CHAPTER ONE

Caste in South India

Caste is such a historical truth as is very complex and very hard to define. It is an institution of considerable internal complexity which has been based on extreme degree of closed criteria and rigid hierarchical social stratification. Caste has many definitions, given by historians, sociologist, anthropologists and social scientist. The traditional notions of caste is India is divided into five main varnas or five caste groups. First Brahmin, second Kshatria, third Vaishaya, fourth Sudra and fifth are "untouchable". Each caste group is attached with power which every individual exercises. Caste is more than division, gradations, hierarchy; it is also a caste of minds, caste hegemony and it is myopic where individuals are bound to fail to grasp the caste what actually caste is. The chapter includes approaches towards caste, various definitions given by Europeans, Indians, caste and power, Caste and social change, Caste and migration and whether new Caste were emerging?

Approaches towards caste system

Various theory and principles have been given by the historians about what system is?

Towards a Marxist Perception

D.D.Kosambi, R.S.Sharma and Irfan Habib are well known Marxist thinker. Kosambi points out in his article An introduction to the study of Indian History,¹ that

¹ D.D.Kosambi, An introduction to the study of Indian History, Bombay, p.25.
Castes did not arise out of any internal division of the Varna in the original Vedic society, but from an external process altogether: "The entire course of Indian history shows tribal elements being fused into a general society. However, D.D. Kosambi maintained that one of the clues to an understanding of the Indian past was the factor of the transition from tribe to caste --- from small localized groups to a generalized society. This transition was largely the result of plough agriculture in various regions which changed the system of production, broke the structure of tribes and clans, and made caste the alternative form of social organization. Indicative of such a change is the evolution of clan totems into clan names and then into clan names; and then into caste names. Brahminical settlement in various parts of the country was the nodal agency for, and the fore runner of, plough agriculture. They led to the assimilation of local into the Brahmanical tradition and to the Sanskritization of local folk cults.²

Therefore, he sees caste as a class form dependent on the mode of productions. Irfan Habib sees the caste system as an unique – social institution of India. Further, he points out that caste is fairly well-marked, separate community, whose individual members were bound by each other through endogamy, and very often also by a common hereditary or duty, actual or supposed.³ He quotes Marx "Being a relatively rigid form of division of labour, the caste system formed part of relations of production. But the caste system operated in two different worlds of labour, and these two must be distinguished in order to better our understanding about both the caste system and social formation, of which it was a part. Marx derived a very important insight from


Richard Jones, when he distinguished the artisans maintained by the village and the artisans of the town, wholly dependent upon the vagaries of the market. In one case the caste labour belonged to a natural economy, in another to a commodity or monetized sector.  

**Orientalists and the Colonial Perception of Caste**

Orientalists saw Hindus as the prisoners of an inflexibly hierarchical and Brahman-centred value system. Their insistence on this point played a significant part in the making of a more caste-conscious social order. Yet this could happen only in the context of broader political and social changes which were in progress well before the onset of colonial rule, as was seen in the preceding chapters. Furthermore, the continuing movement towards the caste like ways of life to be described in the book's final chapters could not have occurred in so many areas without the active participation of Indians. Caste was in any simplistic sense a creation of colonial scholar-officials.  

**Castes and Social Groupings in Early European Travel Accounts**

The word “caste” is derived from ‘chaste’ (Masc. casto), which refers to mean ‘lineage’. Thus, Sayyids were termed by them ‘Mouros da casta de Mafamede’. It could equally be used interchangeably with ‘raca’ (race). With nacao (nation: significantly derivative from the verb nascar- (to be born), it could even mean religious

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denomination (gentio, mouro, etc.).  The word 'casta' is first made known to us by the Portuguese and described by them as signifying 'breed' and 'race'. The Portuguese also used 'castez,' which mean the children of the Portuguese. Both boys and girls who were born in India were called 'castizos' or 'castees'. However, the Portuguese accounts used the above terms throughout in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In English, there was use of the term 'cast' in the sense of race in 1555. In early seventeenth century, English writers such as William Methwold used 'tribes or lineages' in the sense of caste, and in South Eastern India he divided them into 'Bramene' 'Fangam' (Jangama?), 'Commity' (Komatti), 'Campo Waro (in Telegu: Kapu Waru), transformed here into the Portuguese Cammo which mean 'field' to underline their agriculturist leanings), 'Boga Waro (the whoores Tribe), the smiths and 'all other mechanical traders'; all forming one 'tribe' and having been 'tribes by themselves'. In English, there was for long no distinction between caste and tribe. Therefore, there was a great confusion about the specific use of the term 'caste'. This is

10 Ibid., pp.188-189.
14 Ibid., p.22.
a confusing word. It has been used to convey different meanings, connotations and social categories. Therefore, definition of ‘caste’ is very problematic and confusing. Yet it is very important to define the caste system and to delineate what its features are. In the following pages, we will look into the various facets of the caste system: first as seen by the Early European travellers, and some modern ethnographical studies of the later period.

In the early sixteenth century, Duarte Barbosa, the Portuguese traveller, visited South India, stayed in the Malabar Coast (Western Coast). He left innumerable accounts of the caste system in the region. He informed us that he met Brahmin caste which is the highest caste among the Hindus. They did not consume flesh or fish. They marry once in life. No man may prepare any food for the King except a Brahmin or his own kin. He also mentions that he met a low caste, called ‘revoleens’. He neither touched anyone, nor did anyone touch him under pain of death. They went naked, covering only their private parts with scant and filthy rags, the more part of them indeed with leaves of certain trees. He also informed us that there was another caste who live in the fields and open camping, in secret lurking places and also live in huts very strait and mean.

15 Dube, SC., Indian Society, NBT, India, p.52.
16 Habib, Irfan, Caste and Money in Indian History, PPH, Feb. 1992, p.5.
18 Ibid., p.34.
19 Ibid., p.37.
20 Ibid., p.67.
21 Ibid., p.68.
Barbosa had also reported about another caste group called the Pariahs, the members of which were even lower than any other groups and constitute the lowest among all. The Pariahs dwelt in the discrete places away from all other castes. They usually did not have social interaction with persons of other castes. They were held to be worse than devils and were to be damned, and even to see them was considered a sin and one can become ‘unclean’ and ‘outcaste’. They ate yams and other roots. They also ate the flesh of wild beasts. However, Barbosa also made difference among them. He points out that each caste was separate and unable to touch the other or marry them. Further, he listed eighteen caste groups, divided into three sections. First was the higher caste in which Brahmins, Nayars (Nairs), Vyapari or Ravari, Kusavan (pot maker), Vannathamar and Chaliyan belonged. The second was the lower caste in which Tiyan, Mannan, Kaniyan or Kanisan, Asari, Mukayar or Mukavar, Mukkuvan, Vettuvan, Panan, Eravallen, Tulayan, and Parayan constituted. The third was immigrant castes or foreign castes in which belonged Chetty, Gujarati Banyan, Mappilla and Pardesi or “foreign Muhammadan”.

Duarte Barbosa also visited the kingdom of Vijayanagara and wrote that there were “three classes of heathen, each one of which has a very distinct rule of its own, and also their customs, different much from one another”. The three classes in which Barbosa divided the Hindus, however, did not correspond to what is the actual caste division. His understanding of the three classes were: first, the King and Nobility;

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22 Ibid., pp.69-70.
23 Ibid., p.70.
24 Ibid., p.71.
secondly, the Brahmins; and third, the members of the Lingayat sect, who occupied very important status in some parts of the territory of the Vijayanagara empire.26

Jean Baptiste Tavernier, a French traveller who travelled in India in the middle of seventeenth century also reported on the Hindu beliefs, rituals and customs. He also gives the general description of the caste system in India. He pointed out that an 'idolater'27 did not eat bread, nor drink water in a house belonging to anyone of a different caste from his own, unless it be more noble and more exalted than his, but they could all eat and drink in the house of the Brahmins.28 According to him the first caste was the Brahmin. This caste was the most noble of all because they were priests and ministers of law.29 The second caste was the Rajpoots or Khetris, i.e., warrior and soldiers. He said that they were the only ‘idolater’ who were brave, and distinguished themselves in the profession of arms.30 The third caste was that of the Banians who attached themselves to trade, some being shrojf, i.e., money changers or bankers and other brokers. They never ate anything which disturb their sentiment.31 The fourth caste was the Sudras who were like the Rajputs but they were very infamous.32 There was a special caste, called Halalkhor. The Halalkhors were engaged only in cleaning houses;

26 Ibid., p.212.
27 Jean-Baptiste Tavernier observations of the 'idolaters' is one who worships the god of idol (Murti). His indication was towards the Hindu religion.
29 Ibid., p.142.
30 Ibid., p.143.
31 Ibid., pp.143-144.
32 Ibid., p144.
they made use of asses, to carry sweepings from the house to the fields. The Halalkhors also ate pigs and use them for food.\textsuperscript{33}

Abul Faz'\textl also mentions the name ‘caste’ as Tavernier noticed. He noted that there were four varnas such as the Brahmins or Priests, the Kshatriyas or warriors, the Vaisyas or merchant and agriculturists, and the Sudras or labourers and servants.\textsuperscript{34} With the varna, he also noticed their occupation such as Brahmin were priests (Poojari), the Kshatriyas were the warriors, the Vaisyas were the merchants, and the Sudras the labourers.

Fracois Bernier, a traveller in the seventeenth century India, also supported the view of Abul Faz'\textl, but instead of writing as ‘caste’, he used the term ‘tribe’. He pointed out that Hindus were divided into four ‘tribes’. First, was the ‘tribes’ of Brahmins or interpreters of the law. Second, the ‘tribe’ of Kshatriyas or warrior. Third, was the ‘tribe’ of Vaisyas or merchant and trademen, commonly called Banias. Fourth, the ‘tribe’ of Sudras, or artisans and labourers. These different ‘tribes’ were not permitted to intermarry. For instance, a Brahmin was forbidden from marrying a Kshatriya.\textsuperscript{35}

Niccolao Manucci, a native of Venice (Italy), landed in India in the second half of seventeenth century. He reported extensively about the Hindu religion and its divisions. He divided the Hindus into four classes or kinds. Manucci used the term ‘classes or kind’ instead of caste. He also gave the origin of class or kind. The first class was Brahmin who descended from the Brahma’s face. This class was divided into

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., pp.145-146.

\textsuperscript{34} Abu‘l Fazl, A'\textit{i-i-Akbari, Calcutta, 1786, Vol.III, pp.82-84.

\textsuperscript{35} Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656-1668, ed. V.A.Smith, MMP, 1983, p.325.
several branches. The second class was Rajahs who were born from the shoulders of
the Brahma. It had also several divisions. The third kind was said to be born from the
thigh of the said Brahma and these were the merchants or shopkeepers of whom also
there were many varieties. The fourth were the Sudras, who were born from the feet of
the Brahma. They have many divisions, too hard to count. He added the fifth class of
Chandalon or blacks. They were divided into four kinds namely, Achivanatar, Pallis,
Parias, and Alparqueros (shoemaker). These people were low and infamous. These
people live outside the inhabited places and might be called outcasts.36

John Francis Gemelli Careri also supported the views of Manucci, Abul Fazl,
Tavernier, and others. He divided the Hindus in the same manner as the above
mentioned authors had divided. However, he used term 'sects' or 'tribes'. He notices that
Hindu religion was divided into 84 ‘sects’ or ‘tribes,’ each of which has its particular
rites and ceremonials. Careri mentioned the Brahmins (professors of learning), Rajputs
(princes), Banians and lots of other sects.37

William Hedges also pointed out that Hindus were divided into ‘countless’
numbers of ‘sects’ and ‘family’ or ‘tribes’. He put the Rajputs in the first place, whom
he thought were the ‘ancient princes and gentlemen soldiers’. Second in the hierarchy
was the ‘Brahmins’, who were the priests to all the other sects of the Hindus. The third
was the ‘Banians’, who were, for the most part of their professions, merchants,
tradesmen and brokers. The fourth was the ‘Gentoos’, who were commonly
handicraftsmen such as carpenters, smiths, tailors, shoemakers, and seamen. Finally,

36 Manucci, Niccolao, Storia do Mogor, 1653-1708, ed. William Irvine, OBRC, New Delhi, 1981,

37 Thevenot, Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri, ed. S.Sen, New Delhi, 1949, pp.254-258.
the fifth group was the Coolis, who were the poor country peasants and who were also appointed to ‘watch and oversee every village’.38

Abbe J.A. Dubois, French traveller, has pointed out about the caste structure of south India. According to him, the word caste was derived from the Portuguese, and was used in Europe to designate the different tribes or classes into which the people of India are divided.39 The most ordinary classification, and at the same time the most ancient, divides them into four main castes. The first and most distinguished of all was that of Brahmina, or Brahmins; the second in rank is that of Kshatriyas, or Rajahs; the third the Vaisyas, or Landholders and Merchants; and the fourth the Sudras, or Cultivators and Menials.40

The functions proper to each of these four main castes were: for Brahmins, priesthood and its various duties; for Kshatriyas, military service in all its branches; for Vaisyas, agriculture, trade, and cattle-breeding and for Sudras, general servitude. But I will describe more fully hereafter the several social distinctions which are attached to each of them.41


39 The Sanskrit word is Varna = colour, thus showing that upon the difference of colour between the Aryan Brahmins and the aboriginal inhabitants the distinction of caste was originally founded.


41 Ibid, p.15.
Each of the four main castes was subdivided into many others, the exact number of which was difficult to determine because the subdivisions vary according to locality, and a sub-caste existing in one province was not necessarily found in another. 42

Amongst the Brahmins of the South of the Peninsular India, for example, there were to be found three or four principal divisions and each of these was again subdivided into at least twenty other sub-divisions/subsides. The lines of demarcation between them were so well defined and district as to prevent any kind of union between one sub-caste and another, especially in the case of marriage. 43

The Kshatriyas and Vaisyas were also split up into many divisions and subdivisions. In Southern India neither Kshatriyas nor Vaisyas were very numerous; but there were considerable numbers of the former in northern India. However, the Brahmins assert that the true Kshatriya caste no longer exists, and that those who pass for such were in reality a debased race. 44

In this connection, it should be categorically understood that “kshatriya” is a martial race and they have very limited opportunities, except in Defence, at the present time (in the context of democracy) as people belonging to other castes also avail of job opportunities in Defence. Nevertheless, the assertions made by some Brahmins in North India are untenable and the remarks are uncharitable against “Kshatriyas”.

The Sudra caste was divided into many sub-castes. Nobody in any of the provinces where author/writer had lived has ever been able to inform him as to the

42 Ibid, p.15.
43 Ibid,p,15.
44 Ibid,p15.
exact number and names of them. It was a common saying, however, that there were 18 chief sub-castes, which were again split up into 108 lesser divisions. 45

The Sudras were the most numerous of the four main castes. They form, in fact, the mass of the population, and added to the Pariahs, or Outcastes, they represent majority of the inhabitants. When we consider that the Sudras possess almost a monopoly of the various forms of artisan employment and manual labour, and that in India no person can exercise two professions at a time, it was not surprising that the numerous individuals who form this main caste were distributed over so many distinct branches. 46

However, there were several classes of Sudras that exist only in certain provinces. Of all the provinces that he lived in, the Dravidian, or Tamil, country was the one where the ramifications of caste appeared to me most numerous. There were not nearly so many ramifications of caste in Mysore or the Deccan. Nowhere in these latter provinces had the researcher come across castes corresponding to those which were known in the Tamil country under the names of Moodelly, Agambady, Nattaman, Totiyar, Udaian, Valegen, Upiliyen, Pallen, and several others. 47

It would be remarked, however, that those Sudra castes which were occupied exclusively in employments indispensable to all civilized societies were to be found everywhere under names varying with the languages of different localities. Of such he might cite, inter alia, the gardeners, the shepherds, the weavers, the Panchalas (the five

46 Ibid, p.15.
castes of artisans, comprising the carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, foundry workers and, in general, all trades in metal working), the manufacturers and venders of oil, the fishermen, the potters, the washer men, the barbers, and some others. All these form part of the great main caste of Sudras; but the different castes of cultivators hold the first rank and disdainfully regard as their inferiors all those belonging to the professions just mentioned, refusing to eat with those who practise them.48

In some districts there were castes which were not to be met with elsewhere, and which might be distinguished by peculiarities of their own. He was not aware, for example, that the very remarkable caste of Nairs, whose women enjoy the privilege of substituting husband, was to be found in Travancore,49 Cochin and Malabar (West Coast). Their marriage was also nomenclature as “Sambandam” (establishing relations without entitlement to the woman’s property), on account of ‘matrilineal system of inheritance. Again, was another distinct top Brahmin caste called “Nambudiri”, which observed one peculiar custom. The girls of this caste were usually married before the age of puberty to ensure delivery of guaranteed virginity; but if a girl who had arrived at an age when the signs of puberty were apparent happens to die before having had intercourse with a man, caste custom rigorously demands that the inanimate corpse of the deceased shall be subjected to a monstrous connexion. For that purpose the girl’s parents were obliged to procure by a present of money some wretched fellow willing to

48 Ibid.,p.16.

49 It would be more correct to say West Coast. Moreover, although Nair women were commonly described as polyandrous, they were not really so, for though they enjoy the privilege of changing their husbands, they did not entertain more than one husband at a time.
consummate such a disgusting form of marriage, for were the marriage not consummated the family would consider itself dishonored and cursed.50

The caste of Kullars, or robbers, who exercise their calling as a hereditary right, was found only in the Marava country, which borders on the coast, or fishing, districts. The rulers of the country are of the same caste. They regard a robber’s, occupation as discreditable neither to themselves nor to their fellow castemen, for the simple reason that they consider robbery a duty and a right sanctioned by descent. They are not ashamed of their caste or occupation, and if one were to ask of a Kullar to what people he belonged he would coolly answer, ‘I am a robber!’ This caste is looked upon in the district of Madurai, where, it was widely diffused, as one of the most distinguished among the Sudras.

There exists in the same part of the country another caste, known as the Tatiyars, in which brothers, uncles, nephews, and other near relations were all entitled to possess their wives in common.51 Obviously, this arrangement is handed down by customs with the object of saving expresses on large family life and adjusting within the compass of small accommodation.

In Eastern Mysore there was a caste called Morsa-Okkala-Makkalu, in which, when the mother of a family gives her eldest daughter in marriage, she was obliged to submit to the amputation of two joints of the middle finger and of the ring finger of the

50 Ibid, p,16.
51 IBID,P,16.
right hand. And if the bride's mother be dead, the bridegroom's mother, or in default of
her, the mother of the nearest relative, must submit to this cruel mutilation.

Many other castes exist in various districts which were distinguished by such
dubious practices as above mentioned.

Generally speaking, there were few castes which were not distinguished by
some special custom quite apart from the peculiar religious usages and ceremonies
which the community might prescribe to guarantee or sanction civil contracts. In the cut
and colour of their clothes and in the style of wearing them, in the peculiar shape of
their jewels and in the manner in which they are displayed on various parts of the
person, the various castes have many rules, each possessing its own significance. Some
observe rites of their own in their funeral and marriage ceremonies: others possess
ornaments which they alone may use, or flags of certain colours, for various
ceremonies, which no other caste may carry. Yet, absurd as some of these practices
may appear, they arouse neither contempt nor dislike in members of other castes which
do not admit them. The most perfect toleration is the rule in such matters. On the whole
as long as a caste conforms to the recognized rules of decorum it is permitted to follow
its own bent in its domestic affairs without interruption, and no other castes ever think
of blaming or even criticizing it, although its practices may be in direct opposition to
their own.

There were, nevertheless, some customs which, although scrupulously observed
in the countries (provinces/regions) where they exist, were so strongly opposed to the

52 This custom was no longer observed; instead of the two fingers being amputated, they were now
merely bound together and thus rendered unfit for use.

53 Ibid., p. 18.
rules of decency and decorum generally lay down that they were spoken of with
disapprobation and sometimes with horror by the rest of the community. The following
might be mentioned among practices of that nature.

In the interior of Mysore, women were obliged to accompany the male inmates
of the house whenever the latter retire for the calls of nature, and to cleanse them with
water afterwards. This practice, which was usually viewed with disgust in other parts of
the country, was here regarded as a sign of good breeding and is most carefully
observed. 54

The use of intoxicating liquors, which was condemned by respectable people
throughout almost the whole of India, was, nevertheless, permitted amongst the people
who dwell in the jungles and hill tracts of the West Coast. There the leading castes of
Sudras, not excepting even the women and children, openly drink arrack, the brandy of
the country, and toddy, the fermented juice of the palm. Each inhabitant in those parts
had his toddy-dealer, who regularly brings him a daily supply and takes in return an
equivalent in grain at harvest time. 55

The Brahmin inhabitant of those parts were forbidden from similar indulgence
by invoking a provision for banishment from caste. But they supply the defect by
opium, the use of which, although universally interdicted elsewhere, yet considered
much less objectionable than the use of intoxicating liquors. 56

The people of these damp and unhealthy districts had, no doubt, learnt by
experience that a moderate use of spirits or opium is necessary for the preservation of

54 Ibid, p. 18.
health, and that it protected them, partially at any rate, against the ill effects of the malarial miasma amidst which they were obliged to live. Nothing indeed but absolute necessity could have induced them to contravene in this way one of the most venerable precepts of Hindu civilization. 57

The various classes of Sudras who dwelled in the hills of the Carnatic observe amongst their domestic regulations a practice as peculiar as it is disgusting. Both men and women pass their lives in a state of uncanniness and never wash their clothes. When once they have put on cloths fresh from the looms of the weavers they did not leave them off until the material actually drops from rottenness. One can imagine the filthy condition of these clothes after they have been worn day and night for several months soaked with perspiration and soiled with dirt, especially in the case of the women, who continually use them for wiping their hands, and who never change their garments until wear and tear have rendered them absolutely useless. 58

Yet this revolting habit was most religiously observed and, if anybody were so rash as to wash but once in water the clothes with which he or she is covered, exclusion from caste would be the inevitable consequence. This custom, however, may be due to the scarcity of water, for in this part of the country there are only a few stagnant ponds, which would very soon be contaminated if all the inhabitants of a village were allowed to wash their garments in them.

Many religious customs were followed only by certain sects, and were of purely local in character. For instance, it was only in the districts of Western Mysore that he

had observed Monday in each week kept nearly in the same way as Sunday is among Christians. On that day the villagers abstain from ordinary labour, and particularly from such acts as ploughing – requiring the use of oxen and kine. Monday was consecrated to Basava (the Buli), and was set apart for the special worship of that deity. Hence it was a day of rest for their cattle rather than for themselves.

This practice, however, was not in vogue except in the districts where the Lingayats, or followers of Siva, predominate. This sect paid more particular homage to the Bull than the rest of the Hindus; and, in the districts where it predominates, not only keeps up the strict observance of the day thus consecrated to the divinity, but also forces other castes to follow suit.\textsuperscript{59}

Independently of the divisions and subdivisions common to all castes, one may further observe in each caste close family alliances cemented by intermarriage. Hindus of good family avoid as far as possible intermarriage with families outside their own circle. They always aim at marrying off their children into the families which are already allied to them, and the nearer the relationship the more easily are marriages contracted. A widower was remarried to his deceased wife’s sister, an uncle marries his niece, and a first cousin his first cousin. Persons so related possess an exclusive privilege of intermarrying, upon the ground of such relationship; and, if they choose, they can prevent any other union and enforce their own preferential right, however old, unsuited, infirm, and poor they may be\textsuperscript{60}. This is a sort of right of pre-emption provided by the customs against the remainder of the society.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 20.

\textsuperscript{60} This custom was gradually giving way amongst the higher castes.
In this connexion, however, several strange and ridiculous distinctions are made. An uncle may marry the daughter of his sister, but in no case may he marry the daughter of his brother. A brother's children may marry a sister's children, but the children of two brothers or of two sisters might not intermarry. Among descendants from the same stock the male line always has the right of contracting marriage with the female line; but the children of the same line might never intermarry. 61

The reason given for this custom was that children of the male line, as also those of the female line, continue from generation to generation to call themselves brothers and sisters for as long a time as it was publicly recognized that they spring from the same stock. A man would be marrying his sister, it would be said, if the children of either the male or the female line intermarried amongst themselves; whereas the children of the male line do not call the children of the female line brothers and sisters, and vice versa, but call each other by special names expressive of the relationship. Thus a man can, and even must, marry the daughter of his sister, but never the daughter of his brother. A male first cousin marries a female first cousin, the daughter of his maternal aunt; but in no case may he marry the daughter of his paternal uncle. 62

This rule was universally and invariably observed by all castes, from the Brahmin to the Pariah. It was obligatory on the male line to unite it with the female line. Agreeably to this, a custom has arisen which so far as he knew was peculiar to the Brahmins. They were all supposed to know the gotram or stock from which they

spring: that was to say, they know who was the ancient Muni or devotee from whom they descend, and they always take care, in order to avoid intermarriage with a female descendant of this remote priestly ancestor to marry into a gotra other than their own.63

Hindus who cannot contract a suitable marriage amongst their own relations were, nonetheless, bound to marry in their own caste, and even in that subdivision of it to which they belong. In no case were they permitted to contract marriages with strangers. Furthermore, persons belonging to a caste in one part of the country cannot contract marriages with persons of the same caste in another part, even though they may be precisely the same castes under different names. Thus the Tamil Yedeyers and the Canarese Uppareru would never consent to take wives from the Telugu Gollavaru and the Tamil Pillay, although the first two are, except for their names, identical with the second two.64

The most distinguished of the four main castes into which the Hindus were originally separated by their first legislators was, as we had before remarked, that of the Brahmans. After them come the Kshatriyas, or Rajahs. Superiority in rank is at present warmly contested between the Vaisyas, or merchants, and the Sudras, or cultivators. The former appear to have almost entirely lost their superiority except in the Hindu books, where they are invariably placed before the Sudras. In ordinary life the latter hold themselves to be superior to the Vaisyas, and consider themselves privileged to mark their superiority in many respects by treating them with contumely.

63 Ibid,21-22.
64 Ibid,22.
With regard to the Vaisya caste an almost incredible but, nevertheless, well-attested peculiarity is everywhere observable. There was not a pretty woman to be found in the caste. He had never had much to do with the women of the Vaisya caste; He cannot, therefore, without injustice venture to add my testimony to that of others on the subject; but he confesses that the few Vaisya women he has seen, from time to time, were not such as to afford me an ocular refutation of the popular prejudice. However, Vaisya women were generally wealthy, and they manage to make up for their lack of beauty by their elegant attire. 65

Even the Brahmins did not hold the highest social rank undisputed. The Panchalas, or five classes of artisans already mentioned, refuse, in some districts, to acknowledge Brahmin predominance, although these five classes themselves were considered to be of very low rank amongst the Sudras and were everywhere held in contempt. 66

As to the particular subdivisions of each caste it was difficult to decide the order of hierarchy observed amongst them. Sub-castes which were despised in one district were often greatly esteemed in another, considering the way in which they conduct themselves with greater propriety or follow more important callings. Thus the caste to which the ruler of a country belongs, however low, it may be considered elsewhere, ranks amongst the highest in the ruler’s own dominions, and every member of it derives some reflection of dignity from its chief.

65 Ibid, p, 22.
66 Ibid, p, 23.
After all, public opinion was the surest guide of caste superiority amongst the Sudras, and very slight acquaintance with the customs of a province and with the private life of its inhabitants will suffice for fixing the position which each caste has acquired by common consent.

In general, it will be found that those castes are most honored who are particular in keeping themselves pure by constant bathing and by abstaining from animal food – who are exact in the observance of marriage regulations, who keep their women shut up and punish them severely when they (the women) err, and who resolutely maintain the customs and exercise privileges of their order. 67

Of all the Hindus, uppermost the Brahmins strived for keeping up appearances of outward and inward purity by frequent ablutions and severe abstinence not only from meat and everything that has contained the principle of life, but also from several natural products of the earth which prejudice and superstition teach them to be impure and defiling if consumed. It was chiefly to the scrupulous observance of such customs that the Brahmins owe the predominance of their illustrious order, and the reverence and respect with which they were everywhere treated. 68

Amongst the different classes of Sudras, those who permitted widow remarriage were considered the most abject, and, except the Pariahs, he knew very few castes in which such marriages were allowed to take place openly and with the sanction of the fellow caste members. 69

67 Ibid, p.23.
69 Remarriage of virgin widows was one of the foremost planks in the platform of Social Reform, but that was opposed violently by the orthodox as author mentioned in footnote.
The division into castes was the paramount distinction amongst the Hindus; but there was still another division, that of sects. The two best known were those of Siva and Vishnu, which were again divided into a large number of others.

There were several castes, too, which might be distinguished by certain marks painted on the forehead or other parts of the body.

The first of the four main castes, that was to say the Brahmins, were distinguished by a thin cord (sacred thread) hung across from the left shoulder to the right hip. But this cord was also worn by the pauchalas, or five castes of artisans, e.g. goldsmiths, for the simple reason that the carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths etc. have been permitted to enter the sanctum sanctorum of the temple during the construction work (In the absence of the sacred thread if the craftsman works inside the temple, it is considered in auspicious and unhappy augury.70

The caste system consists of a number of groups, recruited by birth; membership in the group determines many behaviors, expectations, obligation, and evaluations of individuals and determines their access to the valued statuses and activities in society. Status in the system is ascriptive and, for the individual, unchanging as far as group-determined activities are concerned. There is a hierarchy in the system, leading to the ranking of groups. Marriage is within the group. Sometimes particular roles, either negatively or positively valued, are the exclusive privilege of group members-priestly roles, certain craft activities, and service functions.71

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Caste membership is by birth. Caste status is ascriptive and unchanging for the individual. Castes are endogamous; they are ranked within a local system. Underlying the caste are valued associated with ideas of purity and pollution. In recent years there has been considerable argument about the use of the word “caste” as a term applied generally to relatively closed stratification systems found outside Indian civilization.

Sociologists and others have long used the word “caste”, which is not the indigenous word applied to the system in India but a word first used by the Portuguese to mean “breed or type” and applied by them to the closed groups found in India. Conceptually, caste is used to describe any relatively closed stratification system in which recruitment to its constituent parts is by birth and in which there is little movement from one closed group to another, either through intermarriage or through individual mobility. Caste in these terms is at one end of a continuum, and a class-based society is at the other. Clearly, caste can be used in this sense for the comparative study of stratification systems, either in rigorous or common-sense terms, and eventually such usage may help to illuminate stratification systems generally. But thus far, it is still hard to see whether the discussion has added much to an understanding of the caste system in India. In this essay, the word “caste”, unless otherwise specified, refers to the particular aspects of the system in India.72

From the vantage point of a village and one family in that village, rather than from an overall view of the caste system of India in descriptive or analytical terms, caste can be seen initially as an extension of the kinship system. Members of the first-level unit in the system comprise what is termed the biradari, or the band of brothers”.

There is real or fictive extension of kinshi, to all members of the biradari. Within it, members are treated as relatives within age categories; that is, all members of the same generation are regarded as brothers, older generations as fathers or mothers. The biradari is exogamous, much as the family is exogamous in northern India. for middle- and lower-rank castes, the biradari is usually a corporate group.

Members meet frequently on an informal or formal basis. All members of the biradari are represented at life-cycle rites. The heads of the various households making up the biradari are represented at discussions or meetings (panchayats) called to adjudicate disputes or to regulate behaviors of members.

The span or ground coverage of a biradari is a function of demography. If many members of a particular biradari live in one or two villages, the boundary of the biradari is of narrow span. This is true in northern India for the untouchable laboring castes, such as Chamars, and some of the middle-rank agricultural castes, such as Koeris or Ahirs. Usually, few members of the artisan and serving castes, such as potters, blacksmiths, and washermen, are found in a particular village. The span of the biradari in this situation stretches over dozens of villages.

It is generally true that upper castes, both priestly and landed, tend not be well organized into biradaris. In the more distant past, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there is evidence that the upper castes were well organized at the biradari level in terms of internal management, particularly where landholding lineages were concerned. But for Rajputs, Jats, and Khandaits, the organization emphasized the lineage and clan structure of the group rather than the caste structure.
The biradari level of an individual is the only clearly bounded unit in the system. The next level can usually be analytically differentiated as the jati level – the group into which members of a biradari marry. Sometimes, however, clear geographic features, such as rivers or hills, define the boundary of the jati for individuals in the biradari. The tie between the biradari and the jati levels in the system is through marriage or through one’s mother’s family. In the north, effective cognizance of the jati boundary varies from family to family within a biradari.

For most castes, representatives from the constituent biradaris of the jati rarely have occasion to meet for any social or ritual purpose. The jati, in a structural sense, is a system of actual or potential networks of affinal and cognatic kinship ties. Often the jati has cultural characteristics that its members believe themselves to be different from others of the jat but not of their jati. Effective social control at the jati level is exercised through biradaris in the jati. The jati is frequently called the subcaste in older literature concerning the caste system. 73

The discussion has centered on caste as a component of the system and not on how castes interact or are tied in with one another to form a system. To see the caste system in operation, it is easiest to look at a large, multicaste village with a resident dominant caste. Not all India one finds such villages along with smaller villages with one or two castes, with tribal villages, towns, and cities. The model of the caste system that anthropologists have recently developed is based on the multicaste village.

Within a village, there is considerable face-to-face interaction as well as knowledge about residents in the local area. Since a person’s jati is known, the first

question that arises in relation to a caste-system in other settings (How do you know who belongs to what caste?) does not arise here. Caste behavior is situational. Rules about ranking, occupation, subordination, and ritual relations come up, not abstractly, as a set of rules, but in situations. One's caste and its relation to other castes are always situational. Age, education, economic position, political connections, personality, and friendship also intervene and are taken into account. Nonetheless, it is possible to extract a description of how caste operates in the village context.

The hierarchy or ranking of jatis within a village and its local area is the most obvious characteristic of a local caste system. In a particular local system, the top and the bottom of the caste hierarchy are usually well known by all participants in the local system if Brahmans are part of the system. If Brahmans are the dominant landholding group, they are clearly the top caste in the system, because they have both the attributes of high ritual caste status, and economic and political power. In situations in which Brahmans are few and not significant holders of land, some anomalies arise. Brahmans are granted deference in ritual situations, but in the interactional context, their status is not so high as the dominant landholding caste. The highest caste in a summation of statuses for most areas other castes: Rajput, Gujar, Jat Maratha, Okkaliga, Rddi Komti, Khandait, or even Muslim. Other castes tend to be ranked in relation to the dominant caste. 74

The relative positions of castes within the local ranking system can be seen symbolically acted out on ritual occasions when people attend feasts. The usual occasion for a feast is at the time of a life-cycle ceremony, that is birth, marriage, death,

74 Ibid., p.131.
or sometimes when a special ceremony has been performed in a household. Except on formal ritual occasions, there is little interdining among households or among members among friends and neighbors. When different families and different castes eat together, it is a ritual occasion. Where one sits on such occasions, who cooks the food, when one is fed, with what, and by whom symbolize the local caste ranking. The rules for dining and cooking are simple in principle. High status is symbolized by being able to take the rarest kinds of food from the fewest people. It is much better to give and have one's food taken than it is to receive. A Brahman theoretically can take only uncooked food from anyone of lower status than himself; hence, at a feast, a Brahman should cook his own food.

At a feast, people sit on mats in rows. The Brahman is by himself on his own mat, often cooking his own food. Other castes are graded down from the Brahman, with the untouchables hanging on the fringe, waiting for the leavings from the plates of the higher castes. The landed dominant caste is at the center of a whole series of exchanges that can be seen as acting out relations. The dominant caste exchanges the right to use land for the labor and money of other castes. Not only do they exchange the use of land for money and labor, but they also gain followers in local political tussles as part of the exchange. In many areas of India, one establishes a tie to the person who "owns" the land on which one's house is built. In northern India this is called the Thakur-Praia tie (lord and follower). With those providing crafts, products, and services, the dominant caste person exchanges a share of the crop grown on his land or rights over land use for goods and services through an exchange system called the iaimani system. The iaimani
system is not merely a means of distributing goods and services in exchange for grain and land, but has a ritual component as well.\textsuperscript{75}

Families within particular \textit{iatis} provide services and goods to other families. In turn, they receive a fixed amount of grain and some goods. The services rendered are the carrying out of rituals by priests, water carrying, scavenging, carrying off refuse and dead animals, barbering, and washing clothes. The goods usually provided are plows and other implements as well as their maintenance and repair by carpenters or blacksmiths, provision of pottery vessels by the potter, and leaf plates by the leaf-plate maker. The kind and amount of goods and services rendered vary from place to place and from caste to caste. For example, a landholding dominant caste may have ten or twelve different families of other castes providing it with goods and services in the \textit{iaiman} system, but a lower caste may have only two or three.\textsuperscript{76}

The exchange, though, is not just economic; there is always a ritual component to a relationship that is permanent and hereditary for both parties. Again the ties I the \textit{iaiman} system binding families of different castes together can be seen at life-cycle rites, such as weddings, where much of the paraphernalia used must be made by one's \textit{kamin} or \textit{par-iuniya} (the worker or giver of services). The carpenter provides the stand on which the bride-to-be washes herself and the birds that are part of the decoration of the shelter under which the wedding ceremony takes place. The barber must be present to provide certain services. The wife of the family Chamar leads the new bride on a tour of the sacred places of the village. In different villages and different

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p.132.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p.133.
regions, the services performed or the goods provided may vary, but the presence of the provider of the goods and services is necessary for the ceremony or ritual to be carried out.

There has been much argument about the question of how exploitative the iaimani system is, in that services and goods are rendered at a fixed or customarily fixed price, and payment made by landed elite groups is less than that made by other groups. Another set of questions are taking place within the customary exchange system as more and more goods are transferred on the open market. The issues are related, since if members of the dominant caste can maintain its hold over the pariuniyas or kamins and keep prices down to their customary level, they clearly stand to benefit at a time when prices of goods and services are rising. As with many questions about change and the rate of change in India, we must note that the empirical evidence is far from clear, given the lack of specific historical comparisons for particular villages. Logically and empirically, it is clear that the number of transactions and the number of specialists involved in the *iaimani* system, in its narrowest sense, are declining because of technological change. For example, the introduction of the safety razor and its widespread use in the villages has reduced the number of times one is shaved by his barber. Conversely, the rise of "barber shops" in towns, on roadsides, and in bazaars has opened up a lucrative occupation for the barber. During the last fifty years, the potter has felt the increasing competition of cheap metal, china, the potter has felt the increasing competition of cheap metal, china, and glass utensils and plates, and so today, except for large storage devices and pottery for ritual occasions, there is little demand for this services. The installation of hand pumps within houses has cut down
on the need for water carriers and servants. Many of the traditional artisans would like to be free of the hereditary contractual tie, because they could market their skills and products more lucratively in the open market. A more serious blow to the hereditary exchange system has been dealt by zamindari abolition. It is often overlooked that part of the payment in the system was a grant of land to the artisan or serving family, along with the regular payment of grain at the time of harvest. Most of the artisans and servants granted land under this system, at least in Uttar Pradesh, were classified as permanent or hereditary tenants; at zamindari abolition, they became in effect owners of their own land. Hence, many tie to their iaimans was broken. In those cases where the servant or artisan was a tenant-at-will, he tended to lose his land if the landlord had the land recorded in his own name. Hence, the dispossessed tenant felt that his obligation was ended. As discussed below, broad scale economic and political changes have affected the village in the last two generations and, in a real sense, have tended to loosen the hold that the dominant caste traditionally had over other castes. Mutual interdependence and the division of labor involved in local caste systems have tended to be eroded, although with a concomitant strengthening of internal ties within the iatis. 

Left and Right Hand Caste: A Brief History

The South Indian society was explicitly divided into Right Hand castes and the Left Hand castes. It was in prevalence for almost nine centuries, roughly from 1000 to

77 Ibid., pp.133-34.
AD. 78 The Right Hand caste (Idangai) had some difference. The right hand castes claimed the prerogatives of riding on horseback in processions, of appearing with standards bearing certain devices, and of erecting pillars to sustain their marriage booths, while Left hand castes were not allowed more than eleven pillars.79 The Right hand castes understood that they had the exclusive privilege of using twelve pillars in the pandal or shed, under which marriage ceremonies were performed; they had right to ride on horseback and to carry a flag painted with the figure of Hanumanta. The Right Hand groups thought that their adversaries (Left Hand groups) had no right to ride on horseback, or to carry a painted flag. The Left Hand castes, on the other hand, claimed that all these privileges were confirmed to them by the grant of Kali on copper plate. Therefore, they were the highest rank group in south India. Because of this claim from both sides, frequent disputes took place among them especially in Madras.80 Although these groups excluded Brahmin or some included Brahmin,81 the Brahmin generally were not assigned a place among both the caste groups. Nonetheless, Brahmins were very active and very much a part of the caste system in South Indian.82

Abbe J.A. dubois has also documented about the Left and right hand castes factions in south India. He pointed out that there was another division more general than any he had referred to yet, namely, that into Right-hand and Left-hand factions.

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82 Foster, William, English Factories in India, 1651-1654, p.237. (Hereafter refer to as EFI).
This appeared to be but a modern invention, since it was not corroborated by any statement in any of the ancient books of the country; and he had been assured that it was unknown in Northern India. Be that as it may, he did not believe that any idea of this baneful institution, as it existed at the present day, ever entered the heads of those wise lawgivers who considered they had found in caste distinctions the best guarantee for the observance of the laws which they prescribed for the people. 83

This division into Right-hand and Left-hand factions, whoever invented it, has turned out to be the most dreadful disturber of the public peace. It has proved a perpetual source of riots, and the cause of endless animosity amongst the natives.84

Most castes belonged either to the Left-hand or Right-hand faction. The former comprises the Vaisyas or trading classes, the Panchalas or artisan classes and some of the low Sudra castes. It also contains the lowest caste, namely, the Chucklers or leather-workers, who were looked upon as its chief support.85

Most of the higher castes of Sudras belong to the Right-hand faction. The Pariahs were its chief support, as a proof of which they glorify in the title Valangai-Mougattar, or friends of the Right-hand. In the disputes and conflicts which so often take place between the two factions, invariably, it is the ‘Pariahs’ who make the most disturbances and cause the most expensive damage.86

85 Ibid, p.25.
86 Ibid, p.25.
The Brahmins, Rajahs, and several classes of Sudras were content to remain neutral, and take no part in these quarrels. They are often chosen as arbiters in the differences which the two factions have to settle between themselves.

The bone of contention between the two factions arises from certain exclusive privileges to which both lay claim. But as these alleged privileges are nowhere clearly defined and recognized, they result in confusion and uncertainty, and are difficult of easy settlements. In these circumstances, what one can do is to endeavour to compromise matters as far as possible.

When one faction trespasses on the so-called rights of the other, tumults arise which spread gradually over large tracts of territory, afford opportunity for excesses of all kinds, and generally end in bloody conflicts? The Hindu ordinarily so gentle, disciplined and self-controlled in all other circumstances of life, seems to change his nature completely on occasions like these. There was no danger that he will not brave in maintaining what he calls his rights, and rather than sacrifice a title of them he will expose himself without fear to the risk of losing his life.\(^7\)

He had several times witnessed instances of these popular insurrections excited by the mutual pretensions of the two factions and pushed to such an extreme level of fury that the presence of a military force had been insufficient to quell them, to allay the clamor, or to control the excesses in which the contending factions consider themselves entitled to indulge.\(^8\)

\(^7\) Ibid, p,25.

\(^8\) Ibid, p26.
Occasionally, when the district magistrates fail to effect reconciliation by peaceful means, it was necessary to resort to force in order to suppress the disturbances. He has sometimes seen these rioters stand up against several discharges of artillery without exhibiting any sign of submission. And when at last the armed force has succeeded in restoring law and order it is only for a short space of time. At the very first opportunity the rioters are at work again, regardless of the punishment they have received, and quite ready to renew the conflict as obstinately as before. Such are the excesses to which the mild and peaceful, Hindu abandons himself when his courage is aroused by religious and political fanaticism.

The rights and privileges for which the Hindus are ready to fight such sanguinary battles appear highly ridiculous, especially to a European. Perhaps the sole cause of the contest is the right to wear slippers or to ride through the streets in a palanquin or on horseback during marriage festivals. Sometimes it is the privilege of being escorted on certain occasions by armed retainers, sometimes that of having a trumpet sounded in front of a procession, or of being accompanied by native musicians at public ceremonies. Perhaps, it is simply the particular kind of musical instrument suitable to such occasions that is in dispute; or perhaps it may be the right of carrying flags of certain colours or certain devices during these ceremonies. Such, at any rate, are a few of the privileges for which Hindus are ready to cut each other's throats.

Frequently it so happens that one faction makes an attack on the rights, real or pretended, of the other. Thereupon the trouble begins, and soon becomes general if it was not appeased at the very outset by prudent and vigorous measures on the part of the magistracy.
He could cite very many examples bearing on this fatal distinction between Right-hand and Left-hand; but what he had already said was enough to show the spirit which animates the Hindus in this matter. He once witnessed a dispute of this nature between the Pariahs and Chucklers, or leather-workers. There seemed reason to fear such disastrous consequences throughout the whole district in question, that many of the more peaceful inhabitants began to desert their villages and to carry away their goods and chattels to a place of safety, just as is done when the country is threatened by the near approach of a Mahratta army. However, matters did not reach this extremity. The principal inhabitant of the district opportunely offered to arbitrate in the matter, and they succeeded by diplomacy and conciliation in smoothing away the difficulties and in appeasing the two factions, who were only awaiting the signal to attack each other.

One would not easily guess the cause of this formidable commotion. It simply arose from the fact that a Chuckler had dared to appear at a public ceremony with red flowers stuck in his headgear, a privilege which the Pariahs alleged to belong exclusively to the Right-hand faction.\footnote{These faction fights have gradually disappeared under the civilizing influences of education and good government; and if they ever occur at all, are confined to the lowest castes and never spread beyond the limits of a village. The distinctions between the two factions, however still exist.}

At Madras, the Brahmins and Rajpoots were very much a part of the caste system as the foregoing European accounts would tell.\footnote{Census Report of the Town of Madras, 1871, p.10.} They also played very significant role in the city. They were employed in the temples as priests and have the opportunity to ‘commit the crime of pilfering the property of the deity especially
ornaments’. But, of course, the Kshatriyas had a very limited role in Tamil Nadu.\(^{(91)}\) Inter-marriage and inter-dinning was prohibited among them.\(^{(92)}\) Palalkeel Banian caste also followed taboos in eating and they were usually occupied in carrying their pots for preparing food and in cooking their meals, which consisted chiefly of rice.\(^{(93)}\) Each and every caste did not permit to inter-marry and inter-dine in South India.

**Understanding Caste Divisions**

During the 17\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\) century the caste system had gained much currency and popularity in South India as it was practised very rigidly although in a different fashion that was in the Northern India. Even now, members of different castes cannot marry each other, except within their specific caste group. Usually they have caste based occupations or hereditary occupations.\(^{(94)}\) Dumont noticed that “the caste, unified from the outside, is divided within (capable of developing internal crack). More generally a particular caste is a complex group, a successive inclusion of groups of diverse order of levels, in which different functions (profession, endogamy, etc.) are attached to different levels”.\(^{(95)}\)

While discovering the role of caste in the 17th and 18th century it is pertinent to bear in mind the concept as put forward in recent writings by eminent authorities. Dr. Ambedkar has pointed out that “caste divides labourers; caste dissociates work from


\(^{(92)}\) Ibid., p.157.


\(^{(94)}\) Habib, *Caste and Money in Indian History*, p.5.

\(^{(95)}\) Dumont, Louis, *Homo Heirarchicus, the Caste and its implications*, 1970, OUP, p.34.
interests; caste disconnects intelligence from manual labour; caste devitalizes by denying to him the right to cultivate vital interest and caste prevents mobilization”. Caste system is not merely division of labour; it is also a division of labourers”. The 1911 Census gives definition of caste which reads “no member of the caste may intermarry or eat or even share hukka with persons of other caste... the most obvious links are the possession of the same designation and traditional occupation although occupations are often hereditary, they are not always so”. Burton Stein states “caste principles pretend to kinships marriage and occupation....Hierarchy and inequality, a form of segregation and ranking”. 

Similarly, Dharma Kumar has written that “caste stands in an unchanging relationship to each other; where caste determines its main social and economic roles; where all the rules are interdependent and architectonic whole; where for example, the land provides a livelihood for those playing different parts, the rights and duties of its being strictly defined and none having absolute rights of ownership and possession”. Nicholas B. Driks says that “when thinking of India it is hard not to think of caste.... Caste is, in fact, neither enchanted survival of ancient India nor a single system that reflects a core cultural value but it is a modern phenomenon”. S. Jaiswal points out that past ideology poses many questions in front of the authorities. Now caste ideology is changing from its jajmani type services, endogamy process also changing under the

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97 Census of India, 1911.
98 Stein, Burton, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, OUP, Delhi, 1994, pp.9-11.
99 Kumar, Dharma, Land and Caste in South India, Manohar, 1992, p.32.
100 Dirks, B.Nicholas, Castes of Mind, Princeton University Press, 2001, p.3.
influence of market and further it will modify more.\textsuperscript{101} However, such ideas cannot be accepted as such. J.Aloysius points out that Caste is very complex, discursive and value loaded subject.\textsuperscript{102}

Prem Chaudhary found a different system in caste structure and pointed out that difference and hierarchy are the two most widely acknowledged and characteristic features of the caste system.’ To maintain these characteristics, the principle of strict caste endogamy has to be maintained. Intercaste marriages lead to a blurring of the differences between different caste groups and disturb the recognised caste hierarchies. Anyone venturing to transgress this law is treated as out-caste or expelled from the membership of the caste group. On the other hand, attempts at strict enforcement of a ban on marriages between certain gotra (lineage) within the same caste group can be seen as attempts at enforcing a hierarchical and ranked order. Effectively, this suggests a reproduction of the caste system within a caste group, the only difference being that ’ritual hierarchy’ criteria (for instance, the ban on inter-dining) are not entailed. In such cases, the hierarchical differences between gotra are manifested as status rivalry, leading to social boycott and often to the expulsion of the transgressor, their families and even an entire group from the caste. All this is done under the traditional ideology of bhaichara (brotherhood) that dilutes competitiveness and contest within a caste group in order to maintain its “izzatt” (honour) and “ekta” (unity and solidarity). The collective strength of the caste panchayat (council) is used to socially control deviant caste members so that the cohesiveness of the caste group is maintained. Paradoxically,


this blatant legitimisation of inequality within a caste group leads both to its further split and fragmentation, as well as to its solidarity in different social contexts and relationships.\textsuperscript{103}

Hiroshi Fukazawa reported that all over India there were about 3000 intergamous groups to whom we might call caste. He says that “caste membership is fixed by hereditary; each caste is restricted to take certain hereditary occupation the inter-dining and other social contacts between castes are more or less restricted by peculiar ideas of purity and pollution and that there is a hierarchy between the castes in a region with the Brahmin at the top and the untouchables at the bottom”.\textsuperscript{104} Ronald Inden has analyzed that ‘Indian civilization was dominated by caste’. Caste affects every area of life. It could be associated with race, occupation, religion, status, land control and psychic security with birth and death, marriage and education. Simultaneously, thought and action are separated from each other. Further, he says that “the Indian people are not the maker of their own history, but a hidden, substantialized agent, caste, is the maker of it”.\textsuperscript{105} V.S Naipaul articulated the same view as the “old India has special cruelties; not all the people are people”.\textsuperscript{106}

Patrick A. Roche analyzed caste in three different ways. First, caste can be understood in a traditional sense; i.e. as an endogamous and hereditary sub-division of ethnic groups occupying a position superior or inferior rank or social esteem in

\textsuperscript{103} Prem Chaudhary, Caste panchayats and the policing of marriage in Haryana: Enforcing kinship and territorial exogamy, Contributions to Indian Sociology 2004; 38; 1.

\textsuperscript{104} Fukazawa, Hiroshi, \textit{The Medieval Deccan, Peasants, Social System and States, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries}, OUP, 1991, p.91.


comparison with such other division. Secondly, caste refers to a categorization peculiar to the Dravidian speaking parts of Southern India except Malabar, namely the growing of caste into two divisions of the Right hand and the Left hand castes. Finally, he refers to the phenomenon of a ‘colour caste’ which was the “white” Europeans and the rest of the local population.\textsuperscript{107} For Susan Bayly, caste has been for many centuries real and active in Indian life. It had been most commonly understood that caste society is a grading and ranking society. It is divided into four varnas, viz; Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. It had order and hierarchy.\textsuperscript{108} Dipankar Gupta defines caste as “a form of differentiation wherein the constituent units of system justify endogamy on the basis of putative biological differences which are semaphored by the ritualization of multiple social practices”.\textsuperscript{109} For him caste system is a discrete category. S. Arasaratnam posits that caste was a system of status which could not be de-linked from the question of power.\textsuperscript{110}

S.C. Dube examines the features of caste system and points out that:\textsuperscript{111}

1. Jatis are endogamous units;
2. They are hierarchically graded;
3. They have a Jati-linked occupation;

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} Dube, S.C., \textit{Indian Society}, NBT, India, 1990, p.54.
\end{itemize}
4. The purity and pollution ideas determined the interaction between different units;

5. Members of Jati generally share a common culture, living condition, life, partner of thought and behaviour. They even share their belief, values, rules of conditions, economic and organization;

6. These values are transmitted from one generation to the next by learning and not by biological inheritance; and

7. In several parts of India, castes have their own mechanism of social control and conflict resolution.

V.N. Misra and Malti Nagar also supported the above views. They point out that “castes are part of complex social system which is primarily, though not entirely, based on occupation. Other distinctive features of the systems are occupational interdependent, hierarchy, endogamy, restriction on sharing of food and drink, concept of purity, pollution, rebirth and karma (social and economic position at present being a consequence of conducting in the previous life) and specific social and religious belief and customs. Each caste in the system has a well defined place in the hierarchical grading, and every member of every caste is aware of his social status within the wide framework of caste society.”

The above definitions of caste give the necessary features of caste system, which points out that caste is necessarily determined by birth and cannot be changed by any means. For instance, a Brahmin cannot be a Sudra, and a Sudra cannot be a Kshatriya. However, despite the avowed endogamous nature of the caste system, in

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reality there were several instances of intermarriage among different caste groups, which were generally through consent. In fact, all caste features of endogamy are not constant but rather dynamic in nature.

Caste, the Occupational Caste Groups and their Occupation

There is a definite relationship of caste with occupation. Ghurye noticed that “caste name are very often names of trade”.\textsuperscript{113} Usually, each and every caste has its traditional or hereditary occupation\textsuperscript{114} such as, for instance, the Brahmins, who made up the highest rank and monopolized the position of priests and teachers of Vedas. Likewise, the Kshatriyas were a warrior or military class, the Vaisyas were the cultivators, herders, and merchant class and the Sudras were the servant class,\textsuperscript{115} while the outcastes or untouchables were associated with some customary or hereditary duties.\textsuperscript{116} For instance, the Dhobi, meaning washermen washed clothes of others. This word is said to be derived from dhoha in Sanskrit in which dhav means to wash.\textsuperscript{117} Chakkans are oil pressers, Chakku means oil-mill. Those who follow this profession are called Chakkan.\textsuperscript{118} Pallicchan, a sub-division of Nayars, is a group whose

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ghurye, cited by Dumont in \textit{Homo Heirarchicus}, p.95.
\item Habib, Irfan, \textit{Caste and Money in Indian History}, p.5.
\item Ibid., p.23.
\item Ibid., p.1.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
hereditary occupation is to carry Palanquin.\textsuperscript{119} Paraiyans are drumbeaters. This word is said to be derived from a Tamil word ‘parai’, which means a drum.\textsuperscript{120}

There are several occupational caste groups involved in their hereditary occupation such as weavers, cotton carders, barbers, tailors, fishmongers, stoneworker, leather workers, scavengers, blacksmiths, carpenters, gardeners, potters, grass cutters etc.\textsuperscript{121} Nonetheless, sometime caste occupation changed significantly and, therefore, it was also hard to recognize the original caste.\textsuperscript{122} This view is also supported by V.N. Misra and Malti Nagar that caste occupation is not definite. They argued that one's actual occupation could be different from one's hereditary occupation.\textsuperscript{123} For Suvira Jaiswal, occupation is no doubt basic caste system but it is changing under the pressure of the market. Therefore, “caste ideology has gained strength both for political and economic reason, in spite of the fact that there are increasing differentiation of wealth and status of individuals within each caste. Inter-caste relations are now marked by cleavages and conflict replacing the traditional ethos of the community’s sense of togetherness in the countryside”.\textsuperscript{124}

S.C. Dube has argued that notion of noble occupation, clean and unclean, purity and pollution interact into intra and inter-caste behavior and interaction.\textsuperscript{125} This argument accepts the changing nature of a dynamic occupation, which gradually is

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., vol.vi., p.29.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., pp.77-78.
\textsuperscript{121} Census of 1881, List V, p.49.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., p.viii.
\textsuperscript{123} Devnathan, From Tribe to Caste, pp.136-137.
\textsuperscript{125} Dumont, The Caste and its Implication, OUP, 1999, p.93.
drifting away from tradition. Hocart argued that religion also played a determining role for one’s occupation through the intermediary part between caste and profession like barber and washerman. Dumont was not fully convinced with this view; however, supported that there are some religiously natural profession, which are followed by a number of different castes.\textsuperscript{126} Francis Buchanan had recorded the contending claims of the Left and Right Hand castes for a superior position in the society. He said that the Left Hand caste groups claimed that they had the sole rights to ride on horseback; right to carry a painted flag etc. The Left Hand Caste pretended that all these privileges were conferred upon them by the grant of Kali on copper plate. Thus, they were the highest group in the South India.\textsuperscript{127} Rig Vedas legitimized that the top three varnas were the regular members of Aryan society. They were called the dvijati or ‘twice born’ and were allowed to participate in the religious worship presided over by the Brahmans. Contrarily, the Sudras were segregated from the dvijati as ckajati.\textsuperscript{128} This means that their occupation is also legitimized and this becomes a religious law.

Edgar Thurston gives details of Kaikolan caste that were a weaver caste in Tamil Nadu. This Kaikolans were a warrior caste as assigned by Lord Shiva. It means that military services was their profession.\textsuperscript{129} Mattison Mines support that they were the warrior merchants because of their kingly traditions, which emphasized conquest and

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., p.93.


\textsuperscript{128} Kotani, \textit{Caste System}, p.3.

\textsuperscript{129} Thurston, \textit{Caste and Tribes}, vol.III, pp.31-33.
human sacrifice and priestly superiority. What he means is that there was a religious rite in order to become a warrior. According to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, "Religion is a social force; Religion stands for schemes of divine governance". But Hinduism leaves no place and scope for the Sudras to accumulate wealth. One occupation only which is said to have been prescribed by the Lord (God) to the Sudras; i.e. to serve meekly the other three higher castes, gives no scope for change. Ambedkar points out that Hindu religion decides one's occupation or profession.

However, in contrary to the alleged static position of the caste occupation as have been argued by Dumont, Hocart and Ambedkar, the caste occupations in Madras during our period of study shows that caste occupation has been dynamic and keeps on changing through ages. For instance, in Madras, the various occupational castes took such professions, which are different from what their religion and tradition had prescribed. For example, peons were labourers, watchmen and even policemen. Kaikkolans were weavers and warrior caste at the same time. Therefore, religion is not a deciding factor for one's occupation in Madras.

There is also a great debate on caste mobility in pre-colonial period. M.N. Srinivas noted that "the two potentials of mobility were the fluidity of the political

131 Moon Vasant, Dr. Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, vol.3, p.23.
132 Ibid., p.40.
134 Ibid., p.20.
system especially at the lower level, and the availability of marginal land which could be brought under the plough, itself the result of a static demographic situation.\textsuperscript{136} What he means is that people obtained mobility through warfare, to acquire a political power and become a chief or king. Further if a leader of a dominant caste or small chieftain gets the position of Raja or King, then he become sources of mobility for individuals and groups.\textsuperscript{137} However, he argued in favour of upward mobility. M.N. Srinivas characterized that mobility in medieval India was based on 'fission'. This view is supported by Burton Stein, as he argues that medieval mobility was of individuals and family, and the "open agrarian system" served "spatial mobility," which he called social mobility.\textsuperscript{138} His argument is that in medieval time, there was upward mobility.

Sanjay Subrahminyam support the idea by giving example of recent works on Right Hand castes and Left Hand castes where the latter had claimed through apocryphal genealogies, warrior status.\textsuperscript{139} Though Vijaya Ramaswamy did not accept the observations of any upward caste mobility, she points out four elements of social mobility:

1. the demand for social and ritual privileges;
2. claiming of Brahmncal status;
3. idangai-valangai (Left and Right Hand) conflicts within their own caste;

\textsuperscript{136} Srinivas, M.N., \textit{The Cohesive Role of Sanskritization and other Essays}, OUP, Delhi, 1989, p.41.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., p.43.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., p.50.
4. social protest and participation in Bhakti movement.

For instance, the Devanga weaver claims descent from Manu and Narada, the Kammala or smiths claim to be the descendants of Visvakarma. However, I disagree with the above views because it is observed that caste remain the same even though occupation changes:

- Firstly, caste remains static, stagnant and it is not changing throughout the centuries till this day;
- Secondly, occupation is changing throughout the centuries. What Sudras were in ancient time was not so in Medieval period.
- Thirdly, occupation consisted of power. It improves the power-relation of one's status.

Occupation changes one's political, social and economic power. For instance, in Madras, several occupational caste groups went on strike to press for their economic demands and English East India Company paid attention towards them. They were also in a position to lodge complaint against something that did not go with their wishes. Pariahs, an untouchable and the lowest caste of South India, for instance, gradually improved their status and also power ranking in the society. A.P. Smith writes that "so necessary to the comfort of the public is the Paraiya that orthodox Brahmin gentleman may be seen employing Paraiya coachmen and syces (footmen). The Christian Paraiya has become ‘native Christian caste’, and has achieved, among

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142 Diary and Consultation, 1683, p.67.
other things, university honours, the wearing of the surplice, and the rod of the pedagogue”. 143 Weaving communities also improved their status remarkably. Therefore, one can say that there was mobility in occupation but ‘caste’ remains static throughout. Generally, a ‘clean’ and ‘noble’ occupation give jati higher ritual and social status whereas ‘unclean’ or ‘lower’ occupations give lower place in the society.144 Dumont points out that caste and occupation matter status. Hereditary profession gives inferior place in the society.145 Therefore, the occupational caste groups competed to get the ‘noble’ and ‘clean’ professions. As such, with this process, the occupational caste groups gradually gained new identity in course of time.

But to define ‘occupational caste groups’ is problematic. Generally, Sudras, untouchables, artisans, and different caste groups (Left and Right Hand), who were engaged in different factories, agriculture fields as a labourers, workers, slaves, servants, etc., on the basis of their accumulated hereditary works or different occupations or as set by the society, may be called ‘occupational caste group’. All traveller accounts and scholars understood in this manner. For instance, Thomas Bowrey mentioned about the Halakhore castes who were very low caste men. They were ‘sweepers’ and ‘scavengers’. Halakhore were employed to clean houses. These castes had no other business but only to clean the houses. They eat the food-waste of all other castes.146 John Fryer had also noticed many ‘Gentues’ who were ‘blacks’, such as

144 Dube, Indian Society, p.55.
boatmen, goldsmiths or artisans who were lower than Brahmins or Rajpoots. Sauter describes that the lower people were disparagingly called as “Bandar-log”; and they were regarded disdainfully as a sort of unclean animal.

The English records also mentioned coolies, Tamil painters, washers, peons who were engaged in Company services and who were regarded as subordinates in the society. Fort St. George records also mention Brickmakers, Gentues, Painters, Slaves, Peons, Watchmen, Weavers, and Washermen. They are regarded as belonging to the lower orders of the society and are subordinated in positions. Abbe Carre, during his visit to Madras and various places in South India, called these people ‘My servants’, 'My palanquin bearer', etc.

Francis Buchanan reported about the Left and Right hand groups especially the barbers, washermen etc. in derogated positions in South India, particularly within the

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147 Fryer, John, *Travel in India in the Seventeenth Century*, AES, New Delhi, 1993, pp.173-176.
150 Ibid., p.15.
151 Ibid., pp.47 & 139.
152 Ibid., p.102.
153 Ibid., p.29.
154 Ibid., p.59.
155 Ibid., p.24.
156 Ibid., p.46.
157 Ibid., p.543-545.
East India Company's factories. Vijaya Ramaswamy also points out that the lower positions of the artisans such as blacksmiths, goldsmiths, workers in brass, carpenters, masons, the weavers, bleachers, dyers, cobblers, tanners and potters got the place in East India Company. East India Company in Southern Coromandel Coast employed the occupational castes such as “A steward servant, butler, caterer, brewer, flagman, one palanqueen bearer for the chief”. However, all traveller accounts and scholars frequently mentioned them in “lower” and “subordinate sense”. Thus, it became clear that the low caste people, in whom Sudras, servants, artisans, Left hand castes and Right hand castes come, might be called as the occupational caste groups.

“Caste in making” and the English Company

The English company was little confused about the caste structure and understanding of caste division in south India. He thought that caste was more or less class. Therefore, the English company recognizes caste through the occupation making new caste by identifying their occupation, as several records of Fort. St. George mentioned about the confusion of the English Company in Madras.

The Dairy and Consultation of Fort St. George had listed twenty-nine caste groups inside Madras for the collection of rents for the construction of the ‘Black Town’ walls and the outworks. These caste groups and their share of contribution are listed hereunder:

161 Diary and Consultation, 1677-80, p.181.
162 Diary and Consultation, 1706, p.55.
2. Moormem ............................................................... 300 pags
3. Quomitty caste .......................................................... 800 pags
4. Vellon Warr caste ..................................................... 200 pags
5. Bellejee Warr caste .................................................... 350 pags
6. Ganlewar caste alias Oylemen ....................................... 400 pags
7. Gellawammee Warr caste alias shopkeeper of sugar and limes... 100 pags
8. Aggamoodee Warr caste alias brickmakers &c.......................... 400 pags.
9. Comsala Warr caste alias goldsmith .................................... 500 pags.
10. Guzaratts .............................................................. 500 pags
11. Kiculla Warr caste alias weavers ..................................... 20 pags
12. Charnom Warr caste alias conicoplyes (kankpillai) accountants... 300 pags.
13. Polli Warr caste .......................................................... 18 pags
14. Sallawarr weaver ...................................................... 100 pags.
15. Zoningeeewarr alias Chuliars ......................................... 150 pags
16. Saccalawarr alias washermen ........................................ 100 pags
17. Gullawarr caste alias shepherd ....................................... 70 pags
18. Chomboddee Warr caste alias fishermen ............................... 10 pags
19. Kyawarr caste alias bamboo cooleys .................................. 10 pags
20. Mongele Warr caste alias barber ..................................... 20 pags
21. Vellambilla alias tonnapas caste ..................................... 50 pags
22. Connadu alias grass cutters ........................................... 25 pags
24. Wande Warr caste alias sampsons caste ........................................ 100 pags
25. Sattigurree alias andee chittee ............................................... 200 pags
26. Comra Warr alias pot makers ..................................................... 10 pags
27. Correala Warr alias muckquas ............................................... 100 pags
28. Braminys ................................................................................. 100 pags
29. Pottanapwarr alias cattamaranmen ........................................ 40 pags

30. If we see the list we will find that English company was confused on “Gujarati”.

The company termed them as “Caste” actually they were not caste. By doing this they were creating many new Caste like Rope maker, nut cutter, lamp-bearer, umbrella bearer and so on. I am also giving another list\(^{163}\) which shows the caste making process;

1. 600 collies out of which 200 were hired at 3½ pagodas each-------- 700
2. 50 peons out of which 30 hired at 1½ pags.------------------------- 45
3. 2 smiths------------------------------------------------------------- 6 ½
4. 2 carpenters---------------------------------------------------------- 6 ½
5. 10 horsekeepers------------------------------------------------------- 25
6. 10 grasscutters------------------------------------------------------- 24
7. 3 conicoplys---------------------------------------------------------- 10 ½
8. 1 moochi-------------------------------------------------------------- 3
9. 2 coblers-------------------------------------------------------------- 6
10. 10 servants for Mr.Lweis & Mr.Berlu------------------------------- 25

\(^{163}\) Record of Fort St. George, Diary and Consultations Book, 1708-09, p.26
11. 6 ditto for the Mulla and Paupia------------------------------- 15
12. 1 ditto for Mr. Way------------------------------------------ 2 ½
   2 ditto for the Doctor-------------------------------------- 5
13. 10 frosses------------------------------------------------- 30
14. 1 servant clock maker ------------------------------------ 2 ½
15. 2 sakers--------------------------------------------------- 6
16. 4 cooks---------------------------------------------------- 12
17. 1 compradore --------------------------------------------- 3
18. 1 butler---------------------------------------------------- 3
19. 4 pariyar-------------------------------------------------- 10
20. 4 packers-------------------------------------------------- 10
21. 1 flagman-------------------------------------------------- 2 ½
22. 1 barber---------------------------------------------------- 2 ½
23. 2 armorers-------------------------------------------------- 6 ½
24. 10 dutys---------------------------------------------------
25. 3 washemen------------------------------------------------ 7 ½
26. 4 oxen men------------------------------------------------ 12

The above lists mention the new caste labourer like oxen men, flagman, duty men, butler, horsekeepers, conicoply etc.

Abbe Dubois has also given details about the process of caste making, starting from ancient to colonial period. He says that there was no existing institution older than the caste system of the Hindus. Greek and Latin authors who have written about India concur in thinking that it has been in force from time immemorial; and certainly the
unswerving observance of its rules seems to me an almost incontestable proof of its antiquity. Under a solemn and task, however, would be such a difficult one that I can hardly believe that any proposal of the kind would ever enter an intelligent persons head. Everything is always done in exactly the same way; even the minutest details are invested with a solemn importance of their own, because a Hindu was convinced that it was only by paying rigorous attention to small details that more momentous concerns are safeguarded. Indeed, there was not another nation on earth which can pride itself on having so long preserved intact its social customs and regulations.

The Hindu legislators of old had the good sense to give stability to these customs and regulations by associating with them many outward ceremonies, which, by fixing them in the minds of the people, ensured their more faithful observance. These ceremonies were invariably observed, and have never been allowed to degenerate into mere formalities that can be neglected without grave consequences. Failure to perform a single one of them, however unimportant it might appear, would never go unpunished.

One cannot fail to remark how very similar some of these ceremonies are to those which were performed long ago amongst other nations. Thus the Hindu precepts about cleanness and uncleanness, as also the means employed for preserving the one

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164 Editor informs us Dr. Muir, in Old Sanskrit Texts, vol. i. p. 150, reviewing the texts which he had cited on this subject, says: - First, we have the set of accounts in which the four castes are said to have sprung from progenitors who were separately created; but in regard to the manner of their creation we find the greatest diversity of statement. The most common story is that the castes issued from the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of Purusha, or Brahma. The oldest extant passage in which this idea occurs, and from which all the later myths of a similar tenor have no doubt been borrowed, is to be found in the Purusha Sukta; but it is doubtful whether, in the form in which it is there represented, this representation is anything more than an allegory. In some of the texts from the Bhagavata Purana trace of the same allegorical character may be perceived; but in Manu and the Puranas the mystical import of the Vedic text disappears, and the figurative narration is hardened into a literal statement of fact. In the chapters of the Vishnu, Vayu, and Markandeya Puranas, where castes are described as coeval with.

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and effacing the other, were similar in many respects to those of the ancient Hebrews. The rule about marrying in one's caste, and even in one's family, was specifically imposed upon the Jews in the laws which Moses gave them from God's commandments.\textsuperscript{165} This rule, too, had been in force for a long time before that, for it appears to have been general amongst the Chaldeans. We find also in Holy Writ that Abraham espoused his niece, and that the holy patriarch sent into a far country for a maiden of his own family as a wife for his son Isaac. Again, Isaac and his wife Rebecca found it difficult to pardon their son Esau for marrying amongst strangers, that is, amongst the Canaanites; and they sent their son Jacob away into a distant land to seek a wife from amongst their own people.

In the same way today, Hindus residing in a foreign country will travel hundreds of miles/ kms. to their native land in search of wives for their sons.

Again, as to the caste system, Moses, as was well known, established it amongst the Hebrews in accordance with the commands of God. This holy lawgiver had, during his long sojourn in Egypt, observed the system as established in that country, and had doubtless recognized the good that resulted from it. Apparently, in executing the divine order with respect to it he simply adapted and perfected the system which was in force in Egypt.

The Indian caste system had been of still older origin. The Hindu sacred writings record that the author of it was the God Brahma, to whom they attribute the creation of the world, and who is said to have established this system when he peopled

\textsuperscript{165} Number xxxvi. 5-12.
the earth. The Brahmins were the product of his brain; the Kshtriyas or Rajahs issued from his shoulders; the Vaisyas from his belly; and the Sudras from his feet.

It was easy to understand the allegorical signification of this legend, in which one can distinctly trace the relative degrees of subordination of the different castes. The Brahmins, destined to fulfil the high functions of spiritual priesthood and to show the way of salvation to their fellowmen, issue from the head of the Creator; the Kshatriyas, endowed with physical force and destined to undergo the fatigues of war, have their origin in the shoulders and arms of Brahma; the Vaisyas, whose duty it is to provide the food, the clothing, and other bodily necessities of man, are born in the belly of the god; and the Sudras, whose lot is servitude and hard labour in the fields, issue from his feet.

Besides this traditional origin of the different castes, known to all Hindus, there was another to be found in their books, which traces the institution back to the time of the apocalyptic Flood. For, it should be noted, this terrible world-renovating disaster is as well known to the Hindus as it was to Moses. On this important subject, however, I shall have more to say subsequently; suffice it to remark that a celebrated personage, reverenced by the Hindus, and known to them as Mahanvu, escaped the calamity in an ark, in which were also the seven famous Penitents of India. After the Flood, according to Hindu writers, this saviour of the human race divided mankind into different castes, as they exist at the present day.\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{166} The appellation Mahanvu was well worthy of remark. It was a compound of two words – Maha great, and Nuvu, which undoubtedly is the same as Naah.
Caste and Migration and Role of English Company

"Migration" involves the permanent movement (more or less) of individuals or groups across symbolic or political boundaries into new residential areas and communities.\(^{167}\) The various lists which show that migration took place in Madras. In Madras labourer castes came from Gujarat,\(^ {168}\) Neighboring area and other places. There many Christian people who came to Madras. The English company brought many skilled and unskilled labourers in Madras.

Caste Violence and View of the English Company

The English company’s opinion was very harsh a having very bad opinion. For the English authority such disputes was regarded as the “factious madness”\(^ {169}\) which needs to be taken seriously as they destabilized the smooth functioning of trade and commerce.

Dubious, A.J. Abbe, has also informed us that the rights and privileges for which the Hindus were ready to fight such sanguinary battles appear highly ridiculous, especially in the sight of an European. Perhaps the sole cause of the contest was the right to wear slippers or to ride through the streets in a palanquin or on horseback during marriage festivals. Sometimes that was the privilege of being escorted on certain occasions by armed retainers, sometimes that of having a trumpet sounded in front of a procession, or of being accompanied by native musicians at public ceremonies. Perhaps


\(^{168}\) Diary and Consultation, 1706, p.55.

\(^{169}\) English Factories in India, 1651-54, p.155.
it was simply the particular kind of musical instrument apt to such occasions as was in dispute; or, perhaps, it may be the right of carrying flags of certain colours or certain devices during these ceremonies. Such, at any rate, were a few of the privileges for which Hindus were ready to cut each other's throats.\footnote{Dubois, p,26.}

Caste and Power

"Power" is the main concept which is at the heart of social stratification. Max Weber has pointed out that power is the fundamental concept in stratification with which class, status and party were the serious concern in three separate dimensions. Classes were the outcome of the distribution of economic power. Status was a kind of normatively defined social power; and parties were groups active in the political spheres in pursuit of various goals. Power is, therefore, a social relationship. Power thus defined by Weber in general terms as the probability of persons or groups carrying out their will even when opposed by others.\footnote{Marshall, Gordon, Dictionary of sociology, published by Oxford University press, 1994(first edition), 1998,2004,2005,2007, delhi, p,519.}

Weber made further observations concerning the nature of power in his political sociology. Few groups in society base their power purely on force or military might. Instead, ruling groups attempt to legitimate their power, and convert it into what he termed "domination". According to Weber there are three bases of domination: traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic.

Steven Lukes points out that power is an essentially contested concept.\footnote{Ibid, p,520.}
According to Weber status is related to the power. To me "caste" is statuses which confirm our place in the society. Caste is very much associated with power. Each caste carries power within the caste occupation. With this occupation Castes people were in bargaining position. For instance, in Madras Washer men castes were in bargaining positions. Washerman was extremely important for the Company. The English Company's decided that between 'gentu town' or the 'black town' and the 'potters town,' there was a river which was extremely useful for the Company's washermen who daily wash and dry their calicos. Not only this, the Company also ordered that "Justice of the Choultry should clear as much as possible of the ground or sand on the North side of river on either side of Mr. Edward Henry's house and garden, from the houses and gardens that might be useful for the washers". In a sort of protest, the washermen opposed to make contract with the East India Company and forced the latter to provide a proper space for washing.

The washermen also were given money in advance for curing the Company's cloth. But the washermen complained for being paid low prices while they washed lots of cloths. They also complained to the Company to increase the number of washermen as they are not able to wash them all. The Company brought washermen from other parts of the country.

173 Diary and Consultation, 1672-78, p.76.
174 Ibid., 1706, p.3.
Caste and “Caste Occupational Mobility”

‘Mobility’ means movement – usually of individuals but sometimes of whole groups – between different positions within the system of social stratification in any society. It is conventional to distinguish upward mobility and downward mobility that is, movement up or down a hierarchy of privilege, and intergenerational form to intragenerational or career mobility (the former referring to mobility between a family of origin and one’s own class or status position, the latter to the mobility experienced during an individual career, such as respondent’s first jobs compared to his or her present jobs). Other distinctions – most notably that between structural and non-structural mobility – are more contentious.\(^\text{175}\)

Mobility has been classified into four.

1. Vertical mobility
2. Horizontal mobility
3. intergenerational mobility
4. intragenerational mobility

In the context of caste occupations and mobility, it has been tried to evaluate that there was definite relations between caste and occupation. It has been argued that occupations or professions improve the power relation of ones status. It is also stated that caste has been static, stagnant and, therefore, there was no caste mobility. It is not possible to see the mobility in the caste system as noted above. However, the mobility was possible only in the occupation or profession, as we have seen in Madras with several caste groups. For instance, the washermen, the barbers, the weaver

\(^{175}\) Ibid, p.422.
communities, the carpenters etc. were practising different kinds of professions, which are traditionally not their occupations. Therefore, the term "caste occupational mobility" instead of 'caste mobility' is used. For example, the sudras in which artisan caste, the carpenters, weavers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, and untouchable in which pariah caste and leather workers were all becoming dependent because of financial status.

The English East India Company gave this opportunity from its new economic policy. The Company employed them extensively and various castes were adopting new professions such as in shipping, carpentry, weaving and joining many industries like textile industries. In this context, we can see the caste occupational upward mobility. This profession was, in fact, not practices only by the sudras or untouchables groups. The other upper castes were also adopting different professions. For instance, one Brahmin was the chief dubashes (men of affairs and agents of the Europeans) of the Company in Madras.

Another example of upward occupational mobility was in term of merchants. Generally, merchants organized their business independently or in private with the Company or with other groups. But in Madras the famous merchants were appointed as chief merchants of the Company. Becoming chief merchants of the Company means they have official status and power, apart from their business. The company provided them all facilities including the estate ownership, palanqeen and other honorary symbols which were not available for the ordinary merchants. It shows that they had extra honours as chief merchants of the Company. In Madras, all four type of nobilities
were occurring that are Vertical mobility, Horizontal mobility, intergenerational mobility and intragenerational mobility.

Therefore, it can be argued that the occupational upward mobility was occurring in all castes from top to bottom.

**Advantage and prejudice of castes**

Many historians have focused on this topic from different angles. Devnathan says one place that so-called caste wants to maintain the caste structure because they get benefit from the caste structure while occupational castes protest caste prejudice due to its assignment of low level occupation, dirty occupation and low status in the society.

Abbe Dubious also wrote extensively on advantage and prejudice of Caste. Abbe Dubois points out that many persons study so imperfectly the spirit and character of the different nations that inhabit the earth, and the influence of climate on their manners, customs, predilections, and usages, that they were astonished to find how widely such nations differ from each other. Prompted by the prejudices of their own surroundings, such persons think of nothing well regulated that is not included in the policy and actions of the government of their own country. They would like to see all nations of the earth placed on precisely the same footing as them. Everything which deviates from their own customs is considered either uncivilized or ridiculous.\(^{176}\)

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\(^{176}\) Dubois, A.J. Abbe, Hindu Manners customs and ceremonies, translated from the author's later French Ms and edited with notes, corrections and biography by Henry K.Beauchamp, Low price publications, Delhi, first published in 1906, reprinted in LPP in 1999, p.27.
Now, although man's nature was pretty much the same the world over, it was subject to so many differentiations caused by soil, climate, food, religion, education, and other circumstances peculiar to different countries, that the system of civilization adopted by one people would plunge another into a state of barbarism and cause its complete downfall.\textsuperscript{177}

He had heard some persons, sensible enough in other respects, but imbued with all the prejudices that they had brought with them from Europe, pronounce what appears to him an altogether erroneous judgement in the matter of caste divisions amongst the Hindus. In their opinion, caste was not only useless to the body politic; it was also ridiculous, and even calculated to bring trouble and disorder on the people. For my part, having lived many years on friendly terms with the Hindus, he had been able to study their national life and character closely, and I have arrived at a quite opposite decision on this subject of caste. He believed caste division to be in many respects the chef d' the happiest effort, of Hindu legislation. He was persuaded that it was simply and solely due to the distribution of the people into castes that India did not lapse into a state of barbarism, and that she preserved and perfected the arts and sciences of civilization whilst most other nations of the earth remained in a state of barbarism. I do not consider caste to be free from many great drawbacks; but he believe that the resulting advantages, in the case of a nation constituted like the Hindus, more than outweigh the resulting evils.\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid, p, 28.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid, p, 28.
To establish the justice of this contention we had only to glance at condition of the various races of men who lived in the same latitude as the Hindus, and to consider the past and present status of those among them whose natural disposition and character had not been influenced for good by the purifying doctrines of Revealed Religion. We can judge what the Hindus would have been like, had they not been held within the pale of social duty by caste regulations, if we glance at neighboring nations west of the Peninsula and east of it beyond the Ganges as far as China. In China itself a temperate climate and a form of government peculiarly adapted to a people unlike any other in the world have produced the same effect as the distinction of caste among the Hindus. 179

After much careful thought he can discover no other reason except caste which accounts for the Hindus not having fallen into the same state of barbarism as their neighbours and as almost all nations inhabiting the torrid zone. Caste assigns to each individual his own profession or calling; and the handing down of this system from father to son, from generation to generation, makes it impossible for any person or his descendants to change the condition of life which the law assigns to him for any other. Such an institution was probably the only means that the most clear-sighted prudence could devise for maintaining a state of civilization amongst a people endowed with the peculiar characteristics of the Hindus. 180

We can picture what would become of the Hindus if they were not kept within the bounds of duty by the rules and penalties of caste, by looking at the position of the Pariahs, or outcastes of India, who, checked by no moral restraint, abandon themselves

180 Ibid, p, 29.
to their natural propensities. Anybody who had studied the conduct and character of the people of this class – which, by the way, is the largest of any in India\textsuperscript{181} – will agree with me that a State consisting entirely of such inhabitants could not long endure, and could not fail to lapse before long into a condition of barbarism. For my own part, being perfectly familiar with this class, and acquainted with its natural predilections and sentiments, I am persuaded that a nation of Pariahs left to themselves would speedily become worse than the hordes of cannibals who wander in the vast waste of Africa, and would soon take to devouring each other.\textsuperscript{182}

He was no less convinced that if the Hindus were not kept within the limits of duty and obedience by the system of caste, and by the penal regulations attached to each phase of it, they would soon become just what the Pariahs are, and probably something still worse. The whole country would necessarily fall into a state of hopeless anarchy, and, before the present generation disappeared, this nation, so polished under present conditions, would have to be reckoned amongst the most uncivilized of the world. The legislators of India, whoever they may have been, were far too wise and too well acquainted with the natural character of the people for whom they prescribed laws to leave it to the discretion or fancy of each individual to cultivate what knowledge he pleased, or to exercise, as seemed best to him, any of the various professions, arts, or industries which are necessary for the preservation and well-being of a State.\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{181} The editor informs us that this was true only of Southern India, where the Pariahs number 5,000,000. They form one-seventh of the total population of the Madras Presidency. Of late years the degraded condition of these outcasts has attracted much attention, and a great deal is now being done to elevate them morally and materially.

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid, p, 29.

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid, p, 29-30.
They set out from that cardinal principle common to all ancient legislators, that no person should be useless to the commonwealth. At the same time, they recognized that they were dealing with a people who were indolent and careless by nature, and whose propensity to be apathetic was so aggravated by the climate in which they lived, that unless every individual had a profession or employment rigidly imposed upon him, the social fabric could not hold together and must quickly fall into the most deplorable state of anarchy. These ancient lawgivers, therefore, being well aware of the danger caused by religious and political innovations, and being anxious to establish durable and inviolable rules for the different castes comprising the Hindu nation, saw no surer way of attaining their object than by combining in an unmistakable manner those two great foundations of orderly government, religion and politics. Accordingly, there was not one of their ancient usages, not one of their observances, which has not some religious principle or object attached to it. Everything, indeed, was governed by superstition and has religion for its motive. The style of greeting, the mode of dressing, the cut of clothes, the shape of ornaments and their manner of adjustment, the various details of the toilette, the architecture of houses, the corners where the hearth was placed and where the cooking pots must stand, the manner of going to bed and of sleeping, the forms of civility and politeness that must be observed: all these are severely regulated. 184

During the many years that he studied Hindu customs he could not say that he ever observed a single one, however unimportant and simple, and, he may add, however filthy and disgusting, which did not rest on some religious principle or the

184 Ibid., p. 30.
other. Nothing was left to chance; everything was laid down by rule, and the foundation of all their customs is purely and simply religion. It was for this reason that the Hindus hold all their customs and usages to be inviolable, for, being essentially religious, they consider them as sacred as religion itself. 185

Further, be it noted, this plan of dividing the people into castes was not confined to the lawgivers of India. The wisest and most famous of all lawgivers, Moses, availed himself of the same institution, as being the one which offered him the best means of governing the intractable and rebellious people of whom he had been appointed the patriarch. 186

The division of the people into castes existed also amongst the Egyptians. With them, as with the Hindus, the law assigned an occupation to each individual, which was handed down from father to son. It was forbidden to any man to have two professions, or to change his own. Each caste had a special quarter assigned to it, and people of a different caste were prohibited from settling there. Nevertheless there was this difference between the Egyptians and the Hindus: with the former all castes and all professions were held in esteem; all employments, even of the meanest kind, were alike regarded as honourable; and, although the priestly and military castes possessed peculiar privileges, nobody would have considered it anything but criminal to despise the classes whose work, whatever it happened to be, contributed to the general good. With the Hindus, on the other hand, there are professions and callings to which

185 Ibid., p. 31.
186 Ibid., p. 30.
prejudice attaches such degradation as those who follow them are universally despised by those castes which in the public esteem exercise higher functions.\(^{187}\)

It must here be remarked, however, that the four great professions without which a civilized nation could not exist, namely, the army, agriculture, commerce, and weaving, are held everywhere in the highest esteem. All castes, from the Brahmin to the Pariah, are permitted to follow the first three, and the fourth can be followed by all the principal classes of Sudras.\(^{188}\)

These same caste distinctions observable amongst Hindus exist likewise, with some differences, amongst the Arabs and Tartars. Probably, indeed, they were common to the majority of ancient nations. Ceerops, it will be remembered, separated the people of Athens into four tribes or classes, while their great lawgiver, solon, upheld this distinction and strengthened it in several ways. Numa Pompilius, again, could devise no better way of putting an end to the racial hatred between Sabines and Romans than by separating the body of the people into different castes and classes. The result of his policy was just what he had desired. Both Sabines and Romans, once amalgamated in this manner, forget their national differences and thought only of those of their class or caste.\(^{189}\)

Those who instituted to caste system could not but perceive that with nations in an embryonic stage the more class distinctions there were the more order and symmetry there must be, and the easier it was to exercise control and preserve order. This, indeed,

\(^{187}\) Ibid, p. 31.

\(^{188}\) This statement is not quite correct, for in Southern India, at any rate, some classes of Pariahs are most expert weavers, and are honoured as such throughout the country.

\(^{189}\) Ibid, p. 32.
was the result which caste classification amongst the Hindus has achieved. The shame – which would reflect totally on a whole caste if the faults of one of its individual members went unpunished – guarantees that the caste will execute justice, defend its own honour, and keep all its members within the bounds of duty. For, be it noted, every caste has its own laws and regulations, or rather, we may say, its own customs, in accordance with which the severest justice was meted out, just as it was by the patriarchs of old. 190

Thus in several castes adultery was punishable by death. 191 Girls or widows who succumb to temptation were made to suffer the same penalty as those who have seduced them. The largest temple of the town of Conjeeveram, in the Carnatic, an immense building, was constructed, so it was said, by a rich Brahmin who had been convicted of having had illicit intercourse with a low-caste Pariah woman. He was, however, sentenced to this severe penalty, not so much on account of the immorality of his action, seeing that in the opinion of the Brahmins it was not immoral at all, but on account of the low-caste person who had been the partner of his incontinence. There were various kinds of delinquencies in connexion with which a caste may take proceedings, not only against the principal offenders, but against those who have taken any part whatever in them. Thus it was caste authority which, by means of its wise rules and prerogatives, preserves good order, suppresses vice, and saves Hindus from sinking into a state of barbarism. 192

190 Ibid., p, 32.
191 This of course is no longer allowed by law.
192 Ibid., p, 33.
It may also be said that caste regulations counteract to a great extent the evil effects which would otherwise be produced on the national character by a religion that encourages the most unlicensed depravity of morals, as well in the decorations of its temples as in its dogmas and ritual.

In India, where the princes and the aristocracy lived in extreme indolence, attaching little importance to making their dependants happy and taking small pains to inculcate in them a sense of right and wrong, there were no other means of attaining these desirable ends and preserving good order than by authoritative ruling of the caste system. The worst of it was, these powers were not sufficiently wide; or rather they are too often relaxed. Many castes exercise them with severity in cases that are for the most part frivolous, but display an easy and culpable indulgence towards real and serious delinquencies. On the other hand, caste authority was often a check against abuses which the despotic rulers of the country are too apt to indulge in. Sometimes one may see, as the result of a caste order, the tradesmen and merchants of a whole district closing their shops, the labourers abandoning their fields, or the artisans leaving their workshops, all because of some petty insult or of some petty extortion suffered by some member of their caste; and the aggrieved people will remain obstinately in this state of opposition until the injury has been atoned for and those responsible for it punished. 193

Another advantage resulting from the caste system is the hereditary continuation of families and that purity of descent which is a peculiarity of the Hindus, and which consists in never mixing the blood of one family or caste with that of another. Marriages were confined to parties belonging to the same family, or at any rate the

193 Ibid. p. 33.
same caste. In India, at any rate, there can be no room for the reproach, so often
deserved in European countries that families have deteriorated by alliances with
persons of low or unknown extraction. A Hindu of high caste can, without citing his
title or producing his genealogical tree, trace his descent back for more than two
thousand years without fear of contradiction. He can also, without any other passport
than that of his high caste, and in spite of his poverty, present himself anywhere; and he
would be more courted for a marriage alliance than any richer man of less pure descent.
Nevertheless, there is no gain saying that there are some districts where the people are
not quite so particular about their marriages, though such laxity is blamed and held up
to shame as an outrage on propriety, while those guilty of it take very good care to
conceal it as much as possible from the public. 194

Further, one would be justified in asserting that it is to caste distinctions that
India owes the preservation of her arts and industries. For the same reason, she would
have reached a high standard of perfection in them had not the avarice of her rulers
prevented it. It was chiefly to attain this object that the Egyptians were divided into
castes, and that their laws assigned the particular place which each individual should
occupy in the commonwealth. Their lawgivers no doubt considered that by this means
all arts and industries would continue to improve from generation to generation, for
men must necessarily do well that which they have always been in the habit of seeing
done and which they have been constantly practising from their youth. 195

194 Ibid, p, 34.
195 Ibid, 34.
This perfection in arts and manufactures would, undoubtedly, have been attained by so industrious a people as the Hindus, if, as I have before remarked, the cupidity of their rulers had not acted as check. As a matter of fact, no sooner has an artisan gained the reputation of excelling in his craft than he is at once carried off by order of the sovereign, taken to the place, and there confined for the rest of his life, forced to toil without remission and with little or no reward. Under these circumstances, which are common to all parts of India under the government of native princes, it is hardly surprising that every art and industry is extinguished and all healthy competition deadened. This is the chief and almost the only reason why progress in the arts has been so slow among the Hindus, and why in this respect they are now far behind other nations who did not become civilized for many centuries after themselves.

Their workmen certainly lack neither industry nor skill. In the European settlements, where they are paid according to their merit, many native artisans are to be met with whose work would do credit to the best artisans of the West. Moreover they feel no necessity to use the many European tools, whose nomenclature alone requires special study. One or two axes, as many saws and planes, all of them so rudely fashioned that a European workman would be able to do nothing with them – these are almost the only instruments that are to be seen in the hands of Hindu carpenters. The working materials of a journeyman goldsmith usually comprise a tiny anvil, a crucible, two or three small hammers, and as many precision engineer’s files as required. With such simple tools the patient Hindu, thanks to his industry, can produce specimens of

196 Ibid, p.35.
work which are often not to be distinguished from those imported at great expense from foreign countries. To what a standard of excellence would these men have attained if they had been from the earliest times subjected to good masters!  

In order to form a just idea of what the Hindus would have done with their arts and manufactures if their natural industry had been properly encouraged, we have only to visit the workshop of one of their weavers or of one of their printers on cloth and carefully examine the instruments with which they produce those superb muslins, those superfine cloths, those beautiful colored piece-goods, which are everywhere admired, and which in Europe occupy a high place among the principal articles of adornment. In manufacturing these magnificent stuffs the artisan uses his feet almost as much as his hands. Furthermore, the weaving loom, and the whole apparatus for spinning the thread before it is woven, as well as the rest of the tools which he uses for the work, are so simple and so few that altogether they would hardly comprise a load for one man. Indeed it is by no means a rare sight to see one of these weavers changing his abode, and carrying on his back all that is necessary for setting to work the moment he arrives at his new home.

Their printed calicoes, which are not less admired than their muslins, are manufactured in an equally simple manner. Three or four bamboos to stretch the cloth, as many brushes for applying the colours, with a few pieces of potsherd to contain

197 Ibid, p.35.

198 Ibid, p.35-36.
them, and a hollow stone for pounding them: these are pretty well all their stock in trade.\textsuperscript{199}

He will venture to express one other remark on the political advantages resulting from caste distinctions. In India parental authority is but little respected: and parents, overcome doubtless by that apathy and indifference which characterize Hindus generally, are at little pains, as I shall show later on, to inspire those feelings of filial reverence which constitute family happiness by enchain ing the affections of the children to the authors of their existence. Outward affection appears to exist between brothers and sisters, but in reality it is neither very strong nor very sincere. It quickly vanishes after the death of their parents, and subsequently, we may say, they only come together to fight and quarrel. Thus, as the ties of blood relationship formed so insecure a bond between different members of a community, and guaranteed no such mutual assistance and support as were needed, it became necessary to bring families together in large caste communities, the individual members of which had a common interest in protecting, supporting, and defending each other. It was thus that the links of the Hindu social chain were so strongly and ingeniously forged that nothing was able to break them.\textsuperscript{200}

This was the object which the ancient lawgivers of India (Manu and Yajnavalkia) and further reinforced by Adi Sankaracharya, attained by establishing the caste system, and they thereby acquired a title to honour unprecedented in the history of the world. Their work has stood the test of time – thousands of years – and has survived

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., p.36.

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., p.36.
the lapse of time and the many revolutions to which this portion of the globe has been subjected. The Hindus have often passed beneath the yoke of foreign invaders, whose religions, laws, and customs have been very different from their own; yet all efforts to impose foreign institutions on the people of India have been futile, and foreign occupation has never dealt more than a feeble blow against Indian custom.Above all, and before all, it was the caste system which protected them. Its authority was extensive enough to include sentences of death, as I have before remarked. The story is told, and the truth of it is incontestable, that a man of the Rajput caste was a few years ago compelled by the people of his own caste and by the principal inhabitants of his place of abode to execute, with his own hand, a sentence of death passed on his daughter. This unhappy girl had been discovered in the arms of a youth, who would have suffered the same penalty had he not evaded it by sudden flight. 201

Nevertheless, although the penalty of death may be inflicted by some castes under certain circumstances, this form of punishment is seldom resorted to nowadays. Whenever it was thought to be indispensable, it is the father or the brother who is expected to execute it, in secrecy. Generally speaking, however, recourse was pronounced by preference to the imposition of a fine and to various ignominious corporal punishments. 202

As regards these latter, we may note as examples the punishments inflicted upon women who have forfeited their honour, such as shaving their heads, compelling them to ride through the public streets mounted on asses and with their faces turned

201 Ibid.p,36-37.
202 Ibid,p,37.
towards the tail, forcing them to stand a long time with a basket of mud on their heads before the assembled caste people, throwing into their faces the ordure of cattle, breaking the sacred thread of those possessing the right to wear it, and excommunicating the guilty from their caste.²⁰³

Caste, social change and the English Company

“Social Change” is a more complex theory. Society was never static and that social, political and cultural changes occurred constantly. Change can be initiated by governments, through legislative or executive action by citizens organized in social movements by diffusion from one culture to another, or by the intended or unintended consequences of technology. Some of the most dramatic social changes in modern times have been brought about in this way. Change can also be effected through the impact of environmental factors such as drought, famine and international shifts in economic or political advantage.²⁰⁴

Social change theories now encompass a very broad range of phenomena, including short-term and long term, large-scale and small-scale changes, from the level of global society to the level of the family.²⁰⁵ Change can be progressive or destructive.

Mr. Baines’s General Report on the census of 1891 focused on the importance of the English company. The census points out that “Its greatest development is found

²⁰³ The infliction of such punishments might nowadays be followed by prosecution in the Civil and Criminal Courts.


²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 65.
where the Brahminic caste system is in force in its fullest vigour, in the south and west of the Peninsula, and amongst the Hill tribes of Bengal. In such localities it is naturally attractive to a class of the population whose position is hereditarily and permanently degraded by their own religion, as Islam has proved in eastern Bengal, and amongst the lowest class of the inhabitants of the Punjab. We have seen that in the early days of Portuguese missionary enterprise, it was found necessary to continue the breach that Brahminic custom had placed between certain grades of society and those above them; but in later times, and in foreign missions of the Reformed Church, the tendency has been to absorb all caste distinctions into the general commission of the Christianity of that form. The new faith has thus affected the lower classes more directly than the upper, who have more to lose socially, and less to gain’..... It may be mentioned that in the agricultural settlement of reconverted Christians at Sathalli in Mysore, previously alluded to, the inhabitants retained their Hindu caste distinction; and the following observations in Mr. V.N.Narasimham Iyengar’s Mysore Census Report (1891) are noteworthy:-

‘Roman Catholicism is able to prevail among the Hindus more rapidly and easily, by reason of its policy of tolerating among its converts the customs of caste and social observances, which constitute so material a part of the Indian social fabric. In the course of the investigations engendered by the census, several Roman Christian communities have been met with, which continue undisturbed in the rites and usages which had guided them in their pre-conversion existence. They still pay worship to the Kalasam at marriages and festivals, call in the Brahmin astrologer and purohita, use the Hindu religious marks, and conform to various other amenities, which have the
advantage of minimizing friction in their daily intercourse with their Hindu fellow-caste brethren".\textsuperscript{206}

\textbf{Conclusion}

In the ancient Hindu script/ text caste divisions have been laid down. The caste war proves beyond a shadow of doubt that every individual is committed to his/ her caste and shudders to think of the consequences of becoming an out caste by reason of committing any violation or transgression of moral or legal/ custom code.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar was against the caste system prevailing in the Hindu religion. The caste is like a strong link and in the system the several links – which are analogous to the different castes in Hindus – form the essential basis for the constitution of the Hindu religion.

While we see that the continued trade with Arabian countries by the neighbouring countries e.g. Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia etc. has resulted in their people converting to Muslim religion, India – despite several centuries of foreign subjugation (Muslim/ Mughal and European rulers – have retained its Hindu identity (by majority) simply because of the inviolable right to life and inviolable rule enforced by the Hindu caste system.

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid, p,xxvii-xxviii.
Map I: The Coromandel of 17th Century