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REVIEW ARTICLE

Caste and Politics

I P Desai

Yogendra Singh

Caste in Indian Politics edited by Rajni Kothari; Orient Longmans,
1970; pp x + 380; Rs 35.

I

THIS volume is concerned with un-
folding the role of caste in Indian poli-
tics from a new perspective and with
a new methodological focus. The con-
text of analysis too is different: it has
moved from the microcosm to the ma-
croscosm, from a single village holistic
study to multiregional comparative ana-
lysis and from analytic description to
analytic classification and testing of
hypotheses. This fresh perspective has
slowly emerged in the recent caste stu-
dies by political scientists. The col-
lection of various efforts in Rajni Ko-

thari's volume brings them in one place
and the editor's introduction unfolds
the unity underlying these efforts and
also puts forth coherently the new ori-
entation of these studies.

Nine empirical studies of caste and
the political structure and process in
India have been included in this volu-
me. Yet, the book has a unity. The
exposition of this unity is made by the
editor in his introduction. That also
speaks for the editorial effort put in.
The issues raised in the introduction
give meaning and significance to each
contribution. A careful perusal of the

introduction is therefore necessary.

Kothari raises some basic questions
of approach to the study of political
phenomena and of the relation be-
tween social structure and the polity.
He refers to a 'cognitive hiatus' that
has resulted from thinking on caste in
terms of dichotomous conceptual mo-
dels. He suggests that adaptive pro-
cesses of caste transcend the social sci-
entists' intellectual predilections and
their cognitive 'inhibitions'. He mentions
three prominent approaches to the ana-
lysis of caste in relation to politics.
First is the approach of the doctrinaire
modernisers: whether caste is disap-
pearing or not. This, to his mind, is
a false question to ask. A more rele-
vant question to ask may be: what form
is caste taking under the impact of po-
litics and how do political processes get
transformed in a caste-oriented society?

Secondly, writers take an instrumen-
tal view' of caste and politics. Here po-

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litics is treated as a mere projection of the social system without an autonomous existence. This view, according to Kothari, suffers from a reductionist fallacy. Thirdly, there is a definitional approach where focus on caste and politics is in terms of conceptual models, such as "from caste to class relationship" or in a pure ideological framework. The value premises inherent in this approach tend to vary. For example, caste may be termed as reactionary or a thing of pure 'essences' or contrariwise, in a process of democratic 'reincarnation', as in the work of the Rudolphs. Here, instead of facts impinging upon the model it is the model which imposes itself upon facts presented through neat categories. According to Rajni Kothari, "the caste-politics problem in India is not a problem of definition but clearly one of empirical understanding of a competitive and mobile system which could give us a reasonable model of social dynamics" (p 7).

CASTE-POLITICS RELATIONSHIP

There are three important levels at which, according to him, caste-politics assumes significance. There are, first, 'secular aspects' which consist of 'governmental' and 'political' elements in the relationships within and between castes in their political matrices. Then, there is the 'integration aspect' where caste tends to be relevant to politics through differentiation and agglomeration in its form. Finally, caste enters politics through the 'consciousness aspect' highlighted by its symbolism and value structure. This is where symbolic gestures for cultural mobility such as 'sanskritisation', 'westernisation' and 'secularisation' assume or disguise political overtones in their manifestation. These three aspects work together, and the interaction of caste with politics evolves in a rough sequential order.

To begin with, the stage is set with monopolistic power of 'entrenched' castes which soon evokes a bilateral response of an 'ascendant' caste that challenges their power. This leads to the second stage wherein the process of competition within the entrenched castes for access to resources that are scarce leads to their fragmentation. This is the stage of 'factional politics' of caste; it also might result in the formation of 'caste federations' or system of 'co-option' from other castes by a dominant caste. The third stage is, however, set when due to weakening of caste structure from within and proliferation of other secular structures from without

the bases of political networks and their support structures shift from the caste to the non-caste sector through growth of technology, education, urbanisation, etc. This structure could be a class, though not necessarily. It may take varied transitional forms.

HOPEFUL NOTE

This leads Kothari to add a hopeful note to his analysis of caste and political system in India. He says, "An impression prevails that whereas things like education, urbanisation and industrialisation were making inroads into traditional sectarian loyalties, electoral politics have resuscitated them and reestablished their legitimacy, and that this has given rise to disintegrative tendencies that will disrupt the democratic and secular framework of the Indian polity. Evidence is cited from the behaviour of political parties, all of whom invoke primordial sentiments and organise their support on the basis of pockets of caste influence. Now, much of the evidence cited, though exaggerated, is often true; what is not true is the inference drawn from it. For in reality the consequences of caste-politics interactions are just the reverse of what is usually stated. It is not politics that gets caste-ridden; it is caste that gets politicised". (p 20)

Kothari discards the tradition-modernity model. It is becoming fashionable to discard it. But he has an alternative suggestion. He accepts "change" as a point of reference rather than any necessary reversal as was presumed in the other model; and he seeks to characterise the dimensions of this change. While he avoids the question of the direction of change which was implicit in that model and instead takes the safer position of concentrating on the process of change, his emphasis is not misplaced inasmuch as both "traditional" and "modern" in the other model were presumed to exist in a vacuum. Kothari is right in saying more simply that there is a dialogue between the old and the new. The terms of this dialogue are and should be pragmatic and developmental. Pragmatic is understandable. It means manipulation of the environment with reference to immediate and specific ends. But "developmental" has become a cliche, one function of which is to avoid saying where we are going. Developing into what? That which is always something distant, not very specific or not very clear. In fact, pragmatic in the context of "developmental" has meaning and relevance

with reference to the question: developing or moving into what?

A NATIONAL CONSENSUS

Kothari has an answer — unless he disowns it. His answer is that we are moving towards "the realisation of social purpose and the growth of national consensus". The action which is dysfunctional to that purpose and consensus is pragmatically a bad action. There is likely to be less disagreement on this than on such questions as: What is that social purpose? And consensus on what? When is the consensus national? In fact, the concept 'modern' has a relevance here inasmuch as it has some existing societies and theories as referants. Kothari does not discard these referants. His point seems to be that they are to be taken as given. What he does not agree with, in dealing with the relationship between the old and the new, is any idea of "sharp discontinuities and disruption in the process of political modernisation". What he perceives, instead, is a process of interaction, accommodation, adaptation and integration between the 'old' and the 'new'. He says, "It [modernising society] moves from one threshold of integration and performance to another, in the process transforming both the indigenous structures and attitudes and the newly introduced institutions and ideas."

He is right in making this point. But the differences will arise on naming the new that emerges as a result of the conversation between the old and the new. This is not hair-splitting. The social purpose and national consensus mentioned earlier will have meaning and significance only with reference to that which 'emerges', i e, the new which is neither old nor new and yet has the elements of both in it. This is not just a matter of intellectual discussion when we end with saying, "well, we agree to differ". Kothari very rightly relates it to action. He says, "elements that prove dysfunctional to the realisation of social purpose and the growth of national consensus may need to be subdued; and this is the function of a determined leadership." Thus it is ultimately on the understanding of the "emergent new" that the action of the leaders would depend.

AVOIDING THE 'ISMS'

However, the recent trend is to avoid discussions regarding the understanding of the "new" because that implies discussion of ideologies, "isms", etc, which are supposed to involve me-

taphysics or philosophy or things which are not empirical or not 'science'. In the absence of clarity or consensus regarding the 'new', social purpose and consensus will be that which is interpreted and determined by the people in power and the elements to be subdued will also be decided by them. This point has relevance in the present context in India. The Naxalites and the communalists are to be suppressed. Why? Both are 'ultra' — one is ultra left, the other is ultra right. To pacify the ultra left, a left-of-centre policy is to be recommended. To pacify the ultra right, a right-of-centre policy is to be preferred. One is left to guess for one-self what that centre is.

If the decisions of policy makers are to be influenced by those who are supposed to think on these matters, i e, the academicians, the latter have the responsibility of discussing them. Kothari has not done this, through there is no intention to accuse him of an act of omission. For the purpose for which this book was undertaken, such discussion was not necessary. It is to be appreciated that he has made the point which provides an opening for the discussion which we have been avoiding.

Consistent with the view that the old and the new both get transformed during the course of their interaction, Kothari rejects the question: is caste disappearing? He thinks that the more appropriate question would be: what form is caste taking under the impact of modern politics? And what form is politics taking in a caste-oriented society?

Kothari clarifies his position in the following para:

"Politics is a competitive enterprise, its purpose is the acquisition of power for the realisation of certain goals, and its process is one of identifying and manipulating existing and emerging allegiance in order to mobilise and consolidate positions. The important thing is organisation and articulation of support, and where politics is mass-based the point is to articulate support through the organisations in which the masses are to be found. It follows that where the caste structure provides one of the principal organisational clusters along which the bulk of the population is found to live, politics must strive to organise through such a structure. The alleged 'casteism in politics' is thus no more and no less than politicisation of caste. It is something in which both the forms of caste and the forms of politics are brought nearer each other, in the process changing both. By drawing the caste system into its web of organisation, politics finds material for its own design. In making politics their sphere of acti-

vity, caste and kin groups on the other hand get a chance to assert their identity and to strive for positions. Drawing upon both the interacting structures are the real actors, the new contestants for power."

The standpoint of the book is that the relationship between caste and politics is basically a relationship for the specific purpose of organising public activity. This relationship can be examined by "first examining the nature of this interaction and secondly its product, that is, the type of changes that have taken place in the political system as a result of differential involvement of caste organisations at different points in time and at different levels of the polity". He then further specifies his search. "Our focus is not so much on what happens to the caste system as a whole as a result of its involvement in the political process but rather what structures and networks of relationships enter into the political process and how."

A RESOURCE FOR POLITICS

But he adds, "we cannot wholly avoid the question of what politics does to the caste system — for certain forms adopted by the caste system in the wake of a wider secular ordering of relationships such as the caste association or the caste federation, or even the more traditional intercaste networks of patron-client ties, become very much the stuff of politics. But it still needs to be stressed that it is as political sociologists interested in studying the pursuit of collective interests and purposes that the authors in this volume have approached their subject. Thus, for instance, a number of authors were interested in how different parties or movements, or even different groups within a single party, mobilise different social strata as resources for their political objectives. It is from this perspective that social reform movements, caste associations and federations, and other networks and relationships in the social and economic sub-systems become relevant data for analysis. Or again the authors are interested in how a sense of discontent or exploitation prevailing within the caste order provide a viable basis for the mobilisation of masses; for their own reform in the first instance and ultimately for assertion of their rights vis-a-vis others. Once again the organisational and psychological conditions of caste organisation are turned into a resource for politics and hence relevant material for political analysis."

The ground is now clear for understanding the contributions to the book

by different writers. There are nine contributors and each of them has written with competence. Each one of them sets out with a clear perception of what he wants to do and ends with stating what has been done. It is very gratifying to observe that each contributor has kept to the common focus. Apparently a major editorial job has gone into the preparation of this volume. Each contribution has to be read separately by anyone who wants to appreciate the different situations in which a common analytical focus can be pursued. It will be a very rewarding experience.

II

Eleanor Zellict illustrates how Mahars used political means to ameliorate their social condition. What equipped them to do that? She writes, "The factors that led to the Mahar social awakening [were] military service and other contacts with the British, employment opportunities outside the village patterns, the beginnings of education, provided at first by caste Hindu reformers and Christian missions and from the 1920s onward at least in part by their own efforts; a latent caste spirit stimulated by reminders of their military past and the religious worth of Chokhamela; and a highly educated leader, Dr Ambedkar, capable of forming them into a political force, equipped them for the use of political means toward a modern goal of social equality".

A case similar to the Mahars was that of the Kshatriyas of Gujarat studied by the editor of the book and Rushikesh Maru. The Mahars formed the Scheduled Caste Federation. The Kshatriyas of Gujarat formed the Kshatriya Sabha. Both of them became political forces. But the Scheduled Caste Federation died with the death of Ambedkar and the Kshatriya Sabha is facing a crisis with the split in the Swatantra party in Gujarat. Newspaper reports are that the Kshatriya youths are repudiating the old leaders of the Sabha. One of the charges against them is that they have encouraged caste antagonism. Politics is used by caste and caste is used by politics. The political solidarity of the Mahars in Maharashtra and of the Kshatriyas in Gujarat has been undermined. Has caste solidarity increased or decreased?

CASE OF THE NADARS

Robert L Hardgrave's examination of the case of the Nadars is relevant to this question. He writes, "the role and effectiveness of a caste in politics,

however, is necessarily dependent on the solidarity of the group and the degree to which it shares a common political culture. The degree to which any group may be said to possess a common political culture will be a function of (1) the elaboration of differentiation with regard to other groups, and (2) the elaboration of differentiation within the group itself. With regard to the analysis of a single caste, we might then hypothesise that the degree to which a caste may be said to possess a political culture common to the community as a whole will be a function of (1) the elaboration of caste ranking and (2) internal differentiation within the caste itself." He concludes, "Differentiation within the Nadar community and the concomitant decline in the elaboration of caste ranking has increasingly undermined the community's political solidarity. The cities, the locus of economic change and social mobilisation, most clearly reflected the decline in the elaboration of caste ranking and the rise in differentiation within the single-caste communities."

Donald Rosenthal's conclusion from his study in two urban areas is also relevant here. He writes, "we have suggested that the process of caste conflict is influenced by factors internal to the caste (the degree of internal differentiation; the kinds of goals which a caste pursues) as well as by intercaste conflict and co-operation in the Indian political system."

Caste and Parties

Two papers deal with caste and political party as an organisation. Richard Sisson ("Caste and Political Factions in Rajasthan") analyses the development of the Congress party in one part of Rajasthan in terms of support bases. Among the many important points made by him, the following is very useful. According to him, "perhaps the central factor in the political cohesion of caste groups has been the cohesion of elites within particular castes." He further says, "Such cohesion however would not have lasted long had it not been for the fulfilment of yet another condition. We may call this [the political pay-off that results from organised activity] the desired returns on one's political investment. These returns are of various kinds: (1) employment and patronage, (2) government loans, permits and local amenities such as schools, electricity and irrigation facilities, (3) intercession in administrative decision making and in the posting of local administrative officials. Command over the

allocation of these political goods has not only been important in the maintenance of cohesion within Jat caste and Jat coalition but has been instrumental in the ability of the Jats to attract the support of new political groups." It is important to note here that what we complain about — nepotism, favouritism, political interference etc — are for a social scientist like Sisson simply 'political goods'. They are ethically neutral objects for observation and analysis.

Rosenthal postulates that caste cohesion should be formulated on a continuum of types. He mentions Dahl's three stages of assimilation of ethnic groups into the political life of New Haven city — the stages of ethnic unity, ethnic factionalism and of interethnic solidarity based on multiple cleavages. At the third stage the unity on the basis of primordial identity gives way to non-primordial considerations. Rosenthal brings out many limitations of this model to explain the Indian situation but does not analyse this issue in depth. This is particularly relevant since Andre Beteille in his contribution refers twice to the validity of Dahl's model for the analysis of caste-politics relationship in India.

Recruitment to a Political Party

Ramashray Roy chooses to show the connection between caste and politics through recruitment to a political party ("Caste and Political Recruitment in Bihar"). He writes, "The system of social stratification provides a broad frame of reference for the functioning of the political system both in terms of selection of ends and adoption of means. Moreover, the functioning of the political system, that is the authoritative allocation of values, could not be deemed to be authoritative unless it is recognised as such by the prevailing value system manifested in social stratification." "The crucial connecting link however between social stratification and the political system is political party, association or movement."

Drawing from his Tamil Nadu material Beteille explains the fallacies inherent in assuming a straight and simplistic relationship between caste and politics; unity of caste being relative, according to him, multiple segmentation within a caste render it difficult to analyse the level at which caste in fact enters into political behaviour or process. Caste operates in politics in a 'merging series' where the level of caste segmentation and arena of politics are interconnected. Therefore, a

fuller picture of caste in politics cannot be had only at the level of state. This to Beteille is one difficulty from which Srinivas's concept of dominant caste suffers as an analytical category. The very complexity of the process through which caste is involved in politics reveals how obsolete the term 'caste politics' is. As growth takes place new structural differentiation outside the loci of caste comes into being and this adds a new dimension to the political process. Political alignments begin to cut across caste lines and tend to assume a class-like character. Urbanisation too adds momentum to this development. Beteille would even like to substitute the term 'caste politics' by 'ethnic politics' as used by Dahl in the American context where "in order to retain their positions politicians are forced to search for new issues, new strategies and new coalitions" (p 293).

Two Types of Change

According to Beteille, two kinds of changes seem to be taking place in the relation between caste and politics in Tamil Nadu, as well as in other parts of the country. One is the shift of power from one dominant caste to another. The second kind of change is perhaps more radical than the first. Here the locus of power shifts from the caste system itself to differentiated structures of power.

Further,

"a vast body of new structures of power have emerged in India since Independence. Today traditional bodies such as groups of caste elders [which are functionally diffuse] have to compete increasingly with functionally specific structures of power such as parties and statutory panchayats. Often there are mechanisms which bring about the interpenetration of the two sets of bodies.

"These structures of power exist within a framework of events and activities. The latter creates changes in personnel and, over longer periods of time, changes in the structures themselves."

Beteille states that caste may enter into politics in a number of ways. "Firstly, appeals may be made to caste loyalties in a general way. Secondly, networks of interpersonal relations are activised both during elections and at other times for mobilising support along caste lines. Since kinship, marriage and commensality often stop short at the boundaries of caste, intra-caste relations are very important. Thirdly, caste associations may seek to articulate caste interests in an organised manner."

Beteille then describes at length the

part played by social entities such as subcastes, castes or caste groups in Tamil Nadu politics. He says that it would be unreal to expect the democratic process to operate without taking any account of them. But, he asks, are such particularistic identities the only ones which are relevant to politics in India today? And does not the political process itself create new identities which cut across those of subcaste, caste or caste-group? According to him, the political process seems to have a dual effect on the caste system. To the extent that caste and subcaste loyalties are consistently exploited, the traditional structure tends to become frozen. Thus, there can be little doubt that the non-Brahmin movement arrested to some extent the attenuation of caste identities. But the political process does not operate by mobilising only the loyalties to castes. To the extent that it leads to new associations and alliances cutting across caste, it loosens the traditional structures.

Beteille concludes, "Today the political system is not unrelated to caste and class nor will it be so in the near future. But as it becomes more and more differentiated, new *loci* of power are developing and these are acquiring a weight of their own. In the past — at least at the local level — dominant **caste** and faction were probably the only significant *loci* of power and the faction itself was largely structured by caste. This is no longer the case. Now it is possible for a man to acquire a certain measure of power by virtue of his position in the party hierarchy, irrespective of his caste or class. No doubt membership of the dominant caste helps a great deal, but other factors are also becoming important. A fuller understanding of politics in Tamil Nadu can be achieved only by considering the changing relations among the major sources of power, traditional and modern."

POLITICAL MOBILISATION

Anil Bhatt discusses the problem of political mobilisation in relation to caste. This is an important problem. Not only has the problem great relevance today but it also becomes clear that the problems of mobilisation are the same today as they were seventy years ago.

Bhatt makes a well known point made in early twentieth century: "There were a large number of social reformers who thought for their own different reasons that social reforms should pre-

cede nationalist activity. They believed that without the enlightenment of the masses their organisation for political activity was not possible. If you really want self-government they argued, you must show that you are fit for such responsibility." How fresh does this sound even today! Note the tirades against democracy in general by non-communists, their tirades against adult franchise, illiterate voters, uneducated members of legislatures and uneducated ministers, tirades against casteism, regionalism and linguism. These easily flow from the above argument of the social reformers. If we care to ask who makes this argument today and who made it 70 years ago, we shall also know their location in the social structure.

Bhatt mentions several problems that the early nationalist mass workers had to confront while mobilising support. One of them was that "since political activity in this period was confined to a small section of English educated urban elite, the efforts of these rural leaders towards a mass movement were often looked down upon or even ridiculed by the former". "They had to seek approval of higher level leaders whose style and idiom were dominated by universalistic and secular symbols. They had also to gain recognition from the urbanised high caste section of society."

"Secondly, they had to prepare the traditional leaders to relate their roles to the political movement by supporting their caste reforms while at the same time driving home to them the utility of political means in achieving their goals."

He further adds, "working through their caste associations, these rural based leaders played the role of mediators between the universalistic values of the national leadership and the parochial orientation of the masses with whom they had to work, always addressing themselves to the task of solving concrete problems. In doing so, they developed a political style that was applicable to the existing structure of society, thereby making the structure responsive and adaptable to the demands of the national movement."

He narrates the history, work and role of the Patidar Mandal (Surat District) from 1908 to 1947 to elucidate his point. He concludes,

"The history of the Mandal indicates that where politics becomes the major force working for modernisation, involvement in politics secularises caste because caste then becomes too narrow a group for all practical

purposes and is forced to find a wider identity. In order to strengthen support and integrate various levels, a forging of coalitions and a federation of structures became necessary. Such support and integration were brought about gradually and stage by stage, first involving the subcastes, then the same caste in different areas, and finally different castes."

"Throughout its history the Mandal leaders maintained a continuity between caste activity and wider political activity, and enabled a caste organisation to act as a link between local society and national politics."

III

In the remaining part of the introductory essay, the editor takes a sort of overall view of these papers from the standpoint of the inquiry, namely the organisation of public activity and politics in a society articulated along caste lines. From the pragmatic and developmental point of view, according to Kothari, two things should happen: (1) The elements in the caste system that have secular and integrational potential should get strengthened at the expense of the more obscurantist and dysfunctional elements. This is happening. (2) The new dimensions that secular democratic politics has provided must become enduring parts of India's traditions. This has yet to happen. Kothari calls this "traditionalisation of modernity". Obviously, according to him, this means a rejection of the dichotomous approach of old *versus* new. To him it means old *and* new, or rather the two in close interaction and together becoming part of a new structure of traditions. He addresses himself to the task of showing, in generalised terms, how that happens. There is no reference to any particular paper, yet it is always there implicitly. He is not indulging in speculation.

There are a few general propositions which emerge in respect of caste and politics in India from the various studies reported in this volume. First, there is a postulate of stages according to which the role of caste in politics slowly evolves and transforms its character. This is what Kothari calls the stages of 'entrenched' caste politics, 'factional' caste politics and 'non-caste' politics or what Beteille, following Dahl, refers to as change from 'cumulative inequality' to 'dispersed inequality'. This general statement is largely confirmed by field data reported by Eleanor Zellict from Maharashtra, Kothari and Maru and Anil Bhatt from Gujarat, Beteille and Robert L Hardgrave from Tamil Nadu, Carolyn M Elliot from Andhra

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and Richard Sisson from Rajasthan. In all these regions 'Dominant Caste' have passed roughly through the stages of (a) initial horizontal mobilisation, by appeal to primordial symbols and sentiments; (b) factional groupings and fissions within caste and subcaste coinciding with a process of secularisation of primordial identities; and, (c) passing of substantial part of political activities from caste sector to non-caste sector. This transition may be more symptomatic than definitive about the passing of the political sphere from the primordial to the universalistic realm, but the direction is there and is surely hopeful. Findings of all the studies converge on the point that greater politicalisation of caste also renders it outward-looking. The acceleration of this process of looking outward would depend on what is happening outside both the caste and the political systems. What matters in enlarging the role of secular or universalistic structures in politics is acceleration of the developmental rate of society through the growth of new occupations and new sectors of employment and economic activities which lay the foundation of a new network of relationships. When these develop there is a shift from caste to non-caste orientation in politics.

It may also be said here that what Kothari calls the "stages" may not take place consecutively. These processes might and do take place simultaneously in the same and in different castes, again depending upon the developments mentioned above.

Another important general proposition which seems to be implicit in some papers in the volume relates to the sociology of caste 'movements'. Such movements have been reported in cases of Kshatriyas and Patidars of Gujarat, Nadars of Tamil Nadu, Mahars of Maharashtra and Jats of Rajasthan. With the exception of the Jat-Rajput case from Rajasthan, in all other regions caste movements started with the parochial appeal to cultural reformation and growth of institutions helpful to the caste members but were later secularised. For instance, caste hostels were in course of time rendered open to all citizens and their caste names were removed. Also caste leaders eventually tried to transcend parochial boundaries to become secular leaders. In Rajasthan the case reported by Sisson does show that at election times people's loyalties cut across caste; moreover, intercaste competition is increasing also among the Jats. The other dominant caste of Rajputs is already divided by a long

tradition of internal rivalry. But the shift towards secularisation as in Gujarat or other regions has been in evidence in a different manner. It took the form of Kisan Sabha activities.

What structural factors have impeded or slowed the secularisation process of caste movement in Rajasthan should be an interesting problem for study by political scientists and sociologists. In fact, it could be suggested that a study of small and big movements in different regions by different disciplines without the fear of treading into the fields of other disciplines is likely to be very rewarding. In fact, such studies in different parts of the country have been made and to begin with they could be brought together, bringing out both their covergence and divergence. Such an effort might also open up possibilities of bringing together sociology, economic history and political science in a common work situation.

The other important issue raised by the book may be formulated as the role of "charisma versus caste" in political movements. In the studies reported by Rajni Kothari and Maru, Anil Bhatt, Richard Sisson, Carolyn M Elliot there are references to prominent personalities who mobilised and inspired their castes. In Elliot's case they are dominant notables who establish a powerful network of political relationships across their caste origin. In the case of Bhatt and Kothari and Maru the caste personalities play decisive role both in creating a consciousness identity and in promoting the secularisation process of the caste. This should form

another challenging area for Indian political analysts to explore: What is the social origin of charisma? And how does its extension take place from the local to the regional to the national levels of political participation? Under what structural conditions does 'charisma' fail or come to be possessed? In other words, what is the relationship between 'character and social structure'? This could probably be done when the Indian social scientist develops a taste of what C Wright Mills called working through 'biography' to 'history' and analyses his problem in the context of the social structure or the role of individuals in history.

The contributions to "Caste in Indian Politics" are balanced in analytical depth and substantive relevance. The book as a whole surely goes ahead of most early publications on caste and politics in India as it offers many fresh perspectives on the mechanism of caste politics in our country. In the national context, it is also significant that a body of conceptual terms is now emerging with specific contextual relevance to Indian society. In this respect too the papers collected in this volume make a significant contribution.

"Caste in Indian Politics" is well edited and the volume as a whole has a balance of style and literary form. All the essays combine skill of reporting in depth with mature analytical acumen. The collection has a unity of theme and meaningfulness and the volume would surely be welcomed by all those interested in the dynamics of politics and social structure in India today.