Unpacking intersectionality: Conceptual explorations of the convergences and divergences of class, caste and gender in education in the 66th NSS survey

Amman Madan
amman.madan@apu.edu.in

Abstract :

An analysis of class, caste and gender patterns in higher education from the 66th NSS survey shows that they must be understood in an interconnected manner. The ways in which these have been theorized as systems of inequality are reviewed to draw out some bridging strands. Moving away from a unlinear perspective, a multidimensional and intersectional theory of inequality is turned towards by highlighting three tropes – occupation, culture and kinship – which are central simultaneously across class, caste as well as gender. It is suggested through examples from the sphere of education that examining the convergences and divergences between these respective systems of inequality around the three shared tropes helps us to understand inequality in a relatively more comprehensive manner..

Education is often seen as a path to a personal kind of liberation. This stance is difficult to disagree with. That path to personal freedom and fulfilment, however, makes it way through a terrain that is filled with obstacles, steep ascents and hazards, which are socially created and don't exist only in one's personal self. In one sense, the challenge of a liberating education cannot be separated from the challenge of liberation in a society at large. The Indian experience of social and economic growth after our release from colonialism has been deeply flawed. Even today we find that education makes a substantial contribution to the work and life trajectories of only a minority within the population. For many, exploitation and bitter competition are embedded both in that work as well as in the kind of education which gets associated with it. This is partly because growth in regular, white-collar jobs is very slow and instead informal, contractual jobs are the ones that are expanding to absorb those who are driven away from a stagnating agricultural sector. Education's contribution to culture, rather than the economy, has at its frontier questions that range from trying to redefine the meaning of tradition to whether consumption should be seen as a source of joy and freedom. Disaffection and cultural critiques have to contend with the power of mass media against alternative voices and with the anxieties induced by rapid change and the tearing apart of old cultural fabrics. The meaning of education, even in a very personal sense, must be navigated through the challenges posed by the structures of domination, injustice and inequality in a society.

INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to explore those structures through a focus on the interweaving and intersecting of three particular systems, those of class, caste and gender in India. It will start by counterposing the integrated way of imagining the relation of education with social inequality with uni-linear ways

of doing the same. It will try to demonstrate the validity of integrated ways through readings of some patterns using data from the 66th National Sample Survey. And it will then try to draw out some convergent and divergent principles from various ways of thinking about social stratification and education, focusing largely on the themes of culture, work and kinship. This is the first part of a larger work in progress. The second part goes on to specific explorations of intersectionality and their implications for understanding India and its education. But that is another story.

Not all cultures believe that education can or should lead to liberation of the individual. A characteristic feature of hereditary systems of inequality is the belief that people are basically born different and education can have only a limited amount of impact on them. This has been a common belief associated with, for instance, caste systems and feudal societies. People are believed to be born into a particular social group and destined to stay there for the rest of their life. A counter-point to such beliefs comes from those who think in terms of open and not hereditary systems. They disagree with the closed model of social life and human achievement. A common expression of this second kind of belief is that learning in society and in schools is what builds people's abilities and such social experiences can be used to provide everyone an opportunity to make a better life for themselves. There is a strong moral assertion here that the chance of one's birth should not hold one back. The study of the relation between education and social inequality, of what obstructs the cultivation of capabilities and unrestricted choice of roles has been, consequently, of special interest to those interested in how education can provide equal opportunity to all.

Modernists and the children of the enlightenment characteristically believe that it is wrong if a throw of dice, which is the family one is born into, is allowed to define one's entire future life. Many (though not all) of those who revise the formulations of modernity to accept a greater uncertainty in human history and also the plausibility of multiple narratives, still tend to believe in this basic postulate of human freedom and malleability. Those who are outside west European traditions of modernity and use a different metaphor to distance themselves from social orders with inbuilt separations and hierarchies, seeking universality within a bhakti or egalitarian Islamic idiom for instance, also agree that humans should not be suffocated by the vagaries of where they were born.

There is a good deal of diversity in how social processes that obstruct human freedom are understood. There are several possible positions regarding which forms of social difference are considered inequalities, their causes and why they may be considered illegitimate. Reconciling the different positions is a complicated affair since behind them there can stand fundamental contrasts in value orientations. The inequalities being talked about may themselves be internally diverse, with different structures being interwoven rather than disparate processes. One key question in the study of socially created inequality is an integrative one: that of how different forms of inequality interact with each other and how they may overlap with, reinforce or even cancel each other out. This paper locates itself in the problem of how different kinds of social inequality interweave together in human lives. It comes out of an interest in learning how educational experiences are shaped by these interacting inequalities and how the latter themselves get shaped in return.

One objective here is to highlight a multi dimensional approach to studying and acting on social inequality. The study of social inequalities has traditionally been split into specialized analyses of one or two axes. An important tradition in the study of caste, for instance, has tended to see it as the main form of inequality in India. In contrast, the majority of those who study class tend to leave out the question of caste systems entirely from their main theoretical formulation of social inequality. And both these traditions have until recently tended to ignore patriarchy altogether. This paper seeks to explore an integrated view of inequality in education.

Part of the difficulty in forming an integral view has been that the formulation of our understanding of inequality and injustice comes from our own social experience and can easily be swamped by existing forms of cultural domination. Social movements and activism have played an

important corrective role by providing the energy to overcome the conventions of previous theoretical understandings. However, this has often led to theoretical formulations themselves becoming vulnerable to the exigencies of political movements. For instance, debates on identity in education have commonly tended to emphasize only particular identities (e.g. race in Ogbu 1982, caste in Wankhede 2001). The consolidation of a group's power through the sharpening of identity boundaries has been an important aspect of social and political movements, but this has often been accompanied by an underplaying of other possible sources of group identity. For some it is religion that gives shape to one's marginalization, for some it is caste and for some it is being a woman. It is easy to understand the corrective nature of studies driven by a sympathy for movements for recognition and identity, given the strength of an older discourse of the primacy of economic class. The need is felt to distance oneself from a diagnosis of oppression purely on the basis of access to material resources and to emphasize non-economic bases for identity and its consequent disadvantages and discrimination. Those who argue for the theoretical and practical primacy of caste, for instance, point out that even amongst the economically disadvantaged there takes place a differential treatment of the “lower” from the “higher” castes. And yet, this question also has a flip side which too needs to be looked at to give us a comprehensive picture. Namely, what does it mean to be of a lower caste and *rich*, not poor? Many accounts suggest that there is a significant difference in the life experiences of the two classes of lower caste individuals. Social inequality has many dimensions and they do need to be grasped together, not one by one.

While each form of social inequality and injustice has its unique features and consequences, the different forms often combine together to have a common expression. It is now appearing to be increasingly important to try and see how different processes like social rank, class, gender, political organization and so on interweave in society and particularly in the domain of education so as to produce inequality of lived experiences, relationships, achievements and career paths. There have been several notable exceptions in the mono-dimensional traditions of the study of social inequality and those are what we seek to build upon in this present exploration of intersectionality.

Greater theoretical clarity on this question is a pressing need and so is the requirement to find appropriate methodological approaches to give it an empirical founding. As we become more aware of the many forms of obstruction of human ability, there is a moral imperative to correct for them. There is the need to develop educational entrance systems, for instance, which understand the processes which mask ability and which then attempt to get a more accurate picture of the achievements and potential of candidates. Organizational recruitments and promotions, too, if they believe in the need to find ways to correct for previous disadvantages. The applications of better understanding the interaction of inequalities are numerous. A caste-based reservation system has been the traditional way to do this in India, but has many short-comings, particularly the assumption that caste identity alone and by itself is adequate to represent all the significant forms of inequality. An as yet unwritten but proposed second part of this paper will try to demonstrate an application of the integrated view of inequality through developing an integrated measure or index of inequality, which may be used to improve upon the existing reservation system.

STRUCTURAL PLURALITY AND THE MONOLITHIC CONSCIOUSNESS

An example of a single axis perspective on social inequality is the way the notion of caste has gained widespread support in Indian politics as the fundamental unit of social inequality and difference. It is not uncommon to hear assertions nowadays in seminars that class inequality is an ethnocentric discourse of the West and that caste is the real descriptor of Indian society and has been so for millenia. The effectiveness of caste mobilization in Indian politics is a strong argument presented in favour of this narrative, with class war said to have been relegated either to the dustbin of history or to the stories that naxalites tell gullible tribals. The popularity of a particular discourse of political identity, however, need not be seen as necessarily clinching evidence of the reality or

centrality of that identity. For instance, that Hindutva may have had appeal and votes in the ballot box at a particular point of time does not mean that its proponents have accurately defined what it means to be a Hindu or that Hindutva and cultural nationalism somehow express an Indian's identity to the exclusion of caste and linguistic identity or anything else. Consciousness and human experience are both actually constituted by several social and historical processes, with their own dynamics of suppression and hegemony, permitting us to be aware of some and not of the others, with the latter sometimes disappearing from our mental radar even in spite of their still retaining a strong influence on us.

The consciousness of an individual is indeed crucial to her existence as a creative human, who thinks and makes decisions after assessing her environment and the opportunities available to her, decisions which also contribute to shaping that environment. In practice, an individual is usually constituted by several identities, not just one. These may include her being a woman, coming from the OBCs and practicing an occupation of an IT professional. Each of these identities shapes her consciousness in significant ways and it is this consciousness through which she makes choices and exercises her agency through critical reflection. That consciousness, however, is still being affected by different structures and systems which exist in her environment, particularly its human dimension, that may or may not be adequately represented in her thoughts. The study of those structures and systems is what I wish to draw attention to here. An individual with a perfect and complete awareness of her world would know about each and every one of those structures and have an identity which expresses all of them in an accurately balanced way. However, in any culture some systems are easier to recognize than others and some might even be the target of suppression and distorted decodings. A well known example is how the gendering of society has begun to be understood more clearly only in recent generations. That very act of bringing it to the fore of our consciousness and the consequent changed meanings of gender has contributed to transforming the identities of many men and women.

It is quite possible, clearly, for consciousness to highlight certain structures and not be as aware of others, even though it may be experiencing them in practice. Identities are shaped by structures, but the two are not identical and there can be a good deal of slippage between them.

While talking about the structures that shape identity and lived experiences, it is important to acknowledge their systemic character. To say that inequality and injustice has a systemic character has certain implications. An individual's caste identity is not that of a unique group existing in a vacuum. It comes from its location, its position within a network of relationships that is formed by a caste system. Being a Kurmi, for instance, means little if it is not to be seen in the context of the relations between the Kurmis and the other castes of that particular region. It comes from the way Thakurs see themselves and how Brahmins looks at the rest of society and so on. The systemic character of such processes is important to acknowledge since it directs us to inquire into and visualize social inequalities in a relational way. It is not just the caste of an individual that is significant. What is significant is the set of relationships with other castes that this draws her into. It is important then to connect caste identity with the location of that caste within a particular manifestation of the caste system.

By saying that inequality and injustice are shaped by several different systems and structures and not just one, it is also being argued here that individuals cannot be pigeon-holed into just one social category of inequality like their caste or their gender or their class. Instead, they are better understood as being at the intersections of different systems of inequality, sitting within several webs that stretch in different directions and planes simultaneously. The consciousness of one particular identity may actually be contributed to by several systems together and not just one. For instance, what it means to be a middle class person is shaped not only by one's location in the class structure, but by also by the cultural meanings in the caste system of the purity of doing writing-based work rather than various kinds of impure and manual labour. It may be shaped by the

unisexual character of that work and by the regional flavour of the metropolis where that work is done. What appears at first as an occupational or work based identity actually is shaped by several different systems. Groups that possess a self-consciousness, of being a group for themselves, whether it be a caste, a gender or a class, usually also have the presence of other constituting processes which may not fully or even at all emerge into their self-consciousness.

Social movements against inequality have often resisted analytical attempts to distinguish between various categories within the broad identity under which mobilization is taking place. Dalit groups, for instance, are suspicious, and rightly so, of claims that the Dalits are broken into various mutually antagonistic groups. Feminists often find that to be reminded of class differences amongst women is a way of attacking the movement as a whole. Marxists have traditionally been opposed to considerations of ethnic, caste or regional identity An emphasis on multiple aspects of identity can be a potent weapon against making a shared identity the basis for mobilization of the oppressed. At the same time, it is important to build a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of oppression and inequality. One is encouraged by seeing that in organizations mobilizing around class exploitation, caste or in the women's movement, there is now a greater openness to the idea of intersectionality. The emphasis on intersectionality has become characteristic of what has come to be known as the third wave of feminist theory. In Dalit groups, too, one is hearing greater acceptance of the interaction between caste and gender.

Part of the difficulty here is that a common way of thinking about a person in the context of social inequality has been to see her as if she is a member of a distinct, clearly identifiable social group, sharing common features. That social group is supposed to have a discrete, independent existence as a “thing”. But a system is not a thing, being difficult to clearly identify, leave alone see and isolate. It is important to distinguish between a person and her perceived membership of a discrete group and the social orders which underlie her existence. Those orders may or may not be able to penetrate into consciousness, or may have only a partial representation there. Instead they must be imputed and conceived of as conceptual orders, present but brought to the surface only through the empirical and theoretical labour of the analyst. A young man with the surname of Sharma may be able to articulate only his own hard work and painstaking labour as what is behind his scoring well in his class twelfth exams. But the analyst would be able to see standing behind that several centuries of the interweaving of caste, class and gender relations, cumulating with the fact that this young man grew up in a metropolitan area and speaking in English at home as well as in school. There are several orders and systems of inequality at play in India today. They do not necessarily have a tangible discrete existence, and may even be formulated in varied manners by different theoreticians. They are not tangible in the same way as one can say that a human body is, however they are still substantial and real enough to make and break human lives.

METHODOLOGICAL DILEMMAS

In this paper for brevity's sake we shall restrict ourselves to the interweaving of three systems, those of class, caste and gender, but it is possible to formulate several others, too, for instance through reference to political institutions, religion, language and spatiality. It is not claimed or assumed that the three being discussed are even the most important contributors to social inequality. That is a matter which only a much better understanding of the interweaving of inequality will be able to resolve.

Studies on the interaction with each other of different forms of social inequality with education are surprisingly few in this country given the heat and fury surrounding its application in the form of the debate on reservations. Particularly scarce are studies that go into ethnographic explorations of the educational expression of the cultural or occupational experience of caste. Survey-based studies are a source of frustration, too, but in a different manner. Most surveys and datasets use the constitutional categories of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes and others.

These are useful and reasonably descriptive given the costs of large scale surveys, but do not reveal many details or nuances. The way class is categorized and sought to be captured by survey instruments usually leaves lots to be desired. One is caught wishing for both the interpretive insights of the ethnographic method on one side and the generalizability and comparability of surveys on the other. We may slowly and painfully be moving to a situation where multi-site ethnographic studies permit greater comparability and where surveys begin to examine more subtle aspects of the respondent's existence. But for the moment if one wants to try and understand intersectionality across different parts of India, one seems stuck with having to use both kinds of studies, given all their respective limitations, for the partial pictures which they offer. Sharply aware of the many limitations of surveys, this paper will try to explore the connections between different kinds of social inequalities through the 66th round of the National Sample Survey, conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization. This is the 8th quinquennial survey in the series on employment and unemployment and household expenditure data, being the most recent available at the time of writing. The survey was done between July 2009 to June 2010, covering 100,957 households and collecting information on 459,784 individuals. The NSSO surveys are not infallible (e.g. Agarwal and Kumar 2014) but they can still reveal at least broad trends in the population.

Due to limitations of space our emphasis would be on tertiary or higher education. Primary and secondary education are also sharply constrained by our political economy, culture and institutional processes. They filter who goes on to tertiary education. The most obvious connections between education and social structure, however are visible at this tertiary level. Adult roles that get shaped by education are primarily through tertiary education and only after that by any other level. Educated classes in India are defined by tertiary education and not so much by secondary or primary education. The number of people moving to a tertiary education at 17.2% is a rather small fraction of the Indian youth. However, these are the children of the topmost sections of the stratification system and they are the ones who will occupy most of the higher strata of status, power and wealth. Of course, education alone is not responsible for differences of rank and political power or the inheritance of wealth. Further, tertiary education is highly differentiated and there is a vast gap between IITs and Delhi's elite undergraduate colleges on the one hand and arts colleges in mofussil towns on the other. A focus on higher education, it is submitted, can tell us something significant about power and status in this country.

THE INTERCONNECTIONS OF INEQUALITY

The experience of inequality – whether in the realm of work, in the family or in ritual – may occur in an integrated manner and be difficult to separate into its constituent forces. Or there may situations where one system of inequality may be prominent over all others, as in the caste-based rules for entry to certain temples. Mostly commonly, though, the systems of inequality are so interwoven as not to permit an easy separation. Educational experiences are a case in point, where for instance as in the achievement levels, some of the consequences of equality may even be seen as scores in an exam, mono-dimensional and focused, leading at times to an even more binary result of being selected or not.

Our ability to see the manner in which one system of inequality may be connected to several other orders of inequality depends, fundamentally, on how those systems are conceptualized, defined and delineated. Caste has almost always been seen as connected closely with class or economic and occupational groupings. This may be seen in the ancient *Purush Sukta* which described different occupational groups springing from the body of Brahma as well as in the work of Emile Senart (1896) and many other nineteenth century writers who have connected caste and class. But very few have gone so far as to say that they are completely the same. The connection between caste and gender has been implicitly present wherever restrictions on marriage alliances have been described as going hand in hand with caste (Senart 1896). B.R. Ambedkar (1917) was an

early analyst of how gendering follows the need to maintain the caste system, however it is only in relatively recent times that the structural connection between caste and gender has received more systematic attention(Dube 1996). It is useful therefore to explore the sense in which one uses the terms class, caste and gender and through that to identify at least some of the convergences, divergences and intersections in them.

There have been several ways of speaking about class, but at the heart of most of them is the idea that it is an expression of economic or material inequality. Such an inequality may be connected with hereditary social groups like caste or may at certain historical junctures have had little to do with the family one comes from. There is a conceptual advantage in distinguishing between the process of social clustering on the basis of common kinship, real or imagined, and social clustering on the basis of shared material or economic conditions. These may or may not converge and are quite distinct processes. The gendering of people refers to distinguishing a male-female polarity in social roles and their related norms and sanctions. At its core this is different from a social identity emerging from material conditions or from kinship networks. Of course, gender may be expressed in caste as well as class systems, but is a social differentiation on another set of fundamentally different principles and plays out in a different pattern. It refers to a basic cleavage between types of human roles corresponding to a putative difference in the sexes. While there may be many versions of intertwining or distancing between these systems of social inequality in real life and also many ways of interpreting these terms, it is useful to think of caste, class and gender in a way that refers to fundamentally different processes of social causation, of socially influencing individual life experiences, relationships with others, consciousness, access to resources and so on. The ways in which these coalesce and separate become important to understand.

CASTE

There has been a long and rich history of the study of caste in India to closely describe and analyse this particular configuration of social life. G.S. Ghurye (2000 / 1932) had provided a classic description of six features that seemed to characterise India's caste system: (1) It had a segmentary structure, which meant that individuals' primary loyalty was to their caste rather than to society; (2) the segments were ranked; (3) there were restrictions on social intercourse and the sharing and exchange of food; (4) different segments had different civil and religious privileges and disabilities; (5) there were some restrictions on the choice of occupations; (6) the circles with whom marriages could be contracted had restrictions. Crucially, the restrictions which circumscribed the caste system were hereditary and expressed higher or lower prestige, viz. they shaped a rank order. It should not be thought that the details and structure of the caste system are uniform across various regions and linguistic zones. A surprising degree of variation may be seen. However it may still be said of all the different forms it takes, at its core caste comprises a system of ranked, hereditary groups. This appears simple, but it is also a relatively formal and abstract description of caste and permits us to explore its relation with class and gender.

The greater body of writings on caste has, perhaps, tended to concern themselves less with its conceptual aspect and more with exploring how it has operated in struggles for power and wealth in different parts of the country. F.G. Bailey's (1958) classic *Caste and the Economic Frontier* was content to refer to hereditary occupational groups and then focus on how they responded to the entry of markets. Caste was shown to be an important resource for the powerful in consolidating their forces and taking up positions of advantage in the new economic scenario. But little light was shed on the systemic character of caste itself. The structuralist tradition, seen in the works of Celéstin Bouglé (1971 / 1908), Louis Dumont (1999 / 1971) and others, has taken another tack to examining the caste system. Here the emphasis has been on trying to articulate the basic principles at work rather than how they play out in the realms of the economy, politics and education. Drawing from Bouglé's specification of three basic principles – repulsion, hierarchy and specialization,

Dumont sublimated them into one basic opposition, that of purity with impurity. All the expressions of the caste system, he argued, could be seen to reflect this basic opposition. Dumont did not deny that material and political interests also motivated people and shaped the consolidation of castes in struggling for them. What he wanted to do, he said, was to explore for a while the significance of ideology, as a system of signs, alone for a while, before examining how these interacted with locality and political and economic factors (Dumont 1999: 38-39).

The notion of caste as an ideology, as Dumont himself accepted, had limits in how much it could explain the broader dimensions of social inequality. At the same time his contribution was to focus attention on how the caste system was expressed through the structural patterns within a culture. Following in his footsteps Veena Das (1980) and Richard Burghart (1978) have sought to describe other cultural patterns, too, that crystallized caste relationships. Veena Das has emphasized a triangular opposition of categories, unlike Dumont's binary opposition of purity with impurity. Burghart also takes a different tack away from Dumont's binaries, formulating instead a separation between the king, the ascetic and the brahmin as being characteristic of the Hindu cultural order. The major difference between these cultural and structuralist approaches and the rest being their emphasis on the cultural roots of caste in contrast to its existence being premised on the political and economic benefits it may give.

There has been a tendency in Dumont and some other scholars to define caste in a way such that it is said to exist only in India. This has centred around the centrality of Brahminnical cultures to the caste system. Such an approach may have certain advantages but also has the disadvantage of being so narrow that even some parts of India may not appear to be part of the caste system defined thus. Nor does it allow us to compare the Indian stratification system with others. Perhaps a broader approach to defining caste may be more helpful.

From the point of view of identifying overlaps and intersections, it may be useful to start by asking what the elements of the caste system are, what its moments of force are , so to speak, that together build up the system. Looking at the various ways in which the caste system has been conceptualized, it is possible to speak of at least three moments in caste: (1) Occupational or economic, which contributes substantially to a particular caste's position in the stratification system by influencing their access to resources, markets and so on. (2) Ideology or culture, which may lead to a categorization of superior and inferior ranks and different kinds of cultural resources available to different castes, that may in turn lead to advantages and disadvantages in certain contexts like those of production or education. (3) Kinship, the social rules which build bonds of blood and marriage, particularly those which establish networks through endogamy, leading to a patterning of inclusion and exclusion from resources and cultural capital.

Perhaps what M.N. Srinivas (2003) was saying in his controversial paper announcing, rather prematurely, the death of caste as a system, was that the degree of integration of these various components of caste was declining. However that did not mean that the individual components could not have a life of their own and continue to shape social inequality, even if not in the same way as they would have as part of a larger system. Thus even if caste no longer had a systemic integration and mirroring of culture with kinship networks, it was still possible that a discreet endogamy carried on. That would continue to influence the distribution of inherited capital, both social and cultural, and give a stamp of inheritance rather than achievement to the distributions of various occupations. It was not necessary for people to declare that they believed in the caste system. Indeed a consciousness that asserted it was opposed to the caste system could go hand in hand with the continued effects of caste origins on occupational distributions. This pattern of loosening of the integration between the components of the caste system would also be consistent with Dipankar Gupta's (1997) assertion that a shift from hierarchy to difference was taking place. That may well be happening in the places his fieldwork had taken place in, where a widespread questioning of the ideologies of caste was visible. However, endogamy is not being reported as

having declined substantially and its continuance would still lead to a caste pattern in the distribution of resources. At the same time, it is also important to acknowledge that the breaking apart of the system's components now makes possible newer recombinations in spheres like those of electoral politics.

It is possible for the systemic character of caste to weaken, without dramatic shifts in the caste patterns in education and the economy. This might happen when the individual components of the system continued to have a substantial effect even without a conscious integration. In a manner of speaking, caste for itself may be making a transition to caste in itself, with the effects continuing even as systemic consciousness of it may be changing to a consciousness of specific groupings. The hope that education would dissolve and evaporate the caste system is finding that in reality social inequality is transforming into a different and more subtle shape.

Table 1: Caste-wise Current Enrolments of Undergraduates in Percent (17-24 age group)

	In Sample	Agriculture	Engineering	Medicine	Others
ST	8.5	6.6	0.7	0.3	4.7
SC	20.4	15.0	5.3	14.3	14.3
OBC	40.4	37.1	35.9	36.5	41.0
Others	30.7	41.3	58.2	48.9	39.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Studying the distribution of various castes in higher education is a good way to begin discussing social inequality and its interconnections. We will focus more on higher education since it is at the core of social inequality. It is higher education which is most directly involved in access to the state and to economic power. Parity in primary education, important as it is, may be of limited use as an enabler of equality of resources and power. Instead what matters more is who eventually after several levels of expulsion and exclusion from the education system goes on to higher education and of that, to those forms of higher education which lead to highest salaries and to the levers of the state. The NSS data shows considerable inequality here. The ST, for instance, are 8.5% of all 17-24 years old, but were only 0.7% of those enrolled in undergraduate engineering programmes (Table 1). Even in the many disparate arts and sciences courses they were just about 4.7% or about half as many as one would expect if no systemic discrimination was at work.

The picture of caste inequality painted through NSS data is sharply limited, of course, by the fact that only enrolment is being counted here and not the lived experiences of students in these respective courses, or many other aspects of their educational activities. In spite of these limitations, we get a striking portrayal of social inequality through a tabulation of caste demographics in higher education. As a description of social inequality, it is incomplete and potentially misleading in another sense, too. It is submitted that when we begin to see how caste interplays with class and gender, we would get a more complete view. For that we turn now to a discussion of the formulation of social class.

CLASS

It has long been acknowledged that control of resources, income and the lived experience of one's daily work deeply affect social inequality. Education, it is true, is not just about material wealth but at the same time systems of production and distribution do have a profound influence on the very meaning of education. An important aspect of it is to prepare people for participation in production of goods and services which others will appreciate, and for their exchange and consumption as well. The character of an economic system influences the kind of education system it needs. Of course, what an economic system may “need” and what it actually has may be quite different things. It may

further be pointed out that merely asking what is functionally required for an economic system is not a strong enough moral justification for its provision. For instance, the *jajman-kamin* economic system of medieval India relied on ensocializing the *kamin* to believe that the cycle of birth and rebirth had destined them to drudgery so as to give the *jajman jagirdar* a life of luxury. It is difficult to accept the moral underpinnings of this "need". Similarly it may be asked whether the demands of insecure post-Fordian labour, always moving and increasingly unspecialized, are also what lead to an acceptable moral system, emphasizing trust and cooperation. The class system is one of the central structures around which debates on what is a desirable education take place. Consequently, its relationship with other similarly central structures like the caste and gender systems becomes a key question to address.

Social class has been formulated in a variety of ways and in today's world all of them find education an important process shaping the class structure. Education is usually dominated by those at the upper levels of the class system, whose occupants disproportionately influence its curricula and the kind of work its graduates do. As we move towards a global society that rests on intense concentrations of knowledge and technology, educational institutions become increasingly important in providing access to those knowledge resources. The patterns of provision and denial of access, the kind of knowledges and technologies being promoted and other similar questions are crucial to understanding and perhaps choosing the directions our future will take. Whether we will move for instance, towards a planet of slums with a few oases of gargantuan accumulated wealth or we will move to a world where most people are empowered and enabled to make their destinies, depends heavily (but not only) on the shape our educational institutions will take.

Classes and class systems have been defined in a variety of ways, perhaps with a much greater range in them than can be seen in theories of caste. A simple way of distinguishing between classes has been that of clubbing together people with with similar incomes or consumption levels. The differences between people in India according to their consumption levels is vast. Those in 2009-10 with a monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) of above Rs 3000 were only slightly over 5% of the sample. Approximately 87.8 % of Indians lived on less than Rs 2000 per month or Rs 67 per day. It is hardly surprising that such vast differences also convert into dramatic inequalities in higher education, power, quality of life and so on.

Table 2: Consumption-Class Based Educational Attainments in Percent (17-24 age group)

MPCE	In Sample	Illiterate	Primary	Undergraduate
0-1000	56.7	82.9	73.5	21.4
1000-2000	31.0	15.4	23.9	39.3
2000-3000	6.9	1.2	2.0	17.4
3000-4000	2.4	0.3	0.4	9.4
4000-5000	1.1	0.1	0.1	4.7
>5000	1.9	0.1	0.1	7.9
Total	100	100	100	100

The differences between educational attainments of different MPCE bands is striking. Individuals in the 17-24 year age group who come from households with MPCE of less than Rs 1000 per month are 56.7% or a little more than half the sample (Table 2). However, 82.9% of the illiterates come from this MPCE group. In contrast, only 21.4% of the undergraduates come from this group that is actually over half of the sample. Individuals from households with over Rs 5000 MPCE are only 1.9% of the sample, but they make up 7.9% of undergraduates and only 0.1% of the

illiterates.

One, though not the only, reason why people may seek education is to maintain or improve their class positions. Income alone cannot help us to understand this. A farmer's son and an urban white-collar worker's son may have the same family income, but can bring different experiences to bear into education, make different meanings of it and have different goals. Going beyond income, thinking in terms of an occupational system, too, is an important way of categorizing class to understand its relationship with education as well as several other aspects of the lives of people from different occupations (Lockwood 1958). Families from particular occupational groups like educated wage labourers, or what are often called white-collar workers, have much greater access as well as a desire to pursue education. Not surprisingly, individuals from these families are disproportionately represented in the most powerful positions in India as well as in developed countries. The kind of work one does and the moral and cultural significance attached to it in a society creates motivations, revulsions and sub-cultures that are not very well reflected in an income or consumption based analysis.

Table 3: Occupational Classes within Different MPCE Bands, in Percent

Occupational Classes	In Sample	Percentage Within An MPCE Class					
		0-1000	1000-2000	2000-3000	3000-4000	4000-5000	>5000
Owners, managers, professionals.	11.6	5.3	16.2	33.4	47.3	59.8	62.0
Low ranking educated workers	5.5	2.1	8.7	19.2	22.4	15.8	21.3
Shopkeepers moneylenders	4.6	3.7	6.5	6.0	4.1	2.4	1.8
Skilled workers	18.8	17.4	22.4	20.5	13.2	10.0	5.1
Non-agricultural unskilled workers	11.5	13.5	9.7	4.3	2.9	1.7	1.1
Farmers < 2ha	17.1	19.8	15.2	5.9	3.8	4.1	2.1
Farmers 2-4ha	5.3	5.3	6.1	3.3	2.4	1.3	2.3
Farmers >4ha	2.6	2.1	3.6	3.8	1.9	2.5	3.0
Animal husbandry	1.9	1.7	2.3	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.1
Subsistence agricultural workers	2.1	2.7	1.3	0.5	0.0	0.1	0.0
Agricultural workers	19.0	26.5	8.1	1.6	0.7	0.7	0.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The educated classes are small in number but they make up a disproportionately large number of the high consumption individuals. They are 17.1% of the surveyed households, but make up only 7.4 % of the households with less than Rs 1000 as the monthly per capita consumption expenditure (Table 3). When it comes to families with more than Rs 5000 MPCE, those who are in occupations closely linked with having had an extended education are a whopping 83.3% of all households.

Occupation has to be understood independently and in parallel to consumption and income as the shaper of experience, culture and aspirations. Owners, managers and professionals' children make up just 3.1% of all illiterates, but 29.9 % of the undergraduates in 17-24 year age group. In contrast, young people from agricultural labour households are 31.7% of all the illiterate and just 4.4% of the undergraduates (Table 4).

Table 4: Occupational Class Based Educational Attainments in Percent (17-24 age group)

Occupational Groups	Illiterate	Undergraduates	In Sample
Owners, managers, professionals	3.1	29.9	11.3
Low ranking educated workers	0.9	18.1	5.9
Shopkeepers moneylenders	2.0	5.9	4.6
Skilled workers	17.1	15.5	19.8
Non-agricultural unskilled workers	17.7	4.9	11.5
Farmers <= 2ha	16.2	10.5	16.4
Farmers > 2 <= 4ha	4.2	4.2	5.5
Farmers > 4ha	2.2	2.8	2.7
Animal husbandry	2.2	1.5	1.8
Subsistence agricultural workers	2.6	2.3	2.0
Agricultural workers	31.7	4.4	18.6
Total	100	100	100

Table 5: Occupation-Class Based Undergraduates in Households with MPCE Greater Than Rs 3000 in Percent (17-24 age group)

	Among MPCE Band > Rs 3000	Among Undergraduates from this MPCE Band
Owners, managers, professionals.	49.9	60.8
Low ranking educated workers	23.1	23.9
Shopkeepers moneylenders	3.1	2.6
Skilled workers	9.6	5.8
Non-agricultural unskilled workers	3.6	0.7
Farmers <= 2ha	3.5	2.0
Farmers > 2 <= 4ha	1.8	1.5
Farmers > 4ha	2.3	1.3
Animal husbandry	2.2	0.8
Subsistence agricultural workers	0.0	0.0
Agricultural workers	0.9	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Different occupations within the same consumptions bands are seen to have different educational attainments, which supports the importance of thinking in terms of an occupational system and not just income. As an illustration, Table 5 is of 17-24 year olds from households with a monthly per capita expenditure of above Rs 3000 per month, who collectively make up less than 10% of all Indian households. Table 2 tells us that an MPCE of about Rs 3000 is the threshold above which there is an almost constant ratio of individuals in the sample to individuals in higher education (approximately 4:1). Greater MPCE does not seem to change that ratio. Interestingly the variations within this consumption band are now connected to family occupations. Family members of owners, managers and professionals make up 49.9% of the individuals of this relatively "high" MPCE band. However their educational patterns do not correspond to their proportion within the sample band. These 49.9% make up 60.8% of all the undergraduates of this MPCE band. In contrast, the lower white-collared workers, who do more routine activities, make up 23.1% of this sample band and a very similar 23.9% of the undergraduates. The difference in the proportions across various occupational groups suggests that occupation has to be considered independently and in interaction with income to understand educational inequality, amongst other forms of inequality. Just looking at income alone may not give the complete picture.

The relationship of the members of a household with education is also shaped by the work done by other members. This also affects the way the difference in men and women's work is understood by households from that particular occupational group. A linked but distinct approach from an occupation-centred way of understanding class tries to identify fundamental relationships that are generated through people's work. The relational approach to class has been prominent in Karl Marx's work, for instance, which gave the centre stage to a relation of exploitation, deriving from it several class categories, including those of the capitalists who extracted surplus value from the labour of the proletariat, in a particular historically created context. Central here, as well as in many other formulations of social class that were influenced by Marx, is the theme that social inequality is constituted by and through a system of relationships. Class location is a matter of what kind of relationships a person stands in. In the works of people like Erik Olin Wright (1986) this has been articulated through the notion of people not being characterized by just one class identity, but as actually standing at certain locations in a multifarious web of relationships. Individuals can have simultaneously contradictory and intermediary class relations. An example of this is the manager who is simultaneously exploited by the owner of a firm as well as facilitates the exploitation of others. Max Weber's approach of using multiple kinds of relationships to define a class position has been integrated into these theories of class. Among the key relationships that can go into defining a class location are whether a person is an exploiter, is being exploited or is neither; the degree of power or authority a person possesses in the organization of work; access to the means of production; the extent of development of a labour market and the place within that of the skills possessed by an individual and so on. John Goldthorpe's (2000) work has emphasized in this the relation between the workers and the owner in terms of powers to negotiate, as well as commitment and trust. He has contrasted the relationship of a labour contract with an orientation of service to the firm, with widely varying consequences on the everyday experience of work, identity and remunerations. In such perspectives on class, education plays the key role of setting up class relationships. It is central to the creation of social structures and inequalities.

The relation between the agrarian, the service and the manufacturing sectors is of great importance to us when we seek to understand India's class structure and the place of education within it. When dominated by those from the service and manufacturing sectors, education tends to emphasize them in its curriculum and goal. It acts as a pathway to moving away from agriculture and into other sectors. A relational approach to class analysis of the Indian agrarian sector was pioneered by Daniel Thorner (1956) who integrated a conceptual focus on exploitation with the framework of traditional rights and service-duties that a group held. D.N. Dhanagare (1983) has adapted Lenin (1965 / 1920) and Mao Zedong's (1933) analyses of agrarian classes to further refine

Thorner's schema of agrarian classes. At a broader level the Indian economy is seeing a gradual shift away from agrarian employment to manufacturing and services. Out of these, it is the service sector which is growing much faster than manufacturing. These trends are defining the essential characteristics of the Indian class structure, which includes the tipping of the balance of power away from agriculture into other sectors. What relationship education has with the class structure will depend on what that class structure is and also on the content of that education, among other factors. Formal education in India largely focuses on non-traditional knowledges, literacy and numeracy. It has a relatively small interface with those who work in agriculture or as skilled and unskilled labour. Its greatest affinity is to the highly educated wage labour and professional. The owners of capital have a connection with it that is one step removed, since they do need it increasingly to manage their assets, yet they are also able to hire educated workers to manage their wealth for them. Inheritance of financial capital does not rest on schooling, whereas the inheritance of the cultural capital of the wage labour does. This makes education of differential relevance to different occupational groups. Rather than enabling all the spheres of work equally, education often serves to channelize the movement of labour from one sector to the other. Choices of whether or not to invest effort into education and what kind of education to choose are closely connected with one's location within the broader class structure.

The way class is formulated, not surprisingly, influences how it is sought to be detected through surveys. The class structure has to be conceptualized through a cycling between ethnographic and survey methods and is far from a finished process. An example of the kind of difficulties presently being faced is that of the person who is educated and works in non-agricultural sectors but shares closely knit ties with agricultural siblings. Some members of the extended family may live in the village and some in the town, with children moving back and forth between them. These intermediary classes would call for special care on the part of survey instruments and investigators to enumerate. Like the problem of using categories like Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, here too we have to live with the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the NSS survey.

For the purposes of this paper a reduced eleven class framework has been used, drawing from the categories available in the National Classification of Occupations (2004) which the NSS has used. These have been clustered using a mix of relational and occupational principles, trying to arrive at a set of classes which was not too unwieldy and fragmented. Here we have clubbed owners, managers and professionals together as groups with some affinities that distinguish them from lower ranking educational workers who do more routine work and are at lower levels in organizational hierarchies. These are the two main classes of the educated or white-collar workers. In the non-agricultural sector, skilled non-agricultural workers and unskilled non-agricultural workers are demarkated from each other. Shopkeepers and moneylenders are clubbed as a separate class. Agricultural landowners and tenants have been counted together and distinguished into three classes on the basis of the amount of land which they hold: 0-2 hectares (small), 2-4 hectares (medium) and greater than 4 hectares (large) respectively. People who are primarily doing animal husbandry are treated as a distinct class. Subsistence agricultural workers and agricultural workers who are integrated into markets are counted as two separate classes. As the various tables in this paper show, the differences amongst these classes are tangible, which at least partially validates this kind of categorization. It also shows itself to be useful in understanding the interactions between class and other systems of inequality.

We are now equipped, howsoever crudely, to examine the importance of using a conceptualization of class alongside caste to understand educational inequality. Table 6 describes engineering undergraduate students in the 17-24 year age group in 2009-10 according to the occupations of the heads of their families. The engineering undergraduates are further differentiated into the constitutional caste groupings of their families. If the family's occupation was a neutral matter and caste was the only important factor that contributed to educational inequality, then we would expect that students from any particular caste group would be distributed in a simple

proportion to the distribution of their family occupations within that caste group in the sample. In other words, if family occupation did not give advantages or disadvantages in higher education, then the number of students from an occupation should correspond to the number of people following that occupation, neither more nor less. So if only 3.5% of ST 17-24 year olds are from ST families recorded as owners, managers or professionals, then we would expect that 3.5% of all ST students in engineering should be from those occupations. However, this is not what we find in the sample. Instead we find that a much larger percent of ST students (27.6%) in engineering are from ST owner, manager and professional families. In contrast, ST 17-24 year olds from agricultural labour families are 30.0 % of the STs in the sample, but only 6.2% of the ST students enrolled in engineering colleges. Many more examples could be multiplied from the Tables 6, 7 and 8.

Table 6 Occupational Classes Within Various Castes in Undergraduate Engineering in Percent (17-24 age group)

	ST		SC		OBC		OTHERS	
	Eng UGs	Sample	Eng UGs	Sample	Eng UGs	Sample	Eng UGs	Sample
Owners, managers, professionals.	27.6	3.5	27.3	5.3	31.5	10.7	52.2	18.4
Low ranking educated workers	14.5	4.5	25.4	4.5	22.2	4.4	18.6	9.2
Shopkeepers moneylenders	0.0	1.7	0.2	2.7	5.5	4.8	6.0	6.3
Skilled workers	17.6	10.2	22.6	20.0	17.6	21.8	8.2	19.8
Non-agricultural unskilled workers	0.0	9.4	4.7	20.5	1.4	10.4	0.8	7.2
Farmers <= 2ha	2.7	24.8	13.4	10.7	12.6	17.3	3.5	16.7
Farmers > 2 <= 4ha	31.5	11.1	0.0	2.0	3.3	5.5	1.5	6.3
Farmers > 4ha	0.0	2.6	0.5	0.9	1.1	3.0	7.1	3.5
Animal husbandry	0.0	0.9	0.0	1.8	1.3	2.3	0.1	1.3
Subsistence agricultural workers	0.0	1.4	0.0	1.4	0.0	2.8	0.0	1.7
Agricultural workers	6.2	30.0	6.0	30.2	3.4	17.0	2.1	9.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

It should not be assumed, of course, that class alone matters and caste does not. Table 7 takes up each occupational group whose children are present in engineering colleges and sees the distribution of castes within that occupational group. As previously, the social background of students in engineering colleges is compared with the social background of young people of that same age group in the complete sample. It is quite clear that within particular occupational groups there is a great deal of variation in enrolments with caste backgrounds. Consider, for instance, the class of managers, professionals and owners, which Table 6 tells us is clearly over-represented in engineering education, amongst all the various caste groups. However when we examine the caste break-up *within* this class in Table 7, the Other Castes straddle it. They make up the caste origins of 49.0% of all the young people in the raw sample who come from a family background of managers, professionals and owners. Yet, they are 64.1% of the students from that family background in

engineering undergraduate programmes. In contrast the SC who make up 9.8% of young people coming from manager, professional and owner families, are only 5.4% of engineering students with that background. In other words, even in reference to young people coming from the same class background, the Other Castes are over-represented and the SC substantially under-represented. Rather different patterns can be seen for other classes, but one trend shines through in an unmistakable fashion: caste clearly matters alongside class, but the two are not identical and show complex inter-relations. Similar patterns can be shown in other kinds of enrolments, with the contribution of family occupational background being relatively smaller, though still very substantial, in the less sought after under-graduate programmes like BA and B.Sc. Social background makes increasing amounts of difference as we move from the less to the more sought after educational programmes.

Table 7 Castes within Occupational Classes in Undergraduate Engineering in Percent (17-24 age group)

		ST	SC	OBC	Others	Total
Owners, managers, professionals.	Eng UGs	0.5	5.4	29.9	64.1	100
	Sample	2.7	9.8	38.5	49.0	100
Low ranking educated workers	Eng UGs	0.6	10.2	42.9	46.4	100
	Sample	6.6	15.8	30.7	46.9	100
Shopkeepers moneylenders	Eng UGs	0.0	0.3	41.3	58.3	100
	Sample	3.2	12.3	43.2	41.3	100
Skilled workers	Eng UGs	1.1	14.1	53.0	31.8	100
	Sample	4.5	20.9	44.7	29.9	100
Non-agricultural unskilled workers	Eng Ugs	0.0	28.0	41.7	30.3	100
	Sample	7.2	37.2	36.9	18.8	100
Farmers <= 2ha	Eng UGs	0.3	14.0	63.1	22.7	100
	Sample	13.1	13.6	42.7	30.6	100
Farmers > 2 <= 4ha	Eng UGs	11.1	0.0	56.0	32.9	100
	Sample	17.4	7.5	40.5	34.5	100
Farmers > 4ha	Eng UGs	0.0	0.9	11.1	88.0	100
	Sample	8.4	7.1	45.2	39.3	100
Animal husbandry	Eng UGs	0.0	0.0	94.9	5.1	100
	Sample	4.3	20.7	52.9	22.1	100
Subsistence agricultural workers	Eng UGs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
	Sample	5.8	13.9	55.1	25.3	100
Agricultural workers	Eng UGs	1.7	16.6	45.1	36.5	100
	Sample	13.9	33.6	37.1	15.4	100

That caste and class are connected but distinct as systems of inequality is clear. But how exactly they interact is not revealed by these numbers. For that it is necessary to examine theoretical and qualitative studies of social inequality.

Table 8 Castes within Occupational Groups in Arts, Commerce and Science Undergraduate Programmes in Percent (17-24 age group)

	ST	SC	OBC	Others	Total
Owners, managers, professionals.	2.9	9.1	33.8	54.2	100
Low ranking educated workers	7.1	11.9	25.2	55.8	100
Shopkeepers moneylenders	1.7	6.9	46.9	44.5	100
Skilled workers	4.0	16.7	46.5	32.8	100
Non-agricultural unskilled workers	3.2	29.7	45.4	21.6	100
Farmers <= 2ha	5.1	14.2	48.7	32.0	100
Farmers > 2 <= 4ha	5.2	7.8	40.8	46.3	100
Farmers > 4ha	1.7	1.5	42.2	54.6	100
Animal husbandry	0.7	12.0	67.7	19.6	100
Subsistence agricultural workers	7.9	11.5	47.7	33.0	100
Agricultural workers	6.4	35.3	46.0	12.4	100
All arts, commerce, science UGs	4.7	14.3	41.0	39.9	100

UNDERSTANDING INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CLASS AND CASTE

At the level of structural principles there is a tension between the processes of class and those of caste. In practice they may be intertwined in a variety of ways that may be seen at different places. However being able to identify the structural convergences and divergences between the two sets of processes helps us to understand social inequality much better.

Class, whether one sees it as systems of exploitation and domination or as systems of occupations, however one may formulate it, is shaped by several processes. Prominent amongst them nowadays are industrialization and the growth of markets carrying with them the logic of industrial and finance capitalism. Contemporary forms of production and exchange are driven by critical re-organizing as a way to enhance various activities and to direct them into an increasingly controlled direction. Automation and mechanization is a means to this end. Organizational processes of feedback and control dissolve existing combinations again and yet again to re-orient the organization more closely towards its goals. This increases production and is characterised by a trend towards greater scales and greater differentiation along with complexity in the sense of layering of clusters above each other. The social differentiation which emerges through these processes is qualitatively different from the social differentiation driven by the caste system's considerations of kinship-based power and resource mobilization. Capitalism, in its various forms, directs these trends through its emphasis on the extraction of profit from labour. The focus on profit leads to greater and greater reflexivity on redesigning and rethinking processes, including now an emphasis on sustainability in maintaining the growth of exploitation. These processes have a certain

tension with particularistic relationships and with goals driven by culture or kinship. That is not to say that kinship systems cannot and do not survive alongside the highest forms of capitalism. The inheritance of finance capital down kinship lines is an example of the opposite. Yet, nowadays even this inheritance of capital has to give a nod to the discourse of merit and "best" solutions by seeking the legitimacy offered by elite technology and management education institutions for the offspring.

The discourse of industrialization and the practice of capitalism have as one of their central tenets the idea that class locations are not defined by birth. Of course, what a society spells out as its sanctioned norms may not be the same as its actual practice. The study of social mobility has documented extensively that the resources, dignity and opportunities available to an individual continue to be closely correlated with their parents' class location (e.g. Singh and Motiram 2012). In spite of having a distinct inner logic, kinship networks and hence caste have an emphatically positive correlation with class. Maurice Godelier, amongst others in the relational tradition, has pointed out that since kinship contributes to shaping the relations of production it must be seen as a necessary constitutive element of class.

The inheritability of caste through its emphasis on kinship and endogamy is an important way in way in which it influences class structures. Another way is through the cultural specificities of caste groups which also feed into building class cultures. They create cultural boundaries around and within occupations and firms, and define fields of behaviour which guide inclusion and exclusion from social networks. Indeed it is perhaps when the cultural boundaries of occupational groups become highly rigid and non-porous that they transform into castes.

What is important here is to point out that class is not static and nor is the role of kinship, gender and caste frozen in time. More and more people from other caste backgrounds are entering into classes which were hitherto the preserve of a select few castes. This is being shaped by several processes including the growth of markets and the pressure towards disembedding and re-organization in search of greater profits. The emergence of large-scale political institutions also has a similar impact, when they seek legitimacy through an ideology of equality and participation. One process which may contribute to this expansion of the caste composition of various classes is an open and non-denominational education, that expands opportunity and networks of recruitment. Of course, there can be many brakes applied to the contribution of an open education by the existing patterns of kinship and caste. This putative open-ness may actually be found in many shades. A process creating a more open pattern of recruitment to different classes or occupational groups may be the growth of the economy itself, which creates more positions of say, white-collar workers, than can be possibly filled up by the offspring of the previous generation of white-collar workers, thus making it possible for others to move into that niche. This will lead to a weakening of the link between caste and class in terms of who can enter into a category. However those from previously advantaged castes may still maintain their positions or even, as Christopher Fuller and Haripriya Narasimhan have argued in their studies of Tamil brahmins (2010), move into higher class positions, those of a globalized white-collar force. In contrast to these processes of open-ness, there may be processes which reduce opportunity, like market forces which prefer to increase profit of a few rather than the benefits of many, thus squeezing on recruitments and moving to lower paid contractual workers. The pressure on opportunities may make it desirable for people to cultivate social and kinship networks for the benefits they may potentially offer.

The analysis of the Indian class structure is a complex and still incomplete project. In the interest of our search for intersectionality in education, however, we could point to at least three moments within the class system which help to understand its interaction with caste and gender – (1) its work or occupational dimension, including how these are shaped by organizational discourses, market systems and models of capital-state relationships, (2) its determination by as well as shaping of kinship and gender relations and (3) its determination by as well as shaping of cultural orientations or status groups. By keeping these moments in mind we are able to make at least some sense of how

class interacts with caste in education. Occupational and income groups can be more easily joined and left than caste groups. The class structure itself is heterogeneous with respect to caste, with every specific class being made up of several castes. Castes themselves are also heterogeneous in terms of occupations and incomes. The fact that classes tend to retain their educational levels and are slow to change depends at least partially on kinship networks, endogamy and shared class cultures. Caste systems contribute to each of these, though they are clearly not the only process at work. If they had been, then we should have seen an identity in occupational and income patterns of all those in a particular caste group as well as in their educational patterns. The substantial divergence (though still considerable constancy) within caste patterns tells us that it is still useful to distinguish between these two stratification systems. Among the deep-lying trends in India which are shaping how these moments play out are the growth of a capitalist market on the one hand and the shaping of exchange by political and social networks on the other. Both of them regulate entry into various occupational groups and thence assessments of what kind of education to seek. Merely trying to understand educational inequality in terms of either caste or class systems does not take us very far. It is important to find ways in which we can consider both simultaneously, while still maintaining an analytical distinction between them.

Before we try to articulate the ways of that simultaneous examination, let us complicate our objectives by one more order. We turn now to gender and examine how it interplays with caste and class in education and social inequality. Again our focus will be on where the greatest inequalities lie – in higher education.

GENDER

Our understanding of gender inequality has made substantial gains since the 1970s. Ann Oakley (1972) was one of the early people to use the term gender to distinguish biological differences of sexual dimorphism from the roles and experiences which get socially constructed on the basis of these putative biological identities. It has become clear that gender operates as a system of social differentiation, identity and inequality, reaching into most aspects of human existence, supported and maintained by diverse institutions, cultures, symbols and practices. Gendering appears to operate alongside as well as within every existing system of social inequality, shaping the expression of agrarian inequality as well as the character of brahminnism. It colours the political, economic and cultural systems of every society and is affected by them, too, in return.

Caste, class and gender are widely believed to be inter-related, though at their core may be present quite different processes. The 66th Round of the NSS also shows that the probability of women making it to higher education varies across different class as well as caste groups. The discrimination faced by women has to be differentiated into the experiences of different classes and castes, respectively. Just one of them, class or caste alone is not enough to understand the discrimination faced by women.

Table 9. Gender Differences in Tertiary Education by MPCE Classes and Caste in Percent (17-24 age group)

MPCE	0-1000		2000-3000		3000-4000		4000-5000		> 5000	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
ST	65.7	34.3	61.8	38.2	55.6	44.4	67.6	32.4	78.4	21.6
SC	46.0	54.0	50.3	49.7	51.5	48.5	43.1	56.9	63.9	36.1
OBC	65.0	35.0	54.8	45.2	55.2	44.8	56.5	43.5	58.1	41.9
Others	59.8	40.2	51.2	48.8	46.5	53.5	47.7	52.3	54.6	45.4

There are more men than women in higher education across most castes and most consumption bands. However other than this no clear and unambiguous pattern can be seen. The sex ratio amongst upper castes, for instance, does not fluctuate very much across different consumption groups. The SC women seem to be doing better than the Other Caste women in certain consumption bands. The ST women are consistently worst off, across all consumption bands, though their numbers in the highest consumption band are too few for a reliable picture there. Gender appears to be interacting in complicated ways with class and caste and does not seem to have a simple relationship with them.

The variations above are still enough to show that it is not possible to understand educational inequality of women on the basis of their being women alone, nor is it possible to educational inequality as a function of patriarchy being expressed through the caste system alone. While these processes are undoubtedly important, at least the differences of wealth within caste groups have also to be added to our explanatory model. Only then can we begin understand the differences between the educational chances of say wealthier and poorer upper caste women or between upper caste and Dalit women of the same high MPCE group.

Table 10. Gender Differences in Undergraduate Engineering by MPCE Classes and Caste in Percent (17-24 age group)

	ST				SC			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	Eng. UG	Sample	Eng. UG	Sample	Eng. UG	Sample	Eng. UG	Sample
Owners, managers, professionals.	27.4	3.5	27.8	3.5	17.8	5.1	46.6	5.6
Low ranking educated workers	3.2	5.1	25.4	4.0	23.1	4.0	30.0	5.0
Shopkeepers moneylenders	0.0	1.4	0.0	2.0	0.3	2.7	0.0	2.7
Skilled workers	0.0	10.8	34.7	9.7	23.1	20.1	21.6	19.8
Non-agricultural unskilled workers	0.0	9.3	0.0	9.6	6.9	20.6	0.2	20.4
Farmers <= 2ha	5.5	27.6	0.0	22.2	19.1	11.4	1.7	10.0
Farmers > 2 <= 4ha	63.9	11.4	0.0	10.7	0.0	1.8	0.0	2.2
Farmers > 4ha	0.0	2.1	0.0	3.0	0.7	0.9	0.0	1.0
Animal husbandry	0.0	0.7	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	2.0
Subsistence agricultural workers	0.0	1.3	0.0	1.4	0.0	1.2	0.0	1.5
Agricultural workers	0.0	26.7	12.2	32.9	8.9	30.6	0.0	29.8
Total	100	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

When we begin to aggregate caste with occupational information, instead of consumption, a pattern of gender inequality that is much easier to read begins to emerge. Let us consider as in the case of the interaction between caste, occupations and education, the numbers of 17-24 year olds with a particular background and compare them with the numbers who actually manage to get into

engineering tertiary programmes (Table 10). If there were to be no impact of caste and class on gender inequality, we would expect an identical pattern of gender inequality amongst all different occupational groups and also amongst different caste groups. The picture which emerges from the 66th round, however is vastly different and belies that expectation.

Table 10 (continued)

	OBC				Others			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	Eng. UG	Sample	Eng. UG	Sample	Eng. UG	Sample	Eng. UG	Sample
Owners, managers, professionals.	29.3	10.4	35.2	11.0	57.4	18.0	41.3	18.8
Low ranking educated workers	21.8	4.4	23.0	4.5	14.2	9.6	28.0	8.8
Shopkeepers moneylenders	5.5	4.7	5.4	5.0	6.2	6.3	5.5	6.3
Skilled workers	16.5	21.4	19.4	22.2	10.4	20.5	3.3	19.0
Non-agricultural unskilled workers	2.3	10.9	0.0	9.8	0.2	7.2	2.1	7.1
Farmers <= 2ha	14.4	17.0	9.6	17.6	4.1	16.8	2.1	16.6
Farmers > 2 <= 4ha	4.0	5.3	2.1	5.7	2.2	6.2	0.0	6.4
Farmers > 4ha	1.0	3.1	1.4	2.9	5.3	3.6	10.9	3.5
Animal husbandry	0.5	2.8	2.7	1.8	0.0	1.3	0.2	1.3
Subsistence agricultural workers	0.0	2.4	0.0	3.2	0.0	1.4	0.0	2.1
Agricultural workers	4.7	17.7	1.3	16.3	0.0	9.2	6.6	10.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

Occupational class differences come out quite clearly within and inside a broader pattern shaped by gender and caste. Amongst the SC, for instance, young men from owner, manager and professional families are 5.1% of all SC 17-24 year old men. However, this class takes up engineering seats in a grossly disproportionate manner, making up 17.8% of all SC engineering undergraduates. The filtering effect of class on SC women in engineering is even more pronounced. SC women from owner, manager and professional families are 5.6% of all SC 17-24 year old women. They are a staggering 46.6% of all SC women in undergraduate engineering programmes. The occupational group of owners, managers and professionals is taking up almost nine times as many seats as its own proportion in the sample of SC women. Gender discrimination amongst the Other Castes of the same occupational group for admission to engineering programmes is less pronounced. Young men of the Other Castes from owner, manager and professional families are 18.0% of all Other Castes 17-24 year olds. However, they swamp other classes, making up 57.4% of the Other Caste men in engineering. Young women from that class background are 18.8% of all 17-24 year old Other Caste women. And they are 41.3% of all Other Caste women in engineering education. The educated classes are a small minority, but as elsewhere, they tend to take up many more seats than their own class numbers would suggest. Within these one can further see differences around caste as well as gender processes. Structural discrimination between the genders clearly varies across different caste groups, even in the same occupational class.

One way of understanding the connection between gender, caste and class in education has been to emphasize the primary importance of relationships of material and social production and the

compulsions to reproduce them. Gendering has been connected to a specialization of roles, which came together in a particular pattern to create particular historical forms of production, exchange and consumption. An early tradition exemplified by Engels (1884 / 1962) believed that the shift to capitalist relations went hand in hand in the initial phase with pushing women away from participation in production in the public sphere and into a specialization in reproducing the family in the domestic sphere. As men were drawn into factories and other spatially removed sides, away from domestic activities, it was the labour of women that kept the family going. It was their labour which converted men's wages into the reproduction and sustenance of the household. Jonathan Parry (2001), for instance, argues that with industrialization of Chhattisgarh, women from many communities lose some of their autonomy in the choice of partners and are expected to focus henceforth on only domestic work. The new configuration of gender roles provides both opportunities as well as constraints.

Another strand has been that of radical feminism, which initially distanced itself from the above, but now often interweaves with it. Its central emphasis is on the search for power by men over women, which may go hand in hand with the control of resources and dignity or may operate as an end in itself. Patriarchy, Gerda Lerner (1986) argued, presaged the emergence of private property, with the early capture of women being an early form of accumulation of resources. The control over women's sexual and reproductive abilities was a core from which other forms of domination emanated. States controlled by men perpetuated and enhanced this, and so did the gradual transformation of culture and religion.

It may be useful to distinguish between at least two aspects of systems of gender inequality from the point of view of understanding intersectionality. One aspect is that of how gender is a system of domination in itself, of men over women, of controlling their sexuality, relegating them out of public spaces and so on. Another aspect is that of how gender is integrated into and contributes to other social processes like those of production, caste, politics and so on. Gender as patriarchy will have its own cultural reproduction, too, focusing on control over identity and sexuality. In contrast, the occupational aspect of gender, for instance, would have specific forms oriented towards the class structure and occupational demands. To the extent that gender is a part of the production relations of a society, its expression may be expected to be a differentiation of the expression of class relations. As Balamurli Natrajan (2005) has shown, potter women from families where the traditional caste occupation is followed are expected to have aspirations and skills that support the activities which the male potter is supposed to do. However in families where the men work in offices or other occupations which are acquired through education, women are expected to be educated and to support the reproduction of their middle-class identity. They are expected to teach children and maintain the cultural character of their class. This is reflected in the demographics of women seeking a higher education being closely connected to the family occupations of those women. To the extent that education is seen by people as a means of access to class positions, we may expect that women's participation in education will be a function of the role they play in the class aspirations (i.e. reproduction or mobility) of their affinal and / or marital group. There is also a tendency of women being expected to seek careers through education which are consistent with their gendered roles as care-givers and family makers. Engineering is lower in women's choices than other careers like medicine and nursing.

Caste, it has been suggested above, has a different inner logic than class systems, but here too gender appears to be a central differentiating principle. Gender could take up different forms to construct different caste groups, as Uma Chakravarthy argues (1995). She describes how among the upper castes there was a specialization of women into the domestic sphere, with an expectation of only one marital partner in a woman's lifetime. Among the lower castes, where women worked outside the the home, there was far greater scope for a widow to remarry. This is not just an expression of the occupational specialization of different caste groups. The symbolic practices of caste ideology were heavily interwoven with the message of gender differentiation and role

expectations. Caste ideologies of the upper castes expressed the need to maintain social boundaries and status differences from the lower castes. The control and regulation of women was essential to this. But beyond and above the need to maintain caste, there continues to lie a culture of domination of women by men. Even middle class women researchers have to struggle against marginalization in elite Indian scientific institutions (Gupta and Sharma 2002). The explanation of domination here amongst highly educated people of very similar caste and class origins seems to make sense only with reference to a culture of patriarchy, rather than the need to maintain class or caste boundaries.

Our exploration and understanding of the way marginalization and discrimination works in and through educational institutions is still at an early stage. While large-scale surveys are able to show us some of the end results of social inequality in terms of easy to count criteria like enrolments and the kind of programmes enrolled, they are not best suited to understanding the actual processes at work. Perhaps it is with many more ethnographic and micro level studies that we would better be able to understand the lived experience of inequality, and how it takes place through labelling, identity building processes and the cognitive, affective and aesthetic growth of students from different social backgrounds. That need not hold us back, though, from attempting some tentative stabs at an integrated understanding of social inequality.

INTEGRATIONS

A familiar way of describing and working with social inequality has been to name a system (e.g. the caste system) and visualize it as the difference between specific groups (e.g. castes or jatis). This is a way of seeing inequality as a separation into distinct and tangible things, exclusive of one another. As the above discussion has corroborated, this way of imagining inequality may indeed be useful in many situations and may correspond to important divisions and processes, for instance when we point to a system of gender and patriarchy and its expression in the differences between men and women in higher education. However, there are also times when the categories of analyses from different systems seem to fuse and are difficult to tease apart. The oppositions get blurred and many kinds of categories seem to be getting interwoven.

A rich tradition also emerged of seeing inequality as essentially integrated, variously combining class with ethnicity, race, caste and gender. Bourdieu (1992), for instance, has argued that class relations are to a great extent established and negotiated through cultural markers. The politics of cultural difference contributes to reproducing class structures. The close connection between gender and caste has often been remarked upon in India (e.g. Rege 2006, Devika et.al. 2013).

In this paper we explore one particular way of understanding intersectionality: by examining social inequality through analytical concepts which while central may not necessarily be isolatable in a real world. This permits us to identify several different sub-processes from different systems which may actually be acting together. We may benefit, therefore, from an analytic re-formulation of the categories of social inequality, asking how they are actually integrated with each other across particular systems, or even whether they form a larger and more general system, integrating specific ones. The integration of our understanding of different forms of inequality would help in our ability to delineate and counter-balance how structural injustices operate.

The task of constructing such an integrated view of multiple sytems of inequality is obviously a long and onerous one. At this early juncture, perhaps it may help to push it further another step by pointing to certain specific overlaps and divergences between the particular systems. The preceding review of how caste, class and gender have been formulated suggests that there are several analytically distinguishable moments or tropes within each, some of which are actually expressing the same processes. Caste may be said to be made up of occupation, gender and kinship and cultures of hierarchy. Classes are shaped by work relations, consumption patterns and occupations, kinship networks, by gendering and through cultures drawn from occupational specialization or

other community-based processes. Gender itself is shaped by the compulsions of reproducing work relations and of maintaining power within the family and other social institutions, gaining some of its character through gendered sub-cultures.

It is possible to propose for analytical purposes at least three central tropes which can be helpful in seeing the connections and disjunctions between various systems of inequality: work, kinship and culture. An analytical focus on these three tropes would help to identify intersectionality and trace its pathways. These cut across all the three systems of class, caste and gender and hence offer a way of seeing them in an integrated manner. They do not replace the need to understand each system on its own, but highlight and draw our attention to what is common across the various systems.

A central trope cutting through the various forms of inequality is clearly that of work and occupation, affecting the expression of class and caste as well as the way gendering takes place, though each of them in a somewhat different manner. Work itself is shaped through several processes, coming from different origins. It may be influenced, for instance, by the logic of capitalist development, which may involve acquiring an exploitative form or becoming the object of exploitation. Or it may be shaped by occupational specialization, as the need to cultivate technical skills over several years. It acts as a basic shaper of life experience and is an active ingredient of all forms of social inequality.

Specific castes no longer share the identically same work pattern, but there are still pronounced caste linkages to various occupations (see Tables 6 & 7), not least because of the inheritance of property. Often what appears to be a caste trend is actually the expression of its class relations. Thus the Other Castes' overwhelming presence in technical education nowadays may not be the consequence of its caste ideology as much as the fact that it dominates the educated wage labour of contemporary India. The drive to make the current generation higher level educated wage labour is at least partially that class's attempt to reproduce itself and maintain if not improve its position vis-a-vis other classes. Similarly, the trend within these castes to support the higher education of their daughters may also be at least partially a process of reproduction of the class itself. Apart from one of the main features of gender being a separation of spheres of work, it also takes up specific forms according to the kind of work being reproduced. The patterns of work in one system may echo through the way inequality is shaped in other systems, leading to a common thread uniting them.

It may also happen that occupational processes may introduce divergent trends into caste and gender processes. These are not homologous processes and contradictions are inevitable. For instance, the aspiration to join the educated wage labour through education may lead to weakening a caste identity based on agriculture and landlordism. It may similarly cause an accelerating tension with the traditional homemaker's role as more and more educated women with jobs provided by their degrees are discovering. Gender identities may pull away from the logic of occupations in the growing economy or may colour them in unique ways.

A second central trope is that of culture, seen as loosely integrated symbols and practices, that plays a crucial role, although in different forms, in markets, a caste society and a patriarchy, respectively. It acts, among other things, to organize social groupings, which can be quite dynamic in a market society with an emphasis on open-ness and meritocracy so as to permit a continual re-configuration of resources and processes. This may resound through caste cultures leading to a greater ideological emphasis on being flexible according to the era one is in and thus justifying and encouraging participation in new educational opportunities. Cultures of elitism originating from the history of certain castes may influence the stratification system in another way. They may interweave with the belief of being special and provide a boost to those who imagine themselves as superior in studies and encourage them to orient themselves even more closely with academic goals and processes. Conversely, caste identities that see book learning as alien may contribute to identity processes that slow down students' acceptance of school authority and may lead them to internalize

a sense of being “weak” students. Gendered beliefs in male aggressiveness may lead to classroom processes that encourage boys to participate and girls to be passive listeners.

Cultures may pull in opposite directions within education, too. Patriarchy and caste's ideological emphasis on maintaining a stable rank order is basically in a state of tension with the market's pull towards recombining resources and moving them to new positions through education, among other things. Caste and gender cultures often resist the messages of consumerism as the driving force of the new re-combination of educated labour in liberalizing India. On the other hand, cultures of individualism may reinforce market inequality, while destabilizing traditional forms of both caste as well as gender. These would have corresponding consequences on aspirations for various levels of education by young people and for what they expect education to eventually provide them.

Cultures may also serve as boundaries of exclusion in the most advanced of capitalist firms, the boundaries sometimes acting as a useful resource for group functioning and simultaneously as an obstacle for recruitment of new group members. It may be the basis of excluding both women and other ethnicities and castes from the circles of power. Caste and male cultures invisibly form a substantial part of the cultural identity of many groups that are first formed in highly competitive schools and colleges. These cultural identities define who joins an informal group and who is kept out of it as not quite the right sort.

The third central trope here is that of kinship, which refuses to disappear even under the most advanced capitalism. It shapes the inheritance of property and of work cultures, though the form that it may take may be different in aggressive corporate circles, with their mantra of meritocracy, in comparison with the explicit support it gets in the context of the need to maintain social rank in caste and an acceptance of gendering amongst men and women. Kinship bonds deeply impact the distribution of cultural knowledges and practices which provide the ability to use the education system to access higher positions in corporate and state bureaucracies. Children of educated wage labour – more often of certain castes and more commonly male – would be familiar with the phrase told to them repeatedly by fathers that “if you don't study, how will you eat?” For many young men this becomes a milestone in the formation of their identity as a committed and enterprising educated wage worker. The way to hold oneself, cultivation of a love of reading, learning to negotiate with teachers to gain their attention and so on, for all of these one important where they are are learnt is in the family and in intimate circles. The obscurity of their roots in kinship is not an obstacle to their effectiveness in distinguishing who gets ahead in competitions. For women meanwhile, the importance of marriage as a social goal keeps kinship relations a central influence in their lives. It is they who must carry the bulk of the burden of reproducing and maintaining kinship bonds, often translated into reproducing caste cultures and caste identity. This deeply influences their ability access and stay on in education and also the kind of subjects and careers they may aspire to.

Kinship may also become a site of enormous tensions where the other two tropes of occupation and culture intersect with it. The need to reproduce the class of educated wage labour, as mentioned earlier, is an important force pushing families to look for suitable matches outside the old caste networks. This causes kinship networks to break and take up new forms in ways which we are still struggling to understand. The individualism of the educated wage labour clashes with the expectations of kinsfolk that older collective traditions be maintained. Women are often the ones who have to negotiate both the old and new and try to somehow keep the bonds alive. At the same time, the pressure to keep their existing occupation going through teaching their children and keeping them focused on educational success may become a site of new tensions and split loyalties.

Each of these three moments is integrated into particular systems, like those of gender or class or caste, and shows patterns which express that systemic integration. The cultures of hierarchy, for instance, take up the idiom of purity and impurity within brahminnical orders, serving to express and reproduce the caste structure. However it is also useful to also draw them out and speak of these

tropes in isolation, which is in a purely analytical sense of isolation. Doing so helps us to explain and understand the ways in which different systems of inequality meet and also how they diverge. The culture of hierarchy, thus, can see ideas and values merging with those coming from patriarchy or from class inequality and reinforcing them. Or at times contradicting them, as may happen when children from trading castes begin to accept the values of open competition and meritocracy. An uneasy truce gets struck, with a hybrid interpretation of meritocracy which is both hierarchical and exclusionary and open at the same time.

We may find that kinship leads to strong synergies between class, caste and gender by virtue of its shaping social networks and the boundaries of marriage and affinity. This may lead to strong boundaries emerging in social groups even under capitalism which serve to keep individuals locked in and unable to access knowledges and support systems that are necessary for a higher education. Similarly, they may make available role models and guidance which teach how one is supposed to build the daily rhythm of study and revision so as to get higher marks in board exams.

The way kinship is treated by different systems is also an important point of divergence. Classes in contemporary capitalism emphasize an openness and allocation of roles on the basis of achieved abilities. The caste system sets strong lines which cannot be crossed on the basis of birth and relationships of blood and marriage. The influence of kinship on deciding roles and relationships is even stronger when it comes to women. Nepotism and familial bonds remain an important tension point in contemporary societies. The fundamental values of contemporary education systems rest on this contradiction in values, that achievement and merit is to be the decider of roles, not blood. And yet blood and marriage continue to be significant factors, sometimes covertly and sometimes in open displays as in the anointment of heirs to corporate empires.

To understand intersectionality and the way it is manifested in education it may be useful to spell out some more ways in which these three moments overlap with each other across the different systems of class, caste and gender. And also when they lead to contradictory and divergent trajectories. Tables 11 and 12 summarize some of the tendencies, though of course it would be absurd to consider these as exhaustive.

Table 11: Principles of Overlap: Some Examples

	Class under capitalism	**Caste**	**Gender**
Work	Occupational groups, exploitation, income	Ranked, hereditary occupations	Gendered roles, reproduction of work
Kinship	Shapes social networks and inheritance of property	Forms patterns of endogamy and endogamous groups	Power and social reproduction
Culture	Cultures of specialization in work, of rank and of occupational identity	Cultures of caste identity, ranking, and separation (purity-impurity)	Cultures of gendered roles, cultures of rank

Table 12: Principles of Divergence: Some Examples

	Class under capitalism	Caste	Gender
Work	Based on relations of inter-dependence, on principles of capital accumulation and profit	Conservation of kinship systems and ideological rank	Male domination
Kinship	Open to non-kinship relations in most situations	Kinship defines majority of relations	Kinship defines most relations
Culture	Occupational specialization and work-related identity, open markets and competition	Cultures of ranking, exclusion and group bonding	Cultures of gender specialization and domination

What is being suggested here is that an emphasis on asking how work, kinship and culture are played out becomes a way to see continuities across class, caste and gender and also the oppositions amongst them. The focus on tropes instead of complete systems helps us to understand, for instance, why in spite of a decreasing emphasis and consciousness of caste identity amongst the upper castes, they still dominate the higher wage labour. One process behind this may be the fact that work roles that directly use education in the Indian economy (white collar work) are in a relative minority, which greatly magnifies the impact of kinship and culture in accessing them. When there is a scarcity of opportunities, any asset that may give advantages in accessing them leads to the cultivation of that asset and also leads to disproportionate numbers of those with that asset taking control of those opportunities. This is consistent with the observation that a surprisingly high proportion of upper castes and even women from those castes are present in higher education that provides white collar work.

A disaggregation into tropes to recombine them into a composite understanding of inequality also helps us to see the significance of the entry of women into higher education in greater numbers. This is not necessarily an expression of the emancipation of women from their traditional gender roles, though that, too, may be a slowly growing process. To understand this trend, we can point out that agriculture is stagnating in India in comparison to the service sector and to informal manufacturing, leading even farmers' children (but only those with sufficient income to afford it) to turn to an education that has little to contribute towards reproducing their own kinship groups' traditional occupations. This is creating a demand for a new set of abilities to reproduce the emerging class position. The more a group is oriented towards education and white collar work, the greater the emphasis on education as a means of reproduction of class. And consequently a greater acceptance of the seeking of education by women from those groups, which is the new class culture which is being aspired to, whose cultural reproduction it remains women's responsibility to perpetuate. Women begin to enter higher education alongside men in rising numbers, but that is not a statement necessarily of liberation, being more of an expression of a transition from agricultural or artisanal social reproduction to the social reproduction of white-collar work instead.

This is not a trend restricted to old agrarian communities. A clerical worker in a market economy no longer has the same social rank as his or her father who may have been a hereditary leather worker of the caste system. The roles that a wife of a leather worker in a market economy may have to play would be different in several ways from her roles in the caste system. Instead of participating in leather production, she may be pushed into being the housewife who looks after the home while the husband moves into a pattern of working in a distant factory. It is in this context that an education that provides access to jobs in the new emerging economy is then interpreted and made use of.

Many more examples may be multiplied of how class, caste and gender are interwoven and the usefulness of understanding this through a focus on cultures, work and kinship networks. But the above are perhaps enough to illustrate the point being made: disaggregating class, caste and gender

into their constitutive processes helps us to better understand the convergences and divergences of processes of social inequality in education.

TOWARDS RESEARCH THAT EXPANDS A COMPOSITE UNDERSTANDING OF INEQUALITY

It is true that the meaning of education is what one makes of it, but that truth claim needs to be qualified. What meaning one can make of education is deeply coloured by the kind of roles it may or may not lead to in a particular kind of society and economy, the cultures in which it is embedded and the cultural oppositions and convergences that may be occurring around and through it. Education may, for instance, be the reproduction of a managerial culture, growing increasingly important as the upper ranks of the educated wage labour take up an ever stronger grip on the cultures of elite schools. Within this there hangs like an invisible fragrance the culture of the castes which are dominating the educated wage labour, an odour which is increasingly challenged by the new groups entering the ranks of the educated. The struggles of women to liberate themselves must engage with both the conflicts in the cultures of caste and with the contradictions in older work roles. Sometimes the new emerging work roles and cultures give people's autonomy a boost and sometimes they reinforce the high cost of making new choices. Our agency has to engage with these structural contexts to find its own voice, to the extent that agency can ever have a voice of its own. We must seek the meaning of education through an engagement with the social realities of inequality and injustice, asking critically what education is and what it actually should be.

Sometimes an argument is made against abstraction and conceptual focus, saying that a lived experience is a more valid way of engaging with inequality. While that is true in a certain sense, yet, it is submitted here that being able to represent, compare and rebuild categories is also an important aspect of the struggle against inequality and injustice. There are several systems of inequality which interweave with each other in India, some coming from home-grown roots like those of caste and religion and some with much wider global ramifications, like those from the "liberalizing" economy. Language, political institutions, geographical conditions, regionally diverse developmental histories and many other processes may shape the context within which education finds itself and also the content and ways of education itself. There is a pressing need to understand these, in themselves and through their interconnections. To be able to name them and to seek their a coherent description are important steps towards overcoming them. Several ways can be seen in literature of understanding the shaping of educational inequality through multiple overlapping processes. A discussion of those approaches and some applications of them to understand the Indian situation would make up a second essay to follow.

REFERENCES

Agrawal, Ankush, and Vikas Kumar. "Infirmities in NSSO Data for Nagaland." *Economic and Political Weekly* 49, no. 12 (March 14, 2014): 20–22.

Ambedkar, B.R. "Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development." *Indian Antiquary* XLI (1917). http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/01.Caste%20in%20India.htm.

Bailey, F.G. *Caste and the Economic Frontier: A Village in Highland Orissa*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1957.

Ball, Stephen J. 2003. *Class Strategies and the Education Market: The Middle Classes and Social Advantage*. 1st ed. Routledge.

Beteille, Andre. 1965. *Caste Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore*

Village. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bouglé, Célestin Charles Alfred. *Essays on the Caste System*. Translated by David Francis Pocock. Cambridge: University Press, 1971 / 1908.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1992. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.

Burghart, Richard. "Hierarchical Models of the Hindu Social System." *Man* 13, no. 4 (December 1, 1978): 519–536. doi:10.2307/2801246.

Chakravarti, Uma. "Gender, Caste and Labour: Ideological and Material Structure of Widowhood." *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 36 (September 9, 1995): 2248–2256. doi:10.2307/4403192.

Coleman, James S., Ernest Q. Campbell, James McPartland, Alexander M. Mood, Frederic D. Weinfeld, and Robert L. York. *Equality of Educational Opportunity*. Washington DC: US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1966.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1, 1991): 1241–1299.

Das, Veena. *Structure and Cognition*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Dhanagare, D. N. *Peasant Movements in India, 1920-1950*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Devika, J., Kalpana Kannabiran, Mary E. John, Padmini Swaminathan, Samita Sen, and Sharmila Rege. "Intersections of Gender and Caste." Special Issue. *Economic and Political Weekly* 48, no. 18 (April 24, 2013).

Dube, Leela. "Caste and Women." In *Caste, Its Twentieth Century Avatar*, edited by M. N. Srinivas, 1–27. New Delhi: Viking ; New York, N.Y. : Penguin Books, 1996.

Dumont, Louis. 1999. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. Revised English ed. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. English translation published 1970.

Duncan, Otis Dudley. "Path Analysis: Sociological Examples." *American Journal of Sociology* 72, no. 1 (1966): 1–16.

Émile Senart. *Les castes dans l'Inde: les faits et le système*. Ernest Leroux, 1896. http://archive.org/details/lescastesdansli00senagoog.

Engels, Friedrich. *The Origin of the family, private property and the state In the light of the researches of Lewis H. Morgan*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publ. House, 1962.

Fuller, C. J., and Haripriya Narasimhan. "Traditional Vocations and Modern Professions among Tamil Brahmans in Colonial and Post-Colonial South India." *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 47, no. 4 (2010): 473–496.

Ghurye, G. S. *Caste and Race in India*. 5th rep. ed. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 2000.

Goldthorpe, John H. *On Sociology: Numbers, Narratives and the Integration of Research and Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Gupta, Dipankar. "Hierarchy and Difference: An Introduction." In *Social Stratification*, edited by Dipankar Gupta, 1–21. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Gupta, Namrata, and Arun K. Sharma. "Women Academic Scientists in India." *Social Studies of Science* 32, no. 5–6 (December 1, 2002): 901–15. doi:10.1177/030631270203200505.

Kapadia, Karin. *Siva and Her Sisters: Gender, Caste, and Class in Rural South India*. Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1995.

Lenin, V.I. "Preliminary Draft Theses On The Agrarian Question For The Second Congress Of The Communist International." In *Collected Works*, 31:152–64. 4th English Edition. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965 (orig. 1920). http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/jun/x01.htm.

Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. Women and History v. 1. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Lockwood, David. *The Blackcoated Worker: A Study in Class Consciousness*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1958.

Merton, Robert K. "The Matthew Effect in Science." *Science* 159, no. 3810. New Series (January 5, 1968): 56–63.

Natrajan, Balmurli. "Caste, Class, and Community in India: An Ethnographic Approach." *Ethnology* 44, no. 3 (July 1, 2005): 227–241. doi:10.2307/3774057.

Oakley, Ann. *Sex, Gender and Society*. London: Temple Smith, 1972.

Ogbu, John U. "Equalization of Educational Opportunity and Racial / Ethnic Inequality." In *Comparative Education*, edited by Philip G. Altbach, Robert F. Arnove, and Gail P. Kelly, 269–289. New York: Macmillan, 1982.

Parry, Jonathan P. "Ankalu's Errant Wife: Sex, Marriage and Industry in Contemporary Chhattisgarh." *Modern Asian Studies* 35, no. 4 (October 1, 2001): 783–820.

Reay, Diane. "Finding or Losing Yourself? Working-Class Relationships to Education." In *The RoutledgeFalmer Reader in Sociology of Education*, edited by Stephen Ball. London and New York: Routledge Falmer, 2004.

Rege, Sharmila. *Writing Caste, Writing Gender: Reading Dalit Women's Testimonies.* New Delhi: Zubaan, 2006.

Sewell, William H., Archibald O. Haller, and Alejandro Portes. "The Educational and Early Occupational Attainment Process." *American Sociological Review* 34, no. 1 (February 1, 1969): 82–92.

Singh, Ashish, and Sripad Motiram. "How Close Does the Apple Fall to the Tree?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 47, no. 40 (September 27, 2012): 56–65.

Srinivas, M.N. "An Obituary on Caste as a System." *Economic & Political Weekly* 38, no. 5 (2003): 455–459.

Thorner, Daniel. *The Agrarian Prospect in India; Five Lectures on Land Reform Delivered in 1955 at the Delhi School of Economics.* Delhi: University Press, 1956.

Wankhede, G. G. "Educational Inequalities among Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra." *Economic and Political Weekly* XXXVI, no. 18 (May 5, 2001): 1553–1558.

Wright, Erik Olin. *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Zedong, Mao. "How to Differentiate Classes in the Rural Areas." In *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*. Vol. I. Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1933. http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_8.htm.

Amman
06/05/2014