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Ethnic Identity in a Complex Society : The Badaga Case

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Ethnic Identity in a Complex Society: The Badaga Case

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1. INTRODUCTION

Many technical terms in cultural anthropology have been adopted from common English, French or German speech. This has generally been an aid to comprehensibility, yet it has inevitably led to a certain amount of confusion as the terms have been modified in accordance with further research, in the process moving away somewhat from their commonly understood meanings.

The early anthropological work in India was particularly susceptible to such a development of terminology, for in the last century British imperial administrators there were obliged to write in detail about a society that was wholly alien to them. In some instances the administrators and lawmakers in India were able to borrow technical terms from local languages, including many adoptions from Persian, the language of the preceding Moghul administration. But with new undertakings, like the railways, the Survey of India, and the national census, new terms were called for which English could normally supply.

By the early twentieth century a variety of European anthropologists, both amateur and professional, were commencing detailed ethnographic work in the South Asian subcontinent; and as they did so they found themselves using some of the established government terminology, but then having to modify it further to fit newly perceived social realities.

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By the middle decades of the twentieth century this interaction between anthropological usage and official terminology in India was overtaken by a new, urgent and unlooked-for development. Certain categories of people who were already well-known to anthropologists by such general labels as “tribe” and “Untouchable” were now to receive special benefits from the government *by reason of* their membership in those categories. Quickly what had been an aid to intellectual discourse became politicised, as increasing numbers of people in diverse segments of society realised the advantages of getting themselves “correctly” categorised. Political leaders, too, were not slow to capitalise on the situation, since in the modern Indian democracy categories of people have come to mean manipulable blocks of voters.

Yet still the anthropologists soldier on with the task of developing a terminology that meets the needs of their analytical work. The present paper looks at the history of this intellectual endeavour, and the even more important development of ideas about the social uplift of India’s most disadvantaged social categories.

2. CASTE AND TRIBE IN RECENT SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY

As a glance through the index of many modern ethnographies is likely to reveal, the word “tribe” is still being used in anthropological analyses of innumerable Third World societies. It has even taken on a distinctly political tone in some parts of the world, notably present-day Africa, for which the new term “tribalism” has been coined (first used in this sense in 1955; *The Times*, 30 Aug. 9/7) to refer to a process of putting one’s tribal loyalties above national ones.

In South Asia, the area with which this paper is concerned, the term “tribe” is still widely used today, although there it is associated with or contrasted with—in many people’s minds—the concept of caste. A large number of descriptive ethnographies were produced there by British authorities about a century ago, each bearing the words “Castes and Tribes of...” in the title (these are fully indexed in Hockings [1992: 309–362]). We cannot say however that the British *created* these terms during their dealings with the diverse Indian population, for Megasthenes had already identified some Indian tribes a good 2000 years before the British arrived; while it was the sixteenth century Portuguese who, by 1563, had adapted their word *casta* (“race, lineage, breed”) to the categories of people they were encountering in India, just as the word was entering the English language.

By the end of the last century so much in the way of amateur accounts of caste practices had been published, and so much discovered by Indologists about the ancient ways of each caste-category, that a number of major European sociologists (or “political economists”) began to advance distinct theories

about the whole phenomenon they now called "the caste system." Among these scholars we may note Karl Marx, who emphasised the stability of the caste system as providing the basis of the Asiatic mode of production; Henry J. S. Maine, who saw caste as an example of non-contractual "status society"; Émile Senart, who discussed caste as a system of stratification that was based on purity of descent and purity of occupation; Max Weber, who also saw caste as a system of status stratification supported by other-worldly doctrines of Hinduism; Camille Bouglé, who noted the hereditary specialization, hierarchy and mutual repulsion as being the basis of the caste system; and A. M. Hocart, who viewed caste as a system of social hierarchy based on the right of each caste to perform certain rituals and services for the feudal lords.

It is quite noticeable that all of these scholars took caste as an important analytic concept to elucidate, yet rarely had anything of theoretical import to say about the tribe. Perhaps they felt that, with tribes so widespread in Africa, Australia and the Americas as well as much of Asia, the category was a universal one that threw up no special problems in the Indian context.

But there certainly were problems there of a practical sort, for from the very beginning of Indian national census efforts in 1871–1872 the British administrators involved in producing the census were constantly running into difficulties over how to categorise a particular group—whether as a caste or as a tribe or as part of some larger unit. They were not always consistent in their decisions: it would be possible to recall some groups who were seen as a caste in one province but a tribe across the border; nor were they altogether consistent between each decennial census and the next one.

Once caste and tribe were established terms in scholarly discourse—in English as well as in other languages—they failed to acquire ironclad definitions, and there continued to be sufficient fluidity in the use of both terms in the South Asian context for some social groups to be identified as castes by certain authorities and as tribes by others, thus reflecting the ambiguity in the censuses. In the latter half of the twentieth century such anthropological theorists as Dumont, Bailey, Bêteille, Berreman and others have tried to straighten out the confusion in this matter that was largely the creation of the amateurs who came before them.

Tribe might have remained as a self-evident category for the administrators if their government had not eventually developed a rather novel idea for the social and economic uplift of "backward" groups: it was the creation of a Schedule of groups, including nearly all tribes and many low-status, Untouchable castes, who would henceforth be eligible for special governmental assistance, and whose dimensions were being recorded in the censuses.

The terms "Scheduled Caste" and "Scheduled Tribe" first came to prominence when they were enshrined in Article 341 of the Constitution of India (1949). They had already been in administrative use for about 15 years, since

they were coined by the Simon Commission and embodied in the Government of India Act (1935), Section 309. Perhaps surprisingly for a legal document, the Constitution does not offer a definition of these two terms, but instead states that the President of India, after consultation with the head of each State government, shall issue a notification of "the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes... which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes [and similarly Scheduled Tribes] in relation to that State." In other words, it was left to the good judgement and political forces (by no means the same thing) within each State government to decide which blocks of people under its administration should be on these Schedules. And of course the Schedules have been revised somewhat over the years, mainly by the addition of further names but sometimes by the "denotification" of a group—even when it remained Untouchable.

It is interesting, indeed surprising, that the Gandhians who framed the Constitution adopted the terms of the British government's Simon Commission rather than Gandhi's own favourite coinage, "Harijans" [GHURYE 1957: 240].

Under these legal provisions people from the designated groups are assured of a certain number of seats in parliament, a certain percentage of civil service positions (provided they meet the minimum required admission standards, however), and State governments provide further benefits. Most State governments in fact have a separate Harijan Welfare Department, and some have a Tribal Welfare Department, and all maintain their own list of Other Backward Classes too. These latter are essentially those groups that were not listed in the national Schedules, but who were subsequently able to persuade their own State governments of their "backwardness" or their worthiness for special privileges. Needless to add, effective political pressure and large blocks of potential voters have had a lot to do with these groups getting themselves designated as "backward," with the result that, as was mentioned earlier, groups of the same name and historical background are sometimes held to be "backward" in one State but not in the neighbouring one. At one point in the recent history of Karnataka the designation of who would be eligible for special privileges got so politicised that nearly eighty percent of the State's population became "backward" vis-à-vis the remaining twenty percent, mainly Lingayats and Brahmans, who thereafter found themselves disadvantaged but not backward. Tamil Nadu had seen a similar tendency. Obviously if "special benefits" are spread so widely through the general population, they hardly benefit anyone, especially not the most needy.

Recent commentators have drawn attention to the social inversion which is taking place when Untouchables and other people of lowly status are given special benefits by various arms of the government, while at the same time Brahmans and other high status persons are denied any such help. The ten-

sions which have inevitably arisen, and which led to widespread rioting in Gujarat some years ago, have appeared because this discriminatory legislation clearly spells the end of an age-old system of social distinctions based on relative purity. To the perplexed Brahmans it must seem strange and unfair that those who were traditionally marked with permanent pollution, who had the most menial, underpaid, and undesirable of jobs, and who could not come close to a Brahman, are now in colleges, government offices and even parliamentary seats from which Brahmans commonly find themselves excluded. It is indeed ironic that an early British term for Untouchables was "Exterior Castes." Today the Brahmans, especially of South India, are moving towards just that status.

In summary, then, the Indian Constitution created broad categories of under-privileged groups in the Republic of India that were to be the object of special administrative and welfare efforts. Three categories were named, though not really defined: Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. Very roughly, these were comprised respectively of: (1) Untouchables or Harijans; (2) virtually all Adivasis or tribes; and (3) some other economically disadvantaged groups not included in (1) or (2). In 1981 India had an estimated 105 million Scheduled Caste members and 52 million people in the Scheduled Tribes. The category of Other Backward Classes, always nebulous and fluctuating, is difficult to enumerate. Which castes and tribes were to be singled out for this special attention was solved for millions of concerned people by the publications of lists or Schedules that gave the names of those groups which were to be eligible.

3. CASTES AND TRIBES DEFINED AND UNDEFINED

At present the scholarly debate over castes and tribes is quiescent (cf. references at the end of this paper). But in an urgent sense the academic question of how to distinguish castes from tribes has been overtaken by the political ramifications of being identified with one or the other. With the many valuable material benefits for disadvantaged social groups that were in the gift of national or state governments in South Asia, especially in India, it was inevitable that many individuals would manipulate their social identity to their own advantage. This tendency was already becoming apparent at the beginning of the century, as particular caste groups sued for a higher ranking in the national censuses which the British authorities undertook every ten years. More recently however caste groups have been suing for *lower* social ranking, as they look with envy on the benefits that have been granted by governments to two particular categories, the Scheduled Tribes (i. e. tribals) and the Scheduled Castes (i. e. Untouchables).

To a considerable extent, then the designation of some groups in India as

castes and others as tribes has depended on differences of perception; and at the outset it was the perception of sundry nineteenth-century British writers. Ethnographic accounts then were studded with examples of unconscious bias. Hill tribes and jungle tribes like the Todas and the Kurumbas were portrayed in a sympathetic light by the romantic but untrained British writer: Why? Could it be that the Todas and the Kurumbas shared with the upper-class British residents of the Nilgiris the most favoured “sporting” haunts of the latter, namely the mountains and forests? What were seized on by these people as distinguishing characteristics of the two recognized kinds of social entity, tribe and caste, were the most visibly evident of features, the ecological settings of the communities under consideration. Thus innumerable writers discussed “hill tribes” and “jungle tribes,” but one scarcely ever reads of “plains tribes” and never at all of “urban tribes.” These last two locales were in common understanding the preserves of the “caste system.” It is true that in a few areas, such as the Terai bordering on Nepal, the British did document the culture of mountain-dwelling castes. But such anomalies were usually to be explained away by legends of former immigration from the plains. In fact, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that there has been a strong tendency in South Asia to claim that groups living above 1000 m above sea-level are tribes, while groups below that elevation are castes!

Among the earlier nineteenth-century non-academic writers there was an unconcerned fluidity in the use of what were only later to become technical anthropological terms, specifically in the use of *tribe*, *caste*, *class* and *race*. Beyond making the observation that “class,” “race” and “nation” are terms that have been used in India if anything even more loosely and haphazardly than “tribe” and “caste,” this paper will not explore these other concepts—steeped as they are in a history of British prejudices. But to illustrate: in one small region we find Leschenault de la Tour [1822: 260], Harkness [1832: 19], Ritter [1835: 1023], Mörike [1858: 96], Ostertag [1861: 86], Ouchterlony [1868: 58], Brecks [1873: 3], and Robertson [1875: 9], all calling the Badagas of the Nilgiri Hills a tribe or hill tribe. But these same writers were among those who assigned them to the “Hindu race,” viz: Harkness [1832: 31], Ritter [1835: 1023], Metz [1864: 99], and Brecks [1873: 4]. In addition, Mörike and Metz [1850: 133] viewed the Badagas as a “caste”; Ouchterlony [1868: 58] and Metz [1864: 48] also saw their social divisions as being “sub-divisions of caste” or as “eighteen different classes.” Evidently then, this example shows that there is no point in our seeking for consistency in the early use of these various terms. It was only after the anthropological writings of E. B. Tylor and Herbert Spencer had had some impact on the public, and the Census of India was getting itself organized (1871 and later), that these terms began to lead separate lives, so to speak. By 1908 we find Francis (p. 128) applying the non-committal term “communities” to the Badagas, the Todas and the Kotas; a wise step. In fact

the labelling of any Indian community as a tribe or as a caste could often be traced back to the mere stylistic whim of a nineteenth-century administrator. The words "tribe" and "caste" have been used so loosely in India that it would seemingly be better for an anthropologist to avoid them if he could.

Much of the recent anthropological literature on caste has adopted the Hindi word *jāti* as a technical concept to embrace both the English terms "caste" and "subcaste." This term *jāti*, now so widely used in India to designate an endogamous social unit, is used in this way too by the Badagas, as when they say *nanga ja:ti*, "our community." At the same time we must recall two points about the word: that it is a borrowing from Hindi/Sanskrit because Badaga has no ready equivalent; and secondly, its common usage in English anthropological writing today is largely a convenience of social scientists; for in Hindi and other Indo-Aryan languages the word really means something like "category," and so is applied not only to groups of people but to *jātis* of things like animals or metals. To the extent that Badagas use the term, we can say there is an emic concept of community; yet to any Badaga this very statement would be a self-evident truism, since only Badagas speak their language, live in their villages, and marry their womenfolk.

Another current and slightly less value-laden term than tribe or caste is "ethnic group." In recent years this term has been used to designate a population which:

1. is largely self-perpetuating biologically
2. shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms
3. makes up a field of communication and interaction
4. has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. [BARTH 1969: 10-11]

Adopting this useful concept, which is potentially universal and certainly applies to both tribes and castes, we might assert that such groups are found throughout South Asia in two basic forms, autochthonous ethnic groups and immigrant ethnic groups. And so, applying this seemingly simple distinction for example to the Nilgiri groups, we can hazard another classification, as follows:

<i>Autochthonous</i>	<i>Immigrant</i>
Todas	Kotas
Kurumba tribes	Badagas
Iruḷas	British, Tamilians, etc.

The artificiality of the dichotomy becomes apparent, however, when we realize that there is some archaeological evidence suggesting that the Todas arrived from the South Indian plains twelve or more centuries ago [HOCKINGS 1976]; furthermore, history hints at the Kurumbas' having been rulers of a lowland

kingdom, Kurumbranād, to the north and east some thirteen centuries ago. On the other hand it can be shown that the Kotas and Badagas came up onto the hills more recently, but still so many centuries ago that they have lost their connections with other castes on the plains and have become more like the ethnic groups they live amongst on the Nilgiris; more “tribe-like,” many would say.

4. PROBLEMS OF ASSIGNING PARTICULAR GROUPS TO CATEGORIES OF SHIFTING DEFINITION

So in asking whether groups like the Badagas are really a tribe or a caste, our first consideration is whether the question itself is a meaningful one sociologically. What *is* a tribe, what is a caste, and are Indian communities regularly one *or* the other? When does the question necessarily arise, and in what context is it meaningless or of little help to social analysis? How do peasant people view their own identity in a complex society like India? As a point of departure, let us consider the Badaga individual.

Some years ago, when a Badaga got off a bus in the distant cities of Coimbatore or Madurai, he mixed with a varied crowd of South Indians on the street, and yet might still stand out from them because of his characteristic turban, earrings and cold-weather clothing. If someone asked him where he was from, he would readily answer, “The Nilgiris.” And if the enquirer was persistent, the conversation might run on something like this: “Whereabouts?” “Coonoor” (his *taluk* or sub-district). “Where?” “Ka:te:ri village.” “Where?” “So:gatore” (the name of his particular hamlet). “What is your caste?” “Badaga.” “A Gauda?” “No, Lingayat.” This series of questions and answers would grow longer the more the questioner knew about Nilgiri society. But it regularly would become more specific about the Badaga’s home hamlet and his phratry; much as it would in Ireland or Nuerland [EVANS-PRITCHARD 1940: 136]. The Badaga perhaps let the stranger go on with his questions so as to indicate just how detailed the man’s knowledge of the Nilgiris might be. And the Badaga readily identified himself as being of the Badaga *caste*. However, if asked whether he belonged to the hill-tribes in times past he would generally have said No, and in support of this might either mention the folk-history of how his ancestors fled to the Nilgiri Hills from Mysore; or else would explain that the hill-tribes—Kotas, Todas and Kurumbas—are Scheduled Tribes, whereas Badagas in the government view have up till 1990 been a Backward Class, a status they tried hard to maintain over the years for its material benefits—until in 1990 they began demanding to be officially reclassified as a Scheduled Tribe! The implication of the man’s distinction is that Badagas think of themselves as culturally superior to, or not so primitive as, the indigenous hill-tribes. Yet the persistent questioner would soon discover that the Badagas,

whether Lingayats or not, were traditionally ill-informed of holy scriptures, did not believe in such a classic Hindu doctrine as rebirth, and instead of Brahman priests employ one of the Badaga clans as temple priests—a group of vegetarians who have no investiture of a sacred thread, who intermarry with meat-eating Badagas, and who until this century were quite illiterate. This is clearly not the Great Sanskritic Tradition. Despite the fact that our traveller may identify himself as a Lingayat, his community appears to be not very different in its culture from the neighbouring Kota tribe. A trait-by-trait comparison of their two cultures would bear this out.

The Badagas themselves are very much aware of their distinctiveness from the other Nilgiri communities: (1) only a Badaga person speaks the Badagu language, which derives from medieval Kannada; (2) a Badaga must marry another recognized Badaga—community endogamy is the rule, enforced by the sanction that a non-Badaga who lived as spouse with a Badaga would not be allowed to take a spouse's role in the crucial life-cycle ceremonies of that family; (3) a Badaga, whether man or woman, wears a distinctive dress and carries a characteristic mark on the forehead; (4) a Badaga is born in and lives in a recognized hamlet with a distinctively Badaga architecture and place-name—the Nilgiris did not traditionally have what are elsewhere described as multicaste villages; (5) it is assumed that two Badaga strangers of the same phratry on meeting one another can always trace out a tentative kinship connection between themselves if they work at the problem.

In studying the Badagas I have found it convenient to accept these five criteria (which the Badagas themselves use). With them no problem arises about who is a Badaga and who is not; the community is a grouping in which potential membership is the same as actual membership. This fact is probably of crucial importance at the present time, for it enables the individual to see himself as belonging to a strong, cohesive, well-defined group even when he may be in doubt about his appropriate role in the modernizing nation and the strength of his affiliation to other, newer, achieved membership groups.

In a structural sense, then, the Badagas are one unit in a larger social system. The other units are people who have long been *called* "tribes," the Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas.

At this point we need a potentially universal definition of the tribe. There are in fact several definitions available in anthropological literature, but we can say that a tribe is a system of social organization which embraces a number of local groups or settlements, which occupies a common territory, and normally carries its own distinctive culture, its own name, and its own language. Applying this sociological definition, the Badagas are a tribe. They are a community of about 150,000 farmers living in over 450 hamlets scattered across the Nilgiri Plateau, speaking their own language and bearing a distinct culture.

Then what is a caste? Here we can usefully turn to Bailey, who has given

a good structural definition of caste society:

For a given society to exhibit a caste system it must be divided into groups which: (a) are exclusive (no one belongs simultaneously to more than one group), (b) which are exhaustive (everyone belongs to some group), and (c) which are ranked..., (d) which are closed (recruitment is by birth only), (e) relations between which are organized by summation of roles, and (f) which co-operate and do not compete [BAILEY 1963: 121].

This is an adequate structural definition because it is potentially universal in application. (Most published definitions of caste are inadequate, on the other hand, since their references to Hinduism restrict them to descriptive use—and not comparative—in the sphere of Indian culture alone. It would be impossible, for example, to compare Mysore and Mississippi as two possible examples of caste organization if we had already made Hindu religious values an integral part of our definition of caste.)

We have thus seen that according to the definitions above, the Badagas are an ethnic group and might equally be regarded as caste or tribe, which suggests that perhaps we should make finer distinctions between what constitutes a tribe and what a caste. But the question of whether such a group is a tribe or a caste also depends on the social analyst's focus. Again following Bailey, a "tribe" is generally a whole society while a "caste" is essentially only a part of some larger social unit [BAILEY 1961: 14]. Most modern anthropologists would agree with this.

Using Bailey's definitions, the Badagas are seen not to be precisely a caste society, but they could still be viewed as a caste or a caste-block in a larger caste society, that of the entire Nilgiris. There is in fact a good case for treating *Nilgiri* society as a caste society, even if not an orthodox Hindu one. The Kotas, Todas, Kurumbas and Badagas are linked into a larger unity by a pattern of standardized relations that have been passed on with little change from father to son. Each of the four tribes had an occupational specialization—the Kotas were artisans and musicians for the others, the Todas provided dairy produce, the Badagas had a grain surplus to distribute, and the Kurumbas were influential sorcerers. In other words, each group could turn to every other for certain essentials, each was endogamous, and was accorded a particular rank according to certain indicators of purity. And so, "Together the four formed a social system: each group was clearly demarcated, each was dependent on the others, all co-operated to preserve the standards and the normal operation of their mutual system when its proper functioning was threatened either from within or without" [MANDELBAUM 1958].

The social structure of several contiguous tribes can always be subsumed under two organizational principles: a kinship-based structure, and certain

boundary-maintaining phenomena. Were we to add to these a third principle, that of hierarchical relations, we would have the rudiments for analyzing a caste society rather than several discrete tribes.

Since it would seem self-evident that a caste can only occur in a caste society, we cannot ask whether the Badagas are a tribe or a caste unless we also ask whether the Todas, Kotas, and Kurumbas are castes too; for it would be these four groups (and perhaps additionally the Irulas) that would constitute the indigenous caste society in the rural Nilgiris. Thus in the respect that Badagas form a unit in a larger society, they are not a tribe, since a tribe constitutes a whole society. Yet while arguably a unit in a caste *society*, their *culture* has basic characteristics that in India are usually considered tribal. In a sociological sense, then, the Badagas are one unit in a caste system, together with peoples who have always been called "tribes," yet who—in the same sense as the Badagas—may be viewed as castes. Here the confusion of tribe and caste comes from both popular and official use of the two terms. In the numerous publications about the Nilgiri plateau peoples there have been certain fashions in writing; and these are largely responsible for the confusion. Even though we fly in the face of established practice by calling the Kotas, Todas and Kurumbas castes, they certainly are that if it is accepted that they are discrete, birth-recruited, interacting groups which are ranked into a larger plural society.

Misra has tried to argue that the tribe-caste distinction is a "non-issue" [1977: 149], at least if one takes a Marxist perspective and concerns oneself only with the analysis of "production relations." Treating the Nilgiri tribal communities as a case for analysis, he maintains that some of them have now become "labour to be exploited and used by the capitalist centre." This latter mystical concept is new in the literature on the Nilgiris, and Misra himself does nothing to explain what it is or where it might be located (except that it probably lies within his ultra-vague idea of "the imperial world").

Both Misra [1977] and Gould [1967], a North Indian specialist who has never worked in the Nilgiris and whom Misra seems to treat as his main authority on Nilgiri society, are wide of the mark on many points of ethnographic fact. It is certainly true, as Misra suggests, that some Paniyas, Irulas and Kurumbas, as well as many Badagas and some Kotas, today work for wages on tea or coffee plantations (scarcely any of them on rubber, though); and there are other Badagas and Kotas who work on their own tea plantations. The annual income from this sort of labour, while by no means adequate by any modern standard, is today higher and more certain than the income available to landless workers if they hire themselves out on a daily basis to Nilgiri farmers, whether Badaga or not. Tea and coffee production and marketing are vastly more complex and costly processes than is the plucking for which the tribal labour is regularly employed (and "exploited," in Misra's view). Recent world tea and coffee prices have simply not allowed for a substantial in-

crease in the profits which come back to the Nilgiri plantations. With regard to the Irulas, another local tribe who provide much plantation labour, Jebadhas and Noble [1989: 287-299] advance the argument that they now live in two worlds, one a traditional tribal world of values and religious practices that are still of great psychological importance, the other a world of plantation wage labour. These authors do not suggest, as Misra has done, that the traditional world is simply not relevant today. There is still an issue here.

Independence, which arrived in 1947, not only changed the nature of the central government, but soon worked far-reaching effects on the social fabric. By now, nearly five decades later, we find that ethnic affiliation, while still of primary importance on the Nilgiris, is by no means the only significant categorization of the population. Nor is there simply one other cross-cutting categorization: today we can see people acting and being accounted for as (1) college educated/school educated/illiterate; (2) Backward Class/Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe; (3) members of numerous political parties/cooperative societies/labour unions; (4) members of various Hindu and Christian sects and movements; (5) urban/rural; and each of these identifications is meaningful to multitudes of people in their various walks of life, above and beyond whatever their ethnic affiliation may be. An energetic, upwardly mobile individual today may find that there are several power bases to which he has claim, and may even be able to manipulate them to some advantage.

5. THE BADAGAS AND THE "CASTE-TRIBE CONTINUUM"

We have seen earlier that the question of whether the Badagas are a tribe or a caste must always defer to the question of whether the entire Nilgiri society is tribal or a caste society. Through a model derived from caste society we can understand the structure of Nilgiri society in a comparative or classificatory way. However, this only explains the macrostructure. In other words, we cannot order the question in this manner: are the Badagas together with the four other upper Nilgiri groups caste or tribe, and therefore is the Nilgiri society a caste society or a tribal one? We should rather order it in the reverse: is the larger unit, Nilgiri society, a caste society and are its constituent parts thus castes? This arises because the four more indigenous groups on the Nilgiris as well as the immigrant Badagas are atypical of Hindu societies in their respective cultures, which makes their classification as caste or tribe an isolated one, elusive of integration into a broader picture of Indian society. It is only their relationship to each other which allows their categorization as a type of society, either caste or tribal, and further allows them a commonality characteristic of either a caste or a tribe. Yet, even by doing this, we find that the model for caste society in the South Indian plains does little to illuminate the details of social organization in this particular hilly region. Each community there is

organized socially in a very distinct way from the other communities, and there is no close parallel to what one finds in multicaste villages. This may be illustrated by the following example.

The Badagas are now divided into ten phratries made up of a total of 44 clans (this includes the Christian Badagas; Hockings [1980: 76]). Though these are to some extent ranked into a hierarchy, marriages between clans—that is, within each phratry—may as commonly be hypogamous as hypergamous. In fact, it is quite acceptable (though inconvenient) for a man or woman of a lower, meat-eating Saivite clan to marry a person from a higher status, vegetarian Lingayat clan. As an *Indian* caste, therefore, the Badagas—like the Todas, Kotas and Kurumbas—are atypical in their culture, for all these groups have unusual marriage patterns.

What should we do with this information? We can say, Yes, in a sociological sense, the Badagas *are* a unit in a caste system. But more particularly, in the sphere of *Indian culture*, they are *not* a caste. Which leads to the next perplexing question: What then? What have we gained?

Following a suggestion from Max Weber [1946: 398–399], we may usefully note two aspects of social organization which unarguably do separate tribal society from caste society. First, in the matter of political authority, it can be seen not just from Nilgiri cases but from Arunachal Pradesh ones too that the South Asian tribe commonly controlled its own political destiny through the medium of a headman and council or else through a council alone. This well-known situation contrasts starkly with that of an Indian caste, which if less than the dominant caste of region traditionally found itself subject to the will of other higher or more powerful castes, and in particular of a village headman and multicaste *panchayat*. Furthermore, the economic obligations of the *jā-jmani* system wherever it is still active place further constraints on the many lower-status castes.

In the second place, we may generalize that exogamy of the clan and of its villages is the cementing principle of tribal organization, whereas the endogamy of castes is what maintains their separateness in the face of a great deal of inter-caste cooperation of the juridical, economic and ritual kind.

The over-riding consideration earlier in this paper was whether we are merely trying to determine a macrostructure. If so, then we can meaningfully ask whether societies are caste societies or tribal. But if we are looking into the content of a certain culture, we cannot usefully try to fit it into the model of a caste and, in this instance, ask whether the Badagas are a tribe or a caste. Rather, we should push aside this consuming but meaningless question and proceed to study the content of the culture.

Can the Badagas perhaps be viewed as a different type of ethnic group altogether? Max Weber [1946: 180] designated social inequality as something that is characterized through class, status, and power, or to put it in slightly

more contemporary sociological terminology, through privilege, prestige and power [BERREMAN 1979: 292]. An unranked social organization would be one in which these differentia were minimized; it would be egalitarian, and reflected in an egalitarian economy. The Badaga economy certainly looks egalitarian, as compared with that of caste-organized communities elsewhere in India. In those one can find differential access to wealth and power, controlled by ascribed status and ascribed privilege. With the Badagas all villages, of whatever phratry, still have access to land and cattle, the two traditional avenues to wealth and power in this community; nowadays they also can run for political office in the state or nation. But upon closer examination one finds that education, a nineteenth- and twentieth-century avenue to advancement, as well as land and cattle ownership, are less available in the lowest echelon, namely the Toreya phratry; while land and cattle (but not education) are somewhat more abundant in the highest echelons. It can further be argued that the Toreyas traditionally have been lowest in esteem and prestige as a concomitant of birth-ascribed servitude, namely their roles as "village servants," peons to the hamlet and commune headmen. For a minimal payment they were formerly obliged to fulfill many man/hours per year of time-consuming tasks like carrying messages from one place to another. At the upper end of the status hierarchy were the Wodeya and Haruva priests, landowners and cattle-keepers who received payments from families or villages for each religious task they performed. In short, these differentiations allow us to categorize Badaga society as a ranked but culturally homogeneous unit, a chiefdom [SERVICE 1971]. And it does have a paramount chief.

Bailey has already questioned the use of "tribe" or "caste" to denote two distinguishable forms of social grouping:

We must [he says] cease to hope that particular societies will fall neatly into one or the other category. Rather, in this context, we must see 'caste' and 'tribe' as opposite ends of a single line....In other words, of each society we ask the question: *To what extent* is this society organized on segment-tary principles and *to what extent* is it organic? We do not ask disjunctively: Is this a tribe *or* a caste? [BAILEY 1961: 13-14].

"Caste" and "tribe" then are terms which apply to a continuum in the typology of Indian societies, he argues. But several critics, among them Misra [1977: 139] and Dumont [1962: 121], have questioned the logic of Bailey's [1961] idea that tribe and caste are the poles on a linear continuum. As Misra observes, "there are tribes and tribes." The criticism leads me to suggest a modified polar model which takes better account of the ethnographic facts. I would suggest the utility of recognizing three polar types of Indian ethnic group, as in the following Figure. In it the residential facets of this tripartite

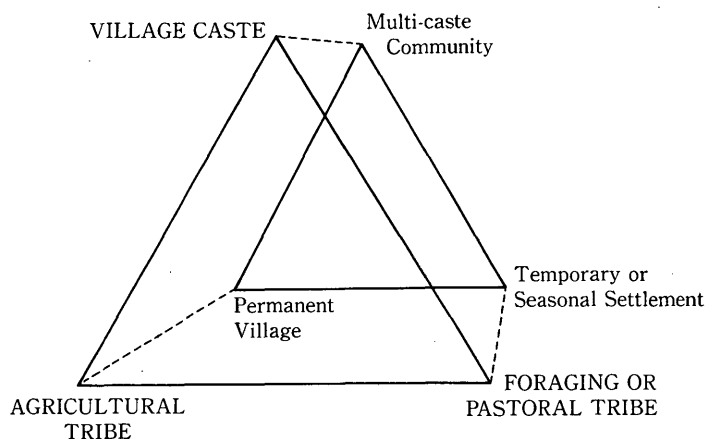


Figure 1. Polar Types of Indian Community, and their Residence Patterns

classification of ideal societal types are shown in the smaller of the two triangles. This triangular model, while hardly more complicated, lets us get away from the idea that castes differ from tribes merely in having more or less of some characteristic. It gives full recognition to the differences that separate pastoral or nomadic tribes from agricultural tribes, the latter being historically the ones which have, with the passage of the generations, been somewhat more easily assimilated into local caste systems.

Applying the caste model derived from Hindu peasant societies to the atypical society of the Nilgiris is an exercise in cross-cultural classification. Let us recall here Goodenough's stricture "that the categories one uses for cross-cultural research necessarily follow from one's statement of the cross-cultural research problem. There are no categories that have universal applicability for all problems. They follow from the variables one is examining" [quoted in NAROLL 1968: 74]. It seems useful to say that the Nilgiri peoples are a case of a caste society having several distinct indigenous cultures which had their respective origins in pre-caste social formations. And yet there is perhaps no basis for calling any of them a caste when *describing* one particular culture and its social organization. In other words, the difference between the Nilgiris and other caste societies lies in the *content* of the culture rather than the *structure* of the society.

Yet our whole question of "tribe or caste?" keeps us from an understanding of the political and identity problems that face our subjects in the present day, and suggests the old "butterfly-collecting" tradition in anthropology; but we do not intend merely to name and classify distinct social units such as the Badagas and the Todas. Our purpose must go beyond developing a taxonomy of such units, to using comparison of units as a way of elucidating the changing organization of society.

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複合社会における民族的アイデンティティ：バダガを事例として

ポール・ホッキングス

専門用語が外国語から英語に取り入れられたり、通俗的な英語から社会科学の特殊用語に採用されてきたために、インド研究ではカーストおよびトライブという用語をめぐる、長年の間に多くの混乱が生じてきた。この混乱の歴史的な検討は、その状況が単に学問的な論議の範囲に留まるものではないことを明らかにする。この2つの用語、およびそれに密接に関連する用語が、今日のインドでは、重大な政治的意味を帯びてきているからである。そこにはステータスの伝統的区別を覆す傾向のようなものすらある。というのも政府がいわゆる指定カーストや指定トライブに与えた特別の優遇措置から、高位カーストの人々は除外されがちだからである。問題の性質上、解決への見通しは簡単には立たない。人類学の論述には昔からカースト・トライブ連続体説が採用されてきたが、この連続体説の避けがたい不正確な諸点を修正する理論として、三項から成る概念モデルを示唆することは可能であろう。