Caste in Goa: Glimpses of Transition from Caste to Class

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The caste system has undergone many changes, many people have predicted its soon demise, but it has proven to stay. Many theories such as Sanskritization by M.N. Srinivas have been written about the caste system and many studies showed that caste has retreated, though not disappeared, from several spheres of life. A delinking of occupation and caste, increased inter-caste and interreligious marriages and the status of a person is increasingly measured not by traditional hereditary factors such as caste but individual parameters such as wealth, job security and career chances, that are factors which can individually be acquired. Thus, researchers said that class will supplant caste, but recent research has shown that it would be better not to see these two as opposed to each other and rather study the similarities. We have researched in rural and urban areas with in purposefully selected areas in Goa with people from many different social backgrounds, religions, caste, and as well tribal background. We have opted to use mainly qualitative research. The open-ended informal interview or semi-structured interview with an interview guide was mostly used as it provides best insight in how people perceive their life and changes. Due to social changes such as democratization after Liberation from the Portuguese colonial rule in 1961, the Land Tiller's Act which transferred the land from the owners to the tillers and migration, which offered especially to the former working class higher incomes, caste markers have undergone changes as well. A significant change to individual choices from inherited traditional caste rules could be observed, which depended on individually acquired characteristics. Hereditary traditional factors such as caste, which are non-personal, retreated to the background. As caste is seen by many as discrimination, people try to get rid of it or hide it as much as possible. That means that obvious caste markers such as names of wards indicating one's profession or caste background cannot be used anymore, as the composition of castes in wards have changed as well. Profession and caste have been decoupled, the sitting order in the church does not indicate caste anymore and other traditional caste markers have become obsolete. Thus, people have found out new markers to orient themselves in their social world. These factors were for instance language. The accent of course could be changed, as certain accents were related to specific varnas and as well jaatis. As ward names have changed, the setting and look of wards became important, such as the space in front of the house and the absence or presence of agricultural tools or harvest versus flower beds and expensive children's toys were gauged. The style of the house, how many stories and the style of color and decoration were considered as well. The behavior and demeanor became very important as well as the style of clothes and jewelry one was wearing. As well how feasts and parties were celebrated. These individual factors of gauging the status of a person did have significant influences and repercussions on social set up in urban and very strong as well in rural areas. The member composition or formal and informal meetings and local NGOs are due to personal interest and skills. Thus, hot issues in villages are decided by expected personal gain and interest. Professions get a new ranking according to career chances and income, dining with others depends on personal liking. Despite this emerging class character, we should not see class and caste dichotomous, as people use either of them in different situations depending on what they feel might get them better chances to advance to their goals. Seeing caste and class as complimentary and not dichotomous helps to better understand social changes in progress.

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1. Introduction

Social changes are taking place very rapidly not only in Goa but in the whole of India. Traditional hereditary caste has receded to the background, though not disappeared, while individual factors have significantly gained in importance to escape the stigma of one's lower position and avoid discrimination based on one's caste. Occupation and caste has been delinked, inter-caste and interreligious marriages have been steadily increasing although still in a minor position compared to the whole society and ritual pollution has lost its importance. Researchers have pointed out the fusion of castes on different levels such as profession, education, neighborhoods and inter-sub-caste-marriages. This has led to many discussions where caste and class were treated dichotomous, but researchers feel that social change can better be gauged when seeing similarities and not concentrating on the division between them, because reality is too complex to use such a white and black concept.

Aims and objectives

Social mobility and change regarding caste and its consequences will be measured and researched and its subsequent consequences for the power and relationships in society and the formation of social classes by the following questions.

1. How valid are traditional caste markers today in society?
2. Have there been any changes regarding caste markers?
3. We will research how people see their caste status, to which extent hiding one's caste or Sanskritization can be observed, if the caste system is still favored and look as well at rural and urban differences.
4. We will identify parameters how people today distinguish between caste identities and how which characteristics are important in guessing the caste of other people.
5. Then we will see the effects of a changed caste system in regard to political participation, economic uplift and social and cultural participation in the community. We will ask how the rank of occupations have changed under a changing caste system. Here we will discuss the question if we can talk about a caste or class character of society and / or how intense overlapping between these two systems have developed.

Review of literature

One way of hiding one's caste was by adopting the behavior of people or members of castes which are regarded higher and thus to escape the stigma of one's lower position and avoid discrimination based on one's caste. M.N. Srinivas has called this Sanskritization and has defined it as follows: "Sanskritization is the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently 'twice-born' caste (Srinivas 1966: 6). But caste has diminished in various aspects of life, as several studies have shown. Occupation and caste have been delinked (Atal 2011: 164), inter-caste and interreligious marriages are an increasing reality, ritual pollution has lost its importance, the jajamani system has weakened (Subedi 2013: 72). K.L. Sharma points out that these above stated pillars of the caste system were never the only basis of difference: "In caste, power emanated not just from ritualized ranks, it also originated from several other factors, including the nature of work, economic standing, numerical strength and performance of individual members," (Sharma 2011: 76). Today democratization, education, which has spread to more sections of society, and migrants are speeding this process up. So, the caste system is no longer a system, but a phenomenon, "caste is increasingly becoming a matter of interpretation rather than substantializing. […] Today, castes are discrete categories. The inter-caste relations, which were the bedrock of the caste system, have disappeared. […] Family and individual have replaced caste in everyday life," (Sharma 2011: 13). Kolenda has pointed out the fusion of castes on different levels, on the job and in neighborhoods, inter-sub-caste-marriage and through democratic politics. […] A new system of competitive descent-groups is emerging as modern economic benefits and political power are prizes to be won rather than inheritances ascribed by birth," (Kolenda 1997: 150f). Thus, Sanskritization is for economic successful, educated people not so attractive to escape their discrimination. This has been recognized as well in academic circles and the discussion was about the direction of society towards a class society respectively if class or caste is prevailing. But today many anthropologists and sociologists think this caste-class difference too simple and too black and white (Kumar 2011: 167). The reality is just too complex to operate just with two terms which are depicted as dichotomous. By the way, class-based hierarchies are not always

an open system (Gupta 2000: 23). In certain social groups where people with different caste, such as in schools, meet on a regular basis and form friendships, it has been observed that caste does not play a role and therefore it is not uncommon that they are not aware of someone's caste background. "Intercaste friendship is the norm rather than the exception in schools, hostels, campuses, offices, labor sites (Still 2014:21). Before Liberation of Goa from the colonial power Portugal in 1961 the political, social and economic life was in the hands of the gaunkars and this post was hereditary and held from generation to generation (Pereira 2008: 329-330), but today there are changes due to the superior number [of the varna of Shudras] and the political system of democracy (Gomes 1996:388-389). This influenced the methods of getting rid of one's caste status.

2. Methodology

Sampling

The most used sampling method in qualitative research is purposive sampling, which means that an area has been chosen because one expects to find in these areas the desired data. "Purposive sampling allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested," (Silverman 2009: 306), thus we have chosen the village of Carvalho, as there live many migrants and a big cross section of Goan society such as lusitanized Catholic Brahmins, many members of the varna of Shudras, a large tribal community, and members of the Hindu community.

Tools and techniques of data collection

For "exploring people's life histories or everyday behavior", qualitative methods would be more useful. Qualitative research wants to find "explanations of social phenomena" (Silverman 2009:34). In qualitative research the open-ended informal interview or semi-structured interview with an interview guide is mostly used as it provides "opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics more in detail," (Hancock 2007: 16). These kinds of interviews require "active listening" by the interviewer who is at the same time an active participant who can with the focus on the broad research question change the direction of the interview and give also the interviewee the chance to bring up topics she or he deems important (Silverman 2009: 110-112), which would not be possible "in a standardized interview or a questionnaire" (Flick 2009: 164). We used as well the ethnographic interview, which is a "series of friendly conversations" where the researcher meets the informant a few times and introduces new topics slowly, as otherwise there would be the danger of an interrogation which will deter the informant to further cooperate with the researcher (Flick 2009: 183 quoted from Spradley 1979: 58-59).

Approach and experience in the entire process of data collection

During my pilot study I started preparing an interview guide with general questions such as marriage and caste relations, old and new caste markers with people of different caste and religious backgrounds. Many of my interviews especially in the beginning of my research were arranged through key informants who suggested me certain people who were capable of answering my questions. They in turn recommended me to other people who could be useful for me, often calling them before a meeting or introducing me personally. Group interviews are very helpful because one can see how opinions are formed, how certain statements are corrected by other participants of the group interview or discussion. While doing my fieldwork I have always gotten informed consent to interviews and told the participant that I might publish the dissertation as a book. Some asked me not to mention their names or reveal their identity.

3. Findings

Discussion and Analysis of Data
How people distinguish different caste identities

Due to social changes caste markers have undergone changes as well. A significant change towards individual choices from inherited traditional caste rules can be observed, which can be acquired individually. While hereditary family affiliations such as caste are non-personal in the sense that they stick to one's whole life and do usually depend on the individual just to a small degree, the new markers can be changed according to personal characteristics, behavior and demeanor. Of course caste was never the only parameter which determined the status of a person. Personality, income or the type of work performed did matter as well. This development has been observed in urban areas, but as the following will show it has as well arrived in rural villages in Goa.

These inquiries concerned as well the question how the researcher encounters caste and how the people themselves distinguish other castes. As a researcher one wants to get the native view (as far as possible) and wants to know how people see reality and construct meaning.

The following example will show how one can inquire about caste: Ronaldo and me went to Quepem to meet one of my informants, a Christian by religion from Chinchinim in Salcete taluka. Ronaldo politely inquired about his name, vaddo (ward) and his acquaintances and friends and profession of his grandfather, father and himself. Later he said "He is a Chardo, but not a top-Chardo." As this way of inquiring is deemed impolite and former traditional caste markers such as residence in a certain ward, profession, clothes such as the murza in church, sitting order in the church etc. have vanished, people have developed to judge people by their outer appearance.

1. *Language*

Language is an important caste marker. Fatima Rebello from Maina said: "Did you hear the accent…it is hard to hide your background when talking Konkani. Brahmins say 'ailo' for come, Shudras say elu." Mr. Shirodkar turned as well to linguistics to explain the differences in their society: "In lower Konkani they say posoro, meaning shop, in higher Konkani dukan. If you want to say that person, I (he is a Hindu Vaishya) say taka, Gauda people say teka, Brahmins say taaka." Favita Deao, belonging to the tribal community of Gawda, told me about an acquaintance in Quepem who was completely hiding his accent which would reveal

2. *Wards or vaddos*

The wards or vaddos, which appear at times as small, enclosed villages, which have grown together through expansion, were caste markers in former times, but nowadays the compositions have changed. But other characteristics such as the style of houses, space in front of the house still allow to distinguish them to a certain degree.

Ungento is a ward in Carvalho. It is located close to the market and the church, which is often a sign of Brahmins living there. Shudras were living there as well, but mostly on the property of their landlords. Some 30 years ago Shudras have built their houses in this ward as the Land Tiller's Act shifted the land from the landlord to the tiller. The houses of the Brahmins are closer to the market, where they were located originally, the houses of members of the Shudra community are further up the street on a small hill, where there were fields 30-40 years ago. The houses closer to the market are in Indo-Portuguese style, all one-storied, and have been built between 70 to 100 years ago. Some of them are empty and look dilapidated as they belonged to Brahmins who left after the Land Tiller's Act to urban areas or foreign countries. In wards dominated by the Gauda community there are almost no empty Indo-Portuguese houses, as there was no sizeable upper caste population. The tribal dominated wards like Aeklat and Calwort have as well other distinguishing features. Many houses are much closer to each other, have no garden or yard, there are some dilapidated houses and some mud houses and some dried crop in the yard tells of agricultural activities. There are new modern two-storied houses, mostly by migrants, but many of them not finished although work has started already several years ago. Though it is clear to most people in Carvalho who belongs to which caste, the changes which have happened over the years make it for outsiders more and more difficult to distinguish the background of people. Nowadays one can hear people distinguishing certain wards in terms of a 'rich ward' or a 'poor ward'. That shows that even without knowing a certain ward, a detailed description is telling about the history and its inhabitants.

3. Behavior and demeanor

Behavior and demeanor are another marker of caste. "The lower castes are now the new Kshatriyas," usually upper caste inhabitants say. Kshatriyas are traditionally members of the warrior caste and characteristics like strength, ferocity, wildness are associated with them. In this case it is a negative term. It describes a headless impulsive person who likes to show off his wealth and is greedy for power and money. Meant are the members of the Gowda and Shudra community who made money abroad and now start building big houses, buy big cars and other accessories they could not afford before. "Just look at their houses, most of them are unfinished…they do not know how to deal with money," said one member of an upper caste. "We Brahmins behave modestly, not like the new Kshatriyas," was another statement regarding the behavior. "I have quite some money, but I don't show off with golden rings or necklaces like the new upstarts," said one Brahmin in Carvalho. "They wear flashy clothes, very glittery, have houses painted in garish colors, red, green, purple, they want to draw attention to themselves," he continued. "They like to be loud, talk loud, drive with their noisy Enfield motor-cycles through our village…" But these differentiations according to behavior is not restricted to a certain caste. "Even among Brahmins there is a division. There are the ones who were tilling their own fields and retained therefore their land after the implementation of the Land Tiller's Act. You can make out the difference immediately. Just look at Mr. XX. He is a bit rough (chuckles a bit and looks at me as saying 'you know what I mean'), no education and no manners, talking loud and arguing with people on the street"

One person who belongs to the Shudra community, but rather looks like belonging to a higher caste. Outside the house he mostly wears a suit and a cap. "You see, he has some education. He was working in Bombay for many years. When you hear him talking in Konkani, you immediately would recognize his background…but, yes, he behaves modest, does not brag and so on."

Caste distinction respectively membership to different communities goes through all age groups. On the Indian Republic Day on the 26th of January I was invited by some people from Calwort to join them for a party at Colva beach in Salcete. It was a big village party and young and old went, though the males and females were enjoying themselves at a certain distance. Next to us there were a few boys who joined us dancing, as the guys from Calwort have brought a sound system with them. In big pots with cool water they have put beer bottles, which rested under some palm trees. When I asked Deao Fernandes if he knew where these guys were from and to which community they belonged, he said: "I think they are Gaudda as well." "How can you tell?" I asked him. "They party just like us," he answered.

Favita Deao, a member of the tribal community in Carvalho, confessed that she did not know of her caste background until quite recently. "I knew we were not Brahmins, but I did not know that we were Gouda, this was just not discussed in our family, I just thought we belong to the educated ones as my father did not go to the local bars," she told.

I would like to mention local festivities in two wards, the Brahmin dominated Ungento and Calwort, which is inhabited without exception by the Gauda community. On festival days many people in Calwort celebrate after going to church on the streets of their ward, one can see ladies combing their hairs in the yards of the houses, some youngsters are playing cards and drinking beer next to the volleyball field, where there is a small club room, where alcohol is stored at festival times. Children are running around and playing games, some people wander through the village and meet friends. It is a very lively scene, one can hear music from some houses, sometimes there is a sound machine in the club room with loudspeakers which fills the air with music and mostly younger people in their teens or twenties dance. One reason is of course the big number of children, youngsters, and young adults in Calwort versus main elder people in Ungento, but people in Calwort feel less inhibited when having a party.

4. Clothes and outer appearance

Gaudy cloth of the so-called "lower" castes is still considered caste markers today in Carvalho. Glittery and shiny clothes in various colors are especially a sign of members of the Gouda community, both male and female. These clothes are seen by this community as fitting to go to church and other festive occasions. Not all members of this community wear such clothes, but other communities wear them rather very seldom. But there are as well members of the Gowda community who consciously do not wear them as not being recognized as a Gowda. At a

tribal meeting in Queen one Gowda was talking about how to hide one's background He tried consciously to avoid his community's accent, wearing cloth and

showing a behavior which is rather associated with the upper castes. Favita Deao, herself belonging to the Gowda community, told me that she thought at first that he was a Brahmin.

1.   Changes in the social set-up

Several factors such as migration, democratization after Liberation from the Portuguese rule in 1961 and the Land Tiller's Act, which transferred the land from the landowner to the ones who were tilling it, made the former working class independent from the higher castes for who they were working before and were in many cases just paid in kind for their work, as many villagers told me. The communicate, who was run by Catholic Brahmins and made all decisions in the village, lost the control of the villages. That meant that their lost authority and the formerly neglected communities did not want to accept the old order anymore. A process of emancipation has started which did not fail to leave its impact on the social set-up and caste system. Together with the economic upswing and the receding of the caste system in the public sphere, which was challenged by the pronunciation of individual character traits regarding the definition of status, it could be observed that political and social issues were more and more dominated by individuals and the caste affiliation receded, although it did not disappear.

1.1. Formal and informal village meetings and local NGOs

Before Liberation it was very clear that the political local and state positions were run by high castes. The high castes were the only ones who had proper access to education. Nowadays apart from the fact that one can see that the tribal community has become much more active in several fields such as the panchayat, NGOs and several informal and formal meetings, which shows their greater participation in the village, the reasons of these changes are not just due to their number. The education of many of the members of the former working class has risen and their advice and participation is due to individual reasons such as personal character and skills. A very good example would be Veena Lourenco, who is a very intelligent woman who is respected for her knowledge and ability to handle village affairs. Alex Fernandes, a very successful contractor and member of the tribal community, is as well very active and respected for his economic success and ability to negotiate village affairs. Mr. Shinkre, belonging to the Hindu community, is even discussing mundane church matters and well respected for his personal ability and diplomacy by all communities. In the case of Carvalho, the head of the panchayat has been in the last 20 years mostly from the community of the Sudirs, 2014 and 2015 there was Rosy Paez, from the tribal community of the Gowda and right now, as Reginaldo Lourenco MLA of the Carvalho Constituency has told me via email (June 2020), there is a Brahmin sarpanch.

The mixing of caste and religion can be seen very clearly in meetings of different NGOs and formal and informal village meetings which have been formed due to certain hot issues concerning the village. Let's take for example a meeting from the 26th of January 2015 where I was present. We will quote the names from letters and leaflets which have been published and handed out by the Village Panchayat of Carvalho (Carvalopanchayat@gmail.com). In the program schedule are mentioned distinguished guests, who are all from Carvalho: Shri. Reginaldo Lourenco Hon'ble MLA, Carvalho Constituency, Fr. Mariano Goes e Proenca (parish priest of St. Alex Church), ZP Veena Lourenco (Sudir community), Smt. Rosy Paes (Sarpanch and member of the tribal Gowda community). Among these people we have a variable mix of castes, from the tribal Gouda community to Shudra and Brahmins. The same is true for the Child Committee, the Village Water & Sanitation Committee, the Biodiversity Management. This is a mix of castes and religious and social backgrounds. The name list of the Carvalho Union includes names as well from all different caste and religious backgrounds, such as Santano Rodriguez (Brahmin), Father V. Da Cruz, Alex Fernandes (tribal Gowda community), Nuno Fernandes (Sudir), Joseph (Vinci) Fernandes (Sudir), A.M. Viegas (Brahmin), M. Koegaonkar, Maria Rebello. The women's association includes one Hindu lady, two members of the Gowda community and members of the Brahmin and Shudra community.

We will discuss two *hot issues* and show conflicts and its perception. Some developers wanted to build a huge hotel with about 80 rooms in Carvalho. There were naturally people for and against this project. In both groups there were found members of different castes and religious, educational and professional backgrounds. So one cannot say that the reason for belonging to the one or other faction is determined by a traditional lump factor such as caste

or religion, but rather by personal statements such as "development brings money and is good for everybody" versus "development brings natural catastrophes and bad influence on society as it makes people greedy". Ideology and personal opinion rather than caste determines one's point of view. This is substantiated by the fact that at times individuals are together in one group and oppose each other in another. This increase of personal attitude naturally weakens traditional caste thinking, as people are more independent and chose according to personal preferences rather than being part of a certain caste. The individual gains the upper hand in decision making processes and puts the issue itself in the foreground thereby overshadowing caste sentiments to a certain degree. Thus a climate is being created where people meet more freely together exchanging ideas and opinions. In an atmosphere where caste groups agitate against each other, it would be more difficult to voice one's own opinion, especially when it would differ from one's caste community, as it would be interpreted as supporting 'the others'. Personal and emotional sentiments do of course play a role and personal associations such as friendships so influence the personal decision making process, but the reference frame has changed from caste sentiments which are rather rigid and more difficult to cross to personal friendships, which can be formed as well as dissolved easier. Another example of an issue which is solved not along caste lines regards the stream which crosses the backside of the market, where most of the village festivals are held as it is the center of the village. Problems of cleaning the nullah, the small stream behind the tinto - the market - and the storing of dry waste for, which a small place was needed, was until then impossible to obtain, because some people thought that there might be some smell disturbing the village. As there were many Brahmins (Hindus and Christians) in the group opposing these projects, some people in the village were of the opinion that caste determined their opposition, while others pointed out that the inhabitants close to the nullah and the place meant for storing dry waste was located near their homes and properties of Brahmins as these especially Catholic Brahmins - in the case of Carvalho as well Hindu Brahmins - were traditionally living near the market and church. But the leader of the group who wants to store the dry waste in this area was himself a Christian Brahmin.

1.2. Professions

There was a distinction between different occupations, but today members of the former working class want to escape in general their caste (jaati) names. Especially people of the former working class rather do not want to be associated anymore with their former caste, as they feel that they have moved on. Some of them fear discrimination and negative comments and therefore try to hide their caste background. That is why they do not want to talk about their former professions, because one could easily conclude from their profession to their caste. Professions nowadays are often the only clue one gets to find out about the caste, said many priests. "When the people who are going to marry bring their respective certificates," Father Proenca said, "we can guess their caste. Otherwise it is difficult to guess, especially in urban areas."

Father Furtado from Sanguem said about his parish: "Basically money and professional background count more than caste, that is how people pair up nowadays." Marianne Viegas, Ronaldo's wife, said about her daughter: "My daughter told me that she wants her husband to earn at least as much as herself." Money has become a decisive factor in choosing a profession. This choice is a step towards individualism and being the maker of one's own destiny. Money enables people to open a restaurant, bar or any shop, which is the dream of many migrants. Professions have always been ranked and they are still ranked today, but in different ways. Once the professions are changed, rules associated with the professions get less and less strict. In Borim, Ponda, the change of profession has altered social relations in the village. "This village was populated by fishermen and toddy tappers. In former times they married within their caste, but these two professions disappeared. Many migrated to London with a Portuguese passport, some went to work on ships. Now they mix as former caste distinctions have disappeared." Individual choices made traditional barriers obsolete and opened new ways.

1.3. New rankings of occupations among migrants

Nowadays a very different set of parameters have become decisive, which are individualistic and much less connected to traditions such as caste or family background. Occupational choices (respectively the wish or aim to get a certain profession) are based on the expected income, time spent abroad, possibilities to make career and advance in one's field of expertise. The prestige of jobs abroad such as in the Gulf region, on ships and in a foreign

country (preferably in England) with a Portuguese passport are directly related to the above mentioned choices. The Gulf region is ranked lowest, because the income is not very high. Work on ships is ranked second and this list is topped by jobs in England (or other Western destinations). Among these three categories there are again sub-divisions based on the kind of work which is performed and the income. Working as a cook on a ship is considered less preferable than working as an engineer on a ship. But working as a cook in a good restaurant in England with a good salary and a Portuguese passport is regarded better, as the chances of advancement are higher and one has obtained the right to live and work in England and other countries belonging to the European Union and Schengen area. Having attended a hotel management school and/or a specialized education as a cook furthers the social status of this profession, as it promises a better career.

1.4. Caste in the Church

The Church and religious festivals are another indicator of the emancipation from caste. While after Liberation the gauncars or landowners lost their formal authority, they were still economically, politically and socially - e.g. organizing religious festivals - in charge. The power game was seen in the position of the grave in the graveyard, the sitting order of the church - with the so-called high castes in front and the others behind - from positions as priest and the church administration and the wearing of colored caps (murza) related to certain castes. In the St. Alex Church in Carvalho as well as other churches it can be observed that mostly women (of different caste affiliations) do sit in the front places. Other factors which are responsible for the sitting order on any given day is often determined how early or late someone arrives in church. I could observe very often a member of the tribal community sitting next to a Brahmin and a former toddy tapper, a migrant or a doctor. In the same way one meets at prayers in local shrines in the different wards and at novenas people from different communities. At the novenas, which are held in each ward, all people interested come irrespective of their caste. Outside the chapel there is a list of who is in charge of the chapel for a certain day. From this list it could be seen that members of different castes were in charge. After the novena people usually eat together some snacks, often beef patties, soft drinks, some sweets or fruits. All people eat, drink and chat together and this is considered very normal. During the passe on Good Friday some decades ago there were disputes about the honor of carrying the cross on Good Friday during the Easter celebrations, but today every ward has the right irrespective of the caste composition to carry the cross, as I could observe in Carvalho.

1.5. Food and dining restrictions

Food and dining restrictions were directly related to religion and caste. "These were two different worlds," said Ronaldo Viegas and Suresh Shinkre, "your friends and the people you met in private were from your caste. The relation with the former working class was just on a professional basis, we did not meet them for tea or food." Caste and religion dictated what kind of food one could take and with whom. Personal preferences were possible but mainly within one's caste. The food restrictions within the Hindu community were stricter than among Christians. Although food restrictions do still exist today, personal preferences have become much stronger and the individual has much more freedom to choose what and with whom to eat. Favita Deao (25) remembers her childhood: "To many instances of my childhood I did not really pay so much attention, but since I know about my background I remember them. Some ten years ago when I was in school some Gowda avoided having food with higher castes on a class picnic. They also did not share water bottles." Nowadays personal preferences are common and the famous eatery in Carvalho run by a family of the Catholic Shudra varna is frequented by most community members. At the novena people of all castes in a ward eat together and share the food which is prepared by different people with different caste backgrounds.

1.6. Class or caste?

We can see that the actors, the people, are actively producing their social world in diverse ways in a more individual way than has been possible just some decades or a generation ago. Rather than trying to see caste or class as contradictory or dichotomous, we should focus on the individuals and groups or communities to see how they act in certain situations. It is very difficult to separate caste or class thinking, because both can be seen in one and the same person in different situations. People are flexible, show in different circumstances different modes

of behavior which might appear contradictory at a first glance, but humans are not beings who follow a thought or philosophy consistently, but are driven by emotions and situational logic and chose respectively display different behavior at different times in different surroundings.

We will show some examples. Favita belongs to the tribal community of the Gowda. To acquire her teaching job she made use of the reservation system. She had applied twice before in general class (without the reservation system), but failed. She did not feel comfortable about the fact that she only passed because she was included in the reservation quota. In her private life she interacts with many different people and said that she would have no problem to marry a foreigner or have a boyfriend from another caste or religion. But she does not want to have a relationship with a Brahmin and actually broke up with her boyfriend when she got to know his caste. The reasons for not wanting to have a relationship with a Brahmin are the history and relationship of the Brahmins and the tribal society and working class. "Too much has happened between these two communities," she said. She chooses her friends according to personal liking and hobbies and these are rather class concepts, while her tribal background has helped her to get her desired teaching job.

In his village Ronaldo does not meet many people, his closest friends are Portuguese speaking Brahmins and he was opposing initially the marriage of his daughter with a member of the Hindu community. She was the first of his three children to marry. His son is working in Germany and he said that he would not mind if he married a foreigner, a person from a different religion, as long as she is from a reputable family and 'up to his (his son's and his) standards'. "I greet everybody, but I keep my distance. I just meet with educated people," he said. These statements and descriptions could easily be used to call him casteist and he admitted to have had casteist ideas when young. "I could never have imagined marrying a non-Brahmin," he said. But getting to know him better it turned out that there were many different sides to his personality. In the meantime he is very happy with his Hindu son-in-law who is a doctor like his daughter. He proudly told me of the achievements of his son-in-law, and he meets with a member of the Catholic Shudra community of his ward and is member in the water works committee which has members form several religious and caste backgrounds.

One of his close friends is a Hindu Brahmin, whom he meets on a regular basis.

As migrants have to work abroad and are quite proud of their profession, they have developed certain symbols such as the wheel of a ship and the ship itself which appears carved in doors, as tattoos, as icing on cakes, as floats on festivals and on T-shirts. They feel proud to work abroad, many youngsters name migrant as their dream job, many young ladies feel that being a migrant is a respectable job which stands as well for financial security. Their similar life style creates a connection across caste and religion. In many cases young migrants come already paired up to Goa after a term of work abroad or patch up via Facebook. These factors promote a feeling of class, a feeling of togetherness based on factors which can be acquired (and lost again). Relationships have become more personalized; migrants would like to choose partners who have similar interests. "My wife should be educated like me; she should be able to follow me living abroad. When she can't speak English properly, how should she manage in England or another country? She won't be able to make friends, she could not take up some work due to language problems. I want a partner with whom I can build up a life abroad," explained an ambitious migrant from Chandor who plans to go to Europe, if possible with a Portuguese passport, as he said.

In Uguem, Sanguem taluka, I met Peter Krasto, who converted in 1976 to Christianity and married a Catholic lady. They still live together with their children and grandchildren. Their children are all working abroad and it does not happen so often that all family members meet together. "During Christmas we usually try to have a big family gathering," Peter Krasto's wife said. Their different family backgrounds seem not to matter, they were rather adjusting to their life as migrants and the workload is shared among them. The grandparents are actively engaged in rearing their grandchildren as their parents work abroad. New lifestyles bring new demands and family structures have to adjust to new circumstances. "It is not always easy when your husband is away for long period of times, the same with our friends. 90% of our friends work abroad, we try to cope with this situation as good as possible," said Peter Krasto's daughter.

4. Conclusion

After Liberation and the end of the Portuguese colonization the modernization and democratization process education has been accessible to wider sections of society and this in turn affected caste. Caste emphasizes on

hereditary and fixed ascriptions of social attributes and status has receded to the private sphere and thus a vacuum was created in the public sphere. While this process has started in the city already some decades ago, it has spread now as well to the countryside. As former caste markers such as profession, inhabiting a certain ward or special colored caps in the church indicating one's caste have disappeared, new caste markers based on individual changeable characteristics have gained in importance. The accent and language respectively dialect, the architecture of houses, its color and the arrangement and size of the yard, behavior and demeanor of individuals but as well festive occasions or functions in wards, clothes and personal items such as necklaces, rings, expensive motorbikes and cars. All these characteristics are not inherited and can be individually acquired. One's status and position in society is thus changeable and less dependent on caste than on the person her-or himself.

These new characteristics were as well translated to everyday life in the village. Thus new guidelines of behavior were based on individuality and personal prospects. This can be seen in the composition of formal and informal meetings and local NGOs, where people of different caste and religious backgrounds meet. Hot issues in the village, which concerns the lives of people such as the building of a big hotel or cleaning the village water channel and storing of waste are weighed against personal interest and perceived gains or losses and not by affiliation to a certain religion or caste. How caste took a backseat can as well be seen in professions. Especially among Catholics and migrants, but as well other sections of society, the jaatis have lost meaning and thus professions received a new ranking based on personal traits such as income and stability of the job. The sitting order of the church, in former times determined by caste, gave way to personal factors such as women sitting in the front of who comes earlier or later. The cross at passe on Good Friday is now carried by all wards and not just by the Brahmins as before. Food and dining restrictions have diminished, as can be seen at the novena, where different castes take part and eat all together food prepared by one person, which is on one day from a so-called higher and one day by a so-called lower caste. In private personal likings are responsible for choosing with who to dine.

Considering these changes one might ask if there is a shift from a caste to a class society, but at this stage it is rather difficult to decide between these two systems. Looking at the behavior of individuals one can perceive that people act context-related and use in certain situations caste or class behavior, as it fits them respectively they perceive any gains or losses. At the same time people with similar interests, professions or personal likings meet and thus foster in a declining atmosphere of caste a class-like society, which still retains caste character. For the individual the distinction of caste and class is less important, than the fact that relationships and connections with other people are based on free and individual choices and thus give more room for personal considerations in making decisions.

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