CHAPTER I
(A) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CASTE SYSTEM

The word ‘Caste’ is commonly used to distinguish one person from another. It is generally considered as a hereditary group. The membership of caste is essentially determined by birth. A person remains the member of a particular caste in to which he or she is born. Hindu Society in India is divided into so many castes and sub-castes. A Hindu necessarily belongs to the caste of his or her parents. They inevitably remains in that particular caste to the last. His caste status cannot be alter by accumulation of wealth or by exercise of talent.

The word ‘caste’ came from the portuguese word ‘casta’ signifying breed race or kind; homen de boa casta is ‘a man of good family.’ The first use of this word in the restricted sense of what we now understand by caste seems to date from 1563 when Garcia de orta wrote that ‘no one changes from his father’s trade and all those of the same caste (casta) of Shoe makers are the same; Yule and Burnell, who quote this passage\(^1\); follow it by another from a decree of the sacred council of Goa in 1567 describing Gentoos (Hindus) as dividing themselves into races or castes (castas) of greater or less dignity, holding the Christians of a lower degree, and keep them so superstitiously that no one can eat or drink who with those of a lower.

Caste is a rigid social system in which a social hierarchy is maintained by the heredity of defined status in the society, and allowing little mobility out of the position into which an individual is born. It is almost and always applied to the complex system which developed under Hinduism in India, although caste like system have evolved in other cultures and religious groups.
(i) **DEFINITIONS OF 'CASTE':**

**LUNDBERG**: “A caste is nearly a rigid social class into which members are born and from which they can withdraw or escape only with great difficulty”.

**GREEN**: “Caste is a system of stratification in which mobility, up and down the status ladder, at least ideally may not occur.”

**ANDERSON AND PANKER**: “Caste is that extreme form of social class organisation in which the position of individuals in the status hierarchy determined by descent and birth.”

**MAC IVER**: “When status is wholly determined, so that man are born to their lot without any hope of changing it, then class takes the extreme form of caste.”

**KETKAR**: “A caste is a social group having two characteristics:
(i) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born; (ii) the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group.”

(ii) **EVOLUTION OF THE CASTE SYSTEM**

All societies throughout history have developed social hierarchies. These hierarchies have almost derived from occupations and their perceived relative status. As societies evolved from hunter-gatherer existence, through settled agrarian systems, development of trade, and industrialisation, new occupations were created and shifts in status occurred. The caste system represents in essence, a formalised, overtly codified social hierarchy, deriving from and subject to the changing economic and political requirements of evolving societies while typified by its rigidity in terms of the lack of mobility for the individual, over time, the caste system as a whole has shown shifts associated with fast the changes in society outlined
above. A unique feature of caste however, has been made its intimate association with religion.

The religious sanction and framework given to the caste system in India have made it a particularly powerful social tool — a rebellion against caste becomes a rebellion against religion, with consequences in this and future lives — and has been a factor in its remarkable endurance to this day. The caste system appears to have evolved some time after the arrival into Northern India of the Indo-European tribes known as the Aryans, a nomadic people, around 1500 B.C., after the collapse of the Indus Valley Civilization. No written records exist of this period (the Aryans had no writing) but it would appear from the clues from later sources based on an ancient oral tradition that they encountered resistance from indigenous peoples, and were evolved in a protracted period of warfare with local tribes before emerging victorious. Aryan society was already split into warriors priests and the general populace, an unremarkable form of social organisation. On vanquishing the indigenous peoples, who are described as darker skinned and with different features from the Aryans (it is possible that this refers to the Australoid and Negroid characteristics still seen in certain peoples in India), anxiety to maintain the low status of the conquered and to retain racial purity are the most likely reasons for the addition of a fourth group of servants to the social system, made up of the non-Aryan peoples. The racial aspect of caste is clearly indicated in the term that emerged to describe the four groups — varna, the Sanskrit word for colour. The four varnas; in descending order of status, were then the Kshatriyas (the king and warriors), the Brahmins (priests), the
Vaishyas (who, with the rise of trade and agriculture, became the farmers and merchants) and the Shudras (servants).

Further changes were to occur before the system ossified most importantly the Brahmins, pointing out their importance in sanctioning the divinity of the monarch and vesting him with his regal authority, were able to manoeuvre to the top of the scale. As society developed (after the heights reached by Harappan Culture, the Aryan period initially represented a considerable step backwards), the area under settled agriculture expanded, and trade and the arts began to flourish, resulting in the slow rise of the Shudras in to the role of cultivators of the land and skilled artisans. Those who performed the most menial tasks, such as sweepers, and those who collected waste were left out of the caste system altogether, becoming outcastes or chandalas. A system of subcastes, or jatis, evolved, related to each occupation. It is at the level of jatis that the caste system has primarily operated, with individuals of a particular jati constrained in various social aspects especially marriage, to remain within their jati. As a social and economic conditions changed, the relative position of some jatis as a whole has shifted to reflect the changing status of the occupations concerned.

This detailed link with occupation is interesting. Occupation tended to be hereditary, the son learning from father. It was small step, then for caste, related to the status of the individual and their role in society, to become strictly hereditary, thus further assuring the supremacy of Brahmins. But it is this most insidious aspect of caste that was to trap millions of individuals effectively in an impoverished, uneducated, and stigmatized state for generation after generation.
The earliest exposition of this social and political phenomenon is found in the earliest of the sacred texts of Hinduism, the Rig Veda (dating back to about 300 B.C. but representing a far older tradition), which described the division of premeval Man, Purusha into four parts, the mouth becoming the Brahmins, the arms, the Kshatriyas, the legs, the Vaishyas, and the Feet, the Shudras. The roles of the four varnas were then established as a law of nature. But without offering some hope of salvation for all, no religion can succeed. This was provided, in Brahmin orthodoxy, by the ideas of Karma (roughly translatable as ‘jati’) and rebirth. While, in an individual’s earthly life, his or her caste was decided by the caste of the parents, the fact of being born into a particular caste was no accident. It was dependent on one’s deeds in past lives. The Bhagwat Gita stresses then idea of duty. The duty of an individual was dependent on caste. Thus a ‘good’ Shudra would improve his karma by a life time of devotion to his or her masters likewise, charity was a part of the duty of the higher castes. Through the carrying out of these caste defined duties, it was possible to be reborn into a higher caste. The ultimate purpose of all these was moksha, or release from the cycle of life and death, through acquiring a spiritual insight that relied, in traditional interpretations of Hinduism, on being born a Brahmin. Thus all could have hope, and the route to salvation was in doing the duty expected of one’s caste.

It is important to stress here a key difference between the workings of caste and socio-economic class. A class system could be said to be, broadly speaking, related to material wealth. This was not so far the caste system. Brahmins, being spiritually superior, were expected to renounce such worldly pleasures. It was however, the
duty of other castes to provide the Brahmins with food and other material requirements. Nevertheless, with education confined chiefly to the higher castes, there has, in effect been a correlation between caste and class.

Much of the stigma against the lower castes and in particular, the out castes, or Chandalas, has been strengthened and justified through the religious concept of “ritual purity.” Manual work was regarded as essentially unclean, and those associated with it could not be allowed to enter into intimate contact with the higher castes, and in particular with the Brahmins, who performed religious ceremonies before which they too, had to purify themselves by bathing. This in addition to the taboo on inter caste marriage, the chandalas, in particular, were not to be allowed near the preparation of food for higher castes, or even into temples (especially in South India). Eventually their touch, and even their shadows were considered to be polluting, resulting in the chandalas becoming so-called untouchables and even unapproachables.

As the system evolved, new sub castes or jatis formed with new occupation, and incoming groups of people were given a suitable sub caste to fit them into the system, although this did not always prove straightforward.

(iii) ORIGIN OF CASTE SYSTEM:
The origin of caste is one of the most important problem in the social history of India. It is so much complicated that it is difficult to recognize a particular factor responsible for its origin. It’s complex nature as mentioned by Dr. Majumdar, “Is evident from the fact that after a century of pains taking and mericulous research in the history
and functions of the social system, we do not yet possess a valid explanation of the circumstances that might have contributed to the formation and development of this unique system. But in spite of this fact various scholars have tried to trace its origin. The following are some of the important theories about origin of caste.

(a) TRADITIONAL THEORY:

This theory is entirely based on the ancient literature of India. According to Rig Veda. There are four castes originated from supreme being. The Brahmins came from his mouth; Kshatriya from his arm; Vaishya from his thighs; and Shudras from his feet. As the mouth is the main organ of speech and learning therefore Brahmins are entrusted in work as teachers and instructors. The arms are the seat of strength therefore the functions of the Kshatriyas is to defend the empire. The thighs are the principal reservoir organs so Vaishyas are destined to provide food for others, similarly the Shudras originated from the feet, therefore their duty is to serve the other parts of the body.

This theory receives a classical interpretation in the account of Manu. His accounts rests on this assumption that the self existent created Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra from his mouth arms, thighs and feet. He then divided his body and become half male and half female. The female part created Viraj. Further the ten Mahaparishad the seven Manus and the Gandharvarishis were created.

According to Manu, the four castes were castes from the four principal organs of self existent. Their duties are determined in accordance to the functions of the bodily organs. Therefore the Brahmins must study, teach, offer sacrifices, give and accept gifts.
The Kshatriya should study, offer sacrifices, give gifts; the Vaishya should cultivate lands, conduct trade, tend cattle and may adopt the profession of usury. The Shudras should only serve the above-mentioned castes.

Apart from the Vedic texts, various legends about caste are also available in the Puranas. According to Puranas, there are various classes and various duties are assigned to them. These classes are based on primitive differences of quality. A similar account is also available in the Ramayana which suggests that the caste arises according to the state of Dharma. Thus according to Mahabharata the world was created by Brahma. At first it was Brahmnic. But latter due to the men’s action, it has become divided into classes. On the basis of actions of a son of Brahmin some time became Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra. Similarly a son of Brahmin sometimes becomes Brahmin or Kshatriya. Thus by birth neither any one was Brahmin nor Shudra. These very caste affiliation were derived on the basis of merits and actions.

(b) OCCUPATIONAL THEORY:
This theory is based on the assumption that there is occupational origin of caste.
It has been developed by Nesfield. He holds that difference of occupation alone is the basis of upon which the whole caste system of India has been built. It is a natural social product with which religion has nothing to do. As there is a difference of occupation, therefore there is a difference of caste. It is well evident in practice that most caste bear the name which clearly indicate their occupations. Thus according to Nesfield ‘Function and function alone is responsible for the origin of caste systems’. The supporters
of evolutionary theory have regarded the community of function as the main function in the evolution of caste.

(c) **POLITICAL THEORY:**

Apart from the supporters of traditional theory, there are some European scholars who are of the opinion that caste has been established by Brahmins in order to maintain their superiority in the society. The Brahmins have obscured the true fact by propagating the divine origin of caste system. In social gradation, Brahmins occupy a superior places and other castes are less favoured. Therefore it is well evident from this practical demarcation that caste system is the product of Brahmins who in every respect protected their class interests.

This very theory has been supported by the French Scholar Abbe Dubios, Ibetson and Dr. G.S. Ghurye. According to G.S. Ghurye, “Caste in India is a Brahmanic Child of the Indo-Aryan culture, cradled in the land of the Ganga and Yamuna and thence transferred to other parts of the country.

(d) **RACIAL THEORY:**

The propounders of this theory contended that the division into castes in founded on an original diversity of races. The clear complexion and the regular features of Aryans distinguish themselves from non-Aryans. It is recognized that Aryans was conqueror. Therefore by the virtue of their victory Aryans placed themselves in the superior status while keeping the non-Aryans in a inferior condition. This very theory has been presented in a classical form by various eminent anthropologists.

(a) **Theory of Risley** - According to Sir Herbert Risley, Caste system originated after the emigration of Indo Aryans from Persia.
At Persia, their society was divided into four classes to which they implied in India after their settlement, the non Aryans to whom they defeated were different from them in respect of culture and racial features. These differences continued retaining the separateness of Indo-Aryans. Risley had also given a considerable importance to hypergamy and there developed a prohibition on Pratiloma marriage. Thus Risley contends that the caste system originated on account of racial differences and pratiloma marriage.

(c) Theory of Ghurye - According to Ghurye the important aspects of caste system specially Brahminical system, originated in the Gangetic plains mentioning the Indo-Aryan emigration, he contends that the original non-Aryan race of Indian was subdued by the Indo-Aryans conquerors. The conquered race was later regarded as Shudras. They were debarred from sharing the religious and social activities of Indo-Aryans. Thus according to Ghurye “the various factors that characterizes caste society were the result in the first instance of the attempts on the part of the upholders of the Brahminic civilization to exclude the aboriginals and the Shudras from religious and social communion with themselves.”

(d) Theory of Majumdar: According to Dr. Majumdar caste system was originated from the varna (which means complexion and class). He contends that in the beginning there were three superior classes based on the ground of complexion. These classes or varnas were originated with the intermixture of Pre-Dravidian and Proto Mediterranean. The principal factors of racial mixture were as follows:
(i) **Scarcity of women among invaders.**

(ii) **Attraction towards the settled life of aboriginal people.**

(iii) **Developed stage of Dravidian civilization.**

According to Dr. Majumdar the above factors played an important role not only in racial inter mixture but also in cultural conflicts of two divergent races. Thus according to Dr. Majumdar “The clash of culture and contact of races of crystallized social grouping in India and endogamous groups were forced who jealously guarded their racial purity and cultural integrity against wholesale admixture and miscegenation.”

Further the three classes graded the society by prescribing occupation. This was done to retain their superior status and debar the other people (inferiors ones). Thus a hierarchial organization developed and the caste system originated. In this hierarchial system the status of each caste was determined by the degree of purity of blood and the extent of isolation maintained by that caste.

(e) **THEORY OF CULTURAL INTEGRATION:**

According to Sarat Chandra Roy, caste system evolved due to the integration and assimilation of different cultures. He contends that there exists variations between various ethnic groups. According to Ray; all the cultures influence each other, by taking same thing new from the other and by leaving same thing old of his own. It resulted cultural assimilation and integration and paved the way for the origin of caste system. Thus in brief, the geographical proximity of these three races and their similarity of their social concepts caused such complex social organization which is known as Indian caste system.
(f) Evolutionary Theory:

This theory was firstly presented by Denzil Ibbetson who held that caste system originated due to interaction of three factors:

1. Tribes  
2. Occupational guild  
3. Religion

Further gradual assimilation of inter-tribal occupation gave rise to occupational stratification which was favoured by the religion. In due course of time different occupations became hereditary for different tribes and restrictions in social intercourse between different tribes grew stronger. This phenomenon ultimately emerged into the form of caste system. Similar view have been expressed by same other writers who hold that caste system had its origin in the class and corporations. It derives it peculiar features from nobility ownership of land and occupations.

(g) THEORY OF MANA:

This theory has been propounded by Sri Hutton in his census report. There are several places in India where every member of a village practice a common occupation. This is the only base of social stratification. Such conditions also prevailed in India before Aryans. Thus according to Hutton caste elements existed in India before the Aryans immigration. Where Aryans settled down, they strengthened the pre-existing division of society by fixing their own position at the top. Further Hutton mentions that caste restrictions developed on account of Mana which imposes restriction upon all members regarding food, drink and marriage. Thus according to Hutton, Indian caste system had its origin in the Pre-Aryan Social division and in the tribal attitude towards supernatural power.
(iv) CRITICISM:

The above theories are subjected to criticism because there is no unanimous agreement about the origin of caste system:

The traditional interpretation about the origin of caste has been criticized on the ground that firstly this theory depends on this subtle allegory in which the origin of caste is attributed to parts of divine person which is biologically wrong and unscientific. Secondly this theory supports the functional division of society rather than the division of society into castes. Thirdly according to K.M. Panmnikar the four fold division of Indian society is not only ideological but is not in any manner based on the fact of the social system. Fourthly, the various accounts of the early literature do not correspond from each other. Fifthly, we find that in ancient literature different accounts are given about the origin of caste system.

The occupational theory has been criticized on various grounds. According to Hutton it is wrong to assume that caste system originated due to the difference of occupation. The second weakness of this theory is that it entirely ignores the importance of religion in the formation of caste. Thirdly it can be said that occupation may be the basis of social classification yet it does not fully explain the origin of caste system at the same time, racial factor has been entirely neglected.

The political theory was criticized on the ground that there is a confusion whether caste is of Brahmanic origin when we consider the starting point we find that no one was Brahmin or Shudra from birth. Highest social dignities were attained according to merits, qualities and actions. It should also be noted that caste system to a product of gradual development of society and it is not based on
artificial foundation. Thirdly, we find many instances where men born in the lowest rank of society taking professions of the other caste.

The racial theory has been criticized on the following grounds. According to Hutton there is no consistency between the racial interpretation and the available facts. It does not explain causes of untouchability. Secondly Hutton points out that if racial contracts and cultural diversity is the sole cause of caste formation, then there must exist a caste system among Muslims and Christians who successively settled into India. Further it is mentioned by Hutton that hypergamy not only existed in India but also in some other countries. But there does not develop caste system. Fourthly, the racial theory assumes that Brahmanic influence played a vital role in the formation of castes. But this assumption is wrong because caste exists even in those area where there is no Brahmanic influence. Lastly according to Hutton, the greater weakness lies in the fact that it explains the origin of caste, purely on racial ground. It is therefore wrong to ignore other grounds.

The evolutionary theory is unable to explain ultimate cause of caste origin. Caste system evolved only in India while similar conditions were prevalent in the other parts of the world. According to Hutton, occupation is the factor in the evolution of caste but not the cause of its origin.

The theory of Mana has been criticized on various grounds. Firstly according to Dr. Majumdar it is doubtful to assume that the principle of Mana played an important role in the origin of caste system. Secondly the concept of Mana is found in almost every tribe of the world but is never caused caste system anywhere except
in India. Thirdly there is no indication that caste elements existed in India in Pre-Aryan period.

(v) THE BATTLE AGAINST CASTE:

Over the centuries, the caste system has experienced regular and strong attack from within and without, and continues to do so. Applied with varying levels of strictness at varying times, depending the perceived vulnerability of the Brahmins, it has proved remarkably resilient. Hinduism is not a clearly defined religion with a founder and single sacred text. It evolved in the first instance, through the amalgamation of Aryan ideas with Dravidian concept, themselves linked to ancient Mesopotamia and other cultures. It has a number of sacred texts, ranging in content from the most profound philosophical thought to the most pragmatic detail of ritual and with many apparent internal contradictions. Over the centuries the influence of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam (particularly Sufism) has also shaped thinking broadly termed Hinduism. A rich, regional Hindu folk tradition has constantly questioned aspects of orthodoxy. Hinduism, then espouses variety of paths and approaches to the ultimate, which itself has been described as Brahman, the essence without any attributes, and in the more popular forms of the many gods of Hinduism, such as Shiva and Krishna, Clearly, in its most profound form, there is no place for caste.

Both Buddhism and Jainism represent major rebellions against the caste system, as part of Brahmin orthodoxy and oppression. The egalitarian nature of Sikhism, developed by Guru Nanak in 16th Century, was also a reaction against caste. But within the fabric of Hinduism itself, there have been many individuals and sects who have ignored or condemned cast. The mystics of Bhakti
movement, such as Chaitanya, were obvious of such considerations, being concerned only in mystic union with God. They happily accepted untouchables, women, and those from other creeds as their disciples. The most important disciple of 15th century mystic, Ramananda, a key figure in establishing the worship of Rama as a deity, was Kabir, a Muslim, who became an important poet and mystic in his own right.

Over the centuries, many unknown or unremembered individuals, including many Brahmins, have also fought their own personal battle, often being made out castes or even killed, in the process.

In the 19th century, Raja Ram Mohan Roy pioneered a rival of the Vedanta and in keeping with the spirit of the Upanishads, condemned the caste system. By the 20th century a number of prominent individuals spoke out against the institution. The battle against caste became part of a greater nationalist struggle, it was along with the Hindu-Muslim divide (partly perpetuated by the British), seen as a factor that divided Indians. Mahatma Gandhi appealed for the untouchables to be integrated with the rest of Hindu society. He renamed them ‘Harijans’ or People of God.” Dr. B.R. Ambedkar set up schools and colleges for untouchables, and fought for their political rights.

After independence, a policy of positive discrimination was established which guaranteed a large quota of places in colleges and professional institutions, and in the civil service, to untouchables, and other depressed classes, now collectively known as ‘Scheduled Castes’. The new Indian constitution enshrined in brief in a secular and egalitarian system, without discrimination by caste or creed.
Political organisation along caste lines, and after shallow appeals by Parties in order to acquire the Harijan vote, have however, helped little and sometime positively hindered attempts to reduce the division of society. Many governmental and volunteer organization continued to fight against prejudice social customs and prejudices are hard to counter. Yet some considerable progress has been made.

(vi) THE CASTE SYSTEM TODAY:

Beyond many efforts, new factors attacking caste are now at plays and may prove unstoppable. These are related to India’s emergence as a modern, industrial nation linked by satellite television and computer to the other nations and cultures of the world. The rise of the urban middle class, with free mixing of sexes, and associating material success rather than caste with social status, has led to the erosion of the caste system. Arranged marriages, a key vehicle for the propagation of caste, are declining in number although many are continuing with the purpose of propagating wealth and status. A significant number of young people in the cities are questioning the system and rebelling against it. Many problem still remains in the urban slums and in rural areas where the issue of caste further complicates the fight against poverty. The former Harijans or Dalits, as they are now called, continue to be those most needing access to primary health care, clean water and other basic resources. Of equal importance must be education, which alone can empower those who have been denied it for so long.

The impact of the caste system on the development of India over many centuries is incalculable. The country had produced many great scholars, scientists and mathematicians. Yet it is possible, for example, that the extreme separation of practical and mental work
effected by the caste system has been a factor in the paucity of technological innovation in India. The cost in social suffering has clearly been enormous. The greatest effect on country as a whole must be the denial of opportunity for learning and self-improvement to the great majority of the population, and with it the loss of many potential innovators, scholars, and statesmen and women. Caste, like sex discrimination, is an the decline in modern India. But its for reaching may take many years to eradicate.9

REFERENCES:

1. Yule and Burnell, Hibson – Jobson (1903).
8. Races and Cultures of India, at p.284.
Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was born in a poor Mahar family with caste stigma of untouchability. He realised that the real struggle for survival is faced by the people who are down caste and untouchable in India. Driven ceaselessly by a zeal for reform, armed by nerve and talent, he made his own image in the hearts of the fallen untouchable lot of Indian humanity. Throughout his life (1891-1956), he continued to remain the victim of untouchability, humiliation, hatred and disgrace of higher up Hindu Castes. As a result he was segregated in the class rooms, mentally tortured at public places, was discouraged in legal profession and was ruthlessly exploited in other spheres of his life. He was not allowed to enter temples and was even forbidden to learn Sanskrit, the so called language of the high caste learned Hindus.

These circumstances forced him to be a great rebel against the Hindu orthodoxy, pendentry and its discriminatory treatment and to turn his mind to search for a cult where a man is not discriminated by another man. He was drawn to the equalitarian humanism of the great Gurus like Lord Buddha, Kabir and Mahatma Phooley. On 13th December, 1935, he declared in public meeting at Yeola, District Nasik, that the untouchables must leave the Hindu fold and accept another religion instead. He took the lead an on 14th October, 1956, at a historic ceremony in Nagpur he embraced Buddhism for this he was later on hailed as Nav Buddha of the modern India.1

During his life time he was considered to be an enigmatic and controversial personality. He was a great nationalist who was less
understood and most misunderstood by his own country man. But his worth was not hidden for a very long time, he began to be hailed by the people of India as a great patriot. He had a towering personality who lashed out against the Socio-economic inequalities prevailing in his time. His multi-dimensional personality had shown great insight and wisdom in various spheres of individual and social life.

In regard to caste system in India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar pointed out that the people of India form a homogenous whole. The various races occupying definite territories have more or less fused into one another and possess cultural unity which is the only criterion of homogenous population. Given this homogeneity as a basis, caste became a problem altogether new in character and wholly absent in the situation constituted by the mere propinquity of endogamous social or tribal groups. Castes in India means an artificial chopping off of the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from using into another through the custom of endogamy. Dr B.R. Ambedkar emphasized endogamy which is peculiar to caste. He also mentioned the custom of exogamy at clan or gotra level. The various gotras of Indian are and have been exogamous. He stated that with exogamy as the rule there could be no caste, for exogamy means fusion. But we have castes, consequently in the final analysis creation of castes, so far as India is concerned, the super-imposition of endogamy on exogamy means the creation of caste. Such an analytical definition was given by Dr. Ambedkar he has given anthropological illustrations for his definition of caste.²

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar mentioned that the problem of caste ultimately revolves itself into one of the repairing the disparity between the marriageable units of the two sexes with in it. Both the surplus man and the surplus woman constitute a menace to the caste and if it is not taken much
care in finding suitable partners inside their prescribed circle, very likely they will transgress the boundary, marry outside and import offspring that is foreign to the caste. He also discussed the problem of widow remarriage and enforced widowhood, which he considered the reason for surplus woman. Dr. Ambedkar also suggested that the problem of surplus man (widower) is much more important and much more difficult than that of the surplus woman in a group that desires to wake itself into a caste. He pointed out that no scientific reasons, prevails for the custom of sati, enforced widowhood and girls marriage. We have plenty of philosophy to tell us why these customs were honoured, but nothing to tell us the causes of their origin and existence. He said that ‘a caste is an enclosed class’.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar criticized Manu and said that Manu did not give the law of caste and could not ordain the present order of Hindu Society. His work ended with the codification of the Hindu caste system rules and the preaching of caste Dharma. The growth and spread of the caste system is too gigantic a task to be achieved by the power or cunning of an individual or of a class. Similar in argument is the theory that the Brahmins created the caste. Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that there is a strong belief in the mind of orthodox Hindus that the Hindu Society was somehow moulded into the frame work of the caste system and that it is an organization created by the Shastras. He explained that the whole process of caste formation in India is a process of imitation of the higher by the lower. His study of the caste problem mainly reveals four main points: 1) that inspite of the composite make-up of the Hindu population there is a deep cultural unity. 2) the caste is a paceling in to bits of larger cultural unit, 3) that there is once caste to start with and 4) that classes have become caste through imitation and ex-communication.
In regard to caste, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has also given certain explanations for its origin. He states that Indian History is a tally of events of caste discrimination, preached and practised in the name of God. It is due to the role of religion in the early laws that the priest became the most potent instrument of the stability and status quo. He interpreted the concept of struggle for existence like as, “desires whenever acute because of the limited goods of existence, out of which they can be satisfied, disturbs this balance.” In order to maintain the balance men have relied upon religion and upon reasons. For the Indian historical content Dr. Ambedkar shows how the monopoly of social control made the priest the most powerful factor in social control.

A great deal of controversy exists on the caste origin in India various theories have been proposed by the different Indian and Western Scholars. In our society the most popular theories are Varna theory, Varna hypergamy and hypogamy (anuloma and pratiloma), occupational theory, racial theory, ecological and geographical factors and the political condition of the ancient India. In regard to the problem of caste in India. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had clearly pointed out that caste is a barrier to social progress and individual advancement of freedom. He also informed that the control minds of men by some powerful individuals is bad such that it retards any moment. The peculiar feature of the Indian caste system is the social equality which is seen in caste hierarchy. The caste hierarchy represents the social position of each and every caste, the Brahmins stands on the top and the Harijans lies at the bottom. Not only the social inequality but also economic and political inequality is found in between highest and the lowest jatis. At present, the power struggle in between the highest and the lowest castes are very common, which led to many caste conflicts. The so called dominant or highest caste are not allowing the lowest caste to reach
up to their levels. Especially in the rural villages the caste is so rigid as compared to that of urban areas. In the rural villages the lower castes are still economically depending on the dominant peasant castes. The position of the downtrodden communities in the rural villages seems to be very low and they lag behind in many spheres. Dr. Ambedkar has rightly pointed out this problem in the year 1916 and has done much scholarly work on it. So far no solution has come out for the resolution of the problem. Therefore serious and indepth research studies are required to find the solution to this problem. It is the responsibility of the educators, scholars and thinkers to focus their attention on this problem taking the radical thinking of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as a beacon of light.4

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has critically examined the problem of caste in our society. He pointed out that as long as Hindu caste system in India exists, the Hindus will hardly have any social intercourse with outsiders and if Hindus migrate to other regions on Earth, Indian caste would become a world problem “According to Dr. Ambedkar the Aryan Samajists have done a great mischief in making the Hindu society by preaching that Vedas were eternal, without beginning, without end and infallible.5 Dr. Ambedkar said that Purushasukta would really have been unique if it had preached a casteless society. The attempt of Purushasukta to realize the ideal was a kind of political fugglery, the like of which was not found in any other book of religion.

The practice of untouchability is peculiar to Hindu system. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said that the Hindu civilization could be a process of caste formation in India. It is a process of imitation of the higher by the lower. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar pointed out that caste is a barrier to social progress and individual advancement of freedom and it retards any progressive moment.
According to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Varna and the caste were the evil ideas. Varna was infallible like Vedas. The Bhagwat Gita has done enough mischief by giving a fresh lease of life to the Varna system by basing it upon a new and plausible foundation namely that of innate qualities. Moreover the Varna system of Bhagwat Gita did not say that it was based on birth.

According to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Hindu Society is pregnant with the evils of caste system which effects the social growth of our country. He refused to call the Hindu society a society at all since it does not have the essentials of a society. Caste system destroys the essentials of a society Dr. Ambedkar played an important role in binding the people together and he contemplated the ideal society based on liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice. In Dr. Ambedkar's view, Hindu society lacks communications of ideas, emotions and efforts. He attached great importance to communications. Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts on national unity and integration were influenced by the oppression and suppression of untouchables in Indian society. Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that caste has killed public spirit and has destroyed the sense of public charity. A Hindu's public is his caste and his responsibility is only to his caste. Dr. Ambedkar has firm faith in a cohesive society which would eradicate the evils of caste system and bring the depressed classes into the main stream of national life in promoting national unity and integration. Caste and religion are strong binding factors in Indian society and intimately effect the people's conduct.

Dr. Ambedkar in his draft of the Fundamental Rights had suggested that 'Any privilege or disability arising out of rank, birth, person, family, religion or religious usage and custom is abolished.' Neither the Drafting Committee nor the Constituent Assembly accepted Dr. Ambedkar's Draft. Dr. Ambedkar's draft was more substantial and pervasive and was more
near to the concept of social equality and social justice without mentioning
the words 'Chaturvarna' or jati (caste). He attempted to abolish all
privileges and disabilities arising out of the Varna or Caste distinctions. The
characteristics of caste in relation to a person or family are rank hierarchy
which is created by birth. It is sanctioned by religion. The caste hierarchy,
through religious usages and customs creates privileges for higher caste and
disabilities for the lower castes. Dr. Ambedkar had said that if the Hindu
religion is to be their religion, then it must become a religion of social
equality...... Merely an amendment of the Hindu religions code is not
enough. What is required is to purge it of the doctrine of Chaturvarna which
is the parent of the caste system and untouchability. Untouchability is the
most decadent form of social inequality, but the root cause or arch villain is
the caste system, based on hierarchy by birth. In perspective planning, the
abolition of caste system should have been a definite social goal. We are
unable to solve the caste problem justly because the caste hierarchy is so
much in our blood that we failed to perceive it as an evil, secondly the
abolition of untouchability was the only political strategy and thirdly
preservation of caste system is a vested interest for securing, social,
economic and political foot hold. The caste system has perverted the
democratic and socialist apparatus and is seriously threatening to dominate
both.

The Hindu caste system has its religious origin. It gave birth to upper
caste and lower caste considerations. This effected the cohesiveness of
Hindu society. The rigid caste system is responsible for the creation of the
so called untouchables, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other weaker
sections of society which form the lowest strata of Hindu society. The
Brahmins were treated to be the symbol of religious superiority and
intellectualism. Dr. Ambedkar came forward with an aim to create a society
where caste consideration must have forgotten. According to him caste is a barrier to social progress and other individual advancement of the freedom. He strongly criticized Varna and caste system as evil ideas. According to him there should be a cohesive society which would certainly eradicate the evils of the rigid caste system and bring downtrodden classes into the mainstream of natural life and then it will promote national unity and integration. He also argued for a casteless society. According to him abolition of caste system would certainly create a congenial atmosphere which is in fact essential for a cohesive society that promotes national integration. Dr. Ambedkar preached annihilation of caste for the re-organisation of Hindu society.

Dr. Ambedkar was a man primarily responsible for bringing about social revolution to secure human dignity for the oppressed. Indians who wretched life as untouchable was a blot on humanity. Thus untouchability and discrimination are yet to be fully wiped out despite numerous concrete steps taken by the govt. of India when India became independent and adopted constitution that brought many safe guards in favour of weaker sections specially the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, also banned untouchability and bring the downtrodden at par with other sections of the society. Of course, the constitution of India was hailed all over the world as a ‘New Charter of Human Rights’.

REFERENCES:
3. Ibid


5. Ambedkar, who were shudras? (Bombay, 1946) at pp.7, 8.

6. Dr. Ambedkar, Annihilation of caste (Lahore, 1935) at p.44.