“G.S. Ghurye’s” caste and race in India is an important work to understand the base and the root of the caste system in India. His work gives us a vivid picture about the caste system existing in India. He also says that caste were groups with a well developed life of their own, the membership where of, unlike that of voluntary associations and of classes was determined not by selection but by birth. He also states about the castes existing in the Southern India. He further states the Brahmin’s residing in Madras, says that these Brahmins out look is totally different and they do not include in the worship of Grama Devata, the village God’s to which the oboriginal population almost exclusively bows down. The Brahmins did not permit widow marriage nor tolerate concubinage as a caste practice. In Southern India the artisan castes has maintained a struggle for a higher place in the social scale then that allowed to them by Brahminical authority.

“John Fryer”, who payed a visit to India, says in the linguistic divisions of India, there are as many as two hundred castes which can be grouped in classes whose gradation is largely acknowledge by all. The Brahmins degraded the lower caste thinking themselves as superior at one end.
“Martin” says in Bihar the Shudras were divided into four classes. “E.A. Blunt” says, there is no relation between a castes social position and the severity of its cooking taboo, as many as thirty six out of seventy six castes of Uttar Pradesh take ‘Kachcha’ cooked food from only their own members and none others. Pakka food can be ordinarily taken not only from ones own or many higher castes, but also from the confections, classes, the Myras and Halwai’s. Even wells are polluted if a low caste man draws water from them, but a great deal depends on the character of the vessel used and of the well from which water is drawn. In the Maratha country the shadow of an untouchable is sufficient if it falls on a member of a higher caste to pollute him. In Malabar region certain castes have always have to keep a stated distance between themselves and the Brahmin and other higher castes so as not to defile the latter. Thus the Shanar, Toddy, Tapper of Tamil Nadu, contaminates a Brahmin if he approaches the latter within twenty – four paces. Among the people of Kerala a Nayar may approach a Nambudiri, Brahmin but must not touch him, while a Tiyan must keep himself at the distance of thirty six from the Brahmin. Even some times the Brahmin doctor, when feeling the pulse of shudra, first wraps up the patients wrist with a small piece of silk so that he may not be defiled by touching his skin. In the region of Telugu and Kanarese the low caste people were kept at the out skirts of the village or city. In the Tamil and Malayalam region the Brahmin’s allowted the pace for the Shudras.
In Karnataka also the Brahmin’s reside at high locality. But where as
the shudras reside at the out skirts places given by the Brahmins. Even the
depressed classes like the Mang, Mahar etc, are forced to live on the out skirts
of the village. However in the Dravidian South, the every land of the supreme
dominance of the Brahmins, the Brahmin was restricted in his rights of
access to any part of the village. In Gujarat the depressed castes used to
wear a horn as their distinguishing mark. The shudras and Izhavas, toddy –
tappers story on the eastern and western coasts were not allowed to build
houses above one strong in hight. Even incase of women for her identity as
shudra women, she has to keep the upper part of the bodies quite bare.

The Shudras were denied of gaining education and knowledge. They
do not have any right to read the sacred literature, they were not allowed to
enter the temples and the childrens of shudras were not allowed to get into
the educational institutions to gain basic knowledge. Even the burial place
were separate for the shudras, “Russell”, observes the real unit of the system
and the basis of the unit of the Indian system and the basis of the fabric of
Indian society in this endogamous group or sub-caste.¹

G.S. Ghurye also says about caste has evolved and occupied its
position in society and community. To give a proper picture about the caste
system, he break up the history of India into four periods. First the Vedic
period ending about 600 B.C and comprising the literary data of the Vedic
Samhitas and the Brahmanaas, second, the post Vedic period. In this period
we have three types of literature which shed light on these subjects. Buddhist literature also gives glimpse of the institutions and some aspects of caste. The third period may be styled as Dharmasastra and ends with the tenth or eleventh century A.D. Manu, Yajnavalka and Vishnu are the chief exponents of the social ideals of this age. The fourth period called the modern period and it brings us down to the beginning of the nineteenth century. The customs and beliefs of contemporary Hindus are those that were mostly fixed and classified by the writers of this period.

In Rig Veda, the earliest work of the first period three classes of society are very frequently mentioned, the Brahmana, Kshatriya, and Vaishya. The word 'Caste' is first mentioned in Purusha Sukta and four order of the society has been mentioned. Even the Taittiriya Samhita, ascribes the origins of the four classes. The Shatapatha Brahmana lays down different sizes of the funeral mound for the four classes. In the Rigveda the word “Varna” is never applied to anyone of these classes. But the Shatapatha classes. But the Shatapatha Brahmana describes the four classes as the four Varnas. According to Shatapatha Brahmana the Brahmanai’s are regarded themselves as the spreaders of Civilization.

The second order in the society were Kshatriya in the Rigveda they were known as Rajanya. They were good archer and good chariot fighter, some shatriyas were well versed in the literature and some have acted as priests also for example Janaka, Pravahana, Jaivali Ajatashatru and
Ashvapali Kaikeya are some of the conspicuous names of philosopher kings. The third order in society namely the Vaishya, the Aitareya Brahmana describes him as tributary to another and to be lived upon by another and to be supported at will. As per as Taittiriya Samhita, the greatest ambition of a Vaishya was to be the Gramani or the village headman. The name of the fourth class appears only once in Rig Veda. The Shudra is described as the servant of another. The Shatapatha Brahmana goes to the length of decreasing the Shudra is untruth itself. In the Rigveda the distinction is made between the Arya and the Shudra. The reference to the Chandalas in the Yajurveda clearly show them to be degraded people. The Paulkasas and Chandalas are referred to as a described race of men in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. In the Vedic period, the Dasa was described as the black race. The Mahabharata says that the shudra can have no absolute property, because his wealth can be appropriated by his master at will. “Apastamba” opines that the Shudra is not entitled to the rite of initiation, the study of the Vedas and the kindling of the sacred fire. A Shudra can be abused by a Brahmin without entailing any punishment.

Gauthama observes, men of the several castes and orders who always live according to their duty enjoy after death the rewards of their works and by virtue of a remnant of their merit, they are born again in excellent countries, castes and families endowed with beauty, long life, learning in the Vedas, virtuous conduct, wealth happiness and wisdom.
“R.H. Tawney”, observes the facts of class status and inequality were rationalized in the middle ages by a functioned theory of society Patanjali, the great grammarian wrote, the physical Characteristics of a Brahmin were fair skin and tawny hair. Patanjali declares them to be the utrinsic traits marketing a Brahmin and black colour of the skin that of a non-Brahmin.

P.C. Mahalanobis concludes his survey of the Uttar Pradesh, castes thus, the Brahmins occupy the highest social position in Hindu society, but in the case of low caste is that the social status and physical size of Shudra varies a lot from the Brahmin, he is short, dark skinned and physically not so attractive for example the castes of Uttarpradesh i.e., Bhatu, Habru and Dom. He also comprises the physical features of the Bihar caste with the Punjabies. Over all we can say that G.S. Ghurye has done great justice in helping us know castes, tribes, sub castes and other social groups. He also referes about their life style, dignity, position and status in the society, their occupation and service towards the society and community. He also refers about their culture, norms, customs, traditions which were followed in the society.

The Caste System in India is a system of social stratification, social restriction and a basis for affirmative action in India. Historically, the caste system in India defined communities into thousands of endogamous hereditary groups called Jatis.
The Jatis were grouped by the Brahminical texts under the four well known caste categories, (the varnas): viz Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Certain people were excluded altogether, ostracized by all other castes and treated as untouchables.

Although identified with Hinduism, caste systems have been also observed among other religions in the Indian subcontinent, including some groups of Muslims, Buddhists and Christians. The latter similar to the caste system reported in the Igbo-Osu Christian community in Africa.

Caste is commonly thought of as an ancient fact of Hindu life, but various contemporary scholars have argued that the caste system was constructed by the British colonial regime. Caste is neither unique to Hindu religion nor to India, caste systems have been observed in other parts of the world, for example, in Muslim community of Yemen, Christian colonies of Spain, and Buddhist community of Japan.

The Indian government officially recognizes historically discriminated lowest castes of India such as Shudras and Untouchables as Scheduled Castes. These Schedules Castes are sometimes referred to as Dalit in contemporary literature. In 2001, the proportion of Dalit population was 16.2 percent of India’s total population.

Since 1950, India has enacted and implemented many laws and social initiatives to protect and improve the socio-economic conditions of its Dalit population. By 1995, of all jobs in India, 17.2 percent of the jobs were held
by Dalits, greater than their proportion in Indian population.\textsuperscript{15} Of the highest paying, senior most jobs in government agencies and government controlled enterprises, over 10 percent of all highest paying jobs were held by members of the Dalit community, a tenfold increase in 40 years. In 1997, India democratically elected K.R. Narayanan, a Dalit, as the nation's President.\textsuperscript{16} In last 15 years, Indians born in historically discriminated minority castes have been elected to its highest judicial and political offices.\textsuperscript{17} The quality of life of Dalit population in India, in 2001, in terms of metrics such as access to health care, life expectancy, education attainability, access to drinking water, housing, etc. was statistically similar to overall population of modern India.\textsuperscript{18}

A 2003 report claims inter-caste marriage is on the rise in urban India. Indian societal relationships are changing because of female literacy and education, women at work, urbanization, need for two-income families, and influences from the media.\textsuperscript{19}

India's overall economic growth has produced the fastest and more significant socio-economic changes to the historical injustice to its minorities. Legal and social program initiatives are no longer India's primary constraint in further advancement of India's historically discriminated sections of society and the poor. Further advancement are likely to come from improvements in the supply of quality schools in rural and urban India, along with India's economic growth.\textsuperscript{20}
The Possible Genetic Origin of Caste System

The origins of the Jati caste system are lost in history and folklore. Many scholars believe that the modern Jatis represent ancient tribal and occupational affiliations that have evolved and specialised over time. A question had remained whether or not castes are genetically distinct, and whether genetic differences between groups might partly explain their origin. These genetic studies have so far failed to achieve a consensus, possibly because of the developing nature of genotyping science and technologies.\textsuperscript{21}

A 1995 study by Joanna L. Mountain et al. of Stanford University concluded that there was "no clear separation into three genetically distinct groups along caste lines", although "an inferred tree revealed some clustering according to caste affiliation".\textsuperscript{22}

A 2001 genetic study, led by Michael Bamshad of University of Utah, found that the genetic affinity of Indians to Europeans is proportionate to caste rank, the upper castes being most similar to Europeans, whereas lower castes are more like Asians. The researchers believe that the Indo-European speakers entered India from the Northwest, admixing with or displacing the proto-Dravidian speakers. Subsequently they may have established a caste system and placed themselves primarily in higher castes. The study concludes that the Indian castes "are most likely to be of proto-Asian origin with West Eurasian admixture resulting in rank-related and sex-specific
differences in the genetic affinities of castes to Asians and Europeans.". 23
Because the Indian samples for this study were taken from a single geographical area, it remains to be investigated whether its findings can be safely generalized. 24

A 2003 report by “T. Kivisild” et al. conclude that the "Indian tribal and caste populations derive largely from the same genetic heritage of Pleistocene Southern and western Asians and have received limited gene flow from external regions since the Holocene." These scientists conclude that their observation does not refute the existence of genetic footprints in India from central Asia, eastern Europe or elsewhere. The genetic influence is higher in northwest regions of India, than other parts. Further, such broad estimates, according to these scientists are preliminary, at best. It will take larger sample sizes, more populations, and increased molecular resolution to determine the impact of historic gene flows to India. 25

A 2006 genetic study by the National Institute of Biologicals in India, testing a sample of men from 32 tribal and 45 caste groups, concluded that the Indians have acquired very few genes from Indo-European speakers. 26 The conclusion of this study has been disputed by later studies. 27

According to a 2006 study by “Ismail Thanseem” et al. of Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (India) "the vast majority of the Indian maternal gene pool, consisting of Indo-European and Dravidian speakers, is genetically more or less uniform", while the invasions after the late
Pleistocene settlement might have been mostly male-mediated.\textsuperscript{28} The study concluded that the "lower caste groups might have originated with the hierarchical divisions that arose within the tribal groups with the spread of Neolithic agriculturalists, much earlier than the arrival of Aryan speakers", and "the Indo-Europeans established themselves as upper castes among this already developed caste-like class structure within the tribes." The study indicated that the Indian caste system may have its roots much before the arrival of the Indo-Aryan immigrants, a rudimentary version of the caste system may have emerged with the shift towards cultivation and settlements, and the divisions may have become more well-defined and intensified with the arrival of Indo-Aryans.\textsuperscript{29}

A 2009 article published in Nature finds strong evidence for at least two ancient populations in India, genetically divergent, that are ancestral to most Indians today. One, the Ancestral North Indians, who are genetically close to Middle Easterners, Central Asians, and Europeans, whereas the other, the Ancestral South Indians, who are genetically distinct from Ancestral North Indians and East Asians as they are from each other. The study observes that genetic markers suggest endogamy within population clusters was prevalent in various Indian kingdoms over time. The report includes a novel method to estimate ancestry without accurate ancestral populations. With this method, the scientists show that Ancestral North Indians ancestry ranges from 39–71% in most Indian groups, and is higher in traditionally upper caste
and Indo-European language speakers. Groups with only Ancestral South Indians ancestry may no longer exist in mainland India due to genetic pool mixing. However, the indigenous Andaman Islanders are unique in being Ancestral South Indians-related groups without Ancestral North Indians ancestry.  

A 2010 review claims that there are at least four population groups in diverse India. Other than Ancestral North Indians and Ancestral South Indians, the population consists of Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic and Andamanese genetic pools suggesting human beings migrated into India from Africa, Eurasia, Tibet and Southeast Asia. The review paper notes that studies so far were based on small sample sets for the diversity in India. With the availability of new genotyping technologies, future diversity studies encompassing a large number of populations, both tribals and castes, at the genome-wide level may help understand patterns of micro-evolution of populations in India. The caste system in India is possibly a complex intra-group and inter-group admixes of interactions between various population groups.

References of Caste System in Hindu scriptures

The most ancient scriptures - the Shruti texts, or Vedas, place very little importance on the caste system, mentioning caste only sparingly and descriptively (i.e., not prescriptive). Indeed, the only verse in the Rigveda
which mentions all four Varnas is 10.90, the Purushasukta. A hymn from the Rig Veda seems to indicate that one's caste is not necessarily determined by that of one's family:

*I am a bard, my father is a physician, my mother's job is to grind the corn.*

-Rig Veda 9.112.3

In the Vedic period, there also seems to have been no discrimination against the Shudras on the issue of hearing the sacred words of the Vedas and fully participating in all religious rituals, something which became progressively restricted in the later times.  

Later scriptures such as Bhagavad Gita and Manusmriti state that the four Varnas are created by God. However, at the same time, the Gita says that one's varna is to be understood from one's personal qualities and one's karma (work), not one's birth. The Indian society honoured people on their achievements irrespective of their caste. For instance, Valmiki, once a low-caste robber, became a great sage and author of the epic Ramayana. Veda Vyasa, another respected sage and author of the monumental epic, the Mahabharata, was the son of a fisherwoman.

“Manusmriti”, dated between 200 BCE and 100 AD, contains some laws that codified the caste system. The Manusmriti belongs to a class of books that are geared towards ethics, morals, and social conduct - not spirituality or
religion. In this text, the sage Manu explains that society is like the human body, where all body parts are required to function optimally in order to ensure the optimal function of society as a whole. He divided this metaphoric body into four main constituent parts: Head, Arms, Torso, Legs. The head of a body is required for thinking, planning, and decision making. Thus the metaphoric head of society (Brahmins) were also responsible for these things. The arms of a body are responsible for protection of the body. Thus the arms of society were the Kshatriyas who were responsible for protection of the society. The torso of the body is responsible for consumption, production, and to hold society together as a whole. Thus, the Vaishya class was likened to the torso and constituted of the peasants, farmers, merchants, etc. Finally, the legs of a body are what carry the entire body altogether without which the body can make no movement or progress. These legs are the hardest physically working part of the body. The Shudra class of laborers was likened to the legs and was responsible for most physical labor jobs.

**Historical Records about Caste System in India**

A historical record of ancient North Indian society is provided by the Greek Megasthenes, who, in his *Indika*, described the society as being made up of "seven castes" as follows:

"The whole population of India is divided into seven castes, of which the first is formed by the collective body of the Philosophers, which in point of
number is inferior to the other castes, but in point of dignity preeminent over all. For the philosophers, being exempted from all public duties, are neither the masters nor the servants of others. They are, however, engaged by private persons to offer the sacrifices due in lifetime, and to celebrate the obsequies of the dead: for they are believed to be most dear to the gods. In requital of such services they receive valuable gifts and privileges. To the people of India at large they also render great benefits, when, gathered together at the beginning of the year, they forewarn the assembled multitudes about droughts and wet weather, and also about propitious winds, and diseases, and other topics capable of profiting-the hearers. Thus the people and the sovereign, learning beforehand what is to happen, always make adequate provision against a coming deficiency, and never fail to prepare beforehand what will help in a time of need. The philosopher who errs in his predictions incurs no other penalty than obloquy, and he then observes silence for the rest of his life."

The other classes are also described by Arryan, in The Anabasis AlexAndhrae, Book VIII: Indica (2nd c. CE) relying on the account of Megasthenes.

"Then next to these come the farmers, these being the most numerous class of Indians, they have no use for warlike arms or warlike deeds, but they till the land, and they pay the taxes to the kings and to the cities, such as are
self-governing, and if there is internal war among the Indians, they may not touch these workers, and not even devastate the land itself, but some are making war and slaying all comers, and others close by are peacefully ploughing or gathering the fruits or shaking down apples or harvesting.

The third classes of Indians are the herdsmen, sheep and cattle pastoralists, and these dwell neither by cities nor in the villages. They are nomads and get their living on the hillsides, and they pay taxes from their animals, they hunt also birds and wild game in the country.

The fourth class is of artisans and shopkeepers, these are workers, and pay tribute from their works, save such as make weapons of war, these are paid by the community. In this class are the shipwrights and sailors, who navigate the rivers.

The fifth class of Indians is the soldiers’ class, next after the farmers in number, these have the greatest freedom and the most spirit. They practise military pursuits only. Their weapons others forge for them, and again others provide horses, others too serve in the camps, those who groom their horses and polish their weapons, guide the elephants, and keep in order and drive the chariots. They themselves, when there is need of war, go to war, but in time of peace they make merry, and they receive so much pay from the community that they can easily from their pay support others.
The sixth class of Indians are those called overseers. They oversee everything that goes on in the country or in the cities, and this they report to the king, where the Indians are governed by kings, or to the authorities, where they are independent. To these it is illegal to make any false report, nor was any Indian ever accused of such falsification.

The seventh class is those who deliberate about the community together with the king, or, in such cities as are self-governing, with the authorities. In number this class is small, but in wisdom and uprightness it bears the palm from all others, from this class are selected their governors, district governors and deputies, custodians of the treasures, officers of army and navy, financial officers and overseers of agricultural works.

The same man may not practise two pursuits, nor change from one class into another, as to turn farmer from shepherd, or shepherd from artisan. It is only permitted to join the wise men out of any class, for their business is not an easy one, but of all most laborious."

**Evolution of Rigid Caste Structures in India**

Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to ChAndhragupta Maurya's court in India classified people of India into seven classes: philosophers, peasants, herdsmen, craftsmen and traders, soldiers, government officials and councilors.
In its later stages, the caste system is said to have become rigid, and caste began to be inherited rather than acquired by merit. In the past, members of different castes would not partake in various activities, such as dining and religious gatherings, together. In addition, the performance of religious rites and rituals were restricted to Brahmans, who were the designated priesthood. The "Pandaram" priests are an example of an order of priests, based in Nepal and South India. The Pandaram maintain the same tradition as the Brahmin priests, including the use of the Sanskrit language (traditionally reserved for the Brahmans) for the rituals. While they are not generally as well trained as the Brahmin priests, they are highly respected within their community and are addressed with reverence.

According to the Manusmriti, every caste belongs to one of the four Varnas (Brahmin, Kshtriya, Vaishya, and Shudra). However, there have been many disputes about the Varna of many castes, such as castes being considered Kshatriya by some scholars, while described as Shudra by others. While texts such as the Manusmriti attempted to rationalize ambiguous castes by placing them in Varna-sankaras (i.e. mixed Varna), the fact remains that Indian society was, and is, composed of numerous geographically diversified but endogamous groups. With many occupational groups practicing endogamy within a particular region, as well as numerous sub-divisions within the four main castes, a more complex system of subcastes and jātis is evident. The jatis have broken up into clans like Agarwal, Iyer, etc.
Mobility across the Castes

The view of the caste system as "static and unchanging" has been disputed by many scholars. For instance, sociologists such as “Bernard Buber” and “Marriott McKim” describe how the perception of the caste system as a static and textual stratification has given way to the perception of the caste system as a more processual, empirical and contextual stratification. Other sociologists such as “Y.B Damle” have applied theoretical models to explain mobility and flexibility in the caste system in India. According to these scholars, groups of lower-caste individuals could seek to elevate the status of their caste by attempting to emulate the practices of higher castes.

Some scholars believe that the relative ranking of other castes was fluid or differed from one place to another prior to the arrival of the British.

The distinctions, particularly between the Brahmanas and the other castes, were in theory sharper, but in practice it now appears that social restrictions were not so rigid. Brahmanas often lived off the land and founded dynasties. Most of the groups claiming Kshatriya status had only recently acquired it. The conscious reference to being Kshatriya, a characteristic among Rajputs, is a noticeable feature in post-Gupta politics. The fact that many of these dynasties were of obscure origin suggests some social mobility: a person of any caste, having once acquired political power, could also acquire a genealogy connecting him with the traditional lineages and
conferring Kshatriya status. A number of new castes, such as the Kayasthas (scribes) and Khatris (traders), are mentioned in the sources of this period. According to the Brahmanaic sources, they originated from intercaste marriages, but this is clearly an attempt at rationalizing their rank in the hierarchy. Many of these new castes played a major role in society. The hierarchy of castes did not have a uniform distribution throughout the country.\textsuperscript{40}

Flexibility in caste laws permitted very low-caste religious clerics such as Valmiki to compose the \textit{Ramayana}, which became a central work of Hindu scripture.

According to some psychologists, mobility across broad caste lines may have been "minimal", though sub-castes (jatis) may change their social status over the generations by fission, re-location, and adoption of new rituals.\textsuperscript{41}

Sociologist “M. N. Srinivas” has also debated the question of rigidity in Caste. In an ethnographic study of the Coorgs of Karnataka, he observed considerable flexibility and mobility in their caste hierarchies.\textsuperscript{42} He asserts that the caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially in the middle regions of the hierarchy. It was always possible for groups born into a lower caste to "rise to a higher position by adopting Vegetarianism and teetotalism" i.e. adopt the customs of the higher castes.
While theoretically "forbidden", the process was not uncommon in practice. The concept of sanskritization, or the adoption of upper-caste norms by the lower castes, addressed the actual complexity and fluidity of caste relations.

Historical examples of mobility in the Indian Caste System among Hindus have been researched. There is also precedent of certain Shudra families within the temples of the Shrivaishnava sect in South India elevating their caste.43

**Historical Advantages of the Caste System**

Historically, the caste system offered several advantages to the population of the Indian subcontinent. While Caste is nowadays seen by instances that render it anachronistic, in its original form the caste system served as an important instrument of order in a society in which mutual consent rather than compulsion ruled, where the ritual rights as well as the economic obligations of members of one caste or sub-caste were strictly circumscribed in relation to those of any other caste or sub-caste, where one was born into one's caste and retained one's station in society for life, where merit was inherited, where equality existed within the caste, but inter-caste relations were unequal and hierarchical. A well-defined system of mutual interdependence through a division of labour created security within a community.44
1. Preservation of order in society through the use of institutional stratification of social groups.\textsuperscript{45}

2. Integration of foreigners and invading forces into Indian culture by assigning a caste to them (a process that India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru referred to as "Indianization" \textsuperscript{46}): India has faced repeated invasions from outside the region, dating back to the Macedonian invasion by Alexander the Great. Most invaders were swiftly assimilated into ancient Indian society by assigning them specific castes. Examples include the Kambojas, believed to be of Indo-Scythian descent, who were retroactively assigned a social position in the Manusmriti.

3. The Varna system, with its normative interpretation as a division of labor, had and continues to have a heavy bias towards spiritual evolution. The deep religious proclivities and the urge for spiritual uplift had induced the people to search for simpler and effective ways to achieve the spiritual goal which led to innovations like the Bhakti movement which had a powerful impact on the socio-cultural-spiritual life of the people even at mass level without distinctions of caste or class or other social differences. It is these deeply run cultural roots which caused an abiding following for Hinduism even in the face of unrelenting assaults by other religions and had in fact continued to
influence the lives of people even after their conversion to other faiths. Thus, the caste system can be said to have preserved ancient cultural values in Indian society.

4. The caste system played an influential role in shaping economic activities. The caste system functioned much like medieval European guilds, ensuring the division of labour, providing for the training of apprentices and, in some cases, allowing manufacturers to achieve narrow specialisation. For instance, in certain regions, producing each variety of cloth was the speciality of a particular sub-caste.

5. Philosophers argue that the majority of people would be comfortable in stratified endogamous groups and have been in ancient times. Membership in a particular caste, with its associated narrative, history and genealogy would instill in its members a sense of group accomplishment and cultural pride. Such sentiments are routinely expressed by the Marathas, for instance.

Caste System During British rule

The caste system had been a fascination of the British since their arrival in India. Coming from a society that was divided by class, the British attempted to equate the caste system to the class system. As late as 1937 “Professor T. C. Hodson” stated that, "Class and caste” stand to each other in
the relation of family to species. The general classification is by classes, the
detailed one by castes. The former represents the external, the latter the
internal view of the social organization." The difficulty with definitions such as
this is that class is based on political and economic factors, caste is not. In
fairness to Professor Hodson, by the time of his writing, caste had taken on
many of the characteristics that he ascribed to it and that his predecessors
had ascribed to it but during the 19th century caste was not what the British
believed it to be. It did not constitute a rigid description of the occupation and
social level of a given group and it did not bear any real resemblance to the
class system. However, this will be dealt with later in this essay. At present,
the main concern is that the British saw caste as a way to deal with a huge
population by breaking it down into discrete chunks with specific
characteristics. Moreover, as will be seen later in this paper, it appears that
the caste system extant in the late 19th and early 20th century has been
altered as a result of British actions so that it increasingly took on the
characteristics that were ascribed to it by the British.  

One of the main tools used in the British attempt to understand the
Indian population was the census. Attempts were made as early as the
beginning of the 19th century to estimate populations in various regions of the
country but these, as earlier noted, were methodologically flawed and led to
grossly erroneous conclusions. It was not until 1872 that a planned
comprehensive census was attempted. This was done under the direction of
“Henry Beverely”, Inspector General of Registration in Bengal. The primary purpose given for the taking of the census that of governmental preparedness to deal with disaster situations, was both laudable and logical. However, the census went well beyond counting heads or even enquiring into sex ratios or general living conditions. Among the many questions were enquiries regarding nationality, race, tribe, religion and caste. Certainly none of these things were relevant to emergency measures responses by the government. Further, neither the notion of curiosity nor planned subterfuge on the part of the administration suffices to explain their inclusion in the census. On the question of race or nationality it could be argued that these figures were needed to allow analyses of the various areas in an attempt to predict internal unrest. However, there does not appear to have been any use made of the figures from that perspective. With regard to the information on religion and caste, the same claim could be made but once again there does not appear to have been any analyses done with the thought of internal disturbance in mind. Obviously there had to be some purpose to the gathering of this data since due to the size of both the population and the territory to be covered, extraneous questions would not have been included due to time factors. Therefore, there must have been a reason of some sort for their inclusion. That reason was, quite simply, the British belief that caste was the key to understanding the people of India. Caste was seen as the essence of Indian society, the system through which it was possible to classify all of the various
groups of indigenous people according to their ability, as reflected by caste, to be of service to the British.\textsuperscript{50}

Caste was seen as an indicator of occupation, social standing, and intellectual ability. It was, therefore necessary to include it in the census if the census was to serve the purpose of giving the government the information it needed in order to make optimum use of the people under its administration. Moreover, it becomes obvious that British conceptions of racial purity were interwoven with these judgments of people based on caste when reactions to censuses are examined. Beverly concluded that a group of Muslims were in fact converted low caste Hindus. This raised howls of protest from representatives of the group as late as 1895 since it was felt that this was a slander and a lie. H. H. Risely, Commissioner of the 1901 census, also showed British beliefs in an 1886 publication which stated that race sentiment, far from being:\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{quote}
"a figment of the intolerant pride of the Brahmana, rests upon a foundation of fact which scientific methods confirm, that it has shaped the intricate grouping of the caste system, and has preserved the Aryan type in comparative purity throughout Northern India."
\end{quote}

Here is a prime example of the racial purity theories that had been developing throughout the 19th century. Here also is the plainest explanation for the inclusion of the questions on race, caste and religion being included
with the censuses. Thus far this essay has dwelt almost entirely with British actions to the exclusion of any mention of Indian actions and reactions. This should not be taken to mean that the Indians were passive or without input into the process. Any change within a society requires the participation of all the groups if it is to have any lasting effect. The Indian people had a very profound effect on the formulation of the census and their analysis. However, Indian actions and reaction must be considered within the context of Indian history and Indian culture in the same way that British actions must be considered within British cultural context. For this reason, it has been necessary to postpone consideration of Indian reactions and contributions to the British activities until the next section of this essay which will then be followed by a more in depth examination of the development of British attitudes. Finally, the results of the combination of both Indian and British beliefs will be examined with a view to reaching a consensus on how they affected the compilation of and conclusions reached through the censuses.\textsuperscript{52}

The word caste is not a word that is indigenous to India. It originates in the Portuguese word casta which means race, breed, race or lineage. However, during the 19th century, the term caste increasingly took on the connotations of the word race. Thus, from the very beginning of western contact with the subcontinent European constructions have been imposed on Indian systems and institutions.\textsuperscript{53}
To fully appreciate the caste system one must step away from the definitions imposed by Europeans and look at the system as a whole, including the religious beliefs that are an integral part of it. To the British, viewing the caste system from the outside and on a very superficial level, it appeared to be a static system of social ordering that allowed the ruling class or Brahmins, to maintain their power over the other classes. What the British failed to realize was that Hindus existed in a different cosmological frame than did the British. The concern of the true Hindu was not his ranking economically within society but rather his ability to regenerate on a higher plane of existence during each successive life.\textsuperscript{54}

**Reform Movements for Eradication of Caste System**

There have been cases of upper caste Hindus warming to the Dalits and Hindu priests, demoted to outcaste ranks, who continued practising the religion. An example of the latter was “Dnyaneshwar”, who was excommunicated from society in the 13th century, but continued to compose the Dnyaneshwari, a Dharmic commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. Other excommunicated Brahmins, such as “Eknath”, fought for the rights of untouchables during the Bhakti period. Historical examples of Dalit priests include Chokhamela in the 14th century, who was India’s first recorded Dalit poet, “Raidas”, born into Dalit cobblers, and others. The 15th century saint “Ramananda” also accepted all castes, including untouchables, into his fold.
Most of these saints subscribed to the Bhakti movements in Hinduism during the medieval period that rejected casteism. Nandanar, a low-caste Hindu cleric, also rejected casteism and accepted Dalits.\textsuperscript{55}

Many movements in Hinduism have welcomed Dalits into their fold, the foremost being the Bhakti movements of the medieval period. Early Dalit politics involved many Hindu reform movements which arose primarily as a reaction to the tactics of Christian Missionaries in India and their attempts to mass-convert Dalits to Christianity under the allure of escaping the caste system (unfortunately, there is Caste system among Indian Christians among large sections of Indian Christians).\textsuperscript{56}

In the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the Brahmo Samaj under “Raja Ram Mohan Roy”, actively campaigned against untouchability. The Arya Samaj founded by “Swami Dayanand” also renounced discrimination against Dalits. “Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa” founded the Ramakrishna Mission that participated in the emancipation of Dalits. Upper caste Hindus, such as “Mannathu Padmanabhan” also participated in movements to abolish Untouchability against Dalits, opening his family temple for Dalits to worship. While there always have been places for Dalits to worship, the first "upper-caste" temple to openly welcome Dalits into their fold was the Laxminarayan Temple in Wardha in the year 1928 (the move was spearheaded by reformer Jamnalal Bajaj). Also, the Satnami movement was founded by “Guru
Ghasidas”, a Dalit himself. Other reformers, such as “Mahatma Jyotirao Phule” also worked for the emancipation of Dalits. Another example of Dalit emancipation was the Temple Entry Proclamation issued by the last Maharaja of Travancore in the Indian state of Kerala in the year 1936. The Maharaja proclaimed that "outcastes should not be denied the consolations and the solace of the Hindu faith". Even today, the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple that first welcomed Dalits in the state of Kerala is revered by the Dalit Hindu community. The 1930s saw key struggles between Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar, most notably over whether Dalits would have separate electorates or joint electorates with reserved seats. The Indian National Congress was the only national organisation with a large Dalit following, but Gandhi failed to gain their commitment. “Ambedkar”, a Dalit himself, developed a deeper analysis of Untouchability, but lacked a workable political strategy: his conversion to Buddhism in 1956, along with millions of followers, highlighted the failure of his political endeavours. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, based on his own relationship with Dalit reformer Ambedkar, also spread information about the dire need to eradicate untouchability for the benefit of the Dalit community.

In more contemporary times, India has had an elected Dalit president, K. R. Narayanan, who has stated that he was well-treated in his community of largely upper-caste Hindus (24 July 2002). Another popular Harijan includes Babaji Palwankar Baloo, who joined the Hindu Mahasabha and was
both a politician and a cricketer. He was an independence fighter. In addition, other Hindu groups have reached out to the Dalit community in an effort to reconcile with them, with productive results. On August 2006, Dalit activist Namdeo Dhasal engaged in dialogue with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in an attempt to "bury the hatchet".\textsuperscript{59}

Also, the "Pandaram" are an order of Dravidian Tamil Hindu priests (a task traditionally reserved for the Brahmins) based largely in Nepal and parts of South India.\textsuperscript{60} These Pandaram priests maintain the same tradition as the Brahmin priests, including using Sanskrit for the rituals. They perform religious ceremonies from weddings to death rituals. They are highly respected within the tamil community and are addressed reverentially.\textsuperscript{61} Also, Hindu temples are increasingly more receptive to Dalit priests, such as Suryavanshi Das, the Dalit priest of a notable temple in the midst of Patna, the capital of Bihar.\textsuperscript{62}

Discrimination against Hindu Dalits is on a slow but steady decline. The results of Bhakti Movements are clearly visible. Numerous Hindu Dalits have achieved affluence in society, although vast still remain poor irrespective of caste. In urban India, discrimination against Dalits is largely disappeared, but rural Dalits are struggling to elevate themselves. Government organizations and NGO's work to emancipate them from discrimination, and many Hindu organizations have spoken in their favor.\textsuperscript{63}
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