

# On verna system in India

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## Abstract

インドにおけるヴァルナ制度はヒन्दゥー教にまつわる身分制度である。バラモンより遙か昔の3000年ほど前に来たインドのアーリア人は、ヨーロッパ系の白色人種系であった。彼らは先住民族（ドラヴィダ族）を滅ぼして、verna（ヴァルナ）という身分制度を作り上げた。ヴァルナとは「色」を意味し、それは肌の色による身分の上下差別であった。当然、支配者であり、肌色も白い自分たちを上位におき、被支配民族を下にした。その後アーリア人の中でも社会的機能（仕事）による区分ができた。即ち宗教儀礼を専門とするバラモン（Brahmana 司祭）を最上位に、軍事・政治を司るクシャトリア（Ksatriya, Rajanya 王族、武士）、商工業活動に従事するヴァイシャ（Vaisya 平民）、その下には被支配民族のシュードラ（Sudra 奴隷）という4つの階級を作り上げた。この古代的身分制度が、インドのカースト制度の基本となっており、やがてこの枠中から、ヴァイシャ、シュードラはそれぞれの職業別にさらに細分化されてゆき、2000とも、あるいはそれ以上ともいわれる多数の区分が、中世的身分制度として固定化されていった。この区分は、職業を生まれたときから世襲化するものなので「生まれ」を意味する jati（ジャーティ）<sup>1</sup>と呼ばれているもので、これがインドのヒन्दゥー社会では、非常に強い影響力を持って、人々を束縛し、社会の掟の基礎をなしている。一度決められたカーストはどんなに努力をしてみてもそこから決して抜け出せないのである。

カースト（ポルトガル語で血統を表す）制度で特に問題とされるのはシュードラより低位とされる、いわゆる不可触民（アチュード、アンタタッチャブル、ハリジャンとも呼ばれる）の存在である。カースト内の位置すら与えていないこの不可触民の人たちは、触れただけ（あるいは目にしただけ）でも穢れるものとして、カースト・ヒन्दゥーから差別されてきた。1億人（インドの人口が約9億人）近くいるといわれるこのアチュードは、社会の底辺で大きな労働力を提供しているのに、社会的地位は非常に低いままである。

こうしたヴァルナに基づくカースト制度の由来とジャーティ及び不可触民の実態を明らかにしたい。

キーワード 《verna, jati, harijan》

## I

Idealistically or in orthodox point of view derived from early theological writings, the Hindu society composed of four orders :<sup>3</sup> priests, warriors-rules, commoners, and slaves<sup>4</sup> ( called as Brahmana, Ksatriya or Rajanya, Vaisya, and Sudra ) This four-tier theory has much been vented by various writers of Indian castes. Although allowing for some easy explanations, such simplistic approach definitely does not give fair accounts of reality. Today in India ( and it is important to note that ) in any linguistic area there are from *fifty to two hundred* of the major groups divided into *five hundred to two thousand* minor groups.<sup>5</sup> For whole of India the number becomes obscure.

To understand the contemporary caste society, therefore instead of the theological grand theory of 'verna' categories, we need to look closely at the basics: Principal orders of caste relationships and intercourses, and their integration within larger society. A man's caste position in a social space can be outlined by defining his perception of himself and his relation to other men chosen as the 'point of refer-

ence'. In our case the assumed process of location of caste involves: ( i ) the indication of individual's relation to specific castes; ( ii ) the relation of these castes within a locality; and ( iii ) the relation of the locality in a linguistic boundary and then further with overall population of India.<sup>6</sup>

Till today hundreds of community studies have been done in India which give us increasing insight to the dynamics of castes in the village community. But locality differences in caste relations are strong becoming more pronounced across the linguistic boundaries. This, obviously, creates problems against generalizations, which Professor Srinivas also indicates: "I am acutely aware of the difficulties and hazards involved in making statements claiming to hold good for Hindus all over India."<sup>7</sup> Besides, there is dearth of studies on social relations in towns and cities. Rightly Ghurye remarked on complexities of caste studies: "With all the labours..., we do not possess a real general definition of caste. It appears to me that any attempt at definition is bound to fail because of the complexity on the phenomenon.

On the other hand, much literature on the subject is marred by lack of precision about the use of the term.”<sup>8</sup>

For purpose of clarity I shall call the major groups, mentioned above, as ‘castes’ and the minor groups as ‘subcastes’; nevertheless we are well aware of possible overlapping in divisions since people belonging in castes themselves are at times confused about the nature of their caste group. Mandelbaum has referred to them as ‘jatis’ and ‘*jati-clusters*’ (probably because there is no specific word in Indian language for the sub-castes) respectively,<sup>9</sup> which I think is fairly accurate analysis of caste as it is seen by ordinary people of India. My purpose in this article is to emphasize *the metabolous process inherent in caste system* which over centuries always ensued changes. Thereby, using some historical evidences, I propose to explore, contrary to the widely held view in academic and nonacademic circles that the Western contact and ‘modern ideas of rights and duties’<sup>11</sup> have created unprecedented changes and weakened the omnipotent role of caste, my own contention that on considering the growth and dynamics of castes though the ages on a wide historical scale and a functionalist perspective, we can clearly recognize a process inherent in the caste system itself that involuntarily paved the way toward its present state and eventual decay. The western influences of modernization was only instrumental in triggering the speed and directional orientation. The first part of the article published here will explain the futures of the caste system as I see it; while the second part to be published on some other occasion will explore the empirical data to examine my hypothetical contention.

## II

But before we enter into discussions it is necessary to explain a few Indian concepts which are important for understanding the caste system. We have heard much about the “untouchables”. However the most determining force behind untouchability (we shall use this word to refer not the ‘Harijans’ but in a wider meaning of ritualistic ability of each person and the access to social inter-course both inter-and intra-castes) is the concept of “pollution” - a central theme of caste relationship. There are many Indian words relating to this concept, viz., ‘*achut*’, ‘*apapatra*’, ‘*asprisyā*’, ‘*mletcha*’, and so on.<sup>12</sup> Every caste and sub-caste in relation to each other has some pollution connected permanent disabilities ranging from a mere touch to prohibition on sharing food or marriage; but they differ from caste to caste. Besides, there are some other temporary disabilities considered as personal, occurring due to some daily chores. Mandelbaum has given us a very good account of the significance of pollution.<sup>13</sup> “The main emphasis of the ritual criteria is on pollution rather than purity. Becoming polluted bars a person from ready relation with men and god. He must

keep his distance from people who are not so polluted as he is, lest his defects disable them also; he may not perform acts of worship because, in his defective state, he is repugnant to deities. Any serious pollution entails avoidance and isolation.” “There is, however, a vast difference between the two main kinds of pollution. One kind is temporary and personal pollution, to which every mortal is subject daily. The other kind is that permanent and corporate pollution ascribed to a jati.” We are concerned here more with the later type.

Permanent pollution is contagious and corporate within a caste, or more specifically a sub-caste. Cleanliness of the individuals in a group does not lessen the ritual pollution of that group. It is important to note that the degrees of caste pollution vary within different sub-castes and the linguistic areas. A caste may not be polluting for certain social exchanges in one area but may be avoided in another. The Sudra caste in Bengal is divided into four categories. A Brahmin can accept food from ‘Sat-Sudra’ or ‘Jalacharaniya Sudra’ but not from ‘Jalabaharya Sudra’ or ‘Asprisyā Sudra’, not to tell of the ‘Antyavasayin’ (the out-castes, who may include people of other religions too, like the Muslims or the Christians) and other lowly untouchables (Harijans and other tribes) who are not included in the formal caste structure and thus termed as ‘Scheduled castes’ in India. Nehru has satirically called this pollution phenomenon and restrictions as “fantastic lengths” of “touch-me-notism”.<sup>14</sup>

Pollution is transferable by physical contact between a person or object that is more defiled and a person who is less defiled until the moment of contact. Personal pollution is believed to last till it is removed with ritual ablution and invocation. “Purity is more evanescent and fleeting. It is the achievement of transient elevation rather than any lasting presence of grace. Pollution overcomes purity. A person who has purified himself, as it were, is a precariously balanced state of being which is soon undone. Being in a pure state is a temporary holding off of inevitable encroachment.... In both high purity and deep pollution a person must be insulated from social contact and isolated from society.”<sup>15</sup>

Ritual strictness of purity varies by castes.<sup>16</sup> Scriptural writing advise the ‘twice-born’ to perform more rituals (and more strictly) than those performed by the Sudras. We may though, on occasions find a low ranked caste being more strict than some higher castes, it is generally accepted that members of higher castes are more prudent about pollution-both private and corporate. The concepts of purity and pollution are the basic factors working behind all relationships and inter-course within the society. The idea of ‘*katcha*’ (cooked in water) and ‘*pakka*’ (cooked in oil) food is also an pollution and deeply concerns the daily life of people.<sup>17</sup>

### III

An explanation of caste system as it exists today requires an understanding of some inherent aspects of contemporary Indian society. MacIver observes "Whereas in eastern civilizations the chief determinant of class and status was birth, in western civilization of today wealth is a class determinant of equal or perhaps greater importance, and wealth is a less rigid determinant than birth: it is more concrete, and thus its claims are more easily concrete, and thus its claims are more easily challenged; itself a matter of degree, it is less apt to create distinctions of kind, alienable, and transferable, and it draws no such permanent line of cleaver age as does birth."<sup>18</sup> To understand MacIver we have to answer what influences caste maintains on an individual. In other words, we must examine the nature and how caste divisions work in India.

#### 1 . *Ritualistic Segmental Division of Society:*

Caste divisions are ritualistic and oriented toward segmentation.<sup>19</sup> Ghurye opines, "Castes were groups with well-developed life of their own, the membership whereof, unlike that of voluntary association or classes, was determined not by selection but birth." There is no denying that caste segmentation centers on Hindu theocratic sanctions though there is a trend among some modern writers to include even the Muslims and Christians in count and project caste as social division. A Hindu is always born in a caste, and caste being a permanent attribute allows no voluntary choice. Each caste has distinct social norms, morals and rituals. "The customs about marriage and death vary widely among different castes. Brahmin did not permit widow-marriage nor tolerated concubinage as a caste practice."<sup>20</sup> Again, many castes have their special deities, and the accompanying festivals differ amongst them.

Most of the castes, excepting the high ones, maintain 'caste Panchayat'.<sup>21</sup> The panchayat, as a system of social control, enforces segmental divisions and maintains an almost 'quasi-sovereignty' in matters of caste affairs. Misra and Parthasarathy, in their study on caste cohesion and conflict, have shown how the Harijans trying to break-through the pollution barrier against them by upper castes, are not at all ready to abandon such barriers they maintain against the lower stratum.<sup>22</sup> The force, what Srinivas calls "Sanskritization"<sup>23</sup> can also be interpreted as working in favor of segregation and maintaining ultimate caste status quo. The amount of community feeling is secondary since in matters of caste affairs people show strong moral allegiance to castes.

Secondly, India is a land of multiple languages each one very different from the other. Officially fourteen languages are recognized and are printed on Indian currency notes, all in different alphabets. A linguistic area signifies not a mere division of land by languages,

rather the basic differences in cultural traits, especially social norms and rituals affecting the fine details of life can be traced to these divisions. Such differences become more pronounced in case of castes and their patterns of intercourse ( even names and number of castes ) differ across the linguistic boundaries. This creates a social situation where castes of same social standing from two different linguistic areas follow restrictions in interaction. A Brahmin from Calcutta is not treated equal in Lucknow, or vice-versa.

Thirdly, elements of segmental division can be traced in rural urban dichotomy of caste values and life patterns.<sup>24</sup> Villagers are traditional, more conforming to caste rules, and the rules cover wider aspects of life. To them the towns-people and their caste rules are different from their own, and thus cannot be of same standing as themselves. AS barber caste in village who serves higher castes will not attend low castes or untouchables; while a city barber may attend both. This however, does not imply a deviation from caste rules, nor is the example unique for modern cities only. City life required and allowed for some differences in caste norms since medieval days. Examples abound in history and other writings. Vatsyayana also reveals such behavioral differences, though centering on sex values and sex life in cities.<sup>25</sup> As in the above case, a city barber presumably faithful to his city caste rules, will not get equal esteem or be accepted in village. Similarly, a Brahmin priest of various castes and sects visit will not be considered as ritually pure as himself by a strict village Brahmin. A system of such duality in caste rules for cities and villages enhanced rural-urban segregation.

To sum up, the segmental division of Indian society into castes is ritualistic since it is sanctioned by Hindu scriptures; but the division in today's society has been much influenced by other secular factors, like the linguistic differences or the urban-rural divisions that eventually created many sub-castes.

#### 2 . *Ritualistic Hierarchy and Jajmani Relations:*

Castes in India are assigned fixed positions on a vertical dimension of hierarchy in ritual purity. Pareto says, social stratification is an essential characteristic of any organized society: "Varying in from social stratification has existed in all societies;" and the basis and essence of such stratification consists is "unequal distribution of rights and privillages, duties and responsibilities, social values and privations, social power and influences among members of a society."<sup>26</sup>

Then, what is special about caste society in India is that not only membership in caste is attributed by birth, but "every individual is forever attached to the social stratum from one another are absolutely impenetrable".<sup>27</sup> It is often believed that "the Hindu population maintain their purity of blood to the present day and that it is only the lower castes wherein the admixture of blood can at all be supposed to

have taken place. A Brahmana, Ksatriya or Vaisya has been a Brahmana, Ksatriya or Vaisya since the days of Rgveda.” However, in his fine research paper, Bhandarkar with empirical evidences from history has proved the fallacy of such a claim in early days of caste.<sup>28</sup> Although it can be said that in later days there was little opportunity for climbing from one caste to another, we can rightly advocate that caste stratification itself was modified on occasions. Historical evidences show that there had been good deal of social changes. Hence we agree with the claim “Though Indian caste society has often been depicted as static social order, in reality people of India have kept adjusting their social system and at times have made fundamental changes in them”.<sup>29</sup> We shall return to this statement later. For the present it is important to note that in India there is no ‘single all-India hierarchy’ of castes and the variations are great indeed from one region to another.

Traditionally each caste is assigned with a particular occupation. Caste control of occupations can be divided into three types: preferred, permitted, and forbidden occupations, which we discuss later. Occupational specialization, as in any society, would require cooperation and interdependence for exchange of services and products, which could “involve a range of relationships along a scale from purely contractual, individual, impersonal, temporary, limited transactions at one end to broadly supportive, group-oriented, long-term, multiple bonds at the other”.<sup>30</sup> In India such relation is durable, exclusive and multiple; is vested in the family and inherited through the family lineage; and is enforced by the caste. These ‘jajmani’ relations involve multiple kinds of obligations, payments and other functions. At times of crisis or need the jajmani associates are supposed to support and help each other, parallel to what close kinsmen may expect to receive. Jajmani relations, in short, cut across the caste hierarchy by establishing relations of exchange and help between higher and lower castes. However, they contain the dual possibilities of solidarity and mutual benefits as well as conflicts and exploitation. Consequently, the lower castes are not necessarily always the most exploited. The economic rule of balance between ‘demand and supply’ of services highly influences the equilibrium. Even a Brahmin is helplessly dependent on a Dom (one of the lowest and untouchable castes) for rites of burning a dead body.<sup>31</sup>

Discussing about social hierarchy we must note that a person’s prestige in a social milieu can be influenced by many secular reasons beside the caste. “The ritual standards are used as reference frame for social order, but interaction among villagers of different jatis is strongly influenced by secular considerations. Abbe Dubois recognized this in his classic account of South Indian peoples in the early nineteenth century: ‘Thus the caste to which the ruler of a country be-

longs, however low it may be considered elsewhere, ranks amongst the highest in the ruler’s own dominions, and every member of it derives some reflection of dignity from its chief’.”<sup>32</sup> Secular factors may influence social ranking of castes in several ways. For example, among those castes or sub-castes of similar ritual practice, the one whose people have main power and wealth may rank higher. Again, the ritual shortfalls of a dominant caste tend to be leniently interpreted. Further, a lower caste that acquires wealth uses its strength to change meanings of demeaning practices or acquire new practices to raise its caste image.

The people in India use the concept ‘izzat’ (meaning personal prestige) to refer the dignity and integrity of a person or family. “Thus although every one in the village world agree that the caste of Brahmins is to be ranked at the top and the caste of Chamars ranked far down toward the bottom, still most persons would rate certain well-to-do and respectable Chamars as higher in individual prestige than certain pious and impecunious Brahmins”.<sup>33</sup> But the izzat of a person does not lead to removal of ritual restrictions, especially regarding acceptance of food and establishing marriage relations which are more strictly observed by respective castes.

Further, there are many activities not covered by caste rules but can adversely influence social patterns of interaction among castes. For example, work in the fields is far less involved with ritual restrictions than the work in kitchen is. In play also caste relations tend to be mitigated, except the very low untouchables. Such latitude in work, sports, etc., is found on many occasions. Moreover, a generally lenient attitude toward conduct outside village, viz., in the markets or fairs, the towns and cities, is of long standing in Indian society. In modern times, such opportunities together with new occupations where caste rules have no control have increased. So today we find situations where, a Brahmin engineer and a Kayastha engineer, though of equal status in profession, belong to two different castes in their private lives, and there could not be any social intercourse between them on equal terms in ritualistic and personal matters.

To summarize, hierarchy of caste relations although stem from ritual regulations, the overall prestige and social position of an individual, a family, or sometime even a caste is highly influenced by other secular factors. A ritualistic low position does not necessarily mean a pitiable life nor an outright exploitation by upper castes. The villagers maintain a network of jajmani relations of exchange and help especially for ritualistic services. Finally, we find a prevailing tendency of dividing ritual role and status from the public or secular role and status. This is increasing with the growth of new roles and government controls against intrusion of ritual role upon the public role.

### 3 . Caste Status: Restrictions and Disabilities:

Hindu tenets on castes concern mainly with ritual disabilities and control and cover extensive areas of life: religion, occupation, marriage and social intercourse, communal life and feeding, et cetera. The central theme behind many of these rules is the concept of pollution, we have already explained. For our discussion here we categorized these regulations into three fields as below:

*A. Community Life and Food:* The most visible feature of caste in daily life is regulations about food and the touch-pollution. As a general rule, a higher caste will not take food or drink from the hands or pots of a lower caste, although a lower caste may receive from a higher caste. But this rule is not universal and there are minute details regarding what sort of food and drink can be accepted and from what castes. 'Pakka' food stands a greater chance of acceptance than the 'katcha' food which is generally accepted from the people of same caste. Besides, there are also rules of prohibition and preference of food for various ritual states of a person. A strict Brahmin or a widow in higher castes will take vegetarian dishes devoid of besides meat and fish, even egg and onion. A Chandala on the other hand can eat pork while all high castes will not. There are even castes who eat beef.<sup>34</sup>

Regarding the touch pollution, the rule stands that a person in ritual impurity must avoid everybody lest he defiles them. There are temporary personal impurities also, viz., a Brahmin upon the death of a close kinsman becomes untouchable to everybody for a specified number of days; a menstruating woman cannot enter temples, etc. Such personal impurity involves daily life of people and thus latently functions as a softening cushion against sensitivity of discrimination felt by lower strata, specially the 'untouchable' castes.

But we are interested here more with corporate pollution as a social yard-stick for caste division between the 'clean' and 'impure' castes. The degree of impurity varies even among those who are branded as a group-the 'untouchables' by the 'twice-born' castes.<sup>35</sup> Granting that theoretically any lower caste could defile a higher caste, in practice however the rule is not observed strictly. Purity and pollution have become relative of class discrimination against those who are at the bottom of the strata. Such segregation of individual castes (or the group of castes as the case may be) leads to an obvious mark of social privileges and disabilities; and it has prevailed in more or less definite form all over India. Allowing for numerous local diversities, we can nevertheless, in a gross oversimplified form divide India into three parts: central and north-west, east, and south: which reveal definite patterns of caste disabilities.<sup>36</sup> South India is more rigid on rules of purity and pollution. Certain parts of villages are inaccessible to certain castes. In some extreme cases even the shadow of an untouchable can defile a Brahmin. All over India the untouchable castes

are debarred from drawing water from a village well which is used by members of other castes.

Even in matters of religion, restrictions exist against the untouchables. Ghurye explains, "Brahmanic ceremonies are to be performed with the help of a ritual, and two types of rituals have been evolved: the Vedic and the Puranic.... The Sudras are asked to content themselves with the later ritual, while for the impure castes, a Brahmin, unless he is a pseudo Brahmin or an apostate, would not minister at all."<sup>37</sup> Addingly, we must also consider that no caste could employ a priest other than a Brahmin; therefore the untouchable castes could not get priests for Hindu religious ceremonies.

Looking at the growth and origin of various castes in India, we come across many castes which do not fit properly in Hindu codes of castes. They are, as can be recognized by their caste names, of tribal origin and usually are rated as untouchables by the society. It is understandable, because in Hinduism those who were out-castes (i.e., including the ones who did not follow Hindu teachings but other animistic beliefs) auto-matically become untouchables. Naturally, many of these tribal groups had their own deities. Today in Indian society not only the 'twice-born' Hindus but also Sudra Hindus keep ritual distance from these untouchable groups. Separate deities got prominence in other layers of castes too, and now is very common all over India excepting the Brahmins. Another code of caste restrictions on religion concerns Hindu temples. In most such temples only the Brahmins can enter the inner-most section, other higher castes and 'clean Sudra' remain outside the sacred precincts, while the 'impure Sudras' and other untouchables and out-castes are not even allowed to enter and must remain in the court-yards of the temple.

*B. Choice of Occupation:* Generally a caste or a group of allied castes considers some jobs as its hereditary occupation. But this does not mean that all castes crick to these traditional caste occupations only. As we have explained, caste occupations only. As we have explained, caste control of occupations can be divided into three groups: preferred, permitted and prohibited. Priesthood is a preferred occupation for a Brahmin, while other jobs are allowed, and some are prohibited. Likewise, shoe-making and leather-works are preferential occupations of Chamars, but they can engage in some other occupations also, and are prohibited from still others. The "groups of occupations like trading, agriculture, laboring in the field, and doing military service which were looked upon as anybody's and most castes were supposed to be eligible for any of them."<sup>38</sup> Such occupational opportunities led to the creation of many sub-castes within a caste who followed different occupations over long period of time and thus instituted a hereditary right over the new occupations. So a shoe-maker Chamar, and a farmer Chamar, in social heritage are different sub-

castes. As a general rule occupations which required ritual purity ( e.g., priesthood ) and the occupations which inflicted ritual pollution and were degrading to the caste status ( e.g., hides-work, dirt-cleaning, etc., ) were prohibited. The horde of new professions growing with industrialization and modernization are contested by different castes. Still, many discriminating restrictions exist simply because the 'clean-castes' to protect their ritual purity want to avoid interacting with polluting castes on same floors in the office or factory.

*C. Marriage Choices:* Marriage presumably is the strongest force segregating the castes-more specifically sub-castes-into exclusive groups. The principle of endogamy had been such a dominant aspect of caste division that writers often have considered it as 'the essence of caste system'.<sup>39</sup> There are however rare exceptions here and there to this almost universal rule of marrying within one's own group. Though Bhandarkar has shown that intermarriage prevailed in old India,<sup>40</sup> in modern times such acts are not accepted. Any person venturing to transgress this law would undergo all sorts of pressures and discriminations by his own sub-caste, and he would not be admitted into any other respectable caste. Looking at the rigidity of this rule and its encompassing effects, Russel said, "The real unit of the system and the basis of fabric of Indian society is this endogamous group or sub-caste."<sup>41</sup>

To regard the endogamy codes as the chief factors of caste division however creates a problem: how to draw line of distinction between caste and sub-caste, that is counted; yet treating sub-castes as castes leads to enumerating a puzzling number of groups, which becomes highly inconvenient in practice and contrary to how Indian people think of caste. As a general rule, it is the caste which is recognized by the society at large, and it is the sub-caste that is considered important by respective castes and persons belonging in there.

To sum up, various social and religious disabilities, caste control of occupations, etc., were determined by the nature of castes and their ritual purity prescribed in Hindu codes. But the details in regulations of communal life: touch-pollution, food, marriage and social intercourse, and so on, are largely under the sphere of sub-castes. Local differences are strong and accepted within the system. At larger social level, what Chie Nakane calls indifference toward others so characteristic of the Indian system, prevails as an outcome of this attitude.<sup>42</sup> Sub-castes consequently are more important in day-to-day life of the people, although castes function as reference groups in the larger society. To recognize this duality of identity and social existence, and overlap of caste codes are important for sociological examination of how caste divisions are made and actually work.

#### NOTES:

Both foreign and Indian writers have used the term 'caste' origi-

nally from Portuguese, for the prevalent social order in India as well as the component groups within the order. But before starting the discussion, we need to clarify that the term is used rather confusedly to denote both 'verna' and 'jati', while in Indian interpretation they are rather separate concepts. Based on Hindu scripture, the society is divided into four rank categories called 'verna'. However, today such differentiations are difficult to make; and in many cases a Hindu cannot clearly define his status according to 'verna'. It is 'jati' ( sometimes called 'zat' ) which concerns the people. Jati is the basic component of the social system and is a unit of great importance in Hindu life. Further, much finer classification of those within a jati is made in each locality. They often are referred to as 'sub-castes' in English. When a villager is asked about his 'jati' he refers either to the wider group of jati or finer classification within a wider group, depending upon the expectations or knowledge of the questioner. The use of 'caste' therefore, often includes all these meanings and social layers.

- 1 . jati ( ジャーティ ) カースト制度のみならずインドには ジャーティと呼ばれる身分制度が存在する。ジャーティとは職業別の身分差別で、職業は数千にも分類される。この中でもドービーと呼ばれる洗濯屋やゴミ拾いの人々、町の掃除屋などは人から出た汚れを扱うとして特に汚い存在として扱われる。これらの職業はほとんどが世襲制でこの世に生を受けた時点で彼らの運命は決まっているのである。
- 2 . 不可触民とは4つのどの階級にも属すことの出来ない最下級に分類された人々のことを指す。彼らはヒンドゥー教の浄・不浄の観念によって「穢れ」の存在としておかれてしまった。
- 3 . In Rgveda the earliest hymns mention of three classes only, named Brahma, Ksyatra and Vis. The first two represented broadly the two professions of poet-priest, and the warrior-chief. The third division was apparently a group comprising the common people. It is only in one of the later hymns that a mention of four orders are given there as Brahmana, Rajanya, Vaisya and Sudra, who are said to have come respectively from the mouth, the arms, the thighs and the feet of the creator. ( Rgvada, X. 90. 12 ) For details see Ghurye; mentioned below.
- 4 . There are differences in opinions regarding status of Sudra. It is of no doubt that they were at the bottom of the four-tier structure. But were they slaves? Rgveda mentioned them only once. But according to the Creation theory of Hindus, no deities were created along with Sudras. Therefore they were debarred from participating in upper caste religions and offering sacrifices. It is of interest to note that in Rgveda 'verna' ( literally meaning 'col-

- or ) is used to refer 'Arya verna' and 'Dasa ( slave ) verna'. It is only in later literature that this division tends to bedrawn between the 'Arya' and 'Sudra', where the Sudra is described as of dark color. Still later we find references of 'Arya' as 'Dvija' ( meaning 'twice-born' ) . Consequently all thgher three castes are claimed to be as 'twice-born' while Sudras are not. For details see Ghurye; below; pp. 44-55.
- 5 . GHURYE, G.S.; Class and Caste in India; Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1957; p. 22
  - 6 . *Adopted from SOROKIN Pitirim A.*; Social and Cultural Mobility; Free Press, N.Y., 1959; pp. 4-5
  - 7 . SRINIVAS M.N.; Social Change in Modern India; Univ. of California Press, 1966; p. 28.
  - 8 . Op. cit., p.1
  - 9 . Op. cit.
  - 10 . Op. cit.; pp.59-60
  - 11 . Ghurye; op. cit. But this statement can also be interpreted as what Shah refers to as system of thought and system of values in his discussion on comprehensive definition of modernity and tradition. ( Cf. SHAH A.B. and RAO C.R.M.( eds ), Tradition and Modernity in India; Manaktalas, Bombay, 1965; p. 9 )
  - 12 . Achut is a word of Hindustani origin meaning 'untouchable' Apapatra, asprisya and mletcha are words of Sanskrit origin meaning 'unclean', 'untouchable' and 'foreigner/dirty' respectively.
  - 13 . Op. cit.; pp. 184-205 for detailed discussion and quotations below.
  - 14 . NEHRU Jawaharlal; The Discovery of India; John Day, N.Y., 1946; p. 251
  - 15 . Mandelbaum; op. cit.; p. 192  
 "The sources of pollution are many; the most potent of them are contacts with death and bodily emissions, such as blood and excreta." ( Ibid; p. 184 )  
 "Faeces, urine, semen, menstrual blood, spittle, and paring of nail and hair are all ritually impure." ( Cf. SRINIVAS M.N.; Religion and Society; Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford, 1952; p. 104 )
  - 16 . Rituals of purity are many depending on the type of pollution and caste status. However, the excrements of cow is used in most cases of purification from simple 'touch pollution'. "The cow's most impure part ( specially the cow-dung and urine ) is sufficiently pure relative even a Brahmin priest to remove the latter's impurities." ( Cf. HARPER Edward B.; Ritual Pollution as an Integrator of Caste and Religion; Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 2, 1964; p. 183 )
  - 17 . There are minute details and fine lines of dividing all foods and drinks into those which are susceptible to pollution and those which are not. Water is easily contaminating, while milk and oil are not. ( In this respect it is interesting to note that milkmen ( 'Goala' caste ) or oel-pressers( 'Teil' caste ) are very low castes in India but can sell their products even to a Brahmin. ) Thus, any food cooked, boiled or baked by using water from the hands of a person in ritually polluting state of being, or from a polluting caste are unacceptable. But there is no such barrier for foods cooked or fried in oil, or boiled and baked in milk. Again, grains, raw vegetables, whole nuts, unpeeled and whole fruits are safe, But when a nut is broken, and a fruit is peeled, sliced or cut they become unacceptable by upper castes.
  - 18 . MACIVER R.M. ( ed ) Community; 1920 ; p. 124 footnote.
  - 19 . Indian caste society provides no ladder for upward mobility in caste status. The caste division is 'ritualistic' since there is a theocratic legitimacy behind it; but the division has been influenced by secular reasons as well, discussed below. But I call the divisions segmental because each caste represents a small social world in itself: endogamous in nature and marked off exclusively from others though subsisting on the larger society.
  - 20 . Ghurye; op. cit.
  - 21 . Panchayat has taken different shapes and therefore there is no hard and fast rule for panchayat. But we can safely say that it is a community meeting. 'Panch' means 'five' and therefore panchayat refers to any meeting of the community people for settling some disputes or problems. Depending on the nature of the matter in question, ( viz., if it concerns the village, or a couple of castes, or just a single caste ) a panchayat meeting can be held with either all the castes in the village, or only a few concerned castes, or only a single caste attending. In modern India the government is trying to use panchayat as village council for impriming programs of development. But in the past pahchayat meetings were held for matters of caste decisions, and are still held today when need arises. I used the concept 'caste panchayat' to emphasize its nature as different from the occasional secular pahchayat meetings held today in Indian villages.
  - 22 . MISRA P.K. and PARTHASARATHY J.; Caste in Cohesion and Conflict in Village India; in the Eastern Anthropology, Vol. 34 No. 4, 1981 ; pp. 275-286
  - 23 . SRINIVAS M.N.: A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization; in the Far Eastern Quarterly, No. 15, 1956; pp. 481-496
  - 24 . Many writers depict rural and urban life as a continuum. But looking at facts of life in south Asia and the contrasts in rural and urban milieu propping up much strong than any of the developed countries, I consider for straight forwardness of our dis-

- cussion, a clear division between urban and rural modes of caste behavior is appropriate.
- 25 . See "Kamasutra of Vatsyayana"; Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1974.
- 26 . Sorokin; op. cit. p. 11
- 27 . Ibid; p. 139
- 28 . *BHANDARKAR D.R.*: Foreign Elements in Hindu Population; Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture, Univ. of Calcutta, reprinted 1968; p. 3-7  
 "Not only the higher castes, viz. the Ksatriyas and Vaisyas but also the lowest castes, such as fishermen and Candelas, in short, all castes and classes have contributed to the formation of the Brahmana caste, i.e., the caste now recognized to be the formation of the highest and purest in India! Most of these quotations are taken from Mahabharatha which is recognized by the Hindus so important and sacred that it has been called the fifth Veda. And it is the fifth Veda that we have mostly relied upon for tracing some of the sources of Brahmana caste."( p.6 )
- 29 . Mandelbaum; op. cit.; p. 7
- 30 . Ibid; p.161
- 31 . There are many such examples of ritualistic dependency. A barber beside haircut will also work ritually as a messenger on occasion of marriage or other special festivities in the family of jajmani associate. All castes whose services are ritually essential for the family are invited on special occasions, e.g., marriage, birth, etc., and are presented with gifts. For detail discussion on jajmani relations, see Ibid; pp. 161-180; also DUBE S.C.; Indian Village; Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1955.
- 32 . Mandelbaum; p. 206; quoted from DUBOIS A.J.A., Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies ( Translated by BEAUCHAMP H.K. ) Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1928.
- 33 . *MARRIOTT, McKim*; Interactional and Attributional Theories of Caste Ranking; in Man in India, Vol. 39, 1959; pp. 92-107
- 34 . Mandelbaum; p. 200
- 35 . Not only against the untouchable castes but also among the 'twice-born' castes of Brahmin, Ksatriya and Vaisya origin, as well as among other 'clean castes' like the 'Sat Sudras' there are divisions of purity for accepting food from each other. Again, a 'touch' by the untouchables carries different degrees of pollution-less impure, extremely impure, etc., -and requires different methods of purification rites.
- 36 . Ghurye divides into two parts: the north and the south India. But in the north there is a large perceptual difference between the east and the west. In the eastern parts like Bihar, Bengal, Assam or Tripira states Sudras are divided into four groups as we mentioned earlier, which are not common for other parts of India.
- 37 . Ghurye; p. 13
- 38 . Ibid; p. 15
- 39 . WESTERMARCK E.A.; History of Human Marriage; 5 th ed., Vol. 1, 1921; p. 59; as quoted in Ghurye; p. 17
- 40 . Op. cit.
- 41 . *RUSSELL R.V.*; The Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces; Vol.1, 1916; p. 10
- 42 . *NAKANE Chie*; Japanese Society; Univ. of California Press; 1972.

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