Chapter-II

ORIGIN OF BACKWARD CLASSES AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION POLICY
Creation of an egalitarian society has been the vision of the founder fathers of the Constitution of India. The Article 16 of the constitution provides that there shall be equal opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment in an office under the state. However, the clause (4) under the Article 16 permits reservation in favour of backward classes.

The Indian society has been characterised by stratification based on caste system. Traditional discrimination has led not only to social backwardness but also economic backwardness that stems from the social discrimination. Though the definition of "backwardness" has been a point of debate, the definition Backward Classes of citizens means the class of citizens who are socially and educationally backward as may be notified by the government from time to time. The following few paragraphs threw lights on the meaning and origin of backward classes.

**Origin of Backward Classes**

India can claim to have long and rich experience with a system of public policy which seeks to safeguard the interests of backward class communities through preferential treatment. From the last decade of the Nineteenth Century to the present, it has remained an integral part of public policy of both British and Princely India. It has been found expedient to deal with the problems of castes and communities occupying low position in status hierarchy.

The inherited injustices and oppressions of a traditional society spanning over many thousands of years necessitated a policy of preferential treatment to bring them on par with other advanced sections of society.¹

India’s system of preferential treatment for historically disadvantaged sections of the population is unprecedented in scope and extent. India embraced equality as a cardinal value against a background of elaborate, valued, and clearly perceived inequalities. Her Constitutional policies to offset these inequalities proceeded from an awareness of the entrenched and cumulative nature of group inequalities. These compensatory discrimination policies entail systematic departures from norms of equality such as merit, even-handedness, and indifference to ascriptive characteristics. It is for over a hundred years that Provincial Governments in India have been
implementing special programs for the welfare of the deprived and depressed sections of society. The first such decisive step was taken by Madras Government with the framing of Grant-in-Aid Code in 1885 to regulate financial aid to educational institutions, providing special facilities for students of depressed classes.\(^2\)

Since then (1885), the policy of protective discrimination, in particular job reservations, has shown an irreversible trend. Beginning with reservation of posts in public services, it extended to reservation of seats in legislative and other representative bodies, to preferential treatment in admission to educational institutions and ameliorative measures for their economic advancement. Thus from the last decade of Nineteenth century to the present, the schemes of positive discrimination have remained an integral part of public policy of both the British and free India. Thus, the reservation policy encompasses: (i) political representation; (ii) employment under government (iii) education; and (iv) economic uplift.\(^3\)

### Meaning of Backward Classes

The first question that arises about India's policy of compensatory discrimination is: "who are the legitimate beneficiaries?" Historically, the process is very complex the identification of some groups as requiring and deserving special treatment gives rise to concept of compensatory treatment, and this in turn provides controversies about those who should be included within its scope. Even after compensatory program is firmly established, who is to benefit continues to be a central question in designing and administering programs-and crucially important for the continuing justification of these programs to others. For the Constitution authorizes preferential treatment only for the limited purpose of advancing the backward. Public and professional discourse about the identity of the beneficiaries is thus an integral part of the operation of these programs.

The Other Backward Classes for whom preferential treatment is authorized are not defined in the Constitution, nor is any exclusive method or agency for their designation provided. For all the uncertainty surrounding the term "Scheduled Castes" (and its predecessor "Depressed Classes") its central purpose is clear to identify the victims of "untouchability". At the' time of Independence, the, term "Backward Classes" had 'a less fixed and definite reference. The term had been around for some
time. But it had a variety of referents; it had shifted rapidly in meaning and had come
to mean different things in different places.

In 1917 the Maharaja of Kolhapur recounted to Montague that he had "been
taking very keen interest... in uplifting the Backward Classes and especially the
untouchables". Soon after, the term appears in the terms of reference of the
Southborough Committee, which was to advise on measures to secure representation
of "minorities, of special interests, or of backward classes".\textsuperscript{4} But the Committee did
not mention any such groups in its report, other than Depressed Classes. The Joint
Select Committee of the British Parliament which reviewed the Southborough Report
mentioned in passing the importance they attached to "the educational advancement
of the depressed and backward classes".\textsuperscript{5} There is no indication that, the term was
meant to include anyone besides the depressed classes.

"Backward Classes" first acquired a technical meaning in the princely state of
Mysore. In 1918, the Mysore Government appointed a committee to enquire into the
question of encouraging members of the "Backward communities "in Public Service."
In 1921, preferential recruitment of "Backward communities" was instituted and they
were defined as "all communities other than Brahmins, who are not now adequately
represented in the public service".\textsuperscript{6}

The Reforms Enquiry Commission (1924) did not find occasion to use the
term, but the Ministry Report refers to its use as a synonym for the Depressed Classes
(untouchables) and in contradistinction to "non-Brahmins".

Although "Non-Brahmin" and "Maratha" were much more frequently used in
the setting of the Bombay "Non-Brahmin" Movement of the 1920s the Backward
Classes rubric was employed both popularly and officially in a broad meaning,
somewhat akin to that in Mysore. In 1925, a Government Resolution defined
Backward Classes as all except Brahmins, Prabhus, Marwaris, Parsis, Banias and
Christians. Reservations in government service were provided for this group.

The Hartog Committee (1928) defined Backward Classes in their glossary:
Castes or classes which are educationally backward. They include the depressed
classes, aboriginals, hill tribes, and criminal tribes.\textsuperscript{7}
In 1929 the Indian Central Committee distinguished the problem of the ‘backward classes’, among whom may be counted aboriginals, criminal tribes and others among the less advanced of the inhabitants of British India. Apparently the Committee not only excludes the Depressed Classes but includes in addition to tribals, some strata of the caste population, for they mention an estimate of sixteen million backward "classes in UP (excluding, the untouchables). But the category is not used as expansively as, the Mysore or earlier Bombay usage, for it did not include the Madras non-Brahmins or Marhattas in Bombay who were discussed separately. The term could not have been a familiar one for the Report finds it necessary to distinguish Backward Classes from untouchables several times. In a separate note, M C Rajah, an untouchable spokesman, mentions Backward Classes only as a confusing synonym for Depressed Classes.

In 1930 the State Committee in Bombay devoted careful consideration to the question of nomenclature. It noted that in 1924, the term Depressed Classes had been accorded a wider meaning to include aboriginal tribes and the Criminal Tribes and some other wandering and backward Castes [which had] resulted in much confusion of thought in this Presidency, as in ordinary usage the phrase Depressed Classes is taken-as meaning the untouchables whereas they do not form half of this new and enlarged grouping, of Depressed Classes. The Committee recommended that "Depressed Classes" should be used in the sense of untouchables, a usage which "will coincide- with existing common practice". It proposed that the wider group should be Called "Backward Classes", which should be subdivided into many castes.

It identified the Depressed Classes (i.e, untouchables), Aboriginal and Hill Tribes, Other Backward Classes (including wandering tribes). It noted that the groups then currently called Backward Classes should be renamed "intermediate classes". In addition to 36 Depressed Classes (approximate 1921 population 1.475 million) and 24 Aboriginal and Hill Tribes (approximate 1921 population 1.323 million), it listed 94 Other Backward Classes (approximate 1921 population 1.041 million).

The Simon Commission, though it refers to "intermediate castes", and takes note of the non-Brahmin movement, makes no mention of Backward Classes. But shortly after, in the early 1930s we find a flowering of the term. In the hearings held
by the Indian Franchise Committee in the United Provinces, the term recurs in the testimony in a number of significations. Thus a note by S.S.Nehru, ICS, presents a list of Depressed Classes of, which portions are designated “Vagrant Tribes” and "Backward Classes". Presumably these are the groups who least fit the "untouchability" criterion. However the memorandum of Pandit Sheokaran Nath Misra, (Deputy Collector of Fyzabad) suggests that "depressed classes should include un-touchables as well as backward classes". He equated depressed classes roughly with all Sudras excepting Kayasthas. The United Provinces Hindu Backward Classes League (founded in 1929) submitted a memorandum which suggested that the term "Depressed" carried a connotation "of untouchability in the sense of causing pollution by touch as in the case of Madras and Bombay" and that many communities were reluctant to identify themselves as depressed. The League suggested the term “Hindu Backward” as a more suitable nomenclature. The list of 115 castes submitted included all candidates for the untouchable category as well as a stratum above. "All of the [listed] communities belong to non-Dwijas or degenerate or Sudra classes of the Hindus". They were described as low socially, educationally and economically and said to number over 60 per cent of the population.

This inclusive usage was adopted elsewhere. Travancore in 1937 abandoned the Depressed Classes nomenclature and substituted the term "Backward Communities" to include all educationally and economically backward communities. However, in Madras and elsewhere the term "Backward Classes" was used to refer to the strata above the untouchables. The Madras Provincial Backward Classes League, consisting of the less forward non-Brahmin communities was founded in 1934 for the purpose of securing separate treatment from "the forward non-Brahmin communities". According to the list they presented to the Madras Government in 1944, the Backward Classes comprised more than a hundred communities with about 25 million people (more than two-thirds of the non-Brahmin category and 50 per cent of the total population of the Presidency). In November 1947, separate reservations in the Madras services were provided for these "Backward Hindus".

In the meantime, the Objectives Resolution of the Constituent Assembly, moved by Jawaharlal Nehru on December 13, 1946, had resolved to provide adequate
safeguards for "minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes". Thus, the term had never acquired a definite meaning at the all-India level. There had been no attempt to define it or employ it on the national level and there were no 'nationwide backward classes' organisations or spokes men. It had definite meanings in local contexts, although these differed somewhat. After the listing of Scheduled Castes, the usage as a synonym for untouchables drops away. Two major species of usage emerge:

1. As the more inclusive group of all those who need special treatment.
2. As a stratum higher than the untouchables but nonetheless depressed.

This double usage continues today: the former in the usage of Backward Classes in the wide sense (including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes); the latter in the usage as equivalent to 'Other Backward Classes'.

From the foregoing discussion the following Denotations are used interchangeably over a period of time for the Backward Classes.

1. As a synonym for Depressed Classes, untouchables, Scheduled Castes.
2. As comprising the untouchable, aboriginal and hill tribes, criminal tribes, etc.
3. As comprising all the communities deserving special treatment, namely those included in (2) above and in addition the lower strata of non-touchable communities.
4. As comprising all non-tribal communities deserving special treatment.
5. As comprising all communities deserving special treatment accept the untouchables.
6. As comprising the lower strata of non-untouchable communities.
7. As comprising all communities above the untouchables but below the most "advanced" communities.
8. As comprising the non-touchable communities who were "backward" in comparison to the highest castes.
9. As comprising all communities other than the highest or most advanced.
10. As comprising all persons who meet given non-communal tests of backwardness (e.g., low income).
Backward class people is a collective term, used by the Government of India, for castes which are economically and socially disadvantaged and face, or may have faced discrimination on account of birth. Most of them do not have any land ownership or economic independence and are dependent on Forward Castes for employment, mostly as farm hands or menial labour; or derive income from self employment on caste-dependent skills assignment. They typically include the Dalits, the Scheduled castes, and the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). They live mainly in rural India and perform hard physical labour such as agriculture and janitorial work. Backward Castes constitute around 50% of the Indian population. Even though they have a rich culture, many live below the poverty line. According to estimates from the Indian government's National Sample Survey, in 1999-2000 44% of Scheduled Tribes and 35% of Scheduled Castes lived in poverty. Their plight is regarded as a serious issue in Indian society. According to "The Times of India" on 31 August 2010, even after 17 years; at most 7% of seats have been filled by OBCs, regardless of their 27% reservation.11

Political parties in India have attempted to use these communities as vote banks. In contrast, some politicians like Ambedkar, D. Devaraj Urs, and V.P. Singh have tried to self-empower the Backward Castes. As a result, there are now many opinion leaders, including Bangarappa, Siddaramaiah, Narendra Modi, Uma Bharathi, Ramachandra Veerappa, Laloo Prasad Yadav, and Mulayam Singh Yadav, in these communities. Today in India, there is a strong need of OBC reservation in large Corporate world and Private sector for equality among forward castes and rest of the people of India.

Constituent Assembly debates and Backward Classes

By the time of the Constituent Assembly the usage of the term "Backward Classes" to refer to some larger or smaller portion of the population deserving of special treatment was familiar in many parts of the country. In the Assembly, delegates from the north expressed puzzlement at the provisions for "Backward Classes" (in what came to be Article 16[4]). It struck them as vague and some thought it was meant merely as a synonym for the Scheduled Castes, while others were concerned that it might mean more. But representatives from Madras, Mysore and
Bombay assured their colleagues that Backward Classes was a distinct term with a technical meaning. Examples were given of Mysore where Backward Classes included all but Brahmins, of Madras where it referred to a stratum of non-untouchable Hindu castes and to Bombay where it included not only Scheduled Castes and Tribes but others who are economically, educationally, and socially backward. A representative from Bihar (which had the most active Backward Classes movement in the north) explained that Backward Classes were a section of society between the highest castes and the Scheduled Castes: "the third occupying the middle position and consisting of a large portion of our people is what may be termed the Backward Class. No doubt they are not treated as untouchables." K.M. Munshi assured the house that the term would include the Scheduled Castes, when doubts were expressed, and explained that it was "necessary to find a generic term". "It signifies people-touchable or untouchable, belonging to this community or that- which are so backward that special protection is required in the services."

Although one speaker pointed out that classes were not necessarily castes and that literacy might be the test of backwardness, it was generally envisioned that them backward classes would be communities. When asked what is a backward community, Ambedkar, defending the draft, explained we have left it be determined by each local government. A backward community is a community which is backward in the opinion of the Government. However, the matter was not as clear as this suggests. The most prophetic statement was T.T. Krishnamachari's prediction that the clause would be "a paradise for lawyers".

It was anticipated, then, that the backward classes other than the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, were to be designated at the local level. The delegation to local authorities undoubtedly reflected an acceptance (at least temporarily) of the divergence of existing practices, a desire- to preserve flexibility, and an awareness of the difficulties of prescribing universally applicable tests of backwardness in view of the varying local conditions. It may also have been presumed that "Backward Classes" were sufficiently potent politically to look out for their own interests on a local level, and, unlike Scheduled Castes and Tribes, central control of their designation was not required to ensure the inclusion of the deserving. However the Central gov-
ernment was not entirely excluded from the process; The President is instructed to appoint a Backward Classes Commission.

To investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes and the difficulties under which they labour and to make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by the Union or any State to remove such difficulties and to improve their condition.

No special central machinery for supervision of programmes for backward classes is provided in the Constitution, but Article 338 (3) provides that the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Tribes shall include in his duties such other groups as the President may specify on receipt of the report of the Backward Classes Commission. It is not clear from the text that this Presidential specification was meant to be exclusive.

**OBCs after the Independence**

Even before the Constitution came into force there was a great expansion in the employment of the Backward Classes category. Several states created such a category for the first time and, of those who already had it, several expanded the benefits conferred upon the Backward Classes. The Central Government was pressed to extend its scheme of post-matriculation scholarships to the Other Backward Classes, and, when it did so, it compiled lists of Backward Classes in each state for this purpose. 'Backward Classes' organisations emerged; a national federation was formed. Apart from the Central scholarships, provisions for Other Backward Classes roughly followed a regional pattern as indicated by Table 2.1.
Table: 2.1

State Wise Concessions for Other Backward Classes, 1951-1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>Education: Fee concessions, stipends, training, facilities, etc.</th>
<th>Reservations in Educational Instrs.</th>
<th>Other Welfare</th>
<th>Recruitment to Govt. Posts</th>
<th>Expenditures 1951-52 (Lakhs)</th>
<th>Expenditures 1953-54</th>
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Source: Marc Galantar, Competing Equalities: Law and Backward Classes in India

Note: OBC lumped together with SCs and STs.
In South India and in Bombay, provisions for Other Backward Classes flourished. In the north, there were mostly a scatter of educational concessions and many states did not have any lists at all (other than those compiled for purposes of the Central post-matriculation scholarship scheme).

It remained unclear just how many people were included in the Backward Classes category. The never completed 1951 Census enumeration, based in part on the existing state lists, counted 67 millions (18.9 per cent of the total population). The Planning Commission in July 1951 estimated that Other Backward Classes were approximately 20 per cent of the population," but in late 1952 noted that "these other backward classes are believed to number about 54.6 millions". Other observers predicted a smaller list, but the President in his address to the inaugural meeting of the Backward Classes Commission is reported to have mentioned the figure of about 70 millions.14

It was anticipated, then, that the backward classes other than the Scheduled Castes and Tribes were to be designated at the local level. The delegation to local authorities undoubtedly reflected an acceptance (at least temporarily) of the divergence of existing difficulties of prescribing universally applicable tests of backwardness in view of the varying local conditions. It may also have been that "Backward Classes" were sufficiently potent politically to look after their own interests on a local level, and unlike Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Central control of their designation was required to insure the inclusion of the deserving. However, Central government was not entirely excluded from the process. Even before the Constitution came into force, there was a great expansion in the employment of the Backward Classes category. Several States created such a category for the first time, and of those who already had it, several expanded the benefits conferred upon the Backward Classes. The Central government was pressed to expand its scheme of post-matriculation scholarships to the Other Backward Classes, and when it did so, it compiled lists of Backward Classes in each State for this purpose. Backward Classes organizations emerged, and a national federation was formed. The following table 2.2 shows the estimated population of OBCs in early 1950s.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>Total Population in (Lakhs)</th>
<th>Enumerated Pop. of OBC</th>
<th>% of Enum. of OBC</th>
<th>Estimated Pop. of OBC</th>
<th>% of Est. to Total Pop.</th>
<th>Estimated Pop. of OBC</th>
<th>% of Est. to Total Pop.</th>
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<td>17.2</td>
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<td>16.7</td>
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<td>17.53</td>
<td>19.3</td>
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<td>22.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh &amp; Bilaspur</td>
<td>11.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.38a</td>
<td>21.4</td>
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<td>Coorg</td>
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<td>30.3</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>29.7</td>
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<td>Delhi</td>
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<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>2.41a</td>
<td>13.8</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.08</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>6.39</td>
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<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>64.5</td>
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<td>7.40</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Andamans &amp; Nicobars</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>3568.29</td>
<td>674.39</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>730.01</td>
<td>20.5</td>
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<td></td>
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Source: Marc Galantar, *Competing Equalities: Law and Backward Classes in India*
Note: OBC lumped together with SCs and STs.
A pair of Supreme Court decisions in April 1951 shattered the legal foundation of the system of communal quotas which prevailed in South India. State of Madras Champakam Dorairajan struck down Madras' reservations in educational institutions and by implication barred all preferential treatment outside the area of government employment. Venkataramana State of Madras struck down Madras' quotas in government posts for all groups other than the Scheduled Castes and 'Backward Hindus', confining potential recipients to those who could qualify as the backward classes mentioned in Article 16(4). These decisions caused a political furore in South India and occasioned the prompt addition of Article 15(4) to the Constitution.

The debate over the amendment centered on the desirability of providing educational preferences to the Backward Classes, and it revolved in part around the question of who were the backward classes. Although the Scheduled Castes and Tribes were equally discomfited by Champakam Dorairajan and presumably equally concerned with educational preferences, a there was little mention of them in parliament. The question worrying the house was the identity of Backward Classes, and the possible abuse of the new provision by advanced groups. In an attempt to confine the possible meaning of Backward Classes, the i.e. Wording of Article 15(4) was keyed to that of Article 340 which provided that the not yet established Backward Classes Commission should list i.e. the "socially and educationally backward classes of citizens". Some speakers drew assurances from the nation that the listing by the Commission and subsequent presidential specification would be determinative. Others assumed that the identity of the Backward Classes would remain a question for the state governments and counselled trust in their good faith.15

It is abundantly clear that the Backward Classes, by whoever designated and according to whatever tests they were chosen, were expected to be a list of castes or communities. Ambedkar, then Law Minister, forthrightly observed that the amendment was needed precisely because "what is called backward classes is nothing else but a collection of certain castes". There was considerable concern that the provision should not permit communal quotas to be enjoyed by more advanced groups. While there was discussion of the economic backwardness of "the groups who
deserved preferences, it was not merely the poor that the drafters and speakers had in mind. (Indeed, if they had, an amendment would hardly have been necessary). Some speakers argued that preferences should be directed to the economically poor, but the predominant concern was to provide some special treatment to offset and remedy specifically those social inequalities of caste and community which were seen as underlying and compounding economic differences.

The Venkataramana case had indicated that the "Backward Classes" included only those caste groups of whose backwardness there was some assurance. In spite of some unflattering observations about that judgment, there was nothing in the proceedings to indicate that Parliament sought to overturn it. Indeed it was seen as the foundation for judicial protection against unwarranted use of the power to confer preferences. Upon passage of the amendment, Madras revised its former system of communal quotas to accord with the new requirements; the situation in other states remained unchanged. There was no further litigation over the Backward Classes for eight years.

**First Backward Classes Commission**

The Backward Classes Commission was established in 1953 under chairmanship of Kaka Kalekar and directed to determine the criteria to be adopted in considering whether any sections of the people (in addition to the Scheduled Castes and Tribes) should be treated as socially and, educationally backward classes; and, in accordance with such criteria to prepare a list of such classes.

The directions express an expectation of Centrally-established uniform standards and a Central master list of Backward Classes. Accordingly, the Commission, after two years work, presented a list of 2,399 backward groups and recommended various measures for their economic, educational, social, cultural and political advancement." It was estimated that these groups comprised a total of more than 116 million members (about 32 per cent of the total population of India). This does not include women as a separate group; although the Commission recommended that all women in India comprised a Backward Classes does it include Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who in 1951 made up over 14 per cent and 6 per cent respectively of the total population.
It had been generally anticipated, if not universally approved, that the "classes" designated by the Commission would be castes or communities. While indicating its desire to avoid perpetuating evils of caste and its eagerness to avoid caste, the Commission "found it difficult to avoid caste in the present prevailing conditions". The Commission felt it was "not only correct but inevitable" to interpret its terms of reference "as mainly relating to social hierarchy based on caste". As general criteria of backwardness the Commission listed trade and occupation, security of employment, educational attainments, representation in government service and, most emphatically, position in the social hierarchy. It did not use these standards directly to isolate categories of backward persons, but to isolate backward communities. The units to which these tests were applied were for the most part caste and sub-caste groups. In identifying the backward, the Commission used caste in two ways: first, it used caste groups as the units or "classes" to be classified: and second, it used the position or standing of these groups in the social hierarchy as the principal criterion for determining their backwardness. In classifying communities, the Commission aimed to take into consideration the social position which a community occupies in the caste hierarchy, the percentage of literacy and its general educational advancement; and its representation in government service or in the industrial sphere. The economic backwardness also had to be kept in view as also the recent trends in its advancement as a result of various (government) measures during the past one or two decades.

The Commission was deluged by communities claiming to backward." But it found that 'the paucity of data fully matched the immensity of 'its task." The state governments were 'found not to have relevant statistics, administrators and census officers pleaded their inability to supply the relevant material, and figures supplied by the communities themselves were 'chiefly guesswork'. The decision to deemphasise caste in the 1951 census 'operations had left the Commission' without any figures on the literacy, income or occupation of the various BC communities. The Commission had no facilities for generating data themselves. In the face of these, obstacles, the Commission plowed bravely on. In the absence of reliable facts' and figures, the only course open to us was to rely on the statistics available from the various governments.
and the previous census reports, and to go by the general impressions of government officers, leaders of public opinion and social workers.

In some cases there was no data at all and "the decision had to be taken on the strength of the name of the community only, on the principle of living the benefit of doubt." The Commission did not undertake to document the application of its tests to the communities on its list, for which it provided only names, traditional occupations and estimated population. "In addition to listing the Backward Classes, the Commission was instructed to investigate the conditions of all such socially and educationally backward classes and the difficulties under which they labour and make recommendations.

I. As to the steps that should be taken by the union or any state to remove such difficulties or to improve their conditions;

II. As to the grants that should be made.

True to its charge, the Commission recommended a vast array of schemes for the protection and advancement of the backward, including a number of major changes in rural life - redistribution of land, protection of tenants, help to the small agriculturalists, (credit, price supports, irrigation, etc). It recommended the creation of a separate ministry for Backward Classes' Welfare. It proposed reservations for Backward Classes in government service of at least 25 per cent in Class I, per cent in Class II and 40 per cent in Classes III and IV. In addition there were various aids to the education of these groups and a reservation of 70 per cent in medical, scientific and technical colleges.

In a last minute volte face, the Chairman virtually repudiated the Commission's work, having concluded that it would have, been better if we could determine the criteria of backwardness on principles other than caste. He ends the caste test repugnant to democracy and inimical to the creation of "a casteless and classless society" (in the then fashionable phrase) - by perpetuating and encouraging caste divisions. It is not entirely clear that he would put in its place. He recommends that backwardness be measured by residential, economic, educational and cultural criteria. Apparently he not only repudiates caste standing as the test of backwardness.
but also the use of caste units. At several places in his covering letter he suggests that only individuals and families should be the units whose backwardness is ascertained. Elsewhere, however, he recommends policies which seem incompatible with this position (e.g., that where an income test is employed, members of backward communities should lie given priority).18

The Chairman's last minute desertion foreshadowed (and perhaps augmented) the negative reception, that awaited the report. The spectacle of numerous groups vying to display their backwardness, the feeling that caste classifications were divisive and unfitting, this casualness of the Commission's application of its criteria the vastness to the number it found backward, and the expansiveness of the preferences it proposed, exposed its work to widespread criticism.

The Commission's report was laid on the table of both houses of Parliament on September 3, 1956, accompanied by a withering critique from the Minister of Home Affairs, expressing disappointment with its criteria and its conclusions. The emphasis on caste, the Minister asserted, displayed the "dangers of separatism". Not only on the caste basis unfair to the backward outside these communities, but the caste system was undeniably "the greatest hindrance in the way of our progress toward an egalitarian society, and the recognition of specified castes as backward may serve to maintain and perpetuate the existing distinctions on the basis of caste" The Commission's standards other than caste were "obviously vague". The very expansiveness of the Commission's list undermined, its usefulness, for if everyone "barring a few exceptions, has thus to be regarded as backward, the really needy would, be swamped by the multitude and hardly receive any special attention. Thus the Commission failed to find "positive and workable criteria". Further investigations will have to be undertaken' so that the deficiencies that have been noticed in the findings of the Commission are made good and the problem is solved with due regard to the requirements of Article 340. The state governments were requested to undertake ad hoc surveys to determine the numbers of Backward Classes and in the meantime to "give all reasonable facilities" to, the Backward Classes "in accordance' with their existing lists and also to such others who in their opinion deserve to be considered as socially and educationally backward in the existing
Thus the matter went back to the states; the Commission's report remained on the table and in spite of occasional agitations, was not taken up by Parliament until 1965.

When the replies from the state governments "were not found helpful" the Central government requested the Office of the Registrar General to conduct tulkic surveys to determine suitable criteria. It was hoped that the Registrar General could determine occupational tests of backwardness. On the basis of a three-state sample survey an occupational test with an income ceiling was tentatively proposed. The Home Ministry's suggestion that the states adopt such an occupational criterion enjoyed a mixed reception. However, this effort collapsed when the Deputy Registrar General reported that it would be impossible to draw up precise and complete list of occupations whose practitioners were socially and economically backward.

Those who entertained hopes of generous preferential treatment for the Other Backward Classes found some-encouragement in the late 1950s. State expenditures on schemes for the Other Backward Classes increased (particularly in education where they were substantial), although the expansion of the Centre's scheme for post-matriculation scholarships slowed down after 1955-56. Apparently at some point in 1957 the Government of India instructed all state governments to extend the benefits of various welfare schemes to the Other Backward Classes, using the Ministry of Education lists, pending finalisation of a list of Other Backward Classes. Furthermore it requested the state governments to fill unused vacancies in the seats reserved in educational institutions for; Scheduled Castes and Tribes with students from the Other Backward Classes, a measure found very gratifying by the All-India Backward Classes Federation who observed that "at long last the voice of the Federation is being effectively heard".

By the beginning of the 1960s the tide was running strongly against definition of the Backward Classes by community. Opposition within the government was augmented by criticism from academics and much of the national press, who voiced a common suspicion of the caste criterion. For the first time since 1951, a court intervened to strike down a scheme for Backward Classes in a decision widely acclaimed as a blow at casteism. Revulsion from communal criteria was reinforced by
reports of their abuse. In a situation where many thoughtful persons were increasingly concerned about the dangerous potentialities of social cleavages, the alleged divisive tendencies of the communal criterion seemed a serious threat to national unity and integration.

While a "casteless and classless society" remained the avowed aim of the Congress and a wide section of the intelligentsia, there had been a subtle shift in notions of how this aim was to be pursued. A decade before it was widely thought that special redistributive measures were required specifically to offset inequalities associated with caste, even while general development programmes addressed other aspects of inequality. The notion of caste differentials as themselves a significant form of inequality deserving of special governmental attention to eliminate their effects gave way to a notion that the salient differences were economic; specific redistributive measures directed at caste differences were not necessary, since overall development would raise the general level. Recognition of cast differences in order to offset their effects was replaced by an enhanced reluctance to recognise them at all; indeed, any recognition of such differences was seen as itself a violation of egalitarian principles and productive of inequality.

In May 1961 the Cabinet decided that no national list of Other Backward Classes should be drawn up and the states were informed that in the view of the government of India, it was better to apply economic tests than to by caste. At the end of May a Conference of Chief Ministers to consider matters relating to National Integration "agreed that economic backwardness rather than community or caste would provide an appropriate criterion for giving aid to individuals in matters of education including professional and technical training". In August 1961, the Home Ministry informed the state governments of the Center's decision not to list Backward Classes. In the Ministry's view, the very expansiveness of such proposed enumerations as that of the Backward Classes Commission militated against them: "if the bulk of the country's millions, were to be regarded, as coming within the category of Backward Classes, no useful purpose could be served by separate enumerations of such classes". Furthermore the caste criterion was objectionable: "the remedies suggested on the basis of caste would be worse than the evil of
backwardness itself. But subsequent efforts to discover usable criteria on economic lines "did not yield any useful results". Where in 1950, the "Home Ministry had acknowledged an obligation to compile a list in accordance with the requirements of Article 340, it now pointed out that the Constitution did not require the Centre to draw up a list. Since even if it were to do so, it will still be open to every state government to draw up its own lists (and) any all-India list would have no practical utility". More importantly, the "crying need" of the day was social cohesion and emotional integration. There was the grave danger that different treatment of the 'backward' would foster divisive tendencies, and would undermine efforts for general economic up lift, and the reduction of disparities between different classes. The states were urged to emphasise the expansion, of welfare and educational benefits to all of the poor employing economic rather than communal categories.

The withdrawal of the Central Government from involvement in preferences for the Other Backward Classes was confirmed by the omission of any provision for them in the Central sector of the Third Five Year Plan. The amount contributed' by the Central government post-matriculation scholarships for Other Backward Classes, which had increased steadily since 1949, was frozen at the 1958-59 level and beginning in 1963, the state lists of Other Backward Classes used in administering, this scheme were abandoned in favour of a test of family income.

The Central government's campaign for economic criteria in the states was given added impetus by the first' (since 1951) intervention of the Supreme Court into the matter of who are the Backward Classes. In September 1962 the Supreme Court struck down the Mysore Backward Classes, whose defects included exclusive reliance on caste standing as a measure of backwardness, adding the onus of constitutional disrepute to the caste criterion. The Court's judgment, which warmly commended economic tests, was widely acclaimed and widely (and mistakenly) interpreted as outlawing entirely the use of caste tests. This case marked the emergence of the judiciary as the institution within which the problem of who are the Backward Classes was most carefully and coherently addressed.

In 1965, when the Report of the Backward Classes Commission was finally discussed in Parliament, the Central government's spokesman firmly reiterated its
opposition to communal criteria. Caste criteria were not only administratively unworkable, but were contrary to the "first principle of social justice" in their unfairness to the other poor. They were contrary to the Constitution, would perpetuate caste, and would create in the recipients both vested interest and a sense of helplessness. The Centre endorsed economic criteria, but refrained from enforcing it on the states, preferring "the path of persuasion". Eight states were said to have adopted the economic criterion.

Backward Classes organisations continued to campaign for greater benefits and for a revival of Central responsibility and interest in the Backward Classes. In particular, they petitioned for a restoration of the caste basis, for implementation of the long-ignored report of the Backward Classes Commission, and for creation of a ministry to attend to the problems of the Backward Classes. Organisations of particular communities and some composite Backward Class organizations at the local level (especially in the South and in Bihar continue to flourish, but many of the local composite organisations have become moribund. After, a period of desuetude, the national AIBCF had a revival in the late 1980s.

As the Central role in designation of Backward Classes moved from an attempt to prepare a single nationwide list to suggesting standards to the states, courts involved in litigation over Backward Classes' lists made it clear that the Constitution did not confer on these Central proposals any conclusiveness in the identification of the Backward Classes. While the state might make special provision for 'any' Backward Class, it is under no constitutional obligation to make such provision for every class-designated as backward by the Backward Classes Commission or by any other agency. Indeed, the state may not rely on the Endings of the Backward Classes Commission to establish conclusively that a given class is backward. Conversely, preferences may be given to a group which does not appear on the Commission's list. State power to provide preferential treatment to the backward is not limited to those listed by the Commission or any other agency. The original expectation that the Commission's list or some part of it would be confirmed by Presidential specification has gone unfulfilled. This failure does not invalidate other listings of Backward Classes for, the courts have held, presidential specification would not exhaustively

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define the Backward Classes for purposes of preferences under Articles 15(4) and 16(4).\textsuperscript{23} Central proposals may, of course, carry some persuasive weight with the states (or, as guides to "reasonableness", with the Courts). But it is the "State" in the broad sense of all governmental organs that retains the power of designation. Preferences and who is to receive them may be provided by executive (as well as by legislative action)-and they almost always are.

With the abandonment of central attempts to define the Backward Classes and the relinquishment of whatever control might accompany central funds for Other Backward Classes the matter reverted to the states. The composition of the Other Backward Classes, the scope of preferential programmes and the level of benefits continued to vary widely from state to state. Some of the varying state practices for selecting Backward Classes are summarized in Table 2.3. For all its incompleteness and oversimplification, this list gives us a rough profile of who are the Backward Classes in the mid-1970s.
### Table 2.3
Various State Practices for Selecting Backward Castes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name of Group</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Estimated Population (In %)</th>
<th>Posts (In %)</th>
<th>Medical College Admissions (in %)</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>' BCs</td>
<td>92 listed communities</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Scholarships; fee concessions</td>
<td>&quot;Other&quot; benefits only for those with income under Rs 3600</td>
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<td>Assam</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Economically BCs</td>
<td>All with income under Rs 1500</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Scholarships hostel</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Members of (1955 BCC) list of communities with income less; than Rs 12,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Economically BCs</td>
<td>Income less than Rs 4800/year</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Scholarships Etc.</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>BCs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1 seat of 60</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>BCs / Socially and Educationally BCs</td>
<td>1 Occupations 2. 19 Communities 3. Border &amp; poor areas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>BCs</td>
<td>List of Communities</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Direct recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>BCs</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Socially and educationally BCs</td>
<td>Members of listed communities with income less than Rs 10,000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Socially and educationally BCs</td>
<td>Members of listed communities with income less than Rs 6000</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Scholarships, Loans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>BCs</td>
<td>Members of 560 listed communities with income</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Kerala Service Rules 14-17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>OBCs</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>OBCs</td>
<td>List of communities</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>BCs of Backward Areas</td>
<td>List of communities</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>BCs</td>
<td>List of 105 communities (plus add' I list for Kanya Kumari District).</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Hostels; special training</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>BCs</td>
<td>List of 58 Communities</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Initial recruitment, Promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Hill Areas</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is worth noting a few of the salient features of this profile. Caste and communal units remain the predominant "classes" that are deemed backward. Caste lists range in magnitude from those which include a substantial portion of the state's population to those comprising a narrow stratum just above the untouchables. Income tests are also employed in many cases, sometimes, independently and sometimes in conjunction with communal units. The level of benefits' ranges from none through scholarships and fee concessions to an array of reservations in government posts and medical college admissions.

There is important regional variation. For convenience we may think of three contiguous groupings. First there is what we might call the peninsular bloc comprising the four Dravidian states (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu) and Maharashtra. In these states the Backward Classes categories have a long history descending from pre-Independence arrangements; there are a wide range of benefits, (except in Maharashtra) a major segment of the population from 38 to 55 per cent is included and a major segment of scarce opportunities are reserved for them.

In sharp contrast is what we might call the eastern-middle land, stretching across India from Assam in the northeast through West Bengal and Orissa, across Madhya Pradesh to Rajasthan and Gujarat. In these states there is no significant use of the Other Backward Classes category.24

The northern tier of states displays an intermediate pattern. Jammu and Kashmir, with its history of communal quotas, resembles the southern pattern. An admixture of geographical criteria is found there and in Punjab and UP, along with use of communal units. Bihar, like Jammu and Kashmir, approximates the peninsular pattern. The Backward Classes are selected on a communal basis and make up a sizeable portion of the population, but the benefits have not been as extensive as in the South. Extension of benefits to reservations of government posts in 1578 set off a political crisis.

What the Central government tried in 1965 to portray as a trend toward substitution of economic for communal criteria was even then largely a rhetorical fact, albeit one built around two substantial items -the abandonment of communal
units in Andhra and in Mysore. From the vantage point of the late 1970s this "trend" appears more as a transient deflection from the main line of development of Backward Classes lists. That line of development has been one of continuing use of communal units, but with increasing refinement and restraint. Under pressure from the courts, almost all the state governments that made extensive use of the Backward Classes category set up commissions to identify the Backward Classes. From 1965 to 1971, such commissions reported in Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Jesh, Kerala again and Tamil Nadu. In 1975 a Karnataka commission filed the most massive and scholarly report to date.

All of these commissions, and the government orders based on their recommendations, use communal units to designate the Backward Classes. But Jammu and Kashmir relies heavily on occupational and territorial groups and Kerala employs an income cut-off. The selection of communities is more sophisticated: the commissions attempt to assemble (and sometimes generate) evidence about occupation, income and education as well as status and disabilities. Most of them strive to eliminate the well-off. In some cases, the number of groups designated is more modest than earlier. Benefits are recommended for a limited span of time and there is concern about termination and reassessment.

Perhaps some of this state activity was in response to the animadversions of the Centre against communal criteria, but more directly and probably it was a response to the courts. In some cases it was a response to courts actually striking down schemes; in others, threatening to do so if they were not reformed; in still others it was to the implicit threat of litigation. The states aligned their schemes with the prescriptions of the courts rather than with the pronouncements of the Central executive.

In part this may be because the Centre offered so little, a part from commending the income test. In retrospect it is surprising that the Centre never attempted to formulate a workable quantitative standard for selecting backward communities - eg, those groups whose average income and average literacy were less than one-half of the state average. It may have been felt that practically such a course was foreclosed by the decision to omit caste wise data in the censuses of 1951 and...
1961, but the absence of such attempts suggests that the animus against communal tests eclipsed any consideration of making them more workable. What emerges from the interaction of state Governments, Commissions and courts are lists of communal groups, with some admixture of geographic and income factors, 'chosen on the basis of low status, low educational attainments and poverty. One might generalise very tentatively about the magnitude of the Backward Classes category: the lists tend to converge on something like the second and third lowest quintiles of the population (assuming the Scheduled Castes and Tribes make up roughly the lowest quintile). Northern and Southern states arrive at this position from very different starting points. In the peninsula (and in Jammu and Kashmir) the commission process represents a pruning away of the more prosperous and powerful groups from a comprehensive list that approximated a regime of communal. In the northern tier, however, provision for this stratum is added slowly, first in education, then in government jobs, converging on a somewhat similar position.

Through the course of this development the term "Backward Classes" as retained a multiplicity of meanings. It is used to describe the totality of groups entitled to preferential treatment on the basis of their "backwardness" - i.e, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes as well as "Other Backward Classes" - but not those accorded special treatment because of temporary or situation at disadvantage (e.g, disaster victims, refugees, defence personnel). The term also refers specifically to those backward groups other than the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. There remain fundamental, if rarely articulated, disagreements about who these groups are. Some would confine this category to the lowly - those 'far below' the mean in welfare and resources, or those whose deprivations are comparable to those of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes; others use the term Backward Classes to describe a wide middle stratum of Indian society, who require and deserve special help because they are lagging behind the most advanced groups. There is, as we have seen, further disagreement over whether the term refers to the less well-off in all communities or whether it encompasses only those communities that suffer "backwardness" as a group.

The question of who were the Scheduled Castes was debated and roughly settled before Independence within the executive and without the participation of the
Courts. But who are the Backward Classes is a post-Independence question which the constitutional recognition of the category made one of all-India scope. The Constitution left the matter with the executive at the state level with an option for the Centre to unify it. When the executive at the Centre first failed and then declined to provide a resolution, the question reverted to the states. In the wake of the Janata victory in the 1977 elections, the Backward Classes returned to the national political agenda. Pursuant to its electoral promise, the Janata government appeared poised to appoint a new Backward Classes Commission, but had not done so by mid-1978. The UP and Bihar governments under Janata control, enlarged substantially the preferences for Other Backward Classes, leading to massive violence in Bihar and political intervention by the Centre.

Social Stratification

Societies are divided into hierarchical groups in a way that though various groups are considered in equal in relation to each other but within one group, members are viewed as equals. Two main criteria of social stratification are caste and class, but some other recognised units of stratification are age, gender and race/ethnicity too. Social stratification is different from social differentiation. The term 'differentiation' has broader application as it makes individuals and groups separate and distinct from each other for purposes of comparison. For example, within class strata, income, occupation, and education provide basis for differentiation and comparison. Stratification occurs where differences are ranked hierarchically.  

Caste as a Unit and a System

In India, both caste and class are used as basis of hierarchical ranking and exist side by side. However, caste, which is rooted in religious belief, is considered a more important basis of social stratification for social, economic, and religious purposes. 'Caste' is a hereditary social group which does not permit social mobility to its members. It involves ranking according to birth which affects one's occupation, marriage, and social relationships. Caste is used both as a unit and as a system. As a unit, caste is defined as 'a closed-rank status group', i.e., a group in which the status of members, their occupations, the field of mate-selection, and interaction with others is fixed.
Issues of Equality and Social Justice

The issue of social inequality is a crucial problem of Indian society. The study of social stratification of a society based either on caste or on class, is concerned largely with the understanding of inequality.

Louis Dumont, a French sociologist, has explained 'inequality' in caste system on a different basis. He holds that 'hierarchy' and not 'inequality' is the opposite of 'equality'. He explains 'hierarchy' in caste system in terms of 'purity and pollution', which according to him, is the basic principle of caste system. Hierarchy, according to him, involves the superiority of the pure to the impure, separation of the pure from the impure, and separation of pure occupations from the impure ones in the division of labour. He, thus, talks of (a) the hierarchical co-existence of the two opposites, (b) hierarchy being quite independent of natural inequalities or the distribution of power, (c) the ranking of castes is religious in nature, and (d) hierarchy is the relationship between the encompassed and the encompassed. Dumont's ideology of caste and perception of hierarchy in the caste system is thus totally different from that of other western scholars (Risley, Mayer, Marriott, etc.) who have explained it in terms of western concepts like individualism, egalitarianism, etc. He (Dumont) relates hierarchy with the theory of vama which involves gradation but is distinct from both power and authority. The subordination of the king to the priest in Hindu society involves religious (ritual) ranking. Thus, Dumont holds that hierarchy encompasses both the Varna divisions and the caste system. He, thus, gives importance to ideological orientation in interaction and behaviour within and between castes. He also maintains that traditional division of labour (the jajmani system), regulation of marriage and social contacts are based on hierarchy or religious values rather than on economic or social logic.

T.N. Madan (1971; also see Gupta, Dipankar, 1998) has raised question against Dumont's notion of disjunction between status and power. He says that subordination of power (say king) to the status (say Brahmin) creates difficulties in understanding. The approach is ingenious but the understanding is not satisfactory.
In the analysis of inequality, our contention is that inequality caused by centuries of economic stagnation resulting into differences in life chances between classes and inequality caused by traditional values, social practices, and social restrictions imposed by the caste system, require an exercise in sociological analysis. Historically, the first step towards a sociological understanding of inequality was taken when attention came to be paid to inequalities among men in their conditions of existence. The Hindu view of life explained it in terms of different orders of men born into different castes and endowed with unequal abilities, aptitudes and aspirations. Rousseau talked of political inequalities such as those of wealth, honour and power based on the basis of convention and authorized by the consent of men. Though men are free to discard conventions and institute new ones, yet it is not clear how inequalities, which make men, suffer, have been sustained since long. It is only when we started comparing inequalities among men in our society with other societies that a sociological approach was used to compare patterns of stratification and rates of mobility first in the industrial societies and later in the agrarian societies.26

In traditional Indian society, the basis of hierarchy and existence of social inequalities was the idea of purity and pollution. In modern industrial society, the basis of inequalities is 'achievement' which is the result of 'open and fair' competition. Hindu religious texts tell us that our society is divided into four varnas and into numerous jatis arranged into certain types of mutual relations. People accepted status hierarchies so long they linked caste with religion. And this linkage continued up to the 1920s and the 1930s of the twentieth century. The contacts with western culture spread of education and the processes of industrialization and urbanization changed people's ideas. They started questioning man-made inequalities. The political independence of the country provided them further opportunity to raise the question of inequalities and demand social justice. The recommendations of commissions like Kelkar, Mandal, etc. and political deeds of seeking votes on caste and community basis provided them further impetus to demand equality of opportunity and removal of social injustice. No wonder, the depressed castes and classes got reservations in jobs, legislative bodies and educational institutions, etc. in the name of social justice. Women partially succeeded in getting this justice when in some states, 20 per cent
seats came to be reserved for women in panchayats and in middle of December 1998, a bill was introduced in the parliament for reserving one-third (33%) seats for women. But at tempts to remove social inequalities on caste, class and community basis have created frustrations among some castes and communities, which have resulted into various agitations and violent actions. Somewhat more worrying are the extreme reactions from educated persons and views of politicians with vested interests. There is no doubt that social and cultural life has changed a great deal in the course of development. Many suggestions are also being forwarded as remedies for these evils. It is only the common framework of ideas and values on reducing social gradations that can reduce social inequalities and provide justice to varied categories of people.

Andre Beteille (Inequality Among Men, 1979) has talked of relationship between power and inequality. Power maintains inequality and it also transforms inequality. In the caste system, the inequalities among men were accepted not only because of the belief that people were endowed with different qualities but also because castes were viewed as instruments of power. Once the new instruments of power introduced by the British withdrew their support from the hierarchy and power of caste (say, taking away the powers of caste councils by the courts), the hierarchy itself began to crumble. In the class system, those who possess land or property dominate over the landless and the propertyless. The sociological analysis of power inequalities takes into account two features: one, the power of some over other, and two, their power to interpret, alter and create the rules by which all, including themselves, are bound. At the same time, scope of power is also significant in analysis. The same individual or group does not hold power equally in all spheres of society. We also ask, how far different individuals who hold and exercise power in one sphere or several, constitute a cohesive group, clearly marked out from the rest of society. In Bihar, the inequality of power has led to the origin of caste senas and caste massacres.27

After referring to inequalities of status and inequalities of power, it is also important to refer to inequalities in general conditions of social existence. A very large number of people perceive inequality in terms of division of society into classes and the unequal distribution of wealth. The division of the industrial societies into two
categories—the capitalist and the socialist—has its origin in social class. The capitalist societies are organised through private ownership of property and presence of classes in these societies is freely acknowledged, while in socialist societies, it is conditionally acknowledged. Has the abolition of private property in socialist societies led to the disappearance of classes? Andre Beteille holds that since inequalities in Russia and other socialist countries continue to exist, it confirms that inequality is a much broader concept than class.

Talking of social inequalities in terms of status, power and income, a question may be raised: Is egalitarian society possible? Did it exist in the past? Can it emerge in future? Even though all our modern societies are built on the promise of equality, yet the prospect of an egalitarian society does not appear to be feasible. Beteille has also contended that so long as evaluation and organization remain as inherent features of social life, the problem of inequality will continue to exist. We may conceive egalitarian society at two levels: one, in which different positions may enjoy same prestige and power, and two in which all members enjoy equal access to positions of power and prestige. It is now conceded by almost all people that envisaging such societies in the future will be illusory.

Caste and Politics

The relationship between caste and politics has been analysed at two levels: one, how caste affects politics, and two, how politics affects caste. We will first take up the relationship in terms of awareness of castes in politics.

The Awareness

The interest and awareness of various castes in politics may be studied in terms of four factors: interest of castes in politics, political knowledge and political awareness of castes, identification of castes with political parties, and influence of castes on political affairs. These four aspects were studied by Anil Bhatt in the 1970s by studying 1,713 persons of high, middle, and low castes with different backgrounds in four states (Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh). Analysing the political interest taking all castes together, he found that about 25 per cent castes had light interest in politics, 45 per cent had moderate interest, and 30 per cent had no interest at all. With regard to the awareness of political changes and major political
problems in the country, he found that higher castes had more interest than the middle and the lower castes. He did not find any relationship between caste status and identification with political parties. Lastly, he found that some high castes are politically influential while middle and low castes dominate only in few villages.

**Occupational Classification of Backward Castes**

The census of 1881 enumerated 1,929 castes. Of these, 1,126 (58 per cent) had a population of less than 1,000; 556 (29 per cent) less than 100; and 275 (14 per cent) less than 10. There are a large number of single-member castes. Brahmins, Kunbis and Chamars accounted for more than a crore (10 million) each. These three accounted for as many people as the bottom 1,848 (96 per cent) castes. However, the Brahmin population in Andhra Pradesh may be anywhere between 1.5 to 3% of the total population of Andhra Pradesh. Of these 1,929 castes, 1,432 (74 per cent) were found only in one locality (out of 17), e.g., most of the castes in Andhra Pradesh are localized. Only two castes, Brahmins and the Rajputs, had an all-India presence. The pattern of localization also seemed to vary across space. For example, while the eastern and southern regions had high localization of the big caste groups, in the northern and western regions they were spatially spread.

Some castes are classified as backward (although some are considered as higher castes according to Hindu Varna system) due to their financial, educational and/or political depression. They have government reservations to help uplift their status. They are predominantly artisans, small scale farmers and traders. Backward castes make up about 50% of the population.28

1. Artisans

   1. Viswabrahmins / Vishvakarmas (Engineers, Architects, Priests)
      A. Kammari (Black Smith)
      B. Vadrangi / Vadla (Carpenter)
      C. Kanchari / Kanchara (Brass / Bronze Smith)
      D. Silpi (Sculptor)
      E. Kamsali / Ausula (Gold / Silver Smith)

   2. Salivahana

   3. Surya Balija
4. Ganika (Dancer, singer, poet)
5. Kalavanthula
6. Vaddi (stonecutters and well-diggers)
   A. Vaddera
   B. Vaddelu

2. Shaman
   1. Jogi (Religious mendicant and pedlar)
   2. Joshinadiwalas (astrologer and village priest)

3. Other Kshatriya's
   1. Agnikula Kshatriya (Vanniyakula Kshatriya / Vanniyar) (Aquaculture, Landlords, Farmers and Peasants. Kings and Warriors. Linked to Lord Rama hence they have Raghukula Gothram)
   2. Puragiri Kshatriya (Peasants, Warriors, Patels, traders, Perika)
   3. Bhavasara Kshatriya (Cloth traders)
   4. Arya Kshatriya

4. Warrior / Hunters
   1. Boyar caste / Boya
   2. Boya / Nayak / Naidu
   3. Boya Talwar/ Talari

5. Traders
   1. Perika (They are part of Kshatriyas. They are Kings, Landlords, Peasants, Rajus, Warriors, Patels)
   2. Gavara
   3. Perika Balija
   4. Puragiri Kshatriya (They are part of Kshatriyas. They are Kings, Landlords, Peasants, Rajus, Warriors, Patels)

5. Krishna Balija [Business]
   A. Dasari
   B. Bukka

6. Sadhuchetty
7. Poosala
   1. Dasari

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6. Weaving

1. Achukatlavandlu
2. Dudekula
3. Devanga (makes silk sarees)
4. Jandra
5. Karnabhakthulu
6. Nossi
   A. Kurni
7. Koshti
8. Nakkala
9. Patkar
   A. Khartri
10. Padmashali (Considered as Vysya class according to the Hindu Varna System)
    1. Nelli
    2. Neelakanthi
    3. Sali
    A. Salivan Padmasali
    4. Senapathulu
11. Karikalabakthulu
    1. Thogata Sali
12. Thogata Veera Kshatriya (Warriors, Weavers)
13. Veerakshatriya Swakulasali
14. Narasihma caste

7. Ayyaraka Patrudu (Merchant, Farmer, Warrior)

8. Rulers under Chalukyas
   1. Gowda

9. Alcohol Brewing
   A. Goud
   B. Goud Kala
   C. Bhandari
   D. Edigas
   E. Idiga
F. Kalal, Kalace
G. Srisayana (toddy-drawers')
H. Segidi
I. Settv Baliias
J. Yatha

10. Animal Husbandry
   1. Cattle Herding
      A. Yadava
      B. Golla
   2. Sheep Rearing
      A. Kuruba
      B. Kuruma
      C. Hatkar

11. Barber (Musicians, Surgeons, Ministers, Leads)
    A. Bhajanthri
    B. Mangali
    C. Mangala
    D. Manthri
    E. Nai
    F. Nayi-Brahmin

12. Bamboo Workers
    1. Kandra

13. Basket Weaving
    a. Gundla
    b. Goondla
    c. Gadaba (Forest tribe)
    d. Godaba
    e. Medari

14. Meat Selling
    a. Aare Katika (were warriors during Shivaji Period)
    b. Katika
15. Cobbler
   a. Chirakara
   b. Giniyar
   c. Muchi
   d. Nakhas

16. ceremony singers
   a. jakkali

17. watch&ward
   a. katipapala

18. Cotton Spining
   a. Dudekula - Muslim (Cotton cleaners. Also called as Laddaf, Noor Basha, and Pinjari. A group of Muslims with Telugu as their mother tongue, found in Andhra Pradesh. Padmasri Shaik China Moulana (Nadaswaram), Padmasri Naazar (Burrakadha) is famous personalities of this Muslim sub-community.)
   b. Laddaf - Muslim
   c. Noor Basha - Muslim
   d. Pinjari - Muslim

19. Earthen Work
   a. Odde
   b. Oddilu
   c. Uppara
   d. Sagara

20. Agnikula Kshatriya (Vanniyakula Kshatriya / Vanniyar) (Aquaculture, Landlords, Farmers and Peasants. Kings and Warriors. Linked to Lord Rama hence they have Raghukula Gothram)

21. Fishermen
   1. Jalari
   2. Besta
   3. Mudiraju (Fisherman Heads, farmers, warriors)
      1. Mutrazi
      2. Tenugollu
4. Neyyala  
5. Pattapu  
6. Vada Balija  

22. Mali (vegetable and fruit growers)  

23. Tailors, Dyers  
   1. Rangarez (Muslim)  
   2. Chippollu  
   3. Mera  
   4. Meru Darji  

24. Gypsies (Tribal)  
   1. Banjara  
   2. Kanjara Bhatta  
   3. Lambada  
   4. Sugalis  
   5. Vanjara  
   6. Vanjari  

25. Shiva archka  
   1. Tammali  

26. Jingara  

27. Kachi (Vegetable-grower)  

28. Kalinga (Tribal farmers)  

29. Nagavaddilu  

30. Nagavasam  
   1. Nagavamsa  

31. Oil Pressing  
   1. Gandla  
   2. Sajjana gandla  
   3. Ganiga  
   4. Devatilila Kula  
   5. Teli Kula  

32. Sandlewood Workers  
   1. Agaru
References
5. Ibid, p.57.
7. Banerjee, Anil Chandra Backward Classes Review (A publication of the All-India Backward Classes Federation), New Delhi, Vol 1, No 1, December, 1948, p.129.


