

Caste and Occupation: A Systematic Literature Review of the Studies on *Charmakars and Mehtars*

A Thesis

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By

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Certificate

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled ‘Caste and Occupation: A systematic literature review of the studies on *Charmakars* and *Mehtars*’ towards the partial fulfillment of the BS-MS dual degree program at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Pune represents study/work carried out by Akash Chavan at Indian Institute of Science Education and Research under the supervision of Dr. Chaitra Redkar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), during the academic year 2020-2021.

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This thesis is dedicated to my sister, who successfully broke the barriers and married across caste boundaries

Declaration

I hereby declare that the matter embodied in the report entitled Caste and Occupation: A systematic literature review of the studies on *Charmakars* and *Mehtars* are the results of the work carried out by me at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Pune, under the supervision of Dr. Chaitra Redkar and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree.



Akash Chavan

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Abstract

The right to occupation is a Fundamental Right guaranteed by the Constitution of India. When the Right to Occupation was introduced in our Constitution, its primary purpose was to offer people the freedom to choose an occupation of choice without any kind of restrictions. It is a means for the depressed classes of our society to break free from the burden of performing traditional occupations, which they were carrying on for generations before. These occupations tied them to the caste system, occupation being an important defining characteristic of caste. How far has India been able to ensure occupational mobility? Why do certain individuals continue in their traditional occupation? Are there particular castes that are required to continue with the traditional occupation? And similarly, are there particular castes that enjoy the right to occupational mobility more than the others? These are some of the significant questions that come to the forefront when one tries to understand the dynamics of caste and occupational mobility. This work has attempted to address this issue by reviewing the published research work on two castes, namely the *Mehtar* and the Chamhar or *Charmakar*.

The *Mehtar* caste is at the lowest hierarchy in the caste system. It's a Scheduled Caste in the Constitution of India. Traditionally members of this caste served the community as sweepers and drainage cleaners, and still, a large number continue in the same occupation. The Chamhar or *Charmakar* is also a Scheduled Caste. Traditionally this caste was engaged in the work of cobblers and leatherworkers. The *Charmakar* are politically more mobilized and organized. The *Mehtars*, however, have been able to fetch the attention of society in recent times about the inhuman nature of the work they are forced into.

Reviewing together the studies on these two castes is expected to enrich our understanding of how occupational mobility operates in a caste-ridden setup. This exercise would be helpful in undertaking future studies to resolve the dilemmas of occupational mobility.

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I am alone responsible for the errors and shortcomings in this thesis if any.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background

The reason for undertaking such a study is to understand the ever prevalent issue of caste pertinence and its connection to our society. A caste is an endogamous group assigned with a specific occupation. But as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar observes in his work 'Annihilation of Caste', caste exists not as a segregated unit but as a social system. If endogamy reveals the gendered dimension of the caste system, the absence of occupational mobility reflects the economic dimension of this system of social stratification. Occupation and caste cannot be separated. Most of the castes are defined by occupation that the community traditionally performs, willingly or unwillingly. Occupation being one of the defining characteristics of the caste system, the makers of the Constitution of India thought it is necessary to provide the right to occupation facilitating occupational mobility. Art. 19 (1) (g) of the Constitution of India provides the right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade, or business to all citizens subject to Art. 19 (6), which enumerates the nature of restriction that can be imposed by the state upon the above right of the citizens. This is a civil liberty needed in every democratic society, but it is also a provision for breaking free from the caste society.

A general observation establishes that this Fundamental Right to Occupation could be enjoyed more by the upper castes than by the oppressed class. The Brahmins, for instance, are engaged in many new occupations that were not available to them conventionally. Abhyankar Footwear was established as early as the 1960s by a Chitpavan Brahmin. Vinay Koparkar, another Brahmin, started a men's salon called Pappilon in the early 1980s in Pune. B V Gaikwad, who owns one of the largest cleaning companies - BVG in India is also from the so-called upper caste. The services of tanning and cobbling, cutting hair, or sweeping and scavenging that is providing were traditionally associated with the so-called untouchable castes. In comparison, the Right to Occupation has proved to be an advantage for the privileged sections of the society. The same cannot be said about those who were oppressed, marginalized, and excluded by the caste system.

It, therefore, becomes necessary to understand how far India has been able to ensure occupational mobility in the past 70+ years. It is also important to see if only a certain section of a caste enjoys occupational mobility while a majority of that community continues in their traditional occupation. Are there particular castes that enjoy the right to occupational mobility more than the others?

These are some of the significant questions that come to the forefront when one tries to understand the dynamics of caste and occupational mobility. This work has attempted to address this issue by reviewing the published research work on two castes, namely the *Mehtar* and the *Charmakar*.

1.2. Origin of the Problem

The phenomenon of caste has invited scholarly attention for a long time. There are a large number of studies on the subject analyzing the origins of the caste system, its religious foundation, its cultural roots, its history, sociology, and a number of such dimensions. At the very outset, it is necessary to see how do these landmark studies understand the relationship between caste and occupation. This systematic literature review began with reviewing the major texts theorizing caste with a view to mapping their perception about the correlation between caste and occupation. (A detailed discussion of these works could be seen in Chapter Three.) A review of these works revealed that though these studies give a nuanced understanding of the caste system, they do not throw much light on the entrenched relationship between caste and occupation. They locate the roots of the caste system in Hinduism, Brahminical values, and also identity politics. These studies see the caste-based occupation as an economic root of the caste system, but the program for the annihilation of caste emphasizes more on generating counter-culture and on politicization than for developing a supporting structure for occupational mobility. This also brings out the need for undertaking field-based studies to understand the complexities of the relationship between caste and occupation, its changing dynamics, the feasibility of occupational mobility, and its relevance for annihilation of caste. This study is a step towards undertaking such field-based research. It accounts for the studies that have already been conducted on this theme.

1.3. Scope of the study

We are doing a systematic literature review on all the important studies taking place on occupation and caste, occupational mobility, and related topics. This study lists and reviews the published works on the theme of caste and occupational mobility. A detailed note on the methods used for identifying the sources could be seen in Chapter 2.

1.4. Objectives

The aim of this project is to understand the significance of the work so far done in studying occupational mobility and caste. Occupation refers to the materiality of caste. It defines the standard of life and living, socio-economic status admissible to a member of a

particular caste. The present work conducts a Systematic Literature Review of the literature related to two Dalit castes, namely *Charmakar* and *Mehtar*. Both the castes have an all-India presence. They are sizable in numbers as compared to other smaller Dalit castes, thereby offer numerical significance for democratic politics. While the amount of data and resources available for an SLR is quite big, we will be doing extensive filtering to get relevant studies for this study.

Chapter 2: Materials and Methods

We are doing a Systematic Literature Review of the works on caste and occupational mobility. This involves going through rigorous research work and analyzing the studies to answer our research question. However, this wasn't the plan at the start of the project. The previous aim was to select an area in a locality and conduct interviews with one of the Dalit castes to know more about their occupational choices. The interviews would be carried out with the families at multiple intervals over the course of the project. In the end, we were hoping to answer the question of whether there is occupational mobility among such castes. If yes/no, what were the reasons for the same? This study would have been based on primary data. However, the first part regarding the theorization of caste would not have changed. But in the light of the current global pandemic, such fieldwork and interviews were not feasible and safe. Hence, we had to resort to a Systematic Literature Review for the Project. For such studies, proper filtering and selection of studies is important. The sample space available today is quite huge, and one must know what to search in order to get significant results.

For studying the basis of caste, I have read all the major literature available today, recommended by my guide. The list of which has been added in the Introduction. This literature has helped me to understand all the important aspects of caste, followed by writing detailed summaries of all of them.

The proposed study began with an extensive and exhaustive search online to find relevant studies. JSTOR is a digital library containing a huge repository of journal articles and studies focusing on Humanities and Social Sciences, remote access to which was provided by the IISER Pune Library. All the material for our SLR has been selected from JSTOR.org. But the database is huge and specific keywords were used to select a feasible sample space to begin searching. The table below displays the keywords used in the search and the respective number of results obtained.

Table 1: Keywords

Sr. No.	Keyword	Number of results	Comment
1	Caste and occupation	177897	Too large a number to search ahead
2	Occupational mobility	235972	Too large a number to search ahead
3	Occupational mobility and India	45168	Too large a number to search ahead
4	Occupational mobility and Dalit	1302	Searched through all the studies for relevance
5	Occupational mobility and <i>charmakar</i>	4	Searched through all the studies for relevance
6	Occupational mobility and <i>chamar</i>	510	Searched through all the studies for relevance
7	Occupational mobility and <i>Mehtar</i>	59	Searched through all the studies for relevance
8	Occupational mobility and <i>Mahar</i>	774	Searched through all the studies for relevance
9	Occupational mobility and <i>bhangi</i>	159	Searched through all the studies for relevance
10	Occupational mobility and India	17000	Searched through all the studies for relevance
11	Caste and Occupation and India	20000	Searched through all the studies for relevance

Keywords entries from 4 to 11 had shown the same studies. All of the relevant ones were taken from entry number 10. However, a point to note is that the Jstor database keeps

updating. In my first search, ‘occupational mobility and India’ had around 12k results, which were all scanned and filtered for selection. Later, the number increased to 17k; that's when I also scanned the extra 5k. Today, the number has crossed around 45k. That would have given me a much larger sample space to work and hopefully more compelling entries.

For scanning and filtering, I went through all the 17000 entries one by one. A separate data sheet was maintained to enlist all the selected studies. Below are the steps followed for the selection process.

Table 2: Selection

Step	Selection	Action	Number of entries
1	Check the title for anything related to caste and occupation in India	Copy the link of the article to the datasheet	126
2	Read all the studies in the datasheet	Add their short summaries in the same datasheet	126
3	Based on the short summaries, select studies for detailed summaries	Read all the relevant material shortlisted	80
4	Check for studies that are review articles, outside India, book chapters, and not matching with our objective	Reject	34
5	Accept the rest	Accept	46

As we can see, from a sample space of 17000, only 46 were related to caste and occupation in India. Among those 46, only a handful were proper statistical occupational mobility studies. In the end, detailed summaries of all of them were selected to contribute to this thesis.

Chapter 3: Theorizing Caste

There are many ways of defining a caste, and many scholars have tried to do it. This chapter accounts for some of the major studies on the caste system. These studies could be broadly classified into three themes. 1) Endogamy, 2) As a feature of the Hindu social order, and finally 3) Occupation. Put simply; caste is a stratification of endogamous groups into different classes and occupations determined by birth. The above themes aren't mutually exclusive and hard and fast, and authors have considered more than one for explaining the prevalence of the caste system.

For a deeper understanding of the subject, one can go through the below books:-

- [1916] Castes in India - Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar
- [1936] Annihilation of Caste – Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar
- [1962] Caste in Modern India - M. N. Srinivas
- [1965] Caste, Class, and Power - Andre Beteille
- [1966] Homo Hierarchicus - Louis Dumont
- [2000] Interrogating Caste - Dipankar Gupta
- [2004] Caste in Question - Dipankar Gupta
- [2009] Castes in India - Diane Mines
- [2011] Understanding Caste - Gail Omvedt
- [2012] Caste - Surinder Jodhka
- [2015] Caste in Contemporary India - Surinder Jodhka
- [2019] Caste Matters - Suraj Yengde
- [2020] Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent - Isabel Wilkerson

Some of these books have been reviewed in this study. A thematic summary is given below

3.1. Endogamy

Endogamy was a major aspect of the caste system. Caste separates communities from one another by prohibiting marriage outside the group. Marriage dominates a Hindu's social life and plays a large part in the religion. It is the most prestigious family ceremony, and at the various social levels, it constitutes the main occasion on which the greatest number of members of the caste and other people gather together (Dumont, 1966). There would have been no caste system today if not for endogamy. It is a custom of marrying only within the

limits of one's caste or tribe to increase the numbers and avoid mixing of bloods. In the northern states of India, endogamy in villages was highly prominent. Caste was identified by either their *gotra* or *got* as it is known in rural parts. They strictly followed endogamy to maintain the caste hierarchy, except few exceptions in which marriage among close got relatives was prohibited. If this happened, the family would lose its honor and be severely punished by the caste panchayat. Caste panchayat was the dictator in the villages, which comprises members of all the castes who often favor the dominant castes in case of a conflict. Their decision was respected, and sometimes even the police accepted their decisions without interfering. In case of non-compliance, there have been cases of murders, social boycotts, and even rapes by their kin. The panchayat did not give a fair decision here as they believe collective interest was above personal interest. You cannot marry outside your caste and whatever happens in your caste was a personal issue. The panchayat was even more biased towards the issues involving the lower castes. The only option then left was the court, which was expensive, but some people did go to such lengths for justice. Sometimes there was an unequal sex ratio which resulted in the relaxation of inter-got marriages. Only men were allowed to raise their voice against injustice, i.e., only they are heard in panchayats. If a youth or a woman tried to raise their opinion, they were immediately shut, as; if there is a grown adult in the household, he only had the right to talk in the panchayat raj (Gupta, 2004). While today inter-caste marriages do take place, they often result in a rift between families and, in extreme cases, even violence.

Ambedkar also concludes in one of his speeches that, "Endogamy is the only characteristic that is peculiar to caste, and if we succeed in showing how endogamy is maintained, we shall practically have proved the genesis and also the mechanism of Caste."

3.2. A Feature of the Hindu Social Order

Caste is deeply engraved in Hinduism and preached by its scriptures. The Rigveda talks about the Varna system, dividing castes based on occupation. The four varnas were Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudras. Brahmins constituted the priests and intellectuals and were placed the highest in the social order, followed by the Kshatriyas, who were the warriors and administrators. Vaishyas had the Farmers and Merchants, and finally, Shudras were Artisans and Service workers. The Dalits or untouchables weren't a part of this system and were called *avarnas*, the above four being the *savarnas*. These were the sweepers, leather workers, manual scavengers, and sanitation workers. The Hindus considered them of impure blood due to the kind of work they did.

Dalits were used to dispose of other people's sins and inauspiciousness, according to Hinduism. The regular movement of sin and other kinds of inauspiciousness is necessary not only to the well-being of the Higher castes but to that of the whole settlement. These (sins) were understood by Indians as material, actually embodied in the actor. Because of the embodied nature of the action, some scholars refer to Hindu moral actions as "bimoral," partaking of both morality and biology. These material traces were potentially removable and transferable through an exchange called dan. The service caste accepted this dan - the faults and sins- in part because they were able to and in part because they had to. People often linked their bodily and social incapacities to past actions or events. Sometimes it's their sin or their ancestors'. Hindus had ways of disposing of their negative karma, sometimes through objects and sometimes through prayers. But why would anyone accept someone else's sin? The Brahman priests were trained to do these things and were considered capable of digesting and disposing of the sins through rituals and mantras. Some lower castes used to refuse to take the dan (sins) like beggars as they did not want this curse. These elite Brahmins gave shape to caste to uphold their status by articulating "sacredness" as a key element for status in Indian society (Mines, 2009). Through Gandhi's lens, an untouchable (Dalit) is a strong person by nature who has been brought down by centuries of oppression. They must lift themselves up and purify their bodies and also that caste Hindus should recognize menial jobs as a noble pursuit and regard untouchability as a sin against all Hindus.

Neither economic nor political explanations suffice to account fully for caste rankings; the explanation lies in the concept of purity. The purity of a caste determined its rank. This concept is well explored by Louis Dumont; he argued that castes were ranked along a scale of relative purity depending on their relative involvement in biological or organic substances (impure). For example, the vegetarians were ranked higher and barbers lower, the untouchables lowest as they made leather goods from carcasses. The hierarchy was seen as religious because the valuation of substances and people as pure or impure was seen to come from Brahmanical Hindu texts, beliefs, and practices. Hindus believed themselves to be made up of particulate elementary substances and thus be able to be shared, exchanged, and transferred. They were devoted to maintaining their nature pure by not mixing with impure substances or by accepting only pure ones that might polish them further. Brahmins tended to give much more than they received in an effort to maintain their high rank, while the lower kept getting lower by receiving more (Mines, 2009).

Hinduism never existed as a religion; there was Brahmanism. Hinduism only took a proper birth after the British colonization as the British brought along with them racism,

romanticism, fascination with the *Vedas*, and orientalism, which played an important role in constructing today's caste system. They found it tough to segregate people and consulted the brahmins in helping them give rise to a general hierarchy for the whole country (Omvedt, 2011). Caste System, like many other concepts and practices, was assumed to be ancient and traditional, but it was altered continuously throughout history. British played a major role in this alteration. They effectively turned fluid and locally desperate *jatis* into fixed all-India categories and, as a result, created new social identities that Indians, in turn, shaped further. The modern phenomenon of caste is strongly influenced by British ideas, practices, and policies. One colonial practice that profoundly impacted caste was the official British census of India. They took years in understanding the categories to be included and, in the end, came up with their misinterpretation. The census developed slowly to include more and more demographic information concerning religion, caste, literacy, village boundaries, health, marriage, family size, and other concerns. They rationalized their census work on the basis of administrative necessity: without knowledge of the population under their governance, how would the rule be effective? Of great importance to British officials was gathering knowledge about caste and religion. The British assumed that caste and religion had a determining effect on the character of the population and were, for Indians, the fundamental bases for social organization. Among many of the specific conceptual problems riddling the British census categories for caste is the fact that they confused *varna* and *jati* and so tried to fit all *jatis* into the four varnas in order to count Indians as either Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, or Sudras. This made no sense to the Indians as in many parts of India; *varna* was irrelevant to local understandings of *jati*. The British also imagined that, just as there were martial castes, so, too, were their criminal castes (non-Aryans as they thought) and needed rigorous surveillance? Despite the problematic nature of the whole enterprise, because the British used caste to categorize, measure, create a policy about its colonial subjects, caste became important to Indians in new ways and led to the rise of caste associations. By the early twentieth century, caste increasingly became a basis for collective identity on a regional and even national level. These organizations effectively transformed what had previously been a fairly localized phenomenon into political and social units operating in relation to the nation as a whole, crafting new histories and identities, lobbying for their group interests, and forming political parties. The elite western-educated Brahmins were the top advisors of Britishers and gave rise to many anti-Brahmin movements. Caste is, therefore, a part postcolonial construct, transformed into a modern phenomenon, aspects of which have emerged out of the colonial encounter. Through the practices of colonization and the Indian

response, caste has become a thing, an object, that Indians consciously strategize about and fight over in ways that they never did prior to colonialism.

Often caste is regarded as a social structure arising from Hindu practices and ideas, which is not to the point. Other religions also have historically recognized and reinforced caste distinctions. Both Jainism and Buddhism, which developed respectively in the sixth and fourth centuries BCE, arose partly in response to exclusionary aspects of Brahminical Hinduism. Many Jains actually consider themselves to be Hindu and of the Vaishya varna. An understanding of the caste system is also held back by a general reluctance of sociologists and anthropologists towards the use of historical material. If caste loyalties are discrete in character, then it is necessary to show how the idea of an unchallenged continuous hierarchy could attain such social currency in the first place. It should not be assumed that the ideology of caste is a creation of Brahmins alone or that it is thrust on others, either against their will or while the lower castes are in the ideological thralldom of upper castes, to justify economic exploitation. The large number of land grants made to Brahmins (Brahmadeya lands) during the Gupta period, coupled with the delegation of juridical authority over those lands to the Brahmins, contributed to their ascendance. The Brahmins did not always entail the presence of the untouchables at the other pole; it was well after the Vedic period, after even the period of the Mauryan empire, that the notion of untouchability came into being. It was only around the second century AD that the stratum of untouchables and the notion of untouchability became evident.

Diane reminds us that caste is not a coherent system that exists all over India. It is also not an ancient tradition by which people should always abide. It is a changing constellation of values, ideas, and organizing principles that most Indians engage with, in one way or another, in their daily lives. Caste is a product of complex histories and exists today in multiple forms. For some today, caste is irrelevant. But for Dalits, even today, caste colors almost all their experiences. Caste certainly does not produce social inequalities as there are societies without caste with similar issues. The ranking system is invisible unless one is at the bottom of the ladder with no place to move freely. Dalits have always been there. Caste is one multifaceted aspect of modern life in India. It includes inequalities and injustices that pain many of its citizens and affect them all (Mines, 2009).

3.3. Stratification

The caste system is like a ladder. For those at the top rung enjoy freedom while those at the bottom rungs are stuck in a puddle, just hanging on. It is tough to move on this ladder,

as there is resistance at each level and must be countered to move towards the top. There is a strong fight, as; if a caste moves upward, some other caste has to move downwards to take its place.

It must first be recognized that principles of caste rank rest essentially on conceptions of social honor or esteem. Social esteem was attached to particular styles of life, and groups were ranked as high or low according to how or whether they pursued such techniques. Status, honor has in every society a strong traditional bias in addition to being associated with specific styles of life. Hence it is not enough for a certain caste to adopt a particular style of life in order to achieve a higher social rank. It has to legitimize its position by working this style of life into a tradition; it has to establish its association with the style over a number of generations. Although hierarchy is an essential feature of the caste system, we must not assume that wherever there is segmentation, we can rank the segments as higher or lower. There are conflicting claims to superior rank, and often it is impossible to speak of a consensus. It frequently happens that two castes put forward rival claims to superiority with regard to which members of other castes may be indifferent or may not regard themselves as competent to decide either way. The vital point to bear in mind about the hierarchy of the caste system is its ambiguities beyond a certain level. These ambiguities are essential in a system that always seems to have permitted a certain degree of mobility. These are further increased by the fact that the basis of social honor or esteem, the entire value system on which the ranking of castes depends, has in recent times been undergoing substantial changes. One can roughly determine the upper and the lower rungs, but in the middle regions, ranking is uncertain. Today the relations exist but have transformed; it's no longer imposed work but paid jobs (Beteille, 1965).

It is more realistic to say that there are probably as many hierarchies as there are castes in India. To believe that there is a single caste order to which every caste, from Brahmin to Untouchables, acquiesce ideologically is a gross misreading of facts on the ground. Each caste operates at a level of the hierarchy; the lower ones who are oppressed, oppress the ones below them as well. No caste is willing to concede that its own members are defiling; they readily allege that there are other castes that are indeed polluting. The existence of fake origin stories justifying their situation isn't new. There is no hierarchy without a difference, and every difference implies a hierarchy. The idea of human universals has a long history in anthropology. It was first linked with the evolutionists and later by relativists. The problem with the evolutionary version was that it assumed that certain cultures had already climbed the ladder of development and that other cultures would follow but after a

considerable lapse of time. Even if the sociologists, or the anthropologists, give a technical meaning to concepts such as class or status, the material of analysis comes from how people interact with one another and how they conceive of the divergences in their station and in their life chances. In the case of race, a specific physical difference is picked on to substantiate, justify and perpetuate economic and social inequalities among people. But in caste societies where no natural differences can be discerned by the naked eye, it is imagined that such differences exist, and elaborate care is taken so that the substances that constitute each caste do not commingle. Such stratification does not depend solely on real or natural differences. Class, status, and power are some of the other axes on which stratification takes place. While there is an agreement that castes should be hierarchized on the basis of natural substances, there is no agreement as to how these can be quantified along a gradational scale. To give value to anything is to hierarchize at the same time. To be rich has meaning only when there are poor people around. When working-class movements react primarily to hierarchies of this sort, they only end up, as Marx once put it, inciting petty middle-class revolts. It remains for us now to take cues from the history of sociological theory and realize the crucial relationship that hierarchy and difference have with each other in different stratification systems. While hierarchy steadfastly attempts to establish order, differences constantly and tenaciously pose an active or potential threat to stability. If stratification were only about gradations and ranked order (as in Sorokin, 1967), then it would only mean inequality and nothing more. Likewise, if stratification were just about differences, then that could be subsumed under studies of social differentiation. Only in the sub-discipline of social stratification do hierarchy and differences come together in a complex of ties that tell us at once about order and about stability, as well as about mobility and social inertia (Gupta, 2000).

The belief that Brahmans alone can speak on behalf of the entire Hindu society continues to dominate even contemporary scholarship on caste. There are economic hierarchies in society too. Castes cannot be looked at only in terms of hierarchies without first understanding them in terms of discrete categories. A true hierarchy is an unambiguous linear ranking on a single variable. Besides, criteria such as wealth in cash, women, cattle, or land, authority can also be a valid criterion for a true and continuous hierarchy. For if one moves up or down, say, on the authority scale within a particular organization, one's authority would accordingly increase or decrease. Ideology separates castes into discrete entities in a most self-centered way. In spite of the fact that castes are discrete, they are related as in discourse because each caste, in spite of its own idiosyncratic articulation of the caste ideology,

nevertheless uses identical elements and positions itself with reference to a notion of hierarchy nodes of which appear and reappear in different ideological formulations. Some castes, by asserting that they are descendants of Brahmans, are actually referring to a *varna* category and, in that sense, making a claim to a discrete caste status, quite different from the various extant Brahmin *jatis*. While the separation of these castes from the original lower-caste (e.g., *Charmakar*) group can perhaps be explained on the basis of the notion of purity and pollution as these castes no longer do any tanning or skinning, however, the internal differentiation between these three *jatis* is not based on any polluting factor.

There are certain similarities between caste and race, particularly when we compare the bottom end of the caste system with segregationist racism which, till recently, was practiced in some parts of the United States and South Africa. It is only Black or White that matters and not the actual points of origin or provenance. It is, of course, the case that those who are Black resent the injustices heaped on them, but on no account can they dare claim that they are really not Black but White. This is quite unlike the case of the untouchables, who can argue that they are really not untouchables but have been degraded to this status because of chicanery, deceit, or lost-war. In other words, while the race hierarchy may be seen as unjust, the fact that there is only one hierarchy, and a common standard, is indisputable. In the caste system, as we have already demonstrated, there are multiple hierarchies in existence on account of the discrete nature of caste categories, along with their multiple origin tales and today the quotas. In contrast to the United States, in India, the individual is not as important as the group. It is through group membership and not category affiliation that the reservation program in India gets its impetus. These communities were considered vulnerable not just because they were fewer in number but also because they were historically prevented from acquiring skills and qualities that could enable them to prosper independently. This is why reservations are not really about protecting cultures but about raising the status of hitherto deprived peoples so that they can compete as equals and indeed be able to fight more effectively for rights guaranteed in the Constitution. One solution is compensation for past injustice, but it cannot work in India because the origins of caste discrimination go too far back into the hoary past.

The separation between castes is not only on matters which connote the opposition between purity and pollution. Distinctions and diacritical notches which are not even remotely suggestive of purity and pollution are observed as strictly. Surprisingly the sacred texts do not mention a larger number of *jatis* in existence today, and if it had been the job of sacred texts to clearly identify *jatis* with occupations, then this was done very carelessly. The

jajmani system is, in other words, an idealization which in fact, works out in a somewhat pure form only in a small minority of cases. This further strengthens our view that castes achieve their separation not primarily by the criterion of occupation as supposedly recommended in the texts, but in fact distinguish themselves from each other hyper-symbolically by a cluster of characteristics, the more important of which need not be recommended by the ideology of the true hierarchy. As castes and occupations do not coincide, so quite naturally, there is no identity between the secular status of social classes and the caste identity of members who occupy these social classes. Any hierarchical order in effect is not the essence of the caste system, nor the inevitable consequence of it, but an expression of political or politico-economic power. For if one were to conceptualize *jatis* as discrete entities, and see their difference as one of quality rather than a degree, then this would account for the facility with which castes who occupy a very low position in the varna hierarchy, like the Shudras, find it possible to assume political power and claim Kshatriya status. Likewise, Baniyas can claim to be superior to Kshatriyas, and Kshatriyas can claim superiority over Brahmans, and so on.

3.4. Occupation

In order to see how the caste system operates today, it is crucial to understand how the relations between landowners, tenants, and agricultural laborers (or categories corresponding to them) were governed in the past. Diane Mines, in her book ‘Castes in India’ sheds light on this eternally controversial topic, its previous iterations, its evolution, its struggles, and its present. The settlement is in Yanaimangalam, a small village in Tamil Nadu (1990). Here most villagers made a major part of their living from farming small plots of rice and bananas, either as owners, tenants, or laborers. The rich irrigated lands of the village supported two annual rice crops, and it is in the cultivation of rice that the “mutual” relations of caste were practiced most obviously. Here each caste contributed differently to the production of rice and maintenance of the cultivation. These things weren’t imposed by anyone; they were just there in the form of division of labor. But there was a hierarchy in living; the more powerful and land-owning castes lived in houses towards the north and the lower ones subsequently towards the south depending on the level of their work. For example, the barber, washerman, blacksmith, etc., were in the southern part in small houses, while the service castes of potters and garland makers lived outside the street of Yanaimangalam. There were even some lower castes called toddy tappers (those who climbed palm trees and tapped the fruit for its juice) which lived scattered at some distance from Yanaimangalam. These are today’s Scheduled Castes or Untouchables. Diane had questions about the self-sufficiency and mutuality of the

settlement. The answer to the second question was yes. Today also to some extent, this system survives, but not everyone participates in them. The landowners relied on the labor for planting and harvesting, and the laborers relied on them for their share of the harvest. Each caste had the right to do a particular job. It seemed as if the whole village cooperated to produce rice, and the rice fed the whole village in return. All this looked self-sufficient from the outside, but in reality, the landowners had the supreme power. Without them, the service caste would be jobless and had to agree to do the job. Sometimes there was even violence to get things done. This translates to all the villages with this system; though each village might have a different system in place, the above argument is a reality. In some kingdoms, the untouchables had to sort grains from cow dung to feed their families. Many older accounts of the “*jajmani* system” seem to suggest that villages were relatively self-sufficient and bounded units; they grew their grain and shared the bounty to sustain their small communities. But this was seldom the reality. This myth of self-sufficient and harmonious Indian villages was produced and played into the hands of British colonial policymakers (Mines, 2009). Diane throws the concept of occupation defining castes in India out of the window by stating that there exist thousands of *jatis* in India, and not all can be linked to a service. What is true is that some families of service castes have had hereditary “rights” to serve in those capacities in their respective localities. And today, most work in India is not tied to caste.

Among all the caste studies, the merchant castes have been mainly ignored by the general theories. Though they are a religion today, the Jains were a merchant caste. For them, caste is more social than religious, unlike the Hindus. While Louis Dumont's study focuses on the vertical spread of caste, he ignores the horizontal spread. The hierarchy among the Jains is horizontal. It's called *janati* locally instead of *jati*. The Jains consider themselves above the Brahmans. Their focus is on ahimsa (non-violence) more than purity. Anything which is outside ahimsa is anti-Jain, be it food or relations. They don't even eat anything that grows below the ground as more seeds are consumed, implying more lives were spent in growing this; non-veg is far off. They believe in social-economic development and often migrate to urban areas. Here even the endogamy among them is broken. In this case, we see that purity has no role in justifying the origin. The socio-economic status is the priority for them. Hence, there should not be efforts or attempts to find a single ideology behind the practice of caste throughout the subcontinent.

A single hierarchy, whether Brahmin or Kshatriya, is a bit too perilous to accommodate the multiple nodes along which castes can, and do, operate. Various castes claim various lineages to justify their position in the hierarchy. The lower castes, for

example, the *Chamars*, claim to be the descendants of the *Chanwar Vansh* and are hence *Kshatriya*. It's similar to most of the depressed castes, and due to some reasons, they lost their value in history and are now at the lower end of the caste system. They are often met by vehement Brahmins, who straightaway deny these claims. The lower castes believe in these stories and don't want to mobilize and move up the ladder as they believe there is no need and they should be granted their rights based on history. Many times, this results in violent conflicts among castes. Occupation is no longer a defining factor; in the *jajmani* system, for example, though the tasks are divided, those are assigned to different castes in different villages. Notions of purity and impurity do not guide the behaviors of the people.

3.5. Caste Today

Castes today have joined horizontally for mutually beneficial political purposes, but this coming together, as we have pointed out earlier, has nothing to do with caste logic. Elections in India are misunderstood because it is assumed that political loyalties can only be informed by caste patriotism. If any overwhelming point needs to be reiterated after all that has been said, admittedly in a discursive manner, it is that academics cannot imitate the mode of discourse prevalent in popular constructions of reality if sociology and anthropology are to act as 'levelers' and as humanizing disciplines. Aimless studies of culture not only settle around typifications that divide humanity in the popular consciousness but often even uphold them. Diversity is no longer a cut-off point of sociological investigation whose origins reside in a never-never world. It now demands an explanation in a historical and relational perspective, a perspective that bathes all of humankind in the same light and then discovers its potentiality as a creator of social diversity (Gupta, 2000).

3.6. Inference

The above theorization on caste and its evolution pays very little to no attention to the occupational aspect of it. Majority of the theories put forward the religious, social, and cultural aspects of it. Though they are important, occupation is also a prominent factor as we cannot talk about caste without mentioning occupation. We live in a cultural society; more attention is given to one's rank or respect in the community. People think that they need to fight for that cultural place. But occupation is an important defining factor, is also a way of raising status. The village-centric caste system was completely dependent on occupation and division of labor. There was job security. Everyone was assigned a task, and no one else could take it over. But with industrial development and new mechanized jobs, people found it difficult to adapt to the new style of work, competition increased. This resulted in a loss of

jobs and a further decrease in the economic status of those artisans. Villages too transformed further reducing the old jobs. People couldn't adapt to the new work dynamic. This also gave rise to the demand for reservation in jobs. Occupational mobility is a way out for people from this struggle. Switching to a new occupation will not only raise their economic status but also free them from age-old shackles. It is tough to transition without assistance, but the end result is worth the effort. Reservation also helps in accomplishing this. Reservation in education will empower one with the skills and knowledge necessary to make a transition towards a dignified life. And still, we see negligible importance given to the theorization of occupation. Why is that, we will address in further chapters.

Chapter 4: Understanding Occupational Mobility

When we talk about caste and occupation, we also need to consider the different aspects of the topic that hinder or enable occupational mobility, such as economic discrimination, entrepreneurship, reservation, and present conditions.

4.1. Economic Discrimination

Changing occupation is a way of leaving the traditional occupation behind and having a respectable occupation and a life of dignity. However, switching occupations is not that easy a task; attempting for it is often met with resistance from higher castes. Not only that, but it's also tough to get an opportunity without any kind of support or contacts. Occupational discrimination occurs when members of the deprived castes encounter obstacles that block them from entering the occupations of the majority and face differential treatment (Thorat, Newman, 2007). Many sociologists and anthropologists have argued that economic and political development during the colonial rule and its aftermath led to the breakdown of the caste system, resulting in the breaching of the linkages between caste and traditional occupation. The caste status of an individual no longer determines her or his position in the class of power hierarchy. Studies show that despite the breakdown of the jajmani system and the dissociation between caste and traditional occupations, large sections of "lower" and artisan castes are concentrating in unskilled or low-paid semi-skilled occupations in the informal sector (Kumar, et al., 2009).

A modern and developed India should indeed be a society free of caste. Caste, however, is not simply a traditional hangover. Today the caste structure of India is cut open to forces of industrialization, urbanization, westernization, and secularization. A large Dalit population in villages is still poor. They are landless and asset-less; also a reason to migrate to urban cities. However, urban occupation is based on skill and competence. Those who migrate to cities in order to escape the discriminatory treatment in villages find it tough to adapt to the industries. They have to work in sectors that require similar skills as they possess. In the end, sticking to similar occupations as before and not moving up the ladder. But it's a step forward. A study in Madras shows that there exists intergenerational occupational mobility in urban areas, and nearly 80 percent of the new generation is away from manual jobs (Ramu, 1971). Discrimination does not only exist at a later age; it begins right with the education of the Dalits. They lack many advantages at the start that higher caste

students find quite easy. This is due to the difference in the level of resources available at the start. Even after graduation, they are subjected to skepticism by employers who doubt the legitimacy of reservations and their skills as a result. Perhaps, as a result, Dalit students from comparable degree programs as their high caste counterparts have lower expectations and see themselves as disadvantaged because of their caste and family backgrounds. Even after attaining education, Dalit candidates invariably find it harder to find good jobs. Often Dalit applicants tend to avoid mentioning their being from a reserved category for the fear that it would work against them because of the widespread prejudice among the corporate employers against them. Because they arrive in college with weaker skills on average, they are "playing catch up" and often do not succeed in pulling through even with more advantaged students, and hence enter the job markets with weaker English language and computing skills in the mix (Deshpande, Newman, 2007).

4.2. Entrepreneurship

When finding jobs becomes tougher, another option for Dalits to earn a living is to be a business person/entrepreneur. But this is even tougher than getting a job. While one needs contacts and reservations to find a job, to establish a business, one needs even more support to stand up. They need financial support, a society that accepts their business, and incentives from the government. They may be allowed to enter the Indian markets, but they do so in a position of disadvantage. Discrimination takes a new form under capitalism. A variety of informal bodies are established that prevent any possibility of fair competition in the market between upper and lower caste players (Prakash, 2015). The network needed for getting resources is controlled by the upper castes. To counter the prevalent discrimination in the market and in order to succeed, a Dalit entrepreneur not only has to be a good businessman but invariably also a social and political entrepreneur.

4.3.Reservation

To counter the discrimination and lack of resources, reservation in education and jobs was introduced for the upliftment of Dalits. However, it was supposed to be reviewed frequently and abolished in the end. But we don't see that to be the case today. Instead, some higher castes have now started asking for reservations as they feel they are losing deserving opportunities due to the lower castes. Both the central and state governments have been pursuing their reservation policies independently of each other and without any coordination. There is a need for empirical studies and for putting in place a system for studies on a regular basis to provide necessary inputs for determining the required changes in relevant policies

and programs being pursued or implemented. Reservations need to be restricted to the really needy who have been oppressed and exploited for long and cannot reasonably be expected to come upon the social and economic ladder without special dispensation. Those who are economically well-off, or one of whose generation has already availed the benefit of reservation, should be excluded. The concept of a creamy layer and the restriction of reservation to only one generation need to be uniformly applied to all reserved categories (Saksena, 2007). There is a domination of an upper-caste mindset in the media, the academy, and the wider public in most of the anti-reservation commentaries. All policy efforts should be directed towards equalizing educational opportunity and educational attainment to equalize consumer markets. This conversation stems from the failure of the nation and society in providing an assured commitment to the most vulnerable sector. Reservations possess the threat of perpetuating caste if not used in a limited manner. Glimpses of which can be seen today.

In the process of globalization, the entire Indian economy is getting privatized, which is a big threat to the reservation policy of the weaker sections. In the coming days or even today, it is the private sector that is going to be the dominant player in the job market. There is no compulsion for reservation implementation there. Jobs are often given to relatives and close contacts. They don't want candidates that were pushed forward from the quota system. But this is also positive in some sense for the Dalits. The private sector being dominant, will attract more upper castes and, in turn leaving the government reserved jobs for the depressed (Rai, 2002).

4.4. Urban Caste

When the lower caste artisans try to adapt to the urban environment, they are met with fierce competition from the large-scale industries, putting them in a very unfavorable position. They are compelled to leave their traditional occupations or enter the industry as unskilled or semi-skilled cheap labor. Their traditional skill is not of much importance here. This is also a reason for the lack of motivation to migrate to the cities. The Occupational Mobility of such artisan castes is found to be the lowest in general. There is a sense of security for artisan castes in the villages, making them further insecure about migrating. Improvement in social status is not their priority, but job security and life maintenance are (Chandrashekhariyah, 1962). But for non-artisan castes, kinship and caste ties continue to be a motivating factor to migrate. Such families have taken huge benefits from the economic opportunities in cities. This is evident from the movement of fisher caste men from Minakuppam (see Norr and Norr, 1982).

The control of labor is taking a new form in this urbanization and rural industrialization. Exploitation has changed too. The older forms of bondage labor and control have now adapted to the newer conditions of capitalism. Capitalism is not dissolving this matrix of social institutions but reconfiguring them slowly, unevenly, and in a great diversity of ways (Dandekar, et al., 2015).

4.5. Occupational Mobility

Occupational mobility is enabled by the Constitution of India. It enables one to choose and practice an occupation of choice rightfully. It is instrumental for Dalit castes who have long been engaged in menial occupations such as sweeping, manual scavenging and working with skins of dead animals. These occupations do not earn any respect and have been forced on them for centuries. They are not allowed to eat or drink together; not permitted to even stay in the same neighborhood. There is no dignity in doing such jobs if one can choose a new occupation that is not socially degrading.

One of the most significant studies in this field was done by Rajeshwari Deshpande and Suhas Palshikar in Pune in 2007. They studied occupational mobility across four generations and in different castes. The conclusion was more open than something definitive. Caste still affected the urban dwellers, and endogamy was strict too. Higher progress was seen among the Dalit castes, but they already start from quite a low position, so any progress is significant. The mobility is seen increasing with every immediate generation. It's tough to eradicate the beliefs and political benefits from the caste system.

Occupational Mobility and Political development go hand in hand. Occupational mobility has an impact on the way people orient themselves to politics and public affairs. This is necessary for them to impact their way of life in society. They are often more aware of the communal issues in society, having faced them personally. Occupational mobility has a differential impact on the way citizens respond to their political environment. Apart from things like education and participation in elections, occupational mobility appears to emerge as an "investment" in the growth of stable and aware citizenship (Nijhawan, 1971). Caste associations play an important role in such political upliftments. They enable the castes to make a strong and noticeable front, making it tough for the political parties to ignore their demands and needs. The lower castes will refrain from being politically aggressive, hoping that they will be allowed to enter the higher occupations in the coming future.

4.5.a. Occupational Mobility among *Mehtar* Caste

Traditionally this caste has been engaged in waste picking, sweeping, and manual scavenging. They are also known as Mahar or Bhangi in some states. Manual scavenging includes the manual lifting and removal of human excreta, both from private and also communal dry latrines. They are an exploited caste at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. Hindu religion and culture require the removal of feces as far as possible from the household environment and determines that those considered most impure and polluted - the lowest caste groups - must perform this task. Such association with polluting tasks meant that *Bhangis/Mehtar* was excluded from most of the village activities. If a higher caste person was touched by a *Mehtar*, a cleansing bath had to be taken. Brahmans consider that even the sight of a *Mehtar* requires purification by looking at the sun, moon, or stars and rinsing the mouth with water (Joshi, Ferron, 2007). Due to the kind of occupation they do, they often face the highest level of discrimination and humiliation in society among all the Dalit castes. In the olden times, latrines were cleaned manually by them as they had no other form of livelihood. If they wanted to stay in society, there was no option. But even today, in these technologically advanced times, where machines can do all kinds of work, they are the ones that enter the manhole. The toxic gases in those chambers have proven fatal, sometimes resulting in a significant number of deaths yearly. They are not provided with any kind of protective suit. By law, manual scavenging has been banned in our country, but we still see frequent news of deaths in manholes.

They depend on jobs from the local municipal corporation. Like in Rajasthan, they account for 4.67% of the scheduled caste population but are still unaccounted for and unstudied in the state (Lal, 1981). The jobs of sweeping and night soil cleaning are divided among different *Mehtar* families. Each family has its own service area for which they get paid in the form of daily roti along with some monthly fixed amounts. The majority of the untouchables who seek employment in the cities are doing the lowest type of unskilled work, their occupation often being such as doffers, rockers, and sweepers. Urban mobility and the increased scale in employment opportunities have not much affected the pattern of employment for the *Mehtar* caste. The changes in occupations and education may be associated with measures adopted by the government at the micro-level.

The same is observed in Uttar Pradesh that the work of sanitation and sewerage is still being done by persons from the same caste group in most places. The upper and middle castes enjoy the government jobs of *safai karmis*, but they don't perform them. They appoint *bhangi* substitutes at a meager sum of money—refusal to do so results in loss of income which was never truly enough, and sometimes even violence. The salary is one-fourth of that

of the government-appointed employee. All field stories clearly point out that this scheme of appointing *safai karmis* at the village level has not altered or broken the caste barrier at all (Tripathi, 2012). Politically and economically capable groups have taken over the benefits of government schemes that were meant to uplift *Mehtars* and similar castes. Instead, the exploitation has further increased. In reality, the notion of pollution and purity is still intact, and the work of cleaning is still being done by the same people as has been done historically. Today they rely heavily on conversion for freedom from the disprivileged. Proofs of such changes and mobility can be observed in the form of violent confrontations with the dominant castes and social opposition from the local communities. But their occupational positions have improved. They have started giving up their traditional occupations in the cities (Patwardhan, 1968). Their economic position has, however, not changed appreciably, but there has been a growth of political awareness and aspiration. For further progress, there is a need for educational upliftment.

Government schemes for the rehabilitation of these castes have been short-sighted. The programs announce small jobs such as auto driving, vegetable selling as other options, but there is a lack of focus on moral and economic rehabilitation. The programs promise monetary aid in the form of loans but are not followed by the banks. The neediest of them, that is, the women, elderly, and illiterate, are often less eligible for the programs. To avoid coping with such issues, the scavengers are reluctant to choose other income sources. Better investment and planning in sanitation services and better working conditions for those engaged in this occupation hold the promise of some reform but not social rehabilitation.

One organization headed by an ex-scavenger that is actively campaigning is the Safai Karmachari Association in Andhra Pradesh. The SKA's position is uncompromising - they demand the total abolition of manual scavenging. Bezwada Wilson established the SKA in 1993 and has been working to date. The movement made the scavengers question their place in society and act on it. It was because of his nationwide movement that manual scavenging was termed illegal under the 1993 Manual Scavenging Prohibition Act. Trade unions and even Dalit groups have demanded that the SKA organize manual scavengers into a union to demand better wages and living conditions, but Wilson argues against this, saying that 'we can only be powerful when there are no more among us, who remain manual scavengers.' He explains that the problems of alcoholism, poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy are the by-products of this age-old imposition of cleaning up other people's excreta. He also argues that 'abolition has to be done primarily by groups of manual scavengers themselves in the face of an exposed lack of political will by the government and shameless apathy by the so-called civil society.

It smelled of success, but nothing changed on ground level; things continued to be the same. No government official was questioned or punished for still following manual scavenging. For them, rehabilitation does not mean monetary aids but empowerment.

The nature of the work and services provided by the *Mehtar* castes holds them together. These services can longer be seen as traditional caste-determined work; they have migrated to cities for newer jobs. In Mumbai, they have integrated themselves into the 'monetary economy.' But they have to display their skill and responsibility to work independently, develop their own way of working with the equipment available. For all these reasons, it would be more appropriate to see scavengers in Mumbai as 'professionals' (Vivek, 2000).

4.5.b. Occupational Mobility among *Charmakar* caste

Chamar, *Charmakar*, or *Chamhar* are the caste traditionally associated with picking up dead animals and leatherwork. They are considered at a higher position among the Dalit castes and the largest in population. They also did enjoy a privileged treatment from the British compared to other Scheduled castes. Today some of them are of higher economic status, while some are still roadside cobblers. It's an interesting case study for sociologists of today. The use of plastic and rubber goods has put barriers on the traditional occupation of *charmakars*. This industrialization is a big threat to *charmakars* who do not want to evolve. They need to adapt to either adapt to the newer techniques or switch to a different occupation.

In the past, economic advantages came to this community due to the possibility of retention of their traditional jobs in urban areas. Leatherwork was very much valued in cities too. But for further improvement, there was a need for political and social support. Organizations such as Maharashtra *Charmakar* Sangh helped in raising demands for easier access to caste certificates, scholarship for Dalit students, and separate schools too for effective rehabilitation. These organizations don't support any specific party but instead individual *charmakar* candidates from different parties. These organizations often end up constructing a coherent caste identity under their banner. The Akhil Bhartiya Guru Ravidas Samata Parishad works with a progressive agenda and aspires for a caste-less society. The members are encouraged to be rational, work towards annihilation of caste, inter-caste dining, and marriages, and openly express dissent against unjust religious practices.

The new generation of the *charmakar* community is not interested in continuing their traditional occupation but is in search of a new non-traditional occupation. In Maharashtra, the majority of them are landless and depend on traditional leatherwork. However, in the cities, they are quite aware of all the reservation policies and educational schemes. They can

be seen practicing non-traditional occupations such as teachers, lawyers, doctors, and government employees. Most of them are migrants from rural areas, trying to find a solution for poverty. Nearly 80% percent of *charmakars* in Mumbai are of rural origin (Bhosale, 2003,2009).

Some findings of a study conducted in the Parbhani district highlight *charmakar* as a community that is self-centered. Nearly 74 percent of the total *charmakar* families were engaged in traditional occupations. Only 0.86 percent were employed at higher positions which is a negligible number at the end. One of the reasons is deprivation from higher education and low living standards. 85.15 percent of the respondents were below the poverty line, whereas only 12.9 percent were taking benefits from the government schemes (Patil, 2006).

Chapter 5: Observations

All the above work and studies suggest that there is a significant scarcity of quality work in this field to make any concluding remarks. From what we have seen, it can be said that there is mobility to a smaller extent among the low-skilled workers and low-paying occupations. Also, each caste does not get an equal opportunity in India. But again, there is a scarcity of rigorous work in India in this field due to the shortage of high-quality data.

We do have a greater understanding of the caste system through the rigorous theorization we did in chapter 3 and why occupational mobility is a means to break away from this system. However, similar to what we concluded in chapter 3, a lot of studies play major emphasis on the cultural and religious aspects of caste. Occupation being a defining characteristic, needs more attention from sociologists.

To make comments on our observations, we don't see a concrete pattern pertaining to the studies conducted, as reflected in chapter 4. Some castes are aware of their rights and incentives and make use of them for their upliftment; some are either unaware or choose not to switch occupations citing their religious beliefs. They are heavily dependent on reservations for benefits in jobs and education. While it is a tool, it also invites aggression from higher castes that have also started to for reservations.

Currently, we know that to make any statement on occupational mobility of the concerned castes, there is a need for more field studies focusing on this. We need more data-driven works. There are a few studies on occupational mobility in general for castes, but there are almost negligible focusing on individual castes.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Chakravarti, Anand. "Caste and Agrarian Class: A View from Bihar." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 36, no. 17, 2001, pp. 1449–1462. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4410549.

The author examines the presence of social inequality in rural Bihar. The traditional and new dominant castes continue to have privileged access to material and political resources. Ones born in low-ranking caste are deprived of these resources and mostly belong to the rural underclass, subjected to exploitation and repression. This repression is a consequence of the organic linkage between dominant castes in the society at large, which constitute the dominant class and the structures of the state. Despite certain tangible achievements, enhance wages for locals, and termination of social exploitation, their living conditions remain abysmal. Any form of challenge towards this is often faced with a violent backlash.

2. Chandrashekharaiyah, K. "Mobility Patterns Within the Caste." *Sociological Bulletin*, vol. 11, no. 1/2, 1962, pp. 62–67. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23618814.

The author analyses the condition of artisan castes in modern industries. Such castes face fierce competition in the big industries and are compelled to leave their traditional crafts and take to either agriculture or to enter the industry as unskilled or semi-skilled labor. Their traditional skills are of more use in the rural areas, also being a reason for reluctance towards migration to cities. There is a disinclination towards other jobs for them, as traditional occupations provide minimum job security and life support, giving lesser importance to better social status.

3. Chatterjee, Mary. "Mobilization of Urban Sweepers." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 9, no. 48, 1974, pp. 1978–1979. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4364194.

Mary conducts a study over two and a half years on sweepers and scavengers in Banaras. The sample space was 1800 for the same. The wages are super low for them, and living conditions are below par. They are under-represented and usually turn towards the Congress party for hope, backed by few organizations. Occupational

mobility is also low, and those who have secured supervisor jobs also don't show any signs of social mobility later.

4. Dandekar, Ajay, et al. "The Emerging Underclass Of Urban India." *India International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2015, pp. 37–46. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26316551.

Dandekar highlights that modern industrialization has transformed the way social institutions worked in the past. Urbanization can easily be seen pauperizing rural labor in an iniquitous manner.

5. Desai, I. P. "Understanding Occupational Change in India." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 6, no. 22, 1971, pp. 1094–1098. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4382066.

The author asks whether it is possible to change one's social status without changing the occupation. The data from the census doesn't go with this. Castes traditional practicing agriculture or engaged in semi-skilled or skilled occupations end up migrating to cities hoping for better monetary returns. The shadow of caste is tough to leave behind even after a better economic status.

6. Deshpande, Ashwini, and Katherine Newman. "Where the Path Leads: The Role of Caste in Post-University Employment Expectations." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 42, no. 41, 2007, pp. 4133–4140. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40276547.

The authors study two groups of students post-graduation for job acceptance and the resources available to them. Students from well-to-do families have higher connections and financial security, making a start quite easy for them. On the other hand, Dalit students have to face obstacles at every stage. As usually, they get admissions through the reservation, they are perceived as less for jobs and are subjected to skepticism. Social and cultural status plays a huge role in urban, formal sector labor markets, where hiring practices are less transparent than appearing at first sight.

7. Deshpande, Ashwini. "The Eternal Debate." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 41, no. 24, 2006, pp. 2444–2446. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4418347.

Caste today still remains as an indicator of disadvantage in terms of distribution of income and wealth. Very little importance seems to be given to increasing representation for them. The media, too, is upper-caste biased, and the wider public today is anti-reservation. There is a need for more policies directed towards increasing educational opportunities for greater upliftment in society.

8. Deshpande, Rajeshwari, and Suhas Palshikar. "Occupational Mobility: How Much Does Caste Matter?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 43, no. 34, 2008, pp. 61–70. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40277879.

The authors try to study the occupational mobility patterns in Pune. Most of the studies conducted are focused on rural areas; hence very little mobility is observed. In conclusion, caste exists in cities too. Endogamy is still preferred. Small mobility is seen among the newer educated generations among the lower castes. This is small, but they already start from a very low point, so any mobility is significant for them. For higher benefits, there is a need for better policies, but these policies are brought by politicians, and the politicians need the caste to stay alive for votes. The lower castes will refrain from being politically aggressive, hoping that they will be allowed to enter the higher occupations in the future.

9. Driver, Edwin D. "Caste and Occupational Structure in Central India." *Social Forces*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1962, pp. 26–31. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2572916.

Driver observes that intergenerational occupational mobility is frequent in both rural and urban India, but it is mostly between occupations of comparable ranks. Hence, it does not really work against the caste system. This is mainly due to educational differences among castes. But gains in education are insufficient for the final goal; it depends upon the economy at that time. The government needs to constantly work towards increasing opportunities and jobs for better mobility patterns to be seen.

10. Gandhi, Raj S. "From Caste To Class In Indian Society." *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1980, pp. 1–14. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23261720.

Gandhi observes that the age-old concept of caste today has become vulnerable to the forces of industrialization, westernization, and secularism. The system was cut open by people for political gains. The changes in caste, which were initiated by changes in power dimensions, run parallel with the changes in economic and socio-cultural dimensions. Indians today seem to be vehemently fighting the caste system, which is still strong due to the persistence of endogamy.

11. Gupta, Dipankar. "Continuous Hierarchies and Discrete Castes." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 19, no. 48, 1984, pp. 2049–2053. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4373825.

The author believes that there is a lack of reformulation in the conceptual framework within which castes in India have been understood. The purpose of this study was to find an alternative conceptual formulation that can integrate some empirical findings. In the end, after going through multiple concepts, he concludes that castes do not form a system because of submission to hierarchy but because they separate themselves relative of each other.

12. Heredia, Rudolf C. "No Entry, No Exit: Savarna Aversion towards Dalit Conversion." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 39, no. 41, 2004, pp. 4543–4555. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4415649.

The author believes that conversion is the fastest way out of the caste system. However, this is met with the strongest opposition from the society in the form of anti-conversion laws under the disguise of protecting them. Conversion should be taken as a process rather than an event to avoid violent confrontations. On the negative side, conversion is also a way of running away from the fights for civil liberties, democratic rights, and freedom.

13. Jagannathan, N. Vijay, and Animesh Halder. "A Case Study of Pavement Dwellers in Calcutta: Occupation, Mobility, and Rural-Urban Linkages." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 23, no. 49, 1988, pp. 2602–2605. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4394084.

For migrants from villages, jobs in the cities depend hugely on contacts and good relations. The access routes of such jobs are usually controlled by the dominant castes. Village youth can earn a living through heavy manual work, but these jobs are easy to get through contacts, communal relations, and kinship ties.

14. Jetley, S. "Education and Occupational Mobility: A UP Village." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 4, no. 17, 1969, pp. 725–727. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40735627.

Jetley studies the occupational choices of the Koiris who work in the cities as clerks, leaving behind their traditional occupation. Most of them are reluctant to leave the village and work at nearby places. Their community has improved their social status embracing educational opportunities, and also adopted a number of innovations in their traditional jobs.

15. Jodhka, Surinder S. "Dalits in Business: Self-Employed Scheduled Castes in North-West India." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 45, no. 11, 2010, pp. 41–48. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25664223.

Despite several positive changes, caste continues to play a role in the urban, and it is an even bigger negative factor for Dalit entrepreneurs. The social and political conditions are the major hurdles for them. For Dalits to be good entrepreneurs, they also need to be social and political entrepreneurs.

16. Joshi, Deepa, and Suzanne Ferron. "Manual Scavenging – a Life of Dignity?" *Waterlines*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2007, pp. 24–27. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24685078.

The authors comment on the still prevalent practice of manual scavenging in India. The fight will only be won when there is a massive change in attitude among the oppressors and the oppressed. A life of dignity for manual scavengers is only possible when an occupation is taken by choice, and there is a promise of safe, secure, and dignified life from the availed benefits.

17. K. D. Saksena. "Policy Changes Needed on Reservations." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 42, no. 26, 2007, pp. 2494–2498. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4419751.

There is a need for empirical studies on the reservation system and determining the changes required in the reservation policies. Both the central and state governments have been perusing their own independent policies and setting up commissions. Reservation needs to be restricted to only those who have been exploited for a long now and cannot be expected to come up without an external hand.

18. Kumar, Rajnish, et al. "Social and Economic Inequalities: Contemporary Significance of Caste in India." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 44, no. 50, 2009, pp. 55–63. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25663890.

This paper analyses a sample of slums from four metros for the study. Despite the breakdown of the *jajmani* system, many people from lower and artisan castes are engaged in unskilled or low-paid semi-skilled occupations. The upper and middle castes dominated the higher positions leaving the lowest for Dalits. Simply providing money and basic amenities are insufficient for such castes to improve the quality of life. There is a need for developmental expenditure and employment programs from the government for the reduction of urban poverty among Dalits.

19. Lal, Shyam. "Occupational Mobility among Urban Bhangis." *Indian anthropologist*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1981, pp. 11–20. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41919411.

The author studies occupational mobility among *bhangis* from Rajasthan. Despite being a significant number of the lower caste population, very few studies have been done on them. These castes still end up doing the same old jobs for small money. Jobs reserved for them are taken over by upper castes, who hire the *bhangis* to work at a much lower wage. There is no observable occupational mobility in this caste. Urban mobility and increased employment opportunities have not much benefited the *Bhangi* caste.

20. Lloyd I. Rudolph, and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations." *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 33, no. 1, 1960, pp. 5–22. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2753645.

Caste has absorbed and synthesized some of the new democratic values. The caste associations act as a link between the politically illiterate mass and new democratic processes. Caste has been to play the political role as a bearer of India's ancient regimes and new democratic principles.

21. Mehta, Pratap Bhanu. "Affirmation without Reservation." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 39, no. 27, 2004, pp. 2951–2954. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4415219.

Mehta states that a discussion in terms of the reservation is a number two option. It is a result of the failure of the state in giving credible commitment for the betterment of lower castes. Reservations must be handled carefully, as they can easily be used to sustain the caste system rather than eradicating it in the future.

22. Motiram, Sripad, And Ashish Singh. "How Close Does the Apple Fall to the Tree? Some Evidence from India on Intergenerational Occupational Mobility." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 47, no. 40, 2012, pp. 56–65. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41720217.

The authors observe small occupational mobility from the sample space. It is major in urban areas compared to the rural. There is also substantial immobility among the low-skilled castes. But there is a scarcity of more such studies for comparison. There is a need for high-quality data for more conclusion observations.

23. Nijhawan, N. K. "Occupational Mobility and Political Development: Some Preliminary Findings." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 6, no. 3/5, 1971, pp. 317–324. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4381553.

Occupational mobility has a different impact on the way people orient themselves to politics and public affairs. A consistently large number of mobile voters are politically aware compared to the locals. They are more inclined towards becoming members of different associations. In Nijhawan's study, apart from things like education and participation in elections, occupational mobility appears to emerge as an investment in the growth of stable and aware citizenship.

24. Jadhav, Narendra. "Neglected Economic Thought of Babasaheb Ambedkar." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 26, no. 15, 1991, pp. 980–982. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4397927.

Ambedkar detested exploitation but was against violence to fight against the same. He believed that political equality has no meaning unless it is complement by social and economic equality. Today, his thoughts seem to be neglected, and recognition of his efforts has drastically reduced.

25. Norr, James L., and Kathleen L. Norr. "Impact of Urban Growth: Change in a South Indian Fishing Community from 1965 to 1980." *Ethnology*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1982, pp. 111–123. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3773431.

Occupational mobility has caused young fishermen to travel to urban cities and adopt modern fishing techniques. Movement in and out of the village has increased. Migrations are assisted by kinship and caste ties. Many families seem to be taking advantage of the economic opportunities available in cities over the past 15 years. There is a lack of comparative data, though. The author hopes the trend to continue ahead.

26. Vivek, P. S. "Scavengers: Mumbai's Neglected Workers." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 35, no. 42, 2000, pp. 3722–3724. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4409855.

The author identifies various factors adversely affecting the conditions of scavengers in Mumbai. The groups are held together by the nature of their jobs. Most of the safari karmis have migrated from rural areas in search of better opportunities. However, getting jobs is not easy for them; they have to demonstrate their skills for the same. They have to figure out their own way of working in the new systems. They are turning into professionals slowly with such independence.

27. Patel, Tulsi. "Stigma Goes Backstage: Reservation in Jobs and Education." *Sociological Bulletin*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2008, pp. 97–114. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23634602.

Patel writes about the discrimination faced by lower castes in the private sector. The private sector interacts with the caste in an expected manner by sometimes active, sometimes passive exclusion giving no legit reasons for the discrimination. Caste has been used to regulate the economic life in India, and it now does even in the private market.

28. Patwardhan, Sunanda. "Social Mobility and Conversion of the *Mahars*." *Sociological Bulletin*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1968, pp. 187–202. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23619310.

Patwardhan focuses on the migration and conversion of *Mahars* and Ambedkar's role in empowering them for it. She also talks about the *Mahar* liberation movement and the adoption of Buddhism as well. This increased their spatial mobility allowed them to steer away from the shackles of religion, and education helped in gaining upward occupational mobility.

29. Prakash, Aseem. "Dalits Enter the Indian Markets as Owners of Capital: Adverse Inclusion, Social Networks, and Civil Society." *Asian Survey*, vol. 55, no. 5, 2015, pp. 1044–1069. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26364323.

Dalit entrepreneurs enter the Indian business market in a disadvantaged position. Caste takes a new form under capitalism and continues discrimination. A disadvantage is mainly in the form of market resources that are owned by the upper castes. But this shows the achievement of Dalits in an even brighter light which has made it to the top through such hardships.

30. Ramu, G. N. "Migration, Acculturation and Social Mobility Among the Untouchable Gold Miners in South India: A Case Study." *Human Organization*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1971, pp. 170–178. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44125081.

Ramu observes a migrant from his local village to KGF for a better future. The new job is skill and competence-based. He is emancipated from the burden of untouchability. The family shows intergenerational occupational mobility. The families no longer have to do menial jobs. This shows great signs for their future.

31. Sharma, K. N. "Occupational Mobility of Castes in a North Indian Village." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1961, pp. 146–164. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3629140.

There is more than one occupation that can be prescribed for a caste traditionally. There is a restriction of movement into other occupations in society. However, horizontal mobility is allowed. There is hope for better opportunities for occupational mobility from the government in the future.

32. Rai, Sheela. "Social and Conceptual Background to the Policy of Reservation." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 37, no. 42, 2002, pp. 4309–4318. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4412745.

Reservations were introduced by the British as a quota system. These enable education and government jobs for the disprivileged as well as political seats for representations. But there have always been flaws as many times upper castes would take up the reserved government jobs. However, with greater returns in private jobs today, lower castes find it easy to get the government ones. The reservation system is now keeping the lower castes below as, the higher castes are progressing to a different level.

33. Sinha, Sanjay. "Economics vs. Stigma: Socio-Economic Dynamics of Rural Leatherwork in UP." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 21, no. 24, 1986, pp. 1061–1067. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4375797.

Modern India should have been free from caste, but for people at the receiving end, the system continued to deprive them of opportunities. Official data showed that a large majority of the Dalit population is still landless and asset-less. Government policies are helping some achieve better education, but these policies work against them finding jobs. Dalit candidates are considered less capable due to reservation benefits and struggle for good jobs.

34. Sovani, N.V. and Kusum Pradhan. "Occupational Mobility In Poona City Between Three Generations." *Indian Economic Review*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1955, pp. 23–36. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/29793009.

Authors study the occupational mobility of multiple castes by dividing the occupations into ten grades across three generations. They observe that most like to remain stationary in the first generation and ascend in second. Some castes showed greater levels of fluctuation. The tempo of change is highest in the third generation, shown by declining manual and unskilled labor.

35. Thorat, Sukhadeo, and Katherine S. Newman. "Caste and Economic Discrimination: Causes, Consequences and Remedies." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 42, no. 41, 2007, pp. 4121–4124. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40276545.

Caste has long defined the occupational status of the lower castes. There is exclusion towards them both passively and actively in social as well as professional sectors. The majority group makes it tough for new members to enter their occupation. Caste, in this way the regulates the economic life in India.

36. Thorat, Sukhadeo. "On Reservation Policy for Private Sector." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 39, no. 25, 2004, pp. 2560–2563. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4415165.

The reservation policy was meant to give opportunities to the marginalized. But the private sector seems to be finding a way out of this. The writer cites multiple studies highlighting this injustice. In the end, he discusses the required measures to prevent this from happening through multiple strategies.

37. Thorat, Sukhadeo. "Reservation and Efficiency: Myth and Reality." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 40, no. 9, 2005, pp. 808–810. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4416261.

This article argues that there is discrimination against some groups in the private sector, and it does have a positive result for the excluded groups rather than impairing the efficiency of the industry. Some neoclassical theories predict higher competition in the labor market, implying that the market will self-correct and overcome discrimination. The corporate sector needs to keep in mind that anti-discrimination measures like reservations are needed for growth as much as equity.

38. Tripathi, Tulika. "Safai Karmi Scheme of Uttar Pradesh: Caste Dominance Continues." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 47, no. 37, 2012, pp. 26–29. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41720133.

The work of sweeping and sanitation is still being done by the Mehtar caste in UP. The upper and middle castes take over the government cleaning jobs and employ the lower castes to do the work at very cheap rates. The safari karmi scheme has been broken. Rather, it has led to further exploitation of lower castes by the dominant ones.

39. Varma, Visakh. "On Intergenerational Occupational Mobility." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 48, no. 42, 2013, pp. 4–5. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23528555.

Varma states that defining occupational mobility in the Indian context is not an easy task. Multiple factors need to be considered, such as poverty, inequality, the character of labor market, skill difference, and urban environment.

40. Venkatesu, E. "Backward Castes and Mobilization Process In Andhra Pradesh." *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 66, no. 2, 2005, pp. 367–394. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41856133.

The limitation of the backward castes mobilization is that in the process of globalization, the entire Indian economy is getting privatized, which is a big threat to the reservation policy of the weaker sections. That is why the backward classes movement is neither strongly opposing the privatization process nor demanding reservations in the private sector. The entire process of mobilization is limited to the demands of educated middle classes of the backward classes.

41. Waghmare, B. S. "Reservation Policy And The Plight Of Matangs In Maharashtra." *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 71, no. 3, 2010, pp. 923–946. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42748420.

The Dalit studies have failed to pay sufficient attention to the differential impact that the reservation policy has on different sub-section and the need to distinguish between the most deprived Dalits from those who have benefited more. The author focuses on

the Matang Caste for his study, comparing their situation to Chamars and Mahar Buddhists over six decades. When compensatory discrimination has been applied for ensuring the principle of equality between the upper castes and the SCs, there is no reason why it should not be applied within the scheduled castes, i.e., between the advanced Mahar/Buddhists and backward *Matangs*. The demand of *Matangs* through various caste organizations for categorization of SCs needs government support through appropriate parliamentary intervention. Otherwise, this inequality is bound to lead to social and political unrest in the near future.