CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

Brahmano’ sya mukham asid bahu rajanyah pritah!
Uru tal asya yad vaisyah padbhyam sudro ajayata!!

In the Rigveda, the earliest work in human history three classes of society are very frequently mentioned, and named Brahma, Kshatra, and Visha. The first two represented broadly the two professions of the poet-priest and the warrior-chief. The third division was apparently a group comprising all the common people. It is only in one of the later hymns, the celebrated Purushasukta that a reference has been made to four orders of society as emanating from the sacrifice of the Primeval Being. The names of those four orders are given there as Brahmana, Rajanya, Vaishya, and Shudra, who are said to have come respectively from the mouth, the arms, the thighs, and the feet of the Creator. The particular limbs associated with these divisions and the order in which they are mentioned probably indicate their status in the society of the time, though no such interpretation is directly given in the hymn.

This origin of the four classes is repeated in most of the later works with slight variations and interpretative additions. The Taittiriya Samhita, for example, ascribes the origins of those four classes to the four limbs of the Creator and adds an explanation. The Brahmans are declared to be the chief because they were created from the mouth, punning on the word 'mukha' ('mouth' and 'chief'). The Brahmans only duties are to study and teach the

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Vedas, to offer sacrifices and to offer, and above all to receive, gifts. The Rajanyas are vigorous because they were created from vigour. It is the duty of the Kshatriyas to give orders, to protect the people, to offer sacrifices through the medium of Brahmans and to study the Vedas. The Vaishyas are meant to be eaten, referring to their liability to excessive taxation, because they were created from the stomach, the receptacle of food. Therefore they must raise livestock, cultivate the soil, engage in trade, and give alms, not neglecting either the sacred rites or the study of the written word. The Shudra, because he was created from the feet, is to be the transporter of others and to subsist by the feet. They have only one essential task – to serve the higher castes. Outside this system there are only barbarous or despised peoples who have no access to the religious and social life of the Brahmanic world, that is to say, foreigners or Mlechchhas. In this particular account of the creation not only is the origin of the classes interpreted theologically, but also a divine justification is sought to be given to their functions and status. The creation theory is here further amplified to account for certain other features of these social classes.

God is said to have created certain deities simultaneously with these classes. The Vaishya class, the commoners, must have been naturally very large, and this account explains that social fact by a reference to the simultaneous creation of Vishvedevas, all and sundry deities, whose number is considerable. We are told that no deities were created along with the Shudra and hence he is disqualified for sacrifice. Here again, the social regulation which forbade a Shudra to offer sacrifice is explained as an incidental consequence of the creation.  

What all these myths had in common was the tendency to assert that the caste system was the creation of super-human agency with separate duties. The fact that the four classes are described as of divine origin, although in a later hymn, must be taken as a sufficient indication that they were of long

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duration and very well defined, even though the exact demarcation of their functions, the regulations guiding their inter-relations, and the extent of their flexibility may not be referred to in the main body of the Rigvedic literature, which is avowedly of a liturgical nature.

The Shatapatha Brahmana lays down different sizes of the funeral mound for the four classes. The terms of address are also different, varying in the degree of politeness. In the 'Human Sacrifice' the representatives of these orders are dedicated to different deities. A passage in the Aitareya Brahmana warns a Kshatriya to avoid certain mistakes in the sacrificial ritual. If he commits a particular mistake, it goes on to say, "One like a Brahmin shall be born in his line who in the second or third generation from his has the power of becoming a Brahmin, and likes to live as a Brahmin." Similarly for two other mistakes he shall have a Vaishya-like and a Shudra-like son capable of becoming a full-fledged Vaishya or Shudra in two, or three generations. It is clear, that though the classes had come to be almost stereotyped by the end of the Vedic period, it was not altogether impossible for an upward or downward change to occur in a particular family in two or three generations.

The Brahmanic literature of the post-Vedic period, while reiterating that there are only four varnas, mentions certain mixed castes (sankara jati) and also a group of out-cast classes (antydvayasin). The sacred laws of the Aryas are designed to expound 'varna-dharma' i.e., the duties ostensibly of the four orders. The text-books of the different schools may broadly be analysed into four parts. The first part, generally very short, deals with the 'ashramas' (four stages in individual life) and their duties; the second part, forming a large portion of the book, really deals with 'varna-dharma'. Much of the law proper is treated in this section under the heading, "duties of the Kshatriya". The two other parts deal with expiatory acts and inheritance. Though the main bulk of the law is treated under 'varna-dharma', yet the 'Shudra' does not figure much much.

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4 Muir, John, op. cit., p. 439.
in these texts. The 'varna-dharma' of the 'Shudra' is such that it does not require elaborate regulation. It may justly be said that the 'Shudra' was left to himself as far as his internal affairs were concerned. Mandlik observes, "The non-regenerate class thus seems to form a group by itself, and its internal economy is not specially provided, for by the ordinary Arya writers on law."  

Their case is provided for by the general dictum, fathered on Manu, that the peculiar laws of countries, castes, and families may be followed in the absence of sacred rules. The other classes are considered derivative, and therefore so much beneath notice that only four-fold humanity is always alluded to and prevention of the confusion of these castes (varnasaiikara) is considered as an ideal necessity. Mixtures of castes is regarded to be such a great evil that it must be combated even though the Brahmans and the Vaishyas have to resort to arms, a function which is normally sinful for them. As the outcastes were, deprived of the right to follow the lawful occupations of the twice-born men, and after death, of the rewards of meritorious deeds, it follows that the lawgivers had no concern for them. They were enjoined to live together and fulfil their purposes, sacrificing for each other and confining other relations to themselves. Of mixed castes those that were the outcome of hypergamous unions, were proposed to be treated in two different ways. Gautama excludes from the Brahmanic law only the issue of a Shudra female by males of the first three orders. It is not clear how he would like to treat the remaining three possible groups. Persons born of unions in the inverse order of castes-

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9 Ibid., p. 277.
10 Ibid., p. 220.
11 Gautama, op. cit., p. 197.
technically known as the 'pratiloma' (reverse) castes-are, of course, outside the pale of the sacred law, with the possible exception of one, viz., the 'Suta'.

Among the four varnas, the old distinction of Arya and Shudra now appears predominantly as Dvija and Shudia, though the old distinction is occasionally mentioned. The first three varnas are called Dvijas (twice-born) because they have to go through the initiation ceremony which is symbolic of rebirth. This privilege is denied to the Shudra who is therefore called 'ekajati' (once-born).\textsuperscript{12} The word 'jati' which is here used for 'varna', henceforward is employed more often to mean the numerous sub-divisions of a 'varna'. It is also the vernacular term for a 'caste'. A rigorous demarcation of meaning between 'varna' and 'jati', the former denoting the four large classes and the latter only their sub-division cannot, however, be maintained. The word is sometimes indiscriminately used for 'varna'.

The pre-eminence of the Brahmin was so great that the Mahabharata declared that really speaking there was only one 'varna', viz., the Brahmin and the other varnas were merely its modifications.\textsuperscript{13} Though Gautama quotes the Vedic texts which declare that the Kshatriyas assisted by the Brahmins prosper, and that the union of the two alone upholds the moral order, yet he lays down that when a king and a Brahmin pass along the same road the road belongs to the Brahmin and not to the king.\textsuperscript{14} Vasishtha declares that the Brahmin's King is Soma.\textsuperscript{15} The Mahabharata goes even further, and emphasizes the subordinate position of the Kshatriya, whose only support is pronounced to be the Brahmin.

The Mahabharata says that the Shudra can have no absolute property, because his wealth can be appropriated by his master at will.\textsuperscript{16} If the master of

\textsuperscript{12} Vasishtha, op. cit., p. 9.
\textsuperscript{13} Mahabharata, Shanti Parva, 50, 59
\textsuperscript{14} Gautama, op. cit., p. 235, Apastamba, Grhya- Sutra, Varana, 197, pp. 124-5.
\textsuperscript{15} Vasishtha, op. cit., p. 8.
\textsuperscript{16} Mahabharata, Shanti Parva, Pune, 39, 59
a Shudra has fallen into distress, the latter shall be placed at the disposal of the poor master. The king is enjoined to appoint only persons of the first three classes over villages and towns for their protection.

The Sudras were not everywhere. In many parts of India, they had been rulers, and slave-owners. The Buddhist literature speaks of Sudra kings. The Nanda emperors of Magadha were Sudras and there is every reason to believe that the Mauryan and the Gupta emperors were also Sudras. Even from the post-Vedic literature, it will be seen that all Sudras were not slaves. Gautamadharma Sutra, for instance, says that the Sudras could be merchants and exercise any trade or profession they liked. They were not slaves as a caste. They became slaves only under circumstances and conditions that made even the Brahmana a slave. The biggest slave owners on the Malabar Coast were the Nairs or the Sudras. The severity index of Malabar slavery will be seen from the fact that even after liberation, most of the Paraya and Pulaya slaves preferred to stay with their masters in preference to and being taken to plantations to slave under European planters. Though slavery was abolished there over a century ago, even now descendants of the old slaves could be found living happily attached to the descendants of their former masters. It is not due to their slave mentality; but it is due to the advantages which they could still claim. The slaves there had never been menial servants or household attendants of the masters. The untouchability and unapproachability saved them from the horrors of the Negro slaves elsewhere. The slaves themselves were not free from caste or jati restrictions among themselves. The Parayas, and the Pulayas, for instance, had no social contact, intermarriage or inter-dining; and between themselves. They observed untouchability and unapproachability.

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17 Gautama, op. cit., p. 231.
Facts being such, it is nothing short of absurdity to imagine that the Sudras were the Dravidian laves of the Aryans, and the degraded condition of the Sudras was due to their Dravidian lineage. The Nairs of Malabar are as much Dravidians as the Parayas and the Pulayas but they have always been masters and rulers. If the complexion of the Parayas and Pulayas is darker than that of the Nairs or the Sudras, it is because that the Paravas and the Pulayas like the Oraons and the Munaas of the north, lead an open-air life, in a climate more humid than hot.

In the Santi-parva, Bhrigu makes the following statement:

"There is no difference of caste: this world, having been at first created by Brahma entirely Brahmanic, became (afterwards) separated into castes in consequence of works. Those twice-born men who were fond of sensual pleasure, fiery, irascible, prone to violence, who had forsaken their duty and were red-limbed, fell into the condition of Kshatriyas. Those twice-born who derived their livelihood from kine, who were yellow, who subsisted by agriculture and who neglected to practise their duties, entered into the state of Vaisyas. Those twice-born who were addicted to mischief and falsehood, who were covetous, who lived by all kinds of work, who were black and had fallen from purity, sank into the condition of Sudras. Being separated from each other by these works, the Brahmans became divided into different castes."19

This is different from what Manu has said. According to Manu-Smriti every one is born a Sudra, action makes one a dvija, and knowledge of Brahma makes one a Brahmna. According to both Manu and Bhrigu the divisions into Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra are not according to birth or heredity.20 It is according to one's own action guided by his inclination. Just as one could have become a carpenter or a blacksmith, one could have become a Brahmna or Kshatriya by choice. Among the

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19 Mahabharata, Shanti Parva, op. cit.
descendants of Bharata or Kuru how this prerogative has been exercised is amply shown in Book I.

Varna or Varnasrama distinctions might not have had any more significance than four classifications like A, B, C and D or 1, 2, 3 and 4. It was not only in respect of human beings that the ancient Hindus used the terms Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra for classification. It can be seen from the Silpasastras, or treaties on architecture, that they used the same terms for classifying the land according to the extent and quality, and also to signify certain constants 1, 3, 5, and 7 in certain formulas. They divided the land into four Varnas, white, yellow, brown and black. The white soil they called Brahmana, yellow soil Kshatriya, brown soil Vaisya and black soil Sudra. A plot of land, or an area whose length was equal to breadth was called Brahmana, a plot whose length was one and one-eighth times the breadth they called Kshatriya, and those plots that had the length one and one-sixth, and one and one-fourth, times the breadth they called the Vaisya and Sudra respectively. Then certain perimeters, which they derived from the length, hiding the element of breadth by use of constants 1, 3, 5, and 7, they designated as Brahmana, Kshatriya, Sudra and Vaisya.

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\begin{align*}
\text{Brahmana perimeter} & \quad \frac{LX8+i}{3} \\
\text{Kshatriya} & \quad \frac{LX8+3}{3} \\
\text{Sudra} & \quad \frac{LX8+5}{3} \\
\text{Vaisya} & \quad \frac{Lx8+7}{3}
\end{align*}
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where \( L \) = length.
Having forgotten the real significance of these formulae and classifications the orthodox architects and the later day authors of the Silpasastras have been asserting that the Brahmana Perimeter is to be used in the design of a Brahmana’s house and the Sudra perimeter was for the Sudra's house, and so on. If it were so, the dimensions of a Brahmana's house must be the smallest. Likewise if the colour qualification of the land was exclusive the Brahmanas should live only on certain sea-coasts and desert regions, while the rich black cotton growing tracts of central India should be exclusively for the Sudras.

However, nobody ever appears to have adhered to the Varnasramadharmma or caste duties. The Brahmans would appear to have been great offenders in this respect, only a few followed their prescribed duties, others took up all kinds of professions and callings, as is done even today. The military occupation was not entirely for the Kshatriyas. From Kautiliya's Arthasastra it will be seen that the Brahmans and the Sudras were as keen fighters as the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas, and there were armies or regiments composed of each group, somewhat like the Garhwalis, Raiputs and Madrasis of the British regime, and Vishnu Gupta discusses the merits of each regiment thus:-

"My teacher says that the armies composed of Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas or Sudras, that which is mentioned first is, on account of bravery better to be enlisted than the one subsequently in the order of enumeration. No, says Kautilya (who himself was a Brahmana), the enemy may win over to himself the army of Brahmans by means of prostration. Hence, the army of the Kshatriyas trained in the art of wielding weapons is better or the army of the Vaisyas or Sudras having great numerical strength (is better)"21

In the same Santi-Parva the creation of the four castes is ascribed to Krishna.

“Then, again the great Krishna created a hundred Brahmans, the most excellent, from his mouth, a hundred Kshatriyas from his arms, a hundred Vaisyas from his thighs, and a hundred Sudras from his feet.”

Gautama observes: “men of the several castes and orders who always live according to their duty enjoy after death the rewards of their works, and by virtue of a remnant of their merit, they are born again in excellent countries, castes, and families endowed with beauty, long life, learning in the Vedas, virtuous conduct, wealth, happiness, and wisdom. Those who act in a contrary manner perish, being born again in various evil conditions.”

“The Deity said, ‘The fourfold division of castes was created by me according to the apportionment of qualities and duties.’”

The Second Book accepts the usual account of the origin of the castes. The Ninth Book Bhagavata Purana, declares that in the Krita age there was only one caste: ‘There was formerly only one Veda, only one god, Narayana, one Agni and one Caste. From Pururavas came the triple Veda in the beginning of the Treta.”

The very different opinions with regard to the origin of caste are an illustration of the remark in the Mahabharata: “Contradictory are the Vedas; contradictory are the Shastras; contradictory are the doctrines of the holy sages.”

When witnesses in a court of justice give conflicting evidence, discredit is thrown upon all their testimony. Writings cannot be infallible which involve self-contradictions. One would think that no man in his senses would accept the account of creation in the Purusha Sukta as literally true. The old Hindu writers framed their geography and astronomy out of their own heads, and it was much the same with their accounts of the origin of caste.

22 Mahabharata, Shanti Parva. op. cit.
23 Gautama, op. cit., p. 235.
Each one followed his own fancy. However monstrous the fiction, it did not matter. There is a nursery rhyme in England about the cow jumping over the moon. Very young children accept this as true, and most Hindus are just as credulous.

Parasurama is the great hero of the Brahmans: "He cleared the earth thrice seven times of the Kshatriya caste, and filled with their blood the five large lakes of Samanta, from which he offered libations to the race of Bhrigu. Offering a solemn sacrifice to the king of the gods, Parasurama presented the earth to the ministering priests. Having given the earth to Kasyapa, the hero of immeasurable prowess retired to the Mohendra mountain, where he still resides; and in this manner was there enmity between him and the race of the Kshatriyas, and thus was the whole earth conquered by Parasurama."

This account of the struggle is grossly exaggerated, and it is difficult to say how much truth there is in it.

By the time of Manu, however, the Brahmans were high above the Kshatriyas before whom, but a few centuries earlier, they had cringed and fawned.

Manu represents the various castes as the result of mixed marriages between the four original castes. According to him the four primitive castes, by intermarrying in every possible way, gave rise to 16 mixed castes, which by continuing their intermarriages produced the long list of the mixed castes.

The violation of caste rules may often create a new caste. Illegitimate or illegal sexual relations may cause the nucleus of new caste formations; illegitimate relation between a Brahmana woman and a Sudra man may create a new caste, Dharmasastras as well as the Arthasastras give many instances of such caste formations. In Kautilya's Arthasastra the following instances are given:
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<tr>
<th>Father Caste</th>
<th>Mother Caste</th>
<th>New Caste</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brahman</td>
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<td>Brahman</td>
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<td>Sudra</td>
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Few of these castes are known now by these names. Evidently they have changed their names or assumed new occupational names. A tendency to adopt occupational names will be seen even in the Arthasastra: where it is stated that a Vainya, "becomes a Rathakara, or chariot-maker, by profession ' members of this caste shall marry among themselves, both in customs and avocations they shall follow their ancestors, they may either become Sudras, if they are not born as Chandalas".26

The mixed marriages such as these were once legitimate; the laws for disinheriting children from such marriages were of later origin. Even the illegitimate sons known as Antaralas, were to have equal divisions of inheritance in parity with legitimate sons. "In the case of sons such as Suta, Magadha, Vratya and Rathakara, inheritance will go to the capable; and the rest will depend upon him for sustenance. In the absence of the capable, all

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will have equal shares". But "partition of inheritance shall be made in accordance with the customs prevalent in the country, caste, society (sangha), or the village of the inheritors".

If we look more carefully, says Max Muller, we shall find that most of these mixed castes are in reality the professions, trades, and guilds of a half-civilised society. They did not wait for mixed marriages before they came into existence. Professions, trades, and handicrafts had grown up without any reference to caste. Some of their names were derived from towns and countries where certain professions were held in particular estimation. Servants who waited on ladies were called Vaidehas, because they came from Videha. In other cases the names of Manu's castes were derived from their occupations. The caste of musicians, for instance were called Venas from vina, the lyre. Now it was evidently Manu's object to bring these professional corporations in connection with the old system of castes, assigning to each, according to its higher or lower position, a more or less pure descent from the original castes, The Vaidyas, for instance, or the physicians, evidently a respectable corporation, were represented as the offspring of a Brahman father and a Vaisya mother, while the guild of the fishermen, or Nishadas, were put down as the descendants of a Brahman father and a Sudra mother.

Thus a new system of caste came in of a purely professional character, though artificially grafted on the rotten trunk of the ancient castes. This is the system which is still in force in India, and which has exercised its influence on the state of Indian society for good and evil.

It is characteristic of the Brahmanical intolerance of the compilers of the code that the origin of the lowest of all (the Chandala) should be ascribed to the intercourse of a Sudra man and Brahman woman, while the union of a Brahman male with a Sudra woman is said to have resulted in one of the

\[27\] Ibid., 163.
\[28\] Ibid., 165.
highest of the mixed classes. Indeed it was quite lawful in ancient times for a Brahman to take a succession of wives from the inferior castes.

The object of the regulations regarding admixture of castes seems to have been to visit with the heaviest pains and penalties any irregularities of the females of the twice-born castes, and their degradation, and that of their offspring, for unions with inferior or impure castes; and consequently in the origin of mixed castes, Manu assigns to the offspring of the Brahman woman the lowest degradation of all.

Again, the Chunchu or Chentsu, race of hunters and forest men, are spoken of by Manu as sons of Brahmans by women of the Vaideha class whereas these identical people exist to this day, as they had existed probably thousands of years before the caste system was known, as an aboriginal people living in forests, subsisting on the products of the chase, and such roots and vegetable substances as require no cultivation. The whole of the chapter relating to mixed castes is so puerile in tune, and shows so much of class hatred and intolerance, it gives such freedom of intercourse to Brahman without disqualification, and heaps such dreadful penalties on the incontinence of Brahman women, that the object of the compilers is at once apparent. It is plain that the account of the origin of mixed castes is entirely fanciful, and that not the smallest reliance can be placed on the authority.

"The whole caste system, as it has come down to us, bears unmistakeable evidence of Brahmanical origin."29

"Men who have the same interests, the same occupations, the same principles, unit in self-defence, and after acquiring power and influence they not only defend their rights, but claim important privileges. They naturally impose upon their members certain rules which are considered essential to the interest of their caste or company. These rules, sometimes of apparently the most trifling character, are observed by individual members with greater anxiety than even the laws of religion, because an offence against the latter

may be pardoned, while a disregard of the former would lead to an instant exclusion or loss of caste. The more lucrative the trade, the more jealously it was guarded, and there was evidently no trade in India so lucrative as that of the priests. The priests were, therefore, the strongest advocates of the system of caste, and after investing it with a sacred character in the eyes of the people, they expanded it into an immense spider's web, which separated class from class, family from family, man from man, and which, while it rendered all united action impossible, enabled the watchful priests to pounce upon all who dared to disturb the threads of their social tissue and to wither them to death.  

Manu's account of the supposed multiplication of castes is just as mythical as that of the supposed origin of the four castes from Brahma. The longer quotation from the Mahabharata gives the true explanation—it arose from difference of employment.

When the Brahman could not extirpate the worship of the aboriginal demons, they adopted them, calling them incarnations of some of their gods. In like manner, they have connected different occupations with their caste system.

Moreland rightly summarizes the position of caste at the end of Akbar's reign in the following words: "Among the Hindus the caste system existed substantially as it exists today and the differences among castes and races were such that we find travellers speaking of the Baniyas or of Gujaratis as 'nations' distinct from Brahmans or Rajputs." In the time of Jehangir, the Baniyas of Gujarat had numerous sub-divisions neither of which would eat nor

30 Max Muller, Chips from German Workshop (London: Longman, Green and Co.), 1868.
31 Moreland, W. H., trans. India at the Death of Akbar: The Remonstranite of Francisco Pelsueret (Delhi: Idarah-c-A dabiyat-I), 1920, p. 23
drink with others. Hamilton, in the middle of the eighteenth century, mentions sixty-five divisions of the Baniyas of Surat.

The impact of Islam was too strong to work as a leaven in the Hindu community. The culture and religious practices of its followers were so different that, as noted by Alberuni, the Hindus and the Muslims looked upon each other as contraries and natural enemies. Yet the doctrinal liberalization in the matter of contact and food which we noticed in some movements and even the doings in this line of some of the outstanding personalities of their time must be credited to the influence of Islamic doctrine and practices. The two cultures were too separate to settle down to a great rapprochement in times, when a death-struggle was being fought by the valiant sons of Ind for self-preservation of a cultural entity.

The socio-economic situation had already worsened even before the arrival of the Muslims. It has been well brought out by R.C. Majumdar: “The Hindu society now resembled that, unfortunate human being whose head and feet alone were active but whose intermediate limbs were maimed or paralysed. It is obvious that the one was as little capable of healthy growth and progress as the other. It is equally obvious that the Brahmanas alone cannot be held responsible for this lamentable state of things. After all, people get what they deserve. The Brahmanas could not have asserted their ascendancy if the people possessed a manly spirit and vigour and could tear asunder the chains of superstition by which they were bound to the perpetual servitude. Any one who not unnaturally, wonders how a gifted people like the Hindus could readily submit to the yoke of these superstitions, need only look around him today. He will see how groups of men, not inferior in moral and mental qualities to any on earth are still bound down to those very shackles of superstition. He will see how, inspite of the knowledge of the ancient Vedas,

32 Moreland, W. H. and Geyl, P., Jehangir’s India (Bombay: Macmillan), 1925, p. 76.
Brahmanas, Sutras, and Smritis, millions of men in Bengal unwittingly submit to the dictates of a Brahmana writer of the 15th century, dictates which are in flagrant contrast with the injunctions of the ancient sacred literature. He will be confronted with the strange spectacle of a people adhering neither to common sense nor to tradition of her best days, but bowing down with reverent awe to in all-devouring Moloch-the superstitious customs of degenerate days.34

The worsening situation created by the caste-system had its far reaching effects. It made the people narrow and rigid. That spirit of inquiry which made India great was gone. Arts and crafts also suffered. It was expected that caste will result in specialisation but it resulted in stereotyped patterns resulting in paucity of design and poverty of the artisan. R.C. Dutta analysed the economy of the country and wrote:

“The results were disastrous, so far as arts were concerned. Genius was impossible, except among priests and kings. Men held in a perpetual moral bondage and servitude never learnt to aspire after greatness and glory. Men to whom honour was impossible never learnt to deserve honour and distinction. In other countries a Cincinatus might leave his plough and wield the destinies of his nation, or a Robert Burns might give expression to a nation's sentiments in thoughts that breathe and burn; but in India the cultivator’s fate was seated, he could never break through the adamant wall of social rules. Among other people sculptor, a painter or an architect, like Phidias or Praxiteles, like Raphael or Michael Angelo, might, by the force of his genius, win the highest honour in his country. But in India that highest honour was the exclusive privilege of the Brahmana and the Kshtriya, honour to an architect or, to a sculptor was simply out of the question. Under healthier influences the humblest artisan or engineer might rise to be a Watt or Stevenson, but in India the artisan and the engineer were chained by shackles of steel, which it was

34 Majumdar, R. C., Ancient India (Banaras: Motilal Banarsi Das), 1952, pp. 503-4.
impossible for them to break. Held in comparative, degradation and contempt, the artisan and the mechanic never learnt, to soar beyond the fixed rules of their arts, and have no indications of a great idea, a bold conception, a new invention or an original genius. Hindu architects covered India from Orissa and Ellora to Tanjore and Rameshwaram with temples and edifices. The patience, the industry, the attention to minute details, the ingenuity, and the skill displayed in these works will bear comparison with those of any nation, ancient or modern on the face of the earth. But the conception of a great architect, genius of a true artist is often wanting in these magnificent edifices. A Brahmana poet in Ujjayini has conceived a Shakuntala in verse, but there is no Shakuntala in stone among the millions of sculptured figures in India.

By her position and civilization India should have been the mistress of the Indian Ocean as Greece and Rome were of the Mediterranean; and a Hindu mercantile navy should have swept the seas from China to Egypt. But the genius of Brahmans and Kshtriyas did not descend to the art of navigation; civilized India depended on the rude Arabians for commerce with the West; and the imperfect maritime communication which the Hindus had with Sumatra, Java and China in the Buddhist period—as we know from Fahian's pages, was soon forgotten, and it was considered a sin to cross the seas. Hindu genius struggled against the dishonour cast on arts, Hindu architects, arid goldsmiths and weavers attained all that it was possible to attain, by skill and industry and ingenuity and long training; but the genius which marks the literature and thought of ancient India is absent in her industrial arts, her mechanical inventions and her maritime enterprise.  

Earlier, no clear change was seen which was taking place in the social organization of the Hindu society as a result of the pressure of the Islamic influence. The early Muslims came to plunder as they had heard much of the economic prosperity of the

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country. They did not influence the organizational pattern in the early years of conquest. The arts and crafts of the people continued as before as N. K. Bose has shown: "... the Cultivator, the Oil-pressure the Blacksmith, the Weaver and the Mason, earned his livelihood through the pursuit of his ancestral calling. In, the towns near where the princes and courtiers lived and under their patronage, one could see the pursuit of a few new crafts brought over from Persia or Central Asia. Porcelain work; enamelling, bidri-work, various types of leather work, all began to develop in India at this time; but they did not and could not spread into the villages. The craftsmen and artisans who were brought for these purposes from outside did not transform these into hereditary pursuits in the Indian way; the new arts could be learnt, according to opportunities available, by men of all castes; it does not appear that there were any restrictions of caste in these spheres."36

There were certain cases where the Muslim Kings employed the services of the local craftsmen or took them along with the booty, but it did not in any major way affect the pattern of organization. At this time conversion would also have started basically with the depressed people. The depressed one would have found it a blessing to serve their Muslim lords. But in the early stages of the arrival of Muslims, there were no conversions from the upper castes – the Brahmans or the Kshtriyas. The invaders did not come to propagate or preach their faith. Islam came here with those who came and settled here and made India their motherland.

The Muslim travelers and kings took keen interest in the study and observation of the native customs and traditions and left interesting and useful information about the people and places they visited. Ibn Khurdadba completed his books on India in the beginning of the 10th Century A.D. He found that there are seven classes in India:

“1st Subkufria, among whom are men of high caste, and from whom kings are chosen. The people of the other six classes do the men of this class homage, and them only. 2nd Brahma, who totally abstain from wine and fermented liquors. 3rd, Kataria, who drink not more than three cups of wine; the daughters of the class of Brahmas are not given in marriage to the sons of this class, but the Brahmas take their daughters. 4th Sudaria, who are by profession husbandmen. The 5th Baisura are artiesers and domestics. The 6th Saudalia, who perform menial offices. 7th Lahud; their women are fond of adorning themselves, and the men are fond of amusements and games of skill.”

Al Beruni’s visit to India in the beginning of 11th century is considered remarkable for the fact that he left a vivid account of the Indian of the time. He was born at Khiva, was captured by Mahmud of Ghazni and became a companion of his conquests. He studied the manners, customs and institutions of the Hindus and left a reliable source of information for a study of the period. He noted that child marriage was common. Widow marriage was unknown. Idol worship was there everywhere. Temples were storehouses of wealth.

Al, Beruni found that there were four castes in India. The Brahmans were at that top as they were born of the head of Brahma. Kshtriyas were born of the shoulders and hands of Brahma but he did not find them much below the Brahman’s. The Vaishyas were born of the thighs and the Shudras of the feet. Al Beruni also noted that after the, Shudras came Antyaja who though render various kinds of services are not yet reckoned among any caste, except only as members of a certain craft or profession. Al Beruni found eight guilds in it: the fuller, shoemaker, juggler, the basket and shield maker, the sailor, the fisherman, the hunter of wild animals and of birds and the weaver. They freely intermarry with each other except the fuller, shoemaker and the weaver… The

37 Srivastava, Ashok Kumar, India as described by the Arab Travellers (Gorakhpur: Sahitya Sansar), 1967, pp. 9-10.
members of these guilds lived near the village and towns of the four castes but outside the villages and the towns. Al Beruni has described the duties of the four castes

The Brahma must have an ample intellect, a quiet heart, truthful speech, much patience; he must be master of his senses, a lover of justice, of evident purity, always directed upon worship, entirely bent upon religion.

The Kshatriya must fill the hearts with terror, must be brave and high minded, must have ready speech and liberal hand, not minding dangers, only intent upon carrying the great tasks of his calling to a happy end.

The Vaishya is to occupy himself with agriculture, with the acquisition of cattle, and with trade. Shudra is to endeavour to render services and attentions to each of the preceding classes, in order to make himself liked by them.38

Al Beruni also noted that the Shudra' was like a servant of the Brahmans. The Shudras were denied the study of the holy books. If they happened to read the Vedas, they were to be dragged to the Magistrates and he punished them by having their tongues cut off. If a Hindu was captured by the Muslims and made a prisoner, he was never allowed to return to his own faith. If a Brahman ate in the house of a Shudra for some time, he was expelled from his own caste. In such critical situations, they could easily embrace the foreigners' faith. Dr. Ashok Kumar Srivastava has aptly commented in this respect that the Hindus, since the very beginning, were noted for their conservative outlook. "They always treated the Muslims as Mlecchhas and cow-eaters, and therefore, for the obvious reasons, a Hindu was compelled to observe a separation from them. It was one of the reasons for the wide and rapid circulation of Islam in India or the Hindus were forced to accept Islam as they were in no case allowed by the orthodox Hindus to return to their ancestor's faith even if they had keenly desired as such.39

38 Ibid., p. 13-14.
39 Ibid., p. 22.
The degradation of the Hindu society had reached its nadir by the 11th century A.D. when the Muslims started their conquest of India. Al Beruni has presented a vivid picture of 'the narrowness and bigotry' prevalent in the then Hindu society:

“All the fanaticism of the Hindus is directed against those who do not belong to them, against all foreigners. They call them Mlechchhas i.e. impure, and forbid having any connection with them, be it by inter marriage or any other kind of relationship, or by sitting, eating and drinking with them, because thereby they think they would be polluted....

The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation, like theirs no king like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs. They are haughty, foolishly vain, self-conceited and stolid. They are by nature niggardly in communicating that which they know, and they take the greatest possible care to withhold it from men of another caste, among, their own people, still much more, of course, from any foreigner.40

R.C., Majumdar finds a cause of this narrowness and rigidity of outlook in “the caste system which had assumed a rigid form since the revival of Brahmanical religion”.41 Majumdar found different, classes -as Lords, clergy, the labourers in the English society but he noted that “these class distinctions are a long way off from the rigid system of caste,” ...The Brahman had made the caste system a rigid norm of human, relationship. The Brahmans were polluted if they even crossed the shadow of a Shudra.

Francis Bernier visited India during the Mughal reign. He left a remarkable description of the country. He keenly observed and studied the life of the Mughal royalty as well as the poor peasants of the country. He does not write much about the castes of India. Whatever little he did, leaves the impression that the castes of India. Whatever little he did, leaves the impression that the Brahmans were still ruling the Hindu mind: “These books (the Vedas) enjoin that the people should be divided, as in fact they are most

40 Majumdar, R. C., Ancient India, op. cit., p. 500.
41 Ibid.
effectually into four tribes (Tribus): first, the tribe of Brahmans, or interpreters of the law; secondly, the tribe of Quetterys, or warriors; thirdly, the tribe of Bescue, or merchants and tradesmen, commonly called Banyanes; and fourthly, the tribe of Seydra, or artisans and labourers. These different tribes are not permitted to intermarry, that is to say, a Brahman is forbidden to marry a Quettery and the same injunction holds good in regard to the other tribes.

Muslim were silent observers of the situation. They had become rulers and they could do much. They professed to have a faith of which ‘brotherhood of man’ was the cardinal principle. They had no caste-distinctions and no colour bars. They could eat and sit with the poorest, marry their widows, and obey the calls of negro. But in India all these things proved tall talks and ‘holy words’ confined to books. The Mughals came to India fell in love with its land and people, its farms, fields fowls so much so that they made India their homeland. They loved her beauty wheresoever it was and created beauty where it was not but they did not see deeper. They were conquerors and remained conquerors till they were vanquished by another alien force. They, did not, because they could not become reformers: “The castes assumed greater rigidity in the social and religious spheres during the Muslim regime. The Muslims succeeded in ruling the Hindus, because there were numerous castes which did never oppose the Muslims by becoming united. The Muslim rulers patronized the caste system and they openly supported the feelings of low and high, touchable and untouchable.42

Caste-system with its evils was spreading fast but the rulers made no efforts to remove the blots on humanity. There were some social and religious reformers like Kabir, Ravidasa, Dadu, Sadana and Dhanna. But there was no voice, no law to help the depressed ones who were going down and down in the social scale.

42 Sagar, S. L., Hindu Culture and Caste System in India (Delhi: Uppal Book Store), 1975, p. 33.
Muslims profess to have no caste division's and no evils like untouchability or any other cause of discrimination on the basis of birth in a particular family or community. But their arrival in India further divided the Indian society into more groups. Then the Muslims were developing certain characteristics of the Hindu caste system among themselves. A large number of caste and sub-castes are mentioned in the books written during the Mughals. The castes which evolved in the Buddhist age became more rigid during the Muslim rule.

Aine Akbari makes a mention of a number of new castes like Kayastha, koli, Tamoli, Chandala, Agrawal, Bhar, Chauhan, Gaharaval, Gotami, Gahlot, Kausik, Ahir, Lodha, Gujar, kurmi, Vagari, Mina, Mehtar, Bhil, Kohli, Vaisa, Khada and Khari. It has already been observed that the lower castes i.e., the Vaishyas had started coming over to the Sudras and some of the Sudras had started rising higher in the social scale. The result of this assimilation was the emergence of new castes as enumerated above.

Then the Englishmen started conquering the country and by 1857 they had become masters of the land. They entered the country as traders but the socio-political situation in the country and their own ambitious designs made them rulers. The Mughals came here and they soon became 'naturalised citizens' of India but the Englishmen came primarily to trade and earn profit. Their interest lay in taking away raw material from India to England and send back finished products. As a result, the declining economy got a rude shook. The poor classes became poorer and the low-caste were further reduced in the social scale. Moreover, the problem took a new dimension. The missionaries started converting the poor and the sick, naked and hungry ones, through their net work of schools and hospitals. The members of the low-caste who became their victims were further alienated from the native social groups.

The situation was still worsening. Christian preaching proved of no avail. It has been well analysed by Sagar:
During the British rule, too, there were no reforms in the conditions of Shudras and untouchables; rather they were treated as Sub-human, less than men and worse than beasts all over India. From Ataka to Kataka, from Sindha to Sagar, and from Kashmir to KanyaKumari, the Sudras were regarded as untouchables, the most degraded beings. Even their shadow and sight were considered to be a source of pollution. Mere talking with them caused pollution. In East, Bengal, Bihar; in North, Himachal Pradesh, Garwal, Almora; in South, Tamil, Telagu, Malyalam Pradesh, Madras, Mysore in West, Bombay, Gujarat, Maharashtra - the Sudras were deemed as the most degraded human beings. The touching of their foot-prints was taken as the cause of pollution. Every sphere of life shadowed by caste, and untouchability. The toe of a Brahmin's shoe was regarded more sacred than the head of a Sudra in religious functions. Punishments for the same crime were different, less for a Brahmin and more for a Sudra. If any one wanted to act his daughter married in mature age, if any one wanted to go to foreign country for higher studies, if anyone stood for widow-marriage or for the higher education of his daughter, then the caste created obstacles. The caste rules prevented such a man from doing so. The caste system still exists in the same position and any sort of reform has become difficult rather impossible.43

There have been social reformers from time to time and they did as much as they could to remove caste-distinctions but the hold of religion was so strong that most of the efforts ended in smoke. Jagjivan Ram, the eminent Harijan leader made a study of the religious and social reforms but he found no change in the social organization among the Hindus in India. He wrote:

"In vain a Mahavira or a Gautama Buddha, questioning ritualistic Brahmanic orthodoxy, emphasise the superiority of right conduct over meaningless ritualism. In vain saints like Ramanand, Kabir, Nanak, Raidas stress the godliness of man and the sinfulness of denying him his status. In vain Vivekanand emphasises that, "the unique characteristics of Hindu

43 Ibid., p. 34.
society-the caste, the joint family, the rights of inheritance and the relationships arising out of them, are social and legal, and not religious institutions". "Beginning from Buddha down to Ram Mohan Roy, everyone made the mistake," he wrote, "of holding caste to be religious institutions. In spite of all the ravings of the priests, caste is simply a crystallized social institution which after doing its service is now filling the atmosphere of India with stench." He was critical of rituals, rites, meaningless ceremonials, purification of customs, and wanted social organization to change with the changing times. Ram Mohan Roy endeavoured to reinterpret Hinduism, create a synthesis of the radical ideas from the: West with the philosophical views of the Upanishads. Swami Dayanand discovered in the Vedas inspiration for universal brotherhood and a non-metaphysical approach to God and free Society. Lokmanya Tilak's call to a life of action was based on the concepts of stithi-prajana, nishkama karma, lok Samgrahas, i.e., right knowledge right detached action and welfare of the people. But Hindu society did not change.44

Hutton feels that the original Aryan invaders of India, with their distinct ranks, introduced the principle of social stratification into a society already divided into exclusive tribal groups by taboos connected with food. The Aryan invaders took help of these taboos in maintaining social distance between themselves and the subject population. Thus stratified exclusive group was reinforced and provided a powerful sanction in the shape of pollution through food and, later, pollution through contact. But, as we know, historical explanation is bound to be speculative.45 He concludes, the truth is that while a caste is a social unit in a quasi-organic system of society and throughout India is consistent enough to be immediately identifiable, the nature of the unit is variable enough to make a concise definition difficult.

G. S. Ghure observes, "It appears to me that any attempt at definition is bound to fail because of the complexity of the phenomenon." 46

It is difficult to enumerate castes with precision and chart out boundaries to differentiate one caste from another, particularly beyond the village level. More often than not, scholars leave to the respondent to identify his/her caste. For the respondent, the meaning of caste varies from context to context. To him, caste has a specific and particular meaning in a village society where he interacts every day with other members of the society. However, the meaning and caste identification change when he interacts at district or state level. Ali castes at the village level are not necessarily sub-caste or sub-sub-castes of some higher level caste, except that some of them occasionally use common nomenclature either as suffix or prefix. Caste is not varna either. At the empirical level, many castes do not fit in any of the four Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra.

On this point, the position of another, the alternative theory, is differently placed. On the basis of the distinction between varna and jati, Panikkar has argued that caste system has no basis in Hindu religion and is a product of Hindu traditional law and of the weakness of the central political authority during much of India’s history. This view may help explain some other developments in caste but its plea is generally not accepted.

Definitions of caste are legion and different authors define caste in different ways. Difficulties from various sources are encountered when one attempts to define caste; namely, from the variety of social organisation; from ignorance about, or indifference towards, other castes by the local people; from the confusion between the ideal and the real; from the fluidity in caste; and from nomenclature, to cite a few.

Most of the sociological writings on caste conclude that homo hierarchicus is the central and substantive element of the caste system which

differentiates it from other social systems - particularly that of the West. Broadly speaking, the caste system has been governed by the concept of purity and pollution. Interpersonal relationship among individuals in terms of blood, food and occupation are divided into pure and impure. It is obligatory for each Hindu to confine relationship interaction within the restricted circle called caste, as to maintain purity in marriage relationship, exchange of food and pursuing occupation. "The principle of the opposition of the pure and the impure," Louis Dumont argues, "underlies hierarchy, which is the superiority of the pure to the impure, underlies separation because the pure and the impure must be kept separate and underlies the division of labour because pure and impure occupations must likewise be kept separate. The whole is founded on the necessary and hierarchical coexistence of two opposites. Thus there a four essential features of the caste system which maintain its homo hierarchicus character. They are: (1) hierarchy; (2) commensality; (3) restrictions on marriage and (4) hereditary occupation

There are a large number of castes and their precise figures for any region and the country are not available. Theoretically, each caste has a definite place in the social hierarchy. Its place in the hierarchy is determined by its ritual status based on the observance of religious values and its hereditary occupation. However, the caste hierarchy has never been static through out history. Though the upper castes try to maintain their higher status, the middle and low castes have successfully tried to improve their status. Having improved economic condition, a dominant section of some of the low castes, including the groups which were at one time treated as untouchables, imitated customs and norms of the upper castes. This process is called Sanskritisation.

The concept of Sanskritization and its analogues has been criticized.\textsuperscript{48} The fact that caste as a group tries to attain a higher status shows that the group solidarity becomes stronger. And, attempts of caste towards self-improvement does not affect the traditional hierarchy of the caste system. The theory of Sanskritization is weak on several other counts as well. First, there is nothing new in it as it is the tendency of human beings to imitate, and in particular to imitate superiors, and is encountered more or less everywhere. Secondly, it isolates imitation of the second (Kshatriya), or imitation of the prestigious foreigner (now-a-days ‘westernization’), both of which are also present. Third, how it is that all Hindus are not completely ‘sanskritized’ if the tendency has been at work for millennia?\textsuperscript{49} Fourth, and finally, claim to the status by the caste is one thing, and for it to be recognised is another.

According to Buch, “Caste has given an aristocracy of birth, not of merit. It has rendered free adaptation of individual talent and capacity to particular social work for which it is best fitted impossible. It has stifled initiative, self-confidence and the spirit of enterprise. It prevents the growth of a nationality and a development of a democratic state.”\textsuperscript{50}

The Encyclopaedia of Social Science defines caste as an endogamous and hereditary sub-division of ethnic group occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social esteem in comparison with such other divisions.\textsuperscript{51}

Hobel denotes castes as “the freezing of social classes by means of endogamy and hereditarily ascribed status.”\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{50} Buch, M. A., Rise and Growth of Indian Nationalism (Baroda: Government of India), 1939, p. 23.
There are two different issues here. The first is that the word ‘caste’ is a European invention. The second is the idea that castes are, in some fundamental way, unlike as species are: ‘jati, caste, is also ‘species’ in the botanical or zoological sense’.  

The word ‘caste’ as used in various European Sources, is an extremely unhappy translation of two quite different indigenous concepts, varnas and jati, which are generally believed, both by Hindu and by outside observers to correspond in some way.  

Kroeber defined caste in terms of endogamy, heredity and relative rank. According to him, castes are a special form of social classes, "which in tendency at least are present in every society. Castes differ from social classes, however, in that they have emerged into social consciousness to the point that custom and law attempt their rigid and permanent separation from one another". Warner and his associates accept Kroeber’s definition and add that the caste is rigid and relatively very widespread. Ghurye’s and Myrdal’s views are close to Kroeber’s and Warner and his associates.  

Caste, like other systems of stratification, is connected with economic differentiation. This is apparent whether we consider the four traditional varnas of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras the ideal divisions of Hindu society or the jatis (castes) the practical aspect. Senart observed that varnas originally resembled feudal estates in certain respects. They were like

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57 Ghurye, G. S., Caste and Race in India, op. cit., 1932.
estates both in the character, and, to a great extent, in the hierarchical ordering of the groups (priests, warrior-nobles, traders, serfs), and also in fact that they were not totally closed groups; individuals could move from one varna to another and intermarriage was possible. The jatis which developed later and which continued to grow in number have their economic significance; they are for the most part occupational groups and, in the traditional village economy, the caste system largely provides the machinery for the exchange of goods and services.60

Caste informs each person of his precise place and prescribed pursuit of duties that are beyond doubt and scope of individual interpretation. "Acceptance of one's place in the caste system was unquestioning. It was a part of the order of nature."61 Weber has made a distinction between 'class' and 'stand', status-group or estate as between economy on the one hand, and 'honour' and 'social intercourse' on the other.62 In Weber, as in Kroeber, caste represents an extreme case; but Weber treats it as the status-group which becomes caste when its separation is secured not only through convention and law, but also ritually (impurity through contact). From this point of view, caste would be closed status groups (Gemeinschaft), endogamous, believing their members to be of the same blood, which would put themselves in society (vergeselischaft) one with the other. However, Weber's distinction has made its way in the world: one can distinguish types of social stratification according whether the basis of inequality is power, or prestige, or a combination of both. Classes are usually conceived as implying a hierarchy of power (political as well as economic). 'Castes' and 'estates' imply a hierarchy

of prestige. Max Weber, as it were, distinguished between open and closed status groups and placed caste in the latter category.⁶³

Bailey refers to three types of definitions of caste, namely, (i) rigidity' type, (ii) 'cultural' type, and (iii) 'structural' definition. Bailey finds the first definition inadequate as he observes that a set of beliefs about pollution enforces status rigidity and immutability, or whether they are 'analytic' or 'synthetic' in nature.⁶⁴ Bailey, therefore, accepts the statements of Dumont and Pocock ⁶⁵ regarding the 'religious' definition of caste as 'analytic' rather than synthetic' (empirical situations). Accordingly, the caste system is a system of religious ideas connected with purity. Purity-impurity is not simple opposition, but also implies hierarchy, higher and lower. This includes hierarchic superiority of purity, opposition and segmentation.) This formula also implies hereditary specialisation. Thus, in the purity-impurity opposition three principles of caste system are implied, these are: (i) hereditary specialisation, (ii) hierarchy, and (iii) opposition of parts.

As such Bailey remarks that caste, so defined, is uniquely Indian; a closed system of social stratification, which we define as a structure of relationships of the specific kind and not as a system of beliefs or values. The implication of this definition is that caste shares some structural features as a system of stratification with most other systems of stratification while some of its features are unique to it. However, Dumont's view about caste has an air of finality and completeness. Such an approach leaves a large area of social relations unanalysed, and does not allow a comparative study. Bailey claims that such a structural analysis can be undertaken with or without substituting the definition of caste as a system of religious beliefs. The structural criteria in

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Bailey's definition of caste are exclusiveness, exhaustiveness and ranking; and the specific criteria are: (i) birth ascription, (ii) hereditary specialisation (summation of roles), and (iii) cooperation and inter-dependence between caste groups. These criteria are found together only in a small-scale society. Small-scale relations are not part of the definition of a caste system, but are a condition of the existence of the caste system.

Thus, Bailey observes that caste is not a principle by which politico-economic groups are recruited, nor does it refer to organic relations between political groups; but it is an organising principle of competition. That is, castes are not corporate political groups. As such, caste is an 'organic stratification'. Thus, caste in India is a 'closed-organic stratification', South Africa is 'closed segmentary stratification', and class in Europe is 'open-segmentary stratification'. Bailey is silent about the fourth logical type of stratification, that is, 'open-organic stratification'. Finally, Bailey observes that 'caste systems are always involute systems. Involute systems are found only in simple societies, or in relatively insulated enclaves of complex societies.'

Though Bailey strives at a 'compromised definition' by including certain universal structural criteria of stratification and certain criteria of caste as a unique cultural system of stratification, his ultimate analysis of the caste system is not different from that of Dumont and Leach. Leach considers caste as an 'organic' system having functional interdependence of different caste groups. The upper castes compete among themselves for the services of the lower castes.66 Thus, Leach draws a distinction between caste and class. In a class society the under-privileged groups must compete among themselves for the favour of the elite, whereas in a caste society the upper castes must compete among themselves for the services of individual members of the lower castes. The same view is held by Dumont when he says that the

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ideology of individualism, competition and equality is absent in caste society; a caste society is holistic and hierarchical. The religious order encompasses the economic and political systems. In a class society the political and economic ideologies 'encompass' the religious and 'ritual' order.

Bailey says that Dumont's statements tend to be analytic rather than synthetic. The former become pre-ordained and do not form the basis of a hypothesis. They tend to be axiomatic. But Bailey himself accepts these 'analytic' statements as the basis of his analysis of caste stratification. He concludes that caste is an 'organic stratification' opposed to 'segmentary stratification' characterised by class relations. Thus, Bailey considers caste as a static system of relations ignoring its dynamics and contradictions.

Pfautz acknowledges that caste is essentially a matter of class. In this connection, it is to be noted that a recent work recognizes two fundamental types of 'social stratification': one, the caste-type of social stratification comprising 'orders' or 'estates'; and, two, the open class-type of social stratification. These two sorts of stratification, according to him, are related respectively to the poles of Talcott Parsons' alternative of particularism-universalism.

Nesfield is obsessed by general ethnographic views; his faith in positivist classifications is uncompromising, to a degree quite astonishing in an age which has largely renounced all dogmatism.

Common occupation is in his eyes, the foundation of the caste; it is the centre round which it has grown up. He admits no other origin; he deliberately excludes all influence of race and religion. In his eyes it is pure illusion to distinguish in India distinct currents of population, Aryan and aboriginal. The wave of invasion was early absorbed in the mass unity was, very soon established, and was, already acquired more than a thousand years before the

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Christian era only the constitution of castes succeeded in introducing a disturbing factor, thanks to occupational specialty.

To use his own Words: “Each caste or group of castes represents one or other of those progressive stages of culture which have marked the industrial development of mankind, not only, in India, but in every other country in the world. The rank of any caste as high or low depends upon whether the industry represented by the caste belongs to an advanced or backward stage of culture; and thus the natural history of human industries affords the chief due to the gradations as well as to the formation of Indian castes.”

Starting from this point, Nesfield shows us the different occupations emerging from the tribe to constitute themselves into sectional units, and these units rising in the social scale according to the, trades by which they live. The, caste rises from the tribe, the fragments of which it recomposes according to a new principle, and it has retained persistent memories of its origins. It is from the ancient type of the tribe that it has borrowed the narrow marriage-rules and the strict prohibition of all friendly approach to similar groups

Ibbetson's thesis, less complete, and, less forced than that of Nesfield, is based on the same data. He nevertheless summarizes in the following words the stages which he discerns in the history of the caste:

(i) the organisation of the tribe, common to all primitive societies; (2) the guilds founded on heredity of occupation; (3) the exaltation, peculiar to India, of the sacerdotal function; (4) the exaltation of Levitical blood by the importance attributed to heredity; (5) the consolidation of the principle by the elaboration of a series of entirely artificial laws, derived from Hindu beliefs, regulating marriage and fixing the limits within which it may be contracted,

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declaring certain occupations and foods to be impure, and determining the conditions and extent of the relations permitted between the castes.

It is in race, and the enmities born of race, that Risley, here indirect contradiction to Nesfield, seeks the soul of caste. According to him the existing hierarchy is the social consecration of the ethnological ladder from the Aryans, who have retained their purity in the highest castes, down to the humblest aboriginals herded together in the lowest. Race is now substituted for profession as the generating principles. 'The nasal index' is the formula for the proportions of the nose, and is, it appears, the most unerring criterion of race. Risley ends by making the following somewhat singular assertion: 'It is scarcely a paradox to lay down as a law of the caste-organization in Eastern India that a man's, social status varies in inverse ratio to the width of his nose.'

Risley in his own theory of the Origin of Castes writes: "......whenever in the history of the world one people have subdued another, whether by active invasion or by gradual occupation of their territory, the conquerors have taken the women of the country as concubine or wives, but have given their own daughters in marriage only among themselves. Where the two people are of the same race or at any rate of the same colour, this initial stage of what we have called soon passes away, and complete amalgamation takes place. Where on the other hand marked distinction of race and colour intervene, and especially if the dominant people are continually recruited by men of their own blood, the course of evolution runs on different lines. The tendency then is towards the formation of a class of half-breed, the result of irregular unions between men of the higher race and women of lower:

71 Risley, H. H., Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Ethnographic Glossary, 1891, p. xxxiv.
who marry only among themselves and are to all intents and purposes a caste.  

Although, this explanation is in line with what the Puranas and Dharmsashtra have to say about the many castes, it does not still explain the wide variations of features within the upper castes, which certainly are not of Risley's half-breed types. But even the half-breed, breeding over millennia, if their creation was a one time affair, should have created very distinct types with a great deal of uniformity within each caste. But it is only near the bottom of the social order that we notice some degree of uniformity. This would suggest continuous mingling over centuries among the present day upper castes, and a comparative isolation of those who are near the bottom.

Sub-caste was either referred to as smaller unit and the so called caste as either caste, or major unit. Not rarely are the sub-castes referred to as divisions or sub-divisions, evidently of or within a major unit called caste. Iravati Karve is positive and almost certain that the so-called sub-castes, far from being either subdivisions or even specialized and differentiated subunits, are the actual castes, the so-called castes of the parlance, and of the written usage of most students of the Hindu or Indian caste-system, really "caste-clusters" formed by a "fusion" of the so called sub-castes.

Blunt not only speaks of sub-caste but also of sub-sub-caste. He remarked much the number recorded in detail Census in 1891 may be reduced by judicious scanning, the record "affords striking proof of the fertility of the caste system in the development of subdivisions". He thinks that "the name of a subdivision is generally the only clue that we possess to its [caste nomenclature] origin" and states that "nobody has ever attempted a detailed

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74 Blunt, F. A. H., Caste System of Northern India (New Delhi: S. Chand), 1969, p. 49.
analysis of caste nomenclature”. He therefore, analyses its “principal features” and states: “There are, firstly, local, eponymous and occupational names” secondly, there are "sectional names which are derived from castes". The fifth variety of names is totemistic; sixth, nicknames; seventh, based on some social custom; eighth, referring to origin; ninth, "referring to religious belief" and tenth, names "recalling castes of the Puranas".75

J. H. Hutton quite often uses the word and the concept and even speaks of the processes of segregation, separation and fission when writing about some of the castes and their subunits and contracts the processes of the formation of sub-castes of former times with those operating in recent caste.76

Jackson's statement based on castes of the Bombay Presidency that “a large proportion of subcastes bear geographical names he says that they could be added to without much difficult by parallel instances from all over India” Pointing out the favourable nature of the political condition of ancient India for "just this kind of fission" he concludes: "Clearly geographical, political and administrative considerations have not been unimportant in the development and operation of the caste system”. He further used the concept and the fact of sub-caste to expound the nature and function of hepergamy.77

Sherring explains how subdivisions of castes may have taken place:

"The caste separated into clans, each of which managed its own affairs, held panchayats or councils, and maintained a distinct and independent existence. As, these clans were not amenable to one another or to the caste itself considered as a federal whole, gradually they became jealous of each other's rights, and at length, impelled by the national habit of exclusiveness,

75 Ibid., pp 37-42, 50-57, 236-38.
76 Hutton, J. H., Caste in India, op. cit.
77 Jackson’s A. V. Williams (ed.), History of India, Vol. 9 (London: The Grofies Society), 1907, pp. 51-6
abandoned one another reciprocally, and assumed to themselves absolutely all the functions and prerogatives of castes.\textsuperscript{78}

Another field investigator Adrian C. Mayer operating in the heart of Tamilnad, i.e., Tanjore District, Kathleen Gough mentions four "sub-divisions" of Shaiva or Smartha Tamil Brahmins and adds: "Each vision is divided into small regional endogamous sub-castes each comprising the local communities of some ten to twenty villages". About the four sub-divisions she says that they are "distinguished by minor differences in the performance of Vedic rites".\textsuperscript{79}

We have seen that the Brahmin was at the apex of the hierarchical organization of caste and that the Hindu kings upheld the institution with the help of their civil power. With the advent of the British as the political head of society things were bound to take on a different aspect. The British brought with them their own traditional form of government, and as Christians they could not have much sympathy with the institutions of the Hindus. As prudent foreigners wishing to consolidate their power over a strange land and people they decided to leave the peculiar institutions of the country severely alone except where they egregiously violated their cherished ideas of government. They introduced a system of education which did not demand of the learners any change of religion. Ideas and behaviour patterns, very different from those to which the people were accustomed, were thus presented as isolated from religion. The policy of comparative non-interference naturally gave scope for the revolt of the castes that were not quite comfortable under the Brahmin supremacy. Later on, with the incoming of the modern industrial organization and the growth of industrial cities, large numbers of peoples congregated in cities of mixed populations, away from the influence of their homes and unobserved by their caste or village people.

\textsuperscript{79} Mayer, Adrian C., Caste and Kinship in Central India (Berkeley: University of California), 1960, pp. 4-9 and 152-60.
It is interesting to see that caste and custom were given such importance even during the days of the Mauryan Emperors. If caste was an imposition by a higher caste on the lower ones, such undeviated adherence to the customs of the caste would not have taken place. The caste rules and traditions were formulated and maintained by the respective castes. It was only when their privileges were threatened, that they referred to secular or higher authorities for protection. The caste within itself has been a close-knit corporation though without a permanent head nor any written constitution. Every one knows its privileges, its advantages and disadvantages. To break away from caste due to disadvantages is seldom attempted, for its advantages are much greater. Especially as the members of different castes live in independent isolation, the disadvantages one may feel are more imaginary then real. It is only when one hunts for public posts and government service that one's caste may stand against him. There too it is a question of privileges. It may be that the members of one caste or a particular group thereof, may have preponderance in some posts, or in certain offices, then an entry of an outsider will be resented, especially if the post is a lucrative one. Though this is the practice everywhere, it takes up undue magnitude in a caste ridden India. Caste is not the only operative factor in this, for provincialism plays even a greater part. In the spheres of works specified for respective castes there is little Provincialism. A carpenter from the Punjab could easily find a job in Bengal. There is no competition between a washerman and barber for each other's job. Competitions are in respect of highly salaried posts, or posts with unduly high salaries often with little work. In such cases it is but natural for a Kayastha, to select a Kayastha for a lucrative post, and for a Kashmiri or Tamilian to favour one of his own caste or tribe.

In a non-capitalistic state there could be no strife between caste and caste. If each has to work and if each is to receive adequate remuneration, there will be no strife between caste and caste. As long as India remained non-
capitalistic, there was no caste problem. Unequal distribution of wealth is at
the bottom of all caste problem now.

In olden days India appears to have had an ideal type of socialism
when Kara or Kuram was the unit of local administration. A Kara was a much
wider area, than a gramain (village). In a Kara, families of all castes -and
professions lived side by side. The Brahmanas were there to do puja in the
temples, and special sub-castes were there to assist them in their duties. The
Purohits were there to minister them at the death ceremonies and death
anniversaries. The Kammalans were them to build houses, and to make
ploughs, utensils and ornaments for all. The Sudras were there to see that all
the Kara land was cultivated and tanks and canals for the irrigation were
maintained, and to see that cultivation was done in proper time and grains
were carefully stored in granaries. The grain or produce collected by the
Sudras or farmers was for the use of all. Each had a share according to the
nature of the work rendered. The labourers and workers received it as daily
wages, the Brahmanas and priests got it as honorariums. There was always
some work to be done for some one or the other. New houses had to be built,
old ones had to be repaired, new trees had to be planted, the patients had to be
treated, workers were always in demand. On the other hand, if there was no
work, because of heavy rain or flood, the workers had only to go to the excess
grain storers who were always ready to meet the demand of those who were
lacking in subsistence. It was not begging, it was a legitimate demand. Such
demands were met with the hope of nothing in return, - not even with the
expectation of thanks or gratitude. In such an atmosphere of social economy,
there was no difference in the standard of living. Each one had his own house.
Some houses were small while others were big, but each was according to his
own requirements. A daily worker had no need to have a granary or storage
accommodation. One who had no occasion to entertain lavishly and had no
need for a big dining hall or a guest house. There was not much difference
between the diet of the rich and the poor. As the Government could not be run
on nothing, and no public utility work could be undertaken without money or means, the cultivators and other property owners had to pay taxes, but the taxes were collected in kind as far as possible, which always were a portion of the net produce. The taxes collected were kept as far as practicable in local treasuries of respective Karas, made available for use by the state for general purpose. Under this type of socialism there was no strife between caste, and caste, each caste and each individual of the caste, worked for the common good. The workers realised that their well-being depended on the prosperity of the land-holders and those who held land knew that their prosperity and well-being depended on the workers. It was in such surroundings that caste system originated and flourished.

This happy state of affairs came to an end under foreign domination, under heavy extraction by the rulers, under selfish money-lenders and entrepreneurs of labour and capital. Under this new regime, caste lost its economic advantage; labour lost its mastery and dignity. Art, craft and architecture deteriorated. The country became, dependent on foreign capitalism and commercialism. Yet caste holds its own.

The first British administrators on the Bombay side employed, as early as 1826, officials like Borradaile and Steele, to make compilations of the various usages and customs of the many castes of the Presidency. These painstaking officers made useful compilations. But similar compendiums were not prepared in other provinces. The result was that the Widow-Remarriage Act of 1856 contained clauses practically violating the customs of some of the so-called lower castes. While legalising the marriage of Hindu widow, this Act deprived such a remarried widow of all her rights and interests in her deceased husband’s property. Fortunately the courts have taken a reasonable view of these sections of the Act, and have decreed that the Act with its restrictive clause applies only to those widow who could not, without the aid of this Act, remarry according to their caste-usage. Widows of castes allowing remarriage
forfeited their rights and interests in their deceased husband's property only when caste-usage enjoined such forfeiture.\textsuperscript{80}

On the whole, the British rulers of India, who throughout professed to be the trustees of the welfare of the country, never seem to have given much thought to the problem of caste, in so far it affects the nationhood of India. Nor did they show willingness to take a bold step rendering innocuous. Their measures generally have been promulgated piecemeal and with due regard to the safety of British domination.

To sum up, social and religious privileges and disabilities born of caste are no longer\textsuperscript{81} recognised in law and only partially in custom. Only the depressed classes are labouring under certain customary and semi-legal disabilities. Caste no longer rigidly determines as individual's occupation, but continues to prescribe almost in its old rigour the circle into which one has to marry. One has still to depend very largely on one's caste for help at critical periods of one's life, like marriage and death. One's closest companions and friends are mainly delimited by the circle of one's caste. The difference between the old regime and contemporary society lies in this that whereas under the ancient organization the facts mentioned were almost universally true, today there is a section of society-the modernly educated persons-small yet important, which has risen above all these restrictions. They are bound to serve as beacon lights to the wavering members of society. Attitudes of exclusiveness and distrust, enshrined in the old vernacular proverbs, between caste and caste, still persevere even in the minds of the educated. Caste-associations are very common and command the services of even the most highly educated persons to further their object of the helping the members of their castes. As long as endogamy is prescribed and practised, wider self-interest dictates that one should help the aggrandisement of the members of

\textsuperscript{80} Mayne, J. D. (ed.), A Treatise on Hindu Law and Usage (Madras: Higginbothanas), 1953, pp. 779-82.
\textsuperscript{81} Ghurye, G. S., op. cit., pp. 302-303.
one's caste. For, the better the economic prospects for the of the caste the greater the chances of getting well husbands for one's daughters. The rule of endogamy is a way the fundamental factor of contemporary caste.

Caste has thus become the centre of an individual's altruistic impulse and philanthropic activities. The existence of definite organization has rallied round the caste the feelings of consciousness of kind. In the desire to help one's fellows many forget the principles of social justice, and led to do, consciously or otherwise, injustice to the members of other castes. Unfortunately many leaders in civic life are associated with the movement of amelioration of their respective castes. The mental undercurrents of those who are to be led breathe distrust of such leaders. The conduct of these leaders in the matter of the marriages of their wards usually in their own caste-strengthens this lack of confidence felt by the populace, and acts as a buttress against attacks on caste-endogamy. Hardly any caste accepts its accredited status or concedes the precedence of another caste, though it may demand such precedence of a caste supposed to be lower than it in the old hierarchy.

Economic conditions have led many castes to clamour for petty jobs in the clerical line. This factor enhances the feeling of caste-animosity. Even the apex of the ancient the priesthood of the Brahmin, which has been the great bond of social solidarity in this finely divided society is being loosened by caste after caste. At about the end of the British rule in India, caste-society presented the spectacle of self-centred groups more or less in conflict with one another.