Chapter – 1

Introduction
I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the origin of caste system in India, Manu’s Laws relating to marriage, intimation of caste, untouchability, social work in relation to caste and marriage etc.

HINDUISM AND CASTE

“Caste is a hereditary endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation and a particular position in the hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concepts of pollution and purity, and generally, maximum commensality occurs within the caste” (Srinivas 1962).

Shortly after the Aryan invasion, around 1500 BC, came the emergence of the four Vedas, collections of sacred hymns which were originally preserved by word of mouth, and from which evolved some of the ideologies of Hinduism. These hymns are in many ways simply a celebration of the wonder of the world in which man lives. Hindus have always been primarily concerned with the relationship between man and the universe, the earthly and the spiritual body. The only factual information to be gleaned from the Vedas is that the early agriculturalists of the Indus Valley were governed by warriors, protectors, and that there was a band of priests who prayed for growth and well being.
Around 1000 BC came the epic age, when mythological stories contained in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Upanishads were first told. The last of these was a kin to a philosophical lecture expanded through moral folk tales. Its central theme is the relationship between Brahma, the Supreme Being, and the Atman, the inner self or soul. Brahma, the omnipotent God and king, is seen as the eternal self in whom all beings exist and as the source of Samsara, the transience and change experienced throughout one's earthly existence. The Mahabharata and the Ramayana are today as important to Hindus as the Holy Bible is to Christians. Not only do they tell of war and adventure but they also carry a message of the power and triumph of good over evil. Many of the characters in the stories are the vast variety of gods and deities which have come to govern the faith of all devout Hindus. Throughout can be perceived the basic philosophy of the Hindu—that is, his paramount concern with the nature of the universe and his curiosity in finding a personal relationship with God. Included in the Mahabharata is the Bhagavad Gita, a sacred book of celestial songs allegedly inspired by a mystic dialogue between Lord Krishna and the warrior king, Arjuna. There are instructions and teachings on how to attain complete knowledge and self-realisation, how one should conduct one's prayers, how one should separate good from evil yet accept the presence of them both, and, perhaps most important, the foundation of all Hindu thought; how one should discriminate between one's inherent nature and the future of one's soul and how through each life man must do his duty within the social context in which he finds himself. Contained in the Ramayana and Mahabharata are imaginatively coloured tales of how life at that time was conducted, with numerous clans, each functioning within its own unit.
Around 300 BC the Puranas were composed. These are historical documents of the mythical laws, intended to support the philosophies of the Vedas, and they include an exposition of the creation of the world, the concept of time and details of mythical kings. Concurrently a Hindu sage named Manu qualified various customs and religions and social duties in what is known as ‘Manu’s code’. This has been passed on through generations, and is followed today for the ways in which fasts and festivals should be observed. Although there are many variations under the umbrella of Hinduism, most Hindus will agree on the basic concepts.

First, there is the ancient belief that Truth and God are one. Second, there is the belief in the Atman, the inner soul of each individual, and, third, that behaviour in a previous life is responsible for the present condition. Everyone is struck in a wheel, some form of circumventive pattern. A person’s behaviour is a form of response to being encased in this fusion of infrastructure. The wheel turns continuously but one is free to detach oneself at will while at the same time retaining roots within. One should love one’s neighbour as oneself but before one can do this one must come to a greater understanding of oneself and all human nature. Interwoven, too, in this wheel is one’s dharma, the acceptance of the existence in which one finds oneself. ‘I think, therefore I am, but what I am God knows’.

A Hindu’s ultimate aim is to be freed from his Samsara (his earthly existence of change), and his soul liberated so that finally it achieves the ultimate Brahma – Atman relationship from which enables one to achieve detachment from this earth and
blessedness through union with Brahma. A devout Hindu must aim for the higher region of being, that of contemplation, rather than the lower region of possession.

The doctrine of the law of karma, by which every action has its appropriate result and justice is meted out for the reward or punishment of every action, is linked to the notion of the transmigration of souls. It is stated in the Upanishads that, 'Those whose conduct on earth has given pleasure can hope to enter a pleasant womb, that is, the womb of a Brahmin or a woman of the princely class. But those whose conduct on earth has been foul can expect to enter a foul and stinking womb, that is, the womb of a bitch or a pig or an outcaste.' This concept of rebirth is fundamental and unchangeable existence, and it explains why political reform in India through revolution is such a remote possibility. If a man suffers, it is his punishment for misdeeds in a former life, the penalty for breaking the codes of Hindu behaviour and not the fault of a corrupt system.

To the orthodox Hindu there are rituals to accompany every single action from the moment of birth, through childhood, maturity, old age and, finally, death – how one should wash oneself, whom one should marry, the food one can eat. Rituals are the soul of all cultures and the basic art of religion.

To high-caste Hindus, the most important sacrament is the sacred thread ceremony. This section of society refer to themselves as 'twice born' – rather like birds, which are given an earthly form when their mother lays her eggs and then emerge again when they hatch. A Hindu boy's first birth is at his delivery and his second at this ceremony of initiation. This may take place any time after he has completed his sixth
year. The thread is looped like a sash around his left shoulder and right side of his waist. It is a sign of an elite membership. The orthodox Hindu boy will then begin to learn and recite daily the Sanskrit verses of the holy texts.

**THEORIES OF CASTE ORIGIN**

Like Hinduism, the origins of caste are obscure. The earliest Hindus, who inhabited the area now known as the Punjab, included Persians and Greeks who in the years BC steadily invaded from Central Asia. These northern Aryans pushed the Dravidian inhabitants southwards, and it is believed that caste divisions may first have come about when the original population was incorporated into the conquerors’ new civilisation in a servile form known as Sudra. Although the Dravidians protested they were good Hindus, they were excluded from the ‘twice born’ theory and forbidden to practise the same sacred rites.

There is a reference contained in the Rig Veda (1200-900 BC), the first time the concept of caste is recorded in the history of Indian civilisation, which suggests a second theory of caste origins, namely that the system was formed within a group of families claiming common descent from Brahma, the mythical forefather. Initially the father was the Brahmin, the priest and teacher, the brother the warrior and protector, the sister the keeper of the household and so on. However, after a few generations such organisation became impossible to perpetuate, so groups of individuals with the same roles drew apart into separate guilds or castes.
There is a third theory contained in a delightful myth similar to the story of Noah wherein a celebrated man called Mahanuvu, greatly respected by all Hindus, escaped the great flood in his own ark taking with him seven famous Penitents. When the waters subsided they set about dividing mankind into four different castes.

The fourth theory of caste origin can be attributed to a reference in the Bhagavad Gita to the words of Brahma: ‘The four castes were created by Me according to differences in aptitudes and actions of Men. Though I am it’s creator, know Me to be incapable of action or change.’ Philosophers studying this work believe that the reasoning behind caste has an emphasis on gunja (aptitude) and embryonic caste system was thus based on man’s inherent nature – each and every one of us possesses three main characteristics: Pure qualities (meditative and contemplative), active qualities (the need to work and desire to participate and contribute) and qualities of inertia and lethargy (a lack of both willingness to utilise the mind and intellectual conceptions). Social position, jati, is then dictated by these characteristics.

Whatever the exact origin, by the fourth century BC the system was firmly entrenched and the theory that the castes, the four Varna, issued from the one Almighty Deity, Brahma, is the most generally acknowledged:

From Brahma’s mouth came the Brahmin, assigned special powers of divinity and the six duties of responsibilities of study, teaching, sacrificial duties, giving alms and receiving gifts for their priestly services. Today, many Brahmins still maintain their role as preacher and teacher.
From his arms came the Kshatriya, assigned the qualities of strength and the duties of studying, sacrifice, giving alms, acquainting themselves with the use of weapons and protecting treasure and life so that good government can be assured. Today many join the army and the police force, or become rich and influential landlords. The Rajputs are one of the most powerful sub-castes.

From his thighs came the Vaishya, assigned the duties of work, study, giving alms, cultivation, trading and tending cattle. Today they are businessmen, money-lenders and landowners. The affluent Marwaris belong to this group.

From his feet came the Sudra, their duty being to serve the three higher castes. Today they are broken up into thousands of sub-castes with specific roles, such as carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers, shepherds, toddy tapers (who extract the pungent liquor from within the palm tree), potters, dhobis (washermen) and many others. What has probably prevented a revolt against the caste system is the notion that caste was divinely ordained. As the rules and routines practised by a devout Hindu can totally monopolise a man's conduct and social integration, so can caste, when strictly adhered to – directing how he carried out his toilet, eats, dressed, gets up in the morning and goes to sleep at night, walks down a street, pays a visit, goes on a journey, makes conversation, prays, works, celebrates a festival or ceremonies concerning death, burial and cremation, and even sits down. Another similarity between Hinduism and caste is the attention to ritual – the different ways in which one cooks, when one washes, whom one can engage in conversation and how one drapes one's sari or dhoti is traditionally solely attributed to one's caste.
The practice of caste varies tremendously with area, and within specific regions is more closely associated with sub-caste. In any district there will not be just four castes, but hundreds of endogamous sub-castes. Despite Hindus being the majority in India, each caste Hindu believes himself to be in a minority, so strongly does he feel himself to be a part of his own sub-caste. Indeed it is the division between families, which gives village life in Hindu society much of its character, the design of this fragmentation providing the structure of daily life and human contact.

Since India secured Independence from the British in 1947, political leaders and thinkers have generally acknowledged that the caste system is an aberration and should be abolished. Prime Minister Nehru made caste discrimination illegal, believing not only that its continuation was a hindrance to industrial development and economic advance but also that the repression it imposed on those outside the system was discreditable in a modern humanitarian society. Mahatma Gandhi condemned the notion of marriage taking place strictly within one's clan, perceiving a continuing injustice where a person's value was simply attached to the situation of birth.

In fact the basic right in India that all are equal in the eyes of the law was established at the beginning of the British Rule in India over a hundred years ago. However, one hallmark of the British Empire was never to interfere in the religious and cultural behaviour of its subjects. Caste was regarded by the English as an offspring of Hinduism so they never meddled with the workings of the system, their responsibility to the Crown being simply to maintain civil order and encourage economic growth.
Human injustice exists in every country in the world, but in India it is aggravated by the caste system – inequality exists here in perhaps its most complex and bizarre form, the social order being so strongly formalised. Caste is a peculiarly Indian phenomenon, although there are traits similar to it in other societies, the British class system for one, but in its fullest sense nothing is comparable, and as Hindus have emigrated overseas, to Sri Lanka, African countries and West Indies, so too has the system spread.

Indeed, paradoxically, the Mughal conquests fortified the caste system. The natural indigenous leaders, the princely Rajputs, were overpowered, and the powers of the priests, the Brahmins, were thus strengthened. The system continued to be upheld through the intervention of Islam because the rigidity of intermarrying within social groups maintained a distance for the Hindus from their invaders. For a Hindu to marry a Muslim meant immediate excommunication from his extended family group. Yet it is interesting to see how caste practice has penetrated the Muslim communities, people for whom concepts of rebirth and preordained destiny are foreign – a form of social harmony evolved as certain aspects of Hindus behaviour organically crept in, more in the form of guilds than the adoption of concepts of pollution. And in their turn Hindus too have adopted some Muslim habits, notably women taking on purdah.

Another way in which caste has filtered across to other religions has been through the conversion of Hindus to Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism. A direct revolt against caste, this offered the quickest escape from the horrors of Untouchability.
The adoption of Islam and Christianity by the lower castes has often presented a challenge to the domination and power of the landlords. Although this is the desired effect, it is still noticeable how both Muslims and Christians have failed profoundly to alter their economic status and how their communities are, in rural areas, subjected to living outside the domain of the higher castes.

DIVINE PLAN OR RACIAL ANTI-PATHY

The indigenous explanation most commonly referred to in the literature is the one encompassed in a hymn in the Rig Veda, a collection of what are usually considered to be the oldest (or earliest) prayers and hymns of Hinduism, perhaps even going back to the time of the arrival of Indo-European speakers in the sub-continent. This hymn, then, is taken to be the earliest Indian reference available on caste and its origins. It appears to describe the origin of the universe— or at least of many of its elements, including humans—through the sacrifice, by divinities, of a “cosmic being” called Purusha: creatures constitute but one quarter of him, his three quarters are the immortal in heaven....

When they divided Purusha, in how many portions did they arrange him? What became of his mouth, what of his two arms? What were his two thighs and his two feet called?

His mouth became the brahman; his two arms were made into the rajanya; his two thighs the vaishyas; from his two feet the shudra was born (De Bary, 1958).
explanation and justification of the origin of the caste system and its component elements.

One Indian scholar, N.K. Dutt, argues that the explanation of the origin of caste championed in the Law book of Manu (that of the Purusha hymn) was by no means the only one to be found in ancient Hindu writings. There was much early speculation, Dutt claims, and many cryptic passages abound. However, this hymn apparently offered the explanation that Manu liked best, and therefore it was incorporated into the canonical Manu Smrti (Dutt 1931).

HINDU ACCOUNTS OF THE ORIGIN OF THE CASTE

MAHABHARATA

In this voluminous work different accounts of the origin of caste may be expected. In the Santi-parva, the following statement is found:

“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 kin, 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, "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."

BHAGAVAD GITA

Chapter IV contains the following:

"The Deity said. 'The fourfold division of castes was created by me according to
the apportionment of qualities and duties."

VISHNU PURANA

In the 6th section of Book I, Parasara professes to tell how Brahma formed the
human race:

"When true to his design, Brahma became desirous to create the world,
creatures in whom goodness (sattva) prevailed sprang from his mouth; others in whom
passion (rajas) predominated came from his breast; others in whom both passion and
darkness (tamas) were strong, proceeded from his thighs; others he created from his
feet, whose chief characteristic was darkness. Of these was composed the system of
four castes, Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras, who had respectively issued
from his mouth, breast, thighs and feet."
INTIMATION OF CASTE

To denote caste we might have incorporated the Indian term, "jati," into our vocabulary. The English speakers who first heard it from the Portuguese adopted it for their own. The Columbia Encyclopedia (1963) suggests that it may have been derived from a Portuguese word for "basket". Presumably, if such were indeed the derivation, it conveyed the sense of "category."

Pitt-Rivers makes the following observation: The notion of purity of descent was not essential to the word originally; with regard to lineage and purity of blood it is not surprising that casta became associated with these ideas, for, pure breeding was thought to be superior to cross breeding, particularly in the human species among whom social status was derived from descent (1971).

In other words, whatever the origin of the term, it came to convey the notion of "purity of blood" to the Portuguese. Thus, in using the term, the Portuguese were indicating that what struck them most forcibly about the social divisions they observed in India was that the Indians were concerned about maintaining "purity": that is, by forbidding sexual relations and marriage between men and women of different social divisions, the divisions could be maintained as separated and pure "breeds."

He is telling us that they do not inter-marry---and only that. His report does not incorporate any assumption, explicit or implicit, about the origin, significance, or purpose of the practice. It is, therefore, very different from the seemingly similar accounts of later Europeans. Consider, for example, the Abbe Dubois (1906), whose studies derive from
the early nineteenth country, suggests that "another advantage resulting from the caste system is the hereditary continuation of families and that purity of descent which is a peculiarity of the Hindu, and which consists in never mixing the blood of one family or caste with that of another. Marriages are confined to parties belonging to the same caste can be no room for the reproach, so often deserved in European countries, that families have deteriorated alliances with persons of low or unknown extraction".

The endogamous castes were said to be not only biologically separate, but occupationally distinct as well, and the marriages' rules were understood to reflect and maintain this separation too. Thus, to continue a quotation cited earlier, Arrian—presumably quoting, or at least deriving from, Megasthenes—reports: "The custom of the country prohibits inter-marriage between the castes...Custom also prohibits any one from exercising two trades, or from changing from one caste to another.

Similarly, from the Abbe Dubois we learn that much the same system was in effect—this time in South India—two thousand years later: Caste assigns to each individual his own profession or calling; and the handing down of this system from father to son, from generation to generation, makes it impossible for any person or his descendants to change the condition of life which the law assigns him for any other.

Following are the usually accepted attributes of caste:

(a) **Endogamy**: As we have seen, the existence in India of rules restricting marriage to members of one's own group seems to strike observers most forcibly. For some observers, in fact, the rules of endogamy seem to imply a deep concern for
the maintenance of purity of descent, and it is possible that the very term “caste” originally conveyed that supposed concern. Further, as we see in Dutt, these restrictions are frequently viewed as “rigid” an adjective worth further consideration.

(b) **Occupational Specialization:** There are, Dutt tells us, “fixed occupations for different castes,” and Megasthenes made much the same point—but Dutt has qualified the statement, most interestingly, with the phrase, “in many cases.” When is occupation “fixed” then, and in what cases, or castes, is it not, and with what structural implications?

(c) **Hierarchy:** The cases, Dutt, has noted, are arranged in some kind of order of precedence “with the Brahmans at the top,” and this aspect of the system has indeed been considered of crucial importance.

(d) **Commensality:** Caste membership, Dutt reminds us, restricts not only marriage and occupation but eating and drinking activities to members of the caste. Dutt advises us that the restriction on dining with others may not always be as “rigid” as the ones governing marriage and occupation.

(e) **Hereditary Membership:** One is born into a particular caste, Dutt tells us (echoing earlier writers from Megasthenes on), and normally remains a member until death, passing membership on to one’s children. Further, Dutt notes, expulsion is possible “for violation of caste rules”—so that it is possible to be deprived of one’s caste membership.
THE IDEOLOGY OF PURITY AND POLLUTION

The principle of purity-impurity pervades and partly explains the hierarchy of castes. Gods, people, social groups (jatis and minimal patrilineages), animals, and things may be ranked in a hierarchy of degrees of purity and impurity. Each member of each of these categories possesses, as an individual attribute, some capacity to pollute others. Each, however, may become more polluted, either temporarily or permanently, through transactions with more polluted beings, things, or happenings. Indeed, such transactions display the relative rankings of beings and items in a hierarchy of degrees of purity-impurity. This principle may be understood through the underlying Hindu imagery relating to living and dead organisms.

In recent decades a number of anthropologists have contributed to the theory of Hindu purity-impurity. These include A. M. Hocart (1950); M. N. Srinivas (1952); H. N. C. Stevenson (1954); Harold Gould (1958); Nur Yalman (1963); Edward Harper (1964); Henry Orenstein (1970); Louis Dumont (1959, 1970); Mckim Marriott and Ronald Inden (1973, 1977); and Marvin Davis (1976). These scholars' part-theories are not contradictory so much as complementary. Each usually has integrated his or her predecessors' ideas into his or her own.

Priestly-purity Necessary for Transactions with the Gods. A central point in Hindu ritual is that it is necessary to make offerings to the gods in order for human affairs to continue without undue disaster. The intermediary between the general society and the gods is the priest, typically a Brahman. The Brahman priest must be
pure in order to communicate with the gods, and satisfactory communication with the supernatural powers is necessary for the good of the king and of the society. This idea goes back to the ancient Aryan idea of Rita (order), the belief that the sacrificial offerings made by Brahmans were a necessary part of the natural order. If such offerings were not made, or if they were not made correctly, then nature would go awry, rain would not fall, epidemics might prevail, and so on (Basham 1954). It was, thus, vital for the Brahmans to be pure. As A. M. Hocart saw clearly with respect to caste-ordered ritual in Ceylon, the function of lower castes was to absorb pollution for the higher castes (Hocart 1950). In India, too, the lower castes absorb pollution for the Brahman and for the other “twice-born” (Gould 1958; Dumont 1970).

Both M. N. Srinivas (1952) and Edward Harper (1964) have specified three conditions of pollution and purity - a state of normal purity, a state of impurity, and a state of ritual purity. In the latter condition, one might transact with divinities, namely gods and ancestors. Means of purification include taking a bath and wearing pure clothes. There are many agents causing states of impurity. Contact with lower-caste persons is only one such agent. Others include contact with death, birth, menstruation, sexual intercourse, defecation, urination, bodily dirt, and eating.

Pollution inherited by Caste. The tantrī’s impurity is also temporary; by various cleansing action, he can become pure again. For lower castes, impurity is permanent. Lower caste members suffer a kind of inherited defilement. The Barber deals with bodily wastes - hair and nail clippings; he washes the male corpses, and his wife washes the female corpses of his higher caste jajmans (clients). The washerman washes dirty
clothing, stained by bodily excretions. The sweeper removes human filth; he eats from pots spoiled by birth and death pollution pervading a jajman's house; he wears clothing in which a jajman died; he eats left-over food that has touched the mouths of others, or meat from dead animals. So degrees of defilement relate to the ranks in a caste hierarchy. The Barber is less defiled than the washerman, who, in turn, is less defiled than the sweeper, and so on.

The idea of pollution – contagion is universal in Hindu India. Anything touched by a polluted person spreads the pollution to others who touch it. This notion is expressed in rules about giving food and water, and touching persons and their belongings. An orthodox Brahman will not take boiled food or water from anyone of lower caste rank. He may take food coated by purifying milk or ghee (clarified butter), products of the sacred cow, from professional confectioners, and from some other persons of somewhat lower caste rank. Since fire purifies, he may take from almost anyone raw ingredients which will be purified in the process of cooking.

Purity-impurity as social integrator

Among Christians and Muslims living in India and among Hindus in some overseas communities, caste exists without an ideology of purity and pollution-suggesting that this concept is not essential for the existence of caste systems among Indians (Dumont 1970; Pocock 1957; Ahmad Imtiaz 1973). Dumont, who sees the principle of pollution and purity as central in the Hindu caste system, explains these anomalies thus. He hypothesized that the Hindu setting influences Muslim and Christian
communities decisively, since each of these non-Hindu religions failed to offer any alternative social structure to displace the already existing pre-conversion caste system (Dumont 1970).

CASTE IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Educated Indians know that caste exists, but they are unclear and troubled about what it means for them as members of a society that is a part of the modern world. If there is one significant change in caste in rural and urban India today it is its growing dissociation with hereditary occupation. No longer can one deduce a person's caste by looking at his or her occupation. The carpenter in the village is no longer from the carpenter caste, nor is the blacksmith invariably from the blacksmith caste. The growing dissociation between caste and occupation in rural India is due to several factors; at the outset it is important to bear in mind that the factors associated with such dissociation have not been at work in isolation. Several forces have been responsible for such a process and it is better to examine them separately for the purpose of achieving analytical clarity.

To begin with, mention may be made of two major institutions which lost their importance, which in turn affected the association between caste and occupation in contemporary rural India. The first is the institution of the caste panchayat or council which in the past functioned as a quasi-judicial institution. It governed and regulated both the internal and external relations of a caste. Each caste had a council, at the local or regional level, consisting of elders of the group who officiated as leaders. Such a
council looked after issues like ensuring the proper conduct of members of a caste with respect to their hereditary rights and obligations. That caste panchayats regulated the conduct of people with regard to their occupational rights is evident from the above list. But after independence and the passing of the Constitution of India (1950), caste panchayats were made legally redundant. This in effect meant that the members of a given caste were free to choose the occupation if liked and caste exclusiveness of occupations was no longer tenable in law. In the past, encroachment into an occupation by members of another caste was resisted by the specialist castes through the caste panchayat and the local village panchayat. The constitution deprived the panchayats of this power.

A second important cause for the caste-occupation dissociation was the decline of an institution which in the past enabled members of a caste to not only establish their claims to a livelihood but also to claim exclusive right to their hereditary occupation. This institution, the jajmani system, was known by different names in different parts of the subcontinent. Under this arrangement members of certain castes rendered their services or supplied goods to the village community, particularly the landowning dominant castes, in return for an annual wage paid in kind. The relationship between the specialist and the landowner was enduring over generations, and was part of a wider patron-client relationship. Each had a set of obligations and rights. Thus the service specialist had a right to demand work from the patron, be paid for it, (ideally) exclude competition from others, and so on. The specialist castes also had duties in the patron’s household on ritual occasions such as wedding and funerals.
Although there is evidence of jajmani relations persisting despite the changes in the economy (e.g., Harris 1980; Good 1982; Karanth 1987), the growing body of literature suggests its decline. This is due to several social, economic and political reasons. The decline of jajmani relationships has accelerated the process of dissociation of castes and traditional occupations, forcing the specialist castes to look to new avenues for earning a livelihood. Such dissociation was further accelerated by other factors such as industrialization, the spread of education, urbanization, and the emergence of new occupations. Industrialization not only attracted many of the displaced caste specialists (carpenters and blacksmiths, for instance) but also many young men who would otherwise have continued to pursue traditional occupations.

The legal abolition of ‘untouchability’ and even the benefits of a policy of ‘protective discrimination’ have not succeeded in removing the economic dependence of the former ‘Untouchable’ castes on the members of the dominant castes. Indeed one of the results of the implementation of welfare measures for the weaker sections in rural areas has been to enhance their dependence on the leaders from dominant castes; government officials often depend on the latter for identifying beneficiaries from the weaker sections.

There is one more reason why the lower castes have not been able to dissociate themselves from their traditional occupations to the extent to which the upper castes have been able to. Taking up non-traditional occupations depends upon the availability of alternative opportunities and the extent to which different castes are able to make use
of such opportunities. But this is where members of the very low castes are particularly disadvantaged.

Sanskritization continues to be an important and many sided process of cultural and social change in rural areas. The politicization of the communal situation in the country has also contributed to strengthening religious fundamentalism and consequently of Sanskritic values among Hindus. This was confined in the past to urban areas, but in recent years has been spreading to rural areas as well. Organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad have attempted to draw support from different castes, and the lower castes have found in this an opportunity to further their Sanskritization goals. This movement towards Sanskritization among the rural Hindu castes has been fuelled by reports of communal tension and riots in different parts of the country.

It is necessary to point out, however, that what appears as ‘Sanskritization’, the emulation of customs and rituals of higher castes, may nowadays have a different meaning. Emulation may really be defiance. Formerly, lower castes were forbidden from such emulation of higher castes and the leaders of dominant castes had the power to prevent it. But as mentioned earlier, law courts will now uphold the right of lower castes to adopt the customs and rituals of higher castes and the police will enforce the decisions of the courts. Lower castes nowadays celebrate publicly such festivals as Ganesh Chaturthi and Sathyanarayana puja.

Claiming higher status through Sanskritization is not the only process active in India. There is also acute competition among castes to claim “backward” status, as that
entitles them to the benefits of protective discrimination (Srinivas 1989). Sometimes castes are 'accused' of being really 'forward', thus cutting into the benefits which only the really 'backward' are entitled to. In the last resort, it represents efforts at moving up in the caste and class hierarchies.

The post-Independence policies of protective discrimination, land reforms, and other welfare measures have not significantly changed the relative status of the very low castes. There is a widespread feeling that the benefits of protective discrimination policies have gone to the urban and more influential among the 'backward, castes. Indeed this has been a basic argument against continued reservation in education and employment. It is also frequently argued that there has been social mobility more for individuals than for groups.

While the upper castes tend to retain their rural base even after migration, very low caste find it difficult to do so for at least two reasons. First, the social and economic 'push' factors in the village do not undergo major changes. Second, the new and higher social status gained by them in the urban environment may not be conceded to them in their villages. Such a status incongruent encourages members of lower castes to gradually withdraw from the villages of their origin. Women also contribute to this process of withdrawal. Having enjoyed a relatively emancipated status in the city they are reluctant to return to the village. Educational, medical and employment facilities available in urban areas are also factors preventing a return to rural roots.
Attempts by the lower castes to carry over their urban status into their villages have resulted in inter-caste violence. Every year several incidents of such inter-caste violence are reported in the papers and discussed in State Legislative Assemblies. Such outbursts of violence generally involve mass killings, physical assault and rape, and the economic and social boycott of the upwardly mobile lower castes by the dominant castes. The Scheduled Castes have been a frequent target of such violence, notably in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. The dominant and other high castes not only resent the erosion of their power and prestige but are indignant to the benefits conferred on the Scheduled Castes through the policy of reservation in education and employment. As the various measures designed for their benefit become effective, traditional power relations between them and the higher castes, in particular the dominant castes, are thrown out of gear.

Ideas of purity and impurity expressed themselves in various ways in inter-caste relations. Higher castes were prohibited from accepting cooked food and drinking water from the lower; the latter were prohibited from coming into close physical contact with the former or entering the inner portions of the houses of the upper castes. Traditionally, the lower castes were denied the use of the streets where the high castes lived and in the case of the former ‘Untouchables’, the use of public wells and entry into high caste temples or eating places were forbidden. But significant changes are taking place in the areas mentioned above.

The patterns of behaviour adopted by the caste groups may be described as a manifestation of 'dual culture', that is, an adherence to traditional values in one context
and modern and egalitarian ones in another (Srinivas 1977). A dual culture with respect to caste norms on purity and pollution has come about as a result of urban exposure, education and the loss of caste's traditional authority over its members. Social structure in rural society demands that reverence is shown to older members in the household, kin group and caste. But dual culture may also be seen as reflecting a transitional stage in a dynamic process in rural society wherein notions of purity and pollution are gradually being eroded (Karanth 1981; and Karanth and Sivaprasad 1987).

Closely related to the notions of purity and impurity are the norms of caste endogamy. Ideally marriages took place within one's own caste, often within its narrowest sub-division. While there are some perceptible changes in marriage customs and rituals among almost all castes in rural India, the norm of caste endogamy has withstood change (Kolenda 1978). Inter-caste marriages in the past resulted in a loss of caste status due to excommunication, often damaging the prospects of marriage for the unmarried girls and boys in the concerned families. Hypergamy, the custom of women marrying men from a higher caste, or a higher grade within the same caste, is disappearing among such castes as Bengali Brahmins, the Nayars of Kerala and the Rajputs in Rajasthan. While its practice in the past may be attributed, among others, to demographic factors like imbalance in the male-female sex ratio, its decline may be attributed to a widening structural gulf between different castes and social and economic changes within the concerned castes. Caste endogamy persists also because of the importance attached to the family histories of marriage partners.
Castes are in competition with each other for obtaining access to material resources, education and a share in political. Since Independence and the Constitutional provision of safeguards for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, there has been increased violence against Scheduled Castes by the higher castes. The latter deeply resent the benefits and concessions provided for the former, and the claims to equality with higher castes put forward by the educated members of Scheduled Castes. Also, organizations have sprung up to rouse the members of Scheduled and other 'low' castes to an awareness of their rights and privileges. It is becoming increasingly common to refer to ex-Untouchables as Dalits, though the term is also often used to include all the poor and oppressed. While this is doing some good for the very poor in the villages it is also encouraging anti-Dalit sentiments in the upper castes, often resulting in the Dalit being boycotted by the higher castes and subjected to physical violence. But the net result of all these recent changes is the reduced vulnerability of the Dalits as compared with the situation obtaining before Independence. Universal adult franchise, greater political awareness among the weaker sections and better opportunities of employment and mobility are all responsible for the changed situation.

The idea of caste is alien to Islam, which rests on the principle of religious equality and brotherhood; but in spite of this there are some groups among the Moslems which observe caste restrictions on intermarriage to such an extent that a man of a higher group may be degraded to a lower group if he takes a wife from it; in some parts also members of one group will not eat with another; These groups, however, cannot be
regarded as true castes, although they have some of the characteristics of the caste systems.

So, far from being a homogeneous whole, a caste is generally subdivided into sections called sub-castes, most of which are replicas of the main caste both in the matter of food and drink and nearly all in the more important matter of intermarriage, for the members of each sub-caste marry only fellow-members of the sub-caste.

It must not be assumed that the Laws of Manu described the working of an actual system, for research has shown that they were compiled by Brahmans, who drew an ideal picture of what they thought the social organism should be rather than a portraiture of what it actually was, and presented the ideal as the real.

The inequalities of the caste system and the basic fact that a man's place in the social sphere is unalterably fixed by the accident of birth are justified to the Hindus by their belief in the transmigration of souls combined with the doctrine of Karma which asserts that each rebirth is the direct result of a man's actions in a previous existence. This life is but one in many, an insignificant portion of the total span of existence. There is an endless series of rebirths, and as a man sows, so shall he reap. A man's caste consequently depends on his actions in a previous life; worth in one life determines birth in another. This explains the inequalities of caste, why one man is born to honour, another to dishonour. The general idea is, in fact, that one can be but what one is born to be. It is enjoined in the Hindu scriptures that a man should do his duty in that state of
life which his caste determines for him and those who do so are buoyed up by the hope that they may at a future rebirth be members of a higher caste.

Caste is not merely a social institution but part of Hinduism, which on that account has been described as a socio-religious system, for it is partly a social organization based on caste and partly a religious belief. Caste is, in fact, the steel frame binding together the many beliefs massed together in Hinduism. So integral a part is it of Hinduism, that a Hindu without a caste is almost a contradiction in terms. A man may entertain Hinduistic beliefs, but unless he belongs to a caste, he cannot be a member of Hindu society. As observed by Barth, a caste is the express badge of Hinduism. “The man who is a member of a caste is a Hindu; he who is not, is not a Hindu”, Even if Hinduism could be considered purely as a religion, caste would still be a most important feature of it, because practice means more than dogma, and practice is a question of the observance of caste customs and regulations as well as of religious ceremonies. A Hindu may be a monotheist or pantheist, or even an atheist, in belief, and it makes no difference provided he observes the rules of conduct laid down by his caste.

Throughout India caste remains the basis of social order, with its numerous divisions, each of which has a social value in relation only to other divisions, its theocratic doctrine of the sanctity of the Brahman and its belief that a man’s place in life is preordained.

The caste system is especially rigid in South India, where it even affects the layout of villages. The houses of the Brahmans are in one quarter, those of the Sudra
castes in another, and among the latter any caste that is sufficiently numerous will have a separate block. Just outside the village are the houses of less reputable castes; and in the fields, still further removed from the village site, cluster the huts of degraded castes like the Paraiyan (more familiar to the British in the form of Pariah).

South India is more bigoted and reactionary than North India; ceremonial observances and caste distinctions are more closely kept up—a man of lower caste is even expected to be uncovered down to the waist in the presence of a Nambudri Brahman of Malabar—and the doctrine of untouchability is carried to lengths unknown in the north.

UNTOUCHABILITY

According to the sixth Annual Report of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the practice of untouchability continues in India in many overt and covert forms.

In theory, untouchables are the sources of dreadful pollution either because their jatis customarily have had particularly unclean living habit i.e., eating carrion, or particularly unclean living habits or particularly unclean occupations, i.e., those which involve regular physical contact with death or human excreta. Jatis whose customary occupations are attending to funeral grounds and tanning are usually regarded as untouchable, for example, jatis of sweepers and lauders. These jatis may, in fact, no longer practice their unclean habits or occupations. Nowadays, untouchables are usually agricultural laborers who hold little or no land and work for village landholders.
But that is theoretically irrelevant to their status as untouchables. That such habits and occupations were customarily theirs indicates that they are naturally unclean.

Extraordinary measures are necessary to quarantine the contagion of untouchables; more than the usual restrictions on interdining and food handling among touchable jatis. Typically, untouchable jatis are kept residentially segregated in their villages and forbidden ordinary access to village temples, the homes of touchable villagers and the wells and tanks that are the sources of their domestic water supply. The poorest of the village poor are usually untouchables. They live in squalor and misery. Touchable villagers keep them in lowly place by holding them in debt bondage otherwise paying them as little as possible for their labor, sexually exploiting untouchable women, discouraging the education of their children, routinely subjecting untouchables to verbal and physical abuse, and demanding that they acknowledge their lowliness in the ways in which they refer to themselves and defer to their betters. For the Indian government, however, untouchability is a national disgrace. Its constitutional and legal commitment is to rid India of it. That is not only the approved and intended direction of change, but the actual direction, though the pace is slow.

Ironically, the same Hinduism which apparently sanctions untouchability, also promises untouchables relief from it. Simply, the sweeper who accepts his dharma as a sweeper in this life, will be reborn into the next as a sweeper's better. We can only guess at the extent to which this promise has been a source of consolation and hope to untouchables over the ages and a device for keeping them in their places. Not all have been happy to stay in their places, however. There are untouchable jatis that have
sanskritized their way into touchable Hindu status, although rarely. In general, untouchable jatis, lack the resources, psychological as well as economic and political, to sustain a sanskritizing campaign; and their attempts to do so are often met with particularly bitter resistance from touchable Hindus.

But Gandhi's way of getting rid of untouchability was much the same as that of the twice born Hindu reformers who preceded him. It was the way of reconciliation within Hinduism. Untouchables were encouraged to give up, insofar as possible, doing those things, e.g., carrion eating and whisky drinking, that supposedly offended touchables; and touchables were encouraged to revalue the work done by Harijans and accept them as ordinary members of the Hindu fold. In effect, untouchability would be got rid of by dissolving it into Hinduism, undoing the ancient bifurcation of the shudra varna.

Gandhi, of course, was not only a mahatma (a Hindu saint; literally, great soul) but also the Indian National Congress's supremo, and there were good political reasons – which he would not distinguish from good religious reasons – for keeping within the Hindu fold almost one-fifth of its members, safe from British divide and rule tactics to entice them out. Safe for the Congress.

But not safe from the Congress, Ambedkar argued, as the powerless wards of a nationalist movement whose reins were held by twice born and dominant Hindu Jatis. The oppressors! Not safe for lack of the opportunity to develop outside of touchable Hindu domination, as had the Muslims with British patronage, into a separate and
powerful constituency in Indian politics. Ambedkar was an untouchable, from the very large Mahar jati of Maharashtra. He was one of the remarkable men of his age; an economist trained at Columbia University and the London school of Economics, a leading barrister, distinguished academic lawyer and chief draftsman of the Indian constitution. As both an intellectual and an activist, he was the outstanding untouchable leader of the twentieth century. He wanted the untouchables out of Hinduism and out of Congress. Only outside could they be powerful, and only if they were powerful would their Hindu oppressors heed them.

In the years of discussion before the landmark India Act 1935 was passed by the British parliament, Ambedkar lobbied the British government to establish for untouchables the same sort of separate political identity that they had established for Muslims earlier in the century. When in 1932, the British agreed to Ambedkar’s demand, Gandhi went on a “fast unto death” until either the agreement or the demand was withdrawn. Ambedkar unhappily withdrew the demand in favour of a compromise with Gandhi. This “Poona Pact” between them more or less indicated the mundane way for ridding independent India of untouchability. Untouchable jatis were to be regarded as an integral part of Hindu and Indian society. But in order to realize that integration, they would be made the beneficiaries of compensatory and protective discrimination.

Although Ambedkar believed in and actively promoted the political mobilization of untouchables – to fight their own battles, to be self-reliant and independent of the unreliable solicitude and benevolence of touchable Hindus – Ambedkar understood that people lacking in self-esteem are unlikely to mobilize themselves successfully for
political action. In order to hold untouchables in thrall, Hinduism had imposed a dharma on them which forbade self-esteem, and they could gain it only by choosing not to be Hindus any longer. After scant success as an organizer and leader of untouchable political action, Ambedkar in the last years of his life led a mass conversion of untouchables to Buddhism. There are about 5 million Buddhists in India. But they are almost all Mahars. It has become a major faith of Ambedkar's jati-fellows, but not of untouchable rebellion against Hinduism. Except that the Mahars have also produced the Dalit (oppressed) Panthers: a group committed to "direct action." Still, whatever the Mahars may have gained in self-esteem from their conversion and whatever they may gain in future from their Buddhist self-esteem and dalit assertiveness, nowadays in their villages their social positions and material conditions are those of untouchables.

In dependent India, the mundane ways for ridding India of untouchability are more or less government sponsored or autonomously political and they are basically four:

First, through the law. The Indian constitution expressly abolishes untouchability. It prohibits any government agency or private establishment from discriminating or acting in any way against any Indian citizen on the grounds that he or she is an untouchable; and the constitution and its pursuant laws make any such discrimination or action a criminal offense.

Second, through compensatory and protective discrimination. The Indian government pioneered in this area, now widely known among English speakers by its
American euphemism, "affirmative action." Although untouchability is officially no longer existent in India, the government maintains a schedule, i.e., register, of jatis all over India which were customarily and are now illegally considered untouchable by their neighbors. Hence, "scheduled castes": an Indian euphemism inherited from the British. Scheduled Caste representation in the Union parliament and state legislative assemblies is guaranteed. This is done by reserving for untouchable candidates alone the right to contest about 15 percent of parliamentary and legislative assembly constituencies. All adult residents of these constituencies are enfranchised, but the candidates of all parties and none — must be untouchables. Panchayatiraj institutions are usually obliged to co-opt scheduled caste members if none are elected.

Places in educational institutions, including universities, are reserved for untouchables, in proportion to their numbers; and relaxed terms of admission and scholarship schemes are available to them. Places in all grades of employment, from executive to menial class, in Union and state public services and in all government-owned corporations are reserved for untouchables. To facilitate their employment, particularly in the higher grades, ordinarily applicable qualifications — age limits, educational requirements, experience and so forth — are relaxed for untouchable applicants. Tribal people, i.e., "scheduled tribes," are also the beneficiaries of Indian government-sponsored programs of compensatory and protective discrimination.

Third, through poverty alleviation measures. In recent years the Indian government has instituted a number of programs for providing direct relief to that 51 percent of India's population which in 1979-80 was living below the officially defined
poverty line. A disproportionate number of India's poor are untouchables, about 20 percent, and there is greater poverty among untouchables than among touchables. The poverty of untouchables is one of the major obstacles to ridding India of untouchability. Scheduled castes, then, (and scheduled tribes) are particular targets for poverty alleviation programs and these are of particular concern to untouchable jatis. The largest of these programs is the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) under which poor families are supplied with income generating assets, e.g. goats; and to maintain them, access to credit and other facilities. Under other programs there are schemes for technical training, guaranteed employment and the provision of basic village amenities.

Fourth, through untouchable political action. This is not so much government sponsored as are the preceding ways, but rather government tolerated and facilitated by parliamentary democracy. Like political action among touchable in the Indian countryside, political action among untouchables is usually organized de facto in jati and jati subgroup units. And like touchable political action, it takes many forms Jati associations mobilize jati-fellows for political action and act as interest groups in state politics. There are Harijan blocs in state branches of the Congress (!) and in provincial parties. From time to time, most recently in Uttar Pradesh, a political party of untouchable appears. Or an untouchable direct action group, like the Dalit Panthers of Maharashtra. Government funded non-government organizations (NGOs) have promoted non-violent political activity among untouchable jatis all over India. Government, chronically in Bihar, has used paramilitary police to suppress violent
political protest among untouchables, whether organized in fact or in politicians' fantasy by revolutionary communist groups.

To what extent has India rid itself of untouchability? To some extent and in ways that are consistent with the general pattern of bourgeois revolution. No more than for the general population has change for untouchables been from the bottom up. The incidence of poverty among untouchables has decreased accordingly but not much more than accordingly. The contribution of the various poverty alleviation programs to this decrease cannot be more than marginal. It is allocated to the various poverty alleviation programs have been misdirected and misspent. Between 1980 and 1985, according to government evaluation reports, Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) funds reached about 5 percent of untouchable families who were living below the poverty line, and of these less than 20 percent benefited substantially. More than two-thirds of Bihar's untouchables live in poverty, less than one-third of Punjab's do.

Untouchability is still widely practiced in the Indian country-side, the constitution and the laws not withstanding. But reports of violent and other outrages on untouchable men, women and children by touchable villagers and stories of jati warfare between untouchable and touchable villagers are more likely to come from underdeveloped states in which untouchables are particularly poor and degraded, Bihar in particular. They are less likely to come from developed states in which untouchables are relatively well-off and relatively well-able to defend themselves. The better-off they are and the better-off their states, the better positioned are untouchables to better their conditions in
their villages and in the world beyond through their access to discriminatory reservations.

Given the dominance of landholding farmers in virtually all states, any substantial redistribution of land to the landless, untouchables and others, is likely to remain the unfulfilled goal of an earlier generation of Indian rural reformers. But, of course, the better-off untouchables are, the more able they are to buy or rent land. In places where green revolution technology is well-established, even small holdings can be profitable. The wages of agricultural laborers increase in real terms wherever growth and the diversification of the local economy are sufficiently strong. So too, the opportunities increase for untouchables to avail their families of medical care and to educate their children.

Education is the untouchable's key to the opportunities of employment provided for them by compensatory discrimination. Uneducated, their chances, alternative to agricultural labor are those of urban drudgery and servility or, worse, virtual helotry in stone quarries and brick kilns. Nowadays, where advanced education is requisite for untouchables to hold positions reserved for them, in the higher grades of public service and government-owned corporation employment, untouchables are under represented because of their lack of education. But this will certainly change as more and more untouchables attain advanced education, in part because of reserved places for them in universities and colleges. Including members of parliament and state legislative assemblies, there are already tens of thousands of untouchables who have made it, though rarely to the top, through reservations. Doubtlessly, their numbers will increase.
But to date and in the foreseeable future, this has done and will do more to create an untouchable bourgeoisie rather than to raise the general socio-economic level of scheduled castes.

Of course, it need not end there. Untouchable bourgeois have used their organizational skills, their income, power, influence, prestige, connections and so forth to prime social lift pumps for their jati-fellows. By their example, they contribute presumably to untouchable self-esteem and discredit the belief that untouchables are naturally inferior. But in the operation of lifting tens of millions of impoverished and degraded untouchables by tens of thousands of middle-class untouchables, progress is bound to be slow. Its direction, toward amelioration of the conditions of untouchables if not the abolition of untouchability, is clear. Untouchable political action, violent and non-violent, pushes in the same direction: not toward proletarian revolution, certainly, but toward embourgeoisement and bourgeoisie reconciliation.

Caste has a definite bearing on marriage, as mentioned earlier. The connection between caste and marriage is reported in the ensuing paragraphs.

THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE IN INDIA

Marriage is an institution which admits men and women to family life. It is a stable relationship in which a man and a woman are socially permitted to have children, implying the right to sexual relations. Marriage takes many forms.
The main forms of marriage are as follows:

(1) Polyandry: It is a form of marriage wherein one woman marries more than one man at a given time.

(2) Polygyny: It is a form of marriage wherein one man marries more than one woman at a given time.

(3) Monogamy: Under this system one man marries one woman at a time.

(4) Hypergamy: It refers to woman marrying man of higher status (including jati) than her own.

(5) Hypogamy: It denotes woman marrying man of lower status (including jati) than her own.

(6) Anuloma Marriage: It is a form of inter-caste marriage wherein men of higher castes wed women of lower castes.

(7) Pratiloma Marriage: It is also a form of inter-caste marriage wherein men of lower castes marry women of superior castes.

(8) Exogamy: Every society limits choice in marriage by requiring that one choose a mate outside some specified group, which is called exogamy.

(9) Endogamy: Most societies also require that mates be chosen within some specified group, which is called endogamy.
MARRIAGE A SACRAMENT

In India, according to traditional Hindu Law, marriage is a sacrament and not a civil contract. It is a ‘sanskara’ or purificatory ceremony obligatory for every Hindu. The Hindu religious books have enjoined marriage as a duty because an unmarried man cannot perform some of the most important religious duties. Accordingly, marriage in India is a holy performance of religious duties. The union is sacred and indissoluble in life and continues even after the death of the husband. The parents are morally obliged to find mates for their children and the children to accept the parental choice. Marriage is considered a union between two families rather than between two young people.

CASTE AND MARRIAGE

It is often said that no matter how loudly Hindus might proclaim their indifference or even hostility to caste, when it comes to marriage, all of them – educated and uneducated, urban and rural, professional and peasant – turn to caste. Many have in fact maintained that the regulation of marriage and the social exclusiveness associated with it – something akin to a sense of race – are what make caste what it is. Risley stressed this aspect of caste far more than religion: ‘Race dominates religion; sect is weaker than caste’ (1969). Obviously, we cannot associate caste with race as a biological fact, as Risley was inclined to do, but only with a sense of race more or less widely felt in society.

It will be of little avail to argue about the decline in the legal, religious and moral basis of caste if it turns out that on such an important issue as marriage, nothing has
changed at all. One hears both kinds of arguments among the intelligentsia today; some say that inter-caste marriages are now quite common while others maintain that they are rare and exceptional. Sometimes one hears a person argue vehemently that inter-caste marriages are impossible in Indian society, only to learn that he himself has married outside his caste. More common perhaps is the man who declares himself passionately against caste in every form, but nonetheless opposes strenuously the marriage of his children outside his caste.

Some changes are in fact taking place in marriage rules and practices among educated Indians in the higher occupational strata, but we are hindered in our assessment of them by the paucity of systematic data. People frequently take recourse to casual empiricism, selecting one or another set of examples to argue for and against the same proposition. No clear conclusion can be reached in the absence of statistical data that tell us something about rates and frequencies. But rates and frequencies are not enough; for where it concerns marriage, we have to attend not only to practices but also to rules and to enquire whether these rules continue to carry the same sanctions and the same meanings as before.

In an interview with the editor of the Times of India, M.N. Srinivas noted the changing role of caste in marriage. 'Equally significant as regards pan-Hinduism, Professor Srinivas says, is the diminishing importance of caste in marriage. Inter-caste, inter-regional and even inter-religious marriages are on the rise' (Padgaonkar 1993). What is remarkable about the observation is not that Srinivas is India's leading
sociologist, but that he has repeatedly cautioned the Indian intelligentsia against
underating the strength and resilience of caste.

Similar observations were made thirty years earlier by C.T. Kannan in the only
satisfactory full-length study of inter-caste marriage.

Just twenty-five years ago the instances of inter-caste marriages were very few;
and those individuals who dared to marry outside the caste had to undergo truly great
ardships. Today the situation is altogether different. Not only has the prevalence of
ter-caste marriage become considerable, but even the difficulties the inter-caste
marriage couples have to face have become comparatively quite mild. (Kannan, 1963)

Kannan limited himself to 200 couples formed by inter-caste unions (and 50
thers formed by inter-community unions), and therefore his study cannot tell us very
much about rates and frequencies that is statistically significant. At the same time, it
does draw attention to significant social processes that had been set in motion at least a
decade or two before his study was published.

It is possible that a more permissive attitude towards caste in the selection of
spouses is being accompanied by a greater attention to other restrictions such as those
elating to education, occupation and income. Many different criteria are taken into
account in the selection of a spouse, and in the case of someone who is highly desirable
on a number of important counts, one may overlook the traditional restrictions of caste.
One can get a good sense of the diversity of the categories at play by looking at the matrimonial advertisements in the Sunday papers. These advertisements are classified, but not according to any single or consistent plan. The categories of caste are very prominent.

Where inter-caste marriages do take place among the intelligentsia, ignoring for the moment the question of frequency, such marriages are in general as likely to be of the anuloma (or sanctioned) or of the pratiloma (or unsanctioned) type.

Kannan's assessment of the weakening of collective sanctions against inter-caste unions in urban India was on the whole the right one. His data show that the collective pressure of the caste or the sub-caste against inter-caste unions among the urban middle classes is neither very strong nor very effective. In risking a wrong alliance, the primary focus of anxiety is the family or perhaps the 'kindred of co-operation' (Mayer 1960), itself more restricted in the city than in the village, whereas caste figures only dimly in the background.

But only a few years earlier, Radcliffe-Brown (1952), reflecting the views till then common among anthropologists, had observed as follows in his Foreword to Srinivas's book on the Coorgs: 'A caste is in its essence a religious group, membership of which entails certain ritual observances. The rules of caste behaviour are rules of religion'.
MANU'S LAWS ON MARRIAGE

Marriage is solemnized between people of equal castes by joining their hands. But, where an inter-caste marriage, takes place, the bride has to hold in her hands articles significant of the essential qualities of the respective caste.

Thus a Kshatriya bride, when marrying a Brahmana, has to hold in her hand an arrow; a Vaisya bride, when marrying one of higher caste, has, to take a goat and a Sudra female has to hold the hem, of the bridegroom's garment.

By prescribing these rules Manu admits the legality of inter-caste marriage. But it cannot be held that these verses are consistent with the other statements attributed to him. For, in the same context, he declares:

'A Sudra woman is not mentioned even in any ancient story as the wife of a Brahmana or of a Kshatriya, though they lived in the greatest distress.

Twice-born men, who, in their folly, wed wives of the low, i.e., Sudra caste, soon degrade their families and their children to the state of Sudra'.

Gautama and Baudhayana represent schools of law when the caste system was not so predominant and rigorous, for they put little stress on caste in the institution of marriage.

Manu expresses in some of his verses not only extreme contempt for the Sudra, but the rigid stamp of caste system. Vasishtha stands between these two schools and represents a society that was fast becoming rigorous but he still sounds a note of
toleration. Gautama thus reflects a Pre-Buddhist society, and Vasishtha a post Buddhist society, and Manu that of a conservative Hindu society, where castes and creeds had become more prominent and special safeguards had to be made for its protection from disorder.

ORIGIN OF INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE

In the VIIIth session of the Social Conference held at Madras in 1894 the following resolution was passed:

"The conference reaffirms the necessary steps being taken by the societies for social reform in all parts of the country to remove all hindrance in the way of inter dining of members of the different sub-sections of the same caste and to promote inter marriages between persons who can live together under existing rules".

In Punjab there was a betrothal between two sub-castes of the serin community. This was the first instance of an inter-caste marriage between these subdivisions. Many of widow marriages have also been instances of inter marriages.

Inter-caste marriages have been by several other factors one of the choices of those who are hard pressed by economic needs. Mahatma Gandhi advised that such economic problem could be solved if parents are willing to give their daughters in marriage by extending the field of choice.

The Special Marriage Act of 1872 allowed a man to contract legal marriage with a person not belonging to his own endogamous group. The Baroda Government enacted
The Caste Removal Act in 1938 which prescribes acting against caste councils for excommunicating any member of castes for any caste offence including breach of endogamous marriage. The Arya Samaj Marriage Validity Act of 1938 legalised inter-caste marriages among Arya Samajists in British India. By the Hindu Marriages Disabilities Removal Act of 1946 marriages between different sub divisions of the same caste were validated.

PRESENT STATUS OF THE INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE

Many attempts have been made to eliminate caste system but all have failed. India’s 1950 constitution outlaws untouchability and grants equal status to all people. But laws and modern urban life have weakened the system to some extent. While intra-caste brings together two families together inter-caste brings together two caste groups together.

GOVERNMENT SCHEME

In order to encourage inter-caste marriage among Adi-Dravidar communities the government is awarding Rs.20000/- as incentive to each eligible couples. Out of Rs.20000/- a sum of Rs.10000/- is paid in cash and the remaining amount is paid in the form of National Savings Certificate.

Besides the above the government also awards prizes for the select villages for the removal of untouchability.
SOCIAL WORK IN RELATION TO CASTE AND MARRIAGE

Social work, since the inception of Tata Institute of Social Sciences in 1936 has been performing a helping role in many facets of the life of Indians, through its methods known as, social case work, social group work, community organisation, social research, social welfare administration and social action. Of particular importance is its role in improving family welfare. Professional social workers, in their capacity have contributed a great deal to the upkeep of family relationships.

Social problems, such as, untouchability, divorce, family disorganization and so on pose a challenge to the social work profession. The body of knowledge of social work profession, incorporating the causes, consequences and magnitude of the above mentioned problems and also the relevance of social work methods in tackling such problems provide ample opportunities to the professional social workers in tackling such social ills effectively.

Institutional and non-institutional services are made available to the victims of such social ills by the professional social workers, who not only play the role of an enabler or a guide but also the role of an activist by sensitising the society about the harmful effects of such social ills and the social systems which are responsible for the continued prevalence of such social problems.