CHAPTER- II

CASTE AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

Changing discourse on Caste

Scholarly discourse on ‘Caste’ has received significant attention in the recent times in Indian society. As Susan Bayly (1999) aptly remarks that perhaps of all the topics that have fascinated scholars of South Asia, Caste is probably the most contentious one. It has achieved much the same significance in social, political and academic debate as race in the United States, class in Britain and faction in Italy. Bayly (1999) says that “it has been common since the days of the British rule for both historians and anthropologists to refer to India as a ‘caste’ society, and to treat the values of so-called caste Hindus as an all pervading presence in Indian life.

Since the 1970s, however, there have been scholars, both within India and abroad who have critiqued these earlier scholars and their formulations of massively overstating the importance of caste. Some have gone so far as to question the very existence of an ancient pan-Indian caste system, dismissing the idea of caste society as a fabrication of colonial data collectors and their office holding Indian informants” (p.2).

Declan Quigley (1993) however maintains that the debate about nature of caste has generally led to a division between two main sets of protagonists whose only shared conviction is that members of the other group are utterly misguided. These two groups, respectively endorse a materialist and an idealist conception of history. He says that “the materialists interpret caste in terms of ‘simple rationalisation and obfuscation of more base inequalities. High castes, they believe, are generally wealthier than the low castes, therefore the idiom of purity and impurity through which caste differences are expressed must be ‘simply’ a means of legitimating and obscuring the ‘true’ nature of social divisions.

On the contrary, the idealists explain caste in terms of ‘cultural construct’. According to them it is the product of religious ideas: castes are higher or lower in relation to religiously conceived notions of purity and impurity. For the idealists, the considerations are largely irrelevant because caste is essentially an ideological framework
for explaining universal problems of social order. The most lucid and consistent exponent of this view is Louis Dumont. Quigley (1993) has critiqued both the materialist, as well as the idealist approach to understand caste. He says that Hocart’s interpretation of caste, in which he has suggested that there is a fundamental truth and a fundamental falsehood in both the materialist and idealist visions of traditional Indian society, comes close to his own ideas of caste. He says that “along with the idealists, Hocart argues that caste ideology seeks to provide a transcendent foundation for the social order. Against them, however, he argues caste society is only possible given a certain kind of political system—namely a kingdom and there is nothing transcendent about this: kingdoms are the product of particular historical conditions. Along with the materialists, Hocart asserts that caste is indeed a means of regulating inequalities. Against them, however, he asserts that inequalities are not at all obscured in caste society. Quite the contrary, they are very deliberately highlighted, glorified and perpetuated. There is nothing shamefaced about caste.” (p.3)

In terms of providing an understanding of continuity and change in Indian society the idealist approach of Dumont (1970) did not have much to offer. His critics have, to varying degrees, attacked both his theoretical model and his ethnographic representation of the caste system. Fuller (1996) says that “Dumont’s critiques, as much as he, are therefore predominantly oriented towards traditional rather than modern India, even when they are actually dealing with contemporary material. Beteille (1991: p.8; p.33-35) describes this orientation as the “book-view” of Indian society, as opposed to the “field-view”, and this chimes in with his criticism of scholarship that eulogises the past and devalues the present”. Fuller says that for the analysis of caste, however, the book view has become an impediment since it focuses attention on continuities with the past and the scriptural tradition at the cost of the discontinuities that are becoming proportionally more salient.

He believes that the most telling criticisms of Dumonts’ ethnographic representation of the caste system have been inspired by historical research. During the 1970s and 1980s, he says that it became clearly understood that Indian society, and especially its caste system, as described in the village studies’ ethnographies of the 1950s and 1960s, were not something ancient that survived in the traditional villages. But
on the contrary, village society was the product of history and particularly colonial history". (Fuller, 1996: p.5)

Fuller cites the comments made by Bayly, "who rightly observes that both the old idea of timeless India and the newer revisionism which almost claims that colonialism alone made India into a caste society are erroneous. Infact, both in precept and practice, caste as a rigid and hierarchical system had long been established at major, Brahman dominated centres of Hindu scholarship (1988: pp 155-6)". Bayly (1988) in fact aptly points out that traditional Indian society was not created out of nothing by British rule, but it was consolidated by it." Colonial historiography and specially the subaltern studies’ school of historians have not only critiqued Dumont’s ‘holistic’ textual view of Indian society but also focussed attention on the alternative ideologies-to recovering the voices of sections of society marginalised or silenced by the colonial Brahmanical hegemony.

Another dimension can be highlighted with the help of Helen Lambert’s study (1996) of a Rajasthan village. She has re-examined in her study the question of village unity and the related issues of cross-caste ties expressed through fictional kinship. She has shown how Dumont’s theory as well as many of ethnographic sources on which he relied, over emphasised the salience of caste in relation to those other solidarities, partly because the female perspective was neglected. In fact, she has argued that the treatment of caste and kinship has been coloured by a systematic male bias, and that the significance of locality in relation to caste and kinship only emerges clearly when a gendered perspective is taken.

While the debate regarding caste is yet to be settled, one witnesses severe ramifications in different areas as well as everyday life of contemporary Indian society. Caste or Jati is not merely an ideological notion, but inheres in itself, the vast expanse of kinship network, economic and political structure and functions in the various communities spread throughout the North, South, East and West regions of India. It is not only the Hindus who live by the rules of caste, but other religious communities like Muslims, Christians and Sikhs too are governed or affected by caste as a system of social differentiation in one way or the other. Thus, one can say without hesitation that Caste as a system of social differentiation lies at the very roots of Indian social structure. By social structure, the simplest meaning we derive is the persistent pattern of social interaction
existing within and among social groups. These patterns of interaction are governed by the normative system existing in society. According to the conventional understanding of caste, it is a structure of relationships, a pattern of social behaviour in which groups and individuals within these groups are hierarchically placed within society and are guided by prescribed set of norms, values and social sanctions. Caste system is basically an ascriptive system in which individuals are born into a certain caste and as a result acquire the role and status associated with that caste identity.

This is not to say that as a system of social differentiation in India caste has been rigid, fixed and changeless. In fact, caste has transformed itself from a system of hierarchically ordered social groups given sanction by the Hindu religion in terms of ways of living and interacting to an economic reality inhering in itself the class dimension; of money, and as a result, status and power. It has moulded itself to suit the needs of a changing socio-political and economic order in society.

The earliest census conducted by the British administrators in India, like H.H.Risley (1901) led to chaos in terms of identity of social groups. Many caste communities, who had gained some economic power during the colonial rule, organized themselves as caste associations, such as the Nadars, the Jatavs etc., to prove that they were much above in the caste hierarchy and many identified, themselves with the Kshatriya varna. (Hardiman in Kothari,R 1970) Caste hierarchy varies from region to region and varna is the all India phenomenon, with Brahmins at the top and Sudras at the bottom. But Jati varies from region to region. About 3000 jatis exist throughout India. As Beteille(1966:p.7) has pointed out in his study that due to the colonial impact, one important concommitant of the transformation from a closed to a relatively open system of social stratification is the differentiation of institutional structures which had earlier been subsumed under a more comprehensive framework. He wrote that in the traditional order of Sripuram village of South India both the class system and the distribution of power were to a large extent subsumed under caste. Both class and power positions have today a greater measure of autonomy in relation to caste. This development he is talking about is a change which is seen increasingly ever since the colonial period. There is today a greater range of possibility in the combination of caste, class, and power.
As Cohn (1968: p.6) mentions, the rapid acquisition of knowledge of the classical languages of India by a few British officials began to develop during the later part of eighteenth century. The need to acquire knowledge of the structure of Indian society came to be felt by the British administrators. Along with this, the missionary activities also got intensified. Thus, a systematic knowledge of Indian society began to develop very rapidly from 1760 onwards. According to Cohn (1968), three major traditions of approach to Indian society can be seen by the end of the 18th century: (a) the Orientalists, (b) the administrative, and (c) the missionary. All the three approaches viewed Indian society and caste therein from the point of view of serving their own needs and requirements.

The Orientalists were of the view that an accurate guide to the understanding of Indian society and its culture, especially the Hindus could be obtained through the study of the texts. With the cooperation of the religious pandits and shastris; some of the Orientalists, such as N.B. Halhead (1777) and so on brought out the translation of Dharmashastras in 1776. This attempt to understand culture and society through the texts had several consequences. It led to the consistent view that the Brahmans were the dominant group in the society. This was a direct result of interpreting the religious texts which were naturally 'Brahman' centred. It prescribed differential punishments for crimes based on one's varna status, which prohibits other varnas except the Brahmans, from learning the religious texts like the Vedas, Upnishads, etc. The texts generally placed the Brahman in an exalted position. Another important consequence of holding the textual view of society by the Orientalists was that Indian society appeared as being static, timeless and spaceless. In reality, the society was not in the least static, timeless or spaceless. Historical accounts by and large reveal the sociopolitical dynamism. The Political structure of late 18th and early 19th century India revealed that political power rested in only a very few Brahman dynasties. Largely political and military power was in the hands of other groups in society. Cohn (1968) writes that the Orientalists' view of society had no reflection on the regional variations. It did not question the relationships between prescriptive normative statements derived from the texts and the actual behaviour of individuals or groups.
Like the Orientalists, the missionaries—who came a little later than the Orientalists; too believed that in Indian society the central principles and institutions revolved around religious ideas and practices. They, too, believed that the Hindu religion underlay the whole social structure and that the Brahman held the most dominant position in the social hierarchy. The Brahman was the maintainer of the sacred traditions through primarily his control of knowledge of the sacred texts.

Both the Orientalists and the Missionaries accepted the Brahmanical theory of the four varnas. However, both did not relate, what they must have known, the structure of society in reality to their knowledge of society derived from textual studies and discussions with learned Brahmans. But in other aspects both of them held polar opposite opinion of Indian society. One i.e, the Orientalists saw the cultural philosophical aspects of Hindu religion and society where as the missionary view tended to denigrate Hindu religion, cultural practices and especially the caste system; which they felt held the whole social structure together. Missionary's like Charles Grant during the 19th century, felt that the Caste system, government, and mainly the despotic role of the Brahmans, were the cause of the degraded state of the Hindus. He believed that Indian society and culture are based, directed and maintained by the religious system. He therefore, suggested that the only hope for the improvement of Hindus and their society lay in the elimination of Hinduism, which could be accomplished, by government support and a campaign by Christian missionaries to convert the Indian population to Christianity. Other missionaries too, like Claudius Buchanan, Sir John Shore, William Carey and William Ward studied Indian society and culture and produced extensive works in much the same tenor as Charles Grant. The by product of their condemnation of Hindus and Hindu society and their proselytizing endeavors, often led to contributing considerable empirical work on Indian society. ( for detailed discussion see CohnB.S 1968:pp.6-11). Cohn (1968:p.11)writes that the differences in view of the Missionary and Orientalists were related to their respective social backgrounds and their occupational roles in India. The Orientalists were generally better educated and came from upper echelons of British society. Orientalists like Sir William Jones, were trained scholars before they came to India. They wanted to treat Sanskrit and Persian learning with the same methods and respect as they would treat European learning. They were generally conservative in their
political and social attitudes and accepted the status quo. Where as, the Missionaries largely came from, particularly the Baptists, lower orders in British society. They believed in social reform of British society which they carried on to the Indian society and culture. Thus, they were concerned with changing India rather than maintaining the status quo.

On the contrary, the systematic effort made by colonial administration to collect relevant information regarding the Indian society to enable the Colonial administration function properly was pioneered by Dr. Francis Buchanan.

Buchanan (1807) organized his contributions under five main headings namely, (1) Topography and antiquities, (2) The people, (3) Natural products, (4) Agriculture, and (5) Commerce, Arts and Manufactures. He paid great deal of attention to the standard of living of the people and constantly tried to measure income and consumption. He collected information regarding form and content of education in the districts he covered. His work in Bengal and Bihar were the fore runners of a continuing effort undertaken by the British Government in India. Attempt was made to collect, collate, and publish detailed information about all aspects-physical, cultural and sociological-of every district in India for both official purpose and scholarly use. This effort led to a phenomenal contribution by the British in India in the form of the "Imperial Gazetteer of India" published in the early 20th century. Cohn (1968) says that this effort stretches from the work done by Buchanan in 1840's till the publication of the Provincial and Imperial Gazetteers of the early 20th century. The publication for the first time of Census of India on a systematic and all-India basis in 1872 led to a whole new body of information on Indian society. The successive waves of revenue settlements in the North India, too, produced a great deal of material on the relation of people to the land and the organization of Indian rural society. With this effort, an implicit view of the nature of Indian society, and especially, the caste system began to emerge. The very perception of "caste" by the officials of the British Empire in India was different from the Orientalists and the missionaries.

The official version of British empire treated caste as a "thing", an entity, which was concrete and measurable. It had, above all, definable characteristics such as, endogamy, commensality rules, fixed occupation, common ritual practices, and so on. Since, all
these characteristics were things about which they could supposedly collect information through questionnaire by sending their assistants to the field, the records of various castes communities, their life styles, economy, etc. could be collected and used as categories.

This kind of information was particularly useful to the administration because, as Cohn mentions (1968: 14-15) it gave the illusion of knowing the people, without going to the effort of differentiating too much among individual Indians. Thus, a man of a certain caste, for e.g. Brahman or Bania, had certain characteristic features which made it immaterial to know the individual Brahman or Bania. India, itself was seen as collection of castes. The particular picture was different in any given time and place, but India was treated as sum of its parts and the parts were Castes.

The British officials realised that to collect information regarding Castes, one has to develop classifications to order the data. The most famous classification is one of H.H. Risley (1915). He reduced the 2000-odd castes which the Census in India had found, to seven types: tribal, functional, and sectarian, castes formed by crossing, national castes, castes formed by migration, and castes formed by changing customs.

Along with this effort of classifying castes, a natural question arose regarding their origin. Why do castes exist? and what is their origin? Unlike the Orientalists, who went by the textual interpretations regarding castes the officials went for more prosaic explanations. However, they did not take origins as a direct historical question but considered origins as a broad functional question. Thus, Nesfield (as cited in Cohn, 1968) regarded castes as having its origin in the division of labour in society where the occupation of different castes became a central determining factor in the system. For H.H. Risley (1915), the racial origins of different Castes became important. Ibbetson believed that the "tribal origin" of different Castes explains its existence. Finally, the last of the British official ethnographers and census Commissioners, J.H. Hutton (1946) gave a final form to this elective way of explaining caste origins. He compiled a list of fourteen "more obvious factors which have been indicated as probably contributing to the emergence and development of the caste system" (Cohn B. 1968: p.16). Cohn (1968) mentions that the administrative official view of caste not only was an outgrowth of the way in which information was collected but it also reflected anthropological interests and theories prevalent during the period 1870 to 1910. The reflection of contemporary
anthropological theories can be seen in the general theoretical books written about caste system. It is also seen in the data assembled and classified for the series of provincial "tribes and castes" books, such as, W. Crookes(1896) *The Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces and Oudh*. It is seen that the data and their organization implicitly reflect the work of Morgan, McLenan, Lubbock, Tylor, Frazer and so on. The administrator cum ethnographers were concerned with the use of "Customs", such as, marriage by capture, Polyandry, etc., Attempt was made to infer something about the origins of culture, or, as they termed it, civilization. In 1901 an ethnographic survey of India was conducted as part of an official move which finally became part of the census of 1901.

It was believed that India presented a vast store house of social and physical data which only need be recorded so that it would contribute to the solution of the problems which were being dealt with in Europe with the help of material much inferior in quality to that available and readily accessible in India. Therefore, the vast expense and effort to collect this data, collate it, and classify and present it in the form of the Imperial Gazetteers and Census Reports was justified on mainly two grounds: First, the need to collect the ethnographic data was considered to be urgent because the "primitive beliefs and usages in India" would be completely destroyed or transformed Second, the survey was justified on the grounds that it served the purposes of legislation, of judicial procedure, of famine relief, of sanitation and dealings with epidemic dieases and for almost every form of executive action. The ethnographic survey and a record of the customs of the people was considered to be as essential for good administration as a cadastral survey of the land and a record of rights of its tenants. Indian society during the colonial period was undergoing innumerable changes. It was experiencing social change at considerable pace. The impact of the British rule accelerated the social transformation of society which had appeared changeless and static to the earlier anthropologists, like Charles Metcalfe, Munro, Henry Maine and Baden Powell (see Cohn, B in Milton Singer and B.Cohn 1968:p18). It was believed that Indians were living an eternally isolated, self sufficient life in villages which to them seemed to be the physical unit of life in India. The caste system which formed the social unit, appeared once again to be isolated and self sufficient. But much
later, when work was done on 18th and 19th century social history, for e.g. works of
Ronald Inden on Bengali Kayathas and Brahmans, Karen Leonard’s on Hyderabad
Kayasthas, and Robert Hardgrave’s on South Indian Nadars, a much different view of
caste and caste system began to take shape. It was discovered that, unlike the earlier view
i.e., during the 18th century, that caste as an exogamous unit was the effective unit of
society, in reality the endogamous unit i.e, the jati, was found to be effective
unit(Cohn,B. 1968:p.18). Cohn says that due to the change brought about by literacy,
aspirations for upward mobility, and new geographic and occupational mobility, the
endogamous unit began to take on a wider significance. In urban areas, through English
education, modern means of communications and broader exposure to the outside world,
Indians had started identifying themselves with endogamous groups and with caste name
for e.g. Kayastha, Nadar , Chettier , etc. The role of the Colonial impact in the form of
Census, uniform civil laws, railways, post and telegraph and above all educational
institutions to teach Indians to do mainly the clerical task and behave like the British,
came about which led to a socio-economic and political turmoil which ultimately led to
the Freedom struggle and the departure of the British from India. A large section of
Indian elites, young at heart and full of ideals and spirit of Nationalism arose to fight for
freedom from the British Raj.

The other kinds of social changes that came about during that period, besides the
census operation, were the caste sabha movements, expansion of marriage networks,
establishment of caste hostels at colleges, as well as the petitioning of Census
Commissioners for changes in rank accorded to a caste in the census tables.

Caste and Social change in India: Theoretical approaches

Sociological studies in India since the earliest times were primarily concerned
with the phenomenon of change in relation to the different social forces operative in
society. They focused attention on different stages through which institutions like, caste,
family and village community have evolved through a period of time. So, in the tradition
of biological sciences, the evolutionists analysed the social changes taking place in these
institutions on the basis of their origin and growth from simple to complex, from homogeneous and undifferentiated social relationship to complex, heterogeneous and differentiated relationship. The origin of caste and its racial compositions, thus, formed the main theme under study.

Cultural approach

During the post-independence period, a fresh approach to study caste and social change developed. The concepts of Sanskritisation and Westernisation were the first systematic attempts to analyse the process of change in the Indian culture and its traditions. The concept of Sanskritisation was formulated by M.N. Srinivas to explain social mobility within the traditional caste structure of India. It was based on his study of the Coorgs in Mysore. He defined Sanskritisation as "a process where a low Hindu caste changes its customs, rites, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently twice-borne castes". This process has the effect of generally improving the position of the caste group within the local caste hierarchy. It is, hence, a positional change rather than a structural change. It normally presupposes the economic and political improvement of the concerned caste group or a higher group self-consciousness due to contact with a source of the "great tradition" of Hinduism, like a pilgrimage center or monastery or proselytizing sect (Srinivas, M.N. 1966: pp. 67-68).

The other concept formulated by Srinivas is that of Westernisation. He defines Westernisation as "the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, the term subsuming changes occurring at different levels of technology, institutions, ideology and values" (Srinivas, M.N. 1962).

Both the concepts of sanskritisation and westernisation explain the process of social and cultural mobility in society and as such concentrates on cultural and positional aspects of social change rather than structural form of social change. But Srinivas has added another dimension to the understanding of the process of sanskritisation, which is the dimension of power, where he explains the notion of dominant caste. Here he has indirectly covered the structural aspect of social change, however, its nitty gritty has not been clearly stated by him. Thus, he has been accused for neglecting the structural
aspects of social change in India. There are other theories of social change which pertain to the cultural mobility within society. One is the analysis of social change given by Robert Redfield. He propounded the concept of “little” and “great” tradition. The main ideas in this approach towards the understanding of social change are civilisational and social organisation of traditions (Redfield, 1955: pp. 13-21). According to Redfield each civilisation consists of Great and Little traditions in which there is a constant interaction between the two levels. The great tradition belongs to the elites in society or the reflective few and the little tradition belongs to the folk or the unlettered peasants. This theory is based on evolutionary view that civilisation or the structure of tradition, which encompasses both the cultural aspects as well as the structural aspects; develops in two stages: first, through orthogenetic or indigenous evolution, and second, through heterogenetic encounters or contacts with other cultures or civilisations. The social structure of these civilisations operates at two levels, first, that of folks or unlettered peasants, and second, that of the elite or the reflective few intellectual traditions. The cultural processes in the former comprise the little tradition and those in latter constitutes the great tradition (Singh, Y. 1973: p. 13).

In India, Milton Singer (1959) and Mckim Mariott (1955) have studied social change using Redfield’s frame of analysis. Singer has used the same dichotomy of Little and Great tradition to study cultural change in India. Mariott, on the other hand, has characterised the relationship between the little and great traditions found in India using the concepts of parochialisation and universalisation.

In all the above formulations of social change and mobility in Indian society, one finds certain lacunae. Like the concepts of sanskritisation and westernisation, the concepts of little tradition and great tradition too suffers from the culturological bias. They too neglect the structural aspects of social change and thereby have limited scope.

**Structural approach**

The structural approach to the theories of social change is basically concerned with the analysis of the process of structural differentiations within the society which occur due to social and institutional reforms or alterations in society.
Y. Singh (1974: p. 394-95) says that “the units of observation in a structural study are not ideas, sentiments and values, but the order of roles and statuses which form the basis of social relationships and are schematised into groups and categories. A major principle which governs the form of ordering of social structure is asymmetry of power in relation to command over resources or values. Structural changes may primarily be located by identifying the emerging principles that they lay down new rules about the asymmetry and consequent differentiation and transformation in the institutionalised forms of social relationships and their ordering in society. For instance, the abolition of Zamindari and intermediary rights in land were intended to alter the pre-existing modes of power asymmetry in the Indian society; now the extent to which the asymmetry has been removed may be an instance of structural change in the social system, a transition from the feudal primordial to egalitarian liberal social order.

Another feature of the structural approach in the understanding of social change through the observation of differentiation of roles and statuses taking place in the social structure as a result of social pressures caused by population and industrial growth, emergence of new cities and urban centres and the rise in the economic and technical bases of the society (Singh, R.S. 1985: p. 18). Singh (1985) says that the main areas of inquiry in the study of social change, taking into consideration structural differentiation, was to demonstrate the qualitative nature of new adoptions in terms of its structure and function. He says that by and large, in these studies the differentiation of roles and functions of family, the changing position of caste and tribe in the power structure and social hierarchy, emergence of new functions and castes in the villages and changes in leadership and elite formation have been covered.

**Dialectical approach**

Besides the structural approach to the study of social change, we find the dialectical approach which is primarily concerned with the latent and manifest areas of social conflict in the society. It postulates change as a process of transformation through conflict which is treated as the basic process of social change. This approach is influenced by the Marxian notion of dialectical historical evolution of societies, based on the
changes in the mode of production during different periods of time. Studies of social change based on Marxian perspective, i.e. dialectical model, cover many areas of Indian social life, such as, caste and social polity, stages of social evolution corresponding to different modes of production (Dange, S.A. 1949), nationalism (Desai, R. 1966), historical developments (Kosambi, D.D. 1956), social stratification and social institutions (Pavlov, VI, 1964) and emergence of new class structure (Mukherjee, D.P. 1958).

**Cognitive Historical and Institutional approach**

We find assimilation of both cultural and structural aspects in the cognitive historical and institutional approaches to social change as propounded by Louis Dumont and Gunar Myrdal. Dumont, in his approach, is basically interested in the analysis of the cognitive or ideational structural nature of the Indian social system. He is a structuralist, who conceives of Indian society not in terms of systems of relationships but as systems of ideational or value patterns or cognitive structures" (Singh, Y. 1973: p.20). Dumont believes that essentially, change consists in the adoptive or transformative processes within the traditional Indian cognitive system. Thus, cultural change is the precursor for individuality and of the social change (Dumont, L. 1964).

Gunar Myrdal (1968), in his monumental work, "Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations" (1968) has analysed the problems of economic and social development. He focuses not only on the economic aspects but also on institutional aspects, political aspects and studied ideological trends as well. He believes that the social systems in the South Asian countries, especially India consist of a number of conditions that are causally interrelated. Among these conditions are: output and income, conditions of production, level of living, institutions and politics. The first three refers to economic factors while the next two refers to non economic factors in the process of economic development. In most of these approaches to the study of social change, the primary focus has been on the basic themes of Indian cultural structure and not on the dynamics of social groups or structures. The structural approach on the other hand, limits the scope to the study of structures and neglects the cultural, civilisational aspects. Thus,
a theoretical model which encompasses both the approaches and which does not have the
ethnocentric bias of looking at Indian social reality from the Western eye is greatly
required.

Caste and Social Mobility

When we speak of caste and social mobility, we are basically dealing with the
processes of social change in Indian society. Social change is ubiquitous and no society is
left untouched by its forces. Sociologists believe that inspite of the relatively closed
nature of caste system, there have been changes in caste hierarchy and its norms from
time to time. They have effectively challenged the stereotype about the caste system being
a closed and rigid system not allowing individuals to give up their hereditary occupation
and take up new occupations. Sociologists, beginning with G.S. Ghurye have highlighted
the inherent flexibilities in the system. Ghurye (1961:241-281) pointed out that certain
occupations and tasks such as cultivation (except touching of the plough which was
prohibited for the Brahmans), administration and military services were open to all
castes. He holds that in certain traditional occupations such as weaving there is evidence
of the entry of other castes including some of the ‘untouchable’ castes such as the
chamar. He also points out that such flexibility extends to modern occupations as well.
Using a 1954 restudy of a village in Maharashtra after a gap of over twenty years by one
of his students, Ghurye (1961:280-281) shows that modern occupations in the
administration and the professions have attracted people belonging to all castes in the
village. When we examine historical data, ranging back to the Vedic period, we find that
in reality there existed a lot of flexibility. Social mobility with the gain of economic and
political power was always present throughout Indian history. Historian K;M. Pannikar
(1955) believes that in Indian history, the Nandas were the last true Kshatriyas (which
was around 5th century B.C.). Since then, i.e., the times of the Nandas, all the so called
Kshatriyas have come into being by usurpation of power by the lower castes who
acquired the Kshatriya role and social position. (Singh Y.1973:6). Historical records also
reveal changes in life style, caste customs and cultural practices. One example we come
across in Hindu religious and cultural practices is the consumption of liquor or somras.
which was drunk not only by the lower castes but also by the Brahman elites during the Vedic period. The Vedic rites involved animal sacrifice and Brahmans also ate beef. These practices were prohibited later but they continued amongst the lower castes. (Singh Y. 1973:6).

The middle level castes; especially the jatis; were placed in hierarchical order which was not always very clear and varied from region to region. The process of shifting of social status, upward or downward or horizontally is called social mobility. P. Sorokin has identified two kinds of social mobility on the basis of direction of social mobility i.e., vertical mobility and horizontal mobility. Vertical mobility could be both upward or downward. It refers to transition of an individual or social group from one social stratum to another, upward or downward. Horizontal mobility refers to transition of an individual or social group from one type of social status to another within the same or similar hierarchy. For example, an agricultural labour shifting to the city and becoming a labourer in a factory. When we examine the caste system in India, we find that social mobility had always been present, as mentioned earlier. The important channels of social mobility that we find in Indian society are (a) Sanskritisation (b) Westernisation (c) Conversion to other religions like Islam, Christianity or to Buddhism, Jainism or other heterodox sects (d) migration, and (e) renouncing the world and taking to the life of mendicant, i.e., becoming a Sanyasi or a Preacher.

Mobility in Pre British India

According to Srinivas (1968:pp.189.200), while the sources of social mobility lay in the political and economic systems, sanskritisation provided a traditional idiom for the expression of social mobility. He states that in ancient India, the two most potent sources of mobility were the fluidity of the political system, especially at the lower levels, and the availability of marginal land which could be cultivated since demographically it was still possible to get land to do so. He says that in the ancient period it was possible for families and bigger groups, especially the dominant groups, to achieve mobility through resort to warfare. Although, it was not easy but was possible for an official or soldier, or the head of a locally dominant caste, to acquire political power and become a
chief or king. He gives the example of Shivaji (1627-1680), who even during the heyday of the Mughal Empire, was able to found a large and powerful Maratha kingdom. He was the son of a jagirdar i.e. a fief holder of the Muslim kingdom of Bijapur in South India. The example of Shivaji is an exceptional case— but it goes to show that the fluidity or openness of the pre-British political system was to some extent possible. Only during the establishment of British rule over the Indian subcontinent did this political avenue of social mobility close down. The political fluidity in pre-British India was in the last analysis the product of a pre-modern technology and institutional system. He explains that large kingdoms could not be ruled effectively in the absence of railways, post and telegraph, paper and printing, good roads, and modern arms and techniques of warfare. Thus, delegation of authority to smaller chiefs and feudatories was inevitable. For the common masses, life was regulated and controlled by such institutions as caste and village community. The elders of the locally dominant castes punished the violators of the social and the moral code. This order suited even the Muslim rulers. Warfare was endemic and frontiers as well as loyalties changed frequently. A great ruler brought a brief period of order and stability to the kingdom. The death of a great king was often followed by political chaos. The tribute paying chiefs tended to declare themselves free and stop paying tribute. Srinivas (1968) says that when a leader of a dominant caste or small chieftain -- graduated to the position of a raja or king, acquiring, in the process, the symbolic and other paraphernalia of Kshatriyahood, he in turn became a source of mobility for individuals and groups in his domain. An important, though not absolutely necessary, precondition for such graduation was sanskritisation.

The medieval governments attempted to encourage extension of cultivation The Hindu king, by virtue of his position as the head of the social order had the responsibility to settle all disputes with regard to caste and the power to raise or lower the ranks of castes as reward or punishment. Muslim kings, and even the British in the early days of their rule, exercised at least the first function. Most of the Hindu maharajas ruling over the large "native" states during the British period allowed their jurisdiction in caste matters to lapse only at the beginning of the 20th century (Smith, 1963). The second
source of mobility in pre-British India was, what Srinivas and others like Burton Stein refer to as the "open agrarian system" of medieval India. According to Burton Stein, a historian of medieval South India, "marginally settled lands suitable for cultivation" were always available, and this permitted the establishment of new settlements and even new regional societies (cited in B.S.Cohn 1968:pp 191). According to Srinivas, 1968 this situation was not exclusive to South India alone but characterised the country as a whole. Irfan Habib, too, agrees to the same when he writes that "The Ain-i-Akbari" and Rennel's Atlas (1780) show that down to the 18th century large cultivable tracts still lay behind the forest line, and improvement in cropping by grant of revenue concessions and loans to finance (the) purchase of seeds, cattle or excavation of wells by the cultivators themselves" (1962, p. 62). This kind of situation imposed a check on the authority of chiefs and kings since they were under pressure to treat their subjects, who provided human labour to cultivate land, well in order to keep them. The ability of citizens to flee to frontier areas provided a sanction against excessive oppression by rulers. The jajmani system i.e. the system of patron and clients, within the caste system, found in the villages proliferated in large parts of India. Under this system, the landlord belonged to the dominant caste and had under his wings some artisan castes, lower castes who provided essential services, such as, Kumhar (water carriers), Barai (Carpenter), Chamar (Leather workers), Ahir (Cattle Keepers) etc. The patron was under socio-cultural, political and economic obligation to protect his 'amins' i.e. the client castes. It was not rare to find a whole caste group, which was the families of a caste, fleeing the village to escape an excessively oppressive feudal landlord, during the pre-British period. Thus, it is seen that social mobility in medieval India involved spatial mobility, and the units of mobility were individual families. The need as well as the facilities for "corporate mobility" did not exist Burton Stein (1962)argued that the modern phenomenon of competition among castes for enhanced status within a narrow, localized ranking system is not suitable for the understanding of caste mobility during medieval India. He gives the example of the various sub-divisions of the Tamil peasant caste of Vellalas, which exists now, and is the result of mobility occurring during the medieval period. Srinivas, however, points out that not all cases of sanskritisation in traditional India were preceded by the possession of
political or economic power or even that sanskritisation had a mobility aspect (1968:p. 191).

**Mobility in British India**

Social mobility found during the pre-British period was relatively different from the kind found during the colonial rule in India. It offered some new avenues of social mobility to all castes; especially to the low shudra castes and the erstwhile untouchable castes later referred as "the scheduled castes" by the British and now accepted as a category of castes under the modern Indian Constitution. They receive positive discrimination till date. The establishment of British rule has, therefore, brought about deep and far reaching changes in the socio-economic, political, educational and cultural spheres in India. New economic opportunities, spatial movement of people from villages to cities, new technologies, transport systems, mass media, educational institutions of the modern type, politicisation and Westernisation brought about a rapid change in the rate of social mobility. The traditional system of caste also underwent drastic changes.

Process of social mobility through sanskritisation also gained momentum during this period. Srinivas (1968) writes that due to the impact of the British rule, on the one hand, some traditional means of social mobility closed down; but on the other, several new means emerged. These changes set forces in motion which fundamentally altered the overall character of society. Indian society ceased to be stationary and became mobile. The quantum of mobility has since then increased year by year. For the first time in Indian history there was a single political power governing the whole sub-continent. This was possible due to the new technologies of mass transport, communications, certain forms of administrative and military organisation which the British had brought with them. The emergence of land as a commodity (detached from caste) in the market, several changes in economic and political order took place. This was due to the introduction of tenurial reforms and application of British concepts of ownership of land, introduction of permanent settlement in some parts of India and so on, land became saleable. New opportunities of occupation and income came about in the port cities and
capitals which had far reaching effects on mobility. According to Srinivas, there came into existence a class of men, recruited generally from the upper castes, who resided in urban areas but who had a 'pied-a-tere' in villages (1968:p 192). Mukherjee S.N. (1970:45) also refers to this class of absentee landlords in Bengal in his study of elites. Landownership was a symbol of security and high social status for the elites and there also was sentimental attachment to ancestral land and village. However, tide of time took over and urban living became costly, other expenses like weddings, medication etc. forced this class of landlords to sell their land to the peasants and other rural castes. This disturbed the traditional norms of upper caste with the upper class landlords and the lower caste with the landless labourers. The British brought modern knowledge of science, technology, humanities advertently and inadvertently. This brought about new values of equality, rationalism and humanism. Srinivas(1968) says that there was a new humanitarianism or rather the extension of humanitarianism to new areas, resulting in the abolition of suttee, human sacrifice and slavery Western rationalism appealed to the Indian elites since the early period of British rule. By the year 1830 there was a small but articulate body of rationalists in Calcutta (O'Malley, 1941, pp 70,309,314). Another significant factor in the modernization of India was the European missionary effort. The missionaries were full of evangelizing zeal. They highlighted the evils of the indigenous society such as suttee human and animal sacrifice, idolatry rituals, infant marriage and so on which was rampant during that time. It led to bitter hostility and a defensive attitude of the common masses and the traditional elite, alike. This belief could be seen during the Mutiny of 1857 and was strong in the North of India. The new western oriented Indian elite was put on the defensive and many of them, therefore, addressed themselves to the immense task of reforming Indian society, such as, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar. This criticism by the missionaries also led to reinterpreting the Hindu religion. Missionaries were also actively involved in India in humanitarian work and education. They ran hospitals, orphanages, schools etc. They tried to help the poor and lowly, such as the untouchable castes, other lower castes, tribal folks living in remote areas and women who practiced purdah. The missionaries stimulated the growth of regional literatures by setting up printing presses, cutting types for various Indian scripts,
printing books and founding journals, writing dictionaries and grammars and translating classics in the regional languages to English (Srinivas, 1968, p. 193).

The coming of market economy and the emergence of new economic opportunity brought about immense changes in the Indian society. This came into existence as a result of establishment of law and order, removal of internal customs barriers and the extension of communications linking different parts of the country with the outside world. Other developments like building of railways, digging of canals and roads, introduction of plantation crops like tea, coffee, indigo etc changed the economic structure of society. Growth of towns and cities took place. Factories and industries developed providing large scale employment to people. This led to large scale migration of people from rural to urban areas. Calcutta and Bombay cities were witness to this kind of migration from the earliest. To obtain high paid jobs in the cities and better social status, English education became very important. It is seen that the new opportunities, especially at the higher levels, were usually taken advantage of by the high castes. This resulted in considerable overlap between the traditional upper caste elites and the new elites. Srinivas (1968) says that this development had "the twin effect of increasing the cultural and ideological distance between the high and low castes, as well as making the new opportunities doubly desirable. In the first place, they were well paid and prestigious, and in the second, only the high castes had access to them. Eventually, this gave rise to the Backward Classes Movement" (Srinivas 1968:p. 193). The coming of the market economy also brought changes in the political sphere. The decline of the traditional economic systems, for example, the decline of the Brahmin hegemony in Tanjore village studied by Beteille; the emergence of caste free occupations and mobilisation of caste groups have all resulted in the decline of the traditional political role of castes. However, it still continued to play a significant political role to gain status and power through shifting alliances. This was evident, for example, in the case of the political mobilisation of caste groups in Madhopur, Uttar Pradesh. In this village the rank of noniyas, the salt-makers and Chamars, the leather-makers, joined hands in opposing the locally dominant upper caste Thakurs. Thakurs were the Rajputs belonging to Kshatriya Varna, who held the economic asset of land in their hands i.e. they were the landlords. They were the locally dominant caste, who were the traditional dispensers of justice in that region. Thus, here in this case,
we see that caste which was a dividing factor, reshaped itself in the new circumstances to form a unifying factor for political gains; and also sometimes, for material welfare and social status. The British rule in India released the lower castes, especially the shudras and the erstwhile untouchable castes, not only from the traditional legal barriers of occupation but also from donning the sacred thread and chanting Vedic hymns (mantras) on ritual occasions. The sanskritisation effort, to raise one's social status in the caste hierarchy, was often opposed by the upper castes. In many cases caste conflicts took place, violence and oppression against these efforts by the lower castes are quite frequent in India, in North, as well as South. Caste riots are still quite a frequent feature of Indian society. During the British rule, it was seen that in some areas, a few low castes had access to new trading or employment opportunities. Bailey (1970) mentions how the prohibition policy of the government of Bengal (of which Orissa was then a part) resulted in relative prosperity for the Ganjiam and Boad DistiUers. The oilmen (Telis) all over eastern India benefited from the enlarged market for trade in oil and pressed oil seeds brought about by improved communications and population growth. The Noniyas of eastern UP, Kolis of the Surat Coast (Gujarat) and members of several other social groups benefited from the new employment opportunities resulting from improved transport and communications. In all these cases of improved economic status, the attempt to improve one's socio-cultural and political status became more or less inevitable.

Srinivas says that an ambitious low caste, in the new situation had a new remedy at its disposal i.e. it could appeal to the police and law courts against dominant caste violence. Thus, the Backward Classes Movement, which took place all over India but took a very virulent shape in South of India i.e. the peninsular India; became a potent reality. In south of India it had distinctive ideology and pervaded every aspect of social life. According to Srinivas the importance of the movement is beginning to be appreciated by Indianists, particularly, in the context of the significant changes occurring among the Harijans (the name given to the ex-untouchable castes or "the Scheduled Castes" by Mahatma Gandhi). This movement not only affected the Harijans but also a wide variety of castes and in South India, all castes except the Brahmins (1968: p. 194).
As mentioned earlier, the census operation in India conducted by the British administrators, every ten years, unwittingly came to the aid of the ambitious low castes. Sir Herbert Risley, the commissioner of the 1901 census, decided to make use of the census investigations to obtain and record the exact rank of each caste. This attempt was viewed by most castes as an opportunity to establish themselves as a caste much higher in social status. They were mostly low castes who had gained some economic prosperity. These castes seemed to have felt that by this attempt and success in claiming a higher rank in the caste hierarchy and getting it recorded in the census document, which was the official document of the government, nobody would be able to dispute their rank. Thus, the census became the traditional copper plate grants of Indian kings declaring the rank and privilege of a caste. This attempt once again reveals the political aspect of caste. The role of political authority in providing avenues for social mobility within the caste system, thus, remained intact throughout history. Srinivas (1968) maintains that the Backward Classes Movement, which had its inception during the British India but continued its stirrings in post-Independent India, could broadly be divided into two stages. The first stage was the one where the low castes concentrated on acquiring the symbols of high status. In the second stage, however, the emphasis shifted from the symbols to the real sources of high status i.e., the possession of political power, education, and a share in the new economic opportunities. The "low" castes became aware that in the changed environment in India once one achieved the necessary power, the acquisition of the symbols of high ritual rank would be easy to obtain and become meaningful. Thus, the leaders of the Backward Classes Movement clearly saw the inter-linkage between high status and acquisition of political power, education, and a share in the new economic opportunities.

When the colonial authorities widened political participation by allowing elections in some provinces, castes organised to make claims for political representation. In some regions, such as the South of India, the non-Brahman castes were even successful in restricting entry of Brahmans in educational institutions and administrative services. In order to pacify the fears of the lower castes and middle caste communities about upper caste Hindu rule in independent India and also to weaken the nationalist movement, the British granted special political representation to some groups such as the
untouchables. They had become politically mobilized under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and had learned, like other castes and communities, the use of political means to gain higher status and power (Zelliot 1970).

**Post Independence India**

In the first phase of the Backward Classes Movement, the traditional aspects of the caste system were still strong. The higher castes resented the effort of the "low" castes to achieve higher status and rank by appropriation of the symbols of higher rank. However, they had to overcome their own resistance to such appropriation. But they continued to enjoy the "moral authority". If important point one can make out, is that at this level, the caste system as such was not challenged. Social mobility occurred but there was no structural change. The hierarchical order of social stratification remained intact. Caste as an identity has even till date, in spite of all challenges not been able to be denied. Only its shape and significance seems to have changed. The political power was recognised to be necessary from the second phase onwards to introduce the principle of caste quotas for jobs in the administration and seats in technological, medical, and science courses. Political power was also important in getting licenses and permits necessary for trading in variety of goods and for undertaking other economic enterprises. In this regard, education was considered to be indispensable for obtaining the higher categories of posts in the administration and even for effective exercise of political power. Because of this emphasis on political power that there developed inconsistencies in castes claiming to be "backward" in official and political contexts and of high rank in traditional contexts. Classification as "backward" enabled the members of a caste to get preference as a matter of right, in obtaining seats in educational institutions, scholarships, jobs in the administration and even in job promotions to some extent. However, this "backward" classification was not counted against it in evaluating its rank in the traditional caste hierarchy. To gain political power, higher rank and prestige in society, castes, mostly in urban areas and some had even regional context, began to mobilize themselves into caste sabhas or associations. This was an important factor in the spread as well as the acceleration of mobility. The initial task that the caste associations or para-
communities took up was to bring about reforms in caste customs through the process of sanskriritization. They tried to claim higher caste rank and took up welfare activities for caste fellows, such as, building caste hostels, colleges, houses on cooperative basis and even hospitals in some areas.

**Caste mobility in contemporary India**

Srinivas (1968: 196) writes that with the gradual transfer of power from the British to the Indians, caste associations tended to become political pressure groups demanding for their members electoral tickets from the principal political parties, ministerships in state cabinets, licenses for undertaking various economic activities, jobs in the administration and a variety of other benefits. He says that in some cases castes performed these activities even when they were not formally organized into caste sabhas or associations. The Indian political democracy, unlike the European experience did not emerge as part of a socio-historical movement. It was not a natural evolution of ideas, values and technologies, but was adopted by the national leaders to serve the needs of the people of India in the best way possible. Thus, the values and attitudes which went with the given form of parliamentary democracy had to be inculcated in the people. The notion of "equality" and democracy was something new to the people of India for whom, caste hierarchy and unequal status within it, had always been part of life. The notion of birth and rebirth and "karma" theory was part of the ethos of the Hindus and other heterodox religions like Buddhism and Jainism. Low caste status and poverty were accepted as a result of deeds' or misdeeds' done in past life. It is seen that politics had drawn caste into its web for organising support and in articulating the needs of the masses, who largely identified with their caste or jatis. In modern polity, caste and kin groups attest their identity to strive for positions of power. Different political parties and movements mobilise different caste groups as resources for their political objectives. Thus, even till date we often hear of candidates being selected by different political parties on caste lines. The caste provided for organised party politics a ready made system of segments which could be used to marshall support.
After India became independent in 1947, the Indian leaders hoped that legislative and legal measures would reorder an entrenched social structure. A new constitution was drawn which abolished untouchability and prohibited discrimination in public places. To help lower castes and classes to overcome their low miserable social status and poverty, special places were reserved for untouchables in higher educational institutions, government services, and in the lower houses of the central and state legislatures. Inspite of all these legal and political measures to improve the social, political and economic status of the ex-untouchables who form 16 percent of the total population, there are instances of atrocities on dalits all over India. Except for "a small minority, referred to by Sachchidanand (1977)as 'Harijan elites', the rest of the ex-untouchable castes and their members still find themselves at the lowest rung of the social strata. Census data of 1991 proves that 90 percent of wage-labourers of Uttar Pradesh belong to the scheduled castes.

However, the close association between caste and traditional occupation is breaking down because of the expansion of modern education and the urban industrial sector. In India, an urban middle class has formed whose members are drawn from various caste groups. This has reduced the structural and cultural differences between castes, as divisions based on income, education and occupation become more important than caste cleavages for social and economic purposes. The reduction, however, is most pronounced among the upper socio-economic strata-the urban, western educated, professional and higher income groups whose members share a common life style (Beteille 1969).

Therefore, in contemporary India, we find that liberal education, government patronage, and an expanding franchise have been major factors that have penetrated the caste system. Discontent and exploitation which has prevailed within the caste groups provided a basis for organising caste factions and alliances. In other words, modern politics found an ongoing vertical network of caste and made the structure of caste a political vehicle.

Burton Stein (1968) has characterized mobility in modern India as "Corporate", in distinction from mobility during medieval India which was familial in nature. He says that while the existence of modern means of communication facilitates "corporate
mobility", the motive force for corporateness comes from the prospect of obtaining political power and using that power to benefit caste fellows. This tendency had become stronger in independent India. Universal adult franchise and government policies aiming to provide special facilities and concessions to backward castes with a view to enable them to catch up with the advanced castes in education and economic, positions had several repercussions.

The numerical strength of social groups, such as, caste groups became important and division which previously seemed important were ignored to facilitate caste alliances for political and economic purposes. Scholars like Leach (1960) and Dumont (1970) believed that caste system was a cooperative, inclusive arrangement where each caste formed an integral part of the local socio-economic system and each had special privileges of their own. Some other scholars (Berreman 1981. Beidelman 1959. Freeman 1986) think that though the caste system did provide security for all. It was essentially exploitative and oppressive especially for the untouchables, who were confined to menial, despaired jobs. working as sweepers. gutter and latrine cleaners. scavengers, farm labourers and curers of hides. They were denied access to Hindu temples and were not allowed to read religious Sanskrit scriptures. There were many other hardships which they had to face in day to day living out of which they had no means to come out traditionally. Even the process of sanskritisation did not affect their low status, both ritual and economic.

B'etille(1964:p.134) has pointed out that "competition for power and office requires a certain aggregation of segments. The thousands of minimal segments in a given region can not compete individually in the struggle for power. When they come together they follow alignments interest in the traditional structure of caste. That is why the larger segments which compete for power today regard themselves as castes or jatis and are so regarded by other".

The political need for aggregation was so great that sometimes distinct caste groups occupying different positions in the regional hierarchy came together. Srinivas (1968. p. 198) gives the example of the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha, in which Rajputs admitted the low caste status Kolis to the rank of Kshatriyas, in order to capture power in Gujarat State. Rao, M.S.A. (1964) states that the Yadavs of North India provide an even
more egregious example of a large number of castes from different linguistic areas coming together and trying to form a single caste-category in order to strengthen their political power. Thus, it could be clearly stated that mobility in medieval India was based on fission, whereas, in modern India mobility was based rather on "caste fusion". Srinivas says that the "fusion" of castes has had several implications in modern India. It has led to weakening of pollution ideas. The unit of endogamy has begun to widen to include adjacent segments or grades. The process of exploiting the new opportunities has led to significant changes in the caste system.

Rudolph and Rudolph (1967.11) in their analysis of caste, in the context of modernity and tradition, are of the view that in its transformed state, caste has helped India's peasant society make a success of representative democracy and fostered the growth of equality by making Indians less separate and more alike. Indians are becoming less separate in the sense that due to the electoral system, numerical strength which means more number of votes. Thus, it is the interest of the large majority of castes to come together to achieve their political goals. In this process of aggregation, as mentioned earlier, caste associations and caste federations were formed. The relationship that caste bears to politics can be best understood in terms of three types of political mobilisation discussed by Rudolph and Rudolph (1967) which explains the different stages of political development in India. These three types of political mobilisation are:

**Vertical Mobilisation**

This was the early phase of mobilisation where political support was acquired by the traditional notables, like kings, local rajas and other feudatories. This was possible in a society organised and integrated along caste lines. The society was predominantly traditional, caste groups were largely inter dependent. Modern means of communication was generally missing. Legitimacy of traditional authority was still surviving in large parts of the country. Due to their traditional authority, the Raja or Zamindar or dominant caste elite, was able to get support of their dependents or "Praja" who were socially inferior to them in the traditional manner. Rudolph & Rudolph (1967:24) say that vertical
mobilisation remains a viable strategy for dominant classes and castes until dependents, tenants and clients become politicized enough to be mobilised by ideological appeals to class or community interests and sentiments.

**Horizontal Mobilization**

In this process of mobilisation, popular political support is marshaled by class or community leaders and their specialised organisations. It was during this phase that caste federations and solidarity of different caste and class groups took place. A new pattern of cleavage was introduced which challenged the vertical solidarities and structures of traditional societies. In horizontal mobilisation the agent of mobilisation is the political party whereas in the vertical mobilisation it was the notable person i.e. the landlord or the Raja, who was the agent. At this level, the political parties appeal to the voters directly as individuals or indirectly through the organised groups to which they belong. Thus, in direct appeal often emphasis was placed on ideology or issues, on the one hand, and on the other hand, on community identification through caste. This mobilisation is possible only as long as internal differentiation did not develop and caste communities remained diffused and varied.

**Differential Mobilisation**

In this process of mobilisation the changes that caste has undergone and is still under going, takes it beyond the traditional ascriptive definition. These changes include internal differentiation or fusion and integration of several caste groups in caste federations and associations i.e. fusion which expresses the shared interests, symbols and norms of these castes. In this stage, caste comes out of the village and family domain and becomes to a large extent urban, having a larger area of operation and activities. Rudolph & Rudolph (1967) have given the example of differential mobilisation taking place amongst the Rajputs of Rajasthan. The Rajputs were the rulers, feudal lords, court retainers of princely states before independence. At that time, they formed an association called the Kshatriya Mahasabha which initially represented all ranks within the
community. A new caste association was formed in 1954 called the Bhooswani Sangh. This new association brought into light the conflict between the "small" Rajputs whose modest land holdings had to be supplemented by income from service under the princes and jagirdars. These princess and jagirdars, however, had in most cases dismissed them from service with the advent of the land reforms after independence. Thus, when the rich and powerful Rajputs declined to assist the "small" Rajputs, they formed the Bhooswani Sangh. This association took up the task of protecting the interests of the "small" Rajputs.

This faction amidst the Rajputs was quickly capitalised by the political parties. The class and ideological fusion in the Rajput community shows the process of internal differentiation which has socio-political repercussions.

**Caste Associations and their Role in Caste Mobility**

In their explanation of political mobilisation and its three stages, Rudolph & Rodolph have explained also the role of caste and caste associations in the modern polity. They explained the changes in the nature and function of caste in India. They define caste association as "para-communities which enable members of castes to pursue social mobility, political power and economic advantage" (1967:29). Caste associations resemble in many ways the voluntary associations or interest groups found in industrially advanced societies. However, caste associations are distinct in many respects from voluntary associations, as well as, from natural associations like castes out of which they have developed.

They are more like voluntary associations at the organisational level, unlike the traditional caste structures. They have offices, membership, incipient bureaucratisation, legislative process which can be seen through conferences, delegates and resolutions. But unlike the voluntary associations, caste associations are characterised by a shared sense of culture, character and status which gives it a solidarity not found in voluntary associations. The caste associations play multiple roles and serves the Indian society by both leveling the sacred and hierarchical order and also replacing it. It initiates and manages the efforts of the lower castes to become twice born, to dawn the sacred thread which symbolises higher ritual rank and culture. A clear example of this can be seen in
Tamil Nadu amongst the Nadars. The Nadars were the low castes of toddy tappers, who through the efforts of their caste association, the Nadar Mahajana Sangam founded in 1910, managed to acquire not only higher status but also a modern organisation to serve their needs.

The role of caste associations, found in most parts of India is still significant and till date some of these associations are found to be serving the interests of their caste members, such as, in organising mass marriages or providing a forum for match making etc. Many have opened their portals to other caste members also, as in case of hostels, educational institutions, hospitals and so on.

We find, therefore, that the caste associations contribute to fundamental structural and cultural change in Indian Society by providing an adaptive institution in which both the traditional as well as modern features of society could meet. However, not all aspects of changes in caste system were positive and passive or peaceful. The "Backward Classes Movement", the clash of interest of several castes in various rural and urban pockets of India were rather violent and aggressive in nature.

For majority of Indians living in the villages (73 percent of Indian population is still rural), caste factors are an integral part of their daily lives. Even in cities, as Gould has pointed out in his study of the Rickshaw pullers of Lucknow (1987), occupationally caste had no role but once the rickshaw puller went home, his personal life style, rituals, marriage ties etc. still remained governed by caste to which he belonged. But changes have crept up even in the rural sector due to modern economic forces. The increase in cash crop production, which has made grain payments in exchange for services unprofitable, the introduction of mechanized farming, which has displaced manual labour, the preference for manufactured goods over handmade ones, and the migration to cities and to prosperous agricultural areas for work and better wages have all weakened the traditional patron-client ties and the security that it had provided. The scheduled castes and other low castes have been particularly affected as the other sectors of the economy have not grown fast enough to absorb them.

Caste has "ceased to be a structural economic signifier" according to a number of studies (Metcalf 1979; Pai1988; Saith and Tankha 1972 and 1992; Miriam Sharma 1979 and 1985; H. N. Singh 1986). The significance of caste, however, still lies in the sphere of
identity, that is, it has utility as an ethnic category to which people belong. As such, it is very useful for political mobilisation rather than as a socio-economic segment as it is supposed to have existed in the traditional India. (Lieten and Srivastava 1999: p.75).

The rural social structure has been reshaped in yet another way. The dominant castes are no longer from the higher castes but belong to the middle castes and lower peasant castes - the profit-maximizing "bullock capitalists" (Rudolph & Rudolph 1987) who were the chief beneficiaries of land reform and state subsidies to the agricultural sector (Blair 1980, Brass 1985). They have displaced the high caste absentee landlords, who have moved to cities and taken up modern occupations. The traditional leadership and power structure of local communities have also been transformed as a result of modern political institutions. Relations between castes are now governed by rules of competitive politics and leaders are selected for their political skills and not because they are members of a particular caste. In recent times there have been various instances of confrontation between the middle peasant castes and scheduled castes in rural areas. We see that violence and repression against the scheduled castes or dalits has increased as they have begun to assert themselves with the support of Communist and Dalit movements, they are demanding better wages, and the use of village wells. In the urban-industrial milieu, one expects that the significance of caste will be considerably diluted, because achievement rather than ascription is expected to be the dominant criterion governing organisational performance here. However, available evidence suggests that although urban and industrial occupations and professions have attracted members of diverse castes, here too, certain castes tend to be prominent in particular occupations. Such clustering of castes in occupations colour social perceptions considerably, and these in turn contribute to the perpetuation of caste identities.

Caste composition in the government services reveals that the upper and middle castes form the bulk of the recruitment, especially at the higher levels. The Backward classes commission set up by the Government of India (GOI)- in its report published in 1980 estimates that of the 1,571,638 persons employed in the central government services and public sector undertakings, 18.72 percent belong to SCs and STs and 12.55 percent belong to other Backward classes (OBC) category. It is important to note that the representation of SC/ST and OBC declines as one moves up from class III and IV
services to class I services. In the lower class III and IV services their representation is 24.4 and 18.9 percent respectively. These figures decline to 18.18 percent and 10.63 percent for class II and to a mere 5.68 percent and 4.69 percent in the higher reaches of class I services. In other words, the upper and middle castes form nearly 90 percent of the class I services although according to the Mandal Commission they constitute not more than about 20 percent of the total population of the country. It may be noted in passing that that the SC/ST percentages are higher than that of the OBC because till recently the central government's protective discrimination policy covered only SCs and STs. A recent compilation of data by J.P. Singh (1993) confirms the trend. In 1990, Brahmans formed more than 50 percent of class I category in almost all Central Government Offices except for the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and the Ministry of Finances where the representation was 46.3 percent and 13.9 percent respectively.

In the urban areas, caste conflict has mainly centred around the issue of "reservation". The other backward castes or OBCs (who belong mainly to the Shudra Caste and form approximately 50 percent of Indian's population) have demanded from the government benefits similar to those given to the SC's in government service and educational institutions. Due to the electoral pressures, the state governments have extended these reservation benefits to the OBCs', leading to discontent among the upper castes. This extension of preferential treatment from the SC's to the more numerous and in many states better off backward castes has not only created great resentment among the upper castes but also has reduced the public support for the policy of positive discrimination for the Scheduled Castes. The anti-reservation riots witnessed in several cities, including Delhi expressed this resentment of the upper castes. It is not accidental that this kind of agitation is taking place now when the preferential programmes have only started making inroads in improving the educational and economic conditions of the SCs' (Sheth 1987).

It is but natural that as education would spread and the meaning of the vote and the ideas of equality and justice would seep into the consciousness of people, the rural and the urban areas will witness severe inter caste conflicts. However, these conflicts apparently may be caste conflicts but in reality would be struggles for control over
political and economic resources. The reservation policy adopted by the V.P. Singh's government in 1988-89 was only a culmination of submerged sparks of anger and suppression in various caste communities in India. The reservation policy suggested by the Mandal Commission in and its application led to violent riots in most parts of North India, the worst face of it could be seen in Delhi. It led to the fall of V.P. Singh's government. But the reservation of seats for the "other Backward Classes" which was vaguely charted out by the Mandal Commission Report could not be withdrawn. Finally, Supreme Court once again reiterated the need for reservation of seats for the "Other Backward Classes" which include the middle level castes, like the Yadavs, Kumhars, Dhobis, etc. which do not fall under the Scheduled Castes but are still considered to be the disadvantaged groups in most parts of India. However, many of these caste groups are economically and even politically well off in some regions. For example, the Yadavs who have controlled the political scene in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar for several years. Finally, it can be said that caste has come a long way since the Portuguese's discovery of it when they arrived in India centuries ago. But the tenacity and flexibility of caste has made it a powerful weapon to be used by different people for different reasons all over India to serve their varied interests.

The whole discourse on caste in Uttar Pradesh, as in India everywhere, has changed in the recent times. It is no longer the mute acceptance of upper caste dominance. The dalit movement which has developed, first in the South and then in the North of India rejects caste as a category of identity. This movement resembled the "Black panther" movement of the black people in America. However, in Uttar Pradesh, the emergence of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and swearing in of Mayavati, the first dalit chief minister of UP marked a radical change in the values and attitudes of the lower castes in UP. The aggressive anti-upper caste rhetoric of Kanshi Ram, the founder of BSP and close associate of Mayavati, launched a new debate on caste in India. Some reflections of this changing discourse in caste could be understood, when one examines the slogans given by BSP and Dalit Soshit Sanghars Samiti, its earlier avatar. The anti-upper caste slogan, such as "Tilak, Taraju aur Talwar. Inko Maro Jute chaar" (The upper caste symbols like the ritual mark on the forehead of the Brahmin, the weighing balance...
of the Bania, and the sword of Kshatriya, all these should be beaten four times by the shoe)."

Thus, one sees a sea of change in the caste discourse from what it was during the British period, pre-British period to the modern period including perceptions of the upper caste intellectuals, like Srinivas and others.