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**Examining Stigmatization of Leather Industry:
By Focusing on the Labor Forms of Dalits and Buraku**

**Edited by
Toshie AWAYA, Tsutomu TOMOTSUNE
and Maya SUZUKI**

जनकृत

Center for South Asian Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (FINDAS)

Literature, Social Movements, and Gender Issues in South Asia

The purpose of the Center is to deepen the understanding of structural changes in contemporary South Asia, using as axes the historical, political, social, and literary analyses of social movements as well as the perspective of gender. Regarding the targeted fields of research, we aim to become a repository of documentation within Japan through further systematic and conscious augmentation of the documents and historical materials in the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) collections.

Through the first phase during FY 2010–14 of our research activities, it became clear that the dramatic changes in personal awareness and gender relations on an individual, family, and community level have been brought about by structural changes in modern India accompanying economic liberalization and globalization. We also realized that complexity and variability of the issue of identity have been increasing, and that it would not be possible to understand the lively form of democratic politics that characterizes India without the vigorous objections of groups until now positioned on the social periphery. In the second phase FY 2015-19, along with focusing on the changes in human ties—particularly various aspects of social movements as well as aspects of emotions and sensitivities that support them—and further expanding the region of focus to South Asia, we will emphasize taking the lead in building a theory through consciously organizing comparative research with other regions, including China, Southeast Asia and Islamic nations. While the “politics of emotion” has recently gained attention, by no means has this deepened in the area of South Asia studies. Concerning South Asia, experimental studies and the positing of new theory in this field will serve as an effective opening to understand modern contemporary India. Furthermore, comparative research with other regions will also contribute to the understanding of global structural transformation.

Research Unit 1:

Practice and Theory of Crisscrossed Social Movements: With Emphasis on Human Ties and Sentiments

Research Unit 2:

Social Transformations and Literature

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Contents

International Workshop Photos.....	1
Flier.....	2
1.	
Examining Stigmatization of Leather Industry: By Focusing on the Labor Forms of Dalit and Buraku	
Tsutomu Tomotsune.....	3
2.	
Status of Dalits in India: Issues and Challenges	
Rahul Singh	17
3.	
Caste, Class and Stigmatised Work in Leather Production in India: Some Reflections	
Shahana Bhattacharya.....	33

Photos



Tsutomu Tomotsune



Rahul Singh



Shahana Bhattacharya



Discussion

**FINDAS Joint International Workshop
with Scientific Research Project (Tomotsune, Tsutomu)**

Dalits in India: Historical Reflections and Challenges

Chair ◆友常 勉 (東京外国語大学)

◆Shahana Bhattacharya (University of Delhi)

**“Caste, Class and Stigmatised Work in Leather
Production in India: Some Historical Reflections”**

◆Rahul Singh (National Dalit Movement For Justice (NDMJ)-NCDHR)

**“Status of Dalits in Contemporary India:
Issues and Challenges”**

Comments ◆粟屋利江 (東京外国語大学)

鈴木真弥 (東京外国語大学)

Date and Time: **21. September. 2019. 14:00-17:00**

日時: **2019年9月21日(土) 14:00~17:00**

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Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

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Examining Stigmatization of Leather Industry: By Focusing on the Labor Forms of Dalits and Buraku

Tsutomu Tomotsune

(Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

This paper aims to examine the cultural structure of leather industry within the Buraku by considering the difference of stigmatized and discriminatory practices against the Dalit and Buraku. Although it is perceived that discriminatory practices against Buraku derived from the idea of pollution, *Kegare* in Japanese, the relation between discriminatory practices and the idea of *kegare*-pollution is arbitrary. Instead, the idea of *kegare*-pollution is constituted of various factors, and which consequently come to be connected. The primitive idea of discrimination and pollution is derived from delimiting the border line between classes, community members, life and death, purified and polluted. Based on that, social or religious norms are connected and the stigmatizing process of labor forms are realized. By referring to the similarity with the Dalit case, this paper examines the stigmatization process of Buraku's leather industry.

1. Arguments on regarding the idea of *kegare*-pollution

Before we examine the comparative analysis of labor forms of Dalit and Buraku, I try to summarize the arguments of the idea of pollution, in the Dalit and Buraku Studies. In terms of the definition of *kegare*-pollution, Hiroyuki Kotani, by criticizing Mary Douglas's argument that "the essential characteristic of pollution is chaotic," defines it as follows: "Pollution in general, rather, should be considered to be composed of various ideas which have different origins from each other." (Kotani, 2014:12) . In addition, Kotani explains that the idea of *kegare*-pollution had begun from the distinction between oneself and others in ancient India, and which later was connected to the idea of sin. Next, the idea of pollution was related to one of discrimination against outcasts, according to Kotani. Kotani concludes that discrimination against Dalit is essentially related to the idea of *kegare*-pollution.

The formation of the discriminatory idea against outcasts is realized by being connected the substantiated idea of pollution *a posteriori* to the process. In this sense, the discriminatory idea and pollution are essentially not related to each other, (Kotani, *ibid*: 73)

Discriminatory practices and *kegare*-pollution are acts of relations which had originally been developed from the idea of delimiting the border between oneself and others. Later, this idea had been connected to the substantiated idea of pollution and other ideas with various origins. It is social norms that changed pollution to the idea of segregation.

In opposition to Kotani, Kyohei Oyama, Japanese medieval historian, focuses on the similarities between Dalit and Buraku especially the distinction of “labour forms with a religious character but not commodified” and “labour forms with a religious character but commodified” (Oyama, 2003). In order to understand Oyama’s argument, we have to refer to the following issue discussed in the study of *Hinin*, one of the medieval outcast groups in Japan. In the category of *Hinin*, which includes various outcast groups of the period, *kawaramono*, outcast people on the riverside, engaged in dealing with carcasses and making leather crafts. *Kawaramono* had at the same time other names such as *Kiyome* (the people who purify the pollution) or *saiku* (artisans). *Kawaramono* are considered to be *Eta* (the people who are extremely polluted) later, especially in the Edo period. This connotation of the term *kawaramono* shows that the recognition towards medieval outcast groups, and leather craft artisans connected to different ideas at that time. *Kawaramono* existed between the folkloristic ritual space and the commodified secular society. Since *hinin*, the medieval outcasts were basically dominated by powerful shrines, *kawaramono*’s professions are also thought to be connected to religious characters. However, Oyama’s reasoning ignores that the derivation of the discrimination and *kegare*-pollution are based on the idea of limiting the border. In terms of limiting the border, we also refer to the fact that the medieval society in Japan was approved by written documents, in which any properties or privileges of social classes were determined by the documents. Eiji Sakurai, historian of medieval economy, defines it as a society approved by deities and documents (Sakurai, 1996: 369). In this document-based-society, documents were often authorized by temples and shrines deities. Although the social classes’ professions, properties, and

borders seemed to be authorized by the ritual deities, they were mediated by written documents. This could be understood as the necessary condition that the customs of folkloristic rituals of dealing with carcasses or leather crafts were relatively independent from the religious power. It also suggests that the regime of document-based- society had functioned to fix the border of classes or profession of outcasts. Based on the discussions of Kotani and Sakurai above, we could draw a picture of the fundamental conditions of casteism in Japan different from Oyama's.

Next, by critically following Oyama's work of comparison of labor forms between Dalit and Buraku, we will confirm the similarity between two outcast groups' labors. Although Oyama's approach is similar to Mary Douglas's essentialist understanding of pollution, however, it is insightful to articulate the cultural structure of *kegare*-pollution.

2. *Tolil*, *Vēlai* and *Danna- ba*

In his essay of "Loosely Caste Society as Medieval Japan," by referring to the work of anthropologist specializing in the study of India, Yasumasa Sekine (Sekine, 1995), Kyohei Oyama summarizes the religiously ritual characteristics of *tolil*, and *vēlai*, and labour forms of the Dalit, in Madurai, Tamil Nadu (Oyama, *ibid*:9-49). By defining these categories of Dalit labour forms, Oyama points out that there are similarities of religiously ritual customs of the outcaste in Medieval Japan. *Tolil*, and *vēlai* could be defined as follows, based on Sekine's work.

Tolil: it means some occupations of the caste followed by hereditary line, rewarded by the goods such as food or something for their services.

Vēlai,: it means wage labor, except from special occupation of the caste followed by hereditary line and paid in cash.

In addition, based on Sekine's investigation, Oyama also arranges these categories in detail.

Figure 1 The Form of Labor in the Caste Society

	Distinction of labor form	Form of reward	Form of possession	detailed labor and occupations
Tolil A	Ritual tolil	Scheduled to be rewarded	Possessed by watan	Ācari (kammālar), Vannār (laundria), Ampattar (barbar), Cakkiliyar (leather worker), Paraiyar (serf)
	Tolil in economic meaning			Paraiyar (serf by annual contract, supervisor of worker)
Tolil B	Ritual tolil	Payment by results	Possessed by watan	Kuravar (cleaner, basket maker), Kuyavar (pot maker), Valluvar (priest for dalit), tōtti (drummer for funeral, grave digger)
	tolil in economic meaning			sluice supervisor
Vērai		Payment by results	Possessed by watan/not possessed by watan	Paraiyar (serf)

Based on the Figure1, Oyama describes three features of relations and historical transitions between tolil and *vēlai*.

- (1) The labour form, by which the social characteristics of the caste society are determined, is dependent on ritual *tolil* such as *tolil A* and B. Other forms of labour are secondary or associated. And the labour subjects of the caste society maintain their substances by differentiating three forms of *tolil A*, B and *vēlai*.
- (2) Some specified tolils have tendencies to be transformed to *vēlai* and weakened its ritual

characteristics in accordance with historical transition, socio-economic change and change of consciousness. And finally these labour forms come to get out of the nature of the caste society and come to be marked as a nature of not caste-determined society.

(3) Shades of the caste society are differentiated by the various kinds of the forms of *tolils*, especially of its ritual forms. For instance, although labour work such as doing the laundry or shaving is essential in India, this labour does not have the same meaning in Japan.

Oyama's argument, based on Sekine's work, is noteworthy not only does he point out the similarities of caste-based occupations between Japan and South Asian societies, but also distinguishes two different kinds of labour forms and its relation and transition. We could assume that *tolil A*, as a ritual labour and scheduled to be rewarded by actual goods for the service, should be historically original and *tolil B orvélai* should be derived from it.

At this point, a caste-based labour practiced by Buraku people or outcaste people in medieval Japan shared same cultural characteristic. I will show it by focusing on the system of *Danna-ba*, which roughly meant patronized territories.

The word of *Danna* is derived from "dana" in Sanskrit, which meant originally resource, or gift, and later came to be connoted as a patron. *Ba* means a field or a place. *Danna-ba* is not only the term for Buraku, rather it means the territories and activities by the agents of folkloristic or traditional street performers. These activities to some extent overlap those of Buraku people. However, I will limit the term as activities and customs of Buraku in pre-modern Japan (Okuma, 2011)..

From the end of the medieval period to the early Edo period, *Danna-ba* is thought to be formed as a custom in rural society. In the Edo period, *Eta*, one of the main outcaste classes then, had a special occupation of acquiring carcasses without charge, and taking and tanning the hides or skins. And demarcating the territories and arranging by each *Eta*'s right to take materials was called *Shoku-ba* [working-place] or *Kusa-ba* [glass-place], which are as same meaning as *Danna-ba*. At the same time, *Eta*, *Hinin* (as another huge group of the outcaste), and the same kind of outcaste people also engaged into the labours such as a guardian, prison watcher, and executioner in the rural society, as their special occupations. And these activities were also practiced in the same places of *Shoku-ba*, *Kusa-*

ba, or *Danna-ba*. In the *Danna-ba*, outcaste people had a custom to solicit contributions for ritual purpose, which is called *Kanjin*. Since the *Kanjin* was originally derived from religious solicitation, it included the activities of religious performances or wondering villages as pilgrim, and interests for controlling show business in the village. In this paper, the definition of *Danna-ba* subsumes the whole of these various activities. And interestingly, in the document transmitted by Buraku people, two kinds of *Danna-ba* were differentiated as *Uwa-ba* [upper level field] and *Shita-ba* [lower level field]. *Uwa-ba* as upper level field indicates the whole activities of folkloristic solicitation and interests on the one hand, and *Shita-ba* was regarded as only limited as transaction business related to carcasses on the other hand. The idea of *Uwa-ba* could be compatible with *tolil A* and *Shita-ba* is *tolil B* and *velai*, derived and transformed from *tolil A*.

Figure2 is the description of the labour of *Danna-ba* based on the differentiation of two fields.

Figure2. Labour Forms of *Danna-ba*

		Distinction of labor form	Form of reward	Form of possession	Detailed labor and occupations
Danna- ba	Uwa-ba	Ritual	Scheduled to be rewarded	Possessed in the relationship of rural society/controlled by Buraku	kanjin (religious ritual solicitation), controlling religious performances in the village
			Scheduled to be rewarded	Possessed in the relationship of rural society	guardian of the village, watcher of the prison[<i>ro- ban</i>], executioner
			Scheduled to be rewarded	Possessed in the relationship of rural society	grave-digger, service for funeral[<i>onbo</i>]
	Shita-ba	Ritual but economic labour	Payment by results	Possessed by Buraku	taking hides and skins of carcasses

Between *Uwa-ba* and *Shita-ba*, some labours such as guardian, prison-watcher, and grave-digger, are situated with belonging to the *Uwa-ba* but being differentiated from folkloristic ritual solicitation as *Kanjin*. Guardian and prison-watcher were often carried on by *Eta* and *Hinin*. However, the labours related to grave or funeral were very special and basically carried on by *Onbo*. And these labours were charged and controlled by the

rural community, including commoners and outcaste people. In contrast to this, the labours related to carcasses, tanning skins and hides, were belonging to and possessed by *Eta* as an economic labour subject. In this sense, the transition from *Uwa-ba* to *Shita-ba* is determined by the process of economic logic. At the same time, however, the whole labours of *Uwa-ba*, *Shita-ba*, and transitive labours between them, are partaken by folkloristic ritual sense of *Uwa-ba*.

The system of *Danna-ba*, *Uwa-ba* and *Shita-ba* demonstrates the fact that the labor forms and professions of Buraku are consequently the result of the accumulated ideas which are related to *kegare*-pollution. *Uwa-ba* represents a fundamental idea of delimiting the border, while the *Shita-ba* covers the idea of property related to leather works. *Danna-ba* includes these various ideas and spatial properties and from which the idea of stigmatization is derived in the modern period. Although the system of *Danna-ba* was established and basically functioned during the pre-modern period of Japan, it still has worked by being transformed into the modernized economic mode, or into the routine customs. Especially the labors of Buraku people living in their native rural society or those who maintain the relationship with their community are more or less determined by customs. Next, I will describe the situation by focusing on the experience of Dowa Initiative, as a kind of affirmative action policies for Buraku in post-war Japan.

3. Leather Industry and the Function of a Bond

Following Okuda Nobuko's definition of 'resource and debt' in minority business, we can define Buraku as a 'resource' for supplying labor power for the leather industry (Okuda, *ibid*: 221-224). At the same time, since the leather industry has been regarded as the Buraku's representative business, it has suffered discriminatory practices, which function as 'debt' toward minority business. This binary opposition of 'resource and debt' in the leather industry is embodied in their business relationship based on blood relations and relatives. In relation to this issue, Tirtahankar Roy's study on Chamar immigrants and their settlement could be applied to the case of the Buraku (Roy, 1999: 155-196).

Roy's work shows that the circulation of raw hides became larger and the international demand increased in colonial India. Then raw hides produced in rural villages were transported to Calcutta and kid hides also were transported to Madras (Chennai). Tanning

entrepreneurs settled in port cities or sites of leather trade. Opening the main railroad line prompted this movement. Because of this change, traditional customs of leather production were transformed and agents of the leather industry as well as the caste of leather workers became separated. Then, castes of the leather industry divided into specialists of the leather business and others who got out of the business. There were three ways of becoming leather specialists: as subcontractors of leather entrepreneurs, workers in the leather factory, and dealers of leather business. In addition, tanneries were established in the central city. “In the 1920s Calcutta, collectives of three or four Chamars hiring a shed, a few workers, and some children above ten were observed” (Roy, *ibid*: 182). Roy described the migration as if a village of Chamar emigrated to the city and established the tanners’ village in the suburb area.

We find almost the same movement in the Japanese Buraku from the Meiji Restoration to the interwar period of Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese war. And the structure established at the time continued after the postwar period.

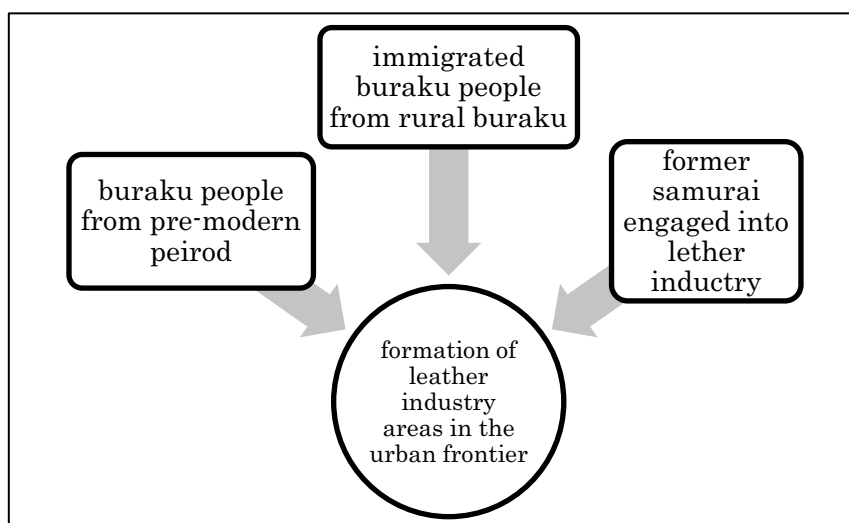
In the Buraku of Asakusa which stems from the Edo period, Danzaemon, a head of the Buraku people in the Kanto region, had set up his office. With his office as the center, hides workers such as cobblers and drum makers assembled from the Buraku of Kanto region and dwelt there. During the 1870s, after the Meiji Restoration, by absorbing human and economic resources from the Kanto region based on the customs of *Danna-ba* system, modern western leather technology was transferred to the Buraku. It is notable that many leather workers of the Buraku in Shiga prefecture, who are well-known for their advanced leather products, migrated to Asakusa, Tokyo. Such transference of skills and artisans may have happened during the Edo period. The case of the drum makers was well-known at the time. By supplying labor power and the transportation of capital based on the network of Buraku, the leather industrial zones were established in Arakawa and Sumida districts, which are located in northern Tokyo. As entrepreneurs who possessed some leather factories, they were divided into relatively small domestic industry managers, larger administrators, and entrepreneurs who financed capital for other businesses. These entrepreneurs asked the administration of Tokyo for earning privilege status for the leather industrial areas and launched a project to develop the town.

Former samurai also engaged in the leather business. By accumulating capital,

companies and conglomerates, modernized large leather companies were organized. In contrast to the big companies, the Buraku companies were associated with the rural Buraku in order to absorb labor resources from the area and combined subcontracting relations into a guild-like organization. They fashioned the characteristics of the modern leather industry located in the city (Tomotsune, 2003). It meant the establishment of a relatively independent subsistent sphere within the city. The new Buraku communities were thus established in the urban frontier.

The binary opposition of ‘resource and debt’ functioned as a bond for the Buraku in the leather industry. In addition, it is obvious that the bond in the industry enabled the Buraku people to form their identity and maintain it. Such a structure of identity formation was found in Osaka, Hyogo and in other areas of the traditional leather industry. And the structure still functions today, as a reproduction of *Danna-ba* system.

[Figure 3] The formation of the Leather Industry Areas and the Buraku in the Urban Frontier



4. Public Construction Business, Subcontracting Structure, and the Buraku

Leather industry is one of the main industries of the Buraku. In the modern period, except for the Buraku with advanced skills of tanning, majority of the Buraku’s work in the farming villages was agriculture. And construction work has also represented another primary work in the Buraku. Based on the two national investigations throughout 4373

Buraku of 34 prefectures in 1971 and throughout 2513 Buraku of 32 prefectures in 1975, 40% (15,414 places) of the total businesses in the Buraku was construction work. Another investigation in 1975 showed the percentage to be 38% (11,498 places). Leather business and leather products were 19 % of the total in 1971 and 23% in 1975. In addition, in the recent investigation of 16 Buraku communities of Nara prefecture in 2000 and 2010, construction work ranked as the second largest Buraku business, second only to producers (of leather products most likely). In the Buraku of Tenri City and Gose City in Nara, construction work ranked at the top (15.2% in 2000, 18.6% in 2005) (Ioka, 2014).

In general, multilayered subcontracting structure in construction work is different from that of the leather industry, which is formed through domestic relationships based on bloodline or relatives. In construction business, the amount of labor power or materials always fluctuated, based as they were on the order or classification of work. Thus, construction entrepreneurs outsourced such division of labor and distribution of materials. This had the effect of stabilizing the management of general construction business. However, small subcontractors with no special skill always remained in the unstable status without any guarantee status until they got a contract.

Dowa Initiative promoted advantageous measures for the construction workers in the Buraku and they received public construction projects from the local government. Yet, their condition remained unchanged as small workers subordinated to the construction business under the control of conglomerate companies. The Dowa Initiative could not change such subcontracting system and status of small business in the Buraku. However, it has been reported that the transfer of labor power from the leather industry to construction work occurred during the 1990s (Yoshimura, 2001). It shows the change of industrial structure in the Buraku. For instance, in the investigation of Nara, the distributor and retail shops, majority of which are for leather products, decreased from 30.2% in 2000 to 21.6% in 2010. The Buraku in Nara prefecture has been famous for such leather products as shoes, bags and baseball gloves. Labour power of the leather business is expected to transfer to other types of business after the drastic change of the industrial structure. Although surplus labour power flows into the construction business, the business derived from this flow was not sufficient for the Buraku community. Thus, Buraku cannot create new jobs in the community because of the change of industrial structure and their small business status. It

could be one of the reasons why the depopulation in the Buraku proceeded. In fact, the population and household of 16 Buraku communities in Nara prefecture decreased by 10% during the decade as follows: 12214 people and 4360 households in the year 2000 decreased to 10689 people and 4229 households in 2010. In addition, the population of those over the age of 65 increased by 10%, showing the change in the aged population.

5. Society of Underclass Labor and the Buraku

Until the termination of the Dowa Initiative in 2002 accelerated the population drain from the Buraku, the Buraku struggled to defend a stable community from the flight of residents. However, this was accompanied by antagonism against the underclass. The enforcement of the Dowa Initiative in Kyoto's Sujin district had the effect of spatially oppressing the neighboring Korean Japanese community. Since the Dowa Initiative was restricted to those with Japanese nationality, it excluded the Korean Japanese (Tomotsune, 2012).

Yoseba, a street labor market, is an obvious example of the oppositional tendency of Buraku's antagonism against underclass society. Kamagasaki district as a *yoseba* has been located next to the Buraku in Nishihama village (present-day Naniwa district). Kamagasaki is renowned for its huge day-laborer market. (There is another day-laborer market in Tokyo, which is called Sanya, located next to the Buraku of Asakusa.)

In the former Nishihama district, a symbolic incident took place when the Osaka administration tried to build a dormitory for unmarried workers in Kamagasaki during the late 1950s (Terashima, 1999 51-52). At that time, a branch of the Buraku Liberation League [BLL] opposed the project and succeeded in aborting it. BLL seemed to have been fearful that the dormitory for single males would result in the concentration of bars and women working in the entertainment business. This incident indicates a negative and exclusionary attitude on the part of the Buraku against the spread of day-laborers' space. The day laborers were regarded as a threat to the integrity of the Buraku people.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the Buraku people do not exist in *yoseba*, such as Kamagasaki. For example, there is a record of a BLL member's brother getting arrested during a huge uprising in Kamagasaki in the early 1970s (although this is merely a modest evidence) (Terashima, *ibid*: 207-208). In addition, a few ethnographic reports demonstrate

that some Buraku people migrated from the Buraku in Nara to the Kamagasaki district.

Conclusion

Leather industry still remains in place as one of the main professions in Buraku, especially in Sumida ward in Tokyo, Himeji or Kobe, in Hyogo prefecture, and Osaka. However, it should be noted that there are remarkably strong tendencies of the transference from leather business to other industry sectors in Buraku, and the dissolution of Buraku community in many rural areas, which is also accompanied by the byproducts of Dowa Initiative, as I have demonstrated above. It is important to refer to the idea of *kegare*-pollution based on its original meaning as the delimiting-border when we deal with the stigmatization of Buraku. And referring to the Dalit labor forms such as *Tolil*, and *vēlai* it is also essential to articulate the economic-cultural structure of *kegare*-pollution. The stigmatization was also made possible created through various ideas and the document-based-tradition which approved properties or ownerships among classes. This is the reason why this paper try to understand the process of stigmatization based on the Kotani's approach instead of reducing the cause of the stigmatized and discriminated status of Buraku to a monolithic understanding of *kegare*-pollution.

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Status of Dalits in India: Issues and Challenges

Rahul Singh

(National Dalit Movement for Justice- NCDHR)

Caste discrimination is a highly politicized and sensitive issue in India. Despite constitutional safeguards and special legislation for the protection of the country's 201 million 'scheduled castes' (the official term for Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist Dalits), violations of their fundamental human rights continue on a massive scale. Caste-based discrimination¹ takes multiple forms² based on the underlying notions of purity and pollution. The extreme and violent crimes committed against Dalits and the widespread impunity for perpetrators, do not fit well with India's image as the world's largest democracy. A global market player and regional super power, India responds to international attention to caste discrimination by referring to it as an "internal issue" and a "family matter", that need not be dealt with by the United Nations, especially since constitutional and legal protective mechanisms are in place³. In recognition of the scale and gravity of this problem, the European Parliament adopted resolution B6-0021/2007 on the Human Rights Situation of the Dalits in India, on 1st February 2007, after a hearing on caste discrimination, in the Development Committee.

It has been 27 years since the Indian Parliament enacted the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 (herein PoA Act), followed by the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules in 1995, to

¹ Discrimination based on work and descent (the UN terminology for caste-based discrimination) is not only a serious violation of human rights but also a major obstacle to achieving development goals. Inequalities inevitably obstruct development and ineffective allocation of human resources due to this form of discrimination also distorts the labour market and affects the efficiency of the economy.

² Multiple forms of caste discrimination includes social and economic exclusion, segregation in housing, denial and restrictions of access to public and private services and employment, and traditionally prescribed occupations of the most demeaning and hazardous kind. Victims of caste discrimination are routinely denied access to water, schools, land, markets and employment; the exclusion of Dalits by other groups in society, leads to high levels of poverty, or reduced benefits, from development processes, and generally precludes their involvement in decision-making and meaningful participation in public and civil life.

³ Caste and the world, S. ANAND, the Hindu, May 24, 2009 <http://www.hindu.com/mag/2009/05/24/stories/2009052450180500.htm>

put an end to targeted caste and ethnicity based crimes against Dalits and Adivasis by non-Dalits and non-Adivasis. Prior to the PoA Act, the provisions of the Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955 (PCR Act) and the Indian Penal Code 1860 (IPC) existed, which were found to be inadequate in deterring crimes of this nature. The PoA Act introduced a new category of offences - “atrocities”, committed against a SC or ST by a person/s not belonging to a SC or ST community, and instituted special procedures to prosecute these offences, mandated the designation of special courts for speedily trying these cases, and imposed more stringent punishment on those found guilty of these crimes.

Atrocities that were identified and recognized in the PoA Act in 1989 have not only grown in number over time, but with the neo-liberal scenario and rapidly changing economic landscape, caste induced vulnerabilities and marginalisation have escalated with new manifestations of caste hatred and atrocities against Dalits. These newer forms of atrocities and offences are related to assault on dignity; atrocities against women; access and ownership over land and housing; exercise of franchise; and ‘untouchability’ in the public sphere. *These newer offences are brought in as offences in the PoA Act Amendment Act 2015, which has recently been passed on 21st December 2015 in the upper house of the Parliament and it has now become an ACT: PoA Amendments Act, 2015.*

Issues and Challenges: The key issues include access to justice, rising violence (Lynching’s and Mass Attacks), multiple discrimination against Dalit women, slavery and child labour, discrimination in education, state violence, judicial impunity, untouchability and access to basic services including humanitarian aid, social and economic rights, shrinking space for civil society organisations and violence against Dalit human rights defenders.

The enduring failure of justice when it comes to protecting the rights of India’s 200 million Dalits is a key obstacle to ending caste discrimination and the structural hierarchies underpinning an entrenched discriminatory mind-set. As many as 422,799 crimes against Dalits

and 81,332 crimes against Adivasis were reported between 2006 and 2016⁴. Over the decade to 2016, crime rate against Dalit's rose by 25%; from 16.3 crimes per 100,000 Dalits reported in 2006, to 20.3 crimes in 2016. Cases pending police investigation for both marginalised groups has risen by 99% and 55% respectively, while the pendency in courts has risen by 50% and 28%, respectively. The conviction rates for crime against SCs and STs have fallen by 2% points and 7% points, respectively, to 26% and 21%, from 2006 to 2016. The Crime in India Report 2016 data has revealed that *atrocities Against Scheduled Castes have increased by 5.5% in 2016 (40,801) over 2015 (38,670)*. Uttar Pradesh (10,426 cases) reported the highest number of cases of atrocities against Scheduled Castes (SCs) accounting for 25.6% followed by Bihar with 14% (5,701) and Rajasthan with 12.6% (5,134) during 2016. *Atrocities/Crime Against Scheduled Tribes have increased by 4.7% in 2016 (6,568) over 2015 (6,276)*. Madhya Pradesh (1,823 cases) reported the highest number of cases of atrocities against Scheduled Tribes (STs) accounting for 27.8% followed by Rajasthan with 18.2% (1,195 cases) and Odisha with 10.4% (681 cases) during 2016. *Assaults on women with the intent to outrage modesty*, at 7.7% (3172 cases), reported the highest number of cases of crimes/atrocities against Scheduled Castes (SCs), followed by rape with 6.2% (2541 cases) during 2016. Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of crimes against women at 1065, of which 557 were rape cases. Bihar, curiously, reported very few cases of crime against Dalit women, even though it was only second to Uttar Pradesh in reporting the maximum number of crimes against Dalits. Bihar, the data shows, registered only 45 cases of crime against Dalit women. All were rape cases. Rajasthan, which has recorded 5134 cases of crimes against Dalits in 2016, reported 641 cases of crimes against women. Of these, 327 were rape cases. Similarly, Madhya Pradesh reported 1833 cases of crimes against Dalit women, of which 439 were cases of rape. Andhra Pradesh too recorded 90 cases of rape against a total of 748 cases of crimes against Dalit women.

Caste inspired violence against Dalits and Adivasis has become increasingly common across India over the last few years and the audacity with which they are conducted suggests a

⁴ National Crime Record Bureau, Crime in India Reports from 2006 to 2016

complete absence of fear of consequences. These crimes range from lynching and mob violence to violence inflicted by vigilantes, sexual assault and even outright murder. The trigger is either the suspected consumption of beef or even the whiff of an interfaith or inter-caste relationship, alleged theft, or alleging petty offences. A 22-year-old Khetaram was beaten to death by a mob for allegedly having an affair with a Muslim woman in Rajasthan's Barmer. The victim succumbed to severe injuries⁵. In another incident from Gujarat a Dalit man is bound by his waist with a rope looped through the handlebar of a door. Its other end is held by one of his four attackers. He howls in pain to death as two men take turns to whip him with a PVC stick⁶. A Dalit youth was lynched allegedly by the father and uncle of an 'upper caste' girl who he was having an affair with, in Buddayapalli village of Khajipet Mandal, Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh.⁷ Madhu, a 30-year-old tribal man from Kerala's Attappadi region collapsed and died inside a police jeep as he was being taken to a Government Tribal Specialty Hospital at Kottathara. In Kerala, a Adivasi, Mr. Madhu had been lynched by an irate mob that had attacked him, accusing him of theft. What has shocked Kerala are photographs that emerged on social media, which were reportedly taken just before Madhu was attacked with sticks by the mob. One of the pictures show a frail man (Madhu) who is tied up using a lungi, his shirt torn. Another man is seen talking to Madhu as they stand against a rock. Unperturbed by whatever is happening, a third young man who has clicked the selfie photograph can be seen smiling at the camera⁸.

In Maharashtra, Bhima Koregaon village near Pune, where lakhs of people, mostly Dalits, from across Maharashtra and beyond gather on January 1 every year to commemorate the victory of a small group of Dalit Mahar soldiers, fighting under the British flag, against the

⁵ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/jaipur/dalit-man-beaten-up-to-death-in-barmer-allegedly-over-affair/story-MgXRQdEAhZZ8VsXSEuTs4O.html>

⁶ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/dalit-man-lynched-in-gujarat-how-india-is-grappling-with-epidemic-of-violence-1238355-2018-05-21>

⁷ <http://www.india.com/news/india/dalit-youth-lynched-for-having-an-affair-with-upper-caste-girl-2944505/>

⁸ <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/adivasi-man-beaten-death-kerala-selfie-taken-moments-he-died-angers-public-76887>

Peshwa-led Maratha Empire in 1818. Many Dalits celebrate the Peshwas' defeat as the first step in their continuing struggle against caste-based oppression. The commemoration has been largely peaceful for decades. But this year, a group of people carrying saffron flags attacked the gathering, throwing stones and smashing cars. One person died. In protest, Dalits in Maharashtra hit the streets the next day, bringing much of Mumbai and parts of Thane, Pune and Aurangabad to a near standstill. Some of the protests turned violent, prompting the police arresting around 4,000 Dalits in a series of "combing operations". Many of them were charged under the Indian Penal Code's provision for attempted murder, although most have been released on bail.

Very often Dalit women are seen to bear the brunt of violence as they are used as a way to punish Dalit communities. At the same time they are very vulnerable due to multiple discrimination on the basis of caste & gender. The severe discrimination they face from being both a Dalit and a woman, makes them a key target of violence and systematically denies them choices and freedoms in all spheres of life. Dalit women are considered easy targets for sexual violence and other crimes, because the perpetrators are likely to get away with it. The highest number of crimes against Dalits were assaults on women with the intent to outrage modesty; of 3,172 crimes recorded, 2,541 were cases of rape.

Multiple studies have found that Dalits in India have a significantly increased risk of ending in modern slavery including in forced and bonded labour and child labour. In India there are specific forms of forced labour that certain castes (Dalits) are expected to perform including for example the practice of manual scavenging and the Devadasi practice of forced prostitution. Beyond this the exploitation of Dalits including children in textile industries, as well as in the informal sector, is widespread. Apparel and textiles play a key role in India's economy and global trade, contributing 5% of GDP and 11 % of total exports. Tamil Nadu is at its centre. The state of Tamil Nadu is the largest producer of cotton yarn in India and a global sourcing hub for readymade garments in recent years, who produce for global international brands like C&A, H&M, Marks and Spencer, Primark, Walmart, Zara and a lot of other brands. The spinning mill

industry is of major importance to the state and to the national economy. Tamil Nadu which is home to approximately 1,600 mills employing between 200,000 and 400,000 workers. Spinning mill owners invented Sumangali system⁹ primarily to secure a steady labour supply of submissive adolescent female labourers. In Tamil Nadu majority of the textile and garment workforce is women and children and almost 60% of the Sumangali workers belong to 'Scheduled Castes'. These girls are mostly from the Dalit caste groups, predominantly Arunthathiyars community. Among them women workers are about 65% mostly unskilled workers.¹⁰ There are various indications that girls under the age of 14 are recruited to work in the factories. An academic estimate says that 10 to 20% of Sumangali workers are child labourers, aged between 11 and 14. Following abuses came to light: Withholding wages, sexual violence, paying below minimum wage levels, excessive working hours, poor living conditions in hostels, low levels of personal, health awareness, illness caused by exposure to cotton dust and no access to grievance mechanisms.¹¹

Discrimination against Dalits in the educational system is a widespread problem. Alienation, social exclusion, and physical abuse transcend all levels of education, from primary education to university. Illiteracy and drop-out rates among Dalits are very high due to a number of social and physical factors. Legislation and measures that have been taken to combat this are often inadequately implemented. The forms of structural discrimination and abuse that Dalit children face in schools are often so stigmatising that they are forced to drop out of school. One of the main issues is discriminatory practices conducted by teachers, which may include, denial of access to school water supplies, segregation in class rooms and Dalits being made to eat separately, and forcing Dalit children to perform manual scavenging on and around school premises. As a grave consequence of this harassment, a disproportionate number of Dalit and

⁹ Under Sumangali, young women are hired on contract for up to five years. During their contract they earn minimal wages and at the end are given a lump sum to pay for a dowry.

¹⁰ Documentary series of issues faced by the victims of the scheme in the form of snap shot stories, R. Karuppusamy, READ

¹¹ Captured by Cotton, Exploited Dalit girls produce garments in India for European and US markets, SOMO - Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations ICN - India Committee of the Netherlands.

Adivasi students have committed suicide in India. A tragic recent example of this was the suicide of Dalit student Rohith Vemula, following his exclusion from the hostel and dining hall as well as cut off of finances, by Hyderabad University. Key recent reports on caste discrimination in education in India include the Human Rights Watch Report “They say we’re dirty” – Denying an Education to India’s Marginalised” and documentation in the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children – South Asia Regional Study, published by UNICEF and UNESCO in 2014 finding Dalit girls most excluded from primary education in India.

HRDs advocating against caste-based discrimination and violence against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are at ongoing risk of attack for defending the rights of Dalit and Adivasi communities. The community facing most harassment, physical violence, abuses and untouchability practices based on their caste are Dalits and Adivasis. They are often charged of abetment, criminal conspiracy, promoting enmity between religious groups, imputations prejudicial to national interests¹², false charges of offence^{13&14}, threat to public servants, statements conducing to public mischief, criminal intimidation under the IPC¹⁵. They face a diverse range of attacks and harassment from state and non-state actors based on their caste alike, killing, physical assault¹⁶, arbitrary detention¹⁷, threats, judicial harassment. Police officials are often the perpetrators of violence against HRDs, which is usually carried out with impunity¹⁸. Private companies also target them for work related to economic development projects and their impact on the local communities or the environment.¹⁹ Participating in public assembly²⁰, protesting peaceful^{21&22} and taking action collectively are important means to fight

¹²<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/meerut/fresh-nsa-charges-on-bhim-army-chief/articleshow/64006187.cms>

¹³ <https://scroll.in/latest/863890/maharashtra-dalit-activists-claim-youth-leader-arrested-on-false-charges-in-nanded>

¹⁴ Mr. Ajinath Anand Raut, an activist from Usmanabad, Maharashtra works for the rights of Charmakar (SC) community in his area. Since he is questioning the discrimination being faced by the community, some of the dominant caste community trapped him in false offences of outraging modesty and Rape. He was beaten brutally several times, his shoe weaving shop was set on fire and was threatened to leave his village. Though he has given several complaints to the police officials against the culprits but in vein.

¹⁵ Indian Penal Code

¹⁶ <https://www.patrika.com/jaunpur-news/attack-on-advocate-lal-chand-in-jaunpur-1-2239991/>

¹⁷ <https://newsclick.in/dalits-mp-and-rajasthan-still-remain-police-custody-bharat-bandh-protests>

¹⁸ <https://idsn.org/urgent-appeal-dalit-activists-brutally-assaulted-arrested-detained-police/>

¹⁹ <http://www.timesnownews.com/india/article/anti-sterlite-protests-haunting-pictures-that-define-the-horror-faced-by-tuticorin-residents-see-here/231597>

²⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/concerns-illegal-detention-indian-dalits-180110152033805.html>

injustice and demand human rights. HRDs working in this context face a higher level of threat, both as organizers or participants including unnecessary and excessive use of force resulting in killings.²³ They are increasingly the targets of online hate campaigns by fundamentalist's groups.²⁴ Targeting journalists under sections 499 and 500 of the IPC, for defamation and for writings on Dalit issues²⁵ and covering Dalit atrocities.²⁶ Sedition charges²⁷ under IPC Section 124(A) have also been used to target freedom of expression and dissent²⁸. The FCRA, 2010 regulates foreign funding for civil society organizations and has been used to reject license renewal applications from rights-based advocacy groups that questioned governmental policies.

Even in the face of disasters such as floodings, droughts or earthquakes Dalits continue to face exclusion and discrimination in access to services. This includes relief materials, shelter and rehabilitation following disasters. An assessment report²⁹ of the situation in Cuddalore District, Tamil Nadu, following devastating floods in 2015 found that assessment team finds that stories of discrimination in rescue and relief work were widespread among the respondents, with non-Dalit households and villages reportedly receiving support from the Government while Dalit households are not receiving support despite being the worst affected. Despite their houses being the main damaged, no affected Dalit families surveyed have received shelter relief from the government and Dalit families were often not able to access relief camps set up in dominant caste villages, due to discrimination and distance.

²¹ On 02.04.18, 5 Dalit activists from NDMJ, from East Champaran, Bihar were assaulted physically by non Dalit's, when they were participating in a peaceful protest organized near Gandhi Chowk, East Champaran, Bihar against a regressive ruling of Supreme Court diluting the spirit of SCs & STs (PoA) Act 1989. Though the FIR on behalf of Dalit HRDs has been registered same day, a false case has also been registered against the 5 HRDs.

²² http://www.annihilatecaste.in/uploads/downloads/doc_180518034312_232540.pdf

²³ <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/release-report-on-killing-of-dalits-in-2012-police-firing-information-commission-to-government-1455335>

²⁴ <https://sabrangindia.in/article/did-anti-dalit-whatsapp-messages-shared-among-savarnas-trigger-violence-during-bharat-bandh>

²⁵ <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/how-dalit-writer-tamil-nadu-being-ostracized-writing-against-caste-atrocities-36916>

²⁶ <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/journalists-covering-dalit-protests-arrested-by-kerala-police> <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/journalists-covering-dalit-protests-arrested-by-kerala->

²⁷ <https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/15-dalit-protesters-booked-on-sedition-charges-in-karnal/720976/>

²⁸ <https://thewire.in/caste/lucknow-press-club-dalit-protest>

²⁹ No Respite for Dalits in Disaster Response, Tamil Nadu” National Dalit Watch and Social Awareness Society for Youth – Tamil Nadu.

Access to social and economic rights, including land rights, continues to be restricted by deeply ingrained discrimination. Generally land rights are an area of conflict and dispute between Dalits and dominant castes as dominant castes may try to seize Dalit land using force, threats and violence. The fact that Dalits often do not own land also makes them vulnerable to exploitation by those who do. In India there are special budgets in place (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes sub-plans) meant to support the welfare of these marginalised groups. However it is repeatedly documented that the money budgeted for Dalits and Adivasi is diverted to other unrelated posts with as much as 60% being diverted in 2014. In addition to this the Indian Government in 2015, cut the Dalit and Adivasi budgets by 60%. Dalit rights groups in India have been campaigning for giving the Dalits and Adivasis's their fair share of the budget and are trying to put pressure on Government to stop cutting already misappropriated allocations.

There are allegations that police officers have their own caste and gender biases and often behave towards dalits and adivasis in a discriminatory way. Police have failed to protect the weaker sections especially the scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes. Police rape of dalit and adivasi women continues to be reported throughout India. In October 2015, a young Dalit boy died while in police custody, police torture is blamed. His crime, allegedly stealing two pigeons from dominant castes³⁰. A Dalit family including three small children were also stripped and put in jail for allegedly encroaching on the land of dominant castes³¹. Study Report on alleged cases of police atrocities against Kuravan Community (SC) in the state of Tamil Nadu submitted by 3 members study committee to National Commission for Scheduled Caste found that They are subjected to physical torture, by the police in the name of nabbing the "habitual offenders". The members of the community, including men, women and children, are subjected to systematic, continuing, ruthless treatment in the hands of the police. It has become handy for the police to

³⁰ <https://scroll.in/article/764492/dead-over-a-stolen-pigeon-family-of-14-year-old-dalit-boy-accuses-haryana-police-of-torture>

³¹ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/noida/police-behaved-inhumanly-with-dalit-family-says-sc-st-panel/story-FT4K2QdCQmy9z3l7ofe2DP.html>

catch hold of the "Kuravans" and foist false cases on them and kept under illegal detention and they undergone inhuman treatment and brutal forms of torture to extract "false confession statements".

In terms of legislation, following years of advocacy by Dalit groups, a landmark amendment to India's key caste legislation – the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act – was passed by the Indian Parliament in January 2016. It was hoped that the amendment will increase the scope for justice for India's Dalits. But the recent judicial reviews on the legislation suggest a caste based judicial mindset diluting the very purpose of the Act. On 20.03.2018, the Supreme Court of India passed a judgment³² that contained directives to prevent the alleged abuse of the SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989. The SC Judgement drastically diluted the Act. Such judicial reviews have clearly surfaced the existing prejudice in the Judiciary. Consequently, on 2nd April, Bharat Bandh was called by Dalit groups due to outrage over Supreme Court ruling on atrocities against dalits. More than 10 people were killed and many injured during the Protests. After the Bandh and widespread opposition finally parliament brought amendments and retained the original provisions of the Act. Yet similar reviews on the legislation are being filed in different high courts of India against this legislation and pending disposal.

The FCRA, 2010 regulates foreign funding for civil society organizations and has been used to reject license renewal applications from rights-based advocacy groups that questioned governmental policies. Space for civil society in India is shrinking with tight regulations of foreign contributions for organisations working on Dalit rights and the harassment of Dalit human rights activists and leaders, including them facing false charges from police and facing torture and custodial murder. Censorship of films dealing with the issue of caste discrimination and blocking of Dalit events have also been witnessed.

³² Dr Subhash Kashinath Mahajan v State of Maharashtra

Response of the Police:

Under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 there were total of 11,060 cases for investigation. The charge-sheeting rate was 77.0. Information from CSO monitoring atrocity cases and DHRDs continue to reveal a number of ways in which police ensure the non-registration of atrocity cases. These include neglect and disinterest towards SC/ST atrocity victims; discouraging SCs/STs from registering cases and instead encouraging compromises with the accused; threatening victims into silence or even inflicting violence on victims; refusing to register cases under the PoA Act to avoid punitive measures against the perpetrators of atrocities; foisting false cases against victims at the behest of the perpetrators of atrocities to push through a settlement; accepting bribes from the perpetrators to drop the victim's case; declaring the perpetrator of atrocities innocent without following due legal process; and delaying their arrival to the scene of atrocity, which contributes to weakening the evidence trail.

Response of the Judiciary:

Till 2017, only 14 States/Union Territories (UTs) out of the total 36 states and 7 UTs have set up a total of 195 Exclusive Special Courts to try cases under the PoA Act. Even in these 12 states/UTs, the number of atrocity-prone districts continues to outstrip the number of available courts. According to NCRB data, at the end of 2014, 85.5% cases under SC/ST PoA Act of crimes against SCs were pending trial across the country. Convictions were awarded in only 28.4% of cases (4,716 cases) in 2014 that completed trial. The high pendency rate for cases under trial can be attributed to the inadequate number of Special Courts and Special Public Prosecutors (SPPs); delayed investigation and registration of cases; no day-to-day trial; and overburdened designated courts which also try non-atrocity cases as well. Moreover, a deep rooted caste bias and failure to recognise the importance of the POA Act as a social protection law prevents these atrocity cases from being treated on a priority basis. The phenomenon of high rates of acquittals in cases of crimes against SCs is also disturbing: There were a total of

50,357 cases came for trial and a total of 701 cases ended in conviction and thus the conviction percentage under the Act was 15.4%.

Status of Accountability and Mandatory Mechanisms:

The various mandatory and accountability mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the POA Act and prevent atrocities, such as periodic reviews of cases and the performance of SPPs; reviews by the SC/ST Protection Cell, Nodal Officer and State and District Level Vigilance Monitoring Committees (SVMCs and DVMCs), etc. in most of the states are more widely flouted than adhered to. Even though SVMCs and DVMCs have been constituted in a number of states, for example, in the absence of regular meetings no follow up action emerges, let alone the plans of action mandated by the PoA Rules. Furthermore, victims and witnesses of atrocities are not informed about their rights and entitlements to travel and daily allowances to enable them to attend court hearings. The states are mandated by the PoA Act to declare atrocity prone areas in order for officials to take preventive measures to stop the occurrence of atrocities. However, according to the MSJE Annual Report 2013 on the Status of Implementation of the PoA Act, only ten states had identified 171 districts as atrocity-prone by 2013. Such is the appalling state of affairs and level of poor coordination between the enforcement authorities and the victims/witnesses. While according to the MSJE, SC/ST Protection Cells have been instituted and Nodal Officers and Special Officers appointed in most states/UTs, no information is publicly available about their functioning, which raises doubts about the level of outreach they have to SC and ST communities.

Legal Mechanisms and Redressal Action South Asia:

Number of legal measures have been put in place for the protection of Dalit's communities in India Nepal and Pakistan and ensures the right against "Untouchability" in any form. Constitution of Bangladesh and Srilanka recognize that all persons are equal before law and shall not be discriminated. In Nepal the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability

(Offence and Punishment) Act, 2011 seeks to protect Nepali citizens from a caste and untouchability related crimes. Legal mechanisms need to be formulated in Bangladesh to address violence stemming from inter-caste marriages. Special measures need to be in place for intersectional caste and gender violence and exploitation in laws or policies. Need to have separate mechanism of lodging complaints made by Dalits in police stations in Bangladesh. The laws, policies and programmes on forced, bonded or child labour currently being implemented by the Bangladesh government need to make reference to caste vulnerabilities.

Commission exist in Nepal - National Dalit Commission. But the commissions are very limited in terms of its functions and ability. There are no specialized institutions to safeguard or oversee Dalit welfare in Bangladesh. The National Human Rights Commission has received capacity building support from UNDP, recruited commissioners. The Law Commission has submitted the draft of Anti- discrimination Act to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, which explicitly acknowledges and seeks to redress CBD.

Key Strategies of National Dalit Movement for Justice – Access to Justice:

- a) Developing mechanisms to promote and protect the rights of Dalit human rights defenders, building their capacity through trainings and provision of legal information.
- b) Establishing a network of Dalit Lawyers, providing training and enabling them to collectively address the judiciary and other enforcement and statutory bodies.
- c) Networking with Dalit and Adivasi CSOs to jointly combat caste based discrimination.
- d) Advocacy towards parliamentarians and Human Rights Commissions.
- e) Use of the Right to Information Act to access information
- f) Holding Citizens Audits
- g) Building the assertiveness of survivors of atrocities to become a collective force. Training and supporting them to meet regularly with enforcement authorities. Survivors are often the best advocates for change.
- h) Community mobilization to become a collective force to address issues of discrimination.

- i) Protecting the civil and political rights of Dalits by monitoring major violations of rights, where necessary making legal interventions and raising cases through public campaigns or in the media.
- j) International Advocacy – Participating and presenting the status of implementation of existing laws at the UN level, intervening through UN Procedures, research papers, shadow reports, benchmarking studies etc.

Examples of Good Practices:

- a) Building a National Campaign “National Coalition for strengthening PoA Act 1989 with more than 500 organizations across the country leading to major amendments to the PoA Act 1989 and its Rules 1995.
- b) Intervention with National Commission for Scheduled Caste having authority to inquire into specific complaints of atrocities against scheduled castes. The final outcome of the intervention was a report was placed before the Parliament on the atrocities committed against the Kuruvan community- been stigmatized as a “criminal caste” facing harassment, including false charges, illegal detention and extreme custodial violence.
- c) Legal Clinic and Victims and Witnesses facilitation Centre intervention modal - Legal Clinics have focused on ensuring that Dalit and Adivasis have the support to access justice.
- d) NDMJ Atrocity Tracking and Monitoring System- The Atrocity Tracking and Monitoring (ATM) system is a digital portal that functions as a first point of contact for victims of atrocities and a repository for documentation on atrocity cases across the country.
- e) Scheduled Caste victims of atrocities can access support by sending a text message received by a dedicated ATM operator. The victim is linked to CSOs and DHRD that will work with them to register the case, engage in fact finding and obtain support through Legal Clinics; DHRDs use the ATM system to aggregate and access registered contacts from over 15,000 police stations; track cases; and send out automated reminders of key dates to police, judges and lawyers.

Key Recommendations:

To the Government of India:

1. The Indian State should strengthen enforcement of existing legal prohibitions of discrimination and, in addition, consider enacting comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation guaranteeing the right to equal treatment and protection against discrimination, including in employment.
2. Robustly, enforce and implement the amended SCs and STs (PoA) Act 1989 and Rules 1995 and in specific the rights of victims and witnesses as enshrined in the amended Act.
3. Establish mandatory Exclusive Special Courts as per Section 14 of the SCs and STs (PoA) Act 1989 in each district. These courts shall not take cases of any other legislation.
4. Take immediate measures to appoint Public Prosecutors of victim's choice as per Rule 4 (5) of the SCs and STs (PoA) Rules 1995 for the speedy trial of the cases.
5. Conduct an open and transparent investigation under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015 and prosecute those Government and police officials under section 4 of the Act who are found to have aided and abetted criminals or found to have negligent in their responsibilities in implementing the provisions of the Act /plan and schemes.
6. Immediate notification or G.O to be issued to all the state governments to frame contingency plan in line with the contingency plan framed by the Govt. Tamil Nadu and framing of schemes under the plan if any for the purposes of rehabilitation, employment, pension, strengthening socio economic conditions of the victims.
7. NHRC, SC & ST Commissions shall conduct open hearing all over the country on cases of atrocities and on the implementation of the SCs and STs (PoA) Act. The Commissions shall ask for the annual reports from the states and present the same before the Parliament.
8. Ensure that the under developed Dalit and Adivasi habitats, habitats prone to atrocities, and habitats which are arsoned or damaged are provided with land, adequate housing, clean

water and sanitation facilities and infrastructure facilities from the SCP/TsP and from the provisions of Contingency Plan.

To the respective governments of South Asian Countries:

9. Official recognition of caste-based discrimination in Bangladesh, Srilanka and Pakistan and to implement without delay measures for its elimination and adoption and full implementation of appropriate legislative and policy measures to eliminate caste- based discrimination.
10. Clear guidance and procedures for identifying, registering and investigating cases of caste-based discrimination and Untouchability Practices and guidelines to ensure effective enforcement of accountability mechanisms to ensure that officers fulfill their legal duties.
11. The draft UN Guidelines on Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent lays down the framework of State obligations to remove Caste based Discrimination from all areas of life. South Asian countries shall engage in —substantive discussions on these guidelines, and accordingly adopt this comprehensive framework in order to eliminate caste-based discrimination.
12. UN Human Rights Council shall ratify the above draft U.N Guidelines and hold a international Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination based on work and Descent (Caste).
13. Affirmative actions must be recognized and shall be extended to Dalits in all these affected countries, for their socio – economic and political development.
14. Close co-operation among the CSOs and NHRIs to undertake joint interventions, activities and programs, and to promote access to justice for victims of caste-based discrimination and Untouchability Practices.

Caste, Class and Stigmatised Work in Leather Production in India: Some Reflections

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The leather industry in India as it developed under colonial rule came to be based primarily on labour traditionally stigmatized by extremely low caste status, facing social exclusion- and marked by the stigma of working with skin, i.e. the nature of the work and the work process itself. In this paper I share some historical reflections on caste, class and stigmatized work on the basis of research into the history of leather production, particularly leather tanning in India from the late 19th century to about the early 1970s. The paper probes these questions through an examination of notions of skill and the history of formal skilling in leather production in the colonial period, the role of caste in mediating categories of skill, and its implications for labour and class.

Hides, skins and leather production¹ in India grew exponentially in the 19th century under twin imperatives –colonial military requirements and a sharp escalation in international demand late 19th century, following India’s close linkage to the international market under colonial rule.²

The growth was achieved by a complete reorganization of production and setting of new extensive networks of procurement and transportation of 'raw materials' – hides, skins, tanning materials, and labour, etc. Most hides in India were sourced from dead and not slaughtered animals (due to taboos in some sections of society against cattle slaughter and beef eating) though skins were secured through slaughter of goats. The railways had made the speedy transportation of these perishable materials to the ports for export, and networks of hide traders and contractors reaching deep into rural areas emerged, engaged in collecting hides and selling at new and old hide markets. Urban hide and skin processing clusters emerged outside ports and other cities, into which raw materials and labour were drawn – from the immediate hinterland as well as distant

¹ 'Hide' refers to the skin of cows and buffaloes, or larger animals in general, while 'skin' is used to refer to the skin of smaller animals, goats and sheep for instance, and also wild animals like tiger, deer, etc. See, Bhattacharya, 'Labour in the Leather Industry', Chapters 2 and 3.

² See Figures 1-4, Annexure 1.

areas. Tanning and hide and skin processing clusters included those in several towns in Madras province, and also on the outskirts of Calcutta, Bombay, Karachi, Kanpur and Agra etc. Raw and lightly tanned hides and skins became the dominant exports leading to an expansion of pre-tanning labour processes.³ A new labour market had to be created to meet this vastly expanded demand. It came to be drawn predominantly from traditionally outcaste groups, today called Dalits and in the contemporary period considered ‘untouchable’ or ‘outcastes’ (e.g. drawn from *chamars* in northern and eastern India and *paraiyans* in the south Indian clusters in Madras province). I have argued elsewhere⁴ about how the basis for their being considered ‘suitable’ labour for this work was the fact that they were ritually and socially ‘permitted’ to handle raw hides and skins, and served as under-caste and underclass and therefore controllable labour, as well as present in large numbers in different areas cheap labour who could be deployed to perform this kind of brutal, stigmatised and hazardous labour. These workers thus became specialised in this work, categorised as ‘unskilled’ labour, doing crucial foundational work at the beginning of the highly profitable trans-continental commodity chain that extended to importing ports in Britain, Europe and North America among others. A number of Muslims were also drawn in as labour but pre-tanning operations in India remained mainly dominated by outcaste labour during the colonial period and the initial decades after independence.

A point that needs to be sharply made here is that this connection of these Dalit workers with stigmatised material and labour was now much more regular, continuous, intense in the modern period in India – it was entirely new, produced in the context of the connection of Indian hides and skins with the international market and linkage to the colonial economy particularly from the 1870s. It was vastly different from the traditional work of largely agricultural labour done by them, and from the work of occasional flaying of carcasses following death of animals in villages that some of them might have done previously.

³ After hides were flayed, i.e. removed from the carcass, they had to be preserved, salted for transportation. Once they reached the tannery, located in the new clusters, they were soaked in water, then limed and unhaired (soaked in pits of lime solution, in which these raw skins and hides had to be constantly turned to prevent rotting, then unhaired by a blunt knife, called ‘scudding’). The next operation was ‘fleshing’ in which the fat adhering to the skins and hides was removed by a sharp knife. This was followed by ‘deliming’ (this was done by some form of ‘bating’ or ‘puering’ i.e. again immersing hides and skins in a soak replete with putrefying material – dung, excrement, rotting old fleshings of hides, to soften the hides, skins for tanning). The hides and skins were then tanned – by soaking them in bark solution or later, using chrome, as a result of which they did not rot.

⁴ Bhattacharya, ‘Labour in the Leather Industry’, Chapter 4.

This essentially new industry in India was visibly differently organised, based on large scale and systematic extraction and commoditisation of raw or semi processed hides and skins (not major commodities previously) linked to new networks of procurement of labour and raw materials, new markets and new sites of production, with new specialised labouring and mercantile groups and capital associated with it. Yet the notion that leather was a ‘traditional’ industry, its associations with stigma, and low caste and social status, remained entrenched well into the twentieth century.

Attempts were made, by various social groups, as well by the state to counter these associations and the colonial state’s initiative to establish formal higher technical education in leather production was part of these efforts. This paper examines the way in which planned and organised technical education by the colonial state in leather production, which was introduced to at least partly counter these associations went on to reinforce them in complex, direct and indirect ways.

Technical Education in Leather Production

The factors mentioned above – the possibility of high profits from hides and skins production and export, and stigma associated with these materials – as well as the thrust of the overall policy on technical education in India and the introduction of chemical tanning in the west shaped the history of technical education in leather production in India.⁵

State Policy and Initiatives on Technical Education

Initial attempts by the colonial state to provide technical education and industrial training were made in a more focused way in the 1880s. These ‘schools’ were more general and provided ‘technical education’ in different fields, including, the making of leather and leather products in some cases. In Bengal, where Calcutta was already becoming a major hides exporting port, leather production was not considered fit to be taught formally, or require any ‘special training’⁶ in the 1890s. It was believed that private firms that supplied leather for military and other needs

⁵ This part draws upon my article, Bhattacharya, S, Transforming skin, changing caste

⁶ Collin, ‘Report on the Arts and Industries of Bengal’, p. 205

provided adequate training to workers. ‘Native’ shoe makers were praised for their skill,⁷ and the government report stated that possibly ‘leather curing’ could be a field in which training could be given in Bengal.⁸ This did not materialise however.

Edward Charles Buck, Secretary, Department of Revenue and Agriculture, Government of India, was deputed in the late 19th century to report on technical education in different provinces and his report of 1901 affirmed its importance, and held that it was responsible for the economic success of Austria and Germany.⁹

The Simla Conference on Technical Education held in 1901 incorporated many of Buck’s recommendations in its resolution. Technical education was (a) the study of the scientific methods and principles underlying the practice of any handicraft, industry or profession and (b) the application of those methods and principles to the practice of the handicraft, industry or profession in question¹⁰ the resolution stated. The Conference initiated a policy shift – there would be two separate systems of industrial training were envisaged, one broadly for those industries where workers’ output competed with English or European workers, and another for ‘local handicrafts’, practiced by caste-based artisanal groups. Training institutions for the latter were to be set up in small towns where ‘caste traditions’ were believed to be more entrenched.

For the first kind of industries whole time instruction was envisaged for pupils who would be admitted after reaching as high a standard of general education as can be exacted¹¹ and a training programme that was ‘divided between actual workshop practice and the study of the principles and scientific processes on which the trade depended’ could be designed. This kind of training was to be adopted for those sectors ‘where the Indian manufactures come in competition with foreign,’ and there ‘the object should be as far as possible to produce Indian workmen as well

⁷ Ibid., p. 191, In Calcutta and the suburbs a great number of shops are engaged in shoe-making. In Bentinck Street there is a large colony of Chinese shoe-makers. The existence of European shops and the introduction of the sewing machine has greatly improved the trade. I visited the European firms and was told that a Bengali shoe-maker could do as fine hand sewing in leather as any European.

⁸ ‘Curing’ refers to the temporary preservation of hides and skins using salt or salt solution. Raw hides and skins need to be flayed and cured for transportation. This was the first step in the labour process involved in the production of leather, done usually by those who flayed carcasses of animals, before being sold in hides and skins markets. The hides and skins that were exported were cured again in curing yards at the ports, to enable them to withstand long ship journeys to London, Hamburg, Boston, etc.; see Bhattacharya, *Labour in the Leather Industry*.

⁹ Buck, ‘Report on Practical and Technical Education’

¹⁰ Government of India, ‘Resolutions of the Simla Conference’, p. 251.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

trained as his foreign competitor' the resolution stated.¹² Additionally the Conference provided for the provision of scholarships for higher technical education at 'home' or 'elsewhere in Europe' for 'educated young men' with an inclination for the same.¹³

For the second type of training institutions, adopted for sectors regarded as 'local handicrafts', only students 'whose caste occupation is the industry which the school is intended to develop' were to be given admission, trained manually and practically for the most part and no English was to be taught, while students were to restrict their reading to the vernacular.¹⁴

The Simla Conference resolutions became the decisive basis for policies towards technical education in leather production across provinces.¹⁵

By the early 20th century, the leather industry straddled both kinds of industry. (a) Sections of it were centred in cities, in urban tanning clusters on their outskirts, competing with European products, and potentially, workers, and (b) Sections of it continued to be involved in tanning and making leather goods in the traditional paradigm, by traditional means on caste and community basis.¹⁶ Significantly, the section of the industry located in big cities and geared towards exports was also dominated by small-scale, informally organised and predominantly manually worked units concentrated in the leather-working clusters.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Government of India, 'Resolutions of the Simla Conference', pp. 252–53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* This denial of access to English, by conscious design, for those who were drawn into industrial schools, meant that pedagogic design of technical education in India produced a distinct line of hierarchy that did not exist in countries such as Germany or England. English in India was a hegemonic language, a marker of social and economic status. Its denial had to be understood in this context.

¹⁵ Provinces varied from each other in adopting these policies, or adopted them selectively according to their own context (especially after 1919 when education became a provincial responsibility) while remaining broadly committed to the Conference's recommendations. The majority of the raw skins were exported mostly 'dry salted with the hair on, but sometimes they were flint dried and occasionally wet salted in the hair, or unhaired and then pickled in a solution of alum and salt'. See Indian Munitions Board, *Review of the Trade*, p. 17.

¹⁶ These included two kinds of traditional workers with leather—(a) Rural outcaste workers, who skinned carcasses, made simple products, as part of (dependent and subordinate) agricultural labour services. The production of these goods was linked to servitude. Many of these labourers were recruited as tannery/curing yard workers and many also remained tied to old structures of production. The Simla Conference's reach did not extend to the latter. (b) 'Traditional' craftsmen from artisanal castes, most commonly Muslim or from some 'untouchable' castes, living in small towns. These included makers of elaborate native shoes, saddle or water bag makers, among others. Their access to raw materials and inputs, and markets was severely and mostly negatively impacted by colonial economic linkage. The Simla Conference sought to provide training and support to these traditional craftsmen. See Bhattacharya, *Labour in the Leather Industry*, Ch. 5.

Chrome Tanning, Chemicals and the transformation of hides and skins

The second factor that quite centrally shaped the history of technical education in leather production was the introduction of chemical or chrome tanning. Chemical tanning emerged through the process of experimentation by chemists in Germany in the 1870s and early 1880s, and was finally developed and patented in 1884 in the USA by Augustus Schulz, a German immigrant. With its industrial application in Germany, the USA and elsewhere, chemicals began to be increasingly used in pre-tanning and tanning processes. Chromium compounds were most commonly used for the tanning processes, hence the term ‘chrome’ tanning. Chrome tanning also had major implications for the many outcaste workers who laboured in the production of hides, skins and leather in India as well as on the design of higher technical education.

It was countries like Germany and the USA that turned to chrome tanning the earliest – by the 1880s. Chrome tanning also initially could only be done in an integrated manner – thus these countries, already among the highest importers of raw hides and skins from India began to import even more to rapidly process and tan them using chemicals and electric power.¹⁷ The field of leather chemistry developed, especially in the USA and continental Europe, and later, in England. By the 1870s institutions like the Gerberei Technische Untersuchungs Anstalt in Vienna, and the Gerberei Technische Hoch Schule in Freiberg, Germany, technical institutions for scientific research in leather tanning and chemistry were already established and flourishing.¹⁸ In England, such research was pioneered by the Leather Industries Department in Yorkshire College in Leeds in 1891. English manufacturers were relatively slow to adopt chrome tanning, especially in the case of light leathers.¹⁹ England’s dependence on the so-called ‘half tans’ especially from Madras could have been a factor. The First World War in which there was a great expansion of demand for leather and leather goods was the watershed after which chrome tanning grew in England. In India, though chrome tanning was introduced only a few years after England, its widespread adoption took place only after several decades.

The speed of tanning grew manifold with chemicals compared to traditional bark tanning. It required scientific knowledge of chemicals, and electricity, and could lead to mass production –

¹⁷ The majority of the raw skins were exported mostly ‘dry salted with the hair on, but sometimes they were flint dried and occasionally wet salted in the hair, or unhaired and then pickled in a solution of alum and salt’. See Indian Munitions Board, *Review of the Trade*, p. 17. See also Bhattacharya, *Labour in the Leather Industry*, Ch. 2

¹⁸ Flicht, *Note of a Visit to Technical Schools*.

¹⁹ Church, ‘The British Leather Industry’.

tanning lost its place as a ‘craft’ and leather production became industrialised. As mentioned chemical tanning in Europe and USA initially meant that these countries only imported raw hides and skins on a vastly increased scale. However soon an interim product, pickled hides and skins²⁰ was developed, and these too began to be imported from India by international buyers.

It is with mass production that the concerns about standardisation of commodities, hides and skins and also the skill of labour engaged in skinning, and processing them got intensified – in the early decades of the 20th century, corresponding to the adoption of chrome tanning. Expanded production of leather in chrome-tanning countries put pressure on countries like the UK that still depended bark tanning.²¹ England’s need to keep up with the increased pace and scale of production meant that work intensity grew significantly for Dalit workers engaged in pre-tanning work in Madras and elsewhere who produced half-tans for export to England. This work had to be done faster, and continuously after the growth of chrome tanning. Even though chrome was not widely adopted in India in the early 20th century its adoption impacted the lives of labour engaged in the production of leather.

Thus, though chrome was introduced on a relatively limited scale in actual production of leather in India in late 19th – mid 20th centuries, its adoption in hides and skins importing countries led to a significant amount of re-structuring of production and increase in the intensity of work, and impacted labour engaged in this field significantly.

The role of scientific and chemical leather tanning in increasing productivity and profitability of leather is significant. Its role in serving capital in leather production lends weight to the argument of Alfred Sohn Rethel that science, in this case represented by chemicals and chrome tanning, led to a separation of intellectual from manual labour – those who understood theoretically and scientifically, how leather as a substance could be processed, could not actually do the manual work of processing leather. Sohn Rethel shows how the capitalist acquired control

²⁰The export of pickled skins particularly (for production of ‘glacé kid’—a type of leather) grew after chrome tanning as did that of raw, dry-salted hides and skins. As Chatterton discusses in his 1905 monograph on tanning in Madras, pickling involved all the pre-tanning operations (i.e., soaking, liming, unhairing, fleshing, scudding, deliming) after which, instead of immersing the skins in the tanning tub they are pickled in a liquor ... composed of water, sulphuric acid and salt The effects of this process are to cleanse and bleach the skins and to put them into such a condition that they may be kept for an indefinite time without spoiling, Chatterton, *A Monograph*, p. 35.

Pickling of skins and hides that were exported also required the use of chemicals.

²¹The most profitable category of the lightly tanned hides and skins exported were the tanned ‘EI’ or ‘East India’ kips or lighter hides. See, Bhattacharya, *Labour in the Leather Industry*, Ch. 2.

over the production process through the abstract power of science.²² This was as true of leather tanning in Germany and England as much as in India.

Higher technical education in India as it developed in India focused on chrome tanning chrome tanning and left out the vast majority of the workers engaged pre-tanning of hides and skins and basic bark tanning for export. It thus became a major mechanism by which the reinvention of tanning as a science was achieved. Scientific tanning was in a broader sense an ally of capital, yet historically, sections of Indian and British capital in the early 20th century in India did not respond enthusiastically to technical education. This was probably partly because of their own location in the commodity chain, the nature of the market demand, and the economic hierarchies of colonialism, among other factors. My argument is that technical education managed to transform leather production into a 'science' it sought to draw in upper caste, upper class men into the work, giving them a share in the enormous profits it produced.²³ The instances of technical scholarships being given to, and availed by young men to study leather production abroad after the Simla Conference, especially to study leather chemistry and manufacturing in institutions like the Department of Leather Industries in Yorkshire College, Leeds, and the Leathersellers' Technical College, in Bermondsey, London, and other institutions in Europe indicate that this agenda was at least apparently succeeding. Yet the recurrent complaints and problems about these students indicated that its success was limited in different ways.

It is important to know that many of these students who received scholarship for higher technical education in leather production later joined the leather manufacturing industry in India. They were also significant in guiding and shaping technical education in late colonial and post-independence India. Some of these students who went to study leather technology especially in England in the early 20th century included Allan Guthrie (Principal of the Leather Trades School in Madras in 1915), and B. M. Das, manager of National Tannery in Calcutta, who became Director of the Bengal Tanning Institute, and the first Director of the Central Leather Research

²² Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*.

²³ Presenting leather tanning as a potential career for educated young men, Sen and Weston wrote, 'Modern tanning is based on science. Knowledge of chemistry, physics, bacteriology and mechanical engineering finds profitable use in this industry So nobody need be ashamed to pursue the tanning profession on modern lines'. Further, they expressed happiness that 'educated young men are being gradually attracted to the leather industry', and that the Bengal Tanning Institute was providing 'facilities of training in the modern methods of leather manufacture'. See, Sen and Weston, *Opportunities for an Industrial Career*.

Institute (CLRI), Madras in 1953.²⁴ Institutions of higher technical education in leather production and manufacturing such broadly fitted into the first category of institutions outlined in the Simla Conference.

Technical Education in Leather Production in India: Some Debates

Shaped by the factors discussed above, the history of technical education in India was further mediated by some crucial debates, each revolving around questions that were related to caste and untouchability, and what constituted skill. These questions could be framed as (1) Who was to be trained, and what was going to be taught? (2) Was leather production and making an art/craft or a science? and, (3) Should the training be practical or theoretical?

(1) Who was to be trained, and what was going to be taught?

The Simla Conference's proposal to set up different kinds of technical educational institutions for industries 'where workers' output competed with English or European workers'²⁵ was explicitly ignored in the actual development of technical education in leather production. As mentioned, chemical tanning was decided upon as the chosen direction for developing technical education, and as a corollary, higher technical education in leather production was to be developed not to meet the export demand (of bark tanned leather) but oriented towards domestic needs. As a consequence, school education and knowledge of chemistry (and English in which the subjects would be sought) were declared essential to access technical education – as they were

²⁴ B.M. Das or Rai Bahadur Biraj Mohan Das (1885–1956) became a key figure in framing policy on technical education in leather production in India. Born in Faridpore, he had an MA degree in Chemistry from Presidency College, Calcutta University and went on to conduct research in chemistry under Sir P. C. Ray. He studied applied chemistry in leather manufacture in Leeds University (1909–11), receiving training from Professor Procter there, and served as a technical chemist with Friedrich Bayer & Co., in Germany. In 1946–47, he was deputed as an Expert in Leather Technology with the British Intelligence Objective Committee. After retirement, he was Leather Advisor, West Bengal, and also, as Chairman of the Planning Commission he submitted a proposal to the Government of India for the establishment of a Leather Research Institute in India. This materialised in 1949, and he went on to head the CLRI, set up under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. His persistent efforts led to the introduction of the degree of BSc (Tanning) in the Madras and Calcutta Universities, Central Leather Research Institute, *Bio brief of Prof. B.M. Das [1885-1956]*.

²⁵ Risley, *Scheme for the Development of Technical and Industrial Education*.

needed for chrome tanning. This, by definition, meant that the Dalit workers, underclass and illiterate, were excluded.

One reason why no training was given to the export tanners and workers was, as Captain Allan Guthrie of the Madras Leather Trades School stated, was because ‘little could be taught to the export tanners’.²⁶ The Calcutta Research Tannery director B. M. Das’s vision of technical education also matched this view.²⁷ Peculiarly and significantly, technical education institutions chose to avoid skill development in the most economically thriving sector of leather production, involving work in which a large number of workers already had some dexterity. They chose instead to provide technical education in the new, uncharted field of chemical tanning. The colonial authorities exercised a strategic choice in this which had direct implications for technical education and the history of leather production in India.

It was significant that even though it benefitted capital in a local Indian and British capital in India engaged in export linked production did not welcome chrome tanning – owing to specific factors of geographical and historical location, and commodity production.²⁸ It was in the bigger, formal units producing leather and leather goods for military or other domestic use, often located in northern India that chrome tanning came to be adopted and students of the higher institutions of technical education were employed.²⁹

²⁶ Desikachariyar et al., *Report of the Leather Industry Committee*, p. 3.

²⁷ Director of Industries, *Report of the Department of Industries, Bengal, 1922*, p. 5.

²⁸ The attitude of the tanners in Madras towards the Leather Trades Institute is evident from the sceptical comment C. Sabapathy Mudaliyar, representing the tanners Messrs. C. H. Zain ul Abidin Sahib & Co. (Madras), made in his deposition before the Leather Industry Committee:

I have no idea as to the constitution, aims and functions of the Leather Trades Institute. I gather that the Institute is intended to train the sons of vegetable tanners and those who have some interest in tanning skins and hides business to become tanners themselves. They, I suppose, start from the lowest stage of tanning doing manual labour and all menial work done generally by *chuklars*; it is very doubtful in my opinion, if big tanners would care to send their sons to the Trades School because I personally think that a vegetable tanner owning his own tannery would prefer to put his son under training under his own men as he does not care to encourage chrome tanning as it will create competition. For one thing in a country like India where there is so much of class and caste distinction it is hardly possible to expect a caste man to do the menial work of liming, shaving and drying of skins—practically all dirty work—when a hide or skin is put under tannage. I do not think the ordinary workman has yet come to that stage to consider about a broader outlook in life to induce him to become a trained tanner and I cannot see how he can be induced to become such by the Institute affording opportunities, Desikachariyar et al., *Report of the Leather Industry Committee*, p. 59.

²⁹ The students who finished their course in 1919 included Abdul Hameed and S. M. Yakub who found employment in the Government Harness and Saddlery factory in Cawnpore, and A. Rajagopalachari who was employed in the South Indian Leather Company, Madras. Among students graduating in 1921, there was Balwant Singh who was a proprietor at Punjab Chrome Tannery, Sialkot, and two others who found work in Cawnpore, and two more,

How, then, did the choice of chrome tanning as the basis of technical education in leather production maintain hierarchies of caste and labour? It did so by redefining skill to indicate knowledge of chemicals and scientific tanning. Dalit workers who actually laboured in these tanneries –learnt their work on shop-floors of tanneries from other experienced workers, often relatives or fellow villagers. They remained, forever, categorised as unskilled or semi-skilled, and were paid low wages, embedded in brutal labour processes, denied any avenue of mobility in work or in skill formation. The skill differential between ‘skilled’ European and ‘unskilled’ Indian workers was also maintained through the design of technical education, among other things.

(2) Was leather production and making an art/craft or a science?

This question arose in the late 19th century in England and Europe as well as in India as leather tanning and production got industrialised with chrome. It was closely related to the question of how skills were to be calibrated and understood in a society. Tanning or the transformation of hides and skins into leather was considered, traditionally, a craft or a trade. This notion was directly confronted by the new notion of tanning as science.

There were two distinct bodies of knowledge, pertaining to preparing leather. These were the old ‘craft’ based knowledge of practical tanning using bark which was confronted, now, by the ‘science’-based knowledge of the leather chemist, who was the new expert who knew about chemical scientific processes involved in the transformation of leather from theoretical study and some laboratory practice of chemical processes. Thus Professor Smithells of Yorkshire College, England, wrote in 1891 that while designing courses in the then proposed Leather Industries Department ‘...I do not propose for a moment to teach the art of tanning but merely to teach to those who have already had a sound training in general chemistry ... I make no proposals with regard to workmen—It is impossible to teach them any science of tanning and the art can, in the opinion of most people be only properly learned in the tan-yard.³⁰ Even in Germany at about the same time Herr Courtier, who headed the German Technische Hoch Schule in Freiberg spoke about the importance of a thorough knowledge of chemistry as also the great importance of

Rajaratnam and Subrahmanyam, found work as ‘supervisors’ at the Institute itself, Cotton, *Notes Connected with G.O. No. 148*’.

³⁰ Henry Richardson Procter to Arthur Smithells. *File of Correspondence*.

practical work, observing however that ‘I can more easily make a chemist into a tanner than a tanner into a chemist’.³¹ In both Britain and Germany to different degrees, the centrality of practical work and knowledge in the training given to the new leather chemists was acknowledged, even as the tension between the traditional tanners, and their craft-knowledge and the scientific personnel, leather chemists and technologists was recorded.

The leather chemist could and did enter tannery floors often as an outsider, not belonging to a family of tanners as had been the case with traditional tanning in different parts of the world. This further undermined the notion tanning as a hereditary craft though in England and Germany tanners family members also began to acquire technical education and run family businesses.³²

In India, the question of whether leather production could be considered a craft, a trade or science was severely refracted through structures and ideology of caste, and caste based notions of stigma. The issue of whether or not tanning could be permitted inside the School of Industrial Arts in Madras posed this question sharply in 1903 when the Superintendent, Sir Alfred Chatterton, established a chrome tanning department and an experimental tannery. Given the scale of opposition from Members of the Education Department he had to shift the tannery outside the School in 1906.³³ It was said that tanning would ‘disorganise the proper work of the institution.’³⁴ A member of the Educational Department stated that it was an industry which is

³¹ Flicht, *Note of a Visit to Technical Schools*. Flicht ran a tanning firm and was closely associated with setting up the Department of Leather Industries and was part of a deputation consisting of Messrs. W. Brown, H. R. Procter and Professor Smithells and was himself appointed by the Leather Industries Committee of the Yorkshire College and the Leeds Association of the Leather Trade to enquire into and report on continental methods of technical instruction in the leather industry.

³² At the Leather Industries Department in Leeds University, there were students such as George Croft Foulds or B. Steinhem who were sons of tanners, who left the institution in 1904 and 1902, respectively, to go back to work in their fathers’ tanneries; or students such as Allan Guthrie (founder Principal of Leather Trades Institute in India, and employed in Cooper Allen and Company) or G. Greatrex who were not sons of tanners but came either to seek training in chrome tanning from India, or to secure employment as leather chemists. There were others who were not sons of tannery owners like J. Chadwick, who left the Leather Industries Department in 1904 and went on to join the Chicago Rawhide Co. at New Brighton, or those like Herbert Pettit who came from a family of tanners, J. Pettit and Co. of Northampton, *Record of Students in the Leather Industries Department 1898 [–1911]*. As R.A. Church observes, the closer connection between the leather chemists, who had secured institutional technical education and the industry and practical tanners in Vienna (in Austria, and also Germany) is evident from the fact that in the 1890s, among the four teachers there was one who owned several tanneries; the Yorkshire College in England on the other hand two teachers who were both leather chemists, Church, ‘The British Leather Industry’.

³³ *Copy of letter from Alfred Chatterton*.

³⁴ G. S. Forbes to H. D. Taylor, letter.

‘repulsive to the general sentiment’ and employed an industrial population ‘of the very lowest classes.’³⁵ Leather could not in India be considered an art and leather tanning was not even given the status of a craft. After much discussion the term ‘trade’ was agreed upon and the first institution of higher technical education in leather production set up in Madras came to be called ‘Leather Trades School.’

(3) Should the training be practical or theoretical?

Practical work was, as mentioned, considered important for the training of students of leather chemistry or technology in England, Germany and elsewhere. But in India, given the caste moorings of leather work, practical work was gradually minimised in the curricula of institutions of higher technical education in leather production that came to be set up in the early 20th century. This was true of institutions set up on western models – the change came about after some discussion and debate and the official alibi for it was ‘Indian difference’, i.e., that Indian society structure and needs are different, and hence different standards needed to be applied. The attitude of Indian students towards the practical work of leather production was highlighted in the course of an enquiry by the Secretary of State in England in 1921 into the refusal of English tanners to take on Indian students (holders of technical scholarships for different aspects of leather production). Dr. J. Gordon Parker, the Principal of the Leather Sellers’ Technical College in Bermondsey, London, one of the two colleges³⁶ where most Indian technical scholarship holders came to study leather manufacturing deposing³⁷ before the enquiry stated that the Indian students could not be given practical training in tanneries because ‘educated Indians are more in the habit of giving orders to servants to do the work and not seeing it done, which is an essential feature in British productions’.³⁸ These technical scholarship holders were science graduates. They were conversant in English, and belonged to higher castes/classes. Whether Muslim or Hindu, they

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ The other institution in England where Indian students came on technical scholarships was the Department of Leather Industries, Leeds University.

³⁷ Deposition of Dr. Gordon Parker.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

accepted caste based ideas of stigma and work.³⁹ Parker thus stipulated that they continued to be trained in England but differently, without practical work and while this meant that they would not be able to produce very good quality leather but produce leather and leather goods, boots that were adequate for the ‘native’ boot wearers. There would always be a hierarchy of skill and workmanship therefore between the British and Indian leather producers. Competition with British leather and leather goods was ruled out, and this higher quality segment of the market would not be cornered by Indian leather producers.

These statements reflected a truth about upper class, upper caste Indians’ attitude to practical work of leather production but also showed the depth of notions of colonial power and racialised ideas of skill – the implication that lower quality products were alright for India, and that Indian workmen did not have skills, and low quality of workmanship was also adequate for Indians – all reflected these. Thus the problem of the design of technical education in India that excluded those who actually did the work of manual and practical handling raw leather, curing and tanning for the export market from the project of skilling was not acknowledged.

These varied lines of difference – of knowledge, skill, caste and also race – were maintained by institutional technical education in leather production as it developed in colonial India. The discourse of the untrainability of the outcaste workers in the industry accompanied its development,

Negotiating Caste and Skill:

Leather Trades Institute, Madras and the Bengal Tanning Institute, Calcutta

Two major institutions of higher technical education in leather tanning and production that were set up in the early 20th century in colonial India were the Leather Trades Institute, Madras

³⁹ A large number of tannery owners were Muslims, belonging to different groups—Irakis, Labbais, Ravutans, etc. They, however, largely shared and internalised caste-based ideas of tanning being ‘dirty’ and even polluting work. However among owners of capital, groups such as the Hakka Chinese, particularly, or the Punjabi Ad-Dharmi Dalit tanners in the Calcutta cluster, did not stigmatise working with hides and skins. Their scale of production was very small and they could not afford to seek formal technical education. See Bhattacharya, *Labour in the Leather Industry*, Ch. 1.

(set up in 1912, as Leather Trades School) and Bengal Tanning Institute, Calcutta (set up as Calcutta Research Tannery in 1919). A few episodes from their histories reveals the way in which they negotiated and mediated caste and notions of skill.

Madras: *The Leather Industry Committee and its Findings*

When the Leather Trades Institute was set up, it was meant to train ‘tannery operatives’. Yet by 1923 it was clear that very few of those belonging to the outcaste work-force or even these social groups were actually given training. This issue – why were outcastes (*madigas* and *chucklers* – caste groups traditionally involved in working with leather in Madras Presidency) not being trained in the Institute – became the subject of an inquiry through the setting up of the Leather Industry Committee⁴⁰ by the Provincial government in Madras and initiated by the Minister for Development, K. V. Reddi of the Justice Party.⁴¹ The Committee in its report in 1924 agreed with the Director of Industries for Madras, C. W. E. Cotton, that ‘the whole object of the Institute was to teach a fairly well educated type of student the theory and practice of tanning so as to turn out a man capable of taking charge as works manager of a tannery’.⁴² He opposed the argument that the Leather Trades Institute should not focus on improving ‘the quality of the coolies employed in tanneries or the small artisans engaged in making boots and shoes and saddles out of finished leather’ since a ‘works manager who knows his business can very soon put his coolies in the way’.⁴³

The courses by 1923 were mostly theoretically and the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) became the precondition for securing technical education in the institution. This variation from the design of technical education in England was justified by the Committee on account of Indian society being ‘different’. The Committee stated that:

In Europe the best foreman is usually the man who has ‘been through the mill’ as an apprentice and journeyman, and later has shown ability to organise work and manage other labour, and has

⁴⁰ Cotton, *Notes Connected with G.O. No. 148*.

⁴¹ The highest number of workers in the Madras tanneries was drawn from the *paraiyan* caste, non-specialised agricultural labouring groups who could ritually touch or work with leather. The terms ‘*madigas* and *chucklers*’ were used to indicate outcastes who actually did the work of tanning traditionally. See Desikachariyar et al., *Report of the Leather Industry Committee*; also discussed in Bhattacharya, *Labour in the Leather Industry*, Ch. 5.

⁴² Desikachariyar et al., *Report of the Leather Industry Committee*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

taken the trouble to obtain a certain amount of theoretical knowledge through the medium of evening classes or by private study. In India this class scarcely exists and the next best has to be employed. The latter is the institute or college trained man who has a certain knowledge of the manipulation of tools and apparatus. Though he is not himself a journeyman, the student after completing a course of training in the Institute has the theoretical knowledge which is not possessed by workmen, and after obtaining further practical experience in a commercial tannery he should, we consider be able to supervise the operatives and efficiently control the working of a tannery.⁴⁴

The Indian graduates from the Technical Institute basically did not learn how to do the work but how to supervise, control labour and ensure proper administration of chemicals.

The Committee recommended part time courses for tannery operatives and *maistries*. These courses however found no takers and were dropped after a while. Over time the theoretical and scientific content in the remaining curricula in operational courses was increased.

Calcutta: *The Bengal Tanning Institute and the task of attracting 'bhadralok' into leather*

Technical education in leather production in Calcutta was clearly focused on attracting men from higher castes and classes into the field. Unlike in Madras, there was no debate about who was to be trained. The Calcutta Research Tannery was set up in 1919, and was renamed the Bengal Tanning Institute in 1926. It became a teaching institute then, and formulated courses that were heavily theoretical, entrance to which required at least a school leaving examination certificate. This was designed to exclude the many *chamar* migrant workers in the cluster from the training. D. B. Meek, the Director of Industries in 1926, approvingly reported the large number of applications from 'high caste Bengalis' for admission to the institution, which he believed showed that it had made tanning and leather manufacture acceptable to them and had 'greatly' removed the prejudice they possessed towards it.⁴⁵ He complained that the initial curriculum was not scientific and theoretical enough and criticised the training that had been imparted till his time – stating that 'The one-sidedness of the training now provided for has resulted in turning out men who know how to do things without knowing why'.⁴⁶ He was

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Meek, *Introduction of a Two-year Diploma Course*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

instrumental in making the curriculum extremely theoretical so that the training became committed to training higher caste/class students, unable by caste taboos to handle hides and skins, who knew the ‘why’ of leather production but did not know ‘how’ to do the work. This kind of official concern with attracting the province’s *bhadralok*⁴⁷ into tanning through technical education remained in place till the 1930s and beyond. The annual reports of administration of the Department of Industries in Bengal, in their reports on the Bengal Tanning Institute kept count of the *bhadralok*⁴⁸ who entered the field, making it clear that the number of *bhadralok* in the courses was directly seen as correlated to progress in technical education, regardless of any evaluation of standards of skill acquired by them. Their entry, regardless of their ability to deal with the production process, was equated by the authorities with the improvement of the ‘quality’ of students, and thereby, enhancement of skills—simply because they belonged to higher castes and classes. Conversely, the outcaste *chamar* workmen in the industry or those serving as ‘menials’ in the laboratories of the Bengal Tanning Institute, who knew the production process practically, were excluded from skill enhancement through technical education.

B.M. Das, Director of the Bengal Tanning Institute also lauded the entry of the intelligentsia as marking the entry of ‘both capital and intellect’ into the industry and correlated the ‘contact with science and modern enterprise’ and progress in the leather industry with their joining.⁴⁹ The fact that none of these upper caste, upper class men might be able to actually handle raw hides and skins because of caste taboos did not seem to worry Das or Meek. As in Madras, the fact that the actual production of hides, skins and leather in the industry was continuing, carried out by outcaste workers, bringing considerable profits to tannery owners, only a short distance away

⁴⁷ The term in this context refers to upper caste, upper class men, both Hindus and Muslim, referred to as such in the Annual Administration Reports, Department of Industries, Bengal, 1925–38. See Bhattacharya, *Labour in the Leather Industry*, Ch. 7.

⁴⁸ The report’s choice of words is revealing ‘One gratifying (emphasis mine) feature was the employment of increasing numbers of Bengali *bhadralok* youths in the trade among whom the young men trained at the Boot and Shoe Department of the Bengal Tanning Institute were fairly represented’. Refer Director of Industries, *Annual Administration Report, Bengal, 1934–35*. It was also reported that 73 *bhadralok*, both Hindu and Muslim, received training at demonstrations, and 13 of them went on to start tanning. If outcaste students had sought or acquired training that year, it did not get recorded. The numbers of outcaste workers was reported in other years however. For instance, in 1936–37, it was reported that 33 Hindu and Muslim *bhadralok* and 10 *chamakars* received training in demonstrations that year. The obsession with ensuring and keeping track of *bhadralok* presence and association is visible in these attempts. See Director of Industries, Annual Administration Report, Bengal, 1938.

⁴⁹ Director of Industries, *Annual Administration Report, Bengal, 1929–30*.

from the institution of technical education in leather production, was left out of these reports. The actual workers were associated with ‘ignorance’ and ‘indigence’ as well as the reportedly ‘stagnant’ and ‘moribund’ state of the industry, descriptions that were clearly belied by facts.

Technical Education, Skill, and Caste in the History of Leather Production

Technical education in India, as the above discussion indicates, had a relatively limited role to play in the material history of expansion and growth of hides, skins and leather production in colonial India. It however intervened discursively by reinventing leather production as a science, worthy of teaching in the sanitised space of classrooms of dedicated institutions. The initial work processes of leather production that came to be concentrated at the sites of production in India, part of the commodity chain linked to the international market, remained the most deeply stigmatised, hazardous, and marked by a harsh labour regime. Those engaged in this work were also kept outside the project of institutional skilling and training. Technical education’s intervention in leather production thus also had material implications, in reinforcing the low skill status, exploitation and oppression of workers and bolstering capital and caste in this process.

Marx wrote of ‘skilled labour’ as ‘more complex labour, labour with a higher specific gravity’ than average labour, and also ‘whose production has cost more time and labour than unskilled or simple labour power, and which therefore has a higher value’. The acquisition of skill in any branch of industry required ‘a special education or training’ and the ‘costs of education vary according to the degree of complexity of the labour power required’ being ‘exceedingly small’ in the case of ‘ordinary labour power’, and more for skilled, more complex labour power, and formed ‘a part of the total value spent in producing it’.⁵⁰

When technical education programmes in leather production in India needed aspirants to have prior educational qualifications and free time, knowledge of English – i.e., these became the preconditions of what came to be called ‘skill’ they excluded the poor, underclass, Dalit workers. Scientific, theoretical knowledge of leather production came to be considered superior to any kind of practical knowledge and skills learnt on the shop floor. The divide between ‘skilled’ and ‘unskilled’ workers thus had little bearing on actual abilities in doing the work. Marx’s statement

⁵⁰ Marx, *Capital*, p. 305

about the distinction between about these categories being partly a pure ‘illusion’ could well apply here: The distinction between ... ‘skilled labour’ and ‘unskilled labour’, rests in part on pure illusion or, to say the least, on distinctions that have long since ceased to be real, and survive only by virtue of a traditional convention; and in part on the helpless condition of some sections of the working class, a condition that prevents them from exacting equally with the rest the value of their labour-power.⁵¹ Clarke and Winch, writing about varied notions of skill within Northern Europe, observe that for Adam Smith and Marx, the bestowal of the term ‘skilled’ on a worker depends on the ability to get oneself classified as such rather than on an ability to do the work.⁵²

Many different conceptions of skill had to be navigated in the framing of policy on technical education in India. The evidence indicates that at least three different conceptions were negotiated—the Anglo-Saxon one, the one of the colonial rulers, the German one, since their technical education was seen as a model for the British (and also, through colonial agency, the Indian), and third what was understood as the dominant prior conception of skill in India.

Each had its own peculiarities. Thus the Anglo-Saxon conception of skill⁵³ was associated with manual ability and dexterity, application in performance, and little connection with a knowledge base. This meaning of skill, which had emerged in the context of preindustrial craft production, remained influential in Britain even after industrialisation, producing tensions and hostile relations between technical education and the leather industry in the late nineteenth century. The German conception of skill developed out of its own history of craft, manufacturing and industrialisation, referred to a different sense of practical knowledge which incorporated within it a body of theoretical knowledge pertaining to the craft/occupation. By the late nineteenth century in Germany, the conceptual connection between skill and formal qualification was already there. While some tensions remained between leather chemists and tanners, technical education and the leather industry were historically more mutually dependent and developed closer links.

Thirdly, traditional caste-based meanings associated with preliminary leather processing in India necessarily shaped technical education and the way in which it, and such skilling initiatives were understood. Pre-tanning work, which came to be concentrated in India in the colonial period

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, footnote 19 on p. 305.

⁵² Clarke and Winch, ‘A European Skills Framework?’

⁵³ *Ibid.*

was not traditionally considered ‘craft’ work, or believed to be associated with any skill. It bore the stamp of stigmatised village ‘service’ done by village menials in lieu of some traditional dues. No tradition of guilds or craft/caste organisations of these workers ever existed. This history and this understanding inflected the nature of technical education and ‘skilling’ that developed.

It is widely understood that technical or vocational education is deeply rooted in the ‘division of labour in society, whether on the basis of class, gender or ethnicity’⁵⁴ and ‘the ways in which particular qualities of labour are nurtured, advanced and reproduced through VET (vocational education and training) tells us a great deal too about the value accorded to labour in society’.⁵⁵

Those who designed technical education in leather production in India also went to great lengths to maintain the caste-mandated low social value traditionally accorded to raw hides, skins and leather, and the work that involved handling them. It is true that some kind of hierarchical divide between theoretical and practical knowledge existed elsewhere in the world as well, but the importance of practical knowledge for the production of leather was acknowledged everywhere. In India, however, the caste-driven divide between these different kinds of knowledge was unbridgeable. Modern technical education in India was possibly not aimed at bridging this divide.

It is important to recall that many of the Dalit workers drawn into this work of processing hides and skins were much more systematically and continuously tied to this work, and these stigmatised material and labour in the context of modernity and industrialisation. A large number of these Dalit workers thus did not go through the conventional trajectory of ‘deskilling’ (occurring in capitalist production with the advent of machines), as these processes, and the workers engaged in them, had never been regarded as ‘skilled’ in the traditional context.⁵⁶

When chemical tanning and technical education became the foundation of new notions of ‘skill’, new hierarchies of skill were created, which overlapped with the old ones of caste and class.

⁵⁴ Clarke and Winch, *Vocational Education*, p. 1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ This work (along with flaying, skinning carcasses of animals, and basic curing of hides and skins) was traditionally linked to rural labour services, embedded in structures of subordination (refer ff. 27 in this text). Other categories of workers who worked with leather engaged in the production of traditional leather goods such as traditional shoes, saddles, etc., though also stigmatised, displayed a sense of pride in their skills. For the pre-tanning workers, their earliest labour struggles reflect their attempt to change their identity—from being regarded as servants to being treated as wage workers. See Bhattacharya, *Labour in the Leather Industry*.

Borrowing from frameworks developed in the literature on gender and labour, especially the well-known work by Elson and Pearson,⁵⁷ and applying this to understand caste and labour in the late colonial and post-independence leather industry in India, I would like to suggest that the subordination of the lowest castes was/is a material process. As Braverman argues, skill categories are not determined in an objective way.⁵⁸ Elson and Person write that ‘To a large extent, women do not do ‘unskilled’ jobs because they are bearers of inferior labour; rather the jobs they do are ‘unskilled’ because women enter them already determined as inferior bearers of labour.’ The same could be said for outcaste labour engaged in leather production in India – the labour processes they were associated with were considered ‘unskilled’ also because they were so closely identified with them. Additionally, their ‘inferiority’ does not only come directly from the social structure alone, but from their subordination in modern work-spaces and labour processes consistently to ‘untouchability’ material which considerably intensifies and underscores caste subordination.

As Indian hides and skins production remained characterised by cheap exports, based on cheap and exploitable labour, and as the market for exports remained geared substantially towards the production of a high volume of low-value commodities, raw or lightly tanned hides and skins, technical education or vocational education never became a ‘guardian of entry into labour market’⁵⁹ as it was in some other parts of the world. It did however create a new, narrow but strategically located layer of non-manual scientific workers, who could now be ‘scientific experts’ without actually having to handle stigmatising materials. They were given higher wages, and aligned commonly with the management and not labour inside tanneries and leather processing units. Technical education became the means by which the ‘outcaste’ but extremely profitable field of leather production could be breached from above by higher castes.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Elson and Pearson, ‘Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers’

⁵⁸ Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*

⁵⁹ Clarke and Winch, *Vocational Education*, p. 1.

⁶⁰ Evidence shows that members of higher castes began to get involved in the trade and production of hides and skins especially in the 1920s and 1930s. Thus in Madras, in the early twentieth century a Brahmin like G. Srinivas became a leading figure in the hide and skin trade, owned tanneries in Trichinopoly and Dindigul. His tanneries were known particularly for the high-quality goat skins produced under the reputed ‘GS Mark’ as it was called in the trade. The volume and density of this market related ‘breach from above’ were not very much, however, owing to depth of stigma that adhered to the field. See Bhattacharya, *Labour in the Leather Industry*, Ch. 3; also, interviews with Mohan Srinivas, All India Skins and Hides Tanners and Merchants Association, Chennai, in February 2006.

In the interest of profits capital had to ensure that the work that came to be concentrated in India remained categorised as ‘unskilled’ and the kind of labour required – of workers in pre-tannage work primarily – remained cheap. This was to be ensured in a situation where labour was even more critical to the process of production than in other commodities because of the extreme stigma of these materials – raw hides and skins – as well as their perishability. The labour market was thus restricted to Dalit workers – and the conjoint templates of caste domination and class based strategies of labour control were deployed. The low social value of this work, and the stigma attached to it, not only enabled labour control but also the extraction of much higher surplus value. The social status of Dalit labour that dominated the workforce in this industry, served to depress the cost of reproduction of labour and lower wages. The design of technical education firmly reified the association of lowest caste workers with only certain labour process, and with the most stigmatised materials and work, and denigrated the practical knowledge and skills of the workers, and upheld theoretical, scientific knowledge, unattainable by underclass and outcaste workers toiling in the industry as ‘skill.’ It was through curricula and institutional functioning and design, through discursive and material interventions, directly and indirectly that technical education in leather production as it developed in late colonial India came to be complicit with caste and capital in the subordination of Dalit labour in the leather industry.

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Abbreviations used:

Agriculture & Industries, Industries Branch, Government of Bengal: AIIBGB

Indian Industrial Commission: IIC

National Archives of India: NAI

Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library: OIOC, BL

Procter Department of Food and Leather Science, Leeds University Library Special Collections: PDFLS, LULSC

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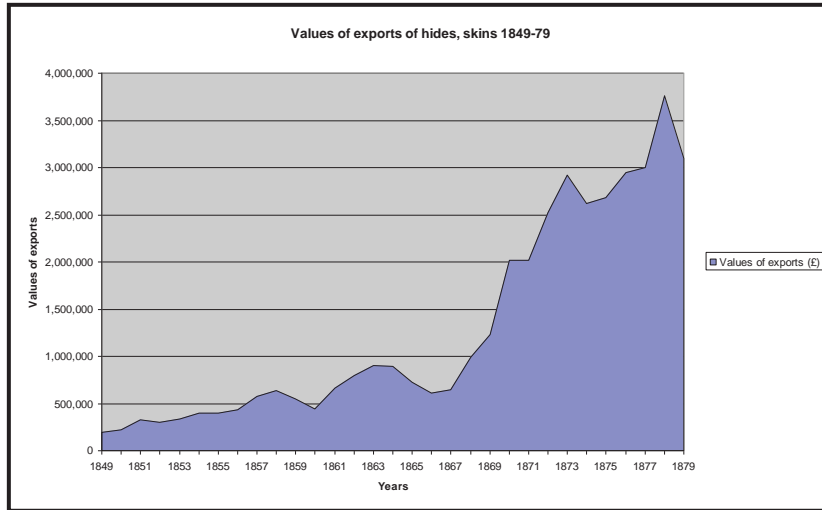
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See Annexure 1 below.

ANNEXURE I

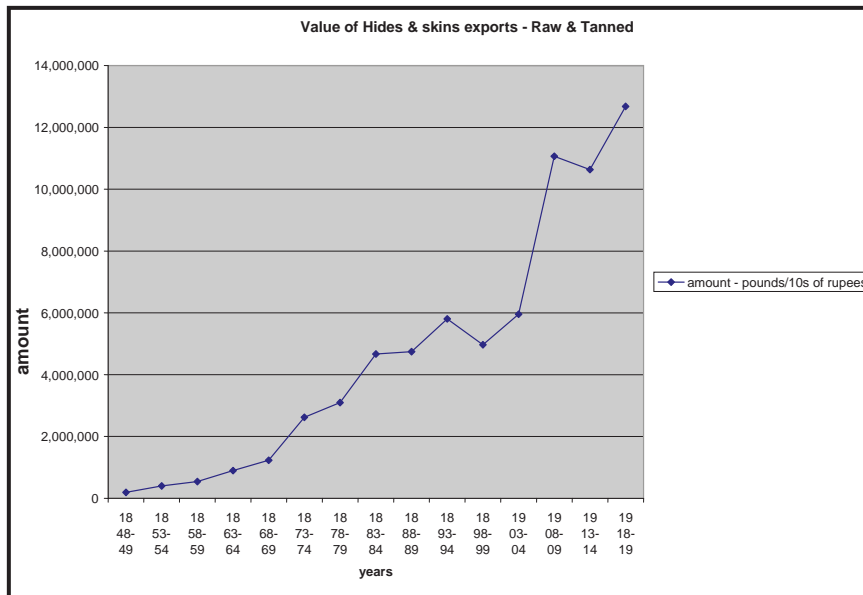
FIGURES/GRAPHS

Figure 1. Value of exports of hides and skins 1849-1878



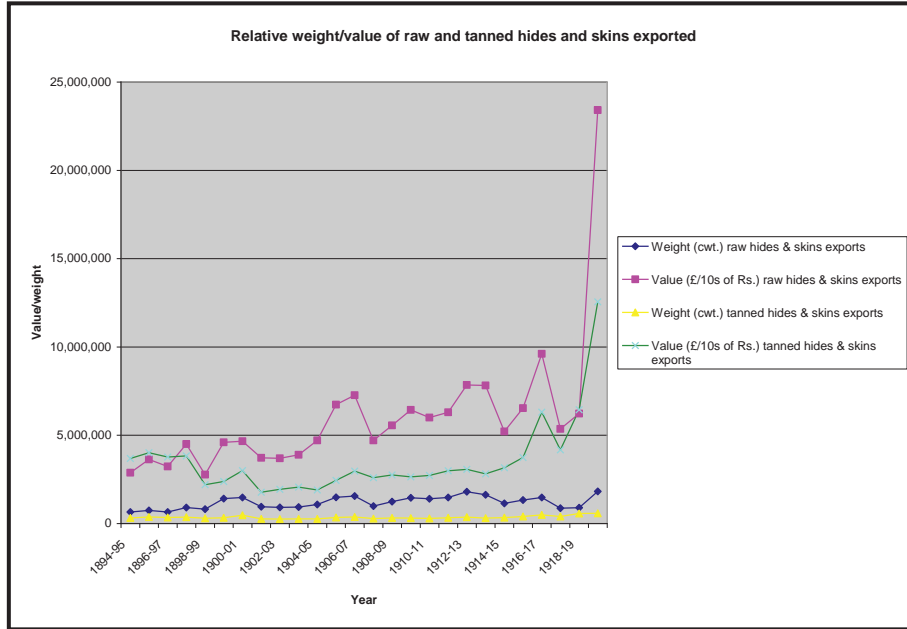
Source: Statistical Abstract of British India- various years (See Annexure I for data in Table 1)

Figure 2. Value of Raw and Tanned Hides & Skins Exports 1848-49 to 1918-1919



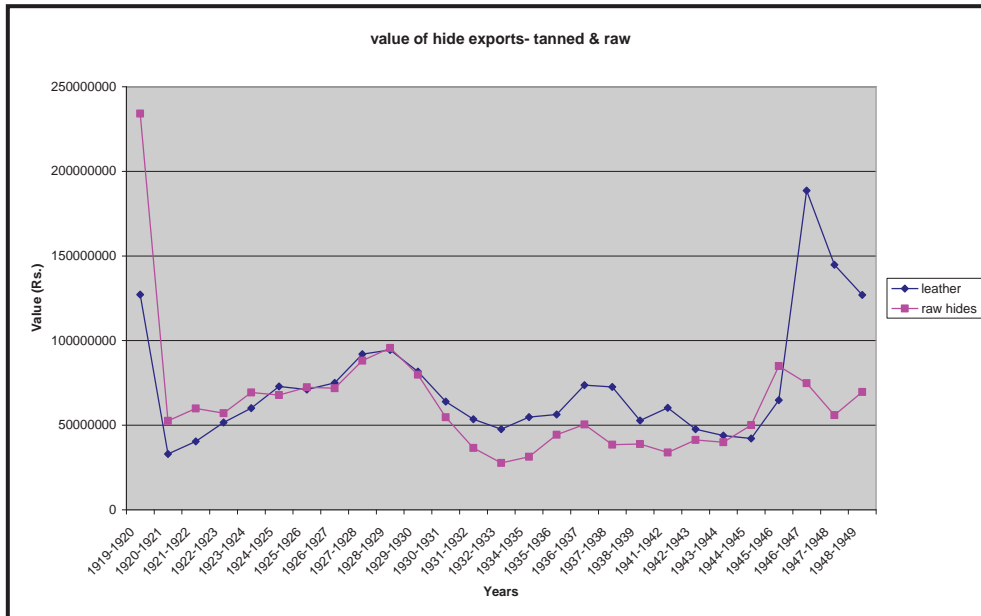
Source: Statistical Abstracts for British India- various years (See Annexure I for data in Table 2.)

Figure 3. Weight and Value of hides and skins exported from India, 1894-95 to 1918-19



Source: Statistical Abstracts for British India- various years (See Annexure I for data in Table 3.)

Figure 4. Value of Raw and Tanned Hides and Skins Exports 1919-49



Source: Statistical Abstracts for British India- various years (See Annexure I for data in Table 4.)

TABLES (pertaining to Figures 1-4)

Table 1: Value of exports of hides and skins 1849-1878 (See Figure 1)

Years	Value of exports (£)	Years	Value of exports (£)	Years	Value of exports (£)	Years	Value of exports (£)
1849	193,765	1857	572,530	1865	725,236	1873	2,921,910
1850	219,396	1858	639,702	1866	609,803	1874	2,618,358
1851	324,444	1859	544,680	1867	650,342	1875	2,677,767
1852	303,089	1860	444,537	1868	994,233	1876	2,944,933
1853	337,849	1861	661,725	1869	1,230,932	1877	3,000,552
1854	402,365	1862	794,137	1870	2,020,819	1878	3,757,480
1855	402,392	1863	904,289	1871	2,020,819	1879	3,097,561
1856	431,729	1864	897,575	1872	2,525,925		

(Source: Statistical Abstracts for British India- various years)

Table 2. Value of Raw and Tanned Hides & Skins Exports 1848-49 to 1918-19 (See Figure 2)

Years	Value of expts - pounds/10s of rupees
1848-49	193,765
1853-54	402,365
1858-59	544,680
1863-64	897,575
1868-69	1,230,932
1873-74	2,618,358
1878-79	3,097,561
1883-84	4,666,788
1888-89	4,746,007
1893-94	5,801,752
1898-99	4,966,146
1903-04	5,956,726
1908-09	11,063,837
1913-14	10,632,442
1918-19	12,674,636

(Source: Statistical Abstracts for British India- various years)

Table 3. Weight and Value of hides and skins exported from India, 1894-95 to 1918-19 (See Figure 3)

Years	Wt. (cwt.) raw h & s	Value (£/10s of Rs.) raw	Wt (cwt.) tanned h & s	Value (£/10s of Rs.) tanned h & s
1894-95	650,800	2,879,576	315,035	3,680,364
1895-96	746,245	3,628,293	367,721	4,011,185
1896-97	654,638	3,234,576	341,726	3,766,794
1897-98	908,691	4,494,297	366,195	3,823,237
1898-99	812,448	2,770,056	297,447	2,196,090
1899-1900	1,411,391	4,592,233	323,295	2,383,018
1900-01	1,471,720	4,658,968	469,903	2,996,124
1901-02	949,706	3,717,759	266,442	1,769,364
1902-03	913,041	3,691,312	257,178	1,932,124
1903-04	936,117	3,890,809	264,494	2,065,917
1904-05	1,076,522	4,702,759	262,604	1,901,145
1905-06	1,482,922	6,732,454	340,880	2,438,954
1906-07	1,555,462	7,262,664	370,320	2,967,503
1907-08	989,882	4,701,201	283,316	2,599,821
1908-09	1,238,685	5,559,103	313,697	2,752,367
1909-10	1,453,540	6,434,147	310,661	2,645,735
1910-11	1,401,948	5,996,131	293,729	2,727,069
1911-12	1,478,163	6,295,718	329,685	2,989,936
1912-13	1,797,179	7,845,484	363,670	3,068,333
1913-14	1,631,798	7,815,276	304,621	2,817,166
1914-15	1,139,610	5,211,716	334,425	3,158,918
1915-16	1,331,532	6,530,192	399,324	3,740,759
1916-17	1,472,192	9,613,214	489,727	6,304,898
1917-18	871,218	5,356,902	399,331	4,173,986
1918-19	891,324	6,228,227	568,780	6,446,409
1919-20	1,819,578	23,406,220	577,682	12,548,825

(Source: Statistical Abstracts for British India- various years)

Table 4. Value of Raw and Tanned Hides and Skins Exports 1919-49 (See Figure 4)

Years	Leather	Raw hides
	<i>Value of exports (Rs.)</i>	<i>Value of exports (Rs.)</i>
1919-1920	127148280	234062200
1920-1921	32953350	52484460
1921-1922	40336813	59813988
1922-1923	51607178	57060201
1923-1924	60076699	69324529
1924-1925	72887243	67741366
1925-1926	71020580	72338263
1926-1927	75002154	71796544
1927-1928	91935700	88094418
1928-1929	94431718	95597664
1929-1930	81624078	79826869
1930-1931	63911208	54663211
1931-1932	53519696	36571421
1932-1933	47641701	27686685
1934-1935	54788328	31306743
1935-1936	56289266	44340015
1936-1937	73637288	50410063
1937-1938	72542072	38466560
1938-1939	52005000	35646000
1939-1940	75959000	38808000
1940-1941	58631000	29596000
1941-1942	60249911	33835861
1942-1943	47605032	41284116
1943-1944	43840361	39853552
1944-1945	42121766	50031115
1945-1946	64788532	84937152
1946-1947	188612345	74748078
1947-1948	144803379	55930161
1948-1949	126891837	69600997

(Source: Statistical Abstracts for British India- various years)

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