

# **BULLETIN**

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**From Toori to Thirty Footer :**

**A Preliminary Study of the Political Economy of Fishing in Tamil Nadu**

**Mid Year Review of the Economy 1979-80 (Part I)**

**Special Section**

**on**

**Caste and Class in Indian Rural Society**



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# MONTHLY BULLETIN

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# EDITORIAL - SOME HIGHLIGHTS

## I General Economic Scene

### State

#### VI Plan, Public distribution and General situation

The NDC decision on transferring to the states as much as the central and centrally sponsored projects (Vol. IX, p. 353) resulted in a transfer of Rs. 2,000 crores to the states, the details of which will be outlined under the section 'National'. Using the IATP (inverse of per capita state income multiplied by its population, formula, the Planning Commission has allocated to the state VI Plan Rs. 149.99 crores as additional central assistance. For the current year, the allocation is Rs. 30 crores. It is to be noted that this sum is not free money, but involved the take-over or launching of several projects seventy one of which have been transferred now to the state. The public distribution system in the state with its 17,113 fair price shops (2,025 in urban areas and 15,088 in rural areas) has been functioning well in this state, unlike most other states. It has gone some distance in the aim of opening a shop in every village with a population of 2,000, and in using mobile shops which function for 3 days in villages with a smaller population. Even before the expanded central scheme was launched (see vol. IX pp. 354 and 399-400), the state had

distributed rice, wheat, pulses, sugar, edible oils, soaps, detergents and kerosene through the net-work and requested Union help in adding bicycle tyres and tubes and cheap cloth to the list. But here the scheme came up against the general constraint that faces the project in all states, and that is there is no guarantee of supply of the goods to the shops: under the present production structure neither the Union Government nor the state government can ensure that a proportion of the goods in question which are produced will be allocated to the fair price shops. The other constraint is more manageable, and that is the financial subsidy which the scheme requires and which must be borne by the Union or state government. This has not been provided in either budget and so the state's request to the Union to share on a 50:50 basis the subsidy of Rs. 3 crores has not received a response and so the whole scheme is running on a somewhat uncertain basis. The general climatic situation in October in the state was warm mainly because the North East monsoon was delayed and did not set in until October 21 after which the rains have been normal.

### Power

The power situation in the state in October was normal except that the

plentiful North East monsoon reduced generation by 600 MW towards the end of the month and led to load shedding. Neyveli which normally supplied 270 MW to the state grid, because of the 50 per cent cut in lignite mining due to the rains (from 9 000 tonnes per day to 6,000 tonnes), supplied on October 26, only 100 MW. The Mettur hydel generation which supplies 240 MW a day had to be completely stopped because of the stopping of irrigation discharge in turn due to plentiful rains in Thanjavur. On top, as will be noted later, Ennore has had to close down 2 units and generates only 150 MW. The Electricity Board in October mechanised the issue of receipts for payment of consumers' power bills in order to speed up the settlement of bills. To improve the care and maintenance of thermal stations, the Board is planning to set up a cadre of maintenance engineers which also reduces the rapid turnover in the profession. The government announced its plan to double the state's power generation capacity in the next 4 years, which involves an investment of Rs. 1,095 crores in the plan period, compared to Rs. 113 crores invested in 1969-76. In this connection it shall be noted that despite this plan to add 2,100 MW, there will still be a shortfall in the state and in the southern region generally because the demand is increasing 15 per cent annually. One of the worrisome problems is the low generating capacity of thermal plants. Ennore with an installed capacity of 450 MW, in October generated only 157 MW because only one out of the five units was functioning fully. These can be dealt with by the engineering cadre mentioned earlier. The government is urging the union government to approve its project for a 420 MW thermal station at Mettur and 630 MW plant

at North Madras. Also the government has forwarded to the Union government a project for undertaking inter-state power generation projects involving the floating of public limited companies in which the state governments concerned and the Union will participate in equity. This will be the format for the 900 MW Hogenekal Project to be undertaken jointly by Tamil Nadu and Karnataka as well as the schemes for harnessing the estimated 10,000 crore units of electricity from the west flowing rivers in Kerala, on which fruitful Tamil Nadu-Kerala government exchanges took place in October.

For the country as a whole, October was a bad month on the power front. The Union ministry estimates that current power shortage is 12.6 per cent or 15 billion units. Drought has affected the hydel reservoirs, leading to a decline of 2.75 per cent of hydel generation in April-July 1979 compared to April-July 1978. The shortfall in September-March 1979-80 will be a large 140 GWH. In April-August power generation increased by only 6.4 per cent compared to last year's 12.1 per cent in the same period. It is only the South (except Karnataka) which had a relatively normal October. Punjab, Haryana and Delhi had not only power cuts, but along with UP, power was completely denied to manufacturing units for several days. Due to the lack of coal supply to the thermal plants, Maharashtra and Gujarat imposed 30-50 per cent cuts on industry in Karnataka the cut was 70 per cent, in UP (apart from the complete cut for 15 days) 66 per cent, in Orissa (which is normally a surplus state) a 30 per cent cut, and in West Bengal almost complete paralysis. In Assam with a 25 per cent power cut and 10 per cent cut on small industries, with smaller cuts in Meghalaya

Tripura and Nagaland, there is wide-spread production disruption, with reduced production of coal, fertilisers, cement and virtually all major manufactures. The Union government has drawn up a 4 point strategy to meet this grave situation involving: a) maximising generation by existing thermal stations, including reducing forced outages, intensive training of thermal plant operators, arrangements for the requisite quantity and quality of coal and use of central expert task forces to monitor the performance of selected power houses, b) speeding up the commissioning of new generating capacity and stabilisation of recently commissioned capacities, c) transfer of surplus power from surplus to deficit areas, and d) dealing with labour and management problems faced by the stations. This programme can be acted upon by the state governments under the leadership of the current energy ministry, without waiting for the emergence of the new government as the whole industrial and agricultural production of the country demands this crucial input in a normal and orderly manner.

## Water

A recent limnological survey reports that the Cauvery river system has reached a saturation point in industrial and urban pollution and should not be loaded with any more untreated discharge of industrial and municipal wastes. The river system is contaminated by effluents of 9 large industrial complexes and 6 urban sewage systems, amounting to more than 502.99 million litres a day. Lignin, spent washes etc. have blocked the light penetration and hence the productivity of the biological system, the wood and fibres have completely eliminated zooplankton (which is the food for the fishes) in the mill area, increase of water

temperature due to draining of factory coolant waters, inflow of acid wastes from a PVC and viscose factory have killed the fish. Similarly large scale occurrence of coliform bacterial group near sewage outlets, floating sewage fungus near pulp mills have eliminated all biological life. It is recommended strict enforcement of legislation to prevent large scale washing of textiles or dyes in the river, and that industries develop concern for human and aquatic life to the point where they treat their effluents to enable aquatic life, flora and fauna in the Cauvery to survive.

## Transport

The Cheran Transport Corporation, in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Petroleum has set up a Rs. 5 lakh, 200 tonnes per annum oil reclamation plant at Mettupalayam in order to re-refine the lubricating oil that is used by its 800 vehicles, instead of following the usual practice and auctioning it for use by engines which are damaged. In the plant the material recovery is 60 per cent and it may well be that the plant capacity should be increased to 5,000 to 10,000 tonnes a year to reclaim lubricating oil used by all transport corporations as well as the steel mills, railway units and defence establishments in the state. In October, Tamil Nadu and Kerala arrived at an agreement to operate stage carriages on 6 more new inter-state routes. In addition Tamil Nadu will operate further services in 13 existing routes, and Kerala in 16 existing routes. The new routes are Madurai-Guruvayur, Palghat-Pollachi and Kottarakara-Achankoil.

## Land records

The government approved in October a scheme for updating land records at a cost of Rs. 1.48 crores. Special Revenue

Inspectors are to survey all lands and verify registers and incorporate changes, if any, in the village accounts. This will help farmers to get bank loans and cooperative credit on the basis of up-to-date village accounts and entries of subdivision of holdings. The scheme is to be implemented over a period of 5 years, covering around 30,000 sq. miles.

### **Slum improvement**

The government announced in October measures to prevent the creation of any new slum and the grant of pattas to slum dwellers of the land on which they have put up their huts and also a proposal for granting of loans for the building of houses on the land.

### **DA and other allowances**

Towards the end of October, the government announced the grant of increase of DA to its employees including non-gazetted officers, teachers and state local bodies. The benefits cover DA, honorarium of village officers, rural service incentives, pensioners' DA and the family benefit scheme. The financial implications of the decision which covers 7.5 lakh employees are Rs. 15 crores in a full year and Rs. 6-7 crores for the current year.

## **National**

### **VI Plan**

As noted earlier, the Planning Commission published in October the results of executing the NDC decision in transferring 71 centrally sponsored schemes to the states together with Rs. 2,000 crores out of the total of Rs. 6,010 crores of such schemes. There are, retained in VI Plan, 15 schemes fully financed by the centre including a) agricultural credit stabilisa-

tion fund and assistance for recognised base level credit institutions, assistance to National Cooperative Development Corporation and debentures of land development banks and shares of rural banks, b) family welfare, post-graduate medical departments and pharmacies of indigenous systems, c) accelerated rural water supply, d) national capital region, e) inter-state roads and transmission lines, f) ICDS and post-matric scholarships, g) aid to voluntary organisations for welfare of backward classes and h) national adult education programme and 60 schemes which will be jointly funded by the Union and states including (i) integrated urban development of small and medium towns, (ii) DICs, (iii) labour and (iv) nutrition. For these a total of Rs. 3,916.29 crores is provided. As at the end of October to finance the growing deficit budget which is estimated at Rs. 2,700 crores for the year, the Finance Ministry is understood to have proposed a cut in development outlays ranging from Rs. 700 crores to Rs. 1,000 crores. The precise position in this regard is not known as there is no parliament and no official announcement has yet been made. The Planning Commission has advised strongly against any cut in development expenditures which would reduce even further the physical attainments which have been eroded by the price rise, the reduction will fall on the Union plan of Rs. 6,600 crores as the state plans cannot be touched, the question of growing food and fertiliser subsidies and non-plan expenditure should first be tackled, also the earnings of the public sector enterprises should be raised from 4.8 per cent in 1977-78 to 10 per cent provided in the Plan document, and above all noting that the crude price rise is an anti-inflationary factor, deficit financing should be curbed by commodity management and not only by management of money

supply. The Planning Commission, with the concurrence of the Cabinet, is publishing the Revised Plan (see vol. IX pp. 451-52) with a view to providing a base and a guide for the Third Annual Plan formulation by the Union ministries and state governments, for which instructions have already been issued to them by the Commission. Discussions on the 1980-81 Annual Plan will be held in December-January and this VI Plan document will provide the needed base.

### Prices

Prices continued to rise in September, though at a lower rate. The wholesale price index stood at 220.7 on September 29 which meant that for 12 months ending September 29, 1979 the price rise was 18.6 per cent and for the period from the end of February to the end of September the rise was 20 per cent. The Economic Times retail price index for Greater Bombay at 249 for September shows a retail price rise of 20.3 per cent for the 12 month period, though it also represents the first decline in that 12 month period from 252.9 in August to 249.7 in September. Similarly the all-India consumer price index for industrial workers increased by seven points at 360 in August with the 12 monthly average touching a record 340 points. In the wholesale index for end-September, food articles registered a price decline of 0.5 per cent due to price declines in fish, masoor, bajra, milk and tea, while food products—gur, salt, groundnut oil rose by 1 per cent. The Bombay retail price index also for September shows a decline of 4 per cent in food articles—vegetables, fruits, pulses, meat, fish and egg, edible oil, milk and milk products. This means that the price rises during the next six months of the financial year will be a lower rate than during

the first six months. The anti-inflationary forces are the drawing down of the food reserves due to the drought, the deficit in the balance of payments, any increase in production of goods and services and the check on money supply and credit following from the RBI actions noted in the last issue (p. 505). On the other hand the inflationary forces are still active and powerful. The DA announced in early October, the increased support prices for sugarcane announced also in October against the advice of APC, the additional Rs. 80 crores that will be pumped into economy as a result of procuring 5 million tonnes of rice (less than last year by 1.2 million tonnes at the higher rate of Rs. 10 per quintal) and the many crores that are being expended on drought relief. The most important factor stoking inflation is the decline in production—agriculture because of the drought and industry because of the shortages of power, cement, steel and railway wagons and poor management and sickness. To meet the growing non-development expenditure the government raised by ordinance in October the corpus of the Contingency Fund from Rs. 50 crores to Rs. 150 crores until March 31, 1980. Further the Union government also announced in mid-October issue of 3 loans aggregating Rs. 450 crores.

### Economy and Industry

The economy is in poor shape. A quick survey of the overall growth rate shows a negative rate for the first 4 months April-July at -0.9 per cent. The NCAER review for the July-September quarter raises the question whether under these conditions even the modest 4-5 per cent of the VI Plan will be attained this year. Foodgrain production will decline by 10 to 12 million tonnes, industrial production faces near

stagnation, price inflation is very serious at this mid-year point along with a widening trade gap. On the whole this will be a poor performing year for the Indian economy. On the side of industrial growth, the rate of industrial growth continued to be low and negative as noted in the last issue (p 505). From no growth in the first quarter April-June, July represented an upward movement at 149.8 in the index but August saw a decline to 147.5 and September an even lower 145. Thus September registered a minus industrial growth and was unfavourable compared to the record of a year ago, at 146, in September 1978. Production of steel in the first quarter recorded - 10 per cent, coal -2 per cent, cement -1.3 per cent, paper and newsprint -7 per cent. Copper increased by 9 per cent, aluminium 17 per cent, commercial vehicles 19 per cent, textiles 2 per cent and engineering industries 12 per cent. The government attributes the poor industrial performance to power shortage, which has been analysed earlier. Power generation has grown at around 6-7 per cent but it has flown mainly to agriculture. In addition, industrial units face shortages of raw-materials and inputs. The Cabinet Committee on monitoring of industrial production which met frequently and took decisions to relieve industry of constraints as they came up is no longer in existence. Altogether it looks as if the year would end with no or atleast a 1-2 per cent growth rate.

### Public sector performance

It is not only the private sector that is performing poorly, but also the public sector, particularly the units under the Department of Industrial Development. For the period April-August, their cumulative production grew at a mere 3.29 per cent, while the units under the Department of

Heavy Industry recorded a 12.5 per cent growth rate during the first quarter of the year.

## National Production Front

### Steel

Steel production presents a rather sombre picture. Bokaro is the only plant which reports higher ingot steel production in September at 1.21 lakh tonnes, 1.44 lakh tonnes of hot metal, 1.36 lakh tonnes of sinter and despatched 11,210 tonnes of blast furnace grade coke. TISCO reports an 8.9 per cent decline ingot steel production between April and September at 8,42,000 tonnes compared to last year's 9,24,000 tonnes in the same period. Its saleable steel production declined from last year's 7,29,000 tonnes to 6,68,000 tonnes which was an 8.4 per cent reduction, all due to severe power shortage on account of which it reports a production loss of 1.12 lakh tonnes of saleable steel in the first 6 months of the financial year. Rourkela also reports declining production, due mainly to shortage in the high grade lump iron ore stocks it requires at the rate of 2,200 tonnes a day, against which by early October its stock position was a mere 6 000 tonnes. While total July production from all parts was 5,18,700 tonnes of saleable steel, August production was 4,50 000 tonnes. In this difficult situation, and as a result, SAIL reports that it has large stocks of ingots, which have accumulated because Rourkela, Bhilai, Durgapur and Bokaro faced with serious power shortage are not able to optimise the capacity utilisation of their rolling mills and convert the ingots into finished and semifinished items. On top of this, operational problems at some of the major ports and slow port unloading movements from ports to stockyards and consuming

points have forced SAIL to carry huge quantities of imported steel under the buffer stock scheme. SAIL is carrying an overly large 1.5 lakh tonnes of imported steel which means a lock-up of Rs. 60 crores. SAIL is therefore offering steel ingots for sale to rerollers in quantities of 30,000 tonnes at a time, as one way of reducing the stock and meeting its cash flow problems. From the long term point of view, it is necessary to proceed with the expansion of Bokaro and Bhilai and set up Vishakapatnam on schedule, if future growing steel needs are not to be met by increased imports. For Bokaro, orders for the cold rolling mill complex have been placed from both indigenous and foreign sources and the problem of the escalating costs of the Bhilai expansion from Rs. 969 crores to Rs. 1,100-1,400 crores is under study and action. India and USSR at the technical level have reached agreement on the modernisation and expansion of Bhilai at a cost of Rs. 403 crores which will increase production by 1.5 million tonnes to a total plant capacity of 5 million tonnes.

### Crude

The country in all areas—both manufactures and agriculture—faces a serious diesel shortage. In Tamil Nadu, in the first week of October, diesel stocks were available only for 6 days. The shortage looks as if it is of a long term nature and the Union Government has alerted all states to regulate diesel consumption at only 5 per cent over that of last year. The diesel demand has been accentuated by monsoon failure (so that farmers have had to rely on pump sets and tractors for reploughing their land), the widespread power shortage referred to earlier and the shortage of railway wagons (making it necessary to use trucks to carry the freight otherwise moved by the railways).

State governments are in real trouble over regulating the limited diesel supply. Diesel demand in April-August increased by 13.8 per cent in the northern region, 22.8 per cent in the eastern region, 15.9 per cent in the western region and 11.7 per cent in southern region, with all-India average of 15.3 per cent. HSD consumption is 12 per cent by railways, 5 per cent defence, 30 per cent organised transport and the rest by agriculture. The situation is grim and calls for import of diesel on a larger scale at the higher cost of \$ 320 a tonne compared to \$ 150 a tonne in January. By September, 11 lakh tonnes had been imported and between October-December 4.20 lakh tonnes will be imported, a total of 15.2 lakh tonnes for the year 1979. Indigenous diesel production in 1979 will be 8.53 million tonnes, giving an average of 7.10 lakh tonnes a month. The major problem is to keep the 4.11 lakh trucks in the country supplied with diesel, as they constitute a vital link in the transport of essential goods. The means of doing this is still exercising the Union and state governments. So far 4.75 lakh tonnes of imports have been firmed up. Negotiations are under way with the Soviet Union for an additional 3 lakh tonnes, with Iraq for an additional 1 lakh tonne diesel and kerosene (with an assurance from Iraq that it will supply at the OPEC and not the higher prices), with China which has expressed its willingness to sell 1 million tonnes of crude to India (which because of its high surplus content will have to be exchanged for a lighter crude for use in our refineries), and with Indonesia where negotiation for 3 million tonnes of crude are to be pursued. In addition negotiations for the import of 2-3 million tonnes of crude in 1980 from Mexico are under way. Against this background there is need for action on the domestic front. First conservation of diesel and other

petroleum products by transport operators, factories and farms must at once become a major national concern. Second, indigenous oil production and exploration must be stepped up. ONGC reports that it will produce 3.7 million tonnes of crude and 700 million cubic metres of gas in 1979 and that exploration in Cambay basin has reached an advanced stage, new discoveries of oil and gas in Ankleswar are made and sizeable oil reserves located in Gujarat. There is, however, a lingering sense of lack of urgency in the operations of ONGC and Oil India Ltd. OIL's Rs. 21 crore offshore drilling programme in Mahanadi which was to start in September is now put off till early January. A US drilling ship has only in September been firmed up, so that the Mahanadi exploration which should have started in January of this year is delayed by a year. The delays in the exploration programmes of ONGC and OIL are due to government and the companies delaying action and are inexcusable in the light of the growing cost of the crude import bill and the crisis created by the shortage of diesel in some parts.

## Coal

Coal production continues to be stagnant. For the first quarter April-June 1979-80, Coal India's production declined by 14 per cent from 20.60 million tonnes in the first quarter of 1978-79 to 20.30 million tonnes in this year's first quarter. BCCL's production dropped by 4 per cent, Eastern Coal Fields by 10 per cent while Central Coal Fields rose by 4 per cent. This involved a cumulative loss for Coal India of Rs. 511 crores and for the Coal Mines Authority, Rs. 108 crores. The latest report from Coal India states that for the 6 months April-September 1979-80, coal production rose by 1.5 per cent from 41.2 million tonnes

in the first six months of 1978-79 to 41.81 million tonnes. September coal production, however, declined to 6.72 million tonnes compared to August production due mainly to the severe power shortage faced by Eastern Coal Fields. It is reported that at this time of coal shortage, 1,500 million tonnes of coal are standing in pillars in various mines (which will further grow at the rate of 100 million tonnes every 2 years), which could be extracted by the simple method sand stowing, practised in all coal mines in all countries. One reason for the fall in rate of prime coal production is that coal cannot be mined without stowing sands in the exhausted pits. Before continuing with the import of coking coal from Australia, arrangements should be made to transport sand from Damodar river to the coal mines. With power shortage and the coal industry performing poorly, the economy infrastructure is in a parlous position.

## Aluminium

In October, the government announced steep increases in the case of aluminium prices, ranging from Rs. 1,794 per tonne of EC wire rods, Rs. 1,689 per tonne of EC ingots and Rs. 1,457 per tonne of CG ingots to meet the higher retention price granted to aluminium producers and to account with the system of uniform pooled price of imported and indigenous metal. October also recorded a tightening of the aluminium supply situation, making it impossible for the government to carry through its buffer stock plan of storing 3 months consumption. Internationally, against 75,000 tonnes ordered, only 60,000 tonnes are available because of a major supply source not functioning; internally against the target of 2,50,000 tonnes, indigenous



production is likely to be only 1,80,000 tonnes. This shortfall of over 80,000 tonnes can be met if aluminium scrap is imported and the customs hurdle overcome.

### Engineering goods

Increase in the rate of engineering goods production is declining from 1978-79's 13 per cent to 7-8 per cent for this year. The first quarter record at 11 per cent was good but the July production was so low that the April-July production fell to 6.5 per cent, with continuing declines in the following months. This is due to lack of coal, steel and power, breakdown of infrastructure such as railways, roads, and ports and deteriorating industrial situations. This is regrettable as the demand for quality engineering goods both domestically and internationally is rising and this is one of the industries which needs to be helped at least in inputs and infrastructure so that it continues to expand.

### Sugar

The Union government, as noted earlier, announced in early October, a rise in sugarcane minimum price to Rs. 12.50 per quintal (with average recovery of 8.5 per cent) for the current crushing season starting October 1, while the Agricultural Prices Commission has recommended that the prices be maintained at Rs. 10/- per quintal. This decision is aimed at stopping the reduction of the area under sugarcane cultivation which declined in 1978-79 by 15 per cent, despite which the mills did not take all the cane offered and there were reports of burning of cane by the farmers. One effect of the rise in the cane price is increase in the cost of producing sugar by some 30 per cent and increase in the price of sugar,

which will shortly be announced for the new sugar produced. Sugar production forecasts for the current year vary—one being a 25 per cent decline which means 45 lakh tonnes against last year's 59 lakh tonnes. (1977-78 production was 64.40 lakh tonnes. See vol. VIII p. 643). The opening stock on October 1 was 21 lakh tonnes. Sugar releases in September and October (the festival season) were 6 lakh tonnes each, and for November 5.25 lakh tonnes, at which level it should be maintained to ensure the supply-demand balance, until more is known about this year's sugar production.

### Irrigation and IRDP

To counter the underutilisation of the huge irrigation potential of the country, in accordance with the recommendation of the irrigation committee, ministers conference and the National Commission on Agriculture, the Planning Commission has asked the state governments to: a) construct capillary field channels for speedy utilisation of the irrigation available (which will overcome the lack of field channels making water management in command areas difficult), b) take over the construction of the main outlet channels upto a block of 5 to 8 hectares, and c) increase the irrigation rates to cover the additional costs involved. On the first suggestion which has been repeatedly made, it is suggested that legislation should be adopted which should provide for maintaining the water courses and field channels constructed by government to be the responsibility of the beneficiary farmers organised in cooperatives and panchayats. The Ministry of Rural Reconstruction announced in October that it will develop 3,500 out of the 5,004 community development blocks under the Integrated Rural Development Programme

(IRDP) to benefit small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans, starting this year with 14 lakh families, in addition to the 21 lakh families of last year at a cost of Rs. 233 34 crores, which will benefit the poorest families on agricultural operations, animal husbandry, soil conservation, minor irrigation and small and cottage industries.

### Agricultural Production

The Union government's preliminary assessment (to be finalised by November end when precise figures will be available) of kharif production may show a decline of 10 to 12 million tonnes from last year's record 78.65 million tonnes. The Economic Times compilation of basic rainfall data from June 1 to September 30, 1979 shows only two states—Kerala and Tamil Nadu—did not have a deficit in rainfall, together with parts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. All the rest of the country—in 16 out of 35 meteorological subdivisions compared to only one last year had deficit rain fall. This year's drought is comparable to the one in 1972. The worst hit was UP which had a 44 per cent deficiency, followed by Rajasthan with 19 per cent. To save as much of the kharif crop as possible, the states were urged to ensure: a) timely supply of inputs, b) easier availability of seeds, c) coordinated community action, d) plant protection measures, e) building of rural godowns, f) holding of cattle camps and g) use of available resources. Even so the kharif losses suffered by the various states were detailed in the last issue (p. 510). Haryana lost three-fourths of its kharif crop and unless there are rains by the end of November, rabi sowing will be affected in all the northern states. Already high temperature and inadequate moisture in the seeding region has delayed the sowing of sarson which is 12 per cent

of the rabi land. In Bihar heavy and widespread rain in the first week of October improved the prospect of a bumper of kharif harvest in certain Northern districts, prevented further crop loss in the drought affected districts and has brightened the rabi outlook. ICAR has worked out a package of practices to achieve a target of 40 million tonnes of rabi wheat involving increasing the per hectare yield, the area under crop in non-traditional areas, judicious use of monetary inputs along with emphasis on inputs like date of sowing, depth of sowing, time of application of fertiliser and water. Last year's rabi production of 52.75 million tonnes included 35 million tonnes of wheat. If the area of 14 million hectares remained the same and if the average production is 25 quintals per hectare on irrigated and 5 quintals per hectare on unirrigated lands, then total rabi production would be 40 million tonnes. Similarly a package for rabi barley has been developed for UP, Rajasthan, MP, Bihar, Haryana, Punjab, HP and West Bengal, where it is widely grown. The package includes a proper use of inputs such as treating the seed with mercuric fungicide, timely sowing in the first fortnight of November, soil tests for balanced fertiliser application and adaptation to local conditions. In AP, rabi strategy is aimed at a 30 per cent increase in rice production in areas likely to be sown during the season both to equal last year's rabi production of 20 lakh tonnes and offset the reduction in 1980-81 rice production due to the government decision to provide irrigation to the hitherto dry crops in Nagarjunasagar and Sriramasagar.

### Exports

The rising trend of exports from April to July noted in the last issue did not apply to August exports which declined

by 1.35 per cent compared to August 1978. August 1979 exports were Rs. 347.57 crores compared to August 1978 exports of Rs. 352.33 crores. Imports in August increased by 22.43 per cent from Rs. 455.10 crores in August 1978 to Rs. 557.18 crores. According to the provisional figures released by commerce ministry, exports during the 5 months April to August 1979-80 increased by 18 per cent at Rs. 2,404.25 crores compared to Rs. 2,045.18 crores during these 5 months in 1978-79.

Imports increased by 19 per cent from Rs. 2,544.45 crores in April-August 1978-79 to Rs. 3,027 crores during the first 5 months of 1979-80. Hence the trade deficit increased for that period from Rs. 499.27 crores to Rs. 623.50 crores. This was a near doubling of the trade deficit upto July (Rs. 350 crores), due to the higher import bill for fertilisers, petroleum and edible oils. At this rate imports will use over Rs. 3,000 crores of our foreign exchange reserves. The good export performers are jute goods, cotton textiles, garments, jewellery and leather goods. To broaden the base of the diamond industry and improve the product mix of its exports, Hindustan Diamond is selling rough diamonds to exporters to further improve the export trade which earned Rs. 694 crores in 1978-79 (25 per cent of the world trade in diamonds) compared to Rs. 30 crores in 1968-69 (1 per cent of the world trade). India's exports to Australia during 1978-79 increased by 16 per cent and against that year's earning of A \$ 90 million, in the current year exports will earn A \$ 104 million, mainly in textiles, leather and leather manufactures, chemicals and allied products, coffee, engineering products, sports goods, jewellery, carpets and footwear. Similarly North America offers a good market for Indian coffee provided supplies,

pricing and shipping services are streamlined. Also EEC offers a market for \$ 200 million for industrialised products, which is only 0.5 per cent of its \$ 40 billion imports, which include internal combustion engines, oil hydraulics, compressed air equipment, office equipment, data processing units, mechanical handling and warehousing equipment, road vehicles, machine tools, welding, cutting and joining tools and electronics and communication systems. The Union government has under study with a view to liberalisation policy regarding silver jewellery exports which at present is banned when the silver content is more than 50 per cent. It has also decided that no special allocations of EC grade aluminium will be made for the manufacture of aluminium conductors for exports. Two areas where a disturbing declining trend in exports are noticed are engineering exports wherein exports fell from Rs. 209 crores in April-July 1978-79 to Rs. 181 crores during the same period this year mainly due to the fall in exports from the eastern region of the country where production has been disrupted by power scarcity, raw material (pig iron and steel) shortages and dislocation of shipment at Calcutta port. The other area is textiles where the very low prices at which China and Korea are offering their textile goods are eroding the Indian export market. This, however should not be countered by a subsidy system but by negotiations atleast with Korea and switching to goods where such competition does not prevail. One other serious set back in our export trade is the failure of our exporters to adhere to delivery schedules which is spoiling our trade and production reputation particularly in the Arab countries and acting as a constraint in the expansion of Indo-Arab trade. This is capable of correction and the various chambers should attend to this. Similarly it is good that preshipment

inspection of shrimp consignments are being enforced by government on the basis of which it should be possible to remove the black listing of Indian shrimp exports by USA authorities.

## **Aid**

At the end of September India and US signed an agreement for \$ 22 million to finance imports of ammonium sulphate, di-ammonium phosphate and urea. In mid-October, India and West Germany signed an agreement for Rs. 136 crores for a 500 MW set at Singrauli super thermal, Neyveli and capital goods assistance. India and Belgium also signed an agreement for a \$ 12 million credit for development of communications. Towards the end of October, India and Norway signed two agreements for Rs. 22. 91 crores for fertiliser development. The International Fund for Agricultural Development announced a \$ 50 million loan agreement to finance the Bhima command area development project.

## **International**

### **Bangladesh**

At the end of a 3 day meeting in mid-October, India and Bangladesh reached an agreement to develop and diversify the trade, improve tele-communication facilities, and get the transport coordination committee to identify the transport bottlenecks between the two countries. At the end of October, India announced that it is importing 4,000 tonnes of newsprint from Bangladesh in addition to the 7,000 tonnes already provided. This will help relieve the newsprint shortage in the country as STC buffer stock has touched the bottom in October.

## **World monetary reform**

The IMF-World Bank meeting in September at Belgrade discussed world economic problems, unemployment, growth rates and balance of payments problems. It referred to the IMF Board the proposal for the creation of a "substitution account" which will absorb the excess of US dollars held by the central of the developed countries in exchange for SDRs. The developing countries tried once more to link this with development assistance which is still in the discussion stage. The group of 77 following the Havana summit, presented to the Belgrade meeting a world monetary reform package concession on money aid and trade which was discussed at the joint development committee of the IMF and IBRD which asked the IMF Board to create a mechanism to lower the interest cost of drawings on IMF's Special Fund. The IMF-IBRD meeting agreed that all countries should take action to control inflation as the major concentration to counter the threat to the economy and financial system. It was also agreed to increase the World Bank's capital resources which will be used to help the developing countries facing balance of payments problems so as to minimise its disrupting effects on their economic and development programmes. The Bank also proposed to lend to such countries to make structural changes to avoid future balance of payments crisis. This means that the Bank would provide assistance to countries willing to take action to deal with their financial problems and to increase efficiency by diverting labour and other resources to more productive areas. There was also agreement on the need for better policies and international mobilisation of capital in the energy field and for measures to arrest protectionism and promote freedom of

international trade. The proposal for IMF to strengthen its surveillance machinery for scrutinising any national economy which rank into balance of payments difficulties is to be the subject of further study by the Fund. Apart from the World Bank's decision to lend resources to such countries and increase its capital for general development aid, the Belgrade meeting did not register any real forward move in closing the standards and payments gap between rich and poor countries. It was still at the stage of discussion on these vital issues. During October, gold crossed \$ 440 per ounce and as a result the IMF sale in October of 4,44,000 ounces of gold at an average price of \$ 412.78 per ounce realised \$ 163 million. This brought the Special Fund of IMF to \$ 3.13 billions.

### Tokyo Round

The Tokyo Round agreement which was not signed by the 99 developing countries (see vol. IX, p. 252) is moving forward with an agreement recorded in October between industrialised and developing countries on an international code to govern valuation of imports for customs purposes, which would deal with the rules to be followed by the industrialised countries in imposing import curbs on goods from developing countries which compete with their ailing domestic industries. The developing countries want that the country concerned should be consulted before such curbs are imposed and they should be subject to surveillance by an independent committee. On the basis of the agreement on the international code, the developing countries have accepted the proposal of the Director-General of GATT that a meeting of all members be held in late October to set up a negotiating committee to continue talks about the

safeguard rules and the rest of the Tokyo package be approved and enforced starting January 1980. The problem for the developing countries is that apart from their numbers, they have no other means of obtaining further concessions from the industrialised countries.

### INMARSAT

The Conference of the International Maritime Satellite Organisation (INMARSAT) meeting in London in late October reached agreement on the provision of facilities to enable communication with ships on the high seas through orbiting satellites. This worldwide maritime satellite system will improve the reliability, quality and speed of maritime communications via the satellites and allow the introduction of new services beyond those available through the present high frequency transmission system. INMARSAT will provide the space segment for maritime communications via the ground facilities provided by member states, with the ship-owners providing the ship-borne equipment.

### Havana Summit World Fund

Following the Havana summit decision, (see last issue, p. 515), Iraq has taken the lead in negotiating the establishment of a World Fund which will give long term interest free loans to developing countries purchasing oil from it and other oil-producing countries to compensate them for the rise in oil prices. The industrialised countries are to contribute to the Fund. Meanwhile Iraq has unilaterally decided to compensate the poor developing countries which have oil contracts with it for any allowance to be added to the Iraqi oil price from May 1, 1979 till the end of the year.

The compensation will be in the form of interest free long term loans equivalent to any further price increases effective after May 1. It is hoped that this, in effect, differential pricing system will be extended by all oil producing countries and made a long term arrangement. Iraq has taken an important stand on the issue facing oil-importing developing countries.

## World Economy

Further to the survey of the World Economy in the last two issues (pp. 463 and 513), the Bank of America in a global report states that consumer prices will rise by 12.3 per cent in 1979 and 11.5 per cent in 1980, with growth limited to a rate of 3 per cent. It estimates no growth for the US, and places responsibility for all this on the rise in oil prices from \$ 12.70 per barrel in 1978 to \$ 23 in 1979. World trade is estimated to grow at 16 per cent in 1979 and 13 per cent in 1980. OPEC balance of payment surplus will be \$ 43 billion in 1979 and \$ 52 billion in 1980. The emphasis is on the need for greater international cooperation rather than individual national action. FAO in its survey states that the outlook for agricultural commodities' prices is uncertain, with 1979 farm prices being higher than those 1978. The economic slow down expected in both industrial and oil importing countries will weaken the demand for a number of farm-based products, especially agricultural raw-materials such as fibres and rubber.

## World Food

FAO states that in 1979 world wheat and coarse grains production will be less than in 1978 and rice and sugar production will decline, leading to drawing down

of cereal and sugar stocks. (This is precisely the situation in India.) Other declines are forecast for tea, pepper, jute and coffee. However, there will be production increases in fats, oils, oil seeds, cocoa, cotton, fruit, major meats, milk products, cassava and tobacco. Strong import demands for meat, fats, oils, coffee, tea, jute, fibres and hides and skins are likely to push up their prices. It also reports that more than 400 million people in developing countries are suffering from hunger due to non-availability of food and the little that is available is heavily supplemented by massive imports. The annual cereal imports of developing countries have risen from 60 million tonnes in 1974 to 80 million tonnes in 1979 and will further rise to 94 million tonnes by 1985. Over the last two decades agricultural growth has been below the accepted target of 4 per cent and below the rate of increase of population particularly in Africa. FAO's food security assistance plan has international emergency food reserve of 5,00,000 tonnes contributed mainly by North America and EEC. This is inadequate to meet the growing needs of an additional 70 million people every year.

## World cotton and World Sugar

At a meeting of 52 countries in October in Geneva called by UNCTAD to discuss and establish a cotton reserve stock, US, Japan and the EEC countries opposed any agreement to regulate the world cotton market. US which exports 27 per cent of world cotton exports and Japan which is the world's largest importer joined in the opposition with the support of EEC about any effort to control cotton prices, because they felt that there was no need for it. 16 developing countries representing 30 per cent of the world cotton trade and 60 per cent of Third

World cotton exports, with the support of USSR, Switzerland and Nordic countries argued in vain for a reserve stock system. World sugar production in 1979-80 is expected to decline to 88 million tonnes, 3 million tonnes lower than that of the previous year. There is

also a large speculative element in the market which is both the cause and consequence of the sharp rise in sugar prices in October-the highest in the last two and a half years. It was also a part response to the reports of the heavy damage suffered by the Cuban sugar crop.

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## II Agricultural Development

### Paddy and other production

Kuruvai harvesting in the state has been completed and marketing is going forward through the 300 purchase centres established by the State Civil Supplies Corporation. Samba sowing is now under way and for this as well as the kuruvai crop the plentiful south west and the present north east monsoons have been of great help. All the irrigation reservoirs are full, giving the farmers the needed water for 2 or 3 crops. At a meeting of irrigation officers of the Southern states in October at Madras, it was decided to give priority to repair of existing irrigation canals and field canals and excavate new canals as part of the programme of modernisation of the irrigation system. Also the diversification of the cropping system which would supplement and replace in some cases paddy by pulses and other crops so that the available water resources could be used for growing more valuable crops. The government plans to reduce slightly the area under paddy during the current samba season to bring the area thus available under pulses and oil seeds. The 65 lakh tonnes paddy production is to be achieved by improving

productivity. The total area under paddy in 1979-80 is 26.5 lakh hectares, including 2.5 lakh hectares under short term paddy, whose harvest was begun and completed in October. Under pulses, the year's coverage is 11.6 lakh hectares (an increase of 0.6 lakh hectares over that of last year) which will yield 3.58 lakh tonnes of pulses. Oil seed production is over 14.5 lakh hectares (an increase of 1 lakh hectares) to make up for the shortfall of 1 lakh hectares of the groundnut crop which was affected by the scanty rainfall in June-July. In the districts of North and South Arcot and Chingleput which grow the entire rainfed groundnut crop, the June-July sparse rainfall led to some withering but the rains in August and September revived the crop. The state has a particular responsibility being one of two states (Kerala being the other) with a normal rainfall to produce a good samba and other second and third crop to make up for the drought situation which the rest of the country faces. The government is proceeding with the export of 19,000 tonnes of Kuruvai rice and 40,000 tonnes of samba rice to East European countries.

## Vegetable production

The Tamil Nadu State Farm Corporation produces 15 tonnes of vegetable per day, which will rise to 10 tonnes per day during the season, from its Kancheepuram and Neyveli farms. Pending the establishment of permanent marketing arrangements in Madras and other urban centres, the Corporation has established 6 temporary sales points in the city.

## Research results

Research into oil bearing trees and seeds has opened a wide vista for meeting the oil needs of the state and the country. The neem seed available in this and all states to the extent of 20 lakh tonnes, of which only 3 lakh tonnes are collected and processed into 30,000 tonnes of oil a year against a possible 4 lakh tonnes of oil which is used in soap, as pesticides, and the cake as fertiliser and poultry feed, should be more fully exploited. Similarly the Iluppai tree seed produces an oil for lamps, soap and when processed, can be used for cooking in this state. Here too only 20,000 tonnes of oil a year is now produced when 35 lakh tonnes are available if collected and processed. In other states kusum tree seeds which can contribute 66,000 tonnes of oil against the 4,000 tonnes a year now produced for use in cooking, soap, and hair oil. Similarly the sal tree seed of which 27 lakh tonnes were collected last year and 23,000 tonnes against a potential of 7.2 lakh tonnes, used extensively in Europe for butter, glycerine show what can be done further. So too the pungam tree seed of which only 1/15 is used (8,000 tonnes out of 1.35 lakh tonnes) for soaps, lubrication and medicinal purposes. This oil wealth should be set against the import of edible oil at enormous cost. The Calicut Research Centre has developed

saline resistant paddy varieties, SR 26B and PVR-1 and Vyttila-I for cultivation in saline lands with 120-125 days' duration. The saline soil is built into mounds which facilitates washing out salinity from the soil in the moonsoon rains and on which the seeds are germinated when the seedlings attain 30 to 35 days growth, the mounds are dismantled and seedlings planted, with no manuring being necessary. In the saline land of this state, this paddy variety and cultivation can be introduced. The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has developed a new cowpea variety CO3 for cultivation all over the state either for single or mixed or intercropping use. It is drought tolerant of 80 days duration and yields 850 kg. per hectare. It is pest resistant and can be grown all round the year. Some avoidable loss of production through wrong use of pesticides and poor storage which is exposed to rodents and other predators are also the subject of investigation and improved practices. Pesticide usage in the proper form, quantity and timing can become part of the plant protection training of farmers. This applies to use of phosdrin, parathian, organo phosphates and organo chlorines. On storage losses, the "save grain campaign" in the state with its 57 campaigns covering 45,000 houses and 66,500 acres is training farmers in rodent control, there being as many 8 species of rodents in this region. As a result of observing the National Rodent Control Week in the state, it is reported that Rs. 10 lakhs worth of grains was saved from the ravages by rodents. The Anantpur Research Centre's work on maize has helped to develop maize varieties with both short duration and high yields and pest resistance to the plants which makes use of chemical pesticides unnecessary. There is need for further study on post harvest maize technology including extraction of germ oil from the



germs obtained during the wet milling of the maize. The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has worked on the oyster mushroom which can be grown in the state under thatched sheds. It can be grown domestically in trays with substrates like paddy straw, maize cobs, waste cobs, waste paper on which the seed material is sprinkled, and in 20 days the mushrooms appear. Alternately the mushrooms can be grown with polythene sheets as containers. Spawn is spread over the base material and covered with farm waste and after 20 days the mushrooms appear. The cost of cultivation is Rs. 3-4 per kg. and the market price is Rs. 15 per kg. Thus mushroom cultivation can be a good supplementary income to the farmers.

### Fish farming

Inland fish farming is yet to be developed as a major off-farm activity. In this the needed research has been done, and what is needed is publicity and training of the farmer, or more particularly, his wife, in rearing fish in homestead ponds, where rapid growth of carp, mrigal, karimeen, and fingerlings can be reared. On sea fishing, with some delay, the country's first exclusive fishing harbour in the Madras port is nearing completion and will be commissioned in September 1980 to handle 50,000 tonnes of fish per annum. The construction cost of Rs. 6 crores has, because of the delays caused by the state government not handing over the neighbouring 8 acres (which is a fishermen's slum) which would have made 1976 the year of commissioning, raised the cost to Rs. 10 crores. 75 per cent of the 2,000 metres break water has been completed. A cutter section dredger of the Dredging Corporation of India is being used to reclaim 60 acres of land as the alternative on which auction

and packing halls and cold storage facilities will be started. The problem now faced is sea erosion of this sector for which a beach nourishment programme including the dumping of sands at vulnerable points have been proposed to the government.

### Dairy farming

The Rs 35 crore dairy complex at Erode which can pasteurise 1.5 lakh litres of milk and produce 10 tonnes of milk powder will be ready to go into operation in 1980. It is based on the "Anand" pattern, with minimal governmental control, assuring guaranteed offtake of all the available milk offered, regular payment and a package of cattle feed at reasonable prices and free veterinary services. Between 1974 when it was started and today, 155 societies in Erode, Bhavani, Gobichettipalayam, Sathiamangalam and Dharpuram taluks comprise 18,000 farmers producing 40,000 litres. The Erode District Cooperative Milk Producers Union has had a paid-up share capital of Rs. 16.06 lakhs, its total turnover increasing from Rs. 28.82 lakhs in 1974-75 to Rs. 1.0 crores in 1977-78. The village societies make an average profit of Rs. 35 per day and the Union has purchased 65 acres of land at Swiampalayam village where the feeder balancing dairy is now nearing completion. It has also purchased a 99.97 acre site in the Industrial Estate at Erode for setting up a cattle feed plant at a cost of Rs. 2.24 lakhs as well as the sites for chilling plants at Sankarandapalayam and Kumarapalayam at Rs. 2 lakhs. Milk collection by the Union will have to be doubled by the time the feeder balancing dairy goes into operation in 1980 and for this the cooperative department of the state government should stop obstructing the recruiting of staff who are bringing self-respect, employment

and prosperity to farmers. Incidentally unlike the recent past when the caste hurdle would not receive milk brought by a harijan farmer, in the Union harijan and caste Hindu milk producers pour milk into the same booth. In addition to the milk powder factory at Erode, 3 other such factories are to be started in the state-all at a total cost of Rs. 4 crores.

## **Tea**

Tea production in North India has declined this year due to bad weather. By the end of September the north Indian shortfall was 30 million kg., the total at September 1978 being 259 million kg, and of September 1979, 229 million kg. The loss in production in terms of money owing to drought in Assam, Tripura and West Bengal is estimated at Rs. 17 crores. Hence for the crop year 1979 it is expected that there will be an overall decline of million 24-25 million kg. compared to the 511 million kg. produced in the last season. Unlike last year's planned decline of 25 per cent to export, the Union government has asked the trade to export the maximum possible so that if port facilities are available exports will be 210 to 220 million kg. in 1979-80, which would be 30-40 million

kg. more than 1978-79 exports. At the end of October, reports of the reduced North Indian production and the Calcutta port strike has raised tea prices in the domestic and London markets. The Tea Board has submitted a plan to the Union government for the extension of tea cultivation to non-tea growing areas-Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh and the government has stated that it is considering offering incentives to attract new planters. The new plantations using high yielding cuttings from mother bushes would yield a minimum of 1,300 kg. per hectare.

## **Coffee and Rubber**

Coffee production for the year is good and coffee exports are increasing to make up for a tendency in the international market for easing of prices, due to supply being 1 million bags above consumption. The production of natural rubber will be at about the same level as last year. By October end STC imported 26,000 tonnes and expected a further 6,069 tonnes. The International Rubber Study Group estimates that natural rubber consumption will rise this year by 5 per cent and production by 3 per cent.

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### III Industrial Development

#### State public sector

The state public sector units are performing as poorly as the Union units, noted earlier. The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General for 1977-78 shows 12 such state units incurred a total loss of Rs. 432 lakhs while 17 units earned an aggregate profit of Rs. 648.68 lakhs. It reports that the accounts of 14 companies for 1977-78 were not finalised by March 1979. TANSI's 43 out of 57 units are making losses which add up to Rs. 176 lakhs as at March 21, 1979 due to production shortfalls, under-utilisation of machinery, production of goods which are not in demand, unplanned purchase of machinery materials resulting in lock-up of capital and lack of scientific inventory control procedures. Another loss-making unit is the TN Fisheries Development Corporation where the results of deep sea fishing operations by costly imported trawlers are far below the target, and the ancillary services like processing plants, storage plants and fish meal units are very much under-utilised. The state goods corporation is losing large sums (3.58 lakhs from the Diary Development Corporation and Rs. 3.37 lakhs from Civil Supplies Corporation, for instance) because agreements are not made for the work undertaken and essential documents are not maintained to fix responsibilities for lapses. This together with the R. Venkatraman Committee report (see last issue p. 521) provide the basis for government action to retrieve the state public sector and make it operate along sane commercial lines.

#### Industrial growth

The annual Economic Survey of the state by the government which will be the subject of the seminar paper in the February issue of the Bulletin shows a stagnant if not declining industrial growth profile from 1966-77. A major cause for this is the absence of any Union public sector plan investment during the whole of the IV and V Plans and in the projections set forth in the VI Plan, with the exception of Salem Steel. The state which occupied the third place in per capita output has now slid to the fifth rank and in terms of per capita investment occupies an even lower position. For one thing the industries sector in a major agricultural state like Tamil Nadu which is reducing its optimum level of foodgrains production requires the full time attention of an able and well equipped minister and this has been absent. The industrial growth rate has been fluctuating at 8-10 per cent in 1960, 1964, 1965 and 1974, and at 0.3 per cent to 8.9 per cent in 1966, 1973 and 1975. The state has had its share of the national causes for industrial stagnation-power cuts or in a sense what is even worse load shedding and violent voltage fluctuations, strained industrial relations with the engineering and textile industry bearing the brunt, and the inefficient transport system leading to shortage of coals and other inputs. As a result all the basic goods industries except fertilisers and steel products declined. Intermediate goods industries-paper, tyre and cotton yarn declined in 1977 by 7.8 per cent. On the other hand consumer goods units, wheat products, sugar rose while dry cells, pencils,

cotton piece goods, declined.) The report gives an aggregative profile of 7 industrial areas of which two are declining and five are doing well. And there is not enough data to judge the quality of the performance of each area except the general conclusion that industrial private sector units are doing better than the state public sector and functioning well within the overall stagnant and declining industrial situation in the state.

### ICF

ICF which completed 25 years in October is now producing 750 fully furnished coaches per annum with 98 per cent indigenous material. The annual coach production of 1,500 is now inadequate to meet the demand and so ICF has emerged as the consultant and collaborator, providing knowhow on a turnkey basis to the establishment of a new coach building factory. Its design and research wing equipped with computer facilities since 1966 helps also inventory control, production control and process planning as well as in various new coach designs.

### Madras Refineries

As noted in the last issue (p.520), Madras Refineries' expansion plan is the outcome of the Indian Institute of Petroleum's study of the demand for petroleum products in 1982-83, based on the total refining capacity of 36 million tonnes per annum. This showed a gap in refining capacity of 6 million tonnes by 1984-85 and 10-12 million tonnes by 1986-87. In the Oil Economy Budget prepared by the Oil Coordination Committee (OCC) the demand for petroleum products is estimated at 31.5 million tonnes for this year. But this year's rate of growth for

HSD and middle distillates has risen by 11-12 per cent and hence the urgency to expand refining capacity. The Union government constituted a working group to study petroleum products demand by 1983-84 and it is this group that recommended to raise refining capacity by expanding 2 or more existing refineries. It is this background which explains the Madras Refineries' proposal to double its capacity to 5.6 million tonnes which is now under final stages of government approval.

### TIIC

The Tamil Nadu Industrial Investment Corporation reports that it has reduced interest rates on various categories of loans. On small loans to autorickshaws it has reduced the rate from 11.5 to 9.5 per cent, for scheduled castes and tribes the security margin has been reduced from 15 to 10 per cent, for self-employed entrepreneurs from 9.5 to 8 per cent, for mini loans to SC and ST from 9 to 8 per cent. It has evolved a special scheme for setting up reeling and silk twisting sericulture units and continues its emphasis on small scale units as reported in the last issue, p. 522. It must now react to the R. Venkataraman Committee's specific recommendation addressed to it and act on it.

### SIPCOT-Hosur Estate

SIPCOT's industrial estate in Hosur has now developed with 12 industrial units in production and 12 under construction with a total investment of Rs. 60.70 crores and employment of 2,000 workers. There are 17 electronic and precision engineering units. Its housing facilities with 300 residential plots being developed by SIPCOT call for action by a Housing Board. Similar growth centres are being planned at Pudukottai, Manamadurai and Tuticorin.

## **Ambattur Industrial Estate**

The 400—units Industrial Estate at Ambattur faces a number of problems, mainly because SIDCO which has developed it is burdened with many other office and routine responsibilities, as the R. Venkataraman Committee points out. The infrastructure including street lighting is unsatisfactory, load shedding reduces 25 per cent of total production and the units face prolonged delays in the settlement of their bills by large houses. The security situation is also unsatisfactory. What is needed is for SIDCO to shed other distractions and concentrate on developing small industries in the state.

## **TIDCO-Magnesium Unit**

TIDCO is setting up a Rs. 4.29 crore magnesium metal factory at Valinokkam in the district of Ramanathapuram with a capacity of 600 tonnes per annum. The manufacture of magnesium metal utilising technology has been developed by the Central Electrochemical Research Institute at Karaikudi which also runs a pilot plant as does the National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jamshedpur, the two together producing 250 tonnes. The present demand for the metal is 700 tonnes which according to the Union ministry will be 5,000 tonnes in 1989. The factory is being set up with the help of Tata Consulting Engineers and will use seabitterns, the waste products of saltpans.

## **Sericulture and LPG**

The Central Board of Sericulture has sanctioned an additional Rs. 1.4 crores for the development of sericulture in the state this year. This would enable the number of farmers being subsidised to be increased from 7,000 to 10,000 by the end of the year and increase reeling units to provide

employment to 46,000 persons. It is planned to make the state selfsufficient in silk yarn production which amounts to Rs. 20 crores per annum. On the LPG (cooking gas) front the demand in the 4 southern states is estimated at 18.4 lakh tonnes. To meet the additional demand the Union government announced 2 plants in Salem and 2 in Bangalore with an annual capacity which will be commissioned by 1981-82.

## **Salt and Matches**

Plans are under way for using the 700 cusecs of sea water discharged by the Tuticorin thermal plant after cooling the plant which will be deployed into salt pans to be developed in the fallow land between Tuticorin and Etaiyapuram. The water discharged will be hotter by 80° C over normal sea water and so salt will be produced quicker. The project calls for cooperative action jointly by the Tuticorin thermal plant, the trade and the state government. For utilising the water a canal of 10-15 km. length for gravity flow will have to be laid. This is the traditional salt producing area and SPIC with its large demand for salt based chemicals offers a captive market. In regard to match box production and prices, a recent survey shows that as a result of the increased excise provided in the budget on mechanised sector match boxes of 1.7 paise per box, WIMCO which is the mechanised producer raised the price per box by 4 paise to 17 paise. The hand-made match sector, which actually had a small decrease in its excise from Rs. 4.52 to Rs. 4.50 per gross followed suit. The Aiya Nadar group in Sivakasi raised their price to 15 paise per box, the Sundaravel group of Sivakasi to 17 and 18 paise per box. The total production of matches in the country is 95 million gross boxes valued

at Rs. 80 crores, with the mechanised sector producing 30 per cent, the middle sector 58 per cent and cottage sector 12 per cent. 17 units in the pioneer group in Sivakasi produce 7 million gross boxes, 17 units in the Aiya Nadar group produce 35 million and 10 units in the Sundaravel group produce 2.8 million gross boxes.

### Handlooms

In October, the measures taken by Union government to provide relief to handlooms in yarn supply and prices have caused confusion and uncertainty on two counts. The state government had reached agreement with SIMA to supply 3,010 bales of yarn a month in September and October at August invoice prices less 5 per cent. On this basis the first lot of 3,010 bales have been procured and distributed by the state Department of Handlooms. Later the Union government decided that yarn will be supplied to handlooms at September prices minus 5 per cent depending on categories (for upto 60s 5 per cent, for 60s and above 10 per cent). The trade is naturally trying to get out of the state government agreement as the September prices were higher than August prices. Secondly the trade has asked the Union government whether its decision means that while 25 per cent of the yarn has to be delivered to the decentralised sector at the rolled back price, the trade is free to sell the remaining 75 per cent at a higher price. This of course will hit the consumer hard and will create chaos. The Union government should clear up both these points to help the handloom weavers and consumers. Of the present production of 1,840 million square metres of handlooms, 10 per cent is exported. Export earnings have increased from Rs. 11.43 crores in 1966-67 to Rs. 275 crores in 1978-79. In order to promote handloom exports and in accordance with the recommendation of the Committee of Administrators, cash assistance on exports of handloom fabrics and made-ups

will be handled by the Joint Chief Controller, Imports and Exports, Madras, relieving the Handloom Export Promotion Council, Madras to concentrate on product development and export promotion.

### Leather

India's leather exports in the future will be affected by the decision of Argentina to withdraw its export ban and replace by a gradually declining export duty on cattle hides export from 20 per cent on October 1 to nil in October 1981. Similarly the US has decided to reduce export duty on leather from October and abolish it in October 1981. Australia is also following these anti-production measures. India will have to examine the effect of these measures on its export duty system. The leather industry explains that inadequate supplies of semi-finished and finished leather, heavy import duty on certain essential equipment and escalating costs of all inputs have a depressing effect on footwear production in the country. This needs attention by government and the leather promotion council. Despite these negative factors, high international prices which are damping demand, and the suspension of 400 tanneries operations in Florence in a dispute with the government, the export estimate is that the year's target of Rs. 400 crores will be attained. Exports in April-September 1979-80 totalled Rs. 224.88 crores, which was a 44 per cent increase compared to the Rs. 155.90 crores in April-September 1978-79. Finished cow calf skins were in demand moving up from last year's (April-September) Rs. 49.12 lakhs to Rs. 153.43 lakhs in the six months of this year. The International Fair at Singapore in May 1980 will provide an opportunity for industry leaders to study and evaluate the latest technology, equipment and raw materials available.

## IV Education, Science and Health

### Unrest in educational institutions

In October disturbances in educational institutions were reported in 5 centres—Madras, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Gonda. In Madras the unrest arose from unsatisfactory conditions in one women's college and conflict between busmen and students of a men's college. In Punjab and Haryana the conflict was between students and teachers on the one hand and the Vice Chancellor on the other over the conditions of service of the teaching staff and some students' demands. In Delhi the agitation was over the conditions of work of junior doctors in a medical college and the police action against students of a college who were disrupting the city bus services. In Gonda, the disturbance arose over the B. Ed examinees of a college running away with answer books, after beating up the principal and teachers when they asked the students to surrender the copying material they were carrying with them.

### Educational reform

UP announced in October that it had introduced moral education in the school and college syllabus and was proposing legislation to ban publication and proliferation of guess papers. Its further decision not to admit students to educational institutions nor appoint teachers who smoke is a piece of sumptuary action which may lead both to various means of breaking the orders and unrest. Following a recommendation of the Bar Council of India and preparatory work done by an expert group in 1977-78, the Tamil Nadu universities have under consideration the revision of the structure of legal education so as to provide a 4 year law

degree course after the ten plus two stage. This would bring legal education in line with other forms of professional education so that after the plus 2 stage, the BGL degree will be obtained in 4 years and the BL degree after a further year. A combined meeting of the Boards of Studies in Law of the 3 universities, Madras, Madurai Kamaraj and Annamalai has decided to prepare a draft syllabus for legal studies in the state under the revised structure. The Bar Council has also suggested that universities convert the existing morning and evening law colleges and departments into whole time day colleges or departments by June 1982. In addition to the new law colleges in Tiruchi and Coimbatore started in October, the University has under consideration making the Madras Law College an autonomous college so that it can concentrate more on post graduate and research studies. The state government announced in October that it will bring out all unpublished manuscripts with universities, the government Oriental Manuscripts Library, U. Swaminatha Aiyar Library, Swarasthi Mahal Library, Institute of Indian Medicine, Santhalinga Adigalar Library and various religious Maths and Jain Math at Chitamoore. A panel of scholars will scrutinise all manuscripts which will contain historical introduction, meanings and notes, under the overall supervision of the Department of Archaeology. The Tamil Nadu Text Book Society will undertake publication.

### Adult education

Gandhi Jayanthi Day, October 2, was celebrated all over the country to mark one year of the National Adult Education Programme which was launched on October 2, 1978. In Tamil Nadu, the

government announced on that day the opening of 6,000 centres in addition to the 6,600 centres now functioning. In addition, industrial establishments were being persuaded to start their own adult education centres for educating the workers and their families. It was also emphasised that particular stress will be laid on women's centres beyond the 600 now functioning.

### Technical education

The state Fisheries Department has opened 10 centres in the coastal districts of the state to train 600 rural youth in brackish water aquaculture with emphasis on prawn culture. This is part of the government's scheme to train 10,000 rural youth in various crafts during this year. The centres will provide technical skills in aquacultural practices including knowhow on the collection of seeds, their transport to culture farms and maintenance of farms. The follow-up has been encouraging. Out of 50 persons trained earlier, 30 have set up their own prawn culture units at Nagore, Mahendrapalli and other places.

### Science

The Nuclear Fuel Complex, Hyderabad reports a breakthrough in producing electro-slag refined stainless steel which so far has been concentrated in US and USSR. The electro-slag refining technique is used to manufacture stainless steel and super alloys to extremely high degree of purity for use in aero space and nuclear power engineering. It has now gone into commercial production at Midhani where the quality of melting and refining is ensured by computers and monitored by closed circuit TV. A group of scientists in the Bio-Physics department of Madras University reports an important finding

into the conceptual missing link between chemical and biological evolution. After extensive studies on possible shapes of the chemical units of RNAs and amino acids, the team arrived at the double sided mould of a small RNA molecule which triggered the origin and evolution of all molecular processes in life. The breakthrough has been commended internationally and now experimental evidence is needed in support of the discovery. The Archaeological Exhibition in which several Departments of Archaeology of the states are participating in October in Madras shows important artifacts as a means of throwing light on the history and culture of the region. Among the relics on display are a multi-spouted vessel of 1000 BC from a megalithic site in Dharward, and the Panchmukha Vadya of Tamil Nadu which is several centuries later, showing migration of people from Karnataka to Tamil Nadu.

### Health

An institute to do research on the Unani systems was inaugurated in Madras in October. Established by the Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine, it will carry out clinical studies on diabetes, filariasis and malaria. A mobile research unit with doctors, laboratory technicians and paramedical staff from the Institute will visit and work in the villages where all drugs will be dispensed free of charge. WHO announces that with eradication of small pox from its area, the Horn of Africa, there is no need for compulsory anti smallpox vaccination. No small pox cases have been detected for 2 years now, and in May 1980 the total eradication of small pox in the world will be announced. After that the risk from the infection will be greater than the disease such as the risk of meningitis, serious pregnancy



problems and other dangers. WHO would stop issuing vaccines after the May announcement and the developing countries will be called upon to abolish compulsory small pox vaccination. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in a mid year-report on IUCD use states that UP with 60,717 insertions (making an 81

per cent increase) stands first. It is followed by Delhi 11,157 (69 per cent), Karnataka 16,192 (50 per cent) Maharashtra 9,216 (34 per cent), Punjab 10,712 (19 per cent), and Assam and Gujarat 12,316 (2 per cent). Haryana registered a 13 per cent decline with 8,143 insertions as did Jammu and Kashmir with 892.

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## V Employment

Plans are under way to undertake the decennial Family Living Survey (FLS) for 1980-81, following that for 1960 and 1971. In this connection, the adequacy, representativeness and criteria for selection of the centres on which the survey should be based are being examined. The FLS for 1960 was based on 50 centres, for 1971 on 60 centres. It has been suggested that in view of the very high inflationary pressure on the consumer, and growing industrialisation and fast urbanisation, the number of centres for 1980-81 FLS should be increased. The selection of centres should be based on the total working force in the district in which centres are working checked by centre specific employment data. Also as the Rath Committee (see vol. IX p. 504) has recommended, that where a state has a series of parallel consumer prices as Kerala and Bihar do, provided the series is based on acceptable procedures and methodology and the same base year as the central series, the former could be used in the FLS. The Union government announces that for the 6 months January-June 22.47 million man days were lost in strikes and lockouts compared to 14.92 million days lost in the first six months

in 1978. The conference of State Labour Secretaries in October in Delhi endorsed the P. C. Mathew Committee recommendations on Employment Exchanges (see vol. IX, pp. 214-215) recommended central legislation to ensure national uniformity on residential qualifications for employment purposes (sons of the soil theory), but expressed doubts as to the practicality and usefulness of extending the employment exchange service to rural areas because of its cost (around Rs. 12 crores recurring and Rs. 4.59 crores non-recurring) and in view of the fact that only 9 per cent of even those in urban areas registered with the exchanges are able to find placements. This last proposal was referred to the new ministry of Rural Reconstruction for further study and the recommendation for extending job reservations for scheduled castes and tribes and physically handicapped persons was referred to the Ministries of Social Welfare and Home Affairs. It rejected the recommendation for a separate Ministry of Manpower Planning and Employment as it was felt that Ministry of Labour could deal with it. The Gujarat government announced that those who had been on the employment exchanges for 5 years

and above would be granted a retention allowance as educated unemployed for an experimental 2 year period, starting from November 1. Rs. 47 lakhs have been sanctioned for the scheme. The Tamil Nadu government announced that 25,000 women from the weaker sections of society would be covered under the state's self employment scheme such as book binding, envelope and match making under which 10,000 are already employed. in the state, the delay in bonus

payment to workers in small scale units is creating a disquieting labour situation. The delay is due to large and medium manufacturers deferring payment to their ancillary suppliers as noted earlier. NTC units are facing labour unrest and the prolonged Dunlop lockout was lifted at the end of October. The small units after paying their bank loans in the absence of funds due to them from the large units do not have the reserves to pay bonus and this is becoming a serious situation.

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## VI Other Items

### Director's Section

The major event in the Institute in November was the Ninth meeting of the Heads of Departments of Social Sciences which was held on the 17th and 18th. 24 participants representing 14 Universities and 9 disciplines attended the session. It was therefore one of the best attended and most representative meetings that we have had. Another feature of the meeting was that four new Universities were represented for the first time and that nine participants were also new to the meeting. In the reports from the departments, attention was concentrated on the M.Phil programme. There was a very lively discussion on this topic, as one or two participants put forward the points of view that the M.Phil course did not serve any purpose at all and that it could and should be dispensed with. On the other hand many others felt that the M.Phil course was useful both as pre-Ph.D. course and as a refresher programme for teachers in colleges and universities. It is generally felt that one of the basic drawbacks of M.Phil programme was that it

was built on a M.A. course which did not require the students to do any independent work. Thus the entrants to the M.Phil course were frequently strangers to doing original work and found it difficult to cope with what was expected of the M.Phil programme particularly its dissertation. There was a general feeling also that the M.Phil programme should be kept as flexible as possible and that the Research Methodology course which was part of the M.Phil programme should not become an abstract generalised course, but must be related to the nature of the subject itself and the particular problems that the researchers were concerned with.

The review paper this time was on 'Teaching and Research in Anthropology in South Indian Universities' by Dr. Gopala Sarana who till recently was the Head of the Department of Anthropology at the Karnatak University, Dharwad and is now Professor and Head of the Department of Anthropology, Lucknow University. Apart from giving a factual and historical survey of teaching and research in Anthropology, in the south, Dr. Sarana also

raised the question of relationship between Sociology and Anthropology as disciplines of teaching in the Universities. It was generally felt that while in terms of subject matter, the two disciplines had much in common, they differed in their approach to problems and in their conceptualisations of social issues. From this point of view it was felt that for administrative purposes, it would be desirable to keep Anthropology and Sociology as separate disciplines within the University set up. However, it was noted also that in terms of actual teaching and research, particularly about concrete problems arising from the social context, disciplinary boundaries should not stand in the way of scholars interacting with one another so as to gain a clearer perspective of concrete problems.

Another paper presented during the session was Dr. V.N. Deshpande's paper dealing with the methodological issues thrown up by the papers presented during the three Interdisciplinary Research Methodology Workshops on "Understanding Poverty". Dr. V. Sarveswara Rao has already compiled the papers and provided a summary of the discussions. Consequently, in Dr. Deshpande's paper greater attention was paid to the methodological issues. Members of the session, particularly those who had participated in the workshops concerned reacted to Dr. Deshpande's outline paper and suggested ways of incorporating different points of view that had emerged during the workshops.

The meeting also made plans for the Tenth Interdisciplinary Research Methodology Workshops with the theme "Rural Change-An Interdisciplinary Perspective". It was decided that the workshop should

be held from Wednesday, May 28 to Saturday, May 31, 1980 in Mysore. The meeting noted with appreciation the census of social science research in Southern universities which the Institute had compiled in 1979 and felt that this should now become an annual feature.

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Two special seminars were held in the Institute in November. The first was conducted on November 8, 1979 by Prof. G.G. Kotovsky, Professor at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow and Co-Vice Chairman of the Indo-Soviet Joint Commission on Social Science Research. Prof. Kotovsky gave a brief account of the organisation of Research on India at the Institute and also gave a quick survey of the results of research on Indian Development by Soviet scholars. In respect of the contemporary situation in India, Soviet scholars see India as being in transition from a colonial feudal society to a modern capitalist one. Being a society in transition, India must be studied as a multistructural society, the term 'structure' implying an entity comprised of economic units which represents the same type of production relations. Specifically Prof. Kotovsky indicated that India is characterised by the continued co-existence and even self perpetuation of pre-capitalist structures along with modern and advanced capitalist structures. Prof. Kotovsky's presentation sparked off a very lively discussion. Responding to some of the points that emerged during the discussion, Prof. Kotovsky said that a weakness of Soviet work on contemporary India was its heavy reliance on official data and other sources of secondary data.

The second seminar was held on November 23, 1979 when Dr. Susantha Goonatilake, Research Director, People's

Bank. Colombo presented a paper "Technology as a Social Gene". Dr. Goonatilake indicated that technology was not universal and that a given social, cultural and economic structure influenced the choice and development of technology. Hence technology always bears the scars of the social conflicts and compromises of the country in which it is born. Technology also influences certain aspects of social behaviour. In the process of transfer of technology, therefore, certain aspects of the social and economic structures of the country of origin come to be transferred to the country of adoption along with the technology itself. As a result, countries importing technology will find it difficult to avoid some kind of cultural and social dependency on the country from which the technology was imported. Dr. Goonatilake also outlined the relationship between technology on the one hand and management science on the other. A good discussion followed the presentation.

### **Mass Communication in Adult Education**

An international symposium on the Role of Mass Communications in Adult Education was held in early October in Ottawa, Canada, attended by 25 specialists in social sciences, adult education and TV and radio. It was agreed that as adult education has now in every country moved into a mass national campaign, the use of T. V, radio and the press and where available, satellites with their mass coverage is essential. The problem of their being a one-way communication calls for a comprehensive feedback system with people's participation. Programmes need to be decentralised to the village level using mobile recording sets and transmitters. The symposium adopted a declaration setting forth the criteria to

be used for the more intensive exploitation of this massive media in Adult Education Programme.

### **IAEA Annual Conference**

The 32nd Annual conference of the Indian Adult Education Association was attended by 600 delegates from all over India at Amritsar in the first week of October. The subject of the conference was Adult Education, and Education and NAEP. The conference worked through five sub-committees: a) The relation between literacy and development, b) the training of instructors, supervisors and other adult education functionaries, c) the production of materials for the illiterate and neo literate, d) the programme for tribal people and e) the special programme for women. The main finding was that at the end of the first year some 10 lakh adults have been made literate, that voluntary agencies are doing a good technical job and that the main danger facing the programme was its divorce from development concerns and tendency to slide into becoming mainly literacy effort. The conference decided to appeal to all development agencies to enter the programme, affirmed the primary importance of NAEP as part of the country's minimum needs programme, and appealed to UGC to ensure that universities and colleges played their full part in it.

### **Jammu and Kashmir Enquiry Committee**

The Jammu and Kashmir Enquiry Committee in October visited 6 taluk headquarters and received representations with regard to various forms of imbalances and slugs faced by the people and the taluk. The main problem that was presented to the Committee was the greater share in industry, agriculture and

ment that each group wished to receive, which is the problem faced by all regions in the country.

### **NAEP Review Committee**

The government has set up a committee chaired by Dr. D. S. Kothari to review the functioning of the National Adult Education Programme, recommend the priority it should have and see if there are any economies realisable. The Committee held 3 sessions in October, the first with the Minister of Education and the others with the Directorate of Adult Education to examine the data on the programme that is available. It also began receiving the views of persons supporting and those critical of the programme.

### **CSD**

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council of Social Development was held at the end of October. The Council's growing programme of survey, research and training was reviewed and decisions made to expand and intensify some and drop others where collaborative and financial arrangements were unsatisfactory. The budget, and staff of the Council for the year were also reviewed and approved.

### **Assocham**

For the fifth year a one-day seminar on a Mid year Review of the Economy 1979-80 was organised in late October by the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It was attended by 150 top industrialists and some economists and government officers from the Finance Ministry. (The first part of the basic

document of the seminar appears as the second article.) There was general agreement that inflation for this year will have to be lived with and that government should set up task forces to correct the infrastructural bottlenecks faced by the economy. The private sector should also act within the present constraints to improve and increase investment and productivity. The Reserve Bank should review the functioning of the basket rate and examine whether the intervention currency should be shifted from the pound to the dollar.

### **November Seminar**

The paper for the November Development Seminar, "From Toori to Thirty Footer: A Preliminary Study of the Political Economy of fishing in Tamil-Nadu" by S. S. Sivakumar, Dilip Kumar and B. Vasant Kumar, Department of Economics, Madras University, together with a summary of the discussion on the paper at the seminar chaired by Prof. B. Ardhanareswaran appears as the first article.

### **Second article**

The first part of a note on the Mid Year Review of the Economy 1979 appears as the second article.

### **Special Section**

In this second special number of the Bulletin for the year some selected papers of the Ninth Interdisciplinary Research Methodology Workshop on Caste and Class in Indian Rural Society appear.

# **From Toori to Thirty Footer: A Preliminary study of the Political Economy of Fishing in Tamil Nadu**

By

S. S. SIVAKUMAR, DILIP KUMAR AND B. VASANT KUMAR.

Madras

The present paper is a summary of the main findings of the enquiry conducted by the students of Economics Department, University of Madras during 1978-79. The students were studying for their Masters degree in Economics and Econometrics, and the project was co-ordinated by S. S. Sivakumar.

The paper is divided into five parts. Part I concerns itself with an outline of our method of enquiry and the consequent limits to the scope of our conclusions. Part II is a description of the technological universe of the traditional fisherman. In this are subsumed the stock of knowledge of traditional fishing, nature of means of production, labour and capital intensity and finally, production relations. Part III describes the changes that have occurred in technology and production relations with the introduction of mechanised fishing. Part IV considers the political economy of mechanisation. Part V consists of a brief analysis of the ecological nuances of mechanisation.

## **Part I: How limited our study is**

As already stated, our study was conducted by students of M. A. Economics

and M. A. Econometrics as a part of their C. S. S. (Community and Social Service) Programme.

During 1977-78, the Department of Economics entrusted the task of co-ordinating its C. S. S. work to S. S. Sivakumar. C. S. S. occupied a dubious status in the minds of the students: in the first place, it was not a part of their curriculum; however, they were expected to do 'satisfactorily' in their C. S. S. project in order to obtain their degree; the projects were also to be conducted mainly during week-ends; finally, most students were loath to spend their week-ends performing social service, while they felt they had "much better" things to do.

As an immediate solution, therefore, it was felt that the students should choose projects, either singly or in groups, allocate time according to their convenience, and submit reports periodically. While as an advantage, this decision permitted a wide ranging choice of activities (a survey of the backgrounds of domestic servants to teaching children in schools), it also left little scope for the co-ordinator to attend to the requirements of each project. At the end, the students

felt they had done something spontaneously, but the output varied in quality from very poor to average.

During 1978-79, it was decided that a single project would be chosen and all students would work on it. Fishing was chosen, since it had not been studied in any depth up till then, and because the "industry" was located within close proximity of the University. The students were divided into three groups: a) the field workers b) the archival workers and c) the tabulators and data processors. It need not be pointed out that since inclination and motivation were the key criteria of classifying students, group (c) was disproportionately large.

All this goes on to indicate that,

- (i) Our project suffered from all the limitations of C.S.S. work. First, those who were motivated had to hold themselves back since C.S.S. was not a part of the curriculum. Second, a number of students who were not motivated felt that they were forced to work. Third, much of the work was done during week-ends and so suffered problems of discontinuity. Fourth, since there was no scope for training the students, our work involved a lot of wastage of time and energy. Finally, the output (mainly our raw data) varied in quality depending on whether the student field worker was a motivated one or considered himself an inmate of an academic 'Gulag'.
- (ii) While it was our objective to use the method of participant - obser-

vation, we found ourselves relying more and more on interviews. This was because we were limited to week-end work. Thus in terms of perfection in the 'art of field work' we were closer to Sunday painters than to professionals.

## Part II: The technological universe of the traditional fishermen

Traditional fishing involves a technology and a stock of knowledge, which were more of the 'endosomatic' nature rather than 'exosomatic'.<sup>1</sup>

In the main, the differences are that the process or learning in the former is mainly through apprenticeship, while in the latter it occurs through formal institutions. Further, in 'endosomatic' processes, emphasis is not so much on major alterations of the factor - coefficients as it is on changes within a given vector of factor - coefficients.

The instruments of production are mainly (a) the *Kattumaram*, which consists of three to seven pre - shaped logs of wood tied together, with a provision for a makeshift mast for the sail and (b) nets (*Valai*, in Tamil). Occasionally, a larger boat (*Padagu* or *Thoni*) is used when certain nets are used.

There are several types of nets used in traditional fishing:

- (i) *Toori Valai*: Toori Valai is most commonly used during most parts of the year. It is six feet wide and about a hundred feet long. The lower edge of the net is weighed down and the upper

1. These concepts have been borrowed from H. Nakamura, *Accumulation and Interchange of Labour*, Institute of Developing Economics, Tokyo (1978).

edge is buoyed with pieces of wood (called 'boya') or more recently aluminium buoys. The two ends of the net are attached to two Kattumarams which hold the net across a sea current.

This net is used to catch fish which swim close to the surface of the sea. The gills of the fish get stuck in the net as they try to swim through it. A good catch with a toori valai comes to about 50 kg of fish and an average one about 10 to 15 kg. At the prices prevailing at the time of our study this would mean Rs. 200/- for a good catch and Rs. 40/- to Rs. 60/- for an average one. Usually, there are two to three men per Kattumaram for this net.

(ii) *The Peruvagai*: As the name indicates, this is the largest net. The net is carried out to sea (700 to 800 meters) in a boat (Padagu or Thoni) manned by 6 to 8 men. The four ends of the net are connected to a long sturdy rope of hemp which is held from the shore by 15 to 24 men. Once the net is dropped in the sea, it stays buoyed and submerged in the same way as does the toori. It is then hauled back to the land by the men on the shore. A good catch with a peruvagai (which is so designed as to be able to catch most marine creatures from prawns to sharks) might fetch upto Rs. 3500/- whereas we also witnessed a very poor catch which fetched only Rs. 150/-. On the average the peruvagai appears to fetch Rs. 300/- to Rs. 450/-.

(iii) *Aravagai* is the smaller of the nets used in sea. It usually involves one Kattumaram with two or three men. It is circular in shape and has its apex weighed down and the circumference buoyed. It is dragged for a short distance and hauled in. A good catch would

fetch upto Rs. 150/- while the average one was worth about Rs. 30/- to Rs. 35/-.

(iv) *Eda valai*, *Painda valai* and *Kola valai* appear to be quite unusual and are specifically designed for specific types of fish. More recently these have gone almost out of use. The reasons for and circumstances of this disappearance are discussed in Part V.

(v) The *mani valai* is the smallest net and usually involves no Kattumaram. It is operated by one man who stands in shallow backwaters or estuaries. It is a miniature version of the peruvagai. The fisherman tosses the net some distance away and hauls it in. An average day's work would yield around Rs. 4/- to Rs. 6/- for the fisherman.

From a study of the labour and capital intensity, and average output of the different valais, it was evident that:

- (i) There is a positive correlation between investment levels and output levels of various types of valais.
- (ii) There is also a positive correlation between labour requirement and degree of uncertainty for different valais.

From these it follows that:

- a) Given the uncertainty, high labour intensity and low output levels, a system of output sharing will be preferable to employers (vis-a-vis fixed wage rates) in the employment of labour. For instance, given sharing criteria biased in favour of the employer, this would (i) force the



labourers to share the risk and (ii) enable them to earn a bonus in case a good catch materialises.

- (b) Further, it might also suit the employers to keep the labour at their disposal by way of tying-up arrangements through usury. This, of course, is subject to the condition that the proportion of fishing population that goes into labour is not more than that required by the employers.

That such an arrangement might suit the requirements of labour, is also evident, for, given the lack of alternative vocations and uncertainty of fishing outputs, output sharing and labour-tying might provide the labour with security as well as a share in bumper outputs. The alternative to this, within the system, is the freedom to be destitute.

The high proportion of "bonded-labourers" in the total population of labourers to some extent illustrates the arguments made above. Further, we may point out that all Kattumaram owners pay their labour in terms of output shares. In Kasimodu and Nochikuppam, the shares were 2/5 for labour if the Kattumaram was run only by labour and 1/5 if the owner and his son/sons participated in the actual fishing.

In general, the following points may be made regarding production relations with respect to traditional fishing:

- (i) Traditional fishing involved a high degree of economic stratification.

- (ii) It also involved a combination of usury with production activities, so that depending upon labour supply and the degree of uncertainty, bondage of labour was a part of the rationale of the system.
- (iii) The characteristic feature of the relations between the employer and the employed was the system of output sharing.

It is into this system that mechanised fishing was introduced. It may be noticed that there is no endogenous stimulant for mechanisation within the system. It will be seen shortly that the State played a considerable part in the process of mechanisation (See Tables 1 & 2 ).

### Part III : Mechanisation-The process

Tables 1 and 2 give a picture of mechanisation and output levels of fishing. It is quite evident that the period 1971-77 witnessed a substantial investment in motorised launches. In terms of the cost figures given by the Fisheries Department for 1973 - 74, the total value of mechanised vessels distributed by the Tamil Nadu Government works out to over Rs. 25 crores.

From an analysis of the capital, labour and output relations for the mechanised and traditional fishing on a comparative basis, it is clear that while mechanised fishing involves a far lower labour intensity (vis-a-vis traditional fishing) its average output levels are at least 5 times higher. Thus, the principles of output sharing are no longer valid as optimal labour reward arrangements.

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\* Ten other tables and three appendices related to the paper have not been included here. They are however available with the authors.

Given much higher output levels, much higher capital-output ratios and much lower labour-output ratios, the employer would stand to benefit through a system of fixed wage payments. For the same reasons, the interlinkage between credit and labour markets is also unnecessary any longer.

These, we feel, are the reasons why we do not find any form of bondage among launch workers.

The process of mechanisation also means the advent of very high capital coefficients and a sudden spurt in productivity of labour. At same time, this also means 'freedom' for labour, from the self perpetuating bondage implicit in the output sharing system of traditional fishing. In concrete terms, all this meant that a labourer earned an average wage of Rs. 20/- per day on a launch, while a labourer operating the peruvilai earned less than Rs. 9.50 as the output share due to him.

It might appear that the advent of launches need not necessarily affect traditional fishing in any way; the argument that India has "vast" export potential for marine products, has often been used to advocate "harmonious", development of traditional and mechanised fishing. From our own arguments it might seem that mechanised fishing certainly does not draw out much labour from traditional fishing; and that this is the basis of the 'Two-legs' policy of the state. The politician we met in Kasimodu, in fact told us, "The sea is vast. Why can we all not benefit from its gifts?"

However, there are atleast two reasons why the reality is quite the reverse. First of all, the continental shelf along the coast of Tamil Nadu slopes rather steeply from 10 to 25 fathoms depth. Most off

the sea floor is either over 25 fathoms deep or under 10 fathoms deep. The two common types of mechanised fishing vessels, the 30 footer and the 32 footer, are not meant for operation in depths greater than 30 fathoms. The bulk of the traditional fishing is undertaken in depths of less than 10 fathoms. Given the nature of submarine topography, therefore, mechanised craft and traditional craft (and valais) overlap mainly in 39 per cent of the continental shelf that lies under 10 fathoms in depth.

Secondly, given the fact that a mechanised craft can travel as much as 60 miles in a day they would be able to net most of the fish in their zone of competition with traditional craft.

The government's crash mechanisation programme has increased the number of mechanised vessels by nearly 31 per cent during 1974-79 alone, of which 26 per cent occurred during 1974-77. This has aggravated the problem further.

It is thus evident that during the last few years, an increasing section of the under-10-fathom area of the sea has yielded rewards to mechanised trawlers.

The eclipse of the traditional craft is further hastened by the fact that the trawlers get to a shoal of fish much faster than the Kattumarams do. Gradually, therefore, the entire spectrum of traditional fishing is faced with extinction. What constrains the process will be understood best if we consider the political economy of mechanisation in greater detail.

#### Part IV : Mechanisation-The political economy

The political economic implications of mechanisation are being considered in the following order;

- (i) The contradictory structure of interests in the fishing industry and the society of fishermen.
- (ii) The dynamics of dialectically related coalitions among the fishermen.
- (iii) The mechanics of policy formation at the level of the state.

Before we go into any further details, it might be relevant to point out that our data from hereon is much less substantial than it has been hitherto. In a sense, what we are presenting below is a somewhat impressionistic analysis. Our justification is (a) that hardly any studies exist in this area and (b) that we have attempted a logical extrapolation of the structure of relationships which we observed earlier on.

(i) *The structure of interests*: Under the traditional arrangement, the dominant and well-to-do fishermen (who are known as *Chettiyars*) control the *jati* leadership. It is well known that the vocation of fishing (at least marine fishing) in the traditional society is restricted to the *Sembadavar jati* (or in modern parlance, *Meenavar*). The well-to-do in the Madras fishing communities belong to the *Periya Pattanavar* sub-jati while most labourers belonged to the *Chinna Pattanavar*. The affairs of the entire community are run by the Panchayat of jati elders (*Chettiyars*) of the region. The Panchayat represents the interests of the fishing community with the higher authorities, settles all internal disputes and runs the affairs of the temples.

With the advent of large scale mechanised fishing the internal solidarity of this structure has been shaken. There is a

considerable challenge to the authority of the chettiyar-Panchayat members. Firstly, as seen earlier, the arrival of mechanised fishing has introduced among the fisherman individuals of hitherto unforeseen amount of wealth. These individuals, who are owners of mechanised boats, are almost always from outside the *Sembadavar Jati*. Unfortunately we do not possess jati-wise information of mechanised vessel owners. However, most of them appear to be upper caste individuals who have diverted investment into fishing from various other lucrative channels. The inability of their Panchayat to prevent such a rapid and powerful intrusion into their midst has rendered the poor fisherman somewhat sceptical of his leaders. Secondly, the chettiyars have themselves become quite impoverished with the gradual ecological (of this more later) and economic erosion of their fishing grounds. Thirdly, political parties have in recent times been selecting their own men to perform leadership functions among the fishermen, often at the expense of the chettiyars. Fourthly, during the recent years there has emerged a shiftless group of migrant fishermen, who are labourers on various trawlers. Since the trawler owners seldom retain any one for more than one season (except the boss-labourer) and since they (the trawlers) wander up and down the coast of Tamil Nadu, this group is small, but outside the jurisdiction of the local chettiyars. Finally, the destitute nature of a large number of 'liberated' traditional labourers, has led to their disillusionment with any form of authority.

All this however, should not be misinterpreted to mean that the traditional fishing society is now polarised due to the advent of mechanised fishing. Our purpose was only to demonstrate that, with the weakening of older forms of

production relations, the older social authority patterns are on the decline. In fact, the contingencies that have emerged subsequently have tended to unify the chettiyar (or other) jati-leadership with the rest even more strongly. The new situation is one of a serious threat to the entire lot of people dependent on traditional fishing and a threat to an entire lifestyle as well. As a result, the traditional fishing community constitutes a single highly vociferous, militant and at the same time internally sub-divided interest group.

The interest group that opposes them consists of launch owners and their labourers, who (even if it is insecure) find their employment on launches highly rewarding. We also have reason to believe that the bigger fish merchants and brokers are in the same lobby. Although we could not interview any of these brokers and merchants, we were witness to the thriving business which launches provided them with. Some of the launch workers said to us that most launches have a regular agreement with particular brokers, for the auctioning of their catches. We have little reason to doubt this. In fact, we feel, the brokers have acquired a much stronger role after mechanisation; after all even given the older rates of commission, their earnings should have gone up significantly after mechanisation.

More recently (i. e., since 1975) at least two large marine product exporting firms have come into the picture. These concerns, possessing modern canning facilities, convey the marine products directly from the fishing harbours to their factories in refrigerated trucks everyday. The input-output linkage between these concerns and the trawler-merchant-broker nexus, and the linkage of the

exporters to international marine products market renders the entire lobby (financially and materially) immensely powerful.

Thus, while the structure of interests of those involved is polarized, it is not so much down the economic hierarchy, as it is between two types of technological-production relations. It is also evident from Table 3 that the mechanised fishing lobby has overwhelming material advantage. (To the figures pertaining to them must also be added the value of assets and profits of the big brokers, merchants and marine product exporters).

(ii) *The dynamics of coalitions and contradictions:* The traditional leadership of the traditional lobby, as has been already pointed out, is suffering from an erosion of its authority. In fact, it was obvious to us, that there is a growing vacuum of leadership. The jati panchayat leaders, are under constant pressure to seek redress for the 'excesses' of the mechanised craft. They are increasingly unable to cope with the power and influence of the mechanised fishing lobby. Over the last few years, political parties are putting up their representatives as alaimants for leadership.

At the time of our field work, we met a few chettiyars who complained to us that they were no longer "men of respect". One of them even narrated a Tamil couplet which stated that a leader (or king) commands authority only as long as he is able to govern efficiently. All the chettiyars we met made oblique references to these "new boys" who received funds from the political parties and were "stirring up the youngsters into disobedience". The relationship between the new 'political' leadership and the jati panchayat is an interesting and complex one.

In many respects, while the 'new' leadership has emerged as a challenge to those of the individual chettiyars, it has no reason to threaten the institution of Panchayat itself. In order to understand this it might be necessary to consider some details pertaining to the viciousness of the competition between the traditional and mechanised vessels.

Most of the traditional fishermen in Madras operate either the Toori or the Aravalai. Since the launches operate in the same area, the traditional nets are often torn apart by the launches, when they are working the same shoals of fish. We do not know accurately, the extent of such damage. We only know that there are the usual catalysts of violent confrontations. We were informed about at least four or five dozen of such confrontations. We were also informed that 'professional' goondas were employed by the launch owners as labourers. This seems possible, since the personal skill needed to operate the launches are far less than the ones needed by the traditional valais. However, considering the extremely volatile temperament of the fisherman, it appears unnecessary to employ outsiders as "muscle men"; fishermen themselves would seem to possess the prerequisites. The point that we wish to make is that the competition is a physically violent one. The launch operators are said to have killed or maimed at least ten Kattumaram operators, aside from having damaged "thousands of rupees' worth" nets. The kattumaram fisherman themselves, burnt up 20 launches at Kasimodu in 1978 and beached another one at Marina in the same year. The residents of Ayodhyakuppam, went on rampage on a day in mid-1978 when they tore up concrete benches along the Marina and blockaded the beach road for

several hours. Many fishermen swore to us that within two years they would 'burn and sink every launch in Madras'.

It is evident that the task of leadership is far from easy and simple. At the same time the potential instability of the situation leaves the door wide open for professional politicians. At Kasimodu, almost all political parties have a foothold. To the extent that leadership can organise protests and petitions, and thus express their solidarity with the 'masses' of fishing folk, they widen their 'base'. However, the final solution to the 'problem' is outside their framework of activity, since their very existence and growth are intimately tied up with the *continued existence and intensification of the 'problem' itself*; the moment the 'problem' is solved the leadership of the political parties is rendered disfunctional. The essential strategy of the politician, therefore, is of the "one step forward - two steps backwards" type: an issue is precipitated, emotions are whipped up, protest organised, petitions submitted and at the same time a compromise is made with the launch operators; the breaking of the 'agreement' leads to a new round of protests, violence, petitions and the new 'agreement' ..... and so on. The political party leader, therefore, cannot afford to conscientiously oppose the launch operators and 'problem' they have created because they are existential prerequisites. The Panchayat, on the other hand, can afford to try and confront the mechanised craft operators, on a 'total' basis, since as an institution it exists only *for and on behalf* of traditional fishing. The relationship between the political parties and the Panchayat is thus a complex one. The former functions through the latter as pressure groups and *never* at the expense of the latter. Often times, some parti-

ular chettiyar might come in for hacking and pressurisation if he does not toe the line of the dominant party boss. At the same time if the political party bosses were to displace the Panchayat as an institution, they would face the same predicament as the chettiyars.

The basic strategy of the political parties is therefore to use the growing disenchantment of the poor fishermen with the chettiyars and the panchayat, to their own advantage by organising pressure groups within the panchayat. As a final illustration let us discuss the case of 'L' who is, perhaps the most powerful political party leader among Madras fishermen today. He belongs to the AIADMK and his thatch roofed home at Royapuram has walls decorated with collages, featuring a giant sized 'L' superimposed against a background of thousands of fishermen marching in protest. He also showed us an album containing a number of photographs of himself along with a fishermen's delegation to Delhi, most of them besides (and often shaking hands with or talking to) the then central Minister Mr. Barnala. We asked him what happened at Delhi. He talked for five minutes, stating how he had spent a full fifteen minute period with the minister and how he had tried to convince the minister about legal measures to protect the 'fishing poor'. We asked what the minister's reply was. 'L' said, "This problem cannot be solved easily. The launch operators are powerful. And we will never give up. Perhaps I will have to go several times to Delhi. The minister was non-committal but sympathetic." He concluded by saying, "It is much better to have a lasting agreement with the launch operators. It might be better for both parties. Anyway, they are too big!"

(i) *The mechanics of policy formation.*

The state is often defined as consisting of (a) a body of men who formulate the laws of a nation; (b) another body of men who execute the laws and (c) instruments of enforcement such as the police. We find it convenient to start with this conception of the state.

Persons like 'L' whose case we have earlier discussed obviously constitute (at least potentially) members of group (a). Their decisions vis-a-vis any particular sector of the economy is obviously a part of their whole process of perception, objective specification, and allocation (of time and resources) with respects to the full system. Even here, factors 'exogenous' to a national political economic system might have considerable significance. Works of Gunder-Frank and others in this respect are only too well known. We shall not go into the details of this here: nor is it pertinent to do so. We also have little evidence indicating the exact manner in which the rest of the economy is linked to fishing. All that we wish to point out is that, what little we have seen about the role of political parties, has made it clear that it is impossible to assume the state to be a 'neutral' body. By inference, therefore, the key questions that follow are not whether (& why) the state is a 'Soft State' (a la Myrdal) but rather, what the mechanics underlying allocational decisions are and how they result in policy.

It is interesting to note that after the Act of 1897, there has been no major legal enactment pertaining to fishing. The entire process of mechanisation, which is definitely a part of the "export-promoted-growth" strategy, has been ushered (financed and encouraged) into the scene, without any systematic study of the ramifications of such a move.

Having done this the state is under contradictory compulsions. On the one hand, the new technology and the implicit gains (eg., foreign exchange, higher profits and so on) are welcome. On the other hand, the nature of the political system, involving adult franchise (and its exercise once in five years) create compulsion to provide for the needs of a vast and vociferous traditional fishing lobby. These compulsions are evidenced in two salient policy decisions.

(i) It is evident that there is no serious intention to legally demarcate zones of reservations in the sea as this would affect the 'efficiency' of mechanised fishing. On the other hand, the need for such a demarcation is emphasised by the violent nature of the competition between traditional and 'modern' fishing. Thus, the solution (which appears logical) is to get the Panchayat and the launch owners' association to meet under the aegis of the Fisheries Department Officials to 'discuss' matters and to arrive at 'agreements'. The question is whether such 'agreements' have any legal standing. The 'two mile' limit beyond which launches are supposed to fish (and within which the traditional craft operate) is the product of one such agreement. The 'limit' is observed by launches when nothing is available within the 'limit'. However, most of the time any cursory glance at the sea off Marina or Santhome would tell us that the launches observe only a 'two fathom' limit. In particular, on a day when an upswell in the sea brings prawns (which follow the Zooplanktons) to the surface, there is anarchy. Thus, the decision to mediate and not to legislate reflects the contradictory compulsions inherent in the state.

(ii) The figures pertaining to allocation of funds again illustrate this quite significantly. It is evident that the large

amount of subsidies for the mechanised lobby have to be counter balanced by 'social' or 'welfare' subsidies of an equally large sum to the traditional sector. If we are to devise a crude social cost benefit indicator:

Suppose purely technically the relationship is

$$Y = \frac{I}{F} \beta F$$

wherein  $Y$  indicates additional output of mechanical fishing, and  $I$  and  $\beta$  are the investment level and output capital ratio respectively.

However since, investment in mechanised fishing upsets social (& political) equilibrium, every rupee of investment in mechanised fishing might require an additional  $\alpha$  fractional Rupee worth 'social' expenditure.

Thus we have from the point of view of social statusquo

$$I = I(1 + \alpha)$$

computing the value of  $\alpha$  from information available to us, we arrive at the figure 0.58 - i. e., for every rupee of subsidy to be given to mechanised fishing investment, the state has to spend 58 paise on the 'social welfare' of traditional fishermen.

Further, since the effect of increasing mechanisation is to increasingly affect (adversely) traditional fishing, it is even possible to think of  $\alpha$  as being an increasing function of subsidy to mechanised fishing.

We do not know whether such a solution is optimal from the point of view of domestic resource allocation. It might be so as long as the rate of growth in productivity in mechanised fishing is faster than that of increases in  $\alpha$ . How long

that will last, is difficult to say. But that housing is not the most important requirement of the fishermen is clear from our enquiry into their own preferences. The investigation into the needs of fishermen in Royapuram and Nochikuppam showed that they gave the highest preference to government protection from launches (46.5 per cent), second preference to credit (29 per cent), third to housing 10.2 per cent, fourth to the establishment of adequate market's by government (9.3 per cent), and lastly to the nationalisation of the fishing industry (5.0 per cent).

The constraint to the present form of mechanisation, is thus not within the system. As we shall see in the ensuing part it is given by the ecological factors.

#### Part V : Ecology: Constraint

We were informed in Kasimodu that the mechanised vessels are an ecological menace. In order to understand this better, let us consider the marine ecology of the sea coast off Tamil Nadu in some detail.

The Bay of Bengal is a rich fishing ground. This is mainly due to the confluence of four currents in it: the South West Monsoon Drift, the Indian counter current, the North East Monsoon Drift and the North Equatorial Current. Locally they are known as Tendi, Meimpasi, Vanni and Ocain. The confluence of these currents creates circulation of large masses of water that penetrate up to the ocean bottom. This causes an upswelling of water which is rich in nutrients for zooplanktons & other smaller species of marine life. This in turn leads to an ideal condition for the breeding of a number of species of fish. In all 1800 different species of fish are known to exist in the

sea coasts along India and of these 500 species, classified into sixteen groups are commercially important edible fish.

We have already seen that traditional fishermen are aware of the four currents and their importance. In fact, a number of them told us that they could tell the different parts of the year when different currents would be dominant. They also gave us a list of over 120 pieces of marine life in Tamil and some of them had over twenty sub-species. We were informed that there were people, in the previous generation (who were alive till 5-10 years ago) who could correlate the spawning and appearance of different species with different currents, tides and lunar cycles. These people, we were informed, demarcated different water zones with respect to different landmarks along the shore and different depths and predicted the types of marine life that could be found in each zone. There was also a custom, which existed till ten years ago, when young men (with some flattened rice and dried fish and water rations) went out on long trips ("Kan Kannatha Desam") lasting several days in search of certain types of sharks and flying fish. We were also informed that till five years ago there were thirty men in Kasimodu alone who could navigate by the stars. Today there are only three.

All this is being narrated to point out the detailed and complex nature of the knowledge of the skilled traditional fisherman. His fishing activities and technology were also, likewise, highly selective and discriminating. Today, he is as mercenary as the launch operator, thanks to the vicious struggle for survival in which he is engaged.

The launch workers and operators, on the other hand, consider the sea to be a



'pagoda tree'. In the first place most launch owners have no acquaintance with marine ecology. They seldom go out in their launches. The clean, well-ironed clothes in which they sit awaiting the return of their vessel, is in direct contrast to the stench, squalor and waste created by their launches. The harbour at Kasimodu, is littered with enormous amount of "waste" which is unsaleable. Among these piles of waste, we spotted magnificent sting Rays, hundreds of Crustaceans, innumerable fry and fingerlings and even a young dolphin. On the beach alongside Nochikuppam in San Thome, as a sheer contrast, there was no such 'waste' lying around.

In part the very technology of the launches is responsible for this. While the traditional valais, are designed for selective fishing, the launches use a standard procedure. A large net is trailed behind the launch, and weighed down with a heavy bar of iron. The launch then proceeds to drag into the net anything that surfaces upto the depth of 10 to 12 fathoms. Since the launches operate in the indiscriminate destruction of all that exists on the ocean floor and the spawning area. Once the catch is hauled in and brought to the harbour all "waste", which are by then dead, are discarded.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the traditional fishermen accused the launch operators of denuding marine ecology. That this is true, was confirmed by several others, including some ex-launch owners, government officials and researchers. At what speed is this destruction occurring? The fishermen of Kasimodu told us that the bulk of the spawning grounds off Cuddalore and Pondichery are now barren and most of the launches of that area are now in Madras. That this is atleast partly true was confirmed by the

fact that about 400 launches were using the Kasimodu harbour at the time of our fieldwork, whereas in the previous year only around 200 were doing so.

The ecological threat of mechanisation is not a new knowledge. The amendment to the Fisheries Act of 1897 as far back as in the 1920s to ban ecological damage of various sorts, (during the abortive mechanisation attempts then) only illustrates this.

Does all this mean that there is a need for 'appropriate technology'? With this in mind we asked the fishermen what they felt about Kattumaram made of fibre glass, with sail and outboard motor fittings. Needless to say it was welcomed by all traditional fishermen. Some months later we discovered that such a vessel was, indeed, being developed at the Vizag shipyard.

It is true that fibre-glass Kattumarams would greatly increase productivity, while at the same time retaining the existing employment levels. However, given the existing inequalities of income, this would only mean strengthening the hands of the chettiyars. Further, once such an innovation is made available to them, there is no reason why the chettiyars themselves should not seek labour-saving innovations in the next round. In other words, given a "spontaneous" market economy, fibre glass Kattumarams only constitute a transitory stage to the thirty-footer launch.

Many fishermen, said to us, "All this will only mean profits to the rich." In a sense, this remark expresses the fact that such appropriate technologies require equally appropriate institutional and social environment in order to lead to

optimal solutions. Given the present structure of interests, this is an 'out of system' choice.

In sum, we find that the limits to the wave of mechanisation are given ecologically — i.e., when the sea stops offering any further bounties. Official figures support this argument. During the last year, the number of launches distributed by FDCI in Tamil Nadu have come down to a paltry figure of 4, from 202 in 1976-77. Since this is no attempt by the State to tighten the purse strings, we can only infer that there are fewer 'takers' now. It appears to us that the present wave of mechanised fishing, at least off Madras, has another 2 years to go before it destroys the ecology and itself.

The next phase of mechanisation involves a far more expensive process of deep-sea fishing. Whether this would materialise depends upon whether the government can subsidise such a massively expensive operation. This in turn, depends upon the urgency of the "export-promoted-growth" strategy. It would also depend upon the extent to which the present world fish market (and the dominant fishing interests) permit large scale Indian entry. The viciousness of the world wide competition in fishing (and also the large scale ecological constraints) is evident from the recent announcement of U.K. of a 200 km territorial water limit to protect its herring shoals, and the subsequent near conflict situations that it has created between the other major fishing interests of the EEC and the U.K.

TABLE 1: Kattumarams, Boats, Trawlers and Nets (1977)

District	Kattumarams	Boats	Trawlers	Nets
Madras	5426 (3 91 9500)	72 (22 60 000)	434 (8 68 00 000)	1546
Chengleput	5230	248	192	6493
S. Arcot	1508	342	363	2913
Tanjore	5027	1709	217	28916
Pudukottai	15	618	—	31791
Ramanathapuram	228	3257	232	48883
Tirunelveli	4240	781	142	46456
Kanyakumari	12088	863	572	15930
	33762	7790	2152	192928

Note: Figures in brackets are the estimated annual output of different vessels.

The estimates have been made by us under the following assumptions:

- i) All vessels are fully employed for the entire technically possible period :
  - a) Kattumarams (150 days)

- b) Boats (80 days) : 22102A
- c) Trawlers (200 days) : 22102 (a)
- ii) a) The Kattumarams have been imputed the toori output (average) of Rs. 50/- per day at 1978-79 prices (local).
- b) The boats have been imputed the peruvilai output (average) of Rs. 375/- per day.
- c) The trawlers have been imputed the 1978-79 average daily output of a 30 footer. : 22102 (d)

Source: *Tamil Nadu Meen - Turai Pulli Vivarangaal*, Directorate of Fisheries, Madras June 1979).

(c)

TABLE 2: **Distribution of Trawlers and Marine Product Output (1971-1979)**  
—Tamil Nadu

Year	Trawlers distributed	Marine Product Output (Rs)
1971-74	1671 (a)	N. A. (e)
1974-75	28 (b)	N. A.
1975-76	211 (b)	200,172
1976-77	202 (b)	201,838
1977-78	65 (b)	205,058
1978-79	4 (b)	210,316

Note: (a) Distributed by Dept. of Fisheries.

(b) Distributed by Fisheries Development Corporation.

Source: Tamil Nadu Dept. of Fisheries (1979), *ibid*

TABLE 3: **Estimated Relative Economic Strength of the Traditional and Mechanised Fishing (Tamil Nadu)**

S. No.	Item	Traditional	Modern
1.	Fishing Craft : (Rs) (1977)	7,42,71,500 (a)	26,89,00,000 (b)
2.	Labour employed (1977) (Man-days during the year)	1,52,78,680 (c)	21,52,000 (c)
3.	Co-operative (1979)		
	a) members	85,066 (d)	—
	b) Share Capital (Rs.)	41,79,000 (d)	—
4.	Net yield/Profit per annum (Rs.)	8,59,84,100 (e)	34,43,20,000 (e)

*Notes:*

- (a) Source : "Tamil Nadu Meenthurai Pullivivarangal". Tamil Nadu Fisheries. Department, Madras, 1979-for number of craft. Thonis have been valued by us at Rs. 5,000 each under the assumption that each thoni has depreciated 33%. Kattumarams have been valued at Rs. 750/-each assuming that each Kattumaram has depreciated 50%. The depreciation figures approximate to our observations in our field area in Madras.
- (b) Source : "Tamil Nadu Meenthurai Pullivivarangal" *ibid* each mechanised craft has been valued at Rs. 1,25,000/- which was the 1977-78 value minus 15% depreciation (at 5% per annum).
- (c) 'Traditional crafts' employment figures have been computed at the employment rates of Toorivalai and Peruvalai at Madras. Employment figures of Mechanised vessels are estimated on the basis of the figures for a thirty footer.
- (d) Source : "Tamil Nadu Meenthurai....." *ibid*..
- (e) Assuming full capacity utilisation.
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## November Seminar

### Summary of Discussion

In presenting the paper the author regretted that the paper had not been made available to participants in advance. (It has since been received.)

It was stated that the study was a preliminary one in two senses of the term: first, there had so far been no systematic study of the problem of fishing in Tamil Nadu, and second, the study had so far been limited by the fact that it depended for its information base on part time work done by the students of the M. A. class at the University Department of Economics.

The purpose of the study was to understand the framework within which policy decisions are being taken on fishing. In this context the author considered it necessary to explicitly assert that the concept of state as a neutral entity is clearly irrelevant in the case of fishing. Given this assertion, the conclusions would project the systemic limitations involved in state policy, with the state itself being regarded as part of the system.

Differentiating between "traditional technology"—where labour and capital inputs have remained fairly rigid for centuries and which is characterised by an endosmotic knowledge system—and the modern technology, characterised by more capital intensive methods of fishing

and lower skill requirements, the author pointed out certain effects of the growth of the latter on the former.

First, in the recent past, it appears that several of the traditional nets, each geared for a specific type of catch has been disappearing, some having become totally extinct.

Second, a large part of the endosmotic knowledge system implicit in the traditional fishing, based on centuries of empirical observation, has begun to vanish altogether.

Third, given the role of uncertainty in the traditional fishing, and the consequent predominance of output sharing rather than straight wage payment in the relation between boat/net owners and fishermen, the new technology has brought about a major change in making wage payment more important than output sharing. One impact of this has been the weakening of the bondage of fishermen to the traditional owners. In its turn, this weakening has also had its political impact in terms of the lowering of the power held by the traditional owners within the fish economy.

Emphasis was also laid, in the presentation, on the serious ecological impact of modern technology in fishing. This was presented in terms of the competition

between the two technologies. The geography of the continental shelf along the Madras coast, according to the author, is such that the off-shore region—which is the trawling area—forms only eighteen per cent of the total shelf area. Encroachment into the onshore parts of the shelf—which is the preserve of traditional fishing—is thus inevitable. Moreover, with trawling leading to high levels of waste, coupled with destruction of organisms on the sea floor, it was predicted that the entire fish stock would vanish within the next three years. To back up this argument, statistics relating to offtake of trawlers by private parties from the Fisheries Development Corporation were cited, showing a sharp decline in numbers over the period 1975-76 to 1977-78.

In this situation, characterised by depletion of stock, by the declining hold of the traditional leadership, by increasing cynicism on the part of fishermen and by a choking of relations characteristic of traditional fishing, it was argued that political parties, which see a big vote bloc in the fishing community, intervene by functioning as pressure groups within the existing framework without working decisively to alter it. In this way, they avoid entering into direct confrontation with mechanised fishing and can thus maintain and capitalise upon the tension between the two sectors.

State policy has tended to discriminate in favour of mechanised fishing, even while offering certain palliatives to the traditional sector. It has also been characterised by a failure to legislate decisively in favour of those working in the traditional sector in respect of their lives and conditions of work,

The discussion began with a suggestion for dividing the coast by latitude rather than by depth so that encroachment-and-confrontation—might be lessened, but this was considered by several participants, to be impractical.

Peru was cited during the discussion as an example of total depletion of fish resources. In India, Pondicherry was cited as an example, particularly in the light of the fact that depletion there has led to an increase in migration of fisherfolk to other parts of the Tamil Nadu coast.

In response to a question, the speaker made the following points about relationships in the traditional sector: firstly, that the bulk of traditional fishing is dependent upon dependent labour; secondly, that in the traditional sector, both the employer and the employee are on the decline; and thirdly, that there was no large intervention by merchants into the traditional sector, the catch being too small for such intervention.

Outlining his perception of the way out of the present situation, the speaker indicated that institutionally, it required an "out of the system solution," involving some form of collective control. Later, he also referred to certain technological innovations that could be introduced, such as the fibreglass fishing boat.

In response to another question, the speaker said that the ecological frontiers to fishing were being rapidly reached, and that there was the danger that legislations would be passed only after the process of exhaustion of marine resources was too far gone.

Prof. B. Ardhanareeswaran chaired the meeting.

## Mid Year Review of the Economy 1979-80\*

### (Part I)

#### Prolegomena

I wish to begin this year's mid year review of the economy with three prefatory remarks,

First it is somewhat difficult at present to undertake a meaningful review of the economy. I called the 1977-78 review of the economy as an exercise of whistling in the dark as there were no bench marks in the form of a Five Year Plan at that time as against which a review of current events could be made. This year's review is somewhat like punching in the air, because there is no responsible government whose actions can be analysed and reviewed, there is no central authority to whom recommendations can be addressed and there is no Approved Five Year Plan against which judgements can be made.

Second this state of suspended animation runs over half of the year atleast under review from July 1979 to January 1980. It is this background against which the review of the economy is made, leaving aside the longer term issues such as whether a socialist society or a mixed economy with its commanding heights being in the public domain is

consistent with coalition governments, formed on the basis of what are euphemistically called minimum programmes. I wonder whether it is realised that when analogies are drawn between the current political power structure in India and those of the IV Republic (pre De Gaulle) France or the Italian Republic, the latter was possible because these countries had, broadly an economy which was run by market forces, and which was thus self regulating and self sustaining as non socialist market economies. Somewhere along the line, the country and the people of this country will have to draw the necessary conclusion and choose the economic system which the political framework that we are adopting makes possible. We cannot have our free wheeling political cake and eat it socialistically at the same time.

Third, for the immediate present, that is for the balance of this year, new economic responsibilities, in the way of investment initiatives, management foresight and skill, futuristic forecasting, market discipline including the areas of black marketing and corruption fall on the 22 states; the business community and its organised instruments such as Assocham, FICCI, AIMO, the trade unions and the

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\* Extract from a note by Malcolm S. Adiseshiah for the Annual Seminar, The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry, New Delhi, October, 24 1979.

many voluntary associations of citizens and professionals in the country. This period of political and governmental hiatus could become a period of decentralised planning, rational decision making, based on a new sense of economic responsibility which could leave a permanent mark in the form of an irreversible tradition of decisions being made where they count and not at one central point, which in terms of instruments, micro processing and the new technologies of communication make possible. (1) This would also lessen the role of money power and the practice of palm greasing which has attracted international attention as our "way of life". (2)

### General State of the Economy

The Economy at this point reflects quite opposing and contradictory symptoms of health and ill health. On the one hand, the base 1978-79 from which the current economy took off was apparently sound. In 1978-79, the economy grew at 3.5 per cent according to the ministry of Finance. (3) Agricultural food grains production was estimated at a record of over 130 million tonnes, which was a 3 per cent growth and marked the first time in recent years when there was no import of food grains. Manufacturing industry grew at 7.7 per cent. Food grains buffer stood at 20 million tonnes. Despite an adverse trade balance (revised) of Rs. 1,107 crores, foreign exchange reserves (without gold and SDRs) stood in March 1978 at Rs. 4,500 crores. Time and demand deposits

increased, with time deposits rising 25 per cent faster than demand deposits. And prices for the calendar year 1978 registered a fall of 0.27 per cent and for financial year March 1978 to February 1979 a marginal rise of 0.3 per cent. (4) What these base line indicators mean with regard to the realisation of the triple plan objective of removal of poverty, elimination of unemployment and under employment and attainment of self reliance is difficult to quantify in regard to the first two elements, because of the short time period involved and even more basically because we do not have the data base, particularly for the major rural sector. The information given by the Planning Commission to Parliament in July 1979 (to be referred to later), indicates some progress made through the IRD, SFDA, Food for Work and Antyodaya programmes in generating rural employment. And now in the mid year, the economy is in bad shape. Food grain production is not likely to attain last year's level, because of drought conditions in parts of the country, industrial growth has slackened because of various infrastructural constraints, the rising costs of projects and sickness at all levels and sectors, — large, medium and small, capital goods, intermediates and consumer's goods. Savings continues to out run investment and despite the large and comfortable food grains buffer and foreign exchange reserves, and curiously enough because of them, acting to increase the liquidity of the economy and the importing of international inflation,

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1. Nora Simone: *Informatisation of Society*, Guilford, Paris 1978  
Malcolm S. Adiseshiah: *Societal Expectations of Science*: Nehru Centre: Bombay 1979
  2. *International Herald Tribune*: Bribes, Favours Accepted at all levels, August 30, 1979 Paris,
  3. *Economic Survey 1978-79*, Government of India: New Delhi 1979
  4. *Monthly Abstract of Statistics*: May 1979. CSO New Delhi.



forecast of the economy's growth of 3.7 per cent by the ministry of Finance and 4.4 per cent by the Planning Commission for the current year are not likely to be realised, and in fact during the four months April-July of this year economic growth is reported at -0.9 per cent\* and the economy is in the grip of an inflationary spiral.

## Prices

Wholesale prices in the 12 months ending August 25, 1979 have registered a rise of 17.3 per cent and retail prices which had been lagging behind have now caught up and passed beyond the wholesale price trend. (In July alone the all-India consumer price index rose by 8 points or 2.6 per cent.) Between the last week of February and August end, wholesale prices have risen by 19.2 per cent. The causative factors for this inflationary spiral are usually grouped under: (a) monetary and credit expansion at an annual rate of 20 per cent as against the projected growth of the economy at 3-4 per cent (which in fact is a minus rate as of now) plus the liquidity introduced by the growing food-grain reserves and the expanding foreign remittances, (b) infrastructural bottlenecks represented by power, coal, steel and transport shortages including railway wagons non-availability, (c) fiscal factors such as the large budget deficit of Rs. 1,345 crores for the current year over and above that for the last year, seen in large government borrowing from RBI to the tune of Rs. 1,347 crores between March 30 and August 31 compared to Rs. 401 crores in the same period last year for meeting its food and export subsidies and its consumption expenditure, and the universalisation and increase in excise duties, (d) trade policy with its inbuilt growing system of subsidies

which have in the seventies expanded over 16-fold, and wage policy involving the bonus, DA and wage revisions and repayment of the compulsory deposits, and (e) the system of administered prices, rising procurement or support prices for agricultural products and for a number of basic industries' products.

It is necessary to examine a little more in depth this inventory of the causes for the price increase. First, as against the monetary and fiscal causes which should have resulted in a rise in prices in the generality of goods at about similar levels, an examination of the index of wholesale and consumer prices set forth by CSO's monthly abstract of statistics shows, on the contrary, that during the period of stable or falling prices in 1978-79 reported earlier, 9 groups of commodities ranging from cement and steel to chemicals and rubber registered a much higher rise in prices at 5 per cent to 44 per cent (compensated by fall in prices of oils, sugar, fibres and vegetable groups), than in the current inflationary 5-month in this 5-month inflationary period the commodity groups which represent a weight of 75 per cent in the price index registered a rise of only 1 per cent. In fact there has to be more of a disaggregated analysis and approach to this problem of price rise than is common, as then it is found that three groups of commodities—metal products (accounting for 27 per cent of the price rise), sugar products (accounting for 34 per cent of the price rise) and fruits and vegetables (accounting for 25 per cent of the price rise)—account, all told, for 87 per cent of the inflationary phenomenon. Such a disaggregated approach could also have meaning and content for pricing policy.

Second, as regards the credit bulge as a causative factor for the current bout of inflation, apart from the large borrowings

\* CSO's provisional estimate of the economy's growth is 2 per cent in April, -1 per cent in May, -0.8 per cent in June and -0.8 per cent in July.

by government referred to earlier, commercial credit, excluding foodgrain procurement credit for the period March 30 to August 1979 amounted to Rs. 948 crores compared to Rs. 7 crores in the same period last year. The two annual figures are however not comparable as the estimate for this year includes participation certificate credit which last year's did not. If it is possible to distinguish the part of credit used for speculative deals and inventory stock piling and hoarding and the recent hike in lending rates applied to them, that would be an effective anti-inflationary action. But the effect of the general lending rates rise will be to further increase project costs for needed programmes, discourage fresh investments and not touch the speculative and hoarding activities which do not rely in the main on bank credit.

Third, with regard to infrastructure bottlenecks, the railways and its wagons non-availability are widely believed to be a major cause for the rise in alternative transport costs. This is true, but the railways shortages are in turn due to the steady decline in railway investments from 20 per cent of the outlay in the Second Plan, to 11 per cent in the three Annual Plans, to 9 per cent in the Fourth and a meagre 4.5 per cent in the Fifth Plan, at which level it has been stabilised in the current Draft Plan. Furthermore ominously, the lower rate of wagon loadings about which there has been a public and business outcry is in some important cases not because of the inefficiency of the railways but because of lower rates

of commodity production. In the period April 1978 - January 1979 wagon loadings of coal declined (from 24.42 lakh wagons to 22.80 lakh wagons), but this was due to coal production increasing by a mere 1 per cent in that period. Similarly cement loadings in this period fell but the cement industry grew in this period by only 2.4 per cent; so too in the case of steel and iron wagon loadings, but what was there to load when this sector grew by a minute 0.5 per cent, all of which also trace back to past declining investments? This has implications for investment policy.

Fourth, a comment on the system of administered prices as an inflationary causative factor. In so far as coal, steel, cement, soda ash and other price rises have raised project costs as the engineering industries find, this is true, but it is equally true that these administered (remunerative) prices based on careful studies by the Bureau of Costs and Prices do not increase production, because of the Producers' Iron Law which decrees that it is not remunerative prices but only shortages that maximise profits.\* This has implications for some discipline in our market and production policies.

Finally the public distribution net work including the expanded system launched on July 1 by the previous government has a price dampening effect for some commodities in the largely urban areas where it operates, except in the case of Kerala where it is a truly state-wide net work. The demand that even in this limited spatial framework, the expansion of the

\* In a somewhat straight report in the Economic Times of Sept. 2, 1979 it is stated that textile "mills are also induced to raise the prices because of the improvement of market activity..... the bargaining positions of the mills vis - a - vis the wholesale trade has improved considerably following a cut in the products and a fall in the month end stocks".

basket to include tea, coffee, matches, soaps, exercise books, cheap cloth and kerosene raises a number of unresolved and unresolvable issues. The supply of these additional items cannot be assured by any kind of producers' levy which has been given up for foodgrains in the name of free trade and price support. On the other hand, there can of course be an assured supply to the distribution net work through a system of subsidies, which aside from its serious fiscal incidence, will benefit the not-so-poor, will increase bureaucracy and corruption, and most important will divert resource from production and lagging investment, to be referred to later, to trade and the creation of a new dependent and protected class of self-employed, which will merely replace the existing really growing self-employed group. The public distribution net work is a necessary instrument to help the poor, and it is the spatial extension of the net work to reach out to the rural poor rather than an expansion of its basket of goods that is needed. The policy implication is that the public distribution net work is more an anti-poverty than an anti-inflation instrument and should be so planned and operated.

What then of the inflation prospects for the current year? Here I begin with two assumptions. First, the inflationary spiral will continue for the balance of this year and on the basis of a study of various trends in commodity prices, I place the inflation rate for the year 1979-80 at around 25 per cent. It should be noted that in less than half this period an inflationary rate of near 17-19 per cent has been recorded. Second, given the somewhat special and unique position occupied by the parallel economy (which today I estimate at double the magnitude reported by the Wanchoo Committee), and my belief that that sector will be left untou-

ched during the balance of the year, which is the election period followed by the pay off period, I am of the view that the use of classical anti-inflationary instruments—monetary, such as credit curbs, bank rate hikes, statutory, such as price controls, canalising commodities supplies, or price roll-backs, or fiscal, such as further incentives, subsidies etc. will be counter-productive in the sense that they will hurt the official capital market, hold back legitimate corporate sector investment, penalise the producer, consumer and worker who are in the mainstream of the economy and act as a further fillip to the overly powerful parallel economy. Under these circumstances my advice to the government, the producing community in both the primary and secondary sector, to the workers and the consuming public is to plan during the coming 7 months for an inflationary economy (which can at least avoid the stagflation of 1974-76). The techniques of planning for an inflationary economy, are now well established, ranging from full-fledged indexation as developed by Brazil, to compensate for price escalations through escalation clauses, cost of living indices offset by dearness allowance, etc., all of which have in common the commendable administrative qualities of automaticity and relative straight forward simplicity, the economic virtues of not holding back production and investment growth, and the social norms of equality in sharing all profits and gains on known and acceptable principles. Can this policy of allowing the economy to roll with the inflationary punch be achieved without a central government? The answer to that basic question is in your hands—that of the corporate industrial sector, the agricultural industry leaders, and the workers who are now presented, as I have referred to earlier, with an oppor-

tunity to develop and attain new economic norms.

On the basis of this analysis of the basic frame, it is possible to pause and review the planning instrumentality, the Draft Plan, and the various sectors of the economy.

### Draft Plan

The finalising of the Draft Plan has been half completed and even so it is in the limbo for the balance of the year. Its finalisation is only half completed in the sense that its base has been moved to 1978-79 prices, (as against the post-March 1979 sharp, and sustained price spurt) and on that base the total public sector outlay was estimated to increase from the original Rs. 69,380 crores to Rs. 73,380 crores. The Planning Commission meeting in early July, however, decided to limit the increase to Rs. 71,604 crores in light of the problems raised by the effort for additional resource mobilisation. Thus the finalised Plan was not really based on 1978-79 prices, but was a kind of half-way house. This revision was also used to revise the order of allocations for various sectors, with consequential cuts in physical targets as at 1982-83, as in the case of coal from 149 million tonnes to 143 million tonnes, steel from 11.80 million tonnes to 11.47 million tonnes, nitrogenous fertilisers from 41 lakh tonnes to 39 lakh tonnes, and even so the outlay for industry and minerals at these lower targets has been raised (from Rs. 13,340 crores to Rs. 14,299 crores) because of increased project costs. In other sectors, targets

have been revised upwards, as in cement from 30 million tonnes as to 32 million tonnes, commercial vehicles from 65,000 to 75,000, crude from 18 million tonnes to 18.04 million tonnes, and paper and paper boards from 1.25 million tonnes to 1.4 million tonnes. One noteworthy feature of the revision is that for the first time since planning began, the private sector's investment at Rs. 70,377 crores (against the original Rs. 46,860 crores) is higher than the public sector outlay on new projects of Rs. 61,320 crores (to which Rs. 10,250 crores on ongoing projects should be added). This sharp increase in private sector investment is due to the changed domestic savings structure for the Plan period, to which reference will be made later. Thus the total (public and private) Plan outlay is a huge Rs. 1,41,947 crores, which is nearly double our current GDP. The revised Plan is a makeshift effort because (a) it does not allow for the full price rise, (b) it allows for half of the rise, and (c) and it makes for shifts in outlays and targets purely on the basis of costs, rather than on the results of an appraisal of projects implementation.<sup>(5)</sup> It is a matter of regret that the one important element of realistic flexibility that rolling adjustments of outlays and targets based on annual Plan implementation reviews which the concept of the Rolling Plan offered has not been used. But even this makeshift instrument is now in the limbo, and when brought to light and finalised by the new government during the 1980 budget session of the Parliament through NDC might involve further shifts in priorities, targets and outlays, and in the interim offers no yardstick against which the current year's economy can be judged.

5. Draft Five Year Plan 1978-83; Planning Commission. New Delhi 1978.  
(Revised) Five Year Plan 1978-83; Planning Commission. New Delhi 1979.

Meanwhile at this mid year point, the 1979-80 Plan at a total of Rs. 12,511 crores, representing an increase of 7.4 per cent over the previous year's Plan, is under way. The first two years of Plan outlays are 35 per cent of the (original) public sector outlay. Like last year, it looks as if the financial targets will be attained but not the physical targets. The states who have a modest 1.9 per cent increase in their plan assistance (compared to the centre's 13.2 per cent) will have to raise resources to finance 62.3 per cent of their Plan outlay compared to last year's 53.9 per cent. Apart from reliance on the large financial devolutions made to them by the Seventh Finance Commission, this is one occasion when the states, in the absence of a union government, can put into effect the Raj Committee report recommendation for taxation of agriculture. Agriculture which contributes 43 per cent of GNP of the country does not provide even 1 per cent of GNP as tax revenue, while the various incomes and corporate taxes contribute the equivalent of 5.7 per cent of GNP, and the excise on manufactures of various kinds contributes 5.4 per cent. The states have the potential resources to finance their current year Plan, if they will mobilise them.

### Agriculture

It is unlikely that the current year's original target of 133 million tonnes of foodgrains production or even the revised target of 130 million tonnes will be attained because the kharif food crop is a failure in some 15 meteorological sub divisions (compared to just one sub division in 1978-79) due to failure of rains in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Eastern Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, parts

of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. (The late rains in September will not save the kharif crop, but can help rabi sowings.) This raises the question of the investment-oriented character of our agriculture. If it is true that the agricultural crop in any year is a function of six factors, viz., weather, water, seed quality, fertiliser and pesticides input, market conditions including pricing and farm management, this year's dry spell during the kharif season is a reminder that weather is still the major and decisive factor. Second, with the failure of the kharif paddy crop in the new and major rice-producing regions of Haryana (the Karnal-Kurukshetra area), Punjab, (Ludhiana), Western UP (Gorakhpur, Basti, Azamgarh and Deoria), West Bengal (Malda) and Andhra Pradesh (17 out of 22 districts), rice production this year may fall by over 3 million tonnes (the kharif loss in Punjab alone is estimated at 1 million tonnes) the quantum and composition of the 21 million tonnes food-grain buffer will change, (the quantum coming down from 21 million to 11 million tonnes and the near even composition at 11 million tonnes of wheat and 9.8 million tonnes of paddy—the rice buffer increasing from 6.2 million tonnes in March 1977 to 9.8 million tonnes in March 1977—returning once more to the earlier ratio of 75 to 25 if the rabi performance is normal), and an additional new demand on the railways to transport foodgrains to deficit areas, competing with the demand for the equally urgent need to move coal and fertilisers, will emerge. While the production shortage of foodgrains will be cushioned by drawing down on the ample foodgrains buffer and, if well managed, should not lead either to local supply shortages or sensible price rises, the more serious problem in the current year is the increase

in unemployment, sharp fall in farm incomes and wages and moving into the poverty sector of about half of the small farmers in the country, which is some 30 million small farm houses out of some 60 million households according to the SFDA definition, and about 25 million out of the 45 million of landless labourers.<sup>6</sup> The states here have a major responsibility to undertake urgently well designed and effective employment generation programmes to meet this crisis, using their rural planning and implementation machinery for operating the IRD, Antyodaya, Food for Work, SFDA and other local programmes for this purpose, as will be explained later.

On a longer term basis, studies show that 2/3 of the expenditures of the cultivator flow out of the village in the form of payments for chemical fertilisers and pesticides, mechanical harvestors and tractors etc., so that the 1/3 which remains in the area is unable to absorb the local output. The strategy of agricultural growth as well as its ancillaries of IRD and that of the major manufacturing sectors which are dependent on the agricultural sector must be related more closely to the rural factor endowment, and not to the single criterion of profit maximisation or the discharge of the collaboration arrangements with the MNCs. Another long term issue relates to our poor land reform record for the year. Here FAO's international cross section data show that the rank correlation

between average holding size and output per hectare is negative and significantly high at 0.96. It shows that a reduction in the average size of holdings or in land concentration is associated with increased output per hectare, which means an increase in employment per hectare, or total employment. Against this is the small progress made in land reform in the states during the year. With potential surplus land at 88.13 million acres (in the hands of 3.29 per cent of rural households) the official surplus at 5.32 million acres, the declared surplus at 4.04 million acres, the area taken over at 2.10 million acres and the actual distributed area at 1.29 million acres, that is 1/4 of the official surplus and 1/8 of the real surplus, the land reform situation is grim. There is only one way that the reform can be made effective as Japan, Mexico, Venezuela and nearer home Kerala and West Bengal have shown, that is, through local committees of the landless acting to implement the legislation on the statute books. This is one area where the state governments and legislatures without waiting for the new government to emerge at the union level can act as Kerala and West Bengal have done.<sup>(7)</sup>

Returning to the crop review, apart from wheat and paddy, the other food-grains, coarse grains and pulses and the commercial crops of oil seeds, cotton, jute, cane and tea and coffee present a less sombre picture at this mid year point.

6. Evaluation of SFDA: Planning Commission, New Delhi, 1979.  
Survey of SFDA: Ministry of Agriculture, New Delhi, 1978.

7. FAO: Report on Agrarian Reform: Rome, 1979.  
NSS: 26th Round, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 1978.  
Draft Five Year Plan 1978-83: Planning Commission, New Delhi, 1978.  
Raj Krishna: Towards a Theory of Optimum Land Reform for a Dualistic Agriculture,  
Journal ISAS, Delhi, June 1978.

Pulses production without further technological aid will be around 12 million tonnes this year. The kharif paddy failure has led in some cases as in Punjab, UP, MP and parts of Tamil Nadu to the paddy lands being reploughed for growing coarse grains, and oil seeds and groundnuts, so that there is likely to be an increase in the rather low output from last year of coarse grains and oil seeds. In the case of jute, the decline in the Bengal-Bihar output will be to some small extent compensated by the 40 per cent increase in the Andhra Pradesh acreage under maesta (the land being diverted from paddy), so that the current year's production of jute and maesta together should not be much below last year's 75 lakh bales.

Cotton prospects are also not unsatisfactory, due to the fact that the expected decline in production from last year's 77.50 lakh bales to 72 lakh bales this year is compensated by a large carry over of 20.73 lakh bales (official estimates) to 24 lakh bales (trade estimates) due, as noted earlier, to the sharp cut back in the consumption by the mills of cotton last year (of nearly 4 lakh bales below the estimate). Cotton prices will move up from the past year's low level, particularly if the exports to China of long staple is

kept up and expanded.<sup>8</sup> Sugarcane production which last year increased sharply by 7 per cent in area and 10 per cent in value of the cane grown may decline a little, if the Agricultural Prices Commission's recommendation to maintain the statutory minimum price of Rs. 10 a quintal for sugarcane for a basic recovery of 8.5 per cent in the 1979-80 season is accepted, and in the absence of a government, that is likely to be. APC has also recommended that the mechanism of states advised prices be discontinued and this must be accepted by states to prevent the cane growers losing and arresting the trend to increase the area under cane at the cost of the area under pulses and oil seeds.<sup>(9)</sup> Coffee is likely to be at last year's level of 1.05 lakh tonnes, along with planned expansion of the gardens in non-traditional areas like AP, Orissa, Assam and North Eastern hill states. Tea production in the current year is recording rather severe shortfalls. Northern tea gardens have had to contend with drought conditions and southern estates to the extent of 50 per cent report losses, so that this year production is estimated at less than 560 million kg. compared to last year's 571 million kg. <sup>(10)</sup> The linkages of the country's primary industry with that of manufactures are not favourable this year, and are in part reflected in the latter's poor performance.

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8. Season and Crop Reports : Ministry of Agriculture, New Delhi 1979.  
Press releases on crop forecasts: Ministry of Agriculture, New Delhi  
1979-80 forecast: All India Cotton Federation; Bombay August 1979.

9. Report on Sugarcane: Agricultural Prices Commission, New Delhi, 1979  
Trends in cultivated areas: RBI Bulletin, Bombay January 1979.

10. UPASI: Annual Report 1978-79 and President's Address: Coonoor 1979.

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on

CASTE AND CLASS IN INDIAN RURAL SOCIETY

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## A Review of the Trends in the Caste System

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Caste is a very complex social phenomenon, handed down to us from immemorial past. The earliest Vedas do not reveal the existence of caste. The most careful analysis of the Sacred Books of India indicates that caste system developed in the latest phase of the decline of the vedic culture, as a result of Aryan invasion and conquest of the original inhabitants. For centuries, it remained more or less fluid; all classes enjoyed the freedom of fullest participation in religious and civic life. But later on it acquired rigidity and exclusiveness. The tendency to divide into close groups worked out into an immense number of sub-divisions or sub-castes—the various censuses of India up to 1931 gave varying number of sub-castes (between two and three thousand). As Sardar K.M. Panikkar puts it, "Primarily it (caste) has tended to sub-divide the social or-

ganism in such a way as to make the units smaller and smaller and unrelated to the general society. Thus it denies the entire theory of community and bases the organization of Hindu life on the opposite principle of disintegration and division." He further states that the Hindu in practice recognizes no society or community beyond the extended joint-family (sub-caste) in his social relations and his loyalties. It provided almost complete definition of social roles to its members. It was also the thread on which a Hindu's whole life was strung. Caste thus became a complete system covering every aspect of the life of a Hindu. It also played an important part in determining the groups in the Indian society. Each caste lives for itself and in itself and the loyalty of the caste members does not go beyond the caste.



In the caste system, status was wholly predetermined by birth and re-birth. A person's status was ascribed and hence immutable. Thus in the early caste system there is a definite scheme of social precedence amongst the castes, with the Brahmins at the head of the hierarchy. It also exalted the sacredness of the Brahmin. The restrictions on marriage, occupation, food, etc. were the consequences of the desire to maintain the "social precedence". The stability of the system entirely depended on the acceptance of the people of their lot in life.

The caste system developed through centuries and enveloped the entire sub-continent, influencing the lives not only of Hindus, but also of Muslims and Christians. Thus it has become really the one all-India institution.

What surprises the social scientists is the manner in which caste has adapted itself during historical and modern times. Hutton opines that: "Indian society has survived a vast number of invasions, famines, revolutions and social upheavals of all kinds, including conquests by invaders of alien religions essentially antagonistic to Hinduism, and there can be no doubt that this was largely due to the caste system on which that society has constructed itself, a system which has often survived even conversion to Islam and Christianity." We find revolts against the caste system from the time of Buddha, but somehow caste system acted as a shock absorber and withstood all assaults. The caste system has also adapted itself to the various forces released during the British rule and the rule by our own people after Independence. All these bear testimony to its ability to survive and even develop under all conditions. The

rigidity and exclusiveness of the caste is on the way to becoming an *ideal type* in the urban context at least. Caste is assuming new dimension. Caste has found new ways of existence and functioning in a positive way in the political arena.

The present age is an age of paradoxes as far as the Indian society is concerned. We are trying to build up a casteless pattern of socialist society. The Preamble to the Constitution of India states that the new state is to be a sovereign, democratic republic, established to achieve the ideals of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The political institutions of the new state provided for in the Constitution—a Central Parliament, State Legislatures, Council of Ministers, Judiciary, Fundamental Individual and Social Rights, Universal Suffrage—are to be informed by these ideas and in their several spheres and varied capacities to promote them.

In the political sphere we aim at three main objectives:

1. A sound democratic form of government based on healthy social foundations.
2. A secular state which will not align itself with any particular religion or community.
3. A strong and united nation which will integrate emotionally our people who belong to different provincial, linguistic and cultural groupings.

In the social sphere, we are seeking the emancipation of the masses from the age old oppressive and dehumanizing social structures, and the development of new social patterns of healthy community living suited for the new era.

To usher in the new social and economic order, India embarked upon a massive scheme of planned social change through its Five Year Plans and a series of social legislations. Article 17 of the Constitution abolished untouchability. The Untouchability Offences Act, redefined the roles of high caste people and the untouchables, the citizen role, the worker role, the customer role and secondarily, the whole complex of roles and relationships linked with or affected by these. Special efforts were made by the Government of India and State Governments to give greater status to the hitherto neglected masses of humanity i. e., the Harijans. Thus the stage to achieve a casteless socialistic pattern of society was launched by the architects and builders of free India.

The pertinent questions that are now being asked are:

1. Can caste survive in a democratic set up?
2. Do the spirit and structure of the caste system obstruct the emergence of the new society in India? If so, at what levels?
3. Is caste structure giving way to class structure on account of the modernizing factors of democratic politics, education, equality and competitive occupational structure?

To answer these questions, we must look into the various factors which are influencing the caste system and analyse how these factors are bringing about changes in the caste system.

The principles of democracy cut at the very root of the principles of the caste system. Thus caste is considered as a misfit in a democratic and equalitarian

society. But the fact cannot be denied that caste still finds its place paradoxically enough, in the present day Indian society. The dimensions of caste are not the same as before. The various restrictions enjoined by the traditional caste system do not exist in big cities as it did formerly. But it found new ways and modes of existence and acquired an added significance—something which it never enjoyed before. As a result of the adult franchise many social groups have become aware of their strength and realised that due to their numerical strength, they are in a position to wield power. The Seminar on Casteism and Removal of Untouchability held in New Delhi in October 1955 under the auspices of the Indian Conference of Social Work bears testimony to the persistence of caste in social life. Acharya Kalelkar who was the Chairman of the Backward Class Commission called upon the Seminar to take note of this phenomenon and consider "caste as something that endangers social justice and national solidarity". The Seminar also noted: "Adult franchise which prevails today means that a great number of votes are cast in favour of an elector's caste. This is explicitly recognized during elections." M. N. Srinivas in his closing address at the seminar remarked: "Mysore is no longer ruled by the mythical Mahishasura, but the very real demon Varnasura.... no explanation of provincial politics in any part of India is possible without reference to caste." In his *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, Srinivas cites numerous instances of the domination of caste in politics. Addressing the Anthropological Section of the Indian Science Congress in 1957, Srinivas emphasised: "Caste is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all including those most vocal in condemning it, that it is

everywhere the unit of social action."

Casteism or caste-spirit is the problem of the present, and at times it takes an anti-social character. The politicians are increasingly exploiting their castemen towards achieving ends. Adult franchise fostered a new sort of caste consciousness based upon caste loyalties. It brings about social divisiveness and encourages vested interests. Each caste wants to safeguard its rights and privileges and in this process tries to grow at the expense of other castes. "The loyalty of the sub-caste has been translated into politics" (K. M. Panikkar: 1956). "Contemporary caste society presents the spectacle of self-centred groups more or less in conflict with one another" (G. S Ghurye: 1952). "Politics and certain other new social institutions have become new modes for expressing caste distinctions and caste loyalties" (Richard W Taylor: 1958). In the villages too, other things being equal, the voter prefers to vote for his castemen. It is surprising to note that even the Communists of India at times select candidates who have the proper social base. Victor M. Fic denies any significant correlation between the poverty of the people and the electoral victory of the Communist Party. According to him "the politics in Kerala was merely a projection of the aspirations and strength of the communal organizations into the political arena and therefore it failed to reflect the class affiliation of voters". Analysing the 1957 elections in Kerala, Fic says that it was merely a communal affair (Victor M. Fic: 1970). Jitendra Singh examines the allegiance of the major religions and caste groups to political parties and concludes that the division between Communists and non-Communists is a division between Ezhavas and the scheduled castes on the one side and the Nairs, Christians and Muslims

on the other" (J. Singh: 1960). Though he perceives a division between the advanced communities and the backward, he fails to see the economic or class character of the situation. Robert L. Hardgrave admits that the Marxists hold the allegiance of the landless labourers, yet he asserts that "It is the politics of caste which forms the fundamental reality of political life in Kerala" (Hardgrave, Jr. 1965; 1970). Kathleen Gough acknowledges communal and caste influence in Kerala politics, but gives some evidence of class consciousness. (Gough: 1967). She observed that those who have begun to support the Communist Party "have greater political allegiance to it than to their caste or to any organized communal associations". Murthy and Rao pointed out that the tug of war in Kerala is between the landed and the landless, highly literate and illiterate, technically skilled and unskilled" (1967). P. M. Chacko in his analysis of the voting behaviour in the mid-term elections in Kerala held in 1971 in Chenakad, a Marxist controlled electoral ward in the Palghat Parliamentary Constituency, shows that party loyalty based on class consciousness may take precedence over caste and religion, even in a rural environment (Chacko: 1975). E. A. Ramaswamy observes that "In an industrial setting, traditional influences such as caste, kinship and village, lose much of their significance in the electoral behaviour of the workers" (1971). The 1977 electoral victory of the Janata party shows people cut across caste, class and party loyalties and voted the Janata into power. All these highlight the fact that 'other things being equal' caste and communalism play an important role in deciding elections in our country.

In the village set up, the Panchayat elections have made each caste conscious of their opportunity to get elected.

Moreover, each caste tries to see that it is represented in the Panchayats to serve its best interests, not to serve the village as a whole, and its interests.

The process of change in the caste system according to Srinivas started with sanskritization. He writes that sanskritization has been an important cultural process ever since the Vedic Aryans established themselves in India. British rule set in motion a vast array of forces some of which greatly strengthened sanskritization while others were either hostile or indifferent. It was also during the British rule that westernization of India began a complex of wide-ranging processes. While sanskritization was the process of change among the lower castes in the villages, the upper castes in the urban areas have taken to westernization. Sanskritization, according to Srinivas, is the process by which a low caste or tribe or other group, takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and styles of life of a high and in particular, a twiceborn (dwija) caste. Sanskritization of a group has usually the effect of improving its position in the local caste hierarchy. It usually presupposes either an improvement in the economic or political position of the group concerned or a higher group self-consciousness resulting from its contact with a source of the 'Great Tradition' of Hinduism such as a pilgrim centre or monastery or proseletyzing sect. The culture of the higher castes is prestigious, and ambitious lower castes would like to take it over. In the case of a group external to Hinduism such as a tribe or important ethnic body, sanskritization resulted in drawing it into the Hindu fold which necessarily involved its becoming a caste having regular relations with other lower castes.

Commenting on the concept of sanskritization as a tool of analysis of Indian society, D. N. Majumdar wrote that the usefulness of sanskritization as a tool of analysis is greatly limited by the complexity of the concept as well as its looseness (1962). Majumdar points out that in a caste system, vertical mobility is not possible. Only horizontal mobility on the same social plane can be possible. Sanskritization is a process through which a low caste is able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in hierarchy, and according to Majumdar, it is only a theoretical possibility. He says that in concrete cases it is hardly done. The emulation of the Brahmanical ways by the lower castes may lead to horizontal mobility—castes of the same social plane moving closer to one another. For a Brahmin, a Charman is a Charman whether he imitates his way of life or not. The higher castes have never tolerated the vertical mobility of the lower castes and they have in fact ruthlessly suppressed such attempts. However, they have looked with indifference if not disconcert, the horizontal mobility of the caste as this is characteristic not only of the lower castes but of the higher castes also. But the horizontal mobility of the castes at higher levels is achieved through gradual dropping of rituals, cultures and practices which can be called de-ritualization or de-sanskritization process, whereas the horizontal mobility at the lower reaches of the caste hierarchy is achieved through sanskritization, that is, accepting and practising more and more Brahmanic way of life. (Majumdar: *Caste and Communication in an Indian Village*, 1962. 331-339.)

Narmeshwara Prasad in his *The Myth of the Caste System* (1958) cautions

the use of the concept of sanskritization in the analysis of Indian society. He proposes an alternate concept 'Kulinism'. Ranga Rao on the other hand suggests the concept 'Islamization'.

In his work *Social Change in Modern India and Other Essays*, Srinivas (1962), has enlarged the concept of sanskritization as a process of social change. He has accepted sanskritic models other than the Brahmanical one, and introduced the significance of Varna hierarchy and the concept of Dominant Caste as the watchdog of 'a pluralistic culture and value system'. The Dominant Caste becomes the reference group model in a given locality.

Srinivas mentions that with the process of sanskritization-westernization is linked the process of secularization as social rationalism.

Srinivas accepts the fact that his sanskritization - westernization - secularization tools of analysis are only processual-conceptual tools and they describe changes in cultural terms and not in structural terms.

A. R. Desai, Nirmal Kumar Bose, Ram Krishna Mukherjee and others introduced the structural model. They emphasized the economic-structural factors of changes in caste system, instead of perceiving social change in terms of imitative cultural items such as ideas, values, rituals and behaviour patterns. Ram Krishna Mukherjee writes that a different 'economic era' has begun, bringing a new set of values, shattering the caste hierarchy and telescoped economic structure. Nirmal Kumar Bose remarked that "Caste derives its strength not merely from the power structure of society, but from its association with a particular form of organisation

in the economic as well as religious life of the country" (Bose: 1961). Economic realities are the structural determinants which bring about change in the deep-rooted social institution, and hence an understanding of the economic realities brought about by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and other factors is essential.

Baidya Natha Varma suggests the relational model in understanding social change. He suggests that instead of considering caste as an independent, dependent and intervening variable, it should be redefined in a methodological framework of role set and status and reference group behaviour as categories of relationship of a certain type (as conceptually distinct from caste as social organization or institution). Caste need not be treated as the static basic unit of Indian social organization (1965). The relational model proposes to understand change in caste organization through the conceptual tools of role sets and statuses. By understanding caste in these terms, it can be redefined as consisting of a set of values and attitudes which restrict a person to membership often by birth in a cohesive group and debar him from moving into any other group with regard to which his group is stratified.

V. K. R. V. Rao opines that historically various groups of Hindus of low castes have broken out of the traditional caste hierarchy in an attempt to improve their caste status and either set up new groups within the Hindu fold that owed no allegiance to Brahmanical caste and denied its claim to represent a superior or an ideal social status or become converted to non-Hindu faiths. In contemporary Indian history, an analogous example would be that of the neo-Buddhists.

Another trend is a wholesale repudiation of the link between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins. The most eloquent example is the movement started by E. V. R. Naicker and the powerful D. M. K., A. D. M. K. and allied movements in Tamil Nadu.

A new trend that is emerging is that as soon as alternative avenues other than sanskritization could be possible for the lower castes, they renounced resorting to sanskritization, in favour of political and cultural mobilization of their own ranks, in the framework of their own sub-cultural ideology. The formation of caste associations, caste federations and even caste-based political parties explicate this process (Srinivas: 1964; 1968, Rudolph & Rudolph: 1967, M. S. A. Rao: 1968, Hardgrave Jr: 1967, R. Fox: 1967 Rejni Kothari: 1970).

Following the changes in the mobility patterns in the caste system from sanskritization-westernization to increased politicization and competition for access to economic and political resources by various strata, new consequences with regard to stratification have come into existence (Yogendra Singh: 1972). Important among these is the coming into prominence and power of the 'dominant castes' of the middle rank in Northern India and of the middle or lower ranks in the Peninsular India, in place of traditionally influential upper castes (Srinivas: 1962, Rajni Kothari: 1970, Paul Brass: 1965). Status mobility of castes has been reported for South India by Srinivas (1968) and Andre Beteille (1966).

### Fight against untouchability

Graham Wallas notes that an almost recognisable 'increase of personal happiness, social contentment and economic effi-

ciency would result, if the achievement of a more complete adjustment (towards equality between individuals) becomes the conscious, organized and effective purpose of a society. Social justice, even less than equality, is not easy under the caste system which enjoins untouchability and pollution. Fantastic and very strange notions prevailed among the people about the intensity of touch and distance pollution. On the basis of pollution, a large chunk of the entire population of our country were sunk in outright and acknowledged slavery of the worst kind and for centuries they continued in a state of hereditary servitude and abject poverty.

Now untouchability has been assailed from all sides and efforts are being made on various levels to eradicate it. In public places and at the political level, untouchability is no longer practised in urban centres. But at home most of them are forced to observe many of the restrictions. Temples were thrown open to all, but people began to have their own small private temples in their own compound. Srinivas once remarked that "there is overt acceptance of the legislation, but covert sabotage".

Industrialization and urbanization and the possibility of having higher education, have brought within the reach of a person almost any occupation he chooses and still retain his caste membership. Low caste groups can rise to positions of political dominance through the achievement of economic prosperity in recent years. The Ezhavas of Kerala and the Nadars of Tamil Nadu are impressive examples. Srinivas pointed out that "the economic forces unleashed by World War II and political and social changes of the last ten years vastly increased the power of the numerically large castes,

They rarely come from the Brahman or the Vaisya category. It is usual for them to come from the Shudra category." For Karl Marx socio-economic status was the crucial factor for attaining political status. But the Indian condition shows that where political status is obtained on the basis of numerical strength, political status can be an independent factor in relation to socio-economic status. It also showed that those with high political status can better their socio-economic status, especially in a developing democratic society. It has also been observed that improvement of secular status leads to an enhanced status in the caste hierarchy also (Bailey: 1957). Mobility within the caste system tends to begin with economic and political change. F. G. Bailey has documented that how a low caste in Orissa, through their occupation as distillers and sellers of alcoholic beverages, made substantial amounts of money with which they bought land and established themselves as a landed group. Thus they were successful in raising their status.

John Healey (1963), writes: "People's desire to rise in status has an important influence on economic growth. The desire to imitate the habits and customs of those of higher social rank can be a strong spur to economic improvement. In West, the desire of working and middle class families to "keep up with the Joneses" has stimulated thriftiness and hard work and economic ambition as a means of rising in the social scale. In India, similarly, it would seem that the desire to rise above one's caste (and to imitate the habits of the castes above) might stimulate the same desire for economic development. An observer of the social scene in a Mysore village writes that "the results of irrigation mean more or less a social and cultural revolu-

tion. The peasants of one village altered their dress to some extent, their diet too...relations became more contractual instead of based on status. This prosperity was followed by a general desire to imitate the way of life of the Brahmins. The villagers themselves say that 'refinement' came to them with irrigation." Bailey in his book *Caste and the Economic Frontier* (1957), shows that sanskritization without economic and political power does not help a caste in improving its status: indeed nothing, not even sanskritization and economic power may help an untouchable caste. Bailey also gives a very useful analysis for the cause of land alienation by peasants. He points out that fragmentation goes on reducing the size of estates, generation after generation, till a day comes when the holder has to sell it to meet contingent expenditure unforeseen and/or unavoidable, like the expenses on buying a new bullock on the death of the one in use on the land, the expenses on death rites and a marriage. Once land starts coming out into the market like this, the owner may be said to have entered a downward trend which may finally make of him a landless peasant.

Milton Singer and others, on the basis of the analysis of empirical studies done in India, revealed the fact that the values of traditional society and culture need not be incompatible with the process of social change and modernization, since new values and adaptations arise through strategic adaptations (1972). A commonly observed mode of adaptation has been the differentiation of spheres of activity, so that the individual is able to operate in both the modern as well as the traditional spheres without experiencing any inconsistency. Srinivas (1966) and Sheth (1968) have noted that in a

modern industrial organization, the Indian worker accepts modern norms of performance and reward of the contractual society, without at the same time abandoning his allegiance to the traditional institutions of caste, religion, kinship and region. Bailey mentions that a social continuity seems to have been maintained in the face of technological change (1968). A Nayar told Kathleen Gough: "When I put on my shirt to go to the office, I take off my caste and when I come home and take off my shirt, I put on my caste." (Many studies on the diffusion of agricultural innovations and the adaptation of new technology reported that the farmers who are culturally and religiously traditional have no difficulty in adapting progressive agricultural practices when adequate financial incentives are available.)

The studies comprising the book *Structure and Change in the Indian Society* (edited by Singer and Cohn, 1968) contend that changes taking place in India do not represent a 'linear transformation' of structural or cultural 'types' but 'adaptive changes'. This may be attributed to limited industrialization, urbanization and modernization; but Milton Singer in his preface states that the Indian civilization has built into it the adaptive mechanism for incorporating new techniques, new ideas and newcomers with only a gradual replacement of the old.

In Part IV of his book *When a Great Tradition Modernizes: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization*, Milton Singer shows that we can accept neither Weber nor Myrdal with their different theories on the incompatibility of Hindu tradition and modernity, but that there is a "continuing coexistence and mutual adaptations of India's cultural traditions—

Great and Little—and modernity". Singer makes plain that the traditional structure of the joint family is very well able to cope with the requirements of organizing an industrial enterprise. Further he shows that traditional occupational restrictions are no longer valid among the test-group, as many of them are Brahmmins and that education, technical training, family history and capital are more decisive factors for a career. (But it seems that when Singer concludes from this that caste is no major impediment to economic success, he does not keep sufficiently in mind that money and also access to education and technical training, are still very much a privilege of upper castes, even though the strict occupational affiliations are withering away.) Singer continues to observe that the religious adaptation to the requirements of industrial life occurs mainly by sanskritization, compartmentalization (ritual neutralization of the working sphere, preservation of traditional attitude in private life etc.) and vicarious ritualization (substitution of abbreviated rites for several longer rites, proxy performer, etc.).

Michael M. Ames in his *Modernization and Social Structure: Family Caste and Class in Jamshedpur*, observes that generally and ideally speaking, people believe that caste should have little relevance for life in Jamshedpur. Caste is for the traditional villages, they say, not for the modern towns. In the city people are divided according to class or occupation. A factory worker may not move with his supervisors or manager, even if they belong to the same caste as that of the worker, because they belong to a different class. In cities there are social clubs, which cut across caste, open to all in theory but in actual practice restricted to those who have the ability to pay the membership. Housing in Jamshedpur is



mostly controlled by about a third of the workers who are allocated company housing, the type of house approximately corresponding to the occupational level of the worker (an eligible worker ideally has the right to select a house type equal to or lower than his level, but not higher). House sites are also distributed officially in terms of the occupational levels of the applicants. Ideally then social and occupational life in Jamshedpur is more class-based than caste-based, in terms of socio-economic performance rather than inherited caste membership. Ames (1969) analyses the question 'How does the actual state of affairs in Jamshedpur compare with the ideal?' Caste membership is still important in the city, regulating marriage and sometimes inter-dining. Harijans and several other scheduled castes have their own caste associations and club houses. Service castes continue to provide their specialized services. The caste factor is also not totally excluded from hiring and promotion in factories. The main role of caste in Jamshedpur appears to be a 'means of last resort'. Young men will compete for jobs on the basis of merit; but if after repeated attempts a person does not succeed he comes to believe that others were favoured over him for personal reasons. He himself is then more inclined to try influence, nepotism, casteism, bribery or other personalized means as a last resort. In these cases caste becomes one of several "particularistic" or "nepotistic" relations a person believes himself forced to activate because he was "denied" a fair opportunity by someone else's nepotism. The activation of caste ties in the city is thus seen as a necessary evil, whereas in the village it may be considered a virtue.

The people of Jamshedpur maintain a pluralistic or relativistic ethical system. "Class for the city and caste for the village" is one manifestation of this relativism. A worker adjusts willingly and easily to the demands of city life and he readjusts with equal ease to the demands of village life (Ames: 1969).

Richard Lannoy in his *The Speaking Tree: A Study of Indian Culture and Society* mentions that Indian society is pluralistic. The caste system was built up out of the two tendencies of fusion and fission. On the one hand the caste system broke up society into many divisions, reducing communication between the various parts. But on the other hand the very independence and wholeness of these parts, linked together in a loose but cohesive structure, made for an extremely durable pattern which has lasted for centuries almost unaltered (R. Lannoy: 1971).

Andre Beteille in his study of a Tanjore village observes that while some areas of social life in Sripuram have become relatively 'caste-free' there are many others which continue to be fixed by birth and are to this extent, immutable. Formerly, birth in a particular caste fixed not only one's ritual status, but by and large, also one's economic and political positions. Today it is possible to achieve a variety of economic and political positions in spite of one's birth in a particular caste, although the latter is still very important in setting limits within which choice in the former is possible (1976):

K. Ishwaran in his study *Shivapur: A South Indian Village* (1968), points out that caste and kinship remained closed in Shivapur, while politics and economic life are becoming open institutions. In fact apart from political and economic

matters, the influence of the caste and its closure are in many respects on the increase. Today, caste is expanding in influence and significance over wider areas. The closure of caste may be noted in its endogamous aspects. It is unthinkable to marry outside caste. Whereas in former times endogamy was aided by isolation from communication contacts, today the system is supported by normative structures of an increasingly conscious and determined kind. Ishwaran points out that there are six factors tended to unify individuals in Shivapur: street, lineage, sub-caste, caste, religion and village. Cross classified against these are five factors which tend to create diversity: land, the panchayat, the co-operative society, personal rivalry and conflict of interests. He sums up by saying that Shivapur is a stable community whose behaviour is highly constant over time. It has shown its capacity for absorbing new elements of change and for maintaining a dynamic balance between change and continuity. This phenomenon cannot be explained by sanskritization or westernization—both over-simplifications. There are six factors that draw people closer and five that draw them apart. The key institution of caste tends to be more open in formal political and economic activities, but closed in other areas of life (Ishwaran: 1968).

The working of the caste system is making attributional features more important than interactional ones, particularly in an urban setting, where individuals and groups in a range of situations increasingly interact on other-than-caste principles, but where the attributes of different castes are still used for identification and broad groupings of social behaviour.

There is an increasing number of situations in which one's caste is of little importance, particularly in the modern

economy, where roles tend to be achieved rather than ascribed. In rural areas the situation is changing also, particularly in response to broad-scale political changes and the spreading of new official ideologies and basic economic changes affecting the agricultural segments of society.

On the basis of the analysis of data on caste and occupations as provided by the National Sample Survey, Fourth Round, K. N. Raj writes that there is a correspondence between caste and class at the two extremes and appears to be thus borne out by the figures. But it is also clear—particularly in the intermediate categories—that class cuts across caste divisions (Raj: 1961). P. C. Joshi remarked that on the basis of information available at the micro level it is possible to suggest that the internal class differentiation within the upper, the middle and the lower castes has been intensified in recent years (1979).

Srinivas in his recent *The Remembered Village* points to the divergence of class from caste (1976), while in his earlier village study he talked mostly in terms of upper and lower castes. Andre Beteille comes to the conclusion from his study of the Tanjore village that in the earlier times the class system was largely subsumed under the caste structure, but of late the class system can no longer be seen simply as an aspect of the caste structure (1966).

Beteille also points out the downward mobility among the Mirasdars and the upward mobility among the non-Brahmin peasants and the Adi-Dravida labourers. Kathleen Gough's study of the Tanjore villages highlights the fact that the caste community is no longer homogeneous in occupation and wealth and how caste is now acting as a limiting factor rather than a determining factor in the choice of occupation (1971).

The village studies done in South India bring out the increasing divergence of class from caste. The village studies in other parts of India also reveal similar trends. Anand Chakravarty's study of a Rajasthan village discloses the fact that the Rajputs are losing their lands and the non-Rajputs are gaining lands and the landowning class is now multi-caste in composition. He also points out that the broadening of the landowning class has been associated with class differentiation within the upper, middle and the lower castes (1975).

Jan Breman's study of South Gujarat villages also brings out the fact that the trend today is a transition from caste to class. He characterises this process as "depatronisation" of relationships between the dominant land-owning castes on the one hand and the labouring castes on the other (1977).

George Rosen in his "Democracy and Economic Change in India" (1966), writes: "To identify and understand the position of the major groups in Indian society at Independence, major emphasis will be placed on caste groups modified by class elements in Rural India and on class groups modified by caste elements in Urban India".

The Chicago Conference on Social Structure and Social Change in India in 1965, focussed mainly on caste, joint family and village and the authors of the various papers had given relatively insignificant attention to the class factor (in the Marxian sense of the term) in their analysis. It is now encouraging to note that sociologists are increasingly giving due attention to the trend of class differentiation in villages and in castes, but also to the transformation of castes into political

factions (P. C. Joshi: 1979). Andre Beteille has provided an insight into the exploitation of caste loyalties as an instrumentality for furtherance of their class interests by the top groups of the emerging agrarian hierarchy (1974).

In order to understand the implications of the changing patterns of stratification in India on the openness or closure of the system, it may be necessary to introduce the perspective of the ecological scale in terms of the village, the district or region, the state and the nation on the one hand and that of the types of strata such as caste and class rankings, occupational and professional groupings and elites on the other. As one moves from the local to regional and national scale of the functioning of the status categories as components of the system of stratification, the openness of the system increasingly declines and the status summation tends to operate. The ascriptive and monopolistic tendencies have not only entrenched themselves at the level of the business elites in India for which there is considerable evidence (Shoji Ito: 1966; R.K. Hazari: 1966; B. B. Misra: 1958), but the same pattern is also visible at the level of the political, cultural and professional elites. A peculiar feature of this summation of status attributes at the national level is that these elites continue to operate as interest groups without having alienated themselves from the caste and sub-caste linkages. On the contrary, they are often more entrenched than dissociated from caste and kinship network which work as support bases, especially for political elites both at the national and regional levels (Yogendra Singh: 1972).

Indeed it is found that the social base for status allocation and its asymmetry in our social structure is still the caste, but as new changes in other systems of the

society such as legislation, economy, technology and political ideologies etc. take place the tendency for the emergence of new economic and political interest groups which cut across the caste boundaries, increases. These interest groups emerge from diverse caste structures but have a tendency not to last long. Once the basis for interest group mobilisation is gone, or its goal has been achieved, these relapse back into the caste structure which alone serves as a permanent social base for interaction in India (Yogendra Singh: 1970). For instance the emergence of the 'Sons of the Soil' theme at different places is a good illustration of this trend. This movement is a result of the increasing unemployment problem. It cuts across caste lines and advocates jobs for local people. But once the employment situation improves this movement will turn out to be associations for strengthening one's own caste or community.

In spite of all the changes that are taking place in the caste system, Srinivas thinks that caste is an inextricable part of the Hindu social organisation and as such it is difficult to visualise Hindu society without caste. He opines that "the vast majority of the population especially Hindus, not only do not want caste to disappear, but they would probably find it impossible to envisage a social system without caste" (1962). He further says that the last hundred years have seen a great increase in caste solidarity. Andre Beteille remarks that "In India, the status groups of the future will no doubt carry the marks of the system" (1977). T. N. Madan points out that "in India caste very much persists and we need not bring any change in a hurry" (1977). Srinivas again showed how caste has not only not been weakened by forces of modernisation in India, but has on the contrary been reinforced, so that it plays a significant role even in the determination of the character of democratic institutions in the country.

### **Trend Report on Caste Studies**

Caste has always been of interest to a large number of people both Indian as well as foreign. The earliest accounts of the caste system were found in the Sacred Books of the East. The first mention of caste was found in one of the later hymns of the Rig Veda. It presents the mythological charter for the establishment of the four orders of ancient Indian society (90th hymn of the 10th book of Rig Veda called Purusha Sukta or the hymn to Purusha). Later Satapatha Brahmana, Taittiriya Brahmana, Laws of Manu, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Vishnu Purana, Vayu Purana, Bhavavata Purana, Aitareya Brahmana, all give divergent views about caste. These accounts were either mythological or

rationalistic in character and were read by the priestly class and interpreted by them. The Brahmanical origin of the caste system has been greatly emphasised in these accounts. Then came the translations of some of these sacred texts by European scholars like Max Muller, Wilson, Monier-Williams and Zimmer. Translations were also made from the Sanskrit literature into Persian by Indo-Muslim scholars (Rehatsck, 1880; Sabah Al-Din, 1961).

From earliest time, India was visited by various foreigners, and some of them left accounts of their impressions of India. Megasthenes' account stands out as a classical one.

With the coming of the Portuguese, a new series of accounts of the caste system arose from adventurers, administrators, travellers, merchants and missionaries. The word 'caste' was first used by the Portuguese. Duarte Barbosa's account of the various aspects of the caste system were very illuminating (1866, 1918, 1921). His accounts were a matter-of-fact description of the caste system as he observed it or as was told to him, by the people of the Malabar coast. He avoided speculation with regard to the origin of the caste and also discussion of the benefits and evils of caste system. The first Dutch Chaplain Abraham Roger studied Hinduism from a Dutch-speaking Brahman and wrote his account of Hinduism (1670).

"With the establishment of British suzerainty in the later eighteenth century, the rapid acquisition of knowledge of the classical languages of India by a few British officials, the need for administrative purposes of a knowledge of the structure of Indian society, and the intensification of missionary activities, systematic knowledge of Indian society began to develop very rapidly from 1760 onward. Three major traditions of approach to Indian society can be seen by the end of the eighteenth century :

- the Orientalist
- the administrative and
- the missionary.

Each had a characteristic view, tied to the kinds of roles which foreign observers played in India and the assumptions which underlay their views of India" (Bernard S. Cohn : 1968).

### The Orientalists' approach

The Orientalists' account of Indian society was as a result of the study of the sacred texts with the help of Pundits. Alexander

Dow's *History of Hinduism* (1768-71) was the earliest one. These accounts reproduce the Brahmanical theory of the origin of caste system and described the Brahmins as the centre of the social order. N. B. Halhead provided the first compilation and translation from the Dharma-shastras under the title "A Code of Gentoo Laws or Ordinances of the Pundits", from a Persian translation, made from the original, written in the Sanskrit language, published in London in 1776.

The Orientalists viewed caste as a steel frame of the Hindu society and the Indian society as static, timeless, and spaceless. "In this view of Indian society there was no regional variation and no questioning of the relationship between prescriptive normative statements derived from the texts and the actual behaviour of individuals or groups. Indian society was seen as a set of rules which every Hindu followed." (Cohn: 1968)

The Christian Missionaries were very active by the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century and a large number of reports were available from them. The earliest was that of Charles Grant's *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain*, particularly with Respect to Morals and on the Means of Improving it (1792). Other reports were that of Buchanan (1807), Sri John Shore, William Carey, William Ward and Rev. Mateer. The writings of C. F. Andrews, Edward Thompson were remarkable. The missionaries in general focussed their attention on the tyranny of the Brahmins and the consequent deprivations of the lowest castes. Rev. Mateer wrote in his *Native Life in Travancore* that the strange notions of untouchability and unapproachability prevailing the Malabar coast "is revolting

to the instincts of humanity, repugnant to the feelings of all civilized men and that it should be winked at under a civilized government is surprising...For thousands of years these lowest castes have continued in a state of hereditary servitude and abject poverty, exposed to the caprice of brutality of the owner and disposable according to his pleasure; too abhorrent at the same time, on account of caste pollution, to be touched or closely approached by their superiors or to be admitted to any of the privileges or amenities of religion." (Mateer: 188.3) However, as a byproduct of the missionaries' evangelical efforts, they often made major contributions to the empirical study of Indian society. William Carey's *Dialogues Intended to Facilitate the Acquiring of the Bengali Language* (1801) is the first socio-linguistic of an Indian language. Likewise, Robert Caldwell's *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* was one of the first systematic accounts of the Dravidian languages.

The need to define the caste system does not arise for the orthodox Hindu. It is something so traditional as to be self-evident. Likewise, the Orientalists and the missionaries were not interested in the conceptual clarity and hence they never attempted a formal definition of the caste system.

### **Empirical approach to the study of the structure and functioning of Indian society**

"The period 1757 to 1785 was a time in which the officials of the East India Company in Bengal had to develop an administrative system capable of maintaining law and order and producing in a regular fashion income to support an administrative, military and commercial

activities of the company and to provide a profit for its owners. Through this period, the company officials had to learn from scratch a great deal about India, Indians and how they had been governed. The assessment and regular collection of land revenue, it became clear by Warren Hasting's time, required considerable detailed knowledge of the structure of Indian society." (Cohn: 1968) Thus, the official view of Indian society based on the British colonial officers' collection of information on the various aspects of the Indian society, especially information on caste, family and village, became available to us, with the British rule in India. Sir Charles Metcalfe's study of village communities in India (1832), Baden Powell's *The Land System of British India* (1892) and *The Indian Village Community* (1896) and *Village Communities in the East and West* by Sir Henry Maine were the earliest compilations. The district and village land revenue settlement reports were also pouring in. These reports contained detailed accounts of the relationship between the local castes and land tenure. But these reports were not useful in understanding the functioning of caste in local communities. The early village studies and the generalized land settlement reports brought out the fact that villages are more or less static because of the unchanging social structure based on caste.

Further, the gathering of census information paved the way for an enormous amount of literature on caste. Each census tried to bring in some more information and thus the census reports in general gave information on the following line: provincial mapping of the various castes; the origin and essence of the caste system; relationship between race and caste; difference between a caste and a tribe;

process of tribes becoming castes; broad pattern of inter-caste social precedence in different regions; the pattern of caste mobility, etc.

With the census enumeration, the "official" view of caste emerged. For census purposes caste was considered as a "thing", an entity, which was concrete and measurable. With the help of the practice of endogamy, commensality rules, traditional occupation and common rituals, castes were identified. "The 1901 census (of Bengal) found there were over 205 castes and tribes over 25,000 in population in Bihar and Orissa. In Bengal there were 450 groups, from one to 22,00,000. Half of them did not have over 1000 members" (O'Malley: 1913). "India was seen as collection of castes; the particular picture was different in any given time and place, but India was a sum of its parts and the parts were castes" (Cohn: 1968). In the 1901 census, Risley identified over 2000 castes and they were categorised into seven types: tribal, functional and sectarian; castes formed by crossing; national castes; castes formed by migration and castes formed by changing customs.

"After the castes had been counted and classified and their customs and characteristics recorded, the gnawing question remaining was why did this "caste" exist; what were its origins? Here origins were taken not as a direct historical question. Unlike the early Orientalists, the "Official" ethnographers of caste, although they recognized the Brahmanical theory as embodied in the texts, did not think the texts were documents in which could be traced the history of caste. By origin they rather meant a very broad functional question" (Cohn: 1968). For instance J.C. Nesfield (1885) brought out his occupational theory of caste. He contended that

caste originated in the division of labour and occupation was the central determining factor in the origin of the system. Risley stressed the racial origin, Ibbetson, the "tribal origins" and Crooke and others came out for more eclectic theories of origin. "This eclecticism reaches its final form with the last of the British official ethnographers and census commissioners" (J. H. Hutton). He compiled a list of fourteen "more obvious factors which have been indicated as probably contributing to the emergence and development of the caste system" (1946).

Following the lead given by Buchanan in Bengal (1807), the British in India were interested in collecting, collating and publishing for official as well as for scholarly use, detailed information about the physical, cultural and social aspects of every district in India. Thus we have got now district manuals and histories, district Gazetteers and also the Imperial Gazetteer of India.

E. T. Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (1872), J. C. Nesfield's *Brief View of the Caste System of the North-West Provinces and Oudh* (1885), H. H. Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal—Ethnographic Glossary* (1891), W. Crooke's *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh—IV Volumes* (1896) made the government realise the need for collecting ethnographic information about the castes and tribes in all the provinces of India. In 1901 steps were taken to establish an Ethnographic survey of India which would develop as part of the census of 1901. Soon after the 1901 Census of India, the Government of India, on the suggestion of their Census Commissioner Sir Herbert Risley, commissioned a number of I. C. S. officers who had an academic bent of mind to prepare ethnographic accounts of the

inhabitants of each of the principal provinces of India. The model for these accounts was Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal* wherein a separate account was given of each principal tribe or caste of the Province. The following are some of the important works: *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, E. Thurston, 7 vols. (1909), *Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces of India*, R. V. Russel assisted by Hira Lal, 4 vols. (1916), *Hindu Tribes and Castes*, M. A. Sherring, 3 vols., *The Tribes and Castes of Madras Presidency*, M. A. Sherring, *The Tribes and Castes of Rajasthan*, M. A. Sherring, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India*, E. Thurston, 2 parts, *Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, R. E. Enthoven, 3 vols. (1922).

In the above mentioned ethnographic descriptions, the regional spread and the probable origins of the castes were discussed. These works give us the list of castes found in each province and also depicted the regional variations. These book moreover, served as a reference book for any one who would like to know the customs and manners of various castes in different regions. In some of these works the Hindu social system is introduced in terms of the popular English idioms, and Hindu manners and customs are explained in the context of the prevalent theories of Westermarck, Tylor, Frazer, Hocart Morgan, McLennan, Lubbock and others.

"While the early census administrators were developing their own systematic ideas, general academicians and social thinkers also set their minds on understanding the caste system." (Surajit Sinha: 1974.) The following scholars come under this category:

Karl Marx (Stability of the caste system on the basis of the Asiatic mode of production)

H. J. S. Maine (Caste as an example of non-contractual status society.)

E. Senart (Caste as a system of stratification based on purity of descent, and purity of occupation.)

Max Weber (Caste as a system of status stratification supported by other worldly doctrines of Hinduism.)

Bougle (Hereditary specialization, hierarchy and mutual repulsion as basis of caste system.)

A. M. Hocart (Caste as a system of social hierarchy based on the right of each caste to perform certain rituals and services to the feudal lords)

Indian ethnographers following the footsteps of their British predecessors, mapped the regional spread of the castes. J. N. Bhattacharya's *Hindu Castes and Sects* (1896), L. A. K. Iyer's *The Cochin Tribes and Castes* (1909-12) G. H. Desai's *A Glossary of Castes, Tribes and Races in the Baroda State* (1912), Iyer and Nanjundaiah's *The Mysore Tribes and Castes* (1928-1935) were some of the outstanding works. S. V. Ketkar's *The Caste in India* (1909) is another important work during this period.

From the 1881 census onwards, the census reports gave us valuable information about castes. Sir Herbert Risely, the brilliant administrator scholar was in charge of the Census of 1901. To have a clear picture of the social structure of Indian society, he decided to base the census classification of castes on the basis of "social precedence as recognised by the native public opinion" (Risley: *The People of India*, (2nd ed.) (1915). On this basis Risley classified 2,378 main castes and tribes. Membership of these varied from a few million to only a handful. The



average membership per caste was approximately 1,20,000. The figure of 2,378 main castes does not include sub-castes.

One very interesting thing we notice while comparing the various censuses is that the proportion of Brahmins among the Hindus was decreasing. The following table will reveal this fact.

**Proportion of Brahmins among  
Hindus — 1891-1931**

Census	Proportion
1891	7.14 %
1901	7.19 %
1911	6.71 %
1921	6.58 %
1931	6.37 %

The procedure followed in the 1901 census for classifying castes provided a new field for caste conflict. Various sub-castes readily perceived this as an excellent chance for raising their social status. Caste conferences were held, caste councils formed and petitions submitted claiming different status than had been granted by the provincial census commissioners. Other castes began to controvert their claims and a campaign of mutual recrimination was the inevitable result. There was an extraordinary revival of the caste spirit. Middleton ("Superintendent of the Census operations" Punjab, 1921) points out "Land records and official documents have added iron bonds to the old rigidity of caste. Caste in itself was rigid among the higher castes, but malleable amongst the lower. We pigeon-holed everyone by caste and if we could not find a true caste for them, labelled them with the name of an hereditary occupation. We deplore the caste system and its effects on social economic problems, but we are largely responsible for

the system we deplore. Government's passion for labels and pigeon-holes has led to a crystallisation of the caste system which except among the aristocratic castes, was really very fluid under indigenous rule."

In the 1941 census, data on caste was enumerated, but did not find a place in the final report, because it was felt that no useful purpose was served by it. Moreover, it was felt by the census authorities that many caste groups felt that by merely reporting that they belong to a higher caste would enhance their social status. This erroneous notion had created much confusion. M.W. M. Yeats, the Census Commissioner of India, 1941 census, observed that caste nomenclature was changing so fast that it was hardly possible to prepare records regarding caste. Moreover, caste positions are not uniform throughout. Brahmins for instance do not constitute a single caste. Brahmin caste is a congeries of sub-castes ranging from the topmost rung of the caste ladder to the lowest.

Abbe Dubois' *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (English Translation by H. K. Beauchamp, Oxford, 1906) and Senart's *Caste in India*, influenced Risley a lot. Risley's *People of India* published in 1908 (2nd edition, 1915), was almost the last production of administrative academicians who had long and extensive experience in the British colonial regime and who had not found their arduous activity incompatible with scholarship. In the second quarter of the twentieth century, this tradition died, and mere ethnographic descriptions and mapping the regional spread of the caste became more or less on the wane. Conceptual tangles began to engage the attention of the writers. The works of Ghurye, Hutton, Hocart and N. K. Bose belonged to this

period. Attempts to explain what caste is and what it is not and the historical factors that have produced changes of a socio-psychological nature in the caste system, have received attention in the hands of the writers of this period. Ghurye's *Caste and Race in India* appeared in 1932. The second and third editions were published with the title *Caste and Class in India* in 1950 and 1956 respectively. The fourth edition emerged with another title — *Caste, Class and Occupation* (1961). In 1969, the fifth edition came out with the original title — *Caste and Race in India*.

Ghurye in his first edition enumerates the salient features of the caste system. They are as follows: segmental division of society, social commensality, social hierarchy, monopoly of occupation and restriction on marriage or endogamy.

Then Ghurye pointed out how the general policy of non-interference in religious and social matters and the gradual introduction of political and social reforms in India by the British gave incentives for caste consolidation and provided the background for the contemporary scene of hostility in the political sphere. With the introduction of uniform criminal law by the British, castes ceased to be recognised as units empowered to administer justice and thereby were shorn of one of their important functions. But caste was recognised in that the government would not set aside the customs of a caste in matters of civil law unless they were opposed to public policy. Thus caste retained its cultural integrity. The British government in a way nursed, rather than ignored, the spirit of caste.

Ghurye also gives his own theory with regard to the origin of the caste system.

Hutton laid down the following criteria for castes:

- 1) A caste is endogamous.
- 2) There is restriction on mobility between members of different castes.
- 3) There is hierarchical grading of castes.
- 4) In various kinds of contact, especially those concerned with food, sex and ritual, a member of a high caste is liable to be polluted by either direct or indirect contact with a member of a low caste.
- 5) Castes are very commonly associated with a traditional occupation.
- 6) A man's status is determined by the circumstances of his birth (i. e. the caste in which he is born) unless he is expelled from his caste for some ritual offence.

To Hutton, caste appears to be an institution of highly complex origin, an origin so complex indeed that in its very nature it must be limited to a single area, and that, no doubt is why it is only found in India. He also pointed out the fact that caste withstood the test of time and surmounted many an onslaught on it.

N. K. Bose's Bengali book *Hindu Samajer Gadan* (Structure of the Hindu Society), 1949 concentrated attention on certain fundamental functional issues. 'The resilience of the caste system through the millenia is attributed to the economic and cultural security offered to the ethnic components by the non-competitive caste mode of production. Bose is of the opinion that it is this assurance of economic and cultural security that has made for the smooth absorption of numerous tribal groups into the Hindu caste system.' (Surajit Sinha: 1974)

Mr. Cunningham in 1927 in a memorandum to the Calcutta University Commission pointed out the fact that "in these parts the social order is a despotism of caste tempered by matriculation. It is only by matriculating and taking part in the after-life which has been reserved for those who have matriculated that the lower castes raise themselves for consideration."

### The era of specific empirical studies

By the second half of the present century, the traditional view that the proper habitat of the anthropologist is among the primitive peoples has started giving way. So too the view that the anthropologist is the sociologist of backward or underdeveloped societies. Bernard S. Cohn, in his book *India: The Social Anthropology of a Civilization* (1971), writes "In the early 1950's it was thought that anthropologists could study an Indian village as if it were a bounded entity like a small tribe, but the first group of post-war anthropologists, Indian, American and British, who approached villages this way, quickly realized that even at the simplest structural level a village had to be seen in a wider context of space and time. For anthropologists especially, India has been important as it has been one of the places where anthropologists have made the transition from the study of small, isolated, pre-literate populations to the study of large, complex social and cultural systems which are parts of a major civilization. This shift has had major consequences for theory and method in anthropology. The study of processes such as the cultural emulation of higher groups by lower groups, the maintenance of the local hierarchy of status and power, the incorporation of western scientific thought in the indigenous thought and the past

and present effects of indigenous political system on modern politics have become the goal." (1971)

Thus during the last three decades, through village studies a new trend in the studies of caste emerged. The main focus of these studies was the village, but it was found that caste, family and village were so interrelated that these three institutions could be studied together. This helped the anthropologists to adopt the functional approach. The basic social units of family, caste and village are not studied as structural or cultural isolates.

The functionalists began to see them as networks of various kinds. The caste system was studied in its relation to the great traditional structures as represented in Dharmashastras and other historical texts. The structural-functional relationships of religion and politics to social structure and of economics and language to social structure have also been examined

M. N. Srinivas's study entitled *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India* (1952) is an important landmark in this new trend. It examines the caste organization of a region as a functioning system. Srinivas in this study used the concept of sanskritization in analysing the mobility in the caste system.

Independence of India ushered in opportunities for anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists to undertake empirical studies. David G. Mandelbaum (1970) wrote a two-volume book entitled *Society in India: Continuity and change* wherein ninety-seven studies of villages, castes and communities in India were listed and discussed. The common points of these studies are: (1) they are by trained academicians, (2) they have made use of the concepts and techniques developed

in recent years and (3) they belong to the period after India's national independence. Of these ninety-seven, seventy-one are village studies, seven are studies of caste groups, nine are studies of other communities, and ten studies of tribal communities. Region-wise the distribution is:

Jammu & Kashmir	1
Himachal Pradesh	2
Punjab	3
Haryana	3
Delhi	4
Uttar Pradesh	13
Bihar	3
West Bengal	10
Meghalaya	1
Orissa	4
Madhya Pradesh	3
Rajasthan	3
Gujarat	5
Maharashtra	7
Andhra Pradesh	6
Mysore	12
Tamil Nadu	9
Kerala	4
Pakistan	4

Of these selected ninety-seven studies, forty-four are by Indians and fifty-three by British and American scholars.

"Mandelbaum identifies the social system of India as 'caste system' which involves a special quality in the order of interdependence. It is a quality of pervasive inequality among the component groups." Mandelbaum points out that this is a universal characteristic of human society which *can be placed along a continuum of stratification*. At the end of this continuum are such scattered communities of hunter-gatherers as Chenchu and Paliyan; at the other extreme are such highly organized communities in which people group themselves into more sharply

defined, more rigid and pervasive divisions with strongly regulated regulations among the divisions.

A myth which Mandelbaum has exploded systematically is the one which depicts Indian society as static and opposed to all change. In reality the people of India have kept adjusting their social systems and at times have made fundamental changes in them. These changes are of four types:

1. There are the adjustments required by dynamics of the seasonal round and of the life cycle.
2. There are repetitive changes involving shifts in rank positions.
3. There are the recurrent changes brought about by historical forces.
4. And lastly, the revolutionary changes that are a product of the world-wide tides of change in the past century.

The nature and extent of such changes in the social system have been discussed by Mandelbaum in the book.

1955 witnessed the publication of three important books on Indian villages: M.N.Srinivas's edited work *India's Villages*; S.C. Dube's *Indian Village* and McKim Marriott's edited work *Village India*. Other important works which appeared during the period 1955-1960 were that of F.G. Bailey's *Caste and Economic Frontier* (1957), Oscar Lewis's *Village Life in Northern India* (1958), D. N. Majumdar's *Caste and Communication in an Indian Village* (1958) and S.C. Dube's *India's Changing Villages* (1958). These studies examined the phenomenon of caste in limited range of social life and made an effort to understand its functional relations in the context of village settings.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable contributions of Srinivas for studying the dynamics of caste system is the concept of Dominant Caste. (*The Dominant Caste in Rampura*: 1959). George Rosen (1966) remarked that "The most useful theoretical concept of equilibrium in the caste system is that of dominant caste. Essentially, this states that when a particular caste enjoys a position of dominance in one sphere it tends to acquire, over time, a similar position of leadership in the other two spheres so that it is dominant in all aspects of village life. "Three major functional dimensions underlie the equilibrium model—economic, political and the cultural and ideological (ritual) dimensions. To understand the functioning of such a system it is useful to start by positing a static system, that is, one not influenced by the passage of time. George Rosen defines a static system as *stable equilibrium*. He writes: "By equilibrium, I mean that there is a direct relationship between a group's rank in one sphere, reflecting its power in that sphere and its rank and power in other spheres. Thus it is located in the entire system, although the group's major function within the system will probably be in only one's sphere. Stability implies that relatively small movements away from a group's interdependent ranking in each of the three spheres will set up a response within the system that will re-establish an appropriate relationship. Another type of equilibrium is the *unstable equilibrium*, in which an initially slight movement away from the original equilibrium, does not lead to a return to the original equilibrium, but rather leads to a still further movement from that relationship." (1966). In contrast to the concept of a static system in equilibrium, independent of changes over time, George Rosen introduces the element of time—that is a *dynamic system*. It is possible to postulate a series of discrete, relatively

small changes in each of the spheres; occurring slowly and spreading sufficiently over time, the entire system is able to establish a new equilibrium position after each change, and the changes in each sphere can be treated in isolation from changes in the rest of the system. In a stable equilibrium a change in any one sphere gives rise to appropriate changes in other spheres, which lead over time to either the re-establishment of the original equilibrium or a movement to a new equilibrium position. In an unstable equilibrium the effect upon the system of such a change in one sphere is to establish either an improved or worsened position for the affected group in its own sphere, depending on the direction of instability. This in turn gives rise to further changes which accelerate the movement from equilibrium in this and in other spheres. *The concept of flexibility* implies that groups within the system are peacefully willing to accept relatively slight gains or losses in their position in one sphere, or they are willing to wait and work through other dimensions to reverse the loss either within the one sphere or the system as a whole. The role of intellectuals and religious leaders is highly significant in dealing with these shifts and in the willingness of a group to accept or reject them, and thus they are important in determining the flexibility of the system.

The final type of movement according to George Rosen in this classification is the *drastic change* or changes completely upsetting the equilibrium system. This may be a drastic change in any sphere of a character that neither recognizes nor accepts the relationships in the existing system. Frequently accompanying the initial drastic change there may be a rapid series of changes in all spheres, each of which calls for adjustment by the existing system, but which together

occur in such number and at such a speed that the existing system does not have time to adjust to all the changes. The British conquest of India is an example of drastic, contradictory change. In effect it substituted, on the political level, a different system for the one then functioning. The new system was entirely different in its structure of group relationships, in its values and ideology, and in the institutions it introduced. However, after the major change of rule, although the British introduced many additional changes they introduced them at a pace that permitted the existing system to operate by either adjusting to them or quarantining them; in effect the two systems operated side by side.

"In India the caste system is a social system. Caste which traditionally structures a society on the basis of the birth of its members, determines a group's ritual function in religious observances and its interrelation with other groups in ritual and social behaviour; it determines a group's economic function, its economic relation with other groups in the geographic area and its rewards; it determines in large part a group's political function and role in an area. Finally the caste system was at first and still is a very important part of the Hindu religion, which supports and is supported by it and there is some question whether the two are separable.

"In theory, caste and class position would be inseparable in the caste system in equilibrium. With the erosion of the ideological and material bases of the caste system, mostly under British rule, a disequilibrium arose between caste and class position and simultaneously the caste system faced strong intellectual attack. In rural India, however, at Independence the caste system was still

ruling, although class elements were both operable and noticeable within rural society; in urban India the class elements had probably become overriding, modified by caste and ethnic factors." (George Rosen: 1966)

The trend of functional studies of the institution of caste in rural India gave an impetus to the study of 'change' aspect in the caste system. Much of the political life in the country in post Independence period was under the strong impact of caste. Political decisions concerning emancipation of scheduled castes created the necessity for looking at the institution afresh, with an entirely different perspective and point of view. The stresses and strains of modernism in a democratic set up with accelerated urbanisation and industrialisation, made it necessary for scholars to focus their attention on change and related aspects; caste dynamics and changing patterns of inter-caste relations, inter-caste hierarchy, factionalism, jajmani system, relationship between caste, class and power, identification of caste groups modified by class elements in rural India, class groups modified by caste elements in urban India, etc. This new trend also brought to the forefront the question of conceptual clarity—distinction between varna and Jati, caste and class and also questions like whether caste is a unique institution found only in India, or it is found in other countries as well, whether caste is changing into class, etc.

Y. B. Damle in his report entitled "A Review of the Literature on Caste" gives us the picture of the type of studies undertaken on caste during 1950-1959 (December 22, 1961). Earlier, i. e. in 1959, M. N. Srinivas, Y. B. Damle, S. Shahani and Andre Beteille—in their *Caste: A Trend Report and Bibliography*, Oxford, 1959—presented

a fairly thorough picture of the trend of research on caste upto 1959.

Damle, in his review article, has categorised the studies under the following heads:

- I. A discussion of the various concepts used and various theories propounded for the explanation of caste in terms of its origin and continuance.
- II. Methodological contributions pertaining to the study of caste.
- III. Descriptive studies dealing with various aspects of caste.
- IV. Prospects and possibilities of change in the institution of caste.
- V. Solutions offered to eradicate caste.

### I. Concepts and Theories

Damle writes that there are various concepts which have been used by the various authors such as the concept of dominant caste, the concept of elaborateness of ranking, concept of pollution, concept of sanskritization and westernization, concept of role, concept of interaction etc. He then points out the difficulties experienced by various authors in arriving at a satisfactory definition of caste.

It was felt that the linking up of the concept of varna as a scheme of classification of caste has been a major source of difficulty. Many scholars admit that the varna scheme of classification provides an all-India frame of reference for the analysis of caste. However, as far as analysis of caste as a functioning reality is concerned, the varna scheme is not of much avail, for the simple reason that that the varna scheme postulates

a relative rigidity in the four fold division of society. In reality, however, it is found that in the middle ranges there is quite an amount of mobility and therefore the varna scheme fails to fit in as an explanation of caste stratification in India. The varna scheme is applicable to the Brahmins and the untouchables. In the middle ranges, however, it is just not applicable (pp. 1-2).

There are a few authors like Hocart and Iravati Karve who feel that the varna scheme is partially useful. Harcart (1950) feels that there is no inconsistency between the varna scheme and the Jati as a reality. Hocart (1950,) and Karve (1956) seem to think that the varna scheme provides a useful frame of analysis for the whole of India and as far as this contention is concerned, there would not be much of a difference of opinion amongst the authors who have rejected the varna scheme as inadequate for special studies of caste in a given locale.

It is felt that since economic change disturbs caste equilibrium, the varna scheme is not suitable because it postulates a rigidity of social distance (p.2).

There are many authors who have been concerned with the *attributional aspect* of caste. These authors describe at length caste and its attributes. But some feel that it fails to take cognizance of reality so far as it does not conform to any given list of attributes of caste at a given point of time. Therefore, such authors suggest an *interactional* theory of caste as a proper corrective to the earlier attributional theory. (Mckim Marriott, "The Interactional Attributional Theories of Caste Ranking", *Man in India*, April-June 1959)

Earlier the caste system was built upon the Brahmanic model. Nevertheless, even

where the Brahmins themselves have departed from the model, because of their adoption of westernization (Srinivas 1956) they continue to wield power as far as the ritual status is concerned (B. N. Nair : 1959).

Narmadeshwar Prasad stresses the importance of the myth of caste as a major force in the continuity of the caste system (1957).

M. N. Srinivas introduced the concept of Dominant Caste and many authors joined with him in stressing the importance of the concept. By doing so these authors emphasised the variability in the status of various castes in different regions. The concept of dominant caste subsumes factors such as the economic, the political, the demographic and the ritual power of the people concerned. Actually this concept gives adequate importance to secular status. It is true that in order that the caste be dominant, it must possess a minimum amount of ritual status. Thus, for instance, the untouchables cannot hope to be a dominant caste however economically well-off they may be or in spite of their greater number in a particular situation. F. G. Bailey has pointed out that untouchability is a special impediment to caste mobility (1958). In certain studies it was pointed out that Brahmins who continue to enjoy highest ritual status, have to curry favour with the dominant-caste. In certain cases where the dominant caste was Brahmin, no amount of economic and political landslide has been able to unseat them from their position of dominance. This shows that the ritual status of Brahmins has been of help to them in overcoming their loss of economic and political status. In many villages the dominant caste are non-Brahmins. This concept clearly proves a shift from ritual to secular (Damle : 1961, p. 4).

Damle points out the fact that the dominant caste tries to enhance its ritual status through the process of sanskritization. To use a wider concept, however, one might speak in terms of sanskritization of ritual. In terms of sanskritization a caste is able to enhance its status by giving up certain foods, customs, occupations, etc. There is yet another process, namely that of hypergamy, whereby also members of a caste are able to enhance their status by marrying their daughters into castes higher than their own. Parallel with the process of sanskritization is the process of westernization whereby the higher castes and the Brahmins in particular, give up orthodox ways of caste behaviour and adopt western values such as equality, democracy, free mixing, etc. However, the process of westernization alienates the higher caste from the rest of Hindus and thereby only perpetuates the social distance between the higher and lower castes.

The dominant caste is able to monopolise power in its hands and therefore, it can almost do and undo things in a given situation. The official and unofficial leadership as it exists in Indian villages brings to our attention the importance of the dominant caste. Right from the panchayats to legislature the power wielded by the dominant caste cannot be ignored (Damle : 1961, p. 5).

While analysing caste as a functioning reality, we have to reject the idealistic theory of caste as well as the varna scheme of classification and the attributional theories of caste also. The interactional theory is suggested in the place of other theories. Likewise the importance of role has been suggested (Damle 1961: p. 5).



## II. Methodological problems

Some have suggested that caste must be studied as a functioning reality and hence a structural-functional approach has been advocated.

Mckim Marriott and some others felt that to arrive at a satisfactory theory of caste ranking certain methodological precautions are necessary. Mckim Marriott speaks of the elaborateness of caste ranking and says that the same depends on four sets of factors, viz. : 1) number of local ethnic groups, 2) correlative stratified interaction among ethnic groups, 3) consistency among individuals in stratified interaction and 4) separation from inconsistent interaction elsewhere. The author insists that for a proper study of caste ranking these four sets of factors must be properly gone into. The same point is made by other authors who stress the importance of local situation in delineation of caste.

What these authors really mean is nothing except that regional variations and peculiarities must be taken note of in a proper study of caste. Therefore, as a general trend one might observe that there are increasing emphases on rejecting overall explanations or theories of caste. This is certainly a methodological contributions made in recent times arising out of the various field studies that have been completed during the last few years by both Indians and foreign scholars.

Then there are certain authors who have concerned themselves with problems of the measurement of social distance between different castes. At the outset it must be mentioned that the authors themselves have admitted the lack of

precision in such measurements. However, scaling analysis has been sought to be employed to assess social distance between different castes to analyse the basis of caste ranking etc. It is significant that some of the authors who have attempted to measure caste distance have been mindful of the importance of interaction, thereby not unduly pinning their faith in the study of attitudes and opinions. A student of caste must necessarily concern himself with interaction rather than with mere attitudes and opinions. In these days of pressures of public opinion and propaganda, it would be difficult to make a correct appraisal of the attitudes and opinions expressed by the people as regards caste. Damle and Karve in their study of Inter-group relations in Rural Communities (unpublished Ms. 1959) made use of the interactional approach and then proceeded to verbalise attitudes and opinions in the light of interaction.

## III. Descriptive studies of caste

Damle (1961, pp.6-7) has subdivided descriptive studies into the following topics :

1. Caste, its origin and development
2. Importance of caste as a central feature of Indian social system
3. Caste and interdependence
4. Caste and importance of local situation
5. Caste and territory
6. Caste and economic organisation (including occupation, technology etc.)
7. Caste and political power
8. Caste and leadership

9. Caste and family
10. Caste and marriage
11. Caste and education
12. Caste and personality
13. Caste and class
14. Caste and race
15. Caste and population
16. Caste and mobility
17. Caste and ranking
18. Caste and migration
19. Caste and ideology
20. Caste and belief system
21. Caste and pollution
22. Caste and the Brahmin (the influence of Brahmins, etc.)
23. Caste and its influence on other communities
24. Caste and social adjustment
25. Caste and social injustice
26. Caste as a unifying force
27. Caste as a divisive force
28. Caste, its maintenance and continuity

Damle observes the fact that the descriptive studies are being divided into different topics as listed above does not by any chance mean that certain authors have emphasised a certain topic or topics to the neglect of other topics. However, the frequency description of the various topics discussed by the authors goes to point out the relative attention paid by the authors to the different aspects of the problem.

#### IV. Prospects and possibilities of change in the institution of caste

An overwhelming number of authors feel that in the near future, at any rate, the caste system is not going to disintegrate. Yet it is true that there are many authors who feel that divergence between ritual and secular status has been a major source of hierarchical change

(Mayer. Adrian, "Some Hierarchical Aspects of Caste" *South Western Journal of Anthropology*, 1956) Gardner Murphy felt that a mere change in attitudes does not mean any change in the structure of caste ("In the Minds of Men": 1959). S. Bernad pointed out the limitation of legislation in the change of caste ("Madhopur Revisited", *The Economic weekly*, July 1959). Bailey, F.G. regarded untouchability as a major impediment to caste mobility (1958). Brahmins have lost their economic and political power, but still they are retaining their ritual superiority. In some cases the Brahmins accepted people belonging to other castes as their neighbours, but such neighbourhood does not in any way spell close interaction on a footing of equality between the Brahmins and members of other castes.

Ghurye mentions that some changes in the features of the caste system are in the offing, but he hastens to add that the essential features of the caste remain unaltered (1957).

Ramkrishna Mukherjee while accounting for the factors which help continue the caste system, found that the economic, philosophical and religious basis of caste is so firm, coupled with its adaptability that there are very few possibilities of a real change (*The Dynamics of a Rural Society*: 1957). Aiyappan points out the role of sentiments for the continuance of the caste system, as for example, reflected in the preference for Jajmani system (1955). N. K. Bose observes that endogamy persists in spite of political and economic changes (1958). Endogamy has been regarded as a very important feature of the caste system by most of the authors. Normally one would be inclined to think of migration as a liberalising force as far as caste restrictions are concerned. However, Hemalatha Acharya pointed out that migrants tend to be more rigid in the

observance of caste restrictions, particularly in respect of marriage, as they want to retain their separate cultural identity (1955).

In short, Damle writes, nothing has happened to alter the ideological basis or foundation of the caste system as far as the system of beliefs is concerned. Nothing much has also happened to shake the caste system. Damle and Desai, I. P. are constrained to observe that change in the caste has been more superficial than fundamental ("A Note on the Change in the Caste", Ghurye Felicitation Volume: 1954). Naturally, therefore, the consensus of opinion among various students of the subject seems to be that caste cannot be eradicated in the near future.

#### V. Solutions offered to eradicate caste

Almost all feel that rooting out the caste system is an extremely difficult thing to achieve. Actually what many have suggested would amount to solutions of certain facets of the caste system such as untouchability. Thus many authors suggest that untouchability can be eradicated by migration of the untouchables to urban areas (Scarlet Epstein: 1959). So also it has been suggested by Morris E. Opler that castes which are dysfunctional in village organisation should migrate (1948). David. G. Mandelbaum thinks that political intervention can help in raising the ritual status of the low castes. Eric J. Miller opines that breakdown of territorial segmentation is felt to be useful in reducing caste interdependence and their caste rigidity (1954). Bryce Ryan regards industrialisation as a solution of the caste problem (1958). M. S. A. Rao pinpoints economic change as an absolute necessity to ensure change in the caste system (1957). P. K. Bhow-

mick and B. Bhattacharya, suggest that opening up of new occupations would help people overcome caste stigma (1957). H. Orenstein is of the opinion that unofficial active leadership should be strengthened as it is against caste unlike the official leadership. He adds that so far at any rate, the government has pinned its faith on bolstering the official leadership which is presumably in favour of continuance of the caste system. Maureen L. P. Patterson states that inter-caste marriage is not a solution to caste problem (1958). Bernard S. Cohn remarks that legislation has limited efficacy in changing the caste practices, injustice etc. (1959). Kathleen E. Gough, Bernard S. Cohn and a host of others feel that a many pronged attack is necessary to change the structure of the caste system (Gough: 1956; Cohn: 1955). They feel that economic, political and ideological changes could bring about changes in the caste system.

Damle concludes by saying that from the solutions suggested it is quite evident that the authors do not seem to be particularly hopeful about any radical change coming in as far as the structure of the caste is concerned, in the near future at least. There seems to be a current underlying all this thinking that the caste is so well entrenched in the Indian system that very radical solutions would be necessary in order to effect anything worthwhile. Thus there does not seem to be much of a difference between the discussion of the prospects and possibility of the caste in the near future and the discussion of the solutions suggested to overcome or change the caste system. In fact, the solutions suggested can be characterised as very cautious and fairly realistic in view of the appraisal of the caste system by the various students of caste (Damle: 1961. p. 17).

As regards the various facets of the caste system, in spite of the fact that certain authors have tended to emphasise the importance of certain aspects, there also seems to be equally prevalent an awareness that the various features of the caste system, such as the ritual and secular political and economic are all interconnected with other features of the caste system. Hence the various aspects of the caste system need to be studied as a whole since they are integrated into a system viz. the caste system. As such Damle warns students who are interested in studying caste, that it would be fatal to isolate a single aspect, however important it may be for analysis and try to explain the caste system in its terms. He points out that so many authors have realised that the various aspects are interconnected and that they act and interact on each other, rendering the caste system very complex. By and large it is felt that the caste system is an all-pervading force, leaving no feature of human life in India untouched. Thus interpersonnel and inter-group relations are mainly dictated by the caste system. Likewise caste has a stamp of its own on the political and economic organisation in India. In the sphere of belief and ideology, notwithstanding the modern forces and movements, caste seems to have left an indelible mark on the minds of the people. In fact caste can be regarded as moulding people's thinking, ideology and behaviour in a very significant manner. It is small wonder then that the authors by and large feel that the prospects and possibilities of change in the caste system as such are not particularly bright. Sometimes one may be prone to mix up what ought to be and what is. Significantly enough, the authors seem to have avoided this fallacy in so far as they are very clear in mind as to what is. It is true that some authors have

suggested solutions to some of the problems of caste. However, even in doing so, they seem to be completely unmindful of the realities of the caste system. Therefore, the solutions suggested have been either piece-meal, affecting certain facets of the caste system only or very radical in the sense that a total change is prescribed to warrant a change in the caste system (Damle: 1961, pp. 18-19).

Surajit Sinha's report on caste in India provides an overview of what has been achieved in studies on caste so far. He categorised the studies done upto 1970 under the following heads :

1. Village studies
2. Caste and politics
3. Caste, economic organisation and economic development
4. Caste and land tenure
5. Caste, class and social inequality
6. Specialised study of caste ranking
7. Social mobility in the caste system
8. Social structure of caste
9. Caste and changing legal system
10. Demography of caste
11. Caste in urban setting
12. Caste among non-Hindus in India and Pakistan
13. Study of caste across civilisation
14. Caste and the Indian civilisation
15. Tribe-caste continuum
15. Caste and personality structure
17. Caste and social dialect (Surajit Sinha : 1974, pp. 235-246)

Two hundred and forty articles published in the major Indian and Anglo-American periodicals in sociology and anthropology have been analysed by Surajit Sinha in terms of topics covered, ethnographic and areal coverage, techniques of field work nature of source material

and methodology of analysis. The data have been classified in terms of three periods : 1. those published before 1950 (period of exploration, survey and speculation), 2. between 1950-59 (period of systematisation) and 3. between 1960-1970 (recent developments).

Prior to 1950, the bulk of the publications on caste were on problems of origin, diffusion, and historical development of the caste system.

Since 1950, the emphasis was on caste and economy, caste and politics, castes and social mobility, regional study of caste, structural study of individual castes and caste ranking.

From the point of view of ethnographic coverage, Sinha points out that Eastern India gets maximum coverage (49) and Northern India closely follows (48), Southern (29), Central (22) and Western India (29) have been relatively less covered.

Most of the monographs are on multi-caste village communities. There are only a few which deal with single castes such as Jat, Pramalai Kallar, Coorg, and Rajput.

Of the 240 articles analysed by Surajit Sinha, 170 (70 per cent) are based on field work. Very few are based on analysis of sacred texts or on administrative reports. In only 18 cases are the articles based on published sociological reports. Social scientists dealing with castes, therefore, tend to lean decisively on personal field work.

Of the 170 articles based on field work, 166, (95 per cent) are based on anthropological field work i.e. personal observation and structural analysis. Only in four

cases one finds primary reliance on socio-economic and social-psychological survey method.

The bulk of the articles (157, i. e. 92 per cent) are based on qualitative and structural analysis with only occasional use of simple quantitative data. In 77 cases (32 per cent) qualitative analysis is combined with some quantitative analysis. Only in 6 cases one finds a rigorous use of statistical methods (Surajit Sinha: 1974, pp. 246-248).

Sinha again makes the following observations regarding the trends in research studies on caste:

1. Speculative theories about the origin of the caste system have practically been given up.
2. The bulk of the work on caste is done by the method of social anthropology on the basis of the study of multi-caste villages, although an awareness is emerging that caste should be studied step by step from the small village to the city in a region.
3. There is considerable interest on how caste is adjusting itself to the demands of political democracy, community development, industrialisation and the like.
4. Caste stratification, in terms of inter-ethnic status ranking, has received considerable attention and a rigorous methodology for field work and analysis of the field data has been evolved.
5. Literature on social mobility in the caste system has grown in volume and improved in quality.

6. There is considerable interest about the essence of the caste system. The concept of hierarchy based on binary polarity of purity-pollution has received much attention.
7. Although the majority of researchers are working at a local level there is a felt need for inter-regional comparison, which has not yet been done.
8. There is a lively controversy about the scope of comparability of caste beyond the Indian civilisation.
9. There is a minority of Indian scholars who are beginning to feel that obsession with caste is obscuring the minds of Indian social scientists from significant emergent non-

caste phenomena in the Indian social scene.

10. The number of professional social scientists interested in the systematic study of caste is growing (Sinha: 1974, pp. 248-249).

The sociologists and social anthropologists have so far concentrated their attention on village studies and particularly on caste as a factor for the explanation of social change, local leadership and political development. The research priorities identified by Sinha are the changing relationship between caste and power, caste and class, caste and planned economic change, inter-caste tensions and social mobility, the political dimensions of the caste system, etc.

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# Class Analysis and its Relevance to the Study of Indian Society

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The most important factor which determines the class to which a person belongs is *his relation to the means of production*. This also determines the role which the class plays in the system of social production. It can be safely stated that the class which owns the means of production must also dominate the society, its economic system, politics and ideology.

Lenin defines classes thus:

Classes are large groups of people different from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth... and the mode of acquiring it." <sup>1</sup>

Each economic formation comprises different classes and strata of people. But we must make a distinction between principal classes and secondary or intermediate classes.

The principal classes are those whose interrelations express the main contradiction of the society. The principal contradiction between slave owners and slaves in slave society, between landlords and slaves in feudal society, between bourgeoisie and proletariat in capitalist society illustrates this point.

## Bourgeoisie

The bourgeoisie in the capitalist society owns the capital and means of production and uses them to purchase the wage labour of the proletariat, and through that process exploits them.

The bourgeoisie, no doubt, is further stratified into monopoly bourgeoisie, middle (medium bourgeoisie) and *petit* bourgeoisie. The significance of this differentiation can be seen from the fact that about 200 monopoly companies control about a third of the industrial production of all the capitalist countries taken together.

The *petit* bourgeoisie is very much interconnected with the monopoly and medium bourgeoisie. But they occupy an intermediate position.

As the economic crisis of capitalism deepens, larger and larger sections of the *petit* urban bourgeoisie face economic depression, loss of market due to stiff competition from large industrial houses and consequently the difference between their living standards and those of the working class decreases over time.

In small scale, cottage and household units, very often the entrepreneurs have to work longer days without social benefits which advanced sections of the working class enjoy and in addition they face extinction due to competition from monopolies. The dependence of the *petit* bourgeoisie on the large industrial houses or on the vagaries of the market makes his position very vulnerable.

### Proletariat

The proletariat is a class of wage earners who do not own the means of production and means of subsistence and who are therefore forced to sell their labour power to the capitalist.

In one sense, in a capitalist society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are functionally interconnected. The bourgeoisie needs the workers in order that they increasingly appropriate the surplus value produced by the workers and grow in size. Similarly the workers are forced by circumstances to depend on capitalists for selling their wage labour. But in terms of socio-economic interests, they are basically antagonistic classes; capitalism creates its own antithesis, the working class. The contradiction between the bourgeoisie and proletariat forms the main contradiction of capitalistic society.

### Middle strata

In capitalist countries there has been an increase in the proportion of wage workers and a decrease in the proportion of independent producers and proprietors.

For example, in 1870 the independent proprietors in the USA constituted 40.4 per cent of the gainfully employed population whereas in 1954 they formed only 13.3 per cent, while the wage-workers and employees increased from 59.4 to 86.8 per cent.

Many social scientists argue that capitalism is passing through a new stage where class oppositions are decreasing. They further argue that the classical antagonistic classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are both being transformed or replaced by an enormously new 'middle class'. The evidence put forward by the protagonists of this argument is that larger and larger sections of the people in industrialised capitalist countries are owning refrigerators, TV sets, automobiles and other durable consumer goods.

The purchase of durable consumer goods including automobiles and TV sets does not change the social status of the workers. So long as their relations to the means of production remain the same, their class position remains unchanged.

The theory of middle class is also buttressed by the fact that there has been a continuous increase in the number of employees in the capitalist countries. Employees who do mental labour are not considered in common parlance as workers. However, they partake of the characteristics of the workers since their labour power is hired.



If we take the major capitalistic countries in the beginning of the twentieth century, employees constituted only about 7 to 8 per cent of the gainfully employed population. Recent estimates put them at 20 to 30 per cent. In the USA alone about a third of the gainfully employed population are employees—numbering about 23 million.

In capitalistic society employees are a heterogeneous stratum. There are very high income government officials, company managers and so on. Their social status and earnings correspond closely to that of the bourgeoisie. On the other hand the vast majority of the employees are middle class or lower middle class, sharing the character of the working class.

Development of capitalism has also witnessed a growth in numbers of the intelligentsia. Teachers, medical doctors, other professional people, those engaged in culture and literature and so on are today becoming increasingly a part and parcel of the trade union movement. As a result of the growth of science and technology and its application to industry and agriculture, the number of technicians and scientists has increased enormously.

Marx did not speak of the industrial proletariat in its narrow sense of those who participate in manual labour. In fact he referred to "collective labour" that is, the working class "each of whom takes only a part, greater or less, in the manipulation of the subject of labour."<sup>2</sup>

Lenin wrote that the "mission" of capitalism "is fulfilled by the development of capitalism and the socialisation of labour in general, by the creation of a proletariat in general, in relation to which the factory workers play the role only of front-rankers, the vanguard. There is,

of course, no doubt that the revolutionary movement of the proletariat depends upon the number of workers, on their concentration, on the degree of their development, etc., but all this does not give us the slightest right to *equate the unifying significance of capitalism with the number of factory workers*. To do so, would be to narrow down Marx's idea impossibly."<sup>3</sup>

Lenin also said :

"...in all spheres of people's labour, capitalism increases the number of *office and professional workers* with particular rapidity and makes a growing demand for intellectuals. The latter occupy a special position among the other classes, attaching themselves partly to the bourgeoisie by their connections, their outlooks etc. and partly to the wage-workers, as capitalism increasingly deprives the intellectual of his independent position, converts him into a hired worker and threatens to lower his living standard."<sup>4</sup>

### Identification of classes in agriculture

Identification and differentiation of classes in agriculture pose more different problems. In the following section an attempt is made at classification in the context of India.

One of the misconceptions prevalent among sociologists and economists, not to speak of public men, is that those persons with large tracts of land, feudal tenures like Zamindari or Inamdari, Jagirdari etc., or those who cultivate vast areas of land with the help of modern implements and tractors, should be called landlords. Similarly, owners of land who do not actually participate in the major agricultural operations, but only supervise cultivation, are sometimes wrongly classified as rich peasants.

In our study, we have tried to avoid the above misconceptions. As a general rule, all those persons or families who do not physically participate in the major agricultural operations cannot be considered as 'peasants', on the contrary, they are confirmed or rejected on the basis of certain further characteristics of an exceptional nature, which will be explained in the following paragraphs.

### **Landlords**

Landlords may be divided into two categories :

- (i) Feudal landlords and
- (ii) Capitalist landlords.

#### **Feudal landlords**

A feudal landlord is one who does not physically participate in the major agricultural operations and who leases out his land, and his income from rent and other feudal exactions like usury is predominant compared to agricultural income derived from the exploitation of wage labour. Dominance of rent income is defined, in this case, as more than 50 per cent of the total agricultural income. In other words, in the case of feudal landlords, income from rent is greater than income from wage exploitation.

#### **Capitalist landlords**

A capitalist landlord is one who does not physically participate in the major agricultural operations and whose income from the exploitation of wage labour in agriculture predominates. In other words, in the case of the capitalist landlord, income derived by employing wage labour is more than 50 per cent of the total income from agriculture. It should be remembered, in this connection, that the demarcating line between the

capitalist landlord and rich peasant is whether the head of the family or one or more members of the family physically or manually participate in the major cultivation activities, instead of being merely contented with supervision. If a person only supervises, and does not participate in manual work, he should be classified as a capitalist landlord and not as a rich peasant.

### **Exceptions**

Several exceptions to the above general rule arise due to the pattern of capitalist development in agriculture, giving rise to a number of 'impure' categories of landlords and landowners and due to the special features of the socio-economic structure.

#### **Mixed class**

The general characteristic of a landlord, namely, the fact that he does not physically or manually participate in the major agricultural operations (even if he supervises the cultivation), cannot be applied in the case of small landowners who are forced to lease out the land or get the same cultivated with the help of relatives or supervisors, if it arose out of the need for taking up low-income professions such as non-gazetted government service, teaching, work in industrial enterprises or elsewhere. This is because, the alienation between ownership right and actual cultivation in their case arises not because of their class position in the village as landlords, but because of the peculiar circumstances relating to the location of non-agricultural professions. They should be appropriately classified according to their non-agricultural professions, that is, as teachers, government employees, etc.

This does not mean, however, that the higher officials or persons who are in the

higher income brackets should not be classified as landlords in cases where there is alienation between ownership and actual cultivation.

In some villages small holders of land do not directly participate in the agricultural operations either due to the fact that they have supplementary occupations outside the village or because there is no adult and able-bodied member of the household. In some villages it is found that non-participation in work is due to certain prevalent social customs. For example, in Irumba in Trivandrum district, it was found that social custom prevented Muslim women from work in the field. In families where the adult male members are employed elsewhere, the family labour input may be zero. They could not be classified as capitalist landlords because of their very small holdings. All such categories of an exceptional nature are covered by the term "mixed class".

### Rich peasants

A rich peasant can be defined as one who physically participates in the major agricultural operations and is not content with supervision alone, and whose inputs of wage labour is dominant compared to the family labour and who gets, in normal times, income from his farm which is sufficient not only to maintain a reasonable standard of living, but also leaves surplus which would be converted into capital, that is, new means of production, thus enabling him to further exploit labour of others. (In view of the fact that the existence of actual surplus above consumption expenditure and its conversion into means of production is coloured by social customs and conspicuous consumption patterns, the criteria about surplus conversion into capital is not being insisted upon in the

classification of rich peasants.) Domination of wage labour input is reckoned here as more than 50 per cent of the total labour input.

Even in cases where the wage labour input is less than 50 per cent of total labour input, but the income derived from all kinds of exploitation such as use of labour, income from rent on land leased out and income from usury and other forms of semi-feudal extractions is more than 50 per cent of the total agricultural income, they should be classified as rich peasants.

In the peculiar socio-economic conditions in Kerala, a number of specific instances have been noticed wherein, despite the dominance of wage labour exploitation, the total agricultural income of the household may not be substantially high. The class essence of the term rich peasant is the dominance of wage labour exploitation, which normally is directly associated with high incomes justifying the adjective "rich".

### Middle peasants

Middle peasant families are those who do the agricultural operations either on own land or on leased-in land mainly by family labour. They may employ wage labour to a certain extent, particularly during the heavy agricultural season or may have young farm servants who are not considered adult farm servants. The major criterion, thus is the dominance of family labour input, dominance being defined as more than 50 per cent of total labour input. In other words, the main characteristic of a middle peasant is not that of an exploiter of wage labour, because, by definition, his family labour input must predominate wage labour. Usually these middle peasants will have incomes

which still enable them to meet their meagre standard of living only in good years; large sections of middle peasants may not have enough to meet their meagre subsistence and may be thrown into the lower categories.

### Poor peasants

Poor peasant families are those who cultivate their land almost entirely with family labour. They may occasionally seek work as agricultural labourers in other farms. Generally, poor peasants find it difficult to maintain even a minimum standard of living, and are, therefore, perpetually in debt. Poor peasants may employ wage labour, to a certain extent, due to exceptional circumstances or due to technical reasons such as the need for completing certain agricultural operations within a limited time period. For purposes of demarcation between poor peasants and middle peasants, the maximum allowable limit of hired labour in the case of poor peasants, in the peculiar circumstances prevailing in Kerala, is reckoned at 25 per cent of total labour input. In case where the family earns part of their incomes by working as agricultural labourers in other fields, such wage labour input will be taken into consideration in determining the proportion of family labour.

On the basis of a study of the distribution of agricultural households in 17 villages in Kerala according to socio-economic classes<sup>5</sup> it was seen that 12.2 per cent of the total agricultural households are capitalist landlords as per the definition used in the study. However, it was noted that the proportion is high only in a few villages and in a number of villages the proportion of capitalist landlords is below 5 per cent. Poor peasants and middle peasants constitute 29.2 per cent of the

total number of agricultural households while the proportion of rich peasants is 11.5 per cent.

The relatively high percentage of "mixed class" is partly due to the caste-bound character of small and middle peasantry. Many small and medium agricultural holdings have members of the households who would not like to dirty their hands in cultivation operations. They would rather be content with lower incomes (even incur debts), employ hired labour and go about as "gentlemen" farmers, in a desperate bid to live up to their false notions of caste superiority.

Marx wrote in *New York Daily Tribune* of August 8, 1853 thus :

"Modern industry will dissolve the hereditary division of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power"<sup>6</sup>

Since Marx considered caste as a phenomenon of preindustrial class society, he naturally expected it to decline and get extinguished under capitalist development and the class differentiation which it would naturally generate. However, a detailed study of Indian history shows that this process has been most hazardous and complex. It is the duty of social scientists to make a serious and ongoing study of the interlocking mechanism between class and caste in Indian society.

In Marxist literature, employment of hired labour is considered as the principal manifestation of agricultural capitalism.

"Thus, capitalism has created ... a new form of the combination of agriculture with industries, namely, the combination of agricultural and non-agricultural hired labourers. Such a combination is

possible on a wide scale only in the period of the final and highest stage of capitalism, that of large-scale machine industry, which attenuates the importance of skill, of 'hand labour', facilitates the transition from one occupation to another, and levels the forms of hire." <sup>7</sup>

Referring to conditions in an area in Russia, Lenin said :

"Indeed, the forms of hire in this locality are very peculiar and very characteristic of capitalist agriculture. All the semi-patriarchal, semi-bonded forms of hired labour which are so frequently met in the central black earth belt disappear here. The only relationship left are those between hirers and hired, a commercial transaction for the purchase and sale of labour-power." <sup>8</sup>

In the Indian context, however, it is more problematical: How "free" is free wage labour in agriculture? Caste and traditional forms of bondage make the system of wage labour in India complex.

The persistence of caste despite increasing commercialisation and capitalisation of agriculture has to be explained by the particular nature of capitalist development in agriculture in India. British imperialism tried to strengthen their rule in the countryside by making a deal with Maharajas, Zamindars and landlords in an attempt to utilise local oligarchies and to jointly suppress the rural poor. Instead of abolishing feudal and semi-feudal relations and the caste system, the colonial masters tried to channelise these forces to perpetuate their rule in India.

Another fact to remember is that the commercial bourgeoisie which increasingly dominated rural areas was not

simply imported from urban centres. On the contrary the urban bourgeoisie got merged with the class of feudal landlords and big moneylenders-cum-traders, thus giving rise to a pattern of capitalist development superimposed on pre-capitalist formations.

It will be wrong to consider the four-fold *Varna* division of Indian society (also the groups considered as outcastes) as originating from some kind of a semi-divine exposition of Hindu *Dharma*. In fact, the very concept of *Varna* underwent changes during different stages of Indian history, and therefore it is necessary for us to study the caste system in India in its historical perspective.

During the stages of primitive communal system the emergence of a warrior class (later called as Kshatriya) meant the emergence of a class who had the monopoly of the coercive powers of the state. It also implied a differentiation in terms of social class and in terms of relation to the social product.

Division of labour simultaneously representing division of social product is nothing but a class division "because the division of labour implies the possibility, nay the fact that intellectual and material activity—enjoyment and labour, production and consumption—devolve on different individuals...with the division of labour, in which all these contradictions are implicit, which in its turn is based on the natural division in the family and the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another, is given simultaneously the distribution, and indeed the unequal distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products hence property..." <sup>9</sup>

"In capitalist production the basis for the formation of a home market is the process of the disintegration of small cultivators into agricultural enterprises and workers." <sup>10</sup>

We observe here, consequently, "the very process of the creation of a home market that is dealt with by the theory of capitalist production—the "home market" grows as a result of the conversion into a commodity of the product of commercial, entrepreneur farming, on the one hand, and of the conversion into a commodity of the labour-power by the badly-off peasants, on the other". <sup>11</sup>

The division of the population into different castes (Varna / Jati) in the Indian context, however, introduced complexities and rigidities in the process of class differentiation in agriculture.

*Varna* and *Jati* are often used as interchangeable terms. However Romila Thapar makes a distinction and thinks that *varna* was the theory and ritual ranking of castes, while *jati* was the actual status and functioning of castes.

... the functional aspect of caste appears to have been *jati* and not *varna*. *Varna* appears to have represented the theory of structure, and may best be translated by the word 'group'. *Jati* relationships represent the actual way in which society functioned, and this word is better translated as 'caste'. *Varna* became what sociologists have called the 'ritual rank', whereas *jati* was the indication of the actual status. The *Dharma-sastras*, therefore, when speaking of *varna*, were referring to the theory of caste, each *varna* representing the ritual ranking of castes, and not necessarily the actual socio-economical status. Every *jati* was given a ritual

rank so that its order in the hierarchy could be easily assigned.... <sup>12</sup>

Even in periods when the *varna* division of Indian society had become very rigid counter-movements in the form of Buddhism and Jainism had emerged. The system had not become fully hereditary. Buddha's talk with a Brahmin youth Assalayana brings this out:

"Have you heard that in some of the adjacent districts there are only two castes—masters and slaves—and that (a member of) the master (caste) can become a (member of) the slave (caste) and vice versa?" To this Assalayana replied: "Yes, sir, I have heard that..." <sup>13</sup>

Kosambi gives a somewhat different version of the above dialogue and comments on the basis of internal evidence in his citation that "this passage could not have been written before Alexander's conquest of the Persian empire. The Buddha does not refer to the Rigvedic two-varna system, for the Arya could not become a Dasa...", but he also agrees that "it sufficed to refute the theory that the four castes were in some way a law of nature". <sup>14</sup>

A detailed study of Indian history will show that precapitalist "unchanging Indian society" came into being as part of a long-term historical process.

The advance of the plough-using village economy over tribal India was a protracted and long-drawn out process. Started by the pre-Harappans in the low-rainfall areas of north-western India, as is evidenced by the recent finding of remains of a cultivated field at Kalibangan, it gathered momentum under the Indo-Aryans and was, more or less, stabilised

during the Gupta period. In this process, successive waves of intruders and autochthons got mixed up with each other, and their social formations were lifted successively to higher stages of development. This involved, in due course, the emergence of some degree of private property in land.<sup>15</sup>

### Harappan Bronze Age Civilisation (2600-1500 BC)

Evidences show that Bronze Age civilisation of north-western India was not an isolated phenomenon. It was a product of development of local pre-Harappan neolithic culture spreading over more than five centuries with an intermediate Chalcolithic stage. This civilisation had an advanced agriculture whose surplus was extracted by those in power to maintain a high standard of urban life. Excavations show that there was a class distinction between workers (who might have been slaves) and the elite. There was a small ruling group or oligarchy: whether they represented a priestly order is not clear.

### Rigvedic Arya-Dasa society (1500-1000 BC)

The Rigvedic Aryans who were pastoral nomads changed to settled agriculture only very slowly. The settlements, *vis* and/or *grama*, had their chieftains (*rajanya*), priests (*brahmana*) and the producers (*vaishya*); but a rigid varna system had not yet emerged. The earliest reference to the four-fold varna is, no doubt, in the Rigveda. But the rare reference to this institution in this source have led historians to doubt the contemporaneity of the relevant hymns with the rest of the text. The Rigvedic society was marked by free inter-varna mobility.<sup>16</sup>

During this period caste distinctions existed between Aryans and the Dasa. Occasionally of course a Dasa could get the status of the Aryan through initiation into a varna. Conquered Dasa (and/or Dasyu) population, (together with far less numerous members of conquered Aryan tribes) formed a separate class vis-a-vis the free Aryan society. The conquered had no rights to arms and to property. Yet they were not slaves as such. This was so because the undifferentiated Aryan society had not yet sufficiently developed the institution of individual property among themselves. The conquered people were regarded as the collective property of the conquering tribe. Barring a few taken into the individual families as household slaves by common consent, the bulk remained where they had been and were subjected to exactions from time to time.<sup>17</sup>

The surpluses provided by the Dasa peasantry were appropriated by the intruders. The growth of Indo-Aryan society was based on this basically class structure of Arya and Dasa.

### Later Vedic period varna society (1000-600 BC)

During this period, compared to cattle herding of the earlier periods cultivation using ploughs became extensively important. The productive basis of agriculture increased and a considerable variety of new Aryans (Arya-Dasa peoples) had a relatively rapid growth compared to ploughless autochthons. The semi-nomadic village or the *vis* transformed into a predominant agricultural community. The introduction of iron-tipped ploughs did influence changes in relations of production. The Vaishya agriculturist's status got lowered and became more or less that of the Dasa as he shed his pastoral functions. Occupational groups began to acquire class

identities, and this led to the expounding of the theory of the four-fold varna system in practice. The Shudra status was thrown open to the Aryanised sections of the Dasa and other non-Aryan people, who had learnt or were initiated into the culture of the iron-tipped plough. It also incorporated the erstwhile Dasa artisans. Not all Dasas were destined for this status. Many remained outside the four varnas, without any status as before.<sup>18</sup>

The society was now less dependent on Vaishya labour and was predominantly based on the labour-power of the Aryanised Dasas. The latter were still regarded as the collective property of the other three varnas, but were now given a ritual status (Shudra) within the expanded Aryan society. Vaishyas now increasingly tended to transfer themselves from manual agricultural work to trade and crafts and other activities.<sup>19</sup>

It must be pointed out that the Shudra, from the very beginning was a heterogeneous combination of autochthonous tribes and groups and hence the attempt to group them into a single varna did not really succeed. On the contrary it got subdivided into a number of jatis. On the other hand the three upper varnas, though differently oriented on a functional basis still enjoyed some kind of inter-varna mobility. Since the caste division within the Indo-Aryan society was mainly between *Dwija* and *Shudra* (of course there was a third category of non-Aryan other castes and tribes without any status).

#### **Varna modelled class society (600-200 BC)**

During this period the productive forces expanded substantially, particularly

because of the availability of abundant metals in Maghadha, expansion of craft skills and a substantial increase in the supply of Shudra labour force for, the economic expansion had already led to a rise in the Shudra population. But the customary relationship between them and the higher varnas acted as a fetter on any further economic growth, as the former were not free to leave their villages to colonise new areas. This contradiction between the new forces of production and the relations of production had persisted for some time during the pre-Mauryan period (600-300 BC). It was then that the conflicts between the Shudras and the upper varnas had sharpened and, as a consequence, the conditions of the former had deteriorated. They used to be considered almost identical with the slaves in law. This contradiction was solved in the days of the *Arthashastra*.

During the period (600-200 BC) class struggles has their reflections in the realm of ideology and politics. The rise of Buddhism and Jainism as protests against Brahministic rituals was a reflection of this process. In the early stages, Buddhism was on the side of non-Brahmin and oppressed varnas and Dasas. The contradiction between rising productive forces and the fetters imposed by a decadent varna system was partly resolved during Kautilya's time or the days of *Arthashastra*. This was done by allowing Shudras to take to cultivation on waste land and become independent peasantry protected by the state and as tenants (slaves) on Crown (Sita) lands.

Romila Thapar states: "In the Buddhist literature and the Ashokan inscriptions *dasa* is mentioned almost as a compound phrase with



*bhritaka* and *karmakara*, hired labourers. Land owners employed both categories of persons to work their land, as indeed both categories were employed by guilds and merchants to work as craftsmen. This would suggest that slaves alone were not used and probably the bulk of the agricultural workers and craftsmen were not slaves... The Mauryan period would be a period when there was slavery for production on a scale which made an appreciable difference to the economy. However, even here, the significant difference between this and other periods lay in the fact that perhaps the state employed slave labour on a large enough scale."<sup>20</sup>

### Asiatic Mode—Formative phase (200 BC-700 AD)

During this period there were a number of changes in the social status of Shudras, Vaishyas and other varnas. Jatis multiplied in numbers. This period witnessed an emergence of the so called self-sufficient village economy which later came to be called the Asiatic mode. Asiatic mode itself, in turn got more and more feudalistic tendencies during the next phase AD 700-1700.

The origins of Marxist interpretation of Indian history can be traced to two articles published by Marx in the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1853.<sup>21</sup> Referring to India before the British conquest Marx noted the passivity of Indian society mainly due to the existence of caste and the traditional ethos of village communities. These communities had to depend upon "Asiatic despotism."

The relations of production were marked by the "absence of (private) property in land". To differentiate Indian society (and indeed many other Asian societies) before British rule from the social formation which existed in Europe in

comparable periods, Marx used the term "Asiatic mode of production."

Valuable notes which Marx prepared five or six years later are today available under the title *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* edited by Eric Hobsbawm.<sup>22</sup>

In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels state that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. However in a footnote it was later on clarified that it did not refer to the early primitive communal society.

The usual Marxist class analysis presents the transition of human society, more or less in the following sequence: primitive communal society—slave society — feudal society — capitalist society (P-S-F-C). But Marx's studies on pre-capitalist economic formations clearly indicate that he did not consider this sequence as a necessary one for all societies. It was only a generalised form applicable to most societies. In addition to Asiatic mode it refers to various other modes such as "Germanic", "Slavonic", etc.

During the last years of his life Marx had read and appreciated the work by Kowalevsky entitled *Communal Land Holdings* (1879) which analysed Indian society in its very complex form. Marx noted also the emergence of private property within the Indian community (which he had earlier described as "that unresisting and unchanging society") with consequent manifestations of contradictions within Indian society.

It must be emphasised that analysis of Asiatic mode does not deny the role of class contradictions and class structures. In fact, it is upto us to study and discover the so called authoritarian and anti-individualistic traditions in Asia and to draw lessons from the innumerable revolutionary struggles of oppressed people in Asia.

Wittfogel states: "The history of hydraulic (i. e. oriental) society suggests that class struggle, far from being a chronic disease of all mankind, is the luxury of multi-centres and open (i. e., West European) societies." <sup>23</sup>

However, Hóbsbawm and Goldelier have shown that some class exploitation did exist within Asiatic societies. <sup>24</sup>

But both of them treat Asiatic societies as already primitive class societies. According to Hóbsbawm, "the Asiatic system is therefore not yet a class society or if a class society, then it is the most primitive form." <sup>25</sup> Goldelier considers the Asian society as "the unity of community structures and class structures." <sup>26</sup>

S. A. Dange's book on *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery* (Bombay 1949) makes a proposition that India had a transition from primitive communism to slavery. But this book lacks authenticity since it has no archaeological evidence or genuine historical method of analysis.

S. A. Dange's work based on cleverly selected verses from Vedic texts, tries to prove the existence of prefeudal slave society in India. But D. D. Kosambi and others reject such a view. Kosambi does not consider ancient Indian society as static. His understanding of Indian history was dynamic. According to him:

"India showed a series of parallel forms which cannot be put into precise categories for the mode based on slavery is absent, feudalism greatly different from the European type with serfdom and manorial economy." <sup>27</sup>

In the Indian context evidence shows that different forms of class and caste exploitation have existed side by side.

Different forms of primitive communal societies, forms of slavery and bondage, feudal relations etc. have existed in different combinations in the same areas or co-existed in different parts of the country during the same historical period. There is no single or simple answer to the question, "How to analyse the class structure in India?" What is important is to make a detailed and thorough study of the class/caste nexus and its ramifications and interrelations in each region so that we get a better understanding of the dynamics of social change.

The historical records of the seventeenth century in India contain exclusive evidence of peasant revolts. These revolts were triggered off by various factors particularly the suppression by zamindars, the very heavy revenue demands and so on.

The Varna-caste divisions in India are of course distinct from the class divisions that we observe in most other countries. Social and economic deprivation of certain groups and classes who are alienated from the means of production is a universal phenomenon. But the Indian caste system is in some way unique because of the practice of untouchability and the concepts of pollution and purity.

Marxism makes the proposition that the working class is historically and objectively destined to play the leading role in emancipating all other oppressed classes and humanity in general.

Unless the struggle against caste is closely interwoven with the class struggle of the working class, the peasantry and other sections of the working people, the struggle against both caste and class will not succeed.

From the recent evidence regarding re-emergence on a wider scale of atrocities against Harijans, one may be tempted to conclude that the caste system in India is getting strengthened rather than weakened. This, in the view of this author, is fallacious.

The existing diversity and division among lower castes is, no doubt, a stumbling block to the formation of conglomerates of lower castes with substantial unity among them against their common class enemies. For example, the two major Scheduled Castes in Punjab, the *Chamar* (leather workers) and the *Chuhra* (the sweepers) feel that they are differentiated from one another and this differentiation is also reflected in religious beliefs and practices. Nonetheless these castes who form a substantial percentage in many districts have objectively many things in common.

Many studies have shown that caste and class situations in villages often overlap. In many cases the class question is a crucial one though caste feelings get highlighted in terms of the cognition of caste members. For example, in many parts of Punjab, and indeed in many parts of India, lower castes form the bulk of landless agricultural labourers while a small number of landlords (mostly from the higher castes) control the major part of the land and consequently wield social and political power.

Mark Juergensmeyer's characterisation of Bimla village in Punjab, very close to the Rajasthan border, reveals this point. In this village about 25 per cent of the population are Scheduled Castes. The lower status groups are the *Mazbi* (equivalent to *Chuhra*, the sweepers) and the *Chamiyar* (a variant of *Chamar*, the leather workers).

"Regardless of what their traditional economic roles are supposed to be, I found that in fact the *Mazbis*, and *Chamiyars*' occupational roles are exactly the same landless agricultural labour. The land around Bimla is large irrigated plots, which require a larger labour force than the smaller family farms of central Punjab. The day labourers work primarily during the harvest season, and move among the landlord families according to the availability of work; there are permanent labourers too, attached to the richest landlord families.

"The permanent family-related labour role in Bimla is extraordinarily demanding. These labourers are the mainstay of the labour force in the fields and in the landlords' large houses; and they also are pressed into extra services when the landlords require them. The landlords are Sikhs of Jat castes; unlike the middle-peasant status of most Jat Sikhs in Punjab, the landlords in Bimla are wealthy, and very powerful. When the landlords war against each other, as sometimes they do, the landlords' Scheduled Castes are formed into small militias to defend their landlords and to do mischief against the opposing side. Within the past five years, two Scheduled Caste men have been killed in these skirmishes. Strangely the Scheduled Caste militiamen continue to live among themselves in harmony, even if they have to fight for opposing landlord factions."<sup>28</sup>

Another study of Asthapuram-Kanthapuram in Tamil Nadu in 1976 shows the progress in caste differentiation in an area which was traditionally engulfed in caste consciousness.

"The most significant change as far as class structure is concerned is the

emergence of the class of landlords (owning 174.23 acres of land) in 1976, and a proportionate fall in the share of big peasants. Most of the former's land (nearly 145 acres) belongs to people who combine nonagricultural vocations with land-ownership, and almost all of them are fully or partly absentee in status. This is symbolic of the extent to which market has penetrated over the years."

"Substantial changes have occurred in the class relations of the big and landless peasants. The padiyal-sukhavasi system of the past has yielded place to one dominated by the coolie or daily wage earner. While 52 out of 71 landless peasants of 1916 were padiyals, only 20 out of 104 of the landless peasants in 1976 were padiyals. The character of the padiyals' functions has also undergone a drastic change. None of the padiyals today is a bonded servant. His status is one of an overseer-cum-handyman on a monthly salary. Some of the big peasants are even experimenting with cash salaries for the padiyals. While demographic factors have been important in bringing about these changes the fact of commercialisation of the employer-labour relationship is equally significant."<sup>29</sup>

The study of S. S. Sivakumar and Chitra Sivakumar on Asthapuram-Kanthapuram villages in Tamil Nadu also reveals the substantial gap between the objective reality of increasing class differentiation in Indian villages and the cognition of villagers themselves. In the language which they speak there are no proper equivalents for the terms landlord, tenant, labourer, rent, exploitation, etc. Instead they use by proxy different words which they have inherited

from the past however imperfect they may be.

The authors of the above study came to the following conclusions :

"Thus the cognitive categories referring to economic relations in the two villages do not lend themselves to an articulation of economic relations along the lines of class analysis. It might be argued by some that this reflects only the time-lag in the social perception of the people of the two villages. From what has been discussed so far however, it is evident that the prevailing cognitive categories indicate the continuing influence of the legacies of the past."<sup>30</sup>

One should obviously expect a time lag between formation of classes and the cognition by their members of their position in social production, that is the attainment of social consciousness. At the same time to make the prognosis that since caste consciousness is inherited from the past it would remain for a long period, does not add much to our knowledge. The real point, therefore, is to determine the progress through which false consciousness of caste can be shed by people belonging to various castes and how class consciousness can take its place. This will take us to the realm of socio-political action, the organisation of the people particularly belonging to the lower class and along class lines, in unions of agricultural labour, peasants, artisans, etc. and to lead them in their struggles against identified common enemies, landlords, moneylenders and the capitalist landlord system in general.

Indian history is replete with instances of protest movements against caste oppression, particularly against Brahminical supremacy, man-made rules of

pollution and purity. These protest movements were not always led by people who had any notion of "class", but, despite their cognition of "caste" as the only or major factor, class contradictions were objectively inherent in their protest actions and in some cases articulated as such by the advanced sections of the oppressed castes.

It is important to note that the protest movements against caste oppression have attracted members of different castes, including socially and politically advanced sections of higher castes. The meeting together of oppressed castes with rebel Brahmins and members of other higher castes on the arena of common struggles is an important pointer to the possibility of development and accentuation of social consciousness.

The lesson to be drawn is this: It is futile to talk only of caste. Caste is, of course, an important factor in the life of the people in India, but anti-caste movement is pregnant with possibilities of developing into class differentiation, provided the leaders of the struggle against caste oppression are changed with progressive social and political consciousness.

In recent years there has been an intensification of clashes between caste Hindus and Scheduled Castes. Many of these clashes have taken the form of bloody fighting. In state after state—in U.P., Bihar, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and so on—the same story has been repeated.

One of the new features of these struggles is that the Harijans are no longer without educated leaders. Using the advantages of "protective discrimination" provided by the Government,

however imperfectly and haltingly, a new batch of educated leaders have emerged from among the Harijans. In particular, the youth belonging to the so called lower castes go to any extent to assert their human rights and sense of human dignity. The Dalit movement in Maharashtra, for example, and its influence cannot be underestimated.

Scheduled Castes are increasingly realising that their social status is in some ways related to their access to resources, land and other means of production, which in turn would provide them the material basis for social and political power. This is indeed an important step towards class consciousness. Once the oppressed castes fully realise that their emancipation is through a protracted struggle for land (by abolishing landlordism in all forms) and that their bondage can be overcome only by joining hands with free wage earners—the organised agricultural labourers—caste consciousness will be replaced by class consciousness.

This process, of course, is not easy; it may take us several decades and possibly more to eradicate caste consciousness which has been ingrained in us over centuries of perverted process in Indian history. But social scientists should grapple with the new possibilities and not only analyse existing reality, but try to change it.

Analysis of classes in agriculture will have little relevance if it does not help us in sharpening our understanding of the social forces which stand as obstacles to development and the social forces which have a crucial role to play in transforming the rural life and in solving the problem of mass poverty.

A study of the correlation of class forces in the agrarian situation will show that there are two major contradictions :

- (1) Contradiction between agricultural labour and all types of land owners (landlords and peasants of all strata) on the question of minimum wage and other benefits for agricultural labour; and
- (2) Contradiction between agricultural labour and peasants on the one side and landlords on the other on the question of abolition of landlordism.

In other words, agricultural labour has a historical role to play in not only struggling with land-owners for their own betterment but also uniting with the peasants against their common enemy—the land lords.

This dialectical task of unity and struggle at the same time is difficult to comprehend and even more difficult to put into practice. But agricultural labourers with firm alliance with poor peasants can master the science and art of revolutionary changes and rise to the occasion and play their historical role provided their movement has a correct political and ideological perspective. The solution to the problem of rural poverty lies along this road.

The increasing social consciousness of the oppressed class and caste are today in the melting pot. Wherever they have got organised they have deliberately taken

action both against caste hierarchy and class oppression. The powers-that-be react to this situation by unleashing terror against the oppressed people. They also use caste prejudices of the landed gentry and their supporters in effectively undertaking the counter-attack. What we are witnessing today is not a strengthening of the caste system but the agony of a people trying to rise from traditional caste consciousness to a broadly defined class consciousness.

We have to understand caste as a phenomenon with all its ramifications. Caste must be fought on its own ground; but such a battle cannot be won unless and until oppressed castes and classes and oppressed members of all castes join together in a common stream against class oppression of landlordism, monopoly capitalism and imperialism. This would mean that members of higher castes who have attained progressive social consciousness should join hands with members of lower castes against their common class enemies. Class solidarity which transcends the castes will have to be emphasised at every point of this solidarity action. Only through coordinated struggle against both class and caste oppression can a united front of all oppressed people emerge. The duty of social scientists today is to not only study class and caste in terms of their interrelation but also to help the people in raising their social consciousness through struggles so that their potential capability of acting as a class becomes a reality.

#### NOTES :

- 1 V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 29, p 421.
- 2 Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, pp 508, 235.
- 3 V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p 316.
- 4 *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p 202.
- 5 Field survey conducted by the present author in 17 villages in Kerala.

- 6 R. P. Dutt, *India Today*, p. 244
  - 7 V. I. Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 249.
  - 8 V. I. Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 247.
  - 9 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, Moscow, 1964, p. 43-4.
  - 10 V. I. Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1967, p. 71.
  - 11 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
  - 12 Romila Thapar, *The Past and Prejudice*, pp. 29-30.
  - 13 Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and I. B. Horner, *The Living Thoughts of Goutama and Budha*, Cassell and Co., London, 1948, p. 125.
  - 14 D. D. Kosambi, *Introduction to the study of Indian History*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1975, p. 169.
  - 15 Amalendu Guha, "Marxist Approach to Indian History: A Framework", in K. Mathew Kurian, Ed, *India State and Society*, Orient Longman, 1975, p. 33.
  - 16 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
  - 17 *Ibid.*, p. 38.
  - 18 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
  - 19 *Ibid.*, p. 30.
  - 20 The quotation is from an unpublished paper, "The Nature of Society in Ancient India".
  - 21 Article entitled "British Rule in India" and "Future Results of British Rule". See Karl Marx, *Article on India*, Bombay, 1951, pp. 21-29 and 66-73.
  - 22 Karl Marx, *Pre - capitalist Economic Formations*, edited by E. Hobsbawm, London, 1964
  - 23 Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism*, p. 71.
  - 24 Hobsbawm, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
  - 25 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
  - 26 Enquiry News Series II, No. 3, p. 88.
  - 27 Kosambi, *op.cit.*, p. 15.
  - 28 Mark Juergensmeyer, "Cultures of Deprivation: Three Case Studies in Punjab" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, 1979, pp. 256-57.
  - 29 S. S. Sivakumar and Chitra Sivakumar, "Class and Jati at Asthapuram and Kanthapuram", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, 1979, p. 273.
  - 30 *Ibid.*, p. 275.
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# Some Methodological Issues in the Study of Caste and Class in the Indian Village/Rural Social Structure

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## Introduction

1. How to conceptualize the bewilderingly complex social reality that is village India? One of the crucial steps is to be able to describe it in terms of the village *social structure*. But then, the concept of the "social structure" is an "essentially contested one". It is the contestedness of the concept (systematic ambiguity and disagreement as to what the concept means), that, I believe, gives rise to some critical methodological issues in the village studies.

(A) When we raise the question: What are the parts / components / elements of the social structure, the social scientists do not seem to agree as to whether these are institutions (Durkheim), groups (Evans-Pritchard), roles (Talcott Parsons) or classes (Marx).

(B) Also, on the question "What are the relations between the elements?" they would describe these differently. (i) Influenced by the analogy of society as an organism, one may say, the *functional relations* between the elements constitutive of the social structure are such as to ultimately sustain the society as a whole. Some might describe this way of looking at society as based on the equilibrium

model. I believe M. N. Srinivas's village studies are influenced by what I have loosely described as the equilibrium model. (Was he not a student of Radcliffe - Brown?) (ii) (a) The relationship between the elements can also be conceived differently. Besides functional consistency, some might discover tensions/ conflicts between the various elements and how these are resolved (within the social system). I believe Max Gluckman and Victor Turner have attempted to study simple societies in this way.

I was wondering whether Dr. Kathleen Gough's village studies point to this way of looking at societies.

(b) Another way of conceptualizing the relationship between the various elements (the classes) is to describe it as one of tension/conflict/ contradiction, the resolution of this conflict leading to change and development. This is the way of Marx and one way of distinguishing this from (a) might be to describe it as the dialectical model.

Attempts to describe Indian society in general and village India in particular are made by Marxist scholars, some of whose articles appear in the recent issue of the EPW.



2. There is another dimension complication bearing on the issue of *Indian village studies*.

- (A) We describe it in terms of 'caste' structure (M. N. Srinivas).
- (B) We describe it in terms of 'caste' as well as 'class' structure (Kathleen Gough (?), Andre Beteille, Joan Mencher).
- (C) We describe it in terms of 'class' structure (some Marxists).

And then again, the concepts 'caste' and 'class' are essentially contested concepts giving rise to methodological issues in the study of *Indian villages*.

3. May I say that the central concern/focus of this paper is conceptual and methodological? (What is methodology? "A methodology is the analytical study of methods. Specific studies are examined here as to the procedures adopted, assumptions made, and the results obtained. The nature of generalizations,

if any, and the explanations, if attempted, are also scrutinized." Dr. Gopala-Sarana)

(I) In the first section, I make some remarks in the context of what is said in (1) and (2) in response to the questions: (A) What is the meaning of caste? (B) What is the meaning of class? The idea being to illustrate the contestedness of the concepts and some methodological implications, I do this with reference to Dumont, M. N. Srinivas and K. Gough.

(II) In section two, I comment very briefly by way of methodological case studies the work of the village studies of M. N. Srinivas, Kathleen Gough, Andre Beteille and Joan Mencher.

(III) I try in the third section to identify a few of the issues thrown up by the Marxist methodology concerning village studies in the context of what some of the Marxist writers have said in the recent issue of the EPW.

## I Conceptual Considerations

### (A) The meaning of caste

This leads us to the problem of definition of caste. Surely, the definition implies identifying criteria / cultural traits. We speak of the caste system implying that the cultural traits constitutive of caste are organically related so as to constitute a unity. Secondly, caste is a "historical expression meaning." A definition has to take account of both these facts,

Following Prof. Max Black, I would say the search for formulation of the

definition of caste has to be in terms of "a system of overlapping and interacting criteria". This he calls a "range definition". "To provide a satisfactory range definition, we shall need (a) a description of the main factors engaged, (b) determination of their relative "weights" or importance, and (c) an account of their mode of interaction" (Black 1954: 13).

What is the range definition of caste? Here, we may as well follow Hutton who says that normally caste conforms to the following criteria:

1. A caste is endogamous.
2. There are restrictions on commensality between members of different castes.
3. There is an hierarchical grading of castes the best recognized position being that of the Brahman at the top.
4. In various kinds of contexts, especially those concerned with food, sex and ritual, a member of 'high' caste is liable to be 'polluted' by either direct or indirect contact with a member of a 'low' caste.
5. Castes are very commonly associated with traditional occupations.
6. A man's status is finally determined by the circumstances of his birth, unless he comes to be expelled from his caste for ritual offence.
7. The system as a whole is always focussed around the prestige accorded to the Brahmans (Hutton 1946 : 49 Ch. VI; quoted here from Leach 1971 : 2-3).

The problem of definition is not so much describing the criteria / cultural traits, but (i) that of locating the "relative weights or importance" (which ones are critical / basic / essential and which ones are non-critical / derived (part of superstructure) / accidental); and (ii) the way these are related to each other.

To illustrate, I consider the descriptions/ definitions of caste by Louis Dumont, Srinivas and Gough.

(a) For Louis Dumont, what is critical is the principle of hierarchy based on the opposition between pure and impure; it

"never attaches itself to power as such, but always to religious functions." The hierarchical principle expresses conceptual or symbolic unity: "hierarchy integrates the society by reference to its values. The distribution of power, economic and political,... is very important in practice, but is distinct from, and subordinate to hierarchy." Further, the distinction between religious and social status obscures the issue : "Unfortunately, there has sometimes been a tendency to obscure the issue by speaking of not only religious (or ritual) status, also 'secular' (or social) status based upon power' wealth etc. which Indians would also take into consideration" (Dumont 1966 : 251-2).

May I hazard two comments on Dumont's view of caste?

(1) The locus of the critical principle of hierarchy is in the "ideological model" of caste ("believed - in - traditional model"; what the Hindus believe to have been the traditional literati system); (2) This only means that Dumont's view of caste differs from the observers' model; the model constructed by outsiders including social scientists (ed. Banton 1965 : 135).

(b) Consider Srinivas's formulation: "A sociologist would define caste as a hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed among other things, by the concept of pollution and purity, and generally, maximum commensality occurs within the caste" (1962 : 3).

This description does not indicate what according to Srinivas are relatively important factors / cultural traits, and what are secondary. But his field-study s

perhaps indicate his bias: what impresses him is the ritual-ranking based on the concept of pollution; that the caste groups are closed, membership being determined by the criteria of heredity and endogamy; and the systemic nature of caste phenomena.

(c) What impresses Kathleen Gough is "the ranked birth status" aspect of caste. Further, she says: "The caste or a subsection of it, is usually endogamous; it tends to be associated with an occupation. A caste is not a localized group, but comprises small local communities, often several miles apart. Local communities of different castes form administrative units as multi-caste villages or towns. Usually, the caste communities possessed hereditary differential rights in the produce of village lands, these rights being dispensed by a dominant caste group of land managers and village administrators."

"The formal ranking of castes is defined in terms of the belief in ritual purity and pollution; the rules of social distance between caste issue primarily from this belief. Whatever the origins of these rules, their codification, recording and adaptation to local circumstances have been primarily the work of the Brahmans.... The ubiquity of the Brahmans and their common possession of a sacred literature and a body of religious laws are apparently responsible for most of the common features of caste in the different regions" (Ed. Leach 1955 : 11).

K. Gough is interested in the relation of caste to power—economic and political. Her field-studies, as we shall see later, are influenced by these considerations.

### (B) The meaning of class

1. (a) "What would be the conception of class best suited to the analysis of

rural society in India?" asks Andre Beteille. He goes on to say: "This is not an ideal question for it is possible to choose among several conceptions, each having its particular advantages. In sociological literature the most sophisticated use of the concept has been made in relation to Western industrial society and it may be necessary to modify it substantially in order to make it applicable (to the rural society in India)" (1974: 35-6).

(b) But how do we define class? "Class can be defined in a number of ways and students of industrial societies have differed widely in their definitions of class. It can be defined in terms of interest or consciousness; in static or dynamic terms. Among these factors property and conflict are of particular importance in definitions of class which draw their inspiration from Marx" (p.51). What is Beteille's conception of class? It is not clear to me what conception of class his work presupposes. (But, to this issue, I shall return once again later.)

(c) The concept of class is used in the censuses. The basic categories used are: landlords, owner cultivators, tenant cultivators and agricultural labourers. "As Thorner has argued, these categories derive from a conceptual frame-work which is appropriate to the study of industry or even capitalist farming but not to the kind of agriculture which is commonly practised in India" (Beteille, 1974: 46).

(d) Statistical and legal conceptions of class are used in socio-economic surveys and by economic historians. Beteille says: "The availability of numerical data leads to grouping of people owning or operating holdings of different sizes

into different classes. There are two difficulties in this procedure. We can never be sure that people owning or operating, say, between 7.5 and 10.0 acres of land play the same social role everywhere, even in the productive process. Secondly, this way of grouping of people into statistical classes tells us nothing about social relations among them, i. e. the nature of rights, duties and obligations which form the basis of their mutual interaction." As to the concept of legal class "... Legally established categories do not always tell us much about the system as it actually works on the ground. Economic historians have for generations contrasted the zamindari and the ryotwari system as if each represented a single pattern which differed in every way from the other. In actual practice various modes of productive organization were to be found under each broad system and great similarities in the agrarian hierarchy might sometimes exist across the two systems of tenure." (1974: 32-3.)

2. Amongst the Marxist scholars concerned with Indian agrarian situation and village studies, the challenge remains as to how to arrive at an agreed class analysis of Indian peasantry. While some (e. g. P. C. Joshi) would say that at the village (micro) level, class analysis in the Marxist perspective cannot be carried out ("class is not a tool of investigation at the village level." — Joshi 1975: 72), others have gone ahead in conducting village studies on the basis of class differentiation of the Indian peasantry (by and large, following Lenin and Mao). (E. g. Joan

Mencher 1978: Ch.V II; vide, also Notes, Pradhan H. Prasad *EPW* 1979, Vol. XIV, 7,8: 484).

What is the Marxist view of class? The *EPW* special issue says: "Classes are defined by the relations in which the various sections of society stand to the means of production, by the manner in which the surplus is expropriated from the actual toilers, by which sections within and outside the country appropriate the surplus value from the actual toilers and by what do the expropriators within the country spend it on" (p. 223).

The form of social classes implies a specific mode of production. At the macro-level how do we describe the contemporary socio-economic formation in India? What do the terms Asiatic mode of production, feudal, semi-feudal, colonial, capitalistic formations mean in the Indian context? One of the writers in the recent issue of *EPW* says: "Any simplistic all-India generalisations about the mode of production and the nature of social classes, though essential, are bound to be inadequate. For them to be realistic and purposeful, they have to be based on detailed studies of the specific social structure in the different regions of India" (N. Pandit, *EPW* 1979 (Vol. XIV, 7,8): 425).

(As the concern of the last section is to identify some issues concerning Marxist understanding of caste and class in relation to methodological implications, I do not pursue the theme of Marxist view of class any further.)

## II Some Illustrative Methodological case studies

These case studies relate to the work of some social scientists who have been concerned with Indian village studies in terms of caste and/or class structure, based on intensive field-work. The aim is to concretise a few of the conceptual and methodological issues that emerge in terms of their work. (The considerations spelled out here are far too sketchy and may appear loose and scrappy.) Partly, the reason that prompted me to prefer M. N. Srinivas, Andre Beteille, Kathleen Gough and Joan Mencher is that their studies are, by and large (I believe), well known and surely well documented.

### (A) M. N. Srinivas

(a) For Srinivas, an Indian village is a social system. A system implies a complex whole, a unity composed of parts in orderly arrangement according to some scheme (or plan). This complex whole is conceived on the organic model: "The various aspects of rural social life are *closely* integrated with each other, and an analysis of any one aspect of social life may, and usually does involve an analysis of one or more related aspects and their interaction" (1962: 123) (*italics mine*). Influenced as he was by Radcliffe-Brown, I imagine that Srinivas conceives the social system the same way a natural scientist conceives a natural system. (*cf.* the title of one of Radcliffe-Brown's book is: "Natural Science of Society.") I believe, it is this bias which prompts him to say that a social anthropologist is value-neutral: "Unlike other social scientists, he (the social anthropologist) tries hard to keep his value-judgements to himself, and this gives him the necessary sympathy to grasp rural or tribal situation" (1962: 123).

Why the social anthropologist selects/studies a small community like the Indian village? "... One of the aims ... in selecting a small community is that he wants to obtain an idea of the way in which all the parts of a society hang together. Even religion or law he tries to view it in relation to the total social system in which all the aspects are found to be constantly intersecting" (1962: 120).

Srinivas is much impressed by the isolation and stability of Indian village: "Nobody can fail to be impressed by the isolation and stability of these village communities" (1960: 23). He approvingly quotes Charles Metcalf: "The village communities are little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. This union of village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself has, I conceive, contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the people of India, through all the revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence." (1960: 23.)

Why the study of a single village? "... The study of a single village is productive of much more than knowledge about a single village. It is an attempt to answer a theoretical question by viewing it in relation to a body of self-collected data.... It provides an anthropologist with some insight into rural social life all over the country" (1962: 121). "An anthropologist goes to live in a village for a year or even two not because he wants to collect information about curious dying customs and beliefs, but to study a *theoretical* sociological *problem*, and his most impor-

tant aim is to contribute to the growing body of *theoretical knowledge* about the nature of human societies" (1962: 134) (Italics mine). Srinivas does not seem to me to make clear what sort of "theoretical sociological problem" and "theoretical knowledge" he implies/means in the above statements.

(b) Srinivas speaks of "The Social System of a Mysore Village" (ed. Marriott 1955: 1, and "The Social Structure of a Mysore Village" (1960: 21). The village is Rampura, "a large, nucleated village in the plains of Mysore District in Mysore State in South India." What are the parts, or elements of the system or structure that is Rampura? The parts are the castes. Why castes? "Caste is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all, including those who condemn it, that it is everywhere the unit of social action" (EPW 1979 Vol. XIV, 7 and 8: 41).

What was the aim in making a study of Rampura? "My own aim in making a study of Rampura in the year 1948 was to get a detailed description of the way in which each of the nineteen caste groups behaved towards the others. I must confess I was a bit tired of reading about caste in general and it may come as a surprise to some to know that in spite of the great interest in the institution of caste, no one had seen fit to go and live in a multi-caste village and record in detail the interactions between the various castes." (1962: 135.)

Srinivas spent twelve months doing field-work in Rampura (ten months in 1948 and two months in 1952). The data was later analysed during nine months (1953-54). Rampura has a population of 1523 and consists of nineteen Hindu

castes and Muslims. Each caste is traditionally associated with the practice of a particular occupation. Though traditional calling is not unchangeable, a caste may have more than one traditional occupation. "The peasant caste is the only caste in the area of Rampura which has agriculture as its sole traditional occupation. Peasants are the most numerous caste in Rampura, numbering as they do nearly half the population... The bulk of the peasants are actually occupied on the land, either as owners, as tenants, as labourers or as servants. All the biggest land owners in Rampura are peasants" (Ed.) Marriott 1955: 3). For Srinivas, the elements of the social structure are castes, and hence he is concerned with the interrelations, interactions between the nineteen castes their functions and how each contributes towards the functioning of the village society as a whole. For him, the term "Peasant" (Okkaliga) is a caste category, and though he speaks of the peasant caste being differentiated into "owners" "tenants", "labourers", he does not seem to be interested in studying the inter-relationship and interactions between them.

He describes the content of conformity, change, flexibility and overlapping in traditional occupations of the castes of Rampura, through a caste-by-caste review with reference to (A) the peasants, (B) priestly castes, (C) servicing castes paid at the harvests, (D) other castes.

As I said earlier, what seems to be central to the caste system to Srinivas is the hierarchy—a social stratification based on ritual-ranking inspired by the ideology of pollution. Hierarchy implies separation; "The essence of hierarchy is the absence of equality among the units which form

the whole: in this sense, the various castes of Rampura do form a hierarchy. The caste units are separated by endogamy and commensality, and they are associated with ranked differences of diet and occupation. Yet, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the exact, or even the approximate place of each caste in the hierarchical system" (ed) Marriott 1955: 19-20).

But then, how to account for the unity/integrity of the system with the fact that the elements/the castes are separated on the principle of hierarchy? This is achieved through the principle of interdependence between the various caste groups in the various aspects of their socio-cultural life—religious, economic, political etc. "At the village level, castes were not only interdependent but acutely aware of the fact, and the annual grain-payments made to the Smith, Potter, Barber, Washerman and Priest dramatized the interdependence. While each caste had its own solidarity, it was also aware of its solidarity with other castes—each Smith, for instance, competed with all other smiths for the custom of the land owners. Again, loyalty to one's village was universal, and this was common to all the castes from the Brahmin to the Harijan. It is necessary to point out here that the Harijan occasionally exercised authority over members of the upper castes and this was especially true of South India. Historical evidence going back to a few centuries testifies to his taking an active part in the deliberations of the village assembly. Even as recently as fifty years ago the Holey *Cheluvadi* (hereditary servant of the assembly of village elders) of Kere village beat a rich Smith from Mysore because the other had the audacity to wear red slippers... a privilege expressly forbidden to them in that area" (1962: 74).

Is the village caste system static, unchangeable, lacking mobility and competition between its elements/caste groups? Srinivas says that the system was flexible, permitted mobility and competition. "Caste system always permitted of a certain amount of mobility. This is why mutual position tends to be vague in the middle region. At one extremity no mobility is possible, while at the other it is extremely difficult" (1962 : 8). Later, he adds: "Sanskritization is both a part of the process of social mobility as well as the idiom in which mobility expresses itself. When there is Sanskritization mobility may be said to occur within the frame-work of caste..." (p. 9). As to competition, "Though at the village level the local sections of different castes or, more correctly, households co-operated for agricultural production and for pursuing social and cultural ends, competition did occur at the higher levels for seizing political power and for achieving mobility....". Srinivas goes on to add: "... Leach's view that competition between castes is uncharacteristic of the traditional caste system is, in my opinion, totally wrong" (EPW 1979 (Vol. XIV, 7 and 8): 239).

Besides caste relationships and interactions, Srinivas does speak of the relationships between a master and his *jita* servants, a landowner and his tenants, a creditor and his debtors, and finally between a rich man and his dependents. But all these, he subsumes under a single relationship; patron and client. "I use the term "patron".. to mean "one who countenances, or of was influential support to person, cause, art, etc" ( (ed) Marriott 1955 : 30). What is the nature of the relationship of patron-client, say, the relationship between landowner and tenant ? "The relationship between

landowner and tenant is ... an intimate one-like all intimate relationships, it is frequently marked by conflict" (p. 29). A patron (yajamana) is surely superior in wealth and status, but, "patronship in traditional India did not only confer rights but carried with it onerous duties towards clients." Srinivas goes on to say: "The term "patron" has acquired a bad odour in the last thirty years or so but this is due to concentration on "exploitative" aspect of patronship while at the same time ignoring its protective aspect" (EPW 1979 (XIV, 7 and 8) : 238).

Description in terms of patron-client relationship has been criticized severely and I draw attention to one such criticism. Claude Meillasou, "distinguishes sharply between class relation and patron-client relations, and calls the latter type of relationship "offshoots from the class relations" since the group of clients who specialized in specific activities, far from necessarily being exploited, on the contrary profited through the mediation of the patron who maintained them, from the exploitation of the labouring classes (slaves, serfs, agricultural workers etc). The client relationship ... was only a derived, secondary relationship whose functioning depended on the class relations that fed them" (EPW 1975 (XIV, 7 and 8) : 315).

May I conclude this part with Srinivas's main findings based on the Rampura study? "While the divisive features of caste have previously received notice, the links that bind together the members of different castes who inhabit a village, or a small local area, have not been adequately emphasised. Many features of village life tend to insulate castes from each other: endogamy, the ban on commensality, the existence of occupational specialization, distinctive

cultural traditions, separate caste courts and the concepts of pollution, karma and dharma. But there are counteracting tendencies too."

"Occupational specialization requires interdependence among the castes, a fact which is dramatized in the annual grain payments made to the servicing castes...

"Occupational specialization is important in other ways too. It gives each group a vested interest in the system as a whole, because under it each group enjoys security in its monopoly...

"Local methods for settling disputed reveal the part played by the elders of the dominant caste" (ed.) Marriott 1975 : 34-5).

#### (B) E. Kathleen Gough

1. Trained as a professional social anthropologist (Ph. D. from Cambridge), Dr. Gough was awarded a studentship in 1950 to investigate relations between caste, village and kinship structures among the Tamilians of Tanjore district. In this paper, I refer to her three essays :

- i. "The Social structure of a Tanjore Village" (from, *Village India*, (ed.) Mckim Marriott, 1955) ;
- ii. "The Social Structure of a Tanjore Village" (from, *India's Villages*, (ed.) M. N. Srinivas, 1960); and
- iii. "Caste in a Tanjore Village" (from, *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North-West Pakistan*, (ed.) E. R. Leach, 1971).

2. Before I present Gough's observations about her fieldbased village studies, it might be helpful (a) to look again at Gough's definition/description of caste



(the conceptual aspect), and (b) as a structural-functionalist what model she is committed to.

(a) I said earlier that the critical criterion in defining caste for Gough is "the ranked-birth aspect". In this, she is influenced by Max Weber. She speaks approvingly of Weber; "An excellent statement of the common characteristics of castes was given by Weber" (ed.) Leach 1955 : 11).

Leach says that Weber's views on caste on the issue: "whether caste is best considered as a cultural or structural phenomena", is "contradictory". Weber says that caste is "the fundamental institution of Hinduism, there by implying that caste is a cultural concept. But, he also says, that, there are also castes among the Mohammedans of India and the Buddhist, thereby implying that caste is a structural concept (caste is an extreme form of closed status group)" (p. 11).

L. Dumont says that Gough reduces hierarchy to relations of power in her understanding of caste (Dumont 1966 : 31). In this also, I believe she is influenced by Weber. Weber's concern was with class, status and power; these were "closely interdependent although none could be fully explained by others" (Beteille 1972 : 6).

I try to show later, that Gough looked upon caste as a structural phenomena (was she not a structuralist ?) rather than cultural; further, the relation of caste to power—economic and political—were crucial; this relation is intrinsic and not extrinsic, in the sense that without this, caste cannot be what it is.

(b) Like Srinivas, Gough is committed to the structural-functional framework for studying societies—simple or complex. Structure-functionalism presupposes an organic view of social system, and to this extent, Gough also is interested in showing the unity/integrity of the system as a result of the intrinsic/internal relations between the various parts (caste-groups), their interdependence, and the functional role of each, towards maintaining the system. But there the similarity between Srinivas and Gough as their theoretical/methodological commitment ends.

I believe Gough is somewhat closer to Max Gluckman (as a structural-functionalist he was the one to speak of tensions/cleavages/conflicts between the various elements of the system and their resolution resulting in the maintenance of the system); while Srinivas is closer to Radcliffe-Brown who conceived the organic view of society as a 'tight' system (for him, the difference between mechanical, organic and social system is not of kind, but of degree; I would say for him they are of the same logical type. I have criticized elsewhere, Radcliffe-Brown's structural-functional model for studying social system as a species of scientism).

I have mentioned Gluckman. He has stated the case, I believe, well in the following words: "... I now abandon altogether the type of organic analogy for a social system with which Radcliffe-Brown worked. Social systems are not nearly as integrated as organic systems, and the processes within them are not as cyclical or repetitive as are those in organic systems. Moreover, social systems are open to the influences of changes in environment, and to changes due to relations with other social systems, as organic systems are not. I think therefore much more in terms of series of social

processes, operating within an ecological setting and the bio-psychical framework of human life, as well as of the restriction and action of a technology and a culture. These are never perfectly adjusted; and processes do not easily cancel themselves out as in organic systems. We have ... to think of a field of social action in which we can delineate certain processes set in motion by a series of customary institutions, which do largely 'hang together', but only largely, and not perfectly. The institutions, and the values and the laws they embody, are often independent, discrepant, and even conflicting. The structure of such a field is much less rigid and self-consistent than it was thought to be by social anthropologists from the 1920s to about 1950."

"As we examine the working of each process, we are, in a current popular terminology, analysing a model, though I would insist that we are dealing with a process that occurs in reality. It is a 'model' in so far as we are delineating only part of the reality we are analysing; and to get nearer to reality, we have to complicate the model by feeding in the influence of other processes,"

"In reality, too, each process may work over a relatively limited period of time: then external events, or the cumulative working of varied and often opposed processes, may alter the basic pattern of the system" (Gluckman 1963 : 38-9).

I believe these preliminary conceptual and methodological considerations are likely to be helpful in understanding what Gough is doing in her study of the Tanjore village.

3. Gough describes Kumbapettai, a *mirasi* Brahman village from Tanjore district in these words: "Kumbapettai lies

eight miles north of Tanjore town, about two hundred miles south-west of Madras ... In the centre of the village is a single street containing thirty-six occupied and twelve unoccupied Brahman houses. The Brahmans, living in the village are small landowners, apart from a few families who have recently sold their lands... Near the Brahman street are three streets of Non-Brahman tenants and servant castes... The bulk of agricultural labour is done by landless labourers, formerly serfs, of the Pallan caste, who live, in eighty-nine houses in five streets, beyond paddy fields, outside the village proper" ( (ed.) Marriott 1935 : 40-1).

Gough states the problem she was investigating and what she is doing in her three essays variously as follows:

- A) "To what extent is Kumbapettai an isolable unit? And to what extent is it changing in this respect?" ( (ed.) Marriott 1955: 41);
- B) "Here, I attempt to outline the social organization of a *mirasi* village ...and to indicate what seem, after four months of observation, to be the most important trends of change" ( (ed.) Srinivas 1960: 90);
- C) "I have emphasized what is known of the village's caste structure in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. At the same time I have tried to relate modern changes in the caste structure and loss of caste functions to changes in the villagers' relations to their means of production and to the wider society" ( (ed.) Leach 1971: 14).

I summarize Gough's findings very briefly in her own words. (I may be permitted to quote her extensively with a view to retain certain authenticity in

exposition. ) To capture the basic pattern of her observations/interpretation, I first present her account of (X) caste in traditional economy and (Y) caste in modern economy.

### **(X) Caste in traditional economy**

What was the situation with the three major segments of the caste hierarchy—the Brahmins, the Non-Brahmins (the service-castes) and the Adi Dravids (Pallans etc.)?

(a) *The Brahmins*: "In Mahratta and also early British law, all land in Brahman villages was managed jointly by the Brahman community, was impartible and might not be sold. In return for their rights of land management, the Brahmins paid, at various periods between forty and sixty percent of the village's grain produce, twice annually after each harvest, as revenue to the government" ( (ed.) Leach 1971:21, 22).

(b) *The non-Brahmins and the specialists service castes*: "The work of all these castes was performed primarily on behalf, and under the authority, of the landlords" (p.25).

(c) *Adi Dravids*: (Devendra Pallans): "Pallans were by law everywhere the serfs of landlords... They received daily payments in grain and similar gifts on special occasions. Their work was... more arduous, for between them men and women performed practically the whole work of grain cultivation of the village" (p. 23).

Gough makes the following significant observations about caste in the traditional economy:

(a) *Economic relationships*: "Each cast group was virtually homogeneous in occupation and wealth" (p. 26). "within the village apparently, all economic relationships consisted of the provisions of goods & services in direct exchange for paddy, the chief source of livelihood. Within the village there was no middle man trader, no market, and very little economic competition. Because the highest caste controlled all the land, the most important economic relationships consisted of the rendering of goods and services by lower caste households in return for food, clothing and shelter" (p.27).

(b) *Village: a self-sufficient production unit*: "The simplicity of specialization, the dyadic, hereditary, interhousehold nature of economic ties, the direct exchange of goods and services for subsistence, and lack of markets and cash transactions within the village depended on the fact that the village was an almost self-sufficient productive unit, deriving most of the basic necessities of living from its lands" (p. 27).

### **(V) Caste in the modern economy**

(a) "During British rule a series of inter-connected legal and economic changes undermined the role of caste in the villages economy" (p. 28).

(b) "The new families (Non-Brahmins) entered into economic relationships of one or another kind with Kumbapettai's population, although only some of them entered service relationships with the Brahmins. As a social unit Kumbapettai thus expanded, but the economic control of the Brahmins over the lower castes was diminished" (p. 29).

(c) "With the abolition of serfdom in 1843, most of the serfs became pannaiyals (tied labourers) of their former masters. The pannaiyal's work and payments remained the same as in previous centuries, but the relationship was in theory *contractual*. In fact, however, the pannaiyal lost security and also failed to gain freedom. As trade increased and the lower castes began to require cash for private transactions in the towns, landlords made periodic cash loans to their pannaiyals. In this way the pannaiyal became tied to his master by debt rather than (as formerly) by hereditary right .... As a result of this breakdown of hereditary inter-household service-relationships and insecurity of employment, many single families became detached from their local communities and wandered into strange villages in search of work" (p. 30-1) (*Italics mine*).

(d) Gough arrives at the following general observations about caste in modern economy:

- i. "The caste is no longer homogeneous in occupation and wealth, for caste is today a limiting rather than a determining factor in the choice of occupation" (p.32).
- ii. "Castes are obviously no longer characterized by hereditary differential rights in the produce of the village lands" (p. 32).
- iii. "With the extension of cash purchasing power to the lower castes and the introduction of markets into the village, many economic transactions now bear little or no relationship to caste" (p. 33).
- iv. "Caste is, nevertheless still a limiting factor, in Kumbapettai's

economy. First, differences in average wealth, ownership of resources, education and occupational opportunities, although no longer upheld by law, persist as a legacy from the past... "

"Second, ritual rules of caste as well as economic expediency still limit the choice of occupations in Kumbapettai" (p. 33).

In her 1955 essay in the volume edited by Marriott, Gough has summed up her conclusions as follows : "Today, Kumbapettai has moved about halfway in the transition from this relatively stationary feudal subsistence economy to a much wider-scale, expanding capitalist economy" (p. 42).

4. I conclude this part with two observations on Gough's findings and procedure—one some what specific and the other somewhat general.

(a) Her analysis of the social structure of the village is conducted in the framework of caste, but in describing social change (in 1952) in Tanjore villages she sums up the case in class-terms: "In Tanjore villages in 1952, indeed, one major conflict overrode all others : that between landed and landless. It results from acute agricultural over-population, the concentration of land-ownership within a small fraction of the population, and the failure to develop industrial employment for surplus villages. It seems logical to conclude that such economic and class conflicts, whatever their outcome, will in the future weaken the identities of caste" ( (Ed.) Leach 1971 : 59).

I imagine (there is no reference cited) Srinivas is referring to this statement of Gough when he says: "If it is Dr. Gough's opinion that the involvement of a caste

in modern and industrial processes will necessarily lead to its extinction, then the areas of contradiction have to be mapped out clearly and the implications of the contradiction worked out." In the same place, earlier, Srinivas comments: "I am unable to follow Dr. Gough when she says that the taking on of political functions by a caste changes its nature so radically that it ceases to be a caste. Lingayats and Okkaligas are extremely active in the political life of modern Mysore but when selecting a bride or in their diet and inter-dining, they observe the rules of their respective castes" (1962 : 7). (My impression is that Gough does not speak of "extinction" of caste or caste "ceasing" to be; but that is not the issue.) Srinivas's comment raises a conceptual dispute, and hence its relevance.

For Srinivas, the critical criteria for defining a group as a caste is hierarchy based on the concept of ritual pollution and endogamy and restriction on commensality. Hence his reference to intercaste marriage. For Gough, what is critical is the relation of caste to status, class and power. (Does she not try to understand caste phenomenon in terms of status, class and power?) For her, the undermining or change in the caste-based statuses of groups, and change in the distribution of power—economic and political—are indicators of the decline of the caste system.

(b) How is it that Gough's dominant conceptual framework is the caste-framework, though some of her substantial findings are stated in class terms?

As one trained in the tradition of British anthropology, she is committed to describing the Indian rural micro-universe in terms of the categories of the people

themselves (the conceptual scheme in terms of native categories constituting, what one may call a home-made model). The class-framework is an outsider's model, till the people themselves seek identity in class terms. I would argue: It is the inadequacy of the "home-made" model to describe change today in the Tanjore village that necessitates her to use class concepts.

That caste-framework is inadequate to study the Indian agrarian situation and that we must also develop class-framework has been so emphatically stated by Andre Beteille. And then, Beteille (like Srinivas and Gough) has experience on the ground: his doctoral work, "Class, Caste and Power" is based on field-research conducted in a Tanjore village, Sripuram. These considerations led me to consider his views on a few issues relevant to the main concerns of this paper.

### (C) Andre Beteille

I propose to consider Beteille's views on: 1 (a) what he calls "the excessive preoccupation" of social anthropology's and sociology's concern with caste; and (b) the two frameworks—that of caste and the other of class; (2) his criticism of class categorization in censuses, and statistical model of class concept etc; (3) his remarks on the sort of consideration relevant for developing an adequate class framework for agrarian social structure; (4) his main concern/aim for agrarian studies; (5) Beteille's methodological assumption: pluralism.

1. (a) Trained as a social anthropologist, Beteille's earliest preoccupations were with Indian village studies based on field-work in the framework of caste. "I had started my field-work within a few years of the publication of a number of important studies of caste at the village

level, and I had been told to make a list of the different castes in the village and to study every aspect of their mutual relations. In my case there was the added fascination of dealing with a caste structure that was elaborately segmented, so that I made lists not only of castes but also of sub-castes and sub-sub-castes' (1974: 11).

Beteille says that detailed village studies in the caste framework, surely, has enriched our understanding of social life in contemporary India. "But too great a pre-occupation with this problem has led the social anthropologist to develop his own conception of Indian society, a conception which many have criticized as being narrow and one-sided. Social anthropologists have tended to relate all cleavages and conflicts to those of caste and to minimize or ignore the role of other factors in society" (1974: 23). He gives yet another reason why the social anthropologist's approach has been one-sided: "Yet even by the requirements of their own methodology the application of the social anthropological approach to the study of rural India has been narrow and one-sided. For the native categories of the Indian villager, the categories in terms of which he thinks and acts are not exhausted by caste; they also relate in significant ways to what we understand by class" (1974: 49). Why have the social anthropologists used caste instead of class-framework? "For in their own view caste is internal to the system they study in the Indian villages whereas class as it is usually understood relates to an external system of concepts" (1974: 48).

(b) But then, the two major frameworks—that of caste and class are already in use: "Caste has been the major pre-occupation of social anthropologists and

sociologists.... Class has been the object of attention of agricultural economists who in their turn tend to view caste as more or less a subject of historical or even antiquarian interest" (1974: 36).

2. Class-framework is being used by economists in the study of agrarian systems and Beteille is not saying perhaps anything new, when he speaks of the need for both the frameworks. But, he says that the sort of framework that is needed is different and he does not get much help from the economists. A sociologist does not "find much help from colleagues in other disciplines who were specialists in the study of agrarian systems. The economists, I soon discovered, were interested in either 'models' or 'data', and for a substantial number of them 'data' merely meant what could be put in the form of tables. The rigorously quantitative approach to empirical reality adopted by many agricultural economists has had two unfortunate consequences. It has led them to bypass many significant problems which are not amenable to quantification, and it has acted as a barrier to easy communication between them and the sociologists" (1974: 12).

As to the data provided by the decennial censuses and National Sample Surveys, the reports of government committees such as the Agricultural Labour Inquiry Committee and of the Rural Credit Surveys (of the R. B. I.) etc. Beteille comments: "A major difference between studies (conducted by the economists) relating to class (and expressed in the censuses, N. S. S. reports etc. mentioned above) and to caste is that the former appear to be more easily amenable to quantitative treatment. This has the advantage of enabling a global picture to be presented in terms that are not merely impressionistic. But it has also been responsible

for creating the tendentious view that no discussion of the class structure can be objective or 'scientific' unless the material relating to it can be represented in the form of statistical tables" (p. 45).

3. What sort of considerations Beteille thinks are relevant for developing an adequate class-framework for agrarian social structure?

(i) Beteille speaks of class, power and status as the three principal aspects of social stratification, an approach he claims was first developed by Max Weber. (Cf. the title of his doctoral work: "Caste, Class and Power".) Further, stratification in terms of class is based on economic distinctions, but class is one of three principles and not the sole one. "...Weber, unlike many of his interpreters, assigned class a central place in sociological analysis. But he argued that status and power were also important and not wholly determined by economic factors... Class, status and power were closely interdependent although none of them could be fully explained by others" (1972: 6).

(ii) He says: "When we turn to village communities in India what strikes us is their highly differentiated nature... Very often the Indian village is clearly differentiated in terms of ownership, control and use of land so that in addition to peasant proprietors, subsisting mainly by family labour, there are other social classes both above and below. Where a community includes non-cultivating landowners at one end and share-croppers and landless labourers at the other, it is misleading to use the blanket term peasantry to describe it" (1974: 25). At another place, he says: "There is a whole range of relations in rural India centring around the ownership, control and use of land. These relations are not

only partly independent of caste but they have their own pattern of organisation. A study of their modalities will give us an understanding of what is described here as the agrarian class structure" (1974: 143).

(iii) What class categories? What has Beteille to say? "If we are to understand class not as an abstract and formal scheme but as a system of social relations then we will have to work through concepts and categories used by the people themselves. Our analysis will not come to an end once we have identified these categories but that is where we should begin" (1974: 33). Given the wide regional diversities / variations, this would give rise to an extreme relativism in the use of the class categories, and the social scientist has to grapple with the issue of uniform categories in terms of which the complexity and variation can be intelligibly ordered. What is Beteille's response to this?

(iv) What about the categories, 'poor peasants', 'middle peasants' and 'rich peasants' etc? Beteille's objections are summed up thus: "Few people stop short of one single criterion in formulating their scheme of social gradation. Categories such as 'rich peasants', 'middle peasants' and 'poor peasants' in fact seek to sum up a number of major characteristics and are in that sense terms in a scheme of synthetic gradation. Even so, the basic problems remain: at which points do we draw the line between 'poor' and 'middle', or between 'middle' and 'rich' peasants without fear of being arbitrary? Can we use a uniform set of criteria, given the extent of variation between districts and sometimes within the same district? And, most important, do these groupings reflect in any

significant way the manner in which the peasants themselves divide up their social universe?" (p. 124).

*My comments are:* (a) What is the point of drawing the line between 'poor' and 'middle' or between 'middle' and 'rich' peasant? The class differentiation of the peasantry in terms of landless, poor, middle, rich peasantry has something to do with practice (praxis) and is not merely an academic exercise. This does not imply that the problem of fairly workable criteria for identifying 'poor', 'middle' and 'rich' are easy to specify in a given historico-sociological situation.

(b) Beteille says that as a first step, we need to identify class categories in the idiom of the people themselves. This way of analysing classes would give rise to what I loosely would call the home-made model. What about the observer's model? Without the class categories in terms of which the intolerable variations and diversities of Indian agrarian relations can be intelligible ordered/conceptualized, how can we link up the micro- with the macro-situation?

4. What is Beteille's main concern or aim in carrying out the agrarian studies? "The main concern is with patterns of inequality and conflict as these arise from the ownership, control and use of land" (1974 : 1). Relations between classes in which Beteille is interested are relations of inequality.

In the essay "Inequality in Rural India", Beteille examines "some aspects of inequality in Indian society and certain changes that are taking place in them. The main question which arises while considering these changes is whether they represent an increase or decrease

in the degree of inequality or are merely changes from one type of inequality to another" (1972 :19).

5. Is not inequality associated with class conflict? Not necessarily. "Mirasdars, Kuttahaiders, pannaiyals and others have had relations of interdependence in this area for many generations. Even if we admit, for the sake of argument, that inequalities between landlords and the landless have increased in recent years, there is no question whether but that there were severe inequalities in the past and that landless have for long lived a life of poverty and squalor. In spite of this there was a measure of co-operation among the classes in the process of production. This does not mean that there were no tensions or conflicts between individual landowners and their individual tenants or labourers in their day-to-day relations. It only means that these tensions and conflicts did not lead to the kind of antagonism between groups which has become an important feature of social and political life in certain parts of Tanjore District" (1974 : 160).

6. What is the central methodological assumption of Beteille that influences his work on village studies? It is "pluralism." To illustrate: Beteille commenting on agrarian unrest in the Tanjore district says: "... Agrarian unrest has many causes, and that the same cause produces different results at different places because, it never acts in combination with the same factors everywhere. I think it would be futile to look for a single factor in regard to which we will be able to say that that alone is the cause of conflict of classes. There are in my belief very important structural reasons which make it impossible to predict



phenomena of this kind" (p. 169) (*italics mine*). Again, commenting on Kathleen Gough's observations in regard to clash of interest between the landowners and landless, and her view that "economic and class conflicts, whatever their outcome will in the future increasingly weaken the caste identities", he says: "These conflicts do not appear to have developed a *linear* path as Gough probably anticipated they would" (p. 161) (*italics mine*).

I believe the pluralist position in social science tends to tread a safe path by being less committal and tinged by some scepticism. For social science which (at least as a regulatory principle) attempts to be more rigorous and is ready to the risk being wrong so that the social reality is not only grasped but can be tackled, the pluralist position cannot inspire a fruitful inquiry.

7. I began with Beteille's emphatic view that Indian village studies need the class-framework besides the caste-framework.

But what has he to say in regard to the 'relationship' between the two frameworks? Surely, he says, both frameworks are needed and criticizes Marxists who argue that "Caste conflicts are really distorted expressions of more fundamental social conflicts—in short, class conflicts" (1969 : 86).

Now he says that "caste and class in rural India share important properties in common and that they can be meaningfully studied within a single framework" (1974 : 38).

I would say: unless this is *shown*, Beteille's statement perhaps says that this is so! My impression is that Beteille's

work which I referred to in this paper, does not clearly show the common properties shared by caste and class (it is not clear, what, "common properties shared by caste and class", means!). Also, it is not clear to me, how far Beteille has succeeded in developing a single framework within which studies in Indian village social structure can be carried out through caste as well as class analysis.

#### (D)Joan Mencher

1. Given the focus and concerns of the present paper, I have been tempted to make a few remarks about Joan Mencher's Indian village studies, now brought out under the title, "Agriculture and Social Structure in Tamil Nadu" (Allied Publishers, 1978). I refer to only four of the chapters (II, VI, VII and XI) from this book, and my acquaintance with the book, I am afraid, is somewhat superficial. Nonetheless, as I felt that the book is rigorously documented and argued within a clear theoretical framework, which the author explicitly states in the Introduction, I should at least try to take note of it.

Mencher describes the theoretical perspective she has taken in this study as follows: "... It is clear that any particular epoch is historically specific and governed by its own laws. As such, the analytical concepts that are used must be also specific. For example, the category of capital does not simply denote the instruments of production. Rather, the instruments of production become capital only when they are the monopoly of a certain class... In agrarian systems undergoing or having undergone capitalist transformations, land is the most important source of wealth or capital. Thus, I shall try to analyse

how land is held and distributed, and what is the ownership pattern, and how it is actually cultivated" (1978: 7).

The aim of this study is "to explore in detail the complex relationship between agricultural practice and socio-economic structure. The area chosen for study is Chingleput district of Tamil Nadu" (p. 14).

2. What is the method of study followed? It attempts to combine the intensive case-study approach of the cultural anthropologist with broad-scale survey work, as well as the use of archival materials relating to historical back-ground (14)... the combination of survey data, information collected by assistants, and my own intensively collected data can help to present a much more well-rounded picture of the situation than could be obtained by an anthropologist working in-depth in one or two villages. Furthermore, in many instances the data collected by assistants provide a necessary corrective to the impressions obtained from intensive study... It is also true that intensive study throws up many questions and ideas which could never be obtained from a survey. As an example, no survey would have provided an inkling of the multitude of ways in which records of land holdings are concealed and manipulated. This knowledge was obtained only at the cost of the most persistent and exhaustive inquiries which I have ever conducted. Yet it is crucial information" (p.15).

3. The substance of the theme on, "Agriculture and Caste" (Chapter VI) is outlined thus: "Against a background of caste composition from earlier census data, and the relationship between districtwise caste distribution and the detailed picture on the village level..., this chapter discusses the

relevance of caste to landholdings...to tenancy...and to the status of agricultural labourers...The chapter points out the close correlation between caste and class, and discusses the extent to which this is consistent with the development of capitalist agriculture..." (p. 126).

I describe below what I consider perhaps her significant observations on the relationship between agriculture and caste:

(i) "From the point of view of the relationship between social structure and practice of agriculture, sub-caste differences are clearly not significant. What is far more significant is the relationship between caste and social, economic and political power. In particular, the correlation between caste and economic position is striking" (p.129).

(ii) "The traditional picture of caste in rural India is grossly misleading, at least for regions such as this. This general picture that has been presented is one which tends to equate caste with occupational specialization. Yet the fact is that the majority of people in rural India have been primarily engaged in activities related to agriculture, either as workers (landless, or tenanted or self-owned land) supervisors (on either tenanted or owned land), or simply enjoying the benefits of agriculture (via tenants). In addition, there are those who subsist on the sale of agricultural commodities outside the village, and by selling other things in the village. Even among the caste groups which officially had assigned occupations, it was never possible for all of them to work at the assigned occupations" (p. 134).

(iii) "Basically, there are three categories of people: landowners, tenants, and

labourers, though the rank of each category are not mutually exclusive...It is clear that these three groups form the core of Indian village society. This is not to say that castes with specialized function are not important, but rather that in a sense they owe their existence to the large agricultural communities" (p. 135).

(iv) As to the concept of caste dominance? "It is useful in this connection to examine the relationship between types of caste dominance by number and by land ownership.... In most cases land dominance goes with high caste, numerical dominance with low caste" (p. 136.)

(v) "Some have argued that the differentiation into these three categories is more closely related to the organization of production than caste. But the fact is that the organization of production is closely interrelated with caste. Thus...most of the landowners are of higher caste, and the vast majority of agriculturists are untouchables and other lower castes" (p. 136).

(vi) "There is a close correlation between caste and concentration of landholdings, though there is no simple correlation between caste membership and land-ownership.... Thus, looking at the upper level, 17 per cent of the Brahmans, 12 per cent of the Reddiars, and 11 per cent of the Vellalars owned over 15 acres, while none of the Paraiyans and only 3 per cent of the Vanniyars did" (p.136).

4. The substance of the theme on, 'Agriculture and Class' is outlined thus: "This chapter presents a classification of the rural population into six categories (*socio-economic classes in rural Chingleput district*), followed by some illustrative

vignettes of typical families (some typical households: *Examples of landless households; poor peasant households; Middle peasant households; Some rich farmers; Two capitalist farmers*). It then goes on to discuss *Other sources of money and power* available to those in the higher 'classes' the relevance of the terms 'feudalistic' and 'capitalistic' in discussing social relations in this region (capitalist vs. feudal relations), and some details about the relatively small proportion of *Nonagricultural households* in the region. The section titled *Analysis* discusses some of the contradictions within the system, and factors tending to mask the existence of class distinctions" (p.161).

(i) The socio-economic classes categorized are: the landless, poor peasants, middle peasants, rich farmers, farmers holding land between 15-30 acres and those holding above 30 acres.

(ii) What are the modalities of conflicts and between which classes?

(a) Conflict between landless labourers (who account for close to half the population in the major rice regions of the state) and the large land-owners;

(b) conflict between the many small landowners and the few large land-owners who control most of the village lands;

(c) conflicts about who should get water and about the use of water;

(d) tensions in the bureaucracy that lead village-level leaders to over-report use of seeds or yields;

(e) conflicts within the ranks of the poor about getting hired, or about getting land for temporary share-cropping;

- (f) conflicts about the use of money for possible development projects;
- (e) conflicts among the different departments of government involved in programmes (e. g. between those responsible for irrigation, the electricity board, and the Block Development Officer, about who is to energize the well) (p. 3-4).

5. What is Mencher's characterization of the relations of production in the area under study? "In looking at the relations of production in this area today, they appear to be a kind of mixture of feudalism and capitalism. The relations between high-caste landowners and Harijans strongly suggest the survival of feudal ties of one kind or another. Most Harijans will hesitate to walk on the Brahman street in villages where there are many Brahmans" (p.153).

6. Whether caste or caste-like phenomena play any significant role in capitalist relations? Race and ethnicity are part and parcel of an advanced monopoly capitalism such as the United States. Racism and ethnocentrism, like casteism, can and have been used as mechanisms of oppression, and particularly as ways of keeping labourers from uniting on the basis of common class interests...Caste is often consciously manipulated by capitalist landowners and their supporters" (p. 153).

7. Feudal or capitalist relations? With reference to agricultural labourers: "Despite the fact that some of the labourers are working as Padiyals (permanent agricultural labourers), the vast majority of labourers in this area are united...In this area the majority of labourers are 'free wage labourers'—but 'free wage labourers' in a situation of limited employment" (p. 153).

8. Why do the lowest castes not rebel? "... It is a gross simplification to speak of feudal ties as the dominant reason why the lowest castes in this case do not rebel any more. In the case of Paraiyans, it is clear that the straight and simple fear of the brute force on top is an extremely important factor. Paraiyans must move slowly and carefully where they are powerless" (p. 154). "...It is not solely feudal relations within the village that prevent more active organization against caste oppression, but also knowledge of how the cards are stacked against the poor outside the village" (p. 153-4).

9. Now, as to the last question: Whether socio-economic relations in India's villages can today be characterized as primarily feudal or primarily capitalist?

(i) "The landless are in many cases bound to the landed by ties which seem to be of the feudal type. Landless labourers have to do all kinds of favours for those who employ them steadily, even if they are permanent padiyals or bound labourers, and more so if they are heavily in debt to the landowner" (p. 188).

(ii) "Some social scientists have called the structure of Indian agriculture semi-feudal in the sense that it has certainly been influenced by the colonial experience and the penetration of the modern market economy, since landlords still get their main income from rents and money lending. There appears to be considerable variation from one part of the country to another in this regard. In Chingleput, by the 1970s, the majority of landlords derived their main income from the sale of produce, not from rents" (p. 188).

(iii) "In all of our villages, the majority of the landless labourers or mini-farmers who go out as landless labourers are not permanently attached to any particular landlord. Indeed, in any season, most labourers tend to work for a number of households" (p. 188).

(iv) "With this degree of fluidity of tenancy and employment, it is hard to make a simple characterization of the mode of production here. It contains both feudal and capitalistic elements. A description of the production process requires first of all an understanding of the regional variation, and secondly an understanding of the social relations of production" (p. 190).

(v) And lastly, "To characterize this region as semifeudal (as Breman does for

Gujarat) would be quite mis-leading. It is true that the poor can often be manipulated by the larger landowners. But this is because of such factors as the lack of organization among the landless and (at least at times) the excess of labour" (p. 190).

I believe that Joan Mencher's observations based on her field-work in Chingleput would be of interest as representing an attempt at Marxist analysis of class and caste structure of village India. Hence, what she says prepares some background for the last section in which I try to highlight some issues on this theme, especially in the light of what has been said in the recent issue of the EPW. I have taken the liberty of stating her views in her own words to avoid any possible distortion.

## Conclusion

In the Note, I submitted to the MIDS meeting on 9th December, I suggested a perspective for the consideration of the methodological issues in the study of class and caste of the Indian rural Social structure, I said the issues arose primarily because of the contestedness of the key concepts 'social structure', 'caste' and 'class'. Studies in social structure/system can be conceived/designed in terms of two models-the equilibrium, and the conflict models. I confess, my use of the term model is not precise, but my use was solely for heuristic purposes and to draw attention to the two different ways in which social systems can be conceptualized, and studied.

In the Note, I raised questions without any attempt to answer. concretize or

illustrate the point of these questions. How to do this ? I thought it may be fruitful to do this in terms of what I call, methodological case studies. By this I mean identifying social scientists who have carried out Indian village studies, whose work is supported by hard empirical data-and that is the point of identifying work based on intensive field-work, I try to lay bare their conceptual and methodological presuppositions and implications. Besides, I also felt it might not be out of place to describe their significant findings.

I selected the village studies of M. N. Srinivas, Kathleen Gough, Andre Beteille and Joan Mencher, to concretize the perspective of the Note :

- A. Srinivas's studies as illustrative of village studies based on the caste-framework and influenced by the equilibrium model of a social system;
- B. Gough's studies as illustrative of village studies essentially based on caste-framework in the structural-functional tradition, but influenced by Gluckman type of conflict model;
- C. Beteille's work as illustrative of village studies based both on caste and class framework with focus on inequality and conflict and influenced by the Weberian perspective ;

- D. Mencher's studies as illustrative of village studies based essentially on class analysis in the Marxian perspective, still with caste-framework as the background.

In the course of this illustrative exercise, several conceptual and methodological issues that emerge are not carefully articulated and pursued further. But this would be clearly beyond the scope of a small article. If, in the course of this broad survey, one gets a little sensitized or becomes aware of the issues/structure of issues on this highly complex theme of class and caste in rural India, the purpose would have been served.

### III The Marxian Perspective

The context in which some of the issues have been raised in this section is the recent Annual Number of the *EPW* devoted to "Class and Caste in India". Given the constraints of a small paper, I shall severely restrict myself by *merely* raising the issues, and not perhaps discussing them.

#### 1. "Classes in caste idiom"

This is the title of the editorial of the *EPW* (Vol. XIV, Nos. 7 and 8, 1979, p, 223; unless otherwise stated, all the references to this issue will hereafter be referred to merely by page numbers).

What are the presuppositions and implications of *this way* of looking at class-caste phenomena? I try to deal with this question in this part.

1. *The nature of caste*: "Those who claim an interest in the progressive

emancipation of the people of this country need to be clear about the *nature* of caste—its *material basis in history* and in the *present*, and the reason for its continuing use in the conduct of politics by those who control that politics" (p. 223) (*italics mine*). The methodological issues raised by this way of understanding caste is the principle of historicism. I raise this in (2), under "*class-caste nexus in history; the Problem of origin and development of caste.*"

The editorial goes on to say: "However *underpinned* caste division may be with heredity, ritual, cultural and pollution-conscious practices etc., for the majority of Indians the material base in relation to land and extraction of surplus from the land is inescapable" (p, 223) (*italics mine*). Implicit in the metaphor of "underpinning" is the suggestion that

caste is an epiphenomenon, a superimposition, and *not* a substantial social phenomenon/reality. Let me illustrate similar points of view expressed in the following statements :

- (i) Casteism *mystifies* and *obscures* the fast growing class differentiation in the rural communities (P.C. Joshi, p. 359).
- (ii) Indian varna/caste divisions have, for their *essence*, the class stratification of society (Ajit Roy, p. 301). Also, "the varna division from its original beginning was *essentially a reflection of class differentiation*, sustained by the ideological and political domination of the ruling elite (p. 299).
- (iii) "The manner in which caste is *superimposed* on tribal society and the relations of superiority and inferiority that are established within the caste hierarchy makes it easy for this organisation to serve the purpose of the division between owners and slaves. Again, when society is ripe for a transition from the slave to the feudal phase, caste could easily be used to *cover up* the relation between land and serf" (Namboodripad Social Scientist 64 Nov. 1977, p. 4).
- (iv) Gail Omvedt speaks of two hierarchies developed in the traditional feudal system: one, the hierarchy of groups defined in terms of their relation to land; the other, a hierarchy of artisans and service workers. And then she says: "*Overlaying* this was the ideology of caste-based on notions of purity and pollution, hereditary transmission of qualities, and

ultimately sanctioned by religious notions of service to and exchange with goods" (p. 409) (*italics mine*).

Is caste merely an epiphenomenon, a superimposition, a part of superstructure ? A view that differs somewhat from those presented above, is, I believe, stated in the following: "... Kinship systems, of which caste is a particular rigid example, are not *actually ideological reflections* thrown up in the superstructure, but *are the units of the relations of production* themselves. This makes them extremely stubborn social institutions which, after their economic basis has been destroyed, may continue to persist in institutions and social consciousness" (Lieten, p. 319) (*italics mine*). Does this not imply, that for Lieten, it will not do by saying that caste is merely part of superstructure ? Let me sum up: In the above formulations, class-caste relationship is described through terms such as "superimposition", "covering up", "mystifying and obscuring", "underpinning" etc. What do these terms mean ? To illumine the relationship between class and caste, we need to consider class-caste nexus in historical terms.

2. *Class-caste nexus in history: the problem of origin and development of caste* : The methodological principle involved in understanding a social phenomena/institution such as caste, in the marxian perspective is historicism. What is historicism ? It is, the belief that an adequate understanding or evaluation of any phenomenon is to be gained by considering it in terms of the place it occupied and the role it played within a process of historical development. "Each event has to be understood in terms of a larger process of which it was a phase or in which it played a part and that only

through an understanding of the nature of this process can we fully understand or evaluate concrete events." Finally, "historicism involves a genetic model of explanation and an attempt to base all evaluation upon the nature of the historical process itself" (Mandelbaum 1967 : vol. 4, p. 24).

Consideration of class-caste issue in the marxian perspective hence does involve raising questions about origin of caste and its role/function and development in various successive historical stages. This concern is expressed in several articles of the EPW (Vide those by Sharad Patil, p 296; by Ajit Roy, p. 299; EMS, p. 329-336; Lieten, p. 315; Gail Omvedt, p. 409-10).

One of the outstanding formulation of class-caste issue in the marxist perspective of history is illustrated in Prof. D. D Kosambi's *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India*. I believe Kosambi's historical insights and very lucid formulation of the issue provides an excellent backdrop for the attempts made by the Marxist thinkers on this theme, in their articles in the EPW. May I indicate, through a few selective excerpts from Kosambi's work, the way this complex issue is dealt with ?

(i) "The main feature of Indian society, seen at its strongest in the rural parts is caste. This means the division of society into many groups which live side by side, but often do not seem to live together.... Most peasants will not take cooked food or water from the hands of a lower caste. That is, caste has a rough hierarchy. In practice, the number of such caste groups goes into thousands. In theory there are only four castes: the brahmin... or priest caste; the kshatriya - warrior; vaisya - trader or husbandman; and sudra, the lowest caste which corresponds to the

working class. This theoretical system is roughly *that of classes*, whereas the observed castes and sub-castes derive clearly from tribal groups of different ethnic origin. Their very names show this. The relative status of the small local castes depends always upon the extent of, and the castes' economic position in the common market... The same caste may have different positions in the hierarchy for two different regions. If this differentiation persists for some time, the separate branches may often regard themselves, as different castes, no longer intermarrying. The lower one goes in the economic scale, the lower the caste in the social scale on the whole. At the lowest end we still have purely tribal groups many of whom are in a food-gathering stage. The surrounding general society is now food-producing" (p. 15-6).

(ii) "*Caste is class on a primitive level of production*" : "What holds caste together in theory is the top position of the brahmins. The bond of production varied, but there was a bond. Caste is class on a primitive level of production. In many cases, the bond is simply of peasant families, all related, joining in general agriculture. But many castes were the equivalent of medieval guilds following specialized professions such as basket-makers, herb-vendors (vaidus), diggers (vaddars), fishermen... The tribal origins of many such castes is known, e. g. Kaivarta in Bihar and Bengal for fishermen, Bhoi in Maharashtra. The totemic features also present themselves: Every original inhabitant has the same surname, crocodile (Magar), wolf (Landge), peacock (More), the sacred pipal tree (Pimple) speak for themselves. Whatever the origin, some totemic observances still remain. For example, the Mores cannot eat peacock flesh, the Pimples



will not eat off the leaves of their totem tree and at one time would not cut its branches for firewood..." (p. 50).

(iii) *From tribal to agrarian society:* "Disruption of the tribal people and their merger into general agrarian society would not have been possible merely by winning over the chief and a few leading members. The way people satisfied their daily needs had also to be changed for the caste-class structure to work. The tribe as a whole turned into a new peasant *jati* caste group, generally ranked as Sudras, with as many as possible of the previous institutions (including endogamy) brought over. The brahmins here acted as pioneers in undeveloped localities..."

"The brahmin often preserved tribal or local peasant *jati* customs and primitive lore in some special or modified form, as the priest who had taken them over..."

"...This procedure enabled Indian society to be formed out of many diverse and often discordant elements, with the minimum use of violence. But the very manner in which the development took place inhibited the growth of commodity production and hence of culture, beyond a certain level. The emphasis upon superstitions meant an incredible proliferation of senseless ritual..." (p. 172-3).

The point of these rather extensive quotations, stated rather randomly, is to indicate the possibility that the class-caste relationship could be illumined only in the context of history. I took Kosambi to be the outstanding social scientist using the historicist method in the Marxian perspective. Lest I misstate Kosambi's methodological commitments, may I state his views on history, culture and the role and function of history?

(a) *History:* "History is the presentation in chronological order of successive changes in the means and relations of production" (p. 10).

(b) *Culture:* "Culture must... be understood also in the sense of the ethnographer, to describe the essential ways of life of the whole people" (p. 10).

(c) *What is history?* Kosambi approvingly quotes E. H. Carr: "The function of the historian is neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to master and understand it as the key to the understanding of the present. Great history is written precisely when the historian's vision of the past is illuminated by insight into the problems of the present.... Learning from history is never a one-way process. To learn about the present in the light of the past also means to learn about the past in the light of the present. The function of history is to promote a profounder understanding of both past and present through the interrelation between them (*What is History?* London, 1962, p. 20, 31, 32)."

A point of considerable methodological relevance is the relation between history and social anthropology. (Section II of this paper deals with village studies carried out by social (and cultural) anthropologists.)

On a paper on "Historicism", which I presented a few years ago, I had said: The historicist explanation lays stress on the genetic model of explanation. It seeks to see, for example, how caste came to be what it is today, tracing the development from its origin. Similarly, it queries into the origin of religion. And so on about other themes and problems. During the heyday of evolutionism, one went to the extreme of tracing everything to its origin and leaving the matter

there. The pendulum has swung to the other extreme now. Of late, the genetic model is in great disrepute among the scientists, especially the social scientists thanks to the positivists in philosophy and the structural functionalists in anthropology and sociology. I believe it is high time modern positivism and a moderate historicism defined the limits of their explanatory power and use (p. 1-2).

In recent times, a distinguished social anthropologist Evans-Pritchard has emphatically stressed the need for history for social anthropology, *when you are dealing with studies of complex societies (e.g. Indian village studies) which have a long tradition and history; "... Anthropologists are now studying communities which, if still fairly simple in structure are enclosed in, and form part of, great historical studies, such as ... Indian rural communities. They can no longer ignore history, making a virtue out of necessity, but must explicitly reject it or admit its relevance. As anthropologists turn their attention to more complex civilized communities, the issue will become more acute, and the direction of theoretical development in the subject will largely depend on its outcome"* (1962, p. 1-2).

This is from the side of social anthropology. What relevance anthropology has for history? Kosambi speaks of *"history studied in the field"*. But, *"How is a history of India to be written when so little documentation is available?" "The country has one tremendous advantage that was not utilised recently by the historian: the survival within different social layers of many forms that allow the reconstruction of totally diverse earlier stages. To find these strata one had to move from the cities into the countryside"* (p.13). What according to

Kosambi is possible *to show* if history is studied in the field? *"This stratification of Indian society reflects and explains a great deal of Indian history, if studied in the field without prejudice. It can be shown that many castes owe their lower social and economic status to their present or former refusal to take to food production and plough agriculture. The lowest castes often preserve tribal rites, usages, and myths. A little higher up we see these religious observances and legends in transition, often by assimilation to other parallel traditions. Another step above, they have been written by brahmins to suit themselves, and to give the brahmin caste predominance in priesthood, which in the lower castes is not generally in the hands of the brahmins. Still higher we come to what is called 'Hindu' culture, the literate traditions that often go back to much older times...The main work of brahminism has been to gather the myths together, to display them in a better developed social framework"* (p. 15).

To conclude: I believe an adequate grasp of class-caste relationship in history is indispensable for a deeper level understanding of the present day village India. I shall now turn to the methodological issues that centre round conceptualization of the Indian rural social structure in marxist terms. The conceptual technique used for describing a rural structure is of course, class analysis.

## II. Class analysis of Indian rural social structure

(i) One of the critical problems here is the precise identification of classes that constitute the village social structure. The EPW editorial says: *"...If the precise identification of classes in Indian society is proved elusive, it is because the*

"manifold gradations of social rank" which Marx speaks of for the West (patricians, knights, plebians and slaves in ancient Rome; and feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices and serfs in Europe of the middle ages) have taken in the Indian context the form of caste (class ?) and caste has been further complicated by quasi-religious sanctions and prohibitions" (p. 223).

Putting it simply: (i) The issue here is, how to differentiate the classes in the rural areas in India? (ii) The issues that arise in describing rural social structure in class terms in the background of caste-framework. What is the class-caste correlation? How is the specific character of a class modified by caste? How are the dialectical relationships between classes modified/influenced by caste structure?

(a) *What classes?* What are the criteria for determining class status in the rural areas? Lenin first formulated them in the context of the Russian social situation of his times (see *To the Rural Poor* second revised edition, 1967, Moscow: Progress Publishers). The model of class differentiation of the peasantry, he developed, used class categories such as landless, poor, middle and rich peasants and the landlord. Mao used this model creatively to grasp the Chinese rural situation so as to change / transform its basic structure.

Social scientists in India influenced by this tradition have, by and large, continued to use these categories with some modifications. I have already mentioned Joan Mencher. To illustrate another example, one may look at Prasad's article "Caste and Class in Bihar" in the *EPW*. His analysis is carried out in terms of the following: 'Poor peasant' and 'agricultural labourers', are used synonymously: the

middle peasant: the big peasant and the landlord. He describes some formal criteria to distinguish each category (p. 484). May I draw attention to the controversy raised by Ashok Rudra: "There are only two classes in Indian agriculture, one of which is termed 'the class of big landowners, the other 'the class of agricultural labourers'. These two classes are in antagonistic contradiction with each other, and this contradiction constitutes the principal contradiction in our rural society" (Three articles in the *EPW*, XIII, Nos. 22, 23, 24, June 3, 10 and 24, 1978).

The issue is too large, and I feel one cannot go into it here; also, I confess, I do not feel able to argue against Rudra's position. I feel inclined to suggest however, that the issue cannot be decided a priori, on theoretical grounds alone, in the sense that, the question "What class categories?", is intimately bound up with the task of grasping the rural social structure at the micro- as well as at the macro-level with a view to identifying the nature of several tensions/contradictions between the various classes, as a basis for mobilisation of the rural poor at the micro- as well as macro-levels. Finally, Rudra's position rests on the view that the mode of production in Indian agriculture is capitalistic; now this has been controversial. But these are vague statements, and I leave the issue at that.

Description of Indian village social structure in terms of classes, amongst other factors, has to take account of the following :

- (i) Class analysis is not a formal, abstract inquiry, but conducted in structural-functional terms, in the dialectical perspective.

- (ii) The formal criteria for identifying class of rural households need be supplemented by more concrete case studies on the lines of Joan Mencher.
- (iii) In order to fully capture the specifics of the Indian situation, class-analysis need be described in the background of caste-framework.

The question of grasping the specifics of class contradiction is related to the understanding of the *form* of class relations—the structural form. But, the form of class relations is a function of the mode of production. The question then arises: How do we describe the mode of production at the micro-level as well as at the macro-level?

(b) *What mode of production?* : What is the mode of production in Indian agriculture? Asiatic? Feudal? Semi-feudal? Colonial? Capitalistic?

There is a vigorous debate on the issue. To illustrate, I draw attention to the following articles: Ranjit Sau "On the Essence and Manifestation of Capitalism in Indian Agriculture", *EPW* vol. VIII, No. 13, 1973, also, "Can Capitalism Develop in Indian Agriculture", XI, No. 52, 1976; Jairus Bannerjee "Mode of Production in Indian Agriculture—A Comment", *EPW*, vol. VIII, No. 14, 1973, also, "For a Theory of Colonial Mode of Production", *EPW* VII, No. 52, 1972; Amit Bhaduri "An Analysis of Semi-feudalism in East India", *Frontier*, Autumn Number 1973; Gail Omvedt, "India and the Colonial Mode of Production—Comments" *EPW*, X, No. 42, 1975; Utsa Patnaik, "Development of Capitalism in Agriculture" (in two parts), vol. I, Nos. 2 and 3, Sept. and Oct. 1972; also, "On the Mode of Production in Indian Agriculture—A reply",

*EPW*, VII, No. 40, 1972 etc; Hamza Alavi, "Feudalism and Capitalism in Indian Agriculture" (Mimeo), 1975 etc.

The marxist challenge in this debate is to specify parameters/indicators which would together define a particular mode of production, so as to be able to identify the specific mode. May I repeat: the issue here is not merely an academic one, but one that is related to, and influences practice.

At the macro all-India level, what is the generalization? A relatively more precise question would be: What is the *predominant* mode of production?

Given the diversities and variations at the local and regional level, the answer to the question, "What mode of production", cannot be a straightforward one—it cannot be, in many cases, in terms of one single mode (*cf.* Mencher who says that the mode of production in the rural areas of Chingleput District is a mixture of feudal and capitalistic elements). A country of the size of almost a sub-continent, with such uneven level of historical development, we should look for a *pattern combination*, rather than a simplistic answer in terms of a single mode.

The conceptual and methodological issues involved are:

- (a) Identifying what mode of production—single, combination/pattern;
- (b) The form of class relations; the contradictions between the various classes, the principal ones; the antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions;
- (c) What are the issues that emerge as a result of these?;

- (d) The task of mobilization of the peasantry / rural poor through action-oriented programmes based on these issues.

Finally, what can one say to the view held by some that class analysis cannot be used as a tool for village studies at the micro-(village) level? I have mentioned some village studies at the micro-level, (e.g. Mencher's, etc.) which have used the marxist class-framework. Again, this is not merely a theoretical issue. Communist cadres deployed to mobilize peasantry in a village or group of villages have to understand/grasp the village social structure; how will they do it except in class terms? Such studies/understanding at the micro-level has necessarily to be linked up with the situation at the macro-level. But unless he understands the situation at the micro / local level, how does he mobilize?

The question of organizing the rural poor in a village or a group of villages is not an isolated one. It is organically/integrally related to the task of developing an overall strategy of mobilizing at the all-India level. The strategy provides the practical basis for defining tasks on the kisan front.

But these tasks become meaningful and effective only when the understanding at the micro-level is concretized and integrally related to that at the macro-level so as to provide a concrete basis for action at both the levels.

As a theoretical basis for developing an all-India strategy, how can one avoid generalization regarding the mode of production at the macro-level, however simplistic and tentative it may be? Such a generalization is perhaps only a very rough hypothesis.

If what I say makes sense, then one implication of this position is that the issue here is not of opting out for either a micro-level or middle-range level theorising or for developing an all-comprehensive theory at the macro-level. The need is for continuous dialectical interaction between understanding at the micro-, middle and macro-levels; the point of saying dialectical is that there is a tension between understanding at various levels and an adequate generalization need to emerge by resolving this tension conceptually and testing its validity through practice.

### **The question of objectivity and validity of the marxist framework**

The issue again is too large for consideration here. Social science influenced by marxism, I contend, rejects the simplistic epistemological model developed by the empiricists such as Locke and the later positivists. The subjective-objective dichotomy presupposed by this model is far too simplistic and misleading and cannot provide adequate criteria for evaluating investigations/inquiries as scientific or not. Such a social science also rejects the dichotomy between fact and value, between descriptive and normative, between value-neutral description and ideologies. I have considered some of these issues elsewhere ("Epistemology of the Social Sciences" *SAPI*: 17-29, 1978, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi).

The point of making these remarks rather dogmatically is to draw attention to some of the deeper issues in philosophy of science that marxist methodology raises.

What is it that makes a particular methodology fruitful? What is it that makes a scientific theory objective / true?

Marx said: "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. In practice man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness...of his thinking. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is purely a scholastic

question" (second thesis from "Theses on Feurbach").

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