RESTORING "MEANINGFUL-NESS" IN HINDU THEOLOGY: CASTE, KARMA AND OVER-SANCTIFICATION

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Abstract
Hinduism is one of the oldest faiths in the world. Its history is one, which to this day remains a matter of debate and deliberation, due to the lack of historical accounts and archaeological evidences. I believe that by focusing on the loss of sacredness and meaning in Hinduism due of *Jatization* of *Varna*, it is possible to change the discourse on caste within Hindu theology.

Keywords
Hindu teology. Caste. Discourse.

Introduction

As Durkheim states in the *Elementary forms of religious life*, there is no religion that is not both a cosmology and a speculation about the divine. It has brought me to a premature deduction that religion is born out of the ability of the human mind to wonder.[1] This deduction, however premature, has informed my judgement on the subject of religion both consciously and sub-consciously. Anthropologists like Rappaport who have been inspired by Durkheimian ideas among others have taken it a step further in stating that religion is humanity's way of ascribing meaning to an otherwise meaningless universe[2]. However, the birth of religion, as it may be, is not the subject of my enquiry. This inference to the birth of religion is merely a modest attempt at providing a precursor to the discussion that shall follow. I hope, by the end of this paper, the reader finds this small precursor rather meaningful.

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[1] Emile Durkhiem "Elementary Forms of Religious Life," in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Michael Lambek, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell), 38.

[2] Roy Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 1-10.

deliberation, due to the lack of historical accounts and archaeological evidences. However, the sources that have been informing scholars of the "Hindu way of life" have been under great scrutiny due to the multitude of interpretations they have to offer. This in turn, has led to a considerably large scholarship being produced on the matter which diverges from one another on the most basic issues. One such matter is that of Caste. This chapter shall deal with the same. The word "Hindu" primarily is of Persian origin which means people who live beyond the Indus.[3] The term poses problems to those who claim that Hinduism is, in fact not a religion but a philosophy, which may be true in the sense that it does not have a single book of authority like the Quran, the Holy Bible or Guru Granth Sahib respectively in case of Islam, Christianity and Sikhism, but does that mean Hinduism is not a religion? Durkheim defines religion as "…a unified system of belief and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them."[4]The concept of a "church" or a seat of sacred authority is missing from Hinduism, in that there is not a singular tangible location where the sacredness is or can be found. On the other hand, Hinduism subsumes ideas like monism, monotheism, polytheism or even atheism all at once which may not necessarily imply a unified system of beliefs.[5]Jawaharlal Nehru, Independent India's first Prime

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[3]   Radhakrishnan observes that Aryans were recognized as "Hindus" by the Persians and later the western civilizations that came to India. Thus, the word Hindu as mentioned above was an imported term and initially had a "territorial significance". See, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu Way of Life*, (London: Unwin, 1971), 12.

[4]   Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System", in *A Reader in Anthropology of Religion*, Michael Lambek eds. (Oxford: Blackwell), 61-83.

[5]   R.C Zaehner, *Hinduism*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 2.

Minister said and I quote "Hinduism is all things to all Men"[6]. Hence, probably traditional definitions of religion may not suffice. However, Clifford Geertz's definition of religion might explain how Hinduism embodies characteristics of a religion after all. He defines religion as "…a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the mood and motivations seem uniquely realistic."[7] The key phrase in this definition in accordance with defining Hinduism is "formulating a general order of existence".[8]

Hinduism has famously been home to cults, heterodox traditions and factions within it but, a general order of existence has prevailed throughout its history, that of Caste. To exemplify, Timothy Fitzgerald remarks that merely a spiritual exploration of Hinduism without an enquiry into caste is no enquiry at all. He goes on to claim that Hinduism is no religion if not seen in the light of Caste and its social implications.[9] This maybe a

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[6]   Gavin Flood, *Introduction to Hinduism*, (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7.

[7]   Geertz, *Religion as Cultural System*, 63.

[8]   This definition has been critically scrutinized a fair amount and requires more clarity on key terms like "conceptions" and "motivations" specifically. But, its inscrutability in that it provides a sense of freedom to classify religious traditions from unconventional

vantage points, unbound by western rationale of religion is what has attracted my attention towards it. To, Clarify, as pointed out by Frankenberry and Penner the first part of this definition has been under greater scrutiny whereas, if seen in the light of the second part it explains religion not as a model "of" reality rather a model "for" reality. Whereby implying that said "moods and "motivations" of myth and symbolism are primarily subjective world views and not universal in their existence, much like reality. See, Nancy K. Frankenberry and Hans H. Penner, "Clifford Geertz's Long-lasting Moods, Motivation and Metaphysical Concepts", *The Journal of Religion* 72 (1999): 636-640.

[9]   Timothy Fitzgerald, "Problems with 'Religion' as a Category for Understanding Hinduism" in J.E Llewellyn eds.

farfetched claim but, Caste's influence on the development of Hinduism needs to be identified. As far as the question whether Hinduism can be defined as a religion is concerned, it maybe one that is beyond the preview of this paper but while considering Geertz's definition, I intend on constructing a narrative of Hinduism as a religion guided by the historically dynamic idea of Caste. In using the term "historically dynamic", I intend on making an enquiry into the difference between Caste as a concept within Hindu theology which I shall identify as Varna and Caste as a concept within Hindu sociology which shall be identified as Jati. I shall do so by discussing the nascent stage of development in Hindu history. Precisely, the period when Caste transforms from broadly a concept into an inflexible social reality sanctified within Hinduism. Furthering the same, I shall discuss Karma as a concept in Hindu theology and its role in providing un-

questionable sanctity to the Hindu Caste System.

1. Caste: Varna or Jati

This is primarily a historical exploration yet it remains important to keep a bird's eye view of the seminal works on caste by sociologists and anthropologists. To better comprehend the social implication of the historical developments within Hinduism vis-a-vis caste, I shall try to maintain a constant dialogue between historians and sociologists of Hinduism. In doing so, I hope to fill the gaps that could be an outcome of a solely historical enquiry of caste. According to Hocart "Caste is born in ritual"[10], Dumont understands caste through "Purity" and "Impurity"[11], Srinivas centres his analysis of caste on "Sanskritization" (which he defines as the ability of what he calls the "Great Tradition" i.e. *Brahmanical* Hinduism, to sub-

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Defining Hinduism: A Reader, (London: Equinox, 2005) 170-201.

[10] A.M Hocart, *Caste: A Comparative Study*, (London: Methuen), 59.
[11] Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*, (London: Chicago University Press), 43-46.

sume smaller traditions within it, voluntarily or involuntarily, by placing them within the structure of caste hierarchy).[12] However, all the above converge one another unanimously on the issue of *Jati* and *Varna* as non-interchangeable terms used interchangeably to denote caste. As acknowledged by Dumont, Senart was probably one of the first to identify the distinction between *Jati* and *Varna* (both meaning Birth and Colour respectively in Sanskrit).[13] The origin of these words can be traced back to the Vedic period.[14] Chakravarti claims that

Brahamanas and Upnishadas, due to which these are considered to be a part of the Vedas itself. There are four Vedas namely; *Rig, Sama, Atharva* and *Yajur*. Rig Veda is believed to be a work of its namesake; the Rig Vedic or early Vedic period (2500-1000 BCE) and the Later three Vedas as well as the *Upnishadas* and *Brahmanas* may have been works of the later Vedic period (1000-600 BCE). *Dharmashastras* like *Manusmariti* and the *Dharmasutras* are considered to be a by-product of the pre-Mauryan period (600-322 BCE). The Puranas as well as epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana were compiled between (300 BCE-400 CE). Even though compiled later Mahabharata may be an account of the later Vedic period, however this remains a matter of speculation: Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1969), 31-32 ; K.M Sen *Hinduism*, (Penguin: Middlesex, 1969), 46-62, ; V. Raghvan, "Introduction to The Hindu Scriptures", in *The Religion of the Hindus*, eds. Kenneth W. Morgan, (New York: The Ronald Press, 1953), 265-232 ; R.S Sharma, *India's Ancient Past*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010) 29-30.:Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore eds. *A Source Book In Indian Philosophy*, (Bombay: Princeton University Press, 1957) 3-38; Wendy Doniger, trans., *Hindu Myths: A Source Translated From Sanskrit* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1975) 17-18.

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[12] M.N Srinivas, *Village, Caste, Gender and Method*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 87-125.

[13] Louis Dumont, *The Caste System*, 65-67.

[14] Early Hindu scriptures can be broadly classified into the *Vedas*, *Brahamanas*, *Upnishadas* ,*Aryanakas* Dharmashastras, Dharmasutras Puranas and epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana. The Vedas (also referred to as Samhitas) are the earliest texts. The *Brahamanas* as well as *Upnishadas* and *Aryankas* derive their traction from within the Vedas but are believed to have been compiled at a later time. As a result every Veda has corresponding

the word *Jati* does not appear within the *Rig Veda* or the later *Vedas*, it appears for the first time in the *Brahmanas* and *Upnishdas* a total of three times. On the other hand the word *Varna* appears in the Rig Veda itself twenty three times. Chakravarti considers *Jati* to be what is today understood as caste bound within birth and *Varna* to be a mere occupational classification.[15]Thappar on the other hand suggests that *Varna* meaning colour was just another term for caste. She bases her claim on the fact that the Aryans who entered India from Central Asia were fair complexioned and the natives of India were dark complexioned which is how *Varna* or colour was a means of identifying the non-Aryans (Dasa[16] as mentioned in the *Rig Veda*). This according to her, later becomes the caste hierarchy of *Brahman,* of Aryan social status. There are references in the Rig Vedic literature of *Dasas* being identified as ugly, noiseless or dark skinned as noted by Habib and Thakur as well however, aforementioned hostility by Thappar could be a reference to *Dyus Hatya* which signified murder of the *Dasyus*. But Sharma, Habib and Thakur make an important distinction between the terms *Dasa* and *Dasyus*. According to them a distinction between *Dayus* and *Dasa* in Rig Vedic Hymns suggested that *Dasa* where hated less than the *Dasyus* who are indicated to be enemies which could hint towards a group of politically resistant *Dasas* that undermined Aryan authority. This could imply that said hostility was political in nature rather than social. Moreover, Arwind Sharma diverges from Thappar's analysis as well while making a reference to a Rig Vedic Hymn where *Agastya* is referred as a protector of both these Varnas; *Dasas* as well as *Aryas*. See, Thappar, History of India, 37-39; Sharma, *India's Ancient Past*, 108; Irfan Habib and Vijay Kumar Thakur, *The Vedic Age*, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2007) 15-18; Arwind Sharma, Classical Hindu Thought: An Introduction (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011) 135-136.

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[15] Uma Chakravarti, "A Glace at The Word Jati in The Vedic Literature", *Annals Of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 86 (2005): 129.

[16] According to Thappar there seemd to be Aryan hostility towards these dark complexioned natives of Indus (speculated to be Dravidians or remnants of the Harappan civilization) that is translated to her mind as superiority

Kshatriya, Vashiya and Shudra.[17] She remains ambiguous about the period and focuses on describing processes instead of timelines. However, she does mention the tenth chapter of the *Rig Veda* and the *Purushsukta* Hymn (which shall be discussed eventually) as the juncture when *Varna* becomes caste.[18] She further writes that "...the first three castes were a theoretical framework evolved by the *Brahmans*, into which they systematically arranged various professions".[19]RS Sharma, on the other hand, clearly suggests an absence of hierarchy throughout the Rig Vedic period. He suggests that the Indo-Aryans being pastoral nomads had less dependence on agriculture, whereby, distribution was not a major concern during the Rig Vedic period. According to him, references to land distribution are also absent. Hence, he concludes that the Rig Vedic society was broadly egalitari-

an.[20]Jha's views are quite similar as well. According to Jha, while examining the Rig Veda, one may come across Thappar's point of *Varna* being a means to differentiate between the Aryans and Non-Aryans but, words like *Kshatriya* and *Brahman* that appear (several times as loose classifications) are never used in connection with *Varna*. He also notes that the word *Shudra* and *Vashiya* (the lowest according to Caste hierarchy) appear in the tenth *Mandal* (Chapter) of the Rig Veda as Thappar observes but this *Mandal* might be a later addition to the Rig Vedic *Samhita.*[21]On the matter of occupational classification, Jha provides evidence of a Rig Vedic Hymn composer calling himself a poet, his father a physician and his mother a grinder of corn'.[22] This suggests that at least during the Rig Vedic period *Varna* was

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[17]   Thapar, *History of India*, 37-38.
[18]   Ibid, 39-40.
[19]   Ibid, 38.

[20]   Sharma, I*ndia's Ancient Past*, 113-114.
[21]   Vivekanand Jha, "Social Stratification in Ancient India: Some Reflections", *Social Scientist* 19 (1991): 24-25.
[22]   Ibid, 24

not caste hierarchy based on occupational classifications as intra-familial occupations were not always the same. *Varna* as classification could have simply been one's occupation devoid of caste based hierarchical implications. Arvind Sharma while confirming the same by referring to the *Purushusukta* as a post Rig Vedic addition to the *Rig Vedic Samhita* goes on to claim that, in light of this evidence it is quite possible to argue that there might have been a period in Hinduism when caste did not exist.[23] Here is where *Jati* comes into the picture.

As far as *Jati* is concerned, according to Thappar, it is merely a sub-caste intimately bound with birth that fits within the broader framework of the fourfold *Varna* as the "main caste".[24]This might however be an over simplified image of *Jati* due to the regional variations (from a sociological standpoint) that are pointed out by Srinivas,

Dumont, Beteille and others but, even sociologists agree that there remains a tendency to categorise the many sub-castes subject to birth related variations, within the four-fold *Varna* system due to the classical Hindu literature and its emphasis on *Varna* as caste.[25]Betielle even suggests that *Varna* system is realized in terms of caste through *Jati* as "it is quite common for a person to say that such an individual is a *Brahman* or *Kshatriya* by *Jati*".[26] But here is where the problem lies, If *Varna* remains the broader framework under which *Jati* acts as a sub-caste as suggested by Thappar and *Varna* at least in the Rig Vedic literature does not function as caste as evidenced earlier, yet the classical Hindu literature promotes *Varna* as caste then

[23]   Arwind Sharma, *Classical Hindu Thought*, 136.
[24]   Thapar, *A History of India*, 40.

[25]   Dumont, *Caste System and its Implications*, 72-75: Andre Beteille, *Caste Class Power*, (Oxford: University Press, 1996), 46-47; M.N Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1962),65: Srinivas, *Village, Caste Gender and Method*, 96-97.
[26]   Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power*, 46.

there seems to be a disjunction in historical continuity of the *Varna* theology post Rig Vedic period.

To exemplify, *Jati*, as established earlier does not figure out prominently within the Rig Vedic literature but it features heavily within the later Vedic as well as Pre-Mauryan literature. Chakravarti with reference to *Jati* gives a count of ninety nine references within the *Vedangas* alone.[27] Here, within the Later-Vedic and pre Mauryan period is where I shall examine the change in *Varna* theology through what I will call; the *Jatization* of *Varna* (*Varna* becoming a matter of birth).

2. The Varna theology
2.1 The Purushsukta

Before elaborating on the process of *Jatization* it is important to discuss *Purushsukta* which is considered by many scholars to be the first reference of the fourfold caste system;

The Hymn reads;
Yat purusham Vyadaduhu
Kritidha Vyakalpayan
Mukham Kimasya Kow Bahu
Kaur upadauchyete
Brahmanosya Mukhamsit
Bahu Rajnayah Kirtah
Uru tadasya yad vaishyah
Padbhayam shudro ajyata. (Rig Veda, X-90)[28]

When they divided the *Purusha*, into how many parts did they arrange him? What was his mouth? What about his two arms? What are his thighs and feet called?

The *Brahman* was his mouth, his two arms were made the *Rajanya*, his two thighs the *Vaisya* and from his feet, the *Shudra* was born/Sprang.[29]

It has been established earlier that reference to *Varna* as a term (let alone analogous to caste) is not made in this hymn but, what crystallizes in later texts as the fourfold caste system is the existence of *Brahman, Kshatriya (Rajanaya), Vashiya* and *Shudra* as suggest-

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[27] *Vedangas* Literally mean "Limbs of the Vedas" which is believed to be one of the last scriptures of the later Vedic period. See, Chakravarti, "A Glance at Jati", 129.

[28] M. V. Nadkarni, "Is Caste Intrinsic to Hinduism? Demolishing a Myth" Economic and Political Weekly 38 (2003): 4786

[29] Radhakrishnan and Moore, *Sourcebook*, 19

ed in this hymn. Hence, it might be logical from a socio-historical standpoint to assume that the earliest reference to these four classifications in the last chapter of the Rig Veda is by extension a reference to the fourfold caste system[30] that features as *Varna* later on.

But, Arvind Sharma points out an unresolved hermeneutical issue with such an assumption. According to him, a hierarchical interpretation of the hymn might not be the only possible interpretation. The head being superior to the feet ipso facto *Brahman* being superior to *Shudra* might be a flawed interpretation. To elaborate, it can also be considered that the society or the cosmos as a whole is being represented where each limb of the *Purusha* represents an integral part of the social and cosmic structure.[31] To illustrate, the often quoted aforementioned verses are part of a longer *Purshasukta*, the later part of which translates as follows;

The Moon was born from his spirit (*Manas*), from his eyes was born the sun, from his mouth *Indra* and *Agni*, from his breath *Vayu* (wind) was born.

From his navel arose the middle sky, from his head the heaven originated, from his feet the earth, the quarters from his ears. Thus did they fashion the worlds.[32]

The above verse explains how the moon comes for the *Purusha*'s mind or spirit, the sun from his eye, wind from his breath, the atmosphere from his navel, the earth from his feet, and all the directions come from his ears as well. Could one, thus argue that because the moon comes

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[30]   Jai Pal Singh and Mumtaz Khan, "Hindu Cosmology and the Orientation and Segregation of Social Groups in Villages in North Western India" Geografiska Annaler. Series B, *Human Geography* 81 (1999):21-22.

[31]   Nadkarni, "Demolishing a Myth", 4786; Arvind Sharma, "The Purusasukta: Its Relation to the Caste System", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 21 (1978):298

[32]   Radhakrishnan and Moore, *Sourcebook*, 19-20.

from the mind of the *Purusha* and the atmosphere from his navel, then the atmosphere is given an inferior status to the moon in this Rig Vedic hymn?[33]There is a logical inconsistency that leaves room for further speculation on the matter of *Purushsukta* hymn of the Rig Veda being the first reference to the caste hierarchy as it is understood today, contrary to what Dumont and other scholars believe.[34] There is enormous literature on the myth of the *Purusha* beyond the preview of this paper; hence, I have tried to keep this discussion concise and solely focused on the *Purushsukta* hymn due to its often established correlation to caste. Having deftly dealt with the *Prushsukta*, and claimed that *Varna* within the Rig Veda is no more than a classification based on one's social role or division of labour. I will now come back to my point of

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[33]   Ibid, 26
[34]   According to Dumont the form in which caste exists in the modern India found form identical to itself for the first time in this hymn of the Rig Veda.   See, (Dumont, *Caste System*, 68).

Varna theology and the aforementioned historical disjunction.

2.2 History, Varna and Theology

I intend to begin from where I left; *Varna* as classification. Sociologically, as suggested, *Varna* was a classification during the Rig Vedic period most probably bound to the division of labour but theologically, it is a philosophical classification of an existential state. Harold A. Gould in his book the *Hindu Caste System* tries to explain this theology that works its way from the Rig Veda into parts of the later Vedic scriptures like *Upnishadas*, *Arayankas*, *Bhagvad Gita* and others.

According to him, *Varna*, *Karma Samsara* (transmigration of soul or rebirth), *Brahman* (the pure one), *Atman* (soul/self), *Moksha* (salvation), *Dharma* (duty or conduct) and *Maya* (material) form a complex inter-web to give an abstract philosophical shape to the *Varna* theology**.** He claims that *Varna* was a means to attain freedom from *karma samsara*, only to realize via

adherence of *dharma* that *Moksha* of the *atman* lies away from the pollution of *Maya*. This *Dharma* was to attain the ultimate status of the *Brahman*. Which in simple words could imply that being a *Brahman* was to forefeet *Maya* and attain *Moksha*.[35] According to this analysis, what binds the *Varna* theology together is the performance of *Dharma*. *Dharma,* like most Sanskrit words, poses the problem of translation. According to Flood, in English, it could be translated to duty, religion, justice, ethics, principles or rights and also state policy but in the Vedic sensibility it could imply the obligation to perform ritual sacrifice or *Yajna*.[36]However, the performance of sacrifice can also be considered the pursuit of knowledge.[37]*Brahmans* were primarily the upholders of knowledge and its pursuit (as is evidenced in most Vedic scriptures) but according to the *Varna* theology, it was not impossible for the son of a *Shudra* to attain *Brahmanic* knowledge. One such example is present in the *Chandogaya Upanishada*; that of Jabala's son *Satyakama* who decides to pursue Brahmanic path to knowledge of the *Atman* (self) and is taken into tutelage by a

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[35]   Koller identifies this as *moksha-dharma*. See, John M. Koller, "Dharma: An Expression of Universal Order", *Philosophy East and West* 22 (1972):133; Also see, Harold A. Gould, *The Hindu Caste System: The Sacralisation of a Social Order*, (New Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1987), 14-21.

[36]   The relevance bring that *Yajna*or ritual sacrifices used above, *Dharma* and *rta* (ultimate order of things) are interconnected. *Rta* manifests itself through *Dharma* in *Yajna. Rta* becomes a symbol of the ultimate truth, *Yajna,* a symbol of the cosmos and *Dharma* their interconnectedness. See John M. Koller, "Dharma: An Expression of Universal Order", 139-140. Dharma in that sense primarily becomes the responsibility of the Brahman as performance of sacrifices was primarily his responsibility. See (Flood, *Introduction to Hinduism*, 52-53).

[37]   The *Aryankas* prior to the *Upnishads* in particular lead to a shift of the *Brahman Dharma* from sacrifice performance to meditation and realization of one's true self. Irfan Habib and Vijay Kumar Thakur, *The Vedic Age and The Coming of The Iron C.1500-700 BC*, (Delhi: Tiluka Books, 2009), 59.

great sage called *Harirumata Gautam*.[38] The Verse revealing the induction of *Satyakama* into the learning of the Vedas explains him as a *Brahman* he wants to follow the path of truth.[39] It is this quality of *Satyakama* that makes him an adherer of *Brahmana Dharma,*

not his birth or where he comes from. Another example can be found within the *Aitareya Brahmana* where a *Brahman* has a *Shudra* wife and their son goes on to compose the *Aitareya Brahmana*.[40] On the matter of quality or *Guna,* the *Bhagvad Gita* further clarifies *Varna* theology. Within the *Bhagvad Gita* the terms used in context to the *Chatur-Varna* (i.e. the four *Varna*) is *Guna-Karma* (i.e. Quality/character - performance/occupation).[41]

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[38] *Jabala* was a servant-maid during the later Vedic period as referenced in the *Chandogaya Upnishada*. Maurice Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda: The Ancient Religion of India*, (New York: Knickerboker Press, 1908), 225.

[39] The Verse reads, "'the boy went to Master *Haridrumata Gautama* and said: 'I want to become a student of sacred wisdom. May I come to you, Master?' To him the Master asked: 'Of what family thou art my son?' 'I do not know of what family I am', answered *Satyakama*. 'I asked my mother and she said: I do not know, my child, of what family thou art. In my youth, I was a poor and served as a maid to many masters, and then I had thee: I therefore do not know what family thou art. My name is *Jabala* and thy name *Satyakama*. 'I am therefore *Satyakama Jabala*, Master.' To him Gautama said: Thou art a *Brahman*, since thou hast not gone away from truth. Come my son, I will take thee as a student.'" See Juan Mascaro, Trans. *The Upanishads*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1965), 116.

[40] According to this myth, A *Rishi* (saint presumably *Brahman*) had two wives. One of his wives was a *Brahman* and the other a *Shudra*. It is said the son born from the *Shudra* woman felt neglected and the woman as well as her son took refuge into the soil. The woman taught her son the sacred wisdom for twelve years (which is considered to be the appropriate period of time it takes to grasp the Vedic knowledge). Upon completion the boy composed the *Aitareya Brahmana*. See, Sen, *Hinduism*, 52

[41] In Verse 13 of the *Bhagvad Gita* during the battle of *Kurukshetra Krishna* says to *Arjuna* that he created the *Varna* on the basis of the quality and inclinations of the four human types so that they follow occupations akin to their qualities. This is quite contrary to the assumption of *Varna* being birth

Radhakrishnan emphasises that according to the Bhagvad Gita, the *Varna* division should be done on the basis of each man's aptitude and character, not birth.[42]Birth (*Janma*) is repeatedly discredited throughout the Vedic literature as the basis of *Varna*. From *Vishishtha* to *Vishwamitra* to *Vidhur,* all are specimens of pivotal figures in Hinduism who were of lower birth and attained the status of *Brahmana*.[43]Being a *Brahman* (the pursuer of knowledge/truth) was to find unity of self (*atman*) with the Supreme Being (*Bramah*). *Bramah* is said to be inside every individual, he is considered to be the thread that binds humanity together and he is the creator as well as the created. The *Brahman* (or rather every pursuer of true knowledge) is supposed to achieve salvation form the transmigration of soul through this state of unity of self with *Bramah*. This state is bound to the theory of *Karma*[44]where an individual is reborn endlessly until he achieves *moksha* (salvation) on the bases of his actions in each life.[45]To simply state the Karmic theory, it is "a theory of rebirth based on the moral quality of previous lives" [46] hereby meaning, one who has not been morally fit or has been unfit towards his duty (*Dharma*) would be reborn into a life of suffering. Mircea Eliade in *The Myth of*

based. See, Nadkarni, "Demolishing a Myth", 4786

[42] He uses the word "caste" to explain the above but due to the nature of this study I have abstained from using the word to avoid confusion, See Radhakrishnan, (The Hindu Way of Life, 79)

[43] *Vishishtha* is considered to be one of the *Saptrishis* (seven prominent saints in the Hindu theology), *Vyasa* is considered to be the author of the *Mahabharta* and *Vidhur* is one of the central characters in the Mahabharata who is also a low born or *Shudra*. See, Ibid, 86-87.

[44] The theory of *Karma* appears for the first time in the Upanishadic literature. Habib and Thakur, *The Vedic Age*, 60-61.

[45] Cybelle Shattuck, *Hinduism*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 28-29.

[46] Robert P.Goldman, "Karma, Guilt and Buried Memories: Public Fantasy and Private Reality in Traditional India", *Journal of American Oriental Society* 105 (1985): 414

The Eternal Return while discussing human suffering and plausible explanations in various cultures regarding it refers to the Karmic theory in the Indian context. According to him, there is nothing (in reference to human sufferings) that "does not find a justification in this divine economy"[47]. What Eliade means by the term "divine economy" is the operation of the Karmic theory, where one is born with a Karmic debt and absolving that debt and all the suffering that befalls is necessary for him to balance out his Karmic slate. Suffering, here, becomes not only a function of life, but is also encouraged in a sense to absolve oneself of previous wrong doings or sins. However, this is a rather simplistic picture. According to *Advaita Vedanta*[48]*,* the theory of *Karma* is a complex idea where a

Karman (an act) creates *Karmasaya* (Karmic residue)[49] which can further be *Dharma* (a dutiful act) or *Adharma* (an undutiful act) which is rooted within the *Samaskara* (dispositional tendencies) which is further classified into two kinds: *Vasana* (this is a disposition which when activated produces memory of the originating act) and *Klesa* (this when activated produces suffering). It is this *Klesa* that is responsible for the human being's constant condition of Karmic debt which, when one dies, along with *Vasana* and Karmic

[47]   Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History*,(New York: Princeton University Press,1954), 48.

[48]   Flood notes that *Vedantas* refer to the Upanishads and the continuity of the Upnishadic philosophy, See: Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, 238

[49]   To clarify further on the matter of Karmic Residue according to Chadha and Trakakis, there are three kinds of Karmic residues namely *Sancita* (all accumulated *Karma* of the past), *Parabadha* (Karmic residue that shapes life) and *Agami* (residues of future acts that are yet to be acquired). Thus, while referring to *Yogastura* of *Patanjali* (an ancient south Indian scripture) and *Bhagvad Gita* they suggest that the *Sancita* and *Prabadha* are in the past but the *Agami* can be reduced by practicing paths like *Karma-Yoga* and meditation. See, Monima Chadha and Nick Trakakis, "Karma and Problem of Evil: A Response to Kauffman", *Philosophy of East and West* 55 (2007) 538-540.

residue, gathers together within the sentient being or the immortal soul (*Bramah*) which is to transmigrate until they are transferred into a new being and this process decides the *Jati* (birth/specie), *Ayus* (lifetime) and *Bhoga* (painful or pleasurable experiences) of the new life.[50]Thus, to summarise this entire mechanism, the unification of the *atman* with the *Barmah* and attainment of *Moksha* functions under the laws of *Karma* which are driven by *dharma* and *Adharma*. *Varna* is thus a symbolic representation of the *Dharma* of the four human types. This abstract symbolic representation of the human existence, its purpose and its journey towards enlightenment besides being a specimen of Indo-Aryan intellect also poses a problem due to this very abstraction. 'The symbolic universe of individuals or groups requires a material base for expression and the material base influences the formation of the symbolic universe'.[51]This exchange between the "material" and "the symbolic universe", case in point; the Hindu society and *Varna* theology causes the earlier mentioned disjunction. As time goes by, the nature and landscape of the Indo-Aryan settlements change, from pastoral nomads to agricultural settlers. The Indo-Aryans expand their relatively smaller settlements from the North-Western frontier, Punjab and Haryana towards western Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Bihar during the later-Vedic period.[52]Discovery of

[50] Karl H. Potter, "The Karma Theory and Its Interpretations in Some Indian Philosophical Systems", in *Karma and Rebirth in Indian Classical Tradition, Wendi Doniger O'Flaherty eds.*(New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1983), 243-244.

[51] F. Franco and Sarvar V Sherry Chand, "Ideology as Social Practice: The Functioning of Varna" Economic and Political Weekly 24 (1989): 2601.

[52] Irfan Habib and Vijay Kumar Thakur do make a reference to the role of agriculture in the Rig Vedic society yet they also emphasise that Pastoral existence was the primary state of being of the Indo-Aryans during the Rig Vedic period. See Habib and Thakur, *Vedic Age*, 11-13: Sharma, *India's Ancient Past, 107-122.*

Iron and surplus Grain production (a shift from Barley to Wheat and Rice is observed) leads to state formation (*Janapada*) from small tribal chiefdoms and a fully functional state is eventually observed in *Kautalia*'s *Arthashastra* during the Mauryan period.[53]

Consequently, from a theological stand point, one of the major developments of this period are the Law book of *Manusmriti* also known as *Manava Dharmashastra* and the *Dharmasutras* that realized the *Varna* theology into the Hindu society.

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[53] According to R.S Sharma, from the Rig Vedic period to the later Vedic period due to the eastward descend of the Indo-Aryans new cultures were encountered which lead to the development of what he calls "Middle-Indo Aryan languages" like Pali and Prakrit. Also, new occupations like Horsemen, blacksmiths among others developed that catalysed state formation and helped in the making of a stratified society. See, R.S Sharma, The State and Varna Formation in the Mid Ganga Plains: *An Ethnoarchaeological View* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 62-63; Sharma, *India's Ancient Past*, 118-124.

3.Jatization

A broadly Indo-Aryan population came in contact with smaller native tribes due to Hinduism's eastward expanse. According to Senart, *Manusamriti* has inherent contradictions. *Manu,* on one hand argues for the *Varna* as *Caste* bound by birth which should not be meddled with and then admits the possibility of a *Shudra* enjoying kingly power.[54]Senart also struggles to understand the contradiction within the Epic of *Mahabharata* where *Brahamans* like *Drona* are fighting wars and low born men like *Karan* have kingly endeavours even though the doctrine of *Manu* is specifically draconian towards transgressions of caste roles within the established hierarchy. He then makes an observation wherein he states that these contradictions represent "an attempt to bring the whole (new native tribes) into conformity with an ideal type"[55] but on the flip side, it

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[54] Emile Senart, *Caste in India*, (London: Methuen, 1930), 97-101.
[55] Ibid, 100-101.

could easily have been a struggle to retain the sacredness of the Vedic theology of *Varna* in the face of a post-Vedic social transformations and a failed attempt to create social organizational structures that were elastic. However, this remains a matter of speculation. What can certainly be said though is that, this society which was earlier functioning under an uncomplicated socio-economic model that drew its authority from abstract Vedic theological ideas was certainly undergoing radical changes. The Vedic idea of *Varna* as occupational classification not bound by birth was soon compromised as new tribes, with new occupations and crafts (unlike in the Rig-Vedic society) were encountered. Bhandarkar makes references to tribes that were not only brought under the Vedic influence by the Aryans rather he uses the phrase "became mixed with" which suggests that inter breeding between these tribes and the Indo-Aryans led to the production of many mixed-breeds.[56]These

mixed-breeds can be referred to as *Jatis*.[57]*Jatis* can be identified as birth based classifications and could be ethnic in nature as well but, due to the Vedic Aryan disposition towards social organization, *Jati* was brought under the umbrella of the four-fold *Varna* to create homogeneity.[58] This arrangement implied that people who belonged to a particular ethnic tribe or *Jati* were identified with the *Varna* most suited to them on the basis of their occupation. To explain, it meant that if all the people of a particular ethnic tribe worked as peasants then, due to the nature of their job being that of servitude would automatically become *Shudras*.[59]In this respect, not only does *Jati* emerge as a sub-caste within the framework of *Varna* theology, rather, it trans-

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[56]   D.R Bhandarkar, "Aryan Immigration into Eastern India", *Annals of Bhadarkar Oriental Research Institution*12 (1931): 104.

[57]   Harshad R. Trivedi,"Discussion: Varna and Jati-Some New Thoughts", *Sociological Bulletin* 46 (1997): 139-140.

[58]   Ibid, 141.

[59]   Srinivas, *Village, Caste, Gender*, 97.

forms *Varna* theology into caste by connecting it to "birth based" occupational classifications. One aspect of this process is indicated in the ritual of *Varna Samkara* unions (inter *Varna* marriages)[60]. The *Dharmasutras* (specifically *Baudiyan*) which were created prior to the *Manusamriti* explain how the process of *Anulome* and *Prtilome* marriages between new tribes and Indo-Aryans were one of the ways in which a *Varna-Jati* model of caste based on birth was established.[61]

This Jatized model of *Varna* gained highest importance in statecraft as well as social interactions within the *Manusamriti*, *Arthashastra*, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayna* among others that followed the *Dharmasutras*.[62]This is how *Manu* refers to the Chandalas[63], "This person of wretched birth (Chanda-

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[60]   The *Varnasamkara* Unions besides being inter *Varna* (*Jatized Varna* or Caste) marriages were looked down upon in general and during this period one of the major duties of the king (in conjunction with the Brahmans) was to discourage this trend and insure purity through endogamy. See, V.N Jha, "*Varnasamkara* in the *Dhramsutras*: Theory and Practice", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 13 (1970): 274-275

[61]   *Anulome* marriages (where a man of higher caste married a women of lower caste) and *Pratilome* marriages (where a woman of higher caste married the man of a lower caste), they figure out in the four *Dharmashastras* of *Apstamba*, *Gautam*,

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Baudyian and *Vishishtha*. There are references which specify that *Anulome* and *Pratilome* marriages were more common than would have been accepted by the orthodox Hindus. See: V.N Jha, "*Varnasamkara* in the *Dhramsutras*: Theory and Practice", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 13 (1970): 273-274: Vivekanand Jha,"Caste, Untouchability and Social Justice: Early North Indian Perspective", *Social Scientist 25* (1997): 22-24; Suvira Jaiswal, "Varna Ideology and Social Change", *Social Scientist* 19 (1991): 45; K. M. Sen, *Hinduism*, 29.

[62]   Jha,   'Caste, Untouchability", 23-24.

[63]   The *Chandalas* are believed to be the first "unctouchables" who were considered outside the *Chatur-Varna* by Manu, considered to be much like the Shudra of lower birth and first recognized theoretically by Manu under the Jati-Varna model as an unholy *Pratiloma* union between a *Shudra* and a *Brahman* See: Ibid

la/Shudra), if he tries to place himself on the same seat with a man of higher caste (Brahman), shall be branded on his hip and be banished, or the (king) shall cause his buttocks to be gashed". If out of arrogance, he spits (on a superior), the king shall cause both of his lips to be cut off. If he urinates (on him), the penis should be cut off. If he breaks wind against him, then, the anus. If he lays hold of the hair of a superior, let the king unhesitatingly cut off his hands. Similarly should his hands be cut off, if he holds? Also, the feet, the beard, the neck or the scrotum'[64]. This might have been a metaphor for severity of the *Jatized Varna* model to instil fear in case of its non-compliance yet, it displays the intensity of the *Jatized Varna* in social interactions. An example of its role in statecraft can be found in the *Manu Samriti* and the *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahabharata*.

Where on the one hand, Manu suggests that the *Dharma* of the ruler is preservation of the *Chatur*-Varna, *Shanti Parva* orders the king to consider confusion in *Varna* order as high treason or rebellion against the state.[65] Historically, a struggle for power between the *Janapadas* begins during this period as strong states develop in the mid and upper-genetic plain as well as the doab region out of which *Magadha, Koshala, Vatsa* and *Avanti* were considered *Mahajanapadas*. However, this struggle for power beginning with Bimbisara as the ruler of Magadha changed hands from one dynasty to another and found its culmination in the rule of *Ashoka* with the capture of *Kalinga* in 273 BCE. Meanwhile, it reached its highest glory under the Mauyran rule which began with *Chandragupta Maurya* who was the grandfather of to Ashoka.[66]

[64]   Shridhar V. Ketkar, *Evidence of the Laws of Manu on the Social Conditions in India during the Third Century A.D., Interpreted and Examined*, (New York: Taylor and Carpenter, 1909), 156.

[65]   Ram Sharan Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 2005), 233-243.

[66]   Ram Sharan Sharma indicates 16 Mahajanpadas (super-

Socially, on the other hand, from *Dharmasutras* where state formation begins in post-Vedic period to *Arthashastra*; the Mauryan treatise on rules for ideal social, economic and political conduct (300 BCE-100 CE), a full-fledged state with strong administrative system is observed by Habib and Jha. This meant a strong ruling class with claim to massive surplus generated in the economy, an even stronger priestly class to legitimize the ruling class and *Varna* (riddled with hierarchy fixed by birth, fixed hereditary occupations and endogamy) becoming the basis of governance that oppressed the lower *Varnas* particularly the Shudras.[67]Kautaliya's *Arthashastra* while taking hints from the *Dharmasutras* an*d Manusamriti* re-imposes the same claims that the *dharma* of the ruler is the preservation of the *Chatur-Varna*. References to untouchability and slavery are also observed by Habib and Jha within the *Arthashastra*the basis of which was the caste system (I will use the word caste system hence forth for the Jatized *Chatur-Varna* system). Ritual of *Varnaashrama*[68]which was

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states) during the Age of Buddha as referred in Pali texts. Further various important territories to the development of Hindu theology were first brought under organized state-hood during this period. Including the Kingdom of Kashi with Varanasi as its capital, Koshala's Capital Ayodhya which is referenced as the kingdom of King Ram in Ramayana, Vatsa's Capital Kaushambi near Hastinapur, Allahbad which was the Capital of the Kuru Clan in epic of Mahabharata during the later-Vedic period. Magadha however, became the most powerful Mahajanpada due to its rich Iron resources, strategic geographical advantage and easy access to rivers for mobility and irrigation. See, Sharma, *India's Ancient Past*, 146-152.

[67] Irfan Habib and Vivekanand Jha, *Mauryan India*, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009), 130-132.

[68] I have abstained from mentioning *Varnashrma* this far as it invites a greater theological debate. However, it gained large social importance in this period which is why it has become paramount to give a compact picture of it. *Varnashrama* was a privilege of the *dvija* (the twice born) which can be identified as the Brahmans, Khatriyas and Vashiyas. The Shudras were denied this privilege. It

one of the oldest caste rituals found a deeper expression and insistence in the pre-Mauryan scriptures as well.[69]Even heterodox movements like that of *Buddhism* and *Jainism* which were born out of the caste struggle between the priests and the rulers during the later Vedic and pre-Mauryan period, did not counter the caste system,[70] rather references can be found in the *Mjjhima Nikaya* (one of the *Sutta Pittkas*) of recognition being provided to caste system.[71]

Another outcome of this *Jatized Varna* model meant a change in definition of terms that were bound to the *Varna* theology during the Vedic period. A hermeneutical shift can be observed in how the later and post Vedic theologians defined *Dharma* in this context. For example, Manu defines *Dharma* as custom rather than duty. An argument

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was signified through a sacred thread tied across the body of the *Divja* according to which these castes were supposed to obverse the first twenty five years of their life as a Student (*Brahmacharya*), the next twenty five years as a Householder (*Grihastya*), the twenty five as a Hermit (*Vanaprasthya*) and eventually the final years of his life as Renouncer (Samnyasa). References of the system as an ideological framework can be found in Vedic-Hymns but this developed as a comprehensive system as *Jatis* came into being. (See R.N Dandekar, "The Role of Man in Hinduism" in Kenneth W. Morgan eds. *The Religion of the Hindus* (New York: Ronald Press, 1953) 136-142; Cybelle Shattuck, *Hinduism*, 31-33; R.C Zaehner, *Hinduism*, 141-142;Radhakrishnan, *Hindu Way of Life*, 58-59.

[69] References in *Arthshastra* can be found where *Kautaliya* stresses the need for following of *Ashrma* duties by respective castes or predicts destruction if the contrary is allowed. (U.N Ghoshal, "On a Recent Estimate of the Social and Political System of the Maurya Empire", *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 40 (1959): 65.

[70] Sharma, *India's Ancient Past*, 130-143.

[71] Buddha explains in *Mjjhima Nikaya* 93 that in the *Janapadas* there are only two *Varnas* that of Masters and Salves. The masters (*aaya*) may choose to become slaves but the slaves can never aspire to become a master (*dasa*); which depicts the total lack of flexibility in the *Jatized-Varna* during the Mauryan period beside Buddhism's ignorance towards it. See Habib and Jha, *Mauryan India*, 134-135.

against this could be that *Dharma* is context specific but the post Vedic re-construction of contexts changed the theological implications of *Dharma* as well. The Vedic context of each *Varna* pursuing their *dharma* was contingent on the realization of one's own *Varna* on the basis of one's *Guna* (aptitude). But the post Vedic *Dharma* was contingent upon *Jati* (caste), *Kula* (family) and *Desa* (country/state).[72]*Dharma* transformed from the "cosmogonic act of ritual" to an ethical norm constructed to uphold status quo in the socio-religious milieu.[73]Hence, the *Dharmasutras*, *Dhramashastras* and *Arthashastra* in particular became social and ethical codes of conduct based on division of a *Jatized Varna* that drew their authority from the Vedic texts through reinterpretation of *Dharma* and allaying concepts. Another allied concept mentioned ear-

lier was that of the Karmic theory. (see 2.2) Karmic theory becomes particularly precarious in sanctifying the *Jatized* model of *Varna* which shall be discussed under the heading; Over-sanctification.

4. Over-Sanctification
4.1 Rappaport's concept of Over-sanctification

Rappaport's discourse on the concept of sacred (or the interchangeable term, ultimate sacred postulates) is fairly detailed and kaleidoscopic in nature which echoes through his three seminal works spanning a career in the anthropology of religion of over three decades. I shall try to summarize and restrict myself to only the basic analysis provided by him on the subject which is relevant to this chapter, i.e. Over-sanctification, which figures out majorly in his final book.

Rappaport defines sanctity as "the quality of unquestionableness imputed by congregations to postulates in their nature objectively unverifiable

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[72]   Flood, *Introduction to Hinduism*, 53-58.

[73]   Wilhelm Halbfass, "The Idea of the Veda and the Identity of Hinduism" in: *Defining Hinduism*, J.E. Llewellyn eds. (London: Equino, 2005), 26-27.

and absolutely unfalsifiable"[74]. In his final book, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity,* Rappaport essentially emphasizes how the aforementioned "congregations" through ritual ascribe meaning to human existence. The "unverifiable" and "unfalsifiable" postulate i.e. "Sacred" in Rappaports view becomes a pivotal part of ritual's manifestation. But he differentiates between "Sacred" or as he calls it "Ultimate Sacred Postulates" and the "Sanctified". Here in, the issue of social specificity is encountered. Rappaport claims in the book that '…the postulate (or sacred) is virtually devoid of social specificity…' and the sanctified, on the other hand, which draws its authority from the sacred itself, is socially specific.[75]

Durkheim's take on sacred as "things protected and isolated by prohibition" resonates clearly in the way Rappaport approaches sacred. The unverifiable and unfalisifiable nature of sacred makes it undeniable (in theory) yet compliable (in practice). Further, language as a symbolic mode of ascribing sacredness to objects or rituals or words in Rappaports view is paramount. To quote Rappaport, '…the concept of the sacred has not only been made possible by symbolic communication (language), but it has made symbolic communication (upon which human adaptation rests) possible. This implies that the idea of the sacred is as old as language and that the evolution of language and of the idea of the sacred was closely related…'[76]The spoken word or the written word gain importance in this respect and become decisive in the declaration of the sacredness of things. These declarations of sacredness in Rappaport's view are answers to the "ultimate questions" of human existence that rest in ritual.

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[74]   Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 281.
[75]   Ibid, 313-317.

[76]   Roy A. Rappaport, "The Sacred in Human Evolution", *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 2 (1971): 30.

For Rappaport sacred (as defined earlier) works within ritual in form of symbols but he also explains its reach beyond ritual alone into the political, economic or social orderliness.[77] Here is where the concept of sanctification unravels. According to Rappaport, the process of sanctification essentially draws or flows from the sacred to establish orderliness in spheres of human structures (economic, political, social etc.). It thus becomes contingent on what he calls the "adaptation" process based on certain regulatory mechanisms.[78] 'Sanctification' is thus considered by Rappaport, as a certification of maxims that ensure orderly (to a certain extent) social interactions.[79] This flow from the sacred to the sanctified for the maintenance of orderliness becomes precarious due to the very nature of sacred as an unquestionable postulate. He suggests that the sanctified by

its very nature is specific and masquerades sacred, (which is devoid of specificity). Hence, when social realities change, the sacred due to its ambiguous, none-specific nature remains adaptive to reinterpretation[80] but the sanctified, having been caught up in specificity, becomes an opposition to social evolution as well as historical processes, the regulatory mechanisms become maladaptive and sanctification becomes a dogma, which is, Over-sanctification. This is a simplified overview of Rappaport's concept of over-sanctification as going into greater detail might lead to unnecessary digression (form the context of this chapter).Keeping the above analysis in sight and based on the narrative of the development of caste within Ancient Hindu history reflected in this chapter, I will summarize by identifying *Varna* as the sanctified through the Ultimate sacred postulate of *Karma* and the Jatization of *Varna* as the process of Over-sanctification of

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[77]   Ibid, 29-31.

[78]   Roy A. Rappaport, *Humanity*, 146.

[79]   Roy A. Rappaport, "Ritual, Sanctity and Cybernetics", *American Anthropologist*, 73 (1971): 69.

[80]   Roy A. Rappaport, *Humanity*, 428-429.

the sanctified. In doing so, I will claim the loss of sacredness within *Karma* and its maladaptation.

4.2 Karma and Over-sanctification

According to Rappaport the Ultimate sacred postulates are unfalsifiable and unverifiable due to the quality of unquestionableness imputed upon them by congregation thus, the sacred postulates are a mode of understanding as well as elevating a congregation's idea of the Universe. One of the ways the Hindu Universe realizes its creation is through the *Purushsukta* myth of the Rig Veda[81], it gives shape to the Hindu Universe. The importance of *Brahman, Khatriya, Vaishya* and *Shudra* is realized and epitomized within the framework of a Hindu's Universe for the first time through this hymn. Its interpretation as may be, but due to its very nature of being abstract, open-ended and non-specific (in terms of meaning), is what provides it with the sacredness that it transmits to sanctify the theology of *Varna* division. The Karmic law then flows through into the *Varna* theology as it vehicles the union of *atman* with the *Purusha* or *Bramah* and enables the union of a Hindu with the Hindu universe.

But, the *Jatization* of *Varna* and its Over-sanctification within the Hindu society in lieu of social, economic and political orderliness led to a failure of the regulatory mechanisms installed. Rigidity of a specified social order led to loss of adaptability which in turn led to loss of sacredness and meaning within Hindu Theology. To illustrate, In the *Vedantas,* suffering is an illusion, the existence of the universe beginning-less as well as endless; the human experience is also not real. In such an abstract state of being, the only law that governs the universe is that of *Karma*.[82] But by realizing it in the social sphere through the *Varna-Jati* model

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[81] J.N. Farquhar and H.D. Griswold, *The Religious Quest of India*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 345-346.

[82] Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, 99-100.

Karma loses it dynamism, adaptability and starts furnishing explanations for the maintenance of status-quo rather than change in interpretation with changing times. To clarify, once *Varna* becomes a matter of birth, then, *Dharma* implies one's caste duty and Karmic theory starts regulating the system in the following manner; The *dharma* of the *Shudra* becomes to function as himself and his self is determined by his birth, his birth in turn had been determined by his past life's *Adharma*. Thus, he himself becomes responsible for the oppression that is inflicted upon him on the one hand and on the other hand, rebellion to the caste system would imply *Adharma* in current life which might not let him transmigrate into a better life. His only salvation lies in following his caste duty and the law of Karma shall take care of the rest in consequent lives. Caste (henceforth caste will imply birth based *Jatized-Varna*) becomes a dogma and *Karma*, in this sense becomes the perfect mode of oppres-

sion and loses sacredness.[83]Moreover, this is how the loss of meaning in *Varna* theology occurs; *Varna* was bound to *dharma* to attain *Mokhsa*[84] through the vehicle of *Karma*. Now, many may have attained *Moksha* but none have experienced it in their lifetime, hence it is important

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[83]   Max Weber, *The Religion of India*, (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), 118-119. Michael B. Shwartz, "Indian Untouchable Texts of Resistance: Symbolic Domination and Historical Knowledge", *Social Analyst: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 25 (1989): 133-134: Francis X. Clooney, "Evil, Devine Omnipotence and Human Freedom: *Vedantas* Theology of *Karma*", *The Journal of Religion* 69 (1989) : 534-535.

[84]   Moksha has been defined earlier as salvation. *Moksha* remains a term defined differently by different Hindu traditions. Some consider it to be a state of existence thereby implying that it can be attained in one's lifetime but that is identified more so as the idea of painless living. On the other hand more commonly *Moksha* is considered to be a post-mortem stage whereby implying freedom from the transmigration of soul. See, Arvind Sharma, *Classical Hindu Thought: An Introduction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001) 116-119.

to realize that *Moksha* through *Karma* remains sacred until it functions within the spiritual realm as it maintains its quality of unquestionableness[85]. When observed within the social realm it is devoid of proof hence, questionable thereby meaning not sacred anymore. Moreover, within the social sphere it has unpleasant social ramifications, as has been elucidated.

5. Concluding Remarks

As illustrated, Caste started developing around the later-Vedic period but crystallized socially during the Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan period. During this period it found greater sanctification in liturgy as well. It became an instrument of oppression in the hands of the ruling elite and the priestly castes that drew their authority from said liturgy which was a displaced reinterpreted of Vedic theology. According to Rappaport, "Rituals become parts of deceit if they if they lead the faithful into bondage while offering salvation".[86] While keeping the above statement in mind, Caste is a theological deceit. It offers spiritual freedom in lieu of social bondage. The Law of Karma offers "fatalistic reassurances" to the oppressed while bolstering their socially constructed caste identities and raising it to the level of naturally ordered existential states.[87]Karma thus inevitably provides sameness in an ever changing universe. It gives one a sense of control,

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[85] According to Rappaport, stronger the quality of Unquestionableness of the sanctified the closer it is to the sacred or the Ultimate Sacred Postulate. According to him, due to the Ultimate Sacred Postulate's empirical non-verifiability they cannot be falsified. Therefore, it becomes easier for the congregations to accept their non-empirical and non-rational nature as it "invests them with mystery". He further suggests that their vagueness also gives them the quality to be reinterpreted in the future and remain adaptable to change. See, Rappaport, *Humanity*, 280-281; Rappaport, *Ecology, Meaning and Religion*, 155-156.

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[86] Rappaport, *Humanity*, 447.
[87] Whitley Kauffman, "Karma Rebirth and Problem of Evil", *Philosophy East and West* 55 (2005): 27.

a control over one's unseen life in the form of a *Dharmic* (dutiful) path that could lead to a better state of existence. A theory so complete in its philosophical rationale, the Karmic theory tries to explain everything, from the state of well-being to the state of suffering. As Berger explains, it is such a theory which due to its all-embracing nature, provides an explanation of everything that exists in the universe that further assumes the life of a human being to a mere causal link in the ever ending chain of events that transpire in the universe.[88] But, the problematic of its disposition towards explaining everything renders its adherents impervious to questioning the state to things, in turn making them susceptible to oppression. This problem becomes an unmitigated disaster when it is put to practice in the social sphere. Such a grand unified theory that explains all, when used as a tool for legitimizing social organization like that of the caste system as I have observed, turns economic, social, political and historical institutions into divine or natural institutions empowering them with unconceivable and unverifiable power or influence.

Many believe that caste cannot be done away with due to its deep rooted integration with Hinduism. Also, caste as a Hindu institution is either denied or justified by most Hindu theologians. I believe that by focusing on the loss of sacredness and meaning in Hinduism due of *Jatization* of *Varna*, it is possible to change the discourse on caste within Hindu theology. I believe it needs to be disentangled from the idea of birth thereby freeing it from the law of *Karma* and its narrow functionality in the social sphere to restore its sacredness within the Hindu spiritual universe. This in my view is the only way Hinduism can go back to its ancient sense of mysticism and wonder which it has lost in the orderliness of caste hierarchies. This paper is a modest attempt in that direction.

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[88]   Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967) 65.