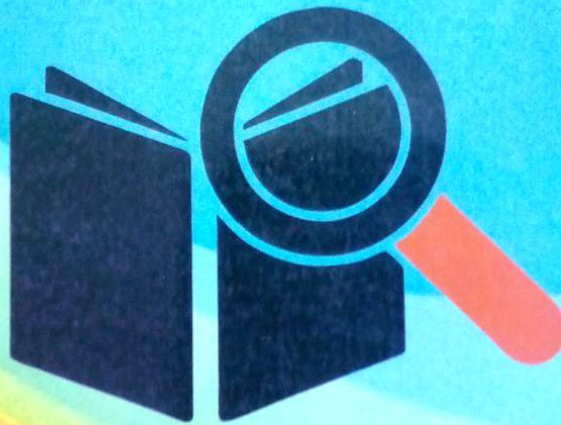




ISSN 2394-5303

Printing Area[®]

Peer Reviewed International Refereed Research Journal



Revised Edition

Editor
Dr. Bapu G. Gholap

- 135N. 2007 4.002(1017)
- 14) Nature and Status of Article 370: Temporary versus.....
Bhoopendra Karwande, Raipur. Dr. Shradha Pandey, Raipur. || 70
- 15) The Role of Academic Libraries in Facilitating for Students
Bhagyashri Y, Keskar, Dr. Govind S. Ghogare, || 75
- 16) Caste and Politics in India (19th Century)
Dr. Kartik Gawande, Jalna (MS) || 80
- 17) Merchant Banking In India
Dr U.Y .Memon, Aurangabad. || 85
- 18) Hegel's Inquiry into the Greek Antiquity: The Realm of Art
Abhay Kumar Mishra, Varanasi. || 89
- 19) Analytical Study on Motivating Employees in Retail Sector
Monika Narwat, Dr. Mini Amit Arrawatia, Jaipur. || 98
- 20) Impact of Information Communication Technology in Library Services
PRAVEEN KUMAR PALIWAL, Dist. Firozabad - UP || 101
- 21) Foundations of College Teacher's Individual Behavior
Rajeshkumar R. Patel, Panchmahal (Gujarat). || 106
- 22) Macroeconomics Perspective of GST
Corresponding Author: **Pinki** || 107
- 23) A STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND GREEN MARKETING
Mrs. Meenu Rani, Kurukshetra. || 115
- 24) Status of Tribal Education in the Naxalite Affected Areas...
Sili Rout, Dr. Jayanta Kumar Nayak, Koraput || 118
- 25) A STUDY OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR TOWARDS HATCHBACK PASSENGER CAR ...
Alamgir Sani, Patna University || 122
- 26) Public Private Partnership in India
Dr. Akther Anwar, Mr. Umer Shareef, Aurangabad || 128
- 27) Health Care Delivery System in Chandrapur district, Maharashtra State
Dr. Rajendrakumar K. Dange, Chandrapur || 131

Caste and Politics in India (19th Century)

Dr. Kartik Gawande
Head, Dept. of History,
MSS Ankushrao Tope College, Jalna (MS)

The complexity and ubiquity of caste defies precise definition. Yet it permeates various aspects of socio-political and economic life of the Indian people. The absence of a clear-cut concept of caste cause confusion regarding its essential and non essential aspects, and the changes it is undergoing. It also causes confusion among scholars attempting an analysis of the complex phenomenon. forces operating independent of caste or the caste system are sometimes attributed to it as functions or aspects of the same.

Since Western social scientists attempted to analyse this phenomenon, various theories regarding its origin and essential characteristics as well as its effects on the social economic and political development of the people, have been put forth. But all of them differ from one another some Indian sociologists have also attempted to define it, but they too have not come to any agreed conclusions. This has necessitated a classification of these attempts. Louis Dumont,¹ for instance, prefers to divide the history of the western concept of caste into three periods: the first is characterized by the explanatory attitude, the second is where description predominates while the explanatory tendency is still present, and the third is the contemporary period starting from 1945 and is characterized by intensive studies by anthropologists. According to him, the explanatory attitude

in its turn has assumed three form: valuntarist explanation, aristocratic explanatin and historical explanation. John P. Jones² has classified the caste theoris into five categories viz, religious, tribal, social occupational and crossing.

The origin of the caste system is not at all clear, but many social scientists hold that it resulted from the penetration of Indian subcontinent by Indo-European tribes who called themselves Aryans.³ These Scholars give different versions of the process of action and interaction among the various forces let loss by the intrusion of these alien races into the relatively setteled and clam life of the earlies settlers. They generally agree to some extent that the emergency of caste was the result of the attempt of the Aryan conquerers to adjust themselves with the earlier settlers of the land, and at the same time to try to maintain their racial purny by making elaborate rules for regulating the contractual, connubial, convivial and occupational relations.⁴

The author teaches modern Political Thought and International Relations in the Marathwada University.

We need not go into details about the hereditary or non-hereditary basis of the Varna System. What is important is the challenge posed by Christian Missionaries and alien rulers with their powerful intellectual culture.

Even before the advent of British merchants the Christian Missionaries arrived in India.⁵ After 1800, and particularly since 1815, the missionaries started pouring in from various parts of the western hemisphere and started preaching the gospel.⁶ Their intention was to set India 'on a path of progress through diffusion of Christian ideas and Western knowledge.⁷ They steadily extended their activities to the regions controlled by the British.⁸ These Missionaries employed different techniques to attract Hindus to their fold. For instance, they used religious melas for mass propaganda, criticised the irrationality of Hinduism, the caste

system, their different inhuman traditions like untouchability, 'sati', Child widow, polygamy and the resulting servitude of the Hindu woman etc.⁹ They also put before the people the partial Christian ethics by opening philanthropic institutions such as leprocy clinics, orphanages¹⁰ etc. In addition they opened schools to educate the people and offered economic incentives. The evangelised mind believed that human character could be suddenly and totally transformed by the direct assault on the mind through the educative process.¹¹ It did not take them long to realise that it was futile to try to convert the higher castes because they were the beneficiaries of the prevailing caste structure. They then turned to the shudras, the untouchables and the tribble and the lower cast even there they could not make much headway because of prevailing superstitions and blind faith. Writing in 1893 Georges Smith confessed that the hundred and fifty millions of caste Hindus still present an unbroken front or very little broken apparently... eclectic, elastic, willing to absorb every belief and cult that will tolerate its social system, Brahmanism presents a greater difficulty than classical paganism, if only because of caste.¹² This confession of George Smith after about 75 years of strenuous efforts belie the above evangelical belief.

British merchants, particularly those who came under the East India Company, opposed the activities of the missionaries on the ground, among others, "that these would interfere with the Hindu religion which produced men of purest morality and strictest virtue."¹³ The relationship between the East India Company and the missionaries kept fluctuating for a long period.¹⁴ The British Government of India under the crown also was not favourable to the missionaries. It was not in the interest of the British Government. The Caste distinctions were in a way helpful to them in keeping the people divided in order to perpetuate their rule. so whatever has been said and written about their phi-

lanthropy and humanitarian mission under the slogans of 'civilizing the uncivilized' and the 'whiteman's burden', their policies in general were not designed to eradicate caste. As it is well known and accepted today, the British rulers under the Company as also under the Crown tried as far as possible not to interfere in the religious affairs of the natives. In this they were prompted by their mercantile and imperial interests. They followed this policy carefully for fear of causing unrest in the indigenous population, which in turn might hamper their economic and political interests. Now there were fluctuations in this policy and some of them advocated reforms and employed the instrument of state Legislation to that end. But, despite this, it would be only fair to say that in general the British Government in India did not show any enthusiasm for reforms. On the contrary their policies directly or indirectly sharpened caste-consciousness among the people. Their insistence on people identifying their caste and sub-caste for recording it in the census reports, on mentioning their caste in applications for jobs as well as in Government and school records, aroused caste-consciousness among the people. Their concern not to hurt the feelings of the Brahmins in Maharashtra,¹⁵ for instance, and the police subsequently followed caused irritation to non Brahmins.¹⁶ Their policy of neglecting vernacular and primary education of the masses and concentrating more attention and expenditure on higher education in the cities which benefited only the Brahmins and literary castes at the expense of the lower castes, the downward filtration theory; discouraging mission schools,¹⁷ continuing land grants and cash payments to temples,¹⁸ the continuance of Daxina to Brahmins,¹⁹ pensions to learned scholars among the Brahmins, are some of the examples.

However, constant missionary propaganda and the slow but steady spread of education among the masses without discrimina-

tion on the part of the Government were, to some extent responsible for making the lower castes aware of their servitude and degraded position. To that extent credit must be given to these two agencies. But the compelling forces behind the sudden spurt of this awareness and caste consciousness and the resultant caste activity were different. It was the silent revolution and the changing economic structure under British rule that caused disquiet and shook the whole socio-economic structure. The under-developed feudal economic structure of the country was used to subserve British industry. The consequent economic drain shattered it completely. The village economy was disturbed and this in turn disturbed the whole social fabric. The policy of the Government regarding land tenure and land revenue and the institution of law courts steadily demolished the importance of village Panchayats and along with it the prestige and role of the Patil and the village community suffered.²⁰ Under the land tenure policy of the British government the concept of private property made land a commodity to be sold and bought in the market. The new legal system guaranteed and protected the rights arising from this. Agriculture ceased to fulfil its traditional role of production for local consumption. A new element of production for market entered the field of agriculture in the wake of the commercializing effect of the British policies. This terminated village self-sufficiency. Along with it the principle of mutual inter dependence and cooperation underlying the community structure of the village also disappeared. This land policy of the British and their legal system were weighted heavily in favour of money lenders, businessmen and trading community.

Thus the spread of education with emphasis on higher education and the opening up of administrative and other minor civil services to the natives benefitted the Brahmins and the allied high castes, while the land policy and the legal system benefitted the money lenders and

the business community. The ultimate sufferers under the new administration were the cultivators and the toiling masses. The meek and submissive money-lending and trading communities started progressively asserting themselves under the new dispensation of British law courts and land policy. Brahmins on the other hand reaped almost all the benefits of the new avenues of civil services. The new division of society into classes of usurers and their sufferers was the immediate effect of the British economic policies. This class division of toiling masses and exploiting money lenders and traders happened to collide with caste divisions. For instance, in the case of Maharashtra, the toiling masses, the farmers and cultivators happened to be Kunbis or Marathas by caste, whereas traders and money lenders were generally Marwadi or Gujarati Baniyas or in some cases the Brahmins.²¹ This collusion of class and caste divisions caused deception and added to the difficulties in understanding the real structure and mechanism that helped exploitation. Consequently those who were exploited tried to understand the phenomenon in terms of caste. This spurred caste consciousness and caste tensions. Jyotirao Phule²² seems to be primarily concerned with the usurpation of worldly pleasures by the few. The mechanism they employed for this exploitation was cultural and religious. The caste mechanism served the interests of higher castes. So they meticulously tried to perpetuate caste gradations and the economic regulation of life linked with it. This was Phule's explanation of the existing social structure of the Hindus.²³ This is how Phule comes out as the greatest of the opponents of caste system and the Brahmanical religion sustaining it. Thus he formulated 'Shethji-Bhatiji' as the exploiters of Shudras. The peasant riots of the 1870's (in the Deccan) popularly known as Deccan Riots were directed against these 'Shethji-Bhatiji' as exploiters not as castes. Phule's attack was directed not against the Brahmins but against

Brahmanism that justified exploitation and inequality. But his formulation of 'Sethji-Bhatiji', as the exploiters of Shudras was later misunderstood or rather inequality. But his formulation of 'Sethji-Bhatiji' as the exploiters of Shudras was later misunderstood or rather deliberately construed as caste rivalry and exploited to that end by his followers. This was the result of the spirit of competition that was aroused under the British administration. Different castes had started competing for secular gains and for this they needed numerical strength consolidated through caste consciousness and rivalry.

The reform movements of the nineteenth century need also to be understood as the Indian response to bourgeois revolution that was initiated by British policies, and not so much as the result of 'awakening of the Indian people.' What these reformers sought was to harmonize and adapt the age-old socio-religious structure to the new socio-economic and political conditions, lest it broke up totally under the new compulsions. Reformers like Ranade and Ram Mohan Roy have themselves testified that their aim was to revive the pristine purity of ancient culture and not to throw it out. Due to the new opportunities in the fields of business, administration etc., the old social regulations restricting certain professions to certain castes appeared as impediments in the path of advancement. The old laws of purity and pollution seemed difficult to observe in the Context of increased opportunities in the fields of trade and commerce, civil service etc. So they must be abolished. Restriction on foreign travel appeared a great impediment in the way of advancement, so they must be abolished. In the old institution of a joint family the incomes of its members were pooled together for common use. Obviously an increase of one or two members in the family did not cause much economic strain on the family resources. So the tradition of life-long widowhood for the women, which Caused an

additional burden to the parents' family was not unbearable. But now these educated young members of the family took Government jobs leaving their home towns. The disruption of cottage industries under the British policies also caused the young members of the Cultivators' families to leave their villages in search of jobs in the cities. Thus joint families were broken giving way to smaller families and the widows were an unbearable burden to these small families. So this custom must be abolished. Educated European woman helped her husband. The uneducated wife of a native office was of no loss to him. They also found it difficult to take their uneducated wives to clubs where British officers were usually accompanied by their wives. So the taboo on women's education must go.

These were in general the issues raised by the reformers of the nineteenth century and they were clearly necessitated by the altered socio-economic conditions. The awakening caused by English education and missionary propaganda no doubt played some part but much more effective were the changes brought about by the British administration in the socio-economic structure of the society. The reform movements, generally dominated by the Brahmins, did not want to allow the old socio-religious set up to disintegrate totally. Their reforms related primarily to the reorganization of the upper layers of the Hindu society.²⁴ What they aimed at was to modify it to suit the new ambitions aroused by the bourgeois democratic revolution, the attainment of which was deemed to be imminent. The references to the old texts and strenuous efforts to justify the reforms they were advocating on the basis of the Shastras can be understood as an attempt to convince the orthodox who opposed them.²⁵ But the very limited range of issues they took up and the slowness of change they advocated show that they were against very radical changes. The basic reformation with respect to the abolition of caste did not attract much attention.²⁶ It was in

the early 20th century (i.e. 1908) that the Social Reforms Conference resolved for the gradual relaxation of caste restrictions'.²⁷

Even among the lower castes there was little enthusiasm regarding the abolition of castes. It was at the close of the nineteenth century that some awakening among the lower castes was visible.²⁸ But here again this awakening did not assume the form of a movement aimed at its abolition but rather of caste consolidation and caste consciousness which in its turn increased

NOTES

1. Dumont, Louis: *Homo Hierarchicus*, p. 22.
2. Jones, John P : *India, Its Life & Thought*, pp. 95-102.
3. Mayer, Kurt B. & Buckley, Walter: *Class and Society*, Random House, (New York 1966, p. 30.
4. According to John P. Jones, these four are the constant factors of the caste existence and activity in India', op. cit. p. 113.
5. See Mitra, S.K. : *Resurgent India*, 1963, p. 47.
6. See Pathak & Palmer, *American Missionaries & Hinduism : A study of their contacts from 1813. 1910*, p. 38.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
12. Smith, George: *The Conversion of India: From Pantaenus to Present Times A.D. 193-1813*, John Murry (London 1893), p. 210.
13. 13 Marshman, J.C. : *Life and Times of Marry*, p. 46.
14. For detailed discussion of the relationship, see Arthur Mayhew, *Christianity and Government of India*, Faber & Owen Ltd., London, pp. 29-79, 112-125.
15. See Ballhatchet, Kenneth, *Social Policy & Social Change in Western India: 1818-1830*, pp. 83-84.
16. See for instance, Jyotirao Phule's reaction to this.
17. See Ballhatchet Kenneth, op. cit., pp. 83-84.
18. See *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 86. I
20. See Eleanor 'Zelliot, *Mahar & Non-Brahman Movement in Maharashtra, the Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. II No. 3, September 1970.
21. *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. XVIII, part I, p. 97.
22. *Non-Brahmin Reformer in Maharashtra in the 19th century*.
23. This, of course, is a very simplified generalization of Phule's ideas.
24. See Christine Dobbin, *Urban Leadership in Western India*, Oxford (1972), p. 70.
25. Damodaran, K. : *Indian Thought : A Critical Survey*, Asia Publishing House (1967), p. 368.
26. Ambedkar, B.R. op. cit., p. 44.
27. Heimsath Charles H. *Indian Nationalism & Hindu Social Reform*, p. 246.
28. Damodaran, K. op. cit., p. 369.
29. See Srinivas, M.N. : *Caste in Modern India & Other Essays*, p. 23.
30. See Lamb Beatrice Pitney, *India: A World in Transition*, Orient Longman. (1963), p. 151. See Also Srinivas M.N., op. cit., pp. 70-71.
31. Dumont, Louis : *Homo Heirarchus*, pp. 226-227.
32. See Bailey: *Closed Social Stratification in India' in Leach E.R. (ed.): Aspects of Caste*, pp. 6-7.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
34. Dumont, Louis, op. cit., p. 227.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
36. Bailey : op. cit., pp. 6-7.
37. See Fox, Richard G. : *Resiliency & Change in Indian Caste System, The Journal of Alan Studies*, Vol. XXVI, No. 4, August 1967, pp. 575-587.