Caste system

Introduction

In India we come across a special type of social stratification in the form of caste. Although evidence of caste are found in many parts of the world as among the present-day the most perfect instances is that which exists in India. The word 'caste' owes its origin to the Spanish word 'casta' which means bread, race, strain or a complex of hereditary qualities.

Herbert Risley has defined caste as a collection of families or group of families, bearing name; claiming of common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling and regarded by those who are competing to give an opinion as forming a single homogenous community.

According to **George Lundberg,** caste is merely a rigid social class into which members are born and from which they can withdraw escape only with extreme difficulty. It is the type of stratification system which is most rigid in mobility and status.

Henry Maine says that caste started as natural division of occupational classes and eventually upon receiving the religious sanction, became solidified into the existing caste system. The caste system comes into being when it becomes an integral part of religious dogma which divides people into superior inferior groups with different responsibilities, functions and standards of living.

According to **Green,** caste is a system of stratification in which mobility, up-and-down the status ladder, at least ideally, may not Occur.

According to **Anderson and Parker,** caste is that extreme form of social class organisation in which the position of individuals in the status hierarchy is determined by descent and birth. Whereas **William** says that caste is a system in which an individual's rank and its accompanying rights and obligations are ascribed on the basis of birth into a particular group.

Various thinkers have defined redefined the term caste in several ways but Ghurye says that even with all the labour of the students, however, we do not possess a real general definition of caste.

Not just identity but caste also comes from birth and lasts till death. Early scholars equated caste with race in India. The colonial rulers followed diversified perspective to study caste e.g. ritual, occupation, promotion of race etc. Travelers and missionaries observed India through the eyes of caste. Early studies were not driven by empirical data.

Various theories which have been put forward to the study of caste in India like Varna theory, occupational theory, race theory, ritual theory, Commensality theory.

Varna theory: it derives data from Hindu texts. It says that Varna and and cast are complementary to each other which a person inherits right from his birth. The term Varna means colour. In religious texts, the concept of Varna is used for grading people. These Varnas are Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudras.

Occupation theory: it has two types, the first one says that people get their names in terms of their occupation e.g. Lohar, sonar whereas in the second group people get their names not according to their caste or occupation (neutral identity) e.g. Jats as they go for diversified occupation.

Race theory: it says that there were two types of races i.e. Aryans and Dasus. The indigenous group of Dasus were defeated by the Aryans. Aryans being a superior race was not willing to give equal status to Dasus. But later on intermarriages to place which led to creation of different colour groups and this gave rise to different identity groups. Now they are different racial categories e.g. difference based on colour, difference based occupation difference based on temperament.

Ritual theory: In a Theosophical, moralist, ritualistic society people go for different rituals for different purpose and out of which they gained their identity. E.g. Kshatriya perform the ritual at warfront. Rituals for common welfare of people is performed by people belonging to superior status e.g. Brahmins.

Commensality theory: people living in particular area develop interaction with their kiths and kins. They go for a specific kind of occupation and food and they worship to their common great ancestors correspondingly. They carry their names and the names that they carry in one area is not taken by other people belonging to different area e.g. Reddys, Bhumiars, Caste is a product of commensality.

When British were studying Indian society they were trying to differentiate between caste system in terms of race. Caste in India is nothing but application of the concept of race in the West.

MN Srinivas on caste

Western scholars looked at India from a holistic perspective i.e. only focused present in India. But empirically it's not true because we can't hold the view that all over India only few caste exist. "Varna and Jati "is the first article written by Srinivas through which we can understand his views on caste. Srinivas says that Varna and caste share dynamic relationship and one cannot say Varna is absolutely different from caste. Srinivas says that it is a fallacious statement that "caste is inclusive in the Varna system". He writes

that caste is inclusive and Varna but not all caste groups are included within it. Caste is different from Varna and one is in conflict with other. Varna says only for groups of people exist in India whereas in caste system there are many groups present.

Every caste group is trying to gain upward mobility they link themselves to Varna system but if one only studies Varna system he could not know and understand the different groups present in Indian society. In every linguistic division there are 200 – 300 caste groups present. Hence their are almost 12,000 groups present in India while on the other hand there is only 4 Varna system is in India. Hence it gives a limited view of the Indian society. It only gives half image rather than showing a full image. Press caste gives a realistic and holistic approach (empirical view).

Varna considers Shudras as unified groups but caste system tells that we have different kinds of Shudras. Varna system indicate that Kshatriyas are also unified group which is not true. If we look into caste system we find out that in the middle hierarchy of caste dynamism and mobility is taking place continuously e.g. Chauhan Rajputs were salt makers. VM Panikar says that since the 5th century BC no Kshatriya is present because those who were Kshatriya evaluated/converted to Brahminic status.

Elements of caste are diffusing from one area to another. Varna provides distorted image about India and researchers must have to keep themselves free from Varna biasness to understand Indian society. Varna provides a simplistic model to a lay man and who never understands complexities of caste. Varna makes caste system sustainable in India and is equally useful for aspiring caste groups going for mobilisation. Both Varna and caste are useful tools in the hands of sociologist to understand the dynamics and mobilisation in Indian society. Varna provides an ideological framework of reference to understand the economic identity and reality of caste.

Srinivas on mobility in caste system

Prior to Srinivas it was perceived that caste is hierarchical determined by one's birth and every caste is entitled to go for specific rules of marriage, rituals, food behaviour and forms of worship that was unchallengeable. Colonial rulers, and to a large extent GS Ghurye develop the holistic image about caste and Srinivas wanted to liberate sociology of India from this ideological bondage. In his book "caste in modern India and social change in India" he has made an attempt to explain the dynamic nature of caste emphasising on caste mobility.

When they think about caste we're reminded of the concept of purity and pollution. Unlike his predecessor Srinivas gave importance to pollution.

He states that:

- pollution forbids an individual to undertake his daily routine activities,
- pollution makes distinction between man and God,
- pollution is contagious but the purity is non-transferable,
- finally pollution glorifies the distinction within the caste and between the caste.

There was significance of pollution and how pollution leads to separation and how people make attempt to get rid of pollution are the instruments through which one can understand the dynamic nature of caste in India. He considers that caste mobility is not just contemporary, since historic times different groups of people have made attempts for caste mobility. However, this caste mobility has passed through three different stages:

- search for ritual mobility,
- secular mobility is used as a medium for ritual mobility,
- secular mobility is considered as an end in itself.

These three phases of mobility is speaking about dynamism of caste systems throughout Indian history. Speaking about first phase of mobility he indicated some non-Brahmins of South India migrated to Tirumala Hills started operating as priest there and subsequently became Brahmins. Vaishnos of Bengal were originally Shudras who under the influence of Bhakti teachings of Chaitanya's, Sanskritised themselves and successfully obtained Brahminic status. He also noticed that Buddhism, Jainism and bhakti movement successfully offered platform to the people to buy Sanskritic values and way of life.

He concludes that Brahminic exclusivity has been questioned, challenged and adopted throughout Indian history therefore it would be difficult to comprehend that caste is a static institution as presumed by Indologists and colonial scholars.

During Mughal period and subsequently during the time of British rule caste mobility was greatly accelerated. Nairs of Kerala ,Kayasthas of Bihar, Rashi Brahmins of Bengal were patronising Mughal rulers as a result they got enormous access to wealth and power and subsequently used their secular credentials for ritual modification. He collected empirical data from different parts of the country and finds out that several castes have successfully gone for ritual mobility using their secular potentials. He realised that jati campaign has improved the caste status of Bhumiars of Bihar, generosity has improved the social position of Lingayats. He finds out that King's grace, migration and cross-cultural contact has considerably improved the social status of Yadav, Kurmis and Jats.

Looking into this form of mobility present in different parts of the country he developed the theory of Sanskritisation. His theory was tested by S Sidhu, MS Rao, William Weiser and all the studies

indicated how in different parts of the country, caste mobility is culturally being experienced. And Srinivas looks at caste mobility, experience in different parts of the country. He finds out that attempt for mobility has given way to intra-caste conflict in different pockets of the country.

He concludes by saying that attempt for caste mobility challenged by protest, resistance and at times conflict therefore caste mobility unlike class mobility is not necessarily a smooth affair. Despite mobility, in certain pockets of the country traditional form of domination of Brahmin priest is still present although lower castes have been able to achieve the status of Rajputs.

The study of Rampur, a village gives out the fact that multiple forms of domination makes appearance e.g. Jats dominate economic sphere, Brahmins dominate ritual sphere, Rajputs dominate political sphere. This empirical study on caste indicates that:

- attempt for class mobility is making caste consciousness stronger,
- social distance among various caste groups is becoming fluid,
- inter-caste and intra-caste conflicts are accelerated,
- consolidation of caste is becoming stronger and impact of caste mobility is not universally same all over the country.

Srinivas concludes that caste systems in India is undergoing through a series of transformation but contradicting to Yogendra Singh he indicates that caste is not replaced by class in India but traditional caste hierarchy also is not persistent in hierarchical form as spelt out by Indologists and colonialist scholars. Caste is responding to the current of social change in contemporary India therefore more caste is becoming weaker more it is becoming stronger.

Future of caste in modern India

Srinivas explains the future of caste in his book "Dominant Caste" and "20th century: New Avtar Of Caste". In this book he looks into caste consolidation in modern India after 1970. He noticed that in different parts of the country under the impact of Panchayati Raj system, Zamindari abolition act, green revolution, cooperative movement a large body of non-Brahmins and non-Untouchables caste group have evolved in a big way identifying themselves as dominant caste. Dominant caste is enormously dominant in political economic sphere. Their traditional status was moderate therefore they can be considered as 'emergent Shudras' who are no longer interested in Sanskritisation and rather focus their attention on secularisation .

Lingayats and Vokalingayats of Karnataka, Reddy's in Andhra Pradesh, Yadav's in UP, Bhumiar's in Bihar have gone for modern education, urban living, rural development programmes and glorifying past consciousness and highlighting the historic cultural definition intended to capture state power. These dominant caste either evolved to their own political parties or are joining major political parties of the country. These

dominant castes are identified as OBC who were highly numerous, greatly organised and determining that destiny of Indian politics today. They are instrumental in dominating public sphere of Indian social life also. This theory is further expanded by Ghanshyam Shah who claims that the rise of dominant caste is the story of power politics indicating that caste operates in contemporary India as a reservoir of power and caste leaders are emerging as power exerciser.

Therefore caste is as important to contemporary India as it was important historically but the only difference is that the ritual role of caste is replaced by the secular role in Indian society today. Hence **caste-India** is not replaced by **class-India**. People in India use their caste and class identity both in combination and separation for different purposes at different points of time.

In his book "20th century – The New Avtar Of Caste" Srinivas is worried that different segments of backward caste like Dalits and OBCs came together in 1990s standing opposite to dominant caste having control over political power. He says that this type of political migration is largely driven by ideology and if this ideological consolation sustains itself in India then there is a possibility of castlessness in political domain. Unfortunately this political honeymoon broke down within a year and one segment of the backward caste joined hands with other higher caste dominated by the party in power thereby compromising their ideology, cultural past and giving more importance to their struggle for power domination. Hence interest-based politics, vote bank politics glorified the emerging secular role of caste. Thus caste is not dead under the influence of modernity rather modernity is making caste consciousness profound and stronger therefore in conclusion he advocated that caste is a federal organisation responding to internal and external compulsions in diverse ways without losing its essentialities and so past was as caste centric as present is and imagining India without caste may be a constitutional vision but not an empirical reality.

Therefore caste never makes people, but people may caste. They call for support of caste for different reasons and at different points of time. Hence caste is taking new incarnations in time and space rather than disappearing from social, political, ideological and economic sphere of life in Indian society.

Louis Dumont – Centrality To The Understanding Of Caste

Louis Dumont came to India in 1968 with the objective of studying caste. He wrote the book "Homo Hierarchies". Dumont was influenced by structural theory of Levy Strauss wherein he said that Western theoretical model was not applicable to India. When Western scholars came to India they had preconceived orientation and ideology though intensity differs from one society to another. To understand this continuous, prominent structure of inequality he came to India. He said that Indologists studies caste from textual orientation where a structural functionalist studies it from contextual perspective (MN Srinivas) but as a matter of fact text and context cannot be separated. Text – what people must do; context says that what people are doing.

Dumont believed that values are not absolutely changing as they are the cemented property of culture and that values are held in differential content by the individuals. He believed that one should have a sociology for India coming out of people themselves. Caste is a universal phenomena in case of India and caste should be studied from Indian perspective. He believed that caste is a synthesis between text and context. Louis Dumont alleged that the structuralists do not study the whole reality and keep their focus of study on specific reality. He takes into consideration the writings of French and German scholars e.g. Emily Durkheim, Hegel, Immanuel Kant and Marcell Mauss.

He said that caste is all pervasive institution present in Indian society since historic times and talks about;

- occupational specialisation (DoL),
- exclusivity of Brahminic position,
- social differences among different caste.

Occupational Specialisation: caste cannot change occupation because of the fact that they are committed to cultural tradition. Values do not permit them to go for any other type of occupation. Division of labour in case of caste is driven by cultural prescription rather than by economic logic. If they look at caste, every caste is maintaining social difference from the other caste. How this social distance is appropriated between two castes is subject to evaluation.

Dumont claimed that every caste is evolving its position in the hierarchical system in relation to proximity/distance from the position of Brahmins i.e. Brahmins have become a reference group. He talks about Hindu ideology and writes that things, beings, phenomena are part of two world i.e. Purity And Pollution e.g. things – Ganga water; being – people and animal; phenomena – Sanskrit knowledge as a symbol of purity. Therefore according to him purity and pollution are the ideas which guide People's action in India.

Dumont uses ethano-sociological approach to caste. His sociology was primarily concerned with the ideology of the caste system. His understanding of the caste lays emphasis on attributes of purity and pollution. For caste is a set of relationship of economic, political and kinship systems which is sustained by certain values which are most religious in nature. He says that caste is not a form of stratification and a special form of inequality whose essence has to be deciphered by sociologist. He Identified hierarchy as the essential value underlying the caste system supported by Hinduism. He calls caste system is a system of ideas and values which is a formal ,comprehensible and a rational system. His analysis is based on a single principle – the opposition of pure and impure for which he has been heavily criticised. He focused on the need to understand the ideology of caste as reflected in the classical texts, historical examples etc. He advocated the use of both Indological and structuralists approach to the study of caste system and village social structure in India.

He points out that caste is not going to die out because caste is a product of consciousness therefore caste was present in the past, is present today, and will be present in the future. He writes that Brahmins live in the world of dignity, status and respect which is undiluted and other groups through mobilisation opting class hierarchy but not caste hierarchy.

He also points out that division of labour is more driven by cultural values than by economic necessities. No big shift has taken place in Brahmins habits and culture because the belief that giving something material and receiving something spiritual even today makes man's life happy; therefore people never question Brahminic supremacy.

Criticism of Louis Dumont

Empirical evidences suggest that in many parts of the country Rajas were instrumental in promoting lower caste into the position of higher castes. Brahmins in ancient times were living under the patronage of the kings who were given political protection and revenue free lands, unfortunately Louis Dumont's sociology never pays any attention to the politics of caste as it was over committed to the cultural aspect of caste.

Louis Dumont's theory has been considered as stereotype, stiff and culture bound. He speaks in the tone Brahmins therefore his book "New Munusmriti" is engaged in celebrating Brahminic exclusivity. Purity – pollution dichotomy is a book view glorified by Louis Dumont that does not exist in a big way in empirical India. Caste is not a system of ideology but a form of hierarchical practice driven by the principles of domination and subordination, privileges and discrimination, security and anxiety and it's not a product of

dichotomy between pollution and purity identically understood by every section of the society therefore Dumont's views on caste is said to be speculative, imaginative and culturally loaded and hence unacceptable.

Jonathan Perry indicate that ritualistic and moral standard of individual can be determined by both hereditary and achievement. Dumont's sociology is more committed to ritual merits of Brahmin procured through their birth, however there are Saints, Sadhus who command more respect than Brahmins which Dumont fails to understand. Therefore in India multiple ritual hierarchy is present indicating that Indian society is more dynamic that cannot be studied by Brahminic centric structure theory of caste glorified by Dumont. Dumont offered an ideal view of caste identical to Manu Smriti because it never explains what Indian society ought to be.

Andre Beteille in his study finds out that different caste groups of Brahmins put clothes differently, in different measures, use symbols differently, worship to different deities and they are also engaged interpersonal conflict with each other. Therefore imagining Brahmin as a unified group living in the world of purity and commanding respect from everybody is nice to hear but difficult to witness in empirical context.

Dipankar Gupta finds out non-Brahminic reaction is not driven by respect e.g. Jats of Western Uttar Pradesh consider Brahmins as greedy and their very presence in the village is considered inauspicious. This is contradictory to Dumont's theory of caste where Brahmins are looked upon by the lower caste people because they command respect and also because people they are guided by Hindu values. Many sociologists doing empirical study have come with the fact that in many situations lower caste people do not accept the cultural superiority of Brahmin and that Sanskritisation among them is not out of respect for Brahmin but is a form of protest for their victimisation since historical times.

Criticism by Andre Beteille

Beteille says that Dumont calls European society as 'Homoequalis' and Indian society as 'Homohierarchicus'. He's only reflexive about Brahminic domination present in India. Brahminic domination is not totally absent in European society also (Pope domination). Hierarchy persists in India but it is a multiple hierarchy but Dumont fails to understand this. Beteille says that hierarchy is going to stay in India but it will not only be based upon caste grounds but also upon one's access to wealth, power, education and that will determine the position of an individual with respect to society.

Dumont is concerned only about one hierarchy i.e. caste hierarchy, he provides romantic vision of India therefore one should liberate himself from Dumont's ideology to have a comprehensive understanding of different kinds of hierarchy present in Indian social system. For example Beteille talks about reproduction of family and occupation in contemporary India. Indicates that family wealth is transmitted from one generation

to another leading to poverty. There is also reproduction of occupation wherein cinema actresses children, civil servants children, proffessors children are going for their parental occupation thus the linkage between family and occupation and the transmission of wealth from one generation to another is bringing forward new forms of inequality.

If the subject matter of Indian sociology is to study the possibilities of inequalities, their outcomes, context and conflict than the sociologists must have to liberate themselves from the shackles of caste. Caste is no longer driven by customary rules strongly followed by people therefore the shadow of caste may appear in some spheres of life but the traditional role of caste is mostly and unfound.

Nationalists made an attempt to unite people irrespective of their caste and cultural differences. Arya Samaj, Nationalist Movement, Gandhian reforms all provided a self confidence in the minds of the people to ask for Justice. Dumont's Sociology don't mention any such type of change;which did not value Brahminic supremacy with respect but on the contrary tried to empower people (especially people belonging to lower cast and Dalits) and weaken the hierarchical system of caste.

In conclusion, it can be advocated that Dumont's theory of caste may not be acceptable because it sounds to greatly Brahminic, culture bound and textual. But despite these limitations it is Dumont's whose study introduced an intellectual revolution in the field of sociology. Stereotype understanding of caste went into the state of oblivion. Ethno-sociological matter was introduced into Indian sociology and Dumont offered a ready-made answers to persistence of caste telling his readers that caste is a product of consciousness . It is a child of Hindu ideology hence it will never change through the introduction of new public policy therefore to kill caste system in India one has to get away from its bondage with Hindu cultural consciousness.

Andre Beteille on caste

Andre Beteille found out that multiple forms of inequality are present in the village and applying weberian model of class and status he analysed the system of stratification in India. His understanding of caste is highly reflexive, critical and distinctive. Unlike his predecessors he doesn't study caste as an end in itself. He wrote that we have devoted too much of time writing on caste, but caste in India can share long linkage and so India cannot be studied only from the standpoint of caste only.

His concern was that Ghurye, DP Mukherjee and Srinivas studied social inequality in India from caste perspective indicating that other forms of inequalities are produced and reproduced only by caste. Beteille writes that in case of Bhadrolok in Bengal, in case of Bangerposhi in Bihar, in case Asrafins in Gujarat, are highly respectable people not coming from any particular caste rather they are considered gentleman with excellence, endowed with knowledge, judicial attributes, and thus highly respected by people at large.

He considers that in Indian society **multiple hierarchies were present** in traditional context driven by caste, personal attributes, status, power, education and so on. He indicated that Indian sociology must have to liberate itself from caste biasness. Sociology must have to pay attention to social change to examine how different forms of hierarchical gradations are encountering different socio-cultural and economic processes (socio – social movements; economic – development policies, industrialisation and modernity) and witnessing a series of transformation.

He makes a distinction between the book view of India and field view of India indicating that field view is highly mechanical and book view highly stereotypical therefore Indian sociology must have to strike a balance between the both.

Beteille's understanding of caste can be broadly explained under four distinctive head:

- his microscopic understanding of caste;
- his understanding of changing nature of caste;
- his reaction to Louis Dumont's understanding of caste;
- his contemporary observation of caste in relation to class, race and power and a reaffirmation of caste in public sphere of India (social reproduction and cultural production of caste).

Microscopic understanding of caste: Beteille's writes that his first encounter with the caste started with his exposure to maternal grandmother's behaviour that was purely Brahminic, Sanskritic. His exposure to caste was realised through his field experience at Siripuram village of Tanjore district of Tamil Nadu. In his book "Caste, Class And Power" indicates that:

- Weberian theory of multiple dimensions to stratification can be applicable to village India.
- In Siripuram village he finds out multiple hierarchies present and each hierarchy is influencing another archaic and gets influenced by them as well. When caste hierarchy is determined by birth, class hierarchy is determined by people's access to unequal wealth because of differential control over agricultural land, modern trade and employment opportunities.
- Differential position in political structure is explained in terms of one's network Of political relationship that is now extended from the village to the capital of India.

While studying caste indicates that people of the village are largely divided into three distinctive divisions such as Brahmins, non-Brahmins and Adi-Brahmins (ancient inhabitants/untouchables). These three major caste group consists of 50 to 20 caste units who have now come together to distinguish themselves from others . This compartmentalisation can largely be attributed to the rise of backward class movement, consolidation of non-Brahmins as against Brahmins and residual groups are identified as Adi Dravidians.

Brahmins in relation to non-Brahmins manifest inequality visible in terms of residence, occupation, dress, language, rituals, speech, personal conduct, rules of marriage and so on. However within a particular caste cleavage one finds out that there are large number of sub caste and sub sub caste present. These divisions manifest difference from each other in a very distinctive manner. Taking the case Brahmins Beteille finds out that these segments and sub segments are distinguished from each other in terms of sacred symbols they carry. Number of threads they carry in their sacred read, kind of clothes and size of cloth they put on and doctrinal affinity. These differences are so holistic and comprehensive that a particular caste group will always search for spouse from that particular caste group and not from any of its sub caste groups or sub sub caste groups. Therefore intra-caste differences are also exclusive and hence persist even within caste and so in Indian villages both intra-caste and inter-caste conflicts are significantly visible.

Beteille looks into the impact of modernisation on caste system indicating that modern trade, employment opportunities have injected class difference within caste and sub caste. As a result relationship between caste and sub caste has become highly dynamic. So when a person is going for marriage he takes into consideration both caste and class identity and sub sub sub caste identity. If the spouse is not available in the sub sub sub caste than he goes for sub sub caste alliance or sub caste alliance or caste alliance. Therefore caste is increasing in India but the basic structure of caste is highly undiluted. Hence caste is experiencing change in continuity rather than being subjected to complete breakdown as concluded by modernisation theory of Yogendra Singh and Marxist theory of DP Mukherjee.

In his book "Caste Old And New" Beteille makes an attempt to examine the changing nature of caste. He considers that between different caste groups there is present proportional inequality and among various sub caste groups there is present distributive inequality. Distributive inequality compartmentalise the sub caste groups wherein each group goes in search of economic and political domination which is becoming quite common in Indian society. In the past different groups of Brahmin forgetting the interpersonal difference had control over land, political power and social status but since 1920s the non-Brahmins of South India have gone for mobilisation leading to backward class movement, formation of Dravidian party and consolidation of non-Brahmins in political economic structure.

As a result Brahmins of Tanjore have become urban bound, taking modern occupation, participating in modern trade and some of them have slowly sold out their land to non-Brahmins. Therefore

imagining India without respecting to social change is highly injudicious. Hence among Brahmins class-distinction, power distinction, educational distinction and personal distinction has clearly surfaced therefore difference within the caste is becoming much more visible and wider. Thus this inequality is entering into intra-caste relationship.

Beteille considers inducement of class element into caste and sub caste is making caste system highly complex. Man in India is driven by multiple identity of which caste and class are highly pronounced. However one still can notice that social change in India is restrictive because people go for occupational choices on the basis of caste and cultural considerations. Therefore Brahmins who were priest in temples are teaching in village schools and we find out their children are becoming university professors likewise non-Brahmins are going for civil administration, politics, trade and military services indicating how caste old is replaced by caste new rather on caste in India being completely uprooted by the elements of class. Therefore Beteille indicates the traditional Indian society was relatively closed and largely static but slowly they are evolving into a dynamic society and the factors responsible for this change can be explained in terms of:

- change in the nature of hierarchical gradation,
- change in the vertical relationship between individuals and families and
- change in the hierarchical system of values.

Thus one may conclude that Beteille's sociology is a sociology of protest against caste focused society. He suggests young sociologists to liberate themselves from Indologicy and Marxian theory to develop a dynamic understanding about social changes and social inequality.

Untouchability – Forms And Perspectives

Thinkers and scholars gave different views on untouchables, no unified view is present. Textual understanding of untouchables is different from the reforms leaders reference to untouchables. Conceptualising untouchables in the horizon of Indian history is a sociological challenge. Untouchables and their presence in India is primarily mentioned in classical Dharma Shastra like Rig Veda. It is mentioned in Rig Veda that there were a class of people present who were known as 'Achuts' and identified as Chandals. Social discrimination associated with them is legitimised in Manusmriti, Mahabharata, Ramayana. The famous incidents of Eklavya, Karana and there's dislinkage from mainstream life talks about culturally prescriptive form of inequality present in India.

Manusmriti writes that if Chandals commit a crime it is natural and instinctive but if Brahmins commit a crime then it's a lapse. It further suggest that Chandals being violators of ethics, they should stay away from mainstream life and they were subjected to capital punishment. Different Sanskritic texts have justified to the fact of practice of untouchability. Hence how untouchability persist throughout Indian history is described in detail by PN Prabhu in his book "Hindu social organisation" and by GS Ghurye in his book "caste and race in India". The concepts of 'Purushartha' and 'Samakhya' philosophy speaks about the difference among the people in terms of attributes driven by birth.

The Hindu culture justify their dislocation in Hindu society and legitimise their exploitation and disprivileges. Such disprivileges are exhaustive and Ghurye explains that in terms of civil and religious disabilities, restriction on food, drinks and social commensality, racial separation and restrictive occupational choice and endogamous marriages. Endogamy was designed for the reproduction of caste and legitimisation to caste-based inequality in India.

Untouchability From Reformist Perspective

The early social reformists made a distinction between caste and religion. They believed that untouchability is a pathological product of caste system that divides people into distinctive groups thereby destroying the unitary character of Hinduism. Therefore they wanted reforms in caste systems and abolition of untouchability. This program was initiated by Dayanand Saraswati and subsequently glorified by Brahmo Samaj and also by other nationalist leaders of India. The Indian nationalist starting from Vivekananda to Bankim Chandra always said that the caste "and unity among the Hindus must be glorified to evolve nationalistic consciousness". Aurobindo Ghosh, Bankim Chandra, Gandhiji started rebellion against caste protecting Hinduism. Gandhiji in his article "my heart bleeds", "caste must go", "untouchability – a crime against God" exhibited fundamental attack against caste practices. He believed that caste is a perversion of Varna. Varna system was giving importance to division of labour on the basis of individuals, it never prohibited

anybody from taking any occupation on the basis of his birth therefore Varna system was holistic, inclusive and egalitarian. He cites the examples of several monks and Rishis who were originated from humble backgrounds and ultimately obtained supra – Brahminic status.

Gandhiji interpreted caste as a degenerated from Varna system created for the division of society. Gandhiji believed that if a person was a assigned a particular role in society, it did not mean that he was absolved of his duties towards others. A Brahmin cannot not absolve himself from the responsibility of physical labour and a Shudra cannot be denied his right to acquire knowledge

Gandhiji said that over a period of time Varna was forgotten, capabilities carried no importance and birth started determining the status and occupation of people transforming egalitarian Indian society into exploitative, caste bound, hierarchical therefore caste must go to bring back our past glory. Caste is a historic mistake and thus every human being in India should be considered as children of God. All our souls are derived from common supra soul thus untouchability as a practice is a crime against man, God and society. Hence it must be wiped out. Gandhiji called untouchables as "Harijans" and asked the member of Congress to live with Harijan family, dine with them and suggested the Harijans to get away from polluting occupation and also advocated Harijans to go for inter-caste marriages, reading Sanskrit text, to operate as priest, teacher and so on. Gandhiji considered Varna system ensured that Indian society is endowed with all occupational groups therefore people do not get exposed to market and utilitarian values therefore he writes that "it is because of Varna system and Hinduism that man in India is more concerned about spiritual pleasure than materialistic wealth like people of West".

Gandhiji further suggested that different sub caste, sub sub caste should forget their interpersonal differences and should go for their lost Varna identity. Hence common commitments to Varna and common association with Hinduism can result in unity of faith and unity of action among the people of India.

Some of the most prominent disabilities in social, economic and political fields are:

- social disability,
- no social contact,
- socially cut off caste,
- economic disability,
- educational disability,
- no drawing of water, user public will, bathing in public tanks etc,
- no ownership of property,
- low-income,
- exploitation at work and less wage payment,
- political disability,

- religious disability and
- administrative disabilities.

Class Approach To Untouchability

Gandhiji upheld the " Varna Ashrama Dharma" he said that Varna is not the glorification of caste and religion in India, rather it is a search for an egalitarian, inclusive, pluralistic society where social positions are attributed to the people on the basis of their capabilities and merit. Thus Gandhiji's distinction between Varna and caste and race support to Varna system is an indication to his desire for the abolition of untouchability and the rise of humanistic society driven by fraternity and merit. Gandhiji believed that untouchability is a result of utilitarian interest of upper caste. He said that caste is a pathological element introduced in Indian society by the upper caste for materialistic pleasures.

When Gandhiji was taking the lead in Indian National Congress session in 1920, removal of untouchability was incorporated as one among many constructive programmes. He founded the "Harijan Sevak Sangh" and underwent 21 days fast as a form of protest against the closing of temples to the untouchables.

Gandhiji and Ambedkar involved In Long Debates Over Caste

Babasaheb Ambedkar (1891 – 1956) was a Dalit who assumed the role of social, political and spiritual leader first for the balance and subsequently for the whole nation. He gave the country a democratic Constitution; as a spiritual leader he revived the legacy of Buddha. On the other hand Ram Manohar Lohia – a socialist by ideology championed the cause of the disadvantaged sections of India including minorities and women. They both identified that caste system has degenerated Indian society and wanted to annihilate it.

Ambedkar recognised that the existence of four Varna is in the Hindu social order is primarily based on the class and not on individuals. He conceded that in the Hindu social order there is no room for individual merit and no consideration of individual justice. If a person has a privilege it is not because it is due to him/her as an individual. The privilege comes with the class, and if he/she is found to enjoy it, it is because he/she belongs to that class. Conversely an individual suffers not because he/she deserves it by virtue of he/her conduct; rather it is because he/she belongs to that caste. We analysed the impact of the division of society into Varnas on the Hindu social order. He argued that because of this division the Hindu social order has failed to uphold liberty, equality and fraternity – the three essentials of a free social order. He says that the doctrine that different classes were created from different parts of the divine body has generated the belief that it must be divine will that they should remain separate and distinct. It is this belief which has created in the Hindu an instinct to be different, to be separate and to be distinct from the rest of his fellow Hindus.

Gandhiji suggested that untouchables should get out of occupation which promote or carry stigma or pollution. He also encouraged inter-caste marriages. Ambedkar said that untouchability is the question of power and domination and it has nothing to do with birth.

Gandhiji said that untouchability is a product of mistakes whereas Ambedkar says that it is a result of dominant castes materialistic needs. Dr Ambedkar said that no exploitation would have been taking place if there did not exist appropriate ideological support and he believed that this ideological support can come from Samakhya philosophy,Buddhism, etc.

Gandhiji said that people from one Varna can move to another Varna on the basis of merit whereas Ambedkar said that Varna system talks about graded inequality which cannot be questioned and is persistent in all-time. Samakhya philosophy tells that people are born with qualities which are 'Sattvic' and' 'Tamasic'. Shudras were always associated with Tamasic qualities for example if somebody committed crime then it was assumed that it must be a Shudra therefore without committing a crime one is admitting it. Ambedkar wanted untouchables to go for individualism, complete freedom to pursue their own choice of occupation.

Gandhiji wanted stability through unity and Ambedkar said stability is not that important as equality. Dr Ambedkar said that the Dalits in case of India are culturally different,they are subclass or underclass. Dalit man cannot raise his head, he is speechless, non-articulatve and is always suffering with self-doubt. Therefore to protect the interest of the Dalits compensation and reforms are not enough in fact constitutional protection should be given to them and thus he believed that the problem of all degrees if class of subordinates can be resolved by uniting them under one head by the Constitution.

Note: Also refer to the social religious movement in Maharashtra and South India discussed in previous chapters.