as rituals, or the Guyanese who told Singer that he would not eat in the home of a low-caste, and restricted feeding of Valmikis in East Africa"(Jain 1993: 15-16). Similarly, "...in Wolverhampton the customer refused to take the change from the vendor lest he found their touch polluting and instead that the change be placed on the counter to avoid contact. On the factory floor, again in Wolverhampton, we know of women of so-called upper caste jats not taking water from the same tap from where the so-called lower caste person drink...(in another incident of practice of untouchability) the Sikh temples hold annual inter-temple sports tournaments. One such tournament was held in Birmingham where the '*Langar*' (sanctified food) will be served by one of the participating temples who happened to be belonging to the *Ravidasia* community. Whilst their teams participated in the tournament but the *langar* did not get eaten by the jats because it came from the "*chamars"* (VODI Report 2000:73). Ironically, this persistence of caste distinction has not been wiped out even with inter-caste marriages between dalits and non-dalits. Jain (2003:74) saw this when he revisited Tamil plantation frontier in Malaysia in 1998-1999. He argues" also the stigma of casted did not die out completely. Women of high caste married to low caste men when they reached the age of 34-35. (When the men were ageing, their wives still enjoyed health and youth superior to their husbands. They looked down upon their husbands. They looked upon the latter, and even told their children how their fathers were of a lower caste than them.)

The Indian Diaspora is not a monolithic whole and is divided on caste lines and in a way replicate Indian society abroad. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of Indian

Diaspora, based on caste identity is a need of the hour. Secondly, the dalit Diaspora has helped the dalit community to use the most advanced technology - computers, internet, web sites, etc, for the development of their community in this era of globalization; otherwise there has been nothing to cheer for them in this era. Thirdly the whole process has broken the national boundaries and taken the dalit movement to international level with the help of dalits in the India can successfully pressurize the inter-national funding and law-making agencies like IMF, World Bank, United Nations, Asian Development Bank, etc, to ask Indian government to take up dalit issues in the right earnest (Kumar, 2004).

Explaining the process of globalization, Oommen (2003) has emphasized that increase in the impact of a common communication system in the current epoch, has converted the universe into a 'world society'. However, he argues that a world culture is different from a world society. It is different because there are four interrelated processes involved in the creation of what is called the global culture. These are: homogenization; pluralisation; traditionalisation; and hybridization. Hence, to understand the impact of globalization on the Indian society, it is very important to look at how these four processes are at work. In this context, Oommen emphasizes that the vast network of communication system which produces a world society results in the process of homogenization. That means the traits; culture or institutions have all become global.

It is clear that with the onset of globalization and its supplementary processes of liberalization, privatization and revolution in information and communication technology, the state is rolling back. This has resulted in substantial reduction of jobs not only in different sectors of government, but in the private sector as well. By granting reservation of jobs in each public sector enterprise, Dalits were ensured their share in the sector prior to introduction of the policy of privatization (Kumar, 2007).

Closely linked to ideas of family background and the implications they have for the exclusion of davits and other marginal groups of Indian society are pronounced regional stereotypes. Not only do HR managers have firm ideas about the qualities that different regions inculcate in their inhabitants, they worry about the social

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consequences both of throwing workers together in unbalanced combinations of antagonistic local groups or about the opposite: solidarity within the workforce, based on caste, tribe, or village membership, in the service of opposition to management.

The practice of screening applicants based on family background, almost by definition will create employment barriers for davits, OBC's and others for whom historic (and contemporary) patterns of discrimination have made it difficult for family members to assemble desirable educational or occupational biographies. Of the 160 million davits in India, the majority are rural, landless laborers. Even those living in towns and cities are more likely to be employed in the informal economy and their children invariably go to state-run non-English medium schools.

values on developing countries and destroying local cultures and traditions, but this is an example of one the many positive sides of globalization - it's changing India's thousand year old caste system, for the better (Jodhka and Newman, 2007).

SUMMARY:

This chapter talks about various facets of caste as can be seen in Indian society. The differentiation between 'varna' and 'jati' is also explicitly discussed in the chapter to bring out the difference between the two often confused terms related to the Indian caste system. The relationship between caste and politics, as it existed and as is exists, has also been discussed in the chapter. Rajni Kothari talks about the importance of caste issue in Indian political scenario. The process of politics is one of identifying and manipulating existing structures in order to mobilize support and consolidate positions. Since the caste structure provides one of the most important organizational clusters in India, politics must strive to organize itself through such a structure. The alleged casteism in politics is nothing but politicization of caste. The existence of caste among Hindus along with non- Hindus is also brought to the fore along with the triple oppression of a dalit female in our society. This chapter also discusses the importance of caste in Diaspora also, which shows that being educated and even after attaining social mobility in terms of 'class' is no guarantee of not believing in the caste system. The nexus between caste and class is also looked upon in the above chapter.

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A CHRONOLOGICAL VIEW OF MAHATMA PHULE'S LIFE EVENTS:

1827	Born
1834-1838	Education in Panthoji's school.
1840	Married to Savitribai.
1841-1847	Primary education (English) in Missionary school.
1847	Study of Thomas Paine's book, 'Rights of Man'.
1848	Humiliation at marriage of an upper caste friend; started school for girls of Shudras and Atishudras.
1849	Left home because of the oath to educate the Shudras.
1851	Started girl's school at Chiplunkar's wada.
1852	Felicitated for his contribution in the field of education.
1854	Joined Scottish school as part time teacher.
1855	Started night school.
1858	Took retirement from management board of school.
1860	Helped in remarriage of widows.
1863	Started infanticide prohibition homes.
1868	Opened the well of his house for the 'untouchables'.
1873	Formation of Satya Shodhak Samaj.
1875	Report of Pune's branch of Satya Shodhak Samaj.
1877	Member of Pune municipality.
1882	Made presentation to Hunter Education Commission.
1883	Wrote, 'Shetkarayacha Aasud'
1888	Felicitated by public and honored with the title of 'MAHATMA'.
1889	Started writing the book, 'Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Poostak'
1890	Death of Mahatma Phule.

A CHRONOLOGICAL VIEW OF MAHATMA GANDHI'S LIFE EVENTS:

2nd October, 1869	**Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) was born Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, in India, into a family of merchants ('Mahatma' meaning 'great soul').**
1888	**Mahatma Gandhi, breaking with caste tradition, went to England to study law when he was 19.**
1891	**Mahatma Gandhi retuned to India from England.**
1893	**Mahatma Gandhi left India for South Africa where he was to stay for 20 years. He was the country's first 'coloured' lawyer to be admitted to the bar.**
1894	**Mahatma Gandhi, deeply troubled by racism towards Indians, founded the Natal Indian Congress to agitate for Indian rights.**
1906	**Mahatma Gandhi, announced he would go to jail or even die before obeying an anti-Asian law. Thousands of Indians joined him in this civil disobedience campaign.**
1913	**Mohandas K Gandhi arrested for leading Indian miners march in South Africa.**
1914	**Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, and began campaigning for home rule and the reconciliation of all classes and religious groups**
1919	**Gandhi announces resistance against Rowlatt Act. Gandhi became a leader in the newly-formed Indian National Congress party.**
1922	**British magistrates in India sentence Mahatma Gandhi to 6 years for disobedience.**
1924	**Mahatma Gandhi is released from jail having served only 2 years of his 6 year sentence.**
1930	**Mahatma Gandhi leads a 200 meter (300 km) march leading thousands of Indians to the Indian ocean to make their own salt, protesting at the British salt monopoly and the salt tax, was jailed for the second time because of his involvement in the salt protest.**
1931	**Gandhi and British viceroy Lord Irwin sign a pact.**
1932	**British East Indies Viceroy Willington arrests Gandhi and Nehru.**
1936	**Pundit Jawaharlal follows Gandhi as chairman of India Congress Party.**
1942	**British arrests Indian nationalist Mohandas K Gandhi.**
1944	**Gandhi is freed from prison.**
1947	**Mahatma Gandhi begins march for peace in East-Bengal**
1948	**Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), aged 78, was on the way to a prayer meeting, when he was shot three times in the chest by a fellow Hindu, Nathuram Godse, who felt that Gandhi had betrayed the Hindu cause.**

A CHRONOLOGICAL VIEW OF PERIYAR'S LIFE EVENTS:

1879	BORN
1889	His school career ended within 5 years.
1895	He used to hear Tamil Vaishnav religious Gurus talks on mythologies at his house, enjoying hospitability of his parents. As a boy, he started questioning the contradictions and absurdities in the fables of Hindu deities spread by the Arya Race i.e., Brahmins for subjugating Dravidian Race.
1905	Starts Selfless social services.
1919	Mr. P. Varadharajulu Naidu and Mr. C. Rajagopalachariyar persuaded Periyar to join the Indian National Congress party led by Mr. M.K. Gandhi. Resigning the Chairmanship of Erode Municipality, Periyar enrolled himself as member of that party.
1920	He ardently participated in the Non-Co-operation movement launched against the British rule by "Mahatma" Gandhi.
1924	Fight for social justice
1926	He participated in many Non-Brahmin Conferences held at various places of Tamil Nadu and propagated the principles of his SELF-RESPECT Movement to kindle the awakening of the Dravidian race for freeing themselves from the slavery of Brahmins.
1927	Periyar met the Congress leader M.K. Gandhi at Bangalore and strongly argued that unless the poisonous caste-system called "Varnashrama Dharma" was uprooted, the eradication of the "Untouchability" stubbornly practised by the Brahmins could not at all be made possible.
1929	The first provincial conference of Self-Respect Movement was organised by Periyar at Chengalpattu.
1930	At Erode, the Second Provincial Conference of the Self Respect Movement was convened by Periyar.
1931	Periyar started his Journey to Europe from Chennai.
1934	The reputed Socialist leader later known as 'Lok Nayak' JAYA PRAKASH NARAYAN met Periyar at his residence and requested him to join the Socialist Party.
1940	He met Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR and MOHAMMED ALI JINNAH in Bombay. Mr. C.N. ANNADURAI (affectionately called as 'Anna'), accompanied him.
1950	He declared the Republic Day, 26-1-1950, as a Mourning Day for Tamils.
1954	Periyar convened the Conference on Buddhism at Erode.
1958	Against the caste system, another big agitation was started by Periyar. a campaign was started to erase the word Brahmin in all Brahmin Hotels in Tamil Nadu. As a result of this agitation, the name 'Brahmin' in the hotel-name-boards disappeared.

	Periyar was arrested as a case was foisted on him by the Govt. of Tamil Nadu that he exhorted his followers to attack the Brahmins in his speeches delivered at Pasupathipalayam (Karur), Kulitalai and Tiruchirapalli and was sentenced to undergo imprisonment for 6 months by the District Sessions Court at Tiruchirapalli.
	Periyar and Ram Manohar Lohia, the Socialist leader of North India, met at Chennai and discussed their social and political service to the people.
1960	He burnt the map of India excluding Tamil Nadu, explaining that the Central Government Raj is a Brahmin Raj.
1969	Periyar announced a Programme of agitation to get the right people of all castes to enter into the Sanctum Sanctorum of temples to eradicate the caste discrimination practiced.
1970	The UNESCO, an international organisation of the United Nations, conferred on Periyar a glorious title.
1973	DIED

A CHRONOLOGICAL VIEW OF DR. AMBEDKAR'S LIFE EVENTS:

1891	BORN
1906	Married to Ramabai.
1907	Bhimrao passed the Matriculation Examination that entitled him to enroll in a college affiliated with Bombay University.
1908	Bhimrao entered Elphinstone College.
1912	Passed the B.A. Examination (special subjects: Economics and Politics) from Bombay University, and prepared to take a position in the administration of Baroda State.
1913	The Gaekwad of Baroda announced his decision to offer scholarships to send students for higher education at Columbia University. A scholarship of 11.50 British pounds a month, for three years, was awarded to the young Ambedkar.
1913	Went New York.
1916	PhD. From Columbia University.
1919	He testified both orally and in writing before the Southborough Committee, which was investigating franchise matters in the light of the planned Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. He demanded separate electorates and reserved seats for the untouchables
1920	Started fortnightly newspaper "MOOKNAYAK"
1924	Founded an association called Bahiskrit Hitakarini Sabha.
1927	Babasaheb presided over a conference at Mahad in Kolaba District
1930	Round Table Conference was held by the British Government in London to decide the future of India. Babasaheb represented the 'untouchables'.
1932	Finally Babasaheb agreed to sign the Poona Pact with Gandhi.
1935	In December, Dr. Ambedkar was invited by the Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal of Lahore.
1936	Founded his first political party, the Independent Labour Party, which contested 17 seats in the 1937 General Elections, and won 15.
1942	All-India Scheduled Castes Federation was formed.
1944	Presided over the second meeting of the Scheduled Caste Federation, in Kanpur.
1945	He addressed the Annual Conference of the All India Scheduled Caste Federation, held at Parel, Bombay.
1947	Babasaheb Ambedkar became First Law Minister of Independent India.
1948	presented the Draft Constitution to the Constituent Assembly
1951	introduced in Parliament the "Hindu Code Bill", Babasaheb resigned from the Government
1956	At Nagpur he embraced Buddhism.
December 6, 1956	Babasaheb died at his Delhi residence.

A CHRONOLOGICAL VIEW OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S LIFE EVENTS:

1889	Birth of Jawaharlal Nehru, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh
1912	Nehru joined Allahabad High Court Bar
1916	Nehru participated in the Lucknow Session of the Congress.
1921	Nehru's first imprisonment for participating in the first civil disobedience campaign as general secretary of the United Provinces Congress Committee.
1924	Elected as president of the Allahabad Municipal Corporation
1926	Visit European Nations
1929	Elected as Congress President
1936	Nehru was re-elected as the president of the Indian National Congress.
1944	He authored "The Discovery of India".
1947	Nehru became the first Prime Minister of India.
1948	Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi
1951	Nehru launched the first Five Year Plan.
1952	Formed May new government after the first General Elections. Began 2 October Community Development Program.
1953	Chief Ministers' Conference November, New Delhi. Appointed December States Reorganization Commission.
1954	Chou En-lai visited India. Issued June joint statement of the Prime Ministers of India and China, listing the five principles (Panchsheel) for the regulation of relations between nations.
1955	Moved January the resolution on a 'Socialistic Pattern of Society' at the Avadi session of the Indian National Congress. Afro-Asian Conference, Bandung, 15-25 April.
1957	Formed April new government after the second General Elections.
1960	Addressed 3 October the United Nations General Assembly, New York.
1961	Conference of Non-aligned Nations, Belgrade, September.
1962	Formed April new government after the third General Elections. Presided June over the National Integration Council meeting. State of Emergency proclaimed 26 October by the President of India following the Chinese aggression.
1963	'Kamaraj Plan'—ministers relinquished office to reorganize the Congress Party.
1964	27 May: Jawaharlal Nehru passed away

A CHRONOLOGICAL VIEW OF Dr. LOHIA'S LIFE EVENTS:

1910	Born to Hira Lal and Chanda in Akbarpur, UP
1921	Participated in Satyagraha March lead by Mahatma Gandhi.
1928	Organized a student protest against the all-white Simon Commission.
1929	Completed his graduation in B.A from Calcutta University.
1932	Completed his Ph D from Berlin University, Germany.
1934:	Laid the foundation for Congress Socialist Party.
1936	Elected as first secretary to the All India Congress Committee.
1939	Arrested for making harsh speeches and asking people to boycott government institutions.
1940	Lohia wrote an article called "Satyagraha Now" in Gandhiji's newspaper, Harijan.
1940	Arrested yet again for his article "Satyagraha Now".
1942	Participated in Quit India Movement.
1944	Arrested and taken to a jail in Lahore where he was tortured.
1947	Was amongst the many leaders who were present in New Delhi on 15th August.
1949	Fought for restoration of democracy in Nepal.
1955	Movement for establishment of a State Assembly in Manipur.
1957	Lost elections.
1958, 1959	was arrested in Arunachal Pradesh for protesting against the ban on entry without permit there
1962	Shocked everyone by asking India to produce a bomb shortly after the Chinese aggression. Dr Lohia fought the second, third and fourth general elections from UP, the third one against Nehru from Phulpur.
1963	His pamphlet "25000 rupees in a day" sparked off the still-remembered "teen anna pandrah anna controversy".
1964	Wrote, 'The Caste System', fought against Portugal's colonial rule in Goa.
1967	Lohia's Non-Congress attitude brought the downfall of Congress in the general election. Elected to the Parliament from Kannauj.
1967	Died at the age of 57 in New Delhi.

CHAPTER THREE

INTELLECTUAL INTERROGATIONS ON CASTE

This chapter looks into the various aspects of caste as an institution and rather as an evil system as enunciated by great intellectuals of our Indian society. It can be made out that regardless of the various intellectual interrogations and not only interrogations but also the provision of solution to destroy the evil emanating from the caste based discrimination by them, still the caste persists in one form or another. Therefore, it can be said that importance of caste is, if not increasing, but then at least is making its presence felt in some or the other aspects of our life. Here is an attempt to discuss those interrogations by M.K Gandhi and B.R Ambedkar along with Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy and Rammanohar Lohia's and also Jawaharlal Nehru and Jyotirao Phule's views on caste system in India and their contributions towards the elimination of evils emanating from caste based discrimination in the following chapter.

Caste continues to be a dominant and pervasive institution in India even today. It was in 1950 that India adopted its constitution which had, as one of its avowed goals, the creation of 'casteless and classless society'. To achieve this end, several steps were taken. A democratic parliamentary system of governance based on universal adult franchise was introduced to ensure equal opportunities for political participation. To attain the twin goals of rapid economic development and distributive justice, socio-economic planning became a major instrument of state policy. To compensate former untouchable castes for the social disabilities they suffered and to draw the tribal population into the mainstream of national life, a policy of "protective discrimination" was adopted. Seats in the parliament and state legislatures, seats and scholarships in educational institutions and jobs in government service and public sector organizations were reserved for these Scheduled Castes and Tribes. These progressive measures seem to have sharpened caste loyalties instead of liquidating caste.

JOTIRAO PHULE'S VIEWS: (1827-1890)

Jotirao Phule (1827-1890) was India's first systematic theorist of caste, and the most radical 19th century opponent of it, who desired nothing less than a complete smashing up of its oppressive structure. He says that originally human beings were not divided into castes. There is no such differentiation among birds and animals. He explains himself by an example of a man who has three sons. He assigns the responsibility of his goats and sheep to one. The other works on growing fruits and flowers. The third son cultivates the land and busies himself with grain production. But then we wouldn't argue that three sons of the same man constitute three *jatis*. He goes on to say that people make sure that their children get a fine education. Some of them are bright and intelligent and develop into complete individuals. Some are not as bright. They end up doing all kinds of lowly work. But good and bad qualities are not hereditary. To argue that a shoe- maker's bright son, even when trained properly, cannot compare with a Brahman Sankaracharya flies in the face of all natural justice. No fair person would argue that.

In many ways, dharma and caste are at the centre of Phule's thought. His opposition to Brahmanism did not relate only to the Varna system. It also related to almost everything within the Hindu system. Phule rarely uses the term Hindu or Hinduism. He refers to Brahmanism instead. In his view Hinduism as we know it originates in the Shrutis (the Vedas) and the Smritis. He was convinced that these books were a part of the brahmanical attempt at creating texts which would rationalize and perpetuate their dominance. The brahmanical position claimed the chaturvarna system (the division of society along the lines of the four varnas) to be god- given and eternal, and therefore unassailable.

Phule rejected this pseudo-religion along with the texts that upheld it. And this rejection was total. Phule was not interested in tinkering with this or that aspect of brahmanical structure to make it a little more humane. He argued for its complete rejection and destruction. In its place, he sought to create dichotomous conceptions of the Hindu social structure. For Phule, Brahmanism was historical, constructed over time, and since it was the ideology of oppression and dominance, it had to be opposed

and ultimately smashed. There was nothing sacred or divine about it. But because it presented itself as divinely ordained, it was necessary to oppose this system in its entirety. The bulk of Phule's writing on religion therefore consists of a fierce polemic against Brahmanism.

The dichotomous structure that Phule created by pitting Brahmans against the shudratishudras at one level, accepted the position of high Brahmanism, though of course in a negative sense, by putting brahmanical theory on its head. It was argued that in the Kaliyuga, there are only two varnas, the first (Brahman) and the last (shudra). This was of course supposed to be assign of the degeneration that society had suffered. Phule turned this notion into a dichotomous structure, in order to emphasize the bipolarity of modern society between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Emphasizing the bipolarity of the Varna system had two other implications. One, it meant that Phule was not looking it as a system of endlessly regressing hierarchy, 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 can come together and unite, rather than on the divisions and schisms amongst them. Two, he rejects the centrality of the pollution principle. His attack on brahmanical dharma necessarily involved rejection of notions of pavitra and apavitra (pure and polluted), sprishya and asprishya (touchable and untouchable), and so on. He also attacked the moral degeneration of Brahmans under the Peshwa rule.

Phule's thinking on religion cannot be separated from his thinking on caste. His method in the analysis of caste was not to separate jati from varna. In fact, the term jati hardly makes an appearance in his writings. He constructs a *dvaivarnik* (two varna) structure, with the Brahmans and the shudratishudras forming its two poles, in place of the traditional chaturvarna structure. In any case, there could not be a jati without a varna. As such the institution of jati derived its authority and legitimacy from varna. 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 asserted their shudratishudra status. Phule thus saw caste both as a category in the productive process, and as something that facilitated the

dominance of the brahmans in the ideological sphere. Caste, then, for him, was a category both of the base and the superstructure of Indian society.

Jotirao refused to regard the Vedas as sacrosanct. He opposed idolatry and denounced the chaturvarna. In his book Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak published in 1891, his views on religious and social issues are given in the form of a dialogue. According to him, both men and women were entitled to enjoy equal rights and it was a sin to discriminate between human being on the basis of sex. He stressed the unity of man and envisaged a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. He was aware that religious bigotry and aggressive nationalism destroy the unity of man.

It is significant that Phule's first practical social reform efforts were involved in aiding the two social groups considered lowest in traditional Brahmanic culture — women and untouchables. He did not do so as a liberal concerned for the "uplift" of some lower order of being, but as a radical well aware that a revolution in social relationships had to be founded on community with those most oppressed by the traditional social hierarchy. Untouchables, for example, were seen not as a group unique within India but as the most oppressed section of the masses, part of the original community of the peasants. This is related to Phule's "non-Aryan theory" discussed below; it may be noted here that while later non-Brahmans compared untouchability with Negro slavery, Phule in the book "Ciulamgiri" considered peasants and untouchables together as a community of the oppressed, suffering under Brahman slavery. Indeed, it may be said to represent a failure of the Satyashodhak movement when later non-Brahmans identified as caste Hindus separate from untouchables, and untouchables under Ambedkar took their separate path to social liberation.'

The thought of Jotirao Phule was revolutionary; it gave a clearer goal for individual freedom and self-fulfillment, complete inequality and social unity than any other "reformist" thinking of the time; it called for a revolutionary, ruthless attack on the injustice of the old society.

"Mahatma Gandhi was unquestionably a great man, both in personal force and in political effect. He moulded the character of the struggle for freedom in India, and impressed his own ideals upon the new governing class that came into power when the English went home. There is, at the present day, a general awakening throughout Asia, but the spirit and policy of India, thanks largely to Gandhi, remains very different from that of any other Asiatic country"(Russell, 1952).

For Gandhi, the revival of four- order social organization became a prime concern. Inherent to the concern was the challenge to the traditional, rigid and orthodox teaching concerning the caste system. By questioning the rigidity and inflexibility of the caste system, Gandhi was on the way to rock the very foundation of the caste system. In Gandhi's understanding it was the duty aspect rather than the ranking aspect which provided a functional legitimacy to the *Varna* system. Gandhi defended the four fold social division in the sense of *varnashrama* dharma, that is, in the sense that there were certain social functions or duties which were related to one's order or status in society. He approved of a society with functional distinctions based on the different abilities of different members as a way of preserving the stability of social life. Individuals were expected to develop hereditary skills, and thereby follow the vocations of forefathers as a matter of course. Gandhi assumed that a person might inherit the natural tendencies and particular characteristics necessary to enable him to follow the same, vocation as his fore- fathers. One form of occupation should not be considered superior or inferior to another. The law of Varna, he explained, resulted from a realistic appraisal of the fact that men are not born equal, in the sense, that they do not all have same abilities. Some are born with definite limitations which they cannot be expected to overcome. The law of Varna ensures that each person is provided with a sphere of activity which establishes a place in society and guarantees that labours are rewarded. In this sense the law of Varna was good and it was Gandhi's conviction that the ideal social order would evolve only when the implications of the law were fully understood. He also maintained that the acceptance of hereditary

calling would necessary limit or precludes the development of ambition and serve instead to release surplus energy for spiritual development. (Gandhi, Vol. XIX, 1966)

Gandhi believed that the caste stratification system contained the seeds of *Swaraj* (self rule) and that it could carry out social reform. For this reason he was opposed to the movements for the destruction of the caste system. He favoured dining and marriage restrictions between strata as this would maintain the social organization of four orders. To him, division of people into strata was the best possible adjustment for social stability and progress. It was a system of culture. Since Gandhi saw the four orders social stratification system as a law of heredity and as a way of preserving the stability of social life, he did not favour social mobility from one stratum to another to avoid unnecessary competition. Moreover, for Gandhi such mobility is not a necessity because "each order is complementary of the other and each necessary for the whole society."(Tendulkar, Vol. III, 1961, p. 193)

An analysis of changing structure of caste should also be examined, because they would reveal so much about his whole approach to social reform and religion in general and to the untouchability question in particular. A major social reform that concerned Gandhi was the injustice in the institution of caste and untouchability. Thus, Gandhi was in search for an approach to caste that will allow him to reform it effectively from within, without achieving the orthodox. The remark that he makes at this time on the issue of inter caste marriage is suggestive of his attitude; he advises that a beginning should be made with inter caste marriage not among different varnas but among members of different sub- castes.

The remark signals the approach taken for almost another decade, an approach which continues to sanction prohibitions on inter marriage and inter dining, but gradually builds varnashram into a social ideal independent of caste. It was only after 1919, when Gandhi had gained the stature of a national leader, his pronouncements on caste acquired a more sure tone. By 1932, Gandhi, instead of supporting the caste restrictions on inter-marriage and inter-dining is highly critical about them. These restrictions for Gandhi are a hurdle to Hindu society in its growth. Writing in 1935 on this issue under the title, "Caste must go", he insists that 'in Varnashrama there was

and should be no prohibition of inter- marriage and inter-dining. His views on inter-marriage, once loosened, and culminated in the announcement of 1946 that couples cannot be married at Sewagram unless one of the parties is Harijan.

Gandhi's entire conception is remarkable. Inspite of the changes that his view underwent, he remained constant throughout in purpose, strength and method. His laudable Constructive Programme envisaged untouchability in its broadest implications. It aimed at establishing harmony between untouchables and caste Hindus, Muslims and Hindus, and the villages and growing urban areas. Thus, his vision was of a harmonious India, with complete eradication of untouchability of any kind whatsoever.

PERIYAR'S VIEWS: (1879-1973)

Born in 1879 in a middle class family in Erode, Periyar gave up formal schooling at the age of 10 to help his family business. He took to religious mendicancy at the age of 19 but soon gave it up, having become skeptical of religious faith and practice; he returned home soon, to abandon all faith in religion. He took to active politics soon after. In a climate of increasing politicization of the non-Brahmin movement, he joined the Congress and emerged as an important non-Brahmin leader in the party. However, he quit the Congress Party on grounds of brahmanical discrimination and started the "Self-Respect Movement" in 1925. Since then Tamil society witnessed one of the most influential propagandists at work, with a declared political agenda of "no God, no Gandhi, no Brahmin, and no religion". He championed the cause of the socially oppressed through his self-respect movement and later with the formation of Dravidar Kazhagam in 1944. By the sheer force of his propaganda among the Tamil people, with whom he remained in constant touch through writings and public speeches, Periyar remained a major iconoclastic leader in Tamil politics till his death in 1973. In fact, it has been pointed out that Periyar's thoughts and ideas could well be considered the thoughts and strategies of the Dravidian movement itself (Babu, 2010)

Periyar once spoke, "If the idol would get polluted by the touch of the people, such a God is not required and the idol has to be broken to pieces and used for constructing

good roads. Otherwise it may be put near the river banks to be used for washing clothes". (Collected Works of Periyar, 1981).

Periyar's philosophy is that different sections of a society should have equal rights to enjoy the fruits of the resources and the development of the country; they should all be represented, in proportion to their numerical strength, in the governance and the administration of the state. This principle had been enunciated earlier by those who stood for social justice, particularly by the South Indian Liberal Federation, popularly known as Justice Party. Periyar's unique contribution was his insistence on rational outlook to bring about intellectual emancipation and a healthy world-view. He also stressed the need to abolish the hierarchal, graded, birth-based caste structure as a prelude to build a new egalitarian social order. In other words, he wanted to lay a sound socio-cultural base, before raising a strong structure of free polity and economy.

It was in this context, the Self-Respect Movement, founded in 1925, carried on' a vigorous and ceaseless propaganda, against ridiculous and harmful superstitions, traditions, customs and habits. He wanted to dispel the ignorance of the people and make them enlightened. He exhorted them to take steps to change the institutions and values that led to meaningless divisions and unjust discrimination. Self-respecters performed marriages without Brahmin priests (prohits) and without religious rites. They insisted on equality between men and women in all walks of life. They encouraged inter-caste and widow marriages.

The contemporary Indian situation is characterized by communalism, caste, fundamentalism and corruption. In every one of the public offices Periyar held, he left a mark as a conscientious worker who would not tolerate inefficiency, insincerity or corruption of any kind. Many believe that Periyar's philosophy and the movement he spearheaded is still relevant today. Today the most prominent and crucial problem and issue is discrimination against Dalits. They are deprived of their dignity and fundamental rights. They are treated cruelly. In a village near Neyveli, Dalits have to sip their tea standing, even if the chairs at the teashop are empty. It is disheartening to hear that in some parts of Tamil Nadu; even touching a Dalit is considered polluting.

Periyar's philosophy of self-respect would be of great relevance today for the empowerment of the Dalits.

Discrimination against Dalits is forced upon not only by Brahmins but also by other castes including Shudras. It is noticed, "Tamilnadu proves that the Shudras when empowered, can be more socially violent than the Brahmins." According to Periyar different sections of a society should have equal rights to enjoy the fruits of the resources and the development of the country; they should all be represented in proportion to their numerical strength in governance and the administration of the state. Periyar always wanted to dispel the ignorance of the non-Brahmins and make them enlightened. He exhorted them to take steps to change the institutions and values that led to meaningless divisions and unjust discrimination. If he were alive today, he would give the same message to Dalits. It is true that during the life time of Periyar, he had no separate agenda for Dalits. Periyar indeed, has become a known figure in all over India especially wherever discriminations against Dalits come to the fore (Babu, 2010).

Dr. B.R AMBEDKAR'S VIEWS: (1889-1956)

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a veritable phenomenon of the 20th century. There may scarcely be a parallel indeed in the annals of human history to the saga of struggle that his life represented. Born in the family of 'untouchables', he could nonetheless scale the highest peak of scholarship, leadership and statesmanship.

Ambedkar, in his paper entitled 'Caste in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development', said, "Aryans, Dravidians, Mongolians and Scythians who came to India…settled down as peaceful neighbours and…through constant contact and mutual intercourse they evolved a common culture that superseded their distinctive cultures" and hence he defined caste and its genesis as a "parceling of an already homogeneous unit, and the explanation of the genesis of Caste is the explanation of that is process of parceling…" He said that caste cannot be considered in the form of an "isolated unit by itself but only as a group within, and with definite relations to, the system of caste as a whole."

Ambedkar considered the four varnas of the Hindu society, namely, the Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras as the classes and said that the sub-division of a society into such classes was natural. "But the unnatural thing about these sub-divisions is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and have become self enclosed units called castes". While some classes adopted endogamy and closed their doors on others and thus became castes, others were forced to adopt endogamy as they were not allowed exogamy by the endogamous classes and hence became castes. According to Ambedkar, a single caste cannot exist in a group of castes, i.e., a caste system. So he said "caste in the singular number is an unreality. Caste exists only in plural number. There is no such thing as a caste: there are always castes". He proposed to destroy the castes and the caste system itself.

Both Socialists and Ambedkar dreamed of a 'class-less' and 'caste-less' society. Ambedkar said "unless a casteless and classless society was created there would be no progress in the country" (Ambedkar, Vol.17). The methodology of ending the classes was well known. But how to end the social inequality that was, the caste system? The approach of at the socialists was socio-economic. It was also democratic and political. Hence it was bound to be slow but steady. Gandhi believed that the essence of democracy that was permeating in India and all over the world would destroy the feelings of dominance and subservience.

Ambedkar also considered different methods of ending the caste system. The two methods in vogue at the time were inter-dining and inter- marriage. The real remedy for breaking Caste is inter-marriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of caste". While the Socialists considered the socio- economic reasons to be at the root of the caste system and hence advocated socio-economic programmes to end the caste system, Ambedkar concluded that religion was at the root of the problem and hence wanted the Hindu religion to be reformed. He said people "observe Caste because they are deeply religious. People are not wrong in observing Caste. In my view, what is wrong is their religion, which has inculcated this notion of Caste". And hence his remedy to annihiliate the caste system was to "destroy the belief in the sanctity of the

Shastras…You must destroy religion of the Shrutis and the Smritis. Nothing else will avail. This is my considered view of the matter".

Ambedkar was a victim of the rigors of the social inequality as manifested by the caste system in India. Mahatma Gandhi gave a better expression to the isolation and humiliation heaped on the untouchables into whom Ambedkar was born, when a letter written to Mathuradas on 5th December, 1932, he said, "We have harassed the Harijans so much that if, on becoming free, they harass us twice as much, we should endure that patiently." (Gandhi, Vol. 52, Page 121).

It goes to the credit of Ambedkar that he, who had suffered the atrocities and violence inflicted on his community, could still steer clear of violence not only as a political tool for the emancipation of his people but also as a means of seeking vengeance against the perpetrators of such atrocities and violence. (Ambedkar, Vol. 17, Part 3, Page 163).

Ambedkar says in 'The Annihiliation of Caste', "What is your ideal society if you do not want caste, is a question that is bound to be asked of you. If you ask me, my ideal would be a society based on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. And why not?" these normative ideals of socialism i.e. liberty, equality and fraternity remained a passion for Ambedkar throughout his life. But, unlike the other socialists, Ambedkar reversed the order of the normative ideals of socialism. While the socialists spoke about Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, Ambedkar spoke of Fraternity, Liberty and Equality, reflecting his priorities.

Ambedkar also scored over Gandhi in this respect. Gandhi's concern was to liberate the untouchables from the shackles of the upper castes and to establish equality between the untouchables and the caste Hindus. Gandhi had said, "I do not want to be reborn, but if I have to be reborn I should be reborn an untouchable so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts leveled against them in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from their miserable condition." Gandhi's biographer Louis Fischer says "How could Gandhi, fresh from his fight for the

equality of Indians in South Africa, countenance a cruel inequality imposed by Indians on other Indians in India." (Fischer, 1997)

But Ambedkar yearned for 'fraternity' between the untouchables and the upper caste Hindus. The nuances Ambedkar placed on the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity underline his concern for social fraternity through abolition of the caste system. Fraternity for Ambedkar was synonymous with social endosmosis, a process of internal foliation. He equated it with democracy in that sense. Ambedkar said that the "Buddha gave the highest place to fraternity as the only real safeguard against the denial of liberty and equality and fraternity,…which was another name for religion." (Ambedkar, Vol. 17, Part 3, Page 503).

In many ways, the analysis of caste system becomes central to Ambedkar's sociology of Indian society. A critical examination of the Hindu social order, social stratification (i.e. the structure of inequality in Indian society), in general and the caste system in particular, is the basic point of departure in most of his writings.

Ambedkar points out that in India, it is difficult to reach the goal of achieving fraternity, because the caste phenomenon is deeply rooted in the Indian culture. So efforts should be made towards achieving fraternity. Then only India will be a nation in the social and psychological sense of the word. Thus, Ambedkar's cry was not for reforms, but for a radical restructuring, a revolutionary end to caste domination.

It was stratification as the dominant principle of the caste system, providing legitimacy to the deprivation and exploitation of the helpless and the lowly that was central to Ambedkar's understanding about the caste system. Without fail, he understood that it was the principle of graded inequality that was central to the caste system (Keer, 1971).

According to Ambedkar, "Fusion of blood can alone create the feeling of being kith and kin and unless this feeling of kinship, of being kindred, becomes paramount, the separatist feeling- the feelings of being aliens created by caste will not vanish." (Ambedkar, 1979)

Further striking at the roots of the problem, Ambedkar made it clear that caste might be bad and it might lead to inhuman treatment of man by man but Hindus observed caste because of their ardent religious nature and not because they were inhuman or wrongheaded. In his own words, 'people are not wrong in observing caste. In my view what is wrong is their religion, which has inculcated this notion of caste.' (Ambedkar, 1979)

Thus, obviously the enemy in Ambedkar's view is not the people who observe caste, but the sacred books like the Shastras, the Vedas which teach them this religion of caste. According to him, "criticizing and ridiculing people for not inter-dining or inter-marrying or occasionally holding inter-caste dinners and celebrating inter-caste marriages, is a futile method of achieving the desired end. The real method is to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the Shastras." (Ambedkar, 1979)

Ambedkar decided and finally embraced Buddhism because in his opinion, was a religion of emancipation, a religion ingrained in which the most egalitarian principle, equal treatment to all human beings, a religion which was based on the tenets of equality, liberty and fraternity. According to him, 'The Buddha never claimed that he was a prophet or a messenger of God. A more important point than this is that his religion is a discovery (it was discovered by man for man). As such, it must be sharply distinguished from a religion which is called Revelation' (Ambedkar, 1992).

CONTOURS OF CONFLICT:

The contours of the conflict between Ambedkar and Gandhi can be traced to their ideological difference and the different solutions which they advocated for the resolution of one of India's major social problems. Gandhi may be described as a dominant group leader working for a nation goal who was concerned, both from a moral standpoint and a realization of the need for unity, about injustices to a low status group within the nation. Ambedkar's correlative role was that of the militant leader of politically conscious segment of the same depressed group. Ambedkar's approach to the problem of untouchability was naturally militant and that of a victim. History had convinced him that any application of external balms would not heal the wounds

suffered by his community over the centuries. The approach of reform envisaged by Gandhi within the existing social structure was impractical to Ambedkar who wanted an independent identity for his community with significant political rights and safeguards in relation to its population, based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. He was afraid that the monolith of the Indian National Congress would exploit the politically backward classes for its subtle political ends. He was more concerned about the practical steps for the emancipation of the untouchables rather than the expression of pious wishes, lip sympathy and use of utopian language

It was the Satyagraha of 1924-25 in Travancore state which offered Gandhi his first opportunity to act publicly on behalf of untouchables and produced Ambedkar's first public comment on Gandhian methods. The Vaikam Satyagraha, spread over a decade, ended with Travancore becoming one of the first states to enact a law opening its state temples to untouchables. Although the Vaikam satyagraha represents the only time Gandhi used non –violent , direct action on behalf of untouchables ' ' right' , it fore shadowed many aspects of subsequent Gandhian activity ; stress on the orthodox Hindus ' inhuman treatment of untouchables , attempts to secure voluntary lifting of the ban y changing the hearts of caste Hindus , and working within a Hindu framework of ideas . The temple trustees 'negative responses were also typical of later reactions to Gandhi's policies which often elicited bitter criticism from orthodox Hindus (Zelliot, 1996).

It was in 1924, at the founding meeting of his first organization, the Bahishkrit Hitakarni Sabha (organization for the provincial Conference of the Depressed Classes. At this juncture, however, Ambedkar was opposed to conversion to a different faith as a mean of removing disabilities, and emphasized on self–improvement, unity and organization as the paths to a better life for untouchables. He used Vaikam Satyagraha with its high caste participants as an example, not of caste Hindu sympathies, out of political importance of the untouchables: "If we remain Hindus as we are, then the Aryan religion will persevere in this country. On the other hand, if we become Muslims then there will be a predominance of that foreign culture in India .If this was not so, the Brahmans would not have been ready to offer Satyagraha for the

untouchable class at Vaikam."(Zelliot,1996, p.162). The following year, the Bombay Province Classes Conference, again with Ambedkar as president, heard Ambedkar present a more detailed analysis, as a whole , was still conciliatory in tone and more emphatic on internal reform than on changing Indian society, but there was no whole hearted support for Gandhi. Although Ambedkar stated that for Untouchables, "The most important event in the country today is the Satyagraha at Vaikam,' (Zelliot, 1996, 162) he pointed out that after a whole year of protest there had been no result. He next spoke of Gandhi.

"Before Mahatma Gandhi, no politician in this country maintained that it is necessary to remove social injustices here in order to do away with tension and conflict, and that every Indian should consider it his sacred duty to do so…However, if one looks more closely, one finds that there is a slight disharmony. For he does not insist on the removal of untouchability as much as he insists on the propagation of Khaddar (home-spun cloth) or Hindu Muslim unity. Only if he would have made the removal of untouchability a precondition of voting in the party. Well, be that as it may, when one is spurned by everyone, even the sympathy shown by Mahatma Gandhi is of no little importance" (Zelliot, 1996, p. 163).

At the second round Table Conference, Ambedkar confronted Gandhi, who not only refused to consider separate electorates for the Depressed Classes but also opposed any form of special representation involving reserved seats. The first meeting in Bombay had sown the seed for the acrimonious debate that was to follow. This unsatisfactory meeting , and the basic disagreement between these leaders , on the issue of special representation for untouchables , made negotiations during the Round Table Conference sessions difficult. The situation was exacerbated by Gandhi questioning of Ambedkar's bonafides: "I say, that it is not a proper claim which is registered by Dr. Ambedkar when he seeks to speak for the whole of the untouchables of India…I myself in my own person claim to represent the vast mass of the untouchables" (Zelliot, 1996, p.166).

These initial skirmishes showed how diametrically opposed to each other were Gandhi and Ambedkar, the former claiming to represent the interest of India as a whole, and

the later not only repudiating his claim but also casting aspersions on Gandhi capabilities .According to Ambedkar, "Gandhi was not fit to play the role he understood to play No country has ever sent a delegate to take part in the framing of the Constitution, who was completely unequipped in training and in study. Gandhi went to the R.T.C with a song of the Saint Narsi Mehta on his tongue. It would have been better for him and better for his country if he had taken his armpit a volume on comparative Constitution law" (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. V p. 289).

The main business before the Conference– the key problem in the words of Ramsay MacDonald, "was the solution of the Hindu-Muslim differences". (Krishnan, 1997, p.88) It was natural that when several communities representing their interests, met at a common table, the whole problem were bound to become totally complicated. Consequently, the entire exercise centered on finding a solution to the conflicting interests of all minorities represented at the Conference, particularly Hindus, Muslims and the Depressed Classes.

The Award was a cruel shock for Gandhi. As the Congress representative at The Second Round Table Conference, he valiantly fought against the recognition of the Untouchables as a separate element. By the act of conferring the Communal Award, the British government had not only overruled Gandhi but also had conferred recognition upon the untouchables as a separate and distinct element in national life entitled to the same safeguards as other minorities such as Muslims, Sikhs, and Indian Christians. Without doubt, this was a historic decision in the sense that recognition of Depressed Classes as a distinct political entity was accepted for the first time.

It was finally agreed to appoint a committee consisting of Malaviya, Jayakar, Sapru, G.D Birla and Ambedkar to go through the specific proposals and to authorize Malaviya to consult persons he liked in drafting a scheme which would be acceptable to Gandhi. All the members of the Committee were for joint electorates for the Depresses Classes except Ambedkar who demanded separate electorates. The Committee drafted a scheme known as Sapru-Jayakar scheme based on joint electorates with adequate safeguards for the protection of the interests of the Depresses Classes. Ambedkar demanded reserved seats against 71 offered through

separate electorates in the Communal Award. In addition, Ambedkar wanted the system of reservation to continue for 15 years and thereafter a change should only be effected after referendum to the Depressed Classes. During this tense and hectic period, while Ambedkar and the caste Hindus tried to hammer out an agreement to both the Depressed Classes and Gandhi, the health of Gandhi steadily deteriorated. (Krishnan, 1997:124-125)

Indeed the times was trying for Ambedkar. A baffled Ambedkar was under tremendous pressure. Ambedkar was continuously reminded that if Gandhi died, it would be because of his unyielding attitude. Ambedkar was on the horns of dilemma. Whether to protect the rights of the untouchables, or to save the life of Gandhi, was the paramount question before Ambedkar. He responded to the call of humanity and saved the life of Gandhi by agreeing to alter the Communal Award in a manner acceptable to Gandhi. Ambedkar at this juncture realized that the duty "which I owed as part of common humanity, to save Gandhi from sure death" had to take precedence over "the problem of saving for the Untouchables, the political rights which the Prime Minister had given them".

Gandhi wanted Ambedkar to realize that untouchables were part and parcel of the Hindu community and not separate from it. By agreeing to alter the Communal Award, Ambedkar left the imperialist fold and accepted the terms of Gandhi, revealed his pragmatism and broad outlook. The major link between the untouchables and the Hindu was Gandhi whose life at this juncture Ambedkar revered, valued and saved. By their vision and understanding, formalized in the Poona Pact of September 1932, the issue of the Depressed Classes got merged in the issue of struggle for India's political freedom. "Thus, in the final agreement hammered out by Sapru and Ambedkar, it was envisaged that a two tier system of voting would allow untouchables first to select a panel of four Dalit candidates and then the general constituency would decide among them. This provided the basis of the Poona Pact once it was accepted by Gandhi (Omvedt, 1994:173-174)

The differences in viewpoints between Ambedkar and Gandhi were also made candidly clear after Ambedkar published his undelivered speech 'Annihilation of

Caste' prepared for the Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal. Gandhiji, in his '*Harijan*' said that Ambedkar made the mistake in his address by picking out the texts of doubtful authenticity and value to substantiate his argument. In his opinion, Shastras should be interpreted by Saints and not by learned men. He further said that judged by the standard applied by Ambedkar, every known living faith would probably fail. He also said that a religion should be judged not by its worst specimens but by the best it might have produced. There was no calling too low and none too high. Everybody should follow the ancestral calling, he said. To these, Ambedkar replied one by one. He held that the texts used by him were not at all of doubtful authenticity. He said, 'I should like to state that the texts cited by me are all taken from the writings of the late Mr. Tilak who was a recognized authority o the Sanskrit language and on the Hindu Shastras.' (Ambedkar, 1979)

In spite of the fundamental differences existing between Gandhi and Ambedkar from their personality to their approach towards the caste problem, and the social and political strategies to tackle the curse of untouchability, it is quite possible to have a conciliatory stance. Their efforts and movements can be understood as being supplementary to each other.

To begin with, apart from being nationalist the basic similarity between the two can be traced to the fact that removal of untouchability formed the integral part of their active social life. Much of the recent political debate about the relationship between Ambedkar and Gandhi has served to highlight the differences between the two. This is important, but it is also necessary to see the commonality. For instance, while it is true that Ambedkar often attacked Gandhi rather strongly, it can be pointed out that the very fact that Gandhi was addressed and singled out for attack is related to his position as the only one within the leadership of Indian nationalism who had ever seriously addresses the issue of untouchability. It is important also to note that an element of competition between the two leaders has added fuel to the fire of differences in attitudes and stands, since both claimed the status of the leader of the Harijans/Dalits.

The evangelical approach of Gandhi sees untouchability as an aberration in Hinduism and stresses the uplift of untouchables and penance on the part of caste Hindus, both of whom will eventually join together in a purified and redeemed Hinduism.

For Gandhi, the use of the term 'Harijan' referred to an effort to integrate with the mainstream Hindu social order, whereas for Ambedkar the use of the term 'Dalit' implied a project of radical emancipation rooted in the twin notion of self assertion and self determination. Whereas for an aggressive Ambedkar, it was turning the system upside down which was the need of the hour, for Gandhi it had to be a persuasive effort, a change of heart.

Gandhi continued to defend the Varna system until almost the end of his life and posited a counter modernist perspective of civilization; on the other hand, Ambedkar remained clearly and unabashedly pragmatic and modern. Though both acted as major catalysts to further the cause of the untouchables, there is no evidence of a 'later Ambedkar' and 'later Gandhi' coming closer together in any terms at all.

Ambedkar remained fundamentally committed to a radical restructuring of society along modern lines of individualism and democracy. Gandhi from a distinctive community based perspective, wanted to imitate a process of self introspection. The remedy lay within the Hindu framework itself.

But still as Rajmohan Gandhi mentions, it can very well be made out that in spite of being at the receiving end of unrestrained attacks from Ambedkar (between 1937 and 1946), Gandhi advised Nehru and Patel to include Ambedkar in the new nations' first cabinet. When there were objections to it, Gandhi reminded Jawaharlal that power was coming 'to India, not to Congress.' According to Ramchandran, 'both Nehru and the Sardar were not in favour, saying that this man had been attacking and maligning the Congress.' In Ramchandran's view, Gandhi saw Ambedkar's inclusion as an 'atonement' that India had to make to her untouchables.

No one had greater role than Ambedkar in the making of our Indian constitution, but it is also legitimate to see the rights which it guarantees to the weaker and underprivileged section of our society, as a proof of Gandhi's commitment to them.

He had pledged these rights in London in 1931, at the Karachi Congress earlier that year, and on numerous other occasions. Led by his colleagues and followers, the Constituent Assembly enshrined the rights at the heart of the Constitution. If we regard what the Assembly resolved to do as an index of what the people desired, and consider that caste Hindus were a large and influential component of India's people, this meant caste Hindu acceptance of untouchable rights. Thus, the vital part was played in this acceptance by Gandhi's sustained battle (Gandhi, 1995).

Urging the Constituent Assembly on 25th November 1949 to adopt the Constitution as drafted by his committee he enunciated his philosophy of socialism. He said, "The third thing we must do is not to be content with mere political democracy. We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. Social democracy means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality; equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is complete absence of two things in Indian society. One of these is equality. On the social plane, we have in India a society based on the principle of graded inequality with elevation for some and degradation for others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty. "On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value…if we continue to deny it for long; we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those

who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has to laboriously build up."(Ambedkar, Vol.17, Part 2, Page 151).

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU's VIEWS: (1889-1964)

As the Prime Minister for the first, formative years after independence, Jawaharlal Nehru had a defining impact on the politics and society of his country. In India, the 1940s and 1950s were the Age of Nehru, just as the 1920s and 1930s had been the Age of Gandhi. As head of government from 1947 to 1964, Nehru had a colossal influence on the directions taken- and not taken- by this new, large, diverse and very conflicted nation. It was Nehru who as the first Prime Minister of the country made possible the features of equality among all and the ideals enshrined in our constitution come to life. His leadership and governance made India to progress with cherished ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

"I want to share with you a certain apprehension that is growing within me. I feel that in many ways the position relating to minority groups in India is deteriorating. Our Constitution is good and we do not make any distinction in our rules and regulations or laws. But, in effect, changes creep in because of administrative practices or officers. Often these changes are not deliberate, sometimes they are so." (Letters, 1953, Vol. 2, pp. 375-80,)

Nehru wrote in his, '*The Discovery of India',* that the coming of the Aryans into India raised new problems- racial and political. The conquered race, the Dravidians, had a long background of civilization behind them, but there is little doubt that the Aryans considered themselves vastly superior and a wide gulf separated the two races. Then there were also the backward aboriginal tribes, nomads or forest- dwellers. Out of this conflict and interaction of races gradually arose the caste system, which, in the course of succeeding centuries, was to affect Indian life so profoundly. Probably caste was neither Aryan nor Dravidian. It was an attempt at the social organization of different races, a rationalization of the facts as they existed at the time. It brought a rationalization of the facts as they existed at the time. It brought degradation in its

train afterwards, and it is still a burden and a curse; but we can hardly judge it from subsequent standards or later developments.

Caste begins with a hard and fast division between Aryans and non-Aryans, the latter again being divided into the Dravidian races and the aboriginal tribes. The Aryans, to begin with, formed one class and there was hardly any specialization. The word *Arya* comes from a root word meaning to till, and the Aryans as a whole were agriculturists and agriculture was considered a noble occupation. The tiller of the soil functioned also as a priest, soldier, or trader, and there was no privileged order of priests. The caste divisions, originally intended to separate the Aryans from the non- Aryans, reacted on the Aryans themselves, and as division of functions and specialization increased, the new classes took the form of castes.

In Nehru's words, "The Indian mind was extraordinarily analytical and had a passion for putting ideas and concepts, and even life's activities, into compartments".

The Aryans not only divided society into four main four groups but also divided the individual's life into four parts: the first part consisted of growth and adolescence; the student period of life, acquiring knowledge and developing self- discipline, continence; the second was that of the householder and man of the world; the third was that of the elder statesman, who had attained a certain poise and objectivity, and could devote himself to public work without the selfish desire to profit by it; and the last stage was that of a recluse, who lived a life largely cut off from world's activities. In this way also they adjusted the two opposing tendencies which often exist side by side in man- the acceptance of life in its fullness and the rejection of it.

Nehru held that Buddha did not attack caste directly, yet in his own order he did not recognize it, and there is no doubt that his whole attitude and activity weakened the caste system. Probably caste was very fluid in his day and for some centuries later. It is obvious that a caste ridden community could not indulge in foreign trade or other foreign adventures, and yet for fifteen hundred years or more after Buddha, trade was developing between India and neighboring countries, and Indian colonies flourished.

Foreign elements continued to stream into India from the north- west and were absorbed.

It is curious and significant that throughout the long span of Indian history there have been repeated warnings given by great men against priest craft and the rigidity of the caste system, and powerful movements have risen against them; yet slowly, imperceptibly, almost, it seems, as if it were the inevitable course of destiny, caste has grown and spread and seized every aspect of Indian life in its strangling grip. Rebels against caste have been drawn many followers, and yet in course of time their group has itself become a caste. Jainism, a rebel against the parent religion and in many ways utterly different from it, was yet tolerant to caste and adapted itself to it; and so it survives and continues in India, almost as an offshoot of Hinduism. Buddhism, not adapting itself to caste, and more independent in its thought and outlook, ultimately passes away from India, though it influences India and Hinduism profoundly.

In our own period numerous movements to break the tyranny of caste have arisen among the middle classes and they have made a difference, but not a vital one, so far as the masses are concerned. Their method was usually one of a direct attack. Then Gandhi came and tackled the problem, in an indirect way, and his eyes were on the masses. He has been direct enough, aggressive enough, persistent enough, but without challenging the original basic functional theory underlying the four main castes. He has attacked the rank undergrowth and overgrowth, knowing well that he was undermining the whole caste structure thereby. But while we struggle with caste in India, new and overbearing castes have arisen in the west with doctrines of racial exclusiveness, sometimes clothed in political and economic terms, and even speaking in the language of democracy" (Nehru, 1944).

The building up of new India has always seemed to me not merely a question of improving agriculture, industry, etc., important as that is. The social, economic and the community aspect of it are equally important. In fact, we cannot go ahead on the economic plane without changing some of our social background and breaking through some of our restrictive social customs. Caste, of course, is one of the major hurdles that have to go. It is separatist, destructive and it perpetuates inequality, apart

from the other social evils that it leads to in the case of Harijans and the backward classes. We cannot build up the unity of India unless there is this emotional awareness of not only political, but economic and social equality. When we talk about a secular state, this does not simply mean some negative idea, but a positive approach on the basis of equality of opportunity for everyone, man or woman, of any religion or caste, in every part of India. (15th Aug., 1954)

Nehru was in favour of continuation of the Harijan Movement. He said: "there can be no two opinions about the desirability of putting an end to all such things as untouchability and the like, and because the Harijan movement aims at this it must be welcomed. Personally, as I consider the political struggle to be of great importance, I devote all my energies to that as well as to the economic struggle" (Speeches, Vol. 2).

Nehru adapted three policy strategies to promote each type of equality of opportunity. The first strategy attempted to bar discrimination against the untouchables. The second was designed to reserve concrete opportunities in education and employment for them. And the third was geared to the industrialization of India and an equitable distribution of its economic resources.

Nehru knew, however, that real equality of opportunity was not likely to follow simply because certain forms of discrimination were barred by law. Even if higher caste Hindus were tolerant of those at the bottom, the untouchables and other scheduled caste members would still carry the legacy of unequal treatment that had existed for centuries. Given the low status of untouchables in society, they had few resources, educational or otherwise, to compete effectively with others. Recognizing the disabilities of the untouchables, Nehru held that "not only must equal opportunities be given to all, but special opportunities for educational, economic, and cultural growth must be given to backward groups so as to enable them to catch up to those who are ahead of them. Early efforts by the government to initiate such policies, however, were thwarted by the courts which declared them contrary to the principle of equal treatment for all Indians embodied in Articles 15 and 29 of the constitution and hence unconstitutional. In an effort to continue policies that provided special opportunities for those at the bottom, Nehru successfully pushed efforts to amend the constitution to

allow special aid for the Scheduled Castes. In an effort to implement this second strategy, Nehru and his government reserved places in government and educational institutions for untouchables and others hindered in their advancement by the caste system.

Nehru's efforts to move to socialism and to promote equality of opportunity as personal growth and moral development proved to be an even more difficult proposition than the goals of legally abolishing untouchability and reserving opportunities for those previously excluded. His vision of socialism depended on an industrial base with high levels of productivity, opportunities for full employment, and sufficient surplus to provide necessities for everyone. In a country which had little economic development as its independence, Nehru set economic modernization as a high priority and used a mixed economic strategy to achieve his objectives. (Chand, 1989)

And if we understand by the Nehruvian model (as enshrined in the Indian Constitution),the right of individuals to freely profess and practice any religion subject to public order and morality, the equality of all citizens before the law irrespective of religion, creed, caste or sex, and no disability attached to citizens for these reasons in regard to public employment and in the exercise of any trade or calling, no religious instruction in state educational institutions, neutrality or equidistance of the state with regard to religions, limiting the purview of religion, and the protection of minority rights -- then Gandhi by the end of his life carried much of this. In fact so much that it is hard to say whether the Constitution has a Nehruvian, Ambedkarite or a Gandhian framework. Indeed it may be possible to go even further and claim that the contradictions in the Constitution rehearse some of Gandhi's own: first in the simultaneous commitment to a non-discriminatory universalism and to a particularistic protection of the identity religious groups, and second, in the simultaneous advocacy of a pedagogical, interventionist state empowered to restructure social and religious life in order to protect fundamental rights and a neutral state pledged to treat all religions equally and impartially (Sangari, 2002).

RAMMANOHAR LOHIA'S VIEWS: (1910-1967)

Rammanohar Lohia was born on 23 March, 1910 in Akabarpur, a village in Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh. His father was a devoted follower of Mahatma Gandhi. Rammanohar saw Gandhi for the first time when he was only nine years old. The Indian National Congress held its plenary session in 1923 at Gaya in Bihar. Little Lohia was a Congress volunteer there. He also attended the 1928 session at Guwahati.

Dr. Lohia more than anyone else wielded most effectively the Gandhian weapon of satyagraha, even after independence, to fight every form of injustice against the oppressed and the neglected. If Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the Russian Revolution professed the theory of "permanent revolution", Dr. Lohia preached and practiced the concept of "permanent civil disobedience" as a peaceful rebellion against injustice.

In the words of Lohia, "Caste is the most overwhelming factor in Indian life. Those who deny it in principle also accept it in practice. Life moves within the frontiers of caste and cultured men speak in soft tones against the system of caste, while its rejection in action just does not occur to them." (Lohia, 1964)

Since caste is a power structure, it needs to be related to a theory of power. A theory of power is usually caught with a tension between two notions of power: power as a hierarchy of domination on the one hand and power as a system of legitimation on the other hand. The former focuses on a hierarchy of elites and subalterns, structural inequalities arising between them and strategies to dominate subaltern strata and so on. The latter focuses on why subalterns give consent to the domination of elites and its moral and legal paraphernalia.

Lohia opines that, caste have endured over thousands of years. They have bred certain traits and aptitudes. Some kind of selection has taken place that is socially as significant as natural selection. Certain skills are considered hereditary such as trade and craft and a real genius is needed to break through it. Some skills are considered as superior to others and castes of inferior skills are downgraded. "Numerically small castes of the most superior skills are the habitual providers of the nation's

leadership…; they become a seething mass of chicanery but surfacially most smooth and cultured. The masses are lifeless, the elite are chicane. Caste has done that…" (Lohia, 1964).

Ramchandra Guha mentions about Lohia and says that according to him, post-freedom India is but a strict continuance of British India in most essential ways. Indian people continue to be disinherited and are foreigner in their own land. All is done for the alleged sake of certain high principles. And these principles tie up with the system of caste, the great chasm between the few high castes and the four hundred million of lower castes. These high castes must instill a sense of inferiority into those whom they seek to govern and exploit. Example, the 'Kahars' (known as Mallas, Kaivarts, Naviks), tell stories about their mythical ancestors who lost to other ancestors of Kshatriyas and other high castes because of their greater greed, wiliness and deceit. Therefore, their current life of misery must appear to low caste as an unending succession of sacrificial acts for the sake of high principles.

Lohia further argued that, this can change. In fact, this must change. The revolt against caste is the resurrection of India. The attack on caste is not single barreled. It is in fact as political as it is social. From the political attack on caste, in the sense of drawing the nation's leadership from all castes in the country, may come that revolution which gives to all Indian society the solidarity and reinsurance now given to smaller groups by caste. He also says that British rule has ended but the caste parties that it gave birth to have continued into free India and are enjoying fresh access of strength. The Dravida Munetra Kazhagam of South India and the Jharkhand Party of Eastern India are not only regional parties but also caste parties. In fact, they represent and embody regional castes.

Among the Shudras, certain castes are numerically powerful, even overwhelming in some areas. The adult franchise has placed power in their hands. Some castes like the Reddys and Mudaliars of South India and Marathas of West India have made use of it. This power is not given to all the lower castes, but only to the largest single section within them. They do not therefore destroy caste, but merely cause a shift in status and privileges (Guha, 2010).

There is one thing common to both Ambedkar and Lohia. Both are dissatisfied with Gandhi's doctrine of least resistance to caste order. Both argue for the rediscovery of Satyagrah against caste system. He argues for changing the upper caste mentalities by an appeal to their change of hearts. He argues that if the upper castes could be convinced with an appeal to the principle of ancestral calling, it would be possible for them to believe in the redundancy of untouchability. According to this principle, we are doing different functions as our duties to a village community as ordained by our ancestors. Through an alternative education of upper castes, it would be possible to convince them that different castes do mere duties to their ancestors. So, there is no low or polluted duty and high or pure duty. All caste functions are duties as per the ancestral calling. Once upper castes are convinced with a notion of duty in every manual labour, it would be possible for them to remove from their minds that some groups do menial labour or polluted functions. All functions would be seen as necessary duties to ancestors. Once upper castes are convinced with this doctrine, they would also undertake street sweeping and so on as Gandhi himself did. That would bring an end to untouchability. So, Satyagraha against untouchability is not necessary. Ambedkar calls Gandhi's doctrine as the one of least resistance. (Rodrigues, 2002)

Lohia does not explore how caste is organized as a graded hierarchy. He examines what is left out by Ambedkar. Why caste order manages to survive in the midst of resistance against caste and foreign conquests? This is most important question for Lohia, "Castes have endured over thousands of years". He goes on to explore how caste creates legitimation processes so that lower castes feel that they are indeed lower, and so on. Lohia argues that a great misreading of Indian history is that foreigners could invade and conquer India due to our internal quarrels and intrigues. The single most cause is caste system which produced imbecility and passivity among masses who were hardly interested in nation's tragedies. Caste is the single most reason why national feeling, national solidarity and action in preventing national tragedies could not develop and still does not develop. Unless caste is destroyed new India could not revive. India would remain weak, not due to intrigues but due to caste inequalities. If political parties play with caste cards in electoral democracy, nation would remain dormant and docile. India would not be seen as a developed nation. So

in Lohia's estimate caste and nation do have negative correlation. If one remains strong, the other remains weak. A vibrant India cannot be born in such situations. So the destruction of caste is more important for nation-building.

What unite Lohia and Ambedkar are four convictions that run through the social justice tradition in India. First, they both recognized that caste is an autonomous and significant dimension of inequality, injustice and oppression in Indian society; neither Ambedkar nor Lohia viewed caste in exclusive terms, as both of them recognized gender and class based inequalities. Yet, they insisted upon its autonomy and in different ways prioritized caste based inequalities as the first call for a politics of social justice.

Both of them held the caste system responsible for a number of ills in Indian society, from economic stagnation to cultural degeneration and vulnerability to external powers. Thus, the caste system was a national malaise and not just a problem for its victims. The causal significance they attached to caste did signal some form of primacy to caste. Also both of them were convinced that this system of inequality could not be repaired or reformed, that an end to caste based inequalities is possible only if the caste system is brought to an end. Both of them engaged in an open-ended search for ways of bringing about an end to the caste system. (Yadav, 2010)

As Professor Kumar mentions in his article that Lohia's concept was different from the caste-centric, antibrahmin perspective of Periyar E V Ramasamy Naicker (1959). Lohia agreed with Periyar that there was the need to eliminate caste; mere reforms would not suffice. He visited Naicker when he was arrested for leading the anti-caste movement in Tamil Nadu in 1958. But he disagreed with anti-Brahmin violence, and with the campaign against Hindi, the Constitution and Gandhi in the name of attacking the caste system. Lohia also saw no reason to be totally dismissive about the civilisational heritage of India because it had a strong tradition of rejecting the caste system. Lohia argued that the tradition of mutually antagonistic world views represented by the orthodox and liberal streams of thought be recognized and utilised constructively.

"Lohia made a paradigmatic breakthrough by creating the discourse of intersectionality and the multifaceted nature of the matrix of power and discrimination in Indian society. It created a synchronization of various interrogations about the nature of injustices from the point of view of women, dalits, adivasis, the working classes and the depressed sections among the Muslims and Christians in the early years of independent India. This synchronized view promoted togetherness for social transformations through not only state intervention but also a radical political will around an alternative agenda favouring preferential opportunities for the marginalized majority" (Kumar, 2010).

Thus, the intellectual interrogation on the issue of caste system as it existed and as it is exists is brought to the fore through the conversations above.

SUMMARY:

This chapter brings out the dialogue and debate between and among various social and political thinkers on the issue of caste system. The dialogue between Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar has been discussed in detail as compared to other personalities. The two opposing views on the solution to the problem of caste in India have been given importance in this chapter. The discussion about Periyar, Jotirao Phule, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru also assumes importance because of their varying and exclusive perspectives on the issue along with their unique form of solutions for the eradication of the problem at hand. As Nehru was powerfully aware, there is now no simple way of wishing it away, no easy way to imagine social forms that would transcend the languages of caste that have become so inscribed in ritual, familial, communal, socioeconomic, political, and public theaters of quotidian life.

When figures such as Ambedkar in western India or Periyar in south organized political movements around caste, they worked to transform both the cultural meanings and the political uses of caste in ways that went beyond the colonial mandate. On occasion, caste has indeed been a worthy synonym of community in the best of senses, even if political movements have all too often failed to transcend any way the problematic relationship of caste to exclusion. Nehru observed that, "In the

constructive schemes that we make, we have to pay attention to the human material we have to deal with, to the background of its thought and urges, and to the environment in which we have to function. To ignore all this and to fashion some idealistic scheme in the air, or merely to think in terms of imitating what others have done elsewhere, would be folly. It becomes desirable therefore to examine and understand the old Indian social structure which has so powerfully influenced our people" (Discovery of India, pg.247).

Bringing in the perspective of Nehru further strengthens the discussion, because without his being sensitive to the problem, the implementation of the constitutional provisions for the marginalized section of the society would have become a distant dream. When figures such as Ambedkar in western India or Periyar in south organized political movements around caste, they worked to transform both the cultural meanings and the political uses of caste in ways that went beyond the colonial mandate. On occasion, caste has indeed been a worthy synonym of community in the best of senses, even if political movements have all too often failed to transcend any way the problematic relationship of caste to exclusion. Nehru observed that, "In the constructive schemes that we make, we have to pay attention to the human material we have to deal with, to the background of its thought and urges, and to the environment in which we have to function. To ignore all this and to fashion some idealistic scheme in the air, or merely to think in terms of imitating what others have done elsewhere, would be folly. It becomes desirable therefore to examine and understand the old Indian social structure which has so powerfully influenced our people" (Nehru, 1944).

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CHAPTER FOUR

CASTE IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

This chapter takes a comprehensive view of the contrasting views and debates on whether "caste" in the strict sense of the term does exist in contemporary India, or it has withered away. There are various points of views on the issue. There are two views regarding the present and future of the caste system. One view is that caste system is fast changing and is weakening though it is not being disintegrated or abolished. To this school belonged early scholars of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s like D.N Majumdar, Gardner Murphy, Pauline Kolenda, and Max Weber, and scholars of the 1980s and 1990s like R.K Mukherjee, M.N Srinivas among others. The other view is that caste system is not transforming itself fast and changes are gradual. To this school belonged early scholars like G.S Ghurye, I.P Desai, K.M Kapadia and Louis Dumont, Andre Beteille, Harould Gould, Yogendra Singh, S.C Dube and T.N Madan. This chapter also looks into the issue of coming of modern education and rationality, thereby linking it with the changing perspectives on the caste based discrimination. There is a sphere of "castelessness" in present day employment scenario and generally occupations are not linked with hereditary characters and one's caste but still the existence of terms (names) such as "Badhai" and "Lohar" does pose an important question about the issue.

It has become a truism today that caste in India has not disappeared in direct proportion to the spread of modern technology. In the rural areas caste, despite many modifications, is persisting in its traditional form, as a system of hierarchically graded, locally integrated, occupationally and ritually specialized, endogamous social strata. In the contemporary, urban-based order, caste is persisting in the form of complex networks of interest groups preserved through endogamy and legitimized by religion. In both forms, caste remains an extremely viable social institution and thus appears to be an instance where simultaneously old uses have been retained and new ones found for a traditional Asian social structure.

"In the contemporary social and scholarly imagination in India, there are a range of responses that are offered in respect of the question of caste and untouchability. Thus, there are scholars who obliquely suggest that caste is a rumor and untouchability has become irrelevant in India. While the other kind of reaction is rather moderate inasmuch as it suggests that caste and untouchability have not disappeared but have changed their nature. It could be argued that those who tend to refuse the very existence of caste suffer from the guilty feeling or the sense of embarrassment that this social malaise causes to such people. On the other hand, there are those who take an objective view of these social phenomena and hence argue that caste and untouchability could not be wished away; it is there and exists but in a milder forms" (Guru, 2008).

Majumdar, while explaining how the caste system has fast changed, has referred to fusion and fission of castes and assimilation of tribes. Murphy (1953:65) (who conducted study on social tensions in India during 1950-52) concluded that caste system has come to be challenged. Weber's (1952) view was that all caste relations have been shaken and the intellectuals are the bearers of specific nationalism. Ram Krishna Mukherjee (1958) stated that both the economic aspect (change in occupational specialization) and the social aspect (adoption of higher caste customs, giving up polluting professions, etc.) of the caste system have vastly changed. He said that change is more specific in urban areas where rules on social intercourse and caste commensalities have greatly relaxed and civil and religious disabilities of lower castes have been lifted. M.N Srinivas and S.C Dube have also suggested the changing pattern of the caste system. M.N Srinivas (1952) has maintained that the mutual rights and obligations among the castes are crumbling down. Change of loyalty of an individual from his village to his caste is noted. Change has also come through sanskritisation and westernization.

But the scholars of the other view point (who describe changes in the caste system taking place slowly and gradually and in some cases even superficially) do not consider these changes as being disintegrative of the caste system as a whole. These scholars, though they do not imply the dissolution of caste, yet have made it clear that

caste today is not the same as it was half a century or a century ago. For example, A.R Desai and Y.B Damle (1981) said: "The magnitude of changes in parts of the caste system is not as great as it is believed to be. These changes have not affected the essential aspects of the caste system as a whole." Ghurye was of the opinion that caste system had shed some of its features. He said: 'Caste no longer rigidly determines an individual's occupation but continues to prescribe almost in its old vigor the circle into which one has to marry. One has still to depend very largely on one's caste for help at critical periods of one's life, like marriage and death...'"

Kapadia (1962:75) tried to study the transitional nature of the different characteristics of the caste system by focusing on the four characteristics: caste councils, commensal taboos, ceremonial purity and endogamy. Analyzing the functioning of caste councils, he found that while caste councils were very powerful in the 1860s and in 1910s, in the 1960s, though they were legally deprived of their authority to enforce their traditional norms upon their members by ex- communication, yet they continued to regulate the conduct and minds of their members. Talking of the change in the commensal taboo, he found that though it was true that even in the rural areas inter- dining, where members of all castes (including the Harijans) sat together in a row, was not uncommon in the 1960s, yet there was evidence to indicate that these inhibitions were not completely uprooted psychologically even in the urban areas.

Andre Beteille (1967) too has referred to some changes in the caste system; for example, in structural distance, in style of life, in commensal relations, and in endogamy, etc. In the past, structural distance among castes was maintained not only through the pursuit of different styles of life but by interdictictions or prohibitions of various kinds- on marriage, commensality and social interchange in general. Today, the structural distance between two sub divisions of the same sub-caste is smaller than that between any one of these and a sub- division of a different caste. Today, Brahmins may interdine with 'clean' Sudras but not generally with members of the polluting castes. The unit of endogamy has also expanded, though to a smaller extent. All these changes in the caste system, according to Beteille, are the result of geographical mobility, western education, creation of new occupation to which

recruitment is at least in principle based on factors other than caste, process of modernization and political factors.

According to Gould (1988:162-164), castes functioning as adaptive structures in a modernizing Indian society (which make their future stable and secure) can be examined at three levels -political , economic and social . At the political level, both in cities and villages, caste, communalism and political factionalism are inextricably interwoven. Parliamentary democracy, linked to the secret ballot, has meant that the manipulation of numbers, resources and favours which successful election to office confers, now occupy an important place. Since democratic politics is a competition among interest groups for the positions and spoils of power, it seems but natural that in India the formation of interest groups would reflect the deepest lines of cleavage and solidarity in the society -those dividing castes and ethnic communities. Casteism affects political issues and political decisions. Caste appeals are followed by religious appeals. This is vindicated by political functioning of both Hindus and Muslims in India. No wonder, caste will continue to be exploited at all political levels.

At the economic level, though it is true that role recruitment, reward distribution, and economic mobility of workers and wage earners are determined on the basis of their performance qualities, and people of different castes take to modern occupations, but it is equally true that in villages particularly, their position depends on pervasive caste structures and on inter-caste relations. In India today, the economic problem for individuals is scarcity - of wealth, jobs and opportunities -to participate in the new economic system that is slowly being built and is obviously the prime source of wealth and power. Thus, the aspects of caste that are most useful to the potential striver for position and power in the modern occupational order are nepotism and castes.

At the social level, castes continue to be important in terms of determining the style of living as well as the rank positions of castes in which marriages are to be settled. Though the old ritual and occupational functions of castes are rapidly disappearing, yet caste endogamy is still preserved and the idea of the structure's sanctity has been retained and adapted to the needs of modern social indexing. It is also to be noted that

the elite of India are overwhelmingly of high caste whereas the lower and menial castes display a precisely opposite placing of castes.

Singh (1974:324-327) has talked of three hypotheses pertaining to the future of the caste system in India: (i) mode of production hypothesis (ii) caste resilience hypothesis and (iii) structural adaptation hypothesis. According to the 'mode of production ' hypothesis, supported both by the Marxist (A.R. Desai) and non-Marxist (Kingsley Davis) sociologists, caste is declining. According to Kingsley Davis, the evidences of the decline of caste are:(1) noticeable loosening of commensal restrictions and toleration of violation of food taboos; (2) increasing tendency to ignore inter-marriages barriers or increasing number of inter-caste marriages;(3) increase in occupational mobility; (4) total weakening of caste councils; (5) weakening of jajmani system; (6) decreasing influence and dominance of upper castes on lower castes; (7) gradual removal of untouchability; and (8) growth of social mobility.

According to 'caste resilience' (recovering the original condition) hypothesis, industrialization, growth of technology, westernisation and other democratic institutional spreads tend to activate and enlarge rather than restrict the process of caste functions. These also contribute to its (caste's) organisation mobilization, rationalisation and fusion of ranks. M.N. Srinivas (1964) states that whereas caste mobility in medieval India was based on fission, in modern India it takes the form of fusion of caste segments. In this process, the nature of caste no doubt undergoes some transformation but it would not be true to assume, as Bailey does, that castes change their character. Caste system as such is not altered. Andre Beteille has also supported the thesis of caste resilience. He has referred to evidence for emergence of new caste-like structural forms (professional and occupational groups) which are rigid in structure. He has maintained (1965) "The changes in political and economic systems are not likely to lead to disappearance of castes. The castes of the future will no doubt carry the marks of the caste system".

Opposed to 'caste resilience' hypothesis is the 'structural adaptation' hypothesis. This hypothesis (Leach, 1960; Bailey, 1963; Singh, 1969; Kothari, 1970) holds that through formation of caste association, caste federations and caste clusters, castes lose their

original character and assume class-like forms. The proponents of this view do not link these changes with inevitable stages of transformation. They also do not talk about the disappearance of the caste system or its replacement by the class system.

Caste has, indeed, been in existence for centuries in south Asia. Though its forms and sometimes even its contents, varied across regions, it was practiced in most of south Asia. However, it was during the British colonial rule that a common theory of caste, as we have come to understand it today, was first articulated (Cohn 1996; Dirks 2001).

Social groupings based on their descent, often described ethnic groups or communities, have existed and continue to exist almost everywhere in the present-day world. With a growing incidence of human migration across countries and continents, such diversity of human groups has only been growing over time. These diverse cultural or ethnic groups do not always coexist in harmony and often become markers of political identities on the basis of which power is distributed across communities.

Caste divisions and differences are not as strikingly sharp in countries like Sri Lanka, Pakistan or Bangladesh as in India. However, unlike India, there has been no recognition of their special situation as socially excluded and deprived. Since the states in these countries do not recognize caste, they also do not collect data on their numbers and around variables of their economic status. In contrast, the state policies have played a critical role in producing dalit elite, which has played an important role in articulating dalit aspirations and identity (Jodhka and Shah, 2010).

"It may be wrong to assume that caste has been a static category of Indian society. It has changed due to internal as well as external forces unleashed by the state power. Census is one such process which tried to provide neat boundaries among the castes through classification. Census during the British period officially demarcated the caste grids, provided fixed labels, and grouped them anchored to time and space. In this process, caste categories were officially standardized, necessitated by the exigencies of enumeration which renewed their identity by providing information on geographical coverage and demographic strength, and encouraged them to the

democratic politics of mobilization based on new forms of caste categories and consciousness" (Bhagat, 2006).

As Galantar opines that the British period may be seen as one in which the legal system rationalized the intricacies of local customary caste relationships in terms of classical Hindu legal concepts like Varna and pollution. Using Srinivas' terms, we can think of the British period as a period of "Sanskritisation" in legal notions of caste. In independent India, as Varna and pollution give way to the notion of groups characterized by economic, educational, political, and religious characteristics, we may think of this not as the abolition of caste, but as the "westernization" of notions of caste (Galanter, 1963).

Granted that caste in its present form is ill-suited to the needs of a modern democratic society, its sudden abolition would create chaos little short of catastrophic. For generations it has been a stabilizing influence both for society and the individual. In its compulsive power to direct the lives of men and women, to specify in minute detail their relationships to one another, to adjudicate their disputes and resolve their conflicts, to punish them for their sins and reward them for their virtues, and to define their place in the scheme of things, the institution of caste, functioning with the joint family, is almost without parallel. No individual or group in Hindu society can escape its pervasive influence. It is precisely because of this pervasiveness into every aspect of social relationships and personality that the changes in the caste system create a challenging situation. Whether the transition from traditional forms of association and control to new ones can be achieved successfully without a serious increase in personality disorders and behavior problems remains to be seen (Gist, 1954).

Caste is not disappearing in India because the solidarities inherent in it perform important functions in the contemporary transitional society. And although this fact has not been ignored by many sociologists and anthropologists who have specialized in India over the past fifteen years, a great deal remains to be understood both theoretically and empirically concerning the precise character and significance of these new functions.

From the beginning, modern social scientific inquiries pertaining to India have almost invariably proceeded on the assumption that modernization would mean the automatic dissolution of the caste system and its progressive replacement by a class system analogous to that found in the advanced industrial societies of the West. To a large extent, this expectation arose from the fact that the first systematic theories of change in social systems had been inspired by the impact of industrialization and had been formulated by economists. These early theories about social change, preoccupied as they were with purely economic phenomena, set the pattern of subsequent theoretical speculation about social change which the other social sciences tended to follow as they developed. Thus, and quite rightly up to a point, the process of industrialization was visualized as the marshalling and application of mechanical forces and 'rationality' to the production of goods and services. The social structural and demographic concomitants of this change included the gradual elimination of 'feudalism' and all other vestiges of the 'traditional' social order which were supposed to be non-rational impediments to the progress of industrialization and modernization. Ideally, the fully modern industrial society would be the fully 'rational' society, in other words, in which considerations of personal connection, birth, friendship, kinship, etc., would yield place to performance, qualification and utility as regards occupational recruitment and social mobility. Ultimately, the industrial society and the traditional society were mutually exclusive, social-structurally speaking, India was the traditional society par excellence and the caste system the antithesis of the class system which reflected the rational forces at work in modern society (Gould, 1963).

One of the features of the transformation from the feudal to the Capitalist mode in India is that the lower castes of the feudal mode are, more or less, confined to the lower sections of the new, capitalist class structure. Even with the working class, the same structure is found. The lower castes are confined to the lower ends, while the upper castes dominate the upper end. One of the basic aims of reservations is to modify this 'natural' transformation. The aim is also to promote a more homogeneous class structure in all the castes. Therefore, along with reservation, a revolutionary programme of attacking both the political structure and the rural base of caste is needed.

The policy of protective discrimination was incorporated in the constitution of India in 1950 for amelioration of the "Depressed" classes mostly consisting of the untouchables in regard to their education, employment and political representation. The term 'Scheduled Caste' was first used in the Government of India Act, 1935 for drawing a list of castes which suffered from economic, social and religious disabilities for statutory safeguards and benefits. The term became part of the constitution in 1950. Untouchability was abolished by Article 17 of the constitution, a charter drafted primarily by Ambedkar as Law Minister in Nehru's first Post-independence Cabinet. The practice of untouchability was declared 'forbidden' and 'punishable' in accordance with law (Patwardhan, 1973).

Reservations have not much changed the position of the Dalits. Earnings from non-agricultural occupations have enabled a few dalits to acquire some land, often as sharecroppers, and shift from agricultural labourers to poor peasants. But an improvement in the agrarian position and the move into higher non-agricultural jobs is even stronger in the case of the backward castes. It is the growing strength of the upper sections of the backward castes which is providing a challenge to upper caste domination. In many of the cases of atrocities committed on the lower castes it was observed that the main oppressors of the lower castes, especially the 'Harijans', were the upper sections of the backward castes like Yadavs, Koeris, etc. Thus, reservation alone cannot put caste to an end. For the upper sections of the backward caste, it may be a sufficient goal but in the interests of the Dalits and other low castes, the anti-caste struggle may not be to defend and extend reservation but, even more so, to carry out a thorough land- reform.

Omvedt says that the low castes especially the ex-untouchables must organize independently and whose liberation is crucial for any social revolution in India. According to her, caste and economic power are strongly co-related. It is the caste which has to be fought first and then the 'economic unity' is to be brought about. It is the Social System of caste which has historically shaped the very basis of Indian economy and society and it continues to have crucial economic implications today. The preferential treatment has had a very complex effect. Firstly, it has served to

disassociate "caste" from near-absolute correlation it had with class. Now, small sections of middle class have emerged in all low castes. Yet, very few numbers from low castes are in a position to take advantage of their rights. Thus, the fact remains that the caste continues to have a high correlation with economic positions (Omvedt, 1982).

As far as the future of the caste is concerned, it can be said that the caste hierarchy is so deeply rooted in the Indian social life that the majority of the Hindus though claim to do away with caste but they think it impossible to envisage a social system without a caste hierarchy. Nearly 80% of the population inhabits in the villages and there the institution of joint family and the caste are the bases of society and they provide the benefits and security to the individuals, which are the promises of a modern welfare state. Thus, a new system of behavior and values is needed that can substitute the deep rooted caste- system without damaging the emotional unity of the Hindu society.

Today, the "consolidation" of caste associations tend to emerge as modified *Varnas* based on modern occupational stratification, in which each caste or sub-caste would be assured of its particular position in the national context as against the earlier religious context. (Gupta, 1984) The consolidation of caste associations may give rise to a new Varna system similar to the Western class system in which the occupational groups might cross over the caste affiliations to make a common cause against other occupational groups based on similar educational, income and occupational positions. Thus, the caste system has to reconcile with the new social and political orders but there is a general apathy among the higher castes towards the established Caste system as it is suited to them for continuing certain ritual, social and economic privileges granted by the scriptures and traditions.

The warning that Ambedkar gave to Indian socialists and communists in 1936 has hardly lost its force today. That the social order prevalent in India is a matter which a Socialist must deal with, that unless he does so he cannot achieve his revolution, and that if he does achieve it as a' result of good fortune he will have to grapple with it if he wishes to realise his ideal, is a proposition which in my opinion is incontrovertible. He will be "compelled to take account of caste after revolution if he does not take

account of it before revolution...an organised struggle against the caste system and oppression of women should accompany the class and mass movements". It is this realisation that has given rise to a controversy that in order to conduct such a struggle separate organisations of scheduled castes and tribes should be formed. Separate organisations of women of various Left parties are already in the field, though mainly led by elite urban women. There is no propriety in establishing new organisations of scheduled castes and tribes. Mass organisations of the agricultural labourers and industrial workers must devote as much energy to the struggle against the caste system as they devote to the struggle against the class system (Patil, 1979).

A long overdue recognition of Ambedkar as an icon of the community and his message of "educate, organise and agitate" are now being recognised as a clarion call to emancipation. And, enunciations and calls for recognising their rights have become most strident. But the challenge remains as to how dalits can craft identities and personhoods that will draw on their own defiance of inequality, retain the strength and advantages of their own culture and mold this with the ideals of modernity so as to generate a culture that is oppositional to caste culture. It is to enable such possibilities and in understanding and seeking to address these multiple forms of indignities and their impact on the subjected personhoods of dalit youth that institutions must strive towards. Continuing to support this until these subjected personhoods are challenged and a sense of independent identity and personhood for every student has emerged will be the basis of breaking the cycle of reproduction of indignities. This will also ensure the establishment of a genuine modern society that breaks from its past of placing a significant number of people in an oppressive and total institution, that of caste (Vasavi, 2006).

The caste ideologies all over the country are alarmed by the changing marriage scenario. They are devising a variety of stratagems to counter the trend, mainly through caste associations. As mentioned earlier, punitive measures are more or less ruled out. Therefore, the leaders in every caste focus on creating a number of opportunities for young boys and girls of the caste to meet and engage in such activities as would facilitate their knowing each other intimately and they can then

decide to marry. The elders tell the youth, "You have the freedom to marry according to your choice, but confine your choice to your caste". To put it in popular language, it is "love marriage" within the caste. Of all the stratagems, structurally the most significant is the stratagem to widen the field for choice by organising activities for the larger caste, because it also has political implications. It is not surprising that politicians often attend these gatherings. However, it appears at present that the defenders of caste boundaries are unlikely to succeed in halting the march of inter-caste marriages, which is basically the march of the individual's freedom of choice in marriage. Social analysts will have to follow this march carefully during the 21st century (Shah, 2007).

Since inter-caste marriages have been taking place for more than a century, there is now not only a second and third but even fourth generation population that does not have any caste. After an inter-caste marriage in one generation, usually the marriages of children of such a couple would be marriages between casteless individuals. The argument that a child born out of an inter-caste marriage inherits the father's caste, will no longer work in view of increasing gender equality. The child may not like to inherit the mother's caste either. She might choose not to have any caste at all. Inter-caste marriages appear to be an inevitable change in view of changes taking place in a number of spheres of culture and society, the most important being the rising age at marriage, the ideology of freedom of choice in marriage, the increasing freedom in gender relations in educational institutions, in the workplace, in the performing arts, and in entertainment activities, and the powerful role of both the print and the electronic media in spreading the idea of freedom of choice in marriage.

Rudolph and Rudolph have defined caste associations as "paracommunities" which enable members of castes to pursue social mobility, political power, and economic advantage. (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967) Caste associations resemble, in many ways, the voluntary associations or interest groups found in industrially advanced societies. However, caste associations or paracommunities are distinct in many respects from voluntary associations; as well as from natural associations like caste out of which they have developed. The caste associations are more like the voluntary associations at

the organizational level than the traditional caste structures. It has offices, membership, incipient bureaucratization legislative process which can be seen through conferences, delegates and resolution. But, unlike the voluntary associations, caste associations are characterized by a shared sense of culture, character and status which gives it solidarity not found in voluntary associations. The functions of caste associations are diverse. It serves the Indian society by both leveling the sacred and hierarchical caste order and also replacing it, it initiates and manages the efforts of the lower castes to become twice- horn, to don the sacred thread which symbolizes higher ritual rank and other.

Social change in India has altered the salience of caste- they have become potential bargaining counters in the struggle for power. The diacritical marks of caste as well as commensal rules have lost their importance but this does not imply either secularization or the withering away of caste. The economic structure highlights monopolization of occupations by castes and of other primordial groupings and a vocabulary of primordialities including that of caste is generated. Caste has acquired a political and ethnic significance. Operating in a structure in which the authority of dominant caste has been eroded, the tendency is towards amplification of caste conflict, towards further sharpening of primordialities.

A posthumously published paper by M N Srinivas (2003) carries the assertive title - 'An Obituary on Caste as a System'. Paradoxically, the system has expired but caste identities remain and show no sign of going. It looks, caste system is dead but its ghost remains. Caste as a system is taken to mean by Srinivas as involving mainly its localised social production base, subsistence economy, and jati (caste) based occupations. All kinds of indignities were imposed on lower castes, their access to learning was barred, and they were pushed to unenviable and inhuman positions. It was thus that the caste system, particularly its extreme form - untouchability, became disgraced and condemned right from Buddha's time, and again from the medieval age and then again in the modem times. Thus, the functional significance of the caste system seemed to vanish, making its collapse all the more inevitable. A major factor is the emergence of the modern state as a much stronger, much more powerful and

pervasive institution than it ever was with its different wings - the executive, judiciary and legislature, able to exercise powers on all further contributed to strengthening of the above idea.

Today, Hinduism has accepted the emergence of the modern state to enact its own laws, including personal laws, and thus the sphere of dharmic laws regulating the conduct of people in day-to-day life has shrunk very significantly. There is thus no need for either *dharmashastras* which served as de facto legislation in dharmic matters, or for caste panchayats which acted as judiciary. To the extent that their role still continues, it is much less powerful and is superceded by the role of the state. For the same reason, the role of the *Varna* system in providing a system of checks and balances also has vanished. The legally enacted constitution, accepted by all, provides now a system of checks and balances to maintain equilibrium and stability. Since in the bargain, decentralised democracy of the caste system has broken down, a new type of decentralised democracy, which is village based, has taken its place. It does not need any authentication by religion, but is backed by the Constitution and state power, which is more important. For some time, the dominant castes (which are not the same as ritually upper castes) may try to hijack the village panchayats, but it is a losing battle. The system of reservation for backward castes and untouchables and also for women will gradually but definitely reduce the role of dominant castes. The secular and inclusive forces will prevail over the caste forces before long, even if they have not already done so in some areas. The political consensus against caste system and the power of adult franchise in democracy will ensure the success of democratic and secular forces and defeat caste forces.

The next factor, which worked against the caste system, was the rise of modern secular education. Education need not be and is not family-based though family education will supplement outside education. It is in schools and colleges including trade schools, professional colleges and polytechnics that skills and education are provided. Thus the need for hereditary occupation is now redundant, and social mobility will be much more. The need for hereditary principle in occupation is now redundant also because of the rise of new occupations and the extinction of several old

occupations. The dynamics of the growth of diversity of occupations is such that the hereditary principle looks totally outdated and nonsensical. The information age has thrown up an opening for new occupations, which cannot be classified into the sphere of the four traditional *Varnas*. It is wrong to interpret that all the intellectual tasks were assigned exclusively to Brahmins in the traditional *Varna* system. Brahmins had no monopoly of intellect even if they had some monopoly to study the Vedas and officiate as priests. Even the monopoly as priests has been broken, with different jatis arranging their own priests from outside the caste of Brahmins and evolving their own rituals. The exclusive role of Brahmins in conducting rituals and ceremonies is highly exaggerated. In any case, it could not have been exclusively intellectual, because every task - regal, warfare, agriculture, and arts and crafts required the role of intellect. This is even more so in the modern age, particularly the information age, under which every sector demands the role of intellect and information and not one sector alone. The reason why this point is elaborated is because the new intellectual tasks of the information age cannot be mechanically interpreted as brahmanical.

Just as new professions and occupations emerged, quite a few old occupations have vanished. Some of them have moved right into homes and do not any longer require specialised occupations and caste groups, thanks mainly to technological change. The system of toilets has undergone a revolutionary change during the last 50 years even in rural areas, making it totally unnecessary to handle human waste and carry it on head as in the past. Toilets have moved inside the homes now, and family members themselves clean them. Several tasks which were considered as dirty and polluting need not be done now directly by hand, and can be handled by tools and machines. It is now possible to be clean and hygienic even while handling the so-called dirty tasks. Thus any rationale for separate castes for doing dirty jobs and for isolating them is now totally lost. (Srinivas, 2003)

With the expansion of the modern and liberal education coupled with the urbanization and industrialization, the relatively 'closed' status groups are becoming more 'open' (Jayaram, 1981). And the concept of ritual purity and pollution are loosening. A new order is being created where the caste rigidities are breaking down and opportunities

are created for the lower castes also. Concepts like freedom, equality, secularism and democracy have made the social change possible in India. Industrialization has brought together people of different castes and several laws have been enacted to remove the various types of social disabilities of the people of certain caste and communities. The most important change has been the flexibility of the caste system as a whole.

According to Gist, with the growth of cities and the expansion of industry and trade the new work functions will have the effect of creating prestige differentials between those whose occupations accord them varying degrees of wealth and power and those whose vocations leave them powerless and impoverished. We are now witnessing the emergence of an economy in which the relationship of worker to employer is one of contract rather than of status ascribed by caste. The existence of trade unions, managerial organizations, and retirement systems attest to this trend. The naive notion that Indian society is a "pure" caste system over-looks the important fact that a class system is in process of development. Even as it now exists, the social order is a combination of caste and class. Yet the two are not altogether compatible. As the society increasingly assumes the character of an open-class system, caste is destined to decline. The present combination of caste and class may become meaningful if one views the social order as a series of pyramids-caste, occupation, wealth, political structure-on which the people of the country, more particularly the Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains, are arranged according to varying positions of status and power. These pyramids overlap at many points, but they are by no means coterminous. The caste pyramid is composed of hundreds of different castes distributed in a somewhat hierarchical fashion, with the Brahmins at the apex and the scheduled castes or Harijans at the base. Although whole castes, acting collectively, can and do move up or down the scale, usually within narrow limits, the individual's caste status is fixed. Allowing for certain exceptions, such as hypergamic marriages in which a man, by special permission, takes a wife from a lower caste, the individual can-not join another "community." (Gist, 1954)

Thus, as M.N Srinivas points out that the moral which can be drawn is that an ideological attack on caste which is not backed up or underpinned by a mode of social production ignoring or violating caste-based division of labour, is totally inadequate. Therefore, a combination of wholly new technologies, institutions, based on new principles, and a new ideology which includes democracy, equality and the idea of human dignity and self-respect has to be in operation for a considerable time in order to uproot the caste system. It can be also said that the changes in the thinking and only rational behavior can bring about the desired outcome which is needed to eliminate caste based discrimination in our society.

SUMMARY:

The above chapter speaks about the form and existence of caste in contemporary India. Various opinions on the issue of caste have been discussed in this chapter. Caste is a specter that continues to haunt the body politic of postcolonial India. Whether in constitutional claims about the abolition of caste discrimination or in political claims about the formation of the national community, it has become the subject of national shame. Caste is one of the basic institutions of Hindu society and has engaged the attention of scholars, activists and politicians. There is voluminous literature on the nature and character of caste in its various aspects. It's ideal typical structure with regional variations and the processes of change and continuity have been vividly described and analyzed. Scholars have tried to explore the fundamental principles that underlie the caste system, and the study of caste has given rise to endless controversies and debates. Caste remained, and was in fact recast, in ways that have caused embarrassment and critique and have provided the basis for new forms of social mobilization and progressive politics. Caste has become uniquely Indian, and not always in ways that satisfy either liberal or conservative agendas of national identity.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This dissertation looked into age old question on the issue of caste and the evils emanating from it. Various intellectual interrogations were also looked upon and examined thoroughly. But still the question remains that in spite of numerous works done on the issue and number of revolutionary movements against the discrimination emanating from this institution.

The answer can be well found when we look it from the twin perspectives of 'ideology' and 'sociology'. Where one focuses upon 'what is ideal' or 'what it should be', while the other focus upon 'what is it', i.e. the gap between the myth and the reality. It is reality which is missing in the ideology. People often say and belief that with the coming of modern education and technological advancement, caste is withering away, which is a kind of myth. Because, the reality of our society comes to the fore when the issue of inter- caste marriages arise. This probably justifies the title of the dissertation- Caste System: Continuity and Changes- because it's a reality that caste exists even today but in different 'avatar'. Therefore, showing its continuity with some amount of changes in the rigidity of the system.

The chapter entitled, 'Facets of Caste', discusses about the institution of caste with its various aspects and makes distinction between the 'varna' and 'jati'. It also looks into the issue of existence of caste, not only within Hinduism, but also among Muslims, Christians and Sikhs in India. The relation caste in politics of India is also discussed in the chapter to bring out the deep embededness of the institution along with its presence in Diaspora. The nexus between caste and class along with the triple oppression of a 'dalit female' because of her caste status in society is also discussed in this chapter.

The third chapter, 'Intellectual Interrogation on Caste', of this dissertation discusses in detail about the problem of caste and the solutions provided by our great social and political leaders and still the caste system is not withering away. Scholars like Periyar, Phule, Gandhi, Ambedkar, Lohia and Nehru have been discussed in detail in this

chapter. Their contrasting debates are also mentioned with the greater focus on the dialogue between Gandhi and Ambedkar. The coming of independence and the adoption of the constitution along with the various safeguards for the depressed and marginalized section of the society was only realized because of a strong will to eradicate the evils and discrimination emanating from the caste system and to make independent India, a secular and progressive society with equal rights and dignity for all.

The fourth chapter, "Caste in Contemporary India', takes a comprehensive view on the contrasting views and debates on whether "caste" in the strict sense of the term does exist in contemporary India, or it has disappeared. There are various points of views on the issue. Some are of the opinion that caste has become meaningless in present day India, with the advancement in technology and modern education. But, on the other hand, some opine that caste has not disappeared and rather it is an illusion to assume so, because "caste consolidation" and "caste solidarity" is on an increase with caste based politics. Thus, caste as is found today, with continuity and changes in its form is discussed in this chapter.

Caste is hereditary, endogamous group, having a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. This is one of the pure models of caste, which has been held since the Vedic days. But now changes have been observed in this phenomenon. Caste has been considered by a large number of sociologists and ethnographers as a closed system of stratification. But, now it has been reported that social mobility has been there in past, and the process of 'sanskritisation', migration and status mobility were not uncommon in ancient and medieval India. The British accentuated these processes of change through new land legislation and management procedures, English education and judiciary.

It was only after industrialization, and new legal reforms which brought awareness to the lower and backward castes that the process of 'sanskritisation' and voice to overthrow the hegemony of the upper castes was accelerated. Naturally this process was checked and resisted, which is continuing till today, and it led to tensions, violence, and compromises as well.

Caste system is a form of stratification found not only in India but its presence can be seen in other parts of the world too. It is interesting to note whether the caste system was rigid or flexible in the past. Mobility within the caste structure is of a very restricted nature. In case of caste system it is difficult to change one's caste status. Once a man is born in a caste, he remains in it for his life-time. The individual's status is determined by the caste status of his parents so that what an individual does has little bearing on his status.

The crusade against caste system began first during the days of Buddha itself who preached the doctrine of equality among men and for several centuries provided the mainstay of those who wanted to escape the caste oppression. Later, in the middle ages Islam had served the purpose, when numerous lower castes people had embraced that religion in areas like Bengal. Still later, saints like Kabir had preached the idea of equality among men. The Christian missionaries were successful mostly among the lower castes and the tribal people. But the caste-system in India has spread the venomous hatred between the people to such an extent that even after being converts to a new religion, people did not stop this hateful discriminatory practice. Thus, the idea of caste division, so alien to Islam elsewhere, is found in the form of certain exogamous restrictions among the Indian Muslims. Being afraid that they would not be able to attract the higher castes people to agree to conversion, the Christian missionaries, with rare exception allowed them to retain the caste distinction. The same is the case among the Sikhs and the Jews.

It is visualized, generally that with the spread of modern education changes occurred in the Indian society but this is not out rightly correct. Though, the Indian social order in eighteenth century did not present a bright picture but the social evils did not go unchallenged, even during this period. Various sects denounced polytheism, idolatry, caste distinctions and other taboos. Besides, it can be argued that substantial changes were occurring within various walks of social life. Caste order was also undergoing some sort of change. Fragmentation, occupational mobility and sanskritisation were some of the indicators. But then, one is forced to ponder that why caste does exists even in the Diaspora? And if education can change people's thinking and make them

rational, then why do people belonging to so called "*elite*" classes (because of the fact being better educated and gifted with better life chances) follow and believe caste? Why are there so many hue and cries over inter-caste marriages?

The answer for the above questions can be understood in better light when we look it from the perspective of Emile Durkheim. He says that we feel the pressure of social obligations only when we start opposing the set norms and standards of the society. This can be very well related to why people oppose inter-caste marriages even when their education does not tells them to do so. We agree with the educational doctrines as long as we are comfortable with it, but as soon as the issue of inter-caste marriages comes to the fore in one's own family, people do adopt the traditional mode of thinking and behavior regarding the caste question.

Therefore, various theories have been put forward for its origin. With the coming of the British rule, horizontal mobility became possible and a change was observed in the Caste system whereby the lower castes got a chance to raise their prescribed status. Such changes have continued till date and disturbed the pattern of Hindu society by creating tensions and conflicts among various castes. Today, numerous types of tensions and conflicts can easily be observed between upper and middle level castes, on the one hand and between the upper and lower castes, on the other hand. Similarly, tensions and conflicts can also be seen between the middle level and lower castes.

The reasons leading to caste conflicts and caste tensions are varied. Historically speaking, the element of conflict has been inherent in the caste system. In the Caste system, the social status of Brahmans in the Varna system was highest and that of the Shudras, the lowest. The tendency of exploitation was rooted in the system as the Shudras were deprived of the social, economic, political and cultural rights and privileges. Thus, in the caste system, there are various types of exploitations i.e. social, economic, political and legal exploitation of the lower castes by the upper castes. The extreme form of exploitation turns into atrocities of varying magnitudes on the lower castes, especially the Scheduled Castes. In these atrocities the police, administrative authorities and the government play a very important role.

With the concepts like Secularism, equality and democracy, the Caste system is losing hold of its traditional pattern and is adopting itself to a new social order, suitable to the modern times. Today, no occupation is caste bound, as it traditionally used to be. The constitution, with the 'protective discrimination', tries to assist the social education and economic interests of the Backward Classes. But still the caste names such as "*Badhai*" and "*Dhobi*" continue to hold its presence and even relevance in today's society as well.

Planning and development, after independence, though have taken a tremendous leap, have failed to cope with the rising population. So there is a keen competition for scarce goods. The policy of "positive discrimination" has created a feeling of insecurity in the minds of upper castes. The upper castes feel that all is being given to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and backward castes through reservations. While the lower castes think that too little is being given to them; and one fails in his economic or political ends, he blames the other, and thereby leading to tensions and conflicts.

The phenomenon of politicization is clearly evident in changing aspects of caste since independence. It has also been confirmed by numerous anthropologists and political scientists in the last couple of decades. At the village level, this has led M.N Srinivas, for example, to stress the political significance of the local 'dominant caste'. Above the village level, political scientists like Rajni Kothari have described the formation and operation of 'caste associations' and caste federations, thus illustrating the variety of forms that caste power may take, and the strength of its political implications. Once caste became politicized, it was understandable that factionalism should find expression through it at the village level. Thus it is a strange paradox that, the new universal political order, in constitution and in principle rejects caste, while in practice; it has accommodated caste as a natural ally. Caste has, in fact, come to terms with the democratic political process. Politics has drawn caste into its web for organizing support and in articulating the needs of the masses. The organization of support is done through the same organization in which the masses are found, namely the caste groups. In making politics their sphere of activity, caste and kin groups attest

their identity to strive for positions of power. Different parties and movements mobilize different social status groups as resources for their political objectives. Thus, even today, at the time of election, the caste configuration in a constituency and the caste of the candidate play a paramount role in candidate getting ticket and his eventual win or loss. For organized party politics, the caste provides a readymade system of segments which could be used to marshal support. Liberal education, government patronage, and an expanding franchise have been major factors that have penetrated the caste system.

The ill effect of caste system is visible in almost all the spheres of our life. But then when we are so much concerned about the "caste" of the person with whom one marries, then why is there no inquiry into the "caste" of the doctor who treats us of our diseases and we give him/her the status of God in India and at this point of time we are least concerned about the caste to which the doctor belongs…why such extremes of paradoxes exists in our society. Today, in contemporary times, we rarely inquire about the caste of person giving us loans during times of our needs, we do not know the caste of the person who teaches us in schools and colleges and makes us qualified enough to sustain ourselves in this competitive world, we are least concerned about the caste of the person who is making food in the restaurants…then why is caste so important when it comes to the question of inter-caste marriages. These are the few very important questions which bring out the hypocrite nature of the so called "thinking" being of this society.

Thus, in the concluding chapter, it can be said that the objectives mentioned in the introduction, i.e. try to trace the origin of conceptualization of caste in colonial India, along with the importance and role of caste in Indian politics (and politicization of caste) with various intellectual interrogations about the caste system in India has been looked into detail with the help of various chapters of this dissertation. The research questions in order to reach the objectives have also been addressed in this dissertation. The existence and importance of caste in various spheres of our day to day life, be it economic sphere, political sphere, social or any other discloses the place, the caste system assumes in our live today.

It is obvious that the eradication of caste is a distant reality, despite the indications to the contrary. As long as caste performs the function of a welfare state in India and provides for the common bonds of kinship ties, political groups and alliances it can be assured of a continued existence in Modern India. Caste will not wither away as long as its social acceptance and functional utility is being appreciated and made use of. A strong will and inspiration is needed to wash out this evil institution from our society in order to see it developing and progressing on the path of success with its secular structure intact. Thus, the element of continuity and changes can be seen this institution of caste and will continue to be so unless some radical action is taken to wash it away.

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