REFERENCE GROUP THEORY WITH REGARD TO MOBILITY WITHIN CASTE

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I propose to discuss the phenomenon of mobility within the caste system in the light of the Reference Group Theory, examining its utility as an operational theory in a Caste society.

Reference Group Theory

Reference Group Theory may be particularly useful in conceptionalizing and understanding mobility within Caste. The theory concerns itself with analyzing the frames of reference for an individual's behaviour and may therefore be looked to for explaining social dynamics. I propose to lay down the salient features of the theory as these seem relevant to mobility within Caste. I am drawing heavily on Merton's presentation of the theory (Social Theory and Social Structure, Chs. VIII and IX, 1957), since I find it to be illuminating for sociological analysis.

The impact of one's own group upon behaviour has long been noted and accompanies the concept that rewards flow from conformity. Furthermore, the selection of a Reference Individual, attempting to identify with another person, has also long been established -- even the fact that the selected individual often belongs to another group.

However, the impact of groups other than one's own, involving a more complicated process of identification, was neglected by the earlier sociologists in their conceptual dichotomizing of "in-group" and "out-group";

'Reference Group Theory which systematically take account of positive orientations towards non-membership groups can serve as a corrective of this prematurely restricted conclusion. In-Groups and Out-Groups are often sub-groups within a larger social organization and are always _potentially_ so... since a new social integration can encompass previously separated groups.'[1]

Selection of Reference Groups from groups other than ego's is largely governed by the institutional structure of the society. A group has less chance of being selected as a Reference Group, the smaller the extent of its internal cohesion, the smaller its influence vis-a-vis other groups, and the less prestige it confers relative to other groups. The greater the structural strength of one's own group, the slighter are the chances that an outside group will be selected as a Reference Group.

Isolates in a group are regarded as particularly prone to adopt the values of other (non-membership) groups. This can apply to non-mobile persons who are relatively isolated and even to disenchanted members of the elite. In this context, attention may be called to the renunciation of higher class status by certain persons in favor of the status of 'leader of the masses' — the topdogs who prefer to cast their lot with the underdogs.

A group may also be selected as a _negative_ Reference Group, where the attempt is to avoid all identification with it. Indeed selection of one group as a frame of reference may entail just such rejection of another. Thus, where a person voluntarily discontinues being a member of a group, he may proceed to shun its values and norms.

In this sense, Reference Group behaviour may involve **nonconformity to the norms of a negative Reference Group** (often, **but not necessarily,** ego's original membership group) and conformity to the norms of a positive Reference Group (often a nonmembership

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[1] Merton. R. K. _Social Theory and Social Structure_, 1957, pp. 298-299.

group for ego). Thus, Reference Group behaviour depends to a large
extent on the social visibility of the norms prevailing in one's own and
in other groups and on the extent to which the members of groups
live up to their norms.

> "There must be patterned ways in which people become
> acquainted with the norms and activities in the groups
> which they select as evaluative and comparative frames
> of reference." [2]

Reference Group Theory elucidates changes in group membership,
where this is possible, through the process of anticipatory socialization.
Given the possibility of ultimate inclusion or absorption into another
group's membership, such anticipatory socialization would be functional
for the individual, though, no doubt, the very same process would be
a dys-functional defection for ego's original membership group. But
there may be significant differences in the eligibility, as well as in
the motivations and aspirations, of persons to become members of
groups other than their own. [3] A person who cannot become a member
of another group, despite his intense motivation and aspiration to do
so, may develop vehement hostility towards that group. Thus, positive
orientation towards nonmembership groups and their selection as
Reference Groups has been regarded as correlated with a high rate
of social mobility and the openness of groups.

To summarize: the internal structure of groups and their
relationship to the external structure and organization of society,
including the social visibility of their norms, will determine their
selection or rejection as Reference Groups. The social organization
may promote the visibility of alternative norms and values by providing
channels or social mechanisms of communication between groups.
By blocking such communication it may withhold visibility. Finally,
Reference Group behaviour is significantly related to whether the groups
which characterize a society are open or closed.

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[2] Op. cit., p. 351

[3] Op. cit., pp. 288-297

Having listed a number of structural variables important to the analysis of Reference Group behaviour, and particularly important in the selection of positive and negative Reference Groups, it will be instructive to apply Reference Group Theory to a society which is structured by caste divisions.

Mobility within Caste System and Pattern Variables

The Caste system is characterized by relative immobility. Various points of view, not to say "theories", have been presented by different students of Caste regarding mobility within the Caste system, ranging from the extreme view that the Caste system precludes all mobility to a realistic appraisal of the situation viz that the Caste system allows a small rate of mobility.

The problem of the analysis of mobility within the Caste system is, to my mind, complicated due to the operation of distinct levels at the same time, e.g. the Rural and the Urban, the Synchronic and the Diachronic. If only one could separate the levels, it would be much easier to analyze the problem. Below is given a schematic presentation of the various levels of analysis. [4]

I think that the presentation of the different points of view regarding mobility within the Caste system in terms of Parsonian, Pattern Variables will greatly facilitate the analytical process of separation of the levels mentioned above. The logic of the use of pattern variables will become clear as the discussion proceeds.

Pattern Variables and the Corresponding Points of View
Regarding Mobility within the Caste System

A	A 1
Affectivity vs. Affective Neutrality	Little Tradition vs. Great Tradition
B	B 1
Self vs. Collectivity	Jati vs. Varna
C	C 1
Particularism vs. Universalism	Attributional vs. Interactional
D	D 1
Ascription vs. Achievement	Fixed status vs. Changeable status
	(in terms of birth) (through achievement)
E	E 1
Specificity vs. Diffuseness	Brahminisation vs. Secularisation

Before proceeding to discuss the logic of the use of Pattern
Variables to points of view regarding mobility within the Caste system,
it needs to be noted that excepting the pair E 1, all other pairs under
the columns A 1, B 1, C 1, and D 1 indicate the polar situation of
immobility and mobility. While Brahminisation itself may smack of
mobility, though in a single direction, it has to be remembered that
Brahminhood can be attained only by birth. Therefore in a realistic
manner the pair Brahminisation and Secularisation is used to indicate
the polar extremes of immobility and mobility.

Further, it should also be noted that the pairs under columns
A 1 to E 1, by and large, denote the Rural and the Urban levels. Thus
Little Tradition refers to rural society, while the Great Tradition is
purely an Urban phenomenon. Jati is more relevant in the rural society,
while Varna is relevant in the urban situation. Attributes of caste
cling to a person in rural society, while in the urban set up a person
tends to be judged by his actual behaviour and action. The status of
a person is determined by his caste in rural society, while in urban
society it can be manipulated by achievement. As mentioned earlier

in the rural set up the ritual status of a Brahmin, in spite of the fact that it cannot be attained except by birth, becomes a matter of emulation and striving for, whereas in the urban situation the play of secular forces opens out possibilities of mobility, which may not bear any relationship to the caste statuses. Thus an untouchable can become a Minister at the state or central level in India. Occupational roles in an urban set up may bear no relationship whatsoever to caste statuses.

The Caste system is obviously a relational system having significance for roles and the relationships amongst the various roles, thus linking up the ego with the alter. The Pattern Variables are precisely meant to explain the relational aspect of the role structure of social system. It is well known that the Caste system is extremely significant for the social system in India in so far as it is largely responsible for designing the role structure. In fact, one may logically treat the Caste system as a social system wherein networks of structured roles and statuses, i.e. institutions are meshed in. Naturally the various dilemmas to the treatment of which the Pattern Variables have been designed are to be found in the Caste system too. The dilemmas of (a) gratification vs. discipline, (b) primacy of cathectic orientation vs. cognitive orientation, (c) quality vs. performance, and (d) the dilemma posed by the scope of significance of object viz. specificity vs. diffuseness are completely relevant to the Caste system.

Further, it has to be borne in mind that the Caste system has various dimensions such as the rural and the urban, the weight of a highly developed old tradition and the force of modernism, etc. The relational aspect of the Caste system is complicated by the dimensions mentioned above. As I have mentioned earlier the rural and the urban dimensions are reflected in the pairs A 1 to E 1, those on the left being rural and those on the right being urban. As regards the dimension of time, it is reflected in the pairs Al and Bl and Cl to El. The first two pairs denote the impact of older traditions

while the last three pairs indicate the impact of modernism. Even
today the Little Tradition is to be found in the villages of India.

Moreover, the relational aspect of the Caste system is
complicated by the possibilities of mobility within caste in terms
of the pairs mentioned above. Thus, those belonging to the Little
Tradition can move up to the Great Tradition. A given Jati has
a fixed status in the rural environment in so far as its position in
the caste hierarchy is concerned. However, on shifting to an urban
environment, such a Jati gets incorporated into Varna complex and
attains status equivalent to other Jatis in the same Varna category.
In a relatively closed system as exemplified by rural units one's
status is determined by the attributes of his caste, while in an open
system, i.e. urban society, one's status depends on actual interaction.
For example, the status of a Brahmin would tend to be very high in
the rural society, irrespective of his merit, while in urban society,
his status would depend on his occupation, education etc. A person
belonging to a low caste would suffer from low status in the rural
set up, no matter whatever his qualifications and attainments may be.
He would be debarred from equalitarian type of interaction with
other castes. The same person would be interacting freely and on
terms of equality with his peers in the urban society, regardless
of Caste differences. The ascriptive basis of caste is firmly rooted
in rural society, thereby determining a person's status irrespective
of performance. In the urban set up, however, status can be achieved
by conforming to objective criteria such as education, occupation,
wealth, etc. Brahmin is regarded as the apex of the caste system
more so in rural society and therefore the Brahmanic model of
behaviour is sought to be imitated, though it cannot be adopted
completely. In the urban situation secular forces are operative
and there are many avenues for advancement by resorting to relevant
ways of behaviour, which may have no relevance at all for the
caste hierarchy.

The pairs A 1 to E 1 denoting immobility and mobility also represent the various dilemmas mentioned above. The Little Tradition exemplifies a situation wherein a person can satisfy his gratifications without much concern for adherence to higher standards. This is facilitated by the informal organization and by the operation of a variety of standards. In the Great Tradition, however, conformity to higher standards is emphasized and thus gratification gets postponed. Activity tends to be of an instrumental nature, rather than immediately gratificatory. Discipline is emphasized due to the complexity of organization and a formal structure. Correct behaviour and adherence to higher standards are necessitated. Yet, the Great Tradition also opens out avenues for advancement. Thus, the Little Tradition and the Great Tradition represent the pair Affectivity and Affective Neutrality.

Jati characterizes one's intimate group in a rural set-up and one is identified with one's Jati. Jati caters to the satisfaction of the needs of its members. Jati is a major reference point for action. Varna, on the other hand, is a conglomeration of units (Jatis) which are more or less equivalent as far as a given category goes. Varna thus puts premium on discipline. Jati can be well likened to self, while Varna to Collectivity. Jati is a narrow entity, while Varna is a broader group. Thus gratification and discipline are emphasized by the Jati and Varna respectively. Varna also opens out avenues for advancement, though, emphasizing again the instrumental nature of activity. The dilemma pertaining to Gratification and Discipline is well exemplified by the two pairs considered above.

In a situation where one's status is determined by the attributes of his caste, the relational complex is highly determinate in terms of the value system. Thus one is judged in relation to his caste attributes and not in relation to his actual capacity and action. This situation obtains preponderantly in rural society.

The relational system is already determined in terms of the attributes of different castes. The primacy of cathectic orientation, based on value standards associated with castes, is thus obvious in this situation. Orientation is clearly subjective. On the other hand, in a situation where capacity and action are emphasized, rather than the caste attributes, reliance is placed on objective standards and criteria. The primacy of cognitive orientation in such a situation is quite clear. Such a situation holds good in the case of urban society. A system which puts emphasis on attributes is therefore clearly particularistic in orientation, while a system which emphasizes interaction (in terms of capacity and actual action) is universalistic in orientation. It needs hardly to be pointed out that the system with particularistic orientation precludes mobility, while the system with universalistic orientation facilitates mobility. The dilemma regarding orientation is well reflected in the pair discussed here.

A system, wherein status is fixed at birth by one's caste, is primarily concerned with quality (which is associated with caste) rather than performance. Consequently, the relational system is once again determinate and not amenable to change. Such is the situation in a rural society where the status of a person is fixed once and for all at birth in terms of his caste. The ascriptive basis is very clear. In an urban society status is manipulable by achievement. As such mobility is facilitated. The relational system is amenable to change. The basis of status is Achievement. This represents the dilemma of Modality.

The relational system in rural society is characterized by the predominating value attached to Brahmanical status. The scope of the significance of object to an ego is very specific under such circumstances. Nearness to or distance from Brahmins becomes a major criterion of social acceptability. The relational system is geared to a single value standard. As mentioned earlier, Brahmanhood

cannot be attained, except by birth. Under such circumstances mobility is utterly impossible. In urban society the play of secular forces opens out avenues for different standards of value and thus facilitates mobility and social advancement, irrespective of caste. The scope of the significance is much more diversified and therefore diffused in character. Various permutations and combinations of the forces and criteria are possible for social advancement. The relational system, being open, is much more dynamic. Thus the dilemma of the scope of significance of object in terms of specificity and diffuseness is exemplified by rural and urban society in terms of Brahminisation and Secularisation.

I have mentioned earlier how, analytically speaking, distinction should be made between the rural and the urban dimension and the time dimension--in terms of earlier and modern times in order to understand the problem of mobility within the Caste system. I have also mentioned how change from one dimension to another has been taking place. A schematic presentation has been given below, indicating the dimensions and change. I have advisedly used the categories Then and Now to denote time--earlier and modern.

A. Rural Social System

<table>
<tr><td>Then   A 1</td><td>A 2   Now (in addition to the earlier features)</td></tr>
<tr>
<td>

Little Tradition
   (Affectivity)
Jati
   (Self)
Attributional
   (Particularistic)
Fixed Status
   (Ascriptive)
Brahminisation
   (Specificity)

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<td>

Great Tradition
   (Affective Neutrality)
Varna
   (Collectivity)
Secularisation
   (Diffuseness)

</td>
</tr>
</table>

B. Urban Social System

<table>
<tr><td>Then   B 1</td><td>B 2   Now (in addition to the earlier features)</td></tr>
<tr>
<td>

Great Tradition
   (Affective Neutrality)
Varna
   (Collectivity)

</td>
<td>

Interactional
   (Universalistic)
Changeable Status
   (Achievement)
Secularisation
   (Diffuseness)

</td>
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</table>

Two qualifications must be added to the schematic presentation. First, that in the case of the Rural Social System the Great Tradition and Varna have always acted as ultimate reference points even in the earlier times and that even in the modern times there is an interplay between all the features mentioned in Box A 1, and the new features mentioned in Box A 2. It is also necessary to add that secularisation has made the least impact, except at the verbal level.[5] Second, that in the case of the Urban Social System even in

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[5] This is rendered possible due to the linking up of Rural and Urban society through development of roads and communication systems Cf. Y. B. Damle, "Communication of Modern Ideas and Knowledge in Indian Villages," 1955 and Y. B. Damle and I. Karve, "Intergroup Relations," 1961.

the modern times the Great Tradition and Varna continue to act as background features, and that the features mentioned in the Box B 2 are not completely effective for all the layers of the population. It would be of interest to point out that the higher castes have been much more influenced by modern forces as exemplified by universalistic orientation, emphasis on achievement and diffuseness than the lower castes. Likewise, the higher castes carry the backlog of Great Tradition and Varna in their minds. Nevertheless, a climate of opinion has been created whereby the features mentioned in Box B 2 are accepted by people belonging to higher and lower castes.

Having discussed the problem of dimensions, it remains for us to discuss the problem of the nature of change with special reference to mobility. The question we have to ask ourselves is whether the change indicated in pairs C 1 to E 1 in particular is a change within the social system or a change of the system itself. Obviously in this case by social system is meant the caste system. It is true that the change in orientation, modality and scope of the significance of object that has come about, can be largely attributed to the impact of the western world. The expanding opportunities and liberalisation of attitude consequent upon technological development and exposure to new ideas has greatly accelerated the process of mobility. Nevertheless it has to be remembered that even in the urban areas the caste system continues to obtain, though in a modified form. As I have pointed out,[6] the Caste system facilitates meeting other people at a tangent. No matter how great the extent of liberalisation may be, one can always withdraw oneself in the shell of one's caste, particularly in the sphere of marriage and kinship. The change in orientation, modality, etc. mentioned above has modified the caste system. The caste system has accommodated itself to the process of secularisation. The caste system has not broken down, whatever may be the factors

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[6] Y. B. Damle, "A Review of Literature on Caste," p. 20.

responsible for that such as the lack of industrialisation, hold of the family system, economic backwardness of the country, hold of traditional values, etc. Besides I have already mentioned as to how the change referred to above is not effective for all the layers of the urban society and that the Great Tradition and Varna continue to provide the background for reference. Moreover, the higher castes have been most affected by the change mentioned above. The higher castes thus can have the cake and eat it too in the sense that they have played an important role in the Great Tradition and Varna complex and also play a major role in terms of secularisation. It can be said that the higher castes in the urban society constitute a dual reference group. Thus, one has really to talk in terms of a change within the system rather than of a change of the system as such.

Therefore, it is perfectly logical and legitimate to employ the pattern variables, which are presumably meant to be employed only in the analysis of a system as a going concern, for analyzing the problem of mobility within the caste system. The Pattern Variables have really helped clarify the various dimensions of analysis of mobility. By doing so the reference groups to be discussed have been brought into a sharp focus.

Reference Group Theory and Mobility within the Caste System

Reference Group Theory sets forth the prerequisites for positive orientation in an open system, where ultimate inclusion in the non-membership group is possible.[7] The Caste system is characterized as a closed system, where ultimate inclusion is not ordinarily possible. Under these circumstances would positive orientation to a caste group other than one's own be dysfunctional for the person or the social system? The paradox of caste lies in the fact that, although there

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[7] Merton, op. cit., p. 293.

can be no expectation on the part of persons of the lower castes to be ultimately included in the higher castes and also because there is no such fear in the minds of the higher castes, positive orientation for reference purposes and imitation is permitted and even encouraged. In this context, anticipatory socialization is really a matter of reducing repulsion rather than that of promoting absorption or inclusion. To cite an example, one may refer to the facility with which a vegetarian non-Brahmin is received as a guest in the house of a Brahmin in a small town. There the consequence is to reduce distance and repulsion, but not to promote ultimate inclusion. In yet another way anticipatory socialization can be functional for the persons concerned, e.g. where persons shift from the Jati complex to the Varna complex. This means a change of dimension really. The various Jatis composing a Varna are supposedly on the footing of equality. The movement of a Jati or some members of a Jati to the Varna complex higher than its original one constitutes mobility. Yet it does not mean absorption in higher Jatis.

Even at the cost of repetition, it would be useful to spell out the various reference groups and their implications for mobility within the Caste system, based on the preceding analysis. Keeping in mind the Rural-Urban dimension one can see that the Rural society tends to have its own groups as reference groups, except in the case of Brahminisation. Bearing in mind the time dimension, one has to remember that in modern times the Great Tradition and the Varna complex and to a certain extent the process of secularisation (all pertinent to Urban Society) have provided Reference Groups to rural society, thus in a way holding out possibilities of mobility. These Reference Groups have consequences for the gratification-discipline dilemma and the dilemma of the scope of the significance of the object, to a very negligible extent though. The prerequisite for the effectiveness of these Reference Groups, however, is the movement of people to and fro from rural to urban society, coupled with the

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facilities of migration to urban areas. It really means a change in the dimension for all practical purposes.[8]

[...] the Great Tradition impose certain types [...] tradition with regard to the practices of hinduism. A [...] version of Hindu rites and rituals has to be adhered to. Simultaneously it means the shedding of certain tribal and purely local practices. As an example one may cite the example of the rigourous adherence to details of worshipping of certain deities required on the part of the migrants to urban areas. In the rural society, on the other hand, the Little Tradition, with all its varieties and permissibilities, continues even today.

Brahminhood can be attained only by birth, at least in the sense of absorption into the caste. Untouchability even today constitutes an insurmountable barrier to mobility.[9] Leaving aside the topmost and the lowermost rungs of the caste hierarchy, the Varna as a Reference Group holds out possibilities of mobility in terms of the Sudra, Vaisya and the Kingly models for the rural people. Traditionally certain occupations have been open to all and sundry e.g. cultivation of land.

The concept of the Dominant Caste has been stressed of late to pinpoint the importance of political and economic power in rural society. A caste, with the help of its numerical strength and political economic power [...] raise its ritual status. Not only that but Brahmins who are supposed to be ritually the highest have to look up to the dominant caste for protection. Thus, the ritual rank of Brahmins is said to be of no avail unless it is accompanied by significant secular rank. Srinivas has reported such a state of affairs.[10]

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[8]Cf. Damle, Y. [...] and Lorve, J. , Intergroup Relations where the importance of the Rural Urban dimension becomes evident for liberalisation of attitudes

[7]Damle, Y. B. , "A Review of Literature on Caste", p. 36

[10]Srinivas, M. N. , The Dominant Caste in Rampura, American Anthropologist, [...] 1959

It is, to my mind, clearly a case of the Kingly Model being effective as a Reference Group. Trading and commercial activities can also be resorted to by any touchable caste. The Vaisya Model can thus be chosen as a Reference Group by any caste Hindu, theoretically speaking. Though in practice there tends to be a Vaisya caste in every suitable village, resorting to such activity.

Thus, except for the Kingly Model, there is no other Reference Group which holds out even a remote possibility of absorption into a higher Varna complex. Even in the case of the Kingly Model, the caste concerned has to carry on a relentless struggle to attain higher ritual status and acceptability in the Kshatriya Varna complex. This does not in any way mean absorption into higher castes. All that really happens is that one more caste is added to the Varna complex.

Secularisation has made very little impact, except at a verbal level, on rural society.[11] However, with the help and encouragement by state, the untouchables have been attempting to raise their status by changing their names. In Maharashtra it is common, particularly in the case of persons belonging to lower castes, to call persons by their caste names. The caste name is treated as a family name, e.g. Ganpat Mahar, Shiva Chambhar, Namdeo Bharadi, etc., thus revealing the caste identity of the persons concerned. In order to obliterate caste distinctions, the Government of Bombay facilitated change of names so that the caste identity may not be revealed. I understand that in a village in the Kolhapur District, Maharashtra State, six persons, all untouchables, changed their names in order to ensure a change in their rank position. It is reported that as a result their rank status improved. For want of actual investigation into the matter, I cannot accept the validity of the report. The instance is, however, cited just to point towards the development of

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[11] Y. B. Damle and I. Karve, op. cit.

new Reference Groups, particularly with the state backing. Active contact with urban society, not to say power, is thus necessary for the process of secularisation to make any progress in rural society.

As for the Urban Society, taking into account the time dimension, the Great Tradition and the Varna complex provided the Reference Groups in earlier times. In modern times, however, the emphasis on cognitive orientation, performance and the diffuseness of the scope of significance of the object set up different types of Reference Groups. Thus, emphasis is placed on limiting the particularistic tendencies embodied in the caste system. The step taken by the Government of India to abolish the entry of caste in any government record may be cited as an example of such efforts. Every effort is made to promote universalistic orientation, which again is exemplified by the governmental effort to throw open public places of worship to everyone, irrespective of caste. Broadly, it may be said that Liberal Group is chosen as Reference Group. It should be added here that liberal attitude has been inculcated in India through her contact with the western civilization and the untiring efforts of her leaders like Mahatma Gandhi. The increasing emphasis on performance makes for the choice of objective criteria for determining status. Thus education and training, skill and capacity, etc. come to be emphasized rather than caste for determining one's status. Here again, efforts are made to limit the role of caste. Thus, recruitment to posts is made irrespective of caste. The emphasis is clearly on performance and achievement. The state has actively pursued this policy. Objective criteria are emphasized, thereby promoting mobility. The Reference Group is clearly provided by western civilization. The process of secularisation, with its emphasis on the diffuseness of the scope of the significance of the object, further delimits the trammels of caste society. Here, too, the state in India has promoted such development by declaring India to be a Secular State. Secularisation logically means eschewing

of caste as a determinant of status. In this context the desire and the efforts on the part of some members of the higher castes to dissociate themselves completely from caste organizations must be mentioned. That the top leadership of the Labour Movement has been confined to higher castes is a case in point. The increasing emphasis on objective forces has helped mobility a great deal. A variety of careers are open to people in terms of which they can ensure a rise in their status. A person can choose a career, irrespective of his caste. The migration of the lower castes to Urban Society has become meaningful for them only due to this. For in Urban Society, the lower castes are not subject to restrictions of caste in the choice of a career. There is a wide variety of Groups which can be chosen as Reference Groups.

However, it must be reiterated that such a situation does not hold good for all the layers in the Urban Society. For certain sections of people, particularly the recent immigrants, the Great Tradition and the Varna complex, still are the Reference Groups and therefore provide but limited avenues of mobility within caste. Second, in so far as the layers most affected by the development mentioned above have belonged to the higher castes, a complete disregard of caste is not feasible. Therefore the change that comes about is a change within the system and not of the system. In this context, I would like to pursue the point mentioned earlier, viz. that the higher castes constitute a dual reference group in so far as they are also the most affected layer by the process of liberalisation, modernization etc. I think, it is of great significance to mention here that in Poona (Maharashtra State) certain typical Brahmin names were adopted by some students in the Backward Class Hostels, notwithstanding the injustices meted out to the untouchables by Brahmins. This opens possibilities of ambivalent attitudes towards the Brahmin reference group due to the desire to identify with the Brahmin group due to its secularisation and prestige and the accompanying hostility towards Brahmins due to their superordination and arrogance. Thus a group is chosen as a reference group with a great deal of misgivings and reservations.

Concluding Remarks

We have discussed the various Reference Groups and their implications for mobility within the Caste system. Now it remains for us to examine whether the selection or rejection of reference groups is in itself dependent on the nature of the social structure and the visibility of norms and values, etc. The question will be examined with reference to the two dimensions mentioned above. To start with we discuss the Rural-Urban dimension. In the case of the rural society, we note that a significant change in the social structure has not come about in so far as kinship and caste continue to provide the predominant reference groups. By and large we get a picture of immobility. The interplay of ritual and secular forces makes for the acceptance of the status quo of the caste hierarchy. It is true that the rural society has been of late exposed more to the Great Tradition and Varna complex due to the increasing contact with the urban society. In this case the choice of reference groups is facilitated by the visibility of norms and by the nature of the social structure. I have mentioned earlier that secularization has made but little progress, if at all. So the reference groups chosen tend to promote only a small rate of mobility. Even in respect of the urban society, the system of stratification curbs the wide spreading of universalistic orientation, emphasis on achievement and diffuseness. It should, however, be mentioned that the constitutional and legal standbys, coupled with a freer system of communication and interaction render possible the selection of groups other than one's membership group as reference groups. I have already mentioned how the model in terms of secularization is open to all. I have also mentioned how inasmuch as the higher castes have so far had a monopoly of being exposed to modern, liberalizing forces, complications are likely to arise in effective mobility. There is no doubt increasing emphasis on achievement and to that extent the possibility of a wide choice of reference groups. But in view of the operation of

aditional and modern forces simultaneously, such choice tends to be limited. The social structure limits visibility of alternate values and norms.

As for the time dimension, there is no doubt that of late the urban society has been affected by the forces of universalism, achievement and diffuseness than before. Hence, the choice of reference groups has increased.

To summarize the discussion one can say that the rural society is governed by forces such as the Little Tradition, the Jati, particularistic orientation and dependence on caste attributes, ascriptive basis of status, specificity in terms of Brahminisation and as such offer very little in respect of reference groups and of mobility. In so far as the Rural Society is exposed to the Great Tradition and the Varna complex, some choice is possible in respect of reference groups and some measure of mobility too is possible. The urban society offers a wider variety of reference groups and promotes mobility. In the urban society the increasing exposure to forces of universalism, achievement basis of status and diffuseness facilitate the choice of reference groups and mobility. Though even here the nature of the social structure puts limitations on such choice and on the rate of mobility. The change is within the system.