

**G. S. Ghurye (1893-1983)**

Govind Sadashiv Ghurye is a towering figure in intellectual and academic life of India. For his unique contribution in the field of Indian Sociology, he has often been acclaimed as the “father of Indian Sociology”. Analysis of his life and works is very interesting as it gives a perspective of the development of sociology in India. When Ghurye began his academic career, sociology was almost non-existent as an academic discipline. It grew slowly but steadily through the efforts of individuals as well as at the behest of governmental administration. In fact, governmental inquiries into Indian social conditions came much earlier than the endeavors of academics to install sociology in India. It was rather opportune for Ghurye to have been in Bombay University where sociology got its start in 1919 through the efforts of Patrick Geddes. Since then, Ghurye had been there and he did single-handedly what was possible for him to do for sociology in this country. His persistent research endeavour, wide-ranging interest and upholding of the best of academic tradition made him the centre of sociological creativity and research for several generations of Indian sociologists. His own works, which are as diverse as the research output of his students, have been highly esteemed in academic quarters.

Because of his unique role played by Ghurye in the development of sociology in India, high tributes and panegyrics have been offered to him both in India and abroad. B.S. Guha has written that there are very few people who have done so much for the cause of Indian Anthropology both in teaching as well as in research as Professor Ghurye has done. D.P. Mukherji commented that while there are many sociologists in India, Ghurye, by his deep mooring in Indian tradition, provides the only example of an ‘Indian sociologist’. Similar tributes have been paid to him by M.N. Srinivas, Y.B. Damle, D. Narain, M.S.A. Rao and others. Among the foreigners, Merton described Ghurye as the “symbol of sociological creativeness”, whereas Mandelbaum, in personal letter to Ghurye, wrote: “All of us, who are interested in India and in anthropology, are your debtors”. In recognition of his services to the cause of sociology, the University of Bombay instituted an award in his name in 1969. Two felicitation volumes have also been published on the occasion of Ghurye’s sixtieth and eightieth birthdays.

Ghurye was born on 12th December, 1893 in a Saraswat Brahmin family in Malavan, Maharashtra, the West Coast of India. Sociology was not a school or college subject when Ghurye showed a flair for Sanskrit. After passing the matriculation examination, Ghurye got himself admitted to the Elphinstone College, Bombay with Honours in Sanskrit. The college that was so well-known for its Sanskrit teachers, library and its prestige with the government. He had a brilliant academic career throughout. He stood first class second at the B.A.

examination and was awarded the Bhau Dazi prize – the blue ribbon of Sanskrit competence in the university. He stood first class first at the M.A. examination in English and Sanskrit in 1918 and was awarded the Chancellor's Gold Medal. None before that time had obtained a first class at the M.A. with Sanskrit. With this type of background in Sanskrit, Ghurye finally came to sociology. This, as we shall see later on, profoundly influenced Ghurye's own writings and the course of research made in the field of sociology under his leadership.

In 1919 the university proposed a traveling fellowship for the study of sociology. Since his Sanskrit thesis had involved the study of social institutions, Ghurye was intrigued. But the fellowship was under the control of the professor of sociology. Strangely enough, this was the celebrated Scottish city planner Patrick Geddes. Geddes had been a botany professor in Dundee for 31 years, most of which he had actually spent as a sociological activist in London. But in 1914, the opportunities of imperial town planning had brought him to India at the invitation of his old friend (and fellow Scot) Lord Pentland. Having lost both his son and his wife in 1917, Geddes decided to settle in India. Patrick Geddes was invited by the University of Bombay to start a Department of Sociology in 1919.

While teaching at the Elphinstone College, Ghurye submitted an essay to Patrick Geddes on "Bombay As An Urban Centre". It won him a foreign scholarship. The scholarship was instituted by the University of Bombay to train promising young men in sociology. Ghurye went to London School of Economics where he briefly worked with L. T. Hobhouse. Despite his initial efforts, however, Ghurye could not stomach the recommended London PhD in Comtean social evolutionism under L. T. Hobhouse. He followed one of Geddes's other letters of introduction to A. C. Haddon, who in turn took him to W. H. R. Rivers, who not only became Ghurye's patron and sponsor at Cambridge but also arranged for two extensions of his Bombay fellowship. Rivers died in 1922 before Ghurye completed his doctoral work. In 1923, he completed his PhD under A.C. Haddon on *Caste and Race in India*. His work was published by Routledge and Kegan Paul in 1932 in C.K. Ogden's *History of Civilization Series*. It immediately established Ghurye's reputation.

[Please note that W.H.R. Rivers (1864-1922) was the popular Cambridge anthropologist, who was also a qualified psychologist. His approach is popularly known as diffusionist approach. Diffusion is the process by which culture traits spread from one society to another. Rivers was also one of the first scholars who studied the Todas of Nilgiri in a scientific way. In India, Todas are found only in the Nilgiri District of Tamil Nadu State. The Todas are a small community who live on the isolated Nilgiri plateau. In the year 1906, he published two volumes in the name of 'The Todas'.]

Sociology in Bombay developed under the leadership of G.S. Ghurye. Ghurye succeeded Geddes as head and as a Reader, took charge of the Department of Sociology at Bombay University in 1924. He was appointed as Professor in 1934 and retired in 1959. When he retired in 1959, the University of Bombay made him an Emeritus Professor. Ghurye was the first Emeritus Professor in Bombay University. He did not cease to be academically active after retirement from service. His last research student submitted thesis in 1971. During these about fifty years' span, he supervised as many as eighty theses. Of these, forty have been published as books. As a teacher, Ghurye was very serious and meticulous in preparing his lectures notes. Many of his students have testified that his lectures were heavily documented. As a *research guide*, he was more impressive and more successful. He created a 'sociological awareness'. The 'second generation' of Indian sociologists was largely his creation. They include M.N. Srinivas, K.M. Kapadia, I. Karve, I.P. Desai, A.R. Desai, M.S.A. Rao and many others.

As an institution-builder, deservedly, the most profound impact on Indian sociology was made by Ghurye. Ghurye was the principal architect of the Department of Sociology of Bombay University and produced a batch of renowned scholars including M.N. Srinivas, who is now internationally known. His students headed (and many of them are still heading) the departments of sociology in many universities in India. Ghurye was the prime mover in the formation of Indian Sociological Society in 1952 and was also instrumental in the publication of its mouthpiece, *Sociological Bulletin*, as its official bi-annual journal. However, the first sociological journal in India, *The Indian Journal of Sociology*, was started in January 1920 under the editorship of Alban G. Widgery of Baroda College in Baroda.

Ghurye was elected the president of the anthropological section of the Indian Science Congress in 1934. In the same year, he was also elected as the nominee to the Royal Asiatic Society and continued to hold this position till 1948. During his lifetime, he won several top honours accorded to any intellectual in India. As a scholar, in fact, throughout, his life, Ghurye has been active from the academic standpoint. His 16 books, out of a total of 31 books, published during his lifetime. Several of them are noteworthy as pioneering contributions to the sociology field. His output is indeed prodigious by any standard.

Despite this prodigious academic output, Ghurye was a loner in the world of sociology. Since 1967, neither he attended a single conference, seminar or symposium nor did he send any article to any academic journal for publication. During the last years, he had not maintained any contact with his university—his Alma Mater—for which he had done so much throughout his life. Much of this state of estrangement between Ghurye and the academic community was due to the self

assertive, highly emotional, sensitive and somewhat egoistical nature of Ghurye. He had never been a 'popular' man throughout his life. He was highly irritated by any slightest provocation. Indeed none but Professor Ghurye could be moved so deeply by even the smallest of courtesies shown to him or so violently outraged by the least signs of ingratitude or boorishness. Academically, he was outright—no consideration stood in the way of expressing what he thought to be right. It is far from truth that the academic community in India was totally indifferent to Ghurye. The fact is, on the other hand, that Ghurye had shown a stiff disinclination to accept any offers made to him if he thought that he had to compromise his sense of dignity in order to accept them. A few incidents may be cited in this regard. In 1969, the Ministry of Education requested him to give his bio-data. Ghurye began to write it. Then came a telegram requesting him to give five copies of it. The first thing which he did then was to tear off those two pages which he had already written and thrown them into waste paper basket. In 1970, Dr. M.S. Gore came to him with a proposal of the government to award him the honorific Padmabhusan. Ghurye turned that down because, according to him, it was beneath his dignity to receive that award. In 1971, the University Grants Commission offered him the post of National Lecturer. Ghurye considered the proposal ridiculously because thereby he would have to move from place to place whereas the students would remain tight in their places. In 1974, he refused to send biographical data to the Indian Council of Social Science Research because "those who do not know about my writings do not deserve to get replies from me." A month or so after the publication of Ghurye's *India Recreates Democracy* in 1978, a letter from the then prime minister came to Ghurye congratulating him on the thesis. But Ghurye did not reply because he thought that the format of the letter was not proper. Ghurye died in 1983, having published *The Burning Cauldron of North-East India*, his last book, in 1980, when he was 87.

Dear Candidate, let us now come to an analysis of Ghurye's writing. What immediately strikes one in this respect is the enormous diversity of Ghurye's writings. Ghurye's broad area of interest was the general process of evolution of culture in different civilizations in general, and in Indian (Hindu) civilization in particular. There is a central theme underlying all the diverse writings of Ghurye. The theme is a very broad one; it is the theme of *acculturation* that goes on and on since the time of arrival of the Vedic Aryans in India. Indian society, through its long historical process of growth, presents a picture of a vast mosaic of culture held together by religion, values and norms of Hinduism. As a sociologist, Ghurye feels the imperative of exploring this unifying and synthesizing process. In spite of many diversions, exploration and analysis of the process of cultural unity in India through ages constitutes the major thrust of Ghurye's writing. And to establish his thesis he moves, with perfect case, back and forth, from the Vedic to the present-day India.

[A note on diffusion and acculturation: Diffusion, as stated earlier, generally refers to the spread of specific cultural traits or elements from one society or social group to another. Acculturation, on the other hand, refers to the modification of the culture of a group or an individual through contact with one or more other cultures and the acquiring or exchanging of culture traits. From a social point of view acculturation implies the diffusion of particular values, techniques and institutions and their modification under different conditions. It may give rise to cultural conflict and to adaptation leading to a modification of group identity. Some scholars defined acculturation as ‘those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into first hand contact, with subsequent change in the original cultural patterns of both groups. The processes of acculturation and diffusion have been going on in human society since very ancient times.]

However, before we proceed to discuss Ghurye’s ideas, a few comments on his overall theoretical perspective and methodology would be useful. As stated earlier, the exploration and analysis of the process of cultural unity in India through ages constitutes the major thrust of Ghurye’s writing. Thus, in theoretical terms, his focus on the unity and integration aspect of Indian culture reflects his broad acceptance of the structural-functional approach.

Since Ghurye’s initial training was in Sanskrit, he emphasized on the Indological approach in the study of social and cultural life in India. Indology literally means a systematic study of Indian society and culture. Indologists claimed that the uniqueness of Indian civilization cannot be fitted into the framework of European Sociology. They claimed that Indian society could be understood only through the concepts, theories and frameworks of Indian civilization. They rely primarily on the book-view, in other words, understanding the society through classical literature, such as *Vedas*, etc. The sources of Indological studies are primarily classical texts, manuscripts, archaeological artefacts, and symbolic expressions. Ghurye utilized literature in sociological studies with his profound knowledge of Sanskrit literature, extensively quoted from the *Vedas*, *Shastras*, epics, and poetry of *Kalidasa* or *Bhavabhuti* to shed light on the social and cultural life in India.

Despite his initial training in Sanskrit, and later on at Cambridge under W.H.R. Rivers (diffusionism), Ghurye was not dogmatic in the use of theory and methodology. He seems to have believed in practicing and encouraging disciplined eclecticism in theory and methodology. Thus, although trained in the craft of Indology, Ghurye was not averse to the fieldwork traditions of social and cultural anthropology. His field survey of *Sex Habits of Middle Class People in Bombay*, conducted in the 1930s and published in 1938 and the monograph on the *Mahadev*

*Kolis* (1963) demonstrated Ghurye was far from promoting an armchair textual scholarship. He was an empirical field worker too.

Drawing on his initial training as a Sanskritist, Ghurye attempted a fruitful synthesis of Indological and sociological perspectives. This constitutes his most enduring contribution to Indian sociology. Indeed, Ghurye helped the emergence of Sociology as a distinct discipline in India from its early beginnings in Indology and descriptive ethnology. His own classic study of caste and race in India moved the focus of sociological study from a reconstruction of a social institution (caste) from Sanskrit texts to a study of how it functioned in contemporary social reality. Ghurye's conception of the sociology of India included the study of modern, medieval and ancient India, as well as rural urban and tribal India. There is now an increasing realization of the value of combining the sociological-anthropological approach, on the one hand, and the historical-textual approach, on the other.

It would be appropriate to characterize Ghurye as a practitioner of 'theoretical pluralism'. It is also likely that Ghurye's flexible approach to theory and methodology in sociology and social anthropology was born of his faith in intellectual freedom, which is reflected in the diverse theoretical and methodological approaches that his research students pursued in their works. Ghurye also used historical and comparative methods in his studies which have also been followed by his students.

Dear Candidate, if we are to understand Ghurye, we need to look more closely at the trends of thought which shaped his approach to sociology, and at their connections with the political and social context of empire and the anti-colonial struggle. Orientalism, Indology and Diffusionism are the three major intellectual influences which mark Ghurye's sociology. We have already discussed briefly about Indology and Diffusionism. Let me briefly introduce you British Orientalism.

The term 'orientalism' implies the literary and cultural study of Middle Eastern and East Asian societies. In literal sense, orientalism refers to the Orient or East, in contrast to the Occident or West, and often, as seen by the West. In recent times the term 'orientalism' has become highly problematic and contested, carrying several meanings which do not sit altogether comfortably with each other. It is helpful to begin with the two earliest meanings of the term as a foundation for analyzing the nature and impact of orientalism. First, it was a scholarly study of the languages, literatures and cultures of the Orient (initially conceptualized as the Middle East but later encompassing all of Asia).

Secondly, the term also refers to the 18<sup>th</sup> century administrative policy of the East India Company favouring the preservation of Indian languages, laws and customs. It was during this period that Indology as a systematized modern discipline was established due to the demands that arose from British rule over India. To govern efficiently, British administrators felt the need for a deeper understanding of the ancient laws and customs of Indian society. Hence British encouraged indological studies whose primary aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the Indian culture. The mainstream of Indology, however, has been the creation of Western scholars. As an independent discipline, Indology is much older than Sociology in India. The first important centre of indological studies in India was started by Sir William Jones in 1784 by establishing Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta. William Jones emphasized the point that originally European languages were very much similar to Sanskrit and Iranian languages.

It is worth noting that the “Orientalists” were the dominant faction in the Indology of this time. The term “Orientalist” as used here requires some explanation. In the history of the British Raj, there were two major schools of thought concerning the system of rule over India. One was the “Orientalist” camp and the other was the “Anglicist” camp. The Orientalists placed major importance on Indian culture and sought to rule India based on its own traditions. In the history of the British Raj, this Orientalist attitude was predominant toward the end of the eighteenth century, before it was replaced by the Anglicist attitude early in the nineteenth century.

The Anglicists, on the other hand, believed in the supremacy of the English language and English culture. Hence, they tried to establish a system of rule fashioned on that of Britain itself, particularly through the introduction of English-language education. These British writers influenced by Utilitarianism and Evangelicism constructed a negative image of Indian civilization in order to provide a moral basis for empire. James Mill was the most prominent representative of this trend; in his *History of India* he attempted to downgrade the place allotted to India on the scale of civilization by the early Orientalists by deprecating all that the latter had glorified. They argued that British had a civilizing mission to modernize India, to ‘liberate Indians from their own past’. Thus the ancient wisdom of India, earlier seen as a fount of western civilization through its connections to ancient Greece and Egypt, became opposed to western civilization, which stood for progress in contrast to the stagnation and backwardness of the east.

The first major influence on Ghurye is clearly the tradition of British Orientalism that developed in the 18th century. The Orientalists produced a theory of Indian history and society that had far-reaching consequences for the

development of both nationalist and academic thought. The most important theme that emerged from their writings and that runs throughout Ghurye's work is that of the antiquity and unity of Indian civilization. The early British Orientalists sought to reconstruct ancient Indian civilization through the study of Sanskrit texts, and with this knowledge to place India within various universal schemes of human history. This reconstruction was oriented to an overarching concern with the origins of civilization, then defined as the cultivation of the higher arts and sciences. India's civilization was regarded as one of the oldest and most highly developed, as demonstrated in the complexity of ancient Indian knowledge and culture and the perfection of the Sanskrit language. The Orientalists identified ancient Indian civilization with Hinduism, and Sanskrit was regarded as the vehicle of Hindu civilization.

Because Indian society was seen as static and monolithic, the ancient texts could be taken as authentic guides to the study of Indian civilization and even to the organisation of contemporary society, for example in the production of 'Hindu law'. "Indian society was seen as a set of rules which every Hindu followed". By reconstructing Hinduism and Hindu law, positing the distant past as normative, and drawing an unbroken connection between past and present, Orientalist scholarship had a lasting effect on the understanding of Indian society and history, an understanding that is reflected clearly in the work of Ghurye, among many others. The great 19<sup>th</sup> century German Orientalist, Max Muller, a product of the German romantic movement, played a major role in the popularisation of knowledge about India and in the glorification of ancient Indian religion, especially of the Vedic period. He collected and published the full text of the Vedas for the first time, because he believed that they were the only "natural basis of Indian history". Like the earlier Orientalists, Max Muller wanted to reveal to Indians the knowledge contained in their ancient tradition, and he believed that the Vedas were the root of Hindu religion, law and philosophy.

Let us now analyze some of the key ideas of Ghurye in the backdrop of his this intellectual background. To simply and facilitate your better understanding I have discussed some of the very important ideas of Ghurye from the examination point of view under the following heads:

1. Ghurye's views on Caste
2. Ghurye's views on Tribe
3. Ghurye's views on Indian culture, and
4. Ghurye - The Nationalist

### Ghurye's views on Caste:

Ghurye in his most famous work *Caste and Race in India* (1932) traces the evolution of caste system in India. For the convenience of such historical treatment, he classifies the history of India into four periods. First, **the Vedic period** ending about B.C. 600 and comprising the literary data of the Vedic *Samhitas* and the *Brahmanas*; second, **the post-Vedic period**, extending to about the third century of the Christian era. In this period, the sacred laws of the Aryans present the orthodox and the more or less idealistic standpoint while the epics testify to the contemporary practices. Buddhist literature, on the other hand, gives a glimpse of the institution as it appeared to those who rebelled against it and in part provides us with a natural picture of some aspects of caste. The third period may be styled **the period of the Dharma-shastras** and ends with the tenth or eleventh century A.D. Manu, Yajnavalkya and Vishnu are the chief exponents of the social ideals of this age. The fourth period may be called **the modern period** and it brings us down to the beginning of the nineteenth century. The customs and beliefs of contemporary Hindus are those that were mostly fixed and classified by the writers of this period. The idealistic point of view is provided by writers like Parashara, Hemadri and Madhava, while the inscriptions and travellers' accounts reveal some of the realities of the times. Let me now briefly summarize the evolution of caste system in India.

‘It may be taken to be an historical fact that people calling themselves ‘Arya’ poured into India through the north-west somewhere about 2000 B.C. It is equally clear ... that an institution closely akin to caste has been very often described in Sanskrit books, which are the work of either the Aryans or the Aryan-inspired aborigines. Can we trace a close connection between the immigration of the Aryans and the rise of the institution of caste?’

Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*

It is difficult to say that all the earliest Aryans belonged to one race, but their culture was more or less of the same type. They were distinguished by their common language. They spoke the Indo-European/Indo-Aryan languages, which are current in changed forms all over Europe, Iran and the greater part of the Indian subcontinent. Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, German, English, Swedish, Russian, Polish, Italian, Spanish, French, etc., belong to the Aryan family. On the basis of similarity between these languages, it has been postulated that the original Aryans had a common homeland somewhere in the steppes stretching from southern Russia to Central Asia. From this region the Aryan-speaking peoples may have migrated to different parts of Europe and Asia. One of their branches migrated to Iran where they lived for a long time. From the Iranian tableland they moved in the south-eastern direction towards India where they encountered the city civilization of the Indus valley. The dispersal of the Aryans in India was not a single event. It took

place in several stages, covering several centuries and involving many tribes. These tribes were often considerably different from each other but, at the same time, shared many cultural traits.

The chief source of information on the early history of the Aryans in India are the Vedas, perhaps the oldest literary remains of the Indo-European language group. The word 'Veda' means knowledge. Vedic literature has been traditionally held sacred for it is believed to have divine source. The Vedas, according to the popular Indian perception, are eternal (*nitya*). The various sages (*rishis*) who were their authors no more than received them from god. Transmitted orally from generation to generation, the Vedas were not committed to writing until very late. The collection of the Vedic hymns or *mantras* were known as the Samhitas. The Vedic texts may be divided into two broad chronological strata: the early Vedic (c. 1500-1000 BC) when most of the hymns of the *Rigveda* were composed; the later Vedic (c. 1000-600 BC) to which belong the remaining Vedas and their branches.

There are four Vedas: *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda* and *Atharvaveda*. The *Rigveda* is a collection of 1028 hymns, mostly prayers to gods, for use at sacrifices. The *Rigveda Samhita* is the oldest Vedic text, on the basis of which the early Vedic age is described. The history of the later Vedic period is based mainly on the Vedic texts which were compiled after the age of the *Rigveda*. Thus, later, for the purposes of recitation, the prayers of the *Rigveda* were set to tune, and this modified collection was known as the *Samaveda Samhita*. The *Yajurveda* contains not only hymns but also rituals which have to accompany their recitation. The rituals reflect the social and political milieu in which they arose. The *Atharvaveda* consists mainly of magical spells and charms to ward off evils and diseases. Attached to each Veda are various explanatory prose manuals called Brahmanas, whose concluding portions are called the Aranyakas (forest books). Secret and dangerous owing to their magical power, the Aranyakas could be taught only in a forest. The Upanishads are commentaries appended to the Aranyakas, but of a more esoteric character.

As stated earlier, we know about the Aryans in India from the *Rigveda*. The *Rigveda* is the earliest text of the Indo-European languages. It consists of ten mandalas or books of which Book II to VII form its earliest portions. Books I and X seem to have been the latest additions. The term *Arya* occurs 36 times in this text, and generally indicates a cultural community. The Aryans migrated to India in several waves. The earliest wave is represented by the Rigvedic people, who appeared in the subcontinent in about 1500 B.C. they came into conflict with the indigenous inhabitants called the Dasas, Dasyus, etc. However, it has been suggested that the conflicts between the Rigvedic tribes and the Dasas and Dasyus were those between the two main branches of the Indo-Iranian/Indo-Aryan peoples who came to India in successive waves. The Dasas and Dasyus were most likely

people who originally belonged to the Aryan speaking stock and in course of their migration into the subcontinent they acquired cultural traits very different from those of Rigvedic people. Not surprisingly, the *Rigveda* describes them as ‘black-skinned’ ‘malignant’, and ‘nonsacrificing’ and speaking a language totally different from that of the Aryans.

The early Aryans, who were essentially pastoral, did not develop any political structure which could measure up to a state in either the ancient or the modern sense. Kingship was the same as tribal chiefship, the term *rajan* being used for the tribal chief. Primarily a military leader, the chief of the tribe fought for cows and not territory. He ruled over his people or tribe (*jana*) and not over any specified area of land or territory (*janapada*). The Rig Vedic people may have occasionally occupied pieces of land for grazing, cultivation and settlement, but land did not form a well-established type of private property. The people were attached to the tribe, since the territory or the kingdom was not yet established.

It is likely that the early Aryans had some consciousness of their distinctive physical appearance. They were generally fair, and the indigenous people dark in complexion. The colour of the skin may have been an important mark of their identity. This provided the context for the use of the term ‘*varna*’. *Varna* was the term used for colour, and it seems that the Colour may have provided the identity mark for social orders but its importance has been exaggerated by those western writers who believe in racial distinctions. But the more important factor leading to the creation of social divisions was the conquest of the Dasas and Dasyus who were assigned the status of slaves and shudras. The early signs of social divisions first appear in the *Rigveda* where it mentions *arya varna* and *dasa varna*.

The tribal chiefs and the priests acquired a larger share of the booty, and they naturally grew at the cost of their kinsmen, which created social inequalities in the tribe. Gradually the tribal society was divided into three groups– priests (*Brahma*), warriors (*Kshatra*) and the common people (*Visha*), which was primarily a functional division. The fourth division called the *Shudra* appeared only towards the end of the Rig Vedic period, because it is mentioned for the first time in the *Purushasukta* hymn of the tenth mandala or book of the Rig Veda, which is the latest addition.

In the age of the *Rigveda* differentiation based on occupation had started. The *Rigveda* mentions such artisans as the carpenter, the chariot-maker, the weaver, the leather worker, the potter, etc. This indicates that they practiced all these crafts. But this division was not very sharp. We hear of a family in which a member says: “I am a poet, my father is a physician, and my mother is a grinder. Earning livelihood through different means we live together...” Unequal

distribution of the spoils of war created social inequalities, and this helped the rise of princes and priests at the cost of the common tribal people. But since economy was mainly pastoral and subsistent in nature, the scope for collecting regular tributes from the people was very limited. We do not find gifts of land and even those of cereals are rare. Tribal elements in society were stronger and social divisions based on collection of taxes or accumulation of landed property were absent. The society was still tribal and largely egalitarian.

However, later, the fourfold social division into *brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vaishya* and *shudra* was given religious sanction. The *Purushashukta* hymn of *Rigveda* tells us that the *brahmana* emanated from the mouth of the primeval man (*Brahma*), the *kshatriya* from his arms, the *vaishya* from his thighs and the *shudra* from his feet. The particular limbs associated with these divisions and the order in which they are mentioned probably indicate their status in the society of the time, though no such interpretation is directly given in the hymn. In this particular account of the creation not only is the origin of the classes interpreted theologically, but also a divine justification is sought to be given to their functions and status. This may be a *post facto* rationalization of the occupations and of the positions that the various groups came to occupy in the social hierarchy. Unequal distribution of the spoils of war was certainly the basic reason for the emergence of the fourfold division of society. But the phenomenon was also linked with the process of assimilation of the aboriginal non-Aryan people by the various sections of Aryan society.

Great changes occurred in the Aryan mode of life during the later Vedic age, extending from 1000 to 600 BC when the three Vedas, *Yajur*, *Sama*, and *Atharva*, the Brahmanas and a few early Upanishads were composed. It would appear that during the period of the composition of the later Vedic texts the Aryans became generally familiar with the major portion of the Gangetic valley where they gradually settled. On the whole the later Vedic phase registered a great advance in the material life of the people. The pastoral and semi-nomadic forms of living were relegated to the background. Agriculture became the primary source of the livelihood, and life became settled and sedentary. Simultaneously with the transition from pastoral to agricultural economy there arose several new arts and crafts. Equipped with diverse arts and crafts the Vedic people now settled down permanently in the upper Gangetic plains. The peasants living in the plains produced enough to maintain themselves, and they could also spare a marginal part of their produce for the support of chiefs, princes and priests. As a result, the later Vedic period saw the beginning of territorial kingdoms. Wars were fought not only for the possession of cattle but also for that of territory. The famous Mahabharata battle, fought between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, is attributed to this period.

Settled life led to a further crystallization of the fourfold division of society. The *Shatapatha Brahmana* describes the four classes as the four *varnas*. Thus, the later Vedic society came to be divided into four *varnas* called *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras*. Initially one of the sixteen classes of priests, the *brahmanas* emerged as the most important class and claimed social and political privileges on account of the growing cult of sacrifice and ritual performed for their clients and patrons (mostly the *rajanyas/kshatriyas*). The *kshatriyas* constituted the warrior class and came to be looked on as protectors; the king was chosen from among them. The *vaishyas* devoted themselves to trade, agriculture and various crafts and were the tax-paying class. The *shudras* were supposed to serve the three higher *varnas* and formed the bulk of the laboring masses. The ideas of untouchability were first given literary expression in connection with the *shudras* and the sacrifice. A *shudra* is declared to be unfit for sacrifice and not allowed even to be present in the hall where the sacrifice was being offered.

The priests became the chief beneficiaries of the sacrifices and gained in power. Cattle were slaughtered at sacrifices, often in large numbers. Public rituals, therefore, led to the decimation of the cattle wealth, whose importance for the developing agricultural economy can hardly be overestimated. The first reaction to the brahmanical dominance and the extremely ritualistic later Vedic religion can be seen in Upanishads, which reflect a wider spirit of enquiry prevalent towards the end of the Vedic period. Upanishadic thought centres around the idea of soul (*atman*) and not sacrifice (*yajna*). Creation is said to have grown out of the primeval desire of the World Soul. In the Upanishads we find the first clear exposition of belief in the passage of the soul from life to life. Souls were thought of as being born to happiness or sorrow according to their conduct in the previous life. From this evolved the theory of *karma* (action), which preached that the deeds of one life affected the next. This doctrine sought to provide an explanation of human suffering, and became fundamental to most later Indian thought.

By the time of Upanishads asceticism had become fairly widespread. Ascetics lived either as solitary hermits or in small groups away from society. Living off its resources, they could not have created a counter-culture in a real sense, as has been suggested by some scholars. Nevertheless through self-training the hermit acquired magical power, formerly ascribed to sacrifices. Asceticism thus challenged the supremacy of the Vedic sacrifice (*yajna*) and of the *brahmanas* who chiefly benefitted from it. The *brahmanas* by way of compromise invented a formula by which the life of an individual was divided into four stages (*ashramas*). First he was to be a *brahmacharin*, leading a celibate and austere life as a student at his teacher's house. Having learnt the Vedas or part of them he was married, and became a householder (*grihastha*). When well advanced in age, he withdrew from worldly life to become an ascetic (*vanaprastha*). Finally in the ultimate phase of

life, having freed his soul from material ties by meditation and self-torture, he became a wandering ascetic (*sanyasin*). In this artificial scheme, asceticism was recommended at the end of a man's life so that he could discharge his social responsibilities before taking to it. The four *ashramas* were not meant for the shudras.

Education began with an investiture ceremony (*upanayana*), whereby a boy was initiated as a full member of the society. All the three higher *varnas* were entitled to *upanayana* or investiture with the sacred thread according to the Vedic mantras. The shudras were not entitled to it. Since the rite was thought of as accomplishing a second birth, members of the three higher *varnas* were described by the epithet *dvija* (twice-born). Theoretically education was open to all *dvijas*, though the Vedas tended to become an exclusive preserve of the brahmanas. With regard to shudras it was stated that a shudra trying to hear the Vedic texts shall have his ears filled with molten tin or lac; if recites the Veda his tongue shall be cut off, and if he remembers it he shall be dismembered.

We have seen that in the *Rigveda* a marked distinction was drawn between *arya varna* and *dasa varna*. In the later Vedic literature this demarcation tends to be drawn between the *dvijas* (twice-born) and *shudras*. This change is perhaps due to the increasing association between the Aryan people and the Indian aborigines resulting in illicit unions not only between Arya males and Shudra females but also between Shudra men and Arya women. Thus the primary distinction based on colour now gave way to the distinction based on various civil and religious disabilities.

Each order (*varna*) seems to have been habitually endogamous though occasionally Brahmins married Kshatriya females, and all the three higher orders now and then might have kept Shudra mistresses. Endogamy was rather a universal custom than a rigid rule of caste. The lawgivers looked upon marriage in one's own caste among the four orders as the most ideal and in a way the only recognized practice, though they were prepared to recognize marriages outside the caste as perfectly lawful. Thus, although the norms of caste endogamy were widely prevalent, Hindu scriptures by allowing ***anuloma*** and ***pratiloma*** marriages, institutionalized, to a limited extent, inter-caste marital alliances. The anuloma marriage permits an alliance between a lower class woman and higher caste man, while the pratiloma marriage is an alliance between higher caste woman and a lower caste man. The former is referred to by the sociologists as ***hypergamy*** and the latter as ***hypogamy***. In other words, hypergamy or anuloma is that form of marriage in which the ritual status of a man is higher than that of his prospective wife, while hypogamy or pratiloma is that form of marriage in which the ritual status of a woman is higher than that of her prospective husband. *Anuloma*

marriages (hypergamy) though never preferred, were recognized and the offsprings treated as legitimate. But a *pratiloma* marriage was prohibited and condemned. But both forms of marriages were practiced and sometimes new castes or mixed emerged leading to confusion in social hierarchy. Both of these forms of marriages also led to caste mobility.

The institution of *gotra* appeared in later Vedic times. Literally it means the cow-pen or the place where cattle belonging to the whole clan are kept, but in course of time it signified descent from a common ancestor. People began to practice *gotra* exogamy. No marriage could take place between persons belonging to the same *gotra* or having the same lineage.

The post-Vedic period testifies to the rigid stratification and internal solidarity of the four varnas. Each group was recognized as distinct, almost complete in itself, for its social life. This period saw a great consolidation of the position of the Brahmin class, while the degradation of the Shudras comes out in marked contrast to the growing superiority of the Brahmins.

It may be inferred that many of the sub-divisions within each varna – and undoubtedly by now there must have existed in each varna numerous sub-divisions – had rules of their own for their internal management. Thus it is clear that other groups than the four traditional ones were not only in existence but had come to be recognized as *jatis*. The Brahmanic literature of the post-Vedic period, while reiterating that there are only four varnas, also mentions certain mixed castes (*sankara jati*).

In the subsequent period, the list of groups considered to have been the result of mixed unions becomes very large and includes almost all the groups, occupational or otherwise, as behaving like unit castes. Though the orthodox theory of caste is stated in terms of only the broad categories of occupations, yet there are enough indications that in daily life further distinctions based on specialization were recognized. It appears that in reality new occupational groups having the characteristics of castes had arisen, and the Brahmanic account of their origins was a mere theory based on permutations and combinations of the four original castes which bounded the Brahmin's mental horizon. Further, some of these specialized occupations seem to have been hereditary by custom.

Please note that *jatis*, depending upon their origins and the nature of their occupations, were fitted into one of these vertically graded levels. Each Varna had its own hierarchy of *jatis*. Rather than invent *jatis*, the pre-existing guilds of artisans and craftsmen and other organized occupational groups were assigned an appropriate level. Some new *jatis* were added to the system from time to time. The

castes proliferated into numerous sub-castes as a result of two factors. A large number of foreigners had been assimilated into the Indian society, and each group of foreigners was considered a kind of caste. Since the foreigners mainly came as conquerors they were given the status of the kshatriya in society. The Hunas, who appeared in India towards the close of the fifth century, ultimately came to be recognized as one of the thirty-six clans of the Rajputs. Even now some Rajputs bear the title Huns. The other reason for the increase in the number of castes was the absorption of many tribal people into brahmanical society through the process of land grants. The tribal chiefs were given a respectable origin. But most of their ordinary kinsmen were given a low origin, and every tribe became a kind of caste in its new incarnation. This process continued in some ways until the present times.

As stated earlier, in the post-Vedic period, the importance of sacrifices and ritualism had been growing and with it the prestige of the priests, who were usually brahmanas. The theory of the divine origin of the four varnas is off and on repeated with the special stress on the origin of the Shudra from the feet of the Creator. Evidently this divine origin did not prove as comforting to the lower classes as could be desired in the interests of the social order. Salvation of self had come to be the outstanding problem of the philosophy of life. If the performance of the religious rites, as laid down by the sacred law, could alone lead to salvation, there was no hope for the Shudra nor even perhaps for the Vaishya, because the former was emphatically forbidden to perform these religious rites and the latter had progressively lost their practice. A philosophy of caste, guaranteeing individual salvation to all, through the performance of duties alone, had to be formulated. Such a theory was calculated to allay the unrest and quell the rebellion against caste that might arise owing to the unsatisfactory nature of the theory as far as salvation, which had become the most absorbing human interest, was concerned.

Buddhism, the newly emerging religion, was giving a tough challenge to orthodox Brahmanism. Buddhism was ready to incorporate people within its fold without any consideration of caste. Buddhism made an important impact on society by keeping its doors open to women and shudras. Further, Buddhism did not involve itself in the fruitless controversies regarding the soul (*atman*) and Brahma which raged strongly in those times. Buddhism advocated that salvation (*nirvana*) could be attained by an individual by his right conduct and right knowledge. With its emphasis on non-violence and the sanctity of animal life, Buddhism boosted the cattle wealth of the country. It stood in contrast to the practice of killing cattle indiscriminately in numerous Vedic sacrifices in Brahmanism. In comparison with Brahmanism, Buddhism was liberal and democratic.

To meet the Buddhist challenge, the orthodox Brahmanism formulated two slightly differing philosophies of caste. Firstly, through its *Guna* theory,

Brahmanism seeks to justify the social hierarchy of varna system (hitherto taken for granted) in terms of different qualities and capacities of the individuals. In the *Bhagavadgita* the Creator is said to have apportioned the duties and functions of the four varnas according to the inherent qualities and capacities of the individuals. This theory claims that all existing things, animated and inanimated, inherent three qualities (*Gunas*) in different apportionment. *Sattva* qualities include wisdom, intelligence, honesty, goodness and other positive qualities. *Rajas* include qualities like passion, pride, valour and other passionate qualities. *Tamas* qualities include dullness, stupidity, lack of creativity and other negative qualities. Thus, brahmanas are predominated by *sattva guna*, kshatriyas by *rajas guna*, vaishyas by *rajas* and *tamas guna* and shudras by *tamas guna*. Of course, this theory fails to explain how the individuals at the very beginning of creation came to be possessed of peculiar qualities and capacities. This theory of origin, though it slurs over the above difficulty, tries to provide a rational sanction for the manifestly arbitrary divisions. God separated the people into four varnas, not merely because they were created from different limbs of his body nor again out of his will, but because he found them endowed with different qualities and capacities.

Secondly, with the doctrine of *Karma*, the lawgivers of the age propagated the view that the conscientious practice of the duties proper to one's own varna, led to a birth in a higher varna and thus to salvation. The concept of *Karma* is one of the hallmarks of Hindu social order. It refers to a belief in the efficacy of actions of a person either good or bad. *Karma* is action and the consequence of action. It is one of the social values stressing the individual responsibility for one's action. The doctrine of *Karma* enunciates the principle of the moral responsibility of man for his own deeds. It assumes that one's present condition is not the result of his present deeds but is also the consequence of his past life. Thus, it is closely linked to *punarjanm* (rebirth). In the *Mahabharata*, the upward march from one caste to another in succeeding births till a person is born a Brahmin is described in detail.

Popularly, Hindu religion came to be defined as *Varnashrama-dharma*. *Varnashrama-dharma*, is three words in one. *Varna* implies the caste, *ashrama* is the life stage and *dharma* is the religious duty. The whole three words translate to mean that an individual's duty depends on his caste and the respective life stage. And if an individual follows his caste duties, follows his life stage and completes his religious duties, it will bring him happiness and build up his good *Karma*. This further implies that good *Karma* individual will have a better re-birth (*samsara*). *Samsara* is a constant struggle to perfect to perfect a person's soul so that it will attain *moksha*. *Moksha* is salvation, liberation from the endless of cycle of births and deaths. It also refers to absorption of the self into eternal bliss. It is the most important goal for Hindus. It represents a spiritual perfection in which a person's soul is completely united with God.

According to Hindu texts, *Varnashrama-dharma* is not a man-made system but refers to natural classifications that appear to various degrees in all human societies. Individuals have different innate tendencies for work and exhibit a variety of personal qualities. There are also natural phases in life, when it is easier and more rewarding to perform certain activities. Hinduism teaches that individuals best realize their potential by taking into account such natural arrangements, and that society should be structured and organized accordingly. Each *varna* and *ashrama* has its own specified *dharma*. What may be desirable for one section of society may be degrading for another. For example, absolute non-violence, which includes refraining from animal sacrifice, is essential for the priestly class but considered wholly unworthy of a *kshatriya* (warrior). Generating wealth and producing children are essential for householders, but intimate contact with money and women is spiritually suicidal for the renunciate.

Thus, according to Ghurye, caste and sub-caste integrated people into a ranked order based on norms of purity-pollution. The rules of endogamy and commensality marked off castes from each other. This was integrative instrument, which organized them into a totality or collectivity. The Hindu religion provided the conceptual and ritualistic guidelines for this integration. The Brahmins of India played a key role in legitimizing the caste ranks and orders through their interpretation of *Dharamashastras*, which were the compendia of sacred codes.

In *Caste and Race in India* Ghurye also examines Herbert Risley's racial theory of caste in great detail through a reanalysis of the anthropometrical data. The racial theory of Indian society was promoted most notably by Risley (a colonial administrator, census officer and the first Director of Ethnography for India), who took the nasal index as an indicator of the proportion of Aryan blood, which supposedly varies along the caste gradient. Risley's racial theory of caste simply elaborated the earlier two-race theory of Indian history, in which the dark, 'snub-nosed' and primitive Dravidians were conquered by, and partially mixed with, the 'tall, fair, leptorhine' invading Aryans producing the caste system. This theory was encapsulated in Risley's famous formula: "The social position of a caste varies inversely as its nasal index".

Ghurye in his study found that outside the core area of Aryan settlement, 'Hindustan' (modern Punjab, Rajasthan and western Uttar Pradesh), physical type does not conform to caste rank, and that there is greater similarity between brahmins and other castes within a region than among brahmins across regions. His conclusion is that the "Brahmanic practice of endogamy must have been developed in Hindustan and thence conveyed as a cultural trait to the other areas without a large influx of the physical type of the Hindustan Brahmins". While Ghurye

criticizes specific features of Risley's theory and methodology, he accepts the overall framework of racial categorization and in fact proposes new racial categories for the Indian population based on the nasal and cephalic indices. He bases his argument on the same assumptions employed by the Aryan race theory: that the 'Aryan type' is long-headed and fine-nosed, represented by the people of Punjab and Rajputana, while the 'aboriginal type', represented by the 'jungle-tribes', is broad-nosed. Ghurye adds a diffusionist element to his argument by suggesting that brahminism and caste spread throughout India as cultural traits rather than through large-scale physical migration of Aryan brahmins.

Thus we can see how Ghurye in his *Caste and Race in India* skillfully combined historical, anthropological and sociological approaches. Ghurye studied caste system from a historical, comparative and integrative perspective. Ghurye examined the caste system from both cultural and structural points of view. He not only explained the evolution of caste system but also tried to examine its contemporary features including changes in it because of the impact of British rule. Although Ghurye understood the caste system historically as the means by which diverse groups were integrated into Hindu society, he was critical of caste in its modern avatar. He was probably the first to point to the politicisation of caste groups as a result of colonial policies and practices. Ghurye condemned Risley in particular for the consolidation of caste groupings and for promoting the emergence of caste associations through his work as Census Commissioner.

With a view to helping "us towards presenting an intelligible picture of the social grouping of that large proportion of the people of India which is organized, admittedly or tacitly, on the basis of caste" the Census Commissioner (Risley) changed the classification of 1891 into one based on "social precedence as recognized by the native public opinion at the present day and manifesting itself in the facts that particular castes are supposed to be the modern representatives of one or other of the castes of the theoretical Hindu system".

Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*

As a result of this, Ghurye asserts, various ambitious castes quickly perceived the chances of raising their status. They invited conferences of their members, and formed councils to take steps to see that their status was recorded in the way they thought was honourable to them. Other castes that could not but resent this 'stealthy' procedure to advance, equally eagerly began to controvert their claims. Thus a campaign of mutual recrimination was set on foot. The leaders of all but the highest castes frankly looked upon the Census as an opportunity for pressing and perhaps obtaining some recognition of social claims which were denied by persons of castes higher than their own. For instance, in 1911 the Census-reporter for Madras wrote the following: "It has been pointed out to me by an Indian gentleman that the last few years, and especially the occasion of the

present census, have witnessed an extraordinary revival of the caste spirit in certain aspects. For numerous caste ‘Sabhas’ have sprung up, each keen to assert the dignity of the social group which it represents.” Ghurye argues that the result of the increasingly elaborate enumeration by caste and ranking of castes in the census was a “livening up of the caste-spirit”.

Thus, on the basis of his detailed analysis, Ghurye identified six outstanding features of the Indian caste system. These features are:

1. Segmental division of society:

The segmental division of society refers to its division or compartmentalization into a number of segments or castes, each of which has a life of its own. Ghurye sees castes as social groupings or segments the membership of which is acquired and fixed by birth. Each caste provides a centre of its own regarding rules, regulations, standards of morality and justice.

2. Hierarchy:

The castes or segments are arranged in terms of a hierarchy. Hierarchy is a scheme, which arranges castes in terms of higher or superior and lower or inferior positions in relation to each other. The relative ranking of particular caste groups differed from one place to another. But, everywhere, the Brahmins were placed at the top and the untouchables were kept at the bottom of the hierarchy.

3. Restrictions on feeding and social intercourse:

The above two attributes reflect the separation or distance between castes. This fact of separation is reinforced by the principles of purity and pollution. The principles of purity and pollution find their expression in the codes regulating the acceptance of food or drink from other castes. In practice, most castes seem to take no objection to ‘kachcha’ food or food cooked with water from a Brahmin. Higher castes (twice-born) take only ‘pakka’ food or food cooked in ‘ghee’ from lower castes. But nobody will take food or water from an untouchable, whose even touch is considered to be polluting.

4. Civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections:

A result of the hierarchical division of society is that rights and obligation are unequally shared by different sections of the society. The ritual status of a caste vis-à-vis the Brahmins and the nature of occupation are the crucial determinants

of the nature of these disabilities. The speech, dress and custom of the high castes could not be copied by the lower castes as by doing so they would go against the governing rule of the society. It is recorded that under the rule of the Marathas and the Peshwas, the Mahars and Mangs were not allowed within the gates of Poona after 3 p.m. and before 9 a.m. because before nine and after three their bodies cast too long a shadow, which falling on a member of the higher castes – especially Brahmin – defiles them. In the Maratha country a Mahar – one of the untouchables – might not spit on the road lest a pure-caste Hindu should be polluted by touching it with his foot, but had to carry an earthen pot, hung from his neck, in which to spit. Further, he had to drag a thorny branch with him to wipe put his footprints and to lie at a distance prostrate on the ground if a Brahmin passed by, so that his foul shadow might not defile the holy Brahmin. In the Punjab, where restrictions regarding pollution by proximity have been far less stringent than in other parts of India, a sweeper, while walking through the streets of the larger town, was supposed to carry a broom in his hand or under his armpit as a mark of his being a scavenger and had to shout out to the people warning them of his polluting presence. The schools, maintained at public cost, were practically closed to such impure caste as the Chamars and Mahars. Further, the impure castes were segregated and made to live on the outskirts of villages.

5. Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation:

Every caste or a group of allied castes was associated with a hereditary occupation. Since distinction was made between clean and unclean and therefore, between pure and impure occupations, the hereditary occupation of a caste reflected its status in society. For example, the Brahmins were engaged in priesthood, while the lower castes took up occupations such as those of barber, washer man and cobbler. The untouchable castes would be doing the most unclean jobs. Occupational differentiation has led to the birth of many sub castes. But the profession of priesthood and literary activities had remained the sole preserve of the Brahmins.

6. Restrictions on marriage:

Inter-marriage between castes was prohibited. Hence individuals married within their own caste grouping, i.e. they practiced endogamy. Every caste was segmented into smaller subdivisions or sub-castes and these were the units of endogamy. According to Ghurye, endogamy is the key factor behind the caste system.

### **Ghurye's views on Tribe:**

Ghurye's works on the tribes were general as well as specific. He wrote a general book on scheduled tribes in which he dealt with the historical, administrative and social dimensions of Indian tribes. He also wrote on specific tribes such as the Kolis in Maharashtra. Ghurye presented his thesis on tribes at a time when a majority of the established anthropologists and administrators were of the opinion that the separate identity of the tribes is to be maintained at any cost. The background to this was the scheduling of tribes by the colonial administrators and the debate that ensued between government anthropologists, who favoured a protectionist policy, and nationalists who viewed the creation of 'Excluded' and 'Partially Excluded' areas as yet another attempt to 'divide and rule'.

There had been fierce debate between G.S. Ghurye and Verrier Elwin. Elwin in his book *Loss of Nerve* said that tribes should be allowed to live in isolation, whereas Ghurye argued that tribals should be assimilated into Hindu castes. Ghurye believed that most of the tribes have been Hinduized after a long period of contact with Hindus. He holds that it is futile to search for the separate identity of the tribes. They are nothing but the 'backward caste Hindus'. Their backwardness was due to their imperfect integration into Hindu society. The Santhals, Bhils, Gonds, etc., who live in South-Central India are its example. In 1943 Ghurye published *The Aborigines, So-called and their Future* (republished as *The Scheduled Tribes* [1959]), in which he attacked Elwin for his advocacy of the preservation of the 'tribal way of life' through state-enforced isolation from Hindu society.

Elwin's writings on the Indian tribes, like Ghurye's on Hindu society, reproduced the Aryan invasion theory, but his interpretation was geared to a different conclusion. Contemporary tribals are the descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of India, those who were not overcome by the Aryan invaders. The 'tribes' were marginalized and pushed into inaccessible forested and hilly tracts and therefore remained culturally distinct from Hindus. Elwin believed that contact with Hindu 'civilisation' invariably led to the exploitation of tribals and loss of their culture, hence the need for protection.

This argument was challenged by Ghurye, who pointed to the complex history of migrations on the subcontinent as well as the close relations and cultural similarities between various tribal groups and their Hindu neighbours. He hotly contested the tribe/caste distinction itself and the view of tribes as culturally separate from Hindu society, preferring to designate them as "imperfectly integrated classes of Hindu society" or "Backward Hindus" rather than aborigines. For him, the cause of the tribals' immiseration was not contact with civilisation but

the economic and legal changes ushered in by British colonial rule. He argued that tribals faced the same problems as caste Hindu cultivators: rapacious moneylenders, ignorance, short-sighted government policies and inefficient legal machinery together produced the typical pattern found in tribal areas of exploitation, land alienation, and bonded labour. The solution to this problem lay in "... strengthening the ties of the tribals with the other backward classes through their integration," not in separatism or isolation. Against Elwin's plea for preservation of tribal culture, Ghurye maintained that the interests and welfare of the tribals would be better served by adaptation to the wider society, for example by giving up 'wasteful' shifting cultivation in favour of settled agriculture. Ghurye suggests that the economic motivation behind the adoption of Hinduism was very strong among the tribes. They could come out of the narrow confines of their tribal crafts of a rudimentary nature and adopt specialized types of occupation, which were in demand in society. Ghurye also argued that the administrative separation of tribal areas was motivated by imperial economic interests rather than any concern for the welfare of the people. He refers here to the exploitation of forests, opening of coal fields in 'tribal' areas, and recruitment of tribal labour for tea plantations and mines.

Ghurye also argued against Elwin's proposal to codify tribal customs in civil matters on the ground that this would simply 'fossilize' them. Ghurye pointed out that "customs ... are plastic, and thus have an advantage over law which is rigid. Once we codify them we make them more rigid than law ... After the customs are codified, whatever little authority the tribal elders may have in their interpretation today will cease."

Ghurye also criticized Elwin's opposition to social reform movements among tribals. He believed that there were certain 'customs' such as drinking and sexual permissiveness that needed to be eradicated. Under Hindu influence, the tribes gave up liquor drinking, received education and improved their agriculture. In this context, Hindu voluntary organizations, such as Ramakrishna Mission and Arya Samraj, played a constructive role for the development of the tribes. Ghurye presents a huge data on the thoughts, practices and habits of the tribes inhabiting the Central Indian region. He quotes extensively from various writings and reports to show that Kataris, Bhuiyas, Oraons, Khonds, Gonds, Korkus etc. have substantially adopted Hinduism as their religion. Ghurye considers the incorporation of Hindu values and norms into tribal life was a positive step in the process of development. The tribes in India had slowly absorbed certain Hindu values and style of life through contact with the Hindu social groups. Today, it is being considered a part of Hindu society.

While Ghurye was in favour of a certain kind of ‘uplift’, mainly economic, he believed that the promotion of cultural pluralism by certain anthropologists and through official policies would lead to social disintegration. He cited as proof of this danger the emergence of cultural revival movements among some tribal groups, and he opposed tribal and regional autonomy movements as divisive. Thus Ghurye in many ways had a more realistic and progressive understanding of the history and problems of ‘tribals’ than many of his contemporaries, and his critique of Elwin’s paternalism is refreshing. It appears that his nationalism, despite its inherent conservatism, led him to be quite perceptive on some issues: he recognized the economic and political roots of the adivasi situation and was quite prescient to recognize the colonial origin of the caste-tribe distinction. But in the end, Ghurye’s own position was hardly more progressive than Elwin’s, for his understanding of the tribal ‘problem’ was based on his view of Indian history as an ongoing process of “...assimilation of smaller groups of different cultures into larger ones.” He regarded this as a natural process that was upset by colonialism: groups that had not been ‘properly assimilated’ appeared to the British to be different from the rest and were therefore designated as tribals. Here was the origin of the ‘tribal problem’, whose solution lay in assimilation rather than in the preservation of cultural diversity.

Driven by his nationalist concerns, Ghurye argued that civilisation is what gives Indian history its structure and logic, and the spread of Hindu civilisation necessitates the absorption of diverse groups. The underlying cause of the ‘backward’ condition of the tribes, then, is not contact with Hindu culture but insufficient assimilation to it.

### **Ghurye’s views on Indian culture:**

Ghurye’s search for the roots of Indian culture in the Vedic age is reflected in several of his later books including *Family and Kin in Indo-European Culture* (1955), *Two Brahmanical Institutions: Gotra and Charana* (1972), and *Vedic India* (1979). It is also evident in the fact that much of his work centres around traditional Hindu or brahminical knowledge systems, religious practices, social organisation, and law, as reflected in the classical Sanskrit texts. Ghurye made extensive use of these texts in his studies of phenomena as divergent as caste, costume, religion, and sexuality. In many of his books, references to ancient texts are brought in side by side with discussions of present-day practices, suggesting continuities between the present and the distant past.

In *Gotra and Charana* (1972) Ghurye investigates the origin, history and spread of these ‘brahmanical institutions’ of exogamy through an exhaustive study

of Sanskrit literature and inscriptions from different periods, ending with contemporary information on exogamous practices in several communities. By comparing similar cultural traits among ancient Greeks and Indo-Iranians, he develops the theory that *gotras* originated in the “cosmographical and astronomical view and knowledge gained by Aryans in their new home in India” Here we see the influence of the Aryan invasion thesis, in which cultural elements have their ultimate origin in the original Aryan race, combined with the diffusionist tracking of culture traits across time and space.

The *gotra* and *charana* were kin categories of Indo-European cultures which systematized the rank and status of the people. These categories were derived from *rishis* (saints) of the past. These *rishis* were the real or eponymous founder of the *gotra* and *charana*. In India, descent has not always been traced to the blood tie. The lineages were often based on spiritual descent from sages of the past. Outside the kinship, one might notice the *guru-shishya* (teacher-student) relationship, which is also based on spiritual descent. A discipline is proud to trace his descent from a master.

In several other works Ghurye attempts to trace the origin of contemporary social practices to their Indo-Aryan roots. For example, through a close analysis of the Vedas, Brahmanas and other texts in *Family and Kin in Indo-European Culture* (1955), Ghurye tries to reconstruct ancient Vedic-Aryan family and kinship structures. He concludes that the family in ancient times was joint in form, with four generations living under one roof, sharing food and property. In other words, the ideal Hindu family, as constructed by British ‘Hindu law’ and reinforced by Indian sociology, has its origin in ancient India. He also finds evidence in the ancient texts for certain contemporary kinship practices, such as father-in-law – daughter-in-law avoidance.

Ghurye outlines the history of particular kinship rites, such as different forms of ancestor worship, from the time of the *Smritis* to the present, arguing that the *shraddha* “has remained the standard type of Hindu (Indian) ancestor-worship throughout the ages till today.” In the conclusion of this chapter, he clearly states that present practices must be understood through their connections with the ancient past. In *Family and Kin* Ghurye offers a rare general statement of his perspective, suggesting that Indo-Aryan culture is “... known for formulation of its ends and for prescription of means for the guidance of society and its components in a clear and definite manner. The Indian theory and practice of life, its social philosophy, its laws and its customs have centred on the four social categories of *varna*, caste, *ashrama*, stage of life, *purusartha*, purpose of life, and *rina*, debt.”

For Ghurye, as in the Orientalist view, religion is the guiding principle of Indian society, and specifically brahminical religion as given in the sacred texts provides the moral principles and prescriptions for the organisation of society.

Like the Orientalism on which he drew, Ghurye's perspective on Indian society was intensely brahminical. For him, Hinduism is at the centre of India's civilisational unity, and at the core of Hinduism are brahminical ideas and values, which are essential for the integration of society. Venugopal describes the underlying theme of Ghurye's work as 'normative Hinduism', defined as an "idealised version of Hinduism serving as a means to judge or analyse diverse social phenomena in Indian society". Brahmins are seen historically as the leaders of Indo-Aryan society and as the "standard bearers of Hindu civilisation"; they were the "moral guides and legislators of the immigrant Aryans." As in the Orientalist understanding, society is understood as a set of rules to be followed, and to be a Hindu is to obey brahminical prescriptions. Brahmin-centred Hinduism served as an 'acculturative model' for other groups because it provided an integrative value system. For Ghurye, 'acculturation' meant vertical integration into the "social structure dominated by Indo-Aryanism in general and brahminical Hinduism in particular", i.e., the caste system. The same vision of the absorptive power of Hinduism explains his argument that tribals are 'backward Hindus'. For Ghurye as for the early Orientalist writers, Indian social history is essentially the history of Hinduisation or the assimilation of non-Hindu groups into Hindu society.

If Hinduism and brahminism are the norm for Indian society, other religious groups *ipso facto* are regarded as deviations from the norm. As in Hindu nationalist thought, Ghurye believed that the continuity of Hindu civilisation was broken by the Islamic 'invasion', and he adopted uncritically the colonial construction of Indian history and society as a struggle between Hindus and Muslims. He also echoed the assumption that Muslims have a culture that is entirely separate from that of Hindus. Evidence of religious syncretism at the level of everyday practices was ignored by Ghurye, who argued against the secularist idea of Indian culture as a 'fusion' of Hindu, Muslim and other elements. Instead he regarded Indian culture as the product of acculturation between Vedic-Aryan and pre-Aryan cultural elements and argued that Muslims in India had always practiced separatism, except for short periods of attempted integration. In his terminology, although Hindu-Muslim 'syncretism' occurred in some contexts, this should not be construed as 'synthesis' or 'fusion'. In *Social Tensions in India*, Ghurye states that the "presence of Islamic cultural elements in the basic ancient Indian culture-fabric shows the process of *syncretization*, *not fusion*". Hindus and Muslims have remained distinct communities "... though there have been some meeting points across religious boundaries at certain stages of history".

“Though there appeared to be some commingling across religious boundaries for military purposes, the main currents kept the two communities separate and distinct, the native Hindu endeavouring to keep himself alive with honour and even to regain his lost dominion, and the incoming Muslim, albeit with a large influx of native converts, strenuously countering the moves, drawing upon his native store-house in foreign lands. There was hardly any rapprochement between the two cultures, the Hindu and Muslim, in spite of co-existence.”

Similarly, in *Caste and Race in India* and *Social Tensions* (1968), Ghurye, like some of the British Orientalists, argued that Hinduism and Islam are fundamentally incompatible religious systems. Ghurye’s understanding of Indian society as essentially Hindu society, and his negative view of Muslims in particular, is reflected in the almost complete neglect of non-Hindu communities within the extensive body of sociological writings that he produced, as well as those of his many students.

Thus, it appears that Ghurye adopted almost wholesale the Orientalist vision of Indian society as the product of Vedic civilisation and ultimately of the ‘Aryan invasion’, and of Indian civilisation as Hindu, brahminical civilisation, although he was somewhat more selective in his arguments about the connections between present India and the Vedic past than were Orientalists such as Muller. However we cannot attribute this perspective purely to the hegemony of colonial discourse. More important perhaps is the influence of cultural nationalism, an orientation that is never explicitly stated but which becomes apparent in Ghurye’s writings on contemporary affairs.

### **Ghurye - The Nationalist:**

As a strong nationalist, Ghurye wanted India to be well-integrated. The failure of the secularists’ idea of integration was demonstrated in continuing communal riots, demands for separate states, and other such divisive tendencies. Ghurye had no faith in the official ideology of secularism promoted by Nehru, nor in the idea that a composite, plural nation could be politically created. He hoped instead for the emergence of an ‘integrated’ nation, which he saw as the solution to ‘social tensions’. Ghurye defines social integration as

“...a state in which individuals and groups have common values. This calls for, or is preceded by, psychological integration, which can take place only through communication ... Social integration when combined with its political aspect becomes national integration.”

While he believed that some degree of tolerance is necessary for social integration, his study of the European experience convinced him that granting cultural autonomy to minority groups does not solve the problem of inter-group tensions. Hence he was opposed to the 'appeasement' of minorities in the name of secularism. For Ghurye a major source of division in the nation is the presence of Muslims. Because Islam failed to be absorbed into Hindu culture, Hindu-Muslim relations are fraught with tension, as is evident from the frequent recurrence of 'Hindu-Muslim riots'. "The mutual incompatibility of some religious practices of the two communities generally has been the proximate cause of these clashes". Ghurye also explains communal tension by reference to the history of razing of Hindu temples by Muslim rulers. According to him, other groups recognized the tolerance of Hinduism and adapted themselves to it, but Muslims never managed to integrate themselves into Indian society and hence have remained a threat to national unity.

Ghurye stressed on assimilation of diverse religious and 'backward' groups to mainstream Hindu society as the basis for national integration. He argues that the remedy for untouchability is the 'assimilation' of Untouchables into Hindu society.

Ghurye's opposition to enumeration by caste in the census, like his stress on the 'assimilation' of Untouchables, stemmed from his belief in the need for national unity based on cultural unity. Because of government policies, caste was becoming a divisive force in society, and this had to be opposed in the interest of national integration. Caste associations, reservation of posts and seats by caste, and even caste-based movements for equality are criticized by Ghurye on the same ground. Opposing the non-brahmin movement, Ghurye suggested that brahmin domination can be eradicated more effectively through education and social reform. Like several contemporary sociologists, he argued that reserved representation is

'...harmful in so far as it tends to perpetuate the distinction based on birth. Cooperation in the satisfaction of the needs of common social life through the machinery of Government is one of the potent factors that have dissolved tribal bonds and created nation-communities... Special representation for some castes ... means the negation of such co-operation.'

Ghurye argued that reservation of seats will induce more and more castes to 'clamour' for individual representation, reducing national life to an 'absurdity'. He further argues that the burgeoning of caste associations has led to an increase in 'caste-consciousness' and strengthened the 'community-aspect' of caste, creating a vicious circle. Ghurye stated that the feeling of caste-solidarity is now so strong that it is truly described as caste-patriotism. This, together with adverse economic

conditions and competition for jobs, has led to 'caste-animosity', and contemporary society "presents the spectacle of self-centred groups more or less in conflict with one another." In order to kill 'caste-patriotism', the government should not recognize caste in any way. Instead, national feeling should be nurtured through inter-caste marriage, since "fusion of blood has been found to be an effective method of cementing alliances and nurturing nationalities." As another strategy for increasing social integration, Ghurye recommends that the priesthood, which traditionally has been a cohesive force in Hindu society, should be reformed and revitalized by doing away with brahmin monopoly and the distinction between Vedic and non-Vedic rites, and by training enlightened priests.

Ghurye was of the view that, free India, is in danger of disintegration due to divisions of religion, caste, language, and region, and it would have to seek its unity by rediscovering its true (Hindu) past. Hindu civilisation, with some modest reforms, would be the foundation of the nation, and any movement that works against national integration (reservations, regional autonomy) must be opposed.

### **Ghurye: An Assessment**

Critics argue that Ghurye's brand of sociology tends to reinforce the claims of Hindu nationalism by asserting the civilisational unity of India and centring it upon the culture of the Aryans, and by extension, Hinduism and brahminism. More important perhaps is the influence of cultural nationalism, an orientation that is never explicitly stated but which becomes apparent in Ghurye's writings on contemporary affairs. Ghurye's sociology revolves around the idea of Hindu civilisation. In Ghurye's writings, Indian 'tradition' was equated with Hindu norms, rituals and social organisation. Critics argue that evidence of religious syncretism at the level of everyday practices was ignored by Ghurye. For example, the contributions of Islam religion to the Indian culture were ignored by Ghurye.

Ghurye has also been accused of reproducing colonial narratives of caste and race as well as 'Oriental empiricism'. Ghurye accepted the racial theory of Risley and adopted the Orientalists' version of Indian culture and civilization, locating its roots in the Vedic scriptures. For Ghurye, Indian culture was Vedic culture and Indian religion was equated with Hinduism, particularly Brahminism. Although Ghurye's sociology is apparently historical in orientation, the idea of Indian culture deployed by him is homogenising, hegemonical, and denies the historicity and fluidity of Indian 'traditions'. Scholars criticize Ghurye's sociology as an *ahistorical* rather than a historical sociology; for its stress on social structure and cultural continuity; and its consequent failure to recognize conflict, oppression and hegemony.

Thus, Ghurye did not pay adequate attention to the problems of uneasy co-existence of religions of Indian and non-Indian origins in India and to the problems of *Brahminical* supremacy. Critics often argue that love for Sanskrit and a thorough acquaintance with the classical religious texts are so much characteristic of Ghurye that sometimes it even clouded the sociologist in him.

Being an indologist, most of Ghurye's works are based on textual and scriptural data. The choice of scriptures and the way of writing may have bias towards one section of society to another and offer a narrow vision about Indian society. Ghurye's own student M.N. Srinivas clearly highlighted the limitations of the 'book-view' of Indological approach and in its place advocate 'field-view'.

Carol Upadhyaya argues that a significant feature of Ghurye's cultural history is the almost complete neglect of economic/material content in his analysis. In his vast body of work we find few references to agriculture, crafts, trade, and so on, except in discussions of caste-based occupational specialisation. This is in stark contrast to the work of his contemporary D.D. Kosambi, for example, who also reproduced the Aryan invasion theory but reworked it through a materialist perspective. Ghurye's understanding of culture and civilisation dwells in the realm of ideas, beliefs, values and social practices – 'culture' in the narrow sense – and hardly encompasses questions of livelihood, control over resources, or ecological adaptation, which are so central to the modern anthropological understanding of human history and civilisation. In *Family and Kin*, Ghurye offers a rare explicit statement of this theoretical perspective when he states that his studies prove the "primacy of beliefs and ideas" (rather than material conditions) in bringing about social change. Similarly, he takes the survival of *gotra* exogamy over 2500 years as an example of the 'tyranny' of an idea, demonstrating the "role and power ... of certain ideas and beliefs in human behaviour and the social process". Within the ideational level, Ghurye emphasises religion and religious consciousness as the foundation of culture.