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Engaging with Caste: Academic Discourses, Identity Politics and State Policy

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Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (IIDS) has been amongst the first research organisations in India to focus exclusively on development concerns of the marginalised groups and socially excluded communities. Over the last seven year, IIDS has carried-out several studies on different aspects of social exclusion and discrimination of the historically marginalised social groups, such as the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Religious Minorities in India and other parts of the Sub-Continent. The Working Paper Series disseminates empirical findings of the ongoing research and conceptual development on issues pertaining to the forms and nature of social exclusion and discrimination. Some of our papers also critically examine inclusive policies for the marginalised social groups.

The working paper ‘Engaging with Caste: Academic Discourses, Identity Politics and State Policy’ discusses systematic theorisation of caste and maps the paradigm shifts through critical writings and comprehensive researches on the subject. The paper is crucial as it encapsulates three moments in theorisation of caste in India and engages at the policy level. With colonial notion of caste hierarchy and understanding of “Hindu India” as an institution, epitome of traditional culture of India, which dominated the text-book view of caste, initiated the theorisation of caste as the moment of culture. Notwithstanding the classical anthropological theorising, the encounter of social scientists, social anthropologists and political scientists despite working with evolutionist models recognised tremendous resilience that caste begot on ground. In their attempts to theorise changing realities of caste, new relationships between caste and democratic political processes were besought. Eventually, the institutionalisation of democratic politics changed caste equation and shift in power and the flavour of regional politics changed invariably around a caste identity. This was the moment of politics, where caste could successfully negotiate with democratic politics but did not confront political questions internal to caste hierarchies, question of power, discrimination and social exclusion. The rise of autonomous Dalit politics in 1980s and 1990s saw emergence of new language of caste
articulating experiences and caste-ness of Dalits. Keeping abreast the changes in geopolitics, globalisation influenced cultures and politics, invoking community rights and identity politics. Therefore, caste reservations and extended reservations to other backward classes turned into an important element to legitimise state policy for development. The shift in state policy coincided or responded to these processes. These shifts transformed as well as expanded the meanings of democratic politics and state/development policy. Indeed, the fact that caste collectivities not participating as equals even in modern democratic politics, emerged in what came to be called the third moment of caste. That is to say, the institution of caste has not undergone simply revival but more significantly, it is articulated very differently. Nevertheless, articulations from the below or understanding of caste from below allow engagements with realities of caste at an intellectual level or to make sense of why and how caste continues to be present today; therefore addressing the question of caste at policy level.

This is part of a knowledge partnership between UNICEF and IIDS to unravel further policy concerns from the perspective of socially excluded communities. We hope our working paper will be helpful to academics, students, activists, civil society organisations and policymaking bodies.

Rajendra P. Mamgain
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Engaging With Caste: Academic Discourses, Identity Politics and State Policy

Surinder S. Jodhka*

...In the 50s’ and 60s’ and into the 70s’, caste was the subject of academic interest. Today ... it has become a subject of public interest.

1. Introduction

History of modern day theorization of caste begins with Western and colonial engagements with Indian civilization (Cohn 1996; Dirks 2001). Categories such as varna, jati or zat and the corresponding social divisions and hierarchies of status, have indeed been present in different parts (though not everywhere) of the South Asian region for a very long time. These have also been source of contestations. For example, several social and religious movements during the “medieval” times questioned

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the legitimacy of such divisions and offered alternative ways of imagining human universe based on egalitarian ideals\(^3\)

The western idea of ‘caste’ simplified the diverse, and often contested, realities of the “native” social order into a neatly marked out division of groups. Drawn mostly from the ancient “Hindu” texts, these “orientalist” writings theorized caste as a hierarchical system through the idea of *varṇa* as a substantive category where Brahmans were always placed at the top of the hierarchical order, followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. The untouchable communities were outside the formal hierarchy but their status also followed this neat hierarchical ordering derived from the logic of purity and impurity.

Though not all colonial observers agreed on nature of the Indian caste system, a dominant view on the subject evolved over the years. The beginning of a systematic theory of caste could be seen in the writings of C. Bougle. In an essay first published in 1908, he contested those who looked at caste merely as a system of occupational specialization. He defined caste as a system consisting of hierarchically arranged hereditary groups, separated from each other in certain respects (caste endogamy, restrictions on eating together and on physical contact), but interdependent in other (traditional division of labour). The word ‘caste’, he emphasized, not only involved hereditary specialization of occupations but also differential rights. Different occupations were arranged in a hierarchical order that made their occupants socially unequal. Inequality was an essential feature of the caste system. Along with inequality, he also underlined the element of pollution as an important feature of caste. Different groups, in a caste society, tend to ‘repel each other rather than attract, each retires within itself, isolates itself, makes every effort to prevent its members from contracting alliances or even from entering into relation with neighboring groups’ (Bougle, 1971:65). Thus Bougle identified three core features of caste system, viz., hereditary occupation, hierarchy and mutual repulsion.

For the colonial rulers, such theorization of Indian social order was not merely an academic exercise. This helped them make sense of what seemed like an incomprehensible reality. They also deployed their notion of caste hierarchy in their administrative system for classifying the native communities and determining their qualities and traits. As Sharma points out:
...the British took the existence of caste very seriously. Successive censuses of India attempted to classify the entire population by caste, on the assumption that everyone must belong to some caste or other and that castes were real identifiable groups. As a result this objectification of caste actually made it more real and liable to rigidification... (Sharma 2002: 8).

This “book-view” of caste also constructed India as the “other” of the West. Even though they were divided on class lines, the modern western societies were culturally or ideologically governed by the idea of equal citizenship. Caste was a peculiar feature of the subcontinent, where social order had been static for ages and had no possibility of change emanating from internal contradictions. This view of caste served useful ideological function. It helped them present a positive image of the colonial rule over India. The normative order of caste was so strong that it made it impossible for “natives” to change their traditional system on their own, or as Inden would argue, they had no agency of their own (Inden 1990:65). Even radical thinkers like Marx and Engels were influenced by such views about the Indian social order and they affirmed in their writings the need for a colonial intervention which alone could break the equilibrium that had kept the Indian village community static for centuries.

The influence of colonialism and its forms of knowledge, to use Bernard Cohn’s expression (Cohn 1996), was also quite significant on the way professional sociology and social anthropology developed its understanding caste and the Hindu social order. Even when the post-colonial “native” sociologists and social anthropologists advocated a shift away from the ‘book-view’ of India, towards a ‘field-view’, the categories through which a majority of them imagined India invariably remained the same. For example, the village typically became a convenient methodological entry point for anthropologists interested in understanding the dynamics of Indian society (Jodhka 1998). Similarly, sociologists and social anthropologists universally assumed that the caste system was fundamental to Indian social structure, which in turn also synonymized Hindu religion with Indian culture.

More recent historical research on the subject has seriously undermined this common-sense view of the caste system. Not only did the colonial rulers through a process of enumeration and ethnographic surveys raise
consciousness about caste but also produced social and intellectual conditions where ‘caste became the single term capable of expressing, organizing, and above all “synthesizing” India’s diverse forms of social identity, community and organization’ (Dirks 2001:5). A good example of this could be found Peter Mayer’s work on the Jajmani System. As he argues, though it is popularly believed to be an ancient and pan-Indian reality, in fact it originated in northern India during the late 19th century (Mayer 1993).

Notwithstanding these critical writings, the dominant text-book view of caste has continued to be based largely on the classical colonial understanding of the “Hindu India”.

2. The “Book-View” of Caste, the Moment of Culture

Caste, according to this dominant view, was not merely an institution that characterized the structure of social stratification; it represented the core of India. It was both an institution as well as an ideology. Institutionally, “caste” provided a framework for arranging and organizing social groups in terms of their statuses and positions in the social and economic system. As an ideology, caste was a system of values and ideas that legitimized and reinforced the existing structures of social inequality. It provided a worldview around which a typical Hindu organized his/her life.

Apart from being an institution that distinguished India from other societies, caste was also an epitome of the Indian traditional society, a “closed system”, where generation after generation of individuals did similar kinds of work and lived more or less similar kinds of lives. In contrast, modern industrial societies of the West were projected as “open systems” of social stratification, societies based on class, where individuals could choose their occupations according to their abilities and tastes. If they worked for it, in such open systems of stratification, they could move up in the social hierarchy and change their class position. Such mobility at the individual level was impossible in the caste system.

Putting it in a language of social science textbooks G.S. Ghurye (1991) identified six different features of the Hindu caste system, viz. segmental division of society; hierarchy; restrictions on feeding and social intercourse; civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections; lack of unrestricted choice of occupation; restrictions on marriage.
Though seemingly simple and obvious, this list represented caste as a total and unitary system. Thus, it was possible to define caste and to identify its core features which were presumably present everywhere in the subcontinent. Similarly, caste was also not merely about occupational specialization or division of labour. It encapsulated within it the features of a social structure, normative religious behaviour and even provided a fairly comprehensive idea about personal lives of individuals living in the Hindu caste society.

Indian sociologists also pointed to the difference between *varna* and *jati*. While in the popular understanding there were only four *varnas*, the actual number of caste groups was quite large. According to one estimate in each linguistic region ‘there were about 200 caste groups which were further sub-divided into about 3000 smaller units each of which was endogamous and constituted the area of effective social life for the individual’ (Srinivas 1962: 65).

Perhaps the most influential theoretical work on caste has been of Louis Dumont. He approached the Hindu caste system from a structuralist perspective that focused on the underlying structure of ideas of a given system, the “essential principles”, which may not be apparent or visible in its everyday practice. Invoking Max Weber, he described his theory of caste as an ideal-type.

Caste, according Dumont, was above all an ideology and the core element in the ideology of caste for Dumont was hierarchy. Hierarchy was not merely another name for inequality or an extreme form of social stratification, but a totally different principle of social organization, founded on the idea of opposition of the pure and the impure. Pure was understandably superior to impure (Dumont 1998: 43).

Another important aspect of his theory was the specific relationship that existed between status and power in Hindu society. Unlike the West where power and status normally went together, in the caste system there was a divergence between the two. In caste society status as a principle of social organization was superior to power. “Status encompassed power”.

Such theorizations of caste have been further extended by works of scholars like Moffatt (1979) who emphasized on the underlying ideological unity
and cultural consensus across caste groups on its governing normative order. Srinivas’s concept of *sanskritization* will also fit well with such a theory. Sanskritization was a

... process by which a “low” Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently, “twice-born” caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community (Srinivas 1972:6).

Such theorizations of caste were extensively criticized for their ideological bias and weak empirical groundings (see Berreman 1971; Mencher 1974; Beteille 1979; Gupta 1984). However, they have continued to be popular and influential. Why does this happen? As I have argued elsewhere (Jodhka 2004) the idea of caste has been very deeply embedded in the modern Indian self-image, which is itself a mirror reflection of the orientalist and colonial images of India. Indian past is thus constructed as an unchanging tradition and its future is imagined through an evolutionary schema where the Western society is presented as a model for imitation in the name of modernization.

In such an evolutionary imagination, caste was a part and parcel of the traditional culture of India, eventually to disappear with the unfolding of the processes of industrialization, urbanization and modernization. This, I would like to argue, was the first moment of the theorization of caste, the moment of culture. Not only did such theorizations of caste simplify the complex systems of inequality, they rarely looked at it critically. It was a descriptive account of the classical anthropological eye, a western view of the “other cultures”. Even something like the practice of untouchability was not seen critically, an oppressive system, with an agency that enforced codes of behavior and reproduced regimes of subordination and domination.

### 3.1 Caste and the Institutionalization of Democracy: The Moment of Politics

Notwithstanding their faith in the scientific value of the classical anthropological theorizing, the encounter of social scientists, the social anthropologists and political scientists, working on India during the post-
independence period produced very different accounts of caste. Even when they worked with evolutionist models of social change, they recognized the tremendous resilience that caste was showing on the ground. Caste could enter the “modern” institutions, such as democracy, and survive or could even find a new life for itself. The rise of non-Brahmin movements in southern and western Indian provinces provoked Ghurye to argue that their attack on Brahmin dominance did not necessarily mean the end of caste. These mobilizations generated a new kind of collective sentiment, “the feeling of caste solidarity” which could be “truly described as caste patriotism” (Ghurye 1932: 192).

M. N. Srinivas developed this point further in his writings during the late 1950s. Focusing specifically on the possible consequences of modern technology and representational politics, both of which were introduced by the colonial rulers in India, he argued that far from disappearing with the process of modernization, caste was experiencing a “horizontal consolidation”. Commenting on the impact of modern technology on caste, he wrote:

The coming in of printing, of a regular postal service, of vernacular newspapers and books, of the telegraph, railway and bus, enabled the representatives of a caste living in different areas to meet and discuss their common problems and interests. Western education gave new political values such as liberty and equality. The educated leaders started caste journals and held caste conferences. Funds were collected to organize the caste, and to help the poorer members. Caste hostels, hospitals, co-operative societies etc., became a common feature of urban social life. In general it may be confidently said that the last hundred years have seen a great increase in caste solidarity, and the concomitant decrease of a sense of interdependence between different castes living in a region. (Srinivas 1962:74-75).

Similarly, the introduction of certain kinds of representational politics by the British helped in this process of horizontal consolidation of caste.

The policy which the British adopted of giving a certain amount of power to local self governing bodies, and preferences and concessions to backward castes provided new opportunities to castes. In order to be able to take advantage of these opportunities,
caste groups, as traditionally understood, entered into alliances with each other to form bigger entities (Srinivas 1962:5).

However, this was not a one-way process. The caste system too was undergoing a change. The horizontal solidarity of caste, which also meant a kind of ‘competition’ among different castes at the politico-economic plane, eventually weakened the vertical solidarity of caste (Srinivas 1962:74; Bailey 1963). This process received a further impetus with the introduction of democratic politics after India’s independence.

Encountered with the question of change in caste order, Louis Dumont too followed Srinivas and speculated on similar lines. Castes, he argued, did not disappear with the process of economic and political change, but its logic was altered. He described this process as change from “structure” to “substance”. This substantialization of caste indicated:

...the transition from a fluid, structural universe in which the emphasis is on interdependence and in which there is no privileged level, no firm units, to a universe of improbable blocks, self-sufficient, essentially identical and in competition with one another, a universe in which the caste appears as a collective individual (in the sense we have given to this word), as a substance (Dumont 1998:222 emphasis in original).

These attempts at theorizations of the changing realities of caste opened-up many new possibilities for looking at the dynamic relationship of caste with the democratic political process. Thus by 1960s sociologists and political scientists began to talk about caste and politics in a different language. Discussions shifted from a predominantly moral or normative concern about the corruption that caste brought into democratic political process to more empirical processes of interaction between caste and politics. The gradual institutionalization of democratic politics changed caste equations. Power shifted from one set of caste groups, the so-called ritually purer upper castes, to middle level “dominant castes”. The democratic politics also introduced a process of differentiation in the local levels of power structure. As Beteille reported in his study of a village in Tamil Nadu during late 1960s:

...a vast body of new structures of power has emerged in India since Independence. Today traditional bodies such as groups of caste
elders (which are functionally diffuse) have to compete increasingly with functionally specific structures of power such as parties and statutory panchayats (Beteille 1970: 246-7).

However, this differentiation did not mean that these new structures were free of caste. Caste soon entered in their working but the authority of these institutions had to be reproduced differently. Though traditional sources of power continued to be relevant, introduction of universal adult franchise also made “numbers” of caste communities in a given local setting critical. Power could be reproduced only through mobilizations, vertically as well as horizontally. This also gave birth to a new class of political entrepreneurs. Over the years some of them have begun to work successfully without confining their political constituency to a single caste-cluster, thus undermining the logic of caste politics (Krishna 2001).

3.2. Caste Associations

While sociologists and social anthropologists talked about horizontal consolidation of castes or its substantialization into ‘ethnic communities’, political sociologists worked on the phenomenon and possible roles of caste associations in democratic politics. Beginning with the late 19th century, different parts of the sub-continent saw the emergence of ‘caste associations’. While on the face of it, caste associations appeared like a typical case of Indian tradition trying to assert itself against the modernizing tendencies unleashed by the colonial rule they in fact represented a different kind of process. Lloyd and Susan Rudolf were among the first to study the phenomenon of caste associations in democratic India. They looked at caste associations as agents of modernity in a traditional society like India. They argued that caste association was

....no longer an ascriptive association in the sense in which caste taken as jati was and is. It has taken on features of the voluntary association. Membership in caste association is not purely ascriptive; birth in the caste is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for membership. One must also “join” through some conscious act involving various degrees of identification.... (Rudolf and Rudolf 1967:33 emphasis in original)

Through his study of *The Nadars of Tamilnad*, Robert Hardgrave further reinforced their thesis by arguing that the caste association of Nadars
worked like a pressure group and had played an important role in the upward social mobility of the community (Hardgrave 1969). M. N. Srinivas too similarly argued that caste associations came up as agents of social mobility for the caste communities at the time when British rulers introduced enumeration of castes (Srinivas 1962).

A little later Rajni Kothari also argued, more or less, on similar lines while writing on caste and democratic political process in India. In the introduction to the celebrated volume *Caste in Indian Politics* (1970) that he edited, Kothari argued against the popular notion that democratic politics was helping traditional institutions like caste to ‘resuscitate and re-establish their legitimacy’. This could lead to ‘disintegrative tendencies’ and could potentially ‘disrupt the democratic and secular framework of Indian polity’. In reality however,

> ...the consequences of caste-politics interactions are just the reverse of what is usually stated. It is not politics that gets caste-ridden; it is caste that gets politicised. Dialectical as might sound, it is precisely because the operation of competitive politics has dawned caste out of its apolitical context and given it a new status that the ‘caste system’ as hitherto known has eroded and has begun to disintegrate.... (Kothari 1970: 20-1).

Caste federation, he argued, ‘once formed on the basis of caste identities go on to acquire non-caste functions, become more flexible in organization, even begin to accept members and leaders from castes other than those with which it started, stretches out to new regions, and also makes common cause with voluntary organizations, interest groups and political parties. In course of time, the federation becomes a distinctly political group’ (Kothari 1970: 21-22).

Speaking in a less enthusiastic language, Ghanshyam Shah also made a similar point. Though in the long run caste association did promote competitive politics and participation, they also exacerbated parochialism, he argued (Shah 1975).

Notwithstanding the deviation they brought into the process of democratic politics as understood in the classical western textbooks on democracy, caste associations did play a role in spreading the culture of democratic
politics in areas that were hitherto governed exclusively by tradition. As argued by Arnold, Jeffrey and Manor,

The caste association was a social adapter, improvised to connect two sets of social and political forms. It helped to reconcile the values of traditional society with those of new order by continuing to use caste as the basis for social organization, but at the same time introducing new objectives – education and supra-local political power... (1976: 372).

In their comparative study of caste associations in different parts of south India they found that, interestingly, leaders of these associations did not come from ‘the traditional caste authorities but from the most enterprising of the misfits – the western educated, the lawyer, the urban businessmen, the retired government servants. These men were few in number; but they looked back over their shoulders, hoping that the rest of their community supported them and would help the misfits to establish themselves more firmly in their non-traditional careers’ (ibid: 372).

One of the most important developmental initiatives taken by the Indian state soon after independence was the introduction of Land Reform legislations. These legislations were designed to weaken the hold of the non-cultivating intermediaries by transferring ownership rights to the tillers of the land. Even though Land Reform legislations were invariably subverted by the locally dominant interests they ended-up weakening the hold of the traditionally powerful but numerical small groups of upper castes (Moore 1966; Frankel and Rao 1990; Jaffrelot 2000; Stern 2001). In a village of Rajasthan, for example, though the ‘abolition of jagirs’ (intermediary rights) was far from satisfactory, it made considerable difference to the overall land ownership patterns and to the local and the regional power structures. The Rajputs, traditionally upper caste and the erstwhile landlords, possessed much lesser land after the Land Reforms than they did before. Most of the village land had moved into the hands of those who were tillers of land, from ‘shudra’ caste categories (Chakravarti 1975:97-98).

Other similar initiatives of the Indian state for rural social change, such as Community Development Programme (CDP), Panchayati Raj and Green Revolution directly helped the rich and the powerful in the village and
they mostly belonged to the locally dominant castes groups. In other words, the state sponsored process of development helped the middle level, landowning caste groups or the so-called 'dominant castes' (Srinivas 1959), to consolidate their hold over the local and regional political process.

This rise of middle level castes during the 1960s and 1970s significantly changed the political landscape of India, at least in some regions of the country and ended the near monopoly of the so-called upper castes in Indian politics. It was in this context that regional political formations began to emerge (Jaffrelot 2003; Vora 2004). The general election of 1967 is believed to have been the turning point in Indian politics. For the first time during the post-independence period the Congress Party was defeated in as many as eight states. From then on, the flavour of regional politics changed significantly. While in some cases, these agrarian castes formed their own political parties, elsewhere they emerged as powerful factions within the national parties invariably around a caste identity. Over the years, they were able to virtually oust the ritually upper castes from the arena of state/regional politics. Scholars working on Indian politics have documented this story quite well (see, for example, Nayar 1966; Kothari 1970; Frankel and Rao 1989; Brass 1990; Hasan 1998; Kohli 2001; Vora and Palshikar 2004).

The existing formulations on the subject of caste and its engagement with democratic politics and the state system have been derived from the experience of these middle level caste groups. It was these caste groups whom Srinivas had described as the ‘dominant castes’ (Srinivas 1959). Though some of them were at one time quite marginal to the local power structure, they were mostly above the line of pollution, and more significantly, they had traditionally been cultivators and landowners. When electoral politics based on the principle of universal adult franchise offered them new opportunities, they were able to politicize themselves rather easily. Though the writings on, and self-articulation of this second moment of caste, the moment of politics, emphasized on how the institution of caste could successfully negotiate with democratic politics, they did not seriously confront the political questions internal to the structures of caste hierarchy and/or its ideological system, questions of power, discrimination and social exclusion. Even subjects like untouchability remained peripheral to this literature on caste.
It was only during the 1980s and 1990s that a new language of caste began to be heard that articulated the experience and caste-ness of Dalits and those who have been close to them in the caste hierarchy, the so-called “backward” castes (the Bahujans) as the core element of caste.

4.1. Dalit Identity and State Policy, Caste from below:

The Third Moment Caste tentatively begins to take shape with the rise of autonomous Dalit politics during the decade of 1980s and takes off with the introduction of separate quotas for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) by the then Prime Minister Mr. V.P. Singh on recommendations of the Mandal Commission in 1990. This created a major political crisis in the country and revived caste question in the Indian public sphere in a rather interesting and disturbing way. This was clearly reflected in the political language used in the protests by students from urban middle class/ upper caste background against the Government Order. Though these mobilizations were supposedly against the use of caste in public policy, the upper-caste students often invoked casteist idioms in their mobilizations and invariably targeted Dalit communities and the constitutional provisions for the Scheduled Castes.

Though in wake of these mobilizations Mr. V.P. Singh eventually resigned from the post of Prime Minister, the OBC quotas were not withdrawn. There was virtually no open opposition from any of the major political parties to the introduction of the new quotas. At another level, implementation of the Mandal Commission Report and the casteist mobilizations against it raised questioned about caste to which professional sociology had no clear answers. In a sense, it also marked the end of the nehruvian imaginings of India and its public life. Though caste based quotas had already been in existence for the Scheduled Castes, they were seen more as exceptions, rather the rule. They were provided in the Indian Constitution right from its inception, for a particular section of Indian society which had faced intense and institutionalized discrimination in the past. Their extension to the OBCs meant an acceptance of caste as a legitimate aspect of state policy and a possible indicator of “development” and/or lack of it.

This resurgence of caste in its new avatar, as Srinivas famously put it (Srinivas 1996), was not merely a consequence of the act of wily politician
who, on one fine morning, decided to implement Mandal Commission Report on reservations for ‘Other Backward Classes’ for consolidating vote-banks. It was also not simply a case of tradition reasserting itself due to the oft stated weaknesses of Indian modernity. It was, in a sense, the beginning of a different mode of articulating democratic politics in India, and caste was an important element of it. The shift in state policy coincided or responded to these processes, and also in some important ways, reinforced them. These shifts also transformed and expanded the meanings of democratic politics and state/development policy.

What could be the theoretical implications of this shift?

Castes are unequal not merely in the ritual domain. Caste inequalities are far more pervasive. In most of the mainland rural India, it is also a reality that conditions social and economic relations. The political economy of Indian agriculture, for example, has been closely tied to caste (Chakravarti, 2001; Jodhka 2003). Thus, apart from asking the question ‘what happens to caste when it participates in modern democratic politics’ or ‘what happens to democracy when caste communities act like vote-banks’, one should also examine the question, whose, or which caste group’s participation in politics is being talked about?

As mentioned above, notwithstanding considerable regional differences, the first three decades after independence saw a growing consolidation of the middle level caste groups at the local and regional levels of Indian politics. While those at the middle levels of the traditional caste hierarchy gained from the developmental process and democratic politics, those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy continued to experience social and political exclusions. In fact, in some regions, the rise of middle level caste groups in the state politics meant a stronger master to deal with for the Dalits at the local level and increased violence against them.

During the decades of 1980s and 1990s, the Indian polity witnessed a shift from the ‘politics of ideology’ to the ‘politics of representation’ (Yadav 1999; Palshikar 2004). This shift was also reflected in the nature of social and political mobilizations that appeared during this period. These “new social movements” questioned the wisdom of the developmental agenda being pursued with much enthusiasm by the post-colonial state in India (see Jodhka 2001).
4.2. Articulations of Caste from Below

Coupled with changes in the geopolitics of the world following the collapse of Soviet Union, the end of Cold War, the unleashing of new technologies of telecommunications, this period also saw the beginning of a new phase in the reach of the global capital. This process of ‘globalization’, as it came to be known, was not confined to the economy alone. It also influenced culture and politics everywhere and opened up new possibilities for social action and networking. It was around this time that “new” political questions like environment, gender, human rights came-up almost simultaneously in different parts of the world. Networking across national boundaries gave them a different kind of legitimacy and strength. For example, the movement against the construction of the dam across the Narmada River invested considerable amount of energies in mobilizing internal public opinion as well as global funding agencies against the project. Similarly the question of human rights violations begin to inspected and commented upon by global agencies. The question of gender rights is articulated, more or less, similarly at the global level and women’s organizations working in India actively network with their counterparts in other parts of the world.

It was in this new context that the question of caste and politics began to be articulated in the language of community rights and identity politics by Dalit groups in different parts of the country. A common identity of the Scheduled Castes or ex-untouchable communities was ‘a constructed, modern identity’ (Kaviraj 1997: 9) which was mobilized by a new leadership which arose from within the Dalit groups and used the language of equality and democratic representation and simultaneously fore-grounded the communitarian dimension of their deprivation, which invariably resulted from the structural realities of Indian society, the caste-based discrimination.

The questions of caste oppression and untouchability were first raised from below during the freedom movement by people like Jyotiba Phule and B.R. Ambedkar. Dalit groups also launched movements for dignity and development during the first of half of the twentieth century (Juergensmeyer 1982; Omvedt 1994). The British colonial rulers also introduced some special provisions for welfare of the “depressed classes”. Following the initiatives of the colonial rulers, the independent India also institutionalized some special provisions for the Scheduled Castes to enable
them to participate in the democratic political process and share the benefits of development through reservations or quotas in jobs and educational institutions.

Until the 1980s, the Dalit question had remained subsumed within the nationalist agenda for development. In electoral politics also the Scheduled Caste communities were mostly aligned with the “mainstream” political formation, the Congress Party. The question of autonomous Dalit politics and identity was confined only to a few pockets, in states like Maharashtra, Karnataka or Andhra Pradesh, largely a concern of urbanized individuals who articulated the question of Dalit identity through literature and other cultural forms (Mendelsohn and Vicziany 2000).

However, over the years the size of Dalit middle class grew, thanks largely to the policy of reservations in government jobs and educational institutions. As they grew in numbers they also felt more confident in articulating their experiences of discrimination at the work place and the continued caste based prejudice against their communities in the society at large. They began to form separate associations of Scheduled Caste employees and mobilized themselves in events of discriminatory experience of their caste fellows (Mendelsohn and Vicziany 2000). It was around this time that Ambedkar was rediscovered as a universal icon of Dalit identity and a symbol of their aspirations (Zelliott, E 2001).

These new developments in the larger ideological and social environment were happening at a time when rural India was experience a disintegration of its traditional social and power arrangements. The ritually “pure” dominant castes who had gained from the institutionalization of democratic politics and rural development programmes initiated by the Government of India during the first three decades of independence also began to experience internal differentiation. Those in the upper segments of rural economy began to look towards cities for further mobility (Jodhka 2006) and those at the bottom began to question their subordination. Continued experience of participation in democratic political process over three or four decades also gave those at the bottom a sense of self-worth.

As discussed above, even though traditionally upper castes were politically marginalized with the introduction of universal adult franchise after independence it did not lead to democratization of the rural society. In
caste terms, the rural power revolved around the landowning dominant caste and in class terms, it was the rich landowners and moneylenders who continued to control the rural economy (Thorner 1956; Jodhka 2003). Independent studies by scholars from different regions tended to suggest that panchayats too became an arena of influence and power for the already dominant groups in rural India (Frankel and Rao 1990).

However, more recently, studies have pointed to a process of loosening of the traditional structures of power/domination. On the basis of his work in Rajasthan, Oliver Mendelsohn, for example, argued that though Srinivas was right in talking about ‘dominant caste’ during 1950, such formulation make less sense in the present day rural India. The ‘low caste and even untouchable villagers were now less beholden to their economic and ritual superiors than was suggested in older accounts’ (Mendelsohn 1993: 808). Similarly, ‘land and authority had been de-linked in village India and this amounted to an historic, if non-revolutionary transformation’ (ibid: 807).

Similarly, writing on the basis of his field experience in Karnataka, Karanth argued that the traditional association of caste with occupation was weakening and the jajmani ties were fast disintegrating (Karanth 1996). In an extensive survey of 51 villages of Punjab I too found a similar kind of change taking place in rural Punjab where the older structure of jajmani or balutedari relations had nearly completely disintegrated (Jodhka 2002). As was also earlier argued by Karanth in the case of Karnataka, with the exception of a few occupations, no more was there any association between caste and occupation in rural Punjab. Further, Dalits in Punjab had also begun to distance themselves from the village economy and disliked working in farms owned by local Jats. They were also trying to construct their own cultural centres like religious shrines and community halls in order to establish their autonomy in the rural power structure. In the emerging scenario, local Dalits have begun to assert for equal rights and a share from the resources that belonged commonly to the village and had so far been in the exclusive control of the locally dominant caste groups or individual households. These new found sense of entitlements and assertions among the Dalit communities was directly responsible for frequent cases of caste related conflicts and violence being reported from rural Punjab (Jodhka and Louis 2003). A study from rural Bihar also similarly reported an erosion of traditional jajmani ties. Here too the hold of the village
community over the individual’s choice of occupation was virtually absent (Sahay 2004).

It is in this changed context of a combination of factors that one has to locate the new agency among the Dalits. The new class of political entrepreneurs that has emerged from amongst the ex-untouchable communities used the idea of ‘Dalit identity’ and mobilized the Scheduled Caste communities as a united block on the promise of development with dignity. Some of them, such Kansi Ram and Mayavati have been quite successful in doing so (Shah 2002; Pai 2002).

However, the point that emerges from the “third moment of caste” is that caste collectivities do not participate as equals, even in modern democratic politics. The historical experience shows different caste groups participate in democratic politics with different sets of resources. While it has become quite difficult for the locally dominant groups to prohibit the traditionally marginalized caste communities from participating in the political process, it has not meant an end of social inequalities or caste and rank. Being a Dalit, or in some cases OBC, continues to be a marker of disadvantage and social exclusion. Notwithstanding the rise of autonomous Dalit politics and their substantial empowerment in some contexts/pockets of the country, the realities of caste in terms of power and dominance have not disappeared. Even when ideologically caste has considerably weakened and older forms of untouchability are receding, atrocities committed on Dalits by the local dominant castes have in fact increased (Beteille 2000; Shah 2006).

5.1. Dalit Deprivations and Theorizing Caste from Below

: Notwithstanding the success of Indian democracy, the increasing participation of the historically marginalized groups/communities in the electoral process and more than six decades of development and quotas for Scheduled Caste, caste based disparities have not disappeared. In other words, caste continues to be an important indicator of deprivation and marginality, both at macro level reflected in the national level data (see Thorat 2009) as also at the micro-level (see Shah et al 2006; Jodhka 2008). Caste also plays an important role in the modern urban economy. For example, ownership of industry in India has historically been concentrated in the hands of a few social/cultural groups and the top jobs were always
kept within the family (Rutten 2003; Munshi 2007). Recruitments to other jobs were opened to outsiders only when the required personnel were not available within the community or the wider kin-group.

Even though there has been a considerable change in culture of the Indian corporate sector, its functioning has not become “caste-free” where caste-exclusiveness is reproduced through categories like ‘merit’ and ‘global competition’. Management of big companies has increasingly become professionalized and they are no longer directly managed by members of the families that own them. Even when some members of the family are involved, much of the work is done by professionals who are recruited mostly by “merit”. While merit has become sacrosanct for the corporate self-image, hiring process is rarely open. The most popular modes of hiring are through: i) hiring agencies, the “head-hunters”, ii) campus interviews, and iii) internal recommendations. Increasingly, a good part of work is done through “out-sourcing” to specialized agencies.

Who is a suitable candidate for a private company and how do they judge the merit of those who are selected for the upper-end jobs in private sector? During a study of corporate hiring managers carried-out during 2006 and 2007 in Delhi, we found that the suitability of a candidate is rarely judged on his or her formal qualification alone. Almost every respondent hiring manager interviewed agreed that one of the most important questions they ask their candidates during the interviews is about their family background. Family background was important to see the suitability of the candidate to the culture of the company. An equally important factor for hiring at the senior level is the linguistic skills of the candidate, their ability to speak and communicate in English fluently (Jodhka and Newman 2007). Another study (Thorat and Newman 2007) found that the chances of a Dalit or Muslim candidate being called for interview for a job in corporate sector were significantly lesser than those from the upper caste with exactly the same CVs.

Caste continues to be an important reality even for those who try to set-up their own independent business. As with agricultural land, capital ownership has been nearly absent among Dalits. However, over the last two decades, some of them have ventured into the urban economy and have tried to start their own businesses. What has been their experience?
In a recent survey of Dalit entrepreneurs in urban centres of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh (Jodhka 2009), I found that they almost always lacked economic resources when compared with their counterparts from other communities. Even when they had economic resources they were disadvantaged by a lack of social resources. This was particularly true about certain caste groups among the Dalits. While the Chamars, who have traditionally been involved with some kind of businesses and have been producers and providers of leather, were relatively more successful in running urban businesses. Balmikis seemed to be much more disadvantaged, socially and economically.

Similarly, some recent researches on schooling also shows continued disadvantage that Dalits or Muslims face in education. The chances of a Dalit student dropping out of school are much higher than those of the upper caste students.

While no one will deny the fact that Indian society, including the institution of caste, has indeed been undergoing rapid changes, the reality of caste has certainly not disappeared. In some ways, its presence in the popular and political discourses is much more pronounced today than it was during the 1950s or 1960s, when institutional hold of caste was perhaps much stronger. While caste continues to be present in the Indian public (and personal) life, the way it is talked about has indeed changed. As we have seen above, since the early 1990s it is increasingly been talked about from below, by those who had been at the receiving end of the caste system. In this third moment, caste is not simply being revived; it is also being articulated very differently. Among many other things, this articulation of caste has also opened spaces for engagements with the language of state policy and development.

Interestingly, the third moment of caste coincides with the shifts happening in the mainstream thinking on development which has seen a paradigm shift over the last two decades or so with “human”, rather than “economic” development becoming the focus and index of growth and progress.

How could we talk about caste today? The third moment of caste provides us a different perspective on caste, a critical understanding, which also opens-up the subject for policy engagements.

According to this perspective, caste is above all about **dominations**. Invoking Max Weber’s distinction between coercive power and authority/
domination, one can perhaps say that caste has historically been an institutionalized form of domination, supported by a set of values, norms and institutions, some of which continue to be present even today while others have weakened or disintegrated. However, there has not been a radical break with the caste system. In absence of a comprehensive structural change, caste asserts itself as coercive power, perhaps more often than before, because of the weakening of its ideological hold. Increase in the incidence of caste based atrocities is an evidence of this.

The second related dimension of caste is that it refers to **disparities**. Caste does not simply imply power in cultural sense of the term. It is also a structural reality where inequality is institutionalized in terms of unequal distribution of resources. Inequality seen in terms of disparities refers to very different set of attributes when compared with Dumontian notion of inequality which refers to a cultural notion of hierarchy, something which exists only as an ideological category, derived from the dialectical opposition between pure and impure as it exits in the Hindu mind. Disparities, on the other hand refer to inequalities in terms of entitlements and ownership of resources, closer to the Marxian notion of ‘means of production’. However nature of disparities and inequalities in caste society is different. They are “graded inequalities”, to use Ambedkar’s expression (Ambedkar 1936).

The third related dimension of caste is that it an institutionalized system of **discrimination and denials**. Discrimination and denial has socially and culturally institutionalized in India and it has been group specific. It produced a pattern of disadvantages, which in turn produced deprivations and poverty among certain groups. Denial was culturally institutionalized in the sense that it had legitimacy and long term implications for social and economic status of caste groups/ communities. For example, the ex-untouchable communities were not allowed to own and cultivate land and become peasants. Such customary practices could not be explained away by referring simply to the dialectics of pure and impure. It defined and limited rights of different groups of people. More importantly perhaps, the effects of such past tradition is felt even today by a large majority of Dalits. Absence of assets, such as agricultural land, makes them much more vulnerable, economically as well as socially.
5.2. Dalit Disadvantage, State Policy and Discourse of Development

This understanding of caste from below not only allows us to engage with the realities of caste at an intellectual level and make sense of why and how caste continues to be present today but it also allows us to engage with caste at the level of policy.

It was during the British colonial rule that the “untouchable” communities of the sub-continent began to attract attention for state action and development. The British rulers clubbed them together and made them into an administrative category, initially as “depressed classes”, and later listed them as Scheduled Caste in the Government of India Act of 1935. The post-independence Indian state continued with the same category but has over the year expanded the list of communities and scope of state action for their welfare and development. Though SC communities are identified at the state level, they are listed in the Constitution of the Indian Union with authorization of the President of India.

Apart from continuing and expanding on the colonial initiatives to ameliorate the social and economic status of the ex-untouchable caste communities, the Indian political leadership that succeeded the British after independence from the colonial rule also saw caste system as a serious obstruction for economic progress and for institutionalization of democratic system of governance. Notwithstanding the ambivalent attitude of Gandhi towards caste system, leaders of the post-independence India vehemently condemned caste and untouchability. Nehru, for example, viewed caste from a modernist eye and condemned caste based value system for it being restrictive for development and progress of the country.

In the context of society today, the caste system and much that goes with it are wholly incompatible, reactionary, restrictive, and barriers to progress. There can be no equality in status and opportunity within its framework, nor can there be political democracy.... Between these two conceptions conflict is inherent and only one of them can survive (Nehru 1946: 257).

Ambedkar, who himself came from a Dalit family and was a leader of the Dalits, was even more emphatic on this:
You cannot build anything on the foundations of caste. You cannot build up a nation; you cannot build up a morality. Anything you will build on the foundations of caste will crack and will never be a whole. (Ambedkar 2002:102).

It was these ideological posturing against the caste system that shaped the legal and development provisions in favour of the Dalits. Broadly speaking, we could identify three sets of policy measures that the Indian State evolved to deal with the Dalits situation. These were i) protective measures; ii) enabling or empowering measures; and iii) representational measures.

**Protective measures**

Introduction of constitutional democracy granted citizenship rights to all. However, given that Indian society was based on hierarchical values of caste, the exercise of citizenship rights by Dalits often generated social tension leading to attacks on Dalits by the so-called upper-castes. The Article 17 of the Indian Constitution made the practice of untouchability an offence. It stated:

“Untouchability” is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of “Untouchability” shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

Government of India also enacted several legislations to protect Dalits from violence of different kinds. Untouchability Offence Act was passed in 1955 followed by Protection of Civil Rights Act in 1976 and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act in 1989. Besides these, several provincial/states governments also enacted legislations focusing on ‘removal of civil disabilities’. Though most of these legislations were passed during the post-independence period the process had begun in the 19th century. The first of these legislations was passed in the present day state of Kerala, The Travancore-Cochin Removal of Disabilities Act, 1825.

Government of India also developed an administrative structure to oversee the working of various safeguards provided to the SCs and STs. Article 338 of the Indian Constitution provided for appointment of a Special Officer, designated as Commissioner for SCs and STs, who was assigned
the duty to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards for SCs and STs in various statutes and report directly to the President of India about working of these safeguards. It was to extend and consolidate this function that the 1978 the Government of India decided to set-up a multi member commission, called the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In 2004 the Government of India decided to bifurcate this Commission into two separate commissions dealing respectively with SCs and STs.

**Enabling or Empowering Measures**

Apart from declaring the practice of untouchability as legal offence and instituting some measures to protect Dalits, Government of India also introduced several enabling measures to create level playing field for social groups that had experienced deprivation and discrimination in past, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. First and most important of these measures was the quota system, reservations of seats in government run educational institutions and for employment in government or state sector jobs. Second, the central and state governments have also introduced various development schemes/programmes directed at enabling them to actively participate in the emerging economy and new avenues of employment. These include different kinds of scholarships for Dalit students, special credit and employment schemes for the self-employed. From the 6th Plan onwards the state governments are also required to have a separate Plan for the Welfare of Scheduled Castes, the Special Component Sub Plan under which they are required to set aside an amount of their plan budget provision for various welfare activities meant for the Scheduled Castes. The quantified amount required for this Plan has to be in proportion to the scheduled castes population in the State. Every state government also has to have a separate department dealing with the welfare of Scheduled Castes and overseeing various schemes for their development.

Some of these programmes have produced discernible results. For example, there has been a significant increase in levels of literacy and education among the Scheduled Castes. As shown below in Table 1, total literacy rate among SCs went up from mere 10.27 percent in 1961 to nearly 55 percent in 2001, bringing them much closer to the general population than was the case in 1961. Interestingly, literacy grew at a much faster rate among them than was the case with growth rate for general population. School
attendance has also improved and has come close to the general/other categories of population. For example, in 2001 as many 72 percent of the SC boys (Others 77) and 63 percent of SC girls (Others 70 percent) in the age group of 6 to 14 were attending schools.

However, not everything is worth celebrating. Apart from gender differences in literacy rates and school attendance, there are also significant variations across regions. For example, Bihar, where SCs make for 16 percent of the total state population, their literacy rate continues to abysmally low at 28.5 percent. Also their numbers decline as we go up in the educational ladder.

Perhaps more serious is the growing disparities in quality of schooling. With economically better-off sections, mostly from upper caste categories, withdrawing from the government run school the quality of schooling available to the poor has further gone down. Drop-out rates for the SC children is also much higher than others. According to 2004-05 data, more than 34 percent of SC children dropped-out of school by the time they reached class V while the overall percentage was 29. This gap between drop-out rate of SCs and ‘Others’ increases as we go up in education ladder (Dasgupta and Thorat 2009:15). This high drop-out rate among SC children is not merely because of economic compulsions. In some instances, caste discrimination is also responsible for the feeling of alienation that Dalit children experience in school. There are instances where separate pots are still kept in schools for Dalit children in some parts of India (see Shah et al 2006).

As mentioned above, the Government of India also introduced quotas for SCs and STs in the state sector jobs. Notwithstanding various criticism of the job reservations from within the SC communities and from outside, job reservations have been one of the most successful programmes of affirmative action. Apart from giving employment to eligible Dalit candidates, the job quotas also helped produce a new leadership, an elite, from within the SC communities. This new Dalit elite in turn has played a very critical role in articulating Dalit aspirations in social and political domain.

As the data compiled by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies clearly shows (see Table 2), there has been a remarkable increase in the proportion of
Scheduled Castes employees at various levels of employment in the state sector. Until 1965 the Scheduled Caste candidates could be found only in low level Group-D jobs in the government sector. Over the years, their representation has grown at all the levels. While in 1965, the proportion of Scheduled Castes in Group-A category of jobs was 1.64 percent and in Group-B jobs was 2.82 percent, but by 2003 it had gone up to 11.93 and 14.32 percent for the same categories of jobs. Their proportion in Group-C category of jobs also saw a steady increase over the years.

**Representational Measures**

Employment in government sector at the senior level not only gives a sense of dignity to the individual employee, it also creates a resource for the historically deprived communities, a network of contacts in the state departments gives them access to institutions of power. Their presence in senior positions in institutions of publics become particularly critical in events of crisis, such as caste related conflicts where almost always Dalits are at the receiving-end because of the overall dominance of dominant castes.

Besides these policies of positive discrimination in government jobs, the Indian Constitution also made provisions for reservations of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in legislative bodies and other representational institutions as per their proportions in the total population. From Panchayats to Parliament, Dalit presence in the elected bodies has become ubiquitous. At a sociological level, these measures have also played an important role in producing a new political class among the Dalits and they are present in all political parties. Given that on a constituency reserved post for Scheduled Castes, only a Scheduled Caste candidate can contest. It has thus become imperative for all political parties to have Dalit candidates.

**6. Concluding Comments**

Caste has for long been a subject of inquiry with sociologists, social anthropologists and political scientists. However, they have invariably looked at it as a traditional system of social hierarchy and culture, which would inevitably weaken and eventually disappear with the process of development or modernization. Caste was thus researched in relation to rural social order, kinship networks, religious life or traditional
occupations, and mostly by social anthropologists and sociologists. The economists who worked on “hard” questions of development rarely treated caste as a relevant area of inquiry. In the mainstream understanding of text book economics, development or markets were essentially secular and anonymous processes. Poverty and deprivation were attributes of individuals or households and those possessing such attributes could be classified and clubbed together using purely secular and economic categories. Using caste and community in policy discourse, the “secular economists” argued, was akin to giving them legitimacy and strengthening hierarchical social order and traditional cultural practices.

However, over the years scholars have come to recognize the crucial importance of the “non-economic” factors such as caste, race, ethnicity or gender in structuring market and determining economic outcomes. Following this realization, the mainstream development studies have also undergone a complete paradigm shift over the last two decades or so with “human”, rather than “economic” development becoming the focus and index of growth and progress.

While on the one hand we saw this paradigm shift taking place from above through the UN agencies and academic debates how best to understand development, India also witnessed a social and political churning thanks to the forces unleashed by democratic political process. The rise of autonomous Dalit movements during the late 1980s did not simply ask for recognition and state power. They also raised questions about the meanings of caste and how they continue to experience it even in secular/modern spaces in contemporary. They also wish to actively engage with the state system on its policies for development and laws against discrimination.

Over the last two decades, the academic understanding of caste has also been undergoing change. There is an increasing recognition of the fact that caste is not simply a question of past tradition and Indian/ Hindu culture, or that it would disappear on its own once modern forces of industrial development and democratic politics appear on the scene. The popular understanding of caste is also beginning to recognize that talking about caste is also talking about power and powerlessness. It is also talking about disparities, discrimination and denial of access to resources and entitlements to some. The rise of autonomous Dalit voice also articulated
a new vision of citizenship where recognition of community identities became essential for addressing the question of denial.

[Acknowledgements: I would like to express my gratitude to Ramya Subrahmanian for her active involvement with the writing of this paper. She has been constantly reminding me of the responsibility of social sciences towards informing state policy and engaging with questions of poverty and deprivation. I also thank her for the useful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I have also learnt a great deal from S.K. Thorat and members of faculty at the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies. I would like to specifically thank R.P. Mamgain and Sobin George for their help. Tanvi Sirari and Anasua Chatterjee also read an earlier draft of the paper and gave useful comments. Usual disclaimers apply]
Table 1: Literacy Rate of General Population and SC Population, 1961-2001

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<td>81.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>11.93</td>
<td>83.88</td>
<td>14.32</td>
<td>81.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Endnotes


2. However, this is not to suggest that divisions that came to be described as caste system did not exist earlier or they were creation of the colonial rule.

3. A good example of this could be seen in the writings of fifteenth century poet-saint Ravi Das. Born in “untouchable” caste, the Chamars in Banaras, he critiqued Brahmanical ritualism and articulated a utopia in his famous poem called begumpura, a city without sorrow.

   ....where none are third or second – all are one;
   Its food and drink are famous, and those who live there
dwell in satisfaction and in wealth.
They do this or that, they walk where they wish,
they stroll through fabled places unchallenged (Hawley and Juergensmeyer 1988: 32)
Also see (Omvedt 2008; Jodhka 2009).

4. Students of India have also offered alternative formulations but they did not become popular. Some scholars, for example, stress that the origin of caste system lay in the nature of agrarian production and generous of surplus in early agrarian system (see Klass 1980; Yurlova 1989). Similarly, some others have pointed to primacy of the political in structuring caste hierarchies in India (see Raheja 1988; Quigley, D. 1993)
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