

## Considering Caste as Cultural Capital: The Marginalization of Dr A.Aiyappan's from Indian Sociology/Anthropology

Shameed. M\*

\*(Department of Sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi  
Email: shameedshamu@gmail.com)

\*\*\*\*\*

### Abstract:

This article aims to provide a theoretical critique of A. Aiyappan's marginalisation in Indian sociology and social anthropology, as well as to lift the veil on how caste influences Indian academic circles and Aiyappan's conceptual discourse, and to try to locate him within the Indian sociological and social anthropological tradition. Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital and its origins would be offered as the core subject of investigation for this goal. Furthermore, this article explores how the caste system of inequality reproduces various forms of capital that support M. N. Srinivas' privileged sociology while simultaneously excluding and restricting Aiyappan's sociology.

**Keywords —A. Aiyappan, M.N. Srinivas, Sociology, Social anthropology, Caste, Cultural Capital, Habitus, Reproduction, Marginalisation**

\*\*\*\*\*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Caste system in India has been investigated by French sociologist Louis Dumont about the religiously governed concepts of 'purity' and 'pollution,' which result in a hierarchical social structure in India (46). Dumont characterises the Caste system as an extreme type of social stratification in his *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980), and he finds that religious motives play a significant part in constructing and perpetuating the system (Ibid). In India, the upper castes have used casteism as a hierarchical and hegemonic social apparatus to keep society divided. Dalit self-narratives and lower caste narratives undertake the project of negotiating the very factors which caused their marginalisation in society. We observe today's society through the lens of our written history and recorded studies. The lower caste and Dalit's scholarly narratives of their culture and tradition are mostly missing in Indian academia. So, before engaging in a study or research, it is vital to understand 'who studied whom? How did they compose the history? What is the caste

identity of a scholar? As we all know, caste power relations have existed for a long time in Indian society, and various shades of caste power relations can still be seen in modern society. So, research from lower caste and Dalit communities is rarely discussed or supported in our academia. If we examine the history of Indian social thinkers, we will find few writings from oppressed communities. Aiyappan's studies are among the most unusual and have yet to be integrated into the college or university curriculum. M.N. Srinivas, for example, is a contemporary of Aiyappan, and M.N. Srinivas completed his post-doctoral studies at Oxford. Aiyappan received his PhD from the London School of Economics, and they both explored western education. Similarly, M. N. Srinivas examined Indian society from a superior caste perspective, whereas Aiyappan investigated from a lower caste perspective, and both give contrasting world perspectives to Indian academics. As a result, it is doubtful that we will have a more inclusive and appropriate framework for Indian academics to examine Indian society. Revisiting Indian society's

marginalised histories and discovering their importance in Indian academics would extend our views and perspectives on addressing Indian society. Bourdieu introduced the idea of cultural capital within the setting of the French academic system in order to investigate the nature of culture, its reproduction, and the circulation of capital from one form to another: symbolic capital (prestige, celebrity, consecration, honour, or privilege), economic capital (money, assets, and property rights), social capital (network of people), and cultural capital (communication skills, accent, books, academic achievements). While revisiting traditional Marxist notions of economic capital, he coined these terms at various stages. Unlike orthodox Marxists, Bourdieu and L. J. D Wacquant argues that dominant classes cannot maintain social power solely through economic capital: A general science of the economics of practises that does not arbitrarily confine itself to those practices that are socially recognised as economic must strive to understand capital, that ‘energy of social physics,’ in all of its various manifestations (Bourdieu and L. J. D Wacquant, 1992, 118–9). Non-economic capital is also possessed by the governing classes and passed from one to the other (cited in Syamprasad, 2019).

In the 1960s and 1980s, Francois Bourdieu introduced the idea of cultural capital and investigated how individuals replicate particular mindsets to retain historical privileges. In 1986, he categorised cultural capital into three states—embodied, objectified, and institutionalised—and he described how these states could be inherited or reproduced at different levels by different groups. This article focuses on how caste creates and organises various types of capital, notably cultural capital, with respect to the privileged sociology of M.N. Srinivas that excludes and limits the sociology of Aiyappan in Indian sociology and anthropology.

Caste is a hierarchical structure comprised of four primary communities: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras (Ambedkar, 1987). It explains inequality with the myth of Chaturvarna: Brahmins are priests because they were born from the Lord Brahma’s head, Kshatriyas are warriors

because they were born from the Lord’s arms, Vaishyas are merchants because they were born from the thighs, Sudras were supposed to assist all these higher castes because they were born from the feet, and untouchables are outside of this. This paper focuses on the critical application of Bourdieu’s notions to Aiyappan’s marginalisation in Indian sociology/anthropology. In addition, this paper investigates how the caste system of inequality reproduces various types of capital that promote the privileged sociology of Srinivas while simultaneously excluding and limiting the sociology of Aiyappan.

## **II. SOCIOLOGY OF AIYAPPAN**

Aiyappan (1905-1988) was a South Indian ethnographer who lived and practised anthropology during a time when the subject was gaining international acclaim, and he was engaged in Indian academia both before and after independence. Aiyappan has made a significant contribution to sociology and anthropology. His publications and essays are extremely valuable to anthropologists and ethnographers. Aiyappan received his PhD from the London School of Economics under Bronislaw Malinowski and Raymond Firth, and he researched Indian society by applying prominent theoretical paradigms like structural functionalism.

During Malinowski’s term as director of the LSE’s anthropology department, Aiyappan shifted the anthropological study of society from the “other” to the “self.” His PhD study was centred on the Iravas/Ezhavas, a lower caste in Kerala to which he belonged. In addition, he chose to work in his native province. When he began investigating the process of cultural transition in his own community, he was one among the few Indian anthropologists who used the same technique. T.N. Madan (1994) described the challenges he had in doing a study of his own community amid the disciplinary fraternity, at which time many more indigenous anthropologists began researching their own culture, albeit not the one to which they belonged.

Aiyappan provided a viewpoint from the perspective of ‘What does caste imply to the lowest untouchable Hindus?’ (Aiyappan, 1937). Indian academics conducted no study on lower castes

throughout the pre-and immediate post-independence period. It is a rare and unusual example in Indian academic history; during the foundational time, a trained anthropologist emerged from the lower caste group and researched the lower caste and tribe within their social-cultural environment. His name, however, was only mentioned as a passing reference in Indian academia.

Even as an anthropologist, his aspirations to penetrate the academic sphere were possibly hampered by his unique caste position (he belonged to the Ezhava caste, which was an exterior caste in those days). While it is well acknowledged that the individual's social and cultural environment shapes his or her personality, intellectual exposure has an influence on the individual's knowledge building. It is possible that the deciding force is a mix of many variables and multiple expressions rather than one aggregate experience with one unique tendency. This is especially true in the case of anthropologists, where the humanistic element is combined with the social scientific aspect. Furthermore, his absence from university departments kept him out of disciplinary history, especially in a system where individual contributions to the advancement of any branch of knowledge as an academic discipline are specifically recognised with the name of the institution with which they were associated (Jitha, 2010).

While in India, the personalities who played a role in the formation and development of the discipline of anthropology were primarily recognised due to their proximity to the trinity of university departments - Calcutta, Lucknow, and Bombay schools - the situation was not significantly different in other countries. Although fieldwork as an anthropological method of investigation was popular even before Malinowski, it was cemented by his service as a teaching staff member at the London School of Economics (See Gosden, 1999, p. 40-52). A lack of a university position for an eminent scholar means no possibility to teach students and spread one's views and perspectives. When an individual scholar's contribution to the

development of the body of knowledge is dependent not so much on the quantum of the contribution through one's knowledge as it is on the propagation/projection of it, being excluded from history becomes the outcome in the case of the one who is professionally marginalised.

### **III. My Orientation**

Before proceeding, I must mention my understanding of Indian sociology/anthropology. It was a watershed moment for me when I moved to New Delhi for my master's degree. In 2013, I enrolled in the sociology department at Jamia Millia Islamia Central University. Among the papers on classical sociology, anthropology and others, a course on Indian society is one of the department's supplementary courses. In the article on Indian society, the debates around the caste system, especially stratification, distancing, untouchability etc., constituted part of the paper. As a non-Hindu, I only studied the caste system academically during my graduation from Srinivas' explanations in two of his works (Srinivas, 1962,1966). As a graduate student, I had enjoyed reading Srinivas, and his works appeared to be particularly simple; however, the systematic depth required considerable effort to grasp. I have studied the caste system at the graduation level through its aspects like endogamy, commensality and Sanskritization.

During my master's, I noticed an inconsistency between what I learned in the classroom and what is enshrined in the Indian constitution, such as the fundamental right to non-discrimination based on caste (Articles 15 and 16) and the abolition of untouchability (Article 17), which speaks to the violence of the caste system. Despite being proclaimed illegal, untouchability and caste prejudice are common, especially outside of college and school, but their shadow was less in town than in the rural. It was difficult for me to ask questions or present my views against the caste system in the classroom. Because I was aware of my classmate's diverse caste identities, and I did not want to offend anyone's sentiments or beliefs. These constraints prompted me to have conversations with my friends and instructors outside of the classroom over a cup of tea, and the caste system and Indian

sociology/anthropology were part of our discussions.

#### IV. The Distinct Points of View

M. N. Srinivas was a contemporary of Aiyappan, and both embraced prevailing western theoretical paradigms of their time, but M. N. Srinivas loomed big in Indian academic debate. It will be interesting to critically summarise Srinivas and Aiyappan's theoretical and methodological approaches and analyse which methodology and approaches are better suited to Indian sociology/anthropology.

M. N. Srinivas is a well-known mainstream Indian anthropologist and sociologist. M. N. Srinivas has already received a number of criticisms and comments. Before criticising Srinivas, I want to acknowledge that his articles and ethnographic descriptions have tremendously encouraged and benefitted me. He is one of the most prominent scholars in Indian sociology and anthropology in terms of introducing a new paradigm, a paradigm shift in comprehending Indian society's transitions from the Indological approach. He provides us with a very significant technique of ethnographic field-based knowledge of society in India, and he eliminates the boundary between sociology and anthropology in the context of India. M. N. Srinivas has nearly built the groundwork for sociology in India. He was instrumental in founding the Department of Sociology at M.S. University in Baroda and afterwards at the Universities of Delhi and Bengaluru. He was a key figure in the legitimisation of sociology. Anyway, let's look at how his methods and ideas related to Indian society.

M.N. Srinivas was a student at Bombay University and completed his first doctorate with Ghurye (See Patel, 2010). Srinivas' sociological imagination, technique, and theoretical approach loomed large in early discussions in Indian academia. Srinivas embodied a synthesis of colonial modernity concepts with Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowskian ethnographic theories and techniques. Srinivas is perceived to have affected a paradigm exchange in Indian Sociology. First, by rejecting what he called the "book-view" of society espoused by Indologists, orientalist and others, he pioneered a "field-view" to be obtained by extensive research in small groups inside the Indian "village."

I would like to point out that, before M.N. Srinivas, Aiyappan used western methodologies, such as Malinowskian ethnography and Franz Boas' cultural relativism, in his study of Indian culture. However, it is critical to understand how Srinivas researched Indian society through ethnography and methodology.

The caste system, according to Srinivas, is the distinguishing feature of Indian society, the specific framework through which you will identify the nature of Indian sociability (Srinivas, 2002). Srinivas' works are rife with references to caste. The caste system is hierarchical, with the Brahmin at the top and the Shudra at the bottom. On the other hand, Srinivas found local variations in caste/jati ranking in certain locations, distorting the picture of caste ranking. Srinivas recalls Ghurye's observation that there are roughly 200 castes present in each linguistic area, each of which is endogamous and greatly affects the social lives of the individual (Srinivas, 2002).

What is caste for Srinivas? Srinivas wrote the now-classic article '*Varna and Caste*' as early as 1954. In this article, he discusses the nature of India's caste system. His emphasis on jati stems from a methodological preference for the field perspective. Furthermore, Srinivas suggests that caste is best understood by concentrating not only on varnas but also on the internal ranking of each jati in relation to others. Because of the uncertainty of rank and position, it becomes a forecast on mobility. In this context, he coined the term "dominant caste," referring to the current caste that rules the village. M N Srinivas coined the term "dominant caste" as the caste in a village which largely controls the economic and political power (Srinivas, 1987).

Srinivas identified caste as the structure that defines Indian society. For example, in the beginning, a portion of his article '*The Social System of a Mysore Village*,' Srinivas stated: "Rampura is a village of numerous castes, yet it is also a well-defined structural entity" (Srinivas, 1951). In another piece, he stated that the caste system "cannot be disentangled since it works in the village" (Srinivas, 2002 p. 237). Village studies are important in conducting ethnography on the



Indian caste system because of its diverse and complex village base. Srinivas expressed the caste system in the same way as the village system. The difficulty with this perspective is that, in fact, Indian society is multi-religious, multi-cultural, and much more varied; how can the Indian social structure be defined through the caste system?

A different vantage point with respect to the caste system was expressed by others. For instance, according to Ambedkar (1987), the Indian caste system has historically been a system of graded inequality. According to Aiyappan, “caste is one of the unsolved issues in Indian ethnography” (A. Aiyappan, 1937), and he claims that most caste studies exclude the lower castes. Aiyappan saw the caste structure in the community as an exploitative institution. He linked the caste system to white South Africans’ brutality to the vulnerable. “It is power (political, military, economic, technical, and so on) abused to the benefit of a privileged racial minority.” (Aiyappan, 1965) Aiyappan said there were, of course, points of difference; the first being that, in Kerala, there was no question of difference in skin colour. Here, there were the more pernicious ritual methods of keeping the lower castes constantly at a distance of several yards from the persons, residence and institutions of the higher castes, the economic method of preventing them from owning land with secure occupancy rights, and the intellectual method of excluding them from all sources of higher knowledge enshrined in the Sanskrit language (Aiyappan, 1965). If Srinivas sees the caste system as facilitating the smooth running of the village, Aiyappan sees the caste system as an exploitative structure in the village and disputes the anthropological evidence from the community.

Aiyappan’s perspective on Indian society differs from that of Srinivas. Aiyappan comes from a lower caste Hindu community, and his caste identification does not prevent him from travelling and learning among lower caste communities, but Srinivas’ caste identity does. Srinivas belong to upper-caste Hindus, and his studies represent the higher caste groups, but Aiyappan’s studies highlight the lowest layers’ hardships.

Let us now look at how Sujata Patel articulated the structural functionalism of British social

anthropology, which inspired Srinivas’ sociology. Srinivas was compelled to search for and view the Indian village (and caste) as a system of reciprocity, help, dependency, and harmony as a result of this typical colonial discipline (even mutual empathy and friendship). Even Srinivas did not fail to see, and document incidents of violence used to impose caste restrictions, of total exploitation and meanness; nonetheless, such violence and force were not included in his investigation. He does not perceive a system of violence, neither physical nor what Bourdieu refers to as “symbolic violence,” in the way the higher castes hold the description of the situation and its norms, which they impose on the subalterns (Patel, 2005).

In ‘*Social Revolution in a Kerala Village*,’ Aiyappan utilised the same western structural-functionalism technique to analyse the Mayur village (1965). Aiyappan observes the lower caste conflicts and disagreements inside the village system in this work. For example, in his fourth chapter, ‘Land Tenure,’ he describes a border disagreement between a higher caste janmi and a lower caste person and a conflict between a pujari and a lower caste renter. Furthermore, in his eighth chapter, ‘The Iravas, an untouchable caste,’ he clearly demonstrates how exploitative the village’s caste structure is. In his ninth chapter, he also saw caste conflicts and violence. Aiyappan described the violence experienced by the village’s lower caste people in order to organise the anti-untouchability movement (Aiyappan, 1965 pp 74-75).

The development of functionalist social anthropology enabled Srinivas to begin changes inside Ghurye’s methods. While Ghurye’s concept of caste remained couched in an Indological perspective, Srinivas employed the field view, the empirical approach of ethnography, to observe and study the caste system within the context of villages. However, we can see that Srinivas’ sociology echoed the principles of his first advisor, G.S. Ghurye. Gopal Guru provided a unique perspective to the discussion by claiming that Srinivas’ sociological imagination was founded in a “root text” of modern Indian social and political concepts (Joseph Tharamangalam and Jos

Chathukulam, 2018). Srinivas studied Indian society using western techniques and ethnography, but his work recycled the text-view/Indology paradigm. In comparison to Srinivas, I can plainly claim that Aiyappan's writings are more oriented to sociology.

In addition, new approaches for analysing caste and societal changes emerged in the post-independence period. Sanskritization and westernisation are methodical endeavours to examine Indian society and its developments. To explain social mobility within India's conventional caste system, M.N. Srinivas introduced the idea of Coorg in Mysore. Sanskritization is defined as the process by which low caste Hindus adopt the customs, rituals, philosophy, and lifestyle of higher castes, sometimes twice-born castes (Srinivas, 1952). This process has the effect of generally improving the status of caste groups in the local caste hierarchy. Therefore, this is a change in caste position rather than a structural change. It naturally presupposes economic and political enhancement of the related caste groups due to exposure to sources of Hindu "great traditions," such as pilgrimage centres or monasteries or proselytising sects (Srinivas, 1966: pp.67-68).

In his book, 'Social Revolution in a Kerala Village,' Aiyappan expressed his opposition to the notion of Sanskritization. He said, "It is not feasible here to record the various features that have come to be replicated, notably in the realm of religion, rituals, and magic. Aiyappan noted that non-Brahmins who think, talk, and act like Brahmins might lessen the psychological gap between them, but not the ceremonial distance or their caste position" (Aiyappan 1965). Aiyappan contended that the slow percolation of non-esoteric Sanskrit knowledge probably occurred first on the sly from Brahmin fathers to their Nayar children and that when some Nayars were later learned in Sanskrit, the caste bar against further spread of Sanskrit knowledge must have been relaxed (Aiyappan 1965). He said that the Jains and Buddhists, who were the first popular educators nearly everywhere in India, enabled numerous lower castes in Kerala

to get schooling, knowledge of Sanskrit, and Ayurvedic treatment.

The ethnography of Srinivas applauds the developments inside the village. For example, the market is changing and expanding; new techniques are being introduced; an oil mill is being built; new bus routes are being established, and new businesses are being established. Srinivas attempts to keep the locals within the community while applauding the developments. There is no explanation for the village's relationships with the cities and towns. He is attempting to maintain the caste structure in the countryside.

Instead of Sanskritization, Aiyappan proposed westernising education and migration outside village limits for employment and freedom from caste stratification (Aiyappan, 1965, pp: 58-59). In his village research, he collected data on various local and regional migrations, mostly from villages to urban centres, to demonstrate how the lower caste improved their caste-based 'disabilities' and freed them from caste-based traditional professions.

Berreman noticed that these movements imply an unaccepted claim to a higher caste. They organise and enforce emulation of high caste behaviours and components among members of a caste in the hope that this will result in public acknowledgement of the claim. "This process has been termed 'Sanskritization', in recognition of the fact that the behaviours adopted are often those prescribed for high castes in the sacred Sanskrit literature" (Berreman, 1972). Aiyappan's village study demonstrates ethnographic evidence of development and change inside the village as a result of migration. Aiyappan also demonstrates how migration has benefited rural infrastructure and the local economy. Aiyappan is exposing what Srinivas was intentionally or subconsciously attempting to conceal.

Furthermore, T.K Oommen states that a sizable section of the Indian population, including Adivasis, Dalits, and even peasants, possesses only oral traditions. We cannot talk of the true history of the Indian people unless their oral traditions are respected. Even if serious efforts are made to reconstruct their past through oral history or "text," the time chunks we can "capture" would be rather

restricted (Oommen, 1983). If we look at the monographs of Aiyappan, we find that he has greatly accommodated the oral history of lower castes and tribes.

In Indian sociology/anthropology, we can see two different perspectives of A. Aiyappan and M.N. Srinivas. As a social science scholar, I consider Srinivas' sociology and anthropology to be more oriented towards Sanskrit and Hinduism, and Aiyappan's contributions as more oriented to Indian sociology and anthropology. Furthermore, it is not simply sociology that 'we desire,' but also what we require.

What distinguishes Aiyappan is that his technique and approach to Indian society diverge significantly from those who practised sociology and anthropology during the early foundational years. A. Aiyappan, who received his training in Anthropology from the London School of Economics in the late 1930s from eminent and pioneering anthropologists such as Malinowski and Raymond Firth, used Malinowski's participatory observation method for investigation, in addition to ethnographic descriptions.

We can observe that Srinivas' sociology/anthropology exaggerates the importance of Brahmins in Indian civilisation. His research ignored the limitations, complexities, and variety of caste systems, arguing that knowing caste implies comprehending India. Because of these concerns, we can understand the idea of the superiority of the Brahmins or Srinivas theory. "For the sociology of India, the Veda is barely required as the Bible for the sociology of the 'West' (Michaels, 2020).

#### **V. Bourdieu's Notion of Capital and its Implications for A. Aiyappan's Marginalisation**

Bourdieu (1986) examines capital in both economic and non-economic forms: "economic capital (money, assets, and property rights), social capital, symbolic capital, and cultural capital. The total of an individual's or a group's actual or virtual resources that accumulate as a result of having a lasting network of more or less formalised connections of mutual acquaintance and recognition is referred to as social capital" (Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. J. D., 1992: 119). Social capital is more about the disparity in social interactions than

it is about a network. Symbolic capital is a degree of accumulated prestige, fame, consecration, or honour that is found in a dialectic of knowledge and recognition. Drawing on Bourdieu, Edgerton and Roberts (2014) suggest that dominating elites transform their economic capital to secure resources and invest cultural capital in their offspring, which results in their educational and professional success and the accumulation of economic capital.

People can gain social capital by combining cultural, symbolic, and economic capital. Concurrently, any capital can create one or the other type of capital, implying that capital circulation is neither unidirectional nor mutually constitutive. According to Bourdieu (1986:47), cultural capital is perceived as good characteristics rather than mechanisms of reproduction of inequality: "Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, that is, in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realisation of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc., and in the institutionalised state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee."

Each type of cultural capital must be understood in connection to others: objectified forms of cultural capital, such as literature, paintings, and monuments, can be turned into economic capital. Furthermore, the possibility of objectified cultural capital conversion is founded on embodied cultural capital (or habitus), which unintentionally defines the kind of conversion that is socially meaningful. This capital circulation enables the ruling class to acquire capacities and legitimise them as natural rights (Bourdieu, 1973, 1986; Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J, 1990). For example, the amount of social capital is defined by the extent of an individual's network of contacts as well as the volume of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital possessed in his own right (Bourdieu, 1986, Roberts and Edgerton, 2014). Additionally, unlike backward groups, dominant communities generally inherit

capital in the form of symbolic capital or are honoured regardless of their ownership of cultural capital.

Bourdieu shows that disparities in academic qualifications between social groups do, in fact, represent uneven distributions of cultural capital. Those with cultural capital may appear that they are smart or privileged. Typically, such brilliance is rewarded by teachers considering privilege as ascribed quality. Furthermore, individuals with better grades are on a more prestigious path, which implies that their cultural capital is cycled into symbolic capital, which may be circulated back into cultural capital over time and social capital. Symbolic and social capitals, in other words, are sources of cultural capital and vice versa.

According to Bourdieu (1986), privilege is the result of a student's investment of time and cultural capital given by their familial habitus rather than natural talent. He says that lower-class students, unlike upper-class students, eventually lack all types of capital. He primarily focuses on students' class identities but rarely considers cultural capital in connection to caste, ethnic, or racial identities. Furthermore, given its link to embodied cultural capital, Bourdieu's (1986) idea of habitus is ambiguous.

On the one hand, these notions appear to be related because he describes them as "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body." For instance, people's body language, accents, and speech patterns are examples of embodied cultural capital related to the specific fields they represent. On the other hand, he attempts to separate these notions while keeping them in mind as mutually constitutive—embodied cultural capital is a type of knowledge that exists inside individuals. However, habitus is a social taste that is unconsciously formed through the collected experience of people in various fields, each with its own set of practices, and that habitus itself reproduces the field and new forays into it. For instance, people are inclined to certain cultural practices such as food habits, clothing, and forms of knowledge after internalising the 'habitus' of a social structure; and once such practices have been adopted, they tend to reproduce them historically, with the potential to transmit a

new form of 'habitus' to the next generation. This is why Bourdieu (1990) saw habitus as both a structuring structure and a structured structure.

These concepts can be used to critically analyse the unequal social structure of caste and how people develop certain "habits" in relation to the exclusion and limiting of the sociology of underprivileged Aiyappan and to the approval of the sociology of Srinivas. Furthermore, habitus may drive dominating groups to acquire or reproduce particular socially and symbolically significant positions in order to sustain their status quo. On the other hand, the underprivileged habits can only prepare them to pursue traditional jobs enforced by caste rules.

In addition, Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) classic work on the role of education in social and cultural reproduction emphasised the state's and its instruments' all-encompassing presence in the reproduction of hierarchy and power relations from generation to generation. State education agencies and policies drive education practice and change in specific directions based on historical, cultural, and social circumstances. The interests of the dominant parts of society are unquestionably better represented than those of the lesser classes, castes, or ethnic groupings. The state favours the current educated elite while pushing the concerns of the underprivileged and marginalised to the fringes. Furthermore, there is a level of stereotyping and condescension in the state's approach to the latter in its regulations, which frequently only serve to alienate them and hinder their chances of scholastic progress.

Many researchers (B. Kisida, 2014, Keskiner, 2015, Jæger, 2016) utilised Bourdieu's concepts to examine the importance of cultural capital and family habitus in the differential abilities of students from various socioeconomic classes, underprivileged groups, or immigrants. Children may also gain cultural capital beyond the home settings, such as through friends or schools (Bisin and Verdier, 2011; Kisida, 2014). Bourdieu highlights several important issues about students' confidence in their ability to inherit cultural capital as well as symbolic and social capital. He primarily contends that lower-class students lack all types of



capital in contrast to upper-class students. Bourdieu (1999:424) discusses the relationship between student performance and structurally contingent elements as follows:

Elite kids who have a well-defined sense of place, strong role models, and support from their families are in a position to use themselves, at the right time and in the right place, on the right tracks, in the right schools, in the appropriate sections, and so on. On the contrary, kids from the most impoverished households, particularly children of immigrants, who are frequently left to fend for themselves from elementary school on, are forced to rely on school mandates or luck to make their way in an increasingly complicated environment.

In the case of India, according to Beteille (2002: 148), the family is more important in the reproduction of inequalities: “The retreat of caste as an active agent for the reproduction of inequality at the upper levels, and the continuing, if not increasing, the importance of the family constitute two of the most striking features of contemporary Indian society.” Beteille’s explanation of inequality elucidates how, despite seeming efforts to provide equal access and advantages to all sections, the required ‘aptitude’ may be hard to acquire due to a lack of access to the cultural and social capital that emerges from social class and its benefits. Beteille tackles the issue of the family’s involvement in perpetuating socioeconomic disparities at the top levels of society; its function is no less important in other contexts.

In the light of Beteille and Bourdieu, if we look at the scholastic journeys of Ayappan and Srinivas, they were also distinct due to their social, cultural, and economic positions in society and the way both scholars’ capital influenced their networks in academia. In the case of A. Aiyappan, he was born into a lower-caste Izhava Hindu family, and he lost his father when he was fourteen. As one of seven children in the family, he had his share of a terrible upbringing while suffering financially to cover education expenses (see, Jitha, 2010). M. N. Srinivas was born into the traditional Brahmin family of Narasimhachar, a government officer. His

maternal aunt, who was one of the two women to graduate from Mysore state first, and his eldest brother who, with a postgraduate degree in English literature, was a teacher at the Maharaja’s High School in Mysore and later an Assistant Professor in English at the University of Mysore, must have greatly inspired him. Srinivas’s brother also encouraged him to enhance his English writing skills. After graduating from Mysore University in 1936, he went on to pursue a master’s degree in sociology at Bombay University, with letters of recommendation from A. R. Wadia and M. H. Krishna (the University of Mysore’s teacher of social anthropology) for G. S. Ghurye, the Head of the Department of Sociology there (Mathur, 2020). Srinivas’s social, cultural, and economic position made obtaining a high-quality education and recommendation effortless. In the case of Aiyappan, no one in his family or community has higher education, and there is no one to look up to and learn from as a role model. Furthermore, Aiyappan failed to establish recommendations and contacts throughout his academic career.

## **VI. Inequitable Possessions of Capital and Privilege in the Caste System**

There is a great deal of debate over India’s caste system and caste discourse. Caste has been theorised to mean many things and has come to represent many separate but interconnected phenomena, such as ideologies, subjectivities, discourses, institutions, political movements, and social scientific perspectives, with some of these perceptions and positions contradicting each other in both popular and disciplinary discourses. These discourses claim that caste as a system may be used interchangeably to describe Indian civilisation at various time periods.

However, according to Ambedkar (1987), the Indian caste system was traditionally a system of graded inequality. Graded inequality refers to the unequal distribution of civic rights, education, and advantages among various castes. In other words, these privileges are increased or decreased depending on the caste. If someone gets promoted from the lower caste untouchables, Sudras, to the intermediate caste Vaishyas, Kshatriyas, and finally to the upper caste Brahmins, their rights will

improve. On the other hand, the caste system has rendered such mobility difficult because a person's position in the pyramid is rather set based on their birth.

Ambedkar (1987:18) elaborates on what distinguishes 'graded inequality' from the generic idea of inequality: The system of graduated inequality avoids the emergence of widespread dissatisfaction with inequality. As a result, it cannot become the epicentre of a revolution. Second, because the victims of inequality are uneven in terms of benefit and hardship, there is no prospect of establishing unity among various castes to topple inequality. Graded inequality differs from its broad connotation in that it distinguishes downtrodden castes with uneven privileges and disadvantages. For example, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudras are victims of the caste system while also benefiting from it. Only the Brahmins have absolute authority under graded inequality, and the untouchable castes are absolute victims. The higher you move up the pyramid, the more esteemed you are. Likewise, the more you move down to the pyramid, the more hardship you get. Although the caste system may not appear to be as strict as it once was, it nevertheless oppresses and marginalises people.

Ambedkar argues how graded inequality itself prevents individuals from opposing caste and inequality. On the other hand, Bourdieu examines how the French educational system fundamentally reproduces students' performance, talents, or privileges. Despite major variations in the forms of social organisation in both nations, these settings have many similarities with the Indian educational system. The Indian caste structure has definitely provided the privileged Brahmins with access to official and informal education modes. Education has always been easier for the Brahmins, but it has been a taboo for the Dalit groups owing to caste practices. As Deshpande (2013) pointed out, caste should be viewed as a source of disadvantage or vulnerability rather than a source of privilege or benefit. Furthermore, caste oppression has traditionally provided a platform for the dominant castes to acquire and convert all types of capital.

Bourdieu's idea of reproduction may be used to investigate the extent to which different types of

capital are unequally dispersed among Indian castes. Historically, the caste system has produced people with uneven talents due to unequal access to cultural capital in the form of formal schooling. For the Brahmins, education has benefited, especially acquiring Sanskrit, which was the medium of teaching in the old education system. Similarly, other favoured classes were employed as secretaries or accountants in the royal palaces. Additionally, they are historically well trained while reproducing cultural capital through family habitus. On the one hand, Aiyappan became marginalised due to his lower caste identity and the lack of cultural capital. On the other hand, M.N. Srinivas became more popular because of his Brahmin identity and cultural capital.

Those who carry cultural capital can produce a natural effect that they are talented or admirable. Such talent is mostly rewarded by society, considering it as an ascribed quality. Through publication in Indian sociology/anthropology, the higher caste brahmins produced a natural effect that studying the caste system and Hinduism has corresponded to Indian sociology/anthropology. For instance, one of the leading journals in sociology, the Sociological Bulletin, was introduced by the upper caste brahmin Ghurye, and most of the published articles are Indological studies, and discussions are based on the advantage of the caste system. Aiyappan's contributions are more oriented to the discipline of sociology/anthropology, but during the same time, the Indological approaches (the study of India through scriptures) have tried to explore Hindu social institutions and practices with reference to religious texts. However, due to the upper caste brahmins' control over the cultural capital in Indian academia, the text-based Indological works of Ghurye and his followers were more popularised, and Aiyappan's contributions were excluded.

Contributions to Indian Sociology, another influential magazine, was launched in 1957 by Louis Dumont and David Pocock. Indologists Louis Dumont and David Pocock claim that the sociology of India arose from its relationship to classical Indology, and their famous quote from this influential article, "it should be obvious, in

principle, that a Sociology of India lies at the point of confluence of Sociology and Indology” (Dumont and Pocock 1957: 9). Homo Hierarchicus by Louis Dumont and a special issue of Contribution to Indian Sociology dedicated to a discussion of the book (1971) are emblematic of the power of debate and discussion on caste and have been fundamental to the understanding of caste that has been carried on. Dumont has been chastised for showing a Brahmanical perspective of caste, which has been related to his claim that those who suffered under this hierarchy system consented to their treatment (see, e.g., Das 1995; Madan 1971; Mencher 1975). Aiyappan was removed from the discussions and debates of the main magazines since his works and contributions emphasise the victims of the caste system and contradict the goals of these two leading journals.

### VII. Privilege as Embodied Cultural Capital in Indian Academia

This section examines people’s various capacities to acquire and transform embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977a; 1977b; 1986), such as personality characteristics, attitudes, confidence, and communication skills. Let us compare privileged Srinivas and underprivileged Aiyappan’s ability to inherit and circulate embodied capital in Indian academia.

Figure 1

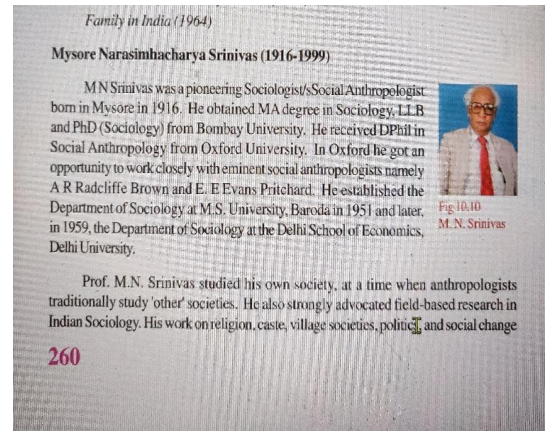


Figure one is from SCERT’s anthropology textbook for class XII. The image of the poet Aiyappan took the place of Dr A. Aiyappan. This misprinting illustrates how caste or academic privileges may be used to produce symbolic capital for the replication of cultural capital. M.N. Srinivas is a student of G. S. Ghurye, regarded as the father of Indian sociology. They are both from an upper caste brahmin family. In other words, his caste and academic privileges enable him to disseminate symbolic capital in order to replicate cultural capital. Regardless of his particular skills, the symbol of Ghurye is a powerful mark for Srinivas to earn and replicate social capital.

Several academicians (Kaufman and Gabler, 2004; Kisida, 2014) investigated how extra-curricular activities might boost students’ creativity and lead to a true development in their analytical and academic skills. For example, upper-caste students in India can build more cognitive skills over extra-curricular activities because they have extra time to practice poetry, music or other types of artistic or cultural activities, and they have the advantage of family habitus to reproduce those skills. This would result in their gaining or supplementing cultural capital, which may then be transformed into symbolic or social capital, and vice versa. Students from lower caste communities, on the other hand, seldom acquire adequate cultural capital in the form of symbolic capital from their parents, making learning a difficult effort for them in comparison to their upper-caste counterparts. On

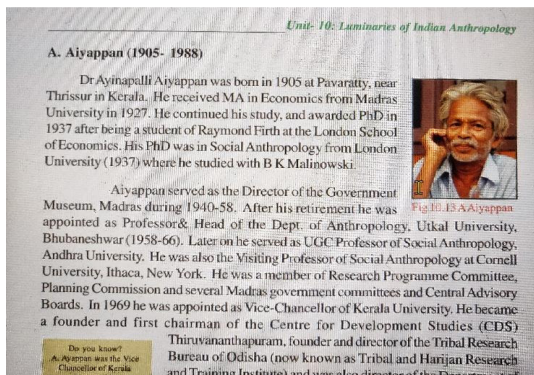


Figure 2

the other hand, these pupils may feel comfortable discussing the reality of their traditional jobs.

The lack of trained individuals puts a strain on such families since they have an extremely limited opportunity to effectively train or affect their children consciously or subconsciously through habitus. In figure two, the photograph of Aiyappan was misprinted in the SCERT anthropology textbook for a long time. In this context, it is important to comprehend the exclusion of the lower caste and Adivasi groups and their predecessors from the official educational system and professional occupations. Instead, they were compelled to work as manual labourers, slaves, or renters. The majority may develop a habit of solely reproducing their talents in traditional jobs. As a result of their difficult financial circumstances, they rarely enjoy their time off after school as they would be the breadwinners of their home. These circumstances continue to have a significant influence on their academic achievement. As a result, learning becomes tedious or a mechanical exercise for them, and they are more prone to drop out, resulting in under-representation in school and work. Aiyappan lost his father when he was 14, and Aiyappan had survived his financial difficulty for his studies through part-time jobs and tuition.

Moreover, the lower caste and Dalit groups were occasionally forced to engage in traditional vocations. As a result, their children's embodied cultural capital in the form of taste, creative abilities, or information instilled via habitus could only lead to success as farmers, carpenters, or barbers. However, it would not make them successful engineers, attorneys, or physicians. This is because caste limits their ability to inherit and replicate powerful embodied cultural capital through parental habitus. Aiyappan's self-determination and interest in sociology/anthropology enabled him to obtain a PhD from the London School of Economics under Raymond Firth, and he produced numerous works on Indian sociology/anthropology.

Nonetheless, because the Indian education system was intermingled with the caste system, the scholar's contributions were legitimised based on his/her caste and historical privileges. Furthermore,

higher caste intellectuals are legitimised as common or recognised as exceptional. Aiyappan's contributions to Indian sociology/anthropology are remarkable, although he is considered as average because of his lower caste status. For a long time, the misprinted photo of Aiyappan in the SCERT textbook confirmed it.

Aiyappan was a special officer of the Tribal and Training Centre in Calicut, Kerala. Despite his deep concern for tribal welfare, he was dissatisfied with how the governmental authorities managed the centre's activities and quit the position independently (Mahendrakumar, 2021). Aiyappan had to resign without completing his tenure. His bargaining strength was restricted by a lack of symbolic and social capital. Professor Aiyappan was also instrumental in establishing a research institution for anthropological and economic studies. He was the founding chairman of Thiruvananthapuram's Centre for Development Studies. CDS does not have the name or photograph of its founder, professor Aiyappan.

On the other hand, representatives of the higher caste are not restricted from accessing, reproducing, or transferring cultural capital in any manner. As an example,

Srinivas was Chair of the first committee of the University Grants Commission, which drafted the status report on the teaching of sociology. He was also one of the five signatories of the memorandum of association that set up the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) - the others being four economists. He also organised ICSSR's first bibliographic survey of sociology and social anthropology in India, which charted out the specialisations in the discipline, thereby directing research in defined areas. (Patel, 1998)

Unlike backward castes, they will not be hindered in their responsibilities as special officers, collectors, ministers, or public servants due to a lack of expertise or seniority. They may have been unknowingly directed and educated by family habitus from childhood. They are more likely to be aware of their father, mother, or uncle holding better incomes or social positions and, more likely



to be familiar with, for example, making a speech, organising a meeting, or engaging in social activities with others from comparable social or economic backgrounds. As a result, their lack of seniority or skill has no bearing on their confidence, school performance, or public participation because they gain built-in cultural capital while watching or listening to their typical conversations or meetings at family events, which gives them the confidence to deal with similar circumstances in future projects. Unselected, underprivileged people, on the other hand, face implicit marginalisation since they lack cultural capital.

### VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Aiyappan was a multifaceted scholar and an excellent sociologist/anthropologist with formal education in human anatomy, prehistoric archaeology, physical anthropology, and social anthropology. Rather than embracing any one stream of anthropological thinking of the moment, he may combine many traditions pertaining to the specificities of the studied societies. He has demonstrated in his research how general theoretical notions may be recast in the context of analysing one's own society and culture. Throughout his professional career (1930-1988), he examined dynamic societies of a specific historical time, the years preceding and following independence. His formal education, personal experiences as a member of a lower caste in society, and prominent intellectual orientations of the day all affected his research and perspective.

I believe Aiyappan can easily coexist with mainstream sociologists/anthropologists in Indian academia. Aiyappan's contributions to Indian anthropology and sociology are significant since his research accommodated the histories of lower castes and tribes, notably oral histories from the colonial and post-colonial periods. There are numerous limits to the contributions of Orientalist and higher caste local researchers who examined Indian society in pre-and post-British period ethnographic studies. The book view of Orientalists and native scholars' higher caste identities limited

the scope of revealing the actual essence of tribes and lower caste histories.

In other words, backward castes and Dalits do have cultural capital, but it is confined to performing their traditional occupations. As a result, unlike members of the upper caste, underprivileged members must still participate in various academic or charitable activities to gain symbolic capital sources that future generations can use to replicate cultural capital and social capital for future social and academic engagements. These inequalities result in the predominance of one group over the other, resulting in the marginalisation of the underprivileged.

Nevertheless, the reality remains that Aiyappan's scholarly contributions to the development of sociology/anthropology in and of India stayed largely unrecognised mainly because he remained ignored in the mainstream Indian academia, from the dominant and noticeable 'disciplinary community' of his time owing to the absence of access to institutional backing due to his lower caste identity. As a result, the government must continue to take intentional steps to ensure the lower caste, Dalit, and minority community populations' representation and involvement in academics and politics. Furthermore, the education platforms should incorporate the literature of the underprivileged communities and discuss them in detail to get a better picture of Indian society.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I'd like to thank my research supervisor, Assistant Professor Dr Pradyumna Bag, and my colleague Rameez. T, for their patient supervision, passionate support, and insightful criticisms of my research work.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Aiyappan, A. (1937). *Social and Physical Anthropology of the Nayadis of Malabar*. Madras: Madras Government Press.
- [2] Aiyappan, A. (1965). *Social Revolution in a Kerala Village*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.
- [3] Ambedkar, B. R. (1987). *The Hindu Social Order—Its Essential Features in Vasant Moon*. Mumbai: Education Department Mumbai.

- [4] B. Kisida, J. P. Greene, D. H. Bowen. (2014). Creating cultural consumers: the dynamics of cultural capital acquisition. *Sociol. Educ*, 281-295.
- [5] Berreman, G. D. (1972). Race, Caste, and Other Invidious Distinctions in Social Stratification. *Sage*, 385-414.
- [6] Beteille, A. (2002). *Sociology: Essays on Approach and Method*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- [7] Bourdieu, P. (1973). cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In R. Brown, *Knowledge, education and cultural change*. London: Tavistock Publications Limited.
- [8] Bourdieu, P. (1999). The weight of the world: social suffering in contemporary society. Oxford: Polity.
- [9] Bourdieu, P. (2021, December Thursday). *The forms of capital*. Retrieved from In Richardson, J; handbook of the theory of and research for the sociology of education. Westport, CT: Greenwood: 241-58:  
[http://home.iitk.ac.in/~amman/soc748/bourdieu\\_forms\\_of\\_capital.pdf](http://home.iitk.ac.in/~amman/soc748/bourdieu_forms_of_capital.pdf)
- [10] Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. Sheffield: Sheffield Region Centre for Science and Technology.
- [11] Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. J. D. . (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- [12] Deshpande, S. (2013). Caste and castlessness: towards a biography of the general category. *Economic and political weekly*, 32-39.
- [13] Edgerton, J. D. and Roberts, L. D. (2014). Cultural capital or habitus? Bourdieu and beyond in the explanation of enduring educational inequality. *Theory and Research in Education*, 193 –220.
- [14] Gosden, C. (1999). *Anthropology and Archaeology: A Changing Relationship*. London: Routledge.
- [15] Jæger, M.M and Breen, R. (2016). A dynamic model of cultural reproduction. *Am. J. Sociol*, 1079-1115.
- [16] Jitha, T. (2010). Mapping the Life and Works of Aiyappan. *Indian Anthropological Association*, 21-42.
- [17] Keskiner, E. (2015). Is it Merit or Cultural Capital? The Role of Parents During Early Tracking in Amsterdam and Strasbourg Among Descendants of Immigrants from Turkey. *Journal of Comparative Migration Studies*, 1-9.
- [18] Louie, V. (2012). Keeping the immigrant bargain: the costs and rewards of success in America. *Russell Sage*.
- [19] Madan, T. (1994). *Pathways: Approaches to the Study of Society in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- [20] Mathur, N. (2020). The Remembered Anthropologist: Engaging with the Insights of M. N. Srinivas. *Journal of the Anthropological Survey of India*, 224-240.
- [21] Michaels, A. (2020). At the point of confluence of sociology and Indology': Louis Dumont's postulate reconsidered. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 357–387.
- [22] Oommen, T. K. (1983). Sociology in India: A Plea For Contextualisation. *Sociological Bulletin*, 111-136.
- [23] P. Bourdieu. and L. J. D Wacquant,. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- [24] Pate, S. (2010). At crossroads. *Sociology in India. Sage*.
- [25] Patel, S. (2005). On Srinivas's 'Sociology'. *Sociological Bulletin*, 101-111.
- [26] Srinivas, M. N. (1952). Religion and society among the Coorgs of South India. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- [27] Srinivas, M. N. (1962). *Caste in modern India and other essays*. Asia Publishing House.
- [28] Srinivas, M. N. (1966). Social change in modern India. *University of California Press*.
- [29] Srinivas, M. N. (1987). *The Dominant Caste and Other Essays*. Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press.
- [30] Srinivas, M. N. (2002). *Collected essays*. Oxford University Press.