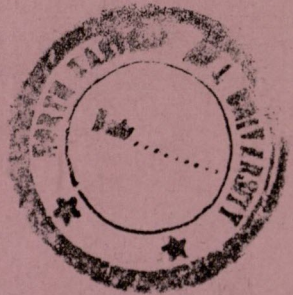


INDIAN SOCIAL SYSTEM

RAM AHUJA



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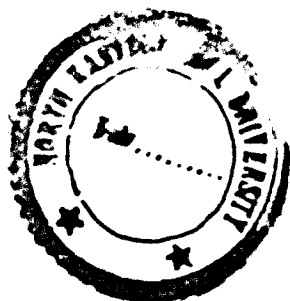
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PREFACE

After forty-six years of independence, we cannot expect Indian society to remain static and completely traditional. While looking back and ahead, we feel that we might have not succeeded in building a Welfare State in India of which every individual may be proud of, but we have surely laid the foundation of a healthy society. The society is healthy because on the one hand we have preserved several traditional institutions and values, and on the other have imbibed those modern norms and practices which we consider functional in achieving our collective goals of social, economic, political and cultural development.

There are many books on Indian society. The present one resembles most of them in some ways, yet it differs some of them in many ways. Besides, the book is distinctive in several ways. Serious attention has been paid not only to themes like social change and modernization but also to the ways in which the subsystems like marriage, family and caste adapt to altered circumstances while retaining enough integrity for survival.

Several models have been utilized in the analysis. The social scientific model has been used to guide the collection of data on subsystems; the evolutionary model to interpret changes in the subsystems throughout history; the structural model to assess the interrelationship among various constituents of the subsystems; and the functional model to analyze the interrelations among various subsystems. The analysis of subsystems has also been based on empirical studies. Jargons have been avoided and the writing has been simplified. We have resisted the temptation of developing any theory because to succumb to it would have left our writings looking like the vague musings of social philosophers. If we have succeeded in our effort of presenting our views in a lucid style, the book will provide to students of society a good sociological perspective for understanding the Indian social system.

The writing of a book can be creative if it takes into consideration the approaches of other scholars too. Our dependence on other writers is varied in form, limitless in range, and often deep in feeling. We may not

list and acknowledge the contribution of all of them to this book, but we express our gratitude to them for providing us a base for our writings and our apologies for any distortions that may have crept in.

Ram Ahuja

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HINDU PHILOSOPHY: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Hinduism and Hindus

The term 'Hinduism' has to be understood in terms of its indigenous meaning, in its meaning of medieval period, and in its contemporary meaning. In its indigenous meaning, the view of Hinduism was derived from the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, etc. Then came a period when some Brahmin *acharyas* (teachers) reinterpreted the religious literature and described some practices and beliefs as significant and decisive. Some of such practices and beliefs were: *sati*, human sacrifice, *devdasis*, child marriage, worship of village goddess with the slaughter of an animal, belief in *shakti* cult, and so on. Later on, specifically after the Mughal period, some educated Hindus described these beliefs and practices as crude and barbarous, and became critical of these features of Hinduism. They even talked of reform and started reformist movements like the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Ramkrishna Mission, and so forth.

In recent years, the discussion and movement on Hinduism has come to be largely galvanized for political ends. As such, a rather different focus has been provided to Hinduism. The new Hinduism, which is being currently propagated by the *parishads* (like Vishwa Hindu Parishad), *sanghs* (like Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh), and *samajs* (like Bhartiya Samaj), is an attempt to restructure the indigenous religion as a monolithic uniform religion. This seems to be a fundamental departure from the essentials of what may be called the indigenous Hindu religion.

Hinduism has neither clearly defined dogmas nor specific beliefs. Religions like Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism are linear religions as their founders and teachings are embodied generally in a single sacred text, but Hinduism is not a linear religion. It is in fact a collectivity of sects, each of which has a distinct and independent origin related to a particular founder or a cult. Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Radha-Krishna cult, Ram-Sita cult, Bhakti cult, etc., are different ver-

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The Diversity

India is the seventh largest and the second most populous nation of the world occupying 2.4 per cent of the total world area. It contains about 15.0 per cent of the world's population living in a variety of social, economic, geographical and ecological conditions. It has a long history spanning over five thousand years of human habitation—3,000 years before Christ and 2,000 years after Christ. It has a cultural heritage handed down by the immigrant Aryans from across the Himalayas, the native Dravidians, and the invading civilizations. Its social, economic and cultural diversities are also reflected in habitat conditions in rural, urban and semi-urban areas. Its total urban population of 217.18 million (1991 census) or even the total population of four metropolis (Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta) exceeds the total population of most of the developing nations. There are settlements with just 1,000 people and also settlements with 10 million people.

The Nature of Diversities

(The diversity runs through various races, religions, castes, tribes, languages, social customs, cultural and sub-cultural beliefs, political philosophies, and ideologies. Broadly speaking, the diversities are found in the following areas.)

Languages

(Though the Constitution of India has recognized eighteen major languages (including three languages recognized in August, 1992) but as many as 1,652 languages and dialects are spoken in our country. Broadly, these languages belong to three families of languages: Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, and European. The Indo-Aryan languages include Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Oriya, Punjabi, Bihari, Rajasthani, Assamese, Sanskrit, Sindhi, and Kashmiri languages covering about three-fourths of India's population. The Dravidian languages include Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada. The European languages include English, Portuguese, and French. The last two languages are mostly spoken by people in Goa and Pondicherry.)

THE FAMILY SYSTEM

I have introduced the concept of 'fissioned' family in the analysis of family pattern in Indian society. This has been done not to replace the popular concept of 'nuclear' family or the concept of 'simple' family as used by Chattopadhyay or 'parental' family as used by A.M. Shah but to understand the basic pattern of family in our society. The structural ideal of the Indian family is entirely different from the western unit. It has greater cohesion and greater continuity. Even when sons are forced to separate from the parental family because of their job, education, etc., their bonds with the parental unit remain unbreakable in most of the cases. The ties among the members remain more tenuous, subtle and slender. As such, we cannot properly study Indian social organization with borrowed concepts from the west. But before analyzing the traditional and the transitional patterns of Indian family on the basis of this new concept, it is necessary to understand the general concept of family.

Perspectives in Studying Family

Three approaches—functionalist, structuralist and interactionist—have mainly been used in evaluating family. In the *functionalist* approach, family is regarded as a sub-system or as a part in relation to society as a whole. Functionalists examine family in terms of: (a) set of functions it performs and its contribution to the maintenance of the total social system, (b) functional relationships between the family and other parts of social system, and (c) functions of family for its individual members. In the *structuralist* approach, family is seen in terms of a pattern of inter-related statuses and roles at a particular time and as an organized pattern of interrelated rights and obligations of its members. In the *interactionist* approach, family is concerned with interaction between individual members. The interactionist perspective, assuming that action is meaningful to those involved, seeks to understand the meanings which family members give to their activities. The interactionists are, thus, concerned with the definition of situations in family and the analysis of the way a family member interprets the language, gestures and manners of other members which affects his behaviour and his in-

THE KINSHIP SYSTEM

What is Kinship

In every society, a male at some time in his life, plays the roles of a husband, a father (unless he decides to remain unmarried) and a son and a brother in some family; and a female plays the roles of a wife, a mother (unless she decides to remain spinster) and a daughter and a sister. But due to the incest taboo, a man cannot play the roles of a father and a husband in the same nuclear family in which he is a son and a brother. Similarly, a woman cannot play the roles of a mother and a wife in the same nuclear family in which she is a daughter and a sister. Hence, every adult individual belongs to two nuclear families—the family of orientation in which he was born and reared, and the family of procreation which he establishes by marriage. It is this fact of individual membership in two nuclear families that gives rise to kinship system. By the virtue of the fact that individuals belong to two nuclear families, every person forms a link between the members of his family of orientation and those of his family of procreation. Such links bind individuals to one another through kinship ties.

Kinship as such, may be defined as “a social relationship based upon family relatedness” (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969: 221). The nature of relationship which may be consanguineal (based on ties of blood) or affinal (based on marriage) determines the rights and obligations of related persons. A *kin group* may be explained as “a group united by ties of blood or marriage”. Most kin groups, other than the family, are consanguineal. *Kinship system* may be considered as “the customary system of statuses and roles that governs the behaviour of people who are related to each other through marriage or descent from a common ancestor” (Theodorson, *Ibid*: 221). It may also be described as “a structured system of relationship in which kin are bound to one another by complex inter-locking ties” (Murdock, 1949: 93).

Kinship Categories

There are mainly four kinship categories: primary kin, secondary kin, tertiary kin, and distant kin. The *primary kin* are those kin who belong to

STATUS OF WOMEN

Over the years, some sociologists and non-sociologists have devoted time and effort to assess the problems plaguing women and to study the quality of change in the status of women in our society. While a few writers have referred to the legal rights enjoyed by women in marriage, inheritance and participation in public affairs, others have referred to the still prevalent inequality and discrimination suffered by women due to the social attitudes of males and the existing customs and traditions. Howsoever high the status of women might have been raised under the law, in practice they continue to suffer from discrimination, harassment and humiliation. They are not taken seriously in obtaining opinions, not treated as equals to men, and not given due respect. There are cases of junior IAS/IPS women being harassed by senior IAS/IPS men, of air hostesses being humiliated by pilots, of junior female custom officials being ill-treated by senior male custom officials and of female clerks and typists being exploited by male officers. Cases of making suggestive overtures or making advances to female subordinates in telephone exchanges, secretariats, newspaper offices, five-star hotels, TV centres, colleges and universities, IITs, etc., have become common.

In the relationship between man and woman, it is an individual with a powerful personality who acquires a position of dominance. Generally, it is a man who commands power over a woman, though in a few cases, a woman also might exercise control over a man. In Indian culture, since the very early periods, women as a group have been dominated by men and their status has been low in the family and society. In the 1930s and 1940s, the commitment of the socio-political leaders to equality influenced the Indian women's movement to turn to liberal egalitarian values. For studying this change (in the status of women) from the early times to the present day, let us start from the early period.

Women in Ancient India

There are two schools of thought regarding the status of women in ancient India. One school has described women as "the equals of men",

THE HINDU MARRIAGE

Different sciences have different frames of reference in studying any institution. Marriage is also conceived differently by social scientists in different fields. While the popular concept of marriage is that it is a union between a man and a woman, anthropologists like Lowie, Murdock and Westermarck emphasize on social sanction in the union and how it is accomplished by different rituals and ceremonies. Sociologists like Blood, Lantz and Snyder, Bowman, Baber, Burgess, etc., view it as a system of roles and as involving primary relationships. Indologists look upon Hindu marriage as a *sanskar* or a *dharma*. Before studying the traditional and modern systems of Hindu marriage, we will try to understand the concept and the sociological significance of marriage.

Concept of Marriage

Every individual has to play a number of roles in his life, or we may say, life consists of a combination of roles played in various institutional settings. Of the various roles one plays, two roles have a very great significance: one is the economic role and the other is the marital or the family role. The former is unquestionably prominent in life because one devotes quite a good part of his career in performing it. Assuming that one starts earning one's livelihood at the age of twenty to twenty-four years and continues to do so up to the age of fifty-eight to sixty-two years, that is, the economic career is spread over to about four decades and that every day one devotes eight to ten hours to his job/work, one can well assume the period which one's economic role consumes. The marital role also involves about forty to fifty years of one's life. But, of these two roles, the marital role is more important than the economic role because when the latter involves secondary relations, the former involves personal or primary relations.

Primary relations are essentially unlimited, particularistic, emotionally involved, altruistic and spontaneous. Conversely, secondary relations are typically limited, standardized, unemotional, utilitarian and contractual. Again, primary relationship in marriage is different from the primary relationship in other primary groups like friends' group,

MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES

The Muslim Marriage

Stratification in Muslim Society

Before discussing Muslim marriage, it is necessary to know the stratification of the Muslim society into various groups. Broadly speaking, Muslims are divided into two divisions: Shias and Sunnis. After the death of Prophet Muhammad when people were faced with the problem of finding a heir to succeed him, some people wanted that the *immamat* should be confined to the prophet's own family or his nominee, while some upheld the principle of election by *jammāt*, that is, the people. One group wanted an elected person as the spiritual head of Islam while the other group wanted Muhammad's nominee for this post. Thus, the origin of the Shias and the Sunnis was the result of the dispute and it had nothing to do with the racial or occupational factors as found in the origin of various castes in Hindu society. The two groups follow different norms and social practices in certain areas, but generally it is the Sunni Law that has prevailed in India, there being very few families of the Shia sect.

Besides this division, Muslims are also divided into three other groups called Ashraf, Azlab and Arzal. Saiyeds (who trace their origin to the Prophet Muhammad's daughter Fatima), Sheikhs, Pathans, and a few others belong to the Ashraf group; Momins (weavers), Mansooris (cotton cleaners), Ibrahims (barbers), etc. belong to the Azlab group; and Halalkhor, etc. belong to the Arzal group. The Ashrafs are the noble-born, the Azlabs are the low-born, and the Arzals are the lowest of all. In a way, the Arzals are like untouchables among Hindus and are not allowed to enter the mosques even; nor they are permitted to use public graveyards. This division too is thus purely based on the socio-economic basis and not on religion.

The Shias and the Sunnis on the one hand and the Ashrafs, the Azlabs and the Arzals on the other hand are endogamous groups. Inter-marriages among these groups though are not condemned but are discouraged. Among the Sunnis, social inferiority on the part of the

AGE AT MARRIAGE

Finding the right partner and developing a personal relationship with him/her are important elements in marriage. Boys and girls may themselves be wanting to marry or their parents may be forcing them for marriage but they may not be 'ready', for marriage yet. The 'readiness' for marriage involves "ability to take on the responsibilities of marriage". One has not only to take up one's partner's responsibilities but within a year or two, problems are added with child-birth. Hence, marriage and parenthood require special skills and resources of the individuals involved. Thus, we may say, in preparing for marriage, age is the most important question.

Marriage Age in Ancient India

In the Vedic period, post-puberty marriage seems to have been a usual practice (Raj Bali Pandey, 1949). After performing the initiation ceremony at the age of eight years, a man was sent to his teacher's house where he stayed for about twelve years or so. Thus, ordinarily a man was more than twenty years of age at the time of marriage. Since the ideal difference in the age of husband and wife was considered to be two to five years, we can say, girls were not married at a tender age. It was from about 400 B.C. that the marriageable age was gradually lowered and the tendency on the whole was in the direction of lower age at marriage, preferably between eight and ten years. *Grihasutras* have also recommended *nagnika* (state of nakedness) as the proper period for marriage. Parasara has classified girls in five groups. He calls a girl below eight years as *nagnika*, of eight years as *gauri*, of nine years as *rohini*, of ten years as *kanya*, and above ten years as *rajasvala*. He enjoined that a girl should be married before eight years of age when she is still in the stage of *nagnika*, and that the parents of a girl who is unmarried when she becomes *rajasvala* go to hell, and a Brahmin who marries *arajasvala* girl should not be spoken to or admitted to a dinner in the same row with other Brahmins (Kane, 1946: 445). *Dharamsutras* have also emphasized on marriage to take place before attaining 'womanhood'. In the sixth and seventh centuries A.D., the rule that the Brahmin girls should

DIVORCE

Marriage in the traditional Hindu society, regarded essentially as *dharmaic* (religious), is gradually becoming secularized in the modern era. The trend is towards making it consensual. Till the middle of the 1950s, the Hindu Law did not permit divorce, though among some castes the local customs did sanction the dissolution of marriage by mere payment of a sum, called *jhagra*, decided by the caste elders, to the deprived husband. It was four decades ago that our law-makers swung Hindu society from the rigidly reactionary position of 'sacramental marriage' to the acutely modern notion of 'divorce by mutual consent'. Since Hindus resort to divorce generally as a last measure, it needs to be analyzed not as a sign of social disorganization or anomie or as something that furthers the disintegration of society but from the viewpoint of suffering and unhappiness of the adults trapped in an unfortunate marriage.

Breaking up of Marriage

All marriages cannot succeed; some end in disharmony. In some marriages which fail, some fatalists, believing in an inescapable destiny, just drag on and pull over; some optimists who think that happiness is a state of mind try to readjust themselves; but some break their marriages. Of those who break their marital bonds, some break them functionally and some structurally. Desertion and divorce are structural breakups. Desertion—either temporary or permanent—is illegal and unofficial and is an irresponsible departure from the home on the part of either husband or wife, leaving the family to fend for itself; divorce is legal severing of marital ties or final termination of bonafide marriage. Desertion occurs more frequently among the lower classes and castes than among the upper economic and social groups. Mostly it is husbands who desert their wives. Though divorce is always a tragedy because the rejected mate feels crushed and humiliated but the social consequences of desertion are more dysfunctional than those of divorce, particularly in the case of a woman. She comes to suffer from many emotional, social and economic handicaps. Emotionally she is upset because she feels she has been humiliatingly rejected by her spouse; socially she suffers because

DOWRY

The importance and topicality of the problem of dowry today is to be assessed not because the number of the reported cases of burning brides is increasing but also because a good number of girls remain unmarried even after crossing the marriageable age due to their parents' inability to pay dowry. This creates the problem of spinsterhood too with its own sociological repercussions. The dowry problem is also crucial because many girls are humiliated and harassed for not bringing adequate dowry to the satisfaction of their in-laws and husbands creating the crisis of their personality disorganization; because it compels many parents to use illegitimate methods in earning money and increases corruption in the society; and because it poses dilemmas and conflicts of varied types for individuals, families, and the society.

In the dynamics of group life, it is apparent that all kinds of distortions are conventionalized in order to increase loyalty and morale. In his collective life, man evolves system of beliefs designed to assist him in the continual struggle to attain his goals. Ends are more desirable, means more energetically pursued if realities can be gilded with attractive colours. Many customs are generated by the people to emphasize elements of their needs and desires. The achievements of the past, the rightness of current practices, the greatness of their existence—such views are widely supported by the members of society. The informal and formal teachings of culture give strong support to the customs and mores. Each culture thus preserves the conventions and traditions considered appropriate to the on-going life of the society. Deviations from these customs and conventions receive serious consideration, for it threatens the integrity of the accepted pattern of living. But such deviations from cultural orthodoxy are tolerated which do not ordinarily constitute a serious threat to society's integrity and morale. However, some customs and usages in the society sometimes persist irrespective of the harm they may bring to the society, that is, they continue at the expense of ill-treatment and exploitation of the people. They also entail a chain of problems which are of no mean significance and are more poignant. Some of these social problems are due to social changes which create conditions which

INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE

The Inter-marriages

Inter-marriage has been gaining momentum in recent decades, and is becoming a much discussed subject. Inter-marriage means marriage between a male and a female belonging to two different cultural or sub-cultural groups. The cultural groups may be religious, racial, ethnic, linguistic, geographical etc., while the sub-cultural groups may be Catholics and Protestants or Shias and Sunnis or castes or sub-castes, etc. Since the inter-caste marriages involve a sociological problem of assimilation and adjustment, their discussion has become a lively issue in the discipline of sociology. The two issues which draw attention in this problem are the causal factors in inter-caste marriages, and the consequences for the marriage partners and their children. The latter issue also involves discussion of different reactions to such marriages and the adjustment of the new family, that is, adjustment by the inter-caste marriage couples in terms of personal habits and the cultural adjustment.

History of Inter-caste Marriage in India

In ancient India, inter-marriages in *anuloma* (hypergamy), that is, marriage of a boy of an upper *varna*/caste with a girl of the lower *varna*/caste, were apparently more frequent than in *pratiloma* (hypogamy), that is, marriage of a boy of a lower *varna*/caste with a girl of an upper *varna*/caste, till the *Dharmasutras* totally came to forbid *pratiloma* marriages. The rule of the Hindu Law in the Brahmanic period became that one must marry within one's own caste. This rule remained rigid till the British period. In 1872, the Special Marriage Act was passed which allowed a man to contract legal marriage with a person not belonging to his own endogamous group, if he declared that he had no religion. The public opinion in favour of inter-caste marriage did not gain ground due to this clause; nor the inter-caste marriage was encouraged, though sanctioned by the law. The Indian National Social Conference launched a movement in 1887 and Justice Ranade championed inter-caste marriages. In 1913, the Conference suggested that the 1872 Act be amended so that people wishing to marry in other castes

CASTE: CONCEPT, ORIGIN AND STRUCTURE

The Caste System: Three Perspectives

The caste system in India has been studied with three perspectives: Indological, socio-anthropological and sociological. The Indologists have viewed caste from the scriptural point of view, social anthropologists from the cultural point of view, and sociologists from the stratificational point of view.

In the Indo-religious perspective, the Indologists take their cue from the scriptures about the origin, purpose and future of the caste system. They maintain that *varnas* have originated from Brahma—the *virat purusa*—and castes are the fissioned units within the *varna* system developed as the result of hypergamy and hypogamy practices. These units, or *jatis*, received their ranks relative to one another in the *varna* order. The rituals to be performed by the four *varnas* are status-bound and prescribed in the *Brahmanas* (written in about 800 B.C.), while the customs and the laws to be followed by each caste are prescribed in the *Smritis* (written in about 200-100 B.C.). The regional, linguistic, ethnic, and sectarian variations have gradually come to affect the ordering of *jati* relationships. The object of the origin of castes, according to them (Indologists), was the division of labour. As people came to accept the general ideology of the division of society into four groups (or say, classes or orders), they became more and more rigid, and membership, occupation, etc., became hereditary. The Brahmins were given the superior position in the social system because of the belief in the divine right of Brahmins to interpret and administer the laws. The rigidity in the caste system is, thus, the result of beliefs in *karma* (deeds) and *dharma* (duties and obligations), which means that the motive force for the caste dogmas was definitely religious. Referring to the future of castes, the Indologists maintain that since they are divine, they will continue to exist (Verma, 1972: 159).

The cultural perspective of the social anthropologists like Hutton, Risley, Hoebel, Kroeber, etc. ramifies itself in four directions: organiza-

CHANGING STRUCTURE OF CASTE AND ITS FUTURE

The Early Structure

The caste system, as it exists today, has grown and developed through many centuries. For discussing the caste system, we may divide the Indian history into four periods: (1) ancient period, which includes (a) Vedic period, (b) Brahmanical period, (c) Maurya period, (d) post-Maurya period (that is, Sanga, Kushan and Gupta periods), and (e) Harsh Vardhna and other periods; (2) medieval period, which includes (a) Rajput period, and (b) Muslim period; (3) British period, which includes (a) pre-industrial period, and (b) pre-independence industrial period; and (4) post-independence period.

Vedic or Pre-Buddhist Period (4000-1000 B.C.)

The work on the history and philosophy of caste in the Vedic period is an outcome of an inquiry into the Vedic literature which mainly includes the *Vedas*, the *Brahmanas* and the *Upanishads*. Indian history, in a strictly historical sense, begins from the Rig Veda. The Vedic period is supposed to have started from 400 B.C. and continued up to 1000 B.C. (according to P.V. Kane). But, for the purpose of analyzing caste, we consider the Vedic period as lying between 1500 B.C. (approximate date of writing the Rig Veda) to 322 B.C., when Chandragupta came to power and Maurya dynasty started in which the fundamental tenets of the Upanishadic thought were formulated and preached.

There are two schools of thought regarding the caste system in the Vedic period. One school holds that the broad frame of the caste system had existed even in the earliest portion of the Rig Veda and the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas were the three caste divisions that the society of the Rig Veda clearly recognized. (Sudra 'caste', however, according to this view did not exist. It was created by the Aryans in the closing phase of the Rig Veda). The other school maintains that these three were not castes but *varnas* which were not hereditary but flexible. Some exponents of this later view are Muir Zimmer (*Philosophies of India*), Weber (*The History of Indian Literature*, 1882) and Ghurye

INTER-CASTE AND INTRA-CASTE RELATIONS AND CASTE CONFLICTS

Inter-caste Relations

For analyzing the inter-caste relations, castes may be divided into three groups: clean castes (Brahmins, Rajputs, Kayasths, Jats, etc.), unclean castes (Teli, Dhobi, Nai, Kumhar, Lohar, etc.), and untouchable castes (Bhangi, Chamar, Pasi, etc.). The relations among these castes may be studied at four levels—commensal relations, marital relations, occupational relations, and social relations. At each level, the relations may be perceived as traditional and as changing relations.

Commensal Relations

Commensal relations refer to a caste/person with whom a man will eat. In daily relations, persons accept food only from the members of their own caste. The question of commensal relations arises only on occasions of feasts. The usual practice on such occasions is that even though members of different castes are invited, it does not mean that they take food together. Members of clean castes sit in one row (*pangat*), while members of unclean castes occupy another row. Several feet of open ground are left between the two rows. K.S. Mathur (1964:126-127) has pointed out some exceptions in which clean and unclean caste members sit in the same row. While the members of clean castes are eating, the members of untouchable castes will not sit with them. When commensal circle is narrow, dietary relations are spread to wide area.

Dietary relations refer to sharing food, smoking, and drinking. A member of a high caste does not take water from the *lota* (vessel) used by the member of a low caste unless washed with sand or ashes. For sharing *hooka* (hubble-bubble), the rules are similar to those as for accepting the food. Regarding eating with others, there are separate taboos for eating *kachcha* food, *pucca* food, and green vegetables and fruits with peelable skins. The *kachcha* food is regarded as pure (because it is cooked in water and salt); hence it is highly pollutable. The *pucca* food is regarded as less pollutable as it is cooked with *ghee*. The green fruits and vegetables are regarded least pollutable. While there is one-way ac-

JAJMANI SYSTEM

The Concept

Jajmani system is a system of traditional occupational obligations. Castes in early India were economically interdependent on one another. The traditional specialized occupation of a villager followed the specialization assigned to his caste. The specialization of occupation led to the exchange of services in the village society. This relationship between the 'servicing' and the 'served' castes was not contractual, individual, impersonal, temporary, or limited but it was caste-oriented, long-termed and broadly supportive. This system in which the durable relation between a landowning family and the landless families that supply them with goods and services is called the *jajmani* system .

Harold Gould (1987: 138-39) has described the *jajmani* system as inter-familial inter-caste relationship pertaining to the patterning of superordinate-subordinate relations between patrons and suppliers of services. The patrons are the families of clean castes while the suppliers of services are the families of lower and unclean castes. It could be said that the *jajmani* system is a system of distribution whereby high caste landowning families are provided services and products by various lower castes such as carpenters (Khati), barbers (Nai), potters (Kumhars), blacksmiths (Lohars), washermen (Dhobis), sweepers (Chuhra) etc. The servicing castes are called *kamins* while the castes served are called *jajmans*. For the services rendered, the servicing castes are paid in cash or in kind (grains, fodder, clothes, animal products like milk, butter, etc.).

Yogendra Singh (1973: 186) describes *jajmani* system as a system governed by relationship based on reciprocity in inter-caste relations in villages. Ishwaran (1966: 41) referring to *jajmani* system (called *aya* in Mysore in South India) has said that it is a system in which each caste has a role to play in a community life as a whole. This role consists of economic, social and moral functions.

The term *jajman* originally referred to the client for whom a Brahmin priest performed rituals, but later on it came to be referred to the

CASTE AND POLITICS

The relationship between caste and politics may be analyzed at two levels: (i) how caste affects politics, and (ii) how politics influences caste. The first aspect may be further examined at various levels in terms of interest of castes in politics; political knowledge and political awareness of castes; identification of castes with political parties; influence of castes on political affairs; actual participation of castes in politics, particularly with reference to effect of castes on voting behaviour; emergence of elite on caste basis; and type of changes in political system as a result of involvement of caste organizations, that is, how leadership gets a structural and ideological base for mobilization of masses and how concessions to local opinion are made. On the other hand, the effect of politics on caste may be perceived as to how politics is used by a caste in rising social scale and/or achieving its goal. This has been described as the process of politicization of caste. We will first analyze the relationship between caste and politics in terms of the first four factors; the remaining factors will then be examined separately.

Caste and Politics

Anil Bhatt's study conducted in early 1970s may be taken as one objective basis for assessing the interest of castes in politics and awareness about political affairs. Bhatt (1975) studied 1,713 persons belonging to high, middle, and low castes (including Harijans) in four states, namely, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, West Bengal, and Andhra Pradesh. Among these, 300 belonged to higher castes (Brahmin and Rajput), 147 to other high castes (Kayastha, Baniya, Khatri, and Baidya), 356 to upper middle castes, 270 to lower middle castes, 353 low castes and 287 were Harijans. These people had different backgrounds of income, education, occupation, and residence (rural and urban), etc. Bhatt's findings in different fields were as under:

(i) Political Interest

The high status castes have higher level of political interest as compared to low status castes. This was indicated by the fact that 10 per cent high castes revealed high interest in political affairs as compared to 6 per cent

SANSKRITIZATION AND WESTERNIZATION

Caste and Status Mobility

The concepts of 'Sanskritization' and 'Westernization' were developed by M.N. Srinivas in 1952 in the analysis of the social and religious life of the Coorgs of South India. Up to the middle of the twentieth century, caste was studied either in terms of the *varna* model or in terms of status based on notions of heredity and pollution and purity. Srinivas analyzed the caste system in terms of upward mobility. He maintained that the caste system is not a rigid system in which the position of each caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible. A low caste was able to rise, in a generation or two, to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism. It took over rituals, customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins and gave up some of their own considered to be impure. The adoption of the Brahmanic way of life by a low caste seems to have been possible, though theoretically forbidden (1985: 42).

The occupations practised by castes, their diet, and the customs they observe determine their status in the hierarchy. Thus, practising an occupation such as tanning, butchery, or handling toddy puts a caste in a low position. Eating beef, fish and mutton is considered defiling. Offering animal sacrifices to deities is viewed a low practice than offering fruit and flowers. As such, castes following these customs, diet habits, etc. adopt the life of the Brahmins to achieve a higher status in the caste hierarchy. This is moving of a low caste upwards in the social structure. Srinivas termed this process as 'Sanskritization'.

The Concept of Sanskritization

Srinivas has defined 'Sanskritization' as a process by which the low castes take over the beliefs, rituals, style of life, and other cultural traits from those of the upper castes, specially the Brahmins. In fact, Srinivas has been broadening his definition of Sanskritization from time to time. Initially, he described it as "the process of mobility of lower castes by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism to move in the caste hierarchy in a generation or two (1962: 42). Later on, he redefined it as "a process by

THE SCHEDULED CASTES

Sudras in Early Literature

Who are the Sudras and when and what brought the condition of degradation to them? The Vedic literature, which mainly includes the *Vedas*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Aranyakas*, and the older *Upanishads*, does not provide any evidence that the 'Sudra caste' existed in the early period. The Rig Veda (second century or about 1500 B.C.) only refers to the three 'castes' of Brahmin, Kshatriya (Rajanya) and Vaisya in the Aryan community. It seems that the 'caste of Sudras' was created by the Aryans in the closing phase of the Rig Veda (Kamble, 1979: 8). However, there are scholars like Dutt (1931) and Apte (1954) who contend that the 'class of Sudras' was known to the Rig Veda. The non-mention of the word 'Sudra' does not argue its non-existence. In the *Brahmanas*, however, we find a repeated reference to Sudras along with Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas forming the integral part of the Indo-Aryan society. The texts of the *Brahmanas* assign to the Sudras (*Dasas*) the lowest position and mention them as the people outside the fold of the Brahmanical sacrificial religion. This is perhaps because they were racially and culturally different from the Aryans and opposed them as far as their religion was concerned. According to Kamble, they not only opposed the gods of Aryans but also did not perform sacrifices and gave no gifts to the priests. The terms and epithets used by the Aryans for the *Dasas* were 'Anyavrata', 'Anasa', and 'Mridhravaka'. In the matter of social privileges and religious rights, therefore, the Sudras were given a very low status. They could neither perform sacrifices nor *yajnas*. They were described as "despised, unholy and impure creatures whose touch caused ceremonial impurity" (Kamble, *Ibid*: 97). Ghurye has also said that only the first three orders were recognized in the Vedic age as far as religious and ritualistic life was concerned. The Sudra was systematically debarred from following the religious practices of the Aryans (1961: 214-15).

This does not mean that the Sudras were treated as untouchables. This is evident from the fact that even a carpenter's touch also caused

SOCIAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

The Concept of Social Change

Social change is the change in established patterns of social relations, or change in social values, or change in structures and subsystems operating in society. Social change may be partial or total, though mostly it is partial. Just as change in the examination system is partial change in the educational system, similarly enacting a law which prescribes punishment for refusing entry to untouchables in Hindu temples, or a law which legally permits divorce in the society, or a law which does not permit marriage below the specific age, might be called partial changes in a society. Nationalization of banks, coal mines, etc. are the examples of partial change in the economic system of society because this co-exists with private property ownership in other spheres. The difficulty is in recognizing total change in the society or in a social system. If we say that not something but everything has changed in the society, it may be termed as total change, but it never happens. Similarly, a few aspects of family system, or marriage system or banking system or caste system, or factory system, etc. may change but we never find a total change in any of these social systems. No social system ever changes in toto. Social change is always or mostly partial.)

Percy Cohen (1979: 176) has said that one might also distinguish between minor changes and major or fundamental changes in a society. Change in the core or strategic features of a society or a social system may be defined as a major change. If we take the example of prison as a social system, its important features are: giving training to prisoners, arranging food, recreation and medical facilities for the inmates, giving punishment to criminals for violating the prison norms, permitting offenders to maintain social contacts with their family and friends, making security arrangements to prevent escape from the prison, and so forth. Now suppose the entire security force is withdrawn and prisoners are given freedom to go to market at their will during the day time but spend nights compulsorily in the jail, it will be an example of change in that feature of the prison system which will affect other features too. As

MODERNIZATION

Modernization has many dimensions. It may be perceived at society level, group level, or individual level. It may also be perceived as economic modernization, political modernization, social modernization, technological modernization, military modernization, police modernization, educational modernization, administrative modernization, and so forth. The concept has thus been employed in a diffused manner.

Economists perceive modernization in terms of man's application of technologies to the control of nature's resources in order to bring about a marked increase in the output per individual in the society. Sociologists examine it in terms of differentiation in the quality of life that characterizes the modern societies. They explore new structures created to perform new functions, or new functions assigned to old structures. They also study the dysfunctional consequences of the modernization process like mental illness, violence, social unrest, regionalism and parochialism, and caste and class conflicts, etc. Political scientists focus on the problems of nation and government building as modernization occurs. They also remain concerned with the ways in which political elite respond to the efforts of new participants in politics to share power and to make demands upon those who monopolize power (Myron Weiner, 1966: 3).

According to Eisenstadt (1969: 1), modernization is the most overwhelming feature of the contemporary scene, in the sense that most nations are nowadays caught in its web. The characteristics and the processes of modernization in different countries are in some respect common and in some respect different. Historically, modernization (as the process of change in social, economic and political systems) has developed from a great variety of different traditional societies in different regions of the world. In western Europe, societies developed from feudal states, in eastern Europe from more autocratic states, in the United States, Canada and Australia through the processes of colonization and immigration, in Latin America from oligarchic conquest-colonial societies, in Japan from a centralized feudal state, in China from

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

An English economist Wicksteed once said that a man can neither be a saint nor a poet nor a lover unless he has something to eat. Of nations also, it might be said that political development, cultural achievement and transformation, and social progress is possible only by the attainment of minimum standards of living. Or, we may say, social progress is contingent upon economic development. The question is: What is economic development? What are the prerequisites of economic development, or what factors contribute to growth? What impedes economic growth in the underdeveloped areas of the world, including India? These are some important questions to be understood before we become concerned with the sociological aspects and social problems of economic development.

Concept of Economic Development

In the broadest sense, economic development might be viewed as "any growth in real income per capita from whatever source" (Robert Faris, 1964: 889). Bach (1960: 167) has described it as "growth in the total output of goods and services in the economy." David Novack (1964: 151) has referred to a very old definition of economic growth, according to which it is "continuous, substantial increase in per capita consumption of goods and services." The substantial consumption of economic goods is possible only when there is substantial production of economic goods, and substantial production these days depends upon more use of technologies. In a narrower sense, therefore, it may be said that economic development refers to "the extensive application of inanimate power and other technologies to the production and distribution of economic goods" (Robert Faris, *Ibid*: 889). In this sense, economic development is practically equivalent to industrialization. But to say that economic development is only industrialization would not be correct because besides involving the use of power and technology in production, it also involves labour mobility, extensive educational system, and so on.

Jaffe and Stewart (1951), who described economic development as

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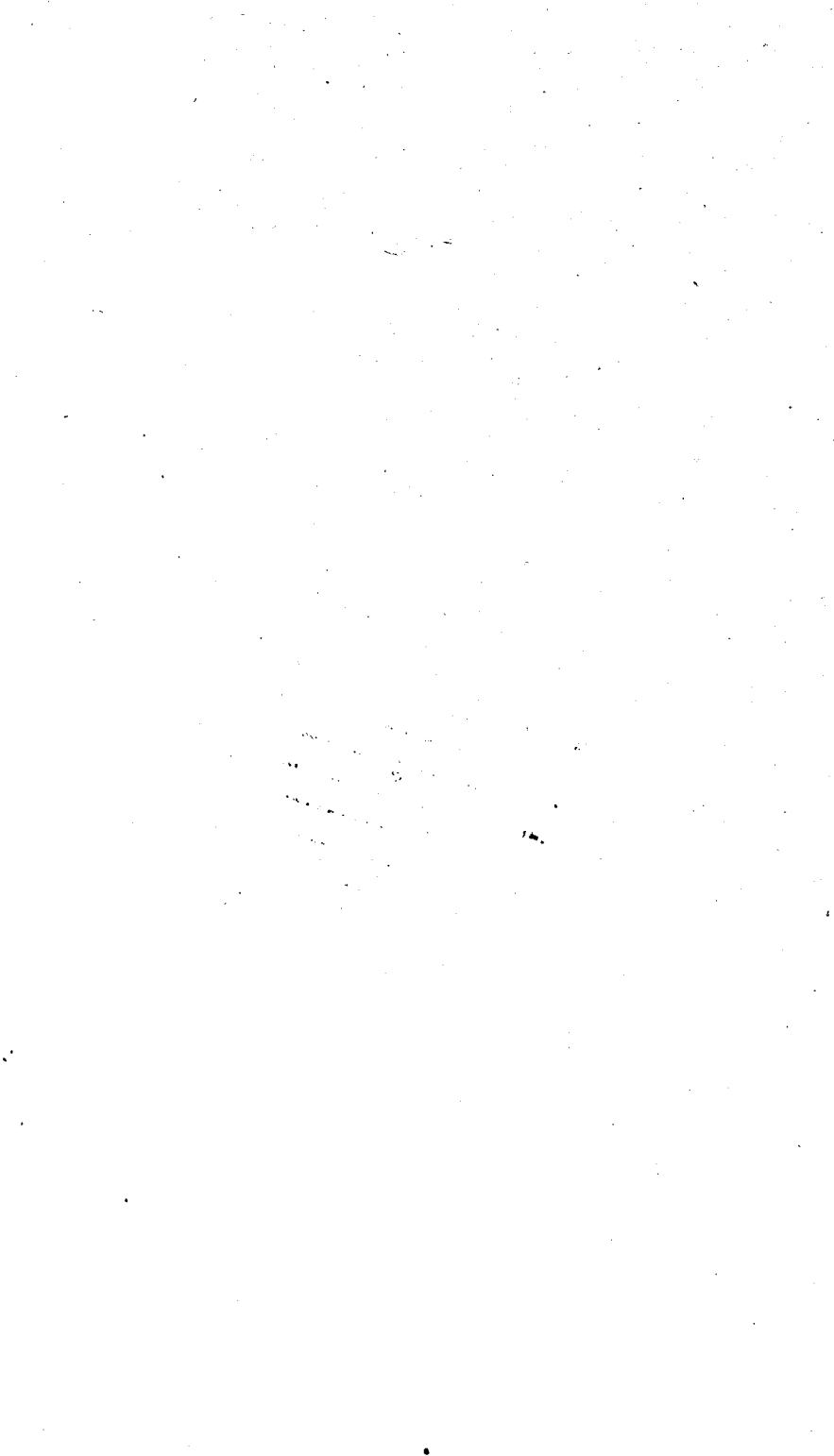
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