CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: CASTE, COLONY AND CLASS

“Caste” has been widely used to describe ranked groups within rigid system of social stratification and especially those which constitute the society of Hindu India. Among social scientists, and especially among those who have worked in India, there are basically two views: (1) that the caste system is to be defined in terms of structural features which are found not only in Hindu India but in a number of other societies as well. Those who hold the latter view find caste groups in Arabian Peninsula, Polynesia, North Africa, East Africa, Guatemala, Japan, aboriginal North America, and the contemporary United States.

Units of every different scale have been denoted by the word “Caste” as well as by vernacular terms, of which Jute is the most common. Such units include references categories extending thought India: hereditary occupational units (such as barbers, tanners), and the endogamous units within the occupational units. The caste system of India is unique in the religious ritual which explains it, in its complexity, and the degree to which the constituent caste can also be defined in terms which give the concept of cross-cultural applicability.

A. L. Krober (1930:254) has defined caste as “an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social esteem in comparison with other such subdivisions.”
A caste system, be said to occur when a society is composed of birth ascribed, hierarchically ordered, and culturally distinct groups (Castes). The hierarchy entails differential evaluation, differential rewards, and differential association. The earliest written mention of division in Indian society refers to the distinction between the autochthonous Dasa and the immigrant Arya populations. Later texts specify a three fold and then to four fold division of society into Brahman (priestly), Rajanya or Kshatriyas (warrior-ruler), Vaishya (merchant), and Shudras (servant) Varna, with the population outside this scheme being subsequently categorized as untouchable. The Varna formed hierarchy marked by differing material and spiritual privileges number of theories about caste devote themselves to explaining its origin. these include the hypothesis that the system was created by the Brahmans for their own benefit (Shirring 1974:231) The Classical view has been described by Manu (Mayer 1968:341) that castes have evolved from unions between members of different Varna. It has also been suggested that caste were formed on “a community of function” through common occupation in a division of labors (Nesfield. 1885:88) An alternative theory claims that the underlying principle was a physical antipathy of Arya for Dasa, resulting in an endogamy that produced measurable physical distinctions, so that one could almost say for least certain regions of India that “a mans social status varies in inverse ratio to the width of his nose” (Risley 1891:xxxiv). Hocart (1950:68) suggest that the functions and concomitant purity of participants in count rituals become hereditary, and when this organization later separated to meet the ritual requirements of rest of the population a ritual ranked hierarchy was created. Others maintain that the system arose from Aryan institutions that were adopted to the conditions found in India (Senart 1930:213. Hutton (1964:164) is even less
ambitious, giving only a list of 15 factors whose concentration contributed to the emergence of the caste system. Weber (1921:130-131) suggests that the institution could have been produced only by the convergence of several major factors.

Dumont (1970) considers inequality based on the caste system as a special type of inequality. Ideas and values' are considered by Dumont as the basis for knowing actual and observable behavior of the people. For Dumont therefore, the idea of pure and the impure is the basis for understanding the caste system. This idea is the basis for hierarchy in Hindu society. Dumont’s main concern is with the traditional social organization of India from the point of view of values and ideas. He constructs an ideal type of the caste system based on ethnographic and ideological research materials. Madan (1971:1806-1808) upholds Dumont view that hierarchy is a ‘universal necessity’. Caste is a very complex system precisely because caste is not simply a ritualistic system of power relations and economic activities. If it gets weakened in one aspect, it also gets strengthened in other aspects with certain alterations, additions and assertions.

According to K.L Sharma, there is no uniform pattern of caste structure in actual terms throughout India (1986:18-19) the same can be said about class structure. Both caste and class bear ideological contents are conceptual elements. Both have substantive elements as existential and mundane chimes of relations. There are thousands of castes in India with different names and nomenclatures, but there are only about five or six classes throughout the country. These apparent bases of social division in Indian society are not realistically very different from each other. There are numerous ‘middle classes’ which are not directly related to ‘production process’ they are an offshoot of the modern
Indian state apparatus. One obvious inference is that there is a caste basis of class and class basis of caste. There is a class basis of rituals, pollution purity, and other apparently non-material aspects of social life. At Sabha is not a simple caste association; in effect, it is a peasant’s organization. Kisan Sabha is not a simple peasant’s organization, it is very much an association of castes engaged in agriculture, particularly Jats in northern India and their counterparts in other states.

Structural aspect of caste system is explained by accepting it as a general principle of stratification (Barth. 1960: 113-46), (Berreman. 1957: 45-73). Caste as a cultural system is understood in terms of prominence of ideas of pollution-purity and notions of hierarchy segregation and corporations (Dumont. 1970). (Leach. 1960: 1-10). Caste is also viewed as a closed system of stratification (Bailey. 1963: 107-124). Where as Beteille (1966: 224-46) considers caste as a’ closed’ as well as ‘open’ systems. He finds that caste is becoming increasingly ‘segmental’ because of the emergence of differentiated structures in India. Caste is not really a very flexible system, yet it permits mobility in certain areas to its members. A given caste is guided by norms of the caste system, have inter caste dependence; but a given caste has also its autonomy in regard to observance of its practices, rituals and protection of its rights in relation to other castes. In fact, caste has adopted itself as it confronted innumerable varied situation, forces and constraints. Caste has evolved simultaneously in several directions and adjusted with ideologically antagonistic systems. It has not allowed the emergence of an alternative system of stratification and social relations though it has undergone significant changes from time to time (Sharma. 1977: vii). There is no point therefore, in enumerating features and functions of the caste system with their descriptions as done by Risley
Caste has been ecologized as a positive and functional system in the writings of the British ethnographers and some Indian scholars. Srinivas (1979: 237-42) notes that even today agricultural production requires cooperation of several castes. The use of caste idiom is quite widespread. Even Karl Marx (1951; 1965) related to the Asiatic mode of production to the stability of the caste system in India. Similarly H.J.Smaïne (1890) has considered caste as an illustration of non-contractual 'status-society'. Dumont (1970) and Bougle (1971) have considered caste as an ideological system of unique nature. Such a view was earlier held by Hocart (1950). Max Weber (1970) too has considered caste as a system of status stratification. All of them have explained caste as basically a cultural system implying that significant structural changes have not occurred in Indian society due to its stable character and cultural ethos.

Srinivas concept of ‘dominant Caste’ (1959b) and his collection of essays on caste (1962), K.S.Mathur’s book on caste ritual (1964), Mariots studies on caste (1959, 1965, 1968a, 1968b) and Kotharis works on the role of the caste system in Indian politics (1970a, 1970b) are some of the notable examples of ‘caste view’ model. Emphasis in these studies has been singularly on the hegemony or over-determination of caste, cultural normative criteria rather than economic and political one. However, in late sixties and seventies “multiple criteria” (Hazalehurst, 1968:38-57), “levels of caste dominance” (Dube, 1968:83-97) have been discussed with a conscious intent to counter the falsity of the futurological concepts like dominant caste, pollution purity, sanskritization and westernization. D’souza (1967: 192-211) draws a simple and
mechanical distinction between caste and class. He is obviously guided by the American notion of class., class for D’souza is a result of what he calls objective rating of position based on certain attributes. Here D’souza refer to the rigidity-fluid dimension of social stratification implying class as a case of fluidity and caste as referring to rigidity. Caste as a system of social stratification represent a semblance of rigidity and fluidity, cooperation and competition, holism and individualism, organic and seminary divisions, interdependence and autonomy and inequality and equality, etc. Weber’s notion of class situation and market situation has been found relevant for studying class in India.

Since caste incorporates class and class incorporates caste, neither caste view alone nor class view alone would explained the totality of India’s social reality (Sharma. 1986:23) Researchers by Stein (1968), Panikkar (1955) and others have shown that a perfect congruence between caste, class and power never existed in the pre-British India. Probably migration was quite normal activities particularly resulting from warfare for acquiring powers and revolts against the atrocities committed by the rulers and upper caste priests. In recent years, land reforms, adult franchise and certain constitutional provision have brought about incongruities in summation of status. Kosambi (1958: 86-870 analyses the Aryans after the rig Veda from the point of their economic formation. Taper (1974: 95-123) Habib (1974: 264-316), and Desai (1948) have analyzed class character of Indian society in ancient, medieval and modern India respectively. H.B.Lamb (1975: 25-34) has reported prevalence of class relations as early as 600 B.C. in India. Material and cultural traditions existed in a congruent form, and class transformation had been a vital fact in the form of new kingdoms, settled agriculture, trade, cities, banking and guild organizations.
According to Sharma (1986: 23-24) both caste and class are the real dimension of Indians social formation by and large inseparable from each other. Class is not simply a category conceptually abstracted. It is not simply a construct based on certain attributes or indices operationally derived. Classes of land owners, or landless laborers and money lenders are not abstractions. But they are existential structural components of India’s class structure. Interactional ties (both conflicts and cooperation) between them refer to their life situation. Caste and class nexus is highlighted by Gough (1980: 337-64) in her analysis of mode of production as a social formation in which she finds inter-connections of caste, kinship, family and marriage with force of production and production relations. The Marxist ideologies Namboodiripad (1979: 329-36) and Ranadive (1979: 337-480 consider class relationships as domain assumption in the treatment of caste and kinship in India. Even Varna and Jajmani system have been explained in terms of class relations and the modes of production (Meillassoux, 1973: 89-111). A ‘class view’ of social structure and social relations is found in the analysis of several others including Djurfeld Goran and J.Linberg (19750. H. Singh (1979), Thorner (1974), Saith and Tanakha (1972: 712-23) and Barduaj and Das (1975: 222-23).

Caste and class represent to a large extent the same structural reality. Singh (1968: 171) rightly comments on caste and class nexus the situation corresponds to a ‘premistic’ model of change where traditional sentiments of caste and kinship undergo adaptive transformation without completely being diffracted into classer corporate group. Classes operate with in the frame work of castes” caste conflict is also class conflict as the gap between the upper and lower castes is also the same that one finds between the high and low classes. Castes also functions as classes as they are geared for performing
their class interest. Therefore common class consciousness among the members of a caste are mainly due to their common economic deprivation. Caste associations particularly in urban context perform economic and political functions for the benefit of their respective members. Thus caste is more of interaction group groups rather than attribution constructs. Joan Mencher (1974: 469) finds caste as a very effective system of economic exploitation of lower caste precisely due to this the upper caste (in the garb of exploiting classes) have not allowed emergence of class consciousness among the lower classes as they feared a threat to their entrenched status in India’s social structure.

The concept of class in regard to Indian society, Marx himself stated about caste and traditional ethos of village communities in his to article on India in 1853 in the New York Daily Tribune (1951). Initially Marx thought of Asiatic Mode of production by which he meant absence of private property in land and static nature of economy due to certain tie up between caste, agriculture and village handicrafts. However, Kurian (1980: 96-106) observes the analysis of Asiatic mode does not deny the role of class contradictions and class structures. India’s pre-capitalist economic formation was neither classless nor static, social relations and exploitations were based on both caste and class side by side. Different forms of communal societies, forms of slavery and bondage, and feudal relations have existed in different combinations in the same areas at the same time.

Ashook Rudra (1978: 916-230) while analyzing the class composition of the Indian agricultural population observe as that there are only two classes in Indian agriculture, one of which is termed the class of big landlord’ the other’ the class of agricultural labors’. These two classes are in antagonistic contradiction with each other,
and this contradiction constitutes the principle contradiction in Indian rural society. Similar to Rudra's view is the view held by Desai (1948, 1975). Rudra and those who adhere to his view do not accept the view that class differentiation in terms of agricultural laborers, poor peasants, middle peasants, rich peasants, landlords etc., exists today and even existed in medieval India (Sharma, 1983b). Kotsambis (1958) accepts mode of production as the basis of understanding of class relations, but does not accept the hypothesis of economic determinism and universal application of Maxims as a monolithic frame of reference and method of study concepts specifically relevant for studying Indian society could be evolved from its historicity and experience. D.P. Mukharji (1958) and Daniel Thorner (1974), for example, have used indigenous concepts drawing from agrarian relations and India's cultural heritage. Even Utsa Patnaik (1976: a82-a101) who uses notions of mode of production and differentiation of peasantry borrowed from writings of Mao and Lenin rejects a mechanical acceptance of Marx model of study. She observes that several modes of production co-exist in India and there has been a limited and destroyed development of Capitalism. Sharat G. Lin (1980) makes a reference of interpretation and integration of pre-capitalist and capitalist relations.

Nexus between class and caste Gough (1960: 11-60) has analyzed conflicts and litigations between different castes in a Tanjore village based on economic inequalities. The mix of caste and class in East Bengal (Mukhaerjee, R.K.1957), and class genesis of caste structure in Bengal (Bose, 1967) and changes from caste to class by B.B. Mishra (1964), Beteille (1969: 17-31), Miller (1975), and Kolenda (19780, have been reported. Some scholars (Deshai, 1948, 1975, 1980, Bettelheim, 1968) have undertaken a class
analysis of India’s social formation considering caste, religion, family and politics as subservient to class relations. However, Harris (1982) and Gail Onvet (1982) have analyzed class relations as a dominant causality with which they explain caste and other cultural aspects in Indian society. The scholars’ dispositions have objected to the culturological determinism as advocated by Srinivas (1952, 1976) Dumont (1970) and several others of their persuasion. Parvathamma (1978: 91) while commenting on Srinivas’ Remembered Village writes: ‘in all the writings of Srinivas, the Brahman-non-Brahman values are juxtaposed’. Hierarchy based on pollution and purity remains intrinsic to Srinivas, thinking in regard to all aspects of human life even it is actually not so pronounced. However, Bailey (1963: 107-24) incorporates both cultural and structural dimensions in the definition of caste. Class as an analytic notion is used by Beteille (1965), Bhatt (1975) and Agrawal (1971) as they draw a distinct line of demarcation between caste, class and power. Emergence of grades within a caste has also been referred as class-like changes within caste. Hyper gamy within caste endogamy always refers to status distinctions based on economic position and parental heritage, and therefore class grade have always been there as part of the caste system itself. Class is not a result of the new forces of change which have affected the caste system changes are in the traditional caste class relations. Thus classes are found as a part of system of social stratification in the same way as castes are rooted in the Indian society. There is no universal and monolithic nature of class, class relations and class conflict. There are certainly objective criteria of class identification and determination of class position. A class is certainly a concrete unit of interaction with other units.
Some empirical studies reveal a high concentration of socially backward castes among tenant cultivators. The study by Reddy and Murthy (1978: 1061-76) show that as many as 73rd percent of the pure tenant cultivators 70 percent belong to these backward caste. The backward caste tenant cultivators are predominant in the small and medium size groups. The socially backward castes in Andhra Pradesh consist of Brahman, Kapu, Devanga and others. Thus most of the tenants of small and medium size belong to economically and socially depressed caste and pure rent receivers except twelve percent belong to the dominant castes. Mukherje (1981:112) cites the example of caste-riots to explain the unidimensionality of caste, class and religion. He writes “caste riots are frequent in those areas where the caste wise ‘social’ deprivations are manifestly correlated with the class-wise economic deprivations; such as in Bihar, Maharrastra, Tamilnadu, etc.” According to Mukherje these caste contradictions are due to inherent class contradictions in the caste system. Vagiswari (1972) observes that the non-Harijans have become proletarians during 1950-1970; whereas the non-Harijans have improved their economic standing during the same period.

The Dalit or Harijan have been attacked, murdered, their women folk raped and put to indignities. Arun Sinha (1977: 2037-40) observed that it is class war’ against harijans, and not atrocities. In another dispatch to Economic and Political weekly Sinha (1978: 675-76) observe that “in the villages of Rihar, the rise of rich peasant class has driven agricultural laborers of all-castes-Chamars, Dusadhs, Kurumis, Yadaus, Rhuminhrs, and so on to forsake of their caste organizations and fight along trade union lines”. This shows that ‘class war’ cuts across caste lines.
The incidence of massacre, loot and rape of scheduled caste in Belchi, Agra, Pantnagar, Marathwada and Bajitpur, among other places, show the role of the caste system vis-à-vis class struggle and class organization as reported by Atyachar Virodhi Samiti (1979: 845-52). The Samiti investigated the nature and extent of repression of scheduled castes in Marathwada in Maharashtra who were also poor peasants and agricultural laborers. The specific oppression and exploitation of women among the rural poor both sexually and as a class, particularly the Dalit women have been highlighted in the report by the Samiti. The findings and observations of Atyachar Virodhi Samiti on caste is seen as a caste as a relations of production.

The view of Samiti: “Caste is one of the important aspect of the Indian society. It represent a specific form of oppression at the level of relations of production. To say there are only classes issue, nothing like questions pertaining to caste, is only absurd, because of the material reality that caste divisions beyond purely (economic) classes yet persist. So issues around specific caste questions must be taken by all the progressive and leftist Dalits and non Dalits and organizations (Samiti: Year? 852). A report from a village in Punjab by Amrinder pal Singh (1979: 1753-54) shows that farm workers are harijans and rich farmers are Jats and Sikhs. The principle demand of the village workers is an increase in the wage. The big and middle peasant are united in opposition to the agricultural labors., thus both class and caste are found inseparably in the tense situation. Convergence of caste and class has been reported P.K. Bose (1981: a713-16) in Gujarat against reservation of seats for post –graduate medical courtesan in Bihar against for reserving 44% of government jobs for the backward classes. The B. P. Mandal commission for Backward Classes was faced with the problem of caste and class
convergence. The commission thought that caste and class hierarchies went together and therefore caste was considered as the basis of determining backwardness of given number of society. In the context of Bihar Arvind N. Vyas (1984: 1616-19) observe that apparently the phenomena of caste is found in its virulent form, but to ignore the concept of class is to undermine the concrete conditions of the state.

Classes are found in India in caste idiom’s Marxist explanation of this: caste should be analyzed in regard to its nature, its material basis in history and in the present and its role in politics. Which caste are the ruling ones, and which ones own the land and the capital, employ wage-labors and extract surplus caste division hamper progress and unity among the oppressed classes. According to this view all classes are defined by the relations in whom the various sections of society are found related to the means of production, and castes are a carryover of feudal class divisions. The annual number of Economic and Political Weekly of 1979 is especially devoted to “Class and Caste in India” implying a class view of caste and not vice versa. The titles in this volume include,’ Dialectics of caste and class conflict”, “Caste and class: an interlinked view” , “Caste conflicts versus Growing unity of popular Democratic Forces”, “Caste, Class and property Relations”, “Caste and Class in Maharastra”, “Caste and Class in Tribal movement”, “Caste Class and economic opportunity in Kerala: an empirical analysis”, Castes and Class in Bihar”, and Class and Jati at Asthapuram and Kanthapuram’”, etc. All these studies report caste and class Nexus, use of Caste, Class and religion for gaining political power, emergence of an elite class in every caste, an inter linked view caste and class, realization of caste idioms in power game, role of caste in agrarian and social movements.
Louis Dumont (1970) considers caste as a method of studying Indian society. To him, caste is social as religion is social, to Radcliffe Brown and Durkheim. Dumont approvingly quoted from Hocart, Senart, and Hutton who have advocated for continuity of caste system by emphasizing the functions of caste system for individual members, for caste as a group and for the entire Indian society or state (Hutton 1964). They make a sharp distinction between caste and class. Class is considered as a characteristics feature of the western society and is characterized by its emphasize on democracy, individualism and openness. On the contrary caste as the core features of the Indian society is defined as an archaic institution lacking in democracy, individualism, and freedom (Sharma, 1980).

The structural-functional theory of social stratification dominated in the fifties, congruence between caste, class and power was found in village community. Division of labor among various castes in a given local situation was found desirable. Corporate character of caste groups was analyzed within the framework of intra-caste and inter-caste relations. Structuralism and Maxims as explanations of and approaches to social stratification acquired prominence in the Sixties. Dumont is the spokesman of structuralism Marxism has been advocated by A.R.Desai and Charles Bettleheim. However, in the seventies, the historical perspective has been accepted by the Marxists and as well as non-Marxists in their studies of social stratification. The non Marxist adherents of structural-historical perspective have given more emphasis on understanding society in relation to its historicity (Singh, 1974, 1981).
Caste as the singular institution of social Rankin has been the characteristic argument during fifties in the studies of Hutton, Ghurye Hocart, Bougle, Myrdal, Leach, Srinivas, Marriot, and Lewis etc. All of them treated caste as a conterminous with the entire gamut of social relation and it thought it to be an all inclusive basis of social stratification (Beteille, 1969:17). Multi mentality of social stratification is emphasized in the sixties in the studies conducted by Beteille (1965) Bhatt (1975) and Agrawal (1971). Class and power along with caste are treated as economic and political dimension of social inequality and hierarchy. Ramakrishna Mukherje (1957) Kathleen Gough (1960) and Joan Mencher (1974) however, look at caste from a class point of view. Menchar feels that caste should be studied from “upside down” rather than through “top down” view. Caste is treated by all these scholars as a system of economic relations rather than merely as a system of ritual hierarchy K.L. Sharma (1974) him self applied both structural and cultural perspectives for understanding social stratification in six villages of Rajastan.

Functional approach to the study of caste system implied that it was a useful institution and it would not change, and also that and it would not adopt itself to meet the challenge and exigencies of a verity of situations. Caste was found adaptive and pragmatic system performing as an interest group for its members (Kothari; 1970b). Normative and cultural aspect of caste have received more attention through analysis of sanskritization and westernization (Srinivas: 19660). Several studies have comprehended contemporary changes in the caste system as a movement from its organic nature to its segmentary character, from its closeness to openness and from its emphasis on corporations to individualism (Bailey, 1957, Miller, 1975).
Srinivas (1952) study of the role of religion among this an extension of Radcliff-Brown's functionalism. Religion is sui-generic for Srinivas. Caste and religion are intertwined, hence religion become the basis of caste hierarchy. Beteille (1965) in trying to go beyond caste through his “Caste and Class and Power” analysis is explicitly guided and inspired by Webbers triology of class, status, and partying the understanding of Indian social stratification, structuralism, Marxism, and positivism along with their numerous variations have been accepted more as Fees than relevant theoretical and methodological devices.

Beteille makes a distinction between caste and class and power on the pattern of ‘Class. Status and Party’ as suggested by the Max Weber (1970). The distinction between this three is justified by Beteille’s observation of” the differentiation of institutional structures” and also because he does not find “summation of statuses” (Beteille, 1966, Bailey, 1963). Beteille also noted that there is very little preoccupation with purity-pollution rituals in general.

Anil Bhatt’s (1975) study of caste, class and politics contains a clear theoretical exposition and objective of the study. He has borrowed extensively from studies of “comparative politics” and comparative functionalism, and in fact use the phrase” comparative social stratification.” His main focus is on the understanding of “summation of statuses” between the contemporary social structure and politics. This he does by comparing the traditional Indian society with its contemporary setting.

Victor S.D’Souzas (1967, 1968) study of caste and class in Chandigarh highlight the significance of the continuum of the rigidity —fluidity dimensions and also of the
individual and his properties as the unit of analysis. All this exercise is implicitly pattern on the notion of positivism of the structural-functional variety. His emphasis is on constructing ‘order’ of classes based on education, occupation and income.

Furnivall, Senart, and Hutton listed a couple of functions of caste system in the books they wrote on caste. They propagate that caste was a useful institution for Hindus in particular and for Indians in general. Recently, some more western scholars have also lent support to this verdict inferentially through the findings of their studies (Marriot, 1965). They have stated that caste have a secular aspect. Kothari (1970a) reports that one American scholar even talk of “the democratic interaction of caste”. According to some, caste has even led to the modernization of India’s polity. Kothari (1970b) accept these statements and considers caste apolitical.

Louis Dumont’s Homo Hierarchic us is the most well-Known exposition of Structuralism perspective on social stratification. The pivotal notion off Dumont structuralism as noted by Y. Singh (1981) is ideology, dialectics, transformation. The basic tenet of caste system is “hierarchy.”

A couple of studies on caste and class have taken ‘change’ as the focal point of analysis. Structural-historical perspective is being applied by those who lay emphasis on the study of differentiation, evaluation and change in cast and class in India. Mode of production in agriculture and industry in relation to caste and class has been discussed both by economic historians and anthropologists. (Frykenberg, 1969). The Marxists look at the origin or evolution of caste from the point of economic relations. Political activist like Dange (1949) Randive (1979) and Namboodiripad (1979) look at caste as a
mechanism of exploitation in the hands of the upper caste Non-Marxists consider not as a super-structural entity, but mainly as a basic institution of division of labor an harmonic relations. Mode of production is the key to the Marxist theory of social stratification. A.R.Desai (1948) study is a well known example of “orthodox Marxism”. Other variants of Marxist analysis of caste, class, and land relation are the studies of D. P. Mukharji (1958) Kathleen Gough (1980) and Gail Omvedt (1982).

While analyzing caste among Muslims, Ansari (1960) has concluded that social structures among Muslims are also organized according to the caste principles. A consideration of caste among Muslim at once raises the question whether the term caste can be applied to the system of social stratification of a community which professes a faith other than Hinduism. Leach (1960: 2) has raised the question as to whether caste is best considered as a cultural or as a structural phenomenon. There are two broad points of view on this question. On the one hand, there are some following Weber (1970:396) take the position that caste is fundamental institution of Hinduism and its use should be restricted to Hindus or at best to social groups which through professing other faiths, live with or near Hindu communities. Dumont (1957:7-22) considers the same within his conceptual framework of ‘pan Indian civilization’. On the other hand, a second group of sociologists and social anthropologists define caste as structural term so as to be applicable to the relationship between two or more groups in other religions and societies as well (Bailey, 1963: 107-124; Berrman, 1960: 120-27; and Harper, 1968).

Agrawal (1978:141-157) who begins his analysis of the Meos with a fairly broad structural definition of caste as ‘a ranked social division in which membership is
determine by birth’ (1978: 142) comes increasingly, as his analysis proceeds, to the Meos in terms of the cultural characteristics of caste and finally employs the degree of correspondence between them and Hindu cast groups as a basis for characterizing them as a caste.

Mines (1978: 159-169) view is that the system of social stratification among Tamil Muslim as is not comparable in any respect to the Hindu caste system. He contends that the different Muslim subdivisions described by him are not ranked hierarchically and regarded as approximately of equal status, though there is ranking of individuals in terms of age, wealth and religiousness, etc. (1978: 162). Again he argues that though the endogamy occurs, the overriding concern of endogamy is not an account of a ‘desire’ to maintain a purity of blood, as one would expect to find associated with the system of Hindu caste ranking: But Rather arises from tendency to match spouses who ‘share the amen economic background and the same cultural and particularly religious traditions (1978: 164).

Bhattacharya (1978: 269-298) designates the system of social stratification among Muslims of rural West Bengal as a system of inter ethnic stratification rather than as a caste system and justifies the usage on the ground that it shares certain features of the caste system but is not quite like it (1978: 270). Similarly Dube (1978: 57-95) suggest that the social groups she describes from the Lakshsdives Island of south west coast of India are analogous to caste among the Hindu but do not correspond to it every detail.

Caste among the Hindus issue usually defined in terms of list of cultural characteristics for traits which are supposed to from a syndrome (Leach, 1960: 2).The
minimal set of primary characteristics which together constitute the real essence of caste among the Hindus are the following Hutton, (1964: 49) and Ghurye (1950).

1. Caste is endogamous.
2. It involves occupational specialization.
3. Castes are hierarchically ordered.
4. Caste has an ideological religious basis involving restriction on social intercourse and commensality.

Exactions and modification in some of these features can be found in various part of India, particularly in urban areas (Kapadia, 1958). Muslim group are endogamous. Occasionally, marriages between two or more social divisions are allowed, especially at higher levels. Bhattacharya (1978) claim that rules regarding inter-group marriages are in any case largely theoretical as ‘there is no evidence to suggest that these rule are ever been put to a test’ (1978: 289). He concludes that local Muslim group in rural west Bengal may conveniently regarded as endogamous units. Endogamy among caste occurs even in the metropolitan situation described by Sidique (1978: 243-268).’ Inter-ethnic marriages, in spite of similarity in class status, are severely discouraged’ (Siddique, 1978: 258). Siddique (1978) shows that endogamy obtains even among the immigrant groups. These he suggests, live in Calcutta detached from their place of origin and periodically go back to them for important life cycle rituals, including marriage. Consequently, their marriages also arranged according to the norm that govern the local situation and are usually endogamous. Where inter-marriages take place across groups, as is illustrated by the case of marriage of a local girl to Afghan man, the girl is excluded from her parental family and retains patriarchal norm conduct with it. It would seem that in all such situations the child belongs to the caste of one parent and the separate caste populations are maintained by this ascription.
Mines (1978) claims that endogamy occurs among the Tamil Muslims studied by him because of a concern among the families for matching spouses in terms of economic background and cultural and religious traditions. He rules out the possibility that the endogamy among the group studied by him anything to do with the desire to maintain purity of blood. On the contrary, Siddique and Ahammed suggested that the occurrence of endogamy is underscored by the notion of ritual purity of blood. Siddique (1978: 258) says that some sort of sanctity is attached to the purity of decent as is evident from the use of such term as Sudh as against bossier or impure, najib-ut-tarfain as against birr or barrage i.e., of mixed descent. Ahamed (1978:171-206) shows that a notion of ritual not only occurs among the Shaikh and Siddique but it also constitutes among the main source of the split between the two marriage circle (1978:199). He also point out that family genealogy is frequently is used as a means of asserting this ritual purity of blood and born, and that each family maintains a fairly detailed account of its decent and marriages as a proof of its purity of blood. Siddique (1978) and Ahammed (1978b) also intricate that notion of ritual purity of blood is accompanied by a belief in the possibility of its pollution through intermarriage.

The picture in respect of occupational specialization is similar to endogamy. Bhatty’s (1978:207-2240) account of Kasuli in Uttar Pradesh and Aggrawals (1978) discussion of the Meo village in Rajastan provide evidence of a full-fledged Jajmani system with the locally dominant caste serving as the nucleus of the exchange of goods and services. Bhattacharya (19780) shows that each of the main groups resident in rural West Bengal is traditionally associated with a particular occupation which is frequently implied its mane and is closely tied to the system of exchange of goods and services.
characteristics of Hindu India. Similarly Dube also (1978) points out that the Koyas, the Muslim and the Melachies have specific occupation associated with them and attempt by some groups to break away from their traditional occupation and to encroach upon those of others have resulted in social tension and strife.

There is a difference in the degree of correspondence between caste and occupation at various levels of social hierarchy. Such links seem to be stronger at the bottom of the social hierarchy than at higher levels. For example Bhattacharya (1978) points out that the upper groups in rural west Bengal do not claim any hereditary occupation and live mainly by agriculture. Ahamed (1978) suggest that the seikh and Siddique are not engaged in any particular traditional occupation though they were originally land record keepers.

1. Caste hierarchy among the Hindus based on the relation between pure and impure who leads to a hierarchy of status based on pollution. D'Souza (1978: 41-56), while admitting that different Muslim social division in Karnataka and Kerala are hierarchically ranked, does not associate consideration of rituals purity and pollution with the basis of caste ranking. Dube (1978: 78) points out that social disabilities attached to the lower caste on the Lacadive Island were an integral part of the social structure. She says 'their violation did not indicate any possibility of pollution through touch or show, or through the sharing of air, it was part of their difference structure, emphasizing inequality of status, Siddique (1978) and Bhattacharya (1978) are inclined to feel that consideration of ritual purity and pollution are present in the case of Muslims. Siddique (1978) shows that the most common pattern of inter dining is the
one confined to ones kin groups or known range within the kin group.' The symbolic ritual quality of the members of an ethnic group is expressed in such terms as tat or chatai upon which members can sit, smoke and eat together (1978: 260). He however admits that the idea of pollution in matters of inter dining is limited to clean caste s with regard to the unclean ones. Bhattacharya (1978) claims that the emphasis placed by the higher class on cleanliness and sense of hygienic as reasons for refusing to eat with the Momins, Patus and Shah’s arises from ritual considerations.’ in reality he says ‘they have a concept of ritual purity and pollution’ (1978: 291). Ranking of caste is based on is quiet frequently on a number of non-ritual criteria D’souza (1978: 41-56) lists four principle criteria of social ranking among the Moplah Muslims. These are (a) hyper gamy; (b) the amount of dower payable by the husbands to his wife in the event of a divorce; (c) use of special articles of distinction; and (d) segregation and restriction on social intercourse 1978: 47-9).Bhattacharya (1978) mention as criteria of ranking the seclusion of women (purdha) performance of absolutions after urination and the observance of daily prayers. Siddiqui (1978) suggest that ranking is based on the nature of occupation, the comparative numerical strength of the groups, and descent. Ahmad (1978) mentions decent, particularly the source from which is traced and its distance from Muhammad, as well as the degree of islamization of customs and ritual practices of the groups. According to Dube (1978), Social ranking on the Locative Island is based on hyper gamy, the nature of occupation and relative standing of the caste in the politico economic structure.

Ahmad (1978b) provides detailed data on the pattern of hypergamous marriage and show how hyper gamy has been used by socially mobile castes; Seikh Siddiquis as a
means of climbing in their search for new status identity. Bhattacharya describes, Though Sayyad men are allowed to marry women of lower groups but Sayyad women cannot marry below their group. Dube (1978) points out that the Koya men can marry Malumi women but the marriage of Koya women with Malumi or Melacheri men is severely discouraged. Such discouragement is also characteristic of the Moplah a social division describes by D'Souza (1978).

Caste among the Hindus is based on a religious philosophy which supports social divisions, and certain theological notions serve to reinforce them (Dumont, 1970:36-39). Certain Hindu theological notions like Karma and Dharma, writes Srinivas, ‘have contributed to very greatly to the strengthening of the idea of hierarchy which is inherent in the caste system. It is also represent certain mile stones on the soul’s journey to God’ (Srinivas: 1952: 25). Religious and Philosophical basis of Hindu caste is so pronounced that Bergel (1962:37) feels that the caste system cannot be understood unless it is recognized as a religious institution. Dumont (1970) sees the religious opposition of pure and impure as the fundamental structure which makes the social system a unique form.

Hindu ideological justification of the caste system does not exist in the case of Muslims. Aggrawal (1978: 141) cites the Koran’s verse which explicitly reject s gradation of group and individuals in terms of this and ideology of pure and impure and suggests theta the only criterion of social evaluation recognized in Islam is religious piety. Bhattacharya (1978) notes that the formal religious values of alma are opposed to any rigid system of ethnic and social stratification as the Islamic great tradition does not offer any sanction for it. Siddiqui (1978) also assert that the existence of an hierarchical
order generally receives overt denial from the great traditional values of the Muslims. But evidence presented by these and other contributors clearly indicates that while the formal religious ideology to which all Muslims claim adherence denies caste distinctions, there is another alternative ideology which recognizes such distinctions and according to which observable social inequalities are correlated to Islamic tenets. Bhattacharya (1978:294) thus point out: To my mind, inequalities in the social status of different Muslim ethnic groups, in contrast to their conscious Islamic model of an egalitarian society, make them mentally insecure. They try to overcome this mental dilemma caused by sharp contras between their ideology and practiced pattern by rethinking the undeniable social fact of status inequality in terms of suitable idioms that can be successfully related to their traditions’. Bhattacharya (1978) goes on to suggest that these idioms are often inadequate as explanation for the complex nature of Muslim social life, but the significant point is that such idioms nevertheless exist. It shows that if the formal Islamic ideology rejects caste, the actual beliefs held by the Muslims not only recognize caste distinction but also seek to rationalize those irreligious terms. (Expiable) Presumably, it is this rationalization that has as Siddiqui (1978: 267) suggests towards the end of his paper, allowed caste distinctions among Muslims to persist without much evidence of internal conflict. It is clear that caste exists as a basis of social relations among them (Muslims), but it is from has been greatly weekend and modified and it differs from the Hindu caste model in certain detail (Ahmad, 1978: 12).

Caste exists among the Muslims at once raises the question whether it owes itself directly to the acculturative influence of Hinduism, or are there some elements within Islam itself which support such distinctions. The common view in this connection seems
to be that caste is directly attributable to the acculturative influence of Hinduism (Ansari, 1960: 96; Srinivas et al. 1959a: 135-85; S. C. Misra, 1964 and Dumont, 1970: 205-12) Srinivas and his associates suspect it is likely that Hindus who were converted to Islam continued to regard themselves as castes, while foreign, conquering groups of Muslims, like Arabs and Pathans, fell in to the position of upper castes' (1959a: 149). Dumont finds that caste was consciously adopted by the Muslims in India as a compromise which they had to make in a predominantly Hindu environment. After tracing the conflicting nature of the two groups, he suggest that Hindus and Muslims in India entered a sort of tacit and reciprocal compromise on the one hand, the Hindus adjusted themselves to political masters who did not recognize Brahmanism values and ‘they did not treat even the most humble Muslim villagers as untouchables’ (Dumont, 1970: 205-206) on the other hand the influence of caste made itself felt among the Muslims. Dumont traces the acceptance of the caste principle by the Muslim to the proximity of the Hindu environment which predominates both generally and regionally (Dumont, 1970: 270).Bhattacharya shows of caste among them as resulting from Hindu influence (1978: 293).

Patnaik (1976: a82-a101) has suggested the E-criterion model for identifying the agrarian classes in the Indian countryside. when we look at the data on the ownership and operation of land and the ownership of livestock, implements and other means production up by the NSS and the farm management studies, there is one fact which emerges strikingly: the high degree of concentration of both land and non-land resources with a minority of cultivators, while the majority have command over a disproportionately low share of resources. The implication of such high degree of concentration of the means of
production is that there’s a correspondingly high degree of economic differentiation within the cultivating population. This different type of holdings enter in to relations with each other in the production process through labor hiring and land leasing (1976: a83). The Marxist prosecution is that economic classes are to be looked at in terms of above two related criteria: process of means of production and the exploitation of labor. In agriculture such as India’s, the two poles are really identified: the landless and near landless who posses no or little means of production and are therefore mainly or wholly depend on working for others; and the landlord and capitalist, who concentrate sufficient means of production not to need to labor themselves but line on implying others. Precisely in agriculture, however, the middle category of petty producers may be expected to be still fairly numerous: those who a posse just sufficient means of production to make living with family labor, neither employing the labor of others nor working of others (Patnaik, 1976: a83).

Indeed, it is this type that most people have in mind when they talk about the “the peasant” the ideal type of independent petty producer who neither exploit nor is exploited, and it is this type which is supposed to make up” the peasant economy” for those who think that independent petty production is still the defining characteristic of the agriculture of actual economies such as India’s (see for this point of Thornier (1962).

Patnaik (1976: a85) distinguished five economic classes (1) Landlord, (2) Rich peasant, (3) Middle peasant: (1) upper middle (1) lower middle (4) Poor peasant and (5) Fully-time labor. (1) the first category contains both big land owners of the feudal type and capitalists, distinguished from the peasants by the fact that family members do not
perform manual labor in any major form operations. (2) The second category is the top stratum of the peasantry, the rich peasants, they perform some manual work in major farm operations and are there for distinguished from the landlord capitalists. (3) The middle peasantry is primary self employed, since on average its resource position per capita is such as to just employ family labor adequately and provide a livelihood at a customary subsistence level. (a) we designate as upper middle peasants those who are net exploiters of others labor, (b) The lower middle peasants are those who either do not exploit labor at all. (4) The poor peasants precipitate resource position is so bad as to necessitate working mainly for others in order to brain a subsistence, whether directly through hiring out labor for wages or indirectly through leasing in land even on high rents, or a combination of the two. (5) The full time laborer does not operate.

For those familiar with their classes, it will bee evident that labor-exploitation criterion suggested above is simply a slight formation in terms of single index which most closely captures class status as well as a synthesis, of the analysis presented both by Lenin (1920) and by Mao Testing (1930). Lenin (1920) discuss the following classes in the context of the European capitalist countries in 1920: (1) first, the agricultural, proletariat, wage-laborers (by the year, season, or day) who obtain their livelihood by working for hire at capitalist agricultural enterprises (ii) second, the semi proletarians or peasant who till tiny plots of land, i.e., those who obtain their livelihood partly as a wage labors. (iii) third, the small peasantry, i.e., the small-scale tillers who, either as owners or tenants, hold small plots of land which. (iv) In the economic since one should understand by “middle peasants” those small farms who, (1) either as owners or tenants hold plots of land that are also small. (v) The big peasants (Grossbauern) are capitalist entrepreneurs in
agriculture, who as a rule employ several hired laborers. (vi) The big landowners, who, in capitalist countries, directly or through their tenant farmers, systematically exploit wage-labor and the neighboring small”.

Mao-Testing (1930) has point ousted the following rural classes . (1)” The landlord’s land old is a person who owns land, does not engage in labor himself rodeos so only to a very small extent and lives by exploiting the peasants. The collection of land rent is his main form of exploitation” (2)” The rich peasants: the rich peasants as a rule owns land. But some rich peasants own only part of their land and rent the reminder. His main form of exploitation is the hiring of labor.” (3)” The middle peasant: many middle peasants own land. Some own part of their land and rent the rest. (4)” The poor peasant: among the poor peasants some own part of their land. Others own no any land at all but only a few odd farm implements.” (5) “The worker: The worker (including the farm laborer) as a rule own no land or farm implements, though some do own a very small amount of land and very few farm implements”.

One of the earliest studies, carried out in 1954-55 by A.M.Khusro (Patnaik, 1976) on the effect of jagirdari abolition in Hyderabad, showed that roughly per cent of all ‘Protected tenants’ created in 1951 (tenants with six years or more of recorded occupation of land) were thrown out in Jagir areas under the heads of legal and illegal evictions, and voluntary surrender by 1954-55. Only one-eight had exercised the right to purchase land while under half of the tenants remained in occupation while there was not much difference in the size of tenanted plots of those who remained compared to those who were thrown out of except in Martha region) the author tells us that the former were
on average the bigger operation of land while the latter operated small holdings (Patnaik, 1976: a95) A sample survey of tenanted plots cared out by G.Parthasarathy and B.Prasad Rao in 1965 showed that in the Diwani areas protected tenants of 1955 continued to be possession on only 55 percent of the plots with 65.5 percent of the area, while eviction and surrenders accounted for 25 percent of plots with 20.8 percent of the area, the remaining having been purchased (Patnaik, 1976: a95).

The intensive study by K. R Nanekar of land reforms in Viderbha, in the Nagpur district of Vidabha, 96 percent of all sample tenancies studied cased during the reference period 1951 to 1961, owing to surrenders and evictions. In 65 percent of all cases the tenant had no land left at all after tenancy ceased, and in another 20.9 percent of cases they had land owned or reentered from others-bellow 5 acres (Patnaik, 1976: a95).

The study by B. Singh and S.Misra of land reforms in Uttar Pradesh, showed that over half the sample households had no bhumidari (ownership) right over any part of their holding after reform, though provision had been made for them to buy ownership (Patnaik, 1976: 96). In Rajastan, similarly the study by Dool Singh showed that the majority of the tenants preassembly of poor peasant and middle peasant status could not acquire the superior land holding right (Khatedari) owing to ignorance, lack of cash, and land lord pressure (Patnaik.1976: a96).These derives evaluation studies, to sum up, are consistent with the conclusion that the benefits to tenancy reform went mainly if not exclusively to the tenants who were already on rich peasant status before reform, and who could improve their position further by purchase of ownership right to tenanted land.
2.1 Caste and Class Analysis in Kerala

The 19th century witnessed the British colonialists initiating thoroughgoing change in the Indian subcontinent, and the society on the Malabar Coast was no exception to the rule. Thus economic, political and ideological interventions of the colonial agent radically altered the caste based social ensemble of Kerala from 19th century onwards. Of course, the gradual unfolding of this trend goes back to a much earlier date-possibly the 16th century Portuguese intrusions upon the Kerala spice trade. The consolidation processes under the patrimonial militarist regimes such as in 18th century Tiruvitamk ur which preceded the colonial rule per se, also had subverted the caste domain which had, until then, formed the social relations in the various kingdoms of the region. Thus the Nayars aristocracy and militia that had worked in tandem with the Nambudiries -mediated temple-based social milieus of these petty kingdoms were slowly but systematically eroded, initially by the consolidation processes and finally and irrevocably by the colonizers forces. The overt as well as covert incursions of the colonizer into the caste domain from 1800 onwards were, by and large, a direct fall-out of their economic, political and cultural designs in the region. The changes that were ushered in thus, drastically altered the living conditions of most social groups and classes. The emergence of a national market attuned to colonial trade had, by and large, a calamitous effect on the artisans and peasantry while a tiny middle class consisting of the colonial salariat and professionals along with the commercial and trading elites experienced considerable upward mobility. Though substantial sections of this emergent middle class consciously or unconsciously subserved the material as well as ideological interests of the colonial regime; they were also as a catalyst to several social movements
reformative, reactionary and radical. The social reform movements enveloped the
domestic, socio-cultural and religious spaces thus releasing at first the modern educated
sections from traditional ties. The nationalist and class movements that followed in
Kerala were thus an extension of the initial struggles against primordial ties like caste,
while the anti-caste movements had taken up radical and secular stances on vital issues
like civic rights and casteist oppression, they had, in the end, also led to communalization
of political space, thanks to the maneuverings of their elitist leadership.

2.2 CASTE AND BRITISH INTERVENTIONS

A series of military, economic and socio-political measures taken by the
colonial state had a lasting impact on the social development of Kerala from early 19th
century onwards. Lemercinier has reviewed the several legislations that were introduced
by the colonial agent and their implications for the various caste and religious groups of
colonial Kerala. Frankel shows how the British state had a double-edged impact all over
India which simultaneously strengthened locally dominant land controllers (Jannies in
colonial Kerala) while undermining their legitimacy. Thus Nayars Army, like the poligar
warrior-chiefs of Tamil Nadu, was disarmed and banned out of existence. The traditional
monarchies of Tiruvitamkur and Kochi were considerable weakened by the British
incursions which selectively strengthened the autonomous character of the social units at
the base. Thus Nayars and Brahmans on whom the earlier social organization was built
lost their power while new groups like the intermediate castes experienced considerable
social ascendancy.
The various legislations primarily attempted to produce new social practices in the religion. Significantly they reflected the underlying power equations between the contending classes and groups of the region. In Tiruvitamkur the 1812 decree which confiscated the extensive landed properties of 378 biggest temples was certainly aimed at cutting the Nambudiries and Nayars chiefs down to size. The British Resident-com-Dewan brought out this legislation shortly after the Kollam revolt. The legislation which coincided with the suppression of Nayars army abolished the Nambutiri Sanketams (scare territories controlled by Brahman’s). The Nayar rebels had until 1812 sought asylum in these sacred precincts over which Nambudiries had considerable jurisdiction. With the abolition of sanketams, whose land was all confiscated, the Brahmans were now virtually reduced to mere religious agents who stood deprived of institutional authority, which, until then had informed their dominance across the region...deprived of the support they had always had from the military caste the Brahmans were no longer in position of power when faced with a political authority, supported by the colonists. Indeed, from this period, the Nambudiries, as a group, withdrew from the political scene and confined themselves within the social space bounded by their double function as land-owners and religious agents.

Several legislations passed, in the meantime, granted more autonomy to Christians as well as intermediate and lower castes in their socio-political and economic spheres of life.” These exempted the Christians from the duty of service in the temples and granted them access to employment in the public sector, recognized the freedom of the missionaries to work in the country and donated land and subsidies for the foundation of the mission in Nagercoil and of the seminary in Kottayam”. The recruitment to
positions in government and allied services was now based on competence, rather than as
in the past, on belonging to a specified caste or family. Though persons from the lower
castes were seldom appointed in the administration, the colonialists put high premium on
merit-placement which virtually removed the traditional elites such as Kshatriyas and the
Nambutiris from the scene. Apart from the ambitious Tamil-Telugu Brahmanas, Nayars
as well as Christians came to hold a perceptible edge over the other castes in getting
access to government jobs in Tiruvitamkur. In addition to the opposition between the
traditional dominant castes and the powers that be, fresh conflicts also arose particularly
due to the forcible introduction of land-tax by the colonial agent.

The agrestic serfs or salves-castes, who never possessed any citizenship rights
whatsoever were finally declared free citizens 1855 by Tiruvitamkur and Kochi states. In
1802, the lower castes were granted permission to wear jewellery. From 1815 onwards
British judicial protection was mace available to all citizens though only in 1816, it
become effective when Kariakkars (Nayars, local officials and former village headmen)
in 1816 lost their power as chiefs and justices and had their function reduced to that of
tax collectors.

Of course, slave trade had been banned in Malabar by the East India Company as
early as in 1792, penalties were imposed for slave-dealing in the Indian Penal Code only
in 1862. The actual living conditions of the lowest castes however could be improved only
in the 20th century with the protest, based to a class-based social ensemble in Kerala.
Though, a tiny section of the Pulayas, were educated in the mission schools and some of
them were also converted to Christianity, their material and social milieus hardly
changed. Getting access to public roads and other civic amenities including schooling was the initial objective of the pulaya movement in Tiruvitamkur. A school opened by the pulayas at Venganoor was destroyed by caste Hindus: in protest, Pulaya leader Ayyankali gave a call for a boycott of agricultural work in the fields of upper caste Hindus. In 1893, Ayyankali staged a protest by travelling in a bullock cart along a public road. In 1898, a group of pulayas led by Ayyankali walked along a public road, leading to clashes between Pulayas and Caste Hindus. The struggle of the pulayas for access to roads and schools led to Pulaya riots at the turn of the century in Cape Comorin, Neyyattinkara and Vikom and these riots were suppressed by the government. The struggle for education led by Pulaya leaders, Ayyankali and Vallikara Choti led the Tiruvitamkur Government to grant Pulayas the right of education in government schools in Balamapuram and Pullattu in 1914. Following this, riots broke out in both these places between the Pulayas and the Upper caste; in Pullattu, the Nayars went to extent of burning a school where Pulaya children were admitted."

In the meantime, the colonial agent mediated a series of structural changes in the economy of Kerala in the 19th century. They culminated in the Pattom proclamation of 1865 which granted possession of the land, with the right of devolution and sale, to all tenants in Tiruvitamkur. This considerably benefited the intermediate castes whose social ascendancy in the ensuing decades had been remarkable. More fundamentally a transition from a caste based society to a class-based society also occurred wherein mercantile institutions developed at a faster pace. In Malabar, however, the conditions of the peasantry worsened.
2.3 IDEOLOGY, LAND CONTROL AND COLONIAL CASTE STRUCTURE

Recent researches on caste have highlighted the fundamental variations in regional caste structure in India while at the same time not denying the significance of certain pan-Indian communities. Thus outside northern and central India, there was a pronounced disjunction between the configuration of actual local or *jati* hierarchies and the abstract Varna scheme used across regions to order proliferous sub-castes and castes. The first three *Varna*’s, at the all-India level, had relatively smaller demographic size, viz, Brahman’s constituting 6.4%, Kshatriyas 3.7% and Vishay’s 2.7% of the Hindu population in India. Their demographic distribution across regions was greatly uneven. While northern and central India had a relatively higher concentration of these twice-born castes, South India reported only a marginal presence of these castes. For instance, according to 1931 census, Brahmins in U.P constituted 9% of the state population which alone amounted to 40% of the total Brahman population in India. Brahmans, Kshatriyas Vishay’s together formed nearly 19% of the U.P population. In Bihar the twice-born castes constituted 12% of the state population.

“The Varna divide between the twice-born castes and Shudras in the Hindi hearth land has historically demarcated the rigid social hierarchy in which lower castes were deprived education, denied social dignity and confined to the manual work of cultivation or to other low status artisan or service occupations. Untouchables, by definition, performed polluting tasks and, in addition, worked in the fields, commonly under
conditions of bonded labor. All though Raja puts (Kshatriyas) rather than Brahmans exercised the greatest power as land-controllers, Brahminical ideology played the most important role in legitimizing the status and occupational hierarch and establishing the model for social emulation. High status groups (including Ashraf Muslims) did not personally engage in cultivating the land or in any sort of manual work which was left to jaties of Shudras Varna and the untouchables.”

The caste structure of colonial Kerala stood in sharp contrast to this North Indian scenario. The Varna structure had apparently very little to do with the social strata which partook of power and wealth in colonial Kerala. The indigenous Malayalee Brahmans including Nambudiries formed a mere 0.5% while the foreign Brahmans constituted another 1.2% meanwhile, in the rest of South India. Brahmans constituted 3-4%. Of course, the Brahmans occupied the upper echelons of ritual hierarchy; nevertheless their distribution in the state was extremely uneven. And as Frankel has noted about the rest of South India, they owned substantial landed properties only in a few localities. With the total absence of indigenous Vishay’s and a very marginal Kshatriyas presence, the traditional trading and commercial functions were by and large the preserve of the intermediate castes if Eaves. Christians and Muslims. The populous matrilineal caste of Nayars along with Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Samantha’s constituted the major land-controlling group of pre-colonial and early colonial Kerala. Frankel points out that Brahmans in South India had by and large, conceded higher social status to clean Shudras whose economic and political supremacy was built on land-control, territory and force.”

They closed their eyes to doubtful claims of warrior groups to Kshatriyas rank and in performing rituals of them legitimizied their power. Conversely warrior groups of
questionable social origin, who claimed the right to command accepted at least symbolic ritual subordination by making generous gifts of income from land to Brahmana dominated “Brahmadeya” villages and “Matha” and for the construction and maintenance temples associated with the devotional “Bakti” cults. The most distinctive feature of the social order in South India from the medieval period was alliance between Brahmans in the localities and ‘respectable’ cultivating groups.”

Even in the late medieval Kerala, the Nayar-Nambutiri alliances seemed to have reflected this ideological and structural ambivalence in more conspicuous forms. While the Brahminical perceptions of Shudras rank had ostensibly informed the defilement customs vis-à-vis Nayars, the military, political and economic dominance of the matrilineal castes seemed to have extenuated even intimate marital ties between their women and Brahman husbands. Thus economic and power hierarchies seemed to most blatantly determine social practices and rules including those in relation to caste and marriage. The political and economic supremacy of the Stamatas and Nayars in pre-colonial and colonial Kerala, like that of the sat-Sudras such as Vellas, Reddis, Kapus and Vokkalingas elsewhere in South India not only earned them an elevated status but also granted them privileged participation in local and temple administration. Recent studies of Brahminical institutions of Medieval Kerala such as Vanjeri Grandhavari have clearly brought out the dependent and variable character Nambutiri sanketams (Brahman-administrated territories of medieval Kerala consisting of several villages organized around a Brahman temple). Most historical writings had, until recently, treated these sanketams as independent republics of medieval Kerala free from the control of neighboring chieftains and kings from outside. Vanjeri Grandhavari has conclusively
shown that the nambutiri-administered sanketams depended on the neighboring chieftains for every thing from the constitution of their yogam to maintain law and order in areas under their jurisdiction. The chieftain appointed Nayars for policing within the sanketham were technically self-governing units but really very much subservient to the neighboring chiefs like any feudal vassal. Moreover, they were quite helpless in implementing law and order due to the absence of a private militia for their own use.

There have also been several other instances in late pre-colonial Kerala where, sanketams were attacked and their landed and other properties appropriated by Kshatriyas or Samantha chieftains. The cases of Panniyur and Thrissur Vadakkunathan temples and their Brahman proprietors whose properties were virtually taken over by the Samutiri Raja and Kochi Raja respectively are remarkable since, in both cases, the Nambudiries involved in the power-struggle were even demoted in their caste status. Until the 20th century reform movement, these two Brahman groups had been consistently victimized and stigmatized by the Nambudiries of other sanketams as well as the rest of Kerala castes naturally due to their economic and political dependence on the chieftains of Kozhikode and Kochi.

2.4 DEFILEMENT PRACTICES AND SAVERNA DOMINANCE

Caste in colonial had been marked by a set of defilement practices which had an unusually intense visibility. There had been a remarkable degree of separation of social spaces between the savarna and avarna castes as a consequence. Defilement practices consisting of untouchability, inapproachability and even unseeability apparently were influenced by the notion of hierarchy, though in actual practices were mediated by brute
power wielded by the savarna castes. However it seems that in urban space of colonial Kerala, were the savarna castes were seldom active in trade and commerce, caste rules, in relation to distance pollution were frequently violated. Notions and practices concerning pollution had been widely prevalent even among the marginal groups such as tribal and fishing communities. It has been suggested that such practices may not have evolved out of Brahminical persuasion and these primordial groups are asserting their consanguinal identities (lineage, clan, etc) by separating themselves from ‘others’ through such symbolic gestures. All the same, the savarna-avarna divide mediated by socioeconomic and political inequalities may have hardened and dehumanized their relationships to one another. It is also interesting that the system of continuous habitation and dispersed rural settlement might have indirectly facilitated the practice of distance pollution in Kerala. Thus in most other parts of in India where nucleated settlements prevail, distance pollution, even from the upper caste view of things, is somewhat impractical and inconvenient. The fact that potable water is available almost everywhere in Kerala may have made the lives of the subordinate castes a little bit more tolerable than those of their caste-fellows elsewhere in India. Thus in Northern India the lives of most Harijans were so unbearable since the upper castes virtually monopolized the water-sources as they do even today.

For the savarna castes, the presence of Christians and Muslims in large numbers may have eased their dependence on the avarna labor which facilitated the practices of distance pollution. Ezhavas and Pulayas had their own religious and cult centers which had been deeply rooted in their popular culture. Thus the awareness of caste oppression become intents only when Ezhavas and Pulayas were able to break with their traditional
ties as the colonial capitalism penetrated inexorably into stagnant agrarian Kerala. Emergence of the Ezhava and Pulaya movements; thus preceded by a variety of historical antecedents. The contradiction between the traditional order mediated by distance pollution and a new economic order based on monetization and commodity production could no longer be contained. Even the identity and self respect which the avarna castes were in search of are to be located in this struggle between contending socio-economic groups.

2.5 CASTE AND THE CHANGES IN THE OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF COLONIAL KERALA

Occupational structure of Kerala underwent significant changes during the colonial period. Unlike most other parts of India, Kerala witnessed a pronounced shift both in its economy and the structure of the work force away from agriculture to processing industries which, by and large, created to foreign markets. Of course the whole transformation has to be viewed as part of the colonizers project of augmenting profit through system of trade, public work and spoliation in India. Undoubtedly, this process unleashed forces of capitalist production which affected various regions unevenly, leading to widespread underdevelopment, pauperization and proletarianization in the sub-continent. The natural resources base of Kerala economy has been more diversified than those of other regions, thus contributing relatively more intense proletarianization of the state. Thus the processing industries and plantations, which were basically labor intensive, not only employed vast sections of rural population but also opened up fresh economic opportunities to them.
Interestingly, the three other states, namely West Bengal, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu where a perceptible shift from agriculture did occur, had respectively, the three metropolises of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras as nodal points for the development of the regions. Of course, all these states, like Kerala also had extensive coastal tracts with sea-ports which were well-connected with the hinterlands. Further, Kerala’s towns and villages were sandwiched by a host of rivers, backwaters, lagoons and canals, which together formed an extensive inland water system and which, along with the sprawling beaches, fostered trade, transport and a flourishing fishing industry. Kerala also had a long tradition of foreign contact and commercial growth and the development of the rail and road system of transport from the latter half of the 19th century promoted the expansion of non-agricultural sectors of its economy.

Thus in 1901, nearly half of Kerala’s work force engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. During 19th century, the British agent first intervened in the Kerala economy by extracting its economic surplus in at least three different modes: taxes, land revenue and the monopoly purchase of primary products at abysmally low prices. In the next stage, towards the final decades of the 19th century, the Kerala economy was opened up for railways, plantations, coir, tile industries, etc. However a substantial working class evolved from these changes only towards the beginning of the 20th century. This was possible thanks to the diversified resources base of the state that catered to a variety of agro-processing and manufacturing projects. All this was of course mediated by a burgeoning colonial capitalism which, however, also led to uneven development of the three politico-administrative units, viz., Tiruvitamkur, Kochi and Malabar. For instance, while the colonial agent promoted progressive land reforms in Tiruvitamkur, no such
favor was grudged to the peasantry in Malabar whose condition steadily worsened over the decades. Thus cultivators in Tiruvitamkur came to constitute two third of the agricultural work force at turn of the present century whereas tenants and landless laborers far out-numbered the cultivators in Malabar who formed a mere 5%. Consequently, Tiruvitamkur and then Kochi got off to a good start on the path of capitalist development leading to the widespread release of productive forces from the feudal, caste-based agrarian structure which still underpinned Malabar for a few more decades. All the same, through out Kerala capitalist relations of production seems to have radically revised the manufacturing, agro-processing and even agricultural sectors which become monetized and commercialized catering even to foreign markets.

2.6 STRUCTURAL MARGINALITY AND MOBILITY OF INTERMEDIATE CASTES / COMMUNITIES

The 19th century thus constituted a historical conjuncture wherein colonial interventions as well as indigenous developments radically transformed the polity, economy and society of Kerala. In the pre-British society, savarna caste had dominated by appropriating the agricultural surplus produced by the avarna castes who had remained marginalized as a result. Thanks to the colonial interventions, an articulate though embryonic middle class seems to have emerged, particularly from the populous intermediate caste of Ezhavas as well as the non-Hindu communities of Christians and Muslims who were socially equivalent to the intermediate castes. By late 19th century, all these three communities came to exhibit a pronounced degree of occupational diversification, though it is possible that a sizable minority among them have been
engaged in trade, transport and other professions, apart from agriculture even in late pre-colonial Kerala.

The sharp and discerning dynamism evinced by Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims was possibly anticipated by their intermediate status and structural position which promoted both their occupational diversification and entrepreneurial ventures during the late colonial period. Towards the end of 19th century, the intermediate castes found themselves in a social position with all the attributes of what Bruce Kapfer has called structural marginality. A section of population is said to be in a position of structural marginality when it is routinely and systematically exposed to contradictory processes. As with luminal periods in rituals, population locate in a structurally marginal situation have the capacity to generate new organizational and structural forms that override or remove the fundamental contradictions that become manifest in the situation. However Kapfer also suggests that this capacity may not always crystallize in all the instances.

Thus Ezhavas with 22% of the state population consisted of vast sections of under classes, who had formed the bulk of the emerging wage laborers in the rural and agro-processing industries. An enterprising middle class had also developed from among those intermediate communities who ventured into new economic arenas as contractors, commission agents, cash crop farmers, traders and entrepreneurs apart from gradually entering the educated, professional classes both inside and outside the state. From mid 19th century, Ezhavas gradually started acquiring land rights. The money for the same could be raised from the more prosperous traditional occupations, such as coir-making, coconut trade, toddy and arrack trade, artisanal occupation, various handcrafts, head load
work, etc.

"The traditional occupation of toddy tapping could absorb only a minority of the castes members (ranging from 3 to 16 percent of the workers) but the associated occupation based on coconut formed the basis of this diversification. Being socially less dependent on the high castes, their occupational mobility, though horizontal, was perhaps the highest. More than half of them were in the category of wage labor. The ability of Ezhavas to free themselves of their traditional dependence on landlords and enter industrial employment could be seen as due to their traditional occupation based on the coconut".

Table 2.1: Caste/communities Distribution of workers in various occupations in Kerala, 1968

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASTE</th>
<th>T.P.A</th>
<th>T.R</th>
<th>F.R</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>S.T.C</th>
<th>A.G&amp;A</th>
<th>UL</th>
<th>T.E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nayars</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC&amp;ST</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus the remarkably successful articulation of the bourgeois interest by substantial sectors of the economy with covert and overt support from the colonial agent and Euro-missionaries had gone a long way in gaining them the highest stratum in the social ensemble of Kerala. The mobilization of Christians had certain novel features which were later adopted by the Nayar and Ezhava movements. The upward mobility of Syrian Roman Catholics was considerably fostered by the founding of schools and colleges, among other things. This was possible thanks to the efficient resource-mobilization as the parish and church levels “But when establish educational institutions become a norm of society, the resources for them were raised through voluntary contributions from a large number of poor families, monthly subscription from households, both in cash and Kind, helped each parish to start a school. In poor families, housewives were asked to save a handful of rice a day (and) this was five percent of the consumption of a poor family”.

Nayar and Ezhava movements adopted these found-rising strategies with consummate skill and founded a chain of educational institutions in the state. Unlike Nayars, the Ezhavas like Christians and Muslims entered the new economic enterprises and productive work and thus depended less heavily on white collar and government jobs. However it is interesting to note that the ‘Weberian’ Protestant ethic pervaded almost all Christian sects including the Roman Catholics, not to speak of the non-Christian groups such as Ezhavas, and Muslims in colonial Kerala.

The structural marginality of the intermediate castes, thus, was primarily reflected in their relative independence which meant that they were not severely curbed by any
traditional ties. The positive support the Christians received, under colonial dispensation, in their mobility efforts, along with their natural advantages—being never burdened by a hereditary occupation under savarna patronage—went a long way in gaining them the highest stratum of Kerala in the post-independence decades. The indigenous Christians had been marked by a positive outlook and dynamism even in the past. They moved into agriculture rather late (17th or 18th century) until which date they had constituted the commercial and trading sections of the state and with considerable ease they shifted themselves from agriculture to non-agricultural pursuits in late colonial period. The pooling effect of caste-based economic networks (charitable-locality organizations seem to have mediated resource—mobilization through chit funds, etc.) also promoted several new ventures from starting of schools and colleges to entering public service apart from taking to industries, trade and commercial cultivation.

Muslims too were traditionally identified with trading professions, though "most of them were pauperized group, especially in Malabar, and they engaged mainly in petty trading, wage labour and small scale cultivation". After their almost suicidal, nevertheless heroic confrontations with the colonial state and savarna landlordism in Malabar, large section of the Muslim cultivating class had regressed into a religious fundamentalism and social isolation which seemed to have severely hampered their educational and social advancement in colonial Kerala. All the same, sections of Muslims had successfully co-opted themselves into the emerging middle classes of colonial Kerala finding their own niche in commercial, trading and agro-processing sectors of the economy.
In the 19th century an articulate class or social group had come into existence as a result of colonial transformation all over the subcontinent. Hamza Alavi called this class 'salariat' which consist of those who had received modern education that equipped them for employment in the state apparatus at various levels, as scribes and functionaries. The salariat was an auxiliary class whose class role was closely enmeshed with the destinies of the fundamental classes (indigenous and foreign capitalists and the land-owning classes on the one hand and subordinate classes, namely the working classes and the peasantry on the other). The material interests of the colonial salariat had underpinned the emerging politicization of caste and ethnic (religious) groups in the subcontinent. This was presumably because the salariat loomed large in societies in which the production base and the bulk of the population were mainly rural and agricultural. Moreover in such societies, the educated urban population looked primarily to the government for employment and advancement. Alavi thus included in salariat, not only those who were in white collar employment, notably in the state apparatus, but also those who aspired after such jobs and sought to acquire the requisite credentials.

The colonial salariat of Kerala was undoubtedly dominated by the savarna castes from its very inception.” A more important factor was the manner in which the member of the upper castes, particularly the Nayars were able to make use of the employment opportunities afforded by the British administration. Already well-versed in traditional knowledge, the Nayars were the first to take to western education, which gave them an advantage over others in government employment.” “The overwhelming majority of the
1000 graduates, undergraduates and matriculates in the Malabar district at the end of 19th century came from upper caste Hindus.”

Table 2.2: Division of Middle and Higher Administrative Posts According to Caste (1891) in Tiruvitamkur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nayars</td>
<td>1,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Brahmans</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Brahman Foreign Hindus</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin Christians</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian Christians</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nambutiris</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Lemercinier: 222)

The emergence of a centralized state in Tiruvitamkur under Marthandavarma during the first half of the 18th century also marked the arrival of foreign Brahmans (mostly Tamil Brahmans) in the soc-political milieu of the region, as the pre-eminent segment of the administrative elite. Naturally such a development was juxtaposed with a perceptible decline in the fortunes of the Nayar elite whose loyalty to the successive rulers of Tiruvitamkur become somewhat suspect because of their alleged support to the erstwhile petty kings and chieftains who had been overthrown by Marthandavarmas ‘unification’ campaigns. With the arrival of Rmayyan Dalawa on the scene, Tamil Brahmans entered the administration of Tiruvitamkur in large numbers and took deeper roots in the ensuing decades. It is possible that the foreign Brahmans who had been marginal to the caste-based political life of the region were found eminently suitable for such co-option by the Tiruvitamkur rulers largely because they could be realized on for
critical support; thus retaining a delicately balanced administrative elite. By the end of the 19th century, 'foreign Brahmanas and Nayars and come to share the bureaucratic and administrative positions virtually among themselves. Indeed this led to a repute in the relationships between the castes due to the intense competition for entry into government service. The Malayali Memmorial of 1891 was possibly the culmination of such a state of affair wherein the prominent Nayar citizens along with other castes of Tiruvitamkur such as Nambutiris, Ambalavasis, Ezhavas, Christians, etc. represented to the King of Tiruvitamkur against the foreign Brahmans domination in government services which, they allege, hurt the interests of the indigenous communities.

While in almost every other Indian state the indigenous Brahmans took to the new avenues of occupation through modern education and placement in the professions and government services, Nambutiri Brahmans of Kerala (a minuscule 0.5% of the population) surprisingly remained virtually a loaf from all this. While Brahmans elsewhere with demographic size above 3% generally moved to urban centers even in the rest of South India, Nambutiris remained stuck to their rural outposts shunning modern education and secular advancement. Traditionally, Nambutiris had shied away from agricultural, industrial and commercial activities, engaging themselves in certain type of priestly and intellectual work. Most of them were absentee landowners modern occupations, Nambutiris were in economic decline during the colonial period. Since they had not traditionally been employed in government and professions, they tended to be at a disadvantage when they began to qualify for such jobs.

While sections of Nayars joined the colonial salariat, the majority of them
pursued the traditional occupation of agriculture as peasants, non-cultivating tenants and as agricultural workers. They also entered a variety of occupations termed ‘floating’, industrial, miscellaneous. Meanwhile the artisan castes had faced a contradictory situation; while carpenters, etc, retained their hereditary function, most others including weavers and blacksmiths suffered pauperization. Harijans, the lowest and the poorest of all castes, continued as agricultural laborers dominated and oppressed in varying degrees by all other castes. Though the pulayas attempted to break with their past, both through conversions to Christianity and Islam and through protest reform movements, their mobility efforts were only partially successful because of a host of structural constrains. Conversion to Christianity, for instance, did improve their living conditions at least marginally, though their subservience to the missionaries-as well as to the higher castes in the case of those who did not undergo prositilization- in their existential struggles hindered their advancement. All the same, conversions did have an emancipator role, by which they could escape oppression from the savarna and the intermediate castes. Of course, the abolition of slavery in mid 19th century by the colonial state was perhaps the first step towards the release of these agrestic slaves from the clutches of savarna landlordism. The lack of development of the labor market and the hold of traditional ties which confined these castes to the servile occupations in the paddy fields may have also thwarted their mobility efforts. The absence of technological innovations such as diesel pumps and other technological inputs also impeded the development of the Pulayas, etc as casulized labor. Even in education, only a section of the Pulayas could take advantage of the free schools for the lowest castes in Tiruvitamkur apart from the missionary schools.” The activities of the Pulayas met with opposition from the Nayars, which was
only to be expected, but also from the Ezhavas who had themselves acquired middle class status". The conditions of the Parayas were similar to those of the Pulayas, though the former also were socially discriminated and isolated by the later, due to their supposed ritual inferiority vis-à-vis the Pulayas. The fishing castes too were converted in large numbers to Christianity and Islam. The modernization of fishing industry and the emancipation movement of fishermen had only a slow start during the first decades of the 20th century. As a consequence, fishermen remained tied to their traditional calling and were, by and large, exploited by various intermediary interests in the emerging fishing industry and trade.

The penetration of colonial capitalism and the absence of progressive land policy at least in Malabar had calamitous effect on most castes and classes in the region. The diversified occupational structure benefited the intermediate groups more than the savarna castes who suffered from ‘primordial ‘hang-ups. The lowest castes generally fared badly being tied to the least developed economies of paddy cultivation and fishing. At the same time, widespread pauperization characterized large sections of all the four major castes, viz., Nayars, Ezhavas, Muslims and Christians, though Nayars and Christians together with foreign Brahmans constituted the emerging colonial salariat.

2.8 CASTE AND CLASS : CHANGING PROFILES

The trends of democratization and secularization of the society in Kerala in the late colonial period were thus anticipated by the socio-economic political and cultural transformations which were briefly reviewed in the for-going pages. All the same, the unique demographic profiles of castes, wherein the four major constituents, namely
Nayars, Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims together formed more than 76% of the state population, also had some interesting fall-out for these emerging tendencies. Thus while each of those four major groupings evinced considerable occupational diversification and class heterogeneity, their sheer demographic size seemed to contribute to contradictory trends—both centrifugal and centripetal—in the succeeding decades of the 20th century. For instance, during the first decades of the century the mobility efforts seemed to unite each of them—as well as the rest of the castes—by intensifying casteist/communal identities and by fusing sub castes or sects. Meanwhile, the caste-based mobilization in the Tamil speaking South India had been limited to the upper and middle castes. In Kerala such mobilization had enveloped even the lowest caste such as Pulayas and fishermen. As in most regions of India, mobility efforts never seemed to involve the popular Tamil Harijan castes such as Pallans, Padiachis and Parayans, though Nadars, an untouchable caste which was almost equivalent to the Ezhavas, rebelled against the dominant Tamil upper castes. The Ezhava Social Reform Movement (ESRM) fought zealously for civic rights, access to schooling and government services which frequently led to violent clashes with Nayars. In Kollam District, for instance, such clashes had seldom been one-sided; if Nayars had beaten up the Ezhavas, Ezhavas retaliated with equal vigor and gave it back to the Nayars in the same coin. This clearly testifies to the emergence of self respect, a sense of independence and a democratic ethos among sections of the subservient Ezhavas who however, had seldom been burdened by a ‘client’ status that characterized the relations of most other castes vis-à-vis their savarna patrons.