CHAPTER - II

CASTE IN INDIA

Section -1

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

Caste remains a perennial topic of interest in Indian sociology. Indologists, social anthropologists, social historians, sociologists - all of them have analysed the functioning of castes from various standpoints. The complex and intricate nature of the institution enthused many to study the institution from different angles. Broadly, from the methodological standpoint, there may be three different approaches to caste studies:

1) classical - scriptural;
2) cultural-anthropological, and
3) the sociological.

The first tends to study the institution with reference to the classical religious texts, the second tends to study caste from the institutional and relational aspect while the third views caste as a system of stratification functioning in a social matrix.¹

The interest of the early western scholars or administrators in the institution of caste generated two types of research. First, the Indologists like Wilson, Colebrooke, Max Muller and Zimmer took a classical-scriptural approach and scanned the sacred literature of the Hindus to discuss the institution. The other group consisting mainly of British administrators with scholarly orientation became interested in the

Thus Dalton, Nesfield, Risley, W. Crooke, Thurston, Russel and Hiratal, Ibbetson etc. produced many ethnographic studies of caste customs and practices and the field data generated thereby immensely helped the course of subsequent researches on caste. This interest in the nature and functioning of the institution continues unabated till today. That research on caste constitutes a significant portion of the total volume of academic researches in the Universities, is evident from a trend report written by S. Sinha. One report indicates that the number of publications on caste system up to present are well over six thousand.

The reason adduced for this predilection for researches on caste is probably the extremely local or micro-level nature of its functioning. Each local system feeds a particular type of local organization which considerably enhances the scope of research on caste. As Mandelbaum points out, "Caste organization has flourished as a vast series of local systems, each partially independent of others, each intricately related to others." So, in spite of Srinivas's claim that 'caste provides a common cultural idiom to Indians', questions may be raised regarding the contents of this idiom. Modern sociologists are mostly interested in this aspect of caste as a functioning system. Senart pointed out long ago that on caste "the relationship of facts leaves room for a multitude of fine shades of difference and that only the most general characteristics are common to the

5 For an excellent analysis of this aspect, see, N.K. Bose - Hindu Samaj Yuvakfabuddhi (Visha-Bharati: 1949).
whole domain." Yet, in spite of these local variations, some general structural features of caste can be singled out. Attempts have been made by various writers to define the caste system but the intricacy of the institution has baffled them in arriving at a precise definition. So, advisedly, the best course left to them is to try to enumerate its general features. And various such studies have come out enumerating the general features of caste. In this milieu of academics' and administrators' penchant for caste studies, it was but natural that G.S. Ghurye, should show a discerning interest in the problem of caste.

Ghurye became interested in the phenomenon of caste quite early in his life. His background of Indian classical studies and his association with Rivers provided him a unique vantage point to look at the institution both from the cultural and structural aspects. Combining the features of all the three approaches mentioned above, Ghurye analyses the origin and evolution of caste with the help of textual and literary data and analyses the present day functioning of caste with the help of empirical data. The book thereby provides an excellent general treatise on the subject. In fact, along with Ketkar's History of caste in India, Ghurye's book was the earliest on caste written by an Indian author.

While Ketkar observed that the chief principle on which the entire caste system rests is that of 'purity and pollution' and gave emphasis on caste as a functional entity, Ghurye regards endogamy as the principal feature of caste and supports his thesis with the help of a mass of data on the origin and subsequent evolution of caste. L. P. Vidyarthi writes,

8 Ghurye - Caste & Race in India (Popular : 1969 ). All the subsequent references to the book are of this edition, unless otherwise stated.
"As the book is written by a sociologist who is acquainted with both the textual and field data, it presents an authentic appraisal of the history as well as the actual functioning of the caste system in modern India."  

The greatest merit of Ghurye's book lies in the fact that for the first time he showed that caste can be treated scientifically in relation to the realities of changing forces in India. This opened a new vista for researches on caste in India.

L. Dumont, one of the most percipient observer on the institution of caste, says that it is very difficult to summarise Ghurye as his treatment is rather discursive. Notwithstanding this, it behoves us well to enumerate the major structural features of caste as discussed by Ghurye. We shall also try to substantiate Ghurye's analysis with reference to the views of other writers on the point. Ghurye enumerates six such factors which are the outstanding features of Hindu society governed by an ideal pattern of caste. In them are included

i) **Segmental Division of society**:

Caste provides for a closed type of stratification where membership of each segment is fixed by birth. It provides for a compartmentalization of society in such a way that each caste provides a centre of control of its own regarding rules, regulations, standards of morality and justice. This cultural variation may even lead to differences in religious practices. Marriott has shown that 45 P.C. of the deities worshipped by the Brahmans are sanskritick, the corresponding figure of deities among the intermediate, the low and the lowest castes being 35 P.C., 15 P.C. and 19 P.C. respectively. Again, this cultural diversity may lead to different norms relating to family relationship, sexual morality or ritual
practices, as K. Gough shows to have existed among the Brahmins and the Adi-Dravidas in the South. Ghurye says that the segmental division did not go against the interests of the larger society in traditional India as an individual's adherence to caste-codes, his caste-patriotism and the like used to be controlled by the larger society. Modern developments have affected this harmonious relationship between castes and the larger society and it has become a threat to social unity. Herein lies, as Ghurye avers, the seeds of a 'pluralistic society' where individuals place their sectional interests above their social commitments.

ii) Hierarchical division:

Though hierarchy is an essential feature of caste, the exact order of hierarchy among different castes is not clear because, as Ghurye says, not only is there no ungrudging acceptance of a particular rank but also the ideas of people on this point are very nebulous and uncertain. In fact, the ranking of castes is made on a local basis and the locally dominant caste exercises most authority in this respect. But though there is uncertainty regarding the nature of the hierarchical order, the prestige of the Brahmin caste, according to Ghurye, is the cornerstone of the whole caste-edifice.

iii) Restrictions on feeding and social intercourse:

The principles of purity and pollution which, according to some, form the essence of caste, find their expression in the codes regulating the acceptance of food or drink from other castes. Ghurye

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holds that in India, there are two broad areas in so far as these taboos are concerned. In Hindusthan proper, which is the place of the origin of castes, the idea of pollution by touch is not followed very strictly. As such, the practice of untouchability is less severe in these areas. But this is not so in Southern and in Western India. This, according to Ghurye, is to be explained with reference to the historical evolution of castes. Firstly, the Brahmans had adopted a much more lenient view regarding pollution and purity in North India because here they lived with the other two twice-born Varnas whereas in the South they went unaccompanied by other varnas, settled as conquerors and rigorously enforced the codes of seclusion against the indigenous people. Secondly, in the south, before the Aryan invasion, the indigenous people had a belief regarding the contaminating power of food which reinforced this aspect of the caste system. This commensal feature of caste has attracted the attention of many writers. Elliot says that caste is primarily a matter of food. Risley quotes the proverbs "For twelve Rajputs, thirteen cooks" or "For three Kanauja Brahmins, you require thirteen hearths". However, as in the case of hierarchy, in respect of pollution also, there is no set pattern even in a particular locality.

iv) Civil and Religious disabilities and privileges of the different sections:

A result of the hierarchical division of society is that rights and obligations are unequally shared by different sections. Ghurye makes a graphic presentation of the various aspects of these disabilities of different sections of people. The ritual status of a caste vis-a-vis the Brahmans and the nature of its occupation are the crucial variables in determining the nature of these disabilities. This segmentary and divisive

14 Ghurye - op.cit., pp. 177-78.
15 For a discussion on this aspect see, Mandelbaum - Society in India (Popular: 1972), pp. 196-201.
character of castes in the day to day living has been well documented by Beteille. In his study of the Sripuram village, he has shown that the Brahmins, non-Brahmins and Adi-Dravidas live in separate hamlets. Mandelbaum mentions that even in village Panchayat meetings, there are definite regulations regarding seating arrangements, order of speech etc. Ghurye says that it has been possible to enforce these restrictions only with the help of the locally powerful caste and with the help of the king who was required to protect these privileges in the name of Rajanya Dharma.

v) **Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation**

The link between caste and occupation is so prominent that some writers like Nesfield define caste in terms of occupation. Ghurye does not accept such a position because the supposed linkage seems to be very tenuous. In support, he quotes P.V. Kane who said that even in the Vedic period all the Brahmins were not engaged in priesthood. It may even be said that at all times the Brahmins have kept all kinds of occupations, including farming, open for themselves. The principal occupation of the villagers, namely, agriculture, has always been caste-free, excepting the lowest caste who were not allowed to be farmers. If the relationship between caste and occupation is so ambiguous, how can it be called that it is the property of a particular caste? Ghurye mentions several reasons for that. First, though there is no definite linkage, in so far as castes are concerned, there is a definite grouping of preferred, permitted and prohibited occupations. Second, while ascribing ranking order to a particular caste in a particular area, the occupation of that

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17 Also Ghurye, *op.cit.*, pp. 11-12.
vi) Restrictions on Marriage:

The endogamous principle has been recognized by Ghurye as the key factor behind the caste system. P.V. Kane, an authority on caste, also thinks that in the 20th century caste is largely a matter of marriage whereas all its other features have crumbled down in the face of challenges. More appropriately, endogamy is associated with sub-caste and it is for this that Ghurye has recognized sub-caste as the effective caste. A man is not entitled to go beyond his sub-caste and even if he marries within his own caste (outside his sub-caste), that will be sternly dealt with by his sub-caste council. It is true that sociologists before Ghurye recognized the existence of this unit but it was Ghurye who elaborated on this concept and declared categorically that "there is ample

19 Also, see, Mandelbaum, op.cit., p. 182. Srinivas mentions in his discussion on Sanskritization that an aspiring lower caste will first of all try to give up its traditional lowly occupation. Srinivas - Social Change in Modern India, pp. 15-16.
20 Risley - The People of India, Ch. 2, Also, N.K. Dutt - The Origin and Growth of Caste, vol. 2.
23 But see A. Beteille - Castes - Old & New (1969) for an exposition of how this barrier is breaking down in modern times, pp. 70-73.
reason why, to get a sociologically correct idea of the institution, we should recognize sub-castes as real castes. Mayer, in his study of caste and kinship in Ramkheri village, mentions the existence of 19 sub-castes of which 16 are endogamous. This finding has corroborated Ghurye’s position.

Ghurye also considers the role of hypergamy in caste. He has mentioned that a large number of castes follow this principle even today. To Mandelbaum, hypergamy is a type of qualified endogamy which makes possible the internal stratification of a Jati. The institution of Kulinism in Bengal is an example of how hypergamous practices may have far-reaching social consequences. Hypergamy, thus combined with sub-caste endogamy, may result in what is known as sub-sub-caste endogamy making the caste situation extremely complicated and baffling.

A sociologist primarily interested in the question of unity and integration, Ghurye asks how is it that in spite of internal differentiation and the degrading position of a large number of castes, social unity was maintained in traditional India? Ghurye thinks that in spite of tensions, the mechanism to ensure co-operation was too strong. The various castes, by contributing their respective services towards the maintenance of civil life, developed a sense of participation which counteracted fissiparous tendencies and caste patriotism. Ghurye mentions the examples of participation by Dom, Kumbhars, Mahars, Barbers etc in various types of Hindu rituals. Unlike many other sociologists, Ghurye is of

24 Ghurye - op.cit., p. 20.
25 Detailed discussion regarding the relation between the two is to be found in the next section.
the opinion that the dominant caste phenomenon is a recent growth arising out of a particular form of land tenure - and this vitiated the former atmosphere of cooperation and interdependence. Other anthropologists have also noted this phenomenon of inter-caste cooperation. D.N. Majumdar mentions the ceremonial role of the barber in all the life-cycle rituals. S.C. Dube, in his account of the Shamirpet village mentions the close relation between the jajman family and the barber's family. So, Ghurye has rightly emphasized upon the ritual aspects of caste in maintaining village solidarity.

But the question is, is it the only factor that accounted for the persistence of a caste-ridden society through ages? To us, more important than these ritual functions was the system of economy in which the different castes functioned in traditional India. In an economy which was subsistence oriented and was at a rudimentary stage, caste-based occupational specialization generated a measure of security which was preferable to an openly competitive non-caste economy. N.K. Bose has rightly pointed out this economic role of caste system and has mentioned it as the reason why the tribes were absorbed into Hinduism. Besides, Ghurye's assumption that life in ancient village society of India was idyllic, without any element of conflict or rivalry, is suspect. Also, his assertion that the dominant caste is of a comparatively recent growth needs substantiation. Again, as Ghurye himself has mentioned, uncertainty regarding position in the hierarchy is a vital aspect of caste system and we would like to know how the resultant tension was managed in traditional society. From whatever data are available now, we are not very sure that

Brahmins enjoyed an unassailable position. Srinivas's comment is worth considering here: "One wonders how many dominant castes in rural India had even heard of the rules governing different varnas, or having heard of them, paid heed to them. One is also at a loss to understand how people living in villages were made to obey the rules or punished for violating them." 31

In fact, recent researches in the field of caste dispel the notion that even in the traditional system the scope for social mobility was non-existent. The picture of a Brahmanic-superiority based static Indian society was more drawn from 'official religious and ideological literatures of Indian society' than from objective historical and field research. Says Norman Brown: 'Not all of Hindu Society, even in Vedic times, acted as though it accepted the Brahman's view of himself ... A good deal has been written on the subject of rivalry between priest and warrior in ancient India.' 32 In every region of India and in every age, caste-ranking has been based more on secular, than on ritual, consideration. Marriott has concluded from his study of two Uttar Pradesh villages: "the ritual hierarchy itself in part grows out of, expresses and tends to remain positively correlated with, and therefore indirectly influenced by, economic, political and other non-ritual hierarchies of interaction. Most castes appear ultimately to achieve positions in the ritual hierarchy which are in harmony with their relative possession of wealth and power." 33

While discussing caste hierarchy and the rights and disabilities of castes, Ghurye gives too much importance on the ritual aspects,

31 Srinivas - Social Change in Modern India, p. 5.
neglecting the economic and political dimensions of the system. That the status of a caste depends to some extent on its political connections was noted by the Abbe Dubois when he said, "Thus the caste to which the ruler of a country belongs, however low it may be considered elsewhere, ranks among the highest in the ruler's own dominion." In fact it was a part of the duties of the king or the local ruler to legitimate caste ranking in a locality and many aspiring castes could have access to high position by influencing these rulers. If a caste is locally powerful or belongs to the ruler's caste or if it has access to the rulers, then, its actual ranking is influenced thereby. 'Power' as it has been said by Barber, "though neglected by the older view of Hindu society, is very much an important dimension of ranking and a determinant of behaviour".

Similarly, the importance of the economic factor in influencing caste-ranking is considerable. S.C. Dube's example of the Raj Gonds in Andhra Pradesh may be mentioned. They are the dominant landowners and though they used to take beef, all the castes, except two, take water from them. Lewis observes, "while the landowners are generally of higher caste in Indian villages, it is their position as landowners, rather than caste membership per se, which gives them status and power. In Karimpur, where the Brahmins are the landowners, the traditional caste hierarchy prevails. But in Rampur, the Jats own the land and the Brahmins are subservient to them." So, it is believed today that any attempt to understand the dynamics of caste with the help of the Brahminical literature,

34 Abbe Dubois - Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies (1928), p.23.
35 Bernard Barber - 'Social Mobility in Hindu India' in J. Silverberg (ed) Social Mobility in the Caste System in India (1968), pp.18-25. This article provides enough evidence to explode the myth of caste immobility in traditional India.
as Ghurye has done, results in the distortion of the concrete reality.

K. Gough has made a very categorical statement: "Castes' role in the economy, and the power-relations which these give rise to, are the prime determinants of their ritual rank-fixing relationship. Neither in the present nor in the past can the ritual ranking of the caste be understood without reference to the political and economic system in which they are imbedded". So it can be definitely said that caste status cannot be entirely explained with the help of ritual factors, as Ghurye has done.

Yet it cannot be denied that Ghurye's work on caste remains a pioneering contribution in the subject. Ghurye's efforts to span both the classical and modern world of literature on the decipherment of the institution of caste is really astounding. Still more, he puts all the elements to rigorous empirical tests to arrive at a solid formulation.

And within the overall framework of Brahminical superiority, he accepts the possibility of some type of mobility. Thus while discussing about the primitive tribes, he mentions that these people are slowly absorbing whatever ideas they could from the Brahmanic civilization. This is exactly what has been broached by the concept of Sanskritization of M.N. Srinivas. Ghurye further says, "apart from their desire to imitate Brahmanic ideals as interpreted by other castes, their bond of social solidarity with other groups was the economic gain that resulted from an exchange of their economic activities with them." So, many new ideas are there in Ghurye's writings, though in embryonic form. In the context of these, Pillai's eulogy that these discussions "have made the book more indispensable than ever for a student of Indian sociology" is not to be easily overlooked.

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39 Ghurye - op.cit., p. 23.
The relationship between caste and sub-caste has proved to be very intriguing for Indian sociologists. Which one should be taken as the real unit for analysis: caste or sub-caste? How are the sub-castes formed? And how do the people recognize their differences in practice? The controversy is of vital importance as it helps understanding the process of caste-formation. Allegedly, there are over three thousand castes in India today (Hutton), and it is vital to know how these caste groups are formed.

Ghurye makes a detailed discussion on the subject and explains his theory vis-a-vis others'. He takes up for analysis Mrs. Karve's theory and points out its limitations. There are two important parts of Mrs. Karve's theory. First, she says that there are three effective types of groups as far as castes are concerned, viz. castes, caste-clusters and varna. The so-called sub-castes should really be called castes because they possess all the attributes of caste, e.g., they are endogamous in nature and differ from each other in habits, cultural traits and also in ethnic or racial origins.41 Second, regarding the process of formation of castes, Mrs. Karve denies that these castes are the products of fission or fragmentation. She says, there are two basic groupings: the jatis and varnas. The jati organization did exist in India even before the Aryans came here. The varna organization belonged to the Aryans. In course of time "the Varna and Jati systems were interwoven together to form a very elaborate ranking system." Mrs. Karve attacks Ghurye for presenting a wrong theory on the origin and nature of these sub-castes.42

Ghurye agrees that sub-castes possess many properties of the caste. But a sub-caste is not to be identified with a caste. As a group the sub-caste is not entirely independent of the strictures, obligations and liabilities which are attached to the caste. The ranking of a sub-caste in a particular social milieu is largely dependent on its caste affiliation. Moreover, the sub-caste is a group known mostly to the people of the caste while caste is a grouping known to the society at large. That indicates that there are different levels of apperception of castes and sub-castes.

It is important to note that Adrian Mayer, in his field-study of Ramkheri village, also emphasizes upon the distinction between caste and sub-caste. Sub-caste, though different from caste, possesses 'enough properties common to the caste to be a caste-like unit.' Betelille has also said, "The fact that caste is a segmentary system means that people view themselves as belonging to units of different orders in different contexts. A Smartha sees himself as a Smartha in relation to a Sri Vaishnava and as a Brahmin in relation to a non-Brahmin." It is thus beyond doubt that caste-sub-caste nomenclature has been accepted as valid.

Ghurye thinks that sub-caste groupings are the results of fragmentation and sub-division of original units and this fragmentation occurs as a result of occupational diversification, migration, rise of a new sect, some peculiarities or some nicknames etc. Psychologically

46 Ghurye - op. cit., pp. 31-42.
also, people belonging to those various groups think themselves to be the differentiated sections of a parent body. N.K. Dutta's account of Gopa and Sadgopa, Mahishya and Kalvarta, Tili and Teli are examples of sub-caste formation on occupational diversification. Risley has also shown how people of some castes migrating to other regions become sub-castes distinguished by territorial names.

The same is true of functional, occupational or artisan castes. History bears abundant proof that craft is the result of a slow process of evolution and each major step of this evolution has been marked by the creation of a further differentiated sub-caste. Nesfield rightly points out, there is a positive correlation between advance towards industrialization and caste ranking - one whose occupation is more advanced and more sophisticated gets a higher status. So, on the basis of these arguments, Ghurye concludes, "The history of technological development dictates this mode of explanation of the multiplicity of castes and sub-castes as the reasonable one." Differentiation, specialization and schisms of varied nature have been going on in this country and they have thus resulted in thousands of caste groups in India.

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47 N.K. Dutta - Origin and Growth of Caste in India (1951), Vol.II.
48 Risley - The People of India (1915), pp. 75-80.
50 Ghurye - op.cit., p. 208.
Section - 3

THE ETHNIC THEORY OF CASTE

Considering the importance of caste as a social institution in India, it is no wonder that volumes have been written about the factors influencing its genesis and growth. Various theories have been formulated to explain the origin of caste. Thus George is of the opinion that a multiplicity of factors have gradually crystallised into the present form of caste. Some of the important factors are the emergence of the Aryans as conquerors, their concern to maintain purity, the rising power of the Brahmins, the doctrine of metempsychosis determined by the law of Karma etc. 51 Hesfield says that caste is mainly occupational in origin, i.e., people were first grouped into occupational guilds which in course of time solidified into caste. Hesfield emphatically denies the racial origin of caste system. Risley does not accept this theory and he shows the inseparable connection between caste and race in his three books, viz., Anthropometric Data from Bengal (1891), Tribes and Castes of Bengal (1891) and The People of India (1915). Risley's theory is important for our purpose because Ghurye's theory has largely been developed with reference to Risley's theory.

The racial theory of Risley presupposes that from the standpoint of physical or biological traits, human beings can be divided into several groups or races. These physical traits can be measured by a method which is known as anthropometrical method. 53

51 For an excellent discussion of these theories, see Hutton - Caste in India (1946), pp. 146-166.
52 See Risley - The People of India, pp. 268-70.
53 The term 'Anthropometry' was first coined by G. Cuvier (1769-1832). See Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 1, p. 57.
to the relation between Caste and Race, Risley has two important points. First, because caste divisions prohibit intermarriage and social connection, caste society provides a vast laboratory, as if to say, which can be studied from the anthropometrical point of view.

Second, there is a broad correspondence in Hindu society between physical type and social grouping. The order of nasal index of different castes, as he says, corresponds with the accepted order of social precedence. The social and the physical aspects are related with each other. Risley even draws a correlation between these physical traits and such cultural traits as matrimony, totemism and exogamy.

Ghurye modifies Risley’s theory and accepts it only with some reservations. First, methodologically, Risley proceeds in a wrong manner. Instead of proceeding on the basis of differential index, he proceeds on the basis of averages which has resulted in inflated differences between various groups of people. Second, there is some relation between Caste and Race only in Northern India where the Aryans first settled. To that extent, Risley is only partly correct.

Ghurye’s conclusions with regard to Caste-Race relationship may be summarised as follows:

54 Risley - op.cit., Appendix III, p. 400.
55 Risley - op.cit., p. 29.
56 Ghurye - op.cit., Pg. 115-20.
1) In Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, the Indo-aryan race has largely maintained its purity of blood;

2) the 'differential index' (in physical traits) between the high castes of this region and the high castes of other places is very high, indicating that there has been a wide racial admixture in the latter regions;

3) in Northern India, where racial purity has been maintained, there is a correlation between social-ranking and physical ranking, and

4) in other parts of India, the situation is very complex and confusing so that anthropometry does not help us much in accounting for caste-ranking. Actually some 'lower' castes in these regions have higher physical averages than some 'higher' castes. But in 'Hindusthan' proper, that is, in Northern India, racial purity has been preserved as a result of endogamy. As Ghurye says, 'the Brahmanic practice of endogamy must have been developed in Hindusthan and thence conveyed as a cultural trait to the other areas without a large influx of the physical type of the Hindusthani Brahmins'.

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57 Ghurye - *op. cit.*, p. 125.
Section - 4

CASTE & A BRAHMANIC CHILD

We have seen that on the origin of caste, Ghurye holds the view that caste is mainly a product of race and hypergamy. The Indo-Aryans first entered India in about 2500 B.C. The conquered aborigines were included within their caste-fold but the Aryans took all steps to keep their blood free from any intermixture. Endogamy became the essential device to maintain such racial purity. The lead in this respect was given by the Brahmins. And Ghurye maintains that this culture-trait of the Indo-Aryans can be traced back to the Indo-Europeans who also cultivated the same exclusivist spirit in social relationship.

How did this feeling of exclusiveness give birth to caste system? Ghurye says that the Aryans, when they entered India, must have had among them, three well-defined classes based on some loose functional separation. Inter-marriage among them was rare, though not forbidden. The Shudras were different from them and they came from the conquered people. This only explains why all the three varnas are the twice-borns whereas the Shudras are known as the single-born.

Among the incoming Aryans, the Brahmins were the most intelligent and enterprising. In course of time, they separated themselves off from the other two sections and developed rules relating to endogamy.

58 Ghurye - Caste, Class and Occupation, p. 115.
The Sudras were strictly separated from others and various types of
inabilities and inhibitions were imposed on them. In northern India,
there is some leniency shown by the Brahmins towards other twice-born
castes. But in South India, the Brahmins settled alone and they applied
their rules relating to the Shudras to all the indigenous people of the
South. Like Slater and N.K. Dutt, Ghurye holds that the South Indian
peoples, before their contact with the Indo-Aryans, shared the ideas of
primitive peoples about the power of food to transmit certain qualities. 60
That is why, the restrictions on food and drink are so rigorous in South
India.

The Brahmins in this way became the sole 'guardian' of this
society. Because of the superior image of the Brahmins, all other groups
tried to follow the Brahmanical practices. Group solidarity and group
prestige enabled all of them to close their ranks. Thus what was earlier
initiated by the Brahmins as a device to maintain their racial purity was
subsequently followed by other groups. These groups also became endogamous.

These diverse groups became crystallised in castes when
occupational groups were created, with the increase of functional differen­
tiation in society. During the RgVedic time, even priesthood was not
hereditary. Subsequently, community of interest among persons following
the same craft gave rise to a corporate organisation and technical skill
was passed on from father to son. 61 These occupational groups became
endogamous in course of time. The practice of untouchability also arose
out of the Brahmanic practice of ceremonial pollution and purity. 62

60 cf. Hutton's view in this respect in Caste in India, pp. 183-91.
61 This is also Dahlmann's view regarding the formation of castes.
   See Hutton, Caste in India, p. 171.
Ghurye thus concludes that caste in India is a Brahmanic child, cradled in the land of the Ganga and Yamuna and thence transferred to other parts of the country.\(^6^3\)

It is thus clear that Ghurye has placed himself against a galaxy of many important anthropologists and sociologists who hold that some elements of caste were prevalent even before the Aryans came in India. Hutton criticises Ghurye and remarks, "One cannot but believe that for priestly interference of this kind to be effective ..... it is necessary to assume the pre-existence of certain of the essential factors in that system which would predispose the population to accept the extension of them."\(^6^4\) Slater, in his *Dravidian Elements in Indian Culture* suggested that caste arose in India before the Aryan invasion. Oldenberg\(^6^5\) and Gilbert similarly regard that restrictions on marriage, occupation and commensality did exist in pre-aryan India. Ketkar\(^6^6\) and S.C. Roy held that the principles of pollution and purity were derived in part from an indigenous source. N.K. Dutt has also taken a somewhat similar view of the origin of castes.\(^6^7\)

Irawati Karve also does not accept Ghurye's theory that caste is a Brahmanic child and that there are wide similarities between caste in India and classes in Europe. She says, "The pre-aryan Jati-system and the aryan Varna system have been interwoven together to form a very elaborate

\(^6^5\) He has been described by Ghurye as "one of the most versatile and deeply read and severely critical Indologists."
\(^6^6\) Ketkar - *History of Caste in India* (1909), p. 120.
She holds that most of the caste-clusters are to be found among the Shudras which proves that the Aryan Varna system was imposed upon an already existing jati-system.

But Ghurye is not convinced about the soundness of these theories and holds that the theory of Brahminical origin of caste is more cogent. The status of the Brahmins as conquerors, their physical stature, colour and language - all helped to create a sense of awe and reverence among the natives. Thus this 'prestige factor' of the Brahmins is what made the adoption of caste-system universal. From an account of the early empires also, particularly those of the South, we find evidence of Brahmanic superiority. The Satavahan Kings, the Ikshvaku Kings, the Vakataka dynasty, the Pallava dynasty - all their records bear witness to the increasing prestige factor of the Brahmins. Thus caste is a Brahmanic child and the beliefs and practices relating to caste have spreaded among others by way of culture-contact and diffusion.

In fact, Ghurye holds, when the Aryans came to India, they had already developed some rigid lines of social divisions among them resembling caste-groups. The type of culture-trait which ultimately gave birth to caste system in India, was widespread among the Indo-Europeans. "In tribal England, in Rome, in Asian Civilizations, occupations not only tended to become hereditary but were actually graded in a certain order as high or low." Sometimes, these groups became even endogamous in nature. Ghurye makes a comparison between caste

69 Ghurye - Caste and Race in India, p. 237.
70 Ghurye - Ibid., pp. 245-48.
71 Ghurye - Ibid., p. 159.
and class and says 'contemporary British class system bears remarkable likeness to the Indian caste system as it was perhaps in the post-Vedic age ...'\textsuperscript{72}

Thus it may be contended .that at the early stage of the aryan conquest, caste system resembled the features of the European Estates system.\textsuperscript{73} But in course of time, due to the operation of factors already mentioned, caste emerged in its rigid form. So caste system is unique to India and at the same time it is a continuation of the cultural traits of the Indo-European people. Yogendra Singh has rightly said, Ghurye's approach with regard to caste may be said to be a cultural-universalistic one. Singh has divided sociologists into four categories from the standpoint of their approach to the problem of caste.\textsuperscript{74} These are cultural universalistic, cultural particularistic, structural universalistic and structural particularistic. Sociologists who belong to the first category believe that caste-like cultural bases of stratification could be found in most traditional societies and that the Indian caste system is merely a special type of the general form of status based groups. Undoubtedly, Ghurye is the ablest exponent of this school.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72} Ghurye - \textit{Caste and Class in India} (1961), pp. 269-70.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Ghurye - \textit{Caste and Race in India}, p. 85.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Y. Singh - \textit{Social Stratification and Change in India} (1977), p. 7.
\end{itemize}
Section - 5

CASTE IN MODERN INDIA

A. THE IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE

Sociologists, who are doing work on the nature of caste in post-independent India, have noted the big relevance of the British period for understanding and estimating the principles of caste functioning in modern India. The contradictory forces which were generated during the British period both endangered and enlivened the caste groups. As Srinivas says, "Westernization is an inclusive, complex and many layered concept .... Its incredible complexity is seen in the fact that different aspects of Westernization sometimes combine to strengthen a particular process, sometimes work at cross-purposes and are occasionally mutually discrete."75 Contemporary Indian society, Ghurye maintains, is heading towards the dangerous path of a plural society and the seeds of it were implanted during the British period. So Ghurye makes an analysis of the forces affecting the operation of caste in British India.

It is true that some developments occurred during the British period which went against the philosophy of caste. The factors which affected the operation of caste in British India may be grouped under three headings: 1) legal and institutional changes; 2) technological changes and 3) occupational changes.

From the legal standpoint, the British rulers undertook a series of reforms which went against the principles of caste operation. For the first time, a single set of laws and judicial system were instituted

75 Srinivas - Social Change in Modern India (1966), p. 53.
throughout India. O'Malley says, "two revolutionary results of introduction of the British judicial system were the establishment of the principle of equality and the creation of a consciousness of new rights." Various new laws were enacted at this time to translate these ideals into reality. Distinct changes in the legal sphere were also observed in relation to untouchability. They were granted the right of admittance in government-aided institutions. Also, it was at this period that reservation of seats in various political bodies were made. Castewise, the population was divided into different groups and specialized provisions for recruitment were made for the backward castes. Ghurye admits the necessity of this type of reservation and says "there is much justification for demanding some representation for the untouchable classes in the local and legislative bodies."

Industrialization and the introduction of new technology also accelerated the pace of disintegration of castes. Cities and towns grew, communication system was improved and it became quite difficult for people to observe rules relating to pollution and purity. Commensal taboos gradually gave way in the wake of these changes. Ghurye welcomes all these features as a healthy development.

There was considerable change in the occupational situation also. The old pattern of occupation was, by and large replaced by new ones. Most of the artisans and traders could not stick to their time-old avocations. Industrialization placed them in the vortex of a new economic and

productive organization. Thus was destroyed the economic organization which was the strongest foundation of caste.\textsuperscript{80}

But as already stated, British rule generated forces which ran at opposite directions. In fact, the British rulers were never seriously interested in liquidating the social and economic base of caste. They used the caste divisions to foment a sense of distrust and suspicion among various sections. Firstly, the caste customs were allowed to remain in tact. Rules relating to untouchability continued to exist. Ghurye declares untouchability as a positive curse and the government was never seriously interested in fighting it out.\textsuperscript{81}

Again, caste was enlivened through another unexpected source, viz., the contemporary census practices. The attempt to record caste names was perceived by the various castes as a chance to raise their status. They formed organisations on caste lines and 'a campaign for mutual recrimination was set on foot'.\textsuperscript{82} O'Malley says, "hundreds of petitions were received from different castes - their weight alone amount to one and a half maund".\textsuperscript{83} Castes thus became politicised - their area of operation being extended to regional or national level. Srinivas has called this phenomenon the 'horizontal stretch' of castes.\textsuperscript{84}

Ghurye thinks that the British policy on caste was positively mischievous. He quotes J. Kerr, the principal of Hindu College, as saying in 1865 that the continued existence of caste may be considered helpful for British rule. "It may be considered favourable ... provided we act with

\textsuperscript{80} On this point, see N.K. Bose - Culture and Society in India (1977), pp. 217-21.
\textsuperscript{81} Ghurye - Caste and Race in India, p. 280.
\textsuperscript{82} Ghurye - Ibid., p. 278.
\textsuperscript{83} The Census for Bengal, 1911, p. 440. (1 Maund is equal to about 38 kgs.).
\textsuperscript{84} Srinivas - Social Change in Modern India (1966), pp. 99-100.
prudence and forbearence. Its spirit is opposed to national union."

With his characteristic intellectual pungence, Ghurye says, "the British rulers of India never seem to have given much thought to the problem of caste, in so far as it affects nationhood of India ... Their measures generally have been promulgated piecemeal and with due regard to the safety of the British domination." The problems which are faced by India at present are largely the legacies of the past. The caste divisions were encouraged by the British rulers and they have been perpetuated and intensified in independent India.

B. THE SCHEDULED CASTES

It can never be gainsaid that during the British period a set of new values based on equality, freedom and humanitarianism were introduced. Broadly speaking, there were three types of reactions as a result of these developments. First, some movements, emphasizing upon the humanistic contents of religion, emerged, e.g., the Brahma Samaj movement. Second, there were the revivalist movements too which attempted to remodel Hindu society on traditional lines, e.g., the Arya Samaj Movement which tried to popularize the Vedic ideals. The vigour of this movement becomes palpable when we know that M.K. Ghandi was an ardent supporter of this movement.

86 Ghurye - Caste and Class in India (1957), p. 197.
87 For a good account of this movement, see Beteille - Castes : Old and New (1969), pp. 73-78.
There was a third and a more significant reaction which Ghurye calls the Depressed Classes Movement. Western values and ideals based on the spirit of equality inspired these people to demand a fair treatment for them. In so far as the benefits of Westernization only reached the upper castes, it also increased the feeling of deprivation among the lower castes. A 1914 datum shows that though the Brahmans constituted 4 P.C. of the population, of a total of 650 graduates, 452 or about 70% of them were Brahmans. The British rulers did not want to counter this process as that had the risk of causing disaffection among the upper castes. This explains why backward classes movement started precisely in those areas where they were subjected to maximum exploitation and injustices.

Ghurye says that largely the direction of the movement was twofold: first, the lower castes demanded and became successful in their demands - separate political representation for them and reservation of jobs for them in the various services. Second, ideologically, they challenged the general tenets of Brahmanic superiority and dominance. The acute anti-Brahmin sentiment of some of them went even against religion as such. R. Naicker of Tamilnadu, for example, declared, "Religion must be abolished. Caste system and the domination of Brahmans must be destroyed." In Tiruchi, on the statue of Ramaswamy Naicker, it is inscribed, "God does not at all exist; inventor of God is a fool; propagator of God is a scoundrel; God-worshipper is a barbarian."
Ghurye admits that reservation of posts and seats for the backward castes may sometimes be unavoidable but it is not necessarily the wisest. Oftener than not, the result has been the pampering of caste even at the cost of efficiency and justice. In some cases it has gone to such an extent that the Brahmins require protection against this type of discrimination. Srinivas has also testified this phenomenon. As he says, "... in 1936, when I graduated, Brahmins were eligible to apply for only one in five advertised jobs". But whereas the advantages of these measures are doubtful, this kind of artificial division is positively harmful because it thwarts the necessary atmosphere of nation-building. "Thus we have not heard of 'labour' claiming special representation in British Parliament. Where it is a question of endangering a feeling of unity, the people must be made to cooperate irrespective of their caste. It is only by such activity that the feeling of nation-community can be created. To harp on the caste differences and to allow special representation is to set at naught the fundamental condition for the rise of community feeling." 

The situation altered after the introduction of the new constitution which exclusively committed itself to maintain the unity and integrity of India. But considering the backward nature of some castes, certain specific safeguards were provided for them for a specific period of time. The whole purpose of the 'protective discrimination policy' was to improve their economic and social condition. But in spite of the operation of these provisions for the last 30 years, the condition of these people has remained almost the same. Let us review the situation with reference

93 Ghurye - op.cit., p. 283.
95 Ghurye - op.cit., p. 290.
to the various Reports of the Commissioners for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

The 20th Report published in 1970-71 concluded that a cursory look at the balance sheet of our socio-economic achievements will show that we are far behind our goals.\(^{96}\) The 21st Report, which covered the years 1971-72 and 1972-73, commented that there is a vast and distressing gap between what we profess and what we practice. The Report indicated growing cases of hostilities against these castes in society.\(^{97}\) The 22nd Report similarly observed that the efforts made to improve the condition of the scheduled caste people have been successful only to a limited extent.\(^{98}\)

In the sphere of education, as stated in the 22nd Report, there was a cent per cent increase in educational expenditure for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. But even then, the number of school-going children of these communities lag far behind other communities as it becomes clear from the following table.\(^{99}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>I - V</th>
<th>VI - VIII</th>
<th>IX and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled caste children</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of other communities</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The miserable economic condition of these people has also been highlighted in various other Reports. N.K. Bose shows that though the Scheduled Castes constitute 14.67% of the total population, 33.16% of them are agricultural workers.\(^{100}\) The National Sample Survey for 1960-61 showed

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96 The 20th Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Govt. of India), pp. 1-9.
97 The 21st Report of the Commissioner for SC and ST (Govt. of India), pp. 5-7.
98 The 22nd Report (Govt. of India), p. 5.
99 Ibid., p. 75 fn.
100 N.K. Bose - Anthropology and some Indian Problems (1972), p. 187.
that 61.9% of the Scheduled Caste population incur the burden of debt whereas the general percentage of rural indebtedness is 53.7%.

The Report of the Committee on Untouchability showed that the incidence of untouchability in rural India is still very high. Very significantly, the committee expressed the opinion that the root cause of the continuance of untouchability is economic backwardness.

This being the economic condition of the Scheduled Castes, Ghurye's assertion that the 'protective discrimination policy' has failed to realize its objectives, is perfectly justified. The social, economic and political condition of these people has not improved considerably. Nor has the integrational policy of the Government become successful. What is worse, the benefits provided to the Scheduled Castes have all gone to a few top castes among them. The Commissioner for 1969-70 pointed out that among the Scheduled castes, the majority of beneficiaries (84 P.C.) belonged to four castes whose proportion in the Scheduled Castes population is 42 P.C. The lot of the vast majority of other sections remains largely unchanged.

C. CASTE IN POLITICS:

It has now been established that the various caste groups became aware of the potentialities of political power, even before independence. During the British period, various developments helped in bringing castes in the political arena. The Census operations provided a launching pad to not

102 E. Kulke - 'Integration, Alienation and Rejection' in S.D. Pillai (ed.) - op.cit., pp. 244-54.
103 N.K. Bose - Ibid., p. 185. Also Y. Singh - Social Stratification and Change in India (1977), pp. 24-25.
only upward mobility but also for aggregation of political interests. Earlier, caste operations were limited within closely knit geographical areas. But the spread of communication facilities and the increasing use of the mass media, increased political consciousness among caste groups and an awareness that political aggregation would reap benefits for them—all these enabled caste groups to operate on regional or even national basis. This resulted in what Srinivas has called 'the horizontal stretch' of caste. Caste became the centre of philanthropic activities of individuals. Hostels, cooperative societies and scholarships for caste members were opened. Even many caste-journals began to be published during the British period. This resulted in a feeling of 'caste patriotism'. Caste became a community for an individual around which all his activities and relations were centered.

All these developments and their dangerous potentialities were noted by Ghurye as early as in 1932. But Ghurye's discussion was not well-received by the academic community at that time. The Man in India noted that these controversial questions should not find a place in an academic review. However, circumstances proved that Ghurye was not only right but prophetic too. The forces which helped the process of politicisation of caste have accelerated to a great extent after independence.

Ghurye holds that excessive attachment to one's own caste goes against national interest and is a potential source of danger to national unity. Various factors have aggravated the situation in post-independent India.

105 Ghurye - Caste and Race in India, p. 300.
107 In fact, there has been a spate of writings on this particular topic in socio-anthropological literature here and abroad. See, in particular, R. Kothari (ed.) - Caste in Indian Politics (1970); Rudolph and Rudolph - The Political Role of India's Caste Associations in Pacific Affairs (1960), pp. 2-22; F.C. Bailey - Tribe, Caste and Nation (1960); M.N. Srinivas - Caste in Modern India and other Essays (1962); V.K. Sirsikar - Political Behaviour in India (Bombay, 1965).
India. The motivated handling of the situation by the ruling party in order to foster their own political interest is the principal cause. The ruling party has failed to implement the ideals of the constitution in this respect. Increasing political awareness among persons having a low socio-economic status is another such factor. Again, 'the communists have successfully won over large numbers of the working people .... and energized them for militant action.' These explain, according to Ghurye, why caste sentiment and caste-patriotism are on the increase in independent India.

One cannot deny this basic factual statement of Ghurye that caste associations are becoming more and more prominent in modern India. But what accounts for it? And what are its effects on the nation-community? The present researcher thinks that Ghurye's analysis and prescription in this respect are somewhat simplistic. Ghurye fails to appreciate that the political involvement of castes is a result of a collective mobilization process that has occurred in modern India and a sociologist's task is to understand and analyse the process and not to condemn it outright.

Recent sociological investigations have emphasized upon the intricate nature of this aspect of caste mobility. Yogendra Singh observes, "caste associations, federations and clusters have increasingly been formed and these compete as corporate groups for access to political power, economic and cultural resources and opportunities. This has enhanced the competitive interaction of castes with other castes on a scale which never existed in traditional Indian Society." Srinivas has also noted that Backward

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109 See, also, Srinivas, Caste in Modern India and Other Essays (1962), p. 89.
Classes Movement is fundamentally a movement for upward mobility by a section of population which had lagged far behind the Brahmans in Westernization. Beteille observes that now-a-days, in addition to Sanskritization, other idioms of mobility have opened to the Harijans.

While commenting upon the recent horizontal consolidation among the Mahars, Sunanda Patwardhan comments that political participation is now a means for social mobility and "there has been set in motion a complex interaction between the traditional horizontal solidarity of the members of a caste group and the solidarity which the compulsion of political processes: create."

A group of political sociologists have explained the phenomenon of casteism from a somewhat different angle. Kothari, for example, views these caste associations as institutional interest groups. He sees nothing unnatural in the growth of this phenomenon because "in democratic polity, politics must make use of such organisations around which the bulk of the population is found to live." Rudolph and Rudolph strike a note of appreciation for caste association's role and say, "the caste association brings political democracy to Indian villages through the familiar and accepted institution of caste."

Selig Harrison, while analysing 'the new caste lobbies' in independent India, has also emphasized upon the positive role of these caste associations.

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114 R. Kothari - Caste in Indian Politics (1970), - Introduction.
115 Rudolph and Rudolph - 'The Political Role of India's caste Associations' in Pacific Affairs (1960), pp. 5-22.
All these writers try to show that castes have entered into the political process as a part of the larger process of social change and there is no reason to be unduly concerned about the situation. Some of them have made 'caste resilience and adaption' hypothesis and have argued that the forces of industrialization, westernization, growth of technology and democratic institutions tend to enlarge, rather than constrict, the process of caste functions. But all these are concerned with the 'why' and 'how' of the matter, on which Ghurye's analysis is insufficient. But it must be admitted that it was Ghurye who turned our attention to this new dimension of caste functions as far back as in 1932.

D. THE BACKWARD CLASSES

The Backward Classes constitute another focus of tension in modern India. As in the case of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, they have organized themselves to protect their special constitutional facilities. Far from moving toward the objective of integration, this has led to progressive atomization of our society.

Beteille notes that the term 'Backward Classes' is not a happy one because the word 'class' suggests not only an economic category but also one which is relatively open. The 'Backward Classes' are not classes in this sense. Unlike in the case of other special communities, there is

118 In the 1969 edition of the book, Ghurye cites the works of K. Gough, B. Cohn, S. Harrison, P.S. Bailey and M.N. Srinivas in support of his original propositions in this respect.
some vacillating attitude towards the backward classes in the constitution. Even before independence, there was some uncertainty in the Congress Party regarding its attitude toward the backward classes. The Working Committee of the Congress Party expressed the opinion that it would be wrong to ignore their demand for communal representation though such specialized representation is not desirable. Ghurye holds that the same vacillating attitude is to be found in the ruling party in post-independent India. While, on the one hand, leaders continued to pay lip-service to the ideals of a casteless society, they sponsored various sectarian and communal organizations and derived maximum benefit from such a situation. Even Nehru, who was trained in the Western liberal intellectual tradition, could not rise above the occasion. Ghurye says, "the great leader, the staunchest protagonist of secularism and an ardent critique of caste patriotism or casteism, Jawaharlal Nehru, on his part, behaved in an ambivalent manner on the very first occasion when a severely cold and chastising front was urgently called for."  

The Backward Class Commission was appointed in 1953 to determine, firstly, the criteria of backwardness and secondly, to prepare a list of such class on the basis of these criteria. The Report submitted by Mr. Kalelkar, the Chairman of the Commission, recognized only two ends - the individual and the state and stipulated that nothing should stand in-between. It was of the opinion that to determine

121 Ghurye - *Caste and Race in India*, p. 431.
122 N.K. Bose - 'Who are the Backward Classes ?' in *Culture and Society in India* (1977), pp. 181-90.
123 Report of the *Backward Classes Commission* (1953), P. IV.
backwardness, 'once we eschew the principle of caste, it will be possible to help the extremely poor and deserving from all communities'. The Commission, again, noted that caste-consciousness, caste-loyalties and caste-aspirations have increased throughout the country and communalism and casteism are bound to destroy the unity of the nation. But in spite of this declaration by the Commission and in spite of the occasional pronouncements of our leaders that the economic criterion would be adopted in determining backwardness, caste still continues to be the basis of backwardness.

Ghurye analyses the whole development relating to the backward classes and says that it shows that 'special treatment which was intended to be a special privilege of restricted duration is being tried to be turned into a birthright of a permanent nature'. The correctness of this assertion has been proved by various committee reports, sociological researches and the continued backward classes movement. The Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes for 1956-57 said that backwardness creates a type of vested interest and has a tendency to perpetuate itself. The Estimates Committee for 1958-59 observed, "the tendency on the part of some castes and tribes to get themselves listed as backward merely to get concessions is undesirable and must be discouraged." The Lokur Committee similarly noted, "we have witnessed the extraordinary phenomenon which had been noticed earlier by the Kalelkar Commission, the Dhebar Commission and the Commissioners for

124 Ibid., p. vi.
125 Ibid., p. xiii.
126 Ghurye - op.cit., pp. 433-34.
Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, of castes and communities solemnly setting forth their desire to be considered backward and included in the schedule for special treatment. This phenomenon explains why, over the last several decades, the list of backward classes has become longer and longer.

What is worse, many of the so-called backward classes are becoming economically more affluent and politically more resourceful. Srinivas has shown that the dominant castes in villages consist mostly of them. Beteille notes, "such castes sometime occupy a dominant position in the economic and political system of the village. Not infrequently, they are small landowners. When they are also numerically preponderant, their control over a village, a group of villages or even a district may be decisive."

In many cases, these backward classes, who constitute the middle-class farmers, have been the principal beneficiaries of rural development programmes initiated by the government. This 'nouveau riche' section constitutes the new class of exploiters in rural society.

In rural India today most of the atrocities against Harijans are committed by this section of people. In Bihar, for example, the Yadavas, Kurmis and Koeris, have emerged as prosperous peasants. Prosperity gave them economic power but socially they remained degraded as before. They are now fighting two battles. They are struggling against the upper castes socially and politically. And their economic interest lies in exploiting the 'low-castes' who constitute the source of cheap labour. But these

129 A. Beteille - 'The Future of the Backward Classes' in op.cit., p.111.
so-called lower castes are also organizing themselves in rural areas. The most question is whether the resultant clashes are instances of 'caste-war' or 'class-war'.\textsuperscript{131} The present researcher does not agree with the opinion that these are only signs of intensification of caste rivalry. It would be wrong to say, that 'Recent developments suggest that Indian society is in danger of dividing along caste lines, which are increasingly taking precedence over gradations of politics and economics'.\textsuperscript{132} The truth is that, in the Indian situation caste and class factors are interrelated and both the variables are to be considered. In any case, it is very natural that, as a sociologist of integration, Ghurye should be concerned with the situation.

Another factor which is to be noted here is the existence of stratified groups among the backward classes themselves. Ghurye has not at all considered this phenomenon. The backward caste lobby is being headed by the upper strata of this section. They are the most vociferous advocates of this protectionist policy. As early as in 1955, the Backward Classes Commission pointed out, "the extremely backward sections of these communities are mostly the victims of the domination of the privileged and dominant communities among the backward classes''.\textsuperscript{133} The 16th Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes observed, "It is not enough to treat all the Scheduled Caste people or the Scheduled Tribes as one single unit. Separate programmes are necessary for different classes among them''.\textsuperscript{134} Even within a particular caste, those who are

\textsuperscript{131} A. Sinha - 'Advancing Class Interests in the name of Caste' in \textit{EPW}, April 22, 1978. Also, 'Atrocities against Harizons or class War?' in \textit{EPW} - December 10, 1977.


\textsuperscript{134} The 16th Report of the Commissioner (1967-68), pp. 2-3.
economically better off, care very little for the rest of the community. The A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies in Patna concluded, "Some of the (Harison) elites who have risen high in social hierarchy have scrapped their ties with their bleak past. They are largely out of tune from the mass of the community and seek a realignment with status and power groups in the wider society". In a study on the status of untouchables in Dhanbad conducted in 1970-71, it was found that the Chamar and Dusadhs who together constitute only 22.5% of the Scheduled Castes population, occupied 47.2% of the available jobs in the district.

The 16th Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes pointed out that in Maharashtra, 85.8% of the Scheduled Caste scholarships are enjoyed by the Maharas who constitute 35.7% of the Scheduled Caste population and only 2.2% by the Mangs who constitute 32.6% of the Scheduled Caste population. The net result is that the vast majority of 'backwards' remain where they were whereas incalculable harm is being done to the cause of national integration by drawing artificial lines of discrimination between various sections of population.

The above developments confirm Ghurye's fear that Indian society is being progressively atomized into different groups who are determined to realize their sectional economic and political demands at the expense of the interest of the nation. And the Government measures to deal with the situation have been insufficient. Ghurye concludes that

135 Quoted in S. Dutta Roy - 'The Benefits up for Grabs' in The Statesman, 28.3.78.
instead of realising the goal of a casteless society, our society is heading towards the dangerous rocks of a 'plural society'.

Ghurye mentions several other developments which show that caste feeling is getting stronger in modern India. First, kinship is still a very important consideration in economic and political activities of individuals in modern India. Second, caste associations are proliferating and they have directly entered the political scene. Third, the number of caste-journals fanning communal ideas and intensifying caste spirit is increasing alarmingly. Fourth, the creation of various caste-based trusts has accelerated the community formation of different castes. When a caste becomes a community, individuals live in them and for them. In Maharashtra alone, Ghurye estimated, these caste centered units are not less than 1700. A staggering figure indeed!

Lastly, though inter-caste marriage is increasing, endogamy, the core element of caste, is still a predominant factor in our society. Ghurye says that the endogamous nature of caste has remained almost the same today. Studies made by Kapadia, Karandikar, B.V. Shah etc. show that endogamy is still going strong. Kapadia, for example, says that the general people's attitude towards co-education, the mixing of boys and girls etc. are indications that 'favourable climate for intercaste marriage has still not been created'. Similarly, C. Laksmanan shows in his study of marriage pattern in some districts of Andhra that "as many as 96.99 P.C. people in the sample favoured marriage of their sons and

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138 Ghurye - Caste and Race in India, p. 441.
139 See, on this point, Mandelbaum - Society in India (1970), pp. 136-44.
140 Though born of a very conservative family and brought up in a conservative local surrounding, Ghurye scrupulously avoided any relationship with caste associations in his own life. See, his I and Other Exploration (1973), p. 25, 35, 64.
daughters only within their caste". But Ghurye regards that both caste and endogamy are injurious to the cause of society. He thinks that caste has become positively injurious today. It has "definitely proved harmful and antagonistic to the birth of a real community and nationality feeling."  

The intensification of caste-spirit is particularly dangerous in modern India. Formerly the activities of caste were strictly controlled by religion and the local society. Today, the various caste groups are not complementary to each other, nor do they contribute to the integration of the community. They have become self-seeking organizations who are going all out to realize their sectarian interests. Society has become atomized and desperate. National integration is at stake. These are all the portends of a 'plural society', which Ghurye concludes, has created a dangerous situation for India.

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145 Detailed discussion on Ghurye's concept of 'plural society' has been made in a later chapter.