# What goes around meat eating, comes around

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## *Vegetarianism as a status marker in contemporary India*

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# Introduction

### *A - A research originating in numerous cases of targeted violence*

In September 2015, Mohammed Akhlaq was accused by his Hindu neighbor of stealing his cow calf and eating it for Eid. He lived near Dadri, a town in the state of Uttar Pradesh in north India. Though he denied the accusations, word spread, and a mob armed with sticks, bricks and knives planned an attack in the night and murdered Mohammed Akhlaq while severely injuring his son Danish. The neighbors called the police, but they arrived an hour later. The following days, the police arrested a total of eighteen assailants, who were soon released on bail. A trial finally took place in March 2021 for which the judgement is still pending. The Akhlaq family received financial compensation from the government of Uttar Pradesh but had to move to the national capital, New Delhi, as they were fearing for their safety. In the meantime, a complaint was filed against the family for alleged cow slaughter; the meat found in their refrigerator was tested and it was expected that it would show evidence. However, the different tests gave conflicting results, one identifying it as goat meat and the other as beef, with the veracity of the second test being questioned. Less than a year after this highly media-covered mob lynching, in July 2016, seven Dalit men, i.e., members of the Hindu lowest caste, were beaten and publicly flogged for butchering a dead cow near the town of Una in Gujarat. In October 2018, about 400 meat shopkeepers in Gurgaon, Haryana, were harassed and forced to close their shops during Navratri, a Hindu festival. These events are some the most well-known episodes of targeted violence against caste and religious minorities in the Indian subcontinent and part of over 200 incidents related to alleged sale or consumption of beef or non-vegetarian products which were surveyed between June 2014 and September 2020.[2]

How do food practices – beef consumption, but also, more generally, meat consumption – become the subject of such violence? These incidents perpetrated by "Gau Rakshaks" (cow protectors) reflect the prevalence of Hindu and Brahmin or Hindu upper caste supremacist sentiment in the Indian subcontinent. If violence in the name of the cow and of vegetarianism is rather recent, the strategic use of these religious symbols originated at the latest in the 19th century, when Hindu reformist organizations promoted Hinduism as a cultural identity at the cost of neglecting internal cultural differentiation between caste groups (Ambedkar, 2019). Focusing on the more recent post-colonial context, my dissertation will suggest that food-

[2] Determining the extent of vegetarianism-related and cow protection-related violence is not easy because the Indian government does not collect official data on religious violence, let alone food-related violence. The statistics are therefore based on initiatives led by journalists, academics, and activist groups. The most complete database is the online *Documentation of the Oppressed (DOTO)*, https://dotodatabase.com, last access in March 2021. See Chapter 1 for further details.

related violence in contemporary India reflects the symbolic and social struggles between religious and caste groups to enforce cultural dominance depending on the resources that stem from their class position. In so doing, I will argue that vegetarianism is a status marker that reflects the attempts of Hindus and in particular, of Hindu upper caste Brahmins, to maintain their dominant position. Depending on one's social class interweaving with forms of claimed and ascribed status, I will demonstrate that vegetarianism is indeed both salient and challenged.

Questioning the logics of status in contemporary India is particularly critical since it is a society in which economic inequalities are much greater (Chancel and Piketty, 2017) than the social contexts that are usually the focus of empirical studies of cultural stratification, most of which countries of the Global North. While Flemmen et al. (2019) specifically argue that economically equalitarian societies are well-suited to unravel status inequality in order to justify their focus on Scandinavian countries, I take on the opposite stand. My interest is directed at understanding how status dynamics may also be salient in a highly unequal context, especially when these status dynamics are not directly pertaining to economic distinctions. The Indian society indeed challenges our understanding of status logics since some of them are strongly related to ascribed categories, particularly caste. While ascribed status such as race or ethnicity in other societies also reflects that inequality does not only derive from class positions, India features a more structured and encompassing stratification in terms of ascribed categories, summarized by Ambedkar's phrase of "gradual inequality" (Ambedkar 2016, notably quoted in Herrenschmidt, 1996). This aspect illustrates that categorical inequality in the Indian context are characterized by more granular differences than racial or ethnic categories. Consequently, categorical inequality in this context is characterized by "the obsession of the small difference" (Herrenschmidt, 1996, see also Jaffrelot, 2005a: 36-38) since "privileges are graded" because "even the low is a privileged class as compared with the lower" (Ambedkar, 1979, quoted in Herrenschmidt, 1996). Unearthing the processes which maintain cultural differentiation pertaining to ascribed and claimed categories in this particular case may help understand equivalent processes of differentiation elsewhere.

## *B - Understanding food-related status markers: a brief theoretical framework*

Conflicts over who eats what may be understood as cultural struggles between competing groups embedded in the same social realm. What people eat derives from who they are and with whom they live, as food choices bring people together while excluding others, as much as they

reflect people's status position in the social hierarchy. Yet, as a measurement of social value, status is a concept that is both central and elusive in sociology (Sørensen, 2001).

I trace back status to the social stratification framework of Max Weber (2010), who defines it as a form of social prestige, theoretically distinguishing it from class, which is anchored in the economic realm. To operationalize this distinction, I therefore suggest capturing status markers associated with caste and religious categories drawing from the processes of ethnic boundary-making. Indeed, I argue that contemporary conceptualizations of status do not allow to study social prestige for categories that present forms of social closure except for occupations. Wimmer's theory of ethnic boundary-making (2013) stems from Weber's understanding of ethnicity, but is a more encompassing framework which enables to study how symbolic boundaries are related to social boundaries, yet without letting socioeconomic dimensions aside (Weber, 2019).[3] My dissertation hence adopts a nominalist perspective on the distinction between status and class, i.e., avoiding a "groupist" (Brubaker, 2006) categorical distinction between these two conceptual dimensions. These concepts indeed highlight the multidimensional resources that individuals draw from depending on their position in the social and economic order. I will suggest that this framework allows for adequately studying the interactions between religion, caste and class in contemporary India.

The strategic use of symbolic boundaries is at the core of status dynamics (Lamont and Molnár, 2002). I hence endeavor to study the conditions under which cultural lifestyles are exclusionary, notably by analyzing the meanings linked to these cultural lifestyles. In doing so, I aim at identifying the possibly multiple repertoires of justifications – the values structured in an interpretation framework – that individuals draw from to support their engagement into certain cultural practices, vegetarianism in this case. I indeed follow Boltanski and Thévenot (2008) who argue that behaviors and practices may be justified under competing sets of moral conventions. Besides, in focusing on food practices, I study a domain of lifestyles that is also particularly anchored in the material and physical realm (Grignon and Grignon, 1980). In short, the metaphorical use of cultural "tastes" and "distastes" (Bourdieu, 1984) has a literal meaning since food is incorporated. By studying vegetarianism in contemporary India, it can be shown that the interactions between the symbolic and the economic, nutritive and physical properties of food practices are particularly relevant to analyze, since they also indicate symbolic boundaries.

[3] The texts I refer to here come from the French edition of ten selected texts of *Economy and Society* (Weber, 1978) that specifically deal with communities.

## C - Contributions to revising the articulation between status and class

Using this conceptual framework, I contribute to revisiting the classic question of the articulation between status and class in the study of cultural stratification. My dissertation more specifically outlines two main theoretical and empirical contributions. The first one relates to the Indian society and can therefore be understood as rather idiographic. The second contribution takes a more nomothetic perspective in the study of lifestyles and social stratification.

First, I show that vegetarianism is an adequate research object in the analysis of the social dynamics of religion, caste and class in contemporary India. To do so, I conduct a careful quantification of caste categories based on subjective self-identifications, knowing that the task of using open-ended questions on caste belonging from large-scale surveys in order to quantify caste categories has been rarely carried out until now. The recent Indian economic history of the past thirty years has undoubtedly transformed caste and class relations. The increased importance of achieved status through educational attainment and the rise of a new middle class may suggest that caste is slowly but surely becoming a social institution of the past. Yet, the statistical examination of the contemporary congruence of caste and class rather highlights the maintaining social reproduction of caste privileges, in addition to the Muslim minority's increasing marginalization.

Meanwhile, the growing access to educational credentials unquestionably fosters the subjective undervaluation of one's ascribed privileges. Still, vegetarianism, a Hindu upper caste marker, remains a salient and positively valorized diet. At the same time, it is not always explicitly associated with caste and is also increasingly assumed, in the rhetoric, as a Hindu religious identity marker as opposed to Muslims, thereby following Hindu nationalist ideology. Besides, vegetarianism is also rationally justified according to criteria that are specific to the more educated classes. Whereas the Indian society remains home to significant malnutrition, vegetarianism is advocated for its budgetary asceticism, which the poor should follow to escape their deprived condition. Its assumed dietary advantages and the advocated respect for animal welfare are stressed on as well, drawing both from religious and westernized spheres. Consequently, I revisit the classic processes of cultural emulation drawn by Srinivas (1956), who distinguished "sanskritization" – in the case where caste markers are sought for to legitimize one's social position – and "westernization" – where, in contrast, class markers are more socially distinctive. Drawing from my empirical findings, I suggest that these two processes combine together since caste markers are redesigned as class markers.

Second, this case study of vegetarianism in contemporary India brings to light that different repertoires of justification may assert a single symbolic boundary. In other words, multiple criteria or status scales help assert the positive valuation of one single dominant marker. The coexistence of different values stems from the diversification of social groups in a modernized society. Célestin Bouglé (1914, see also Messenger, 1926) identified this process as "polytelism," which can be translated as many-endedness, arguing that individuals have increasingly differentiated aims, notwithstanding a certain degree of agreement for a common social order is still preserved. Similarly, I argue that the multiplication of "orders of worth" (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2008) does not prevent the centrality of one single status marker.

The different repertoires of justification result from contextual situations in which individuals are engaged, the social environment and the structural conditions shaping legitimized values. They also vary depending on individuals' social dispositions resulting from their position in the social stratification. Indeed, individuals belonging to different social groups may identify to the same symbolic category while defining it in a different way. Importantly, the meaning-making that individuals associate with categories of the social world may at times challenge the salience of the symbolic boundary. Symbolic labels are part of the classification struggles in the space of lifestyles, although, ultimately, the dominant status scales are those defined by the dominant categories since they are the ones that impose their own status scales (Bourdieu, 1984). The assertion of legitimized lifestyles is therefore all the more assured that they are claimed by individuals who are able to secure dominant positions by holding different social stratification resources.

## *D - Research program*

To carry out this research project, my dissertation empirically uses statistical data on the Indian society as well as discourses drawn from interviews that I conducted in Uttar Pradesh, a region of northern India.

The use of data and statistical methods is motivated by the need to test social mechanisms between individual positions, social environments and food practices. I essentially use four sets of representative data. In order to obtain a temporal depth from the 1980s to the early 2010s, I use the "Consumer Expenditure Survey" of the Indian National Sample Survey Office (six statistical surveys over the period). These surveys provide precise information on the composition of the food basket, its origin (self-production or purchase) and its place of consumption (within the household or outside). The use of the Indian Human Development Survey (2011-2012) and the National Family Health Survey (2005-2006 and 2015-2016) allows

me to refine the link between vegetarianism and caste position: while caste has not been subject to statistical classification since Independence (1947), these two surveys collected and published caste self-identifications resulting from open-ended questions, which led to a very high number of different caste declarations. The statistical processing of these responses constitutes an important step in my empirical research, as my approach, based on a review of the literature on caste in Uttar Pradesh (the strong regional variability of caste structure led me to choose for focusing on this region of northern India), is both inductive and deductive. Thus, the statistical data enable me first to draw a social portrait of the Indian social stratification, by crossing caste and class categories, then to model dietary practices according to the position of individuals and households in this social structure. The Social Attitudes Research India (SARI) survey from 2018 stands out since I use these data in order to understand individual attitudes rather than practices, in particular prejudices against Muslims.

Furthermore, while discourses collected in interviews are sometimes neglected, because "what people say is often a poor indicator of what they do" (Jerolmack and Khan, 2014), I argue, along with Lamont and Swidler (2014), that interviews are an invaluable source in the process of understanding the cognitive representations of the social world, the same that shape social action. Discourse analysis is indeed a way to understand individuals' critical sense, allowing to uncover social norms, as individuals tend to state what is socially desirable to them. It is a particularly valuable source for objectivizing the orders of magnitude that individuals refer to when assessing each other's status. These interviews also provide for the study of the justifications of diets according to the respondents' social background. I conducted 75 interviews in English and Hindi in Uttar Pradesh between September 2018 and June 2019, in different social settings. I also use these interviews to refine my understanding of food practices and to interpret my statistical results. In particular, individual dietary practices differ greatly from family practices, as individuals may tend to consume meat outside the household and to keep it secret from other family members. The use of interviews enables to capture the estimation variability of the number of vegetarians depending on the conditions under which statistical surveys are conducted.

## *E - Layout of the dissertation*

### 1) Vegetarianism as a status marker: contextual and theoretical background

In the first part, I present my object of study, vegetarianism in India, sketching a brief historical and geographical presentation of its prevalence in the Indian subcontinent.

Vegetarians are far from being numerically dominant in India, even among Hindus, as vegetarianism is subject to important geographical variations. I suggest that these disparities result from the historical making of religious norms which depend on identity assertions in different contexts according to the period one looks at. Ultimately, food practices are the product of different social norms, including religious norms, which still reflect symbolic and social struggles (Chapter 1).

This brings me to the second chapter in which I aim at understanding vegetarianism as a status marker. I discuss the distinction between status and class originating with Weber's work, although I ultimately draw from his conceptualization of ethnic categories but also from Bourdieu's understanding of social stratification as "classification struggles" in order to analyze the association between vegetarianism, caste and class. I hence draw a theoretical framework that allows for analyzing social and symbolic boundaries. I show how this conceptual approach of caste is useful in departing from the risk of essentializing categories. Ultimately, this framework suggests that the Indian society is a case in point for the study of the strategies of ethnic boundary-making (Chapter 2).

### 2) Between folk and analytical categories: operationalizing vegetarianism, caste and class

The second part of the dissertation critically examines the ways in which vegetarianism, caste and class have been empirically investigated in the Indian context. I underline that my categories of interest are at the same time "lay" or "folk" categories, i.e., categories of everyday experience, and "analytical" categories, i.e., conceptually-loaded and scientifically manipulated ones (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000), and that they need to be unpacked in order to elaborate a relevant sociological understanding.

In Chapter 3, I confront my statistical material with my discourse material in order to understand the differences in the estimates of the proportion of vegetarians in the subcontinent. I show the way in which estimations vary depending on the precise definition of vegetarianism – the boundary of vegetarianism being, to a certain extent, fluid or fuzzy (e.g., including or excluding eggs) –, on whether estimates are individual- or household-based, on whether they include food practices outside of the household, and on whether gender is included as a factor. Ultimately, discrepancies may arise from small individual adjustments between the presentation of self in interviews and actual food practices. They reflect the social norms of desirability that lead to declare oneself as vegetarian and use vegetarianism as a status marker.

In the next chapter, I question how caste categories and their conceptualization in caste theories (Dumont, 1974) are more idealistic, i.e., based on a socially situated understanding of caste, than real, i.e., drawing from the everyday social experience of caste. I study caste self-identifications in large-scale surveys. I show how individuals actually provide a large number of "lay" identifications in order to describe their own caste position. Nonetheless, I argue that one can still build an objective caste nomenclature in order to quantitatively study the salience of caste in a more appropriate way than when using the administrative categories usually available (Ferry, 2019). I indeed follow Roth (2016) who distinguishes the "multiple dimensions of race" and suggests that subjective self-identifications are best suited to study practices and values (Chapter 4).

Finally, I articulate my different materials for purposes of conceptualizing achieved positions. To do so, I review how material wealth, occupation and subjective positioning allow to grasp different aspects of the position in the economic order. I examine the congruence between caste and class and intergenerational class mobility to locate possible discontinuities. Overall class immobility is very high; strong differences in the class structure between caste and religious groups point at the role of ascribed identities in shaping one's class destiny. Despite intergenerational improvements in educational attainment for all caste and religious groups, educational inequalities are strongly maintained, contributing to differences in class structures along with the unequal conversion of degrees into class positions in Uttar Pradesh. It demonstrates the strong role that caste and religious boundaries play in intergenerational mobility and it confirms that caste and religious inequalities remain high (Chapter 5).

### 3) How do caste and class crystallize? The social stratification of vegetarianism

After having operationalized my objects of analysis, the third part is dedicated to the modelling of the odds of declaring oneself vegetarian, depending on caste, religion and class position. First, I measure how vegetarianism varies depending on achieved positions. Secondly, I demonstrate how logics of social stratification are embedded in spatial contexts.

In Chapter 6, the statistical approach brings to light the current state of "sanskritization," as I consider the practice of vegetarianism as an indicator of this phenomenon. As a process of cultural emulation, the concept of "sanskritization" assumes an association between achieved position and adherence to vegetarianism, so that after considering caste position, individuals in higher achieved positions tend to be more frequently vegetarian than individuals in lower achieved positions. Using multilevel regression models, I show the relevance of this

association, both synchronously, by comparing individuals in different social positions, and diachronically, by taking into account individuals' achieved origin (indicated by the position of the father). In addition, I point out gender differences in the adherence to vegetarianism. Within the household, women are more frequently vegetarian, especially when their partner occupies a higher-achieved position which may result in women taking the role of the guardians of the household's status position. Overall, these results highlight the importance of caste as a matrix of socialization, so that caste habitus shapes eating habits, which are adjusted according to achieved positions too.

I complexify this analysis in Chapter 7. Whereas the social stratification of cultural consumption usually rests on the fact that people's cultural preferences reflect their status position, this association neglects the spatial contexts in which individuals are embedded. The spatial contexts may be the loci of important variations of social stratification, resulting in different local strategies of distinguishing from others. In this chapter, I build on the previous statistical models, but I also include the residence locality of individuals. I identify strong contextual variations of vegetarianism and explore how the socioeconomic domination of either Brahmans or Muslims are key to determining these social distinctions. Beef consumption, which stigmatizes Muslims, is also driven by contextual factors pertaining to their local seclusion. This chapter underlines that both positional and contextual factors are important in studying cultural stratification.

In this part, I relate declared practices of vegetarianism to Wimmer's typology of boundary-making strategies. Variations in vegetarianism among Hindu lower castes that adhere to vegetarianism are an attempt of collective re-positioning (a form of boundary crossing), so that strategies of "transvaluation"[4] are rather statistically invisible. On the contrary, the higher proportion of vegetarians among Brahmin individuals in cases in which they reside in Muslim-dominated areas relates to a form of boundary "contraction." Lastly, the lower proportion of beef consumers among Muslims who reside in Hindu-dominated areas relates to a form of boundary "crossing."

### 4) Consuming and despising meat at the individual level

Finally, in the fourth part, I show that whereas the statistical data analyzed in Part 3 account for the centrality of vegetarianism as a food practice, the results from the interviews

[4] This strategy of boundary-making involves changing the "normative principles of stratified ethnic systems" (Wimmer 2008) and may in particular correspond to "dalitization" in the Indian context.

relativize the role of the Hindu religion as the sole cultural repertoire used in the justification of food practices.

In Chapter 8, I observe that from the point of view of vegetarians, meat eaters are despised not only because they would not follow a religious norm, but also because in collective representations, particularly among upper classes, individuals identify non-vegetarians as poor and careless of their spending. Their supposed consumption of meat is interlinked with their alleged excessive consumption of alcohol and tobacco, these consumption practices being perceived negatively as they would allegedly contribute to their economic situation and to the vicious circle of poverty. This discourse ignores the situation of food insecurity that the poorer sections of the society face and the role that meat, and sometimes beef meat, may play in ensuring food subsistence. This is what I attempt to show from an analysis of a food budget. The meaning of the symbolic boundary that is drawn between vegetarians and non-vegetarians by upper classes is hence rather characterized by economic morality than by religious morality.

To finish, my analysis focuses on the justifications of dietary practices and I suggest that food cultural repertoires that derive from achieved position reinforce those that derive from caste and religious position. I show how the social norms of vegetarianism and cow protection persist among higher educated vegetarian Hindus through a multiplicity of repertoires. The justifications of the most highly educated are marked by a scientific or pseudo-scientific rationalization of vegetarianism and of the exceptionality of the cow in the animal order, by an economic rationalization of animal protection and an attachment to respect for the legal institutional framework that legitimizes these practices. Besides, the higher-educated Hindus still strongly stigmatize lower castes and Muslims. The symbolic boundaries brought to light here mirror the dissimulation of caste privileges in the name of meritocratic evaluation criteria in the professional market sphere, in which the language of caste or in-group preference is "hidden" in the name of modern moral criteria (Jodhka and Newman, 2007, Chapter 9).

The meaning associated with food practices therefore suggests that vegetarians tend to blur caste and religious boundaries in emphasizing their criteria of food preferences, so that the strategy of boundary "crossing" identified in Part 3 can ultimately not only be considered as "sanskritization." By blurring caste boundaries, vegetarians also emphasize class boundaries. Given the caste and class congruence, it results in the reinforcement of the social order. Thus, this study of caste lifestyles suggests that caste is far from being solely a religious institution (Jodhka and Naudet, forthcoming). Essentially, cultural differentiation plays a substantial role in maintaining ascribed privilege that translate into high and gradual caste and religious inequalities.

# First Part
# Vegetarianism as a status marker: contextual and theoretical background

# Chapter 1 – Religious rules are actually not a sacred cow: The symbolic and social struggles of vegetarianism

*Shaurya: Are you one of those people? That support the beef ban?*
*Noorie: Yes.*
*Shaurya: How is that okay? Shouldn't it be about freedom of choice? It's my decision. Who are you to tell me what I can or cannot eat? You or anyone for that matter.*
*Noorie: I'm not forcing anyone. I'm just being honest. I don't like it. It's wrong. Why do you have to kill to eat?*
*Shaurya: It's not wrong... Animals kill each other for food in the wild.*
*Noorie: Because.*
*Shaurya: We are also animals.*
*Noorie: Have you ever seen a lion eating boiled potatoes? They can't. But we can eat this.*
*Shaurya: Yes, but we can also eat this.*
*Noorie: That's wrong.*
*Shaurya: How is it wrong?*
*Noorie: Is it okay to kill someone for food? To take a life? Have you seen videos of animals being slaughtered? That's okay? If I fancy eating a family member of yours... Would you let me?*
*Shaurya: They'll defend themselves.*
*Noorie: Precisely. Kill animals because they can't speak... Just because it's yummy. It's a bit strange, isn't it?*
Trapped, *2016, Motwane, V.*[5]

In this first chapter, I examine the association between religious identity and food practices. The common understanding of vegetarianism in India is that it is driven by the adherence to Hindu faith; one would thus expect this diet to be predominant among individuals belonging to the Hindu category. Yet, on the basis of syntheses of readings of Hindu sacred texts, I argue that vegetarianism is not a prescription but should rather be understood as an orthopraxy; practices are based on appropriate conducts but are not mandatory. Further, vegetarianism is far from being numerically dominant in India, even among Hindus, as vegetarianism is subject to important geographical variations. I suggest that these disparities result from the historical making of religious norms which depend on identity assertions in different contexts according to the period one looks at. Ultimately, food practices are the product of different social norms, including religious norms, which still reflect symbolic and social struggles. This leads to studying food practices, more specifically vegetarianism, from a social stratification point of view.

[5] All the epigraphs at the beginning of the chapters are borrowed from excerpts of Hindi or English-speaking Indian movies or series and have been transcribed into English.

In the following, I first review the "book view" of vegetarianism in Hinduism – based on religious rules found in Hindu sacred texts – and I later outline its geographical variation in the subcontinent. I am then led to adopt a historical perspective of food practices, outlining the emergence of vegetarianism and cow protection as socially distinctive practices and attitudes. Finally, I illustrate how food practices reflect contemporary social struggles.

## *A - Religious norms and contemporary vegetarianism in India*

### 1) Religious symbolic categorizations of food and humans

The study of vegetarianism in the Indian society could not be initiated without addressing the Hindu religious dimension that regulates food practices. In the census of 2011, Hindus represent 79.8 percent of the population. Other religious groups correspond to a large Muslim minority (14.2 per cent), 2.3 percent of Christians, 1.7 percent of Sikhs, 0.7 percent of Buddhists and 0.4 percent of Jains. Among these minorities, religious prescriptions, while not necessarily binding, tend to favor vegetarianism for Sikhs and Buddhists. Jainism is based on a very strict vegetarianism (a lacto-vegetarianism that also excludes tuberous vegetables).

The study of Hindu sacred texts reveals the importance of food practices in the religious repertoire. As Appadurai (1981) summarizes, in Hinduism, "food is the fundamental link between men and the gods." The founding texts of Hinduism display a codification of the animal kingdom, food and dietary practices. However, it is necessary to highlight that the texts, codifications and rules proposed in the Hindu religious corpus are highly diverse. The texts neither propose a unified dogma nor an orthodoxy of practices. It is partly the result of the long period of time over which the texts were written or transmitted, which reflects the rich history of Hinduism, from Vedism (1500-500 BCE), to Brahmanism (500 BCE-600 CE), and to Hinduism (Doniger, 2010).

The reader would be hard-pressed to find a single precise recommendation clearly stating that to be Hindu is to be vegetarian. However, without claiming to be exhaustive, Sanskritist philologists and Indian anthropologists put forward some major principles which value vegetarianism, so that vegetarianism emerged as an orthopraxy, a way of life.[6]

The valorization of vegetarianism carries first of all a moral dimension through the philosophy of metempsychosis (the reincarnation of the soul in a living being after death,

[6] In-depth discussions on religious categorizations is beyond the scope of this chapter. Very detailed syntheses can be found in Chapter 1 of Estelle Fourat's dissertation and in Chapters 1 and 2 of Michaël Bruckert's dissertation (Bruckert, 2015; Fourat, 2015). I also draw from *The Hindus: An alternative History* (Doniger, 2010) for this section and the next part of the chapter.

depending on the past moral conduct, the "karma"). It is also associated with "ahimsa" (non-violence or respect for life), which was particularly linked to and popularized by Mohandas Karamchad Gandhi in the twentieth century. One of the texts stating this moral dimension is the *Manusmriti* (*Laws of Manu*), a treatise of Hinduism dating from between the second century BCE to the third century CE.[7] Importantly, the text does not mention any obligation, but appeals to individual conscience regarding the adoption of vegetarianism.

Vegetarianism also corresponds to a hierarchy that is based on ritual purity, which associates a caste ranking in a social hierarchy to specific diet rules. This codification is notably exposed by the eighth century Samkhya School which attributes three main qualities to food (Sébastia, 2020). "Satvik" foods (pure, easily digestible), such as grains or dairy products are associated with the Brahmin castes, Hindu upper castes. "Tamasik" foods (dark, coarse, impure) correspond to millets, pork and beef, and are associated with "untouchable" caste groups, the lowest castes which are stigmatized.[8] Finally, goat, sheep and lamb meat are considered "rajasic" (red, symbolizing strength and power). This category is associated with the Kashtriya, a warrior caste of high status (though lower than Brahmins, see Chapter 4 on caste). The status of eggs and fish is more ambiguous, but overall, it is not "satvik" (pure). This categorization is also partly dietetic as it is supposed to affect one's body. In addition to the concepts of purity, the representations of Ayurvedic medicine often proscribe the ingestion of meat products, though ancient treatises may outline dietetic benefits to certain meats (Zimmermann, 1999).

Overall, meat implies impurity, although there is an internal hierarchy of meat products. Vegetarianism is thus the purest diet, and places Brahmins at the top of the social hierarchy of castes on the basis of a principle of purity as presented in the theory of *Homo Hierarchicus* (Dumont, 1974). The impurity of lower meat-eating castes motivates the principle of non-commensality between pure and impure caste groups. It generates untouchability, the practice of ostracizing Dalits (formerly known as "untouchables" for this reason) since they are deemed to pollute.

Finally, Hindu cosmology differentiates the status of animals among themselves. This way, the cow is a sacred animal associated with the celestial world. It is considered as a mother (the cow is called in Hindi "Gau mata"), and Brahmins protected her before this idea spread to

[7] See Wendy Doniger's translation and explanatory introduction (Doniger, 2000).

[8] The term "untouchable" is now disqualified, and I use it here only to denote the stigmatization process this group have historically faced (and is still facing, see the last chapter). In the rest of the dissertation, I will usually refer to "untouchables" as Dalits, a term signifying "broken," stemming from the social theorist and leader B. R. Ambedkar. Caste categories will be further conceptualized and operationalized (Chapter 4).

other Hindu groups in the fourth century of our era (Doniger, 2010). Cults are rendered to this animal as well as to its products (milk) and by-products (urine, excrements). While the consumption of cow milk is highly valued, the consumption of cow meat is taboo and only lower caste groups (Dalits) and religious minorities (Muslims and Christians) would consume its flesh.[9]

This (brief) overview of Hindu food codifications and animal classification corresponds to the repertoire of moral and identity justifications in the valorization of vegetarianism and the protection of the cow in Hinduism.

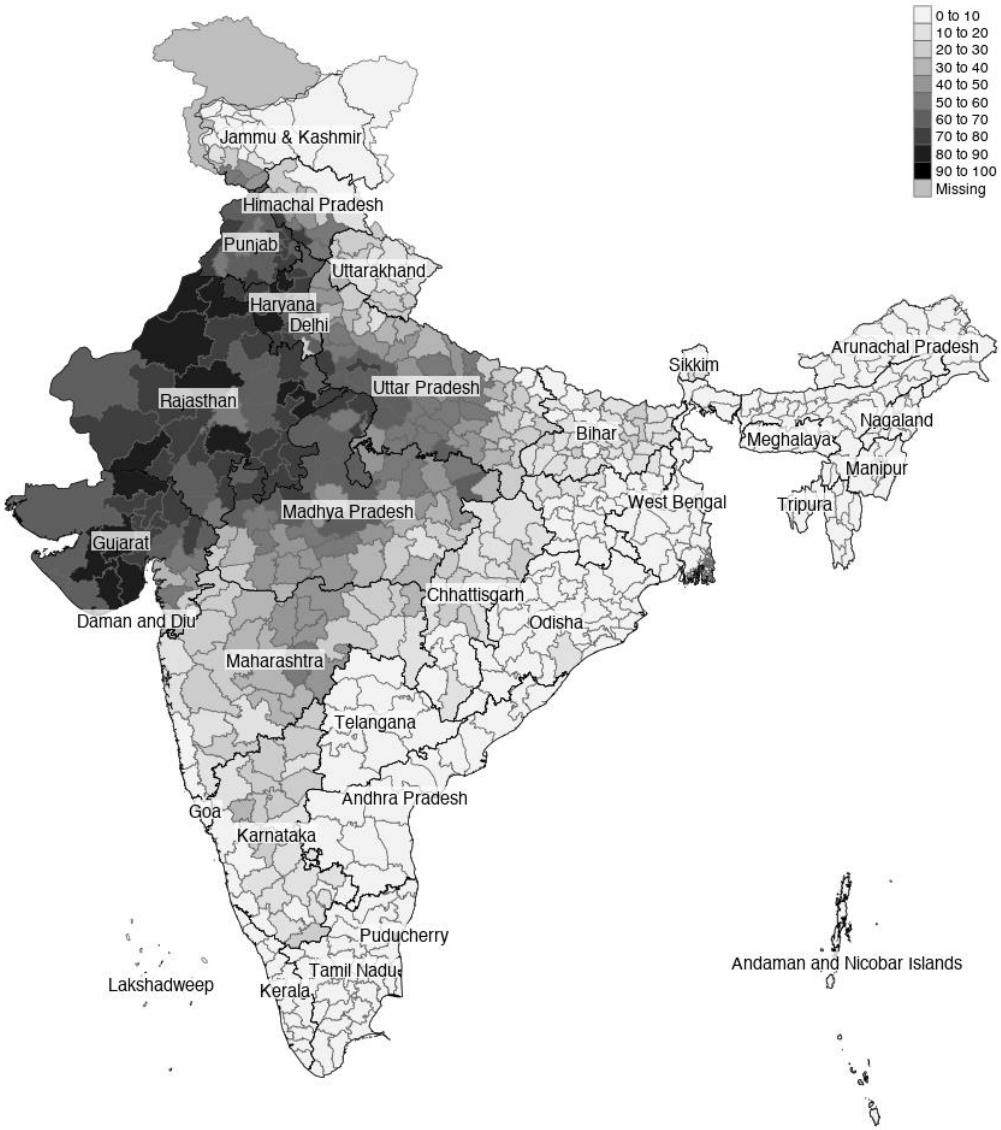
### 2) Relativizing the prevalence of vegetarianism in India

The philological perspective on religious food rules must be confronted to the social reality of the prevalence of vegetarianism. I will come back to the limitations of the figures used for counting vegetarianism further in the dissertation (see Chapter 3), nevertheless it already needs to be pointed out that while 80 percent of Indians are Hindu, the proportion of vegetarians varies between 20 and 40 percent, depending on the survey and on the method of counting. Moreover, the prevalence of vegetarianism is geographically located, as shown in Figure 1.1. The highest levels of vegetarianism are observed in the north-western States, including Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat and Punjab. On the contrary, vegetarianism is the lowest among the seven sister States in the northeast as well as the States along the southern and eastern coasts.

How to explain the geographical clustering of North Indian vegetarianism? It does not correspond to a spatial segregation of Hindus, since the south of India is also predominantly Hindu. Moreover, Hindus in the Northwest are relatively more vegetarian than those in the south and east of the country. At first glance, this spatial correlation does not correspond either to a segregation of the population by caste: for example, vegetarianism among Dalits is also higher in Northwest India.

[9] This is not the case of the buffalo, which is, in Hindu mythology, an evil animal associated with the underworld (Bruckert, 2016).

*Figure 1.1 - Spatial variation of vegetarianism in India (women only)*




*Note: The map is based on the sample of women aged between 15 and 49 years for which the data is district representative. The proportion of men following vegetarianism is on average 10 percentage points lower (national average of 27 per cent for women and 17 per cent for men). The male sample is not district-representative, but it also indicates a similar spatial clustering. This map is extracted from an empirical work written for the book chapter "Vegetarianism and non-vegetarian consumption frequency" in Guilmoto C. and Saikia N. (Editors),* Atlas of Gender and Health in India *(forthcoming).*

*Source: National Family Health Survey 4, 2015-2016, district-representative woman sample.*

This geographical enigma has long been described by anthropologists who sought an ecological aetiology of food practices. Dumont (1974) evokes the "rice civilization" of Southern and Eastern India and the "wheat civilization" of North-western India, thus differentiating cultural traits according to the predominant agrarian production and the geological and climatic conditions. The influence of ecological factors was undoubtedly

brought to a climax by the anthropologist Marvin Harris, through his "cultural materialism" (Harris et al., 1966). He hypothesized that diets are the result of economic and ecological rationalities. The prohibition of animal slaughter in India would have developed in response to the scarcity of animal resources. Harris's thesis focuses in particular on the cow taboo. According to him, it has emerged in reaction to food shortages associated with extreme climatic conditions and an increase in population, knowing that cows produce milk and offer other counterparts (labor force, dung for heating). Nevertheless, this thesis has been widely criticized by critics who brought to the fore the economic, ecological and nutritional inefficiency of cow protection (see Fourat, 2015: 92). Besides, while this explanation proposes an attractive ecological cause for significant spatial food segmentation, one must be careful not to overestimate these factors. First, cow protection values have spread throughout the subcontinent with varying conditions and is certainly one of the few unifying symbols across Hinduism. Besides, this explanation fails to help understand spatial differences in the consumption of ovine or ichthyological products, gallinaceous or ovine meat.

At best, this ecological explanation only provides the ground for the emergence of certain dietary practices, but not for their upholding. To understand vegetarianism, one must rather focus on social norms, i.e., the ideological and social rules of conduct that should be followed within a social group. These rules may be of religious origin (but not only), as I have just indicated, and historical evidence suggests that Hindu religious movements promoting vegetarianism have rather emerged in North-western India and are still more vivid in this region. To look at social norms does not mean to turn one's back on the spatial embeddedness of food practices, but rather means to consider space as a social context in which the social configuration of social groups affects the salience of social norms, and, consequently, food practices. Therefore, the spatial segmentation of vegetarianism is above all the result of the spatialization of social norms, which we need to unveil.

Moreover, these norms are neither rigid nor fixed. Individuals belonging to a social group may not respect the rules that prevail in their group, at the risk of being excluded from it, or because they are trying to join another group as I will show in the following chapters. Different social norms may also lead to similar practices, so that it is not a matter of uncovering a singular norm that regulate diets, but rather a matter of uncovering their diversity. Finally, these norms are not fixed in time. They are the product of history and of the confrontation of different social groups that then crystallized rules of belonging to one group. It is on the history of the social norm of vegetarianism and the protection of the cow within Hinduism that I suggest to turn now.

## *B - Historicizing religious norms: the making of a vegetarian norm*

### 1) Religious competition and the claim of Hindu superiority

I take a detour for the purpose of understanding the emergence of the social norm of vegetarianism and cow protection.[10] The emergence of vegetarianism is indeed associated with the gradual affirmation of Brahmins and Hinduism as dominant social groups on the Indian sub-continent. Initially, when nomadic populations arrived in India from the northwest around the second millennium BCE, those who would later be called Brahmins did not protect the sacred cow, but instead consumed and sacrificed it. The historian and sanskritist D. N. Jha (2009), as well as W. Doniger (2010), document numerous Vedic texts where cow meat is consumed and served to high-ranking guests.

The rigidification of Hindu religious rules came later from the emergence of Buddhism and Jainism around 600 BCE. They are considered as reforming spiritual movements. If the spiritual philosophies of these movements do not impose vegetarianism (it is said that the last meal of the Buddha was pork), they actively affirm asceticism and non-violence. Buddhism and Jainism gradually dominate over Brahmins on the subcontinent. In the third century BCE, the emperor Ashoka who reigned over a large part of India converted to Buddhism. Consequently, the influence of Brahmins waned. Compared to the reformist religious movements, Brahmins appeared as bloodthirsty executioners as they conducted religious animal sacrifices.

It is during the first centuries of our era that the consumption of beef became the object of a religious prohibition, for the upper castes – Brahmins – to start with, and later for the lower castes as well. The imposition of the dietary prohibition against consuming beef and the adoption of vegetarianism were means for Brahmins to appear more virtuous than the Buddhists and Jains. This process is notably presented by Max Weber (1958) in *The Religion of India: the Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*[11] when he describes Brahmanism's competition with other "doctrines of salvation." The restoration of the dominance of Brahmins is thus linked to an overstatement of asceticism and daily life restrictions, with the aim of attaining salvation. Hence, Brahmins adopted food restrictions as a "matter of status" (Thapar, 2004) to legitimize their newfound socio-political dominance.

[10] This section draws from a published essay, see "Cow Terrorism," *Books & Ideas*, March 26, 2018 (https://booksandideas.net/Cow-Terrorism.html).

[11] I consulted the French version of this work, translated by Isabelle Kalinowski and Roland Lardinois, and entitled *Hindouisme et bouddhisme* (Weber, 2015).

The Dalit leader and social theorist B. R. Ambedkar (2019) also associates the emergence of the practice of untouchability to this period. He hypothesizes that it directly stems from the fact of eating beef. The untouchables would originally be “broken men,” Buddhists who were vanquished in tribal conflicts and refused to convert to Brahmanism, particularly by giving up the consumption of beef. From this religious competition, the statutory legitimacy of Brahmins was then imposed on the lowest castes, who progressively adopted, in a more or less strict manner, dietary restrictions. The abstinence from beef and vegetarianism were indeed sought for in order to move up the social ladder (a process known as "sanskritization," Srinivas, 1952). These dietary social norms were later revalorized by various reformist and sectarian movements within Hinduism, in particular Vaishnavism, the numerically dominant variation of Hinduism which was popularized by the bhakti movement from the fifteenth century onwards (Bruckert, 2015: 84).

These historical contributions are coherent with Mary Douglas’s (1966) theory, in which she suggests that dietary prohibitions contribute to preserving the social order. Hindu cultural domination is thus based on a symbolic system where defilement, here the consumption of meat and more specifically beef, threatens the Hindu cultural order. The emergence of vegetarianism and the protection of the cow therefore appear in history as strategies of distinction and affirmation of a social status, gradually imposed and spread geographically among different social categories.

### 2) Hindu identity assertion from the nineteenth century onwards

Vegetarianism and the protection of the cow have had a renewed influence since the nineteenth century. Indeed, the latter appears as one of the rare symbols that is shared by all Hindus, and it did become a unifying symbol to promote Hinduism as a cultural identity. The promotion of the Hindu community partly supplanted the statutory differentiation between caste groups. Indeed, this communal affirmation was born out of an effort to resist colonialism, in a context of rising Hindu nationalism and the struggle between Hindus and Muslims for power sharing.

In the nineteenth century, Hindu nationalist resistance movements that were fighting the British Empire used the cow as a key symbol in the construction of the national imagination. This was largely based on the Sepoy revolt of 1857, the first popular uprising against the British. One of the main triggers of this movement was the mutiny of the Indian soldiers, who refused to use the new cartridges greased with cow fat that were imposed by the colonial administration.

From the 1870s onwards, a cow protection movement emerged in Punjab, before it spread northwards and progressively to the rest of India. The first cow protection association ("Gaurakshini sabha") was established in 1882 with a view to opposing cow slaughter. The movement was supported by the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reformist organization created in 1875 that encouraged Hindu proselytism (and was later joined by the Hindu Mahasabha). The organization encouraged Hinduism to act "defensively," supporting lower caste reconversion into Hinduism through a process known as "shuddhi" (Jaffrelot, 1994). The goal was to preserve the Hindu community that was believed to be threatened by the influence of Islam in the subcontinent as well as by the missionaries' efforts to spread Christianity (Clémentin-Ojha and Gaborieau, 1994).

Indeed, these religious movements particularly attracted "untouchable" caste groups which were discriminated against by other Hindu castes. Hindu religious proselytism aimed at bringing this segment of the population back into the Hindu fold under the promise of the eradication of caste stigmatization. In particular, affirming the numeric weight of Hindus against Muslims became particularly salient in the 1930s when reserved electoral quotas were set up (Naudet, 2009). Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's position regarding vegetarianism, cow protection and untouchability demonstrates an ambiguous vision of a unified Hindu community that encompasses "untouchable" caste groups. While advocating vegetarianism and cow protection on moral grounds (he is an important supporter of "ahimsa"), he was particularly outraged by beef consumption among "untouchables" (that he paternalistically labelled as "Harijans," the sons of the god Hari).[12] Lower castes then became the target of his reformist agenda to change their food habits (Sathyamala, 2019).

By mobilizing the idea of the sacred cow, the Hindu nationalist movements also sought to assert Hindu culture as the national culture, while stigmatizing non-Hindu beef-eaters, in particular the Muslim minority. In Hindu nationalism, the protection of cows unites the Hindus while simultaneously singling out Muslims among whom one traditionally finds cow butchers (Ahmad, 2018). The symbol of the sacred cow hence tends to trigger inter-community riots between Hindus and Muslims, one of the most important being that of 1893, on the eve of the Muslim religious festival "Bakri-id" during which animals are slaughtered.

Throughout the twentieth century, the cow protection movement was instrumentalized by the Hindu nationalists and the extremist nationalist ideology known as "Hindutva,"

[12] After a short period in which he defended meat eating to support the Indians in their struggle against the colonial empire, Gandhi also made vegetarianism a feature of the freedom struggle and advocated cow protection (Gandhi, 2006).

represented amongst others by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which was created in 1925. At the same time, several members of the Congress party that dominated the political field at the time supported this movement. In independent India, the cow protection movement became the subject of legal and political wrangling. In 1955, Seth Govind Das, a member of the lower house of the Indian Parliament (Lok Sabha) proposed a first law to ban cow slaughter in the country. The Prime Minister at the time, Jawarhalal Nehru, opposed this law. In 1966, a network of Hindu organizations led a demonstration in Delhi demanding the banning of cow slaughter, but Indira Gandhi, who had in the meantime become Prime Minister, opposed this demand. Indeed, the secular Constitution of 1950 explicitly stated that the prohibition of slaughtering "cows and calves and other milk producing animals" does not fall under federal jurisdiction but State jurisdiction. It is in this spirit that the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh all banned cow slaughter in the 1950s.

Since then, all the Indian States, with the exceptions of those in the Northeast, Kerala and West Bengal, have banned cow slaughter. This prohibition also applies to bulls and male and female buffaloes in certain north-western States, and in certain cases, the possession and consumption of their meat is also punishable. Nonetheless, these laws do not always hinder the existence of illegal abattoirs and black market tolerated by the police in exchange for bribes (Prakash, 2021).

Vegetarianism and the protection of the cow have therefore become markers of unity of the Hindus as well as their affirmation as a community in the face of colonial domination and the Muslim minority. The 2021 Pew Research Center's report on "Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation" (Saghal et al., 2021) confirms the contemporary relevance of these dietary habits as religious markers. For instance, the survey findings show that Hindus who claim that religion is more important declare more frequently that they are vegetarian (46 per cent versus 33 per cent among Hindus for whom religion is less important). Besides, a large majority of Hindus say a person cannot be Hindu if they eat beef (72 per cent). This proportion is remarkably higher than the shares of Hindus who say a person cannot be Hindu if they do not believe in God (49 per cent) or never go to temple (48 per cent).

### *C - Contemporary struggles around vegetarianism and beef*

In the contemporary period, these markers remain salient, but they also are challenged. Here, I provide three examples of reassertion, contestation and possible questioning of the social norms of vegetarianism and cow protection.

### 1) The demonization of cow slaughter

India has experienced many episodes of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims since independence in 1947.[13] Their frequency and intensity increased in the 1980s and 1990s, with episodes of rioting and mob attacks (Brass, 2003). Alongside these large-scale attacks, episodes of violence of lower magnitude have propagated since the 2010s, some being linked to the symbol of the sacred cow (Pai and Kumar, 2018).

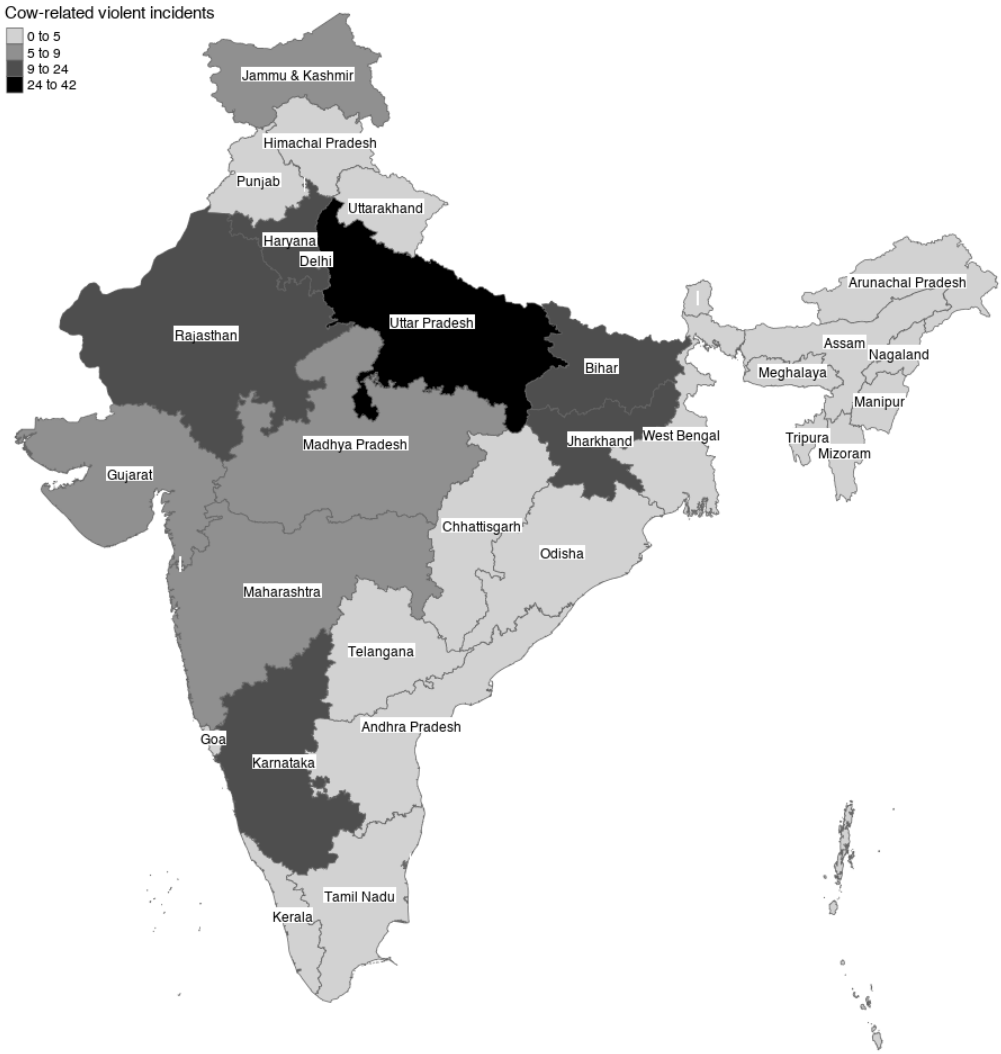
Determining the extent of cow-related violence is not easy, as the Indian government does not collect official data on religious violence, let alone cow-related violence.[14] Yet, most of the victims are Muslims, and to a lesser extent Dalits, Christians or Adivasis, who are occasional beef-eating communities. The pretext for violence is either alleged cow flesh consumption or the transport of cows for alleged slaughter, or even simply the sharing of images of beef on social networks. 47 people found death in the 190 cow-related cases of violence against religious minorities that have been surveyed.

The motivation to defend the cow as a pretext for communal violence is recent – the first identified event of the kind being in 2012 –, but it has to be noted that most of the recorded events (about 95 per cent) took place after the Bharatiya Janata Party, led by Narendra Modi, came to central power in 2014. The majority of the violence has been taking place in States governed by the nationalist party and its allies. This is particularly the case of the States of the Gangetic Plain of Northern India, also known as the "Cow Belt," where the veneration of the sacred cow is more prevalent, and more importantly in Western Uttar Pradesh, in Haryana, and in Delhi (see Figure 1.2, one should also add Karnataka).

[13] This section is partly based on a published essay in French, see "En Inde, des attaques contre les minorités au nom de la vache sacrée," *Observatoire International du Religieux - CERI*, August 2019 (https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/fr/oir/en-inde-des-attaques-contre-les-minorites-au-nom-de-la-vache-sacree#footnoteref2_wxe8j78).

[14] The statistics are therefore based on initiatives led by journalists, academics or activist groups. In response to a parliamentary question in March 2018, the Home Minister stated that between 2014 and 2017, 40 cases of lynchings were recorded by the police, 45 people were killed, and 217 people were arrested, without specifying the social composition of the victims and of those arrested, see: http://164.100.47.190/loksabhaquestions/annex/14/AS242.pdf (last access on April 5, 2019). Among statistical sources, we can highlight the work of *Indiaspend* (https://lynch.factchecker.in/, last access on April 5, 2019), specifically on cow protection lynchings since 2010, the *HateCrimeWatch* platform (https://p.factchecker.in/, last access on April 5, 2019), more generally on communal violence since 2009 as well as the *Documentation of the Oppressed initiative* (DOTO, https://dotodatabase.com, last access on April 6, 2021), on violence against religious minorities. I have extracted the database from the latter to present the two figures of this section. Note that it does not include cow-related violence against Dalits (other sources indicate that it is more marginal).

*Figure 1.2 - Spatial variation of cow-related violence in India (2014-2020)*



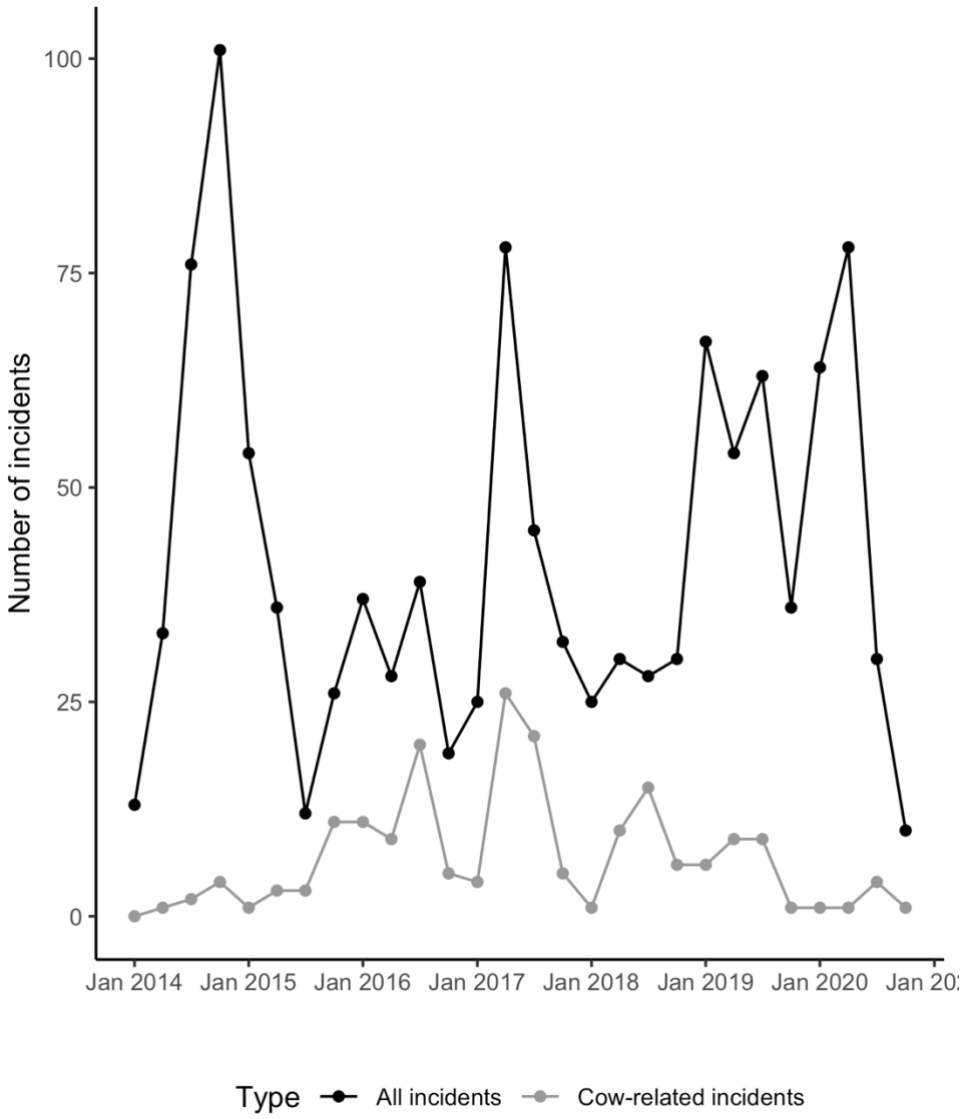

*Note: Only violent incidents that are related to (alleged) cow smuggling/consumption are projected on this map. The maximum number of incidents is reported in Uttar Pradesh (42), Karnataka (23), and Haryana (20), Jharkhand (20), Maharashtra (19).*

*Source: Online database of the Documentation Of The Oppressed (DOTO), automatic extraction on March 24, 2021.*

The spikes in episodes of communal violence and in particular attacks on Muslims are usually linked to pre- and post-election periods. Indeed, in Figure 1.3, we notice a first spike in violence that corresponds to the election of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister in 2014, a second one around the 2017 polls in Uttar Pradesh which led to the election of Yogi Adityanath (of the same political family), then another one around Narendra Modi's re-election in 2019, and finally around the protests following the adoption of a new Indian citizenship law, which

raised fears that it would threaten Indian Muslims' rights.[15] The prevalence of cow-related violence partly follows this trend.

*Figure 1.3 - Violence against religious minorities and cow-related violence in India*




*Note: The data is extracted from Documentation Of The Oppressed (DOTO) that documents all verifiable incidents of hate crimes against religious minorities starting from 2014. They are reported in English and Urdu media (online and print) and in Fact-finding and civil society reports. I included all incidents (1169) until December 31, 2020. Violence against Dalits is not counted in this database.*

*Source: Online database of the Documentation Of The Oppressed (DOTO), automatic extraction on March 24, 2021.*

[15] See Christophe Jaffrelot, "Violence in Delhi is intended to polarise as well as to teach a lesson," *The Indian Express*, February 29, 2020 (https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/remaking-the-riot-delhi-violence-1984-2002-gujarat-6291698/?fbclid=IwAR2YXOHZyIZoijtT-_sjkVtRpwgvk0TzQaX8tLLZ2csTMs1FqtnIJkPIUsg, last access on April 6, 2021).

But the violence outbreaks are also clearly correlated to political stances that reinforce the laws against cow slaughter. Narendra Modi's 2014 electoral campaign that made him Prime Minister was marked by his condemnation of the "Pink Revolution," a supposedly deliberate program (following the "Green" or "White" Revolution in agriculture) to industrialize cow meat production. This moment was followed a few months later by the emergence of episodes of cow-related violence. In May 2017, the central government banned the sale of cattle for slaughter in cattle markets. This law was nonetheless declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in the month of August of the same year. But at the State level, several chief ministers have passed laws to reinforce condemnations. In Uttar Pradesh, immediately after he was elected in the Spring of 2017, the new chief minister Yogi Adityanath had all the illegal abattoirs of the State shut down (some reopened later after bribes were paid). Cow-related episodes of violence have hence surged following these political announcements.

Attacks are perpetrated by "Gau Rakshaks" ("Cow protectors") who are vigilante groups enforcing punishment without legal authority (Favarel-Garrigues and Gayer, 2016). On the margins of State institutions, these militias are nonetheless protected and sponsored by the State power under the domination of Hindu nationalism. They aim at defending and promoting the interests of Hindus in the name of "Hindutva." This concept, according to which only Hindus are considered legitimate citizens because of their religion, is at the heart of the Hindu nationalist ideology. By relying on a religious conception of citizenship, this ideology directly challenges secularism as it is defined in the Indian Constitution of 1950 and which guarantees equals rights for all religious communities. Hindu nationalism is thus clearly supremacist in the sense that minorities can only claim to be accepted insofar as they submit to the culture defined as the majority. The role of vigilante groups is thereby to enforce the Hindu cultural order by targeting minorities, consequently reinforcing Hindu supremacist sentiment and contributing to the Hinduization of the Indian society. The separation of roles, between the consolidation of laws and targeted violence, allows the State to save face while imposing its Hindu nationalist project by terrorizing minorities and polarizing society.

In the name of a political ideology and in order to assert the dominance of the Hindu community, cow protection attitudes have been politicized and brought to the fore in the past decade. The extent to which caste and religious minorities respond to these attacks and the Hindu upper castes support them will be under scrutiny in the next chapters.

### 2) Beef festivals as a limited Dalit identity assertion

The vegetarian dietary model of Hindu upper castes remains the dominant cultural reference on the subcontinent. On the other hand, this cultural domination encourages a dietary resistance, notably through the organization of "beef festivals." Kerala, a State governed by a Communist majority, opened its Parliamentary session on the June 8, 2017 with a "beef fry" breakfast.[16] Along with the north-eastern States, Kerala is one of the States that refused the new legislations against cow slaughter, its Chief Minister labelling them "fascists policies."

Nevertheless, most of the "beef festivals" were in fact organized on university campuses in the past years. They were organized by Dalit and left-leaning organizations, for instance in Jawarhalal Nehru University in New Delhi, in Osmania University in Hyderabad and in the Indian Institute of Technology in Madras (Chennai). These events happened in order to protest against the food cultural hegemony that followed the rise in cow-related violence and to claim freedom in food practices, alongside a call for the respect of Indian secularism. This form of resistance asserts the cultural singularity of Dalits and the organizers claim a political affiliation and inspiration from the Dalit leader B. R. Ambedkar (see the introduction written by Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd in *Beef, Brahmins and Broken Men,* Ambedkar, 2019). Hence, although beef consumption is a source of violent conflicts, it is no less a means for marginal groups to construct and affirm their identity in opposition to the dominant Hindu ideology. It serves as a means to demonstrate a counter-cultural project and to respond to cultural dominance by "reverse stigmatization" (Goffman, 1975).

Yet, one should also be wary of the extent of these protests in social life. Though significant and largely mediatized, these events of cultural resistance are mostly secluded to university campuses. Significantly, Muslim organizations have also not been at the forefront of this kind of festivals, but it may be explained by the fact that the religious minority is the main target of cow-related violence, as I have just recalled. Natrajan (2018) also warns against the limits of resisting caste stigmatization through the assertion of caste-based cultural rights and identities. Given that Hindu upper castes also tend to legitimize the caste structure in a process of culturalization – highlighting that it is the receptacle of a cultural identity, thereby ignoring caste as a structure of domination (Natrajan, 2012) –, "beef festivals" could end up being perceived as an assertion of caste cultural identity of Dalits rather than as a protest against

[16] See "Kerala Assembly session begins with beef fry breakfast," *The New Indian Express*, June 8, 2017 (https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2017/jun/08/kerala-assembly-session-begins-with-beef-fry-breakfast-1614273.html, last access on April 6, 2021).

caste oppression. Furthermore, it would question the contemporary relevance of adopting vegetarianism as a matter of status assertion (Srinivas, 1952).

The extent by which food practices of caste and religious minorities may be resisting the Hindu cultural order beyond university campuses will need to be assessed in the next chapters.

### 3) Do rich Hindus thirst for beef burgers?

Finally, the structural transformations of the Indian society and the effects of the emergence of a globalized middle class on the valorization of vegetarianism need to be addressed. Baviskar (2018) points out that the criteria of social distinction regarding food practices may no longer be solely based on vegetarianism but would more importantly be related to emerging consumption practices such as eating out and consuming manufactured goods. Moreover, in a study on the emergence of IT professionals in Bangalore, Dolphijn (2006) suggests that Brahmanical vegetarianism is no longer dominant and that the criteria for status enhancement are now more related to achieved status (associated to educational attainment). The emergence of consumption practices linked to a globalized culture, through travel and work in multinational companies, in particular within this social class, would favor the emergence of meaty eating habits. In sum, while the social norm of vegetarianism would be challenged from below through Dalit cultural resistance, it would also be overtaken from above, through globalization and the ascent of a Western consumption model.

Nevertheless, does the emergence of new dispositions within the upper classes really challenge the norm of vegetarianism? Several elements already qualify this thesis. Professional workers – for instance those with an engineering background – largely come from upper caste backgrounds, and ethnographic works suggest that they uphold their caste dispositions (Subramanian, 2019) meanwhile they are supposedly the most predisposed to social change. Moreover, looking at vegetarian upper caste Indians who have migrated to the United States or Canada, for example, shows that the attachment to this diet remains important, even if it is adjusted to local contexts that are not always favorable to the maintenance of this dietary norm (Clémentin-Ojha, 2020; Johnston et al., 2021).[17]

It is in fact not certain whether the gradual anchoring of globalized cultural attitudes and practices favors the adoption of meaty eating practices. In fact, Western countries are experiencing a major resurgence of concerns about the meat industry and the slaughter of animals, mainly as a result of ecological, dietetic and animal welfare issues coming to light.

[17] I recognize, however, that migration also raises the question of how to "keep" an identity linked to the country of origin, a topic that will not be addressed in this dissertation.

Even if the countries of the global North continue to be major meat consumers (they are hence experiencing what has been called a "meat paradox," Oleschuk et al., 2019), the promotion of vegetarianism and even the vegan movement is undeniable, though not culturally dominant. These criteria of valorization are not hermetic to India, in view, for example, of the declarations of the BJP minister Maneka Gandhi who relied on dietary and ecological justifications to valorize vegetarianism at the release of the documentary *The evidence - meat kills* (Bruckert, 2016).[18]

The effects of the transformation of the Indian social structure – in particular the emergence of an upper class culturally rooted in globalization – on vegetarianism are therefore probably not one-sided and need to be examined more closely.

## *D - Conclusion: towards a social stratification of vegetarianism*

At the end of this first contextual chapter, it appears that the historical analysis of vegetarianism should be conducted in light of the individuals' and households' social position: their position in a differentiated and hierarchized social system reflects their food practices and attitudes. In other words, this contextualization calls for an analysis of the social stratification of vegetarianism.

A purely religious approach to diets in India would indeed neglect the struggles and negotiations that have enabled and continue to maintain vegetarianism as a dominant social norm on the Indian subcontinent. The historicization of vegetarianism shows the symbolic struggles that this diet has been subject to for several millennia, so that it gradually became a distinctive marker. On the contrary, those who are not vegetarian usually face disgust and prejudice. Without neglecting the remarkable geographical gradient of the higher prevalence of vegetarianism in Northwest India, the analysis of vegetarianism as a social norm appears more fruitful than a purely ecological analysis of dietary practices.

Vegetarianism covers various repertoires of religious justifications but also appears to be associated with other dimensions of identity, morality and culture. Although vegetarianism concerns a numerical minority, this diet is still very salient in contemporary India and is indeed the subject of struggles that reflect the transformations of the Indian social structure. At first glance, these transformations affect both the relative socio-economic positions of caste and

[18] This documentary (https://meatkills.in/) uses certain codes of denunciation of meat consumption from international organisations such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, with striking images showing animal mistreatment, images that are often used in animal welfare awareness campaigns in contexts outside India (Desoucey, 2016).

religious groups (subjective and objective) and the emergence of new dietary arrangements due to socio-economic mobility.

Some of these struggles are also politically embedded. The sacred cow has become the symbol of Hindu nationalism, whose ideology is that of the political family in central power in India since 2014 with Narendra Modi, as well as in many States including Uttar Pradesh since 2017 with Yogi Adityanath. One could therefore focus on analyzing the state of the Indian political field that has brought this ideology to power in order to grasp the instrumental use of food norms. While this work has already been undertaken before,[19] it seems to me that this contextualization calls for an analysis of symbolic struggles as anchored in the social realm.

In order to do this, we need to grasp the attachment of individuals and households to vegetarianism, as well as their modes of justification for their diets, according to their social position. Before doing so, I will outline the theoretical and methodological framework of the analysis (Chapter 2).

[19] See for instance *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s* (Jaffrelot, 1996), *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy* (Jaffrelot, 2021) or Banerjee et al., 2019.

# Chapter 2 – From status to boundary: Framing and operationalizing theory

*Shaurya: You've never eaten chicken before?*
*Noorie: Never.*
*Shaurya: Why not?*
*Noorie: No one eats it in my family.*
*Shaurya: Why?*
*Noorie: It's against our religion.*
*Shaurya: But I have religious friends. They eat non-vegetarian food.*
*Noorie: It's their bad karma. They'll pay for it someday.*
*Shaurya: So I'll also have bad karma because I'm eating chicken?*
*Noorie: I'm not saying that... You're a nice girl so it will balance itself out.*
*Shaurya: And you're a bad guy but you don't eat chicken... so that balances itself out.*
Trapped, *2016, Motwane, V.*

After the contextual analysis of vegetarianism in India, I now present in detail the sociological framework that I draw from for the purpose of understanding the social segmentation of this diet by adopting a social stratification approach. The Indian society certainly is a case that is far too often neglected in the sociology of social stratification – and the same may be asserted for many societies of the South. Yet, there is no reason to maintain this exceptionalism. In particular, I draw from the Weberian distinction between status and class as two key dimensions of social stratification, although I warn against the temptation of conceiving caste as a realist category embodying status. Indeed, this "groupist" perspective may ultimately essentialize caste (Brubaker, 2006) and make one fall into the orientalist trap of analyzing the "other" (Said, 1978), hence going back to the idea of an Indian exceptionalism. Rather, I argue that the analysis of mechanisms of resource distribution needs to be accounted to get an understanding of the dynamic classification struggles in the social world. It implies taking a reflexive stance about the nominalist dimensions of social stratification that caste and class categories reflect, as the sociologist's classification tools could be confused with real social groups.

In the following, I first present the Weberian distinction between status and class in the study of lifestyles. I operationalize it by identifying elementary processes of symbolic and social boundary-making, consequently status-securing strategies. Then, I argue that food is embedded in material constraints which may contribute to the symbolic distinctions between food practices. Ultimately, the food realm may be a domain of cultural sociology that helps understand how different value scales intersect. The presentation of this conceptual framework

finally leads me to present the material that I used in my sociological investigation, stressing on the mixed-methods approach.

## *A - Capturing status as a theoretical dimension of social stratification*

### 1) Max Weber's status groups

Status is most famously related to the distinction between "class, status and parties" (Weber, 2010 [1921]), a foundational yet incomplete text in sociology. This theory of social stratification distinguishes three power dimensions, defined as "resources for affecting the action of others." In particular, engaging with the distinction between "class" (qualifying an economic order) and "status" (referring to a social order) is at the core of modern theories of social stratification. Weber specifically defines "status" (translated from "Stand"): "in contrast to 'class situation,' which is purely determined by the economy, we want to characterize the Stände situation as resulting from the typical integral part of life, in which the fate of men depends on a specific positive or negative social assessment of honor" (Weber, 2010).

As Sørensen (2001) notes, the measurement of prestige is neglected in quantitative sociology.[20] Still, two contemporary approaches claim the Weberian heritage in their study of social stratification. The first approach, by Chan and Goldthorpe (2007), self-qualifies as "neo-Weberian." It aims at operationalizing status as a different variable from class. The second one, whose proponents claim to be "neo-Bourdieusian" (Flemmen et al., 2019) is based on the study of the structure of lifestyles. These two approaches have brought important empirical results in the study field of cultural stratification, even though they can be considered as completely irreconcilable (Laurison, 2019).

To summarize the first approach, "status" is seen as "a structure of relations of social superiority, equality and inferiority among individuals who are perceived and, to some extent, accepted" (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007: 514). This approach is operationalized by using a crucial characteristic of status: the authors assume it implies differential associations between individuals holding different occupations, especially when it comes to intimate forms of sociability, whether between friends or life partners. Status and class hence operate as two different structuring dimensions of lifestyles.

In the second approach, status is in fact no less than the symbolic dimension of class. In order to operationalize status, proponents of the neo-Bourdieusian perspective drawing from

[20] That is if we put aside measures of socioeconomic status with à la Blau and Duncan (1967) or Ganzeboom et al. (1992), about which Sørensen recalls that they tend to measure "welfare" rather than prestige related to occupational positions.

*Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984) see it as reflected in lifestyles, and it is therefore the space of lifestyles that determines status. Following Weber, they stress on the fact that it is the sphere of consumption that underpins the social order and that social differences in lifestyles are linked to "tacit assessments of honor."

But these conceptualizations ultimately do not allow the study of social prestige for categories other than occupations. They rely on the assumption that occupations or class defined by occupations are the relevant social categories individuals relate to and from which social prestige derives. In doing so, they overlook other social categories that involve forms of social closure, such as ethnicity, race, religion or caste. Hence, although these frameworks provide important theoretical reflections, they seem to be limited to the idiosyncrasies of occupation-based processes of social differentiation. Indeed, status is not only a symbolic dimension of class position, but it also participates in securing class position.

### 2) The temptation of India as an ideal-type of a status-based society

Turning to the Indian case, status-based processes appear to be related to caste belonging in particular. At first glance, caste can be equated with social prestige, and it is tempting to think that the Indian society is the epitome of Weberian status (as he himself saw it, Weber, 1958). The Indian society would thus present a realist distinction – caste versus class – to the nominalist dichotomy of status and class. Moreover, the first dimension – caste, or status – would be more structuring while the second would be only residual.

Indeed, looking at the history of sociology, the seminal interest in studying the Indian society initially stems from the fact that it would present a paradigmatic case of a traditional or "primitive" society according to the Durkheimians, notably Célestin Bouglé (1993). Thus, caste would be the institution that supplant other forms of inequality. In this view, caste would make India a durably unequal society, whereas modern societies would be characterized by social forms reflecting egalitarian values (Vogt and Besnard, 1979). This view was later extended by Louis Dumont in *Homo Hierarchicus* (1974). He ultimately views the Indian society as being structured by a caste system that reflects a hierarchical society, as opposed to modern Western societies characterized by egalitarian values. The exceptionality of the Indian society is also at the core of *Status and Sacredness* by Murray Milner (1994). He indeed goes to the point of justifying his interest for the Indian social stratification to build up a theory of status relationships, since India would feature a society where "status power" is extremely salient as compared to the other two dimensions of social stratification.

There is no doubt that caste reflects forms of social prestige. Relying on a criterion of social closure, caste is definitely a social group marked by strong connubiality. Caste is also marked by forms of non-commensality. It is indeed part of a set of social contact avoidance practices called "untouchability" that are related to status assertions (Deliège, 2003) and remain prevalent in the Indian subcontinent (Borooah, 2017). Besides, in the contemporary period, Vaid (2012, 2018) outlines that caste and class are congruent dimensions of social stratification although they do not completely overlap, hence showing that caste categories constitute a relatively independent dimension of economic power.

Yet, equating caste with status as the scholarship on India has been tempted to do ultimately implies conceptualizing caste as a set of fixed and hierarchically ordered categories according to a ritual principle of purity (Lardinois, 1995). This framework takes into account in an unsatisfying manner some of the key elements of the Weberian status-class distinction. First, it views caste as ahistorical, therefore building an image of a traditional society as a paradigmatic framework (Lardinois, 1995). In doing so, it ignores the "classification struggles" around caste categories (Lardinois, 1985). Caste boundaries are indeed neither fixed nor always significant in the social realm, as the historiography of caste suggests (Bayly, 2001). Second, this framework views social prestige as based solely on religion and consequently adopts a philological perspective of the study of the Indian society – as founded on Hindu sacred texts – without examining the subjective meanings that are attached to status, ultimately relying on the cognitive structure of Brahmin culture (Lardinois, 2013). Yet, social prestige may also stem from other sources. Third, this conceptualization of caste tends to disqualify class mechanisms in the analysis of social stratification. It overlooks dynamics of inequality and social closure related to class positions, in particular the way in which status resources help secure and monopolize material resources.

The more recent scholarship (Mosse, 2018 and 2019) tends to go beyond these models of caste and emphasizes how caste is also rooted in the reality of the economic market: it may be a source of economic power through networks, opportunity hoarding, elite capture, or categorical exclusion. Mosse (2018 and 2019) emphasizes the need to study the long-neglected effects of caste in the market, arguing that caste has for too long been relegated to the eroding non-modern religious sphere and to "caste politics." Such a study requires studying how caste, along with class, relates to lifestyles. In doing so, caste may be conceptualized as a specific form of ethnicity which derives from social closure and consequently helps acquire economic and political resources, which involves status-seeking strategies (Jodhka and Naudet,

forthcoming). Caste may then be the source of hierarchy but in a dynamic way, so that it may be challenged and multiple caste hierarchies may arise (Gupta 2019 and 2000).

### 3) Ascribed and claimed position: consensus and struggles

One of the difficulties in operationalizing status groups is that the Weberian distinction qualifies conceptual differences that may overlap in the same observed social groups, as he himself notes: "the social order is highly determined by the economic order, and in its turn reacts upon it" (Weber, 2010). To conceptualize social prestige that relies on social categories related to – yet to a certain degree independent from – the economic sphere, a step back to another key foundational text by Max Weber is of interest. Indeed, Weber's analysis of ethnic group formation insists on processes of social closure that help monopolize economic opportunities, group honor or political power (Weber, 2019).[21] In other words, social closure, of which differential association based on commensality or connubiality may be two specific features, helps acquire (material or symbolic) resources in social stratification. This approach has the advantage of emphasizing categories as reflecting processes of social closure. These processes involve status logics, but their dynamic approach avoids essentializing a status hierarchy.

This conceptualization echoes the boundary approach of ethnicity, systematized in particular by Wimmer (2013). It offers a framework to study processes by which social groups gain social prestige by drawing social boundaries. In this way, it also draws from Bourdieu's classification struggles, as categories are "principles of vision and division of the social world" (Bourdieu, 1985) and individuals are in a permanent struggle "over who is what and who should get what" (Wimmer, 2013). In identifying different "elementary of ethnic boundary making," Wimmer (2008a) clearly states that processes of social closure leading to ethnic groups are ultimately processes of hierarchization, which may be reinforced, shifted or challenged. These processes help acquire material resources and participate in opportunity hoarding when privileged groups manage to control access to resources. The analysis of social boundaries makes it possible to grasp simultaneously the cognitive mechanisms of categorization – through processes of ascription and identity claims – and the mechanisms of resource distribution, which generate and consolidate inequalities between categories.

From this perspective, caste is therefore not reduced to merely a statutory hierarchical dimension – although it is part of it. Caste categories are also related to social, economic and

[21] The texts I refer to here come from the French edition of ten selected texts of *Economy and Society* (Weber, 1978), specifically dealing with communities.

political inequalities. This theoretical framework necessarily lays the foundations for comparing caste with other categories that generate inequalities in other contexts, such as ethnicity or race. By mobilizing a conceptual framework designed to study non-caste-specific categorical inequalities, I thus seek to free myself from the "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer and Schiller, 2003) that ultimately prevents the flourishing of comparative sociology (Visweswaran, 2010). While Wimmer (2013) uses the term "ethnic boundary making," he indeed clearly refers to ethnicity as "a culturally empty organizational form" drawing from Barth (see also Brubaker and Fernández, 2019). Hence, I study caste as a form of ethnicity as defined above, using conceptual tools developed in a non-Indian context, and still acknowledging the specificities of the "content" of caste categories in categorical boundary-making.

## *B - Food practices as symbolic boundaries*

### 1) Status, cultural differentiation and social consensus

The specificity of status group-making processes (compared to class) is that they are characterized by social rules of lifestyle conduct and regulations on social closure: "the honor of the *Stand* is predominantly expressed by the imposition of a specific lifestyle, which is expressed by anyone who belongs to that social circle, and is imposed on anyone who wants to belong to that social circle" (Weber, 2010). Accordingly, lifestyles correspond to status markers, which reflect a positioning in relation to symbolic boundaries, defined by Lamont and Molnár (2002) as "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space." The drawing of these symbolic boundaries may then reflect a positioning in relation to the strategies of social boundary-making, which are parsimoniously described by Wimmer (2008).

In the Indian context, the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism hierarchizes diets between vegetarianism associated with upper caste Brahmins and non-vegetarianism associated with lower castes. This ideal typical description of the social stratification is also the product of dynamic processes of cultural emulation. Low castes would indeed tend to emulate the beliefs and practices of upper castes, particularly those of Brahmins, in order to legitimize their class position. This social process refers to a concept that the anthropologist M. N. Srinivas named "sanskritization" (Srinivas, 1952).

Though intergenerational social immobility is very strong in the Indian society (Vaid, 2018), instances of intergenerational upward mobility occur. Following the process of

sanskritization, the cultural consequences of class mobility may foster individual adherence to vegetarianism, especially for upper class-aspiring lower castes. Shifting one's position regarding a symbolic boundary would help achieve a positional move regarding caste boundaries – by claiming to belong to a higher caste category –, a strategy corresponding to a form of "boundary crossing" in Wimmer's taxonomy (2008a). Besides, sanskritization suggests the cultural prevalence of a Hindu order that is ultimately dominated by Brahminical values. The strength of Brahmin values lies in the fact that they appear to be the values around which the Hindu category is unified, therefore allowing sanskritization to appear as a process of integration (Srinivas, 1989), especially in contrast to Muslims. As a consequence, the legitimization of vegetarianism can also be reinforced in a strategy of "boundary blurring" or "expansion" (Wimmer, 2008a), where this diet becomes a Hindu marker distinguishing the non-vegetarianism of religious minorities. Vegetarianism, a Brahmin status marker, may then be paradoxically reinforced by a lesser assertion of caste boundaries and by supra-caste divisions based on religious antagonisms.

Yet, by seeking to change social boundaries, individuals may also challenge the meaning associated with these boundaries. In particular, dominated groups may challenge the cultural distinctiveness of dominant groups. Cultural distinctiveness assumes that some cultural tastes are more valued than others, as they are ranked in a hierarchically arranged vision of lifestyles. A hierarchy of lifestyles is indeed the dominant one as long as it is imposed by the dominant class. Other groups, reflecting a different "habitus" or matrix of socialization, have competing cultural preferences, but they are not the most dominant ones. In the Indian case, Brahminical hierarchy may not be accepted by all castes irrespective of their position. Lower castes may challenge the Brahminical values in a more frontal style by promoting alternative models of cultural legitimation and by challenging the role of Brahmin values in unifying the Indian society. This is, for instance, described in the process of "dalitization," which demands social recognition and equality (Ilaiah, 1996). In Wimmer's taxonomy, "dalitization" corresponds to a process of "transvaluation" (Wimmer, 2008a). This strategy of boundary-making involves changing the hierarchical ordering of groups to reach equalization.

Finally, a symbolic boundary may weaken as the dominant characteristic of its cultural hierarchy is no longer the prerogative of the dominant groups. Contemporary empirical works following Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) have highlighted the weakening of the opposition between "lowbrow" and "highbrow" cultural tastes (Peterson, 1997). In particular, sociologists have pointed out the rise of cultural eclectism among dominant classes, which they interpret as the less exclusionary property of lifestyles and to which they refer as the "meltdown scenario"

(DiMaggio and Mukhtar, 2004). In Wimmer's typology, it corresponds to a form of "boundary blurring" where symbolic and social boundaries are less exclusionary while other principles of differentiation are promoted.

In the Indian case, sanskritization may be replaced by a process that Srinivas himself qualified as "westernization" (Srinivas, 1956) and that other scholars may call modernization. What the anthropologist means by this process is the impact on lifestyles of the imposition of British rule after the nineteenth century, the development of modern technology along with urbanization, the growing importance of credentialism and the spread of new occupations. Second, in the more recent period, Baviskar (2012) suggests that other dimensions of Western food eating have become more distinctive and diminish the religious and caste salience of meat, such as eating out, particularly in urbanized settings, and the consumption of processed foods (Baviskar, 2017). In short, the blurring of caste-related symbolic boundaries would be replaced by the growing salience of class-related symbolic boundaries, where meat would be even more valorised among the dominant classes.

Yet this process may be more ambiguous. The adoption by dominant groups of cultural practices that were previously low-status marked does not necessarily equate openness and the absence of negative perception of the cultural practices of other groups (Baumann, 2019), as adoptions of practices may be selective and contextual. In fact, the possible blurring of symbolic boundaries may mask a process of reassertion of the hierarchical order of caste boundaries through other symbolic markers, the scales of cultural hierarchy being dynamic and constantly renewing, for instance in reaction to diffusion processes (Bourdieu, 1984). In short, caste may still be highly relevant in the everyday conduct of life, but it may manifest under the veil of class distinctions.

### 2) The symbolic value of the material realm

As Coulangeon et al. (2015) note, sociologists who study cultural stratification following and debating Bourdieu's *Distinction* may face challenges in positioning material goods using his approach. Indeed, many contemporary investigations have focused on cultural practices such as reading, movie watching or musical tastes (Coulangeon, 2005, Robette and Roueff, 2014, 2017). This may seem all the more surprising that the vocabulary that has developed to analyze the social stratification of cultural practices metaphorically draws from food consumption. Indeed, cultural differentiation is analyzed by identifying "tastes" versus "distastes" and individuals are also opposed according to whether they are "omnivore" or "univore." In the Indian case, Ghassem-Fachandi (2010) illustrates how "disgust" towards

meat takes on a literal meaning to result in Muslim stereotyping and ultimately justify violence against the minority.

Besides, the relatively recent interest in vegetarianism and meat practices in the Global North has fostered analysis of food practices in cultural sociology. These analyses reveal the richness of making use of the tools of cultural sociology on the food object. For instance, Oleschuk, Johnston and Baumann (2019) point the different meanings that individuals attribute to meat-eating practices, identifying different cultural repertoires overcoming the ethical concerns of animal slaughter. Thorslund and Lassen (2017) insist on the fact that individuals justify their meat practices by drawing from explanations referring to a different evaluation realm than when looking at animal concerns, thus contextually investing different "orders of worth."

However, taking into account the cultural or symbolic dimension of food practices does not mean that the materiality of food – the economic, nutritive and physical aspects – should be left out of the analysis. In effect, I suggest that symbolic boundaries may also relate to the material realm. Bourdieu hints at it as he includes food practices in his examination of the lifestyle space (Bourdieu, 1984). Still, his analysis essentially focuses on the "constraint of necessity" among popular classes in analyzing more specifically these practices. Grignon and Grignon (1980) later pointed at the risk of naturalizing and essentializing food tastes by looking at the social stratification of food practices among different social classes. By examining the social segmentation of food lifestyles according to class, they have contributed to uncovering a food hierarchy, following seminal works by Maurice Halbwachs (Lhuissier, 2017a). Besides, the analysis of food practices using the tool of symbolic boundaries makes it possible to avoid their essentialization[22] by insisting on the relational dimension of the adoption of practices and by questioning the meaning that is given to them. More recent works have contributed to outline that food has symbolic values and that it is socially segmented according to one's position in the socioeconomic spectrum (Fielding-Singh, 2017). Food embodies socially distributed cultural meanings that help explain the social segmentation of dietary intake differences. In the Indian case, the analysis of social stratification based on household budgets reveals the important weight of food items in the structuring of the social space that primarily outlines economic divides (Ferry et al., 2018). Hence, the analysis of food indicates the role of budget constraints in structuring lifestyles and in shaping the cultural meanings that justify

[22] This point is particularly relevant when examining some of the anthropological descriptions of caste groups, to which cultural practices (in particular, food) are associated. I more precisely think of the reactivation of the project *People of India*, see Chapter 4.

them. Taking into account the material and symbolic aspects of lifestyles therefore allows us to better understand how they are structured.

All in all, the food realm may at first seem far from concerns of exclusionary practices of lifestyles since it is driven by material concerns. Yet, it is also invested with symbolic meanings and, as a consequence, food should be understood as both "nutrition and culture" (Khare, 1980). Symbolic representations associated with food may partly derive from its material properties and drive socially segmented practices as understood in a boundary-making strategy framework.

### 3) The multidimensionality of repertoires of evaluation

Uncovering symbolic boundaries then allows to question the criteria for evaluating and justifying symbolic boundaries. Indeed, individuals may reflect and justify the status markers in different ways depending on the "cultural repertoires" they have at hand (Lamont, 1992).

Different value scales may refer to different coexisting "orders of worth" reflecting the plurality of forms of valorization in the social world (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006), all being socially embedded and still competing with each other. As a matter of fact, classification struggles happen in regard to social boundaries as well as in regard to symbolic boundaries. They involve struggles around the definition of the most legitimate repertoires of evaluation to draw symbolic boundaries. The most salient symbolic boundaries are therefore the ones that dominant individuals use to successfully exclude other groups and define their in-group members. All in all, taking into account the plurality of criteria of evaluation sheds light on the way practices and values become status markers in a given social context.

As we have seen before, at first glance, vegetarianism in India is a diet that is strongly related to the religious realm. Hindu sacred texts provide grounds for a religious repertoire of food practices that is particularly attached to vegetarianism (Doniger, 2000), and if vegetarianism is also related to more individualized rationalized ethics (Gandhi, 2018), it is nonetheless still embedded in the spiritual realm. Targeted attacks against religious minorities (mainly Muslims and Christians), but also Hindu low castes, suggest that the devalued "Other" may well be a religious category and may comfort vegetarianism as a solely religiously driven diet.

Yet, cultural repertoires of vegetarianism may derive from other spheres too, at least for two reasons. First, the diet is not numerically dominant among Hindus (only between 28 and 40 percent of them declare themselves vegetarian, Natrajan and Jacob, 2018) so that other food cultural repertoires may exist and need to be hypothesized in order to avoid a form of religious

essentialism, well beyond the association between caste belonging and vegetarianism that may explain this low proportion of vegetarians. Second, in parallel with the affirmation of Hindu high castes of their "castelessness" (Deshpande 2015), which denies the privilege that derives from their high-caste belonging, high castes may deny the association between their vegetarian diet and their ascribed category. Using a "proliferation of food repertoires," individuals indeed draw from various justifications to explain their diet (Bruckert, 2018). They mobilize "modern" cultural repertoires, which emphasize that diet is the result of a conscious choice rather than from inherited practices transmitted through the habitus of an ascribed identity. Consequently, the upholding of the caste and class congruence may be reinforced.

Overall, the conceptual framework that I deploy here aims at operationalizing the Weberian distinction between status and class. My purpose is to empirically uncover the association between strategies of symbolic and social boundary-making applied to the study of vegetarianism and caste. This focus on a food practice also enables me to emphasize the symbolic meanings associated with the food realm, an object that has often been comprehended in its materiality. In so doing, I stress on the multidimensionality of value scales that legitimize vegetarianism, thus highlighting the "polytelism" (Bouglé, 1914) of food practices. Having set out the main directions of the analysis, I shall now turn to the empirical material and methods that I use in the dissertation.

## *C - Bringing empirical sources into the conversation*

### 1) Focusing on Uttar Pradesh, a region of North India

The focus on one particular region first derives from the choice of a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative material collected in semi-structured interviews. Given the large diversity of the Indian subcontinent in terms of both diets (see the map in Chapter 1) and social structures, I decided to focus on one particular State. Apart from some exceptions, I mainly focus on empirical material collected in Uttar Pradesh, a region of North India that is sometimes referred to as the "Cow Belt." This sobriquet highlights the high reverence given to cows in this region, a point in which I am particularly interested.

Several contextual elements drove me to Uttar Pradesh. First, the proportion of vegetarians in Uttar Pradesh is on average higher than national average (33 percent against 22 percent, according to the National Family Health Survey 2015-2016). Meanwhile, the proportion of low caste Dalits and Muslims – two communities who are supposedly non-vegetarian – is also higher than national average (respectively 21 percent against 17 percent,

and 19 percent against 14 percent). These elements suggest that the vegetarian social order is particularly salient in Uttar Pradesh, possibly as a reaction to a perceived demographic threat from the Hindu community.

Indeed, this region is home to frequently mediatized inter-group violence. Tensions are related to caste stigmatization, the practice of untouchability being higher in this part of India (Borooah, 2017), while the State has also experienced a rise in Dalit power through electoral politics and social movements (Jaffrelot, 2003; Jaoul, 2006; Jeffrey et al., 2008). Inter-group violence also refers to relatively higher Hindu-Muslim polarization in this region, culminating in religious riots and diffuse anti-Muslim prejudice (Pai and Kumar, 2018). For instance, a few months before the start of my dissertation in May 2017, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the flagship party of Hindu nationalism, won the State assembly elections. Yogi Adityanath, a spiritual leader and head of a Hindu militia known for controversial anti-Muslim statements and accused of violence against Muslims, then became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh (Jaffrelot, 2021). Ultimately, these different elements suggest that caste and religious boundaries are very salient in the State of Uttar Pradesh.

### 2) Justifying a mixed methods approach

I adopt a mixed-methods approach. I mobilize data from both nationally representative statistical surveys and interviews conducted in Uttar Pradesh. The mixed-methods approach allows data "triangulation," i.e., the diversification of data sources to grasp adherence to vegetarianism and to understand its subjective representations (Small, 2011).

Surveying the literature on Indian food studies, Baviskar (2018) notes the strong ethnographic focus on Hindu caste norms from the 1960s, when food was a privileged object for different anthropologists to build caste theories, in particular in the works by Mayer (1960), Marriott (1968) and Dumont (1974). Baviskar is critical of this focus and welcomes subsequent works in food studies from the 1980s that have aimed at uncovering other social dimensions and meanings of food transactions and practices, in particular questioning the rise of cosmopolitan cultures, and how they hybridize with local, caste and religious norms. My research acknowledges these evolutions of the field and continues it, notably by using large-scale survey data.

The use of data from large statistical surveys makes it possible to draw up a statistical snapshot of the adherence to vegetarianism according to respondents' social position and the social context in which they live. Moreover, quantitative representative data enable the statistical testing of hypotheses on the social mechanisms that promote – or on the contrary that

challenge – the adherence to vegetarianism. It should be noted that the use of quantitative surveys in the sociology of India is relatively underdeveloped, with the exception of the field of study of social mobility. This low investment may be surprising as sister disciplines such as economics or demography extensively make use of large-scale surveys. It can be explained by the lack of training in quantitative methods in sociology courses in Indian universities, which have a sociology syllabus that is closer to anthropology (Lardinois, 2013). Statistical surveys are rarely the main empirical material of the sociology of food in India, except in the cases of contextualizing a more qualitative approach. My research design departs from this sequencing of empirical material and revisits ethnographically observed social processes (notably M. N. Srinivas' canonical work on "sanskritization" and "westernization") through statistical data analysis. Further, I am interested in whether these processes find empirical support in the contemporary period and whether one finds empirical support of these mechanisms at a large scale, adjusting for possible cofounders.

These data are enriched by the contribution of qualitative interviews. They allow me to access the respondents' representations of vegetarianism and to study the processes of food lifestyle evaluation that is used by individuals depending on their social position. Admittedly, using interviews as empirical material has been criticized by Jerolmack and Khan (2014) who point the possible "attitudinal fallacy" of studies using interviewees' discourses. According to the authors, verbal data is used to support claims about what people do rather than what they say or believe. The authors then argue for the substantial value of ethnographies and the importance of data based on observations. At first glance, this criticism resonates with the preferred ethnographic approach in Indian social sciences. Since vegetarianism relates to food practices, it may certainly be worth conducting ethnographies on food collecting, preparing, serving and eating, especially in a "practice theory" perspective (Dubuisson-Quellier and Plessz, 2013). This attitudinal fallacy problem may also be applied to large-scale survey data which are based on declarations rather than on observed practices. Since I hypothesize that vegetarianism is status-related and that alleged beef consumption reinforce prejudice against Muslims, it is likely that individuals do not necessarily declare what they actually eat. One may certainly be overestimating vegetarianism and underestimating beef consumption using declared instead of observed data (see Chapter 3 for precisions). In fact, the attitudinal fallacy – if understood literally – dismisses all possibility of using survey data based on declarations (including surveys on cultural practices).

Notwithstanding, following Lamont and Swidler (2014), I believe that "an exclusive focus on behavior at the expense of meaning ineluctably leads to an impoverished redefinition

of the social sciences, one where a diminishing range of phenomena can be studied." I therefore argue that declarations – even if they differ from behaviors – inform us about the salience of social norms regulating food practices. Not acknowledging an actual practice reveals the existence of social regulations and their internalized effects. Besides, discourses collected through interviews help understand "representations, classifications systems, boundary work, identity" (Lamont and Swidler, 2014). Hence, interviews are useful in unveiling how individuals draw symbolic boundaries around vegetarianism and how they relate to social boundaries. On the whole, the preferred choice of interviews in this dissertation reflects my interest for the intersubjective understanding of social norms. Hence, far from dismissing the use of declared data, acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of each type of data collection encourages us to think more thoroughly about the epistemological value of empirical material.

Large-scale surveys and qualitative interviews are triangulated in diverse ways throughout the dissertation. Proponents of mixed-methods analyses usually distinguish two important purposes of their uses (Small, 2011). In a positivist perspective, researchers wish to "confirm" the results obtained from various empirical materials. More often though, researchers "complement" different data in the study of a same object. Qualitative interviews have more "depth" than large-scale surveys, but they unfortunately have less "breadth." Indeed, meaning-making processes can be thoroughly explored in qualitative interviews, but they cannot claim representativeness and precisely identify statistical associations as large-scale surveys do. Depending on the chapters of the dissertation, the epistemological purposes of conducting mixed-methods vary (Bryman, 2016). First, the mixed use of data helps "enhance" the results obtained from using different methods. It makes it possible for me to study vegetarianism (Chapter 3) and caste (Chapter 4) from different angles. I also use qualitative interviews in order to "illustrate," to put "meat on the bones," of statistical results in Chapters 6 and 7. In Chapter 8, I use qualitative interviews to "complete" the quantitative results and to provide a more comprehensive account of the association between vegetarianism and standard of living. Finally, in Chapter 9, I "confirm" the hypotheses derived from the qualitative interviews by undertaking a statistical analysis. The research designs of the different chapters hence combine the different materials in pragmatic ways depending on the aspects of the research question under scrutiny.

### 3) A quick presentation of the material

#### a) Quantified food practices and social background

I use four different large-scale surveys in the dissertation. They provide different measures and display different characteristics which I am introducing now (see Table 2.1 for a summary). These surveys date back from 2005-2006 at most. The third wave of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) from 2005-2006 is not the most up-to-date survey to get estimates on vegetarianism but, at the time of beginning my dissertation, not all the variables of interest had been released in the fourth wave collected in 2015-2016 (regarding caste belonging, see below). I am careful when using these relatively older data estimates and I consequently compare them with the most recent wave to take into account any period effect. Besides, regarding the Consumer Expenditure Survey, I rely on the wave dating back to 2011-2012. Even though a newer household consumption survey was conducted in 2017-2018, the data were never released, and so despite explicit demands from the research community. The Central government used the pretext of survey instrument biases in order to justify to never release the complete raw data of the most comprehensive of existing surveys for studying household consumption in India. In fact, press reports leaked and it seems that the total household spending between the last two surveys fell for the first time in four decades. The impact of the 2016 policy shock of demonetization may have affected Indian households' expenditures on the long run, a point that the government is reluctant to acknowledge.[23]

Apart from the Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS), none of these surveys directly capture whether individuals or households are vegetarian or non-vegetarian. Surveyors rather collect food consumption frequencies (NFHS) or quantities (IHDS and CES) of animal-origin products. From these variables, I derive dichotomous variables of whether individuals or households are vegetarian. The Social Attitudes Research India (SARI) survey stands out since I use these data in order to understand individual attitudes regarding Muslims' alleged beef consumption or cow slaughter (Chapter 9).[24] The NFHS collects food consumption data at the individual rather than at the household level. As Chapter 3 will elucidate, this level of analysis reveals substantial intra-household variations in the adherence to vegetarianism and it

[23] The demonetization of November 2016 was decided by the Central government and involved the sudden non-recognition of 500 and 1000 INR banknotes, leading to massive cash shortages and an economic crisis. This policy was supposed to curb the use of illegal and counterfeit cash. See "Consumer Spending: Angus Deaton, Thomas Piketty, 200 other academics seek immediate release of data," *Scroll.in*, November 21, 2019 (https://scroll.in/latest/944431/consumer-spending-angus-deaton-thomas-piketty-200-other-academics-seek-immediate-release-of-data, last access on April 26, 2021).

[24] This survey was unfortunately not conducted in Uttar Pradesh but in Maharashtra, Bihar and Jharkhand.

is thus the favored level of analysis in modelling the odds of being vegetarian depending on positional and contextual factors (Part 3). Still, household-level data allow to position non-vegetarian consumption within the structure of the entire food basket, an analysis that is undertaken in Chapter 8.

As I will explain further in Chapter 4, measuring caste belonging through quantitative surveys is routinely undertaken using administrative categories of affirmative action. Yet, these categories are different from the caste self-identifications (the "jati"), which have been collected through open-ended questions in the NFHS and the IHDS. I present a recoding and method of analysis that take into account the large diversity of caste positions in Chapter 4. Most the surveys are representative only at the national and state level of Uttar Pradesh, using the appropriate weights from the survey samplings. The fourth wave of the NFHS constitutes an exception since it allows to derive representative estimates at the district level (Uttar Pradesh gathers 71 districts). I use this feature to derive district-level contextual variables in order to characterize the various caste and religious configurations in Uttar Pradesh in Chapter 7. This allows to conduct a contextual analysis for exploring the social environment determinants of vegetarianism after adjusting for individual covariates.

Finally, it is worth keeping in mind the ways in which the data were collected. Most of the surveys collect data in face-to-face interactions with surveyors. I will discuss in Chapter 3 how the process of data collection may then reflect social interactions in which surveyed individuals underreport some of their meat consumption. Still, these quantitative sources remain strong indicators of food consumption norms. The SARI survey is here an exception as it collected data through mobile phone. The increased feeling of anonymity in this collection method may help acknowledge prejudice towards specific communities without impairing data quality (Coffey et al., 2018). Indian large-scale surveys are currently at a crossroads as they slowly move from pen and paper questionnaires to Computer Assisted Personal Interviews meant to improve the quality of data collection (intermediary checkups can be conducted to assess whether surveyors correctly report the information given by the interviewees). Here, only the fourth wave of the NFHS was entirely conducted using this method. As I will show in Chapter 3, although there are slight variations on the estimates of vegetarianism between the third and the fourth wave, the decomposed trends according to social positions are highly plausible, which reassured me on the data quality of large-scale surveys using pen and paper.

With these data, I conduct descriptive statistics, regression analyses and geometric data analyses. The research design behind the use of these methods will be introduced in each chapter.

*Table 2.1 - Description of large-scale surveys used in the dissertation*

| **Survey** | **National Family Health Survey (NFHS, Demographic Health Survey)** | **Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES, National Sample Survey Office, NSSO)** | **Indian Human Development Survey (Consortium)** | **Social Attitudes Research India (SARI, Research Institute for Compassionate Economics)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Wave and year** | 2005-2006 (3rd round) and 2015-2016 (4th round) | 2011-2012 (68th round) | 2011-2012 (2nd round) | 2018 |
| **Topics and main characteristics of variables of interest** | Meat (animal origins are not differentiated), fish, egg and selected other food item consumption frequency (daily, often, occasionally, never) | Detailed household food basket consumed in the past 30 days including different animal origins for meat (chicken, mutton, pork, beef), outside-the-home food consumption | Household food basket consumed in the past 30 days including meat & fish (animal origins are not differentiated), presence of a non-vegetarian member in the household | Attitudes regarding Muslim violence occasioned by cow slaughter/beef consumption |
| **Level of analysis** | Individual | Household (outside consumption at the individual level) | Household | Individual |
| **Caste categories recorded** | Administrative caste categories and self-identified jati as recorded by the interviewer | Only administrative caste categories | Administrative caste categories and self-identified jati as recorded by the interviewer | Administrative caste categories and self-identified jati as recorded by the interviewer |
| **Scale of representativeness** | National, state and district level (for the fourth wave) | National, state and regional level (5 “regions” in Uttar Pradesh) | National and state level | State |
| **Method of data collection** | Face-to-face paper survey with interviewer and Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (fourth wave) | Face-to-face paper survey with interviewer | Face-to-face paper survey with interviewer | Mobile phone survey |

*Note: These quantitative data are used in Parts 2, 3 and 4 of the dissertation. Usual statistical significance testing procedures are applied since the data are all representative and derive from random sampling procedures.*

### b) Choice of interviewees and topics of the interviews

My own survey consists in 75 interviews conducted in six different districts of Uttar Pradesh between September 2018 and June 2019 (see Figure 2.1 for the areas of the state where I conducted interviews). I conducted these interviews either alone (6 interviews), either, much more often, with the help of research assistants who enabled me to approach and conduct the interviews more easily in Hindi or even in Bhojpuri (5 interviews in the rural parts of Gorakhpur district).[25] Only 8 interviews were conducted in English. Generally, my level of Hindi allowed me to follow and intervene in the conversation if I felt it necessary for obtaining precisions. Research assistants were social science students (Master or PhD level) and I spent time with them before the interviews to introduce them to the purposes of the interviews and to share my interview guide with them.

The sample of my interviewees is a convenience sample based on inter-knowledge and more significantly on the availability of respondents approached during door-to-door interviews (see the Appendix for a table summarizing the interviewees). Even though I do not claim any statistical representativeness I took into account several indicators so that the choice of my interviewees is based on purposive sampling. I have endeavored to cover different regions of the state because I aimed at exploring regional differences in the adherence to vegetarianism. Besides, I kept in mind that more than 77 percent of the state population resides in areas categorized as "rural" (many of these areas are actually semi-urban, see Denis and Zérah, 2017 and Bercegol, 2017). Meanwhile, classical theories on consumption and food changes usually attribute urbanization as an important factor (Landy, 2009), and this is the reason why I conducted most interviews in urbanized settings: about two thirds of my interviewees reside in cities. In Aligarh and Meerut, the interviews were conducted in urban settings. In Shamli and Ghazipur districts, the interviews were conducted in rural areas. In Lucknow and Gorakhpur, some of the interviews were conducted in the city and others in rural or semi-rural settings. I also tried to select the interviewees according to religious, caste and

[25] Interviews were conducted in Lucknow with Anil (a doctor in sociology from Lucknow University), a college teacher in sociology who occasionally works as a consultant for social and malnutrition assistance program evaluations. His expertise was key to survey slum areas and rural areas of the district. In the same district, the assistance of Monish, a graduate in social sciences, was key to get access to the Old City and to Muslim respondents. In Gorakhpur, Javed, a then MA student from Jawarhalal Nehru University (New Delhi) introduced me to acquaintances and to households he had himself surveyed. In Ghazipur, Rajit, a student at the Banares Hindu University (Varanasi) brought me to his village area. In Aligarh, Mujebur, a student at the Aligarh Muslim University, helped me explore the poor quarters surrounding the university. Finally, in Meerut and Shamli, Himanshu and I explored the area thanks to the help of Shekhar, a friend of Javed, who works in the rural part of the district (he also provided us a car to go around the bumpy roads of Shamli).

class affiliation (the neighborhood and the material criteria of the habitat were often visible signs of class position). I compare my sample with the population of Uttar Pradesh in Chapter 5 (my sample partly overrepresent the upper end of the socioeconomic spectrum). Finally, although 14 of my interviewees are women and 8 interviews were conducted in the presence and with the participation of a woman, my sample unintentionally underrepresents women. This results from the perceived gender identity of the research assistants I worked with and of my own gender identity which created a gender barrier in accessing women, especially when interviews were not conducted with acquaintances.[26]

On average, interviews lasted 42 minutes (the shortest interview lasted 12 minutes as the interviewee put an end to the it and the longest one lasted 1 hour 23 minutes). The language constraints encouraged me to conduct semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire is relatively precise and allows to cover as many subjects as possible meanwhile making up for any possible lack of follow-up question due to language constraints (see the Appendix for the full presentation of the questionnaire). In order to understand food boundary-work around vegetarianism, I was partly inspired by interview guides used in sociological studies on food (Fielding-Singh, 2017; Rodier, 2014) and more generally on symbolic and social boundaries (Lamont, 1995).

The interview began with a discussion on food memories, asking respondents what had changed in terms of their food practices since their childhood. I then asked whether these changes in food were related to a rise in non-vegetarian consumption. Then, I asked respondents about their favorite food. This initial moment mainly aimed at building trust.

The interview guide then moves on to questions about current eating practices. I used the same questions as the closed-ended questions of the National Family and Health Survey on eating practices. This part of the questionnaire is completed by a series of questions on the origin of meat, the presence of meat sales outlets in the residential area, on the distribution of tasks in food buying and cooking. I asked the respondents whether they followed days or periods of food abstinence (on a weekly basis or in relation to religious festivals). I also asked them to describe whether they ate food outside the household. Overall, this theme allows to understand respondents' food habits, their adherence to vegetarianism and whether it is correlated to other food practices.

[26] Besides, even if I conducted my quantitative analyses the same year as I conducted interviews, I was drawn to the substantial gender gap in vegetarianism and to its possible association with status-seeking strategies only later on, see Chapter 6.

The next section is dedicated to asking respondents about the meat consumption of other family members, neighbors and friends. I asked them whether they associated vegetarian and non-vegetarian diets with specific caste and religious groups. This subjective categorization enables me to see how the interviewees associate the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism with caste and religious boundaries.

The interview then focused on the reflexivity of food practices, in particular regarding vegetarianism. I first asked an open-ended question about what respondents thought about when they imagined eating "good" food. This helps understand what the criteria that individuals use to justify their food practices are (and whether they use any at all). Usually, the response of interviewees reflects their previous answers about their own food habits as they had already spontaneously justified their answers. Not all respondents provided justifications (I discuss this point in Chapter 9), so that I also encouraged reflections by asking more closed-ended questions starting with: "Some people say…" introducing an opinion and the justification for eating vegetarian or non-vegetarian food. This section helps understand the criteria of evaluation of food practices (e.g., dietetic, moral or religious). The next section examines meat controversies, particularly the beef ban and the violent episodes against caste and religious minorities.

Finally, the last section makes it possible to specify the objective social position of the respondents through questions related to the possession of material goods (which provides an indicator of the economic wealth of the household), employment, level of education, land ownership, household structure, and the social structure of the neighborhood or village. Note that I asked a question about "untouchability" (directly and indirectly – by a question on the respondents' position on consuming food prepared by a lower caste person, this question is taken from the Indian Human Development Survey), whether the respondent declared to practice it or to be a victim of caste prejudice.

All interviews were translated and transcribed in English thanks to the help of Himanshu, a research assistant. I then used a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS, here NVivo) to manually code the transcriptions. I used "structural codes" to organize and describe the interviews into thematic portions. I also used a combination of "descriptive and values coding" to synthetically summarize shorter portions of the interviewees' discourses and their own subjective representations. Following a common strategy in qualitative coding (Saldaña, 2009), I then hierarchically grouped all the codes to reach a synthetic analytical understanding of food representations in interviews. I further develop the specific analytical strategy in Part 4 of the dissertation (Chapters 8 and 9).

*Figure 2.1 - Geographical distribution of interviews conducted in Uttar Pradesh*


*Note: Most of the interviews have been conducted in the Lucknow district (38), but also in Gorakhpur (11), Aligarh (11), Shamli (formerly part of the Muzaffarnagar district, 7), Meerut (4) and Ghazipur (4).*

## *D - Conclusion: operationalizing concepts*

The theoretical framework introduced in this chapter explicitly intends to conceptually and empirically operationalize the Weberian distinction between status and class, in particular by avoiding a realist or "groupist" interpretation of these theoretical dimensions of social stratification.

In analyzing how caste boundaries associate with vegetarianism, I suggest studying how individuals strategically adhere to this diet and justify it. Through this lens, caste boundary-making strategies are studied by focusing on symbolic boundary-making strategies. I thus

analyze symbolic classifications applied to the food realm, which is also characterized by its materiality. I argue that the multiple food properties reflect possible value scales that serve to assert the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism, so that status may refer to multidimensional hierarchies. This framework hence suggests to analyze social processes of asserting and challenging the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism and to investigate the cultural meanings associated to vegetarianism. In order to so, I use both population-level statistically representative surveys and semi-directed interviews conducted in Uttar Pradesh.

In the next part of the dissertation, I will empirically analyze the subjective and objective meanings and tensions around the three main objects of my analysis: vegetarianism, caste and class. Their classification reflects social struggles of the social world, which I highlight in my sociological investigation.

# Second part
# Between folk and analytical categories: operationalizing vegetarianism, caste and class

# Chapter 3 – Non-vegetarians on the sly: The secret, fluctuating and contextual boundaries of the veg category

*Babu: No non-veg ?*
*Partner: It's been five years. She stopped making it [looking at his wife]. I stopped eating it. Pappu [his son] wouldn't eat if there was no non-veg.*
*Babu: Oh yes… Where is he? I don't see him. He must have grown up now.*
*Partner: He died. Five years before. There was an outbreak of Dengue.*
Babumoshai Bandookbaaz*, 2017, Nandy, K.*

In 2006, the "State of the Nation Survey" conducted jointly by different media (*The Hindu*, CNN, IBN) stated that 31 percent of Indians are vegetarian. Resting upon the Sample Registration System Baseline Survey of 2014, the figure of 29 percent of vegetarians was extensively quoted in the media. Largely circulated in the media at its release, a study by Natrajan and Jacob (2018) recalled that national large-scale surveys estimate between 23 and 37 percent the proportion of vegetarians. All of these figures were used to outline that the real number of vegetarians is often overestimated, proving that the belief of India as a vegetarian nation is a "myth," which also denotes the cultural hegemony of vegetarians on the subcontinent. Natrajan and Jacob (2018) even argue that these numbers themselves overestimate the extent of vegetarianism, assuming that the real number of vegetarians near 20 percent of the Indian population.[27] So, how many vegetarians are there?

In this chapter, I aim at uncovering vegetarianism as an analytical category and in particular at making sense of the varying numbers of vegetarians in the subcontinent quoted in the media. The difficulty in interpreting different figures results from the variety of different surveys which may at first glance reflect technical problems. Instead, I assume that these technicalities reflect social phenomena that are worth studying as they help understand vegetarianism as a social fact (Becker, 2017). The different numbers of vegetarians and non-vegetarians on the Indian subcontinent then constitute different snapshots of food practices that are measured in diverse ways.

[27] For the first figure quoted, see "The food habits of a nation", *The Hindu,* August 14, 2006 (https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/the-food-habits-of-a-nation/article3089973.ece: last access on September 8, 2020). For the second survey, see for instance "Vegetarian India a myth? Survey shows over 70% Indians eat non-veg, Telangana tops list", *The Huffington Post India,* June 6, 2016 (https://www.huffingtonpost.in/2016/06/14/how-india-eats_n_10434374.html: last access on September 8, 2020). One of the most comprehensive online press article on Natrajan and Jacob's (2018) study was released by *BBC News*: "The myth of the Indian vegetarian nation", April 3, 2018 (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-43581122: last access September 6, 2020).

In order to do this, I use both survey data and discourses collected in interviews. I show that the flexible boundaries of vegetarianism depend on who answers, what vegetarianism comprises and where and with whom food is consumed. These contingencies constitute reality checks that reveal vegetarianism as a socially desirable diet and help understand non-vegetarian practices on the Indian subcontinent. The number of estimated vegetarians is highly sensitive to the conditions of production of survey data. The study of quantification of food practices sheds light on the characteristics of the symbolic boundary (Lamont et al., 2015) of the "veg" and "non-veg," as it shows the social conditions under which its outlines are defined and its salience becomes significant. This chapter also paves the way for the subsequent statistical analyses. Even though survey data may not measure what is actually eaten, I dissect how it still tells us whether individuals and households acknowledge vegetarianism as a status marker.

In the following, I first highlight the distinction between observed and declared practices, surveys being part of the latter. I outline the secrecy that may prevail around admitting oneself as non-vegetarian. Then, I show that the distinction between the "veg" and the "non-veg" simplifies the variability of diets that include or exclude animal products. Yet, these categories are ubiquitous given the normative framework that support them and the social desirability to identify as "veg." Finally, I point that household surveys may not be the most adequate sources of data to study vegetarianism since they obliterate the individual and out-of-the-home character of non-vegetarian practices, so that individual data may be preferred to study these practices.

## *A - The secrecy of non-vegetarian practices*

While historically the scholarship on food has mainly employed ethnographic methods, I here stand for a sociological analysis of food practices that is based on large-scale surveys and qualitative interviews. The use of these methods implies studying discourses and declarations of practices which sheds light on social norms, and particularly on the cultural hegemony of vegetarianism. This material simultaneously reveals the possible secrecy surrounding non-vegetarian consumption practices.

### 1) To declare and to practice

Data collected in surveys and interviews are based on self-declaration. But what people say might be a false predictor of what people actually do and lead us to "attitudinal fallacies" (Jerolmack and Khan, 2014), just like any investigation based on a verbal approach. In the case of studying food consumption, respondents may underreport the frequency or the amount of

consumption in general. In their article, Natrajan and Jacob (2018) compare aggregate meat consumption levels from consumption surveys with National Accounts Survey (this comparison is reproduced in Table 3.1). It should be noted that this comparative exercise usually shows discrepancy between the two sources of data because they have different collection methods (Deaton and Kozel, 2005). In particular, survey data suffer from memory bias (usually consumption surveys in India have respondents report their food consumption of the past 30 or in some cases of the past 7 days). The sample of consumption surveys may also not be fully representative of the entire population (accessing the richest households is not the easiest and surveying the circular migrants is usually too difficult to undertake). Finally, the consumption surveys do not include estimates of meat eaten outside the home (a regrettable weakness, see last section of this chapter).

*Table 3.1 - Aggregate consumption estimates for different meats*

| | **FAO** | **NSSO** | ***Ratio (FAO to NSSO)*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Pork*** | 358 | 77 | ***4.64*** |
| ***Beef/buffalo*** | 1,204 | 440 | ***2.74*** |
| ***Mutton*** | 743 | 528 | ***1.41*** |
| ***Chicken*** | 2,304 | 1,651 | ***1.40*** |

*Note: This table was retrieved from Natrajan and Jacob (2018), Table 7. Consumption estimates are in 1,000 tones. NSS estimates are derived from the "Consumer Expenditure Survey" (2011-2012) and the figures for the FAO are taken from the Agricultural Outlook (Edition 2016).*

Regarding mutton and chicken, the discrepancy level corresponds more or less to the discrepancy resulting from the data collection method (1.4). But the gap for pork and beef/buffalo consumption is much higher (4.6 and 2.7). Clearly, the underestimation of beef and pork consumptions results from another factor, arguably respondents not acknowledging that they consume these meat items. In a word, they keep their meat consumption secret.

Coincidentally, pork and beef are the two meat items for which my interview respondents used code words. First, though qualifying two different bovine species, cattle or water buffalo (also called black buffalo or Asian water buffalo), the word "beef" was alternatively used for one another. The indistinction makes the task of identifying whether people actually consume cattle or buffalo meat difficult.[28] In contrast, Swapnil, a Hindu respondent from Lucknow,

[28] Bruckert (2018: pages 102 and 299 in the e-book version) makes the same observation and precises that cattle refer to the *Bos Taurus species* (either *Bos Taurus Indicus*, the indigenous cattle, sometimes known as zebu in English, or *Bos Taurus Taurus*, the exotic or crossbred cattle, imported in the 1970s because of its higher milk productivity). Water buffalo refers to the *Bubalus Babulis* species. While only female cattle are sacred in Hinduism, both species are usually despised for food consumption, notably because they are considered as dirty. Milk from cattle is usually preferred as it comes from a sacred animal, but buffalo milk is also highly consumed.

insisted in clarifying the difference between cow and buffalo when it comes to using the term beef since he himself is a buffalo meat consumer:

> *"Okay, let me compare this because once I was in my college [outside Lucknow]. Beef is not basically cow, it's black buffalo, right? So as for the Hindu mythology is concerned, this is somewhat lawyer's mind which I am applying, but generally, most of the people does not consider this fact, so when I was in college, few people were telling me that Tunday Kababi [a restaurant serving buffalo meat in Lucknow] is very famous in Lucknow, so I said okay fine! Whenever I will be flying by a flight, I'll definitely be getting you, so I bought beef and mutton kababs both for my friends because generally, Tunday Kababi is famous for beef. So, I told them that it's beef, so they said "no, no I won't have it," so I told them that "Dude it's like beef! Means black buffalo, it's not cow, as per Hindu mythology we are not allowed to have cow but we can have black buffalo." So, once I convinced them with a stupid answer, convincing them with a lawyer's mind, so they have this thing. Did I give a convincing answer to you?"*
> (Swapnil, interview 11)

Swapnil underlines that contrary to cows, female water buffaloes are not sacred in Hinduism and can therefore be eaten by Hindus (yet buffalo meat is also usually not favored by Hindus). In Uttar Pradesh, the law prohibits the slaughter of cattle so that legally the "beef" that is consumed is only buffalo meat.[29] Some respondents (in particular, Muslims) acknowledged consuming buffalo meat, but they rarely admitted eating cattle meat for the same reason. They more easily acknowledged that they used to consume cattle meat but that they now can't because of the stricter law enforcement. Mohammed (interview 73), a Muslim respondent, referred to his Indian nationality when asked whether he consumes cattle meat. The mention of Pakistan in his response recalls the constant vilification of the Muslim community as an enemy within. This explains his insistence on asserting himself as an Indian and respecting the laws of his country:

[29] The law dates back from 1955 (*The Uttar Pradesh Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act*) and has been reinforced in 2001 by forbidding the slaughter of both cow and its progeny. Transportation for slaughter outside the State is also forbidden. Since 2017 and the election of Yogi Adityanath as Chief Minister of the State, the police have been ordered to act against cow slaughter and cow smuggling.

> *"Mohammed- Whoever is there in the majority, praise them! We are Muslims, first you understand that, then you will find the depth! Whatever happens in Pakistan, if there's a fire or anything, and we don't care about it! We are Muslims and overthere they are too! But I have to live in this country, I have to praise this country, not Pakistan!"*
> (Mohammed, interview 73)

Besides, other more enigmatic words were used to qualify beef and pork. In Hindi, the word "Bada" (meaning "general") is generally used to refer to beef, implying buffalo meat or cattle meat, and sometimes even to mutton meat. Sometimes, respondents also used the phrase "14 number" to refer to beef or buffalo meat, because at some point in time a kilogram of beef or buffalo meat cost 14 rupees. Correspondingly, pork meat was sometimes referred to as "12 number" for the same reason (the cost of these meats was between 120 and 200 rupees at the time of my fieldwork, depending on the locality). These code words were relatively local to Uttar Pradesh: when I mentioned this in Delhi, not everyone was aware of these terms. Ethnographic works in other regions attest of the existence of different code words (e.g., in Hyderabad "Kalyani Biryani" qualifies beef biryani, a mixed rice dish, Gundemeda, 2020).

The gap between declaration and actual consumption was at times visible in the conduct of my interviews and the secrecy of consumption often emerged as a topic of conversation. I often asked not only about one's consumption but also about the consumption of meat items among the community (referring to the caste or religious group). This was used as a way to identify whether the consumption of meat items was identified as group practices, but also possibly in order to reduce the risks of consumption underreporting. Prasad (interview 13) fully acknowledged that among his caste community (Chaurasia), other members consume beef meat, yet his mother did not want him to say so:

> *"Mathieu- Do you think in your community, people eat buffalo meat?*
> *Interviewee- Most of them are eating buffalo...*
> *Interviewee's mother- Not buffalo?*
> *Interviewee- Yes, they are, mother! These days, Hindus are eating the most. 90% eat buffalo. That's what he is surveying about, so we have to tell about that."*
> (Prasad, interview 13)

In some cases, respondents willingly admitted that they were meat eaters and in particular buffalo eaters. They nonetheless sometimes ensured that no one else (e.g., a family member) was listening. For instance, Ankit (interview 3), a friend of Monish who helped me conduct interviews in Lucknow, whispered when telling me that he consumes meat and more specifically buffalo meat, but he refused to elaborate further when his other friends joined the conversation.

In many other instances, respondents kept vague or simply declared that they were vegetarian. If the case of beef is particularly acute, recognizing oneself as "non-veg" is indeed not very easy even if respondents acknowledge consuming meat, as this short exchange with a self-declared meat-consumer shows:

> *"Anil- So will you call yourself vegetarian or a meat-eater?*
> *Interviewee- We are both.*
> *Anil- So you eat both the things!"*
> (Rajees, interview 28)

Pawan rejected to refers to himself as "non-veg" and preferred being called "omnivorous" (sarvahari), arguing that he eats non-vegetarian food only very occasionally:

> *Anil- Do you consider yourself as vegetarian or non-vegetarian?*
> *Interviewee- I consider myself a vegetarian. Now I get non-vegetarian in one month, 1.5 months or in 2 months. Or you can say omnivorous! Omnivorous [sarvahari]!*
> *Anil- Omnivorous!*
> *Interviewee- More people are omnivorous! So, we cannot say vegetarian or non-vegetarian. Eating it after 2-3 months so how is it non-vegetarian? So, we will call it omnivorous!*
> (Pawan, interview 33)

The reluctance to identify as "non-veg" and the claim for a more neutral category (omnivorous) also derive from the fact that the "non-veg" category has a negative overtone in relation to the valued category of "veg," since it is an antonym, in opposition to the normative vegetarian diet. These English terms are often used in conversations (in particular in the course of my interviews), even in conversations in Hindi.[30]

[30] The Hindi equivalent adjective for non-veg is less negatively connoted: mansahari, literally flesh-containing, and shakahari for vegetarian.

The reluctance to identify as "non-veg" contrasts with what respondents perceive of others. Many respondents considered that others' non-vegetarianism was in fact an open secret. When I asked Rishi, a low caste man (belonging to the Pasi jati, interview 35), whether he thought Brahmins (the traditionally highest castes) consume meat, he said: "Brahmin people won't eat in front of me! They will eat secretly! Not in front! Neither can I tell them or talk with them that they are eating meat! So, they also eat according to themselves!" In the course of informal interviews in Lucknow, the fact that many (usually Muslim) butchers are closed on Tuesdays was used as a proof that Hindus are widely meat-eaters. Indeed, Hindus usually follow some food restrictions (in particular, if they are meat-eaters they abstain from meat, or alcohol) on Tuesdays because it is "Hanuman day," a widely revered Hindu god (other Hindu respondents who followed other gods declared that they follow food restrictions on other days). Longer periods of food restrictions imposed by Hindu festivals were also considered as a proof of Hindu meat consumption and in particular of buffalo consumption. Indeed, during the period of Navaratri, which lasts for ten days (in 2018 it lasted from October 9 to 18), a Hindu cook told me that meat prices usually decrease around that time because of the lower Hindu demand.[31] Mohamed, a Muslim interviewee, also used the same kind of argument to prove that Hindus widely consume meat. I interviewed him right after Navaratri and he insisted on the fact that because of a lack of Hindu consumers, many butchers closed their shops and just reopened after the end of the festival:

> *"Anil- Who eats meat? Like Muslims eat meat!*
> *Interviewee- Yes, they eat.*
> *Anil- Who among Hindus eat?*
> *Interviewee- In Hindus, mostly everyone eats now.*
> *Anil- Everyone?*
> *Interviewee- Everyone! Because it was Navaratri! And in the shops, there were no goats that were slaughtered! There was no goat slaughtered on the shops, and today, Navratri has ended, and there were goats slaughtered and hanged!*

[31] Shravan, another Hindu festival that celebrates Shiva, imposes longer food restrictions (particularly no meat or fish consumption) from July 23 to August 21 or 22 of every year. Given this extended period, I looked at the yearly evolution of meat and fish prices from the Consumer Price Index of the Central Statistics Office (India). Data is available from 2013 to 2018. In 2013, there is no decrease of prices around July and August, but it is present from 2014 to 2018, and is more accentuated in urban areas (this decrease is less visible for eggs). Yet this decrease is of about 4 percent and lasts until September (it is much less than vegetable or fruit prices at other times of the year, for which there are variations of about 20 percent). There are certainly other exogenous shocks all along the year that also affect food prices.

> *Anil- So throughout Navratri, all the shops were closed?*
> *Interviewee- Yes, they were closed!*
> *Anil- And today they opened it.*
> *Interviewee- They opened it! It will be sold more today, because Hindus eat, that's why it's been sold."*
> (Mohamed, interview 20)

Although I did not make this observation myself, I had a personal experience right after Navratri that reflects it. On Dussehra, the final day of the festival, I was in Lucknow and I was invited by Kartikkeya and his younger brother (Brahmins, the sons of Rekha, interview 5) for dinner. I had told Kartikkeya that this specific day was not ideal for me.[32] But since I was leaving the next day and he had told me on the phone that he was not available on the nights before, we met later on that specific day, at around 10pm. For dinner, he had chosen a small restaurant in a Muslim neighborhood of the Old City called Nakkhas, where many non-veg restaurants serve "Galouti kebab," a Lucknow delicacy usually made of buffalo meat. I then realized that the reason why he had insisted to meet on that specific night to eat the kebabs was that he could not have consumed them the nights before because of the festival. He told me he was actually afraid to meet that specific night as well as for dinner time because many Hindus want to eat meat right after their fasting period so that restaurants could have run short of supply.

Secrecy is not only about consumption but also about provisioning. Meat shops often sell meat in black plastic bags (just like for alcohol) so that the content is not visible. This is less the case for chicken and mutton, but nearly systematic for buffalo (and pork). The secrecy in the act of buying is reflected in Durgaprasad's description of what he observed:

> *"I have seen from my eyes... there are people from the society whom we believe that they might not be eating, what we call meat and alcohol or pig or these types of thing, so I have seen them also, they throw the bag slowly, he [the butcher] keeps the meat ready and there is money in the bag, so he understands how much money is there so how much he should give, so he place the meat in the bag; and later it is cooked at home. This is what I have seen from my eyes. Those people and also the butchers, both are from our village, so I have seen from my eyes."*

[32] I was planning to watch the Dussehra celebrations at night: in North Indian cities, a wood statue representing Ravana, the demon king, is burnt on a ground called the "Ram Lila," gathering a dense audience.

(Durgaprasad, interview 50)

In the case of cattle and buffalo meat, the secrecy is reinforced by the secrecy surrounding its production. Many butchers sell buffalo meat behind curtains or frosted glass, which they have put up after the government of Uttar Pradesh temporarily closed slaughterhouses in 2017 (which reopened after butchers paid bribes to the police).[33] When it comes to cattle meat, secrecy is even more important. As I was told in Gorakhpur by Iqbal (interview 53), a Muslim interviewee, since there is no slaughterhouse anymore, butchers slaughter cattle directly in their homes and sell it in the morning but not openly. Informants told me that the same happens in many other cities in Uttar Pradesh, and it can be the case outside Uttar Pradesh too: for instance, while in Dehradun (Uttarakhand), I met a Muslim man who regularly came as far as thirty kilometers away for meat provisioning. The consumers' network is then only composed of trusted buyers.[34]

Finally, the origin of cattle and buffaloes was often kept secret in discourses. In particular, livestock owners who own milch cows and female buffalos were often imprecise when I asked them what they did with veils and cull cows (which do not produce milk anymore and are therefore unproductive for the dairy production). Rajit, an informant and assistant who brought me to his agriculturist family in Ghazipur district assured me that they kept unproductive cows after they were not producing milk anymore because they were "attached to them." Yet, later on, his uncles Parv and Rachit (interview 24) confirmed that they sold them to a butcher who comes directly to their farm. Selling cull cows is part of the economic cycle of milk production since cattle owners can make up to 15,000 rupees selling them, while a new milch cow costs up to 35,000 rupees according to them. The transaction between a (usually, Hindu) livestock owner and a (usually, Muslim) butcher or middleman is hence central to the milch economy, even though Hindu livestock owners do not consume this meat themselves and are reluctant to admit that they are part of an economy that involves cow slaughter (and hence beef consumption) to produce milk. Because of the Gau Rakshak movement and a stricter enforcement of the law banning cow slaughter in Uttar Pradesh since 2017 (see Chapter 1), this economy has been severely disrupted. Without buyers for their unproductive cows (or

[33] These slaughterhouses were deemed illegal: "UP slaughterhouses: All about the Rs 15,000-cr industry that employs 25 lakh people", April 30, 2017, *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/up-s-slaughterhouses-a-rs-15-000-crore-industry-that-provides-livelihood-to-25-lakh-people/story-7ZLE81JFynBFWzRGZFVLfK.html (last access on September 12, 2020).

[34] The same networks also exist in other northern States, such as in Jharkhand, but cattle meat was more tolerated there at the time I visited the State: I could consume it openly in roadside restaurants (dhabas) where it was prepared by adivasi populations (the cook of one of these restaurants told me that he prefers cattle meat over buffalo meat because it is more "red").

for a very low price given the risks taken by the buyers during transportation and slaughtering), livestock owners cannot afford to keep and feed unproductive cows. Local informants in rural areas (including Javed in Gorakhpur) told me that livestock owners have turned to female buffalos instead of cows since they can still sell them off, even though buffalos are less valued by farmers and are associated with low Hindu castes.[35] Others admit that they set their unproductive cows free in the forest, which creates problem when the animals are roaming and destroying plantations. Some respondents, usually urban Hindus, pointed that livestock owners can well give their cows to cow shelters, which have been mostly set up based on private initiatives. But livestock owners, besides the fact that they do not get any money out of this, also outlined that they simply do not have the opportunity to give their cows away because of the lack of space in existing cow shelters, a point the Uttar Pradesh government is aware of since it claimed that it wanted to build new cow shelters.[36] Hence, when Gau Rakshaks and the government exposed the well-functioning but partly secret circuits of milk and cattle and buffalo meat production, it not only disrupted beef provisioning but also damaged milk production and farmers.

All this indicates that due to legal and normative restrictions, which are rooted in the cultural hegemony of Hinduism, and more particularly Hindu nationalism (Ghassem-Fachandi, 2010), secrecy is a necessary component to the consumption, retail and production of meat, and particularly of buffalo and cattle meat.

## 2) No tears with discourses: what declared consumption reveals

Secrecy – or open secrecy – around meat raises three sets of questions. First, why is secrecy so prevalent around meat? Why do many people consider that they are not non-veg though they consume meat and why do they keep they meat (and in particular, beef meat) consumption secret? Second, why do some respondents assert that others are not vegetarian?

[35] In Uttar Pradesh, like in other northern States where cattle slaughter is prohibited by law, the population of cattle tends to decrease while the one of buffaloes increases. In 2012, the population of cattle of this State was 20 million, 30 million for buffaloes (in India, the population of cattle is 200 million and of buffaloes, 110 million, see *19th livestock census – 2012: all India report*, Department of Animal Husbandry: http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/content/399839/19th-livestock-census-2012-all-india-report/#:~:text=The%20Animal%20Husbandry%20and%20livestock,the%20small%20and%20marginal%20farmers.&text=The%20present%20report%20provides%20detailed,all%20States%20and%20Union%20Territories., last access on September 11, 2020).

[36] They are also not kept in good conditions in these shelters as they are underfunded, see "Hundreds of bovines die in UP cow shelters", July 14, 2019, *Deccan Herald*: https://www.deccanherald.com/national/hundreds-of-bovines-die-in-up-cow-shelters-747049.html (last access on September 11, 2020).

Finally, if for some respondents, meat consumption is a secret practice, do discourses and declared practices matter? If the answer is yes, to what extent and in which way do they matter?

The high prevalence of secrecy around meat eating reflects the positive social valuation of vegetarianism in the Indian context among Hindus. As a counterpoint, "non-veg" is a devalued and avoided category. Yet, this positive valuation of vegetarianism is not prevalent to the same extent for all social groups. Shiraji expressed differences between Hindu castes in their relation to meat eating:

> *"Mathieu- So do you think that some communities are vegetarian or non-vegetarian…?*
> *Interviewee- Son, look, I am telling, those who are Pundits [priests] here are vegetarian, there is for instance this Barnwal family which is pure vegetarian.*
> *Mathieu- All are vegetarian!*
> *Interviewee- Yes! The whole family is vegetarian. Some are there in Pandit who eat, but they also hide it in the name of Pandit.*
> *Javed laughs*
> *Interviewee- Okay! We are Thakur, we don't have to hide, but in the name of Pandit they hide it, but eat it secretly so they will talk only about vegetarian with you, not about non-vegetarian."*
> (Shiraji, interview 49)

This positive valuation of vegetarianism also reflects legal norms and a political context that disavows beef consumption:

> *"Mathieu- So beef, how often do you eat beef?*
> *Heena- You can say every 3rd or 4th day. I hope you are not going to disclose this over here in India.*
> *Mathieu- No. My research is anonymous. But why do you want to keep it a secret?*
> *Heena- Because the beef is actually banned over here. The government which is.... You can buy it at the butchers but there are a lot of restrictions now."*
> (Heena, interview 8, Lucknow)

It is worth questioning what the use of declarations of practices may be, since there may be a discrepancy between declared practices and observed practices – collected through observations. As Jerolmack and Khan (2014) argue, "what people say is often a poor predictor of what people do." This also applies to consumption surveys which are solely based on declarations. When admitting consuming meat and in particular buffalo (or even cattle) meat, some of my respondents acknowledged that they would not necessarily provide the same answer to a government surveyor:

> *"Anil- If some questions, imagine now we are just doing it for the research purpose and it is not related to the government, no political relation. If some government organization comes to you then will you tell them?*
> *Interviewee- Yes, I will tell, but for the governmental organization, you have to hide it these days!*
> *Anil- You have to hide it!*
> *Interviewee- There is a fear because they won't tell the real fact, all the government that is there, they run their own policy and they want to know the people who are sitting, according to them they prepare the strategy. They prepare the strategy that how to polarize, how to break them, how to join them. So, the organization that is coming from the government, there is a misuse of the data."*
> (Pawan, interview 33)

One may therefore doubt the statistical surveys that are meant to give a factual representation of meat consumption practices. Yet, I follow Lamont and Swidler (2014) when they argue that discourses are an invaluable source in the understanding of cognitive representations of the social world, which then shape social action. Analyzing discourses is indeed a way to understand actors' use of their critical sense (Boltanski, 2009). Respondents are potentially not telling the truth, since they tend to declare what is socially desirable. It may produce inconsistent accounts of their actions (Vaisey, 2009), but it reflects social norms. Just like interviews, large-scale surveys actually inform us on the social representations and social acceptance of meat and beef consumption, depending on the social identities and the social context in which respondents are embedded. Declaring consuming or not consuming meat hence reveals the degree of proximity or distance to the social norms of vegetarianism.

## *B - The varying boundaries of vegetarianism*

Respondents come to terms with reality in declaring or not what they do. But they also use other cognitive arrangements to consume meat items while claiming to be "veg," in particular by reshaping the boundaries of the "veg" category. This reflects the evolution of declared meat consumption since the 1980s in India.

### 1) The evolution of diets since the 1980s

Looking at the evolution of household diets since the 1980s shows both continuity and changes (Figure 3.1). This typology of diets is based on the consumption of goods from animal origin that are consumed within the household (and hence misses out outside-the-home consumption, see the next section).[37]

Declared lacto vegetarians (households consuming only milk products as animal products) are the most numerous over the studied period that goes from 1983 to 2012 and they form about a third of the population. On the other hand, ovo-lacto vegetarians (households eating both milk and egg products) remain low in proportions (between 1.7 per cent and 3.1 per cent). On the contrary, the proportion of the population that does not consume animal product diet clearly diminishes over the period (from 12.3 per cent to 3.6 per cent), which suggests a massification of the consumption of animal products, to be put into perspective given the stability of the lacto vegetarian diet. It is important to see that the non-animal product diet may refer more to the forced deprivation of animal proteins due to a lack of economic resources rather than to an informed and conscious food lifestyle – the vegan movement, which is barely existing in India.[38]

Whereas the share of chicken-meat diets (diets which include only chicken as meat) increases over the period (from 2.7 per cent to 26.8 per cent), the share of mutton-meat diets (diets which include only mutton as meat) decreases. Finally, the share of omnivores with and without beef (households which might consume all animal products) is remarkably stable over

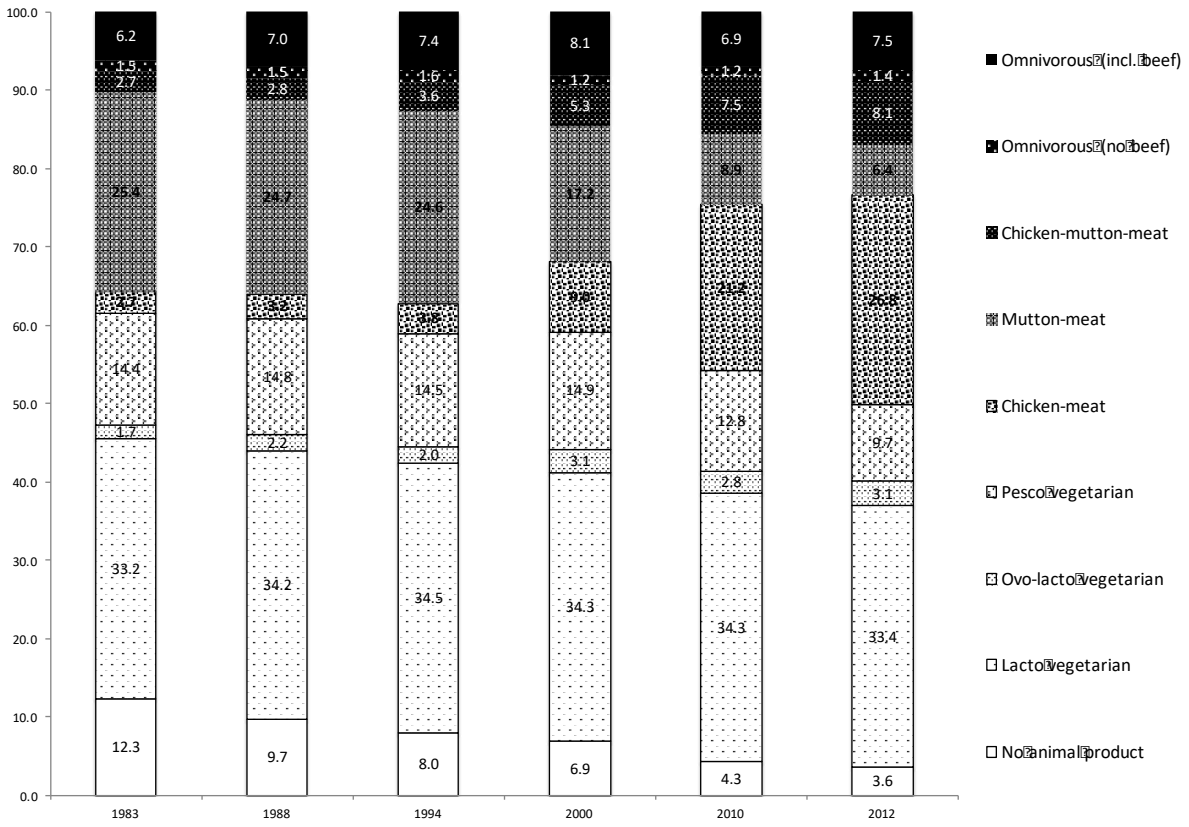
[37] Based on the monthly household budget records, I have constituted nine meat diets differentiated by the consumption of foods of animal origin, that is, the consumption of milk, eggs, fish, chicken, mutton (in the NSSO methodology, "mutton" refers both to the meat of goat and sheep), pork and beef (cattle or buffalo meat). This section draws from the article "What's India's beef with meat? Hindu orthopraxis and Food Transition in India since the 1980s" (Ferry, 2020).

[38] This is partly explained by the fact that vegan diets with proper caloric intake and proteic balance remains expensive, see 'Going vegan is a healthy option, but it won't work for much of middle-class India', *Scroll.in*, December 30, 2018, retrieved from https://scroll.in/article/901720/going-vegan-is-a-healthy-option-but-most-indians-cant-afford-to-give-up-chicken-for-almond-cheese.

time, but the share of chicken-and-mutton-meat diets (diets that include both chicken and mutton but no pork or beef) increases over time (from 2.7 per cent to 8.1 per cent).

This temporal overview demonstrates the strong stability of diets since the 1980s, notwithstanding the shift from mutton diets to chicken diets. This fact is linked to the industrialization of chicken from the 1990s as well as to the symbolic inversion of status between mutton and chicken (Bruckert, 2018). The valorization of chicken partly stems from the fact that it is considered a white meat and that its taste is less strong than mutton, while mutton may on the contrary visually resemble beef when cooked in a gravy dish (a very common mode of meat consumption).

*Figure 3.1 - Distribution of food diets by year in India (all households)*




*Note: This figure is derived from the data of the 'Consumer Expenditure Survey' of the National Sample Survey Office for six rounds (each round includes about 100,000 households). The typology of diets is based on the categories developed by Estelle Fourat (2015), that I completed since she focuses only on Hindus and Jains. Here, I include all households in the samples. This figure was first published in Ferry (2020).*

*Sample: All households from the Indian representative samples are included in this analysis.*

## 2) Coming to terms with non-veg consumption in modernization

This broad description of diet evolutions since the 1980s complicates the distinction between the "veg" and the "non-veg" categories. All my respondents consuming milk and its by-products identified as "veg" and so is the case for ovo-lacto vegetarians, even though the

status of eggs is more ambivalent as Anand (interview 39) told me: "I eat eggs, and you can understand egg like the way you want!" Some of the brands selling battery eggs (which represents most of the sales) precise that they are "unfertilized" to reassure consumers despite the evidence that battery eggs are anyway unfertilized (and that a fertilized egg should be kept under specific conditions to develop into an embryo). This participates in branding eggs as vegetarian rather than non-vegetarian. Indeed, there is just a "hairline difference" between vegetarians eating eggs and those who identify as "pure vegetarian" (a very common assertion) as Manoj explained:

> *"Now these days there's a culture of eating eggs, people don't think that eggs belong to a non-vegetarian group of food products. So those who are consuming, there are certain families who are consuming only eggs, so that's what we call them vegetarian and when you don't even consume eggs, then you become pure vegetarian basically. Just a hairline difference between the two groups."*
> (Manoj, interview 2)

But even the status of chicken is ambiguous regarding the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism. While interviewing Mohammed (interview 73) on his meat practices, he told me that he used to consume more meat in the past but that now he eats "vegetarian, chicken. Meat is less now." This distinction between meat and chicken is also taken into account in questionnaires of consumption surveys. For instance, the National Family Health Survey asks the following question to men and women between 15 and 49 years old: "How often do you yourself eat the following food items: chicken or meat?" In surveying household consumption, the Indian Human Development Survey asks: "Please tell me how much of these food items have been consumed in your household in past 30 days: Meat, Chicken and Fish?" The framing of these questions suggests that while individuals or households consume chicken meat, they may not acknowledge it if it is included among the meat category, meat being a socially deprecated food item.

The ambivalence of chicken and eggs is also visible in the intervention of Sanjay Raut, an elected member from the Shiv Sena (a nationalist right-wing political party from Maharashtra) in the upper house (Rajya Sabha) of India's Parliament in July 2019. He asked the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH: this ministry supports the development of traditional medicines) to clarify whether chicken and eggs should be classified as "vegetarian." He narrated: "Once I had gone to a small hamlet in

Nandurbar region [Maharashtra]. The adivasi people [people considered as indigenous to regions within India and who are administratively classified as Scheduled Tribes] came and served us food. When I ask them what was it, they said it was an ayurvedic chicken. They also said that they take care of it in such a way that after (eating) you will get rid of all illness."[39] Though Sanjay Raut's story was ridiculed on social media, his story reveals the manipulation of existing categories (the "veg" and "non-veg", along with the "ayurvedic", a category referring to a form of Indian-based alternative medicine) to attempt to fit changing food practices with prevalent symbolic boundaries.

If the category of what is considered "veg" is subject to cognitive negotiations, it is also the case of the "non-veg". The distinctive feature between the "veg" and the "non-veg" may not necessarily be related to the inclusion or exclusion of animal flesh in diets. A "non-veg" item simply designates a socially discredited item. This is the case of tobacco and alcohol, as when Ujagar relates his abstinence from these items to the fact that he is "pure vegetarian":

> *"Anil- And do you drink alcohol?*
> *Ujagar- No, no, I never drank it!*
> *Anil- Never drank it?*
> *Ujagar- No!*
> *Anil- Does anyone in your house drink?*
> *Ujagar- No!*
> *Anil- Cigarette?*
> *Ujagar- Not even cigarettes! No one in my house smokes!*
> *Anil- Beedi or tobacco?*
> *Ujagar- No one! Pure vegetarian!"*
> (Ujagar, interview 31)

Upper-caste Hindus sometimes associate their "pure vegetarianism" with an abstinence from garlic and onion, as Manoj and his 18-year-old son from a Brahmin family explained to me:

> *"Manoj- My father, my grandfather, they never used to eat meat.*

[39] Sanjay Raut's intervention can be watched here (in Hindi): "Classify chicken, eggs as 'vegetarian', demands Sanjay Raut. TV9GujaratiNews," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5e3ZOaKk5c (last access on August 21, 2020). An article (in English) summarizes it, see "Have you heard of 'ayurvedic chicken and eggs'? Let Sanjay Raut explain," https://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com/mumbai/other/have-you-heard-of-ayurvedic-chicken-and-eggs-let-sanjay-raut-explain/articleshow/70241434.cms (last access on August 21, 2020).

*Manoj's son- Nobody did that, so that's what we are following basically. And if we go mythological or religious wise, it's yes, it's basically the reason that we don't want to injure, and also that we have a thing in the brain that mythologically that when we consume meat or products like onion and garlic, they make us violent.*
*Mathieu- Violent?*
*Manoj's son- Yes, that like, it promotes some kind of vigorous energy in us that does not bring us peace, that's what we feel and that's why we don't consume these foods and Brahmins basically they are considered to be calm and like very base, tranquil in nature, that's why especially with Brahmins they avoid, and other like Kshatriya and the Kayastha families, they are basically the warriors, so they indulge in the habit of consuming them to give them more energy to fight their enemies, so that was the basic reason that Brahmins chose to be vegetarian.*
*Mathieu- I see, plus all these different reasons, there is also what I have heard about some, so when you say pure vegetarian, there are these terms like pure, so some food is pure, some foods are impure?*
*Manoj's son- Basically we think that onions and garlic, they also come in the category of providing some vigilance and like hardcore energy to you."*
(Manoj, interview 2)

Interestingly, their discourse articulates two different justifications for avoiding meat, garlic and onions. In the first case, it resonates with the Hindu "ahimsa" belief of non-violence, according to which underground vegetables should also be avoided (this is particularly the case in Jain vegetarianism to avoid killing insects while extracting them from the ground). But the second reason relates more to the ayurvedic principles attributing different "temperatures" to food items, affecting the bodily "humor" and here the "violence" of eaters.[40]

More broadly, "non-veg" designates socially depreciated, proscribed and non-normative objects and practices as is reminded in the colloquial phrases of a "non-veg joke," a "non-veg movie" which designate a dirty joke or a pornographic film (Novetzke, 2017).

[40] Ayurvedic principles have been studied in detail in the classical texts of Indian medicine by the philologist Zimmermann in *The Jungle and the aroma of meats* (1999 [1982]).

The boundaries of the "non-veg" hence extend beyond food to qualify socially unacceptable yet existing objects and practices. It demonstrates that these categories are commonly used to cognitively apprehend the social realm.

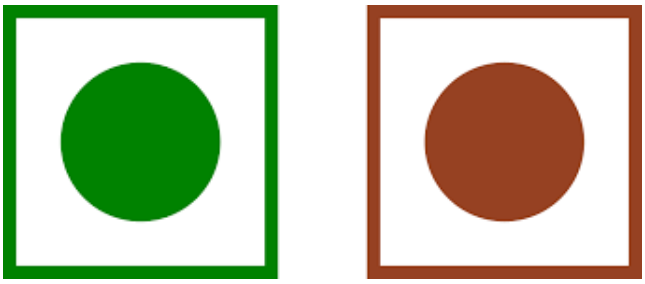
### 3) The ubiquity of the "veg" and "nonveg" categories

The fluidity of the "veg" and "non-veg" categories needs to be put into perspective since the boundary remains clear and is reinforced by the bureaucratic categorization along with the positive social image that Indians mobilize around vegetarianism. Indeed, in Chapter 1, I outline the role of religious institutions in enforcing the social norm of vegetarianism. Here, I suggest that State institutions also act as "moral entrepreneurs" (Becker, 1963) of diets.

Legal identifications distinguish the lacto-vegetarian packaged food items from the non-lacto-vegetarian ones (Figure 3.2). These marks have been created by the State apparatus in the *Foods Safety and Standards Act* of 2006 (made mandatory in 2011), under the control of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) defines "non-vegetarian food" as: "an article of food which contains whole or part of any animal including birds, fresh water or marine animals or eggs or products of any animal origin, but excluding milk or milk products, as an ingredient."[41] Wholesale is not affected by this regulation. Though processed food remains low in the total food budget (about 8 percent and around 11.5 percent for urban households in the richest decile),[42] the rise of packaged food is hence classified within the "veg" and "non-veg" categories. It is then rather surprising that Baviskar (2018a) writes: "In an environment where food prescriptions and prohibitions are internalized as well as imposed widely and often violently, industrial foods are distinctive in that they appear neutral, floating above older classificatory schemes, tethered only to modernity." The neutrality of processed foods (and more particularly in the case of Baviskar's study of Maggi noodles, which are available as vegetarian or non-vegetarian products) should be put into perspective since they do not transcend the "veg" and "non-veg" categories, even though they may also reflect a form of aspirational modernity. In the process of the rise of consumer culture which favors more and more processed items, the standardization of the "veg" and "non-veg" categories regulates the food industry and formats the food market (Fischer, 2020), strengthening the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism.

[41] See the website of the Authority: https://www.fssai.gov.in/ (last access on August 21, 2020).
[42] This budget share includes purchased cooked meals. These figures are excerpted from pages 31-32 (Figure 3.6) in *NSS Report No. 555: Level and Pattern of Consumer Expenditure, 2011-2012*. This report analyzes the "Household Consumer Survey" (2011-2012) of the National Sample Survey Office.

*Figure 3.2 - Vegetarian and non-vegetarian labels*



*Note: The green (left) and the brown (right) marks, composed of a filled circle inside a square of the same outline, distinguish between lacto-vegetarian and non-lacto-vegetarian packaged items. Critics underline that in case of color blindness it is not possible to distinguish the two marks since they have the same shape.*

This official categorization echoes a Tweet by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 2018 (Figure 3.3) which sparked controversy on social media and was deleted thereafter. Advertising "good nutrition," the Ministry depicted an overweight and a slim woman and associated them with different food items.[43] The obese body was associated with non-vegetarian and processed foods (pastry, burgers, hotdogs, soda, beer, cold meats and eggs), while the slim body was pictured with vegetables and fruits. Though this message had no effect on the public nutrition programs, it reflects an emphasis on vegetarianism in nutrition policies. This concerns for instance the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), a school meal program that supplies free lunches to children in primary schools. Despite the National Institute of Nutrition making the provision of eggs compulsory in the program, many States, particularly in North-western India and including Uttar Pradesh, have not implemented it. Most of these States are governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies, and the decision was officially taken to not hurt the "sentiments" of vegetarians. Meanwhile, health experts estimate that the inclusion of eggs would be responsible for the poor nutrition results in these regions.[44]

[43] See for instance the article "Health ministry eats its words, deletes tweet after social media outrage over use of 'fat shaming' image", https://www.firstpost.com/india/health-ministry-eats-its-words-deletes-tweet-after-social-media-outrage-over-use-of-fat-shaming-image-4442787.html#:~:text=New%20Delhi%3A%20In%20an%20embarrassment,lean%20with%20fruits%20and%20vegetables. (last access on August 21, 2020).

[44] See "Despite Nutrition Benefits, Most BJP States Keep Eggs out of Mid-Day Meals," https://thewire.in/health/bjp-states-health-children-eggs-mid-day-meal-nutrition (last access on August 21, 2020) and the enquiry from the data journalism website *IndiaSpend*: "BJP states most resistant to eggs in mid-day meals, cite vegetarian sentiments", July 31, 2018 (https://www.indiaspend.com/bjp-states-most-resistant-to-eggs-in-mid-day-meals-cite-vegetarian-sentiments-72283/, last access on September 8, 2020).

*Figure 3.3 - Screenshot from a Twitter post by the Indian Ministry of Health and Welfare*


*Note : This twitter post by the Ministry of Health and Welfare was deleted after a controversy on social media.*

The bureaucratic categorization works in parallel with the positive social image of vegetarianism. This positive valuation also contributes to reinforce the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism. Two examples illustrate this point.

First, the movie industry tends to positively value vegetarianism. In Bollywood movies, the figure of the evil is often depicted as a meat eater and an alcoholic. While some contemporary directors – for instance Anurag Kashyap with his movie *Mukkabaaz* (2018) – denounce the stigmatization of meat eaters and the caste and religious violence that ensues in their films, the largest film productions tend to build on Hindu nationalism, notably by promoting vegetarianism.[45]

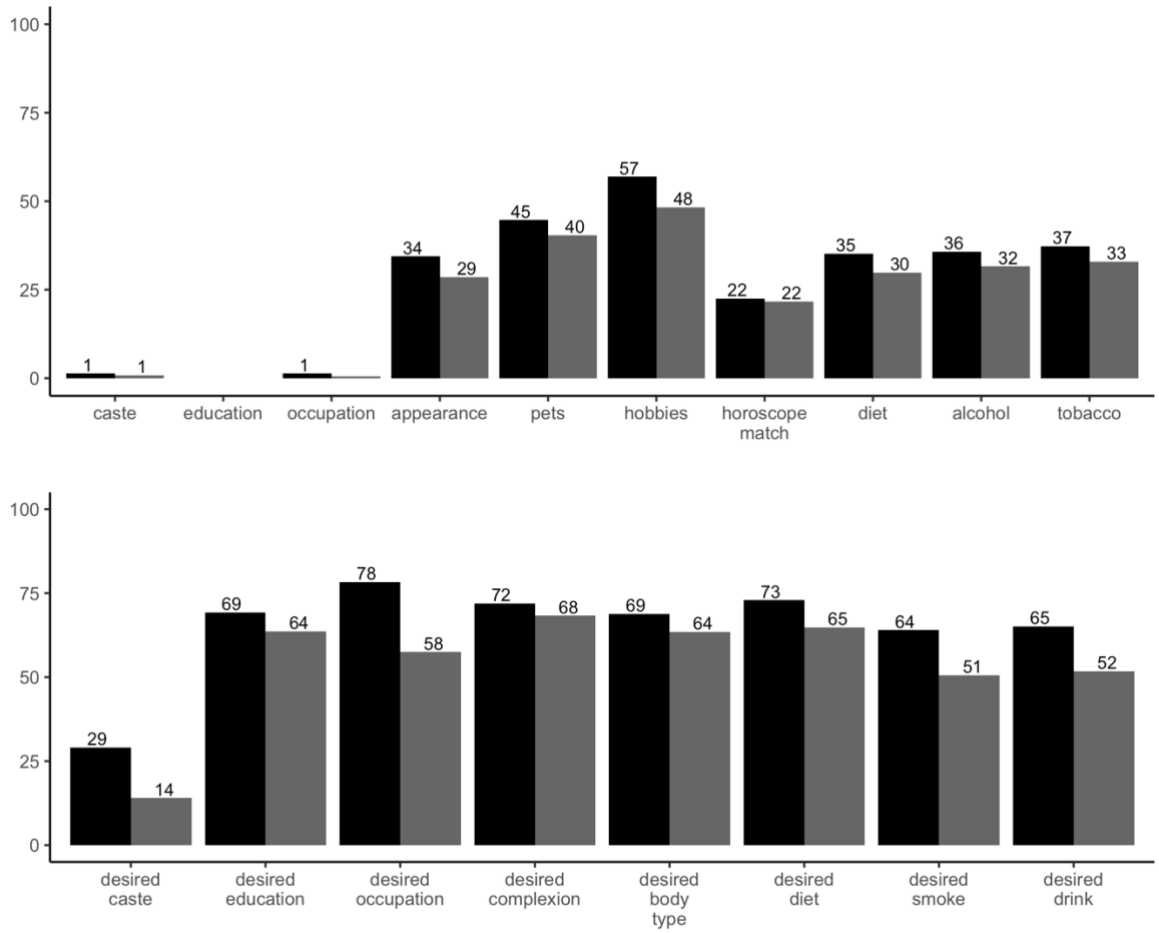
Second, matchmaking newspaper sections or online websites also reinforce the "veg" and "non-veg" categories by setting them as self-presentation categories. Defining oneself as vegetarian (or non-vegetarian) is an ubiquitous element in matrimonial advertisements, despite the fact that the population who uses these services is mostly urban, relatively well-off and highly educated (Banerjee et al., 2009). I illustrate the salience of these categories through a

[45] The writer Sohini Chattopadhyay notably mentions the recent biopics *Manikarnika* and *Padmaavat* ("Bollywood and the politics of meat," *The New York Times*, December 3, 2019: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/03/opinion/bollywood-politics-india-modi.html, last access on May 14, 2021).

simple test analyzing a sample of online-posted matrimonial profiles. I consider that if a pre-set item has been filled in the advertisement, it is an information that matters in self-presentation strategies. It is an indicator of the salience of these information in the bride and spouse market: the more an information has been filled in matrimonial profiles the more salient it is. The information contained in the advertisements and the percentage of missing information for each variable is plotted in Figure 3.4.[46] Diet (vegetarian, eggetarian or non-vegetarian) is a relatively well-informed variable in the profiles: only 35 percent of men and 30 percent of women have not filled the category about their diet. It is clearly better informed than hobbies, interests, dressing or sports, hinting that being vegetarian or not is an important information in matchmaking, in the same way as alcohol or tobacco consumption (sociodemographic indicators and horoscope details are better informed, suggesting that they are more key in self-presentation strategies). When it comes to the criteria that are desired from the partner, caste is clearly the most important one. The desired diet from the partner is then as important as other characteristics, such as education or appearance. On the whole, mentioning one's diet and the partner's expected diet indicates the obviousness of being "veg" or "non-veg" in the Indian social world.

[46] These services contribute to reproduce caste homogamy. The presence of an item regarding vegetarianism suggests that diets play a role in caste homogamy reproduction by assigning different gender roles for men and women in the presentation of their profiles. The figure is based on data collected through methods of web data extraction. I collected the 151,608 online matrimonial profiles of men (102,997) and women (48,611) in Uttar Pradesh from one of the most used websites for this purpose.

*Figure 3.4 - Proportion of missing information in matrimonial advertisements in Uttar Pradesh*




*Note: Matrimonial profiles have been extracted in February 2020. The web data extraction was exhaustive considering all the active (at that time) profiles of the surveyed website for users registered in Uttar Pradesh (I restricted the extraction to these profiles given the purpose of the research and because extracting profiles over all India was too time-consuming, time frame of two days for the complete extraction). I do not disclose the name of the website for confidentiality reasons (and possibly legal ones), but it is one of the most used websites for such services. In the figure, men are plotted on the left (black) and women on the right (grey). A missing information is an information for which the user was prompted to fill an answer but did not. It appears as empty in the profile.*

*Sample: N=151,608 online matrimonial advertisements, including 102,997 male profiles and 48,611 female profiles.*

Though the boundaries of the "veg" and "non-veg" are partly fluid because people try to come to terms with the social norm of vegetarianism according to their own practices and because they associate non-vegetarianism with other socially devalued practices, these categories are rigidified by institutional identifications. What the categories entail in terms of food items is hence largely ubiquitous.

With these precautions on the interpretation of the statistical categories of vegetarianism in mind, how do variations in the numbers of vegetarians differ according to the unit of analysis in large-scale surveys?

## *C - When home consumption differs from outside-the-home consumption*

The difficulty in counting vegetarianism does not only stem from the varying boundaries of the vegetarian category. It also derives from the practice of meat, fish and egg consumption, which, contrary to other food practices, are more individual and may not necessarily be consumed within the household.

### 1) An individual or a family practice?

The relative fluidity of the "veg" and "non-veg" categories are further complexified by the level of analysis one wants to consider when counting the number of vegetarians in India. Is the level of analysis the individual, or the household? In other words, are we implicitly assuming that eating practices are individual or collective? Granting that a practice is individual rather than collective (here, the "collective" being the household) does not imply that these practices are individualistic, disembedded from a social realm. Rather, it may well signify that individual-level differences (such as gender and age) differently affect individuals in the social stratification. It may also mean that food practices are affected by both the individual and the household position (where both levels may interact together).

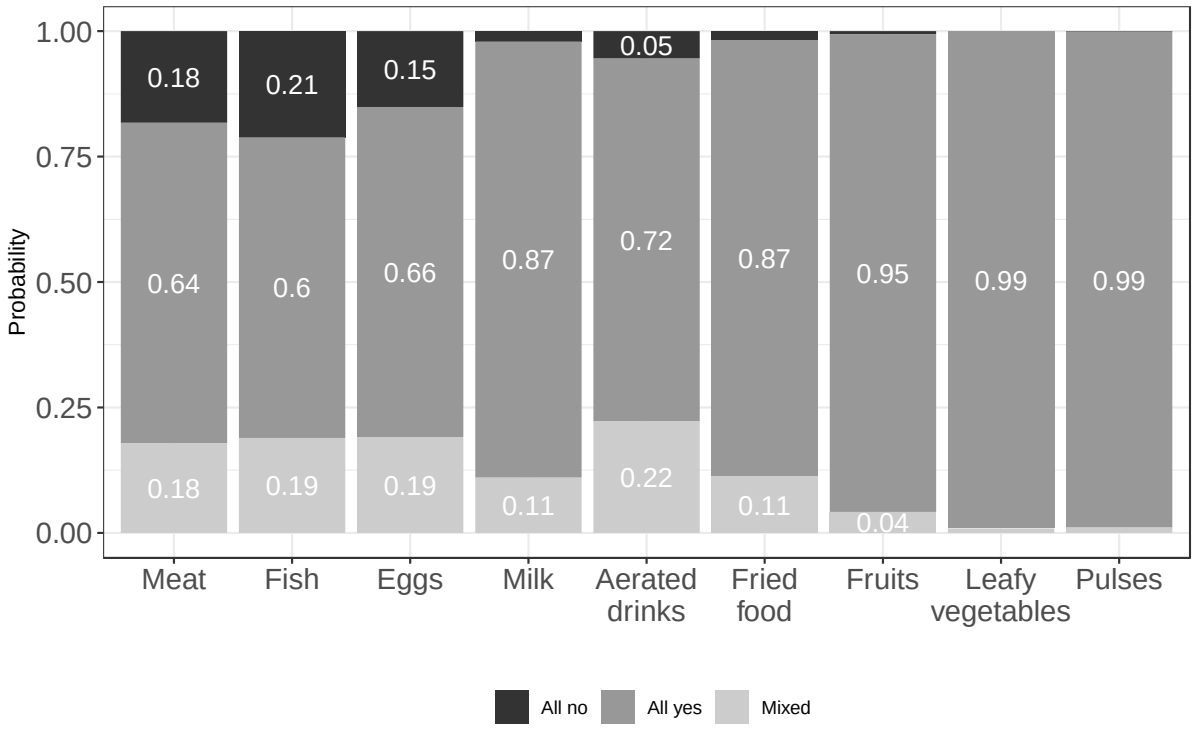
I here first check to which extent vegetarianism is a practice located rather in an individual level than in a household level. I take advantage of one crucial feature of the National Family Health Surveys: in 2005-2006 and 2015-2016, all men (between 15 and 54 year old) and women (between 15 and 49 years old) were eligible for the individual questionnaire. Importantly, these individual questionnaires were answered by the respondents themselves (whereas in other surveys by the NSSO or the IHDS, there is no guarantee about the person answering being the individual concerned and it is more likely that answers were given by the household respondent, usually the household head). The respondents were also if possible surveyed alone as the interviewer's manual recommends to the surveyors: "The presence of a third person during an interview can prevent you from getting frank, honest answers from a respondent. It is, therefore, very important that the individual interview be conducted privately and that all questions be answered by the respondent […] In all cases where other individuals

are present, try to separate yourself and the respondent from the others as much as possible."[47] In the course of my own interviews I observed how difficult it can sometimes be to ensure privacy, particularly given the material constraints of a small abode (see Chapter 5). The surveyors of the NFHS usually solved this issue by having different surveyors interviewing simultaneously several members of the same household.

Hence, these data may be used to check whether the variability in food practices stems from individual (intra-household) or household (inter-household) variability. In Figure 3.5, I computed the within-household consumption homogeneity of the nine food items surveyed in the 2015-2016 round. A food practice is considered homogeneous in a household if all surveyed members declared not consuming or consuming it (this may be with varying frequency). Inversely, a food practice is heterogenous in the household if some members declared consuming and others declared not consuming it. Pulses, leafy vegetables (spinach, fenugreek or bathua are the most common) and fruits are strongly homogenous food items: in more than 95 percent of households, all members consume these common food items. Fried food (such as pakoras, a common snack item) is also a fairly homogenous food item (women consume it slightly less than men). Aerated drinks (soda) are less homogenous: in 22 percent of the households some members declared consuming them while others did not (the consumption of this item particularly decreases with age). Milk is fairly homogenous but in 11 percent of the households the consumption is mixed between individuals (the sex of the individual seems to explain this variation: more men declare consuming it). Finally, meat, fish and eggs are the food items with the highest household consumption heterogeneity (outside sodas): 18 or 19 percent of households present varying individual food practices for these items. Hence, intra-household food practices are fairly homogenous but not when it comes to meat and egg consumption: within the same households, some members consume these items while others do not.

[47] *Interviewer's Manual, National Family Health Survey 2015-16*, p. 9, December 2014, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai (http://rchiips.org/NFHS/NFHS4/manual/NFHS-4%20Interviewer%20Manual.pdf, last access on September 2, 2020).

*Figure 3.5 - Within-household consumption homogeneity in India in 2015*




*Note: The figures include all the surveyed food items from the survey. A household coded "All yes" means that all surveyed members declared consuming the referring food item within the household (I do not distinguish members according to their frequency of consumption). Correspondingly, "All no" means that no surveyed household member consumes the food item. "Mixed" signifies that some members declare consuming the food item and some do not. For instance, in 18 percent of households no surveyed member consumes meat, in 64 percent of households all members consume meat, and in 18 percent of households some members consume meat while others do not.*

*Sample: Indian households from the State-representative sample (N=93 652) of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016). In this sample, both men between 15 and 54 years old and women between 15 and 49 years old residing in the households have been surveyed.*

These individual variations may derive from individual factors: I here point to two key individual sociodemographic characteristics, sex and age. In Table 3.2, the estimates between men and women show stark variations in diets over the 1998-2015 period. Vegetarianism is defined as never consuming meat, fish nor eggs (i.e., it corresponds to lacto-vegetarianism), while ovo-vegetarianism is defined as never consuming meat and fish but consuming eggs. While the proportion of female vegetarianism is fairly stable, 28 percent in 1998 and 27 in 2015, the proportion of male vegetarianism is much lower, between 20 percent in 2005 and 18 percent in 2015. Ovo-vegetarianism remains a rare diet for both men and women, though it is slightly increasing for women (up to the male level). Sex differences in vegetarianism hence rather result from meat intake rather than egg intake (Chapter 6 will delve into the gender distinctions and how they relate to social stratification positions).

*Table 3.2 - Evolution of vegetarianism and ovo-vegetarianism by sex in India from 1998 to 2015*

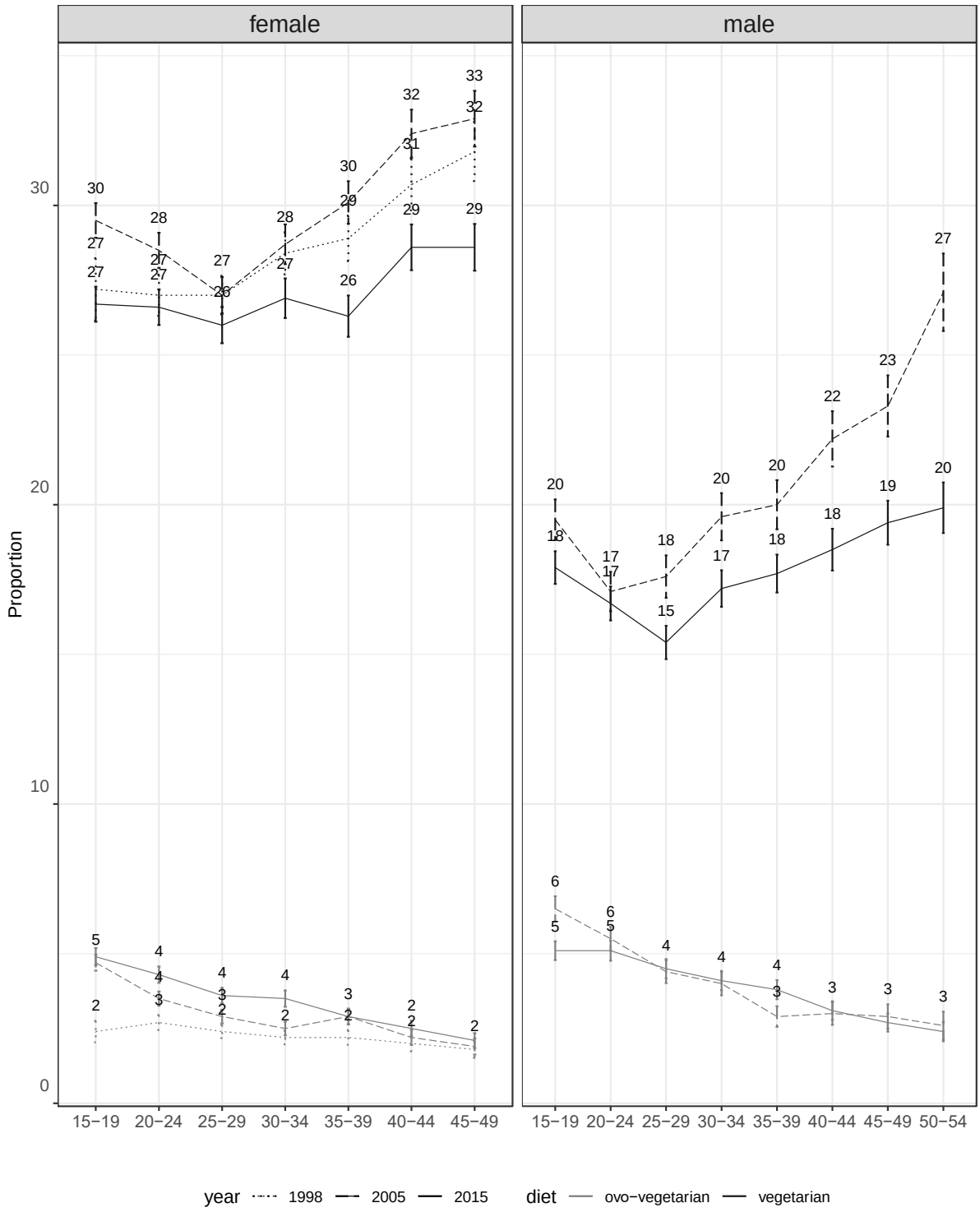
| | 1998-1999 | | 2005-2006 | | 2015-2016 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Veg* | *Ovo-veg* | *Veg* | *Ovo-veg* | *Veg* | *Ovo-veg* |
| Women | 28.4 | 2.3 | 29.4 | 3.2 | 27 | 3.6 |
| Men | NA | NA | 20 | 4.3 | 17.6 | 4 |

*Note: The three rounds of the National Family Health Survey from 1998-1999 to 2015-2016 are included in this analysis. A vegetarian individual is defined as someone who declares never consuming meat, fish nor eggs. An ovo-vegetarian individual is defined as someone who declares never consuming meat nor fish but consumes eggs. In 1998-1999, the questions are not separate (individuals are asked how frequently they consume "chicken/meat/fish," and in another question the same about eggs): this slight difference in the survey framing may have decreased the number of respondents responding "never" which would explain the small increase in vegetarianism between 1998 and 2005. In the 1998 round, there was no male-specific survey.*

*Sample: Indian individuals from the State-representative samples in the NFHS 2 (1998-1999), NFHS 3 (2005-2006) and NFHS 4 (2015-2016: I do not take into account the female district representative sample for this figure). Males between 15 and 54 years old and females between 15 and 49 years old residing in the selected households have been surveyed. N=523,337, where N1998=90,279 (24 missing values for food items), N2005=198,585 (169 missing values for food items) and N2015=234,473.*

Age is another individual factor that explains individual variations. For both women and men, the proportion of vegetarians forms a "U-shape" depending on age (Figure 3.6): it is more prevalent among younger and older respondents. It is lowest between 25 and 29 years old. On the contrary, ovo-vegetarianism is at its maximum at the youngest age (between 15 and 19 years) and linearly decreases with age. But these age effects seem to flatten out over time, particularly for women. In 2005-2006, the proportion of vegetarian women aged 25 to 29 is 27 percent and it increases up to 33 percent for women aged 45 to 49 (a difference of 6 percentage points), but in 2015-2016, the difference is only of 3 percentage points. The same is observable for men, where the difference in 2005-2006 was of 10 percentage points before it flattens out to a difference of 5 percentage points (2015-2016). Though age is an important predictor of vegetarianism it becomes less important over the period. The importance of life cycle effects should hence not be overestimated, though it came up several times in the course of my interviews, particularly when older respondents justified their vegetarianism by health reasons.

*Figure 3.6 - Diets by sex and age in India from 1998 to 2015*



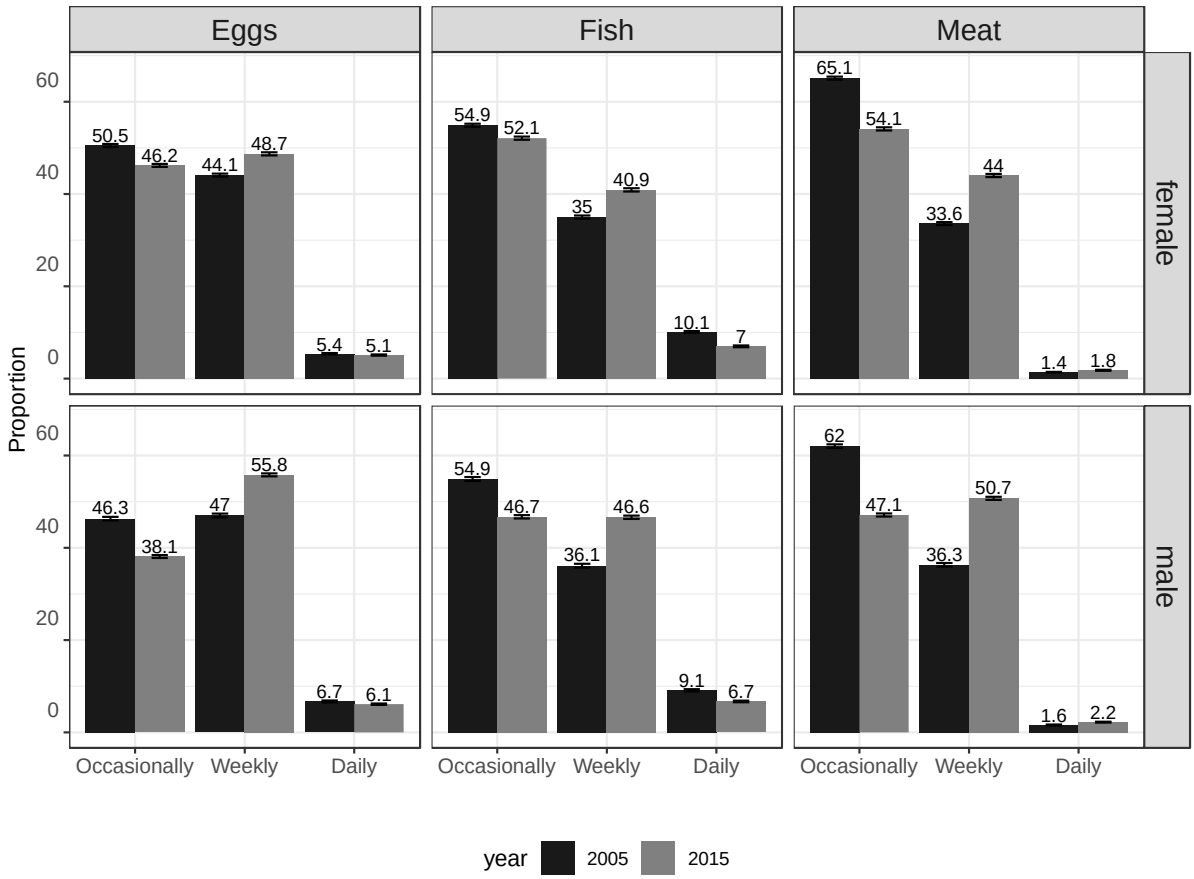

*Note: The three rounds of the National Family Health Survey from 1998-1999 to 2015-2016 are used for the purpose of this analysis and the same method as for Table 1 is applied. 95 percent confidence intervals are plotted. Sample: see note of Table 1.*

Overall, these figures illustrate individual variations in vegetarianism because of the individual factors related to meat, fish and egg consumption.

### 2) What happens out there stays out there

Looking at individuals rather than households shows lower estimations of vegetarianism: 37 percent of households in 2012 (Figure 3.1: adding lacto-vegetarianism and the no-animal-product diet) but only 27 percent of women and 18 percent of men in 2015 (Table 3.2). Contrary to the NFHS estimates which are based on individual food item frequency, the "Consumer Expenditure Survey" (NSSO) estimates are based on an assessment of consumption expenditures in the past 30 days at the household level (note that the survey also includes the consumption of self-produced items so that the discrepancy does not stem from there). It is possible that the level of vegetarianism is inflated in the NSSO because of the occasional non-vegetarian consumption (which did not happen in the last 30 days before the interview). Indeed, among individuals who declared consuming meat, fish or eggs, a large part of respondents consumes it rather "occasionally" (in Figure 3.7, for the year 2015, 46 percent of women and 38 percent of men for eggs, 52 percent of women and 47 percent of men for fish and 54 percent of women and 47 percent of men for meat). Despite the vagueness of this survey category, it certainly corresponds to a less frequent consumption than "weekly" and denotes that non-vegetarian consumption is not a frequent practice, although it tends to become more frequent overtime (particularly for meat). As it will be studied in Chapter 8, it mostly denotes the non-centrality of non-vegetarian products in diets rather than a lack of economic means.

*Figure 3.7 - Frequency of meat, fish and egg consumption by sex in India in 2005 and 2015*




*Note: The two rounds of the National Family Health Survey of 2005-2006 and 2015-2016 are taken into account in this analysis. For each food item (eggs, fish and meat), I look at the frequency of consumption among those who declare consuming the given item (i.e., I do not take into account those who responded "never").*

*Sample: see note of Table 1.*

Yet the low frequency of non-vegetarian food item consumption may not be the sole blind spot of the "Consumer Expenditure Surveys" of the NSSO. Indeed, it is likely that a part of the non-vegetarian consumption is simply not captured in the survey as it is consumed outside the home. In the IHDS, the surveyors asked the household head: "Does anyone in your household eat non-vegetarian food?", in case respondents responded positively, a question about the location of eating followed, in which respondents had to choose between "At home", "Outside" or "Both." Among all households, 76.5 percent declared that at least one member within the household eats non-vegetarian food. This is a higher value than when looking at non-vegetarianism in this survey (70.1 percent) following the declared monthly consumption of meat, fish and eggs (where a household is considered vegetarian if it did not declare any consumption of these items, and where it is considered non-vegetarian otherwise). In fact, the gap partly stems from outside non-vegetarian consumption: among households that declared

that at least one member eats non-vegetarian food, 3.4 percent declared that it happens only outside the home. It is to be noted that food prepared in the home is usually more valued as it is considered healthier. Concerns about "hygiene" and "cleanliness" may also masquerade fears of caste pollution from food prepared by strangers, so that overall outside-the-home food is less valued. Restaurants counter this fear by signaling an upper-caste status in the names of the place and by not employing lower-caste cooks (Iversen and Raghavendra, 2016) but this is not the case for non-vegetarian restaurants. In Lucknow, many of them are located in the Old City and held by Muslims. Even though the attention for symbolic purity may have faded when it comes to eating out – concerns about bacterial contamination being more important than the social one according to Baviskar (2018) –, households who consider non-vegetarian products as impure would rather not allow individuals to eat them within the household.

Overall, the figure of 3.4 percent remains a low proportion. Quite likely, this proportion is in fact largely underestimated. Given that non-vegetarian consumption is not valued, individual members who eat non-vegetarian food outside their home do not tell other household members that they do so, so that the household respondent of the IHDS does not know about it when asked. The secrecy of individual consumption certainly stems from the rules of the households in which non-vegetarian consumption is banned. This individual and outside consumption resonates with several interviews I conducted:

> *"Mathieu- Chicken! Do the kids eat?*
> *Interviewee- They must be eating somewhere secretly; it is not cooked in the house."*
> (Anokhlal, interview 60)

In fact, this secret food practice also echoes outside-the-home alcohol consumption. But while alcohol intake can hardly go unnoticed if it is consumed in large quantity, it is not the case of meat which consumption may remain unknown to other family members:

> *"Mathieu- Right. So in your household, does anyone drink alcohol?*
> *Interviewee- Yes, one of my uncles, he drinks!*
> *Mathieu- So you live in a joint family?*
> *Interviewee- Yes, yes, yes.*
> *Mathieu- How many people are there, total?*
> *Interviewee- There are 17 people.*
> *Mathieu- 17?*

> *Interviewee- Yes! My grandfather has two brothers, one is our family and one is theirs and we live in a combined house.*
> *Mathieu- Okay, but does he consume at home?*
> *Interviewee- No, he never consumes at home, he consumes outside. And when he comes home we know it he had been drunk.*
> *Mathieu- And among the 17 household members, does anyone consume meat from time to time even outside or?*
> *Interviewee- I don't think so if someone had eaten outside, how would I know?*
> (Madhav, interview 71)

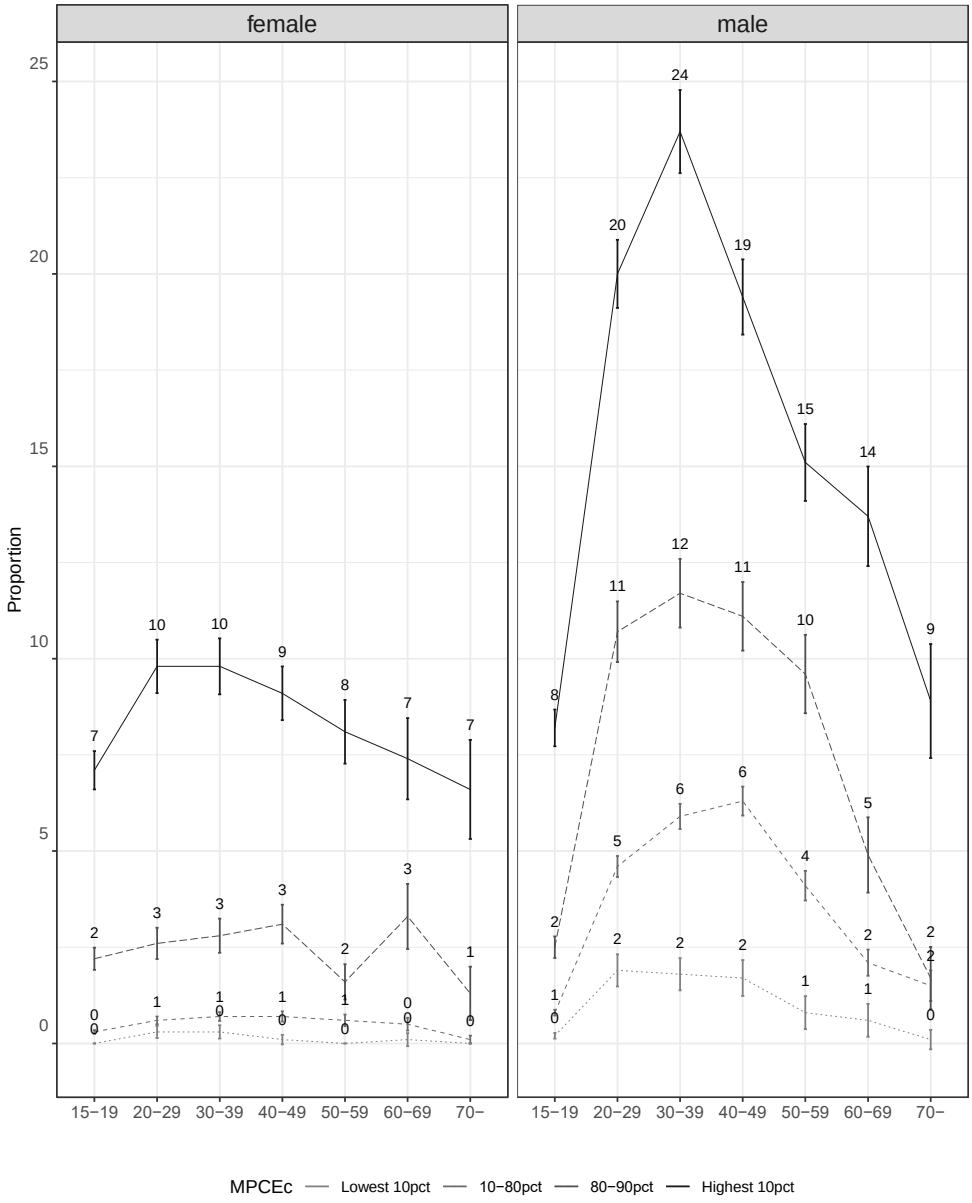
The secrecy of outside food consumption is in line with Khara et al.'s (2020) work where they interviewed urban Indians aged between 23 and 45 about their meat eating habits. They conceptualize these practices as a “backstage behavior” while in the “frontstage” respondents remain vegetarian. This dramaturgical analysis inspired by Goffman (1990) highlights the importance of the social norm of vegetarianism within the household, from which members deviate secretly, and hence usually do so outside the abode. Backstage behaviors rather happen in restaurants with trusted friends.

Kartikkeya and his younger brother’s enthusiasm for going out with me (I mentioned them at the beginning of the chapter) also derives from the fact that they had a social excuse to eat non-vegetarian dinners outside (meat is not cooked at their home, but their mother knew and accepted that they consumed non-vegetarian food outside the home with me). In Lucknow, many interview respondents referred to two famous restaurants for meat: *Tunday Kababi* and *Dastarkhwan* (the second is more expensive than the first one and does not serve buffalo meat). These two restaurants have segregated spaces and different populations visiting the several outlets, either families or men. One of the outlets of the second type faces a small alcohol shop combined with a bar located a bit further (and hidden from open sight, in Hazratganj). During one my stays, I met two Brahmin young people of 24 years old in the Dastarkhwan outlet who had consumed alcohol at the bar before. They told me that their families did not know about their night adventure and that they started eating meat as students when they were 20 years old. Interestingly, consuming meat along with alcohol does not necessarily go together even in an individual and secret setting. Indeed, while visiting the bar facing the Dastarkhwan restaurant, I sometimes discussed with Hindu upper-caste men consuming alcohol who were quite shocked

that I assumed they were meat-eaters. Meat eating may hence be a less acceptable deviating practice than alcohol drinking.

Nevertheless, this outside secret consumption does not exist in all segments of society. Out-of-the-home consumption is socially distributed and not everyone gets the opportunity to undertake this practice, irrespective of eating non-vegetarian food or not. Figure 3.8 highlights that compared to women, men more often get the opportunity to eat out. This practice is also strongly conditioned by the standard of living. It is only among the 10 percent richest households that men significantly eat outside their home. This practice is also determined by age: among the richest men, 24 percent of them aged 30 to 39 declare eating outside in the past month, but it is only 8 percent of men between 15 and 19 years old and less than 15 percent of men aged 50 and above. Eating out is both "utilitarian" (it fulfils the biological need of food for workers out of their home) and "discretionary" (it is part of a leisure time) in the Indian context (Conlon, 1995). Among my interview respondents, I rather encountered the second case (but disentangling both aspects is not always an easy task). Though in the course of my interviews I met families who told me they go eat out together (half of the individuals interviewed told me they occasionally go out to eat), this pattern was more common among richer families but eating out with friends for men was more widespread even among intermediary segments. Finally, while urban spaces may more easily provide opportunities to eat out, this practice also exists in rural settings. While doing fieldwork in Ghazipur district, Vikash, one of my informants, told me that as a young Brahmin boy growing up in a village, he used to eat out with his friends and to secretly eat omelets while eggs were not consumed at home.

*Figure 3.8 - Proportions of individuals consuming at least one paid meal outside of home in India in a month by age, sex and standard of living*




*Note: The figures rely on the "Consumer Expenditure Survey" 2011-2012 of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). I take advantage of questions surveying the number of meals taken at home, outside home but at school, from the employer or on payment in the last 30 days. These questions are barely used in food consumption analyses despite the useful information it constitutes to grasp out-of-the-home consumption (Fiedler and Yadav, 2017). I check whether individuals declared consuming at least one meal away from home on payment in the last 30 days. This excludes meals at school and meals provided by the employer (as part of the wage). I break down this statistic by age group, sex and standard of living group. Note that these questions are part of the block on demographics of household members but are not asked individually and may hence suffer from a certain level of unreliability if outside consumption is a secret practice. MPCE (Monthly Per Capita Expenditure) is a measure of standard of living based on the total consumption expenditures of the household divided by the number of household members. This indicator is widely used by the NSSO as a better proxy than income. I here coded the deciles following the observation that there is not much difference in out-of-the-home consumption between the second and the eighth decile. Sample: Individuals aged 15 years old and above among surveyed households of the "Consumer Expenditure Survey" 2011-2012 (N=464,960).*

The extent of individual secret non-vegetarian practices depends on the weight of family rules that impose vegetarianism on family members. The significance of these food rules itself depends on the position of the households in the social stratification, i.e., on the religious, caste and class positions, as will be assessed in Part 3. But the material possibility of undertaking secret individual non-vegetarian practices is also conditioned on standard of living, age and gender which determine outside-the-home food consumption.

## *D - Conclusion: the relative fluidity of a rigid boundary*

This chapter started from the observation that quantitative surveys from which the proportion of vegetarians in India and Uttar Pradesh are estimated show relatively varied estimates. I therefore intended to understand the source of these variations from the data from these surveys and my qualitative material. To do this, I hypothesized that the differences were not necessarily the result of technical issues in data collection. Rather, the different numbers illustrate the social conditions of statistical data production.

Firstly, the statistical data are the result of reports of practices and not of observed practices as such. The discrepancy between the two highlights the salience of the social norm of vegetarianism in contemporary India, insofar as it may lead to underestimating one's own consumption of animal products. Vegetarianism represents a substantial share of the population (less than a third, possibly 20 percent according to Natrajan and Jacob, 2018), but it is clearly not numerically dominant. Still, it is culturally dominant and it is as such that the assertion of non-vegetarian practices may be a matter of secrecy, including within the family circle. Consumption declarations in large consumption surveys do not necessarily measure the observed eating practices, especially with regards to meat, eggs and fish. But these data reflect the degree of adherence to social norms that crystallize the symbolic boundary between "veg" and "non-veg." Thus, they provide a social picture of the social acceptance of non-vegetarianism in the Indian social space.

Secondly, the temporal evolution of animal product consumption and the different definitions and connotations of what is "veg" or "non-veg" demonstrate the relative fluidity of the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism. It illustrates two strategies of symbolic boundary-making processes (Wimmer, 2008). Thus, the increasing access to animal products (especially eggs and chicken) tends to "contract" – i.e., narrow – the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism. This boundary shift makes it possible to claim to be "veg" while also allowing the consumption of animal products. In the end, it maintains the "veg" status marker while allowing changes in one's food practices. Conversely, the "expansion" of the "veg" boundary – i.e., the enlargement

of the category –, by associating it with products that are not of animal origin or even non-food, also strengthens the boundary. By including more constraints, the expansion of the boundary may possibly more easily tolerate small deviations, even if they are not positively valued. Besides, the "veg" boundary not only marks a taste preference but is associated with religious, political, social (caste) and dietary meanings. This is reinforced by the State support for vegetarianism in the name of nutritional or ayurvedic recommendations. Clearly, while the role of religious institutions as "moral entrepreneurs" (Becker, 1963) was outlined in Chapter 1, in this chapter we showed that the State also emerges as the same in the contemporary period. In all cases, the symbolic boundary always positively values on the one side the "veg" while negatively perceiving "non-veg" as a deviant category. This positive social image is ubiquitous when examining the characteristics by which one defines oneself, for instance in matchmaking processes.

Thirdly, I have also stressed on the importance of the unit of analysis when quantifying vegetarianism. At first glance, food consumption is a domain that should be analyzed at the household level, the unit that is the most often found in statistical surveys on food budgets. It is indeed at this level that the management of economic resources and expenditure is organized, as well as the distribution of tasks, particularly in food production. Thus, most food consumption practices are relatively homogeneous between individuals in the same household (even if gender disparities exist, (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF, 2017)). The exception is the consumption of non-vegetarian products. Gender and age show variations in the adherence to vegetarianism. These variations can be explained in particular by access to food consumption outside the household, which is more restricted to the economically better-off men. Hence, statistically counting a household as vegetarian does not exclude individual non-vegetarian consumption practices, especially for men, a practice that may be kept secret from the other members of the household. This analysis reinforces the secret dimension of non-vegetarian consumption, and thus the importance of the vegetarian norm, while suggesting a gender difference in the adherence to vegetarianism.

The next two chapters will define and conceptually grasp the socio-demographic variables of ascribed and achieved positions to understand their association with the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism.

# Chapter 4 – Casting categories: Conceptualizing and quantifying caste

*Ayaan: What about the temple? Aren't Dalits allowed to enter?*
*Sub officer: Right, sir.*
*Ayaan: Who beat them up?*
*Sub officer: Boys from Mahantji's ashram.*
*Ayaan: Who is Mahantji?*
*Ayaan's assistant: Sir, Mahantji is Mahantji.*
*Ayaan: He's upper caste?*
*Assistant: A Brahman, sir.*
*Ayaan: And those young men?*
*Assistant: They are Scheduled castes.*
*Ayaan: What caste is Brahmandatt?*
*Assistant: Thakur, sir.*
*Ayaan: So are Thakurs considered to be Brahmins, Kshatriyas or Vaishyas?*
*Constable: They are Kshatriyas, sir.*
*Ayaan: What are you?*
*Constable: I am a Jat. Now called OBC, Other Backward Class.*
*Sub officer: So why are you still protesting?*
*Constable: I'm not, sir. The Haryana Jats are protesting. They're still considered Jats, sir.*
*Ayaan: Jatav, aren't you a Dalit?*
*Sub officer: Yes, sir.*
*Ayaan: Same caste as the injured boys?*
*Sub officer: No, sir. I'm a Chamar. They were Pasis. We're much higher than them. We have nothing to do with them, we don't eat the food they touch.*
*Ayaan: And I can't eat the food you touch?*
*Sub officer: Right, sir.*
*Ayaan: Right… And what are you? [To his assistant]*
*Assistant: A Kayasth, sir.*
*Ayaan: What's a Kayasth?*
*Assistant: We're different. We don't fall into the four main castes.*
*Ayaan: And me, what am I?*
*Assistant: A Brahmin, sir.*
*Ayaan: So am I Mahantji's equal?*
*Assistant: No no, sir. He is a Kanyakuja Brahmin, a top Brahmin. You're a Saryuparin.*
*Ayaan: What the fuck is going on here?*

Article 15, *2019, Sinha, A.*

In this chapter and the following one, I take a necessary side-step in the study of vegetarianism in order to conceptually and empirically grasp how the vegetarian diet varies according to ascribed and achieved positions of social stratification. Therefore, through the study of the statistical measurement of caste, I pave the way to better understand the conceptual issues involved around this category, and ultimately to empirically study caste practices and attitudes.

In 2011, the Socio Economic and Caste Census collected information on caste for the first time since the Indian Independence.[48] Unfortunately, detailed information has not been released and a commission appointed by the Indian government has been tasked to classify the 4,673,034 different caste self-identifications.[49] The lack of operational statistical data available to social scientists contrasts with a literature emphasizing the salience of caste in the Indian social structure (Vaid, 2014) along with repeated calls from social scientists for caste data collection (Deshpande and John, 2010). While ethnographic methods undeniably provide valuable elements in the understanding of the Indian society, the absence of caste statistics precludes a synthetic view of the caste social reality.

When compared with ethnic or racial categories in other contexts, caste is sometimes characterized as a more rigid social category. But this assumed feature does not resist a preliminary definition, which on the contrary highlights its polysemy. The term caste indeed commonly covers three different realities. First, it refers to a hierarchical quadripartition of the world between varnas, resulting from the *Rig Veda*, a sacred text of Hinduism. In this ideal scheme, Brahmins are at the top, traditionally considered as priests, Kshatriyas come second in ritual rank, they are supposed to be warriors, then come Vaishyas, traditionally traders. At the bottom, well below these three varnas constituting the "twice-born" high castes, one finds Shudras, who would be agricultural workers and craftsmen. Outside this system one finds the formerly-known "Untouchables." But this categorization is more ideological, corresponding to a cultural scheme adopted notably but not only by the dominant castes. It does not necessarily correspond to a description of social reality, i.e., to the categories that are the most predictive of caste stratification and to the usual categories of self-identification. Second, what is meant by caste are categories with narrower social boundaries called jatis, social units defined as hereditary and endogamous social entities, often characterized by traditional occupations. Varnas and jatis are related but they do not correspond perfectly. Indeed, jatis claim positions in the varna hierarchy, which may or may not be challenged by other jatis. What one claims to be is not what one is necessarily considered to be by its peers and social etiquettes vary temporally and geographically. The highly contested identification of caste renders it a central category of Indian social stratification and one that still fills theoretical debates about its

[48] A preliminary version of this chapter has been published in *OSC papers*, "Caste Links: Quantifying social identities using open-ended questions", May 2019, https://www.sciencespo.fr/osc/sites/sciencespo.fr.osc/files/OP_2019-1-EN-def.pdf, last access on June 5, 2020.

[49] "Cabinet meeting: Panagariya to head panel to 'classify' caste census data", *The Indian Express*, July 17, 2015, retrieved from: http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/cabinet-meeting-panagariya-to-head-panel-to-classify-caste-census-data/, last access on May 29, 2020.

conceptualization, only without empirical quantitative sources. The caste statistical gap is sometimes surprisingly filled in public policies by archival data of colonial censuses dating back from nearly 80 years. These are then mobilized, for instance, to justify the implementation of affirmative action policies, to attribute specific statutes for the most disadvantaged castes in societies, the "backward" jatis. Caste hence also refers to these official categories: Scheduled Castes – former "untouchable" jatis –, Scheduled Tribes – constituted by tribal groups of low social prestige –, and Other Backward Classes – a diverse conglomerate of low jatis yet not considered "untouchable." Jatis not classified under any of these official categories are called the General or Forward category. Many social scientists use these categories of affirmative action as a proxy for caste in their statistical analysis. But overall, this situation makes it difficult to conduct appropriate research work for social stratification sociologists.

The assumed rigidity of caste boundaries is all the more problematic because of the history of caste quantification. The colonial period has been characterized by contentions between social groups collectively aspiring to legitimize a higher status through the manipulation of official statistics. In the postcolonial period, the risk of essentializing caste boundaries has largely disqualified caste statistics and apart from official categories of affirmative action no institutionalized standard caste categories are widely accepted and used today. Counterintuitively, given the past history of quantification, I argue in this chapter that a statistical approach to categorization makes it possible to break free from a fixed vision of caste. Indeed, I suggest a method to operationalize statistical caste categories as a tool to study social stratification. In doing so, I draw from the "constructivist" and "cognitivist" turn in social sciences that study racial and ethnic boundaries as "perspectives on the world" (Brubaker et al., 2004, Wimmer, 2013), rather than thinking of these categories in a positivist way (the vision that categories would be found in the world). I acknowledge the fluidity and multidimensionality of caste categories in order to better understand the social mechanisms that affect social outcomes (as outlined for race in Roth, 2016). I use caste self-identifications collected through open-ended questions in recent large sample surveys on the Indian subcontinent.[50] Statistically, I model caste not as fixed entities but in a multi-layered approach to measure how self-identifications are rightly captured by higher-level conceptual categorizations in a multilevel framework (Gelman, 2006). Doing so helps explore relevant boundaries of self-identification while avoiding substantializing caste identities or creating a

[50] In particular, these self-identifications are found in the Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS), a longitudinal survey conducted since 2004, and in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), a survey conducted since 1992.

statistical chimera. Such an econometric method tests the adequacy of the classification and could prove useful in debates regarding changes in the French "Professions and categories socioprofessionelles" to adapt to a European classification (Filhon et al., 2013) or any other nomenclature summarizing the structure of the social world in a few social categories. I am aware that the conceptual definition of caste has been the object of very old debates (Lardinois, 1985). By suggesting a caste schema, I am taking a theoretical stand in them, but I believe a historically informed and empirically testable schema is the best way forward.

Here, I lay the foundations of caste quantification by focusing on the Hindu population of Uttar Pradesh.[51] Focusing on one particular State eases the process of classification since it reduces the regional variability in caste enunciations. This region is also particularly interesting because it is supposed to be in a region of northern India where the caste system is considered close to the model of varnas and caste self-identifications is expected to reflect this rigid cultural scheme. I will show, however, that caste self-identifications only marginally approximate these boundaries. This implies that the fuzziness of caste boundaries in other regions is even greater and further obliterates the assumed characteristic of rigid caste boundaries.

In the following, I first recall the implicit conceptualizations in past and contemporary caste quantifications. I argue that historical experiences show the way not to classify caste categories. I then present the quantitative material at hand and suggest a two-level conceptualization of caste, taking into account the self-identifications and suggesting a higher-level classification characterizing caste as matrices of socialization. Finally, I analyze these two levels of categories in a multilevel econometric framework. I test to which extent the caste nomenclature corresponds to observed differences in social life regarding four different indicators. I conclude on the use of this classification in the next chapters to study the association between caste and vegetarianism.

## *A - Perspectives on existing caste conceptualizations*

I start by questioning the use of caste as routinized "analytical categories," as a scientific classification, in social sciences. These categories build from "categories of practice" – folk

[51] The restriction to the Hindu population is above all pragmatic. The literature reminds us that caste also exists within the Christian (Roberts, 2016) or Muslim (Ahmad, 1973) religious minorities. But the response rates to the caste questions are lower for these minorities and the self-identifications show an important share of respondents answering "Muslim," "Christian," or religious divisions (Shiite versus Sunni) rather than caste as such. Besides, the internal divisions of Muslims (an important religious minority in Uttar Pradesh) are of less importance in this research on diets and vegetarianism. Other religious minorities (Sikhs or Zoroasthrians) are only very marginally present in Uttar Pradesh.

categories – which are not always questioned and explicit in analyses.[52] I try to make explicit what each categorization entails, an important step when looking at quantification because perhaps more evidently than with simple discursive conceptualization it is a process which by nature reifies categorical boundaries. In turn, it may have performative consequences in the social world and become categories of self-identification.

### 1) The historical legacy of varnas and the ritual purity nominalist perspective

The exercise of quantifying caste is linked to India's colonial history. Censuses, as well as official anthropology, have undeniably rigidified a representation of the caste system, developing a vision of caste as understood by the colonizers and the local elites, meanwhile the statistical apparatus has had performative effects on the social world.

When the first census was introduced in 1871, administrative counting was not new on the subcontinent and was based on pre-statistical experiences in the Provinces, administered either by the British or by local authorities (the Mughal rulers in particular). But the 1871 census introduced questions on religion, sect, caste, for purposes of counting and enumeration. Indeed, the censuses were crucial tools for the control of the territory and population under the domination of the colonial empire (Appadurai, 1993). If statistical techniques had already been introduced by census experiments in the United Kingdom, little socio-demographic information was collected there (only religion in 1851), the interest in the exoticism of Indian social groups being much more important (Guilmoto, 1998). Through the following colonial censuses until 1941, caste progressively became the main unit of description of the Indian society though it was also contested (Denault, forthcoming). This vision was strengthened by official anthropology that developed at the same time, under the aegis of Herbert Risley, William Crooke and Denzil Ibbetson (Fuller 2016, 2017). The project of ethnographic description of caste groups, *People of India*, reinforced the a priori of a traditional Indian society, antithetical to modern European society.

As an exercise of bureaucratic identification (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000), the categorization of caste was influenced by both the European colonizers and the literate elite castes, in particular Brahmins. Fuller (2017) evokes a "shared understanding" between European evolutionist thought and Brahmanic worldview that produced caste knowledge

[52] The distinction between "categories of practice" and "analytical categories" drawn by Bourdieu is mentioned by Brubaker (2001). For an articulation of the two kinds of categorizations, see *Sociologie générale: Cours au Collège de France Volume 1* (Bourdieu, 2015).

organized around a hierarchical view of caste. It was indeed influenced by a colonial understanding of caste as essentialist categories of race. According to the colonial administrators Herbert Risley, and to some extent William Crooke, the social organization of caste was based on the evolutionist paradigm of racial theory, which they sought to support through a collection of anthropometric data. This conceptualization was reinforced by a theory of "social precedence," thus reproducing a pattern of social understanding of the British society based on rank. At the same time, the colonial administration also relied on indigenous informants, mainly from the "Bhadraloks" in Bengal, a literate class of Brahmin castes, Kayasths and Baidyas, who emerged during British India (Fuller, 2017). The colonial taxonomy would then be based on a socially situated view of the caste system, legitimizing a hierarchical view of the caste system supported by sacred writings (Appadurai, 1993). The census categorizations hierarchically organized caste categories according to an assigned degree of ritual purity and to their functional varnas. In the end, the bureaucratic identification of caste hence appears as the socially situated product of the "social images" (Avanza and Laferté, 2005) of castes according to the European evolutionist and essentialist thought along with the Brahmanical social justification of a hierarchical order, favoring their own position in this social order.

This hierarchy induced by census categorizations had "performative effects" on the social world (Desrosières, 2001). Indeed, the recourse to the Hindu texts in the census led to a caste competition for their position in the categorization thus created. Jatis contested their assigned position in the ritual hierarchy or their assigned varna, at a time when caste associations were also developing, strengthening and publicly asserting a social position. Facing bureaucratic identification, members of middle and low castes developed a form of "groupness" (Brubaker, 2001). Typically, jatis developed feelings of togetherness (what Weber calls "Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl," the feeling of being united). They also sometimes recomposed strategies of matrimonial alliances (changing boundaries of "connectedness") and asserted common valorizing attributes (such as myths of origin, a process that Brubaker calls "commonality"). These processes particularly affected small-landed agrarian castes such as Jats, Kurmis and Yadavs (grouping Ahirs, Goallas, and Gopas) in North India. They formed trans-regional caste alliances petitioning and claiming higher statuses sometimes in courts (Headley, 2013). Far from being socially neutral, the census made it possible to administratively concretize and socially institutionalize the ritual hierarchy and the functional varnas.

Though the historiography of caste has today largely revealed the social processes of caste quantification with the colonial censuses, one should not undermine its long-term impact on Indian social sciences. Indeed, anthropologists and sociologists subsequently mobilized these data sources even though they did not fit into the evolutionist paradigm. This is the case, for example, of Max Weber, who when writing about Herbert Risley's documents that they "belong to the best general sociological literature available" (Fuller, 2017). Louis Dumont (1974), whose understanding of caste is based on the hierarchical model of varnas, where the political dimension is less important than religion (Dirks, 2001), was also influenced by colonial knowledge. Besides, colonial caste quantification has not only affected caste as "categories of analysis," it has also durably impacted "categories of practice," the forms of caste self-identifications as I will detail in the next section.

### 2) Backwardness nominalism or caste "on paper"

Contemporary social sciences studies point out the importance of taking into account statistics when highlighting social inequalities based on caste belonging (Deshpande, 2005). Among the works on caste mobilizing statistical categories, one must distinguish two poles; on the one hand, those that mobilize the administrative categories of affirmative action known as "quota policy" in India, and, on the other hand, those that use more precise caste nomenclatures but rely on geographically and socially located surveys. Overall, these categorizations rely on diverse understandings of categorical boundaries and dimensions or measurement, which may not be adequate to study all social outcomes under scrutiny (Roth, 2016).

#### a) Caste as discrimination

In the first case, caste quantification relies on the implicit that "backwardness" defines the objective caste position. Caste categories are the result of bureaucratic identifications to set up affirmative action policies. The use of administrative categories (Scheduled Castes – SC, Scheduled Tribes – ST, Other Backward Classes – OBC) allows the study of (positive or negative) effects of the "quota policies" within higher education institutions (Henry and Ferry, 2017) and the Indian public administration (Benbabaali, 2008). These categories may also be mobilized to import questions and methods from discrimination studies and social exclusion developed from racial categorizations in Anglo-Saxon sociology (Thorat and Neuman, 2012), while taking into account the specificity of modes of exclusion in the Indian society, such as those related to the practice of Untouchability (Borooah, 2017). These categories are also useful for identifying the specificities of living conditions of Dalits (roughly corresponding to

SCs category), Adivasis (category corresponding to STs), while OBCs do not correspond to clearly identifiable caste categories. These categories are therefore a first step towards a study of caste belonging, articulated with reference to religion and social class, for example to understand the social structure of consumption patterns (Ferry et al., 2018), or different social fluidity levels between castes in intergenerational class mobility (Vaid, 2018).

But these bureaucratic identifications are also the product of "groupness" of jatis that have managed to be included among quota categories. Indeed, the official jati lists for reservations vary according to the political game's vicissitudes. It is strongly linked to the political mobilization of caste groups and "vote bank" politics (Jaffrelot, 2000c), where groups of caste support party candidates, based on their promise to include the group among the reserved categories (see also Jaffrelot 2005). This point is salient because the principle of self-declaration of a reserved category involves a degree of uncertainty that should encourage social scientists that mobilize these categories to be cautious in their use (besides the fact that jati lists are regional and that for instance Banias in Bihar belong to the OBC category while in Uttar Pradesh they do not and that respondents may not be aware of their bureaucratic identification).

### b) Caste as a matrix of socialization

Besides, such a nomenclature becomes ineffective to account for finer descriptions of caste categories, in particular to understand caste as "social localization", i.e., where caste position determines common dispositions and circumscribes a common "habitus" or a matrix of socialization (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). Administrative categories may not be the right level of analysis of caste disposition if, for instance, socioeconomic differences between administrative categories are smaller than within administrative categories, as is suggested by preliminary results (Joshi et al., 2018). Besides, administrative categories do not distinguish high castes, middle castes, and low castes (except "untouchable" and tribal castes), whether one considers this division from the point of view of a ritual or socio-economic hierarchy. Notably, whereas the model of caste theorized by Louis Dumont (1967) in *Homo Hierarchicus* is criticized for being too ritual-status oriented, hence overlooking the role of caste in the appropriation of resources, it remains difficult to test competing models operationalized statistically (see however Desai and Dubey, 2012, for an attempt). A model of caste based on a one-dimensional status hierarchy might not be appropriate, or at least it could require thorough testing, insofar as the high castes are differentiated between themselves, especially those which put the Brahmanic moral values in the foreground, as opposed to the concurrent Kshatriya moral values (Bayly, 2001). Further, M. N. Srinivas (1952, 1959) has highlighted

the role of "dominant castes" at the village level, corresponding to jatis middle or upper ritually ranked jatis, but key castes in the appropriation of resources, resulting from their agrarian domination. Again, it is impossible to objectify this social reality through the use of statistical surveys, except from local ones (Himanshu et al., 2016).[53] High caste fractions are also marked by differentiated access to social resources, which is confirmed by the analysis of social trajectories allowing access to positions of economic power. Indeed, among the top business leaders, the Brahmins are closer to the State apparatus and owe their position of power to the inheritance of institutionalized cultural capital, degrees, while the merchant castes inherit family economic empires (Naudet et al., 2018) and caste-based homophily is also key to the development of entrepreneurial strategies (Vissa, 2011).

### c) Caste as political cohesiveness

Caste may also be categories analyzed as "collective identities" reflecting forms of mobilization, based on "commonality," "connexity" or "groupness" (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000).[54] For instance, caste belonging may determine "vote-banks." Indeed, the analysis of caste belonging of elected Indian officials reveals the weakening role of the high castes in favor of agricultural and low castes since the 1950s (Jaffrelot and Kumar 2012, Jaffrelot 2010).[55] But again, the level of analysis may not be administrative caste categories, since jatis in Uttar Pradesh seem to better explain voting patterns for the latest 2019 national elections. Indeed, among SCs and OBCs the party in power, the Bharatiya Janata Party, successfully mobilized small and poorer jatis who resent the domination of other bigger and socio-economically forward jatis voting for concurrent parties (the Jatavs for the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Yadavs for the Samajwadi Party, Jaffrelot, 2019).

All these quantifications of caste involve implicit and multilevel conceptualizations of caste. This non-exhaustive overview shows the importance of caste categories in the study of the Indian social structure, yet often relying on a compromise between the available dimensions of caste measurements.

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[53] Note that an extremely promising statistical operationalization has been realized by Iversen et al. (2010), using data from the IHDS, but the coding of open-ended questions is only briefly presented.

[54] This last group of characterization of caste categories has probably be best investigated by ethnographic studies, for instance on the Yadav caste (Michelutti, 2008), or caste assortative matching (Banerjee et al., 2009). Caste "groupness" is sometimes implied without proper investigation for instance when using the term "Dalit" when referring to the "untouchable" castes, a "category of practice" that has become a "category of analysis," partly under the influence of the academic movement of Dalit studies (institutionalized for instance by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies) and the position of B. R. Ambedkar halfway between the scientist and the politician (Herrenschmidt, 1996).

[55] For a summary of peasant caste movements in contemporary India, see in particular Bayly (2001, Chapter 7).

## *B - Categorizing caste: self-identification and self-understanding classifications*

In the following, I suggest a quantification of caste that departs from previous works while being aware of the critics of the sociology of identities in other cultural contexts. The exercise of quantification, while highly necessary for the research work of the next chapters, is also useful for more precisely conceptualizing caste rather than leaving it as a floating and indeterminate dimension of social stratification. Though processes of caste identification are partly collective (as I showed in the first section), I study here caste at the individual, or more precisely the household level (which is highly equivalent: caste homogamy is very high in India), given the survey data at hand.

I present two different classifications using the quantitative material from large-scale surveys. The first one refers to categories of "self-identification" and they mostly refer to caste as jatis while also encompassing other elements of identifications. The second one builds from these nominal entities to present them in a classification reflecting "social localization." The goal is to present caste as "dispositional" categories, i.e., the representations and tendencies of individuals, their matrices of socialization, or their habitus (Bourdieu, 2003), and as such, constituting competing habitus from social class categories.

### 1) An inductive approach: self-identification of jati categories

The household survey data used in this research (in particular the IHDS and the NFHS) are intended to provide a representative picture of the population distribution of Uttar Pradesh, while including open-ended questions on caste position. A quick review of literature shows these variables have so far not been re-coded in a systematic way. In the IHDS-I (2004-2005), one open-ended question asks for caste belonging: "Which caste do you belong to?" (ID12). In the NHFS-I from 1992-1993, responses to the same question were recoded using the (very detailed) classification of the 1931 census. But as already noted, criticisms on the adequacy of this classification might prevent its use. In the NFHS 2 (1998-1999), NFHS 3 (2005-2006), and NFHS 4 (2015-2016), responses have not been recoded and are left in a raw format.

In the IHDS-II (2011-2012), two open-ended questions are asked: "Which caste/jati and sub caste/sub jati do you belong to?".[56] Table 4.1 presents an excerpt of the answers in the database. "Sub caste" or "sub jati" is an administrative artefact that does not carry any real meaning but aims at precising the jati of respondents more narrowly, who generally use it to

[56] These correspond to the questions ID12aNM and ID12bNM.

assess their varna status. The doubling of the caste belonging question is indicative of the complexity of caste identities, as we have noted. Since complexity is often used as one of the reasons for not counting caste, I will address it here by categorizing caste from these questions.

*Table 4.1 - Excerpt from the "jati" and "sub-jati" variables in the IDHS-II database*

| **Jati** | **Sub jati** |
|---|---|
| … | … |
| YADAV | AHIRI |
| YADAV | AHIRJABAL |
| CHAMAR | AHIRVAR |
| JATHA | AHIRWAR |
| CHAMAR | AHIRWAR |
| YADAV | AHRI |
| ARAKH | AKUR |
| DHOBI | AMRI |
| DHOBI | AMRI |
| ARAKH | ARBANLI |
| PANJABI | ARORA |
| KORI | ASTI |
| KORI | ATARI |
| BRAHMIN | AVASTHI |
| … | … |

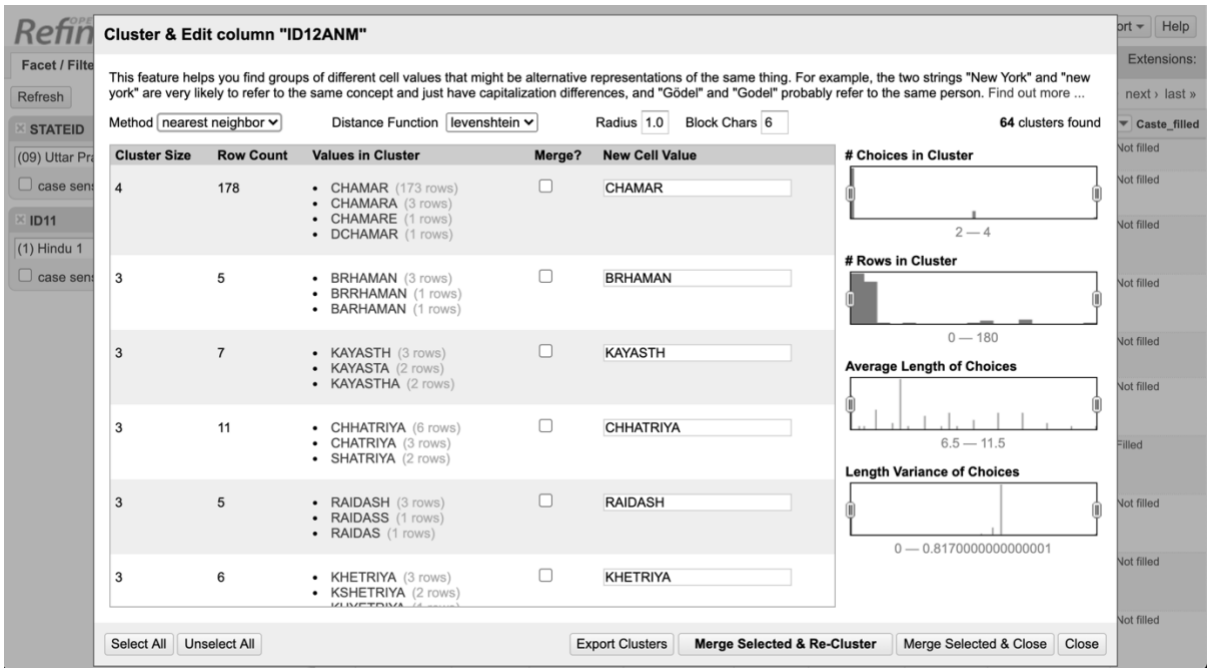
The current use of caste open-ended questions in the IHDS and the NFHS does not attempt to establish a caste nomenclature. The exercise sometimes conducted is to recode parts of the household sample in order to examine particular castes, by looking at certain archetypal caste categories of quotas for example (Srinivasan and Kumar, 1999, exercise conducted using the NFHS data). The other, more recent perspective is to look at the socio-economic condition of particular castes who are seeking a "backward" status and who are mobilizing to be officially counted as OBCs. Deshpande and Ramachandran (2017) have hence used the IHDS data to study Jats (in Haryana), Patels (in Gujarat) and Marathas (in Maharashtra). A. Kalaiyarasan (2016) focuses on Jats in Haryana, and A. A. Dongre (2017) studies the Marathas in Maharashtra.

The last two articles present their recoding methods, which consist of selecting households and individuals according to their declared membership of these castes. This is not so obvious, however, since several different spellings for one caste are used. One may assume that these different spellings do not signify anything in themselves and are simply the result of the operation of translation and transcription in Latin alphabet. Indeed, in the case of the Jats, the various transcriptions are: "JAAT," "JAHT," "JAT," "JAT SIKH," "JATH," "JATT," "JHAT" and "RON JAT".

I apply the same method of orthographic simplification using automatic algorithms. To overcome these transcription differences among Hindus in Uttar Pradesh, I use algorithms of

string grouping based on character sequence similarity. These algorithms are based on the method of the "nearest neighbors" with the algorithm "Fingerprint" and the Levenshtein distance in OpenRefine (Verborgh and Wilde, 2013). This technique is based on the similarity of two strings defined by the minimum number of characters that must be deleted, inserted or replaced to transform one string into another.[57] The software suggests a list of groupings which are then accepted or rejected by the user, as is shown in Figure 4.1. This method substantially reduces the number of distinct jati wordings in the database. The number of distinct "jati" statements drops to 398, the number of "sub jati" to 589, and a total of about 1000 caste combinations are then present in the data. This step hence reduces the variability of caste combinations by almost a third (32.5 percent), but still leaving an important amount of identification variations. This extreme fragmentation of self-identifications reflects a particular feature of the caste system, the obsession for small differences through "graded inequalities" as formulated by Ambedkar (Herrenschmidt, 1996).

*Figure 4.1 - Screenshot from the procedure of caste orthographic corrections using OpenRefine*




*Note: Using OpenRefine allows to easily grasp the entirety of the database and to see the large diversity of orthographic enunciations regarding jatis. Algorithms of string groupings are used but I still keep the control*

[57] A second method based on a "phonetic algorithm" by transforming the character strings into "pronunciation strings" was also tested. In this algorithm, two strings are identical if they are pronounced in the same way. Here, I draw inspiration from Raphael Susewind (2015) who uses a modified version of the "Soundex" algorithm, adapted to Indian vernacular languages by Santhosh Thottingal, to identify Muslim surnames from electoral rolls. See Thottingal's website for details: http://thottingal.in/blog/ 2009/07/26/indicsoundex/ (last access on 29 May, 2020).

*whether suggested groupings are adequate or not (this would not be as easy using other softwares such as R or Stata).*

What do these categories of self-identification correspond to? It is worthwhile to consider how Dongre (2017) identified the Marathas in the database: "The households who report their jati to be Maratha were defined as Maratha households. Their sub-jati can be either of Maratha, Patil, Kshatriya, Rajput. In some instances, no sub-caste is mentioned. Instances where jati is Maratha but sub-jati is Agri, Kunbi, Hatkar are not categorized as Maratha but as OBCs, in line with government rules." This underlines the conceptual difficulty of understanding what exactly these discursive statements of caste correspond to. What Dongre observes as a "sub jati" with respect to the Marathas reflects the assertion of a ritual status when respondents declare themselves as "Kshatriyas" (the second highest varna) or "Rajputs" (a caste claiming Kshatriya varna), in concurrence with the fact that Marathas are often considered to be "Shudras" (fourth varna, low in rank). This "sub jati" might refer to the traditional occupation of Marathas in the military or a "rajputisation" or "kshatriyazation" of their caste belonging (Lardinois, 2005), a social mechanism similar to "sanskritization." Second, I observe that "jati" and "sub jati" enunciations correspond to a gradation of identity assertion (one is first a Maratha and then a Kshatriya), rather than to the logic of a nested nomenclature. Third, some households claim the Maratha caste identity, but they also precise that they belong to an OBC-classified jati, therefore claiming both, the Maratha identity and the "backward" status, which is counterintuitive since Marathas are not classified as OBCs. Overall, Dongre's precisions recall that caste self-identifications are both fluid and multidimensional and that re-assigning detailed jatis based on these self-identifications is not always easy.[58]

Self-identified jatis do not always clearly identify a neat ideal-typical categorization of "jati" where caste categories would be positioned in a nested classification, as Sonalde Desai (2010) would like to build this framework for the Indian census. In other words, these categories are not objective but subjective categories of the most salient discursive caste entities for the respondents. They certainly indicate a degree of "affiliation" (Avanza and Laferté, 2005) related to caste, and as such they reflect one dimension of caste. For instance,

[58] In "Caste Links" (Ferry, 2019), I suggested a further way of inductively classifying self-identified jatis by conducting network analysis and hierarchical clustering based on a network of jatis and sub-jatis considered as an edge list (two respondents are connected if they enunciated a common jati or sub-jati). This method of visualization and clustering is inspired by similar works clustering ethnicity based on shared first and last names between individuals (Mateos, 2007). The network interestingly shows a large, connected sub graph with several smaller sub graphs, going in line with the argument that jati categories are indeed fluid and multidimensional. A clustering of this network reaches a number of clusters of about 80 depending on the metric considered.

135 respondents declare that their jati is "HARIJAN," a term naming "untouchable" caste (not a jati) and meaning "Son of God." But it is not simply a synonym of "untouchable." Harijan has been historically made up by M. K. Gandhi, in order to remove the caste stigma associated with Untouchability, while ensuring "untouchable" castes of their Hindu affiliation (though the term Harijan is considered as paternalistic, Roy, 2017). On the contrary, the term Dalit has been devised by B. R. Ambedkar and has (had) a more critical and militant overtone, also attempting to unit "untouchable" castes but not encompassing them within the Hindu social boundary. That some respondents identify as Harijan but never as Dalit seems to suggest that in Uttar Pradesh, "untouchable" castes tend to draw social boundaries of identification within the Hindu realm. This reflects that self-identification is influenced by external identification (which corresponds here to a "social image" of caste, a positive publicization of an entity, following Avanza and Laferté, 2005) and is not only a discursive expression of social localization.

In some other rare instances, Dalit respondents only identified with the official category they have been assigned to: "Scheduled castes". Some other respondents declared themselves as "General" or "Other Backward Classes" before precising their jati, demonstrating the performative effect of bureaucratic classifications. The use of these categories helps socially locate respondents, particularly when jati names are homonymous, as Anil, my interviewer assistant, exemplified with Prem. His caste identification ("Sharma") was ambiguous:

> *"Anil - Sharma in Uttar Pradesh is used by Brahmin and also OBC the Lohar and...*
> *Prem - We are the Sharma of OBC."*
> (Prem, interview 23)

Other respondents, usually from lower caste background, emphasized the traditional occupation that corresponds to their jati possibly even using the English term, even though it may not correspond to their actual occupational position: "Carpenter (Loniya)" or "Barber (Nai)." In the course of my interviews, many low caste respondents also referred to the traditional occupation attached to their jati, for instance with Rishik (a rickshaw driver) whose wife is a domestic employee:

> *"Mathieu - Which caste do you belong to?*
> *Rishik - We are Kahars! But there is no work of Kahar left! It is not there, but we will be called the same!*

*Anil (interviewer assistant) - Yes, will be called the same! Previously the work was to fill water, no?*
*Rishik - Work was to fill water and lift doli [bride's stretcher]. Now, today's people can't do that. Doesn't happen, but we will be called the same!"*
(Rishik, interview 36)

Finally, one should also bear in mind that these caste self-identifications are the produce of a social interaction (Berreman, 1972) in an interview setting which may affect the responses in two ways. First, respondents adapt to the interviewer, particularly by not entering all the details of their caste identity in front of a foreigner and declaring a more encompassing social category rather than a detailed one which may not be known. In my case of a national foreigner this is particularly evident but interviewers from large-scale surveys do not necessarily come from the same district and may thus be treated as such as well. I had this experience when interviewing Pranav (29) who assumed (and this is right to an extent) that I would not understand the different intricacies of caste identifications (until he also asserted he does not himself understand it all):

*"Mathieu - What is your jati?*
*Pranav - Mine, Hindu Vaishya! Actually, there are four sectors!*
*Mathieu - So, you are telling me your varna, right?*
*Pranav - In the Varna system, I am belonging to the first three stages, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya. I am a Vaishya.*
*Mathieu - Ok, and what is your jati?*
*Pranav - Varna, you say varna?*
*Mathieu - No, no, I am asking your jati…*
*Pranav - Jati, Vaishya!*
*Mathieu - But this is varna, no ?*
*Pranav - Mine is Gupta! But for higher caste, it is known caste and varna is the same but in the lower caste, it is divided in multiple castes.*
*Mathieu - And then, what is your sub-caste, sub-jati?*
*Pranav - Sub-caste Omar, a variety of the Vaishya. As you heard about Aggarwal. Aggarwal is also Vaishya!*
*Mathieu - Ok, so your caste is different from Aggarwal, different from Bania, different...*

> *Pranav - Yes, there is little difference... Actually, I can't explain what actually it is. It is so difficult to understand for anyone who has not been brought up in the system, so it is very difficult to understand, you may know the name but not why and where.*
> *Mathieu - But you know.*
> *Pranav - I don't know, that's why it is difficult. In the social system, some have high status and some have low status. These things appear in when you go in the marriage. There are some festivals, some functions about cremation and birth happening. So on these three or four occasions you find this very peculiar thing, otherwise no."*
> (Pranav, interview 29)

Second, interviewers may themselves modify the self-identifications even though they are tasked to report what the respondents tell them. Based on an ethnography of census investigators who often belong to high castes, Lee (2015) revealed that interviewers sometimes modify their respondents' answers to fit their own conceptions (for instance, not acknowledging religious conversions outside Hinduism). It is impossible to prove how it affected the collection of caste self-identification but there are some clues that the investigators are not neutral collectors, as with this self-identification (from the NFHS 4, 2015-2016): "Thakur, ye log apne aap ko Thakur bolate hai lekin OBC me ate," meaning, "these people call themselves Thakur but they are OBC." The comment implies doubt from the interviewer that the respondents are really from the self-declared Thakur jati as this community is not counted among the Other Backward Classes (OBC).

These data hence reveal the diversity of caste enunciations as categories of "self-understanding," where caste is the result of social processes and interactions in which the interview also takes place.

### 2) A deductive approach: caste as social localization

The richness of these categories, though sometimes difficult to interpret, may now be used to classify caste into a smaller set of conceptually defined categories. The inductive approach achieves a reduction of the diversity of caste enunciations but still ends up with many categories, too many for the most common statistical analyses. I complete it by deductively attributing jatis into a conceptually motivated categorization. This nomenclature is largely reputational and draws from the social science literature studying caste. This classification is

an attempt to consider caste as "social localization" at a more encompassing level than just jatis. By "social localization," I mean the social dispositions associated with caste, each category being associated with certain representations for the agents that are within it (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000).

This classification is conceptualized as the crystallization of social and historical processes of category self-understanding and to this end, a specific look at the historical evolution of caste categorizations is taken into account. The historical overview of caste by Susan Bayly (2001) motivates the categories (Table 4.2). Even though S. Bayly does not attempt to build a caste schema, her empirically based historical discussion of changing caste categories motivates my schema. The caste categories are built according to four intersecting reputational dimensions: ritual rank assertion, moral values and status competition, economic and power positions, and caste consciousness and collective identity (by reputational, I mean that jati wordings have been historically associated with certain characteristics, but this does not necessarily reflect their exact individual position, a point I investigate in the next section).

#### a) Four conceptual features of caste

First, caste can be conceptualized as an opposition between categories that embody pure versus impure values. Whereas Brahmins embody pure values that they display through their lifestyles (e.g., in food with meat abstinence), "untouchable" castes are considered particularly morally impure and polluted. This status follows the quadripartition of the varnas. But second, Susan Bayly also recalls the historical competition between Brahmin and Kshatriyas values in the moral order dominance. Even though Brahmin values have taken to the fore since the eighteenth century, Kshatriya values have not disappeared and are still embodied by certain caste groups, such as the Lordly castes (corresponding to the Rajputs and affiliate castes, embodying warrior and conqueror traditional values). Third, she argues that this competition is not abstract from economic and political power in society which echoes the contemporary emerging body of research calling for the examination of caste on the labor market (Mosse, 2019). The progressive dominance of Brahmin values corresponds to the growing role of Brahmin castes in large ruling administrations (including the Maratha empire, the Moghul empire, the colonial administrations and later the British empire). This ascending position was linked to their normative occupations as priests and teachers (according to the Manusmriti, a sacred text), which placed them as more literate groups in society. Simultaneously, Lordly castes kept political feudal power through small kingdoms and agricultural landholdings. Fourth, the gradual domination of Brahmin values in society has strengthened the spread of the

varna system, its acceptance by the whole society and the self-identification of jatis to varnas. This led to a "substantialization" of castes to accept, assert and collectively maintain the ritual purity of a jati and to claim a status of varna (Dumont, 1967), such as the merchant castes (grouped around the Baniya identity), which claim a high caste status (Vaishya). Caste mobilizations that emerged in the nineteenth century and continued into the contemporary period have also been a means of asserting a varna status, as we noted in the first section with the formation of "meta-castes," and increased the caste consciousness of previously disaggregated groups. This is the case of marginalized groups occupying small peasant positions ("kisan"), and those who were usually considered as Shudras. They affirmed their caste consciousness by a regrouping of categories and political mobilizations. Among Agricultural castes, Yadavs (joined with Ahirs), Patels or Jats are often cited cases. To a certain extent, "untouchable" castes have also moved in this direction with the emergence of a Dalit identity to counter their polluted status ascription. Hence, this caste consciousness asserts itself either in challenging the ritual status system as such, or in claiming a higher ritual status.

### b) Putting jati enunciations into caste categories

These four dimensions of caste localization clearly depart from a vision of caste as a traditional ascribed and fixed entity and recognize the historical and social processes of changing categories. Therefore, it breaks with the idealized caste schema of *Homo Hierarchicus* as centered on ritual status based on sacred texts, a reproach made to Dumont (1974), notably by Dirks (2001). Rather, I integrate two hierarchical principles, ritual status and socio-economic status, along with their contestations.

In practical terms, I manually attributed each previous enunciation into one of the six caste categories. In order to do this, I relied on a diverse set of (non-)academic writings mentioning jatis (including Bayly's synthesis, a range of sociological and anthropological works and the ethnographic project of *People of India* collecting information on jati communities on the Indian subcontinent). At the end of this deductive process, I was not able to assign 73 households (out of 2928), corresponding to 2.5 percent of the Hindu sample of Uttar Pradesh. These correspond to households where the enunciations could not be recognized either because I did not find any information on it, because the doubt about the transcription was too high to assign it to a caste category, or because the enunciation was too ambiguous (as discussed above) to ascertain the caste position.

*Table 4.2 - Caste categories and most frequent jatis in Uttar Pradesh*

| Category | Description | Varna status | Official category | Composition (among Hindus) | Self-identifications | Count |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dalit** | Former untouchable caste groups | Rather unambiguous: perceived and self-acknowledged as "untouchable," possible counter-cultural claim as Dalit or Harijan to denounce their stigmatization in the caste social order | Scheduled castes (93 percent), a few Scheduled Tribes (4 percent) | 29.2 | Chamar | 233 |
| | | | | | Harijan | 135 |
| | | | | | Jatav | 78 |
| | | | | | Pasi | 76 |
| | | | | | Dhobi | 41 |
| | | | | | Kori | 32 |
| | | | | | Khatik | 20 |
| | | | | | Mushar | 19 |
| | | | | | Gautam | 17 |
| | | | | | Gaud | 15 |
| | | | | | Valmiki | 15 |
| **Low** | Former craftspeople and agricultural laborer caste groups | Perceived but usually not claimed as Shudra | Largely counted as Other Backward Class (86 percent) | 20.2 | Rajbhar | 38 |
| | | | | | Pal | 29 |
| | | | | | Bhar | 27 |
| | | | | | Kumhar | 26 |
| | | | | | Gadaria | 24 |
| | | | | | Prajpati | 24 |
| | | | | | Nishad | 23 |
| | | | | | Vishwakarma | 21 |
| | | | | | Kahar | 19 |
| | | | | | Rajvere | 19 |
| | | | | | Kevat | 18 |
| | | | | | Kashyap | 17 |
| | | | | | Bind | 16 |
| **Agricultural** | Small landowner caste groups | Disputed: self-identification to the Kshatriya or Vaishya, may be considered as Shudra | Largely counted as Other Backward Class (91 percent) or Forward (7 percent) | 19.4 | Yadav | 174 |
| | | | | | Ahir | 114 |
| | | | | | Kurmi | 46 |
| | | | | | Jat | 40 |
| | | | | | Verma | 23 |
| | | | | | Patel | 22 |
| | | | | | Gujjar | 18 |
| **Merchant** | Sanskritized and business caste groups | Rather unambiguously Vaishya | Either Other Backward Class (71 percent) or Forward (27 percent) | 5.5 | Gupta | 28 |
| | | | | | Teli | 24 |
| | | | | | Vaishya | 17 |
| | | | | | Bania | 15 |
| **Lordly** | Former landowner caste groups | Rather unambiguously Kshatriya | Either Other Backward Class (49 percent) or Forward (46 percent) | 13.3 | Rajput | 50 |
| | | | | | Kshatriya | 43 |
| | | | | | Lodhi | 37 |
| | | | | | Thakur | 35 |
| | | | | | Chouhan | 33 |
| | | | | | Koiri | 20 |
| | | | | | Kushwaha | 18 |
| | | | | | Morya | 16 |
| **Brahmin** | Dominant in the Hindu social order | Rather unambiguously Brahmin | Largely counted as Forward (96 percent) | 12.1 | Brahmin | 303 |

*Note: In column 6, I present only the jatis that have a count higher than 15 in the IHDS II sample. These jatis correspond to 73 percent of the households.*

In Table 4.2, I present the categories of social localization with the most often self-identified castes (jatis, in the last column). I also contrast this classification with official State identifications of reserved categories (Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes and Forward Castes) and their "social image" (the publicly projected representation of categories, Avanza and Laferté, 2005) as varnas or ritual functional categories. These different conceptual understandings of caste overlap but it is useful to analytically distinguish them.

Does this caste classification discursively reflect the subjective understandings of the social representations of caste in Uttar Pradesh? In other words, do individuals draw ordinary categories that reflect this caste classification when positioning themselves with respect to others? A detailed answer to this question is beyond the scope of this research but interviews still provided some hints.[59] When belonging to Merchant, Lordly or Brahmin categories, respondents tended to self-identify with a jati when its "social image" reflected a positive and possibly ambiguous reputation (since there may be caste homonyms) but they often mentioned their varna, which they clearly identified with one of my three categories of the nomenclature. In the case of Pranav quoted above, his insistence to mention "Vaishya" as his caste partly reflects the fact that his jati "Gupta" may be ambiguously understood since some lower caste people may use this enunciation. When belonging to Agricultural, Low castes or Dalits, respondents more often explicitly mentioned themselves as "Scheduled Castes" or "backward", hence using (and claiming) an official category. Jati identification was also common, except for the Dalit respondents who chose to identify as "Harijan".

When categorizing others, respondents of my interviews usually mobilized some jatis of each of the caste classification, e.g., Chamar, Kumhar, Yadav, Rajput, Brahmin. These categories could be easily related to my nomenclature. Respondents drew a clear boundary between "lower" castes (Dalits and Low castes, referred to as the "low jatis," in Hindi "choti jatis") and "upper" castes (Brahmins, Lordly and Merchant castes): this corresponds to the "three stages" mentioned by Pranav above in terms of varnas, sometimes referred to as the "twice-born" castes. Some respondents also used the distinction between the "savarna" castes (the ones belonging to one of the four varnas: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra) versus the "avarna" castes (the "untouchables"). The Agricultural castes were more ambiguously positioned both by respondents belonging to this category and by others. This category comprises groups of disputed varna status and aspiring to or defined in an official category (Other Backward Class), these groups are also ambiguously positioned because they are sometimes (but not always) rather dominant (politically and in terms of land ownership) in rural areas. Yet, some respondents contested my use of the term "Agricultural" to refer to them:

[59] A thorough analysis of this question could be conducted using a "card game" of social categories where respondents are asked to position themselves and fictitious respondents into their own representation of the social space. This method allows to question the ordinary subjective representations of the entire social space and not only of their own "self-understanding" of their social position as with the data I have used here. For an overview of analyses using this method with social class, see Penissat et al. (2016).

> *"Kanshi - [Referring to a Yadav family] Don't call them farmer's caste, just call them farmers [kisan]! There is no farmer's caste here!*
> *Anil - It is not here but in some places they are there!*
> *Kanshi - That I won't be able to tell! We have farmers but not farmer's caste! The people who do the farming, that's why they are called farmers! There are farmers; like in the village they are farmers because they do farming. My father was a farmer, my brother is a farmer! But there is no farmer's caste!"*
> (Kanshi, interview 32)

In fact, Kanshi's interview is a reminder that I use this term not to describe the occupational position of this category but to refer to the structural position of some jati groups as historically rising landowners. Individuals belonging to this category may not be themselves farmers (as exemplified in the next chapter, though among my respondents many had a connection with agriculture). Besides, individuals belonging to other caste categories are also often engaged in the agricultural sector as Kanshi tells us, which is not surprising given the weight of this sector in the economy (see next chapter).

In the following, I use the terms "caste" or "caste categories" when referring to this classification of caste localization. I refer to the "jatis" when talking about the self-identified nominal groups. Note that these are labelling conventions: a "jati" may sometimes refer to a label that rather evokes a varna (e.g., Kshatriya) or a sub-jati (e.g., if I consider that Jatav is a sub-jati of Chamar). Re-assigning these categories (for instance one could also think adequate to mix the Yadav and Ahir categories) would imply a non-inductive transformation of the jati classification. Precisely, I have argued that I consider these first-level categories as they were enunciated (modulo the transcription transformation) without myself assuming which links are adequate. I reserve these considerations for the caste categories where I have deductively assigned jatis to categories that (I assume) share a degree of social homogeneity (be it in terms of varna and ritual purity reputation, socioeconomic or political domination) and reflect common social dispositions.

## *C - Caste econometrics to study caste conceptualizations*

By now, I have constructed caste categories within which jatis are perfectly nested. Does it make sense to draw inferences between caste categories given their possible internal heterogeneity? How can I measure this internal heterogeneity and is it statistically possible given the small number of households within these categories? How is it possible to

simultaneously draw inferences from jati-level variations while accounting for the caste category I have assigned to them? Are caste categories adequate given the variations between jatis of the same caste category? I suggest using multilevel models (also called mixed-effects models) to account for both levels of categorizations of the analysis. I illustrate this approach on four different indicators that I assume to vary by caste.

### 1) Accounting for levels of caste as analytical categories

In analyzing variations of an indicator using caste categories (e.g., vegetarianism) in a regression model, I can simply model vegetarianism as a predicted variable depending on caste categories as predictors (assigning a reference category to one of the caste categories, e.g., here, Dalits). This modelling corresponds to "complete pooling" with respect to jatis (but "no-pooling" with respect to castes), as it ignores the underlying variations between the jatis. What is the cost of not accounting for the jati structure? It may be negligible if within-caste variations are very small compared with between-caste variations. But precisely, I cannot assume that there is no difference between a Yadav and a Jat among Agricultural castes, or between a Jatav and a Pasi among Dalits. Besides, the degree of variations that is accounted by the jati structure is a question of interest. An alternative to take into account the jati structure is to simply model as many regressions as there are jatis, comparing the intercepts of these models and maybe sorting them by caste categories, or alternatively, to build one single regression introducing jati "fixed effects," i.e., indicators or dummies in the predictors that take the value 1 for one given jati and 0 otherwise. This method corresponds to a "no-pooling" effect with respect to jatis. The main issue here is that these regressions do not model the effect of caste categories, whereas we assume that there is a certain degree of convergence between jatis of the same caste category. Among jatis with very small samples, one cannot interpret the estimates because of too large standard errors. Besides, as the sample has many jatis, the regression(s) may become very exhausting to analyze (one is then tempted to focus on one or two different jatis).

For these reasons, I suggest to model both the jati structure and the categories within one single model accounting for both levels of analysis, in an approach called "partial pooling" using multilevel models (Gelman and Hill, 2006, Gelman, 2006).[60] These models allow to model the two dimensions of the caste structure, taking into account variations associated with jatis, while also accounting for variations between caste categories. The first level of analysis

[60] In *Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models*, see in particular Chapter 1 and, in Part 2A, Chapters 11 and 12.

are individuals or households, and the second level of analysis is the jati structure. Caste categories are a jati-level variable. This framework has at least three advantages. First, it adjusts the inferences of regression coefficients. By taking into account that units of analysis are not independent of each other but nested within a jati, it avoids understating estimation precision (the jati estimates are weighted coefficients of the jati estimate and the caste category coefficient). Second, the multilevel framework estimates jati-level predictors and the conditional remaining jati effect unexplained by other jati-level predictors. In so doing, it can identify outliers in the caste classification. Third, it accomplishes this feature while also modelling the effect of caste categories and is thus not a "fixed effect" model. A simple multilevel model can be written:

$$y_i = \alpha_{j[i]} + X_i'\beta + \epsilon_i \text{, for households i = 1, …, n,}$$

$$\alpha_j = a + Caste_j'b + \eta_j \text{, for jatis j = 1, …, J.}$$

The notation j[i] indicates the jati j containing household i. $X_i$ and $Caste_j$ are predictors at the household and jati level respectively (in the following examples I have no predictor at the household level and caste categories are jati-level predictors). The second line can be written:

$$\alpha_j \sim N(a + Caste_j'b, \sigma_\alpha^2),$$

which makes explicit that the $\alpha_j$ follow a normal distribution with the mean determined by the group-level coefficients and the variance determined from the data.

The multilevel framework may be considered as a form of "partial pooling" since it acknowledges that individual units are structured within groups, yet this structure is more or less taken into account depending on the sample size. Jati-specific intercepts are a weighted average of the jati-specific intercept in a fixed effect framework and of the pooled intercept, and the weights depend on the within- and between-jati variance (along with the size of each jati). In practice, as indicated in the equation, I mostly use a multilevel framework to estimate random intercepts depending on the jati (i.e., jati varying intercepts), but it is also possible to estimate random slopes depending on the jati (i.e., jati varying coefficients for the individual variables). This second alternative is at times tested but generally requires more individual units per jati and better computing efficiency.[61] Thresholds on the minimal number of units per

[61] In R, I mostly use the package lme4 with the function lmer for multilevel linear models and glmer for multilevel logistic models (at times I also run the logistic model using the glmmTMB package which is more efficient). Statistical significance is computed using the lmerTest package and the intra-class correlation coefficient is

group or minimal number of groups have sometimes been advised. I follow Gelman and Hill's (2006: 275) discussion who consider that a multilevel regression with one observation per group as a limiting case is like a linear regression (such a model should work at least as well as a classical regression). They also observe that in case of a low number of groups, the standard deviation (or variance) of the intercepts tends to be overestimated and hence the multilevel estimates are close to "no-pooling," but again, it cannot do worse than a "no-pooling" situation (and the advantage is still that the group structure is taken into account, though in an inefficient way, along with higher level variables).

Multilevel frameworks are most commonly used to take into account structured data where the units of analysis and the variables of interest are at different levels. It has become a common tool to analyze contextual effects. Group levels may be classrooms, schools, neighborhoods, or households. In the Indian context for instance, using NSSO data, Kim et al. (2016) decompose the multiple geographic levels of poverty in India, finding that 12 per cent of the individual differences in poverty levels can be attributed to village factors. With the NFHS, Kravdal (2004) assesses that the surrounding socio-economic status of women affects child health outcomes and mortality. More broadly in sociology, these models have notably been used to model the contextual household or neighborhood effects on voting patterns (Kelvyn, 1998), on cigarette smoking (Goffette, 2016) or on alcohol consumption (Rice et al., 1998). In Chapter 7, I will also use this framework to model individual variations between households, neighborhoods and villages. The use of a multilevel framework is hence incremental: social proximities between jatis are first taken into account but other proximities resulting from co-residence in the same contextual environment will also be later explored. Considering social groups as group-levels in a multilevel framework has been more recently used by Luthra and Soehl (2015) and Luthra et al. (2018) who criticize the "ecological fallacy" of ignoring individual variations when studying ethnic group effects on integration in the sociology of migration. They also model contextual effects attached to the ethnic groups of migration, while taking into account individual covariates. Wimmer and Soehl (2014) model cultural heterodoxy of individuals associated with 305 immigrant groups in a multilevel framework adding group-level variables along with individual control variables in the model. In estimating jatis as groups in a multilevel framework I hence extend this line of enquiry.

calculated using the package performance. Gelman and Hill (2006) tend to see multilevel models in a Bayesian framework and estimate their models in RBUGS or RSTAN, a further step I do not follow here.

### 2) Preliminary validity tests on caste analytical categories

I engage with the theoretical conventions of the nomenclature and test whether the four-caste conceptual reputational dimensions are empirically reflected in the six statistical categories of the nomenclature. While I assigned a caste category to a jati based on its expected position, I now consider whether this reputational position has an empirical contemporary foundation. In doing so, the tests conducted aim at checking whether the statistical categories indeed measure what they are reputationally supposed to and whether caste categories are adequate proxies (Heath and Martin, 2012). Here, I draw from validity tests conducted on class schema, particularly on the Goldthorpe's schema (Evans 1992, 1996, Evans and Mills 1998).

Criterion validity tests require that a concept is measured in alternative ways such that these alternative variables are strongly associated with caste. Such tests are highly dependent upon the presence of well-established theories between caste and the alternative variables that capture the four conceptual dimensions. Arguably, the availability of the variables collected in the survey limits our analysis. Hence, this test is necessarily a preliminary one.

In Table 4.3, I model whether households are vegetarian (looking at whether they declared any consumption of fish or meat product in the past 30 days) testing the ritual rank and status competition (first two dimensions). More vegetarian households can be considered as asserting a higher ritual status (this perspective will be further nuanced and empirically studied in Parts 3 and 4). Economic and power positions are tested by modelling the highest adult educational level in the household (modelled as years of education), whether households are engaged in a family business (looking at whether households obtained a positive income from a family business in the past year) and the agricultural land size (in acres, the widely used measure in India, 1 acre is equivalent to 4,046 square meter).[62]

These four indicators can be considered to capture the first three dimensions of the deductive caste classification. I do not test the last one, related to caste political mobilization (because of data restriction). Each indicator is first modelled using a linear regression and then using a multilevel linear regression where the first level are households and higher-order level are jatis. In this second model, caste categories are a jati-level variable. For all indicators, the log likelihood ratio tests and the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) indicates that the multilevel models are better fit than the simple linear regressions.[63] In other words, this justifies

[62] For this last indicator, the response variable is standardized (scaled and centered), with a weighted mean of 4.4 and a standard deviation of 10.

[63] Another simple test to verify whether the caste classification is adequate is to first estimate an empty multilevel model, then to add the caste variable and to conduct a log-likelihood ratio test and to compare the AIC between

taking into account the jati structure. Figures 1 to 4 plot the estimated dependent indicator for jatis with a household sample higher than 15,[64] ordered by caste categories (with the mean estimate of the caste category plotted horizontally). This shows the importance of looking at the jati structure since jati estimates may differ from the caste estimate.

*Table 4.3 - Linear models predicting probability of vegetarianism, years of education, family business ownership and agricultural land size*

| | **Vegetarianism (Yes=1 / No=0)** | | **Years of education (0-16)** | | **Business (Yes=1 / No=0)** | | **Agri. Land size (standardized)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (1) | (2) | (1) | (2) | (1) | (2) |
| Predictor<br>**Caste** (Ref= Dalit) | | | | | | | | |
| Low | 0.104**<br>(0.036) | 0.14*<br>(0.055) | 0.579<br>(0.358) | 1.973***<br>(0.584) | 0.025<br>(0.035) | 0.022<br>(0.045) | 0.129**<br>(0.043) | 0.138<br>(0.092) |
| Agricultural | 0.343***<br>(0.05) | 0.283***<br>(0.075) | 2.464***<br>(0.519) | 3.188***<br>(0.796) | -0.008<br>(0.041) | -0.003<br>(0.062) | 0.499***<br>(0.092) | 0.458***<br>(0.121) |
| Merchant | 0.336***<br>(0.051) | 0.348***<br>(0.073) | 2.655***<br>(0.609) | 4.624***<br>(0.786) | 0.322***<br>(0.053) | 0.322***<br>(0.061) | 0.037<br>(0.052) | 0.048<br>(0.126) |
| Lordly | 0.199***<br>(0.04) | 0.192**<br>(0.064) | 3.089***<br>(0.398) | 4.01***<br>(0.685) | -0.004<br>(0.036) | 0.002<br>(0.053) | 0.625***<br>(0.089) | 0.548***<br>(0.107) |
| Brahman | 0.561***<br>(0.027) | 0.485***<br>(0.08) | 4.861***<br>(0.334) | 4.566***<br>(0.86) | 0.013<br>(0.037) | -0.113<br>(0.067) | 0.522***<br>(0.062) | 0.407**<br>(0.139) |
| **Constant** | 0.397***<br>(0.025) | 0.383***<br>(0.045) | 5.928***<br>(0.235) | 5.109***<br>(0.478) | 0.184***<br>(0.027) | 0.223***<br>(0.037) | -0.274***<br>(0.016) | -0.287***<br>(0.073) |
| **sigma 1** | 0.455 | 0.42 | 5.068 | 4.702 | 0.399 | 0.374 | 0.976 | 0.94 |
| **sigma 2** | | 0.226 | | 2.338 | | 0.178 | | 0.296 |
| **AIC** | 4273.519 | 4075.579 | 18042.599 | 17846.828 | 3518.464 | 3374.844 | 8631.914 | 8553.591 |
| **Log likelihood** | -2129.76 | -2029.79 | -9014.299 | -8915.414 | -1752.23 | -1679.42 | -4308.957 | -4268.795 |

*Note: The reference category for the caste variable is Dalit. Models predicting the probability of being vegetarian and family business ownership are probability linear models. I fit these models rather than logistic regression because of the easiness of interpretation of coefficients which directly read as probability changes (e.g., the estimated probability of being vegetarian for a low caste household is 10 percent higher than for a Dalit household). I account for the heteroscedastic issue of modelling a 0-1 variable by presenting robust standard errors for the linear models. Using logistic models yields similar results. In column (1), I fit a linear model and in (2) I fit a multilevel linear model with varying group-level intercept. Hence in the first case, caste is a household-level variable whereas in the second case caste is a jati-level variables.* $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$ *(two-sided).*

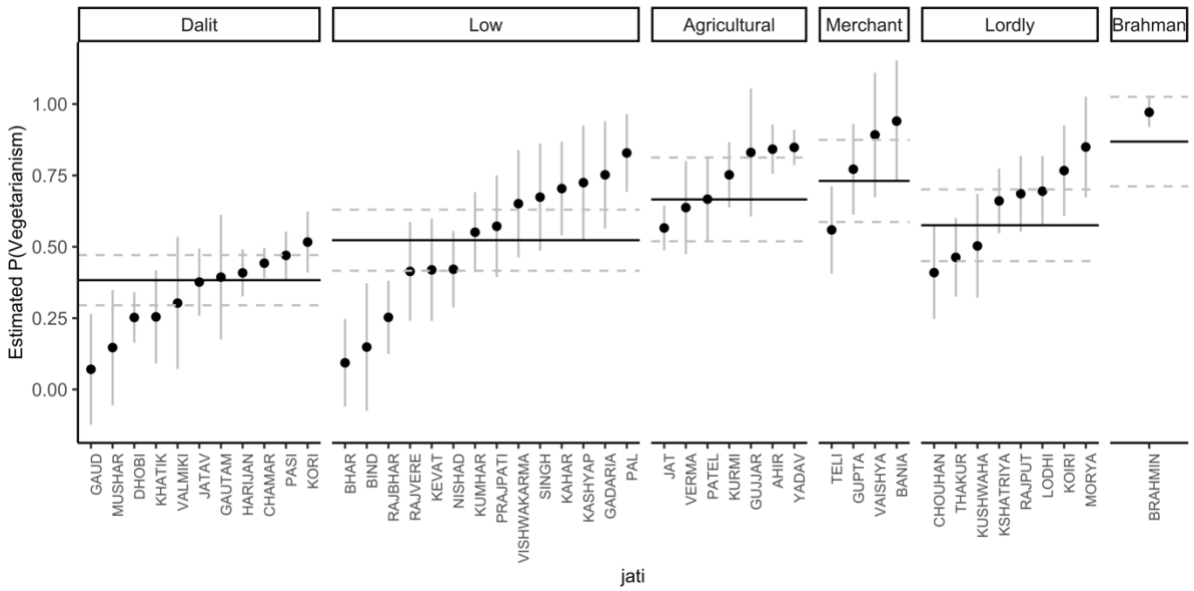
More specifically, I expect that the prevalence of vegetarianism is higher among Brahmin and Merchant castes. Brahmins are at the top of the ritual purity hierarchy and Merchant castes are highly sanskritized castes. This should be also the case of Agricultural castes, which assert a high ritual rank. On the contrary, low castes and Dalits, because they are at the bottom of the ritual hierarchy, are expected to more often be non-vegetarian and not comply with the ritual rules. But the vegetarianism indicator also allows to test the second

the two models. Results are not shown here but they confirmed for all indicators that using the caste classification improves the fit of the estimates.

[64] Since most of Brahmins identify in their jati as "Brahmins," this is the only jati shown.

dimension of my classification, namely the competition between different moral values between high castes. Because Lordly castes embody Rajput or Kshatriya values, where meat consumption is enhanced, I expect the incidence of vegetarianism to be lower among these castes (Bruckert, 2018). The coefficients of the regressions (Table 4.3) reflect this tendency. For instance, it is estimated that 38 percent of Dalits are vegetarian, but 87 percent of Brahmins are vegetarian (coefficients from the mixed model regression). Yet, Figure 4.2 also shows jati variability within each caste category (though not always significantly different from the caste mean effect given the jati error bars): for instance, among Dalits, Gauds and Mushars, the level of vegetarianism approaches 0 while Koris and Pasis come closer to 50 percent. Overall, the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) indicates that 22 percent of the unexplained vegetarianism variance in model 2 is accounted for by differences between jatis, showing a substantial effect of jatis (but without including the caste classification as a predictor, the ICC was as high as 30 percent so caste categories capture an important amount of the jati variability).[65]

*Figure 4.2 - Estimated probability of vegetarianism accounting for the jati-level varying intercepts*




*Note: Dots represent the estimated y which varies by group (jati) because of the estimated varying intercept for each jati. Error bars take into account the standard deviation of the jati-level intercepts (+/- 1.96), hence not accounting for the group-level coefficient uncertainty of caste. I (arbitrarily) choose to plot only jatis with more than 15 households in the sample (beyond that, error bars tend to become very large and jati estimations are not very useful). The horizontal bar represents the estimated y for a jati with a 0-level deviation from the intercept.*

[65] The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient ranges from 0 to 100 percent and indicates the proportion of variance of the predicted variable that is explained by the higher-level structure. In a linear multilevel model, it is calculated as the ratio of group-level error variance over the total error variance: ICC = $\text{sigma2}^2$ / ($\text{sigma1}^2$ + $\text{sigma2}^2$).

Among Low castes, some jatis come closer to the Dalits (Bhars, Binds), while others are much more vegetarian (Gadarias and Pals). Among Agricultural castes, Jats are less vegetarian than Yadavs or Ahirs. Hence, if the average effects of the caste categories are significant in the regressions (the significance tests show that being in any caste category but Dalit demonstrates that the probability of being vegetarian is higher) and indicate the interest of the classification, jati variability is also present. Further models that take into account the class position of households will be estimated in Part 3.

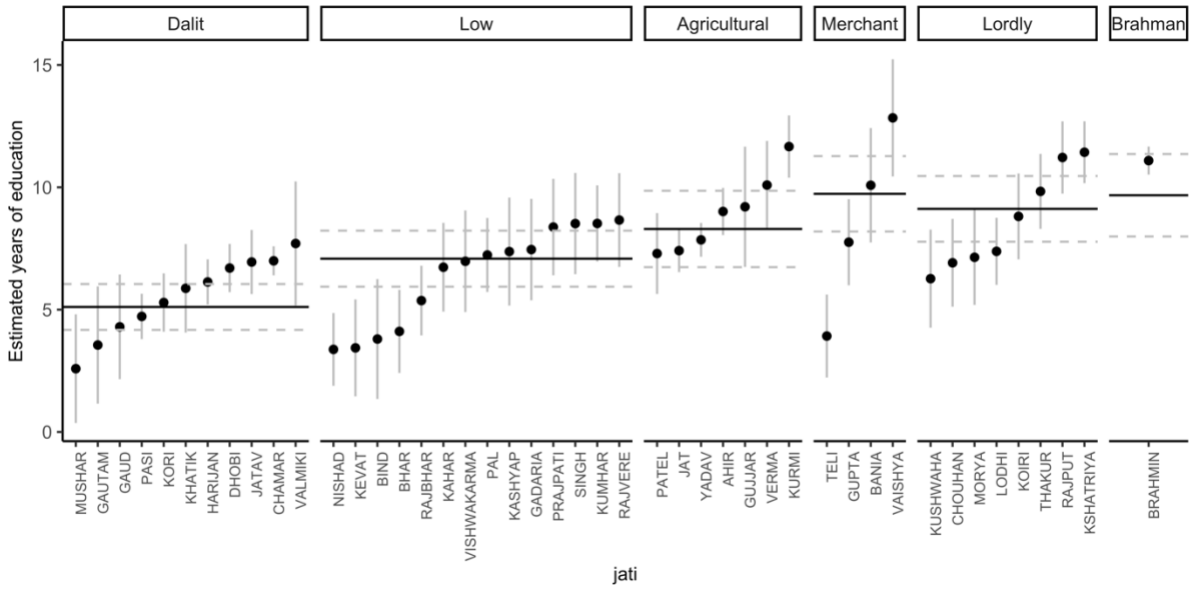
The next three indicators test the third conceptual dimension of caste, namely the economic and power positions linked to caste. Theoretically, I expect the incidence of higher education to be higher among Brahmins, since they are traditionally literate castes. Merchant castes are more likely to own a business given that they are traditionally merchant communities. I also expect that the incidence of land ownership is higher among Lordly castes and Agricultural castes, since both these categories gather traditionally landowning castes. Arguably, these economic positions are normative occupations or the result of historical processes and it might seem bold to consider that they reflect current economic positions or occupations. Post-independence agrarian reforms are likely to have decreased the land ownership of Lordly castes (Hoeber Rudolph and Rudolph, 2011), which has in parallel favored the Agricultural castes (Jeffery et al., 2011). Further, the implementation of reserved categories (SCs, STs, OBCs) aims at reducing educational gaps by implementing access quotas in higher education for low castes. Expectedly, the educational advantage of Brahmins should have reduced over time. Finally, economic "pluri-activity" (Jodhka, 2018) is an important growing process in rural India, which in particular leads to the growing of small household-held businesses, not only among Merchant castes. However, studying these dynamic processes requires adequate surveys over different periods of time, which I do not mobilize here.[66]

The results are in line with the expectations, that is, current economic positions reflect, to a large extent, traditional economic positions, measured by educational attainment, business ownership and land ownership. Whereas the average number of years of education for Dalits is 5 (note that among Hindus the average number of years of education is 7.7), it is the double for Brahmins and, more unexpectedly, for Merchant castes. In between, Low castes study on average 2 more years than Dalits, Agricultural castes 3 more years and Lordly castes 4 more

[66] The caste nomenclature could be implemented in IHDS-I (2004-2005) and in the Human Development Profile of India (1993-1994) to study more accurately these processes, a task I do not undertake here.

years. Again, Figure 4.3 accounts for important jati variability (the ICC indicates that 20 percent of the remaining variance in model 2 is accounted for by differences between jatis).

*Figure 4.3 - Estimated years of education accounting for the jati-level varying intercepts*



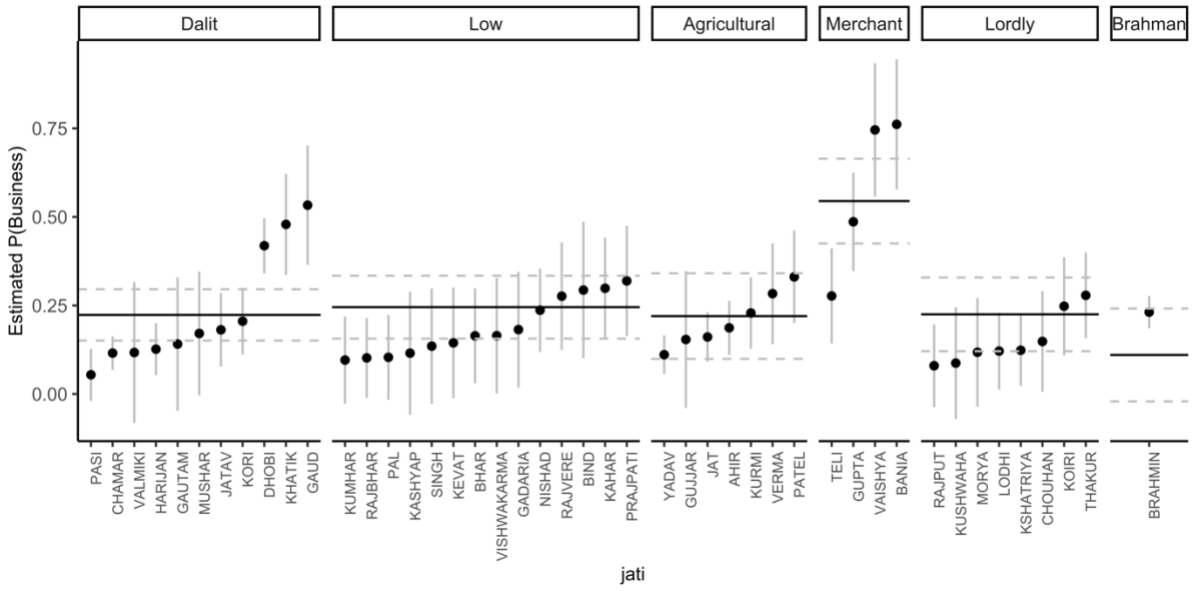

*Note: Refer to the above note.*

Whereas 22 percent of Dalits own a family business, 54 percent of Merchant castes do (Table 4.3, mixed model). Among the Dalit castes that declare owning a business, it is interesting to note that it is those jatis that are traditionally involved in family businesses (traditionally, Dhobis wash laundry and Khatiks are butchers, Figure 4.4). Merchant castes, Banias and Vaishyas (some households use a varna title to identify their jati) fare better, while Telis lie far behind (not better than Dalits): in fact, though this jati reputationally claims a Vaishya status (and has hence been classified among Merchants) it is not widely acknowledged by other jatis. For this indicator, with an ICC of 18.5 percent, jatis still prove to be an important structural determinant of Business ownership.

Finally, while Dalits own on average 1.5 acres of land (remarkably, no single jati stands out from this average, Figure 4.5), Lordly castes own 7 acres (among them, those claiming to be Kshatriyas, using a varna to identify their jati, fare much better almost with 15 acres) and Agricultural castes 6.1 acres (among them, Patels and Kurmis are better-off with 12 and 14 acres). Brahmins are also more often landowners than expected (they own on average 5.6 acres, still behind Lordly and Agricultural castes). In a State where 78 percent of the population is counted as rural (compared with 69 percent for all of India, 2011 census), the Brahmins' agrarian resources seem to strengthen their high caste position, placing them among the

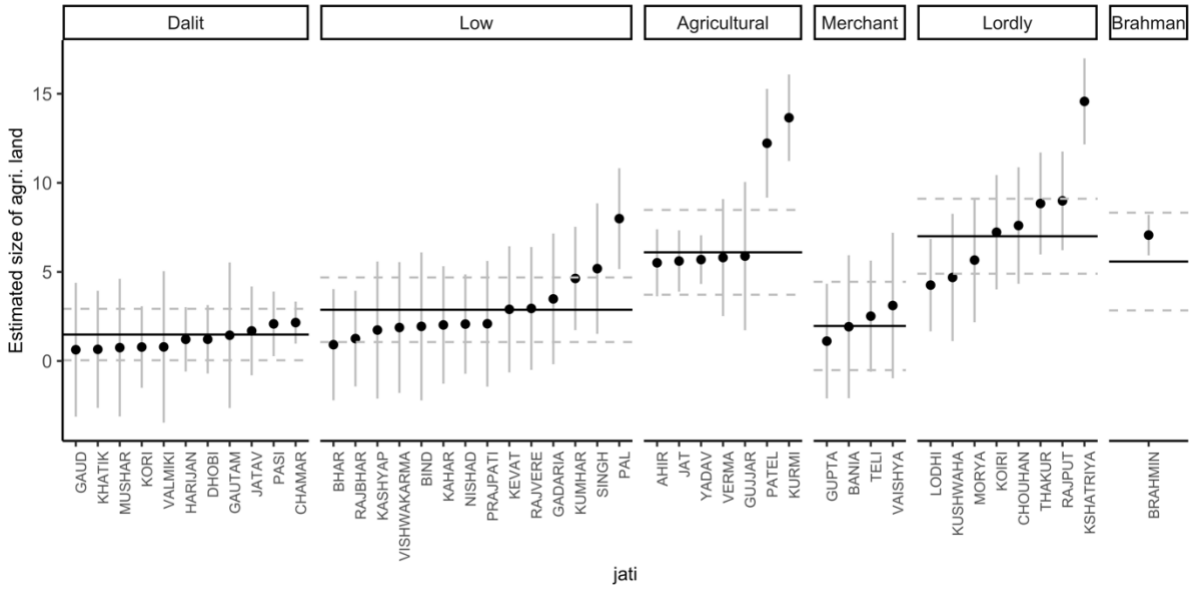
dominant agrarian castes of the region. For this specific indicator jatis seem less important, since only 9 percent of the remaining variability in land ownership size is explained by jati determinants (ICC).

*Figure 4.4 - Estimated probability of owning a family business accounting for the jati-level varying intercepts*




*Note: Refer to the above note.*

*Figure 4.5 - Estimated size of agricultural land accounting for the jati-level varying intercepts*




*Note: Refer to the above note. Estimate points have been unstandardized for easier readability.*

These results show the relevance of the caste classification, while still taking into account the jati structure. While the caste classification seems to rightly capture caste as categorical

social localization, finer-grained social dispositions at the level of jati self-identifications are also taken into account in this multilevel framework. This seminal caste operationalization hence paves the way for statistical social stratification studies on the Indian society. As an analytical category, it is possible to disentangle caste between self-identification while still accounting for a nominal objective classification that considers some dimensions of caste social localization.

### *D - Conclusion: a categorization for the needs of the research question*

By retracing the history of caste as a statistical category, looking at the debates on the possibilities of caste quantification, and questioning the conventions posed by caste coding, I have endeavored to overcome the reluctance of the statistical use of caste in the Indian social sciences. While the statistical instrument in colonial censuses reinforced the ideological a priori of European enumerators, combined with a socially situated vision of local informants, one does not need to reject caste quantification for this reason. The alternative, using administrative categories of caste as a proxy, does not satisfactorily conceptualizes caste. Coding, however, cannot claim historical and social neutrality, since the colonial experience had performative effects on the modes of enunciation and valorization of caste identities in the social world, which are observed in contemporary surveys.

The representation of castes in statistical categories is not only a matter of statistical work, and in this chapter I also wanted to take into account and explain the political processes that lead to the formation of collective categories, as well as the processes of cognitive self-identification in categories (Desrosières and Thévenot, 1988). The development of these different elements throughout the methodological work does not only justify the "equivalences" proposed in the classification, but also shows the salience of caste categories for the respondents, for whom the enunciation of a caste identity varies according to the strategies of social mobility they adopted and the feeling of belonging to more or less institutionalized (e.g., by caste associations) social groups. Thus, noting that caste often remains a blind spot in the quantitative studies of the Indian society, I have suggested a classification which also takes into account the modes of caste self-identification. Noting that caste self-identifications are highly fragmented, I have hypothesized following Brubaker and Cooper (2000) that categorical social localization is not necessarily discursive and may be drawn at larger levels of categorization. The suggested econometric approach allows for investigating different levels of identification and for testing the adequacy of a higher-level caste classification reflecting social dispositions. The possibility of mobilizing open-ended

questions to collect information on caste has, curiously, been hitherto largely ignored in the study of India from a social sciences perspective. The non-use of this resource is all the more surprising that the debates on the salience of caste in the Indian society are reduced to being based on "clue," sometimes leading to conclude that the salience of caste is diminishing in the contemporary Indian society (Béteille, 2012).

The caste open-ended questions are a unique resource for studying the importance of caste in the structuring of lifestyles. If caste is indeed increasingly about cultural separation, or "ethnicization," rather than hierarchical status (Fuller, 1996), there is an urgent need to grasp these changing realities at a broader and more synthetic level than the one allowed by ethnographic enquiry. Further, if today, caste status matters less than social class as suggested in some qualitative studies (Dolphijn, 2006), quantitative research is indubitably necessary to assess the real extent of competing social stratification dimensions. Obviously, quantifying does not mean giving up on ethnographic studies – which prove to be essential in quantification as illustrated in this work – but quantitative research might give further theoretical insights on the reality of caste in contemporary India. As already noted, food practices are important caste-marked lifestyles and subsequent chapters will focus on these cultural indicators. The classification developed in this chapter is therefore a necessary step for investigating the social stratification of food practices in India.

Further results mobilizing this econometric framework should be interpreted in light of the theoretical definitions of caste that I have provided here. Since caste is a theoretically challenged category, it is expected that the characterizations chosen in this chapter will nourish critical comments. In particular, I do not rely only on ritual status to construct a one-dimensional hierarchical nomenclature, such as theoretically envisioned by Dumont (1974). On the contrary, the nomenclature tries to account for the historical changing realities of caste. By explicating the conventions of coding, the classification quantifies an explicit concept. This classification may not be adequate to investigate other research questions and it would certainly require adaptations to study other regions. But the data source, the conceptual approach and the methodological framework using multilevel models may be used to construct and test other caste nomenclatures, and even other social nomenclatures in different contexts. There is certainly a long road until social scientists mobilize more standardized caste categories and this present study is only, at best, a small step in that direction.

At the end of this chapter, I have put in place the theoretical and empirical tools to understand the ascribed position of caste in the Uttar Pradesh region. I have already highlighted how vegetarianism is correlated with caste and consistent with caste beliefs. But caste does not

subsume the entire Indian social structure. In order to understand how vegetarianism is articulated with other categories of social stratification, it is now necessary to look at how achieved positions – or simply put, class positions – structure the Indian social space (next chapter).

# Chapter 5 – Achieved position: mobility or reproduction?

> *Balram Halwai: You see, I was a servant once. Today, I am a celebrated entrepreneur in Bangalore, the Silicon Valley of India! They say, it's named after the Silicon Valley in America, but I think we can agree that America is so yesterday. India and China are so tomorrow. In the belief that the future of the world lies with the yellow man and the brown man, now that our erstwhile master, the white-skinned man has wasted himself through buggery, cell phone usage and drug abuse, I offer to tell you, free of charge, truth about India, by telling you the story of my life. […] I come from the village of Laxmangarh which is in the darkness. India is two countries in one: an India of light, and an India of darkness. I think a rich man like you knows which one I come from.*
> The White Tiger*, 2021, Bahrani, R. (based on Adiga A.'s novel).*

If quantifying caste in the Indian context is not a common or simple academic activity, neither is the statistical measurement of achievement – or class position. Still, social class may constitute an important aspect of the social stratification of vegetarianism. The degree of misalignment between caste and class is at the heart of potential "inconsistencies" or "non-crystallization" resulting in more or less acute effects on lifestyle (Lenski, 1954). If the crystallization of the cultural and economic dimensions of social stratification has been investigated in other social contexts following Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) – see for instance Flemmen et al. (2019) or Coulangeon (2015) as for differences in class of origin and destination –, corresponding studies on the crystallization of ethnic groups (in the meaning of Wimmer, 2013) and class are few. Yet, status-seeking or conformity strategies as well as reactions to status threats may be the result from the misalignment between ascribed and achieved positions and they may affect lifestyles, as I have theoretically hypothesized in chapter 2.

In this chapter, I review and empirically estimate different quantitative tools to quantify achieved position, in particular social class. I mainly draw from the Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012 and I also use my fieldwork material to substantiate class inequality measured in large-scale surveys in Uttar Pradesh.

For each of these approaches, I assess to which extent ascribed position – defined in the previous chapter as caste and religious position[67] – and achieved position – in a word, class –

[67] In the analyses here I use the caste categories as quantified in the previous chapter and I also include "Muslims" as a separate category of my nomenclature. Indeed, as discussed previously, although this community is composed of different caste categories too, its internal composition matters less for the study of the social stratification of vegetarianism. Hence the "caste and religious" nomenclature includes Hindus divided into six categories and Muslims. Besides, this religious category is highly ascriptive in the Indian context, despite conversion processes. As a matter of fact, as already discussed in chapter 1, it involves stigmatization mechanisms.

are two related yet distinct social dimensions of social stratification. In doing so, I outline ascribed categories as a structure of advantage and I discuss the mechanisms of social reproduction, discrimination and opportunity hoarding (Mosse, 2018) that contribute to the association between ascribed and achieved position.

I suggest three different ways of looking at class. First, I look at material living conditions, which provide reliable hints to assess well-being and conspicuous consumption. Second, I focus on occupational classifications and I use an existing schema drawn from intergenerational mobility studies. Third, I investigate the level of intergenerational social reproduction and mobility using this classification, including an adjustment for educational attainment. Fourth, I discuss to which extent class as an experienced social position is different from class as a perceived social position, assessing who identifies as middle class and how it may be possibly misaligned with occupational class.

## *A - Material conditions as primary indicators of achievement*

In this section, I first discuss material conditions, i.e., housing conditions and ownership of durable goods, as indicators of achieved position and social class. The diversity of living conditions that I encountered in the course of my fieldwork reflects the huge economic disparities that exist in Uttar Pradesh. Since these indicators of material conditions are routinely collected in large-scale surveys such as the NFHS and the IHDS, they serve as proxies to estimate household economic positions. They provide important tools for contrasting the economic conditions of caste and religious groups.

### 1) Material conditions as social markers

Conducting door-to-door interviews during my fieldwork provided me with an exceptional access to my participants' living environment. From an illegal slum where the dwellers are under the imminent threat of eviction[68] to a colony (a gated community) guarded by security guards in Rajajipuram, Lucknow (Rekha, interview 5), I accessed diverse households across the economic spectrum. Whether inside or outside the house, while sitting on a plastic chair, on the edge of a charpoy (a bed consisting in a woven network of ropes attached to a wooden structure) or sometimes on a couch, I had an opportunity to observe the material living conditions of the informants I interviewed. The important gaps in housing

[68] An experience some of my interviewees actually already lived through at some point in their lives, as recalled for instance by Mohamed (interview 20), Ram (interview 21) and Halima (22) in Lovekush Nagar, Lucknow.

conditions are worth looking at because they reflect the strong economic disparities that characterize Indian (and more specifically, Uttar Pradesh) society.

The diversity of housing structures is perhaps the most evident economic marker. Whether dwellings' walls are made of mud and unburnt brick (27 percent of the dwellings consist of this material, IHDS II), bricks (50 percent), concrete (17 percent) or plastic or wood out of salvage (1 percent), walls are the primary indicator of one's material conditions. The type of floor, whether consisting of dry mud (70 percent) or any form of concrete (28 percent), also reveals material disparities. The absence of a toilet attached to the house (in 2012, 67 percent of households had no toilet facility), despite a national social program initiated under Narendra Modi's first tenure,[69] also reflects class belonging. Indeed, this last point echoes the fact that 54 percent of households do not have access to water inside their compound while just 56 percent have electricity in their house.

These housing conditions do not simply separate the poor from the better-offs of the population. They are part of an economic continuum reflecting more or less deprived economic conditions. Material conditions may also be a matter of social prestige. After Javed (my informant in Gorakhpur district) and I interviewed Jay (43), a vegetable grower and livestock owner in the countryside of Gorakhpur district, he insisted on taking us to a compound next to his actual wood and mud dwelling. Though the construction of his new house was not complete he had already moved in some furniture and was showing us around, describing the different rooms.

These housing conditions also distinguish rural from urban dwellers. One needs not move far from the city to see how living conditions change sharply. It is clear that urban dwellings are more often concrete houses, they have more equipment and benefit from better infrastructures. It is generally in cities, such as Lucknow and Gorakhpur, that I have met the most well-off families, who sometimes have live-in domestic workers (just 2 percent of households report employing help for cleaning, cooking or childcare). They live in houses equipped with fans (48 percent of households have one) and air-conditioning (just 1 percent of households), luxuries when one considers the proportion of equipped households, yet not so much considering the harsh climatic conditions of the Gangetic plains.

But this urban-rural division needs to be nuanced. While living in rural areas definitely reflects more deprived living conditions, access to less developed infrastructures and scarcer

[69] This refers to the "Clean India" program which has officially brought a toilet to every household in the country, despite many controversies (https://qz.com/india/1550401/is-india-cleaner-after-modis-swachh-bharat/).

economic opportunities, the boundary between rural and urban areas is far from clear when one tries to go beyond the somewhat arbitrary administrative distinction. In fact, Uttar Pradesh is known as one of the regions of "subaltern urbanization," characterized by many small towns that develop rapidly and outside the realm of bureaucratic urban planning (Denis and Zérah, 2017). Nor are the urban and the rural two hermetic worlds, as the recent (attempt of) mass exodus of internal migrant workers during the lockdown provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic showed (Al Dahdah et al., 2020). Slum dwellers I met in Lovekush Nagar (interview 20, 21, 22) and Aliganj (Rishik, interview 36) in Lucknow were first generation urban inhabitants, referring to their village of origin as their home place (this is not the case of all slum dwellers, as slums may become places of intergenerational poverty reproduction, Krishna, 2013). As I expand below, several of my rural interviewees occasionally work in urban towns and in cities and many of the better-off individuals I met recalled owning agricultural land in a native village, managed by a distant family member.

Spatial differences in material conditions are also contrasted when looking at both the extremities of the spectrum. In urban unnotified slums, dwellings are particularly precarious as people may be subject to eviction and the material structure is made of salvaged wood and plastic, with no running water, and rerouted electricity connections. On the contrary, I have come across particularly well-off housings in my fieldwork in rural areas. In the Ghazipur district, in a remote village about two-hour drive from Varanasi, after interviewing Parv and Rachit (interview 24), they invited me to visit their compound. The extended family, comprising 16 members, lives in two air-conditioned houses, including one that has just been built.

### 2) Durable goods as class indicators

As part of my interviews, I also systematically observed and asked questions on the possession of durable goods. As we have seen in the case of Jay (43), comfortable material conditions may be a matter of social prestige and durable goods fall in this category. Yet, not owning these goods and being asked about them may be a form of symbolic violence. Standing outside Rishi's house in Telibagh, Lucknow, I asked him whether he was equipped with chairs or tables inside, to which he replied bluntly: "No, I don't. I am a poor guy! You will only find debt!" (Rishi, interview 35). Trying to limit this effect, I resolved to ask about goods relating to food preparation and goods whose presence or absence I could visibly observe in the case of a one-room dwelling and which felt less intrusive to ask about. I chose as variables nine

durable items, comprising chairs and tables, a pressure cooker, an electronic mixer, a fridge, a microwave oven, a fan, an air-conditioner, a motorbike and a car.

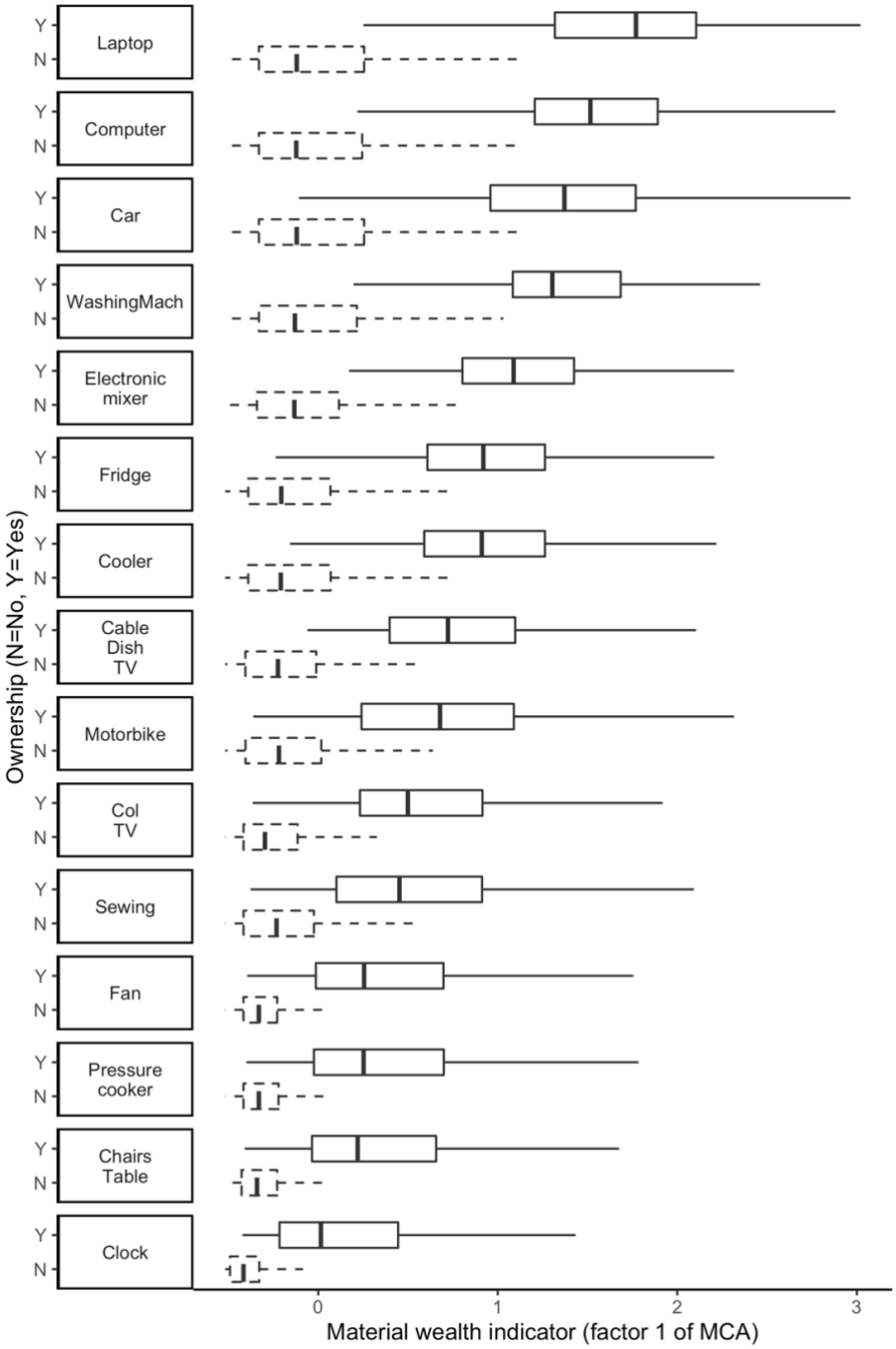
Durable goods often serve as indicators of household wealth in quantitative surveys. Using the IHDS, Barik et al. (2018) observe that the number of durable goods possessed among a list of 24 assets better predicts adult mortality than income or consumption expenditures which are other common ways of assessing economic status. Indeed, income is particularly subject to reporting bias and expenditures may vary due to external factors that are unlinked to economic conditions. The rounds of the NFHS, in relation with the DHS program, routinely produce a "wealth indicator" that is based on a factor analysis of indicators such as housing conditions and ownership of durable goods (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF, 2017). The Centre for Study of Developing Societies in New Delhi, which produces the National Election Survey, also collects information on durable goods and builds four "social class" categories based on these information, along with occupation, housing type and income, which are then used to analyze voting patterns, for instance (Jaffrelot, 2019a).[70] Finally, durable good ownership may at times be used to define the Indian "middle class" (Sudeshna, 2007).

In order to position households regarding their ownership of durable goods and to relate the social position of my fieldwork participants to the representative households of Uttar Pradesh in 2012, I use geometric data analysis and I construct the social space of durable goods. This statistical method aims at detecting and representing underlying structures in a data set (Le Roux and Rouanet, 2010). Specifically, I use Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), where my "active variables" (corresponding to the variables of interests) are 24 durable items as recorded in the IHDS II, taking two modalities, Yes or No.[71]

[70] Class indices of this type are often built controlling for locality (rural or urban). I do not follow this strategy in the following analysis, because of the preceding subsection and because the goal is not to build class categories "net" of other social dimensions. I consider class as a structural dimension that comprises a diverse set of social conditions, that may or may not be controlled for in regression analyses.

[71] Since the active variables are dichotomous, the MCA corresponds to a Principal Component Analysis (PCA), which explains the high variance of the first axes. See the appendix of the chapter for further information on this analysis.

*Figure 5.1 - Boxplots of the distribution of the most contributing durable goods to the material wealth indicator, Uttar Pradesh*




*Note: Boxplots depict the distribution of households on the first factor of the MCA according to the modality (Yes and No) for the different goods. The summaries of the boxplot in the style of Tukey are the following: the median, the lower and the upper hinges correspond to the first and third quartiles and the whiskers extend the range to 1.5 times the interquartile range from each end of the box. Only durable goods with a modality higher or equal to the average contribution of factor 1 (2.08) are depicted in the figure. Goods are ordered from the most distinctive ones (at the top), to the least distinctive ones (at the bottom) on the first axis.*

*Sample: All households residing in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

In this analysis, the first factor accounts for a large part of the total variance of the household cloud (27.3 percent). This factor distinguishes households according to their (non-) possession of durable goods and is also strongly correlated to the total number of owned goods by each household (Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.94, hence very close to 1). Given that the first factorial plane of the MCA shows a "Guttman effect" indicating a redundancy in the first two factors,[72] I here concentrate on the description of the first factor which is interpreted as an indicator of material wealth, where a higher value on the factor (towards the right) indicates a higher material wealth level and where a lower value on the factor (towards the left) indicates a lower material wealth level (Figure 5.1).

The most distinctive durable goods of material wealth are computer equipment (only 2.3 percent and 1.7 percent of households in Uttar Pradesh own a computer or a laptop), motorized vehicles (2.5 percent of households own a car) and electronic appliances (5 percent own a washing machine and 13.5 own a refrigerator). On the contrary, furniture (clock, chairs and tables) are much less distinctive.

I systematically asked all my survey respondents about their ownership of nine items: car, motorbike, microwave, refrigerator, electronic mixer, pressure cooker, fan, air conditioner and chairs and table. I use this information to compute their position on the first factor of the MCA as supplementary individuals,[73] and I compare their position with the representative population from the IHDS, Figure 5.2). I distinguish rural and urban households in Uttar Pradesh given the discrepancies in material wealth associated with the residential context: rural households tend to be much poorer and are rather homogenous. On the contrary, urban households are more heterogenous from a material wealth point of view and they are on average more affluent.

As for my own survey respondents, the overall distribution of their material wealth position is rather similar to the urban material wealth distribution: higher than for rural households but rather dispersed. Several interviewed individuals are at the top of the material wealth indicator (on the right): Rekha (interview 5), Anant (interview 30), Parvez (interview 52), Shiraji (interview 49), Ankit (interview 3) and Anand (interview 39). They all own all of the surveyed durable goods. On the contrary, Rishik (interview 36) and the several individuals interviewed jointly (47) are at the bottom of the material wealth indicator (on the left). They do not own any of the nine surveyed items.

[72] The depiction of the cloud of individuals and the goods has a parabolic shape.
[73] For the 15 items that were not asked about in the interviews, I replace the missing values by simulation. I use the option "average" in the package FactoMineR.

Hence, the material wealth indicator constructed here shows a rather diverse sample of interviewees even though it tends to be more affluent than the Uttar Pradesh rural population. Obviously, this indicator summarizes material wealth quite crudely, but it certainly helps indicate one's relative achieved material wealth position.

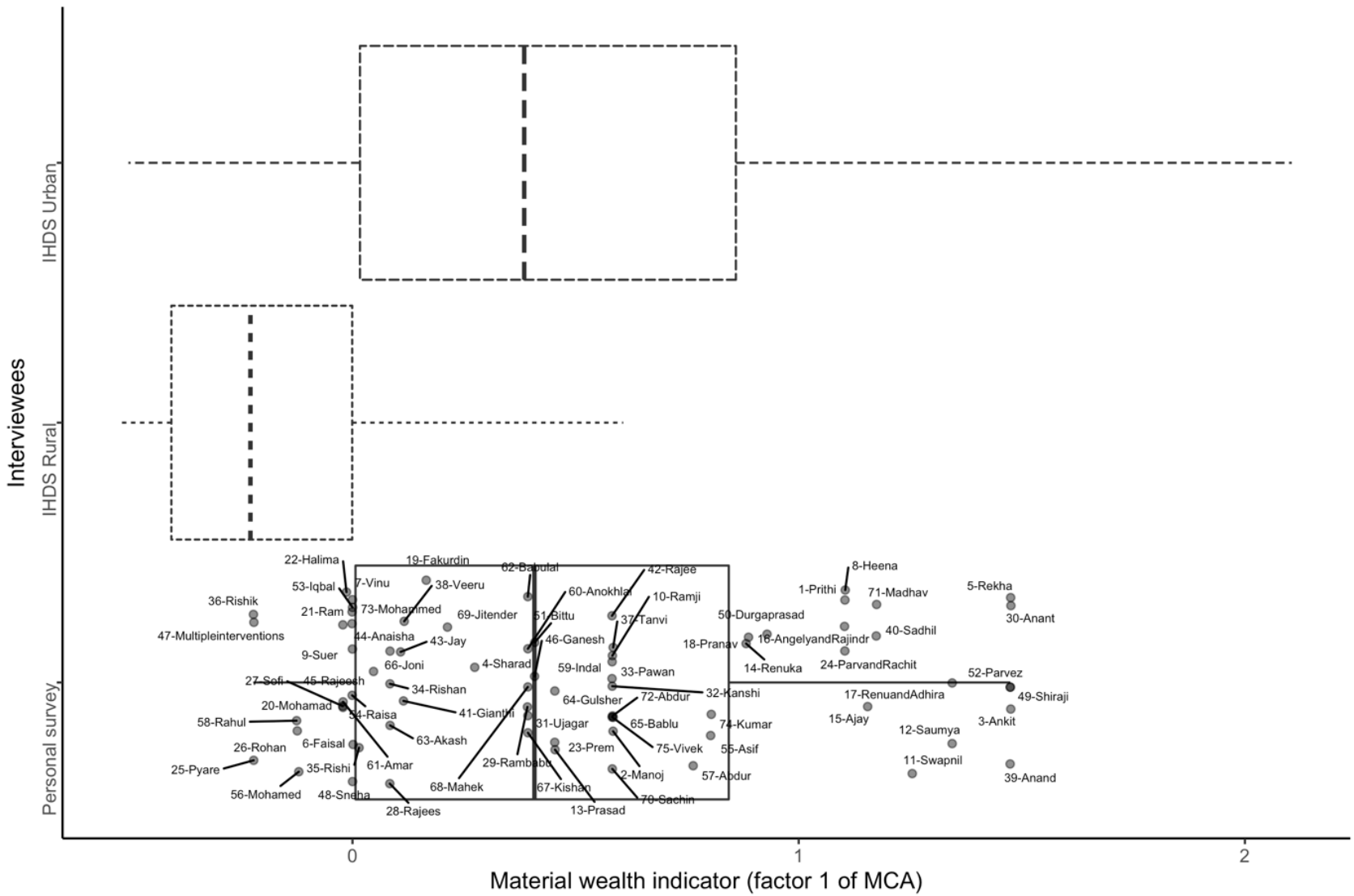



*Figure 5.2 - Boxplots of the distribution of IHDS households and of my own surveyed interviewees on the material wealth indicator*

*Note: The boxplots depict the distribution of urban and rural households that were used to construct the material wealth indicator by way of an MCA. In addition, I calculated the position of my interviewees as "supplementary points" on this indicator using the surveyed information of their ownership of durable goods (non-surveyed items are simulated by the MCA function).*

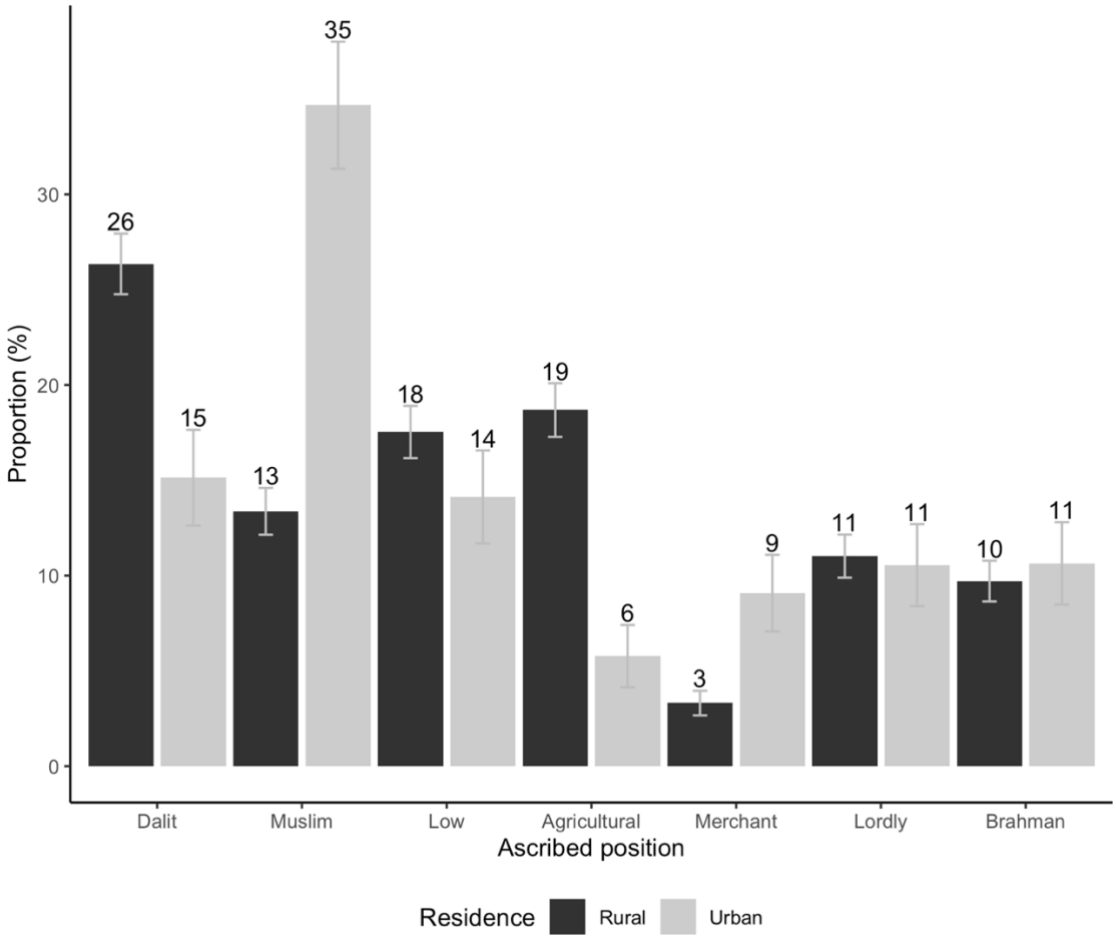
*Sample: All households residing in Uttar Pradesh and interviewees from my personal survey.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012 and self-collected data on surveyed individuals.*

### 3) Material condition and ascribed position

How does material wealth relate to caste and religious positions as discussed in the previous chapter? Ascribed privilege may be associated with achievement so that privileged caste groups (in particular Brahmins and other upper caste categories) may be more affluent. Given that material wealth particularly distinguishes rural and urban households in Uttar Pradesh, I first compare the distribution of ascribed categories in both rural and urban contexts (Figure 5.3). Dalit and Agricultural caste households make up a larger share of the rural than the urban population, while Muslim and Merchant caste households make up a larger share of the urban than the rural population. Hence, ascribed position differences in material wealth may relate to contextual differences.

*Figure 5.3 - Social composition of rural and urban areas by ascribed status category in Uttar Pradesh*




*Note: 26 percent of rural households are Dalit against 15 percent of urban households.*

*Sample: All households residing in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

To investigate how material wealth relates to ascribed position, I run a regression predicting the number of owned durable assets in the household (continuous variable ranging from 0 to 24) where the independent variable of interest is ascribed position, which variable systematically interacts with the residential area (rural or urban, Table 5.1). The number of owned durable goods is arguably a more interpretable indicator of material wealth than the indicator provided by the factor 1 of the MCA, and both are highly correlated.

*Table 5.1 - Linear regression predicting the number of owned durable goods according to ascribed position by residential context in Uttar Pradesh*

| Variable | Modality | Rural | Urban |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Constant | 7.631*** (0.485) | 16.267*** (0.631) |
| **Ascribed category (ref=Dalit)** | Brahmin | 3.598*** (0.863) | 3.211** (1.063) |
| | Lordly | 4.608*** (0.685) | 2.699** (0.897) |
| | Merchant | 2.883** (0.9) | 5.915*** (0.992) |
| | Agricultural | 4.071*** (0.778) | 4.109*** (1.061) |
| | Low | 1.384* (0.601) | 2.08** (0.802) |
| | Muslim | 2.665 (2.491) | 0.836 (2.528) |
| | sigma (residual) | 4.633 | |
| | sigma (jati) | 2.432 | |
| | AIC | 23168.729 | |
| | Log likelihood | -11568.364 | |

*Note: The regression is multilevel since I introduce varying-intercepts for jatis as explained in the preceding chapter (after accounting for the presented variables in the table, 21 percent of the unaccounted variance in asset ownership can be attributed to jati differences). Residential area systematically interacts with the ascribed position in the model.*

*Sample: All households residing in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

The model (Table 5.1) estimates that on average Dalit households own about 8 (7.6) goods in rural areas but 16 (16.2) in urban areas. Brahmin households significantly hold more goods: on average about 3 more goods. In rural areas, Lordly castes own 5 more goods than Dalits and in urban areas, Merchant castes are even more advantaged with 6 more goods. Overall, Dalits are clearly disadvantaged in terms of material wealth both in rural and urban areas. Brahmins are not necessarily the most advantaged caste category: other upper castes and Agricultural castes are on average more equipped. The best-equipped caste in rural areas (Lordly castes with 12 goods on average) is still less advantaged than the most-deprived caste

in urban areas (Dalits with 16 goods on average). It reminds the strong contextual differences in the social structure according to the spatial position of households even though ascribed categories also affect the distribution of material wealth.

Material conditions could partly result from status-seeking strategies triggered by caste inequality (Bellet and Sihra, 2016), and would hence be driven by logics of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899). Yet, these conditions can be first and foremost understood as reflecting economic well-being.

If material conditions are at times used as a class indicator, it is not sufficient and so for at least two reasons. First, asset penetration varies quite fast, rendering cross-sectional comparisons and even time gaps between surveys and fieldwork complicated to manage. Second, material conditions do not reflect a position in the economic order, which is understood as a market position. More so than indicators of class position, material conditions are consequences of class positions and it is therefore necessary to delve more precisely into occupational categories to get a sense of class differences.

## *C - Social class derived from occupational positions*

Although class schemas in developed countries vary quite substantially depending on sociological and national traditions, it is standard routine to consider occupational classifications as a basis for social class. But in developing countries and in India in particular, the use of occupational schemas is not so commonplace and raises a number of difficulties.

### 1) The challenges of using occupational class schemas in the Indian context

When I met Rachit (interview 24) in the countryside of Ghazipur district, he told me that he was a MBBS doctor.[74] But it was not his sole occupation: along with his two brothers, he was also taking care of the joint family's dairy production, of the family businesses (they managed alcohol shops in Varanasi) and of the agricultural land. He assumed his family was the biggest landowner in the village, with about 40 to 60 acres of land, i.e., between 16 and 24 hectares, and his caste community, Yadav, owned the most land in the village. In the same district, I met Pyare, an agricultural laborer. But agricultural work was not his sole occupation either: he cultivated vegetables, although mostly for his own consumption and he also worked

[74] A MBBS doctor is a qualified doctor: he or she obtained a degree after 5.5 years of study. This is an important precision given that I also met "village doctors" who are unlicensed and unqualified, but do play a major role in providing health facilities in rural areas (Dahdah et al., 2018). For instance, Rohan (interview 26) said he was prescribing drugs to patients, having acquired the rudiments of medicine in books.

as a cook in weddings to complement his wages, since laborers are mostly sought in harvesting times. "Pluri-activity" is indeed an important and growing phenomenon in rural India (Jodhka, 2018). In the two examples here, the first suggests that agricultural land ownership constitutes a family resource which helps to engage in other economic activities. The second example also suggests that pluri-activity is triggered by the lack of sufficient resources one can earn from only one occupation. Seasonal variability in economic activities may have consequences in the data collection, with varying occupational declarations depending on the month the interview was conducted. Pluri-activity also triggers circular migration, which is often balanced between seasonal agricultural labor and urban labor, a phenomenon that is challenging to grasp with residence-based survey data (Thachil, 2018).

Two features characterize the Indian labor structure, as in many countries of the Global South: the importance of the informal sector and the size of the agriculture sector (Iversen et al., 2019). First, most occupations belong to the informal sector. According to different estimations, including (Harriss-White, 2004) and the International Labour Organization in 2016, it may vary from about 80 to 90 percent.[75] By definition, an informal economy is one that is not monitored by government institutions, a definition that explains why estimations may vary. Administrative records are hence of little use to monitor the occupational structure and it is only at the cost of an arduous building of estimates that one may derive income or wealth inequalities indicators from tax records (Chancel and Piketty, 2017). Informal occupations are characterized by low incomes, work sometimes paid per hour or based on piecework, and the pay may even be in-kind. Informal workers lack employment contracts and do not have access to social security benefits.

Second, even though there has been substantial economic growth over the past thirty years, and particularly in the 1990s – the era of liberalization –, the agricultural sector remains the predominant employer in India (about 50 percent).[76] While many are landless agricultural laborers, land ownership, though unequally distributed, is not very concentrated in India (Himanshu et al., 2016). Caste dominance has long been based on the characteristics of the Indian economy, in particular through the "jajmani" system: castes specializing in particular occupations rendered their services to dominant caste landholders in exchange for an in-kind wage. Although this system has almost disappeared, there is empirical evidence that caste dominance based on land ownership still characterizes rural caste relations (Jeffrey, 2001).

[75] "India Labour Market Update", Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2016.
[76] See Chapter 2 of *Uneven Odds* (Vaid, 2018) for a complete overview of the Indian labor economy.

Overall, these characteristics of the Indian economy imply that the use of occupations as a basis for class categories may not be fully satisfactory.

### 2) Two more developed class schemas

Drawing on the literature on social inequalities and social mobility, I identify two different approaches to categorize class in the Indian context. Remarkably, scholars of class in India refer to different academic traditions and hardly quote each other, in part as a result of disciplinary distinctions. Indeed, the first approach, more embedded in sociology, studies occupations as categorical groupings, and refers to a Weberian class conception as "market power," where belonging to the same category reflects a similar control over economic resources and equal life chances. In the second perspective, more often adopted by economists, occupational categories are ranked according to skills or socioeconomic status, in an approach deriving from Blau and Duncan (1967). In this second perspective, the term "class" is not necessarily mentioned. But "status" should not be understood here as "prestige" ("Stand" in German) in the Weberian understanding, but rather as a measure of "welfare," as argued by Goldthorpe and Hope (1974) and recalled by Sørensen (2001). Hence, theoretically, the two approaches, even if they differ methodologically, are not necessarily fundamentally different.

The first nomenclature is suggested by Vaid (2018). It is inspired by a conceptualization internationally popularized more specifically by Goldthorpe (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) and named the "EGP class schema" after the three initial contributors to this typology: Robert Erikson, John H. Goldthorpe and Lucienne Portocarero. This schema defines class as similar positions that are embedded in market and work situations, which characterize common life chances. It is supposed to reflect the degree of job security and permanency and, as such, it is considered to follow a "neo-Weberian" tradition. This widely used class schema has been conceptualized and validated over the years in industrialized countries. Kumar et al. (2002) have been largely inspired by this approach to initiate social mobility studies in India – and Vaid has followed their lead –, given the lack of standardized class schemas in Indian research. The schema is adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the Indian case with respect to its industrial development. Vaid emphasizes distinctions among agricultural occupations based on land ownership. A key feature of the EGP schema is to primarily emphasize employment status distinctions (salaried, wage-laborer or independent) rather than occupational ranking. This approach has been developed by using the data from the National Election Survey but the drawback is that it is hardly replicable to other surveys such as the National Sample Survey

Office, the Indian Human Development Survey (at least for the household head's father) or the National Family Health Survey because the data are coded differently.[77]

The second limitation is that the nomenclature is not hierarchical: the perspective developed by Blau and Duncan according to which occupations are "more or less continuously graded in regard to status rather than being a set of discrete status classes" (as recalled by Vaid, 2018) is not considered here. In Vaid's work, a ranking of class categories is used to study upward and downward mobility: "We depict below the classes that may be considered to be at roughly the same level as each other for the purpose of calculating the amount of mobility," but the ranking has not been a feature used to build the schema. Linear categorizations of occupations tend to refer to a different body of sociological work which is more in line with the approach developed by Iversen et al. (2017). These authors build on the National Classification of Occupations (NCO, 1968 version), an attempt to categorize occupations that is largely based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations. Yet, Iversen et al. (2017) point its inadequacy to the Indian context. As they note about this classification, it is characterized by the "use of skill requirements as the main principle guiding occupational rank (for example, Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996). In the Indian context, the translation of skill requirements into occupational status is made more intricate by caste." Some studies (Azam, 2015) use very granular categories (4-digit categories) based on newer versions of the classification but case limitation makes this approach problematic, and differences in the detailed classification of the NCO are not necessarily meaningful in terms of status differences. Thus, following others before them (Singh and Motiram, 2012), they suggest a coding of occupations into large (yet ranked) categories.

I follow this recoding of occupations into six classes applied to the IHDS II. These categories are ranked hierarchically and reflect the degree of skill requirement along with the more or less strong caste stigma attached to it. Besides, the authors argue that construction workers and agricultural laborers should be considered to be at the lowest level, which seems legitimate, when one considers that agricultural laborers often part-time participate in this low-skilled economic sector (Thachil, 2018).[78] In Table 5.2, I provide the three most frequent 2-digit occupations per occupational class. Agricultural and other unskilled laborers are in the lowest category, followed by lower vocational workers, including drivers, loaders and carpenters. More qualified and above all less stigmatized, the higher vocational occupations

[77] The main difficulty is to be able to identify independent economic activities.
[78] Tariq Thachil writes in this paper that available estimates indicate that 52 percent of circular migrant workers are construction laborers.

mainly include tailors, protective service workers (police forces) and electricians. The fourth category include farmers and livestock owners. Like in all classifications, the position of farmers with respect to an occupational ranking is debatable and the choice here is partly arbitrary.[79] The fifth category of clerical workers mainly include shop owners. Finally, the Professional class mainly includes teachers, managers and company heads.

*Table 5.2 - Occupational classes, codes and most frequent occupations in India*

| Class | Occupational codes (NCO) | Frequent occupation | Count in IHDS II |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Laborer** | 63-67, 94, 95, 99 | (095) Bricklayers and construction workers | 8334 |
| | | (063) Agricultural laborers | 6882 |
| | | (065) Other farm workers | 380 |
| **Lower vocational** | 53-55, 68, 71-78, 80-83, 88-93, 96-98 | (098) Drivers, Transport equipment operators | 1347 |
| | | (097) Loaders | 492 |
| | | (081) Carpenters | 436 |
| **Higher vocational** | 43, 49, 50-52, 56-59, 79, 84-87 | (079) Tailors, dress makers, sewers, upholsterers and related workers | 977 |
| | | (057) Protective service workers (police) | 491 |
| | | (085) Electrical fitters and related electrical and electronic workers | 489 |
| **Farmer** | 60-62 | Cultivation | 11129 |
| | | (062) Other farmers | 465 |
| | | Allied agriculture | 92 |
| **Clerical** | 30-39, 40-42, 44-48 | (040) Merchants and shopkeepers, wholesale and retail trade | 4470 |
| | | (043) Salesmen, shop assistants | 1102 |
| | | (030) Clerical and other supervisors | 910 |
| **Professional** | 00-29 | (015) Teachers | 1183 |
| | | (026) Working proprietors, directors and managers, other services | 750 |
| | | (025) Working proprietors, directors and managers and related executives, transport, storage and communication | 717 |

*Note: The correspondence between classes and detailed occupations follows the indications presented by Iversen et al. (2017) and clarified by an email exchange (April 2020). Except for farmers (individuals declaring their main activity as cultivation or allied agriculture are automatically classified as Farmers), the codes refer to the second level of the National Classification of Occupations, 1968. In this table, for each occupational class, I select the three most frequently detailed occupational categories existing in India. They gather 80 percent of the occupation counts.*

*Sample: Male and female household heads and partners aged 20 years and above residing in India declaring an occupation in the IHDS II (N=71,119).*

Table 5.3 depicts the distribution of class categories among men and women aged 20 years and above in India, Uttar Pradesh and in my own personal survey. As for women, it should be kept in mind that 50 percent of them did not declare an occupation (57 percent in Uttar Pradesh), making gender comparison more difficult. For men, the agricultural and other manual laborers constitute the biggest category, followed by Farmers, both at the level of India and Uttar Pradesh, outlining the strong weight of the agricultural sector in the economy. Apart from these two classes, non-laboring manual workers represent about a fifth of the male workforce, just like male non-manual workers (clerical and professional workers). The social

[79] It is hard to identify any validity test to implement (Evans, 1992). Still, the statistical association between material wealth and occupational classes confirms the ranking of classes as suggested by Iversen et al. (2017), more strongly regarding the position of Farmers.

compositions of the workforce in India and in Uttar Pradesh are rather comparable except that Farmers account for a higher share of the workers in Uttar Pradesh while Professional workers are relatively less in number in this region. Female workers are more frequently laborers (possibly denoting that they do not own the agricultural land of their household and are therefore not counted as Farmers), but among those who declare an occupation, they are more frequently non-manual workers, particularly in Uttar Pradesh.

My own personal survey overrepresented non-manual workers, in particular professional workers and I underrepresented laborers and Farmers. Still, it is worth noticing that my interview sample gathers individuals from all occupational classes.

*Table 5.3 - Class distribution among men and women aged 20 years and above*

| | **All India** | | **Uttar Pradesh** | | ***Personal survey*** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Occupational class** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | ***Proportion (%)*** | ***Number of cases*** |
| **Agri and other laborer** | 29 | 41 | 28 | 35 | *13* | *10* |
| **Lower vocational** | 13 | 11 | 13 | 13 | *9* | *7* |
| **Higher vocational** | 7 | 7 | 6 | 9 | *23* | *17* |
| **Farmer** | 29 | 12 | 35 | 7 | *13* | *10* |
| **Clerical** | 14 | 18 | 14 | 27 | *16* | *12* |
| **Professional** | 8 | 11 | 5 | 10 | *25* | *19* |
| **Total** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | *100* | *75* |

*Note: Proportions are calculated for male and female household heads and partners aged 20 years and above who are neither retired nor unfit for work. The proportion focuses on respondents who declared an occupation. At the India level, 50 percent of women do not declare any occupation. In Uttar Pradesh, this proportion rises to 57 percent. For my personal survey, I counted the respondent's occupation (or former occupation in case he is now retired) or their partner's occupation for female interviewees who did not declare any occupation.*

*Sample: Male and female household heads and partners aged 20 years and above declaring an occupation.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

### 3) Do caste and class crystallize?

The association between caste and occupational class has long been of interest in South Asian studies, given the assumed traditional association between caste and some occupations (Panini, 1996), as it appears in some caste names. Yet, an important disconnection between caste and class would exist, particularly among middle castes. In her work on the congruence between caste and class, Vaid (2012, 2018) notes that there is a strong association between caste and class for the upper and lower classes, but she suggests a lower level of congruence for the groups located in-between. Focusing on Uttar Pradesh, with different (and more precise) caste and class categorizations, do we find a crystallization or rather a disconnect between caste and class? Although this question has been answered using monographs at very local levels (e.g., in villages, Krishna, 2003) or at the national level but with large caste categories (Vaid,

2018), the originality of my approach is that it investigates this question with precise categories, yet still with a vast geographical coverage.

*Table 5.4 - Distribution of occupational classes by caste category, for men and women in Uttar Pradesh*

| **Male** | **Laborer** | **Lower vocational** | **Higher vocational** | **Farmer** | **Clerical** | **Professional** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Muslim** | ***20*** | 18 | **11** | ***20*** | **24** | 8 | 100 |
| **Dalit** | **52** | 14 | 3 | ***20*** | 8 | 2 | 100 |
| **Low** | 28 | 17 | 7 | 34 | 11 | 3 | 100 |
| **Agricultural** | 22 | 11 | 2 | **53** | 8 | 4 | 100 |
| **Merchant** | 16 | 5 | 10 | 30 | **37** | 3 | 100 |
| **Lordly** | 21 | 7 | 4 | **55** | 8 | 5 | 100 |
| **Brahmin** | ***6*** | 7 | 4 | **53** | 14 | **16** | 100 |
| ***All men*** | *28* | *13* | *6* | *35* | *14* | *5* | *100* |
| **Female** | **Laborer** | **Lower vocational** | **Higher vocational** | **Farmer** | **Clerical** | **Professional** | **Total** |
| **Muslim** | ***14*** | **21** | 11 | 1 | **40** | 12 | 100 |
| **Dalit** | **61** | 11 | 6 | 4 | 16 | ***3*** | 100 |
| **Low** | 37 | **19** | 13 | 6 | 18 | 7 | 100 |
| **Agricultural** | 35 | 9 | 3 | **19** | 21 | 13 | 100 |
| **Merchant** | ***9*** | 8 | 10 | 3 | **65** | 5 | 100 |
| **Lordly** | 28 | 4 | 13 | **15** | 29 | 11 | 100 |
| **Brahmin** | ***8*** | 5 | 5 | 9 | 29 | **44** | 100 |
| ***All women*** | *35* | *13* | *9* | *7* | *27* | *10* | *100* |

*Note: Proportions are calculated for male and female household heads and partners aged 20 years and above who are neither retired nor unfit for work. The proportion focuses on respondents who declared an occupation. In Uttar Pradesh, 57 percent of women do not declare any occupation. Figures in bold indicate that the corresponding occupational class is overrepresented in the caste category compared with the overall male or female population in the State. Contrarywise, figures in bold and italic indicate that the corresponding occupational class is underrepresented in the caste category. I assess this point calculating adjusted residuals in the cross table (see the appendix for the corresponding graphical representation). For instance, Muslim men are less frequently laborers, but they are more frequently higher vocational or clerical workers.*

*Sample: Male and female household heads and partners aged 20 years and above declaring an occupation and residing in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

Table 5.4 presents the distribution of caste and religious groups in each occupational class. Across the economic spectrum, specific caste and religious groups are clearly associated with certain occupational classes. Among classes with the lowest socioeconomic status (agricultural and other manual laborers), Dalits are clearly overrepresented in this occupational class (more than half of Dalit men belong to this class against 6 percent of Brahmin men). At the bottom of the social class hierarchy, caste-class congruence is therefore very clear. When one moves up the social ladder, vocational workers are more associated with Low castes and Muslims. Coming to the Farmers, only 20 percent of Muslim men and Dalit men belong to this class, but more than half of Agricultural castes, Lordly castes, and Brahmin castes belong to this category. Muslims, and above all Merchant castes, are overrepresented in the Clerical category (especially in the shopkeeper occupation). In the latter case, more than a third are

found in this occupational category: in terms of caste-class congruence, the Merchant castes and clerical association is as strong as the association between Dalits and laborers. Finally, professional workers are overrepresented among Brahmins, and particularly among women.

This shows a high degree of congruence between class and caste, as studied by (Vaid, 2012, 2018), but also by more monographic studies which have long pointed to the continued overrepresentation of low castes (in particular, Dalits) among the lowest skilled manual laborers such as sweepers (Vaid, 2018). On the other side of the occupational spectrum, the overrepresentation of high castes has also been well-documented, for instance among Information Technology workers (Upadhya, 2007), engineers (Krishna, 2014) or senior civil servants (Benbabaali, 2008). Overall, the congruence between ascribed and achieved position is very clear, whether one looks at men or women (despite their lower participation to the labor force). Yet, there is certainly no complete overlap between occupational classes and caste categories, especially given the high proportion of laborers and farmers in the workforce.

Overall, different social mechanisms, such as discrimination in the labor market (Deshpande, 2011, Deshpande and Sharma, 2016), caste hoarding, caste-based social networks (Mosse, 2019) and differences in cultural and economic resources between castes (Deshpande, 2004), may contribute to the continuing association of caste and class. Hence, despite a long history of affirmative action programs in higher education and public employment, caste remains an important predictor of occupation. That being said, it is worth mentioning that there is no complete separation between caste and class, which shows relative social mobility for members of each caste between different class positions. The relatively high association between caste and class calls for examining the dynamic trends of occupational positions and the degree of class reproduction.

### *D - Intergenerational class mobility: do caste and religious positions matter?*

The lack of standardized occupational classifications, along with the poor data opportunities to study intergenerational class mobility has rendered this field of study scattered, with sometimes contradictory results. Yet, there seems to be a convergence of studies showing high degrees of social reproduction, as in many developing countries (Iversen et al., 2019), along with more surprising patterns of marked downward mobility in rural areas.

### 1) Mobility: an understudied topic in developing countries and in India

Several characteristics of the Indian social structure should be brought to the attention of scholars of intergenerational social mobility. Recent trends in rising income inequalities (Chancel and Piketty, 2017) has raised the question of whether inequality has also increased immobility, as hypothesized in industrial countries according to the "Great Gatsby curve" (Corak, 2013). Measuring social mobility could also help assess public policies supporting affirmative action for disadvantaged groups (reservation policies as they are called in India). Besides, there are theoretical reasons to believe that parental endowments may have a higher impact on children in an informal context if the link between education and occupation is weaker than in industrial countries. The consequences of mobility may have greater impacts on life conditions, especially in the case of downward trajectories leading to poverty traps (Iversen et al., 2019). Finally, the changing social structure of the Indian economy (Hnatkovska et al., 2012, Emran and Shilpi, 2015), even though it is still characterized by a high share of agriculture employment, questions the relation between structural and relative mobility. The first is the result of industrialization, with a decline in the number of people engaged in agriculture and a shift from manual to non-manual occupations, along with the emergence of new occupations. The second refers to the degree of inequality of opportunities within a society "net" of structural changes (Vaid, 2018).

Existing international comparisons position India as a country with low mobility. Intergenerational educational mobility for 148 countries and income mobility in a smaller set of countries show that India has a strong intergenerational income correlation (fathers' incomes are highly correlated with their sons' incomes, Narayan et al., 2018). Gregory Clark and Neil Cummins's (2014) project of using surnames to study mobility identifies that India has the lowest occupational mobility level among all studied countries. Iversen et al. (2017) suggest that India's low level of mobility is at par with China's measured levels. Comparing her empirical results with recent studies using the EGP class schema, Vaid (2018) shows that the levels of "stickiness" (lack of relative mobility, i.e., high degree of inequality) in India are higher than in several industrialized countries: Britain, France, Poland and Ireland.

Specifically in India, studies highlight a higher degree of educational mobility than income or occupational mobility (Iversen et al., 2017). Rural mobility is lower than urban mobility and is the site of non-negligible downward mobility. Combining the IHDS and the Socio Economic and Caste Census (2011), Asher et al. (2020) map the degree of educational mobility by sub-districts and towns and clearly show that the Hindi belt, and in particular, Uttar

Pradesh, constitute clusters of lower intergenerational educational mobility (the Eastern and Southern parts of the State seem to be relatively better-off). Yet, many studies suffer from a potential selection bias in their indicators. They construct father-son (or father-daughter)[80] pairs using co-residence, given the large share of live-in extended family units (e.g., Azam and Bhatt, 2015 or Hnatkovska et al., 2012). This implies that only non-deceased fathers (potentially more often eliminating deprived parents) and live-in fathers (potentially selecting pairs with higher degrees of social reproduction) are taken into account in the analysis. This may affect mobility estimations, yet Emran et al. (2017) argue that it is more or less problematic depending on the indicators of mobility. While this method of father-son pairs is not ideal, it makes the use of large samples of the NFHS and the NSSO possible. The NES (used by Vaid, 2018, this dataset is not available for free) and the IHDS (used by Iversen et al., 2017) are the only large-scale surveys asking a retrospective question on the household head's or husband's father's level of education and occupation, of which I take advantage now.

### 2) The segmented social mobility in Uttar Pradesh

I use Sankey diagrams as presented for instance by Laurison, Dow, and Chernoff (2020). It provides a visually readable picture of both the origin and destination social structure and of the mobility flows. I first compare the picture of class structure and mobility between ascribed groups.

#### a) Occupational class mobility

The destination class structure shows contrasted differences between Brahmins, Dalits, and Muslims (Figure 5.4, mobility flows for other caste categories are available in the appendix of the chapter). As presented in the preceding section, at the top and at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, caste and class congruence is very strong. In terms of the class structure, Muslims stand in-between. Possibly, unaccounted caste differences among Muslims would explain this segmentation. The figure also depicts the very large proportion of farmers and laborers for all caste categories (it is all the more striking for Agricultural and Lordly castes as seen in the appendix).

Occupational class contrasts between achieved positions have not waned over generations. On the contrary, class structural differences increased because upper class immobility is higher for Brahmins than for Dalits (and again, Muslims stand in-between), while

[80] Mobility is often studied concentrating on male individuals given their higher participation in the labor force. For exceptions, see Emran and Shilpi (2015).

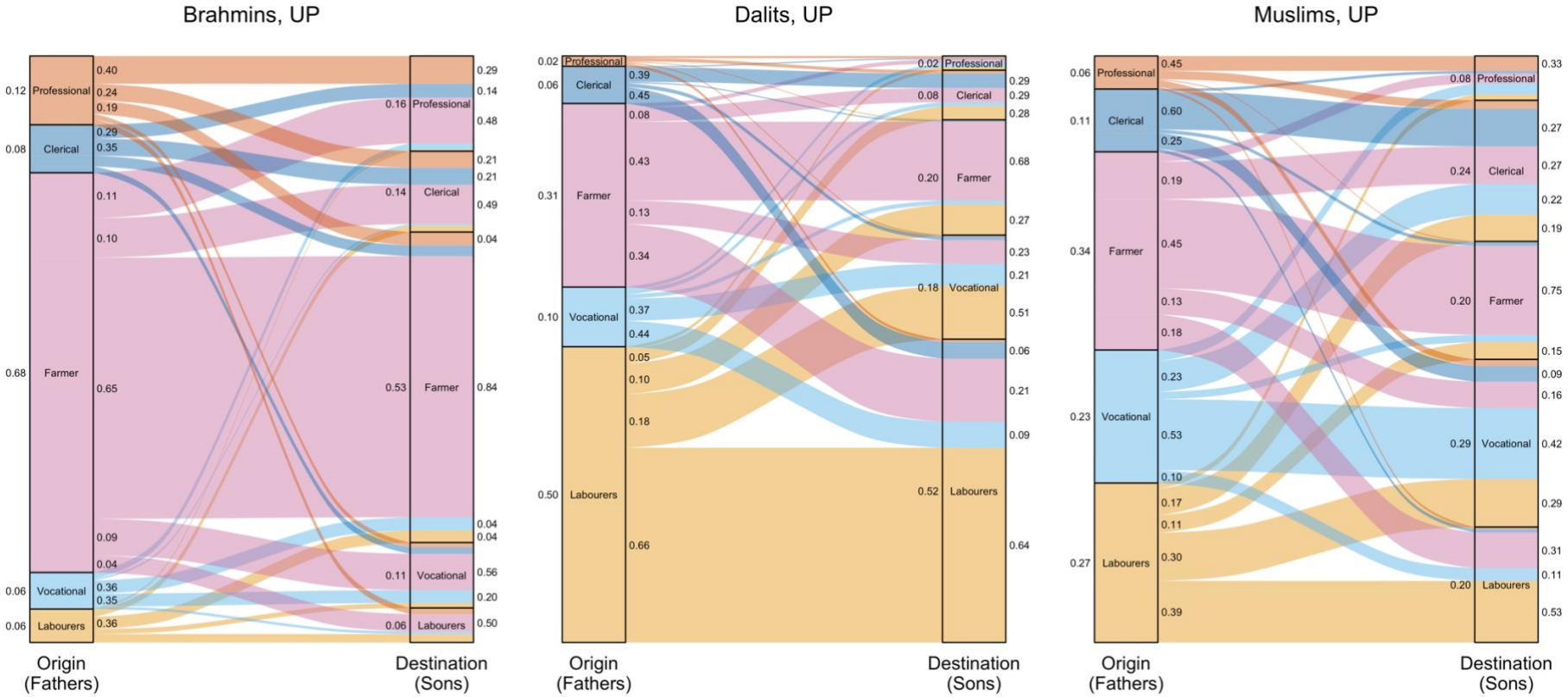
lower class immobility is higher for Dalits than for Brahmins (here, Muslims are much closer to Dalits). Besides, patterns of upward class mobility are always more frequent for Brahmins than for Dalits and Muslims: e.g., 11 percent of farmers' sons among Brahmins become professional, but only 8 percent of Dalits and 5 percent of Muslims. On the contrary, patterns of downward mobility are less frequent for Brahmins than for Dalits and Muslims: e.g., 4 percent of farmers' sons among Brahmins become laborers, but this concerns 34 percent among Dalits and 18 percent among Muslims.

Note that the upward mobility from farmers to the professional and clerical class is likely to depend on the conversion of land capital into educational capital, where Brahmins are better-off than Dalits. Indeed, among those who remain farmers in the class of destination, 24 percent of Brahmins own more than 5 acres of agricultural land, against 2 percent of Dalits and 12 percent of Muslims. Inversely, only 9 percent of Brahmins own less than 0.5 acre of land, but 27 percent of Dalits and 24 percent of Muslims do.[81]

Finally, it is worth noting that patterns of extreme upward mobility are rare but even less common for Dalits and Muslims.

[81] Figures computed based on IHDS estimates. One concern is that some of the flows of downward mobility from farmers to laborers may stem from the uncorrected effect of laborers counted as such because they have not yet inherited from the agricultural land of their fathers. Though this effect may exist (in older-aged cohorts the proportion of laborers is smaller, but this may also result from selection effects with higher mortality and out-of-work individuals for this class), downward mobility from farmers to laborers is still lower for Brahmins than for Dalits and Muslims (this is visible by differentiating Figure 1 according to the sons' age cohorts, figure not shown here).

*Figure 5.4 - Class origin and destination, (a) Brahmin men, (b) Dalit men and (c) Muslim men, relative flows of mobility*




*Note: The numbers to the right of each class origin and destination give the proportion in each flow respective to the number of working male fathers or sons in the origin or destination category. For instance, 0.40 indicates that among Brahmin individuals hailing from professional/clerical families, 40 percent of sons are in the same position. 0.29 (on the right of the destination bar) indicates that among Brahmin male individuals working in professional/clerical positions, 29 percent of their fathers were in the same position.*

*Sample: Male household heads 20 years old or above declaring an occupation and residing in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

### b) Educational attainment mobility

Upward mobility is partly driven by educational attainment, particularly to access professional and clerical positions. For this reason, it is worth considering patterns of educational attainment mobility between generations (Figure 5.5). For all categories, educational mobility (in particular, upward mobility) is higher than class mobility.

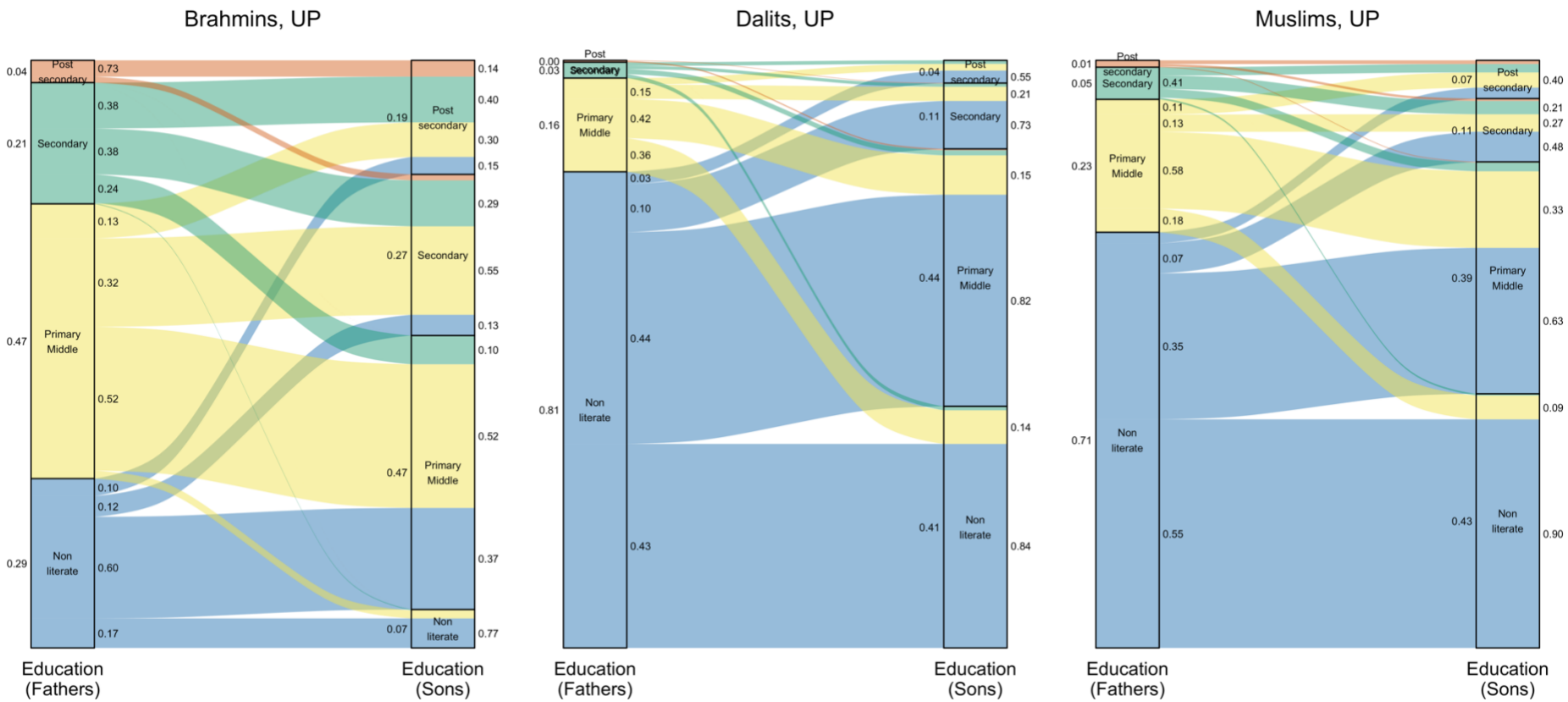
Strikingly, the structure of educational attainment is very different between Brahmins, Dalits and Muslims. While almost a third of Brahmin fathers were non-literate, 81 percent of Dalit fathers and 71 percent of Muslim fathers were. Inversely, a fourth of Brahmin fathers held at least a secondary degree but only 3 percent of Dalit fathers and 6 percent of Muslims.

Educational attainment improves dramatically between generations but the caste and religious contrast for the sons' generation is still important. While only 7 percent of Brahmin sons are non-literate, 41 percent of Dalit sons and 43 percent of Muslim sons still are. Besides, while 19 percent of Brahmin sons hold a post-secondary degree, only 4 and 7 percent of Dalit and Muslim sons do.

Inequalities in educational attainment and their intergenerational continuity derive from the lower rates of intergenerational educational improvement for Dalits and Muslims, along with the higher rates of educational reproduction for these groups. While there has been an intergenerational improvement in educational attainment for all groups, Brahmins were already doing better in the fathers' generation and among them, those who had low educational achievement have improved at a faster rate, e.g., only 17 percent of non-literate Brahmin fathers have sons who are still non-literate, but 41 percent of Dalit fathers and 55 percent of Muslim fathers still have non-literate sons.

Importantly, discrepancies between occupational class and educational attainment is all the more remarkable as it means that upward educational mobility, which exist in urban as well as in rural areas (Iversen et al., 2017, Vaid, 2018), has not translated into occupational mobility. This disconnect between education and occupation may result in a possible source of status inconsistency for younger generations, where "waiting" then triggers political activism (Jeffrey, 2010) and possibly resentment (Jeffrey et al., 2004), while it does not protect individuals from falling into poverty (Iversen et al., 2019).

*Figure 5.5 - Educational attainment origin and destination, (a) Brahmin men, (b) Dalit men and (c) Muslim men, relative flows of mobility*




*Sample: Male household heads 20 years old and above declaring an occupation and residing in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

### 3) Where does ascribed privilege stem from?

Where does ascriptive privilege stem from? To answer this question, I model binomial logistic regressions where the response variable is accessing to a professional occupation, for which educational attainment is supposedly the highest (Vaid, 2014). These models assess the respective weights of caste and religious belonging, class origin, inherited institutionalized cultural capital and educational attainment in accessing the top occupational positions.

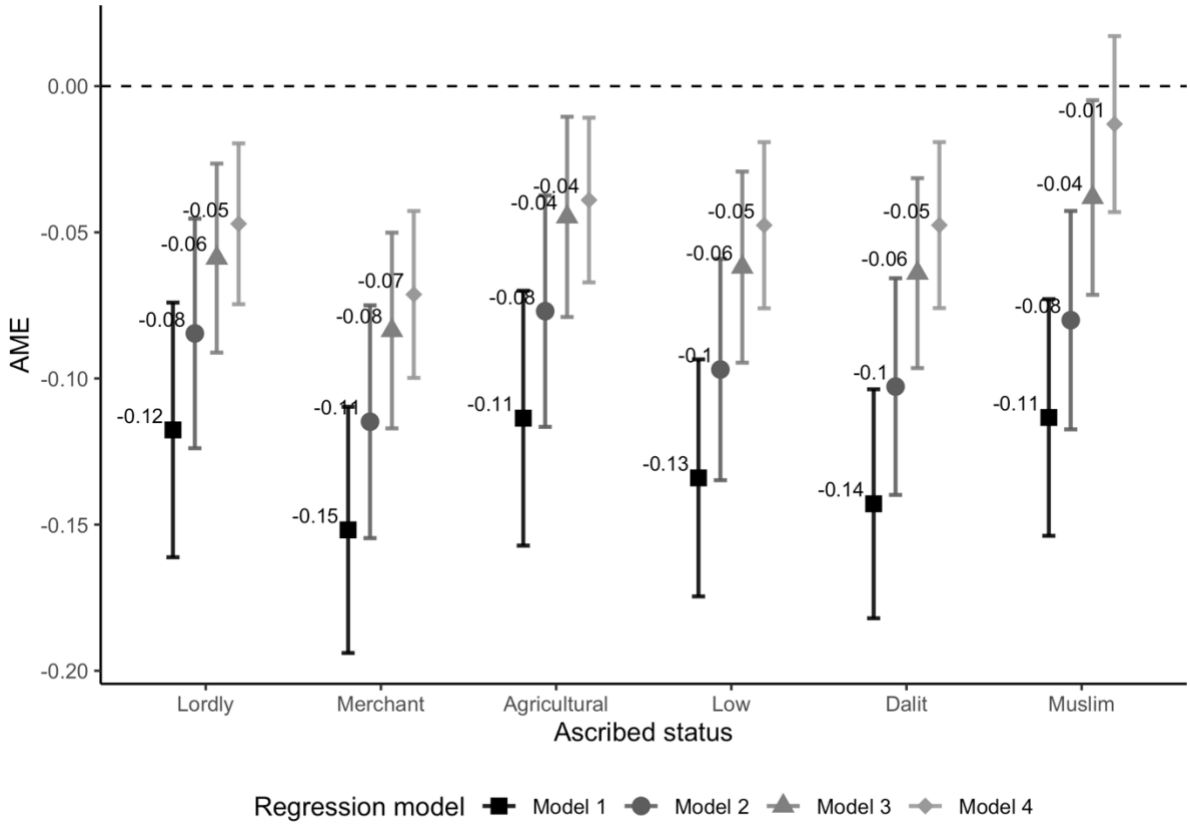
I use a step-up strategy where I start with a model including only caste and religious belonging and adjusting for age and residential area (Model 1), then I progressively add other covariates in the regression analyses to understand whether these factors "explain" the ascriptive inequalities: in Model 2, I include father's occupational class, in Model 3, I include father's educational attainment (a proxy of inherited institutionalized cultural capital), and finally, in Model 4, I include one's own educational attainment. This strategy helps understand whether the incremental addition of covariates reduces the variations of the outcome variable associated with caste and religious belonging. I examine the results looking at the Average Marginal Effects of ascribed categories (Figure 5.6, full parameters of the models are available in the appendix).

When only controlling for age and residential area, Brahmins, compared with other ascribed categories in accessing a professional position, have a privilege of 11 to 15 probability points (Model 1). After controlling for father's occupational class (Model 2) and father's educational attainment (Model 3), the gap between Brahmins and other ascribed categories substantially reduces. It indicates that ascriptive privilege in accessing top occupational positions mainly stems from one's social origins rather than one's achieved position as is modelled in Model 4 by including educational attainment.[82]

Overall, this analysis points to a strong caste and religious penalty in accessing top occupational positions in the Indian context. The class structure and intergenerational flows are clearly differentiated between ascriptive categories, Brahmins being clearly more favored over generations.

[82] Note that Merchant castes are particularly disfavored in accessing professional occupations since their upward mobility trajectory leads them to clerical positions where they own their own business.

*Figure 5.6 - Average Marginal Effects of ascribed status (reference: Brahmins) in logistic regressions predicting accessing professional occupations, M1 to M4*




*Note: The Average Marginal Effect is the effect of belonging to another ascribed category than Brahmin compared with being a Brahmin on the probability of being a professional worker. It corresponds to the average in probability changes for each observation in the data fitted in the model. The regression coefficients and all relevant statistics for Models 1 to 4 can be found in the appendix.*

*Sample: Male household heads above 20 years old declaring an occupation and residing in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

## *E - Where is the middle class? Objective and subjective class positions*

So far, I have focused on objective determinants of class position. I have shown that class, using different approaches to measure it, constitutes a congruent yet distinct dimension from caste and religious positions. But does class as a category of identification make sense to individuals? Do individuals draw class boundaries that reflect their objective material conditions or occupational class position? Do individuals identify with the class to which the sociologist assigns them? I consider an "objective" class in the sense of an experienced class position (class "on paper"), described by occupational class and material conditions, and a "subjective" class ("mobilized" class), as an identification to a class position. This refers to Bourdieu's distinction in conceiving social categories, his conception of the social space being

characterized by a strong overlap between objective and subjective class positions (Bourdieu, 1984, 2015).

### 1) Middle class as a fuzzy concept

Class identification, as in other social contexts (Heath et al., 2007), has been increasingly overwhelmed by the "rise of the middle class," Banerjee and Duflo (2007), and more recently Aslany (2019), have attempted to provide objective definitions of what constitutes the middle class and who is part of it. For instance, they demonstrate that it is more often associated with self-employed or salaried workers and that the middle class is to be found in rural rather than urban areas. This finding is counterintuitive when considering the industrialization process, but not so surprising given the huge proportion of rural dwellers in India, around 70 percent. Along with co-authors, I have warned against providing objective "middle class" definitions that may link different unequal positions together, preferring the term "intermediary class" (Ferry et al., 2018).

But if objectively defining the middle class may not be a fruitful task, it is still worth looking at who actually identifies as such. The journalist Rohan Venkataramakrishnan titled an article published in 2015 in *Scroll.in* "Everyone in India thinks they are 'middle class' and almost no one actually is."[83] Here, I will show that not everyone, but an important fraction of the population, indeed identifies as middle class. This is partly because it makes sense both for the "everyman" and simultaneously for the "elite" (Baviskar and Ray, 2015). While the former refers to a plurality of social groups, qualified as "middle classes," which are the self-identified intermediary social groups with aspiring consumption patterns, the latter refers to the "Middle Class," the "elite masquerading as the Middle Class" (Ray, 2018).[84] Thus, the "Middle class" produces ideologies and claims to be representing everyone, meanwhile the "middle classes," the mass, consumes these ideologies (Deshpande, 2004). Middle class is best understood as an "hegemonic aspiration" (Fernandes and Heller, 2006), a form of social and cultural control of the dominant fractions of the social space that aims precisely at masking social privileges, including caste divisions (Deshpande, 2015). The large number of fractions identifying as middle class would in fact largely be in precarious class conditions when it comes to objective

[83] https://scroll.in/article/740011/everyone-in-india-thinks-they-are-middle-class-and-almost-no-one-actually-is (last access on October 20, 2020).

[84] This second group asserts this class identity claiming an egalitarian ethos, a progressive role and demonstrating cosmopolitan values and practices, disembedded from caste preferences. I question the empirical reality of this discourse when it comes to vegetarianism in chapter 6.

conditions. This would further nourish their social frustration, a key mechanism I explore in the next chapters.

### 2) Class identity and class position in Uttar Pradesh

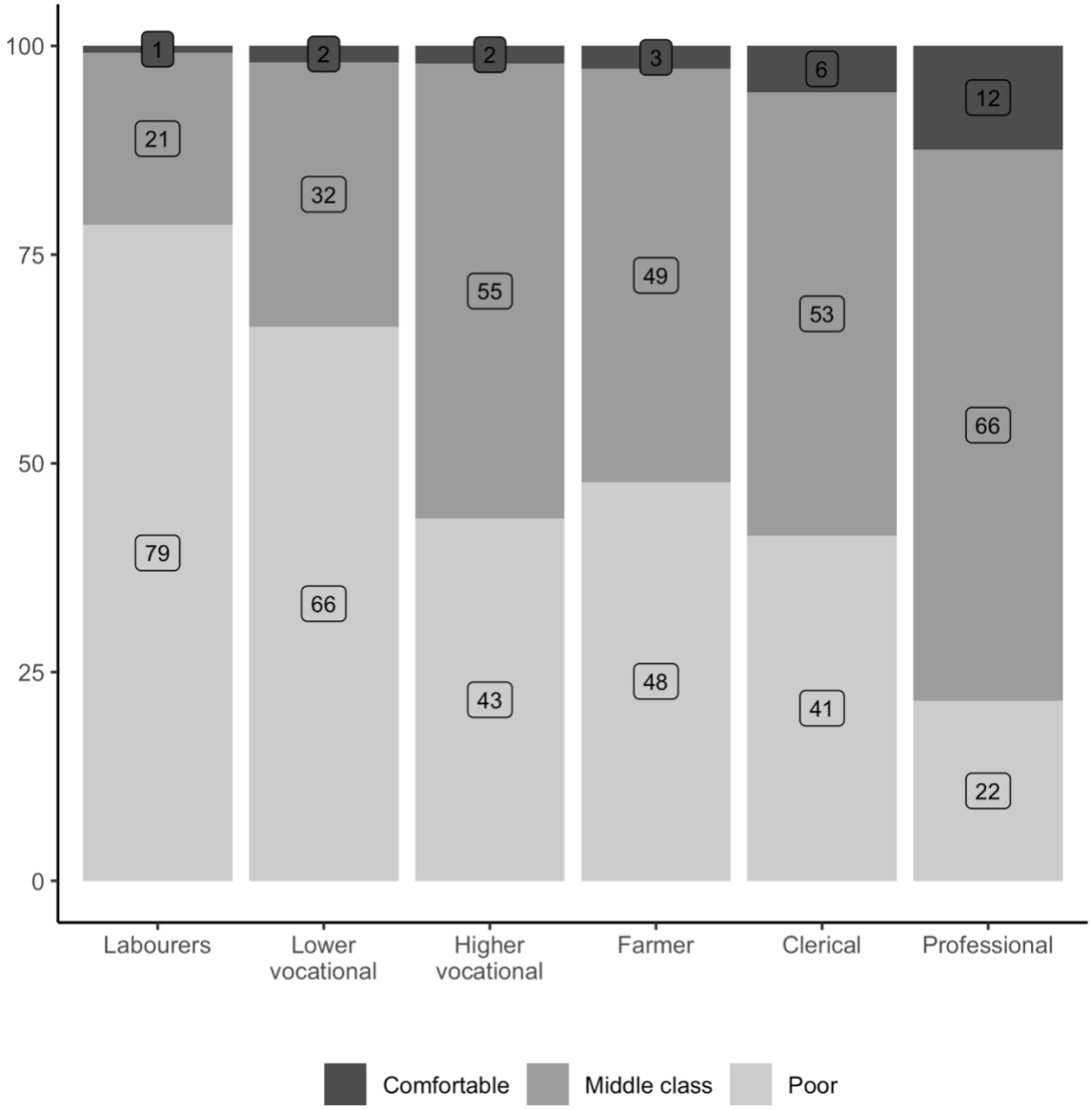
Who identifies as middle class? What are the objective class conditions that drive identification as middle class? Do these also relate to ascribed positions? I use a question in the IHDS II where household head respondents were asked with which social group they identify. They were prompted with "Poor," "Middle class" or "Comfortable". Note that the survey suggests an embeddedness of being middle class with respect to a wealth position rather than an immediate class position since the alternative choices are not "Working class" or "Upper class." One can assume that this question framing affected how respondents identified to the middle class, their objective wealth position being possibly very salient in their class identification.

In Uttar Pradesh, 56 percent of households identify as poor, 40 percent of households identify as middle class and 3 percent identify as comfortable.[85] Looking at Figure 5.7, the proportion of households identifying as middle gradually grows from 22 percent among agricultural and unskilled laborers to 63 percent among Professionals.[86] There is a clear gap between lower and higher vocational workers in identifying as "middle," suggesting substantial differences among manual occupations. The proportion of households identifying as comfortable also grows as one moves up the social ladder, but substantially less (up to 12 percent among professional workers), and there is a clear gap between clerical and professional workers.

[85] The percentage of households identifying as poor is notably higher than when considering the entire country, where it is just 45 percent, and the middle corresponds to 53 percent of the households.

[86] I follow the dominance approach to impute a class to each household: if several individuals within a given household declare an occupational class position, I affect the highest class among these individuals as the household class.

*Figure 5.7 - Class identification according to occupational class position*




*Note: 79 percent of Laborers identify as "poor" against 22 percent of Professionals.*
*Sample: Male household heads of 20 years old and above declaring an occupation and residing in Uttar Pradesh.*
*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

To specify the determinants of identifying oneself as middle class or comfortable, I model a series of logistic binomial regressions predicting subjective class identification, where the dependent variable equals 1 if the household identifies as middle or comfortable and 0 otherwise (Table 5.5). Model 1 only includes caste and religion as a predictor: it shows that belonging to any other ascribed category but Brahmin decreases the probability of identifying as middle class or comfortable, Dalits and Muslims being particularly worse-off. Without

adjusting for objective class predictors, ascribed categories strongly predict subjective class identification.

*Table 5.5 - Logistic regression models predicting the subjective identification to the "middle" or "comfortable" category*

| | | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **Modality** | **Coef (SE)** | ***AME*** | **Coef (SE)** | ***AME*** | **Coef (SE)** | ***AME*** |
| **Ascribed category (ref=Brahmin)** | **Lordly** | -0.232 (0.142) | | 0.031 (0.149) | | 0.128 (0.17) | |
| | **Merchant** | -0.575** (0.182) | *-0.13* | -0.383* (0.193) | *-0.08* | -0.074 (0.228) | |
| | **Agricultural** | -0.118 (0.131) | | 0.23+ (0.14) | *0.05* | 0.377* (0.159) | *0.06* |
| | **Low** | -1.064*** (0.132) | *-0.24* | -0.663*** (0.14) | *-0.14* | -0.104 (0.158) | |
| | **Dalit** | -1.319*** (0.126) | *-0.3* | -0.681*** (0.136) | *-0.2* | 0.01 (0.155) | |
| | **Muslim** | -1.24*** (0.133) | *-0.28* | -0.938*** (0.141) | *-0.14* | -0.49** (0.161) | *-0.08* |
| **Occupational class (ref=Professional)** | **Clerical** | | | -0.811*** (0.192) | *-0.17* | -0.549* (0.226) | *-0.1* |
| | **Farmer** | | | -0.93*** (0.183) | *-0.2* | -0.066 (0.216) | |
| | **Higher vocational** | | | -0.984*** (0.219) | *-0.21* | -0.524* (0.256) | *-0.09* |
| | **Lower vocational** | | | -1.77*** (0.194) | *-0.39* | -0.894*** (0.23) | *-0.15* |
| | **Laborer** | | | -2.153*** (0.188) | *-0.46* | -1.049*** (0.224) | *-0.18* |
| **Educational attainment (ref=Higher)** | **Secondary** | | | | | -0.287 (0.192) | |
| | **Primary/Middle** | | | | | -0.635*** (0.184) | *-0.11* |
| | **Non-literate** | | | | | -1.076*** (0.196) | *-0.19* |
| **No. of assets** | **(scaled, center: 12, sd:6.3)** | | | | | 1.288*** (0.067) | *0.21* |
| **Income/capita decile** | **(scaled, center: 5.6, sd:2.9)** | | | | | 0.144*** (0.044) | *0.02* |
| **Residential area (ref=Urban)** | **Metropolitan city** | 0.049 (0.196) | | 0.105 (0.208) | *0.02* | -0.407+ (0.231) | *-0.06* |
| | **More developed village** | -1.238*** (0.113) | *-0.28* | -1.149*** (0.125) | *-0.24* | 0.197 (0.154) | |
| | **Less dev. Village** | -1.133*** (0.092) | *-0.26* | -0.943*** (0.107) | *-0.2* | 0.431** (0.136) | *0.07* |
| **Age** | **(scaled)** | 0.041 (0.031) | | -0.005 (0.035) | | -0.072+ (0.042) | |
| | **Constant** | 1.432*** (0.131) | | 2.234*** (0.203) | | 0.833** (0.272) | |
| | **AIC** | 5749 | | 5225 | | 4387 | |
| | **Log likelihood** | -2864 | | -2597 | | -2172 | |

*Note: +: p<0.1; *: p<0.05; **: p<0.01; ***: p<0.001. Coefficients are presented along with the standard error in brackets. AME indicates the Average Marginal Effect.*

*Sample: Male household heads 20 years old and above declaring an occupation and residing in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

In Model 2, I include occupational class as a predictor: it shows that being in any other class than professional decreases the probability of identifying as middle class or comfortable

(similarly to Figure 5.7). Including occupational classes substantially diminishes the impact of ascribed categories on subjective class identifications but Dalits, Muslims and Low castes still tend to self-identify less frequently with the "middle" or "comfortable" categories after adjusting for occupational class.

Finally, in Model 3, I include three other predictors: educational attainment (of the male household head), the number of possessed assets[87] and the decile of income per capita.[88] The two last variables are continuous and centered (with respective means of 12 and 5.6) and scaled (with respective standard deviations of 6.3 and 2.9). These variables mediate the caste and occupational class effects. Comparing these three variables, the number of assets has a very strong impact on declaring oneself middle class (moving from 12 possessed goods to 18 has an average marginal effect of identifying as middle or comfortable as large as 21 percentage points), reinforcing the idea that a materially comfortable lifestyle is strongly related to class identification (which is also related to the question framing as discussed earlier). Educational attainment also strongly positively impacts class identification (being non-literate rather than holding a higher educational degree decreases self-identification with the middle class by 19 percentage points). On the contrary, income has a low impact when compared with the first two variables (a household that would be in the 8$^{th}$ decile rather than in the 6$^{th}$ one only increases its class identification as middle or comfortable by 2 percentage points). Overall, the addition of these effects strongly decreases the impact of being Laborer rather than Professional on class identification, but occupational class still has a strong impact on subjective class identification.

But ascribed position seems less salient in subjectively identifying with the top-class categories. Among caste modalities, only Agricultural castes still show a strong and significant positive marginal effect. This positive marginal effect may relate to their assertion as a powerful caste (among them, notably Yadavs), as noted in the previous chapter. I also ran equality of coefficient tests (not reported here) that show that the probability of identifying as middle class or comfortable observed for Muslims as compared with other castes is negative and significant (except for Dalits and Brahmins). This may denote a form of social anxiety for Muslims who face stigmatization on the subcontinent (Jaffrelot, 2019b). One may be surprised to observe such a low and non-significant marginal effect for Brahmins when compared with

[87] This variable measures the degree of material conditions as discussed in the first section (the number of assets was strongly correlated to the first dimension of the factor analysis).
[88] Income per capita is discretized in deciles in the Uttar Pradesh sample and the decile levels are considered as a continuous variable (1-10).

Dalits in the last model. Possibly, Brahmins may feel constrained in their class identity as they see class promotion through affirmative action policies for low castes as a threat to their own position. For instance, Sharad (interview 4), a Brahmin professional, declared: "As the new government comes, as they have their policy, according to that whoever fits that gets preference [benefits from reservation policies]. But the rest, general people, innocent, honest person without any recommendation, their work doesn't go much further." Overall, the last model shows some hint (even though not entirely clear) that caste and subjective class identification are mixed. Class identification is not necessarily separated from caste, as it showed when I interviewed Ramji (interview 10), belonging to the Yadav caste, and asked him to which social class he identifies. He replied: "High middle-class. We come to first class, but these Brahmins started saying it for themselves."

This suggests that if experienced positions of caste and class overlap to a certain extent (as studied by the congruence between caste and occupational class), caste and class identifications are also congruent. If I discussed in the previous chapter how achieved positions modify caste boundaries, it also must be added that ascribed position too affects one's perception of achievement.

## *F - Conclusion: the ascription and achievement interplay*

This chapter has reviewed how achieved position is conceptualized and operationalized in the Indian context using quantitative surveys. Building on different approaches, I have suggested four complementing ways of examining achievement in Uttar Pradesh. First, in the existing literature, material conditions are often used to describe class positions. Even though wealth indicators entail a relatively poor conceptualization of class, they present the advantage of easily relating my quantitative and qualitative materials. But they also make diachronic analyses difficult due to rapid changes in durable goods penetration. Second, occupational class has not been systematically analyzed in the Indian context. I presented two fairly conceptualized schemas that derive from international occupational classifications but are adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the labor structure in India. I chose the one that is more intuitive to manipulate since it may be conceived as a social gradient and is easily replicable, in particular to analyze intergenerational class mobility. Third, educational achievement also indicates a form of achievement that does not overlap with occupational class position and may be worth examining. Finally, India, like other developing or emerging countries, has been overwhelmed by a literature attempting to define the boundaries of the middle class. I argue that middle class is best considered as a form of class identification and I look at whether

households identify with this class when they are prompted to. I relativize the widespread idea that everyone would claim to be middle class, even if it does, indeed, concern a large section of the society.

Two remarks may be brought forward. First, the "majority inferiority complex" of the Hindu population about Muslims (Jaffrelot, 1996) is far from being based on an objective ground of socioeconomic success of the latter group, given its low achieved position.[89] As the largest religious minority in India, the Muslim community also faces discrimination and overall its socioeconomic wellbeing is lower than that of Hindus (Gayer and Jaffrelot, 2012), not to mention that it may have got even more intensely marginalized in the past decade (Asher et al., 2020; Jaffrelot and Kalaiyarasan, 2019). Second, this social tableau of the unequal achieved position in the class structure and of social immobility sheds light on the caste and religious barriers faced by dominated groups. Inversely, it also outlines the resources that privileged groups are able to draw from to ensure the conversion of their position from an ascription-based hierarchy into class positions. In this way, caste is far from being an institution of the past as it contributes to the persistence of socioeconomic disparities (Mosse, 2019). Ascriptive inequalities maintained through processes of discrimination and biased representations of young graduates from these groups constitute barriers for entering top positions of the class structure (Jodhka and Newman, 2007). When accessing the top professional occupations, Dalits perceive themselves as the representatives of a "community in struggle" and keep a strong solidarity with their group of origin (Naudet, 2018), which mirrors their difficulty in integrating the dominant groups. Inequalities between ascribed categories also reveal the structure of advantage that is permitted by caste in economic markets (Mosse, 2018). The transmission of economic capital, in the form of agricultural land or economic assets, seems to be a strong driver of social immobility, up to the field of Indian top CEOs and chairmen who often hold their position as inheritors of family dynasties (Naudet et al., 2018). But the role of caste also implies the maintenance of social capital, which is sometimes institutionalized in the form of associations. The cultivation of caste cohesion ensures the maintenance of caste as a group of interest (Ponniah, 2017), permitting opportunity hoarding and thus facilitating class reproduction.

Overall, each of the presented tools to operationalize achieved position serve to identify congruence and misalignment between caste and class positions, between fathers' and sons'

[89] Had I differentiated Muslims according to their caste position, it is likely that class differences would have also revealed the relegation of the lowest castes into the most deprived classes.

positions and between perceived and experienced class positions. I empirically identify that the congruence between these different comparisons is usually high, reinforcing the idea that the Indian social space (and here the Uttar Pradesh social space) is highly vertical (Ferry et al., 2018). It tends to divide individuals between the top, with materially well-off individuals, belonging to upper occupational class positions inherited from their fathers, hailing from upper caste backgrounds, and identifying as middle class (if not comfortable), and the most deprived, belonging to the large segment of laborers that their fathers also originated from and whom are from a low caste, while they also identify as "poor." But not all positions are perfectly aligned: large sections of upper castes are also materially deprived and identifying as middle class is not limited to upper occupational classes. These misalignments in the social space may trigger differences in status displays, especially regarding vegetarianism. This will be the central focus of the next chapter.

# Third part
# How do caste and class crystallize? The social stratification of vegetarianism

# Chapter 6 – A vegetarian status? A quantitative investigation of sanskritization

*Local officer: We're not so backward, are we?*
*Delhi officer: It was an enlightening experience.*
*Local officer: Enlightening experience? If you want an enlightening experience, go to Gaia. Sit under the holy tree and you will find your soul peace. Is not it, Obandar?*
*Local constable: Do not look at me, sir. I am not a Buddhist. I eat meat and drink alcohol.*
*Local officer: Whatever you are, bring the food. Yes…*
*Delhi sub officer: Arey, he is a vegetarian.*
*Local officer: No problem. Take a little, then. Taste it only.*
*Delhi officer: No way, sir.*
*Local officer: Come on, another one is coming.*
*Delhi officer: Hey, hold it. Will you slaughter it now?*
*Local officer: Yes, in the backyard. We can't give old, stale food to our guests… To our guests from Delhi!*
*Delhi officer: Come on, let it go. I do not eat chicken. Let him go, for me.*
*Local officer: I insist, sir. Give me a chance to be a good host.*
*Delhi officer: Imagine that you have done so, that we are satisfied. Now please leave it. Hey, bhaisahab wait.*
*Local officer: We spent our own money on it. We will slaughter it, cook it and eat it. For my sake.*
*Delhi officer: You just said it was for us. We want it alive, let it go.*
*Local officer: Hello! We paid a lot for that chicken.*
*Delhi officer: I will not allow you to slaughter it.*
*Local officer: So, what will you do, Delhi police officer? What will Delhi police do?*
*Delhi officer: Do not do this. I beg you.*
*Local officer: I wanted to show hospitality only.*
*Delhi officer: So, I consider my soul to be satisfied.*
*Delhi sub officer: For the sake of your soul's peace… For your spiritual peace…! Let that damned chicken go.*

Delhi Crime, *2019, Mehta, R.*

Anthropologists have long underscored the importance of religious and caste identity in food practices in India, food being an archetypical form of consumption marked by symbolic distinctions. Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* (Dumont, 1974) offers an idealistic description of food divisions, with a ranking of food items following a logic ranging from the "pure" — vegetarian — to the "impure" (or the most polluted) — non-vegetarian. This food hierarchy also reflects the caste hierarchy, with a tendency among higher castes, and especially Brahmins, which may be understood as status groups (Weber, 2010), to display their higher social status by declaring themselves vegetarian, whereas lower castes would be non-vegetarian.

Yet, this ideal typical description of the social stratification ignores one important dimension: achieved position, such as material wealth, occupational class, and educational

attainment. In particular, it does not take into account dynamic processes of cultural emulation, in which low castes emulate the beliefs and practices of upper castes, particularly those of Brahmins, in order to legitimize their achieved position. This social process refers to a concept that the anthropologist M. N. Srinivas named "sanskritization" (Srinivas, 1952). Though intergenerational occupational immobility is very strong in the Indian society (Vaid 2018, see also Chapter 5), instances of upward mobility occur. Following the concept of sanskritization, the cultural consequences of achieved position mobility may foster individual adherence to vegetarianism.

The centrality of Brahmins and the cultural emulation of which they would be the object connect with the role of cultural dominance in Bourdieu's theory of social stratification (Bourdieu, 1984). In this framework, "cultural legitimacy" implies that the cultural practices of the dominant class fractions of the French social space in the 1960s are considered to be more legitimate and valued, and individuals belonging to the petty bourgeoisie show "cultural goodwill" by emulating the practices of the bourgeoisie. Yet, this mechanism of social diffusion of cultural practices mainly operates according to one dimension of social stratification, social class. In cases where different categories of social stratification are salient yet not congruent, like caste and class here, their cultural outcome are more uncertain. Individuals with a low degree of "status crystallization" (e.g., a Dalit professional, in a low position in the caste order but high in the class order) may actually seek to change the social order since their position in society are ambiguous and they face uncomfortable social experiences (Lenski, 1954). Consequently, they may not emulate Brahmins' cultural practices, neither adhere to the practices of the dominant categories.

In this chapter, I draw a social portrait of vegetarianism by mainly studying the association between achieved position (measured as material wealth, occupational class, and educational attainment), ascribed position (measured as caste, including jati level) and vegetarianism. Considering caste as a matrix of socialization that shapes dietary practices, I question the role of achievement in food practices and how these two dimensions of the Indian social stratification (achieved and ascribed positions) relate with each other. I test whether individuals in higher achieved positions are more frequently vegetarian, as assumed by the process of sanskritization. I investigate whether vegetarianism can be considered a status marker that legitimizes individuals' achieved position, particularly in case of upward social mobility. I also investigate the higher proportion of female vegetarianism, and whether they may be considered as the moral guardians of vegetarianism in households. This investigation on the cultural emulation of vegetarianism is operationalized by using the National Family

Health Survey of 2015-2016, focusing on Hindus in Uttar Pradesh, the population for which I have recoded jati self-declarations (my caste nomenclature is presented in Chapter 4).

In the following, I first discuss sanskritization by articulating classical formulations with challenges around the validity of the concept that rose more recently. I position this discussion in a sociological framework of the social stratification of cultural practices. Second, based on these theoretical elements, I formulate the three hypotheses that I will test in the chapter. Third, I present the data and the method to operationalize this investigation and I present the results. Finally, I discuss and conclude on the main takeaways of this analysis: caste may be understood as a matrix of socialization that is more or less salient depending on achieved position and gender.

## *A - Assessing sanskritization in a sociological framework*

Rooted in the socio-anthropological work of M. N. Srinivas, sanskritization is a cultural process that illustrates the interdependence of ascribed and achieved status as two components of social stratification.

### 1) Sanskritization: the legacy of an Indian concept

M. N. Srinivas is credited for having coined the concept of sanskritization in his book *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1952), where he presents a monograph of a region of Karnataka, in southern India, tracing the slow historical adoption of Sanskritic Hinduism, which after several centuries ended up supplanting local cultural customs.[90] Sanskritization is defined as a process in which lower castes emulate the beliefs and practices of upper castes, particularly those of Brahmins. This cultural emulation is related to the low castes' aspired or observed upward mobility, be it in economic or political terms. The use of the root word "Sanskrit-," instead of "Brahminization," is justified by the idea that castes come to follow Hindu values and practices as prescribed by the Vedas, the sacred texts of Hinduism. Brahmins are the usual custodians of these values but according to M. N. Srinivas's observations, sanskritization may also happen in the absence or non-dominance of Brahmins in a geographic area, and other castes (for instance, merchant castes claiming a Vaishya varna) have also long been followers of sanskritized values, though possibly with variations. In the long run, Brahmanical practices are mostly the ones that are emulated, so that it is the Brahmanical model that is the most central and sought after. Different practices are supposedly

[90] Charsley (1998) notes that the roots of this concept are to be found in the earlier book *Marriage and Family in Mysore* (1942).

affected by the process of sanskritization, including turning to vegetarianism, teetotalism (alcohol abstinence) or giving up widow remarriage. On the whole, it is to be noted that sanskritization enforces restrictions on women with higher moral control on their lifestyle conduct (Srinivas, 1989). This gender divide is consistent with recent ethnographic investigations of dietary habits among upper class-aspiring individuals from low castes, for instance Yadavs, an initially middle-ranked caste. Indeed, while Yadav men adhere to ideas of "masculinity" and enjoy meat eating and alcohol drinking in sociability event that strengthen the cohesion of the group, women do not participate in these reunions and stick to a vegetarian diet (Michelutti, 2008).

Sanskritization promotes a portrayal of the caste structure that contradicts the idea of a rigid and static hierarchical system (where castes are interdependent with each other), idea that resulted from colonial anthropology and was later partly reproduced in caste theories (for instance in *Homo Hierarchicus* by Louis Dumont, 1974). With this concept, the caste system is considered in a dynamic flux and castes are de-essentialized by the introduction of other key social factors, whether social class or political dominance, to account for cultural practices. The process of sanskritization is supposed to be triggered by class or political upward mobility: in a first step, it legitimizes the attainment of a higher-class destination position as compared with the class position of origin. But sanskritization is not only caused by social mobility: it also affects it in a second step. Indeed, sanskritization raises one's hierarchical caste position. The whole process can then be understood as a dynamic mutual influence between class mobility and caste mobility. Srinivas claimed that the process would be successful (a caste would see its hierarchical position promoted) only under certain conditions: if cultural emulation is a group strategy rather than an individual strategy and if the initial caste position is not too low ("untouchable" castes find it more difficult to reach a higher status position). A typical contemporary example of successful sanskritization is the study the Yadav caste, an initially middle-ranked caste (assigned to the Shudra varna) mainly composed of small landowners and cattle breeders that claims a higher varna position and has risen to high political power in Uttar Pradesh and, has changed its dietary practices for vegetarianism (Michelutti, 2008).

Inspired by the structural functionalism of Radcliffe-Brown (Charsley, 1998), Srinivas considers that sanskritization plays a role of social integration. It is ultimately a cultural and moral unifier around a Hindu order in India. The cohesive role of Hinduism then ideologically relates with the Hindutva project, as Kunnath (forthcoming) notes. Both concepts – it is to be reminded that sanskritization is a descriptive concept while Hindutva is a normative project –

rely on the Gramscian idea of cultural hegemony, but sanskritization uses consensus while Hindutva relies on violence and conflict to ensure upper caste dominance. This way, violence against minorities, including Dalits, and more frequently against Muslims – especially when the motive is cow slaughter or beef consumption (Ferry, 2018) –, may be read as symbolic and violent reminders of sanskritized cultural values in India – in other words, of the salience of upper caste values – in a period where they may be challenged.

### 2) The ubiquity of a Brahminical Social Order?

Sanskritization suggests the cultural prevalence of a Hindu order that is ultimately dominated by Brahminical values. Yet different processes challenge its ubiquity in the Indian society. First, sanskritization may be undermined by a process that Srinivas himself qualified as "westernization" (Srinivas, 1956) and that other scholars may call modernization. What the anthropologist means by this process is the imposition of British rule after the nineteenth century, the development of modern technology along with urbanization, the growing importance of credentialism and the spread of new occupations. The social consequences of these changes may diminish the distinctive feature of Brahmin lifestyles:

> *"The British who ate beef and pork and drank liquor, possessed political and economic power, a new technology, scientific knowledge, and a great literature. Hence the westernized upper castes began acquiring customs and habits which were not dissimilar from those they had looked down upon."*
> (Srinivas, 1956: 487)

In short, the centrality of Brahminical values may have diminished for the benefit of customs of the British dominant class, fostering a reversal of the cultural practices of the meat-eating lower castes. In the more recent period, Baviskar (2012) suggests that other dimensions of western food-eating, such as eating out, particularly in urbanized settings, and the consumption of processed foods (Baviskar, 2017), have become more distinctive and therefore diminished the religious and caste salience of meat. Besides, while Brahmin values clearly reject eggs, they may have gained a more ambiguous status under the influence of modernization, where the insistence on the need of a balanced diet – including proteins – gains momentum. It is therefore possible that ovo-vegetarianism slowly becomes a middle-range or even high-end diet, accommodating most of Brahmin values while including animal proteins.

Meanwhile, Srinivas also quite counterintuitively notes that westernization may as well foster sanskritization: "Western technology – railways, the internal combustion engine, press,

radio, and plane – has aided the spread of Sanskritization" (Srinivas, 1956: 486). He mostly refers to the diffusion of social reformist movements promoting a revival of Vedic Hinduism, such as the Arya Samaj. The argument refers to modernization as an agent of diffusion of Brahminical values, where Brahmins are not challenged in their dominant position since they are the main beneficiaries of secular education.

Yet, other authors suggest that although caste remains a prevalent institution in contemporary India, it should not be understood as a hierarchical structure but as a structure of difference (Gupta, 2000, 2019). In this framework, the unit of analysis may be jatis rather than big caste categories as they are organized around a multiplicity of hierarchies. This view challenges the framework of a Brahminical hierarchy that would be accepted by all castes irrespective of their position. On the contrary, what could be interpreted as a process of sanskritization, i.e., acknowledgement of subordination to upper castes by emulating them, may in fact transpire an aspiration for equalization (Charsley, 1998, Desai, 2008). This reminds us that the "meaning-making" of food practices should be given equal importance (Part 4 will interpret vegetarianism in light of the social portrait of vegetarianism drawn in the current chapter). Lower castes may more frontally challenge Brahminical values by promoting alternative models of cultural legitimation and by challenging the role of Brahmin values in unifying the Indian society. This is for instance described in the process of "dalitization," which demands social recognition and equality. In this conceptual framework, the division of the society between Brahmins and Non-Brahmins assumed by sanskritization is replaced by a division between Brahmins and the "Dalitbahujans," as discussed in *Why I am not a Hindu* (Ilaiah, 1996, see also *Buffalo Nationalism*, Ilaiah, 2004). The second category refers to Dalits and low castes considered as "Shudras." This cultural model emphasizes the opposition, rather than the smooth harmony, between castes and draws from social descriptions and political work of lower caste leaders such as Phule, Periyar and Ambedkar (Jaffrelot, 2000a). The recent organization of "beef festivals" in universities may be read as a process of Dalit assertion for cultural tolerance (Natrajan, 2018), yet the political assertion of Dalits should not be exaggerated, especially in North India (Jaffrelot, 2000b), and the category of "Dalitbahujans" remains a political project that finds little concrete existence as a social group, partly because it would unite jatis characterized by "mutual repulsion" (as reminded by Gupta, 2019, quoting Célestin Bouglé). If anything, this counter-model paradoxically puts back Brahmin values and the adherence to them at the centre of attention.

### 3) Re-embedding cultural processes within a sociology framework

A recurrent critic to the process of sanskritization has been its culturally specific anchor to the Indian society, which prevents it from comparisons with other social contexts (Carroll, 1977). This critic may seem all the more surprising because the concept was inspired by the reading of founding sociologists and anthropologists. But it seems to have travelled in one same direction, taking theoretical inspiration from structural functionalism yet not engaging in a dialogue with the discipline of sociology after its empirical examination in the Indian context.

Yet, the concept has clear resonance with the sociology of cultural practices and social stratification. Sanskritization can be read in continuation with the seminal Weberian distinction of status and class (Weber, 2010). As such, it suggests that although the two dimensions are independent from each other, status groups are emulated partly because of their dominant class position, hence they interact with each other, a point that is not much acknowledged in neo-Weberian empirical applications (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007). The concept hence specifies the conditions under which a category of individuals forms a reference group in a social context, i.e., a group that acts as a frame of reference for people (Merton and Rossi, 1968). Sanskritization also resonates with the idea of "cultural legitimacy" by Bourdieu (1984) as it assumes that some cultural tastes are more valued than others, since they are ranked in a unified, hierarchically-arranged vision of lifestyles. Besides, the author of *Distinction* introduces the concept of "habitus" in order to link cultural preferences with social dispositions acquired in early socialization, which are determined by the position in the social space. In the French context of the 1960s analyzed by Bourdieu, status groups are argued to be crystallized in social class, so that the author insists on class habitus. But in the Indian context, as one can assume the importance of castes as a cultural matrix of socialization, it may be relevant to talk about caste habitus. The possible interaction between gender, social status and lifestyles resonates with the sociology of food investigating the specific role of women – as gatekeepers – in transmitting cultural, nutritive and health norms within the household (Régnier and Masullo, 2009).

Besides, challenges to sanskritization as the sole explainer of social change may be put into perspective with critics and empirical tests of the model of cultural legitimacy (Peterson, 1997). Observing the lower social differentiation between "highbrow" and "lowbrow" tastes, sociologists have pointed out the rise of cultural eclectism and the coexistence of different value scales, possibly in a "postmodern" framework where individuals are more tolerant. Without adhering to an atomization of the social sphere entailed by postmodernity, it is possible

that the different value scales refer to different yet coexisting "orders of worth" that reflect the plurality of forms of valorization in the social world (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006) and their social embeddedness. The coexistence of sanskritization with other cultural processes may reflect this conceptual reading. In contrast, the apparent cultural diversity of social groups may also be only an outcome of social mobility, where secondary socialization possibly outweighs the effect of primary socialization in terms of cultural taste (Coulangeon and Lemel, 2007). The role of social mobility being central to the examination of sanskritization, this observation is necessary to remind that individuals' habitus is shaped by their caste and class positions, and that the latter may be different when looking at origin and destination (even though class immobility is very high).

The examination of cultural practices among lower fractions of the social space, be they lower castes or classes (the two being highly congruent in the Indian case), is also at risk of a "miserabilist" reading of cultural practices, where all practices are only analyzed vis-à-vis cultural legitimacy (popular culture is a poor culture), or, on the contrary, of a "populist" reading of cultural practices, where popular culture is celebrated without acknowledging the symbolic domination it endures (Grignon and Passeron, 1989, see also Coulangeon, 2017). The overemphasis of sanskritization may in fact mask the relative cultural autonomy of individuals especially of those from the lowest caste fractions. In order to legitimate their upper class position, as they are in a social position with a low degree of "status crystallization" (Lenski, 1954), Dalits may seek to change the social order since their position in society is ambiguous and their social experience is uncomfortable (Naudet, 2018). As a consequence, they may not emulate Brahmins' cultural practices, and not be more frequently vegetarian. Inversely, the attention to a supposed dalitization of the lowest castes should be put into perspective with the fact that the celebration of low caste practices such as beef eating remains mostly limited (as far as the present scholarship shows) to intellectual circles and universities.

There is in fact no reason not to analyze the social stratification of vegetarianism in India with different tools drawn from the sociology of cultural practices, while keeping in mind, both methodologically and theoretically, the idiosyncratic specificities of the Indian case. Thus, the following hypotheses derive from a sociological reading of the conditions of sanskritization in the Indian context.

## *B - Hypotheses on the association between diet and achievement*

The first aim of the analysis is to assess whether beyond an association between caste and vegetarianism, one can also identify a correlation between achieved position and

vegetarianism. Given the classical literature on sanskritization, I test whether this achievement-vegetarianism correlation is positive, i.e., whether individuals in higher achieved positions are more frequently vegetarian (H1a). I also test the reverse hypothesis: given the more recent literature relativizing sanskritization in a modernizing context, it is possible that individuals in higher achieved positions are actually less vegetarian than others (H1b).

*H1a: Other social factors being taken into account, higher achievement tends to increase the adherence to vegetarianism.*

*H1b: Other social factors being taken into account, higher achievement tends to decrease the adherence to vegetarianism.*

Following premises from the classical literature on the role of women in households, I then hypothesize that the association between achieved position and vegetarianism is greater for women than for men. Besides, since women's labor force participation is very low and female hypergamy is high (in terms of achieved position), I hypothesize that the association between achieved position and vegetarianism among women is higher when considering women's partners' achieved position (H2).

*H2: Achieved position effects (especially measured as partner's position effects for women) on vegetarianism tend to be more important for women than for men.*

Then, I better characterize this correlation by disentangling it based on caste. I hypothesize that class effects on vegetarianism are different among various caste positions (H3). This hypothesis acknowledges the importance of caste as a socialization circle (caste habitus). Adopting vegetarianism as a status-seeking strategy may be more visible among some castes while individuals from other castes may challenge this strategy (dalitization). I take the opportunity of this hypothesis to explore the importance of vegetarian distinctions at the jati level rather than at the higher caste level among Dalits and Agricultural castes.

*H3: Class effects on vegetarianism vary depending on castes.*

Finally, I test the robustness of the association between achieved position and vegetarianism by looking at intergenerational and diachronic patterns of diets. In particular, I acknowledge that other mechanisms may be at play in mitigating the effect of achievement on vegetarianism, such as household cultural transmission and lifecycle effects as observed in Chapter 3. I thus test whether achievement plays a role irrespective of these alternative effects.

Sanskritization and its critical examinations have been mostly studied using ethnographic evidence until now, when this cultural process is not simply discarded as an outdated classical concept. Quantitative investigations remain scarce if not inexistent, so that in this chapter, I suggest testing these hypotheses by using large-scale surveys.

## *C - Data and method*

The data used in this chapter comes from the National Family and Health Survey, the only large-scale survey in India that collects individual data on dietary preferences, and on meat, fish and effs consumption frequencies more specifically. Individual-level data are preferred over household-level data (which gather information on the household food budget) because of the strong individual variability in vegetarianism as shown in Chapter 3. A variable capturing individual diets is created by distinguishing vegetarians who declare eating neither meat, fish nor eggs – coded as 1 – and others, considered as non-vegetarian – coded as 0.

I use the fourth round of the survey of 2015-2016 for which an open-ended question on jati belonging has been publicly released. All individuals between 15 and 54 years old for men and 15 and 49 years old for women have been surveyed in selected households. The age restrictions imply that not all individuals of a same household were surveyed, possibly undermining individual variations shaping vegetarianism. As explained in Chapter 4, I use multilevel linear probability regressions. In all the models presented here, individuals are the unit-variable that are embedded in jatis, more precisely by allowing varying intercepts for jatis. This framework hence adjusts for jati effects and the results control for the ascribed position. I restrict the sample to Hindus given that 97 percent of Muslim individuals are non-vegetarian, so that they do not aspire to vegetarianism as a cultural marker (which does not mean that they are not affected by it, see Part 4). The empirical application centers on Uttar Pradesh, the region for which I have recoded and cleaned jati enunciations in the data (see Chapter 4). Importantly, the fourth survey of the NFHS includes two modules for female respondents: a "district module" and a "state module," the latter being a subset of the former. When possible, I use the former sample, but not all variables are provided in this sample so that I sometimes rely on the latter. I precise this aspect in all subsequent statistical treatments. In the appendix of the chapter, I present the main descriptive statistical distributions of the variables used here.

To test hypotheses H1a and H1b, I operationalize social stratification achievement using three different indicators that capture different dimensions of socioeconomic conditions. As observed in the preceding chapter, these measures are strongly correlated in Uttar Pradesh but relate with distinct indicators: material wealth – measured at the household level –, individual occupational class – possibly capturing class-specific cultural specificities – and individual educational attainment – which can be interpreted as a measure of subjective socioeconomic status expectations. I predict vegetarianism using three different multilevel linear probability models (M1 to M3), where the independent variable of interest is alternatively material wealth,

occupational class and educational attainment. This variable interacts with sex – given Hypothesis 2 in particular – and residential area (rural or urban) given the discrepancies in vegetarianism and achieved positions in these two contexts. Therefore, the models have a three-way interaction term (along with the lower-order terms) and the models also adjust for age given the lifecycle effects observed in Chapter 3. These first three models may be parsimoniously written as:

$V = \sum_{(s,r)}[\, a_0\, c_{j,(s,r)} + a_1 \mathrm{age}_{(s,r)} + a_2\, \mathrm{achieved}_{(s,r)}]$, *where:*

*V* is the predicted variable of vegetarianism (vegetarian = 1, non-vegetarian = 0),

*c* is the constant that varies across *j* jatis, j= 1, …, 501 different jatis,[91]

*age* is a continuous and scaled variable,

*achieved* is a categorical variable that reflects achieved position (either material wealth, occupational class or educational attainment),

all parameters interact with *s* (sex = male or female) and *r* (residential area = rural or urban).

To ease the interpretation of the regression coefficients, I calculate and plot the predicted probabilities of these models along with their 95 percent confidence intervals in the results. The coefficients of all regression models used in this chapter are available in the appendix of the chapter.

To further test Hypothesis 2, I also predict vegetarianism among women, first by focusing on one's own educational attainment (model MW1), then by replacing one's own educational attainment by one's partner's educational attainment (model MW2) and finally by adding both measures of educational attainment (one's own and one's partner's) along with an interaction term (model MW3). Model MW3 may be written as:

$V = \sum_{(e)}[\, a_0\, c_{j,(e)} + a_1\, partner_{(e)}] + a_2 \mathrm{age} + a_3 \mathrm{residence}$, where:

*partner* is a categorical variable that reflects one's partner's educational attainment,

the constant and the *partner* variable vary across one's educational attainment *e*.

Later, Hypothesis 3 is tested in model M4 by adding caste categories to model M3 as well as an interaction term with the three-way interaction. M4 may thus be written as:

$V = \sum_{(s,r,ca)}[\, a_0\, c_{j,(s,r,c)} + a_1 \mathrm{age}_{(s,r,ca)} + a_2\, \mathrm{achieved}_{(s,r,ca)}]$, where:

All parameters interact with *ca* (caste category, either Brahmin, Lordly, Merchant, Agricultural, Low, Dalit).

Finally, intergenerational and temporal robustness checks of the salience of vegetarianism in status-seeking strategies is conducted using descriptive statistics in the final subsection of the Results.

[91] This number is different from the one that is cited in Chapter 4 because the survey is different, in particular because less households were surveyed, and the jati enunciations reached a different number of self-identifications.

## *D - Results: achievement as a driving force for vegetarianism*

### 1) Caste and vegetarianism

Before testing the association between achieved positions and vegetarianism, I first recall the variations in the adherence to vegetarianism according to the ascribed position of caste.

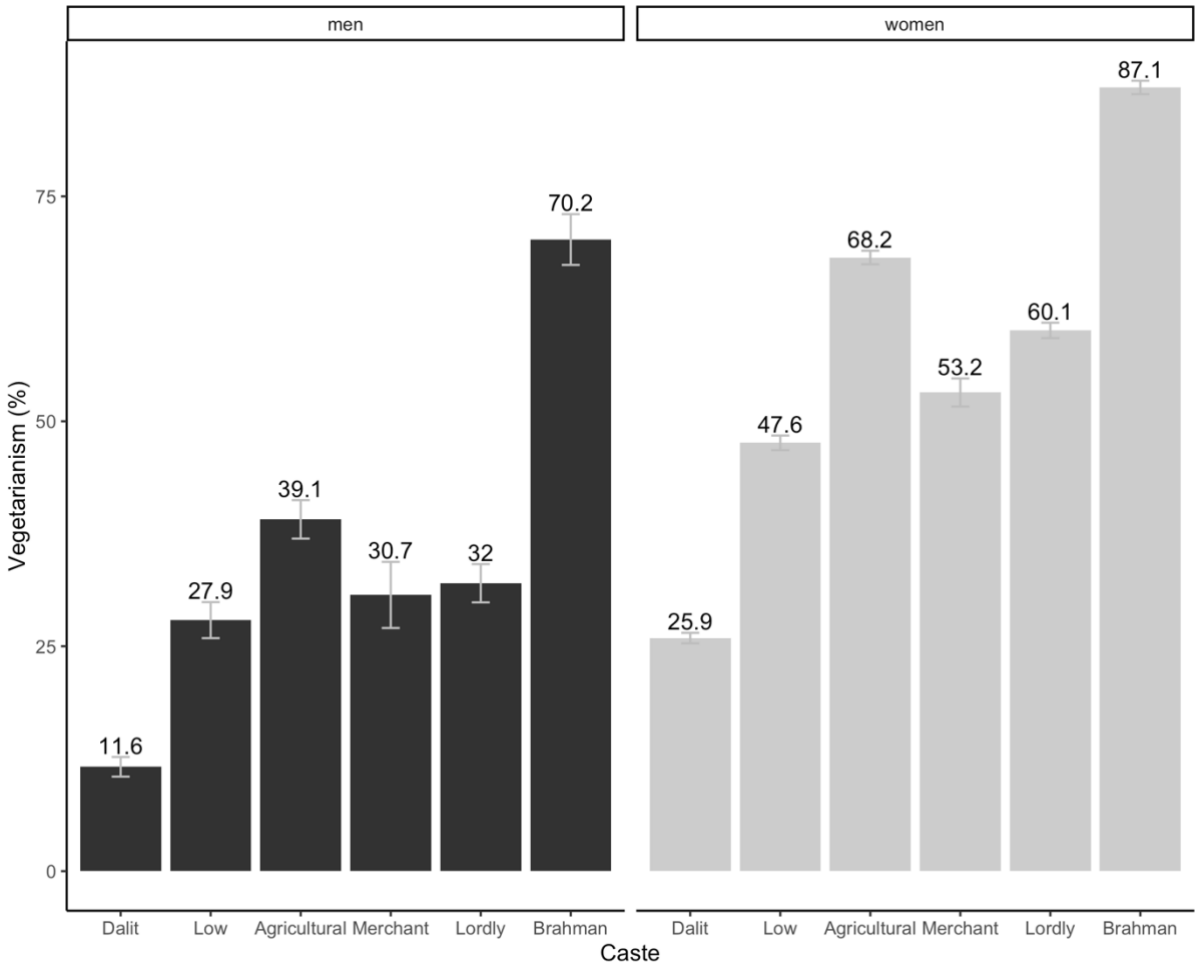
Vegetarianism is unevenly frequent among individuals, depending on sex, as already shown in Chapter 3, and caste (Figure 6.1). Brahmins are clearly the most vegetarian group, with 70 percent of Brahmin men and 88 of Brahmin women. It is the only caste category where vegetarianism is the numerically dominant diet among men. In contrast, Dalits are the least vegetarians: only 16 percent of Dalit men and 28 percent of Dalit women declare not consuming non-vegetarian products.

In-between, the frequency of vegetarianism does not follow a hierarchical pattern, which is not so surprising as I have already noted: though varna categories are clearly ranked, their translation into hierarchical caste categories is not so straightforward (Chapter 4). Low castes present the second lowest frequency of vegetarianism after Dalits, with 30 percent of Low caste men and 50 percent of Low caste women. Contrary to what could have been expected, i.e., that Lordly castes, categories claiming the "Kshatriya" varna, would be highly non-vegetarian, whereas Merchant castes, claiming the "Vaishya" varna, would be highly vegetarian (Michelutti, 2008), there is no clear-cut difference between these categories. But Agricultural caste women clearly demonstrate a higher level of vegetarianism when compared with the other three caste categories.[92]

Among all caste categories, women are more frequently vegetarian than men. Yet the relative difference is the lowest among Brahmins, where women compared with men are only 20 percent more frequently vegetarian – while the difference is the highest among Dalits and Agricultural castes.

[92] The modelling in Chapter 4 showed different estimates that fall more in line with the theoretical estimates of the varna model: Merchant castes have a much higher frequency of vegetarianism followed by Agricultural castes, and Lordly castes lag behind (but higher than Dalits and Low castes). These differences stem from the unit of enquiry, household level in Chapter 4 and the individual level in this chapter (reflecting the important aspect of outside-the-home consumption outlined in Chapter 3). Besides, the present estimates are clearly not statistical artefacts stemming from the survey, since similar estimates are found when using the calculations using the NFHS round of 2005-2006, see the end of the chapter.

*Figure 6.1 - Distribution of vegetarianism by caste and sex in Uttar Pradesh*




*Note: An individual is considered vegetarian if they declare never consuming eggs, fish, or meat. 12.6 percent of Dalit men declare themselves vegetarian against 70.2 percent of Brahmin men. 95 percent confidence intervals have been computed as in other figures of this chapter.*

*Sample: All Hindu men (between 15 and 54 years old) and women (between 15 and 49 years old) residing in Uttar Pradesh for which a caste category could be asserted from their jati declaration and without missing information on food practices ($N_{male}$=10,758 and $N_{female}$=74,493). Estimates drawn from the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

## 2) What status is it about? The drivers of vegetarianism

I now turn to modelling in order to test whether belonging to better-off achieved positions tends to increase (H1a) or decrease (H1b) individual adherence to vegetarianism, based on models M1 to M3. I alternatively look at the household's material wealth (Figure 6.2), individuals' occupational class (Figure 6.3) and individuals' educational attainment (Figure 6.4).

All the models take into account the embedded structure of individuals within jatis. After accounting for age, sex, residential area, and class marker along with the three-way interaction

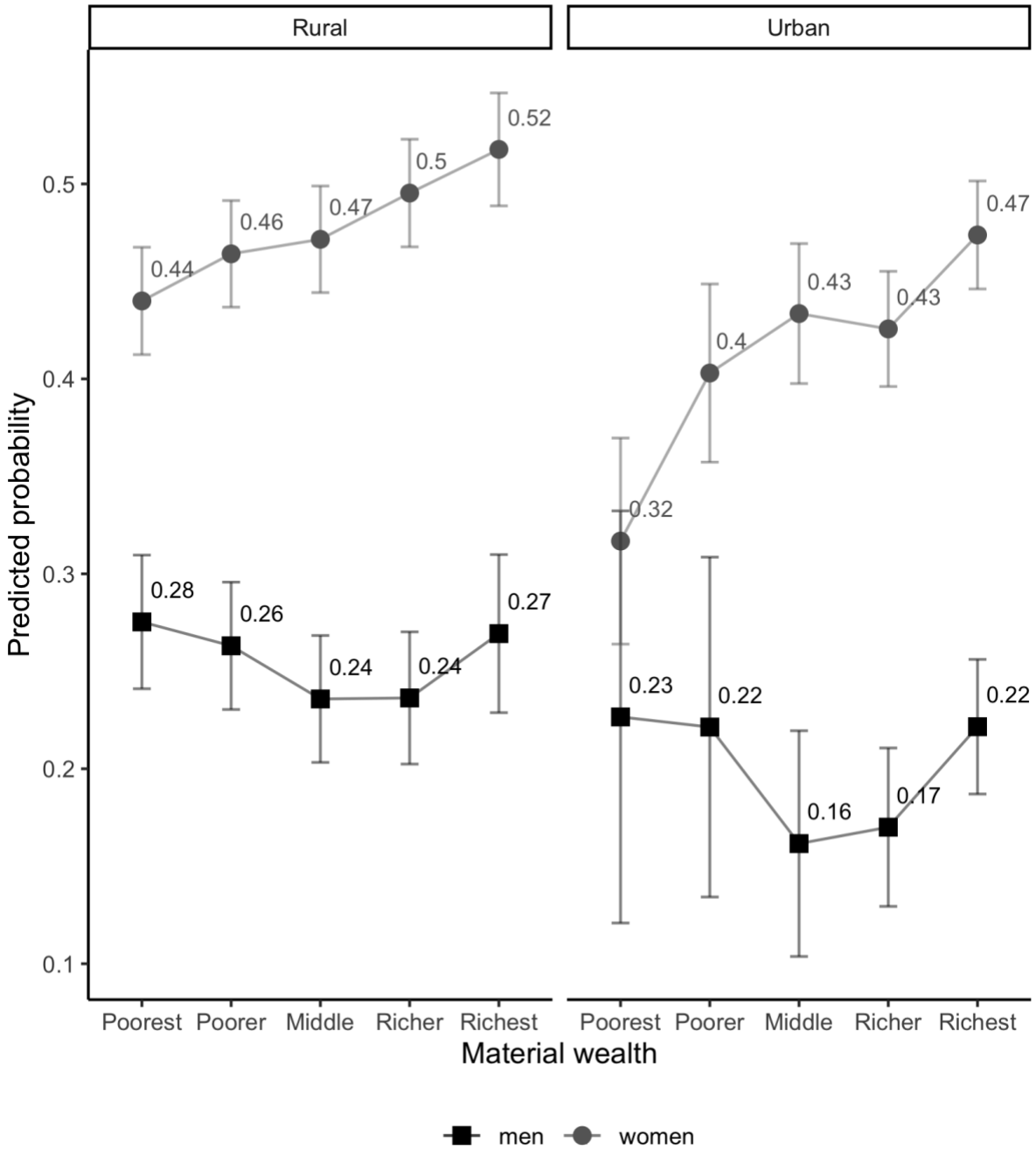
terms between the last three variables, 24 percent, 18 percent, and 24 percent of the unexplained variance of being vegetarian or non-vegetarian of models M1, M2 and M3 (respectively) can be attributed to the jati position. Clearly, this tends to relativize jati, and henceforth caste, as the sole predictor of diets.

Regarding household material wealth, the predicted probabilities of vegetarianism are higher for women residing in better-off households rather than in poor households, irrespective of rural or urban households' location. The effect of material wealth on female vegetarianism is rather linear and shows respectively an 8- and 15-percent probability gap in the adherence to vegetarianism between the poorest and the richest households, for rural and urban households. Quite notably, variations in the proportion of female vegetarianism according to material wealth is more asserted in urban households, although overall the proportion of vegetarians among women is lower in urban areas.

Men's diet is less clearly associated with material wealth and the adherence to vegetarianism presents a "U-shape." Men in the poorest and richest households seem to be more frequently vegetarian, while they tend to be less frequently vegetarian among households with an average wealth level. These results hold both in rural and urban contexts, although the gap in the frequency of vegetarianism according to material wealth is lower among urban households, while overall the proportion of male vegetarianism is lower in urban areas. This "U-shape" may indicate the presence of two different mechanisms at play in determining the adherence to vegetarianism. Among the poorest households, men may be drawn to this diet out of economic necessity, given the economic cost of animal products, while among the richest households, men more clearly adhere to the vegetarian diet according to status-seeking strategies.

The economic rationale of vegetarianism will be further investigated (Chapter 7) but one may interpret this result by men residing in poor households "making a virtue out of necessity" (Bourdieu, 1984). Remarkably, women's vegetarianism is always higher than men's vegetarianism and the association between vegetarianism and material wealth does not indicate any economic constraint for them in the adoption of vegetarianism.

*Figure 6.2 - Predicted probabilities of vegetarianism depending on material wealth*



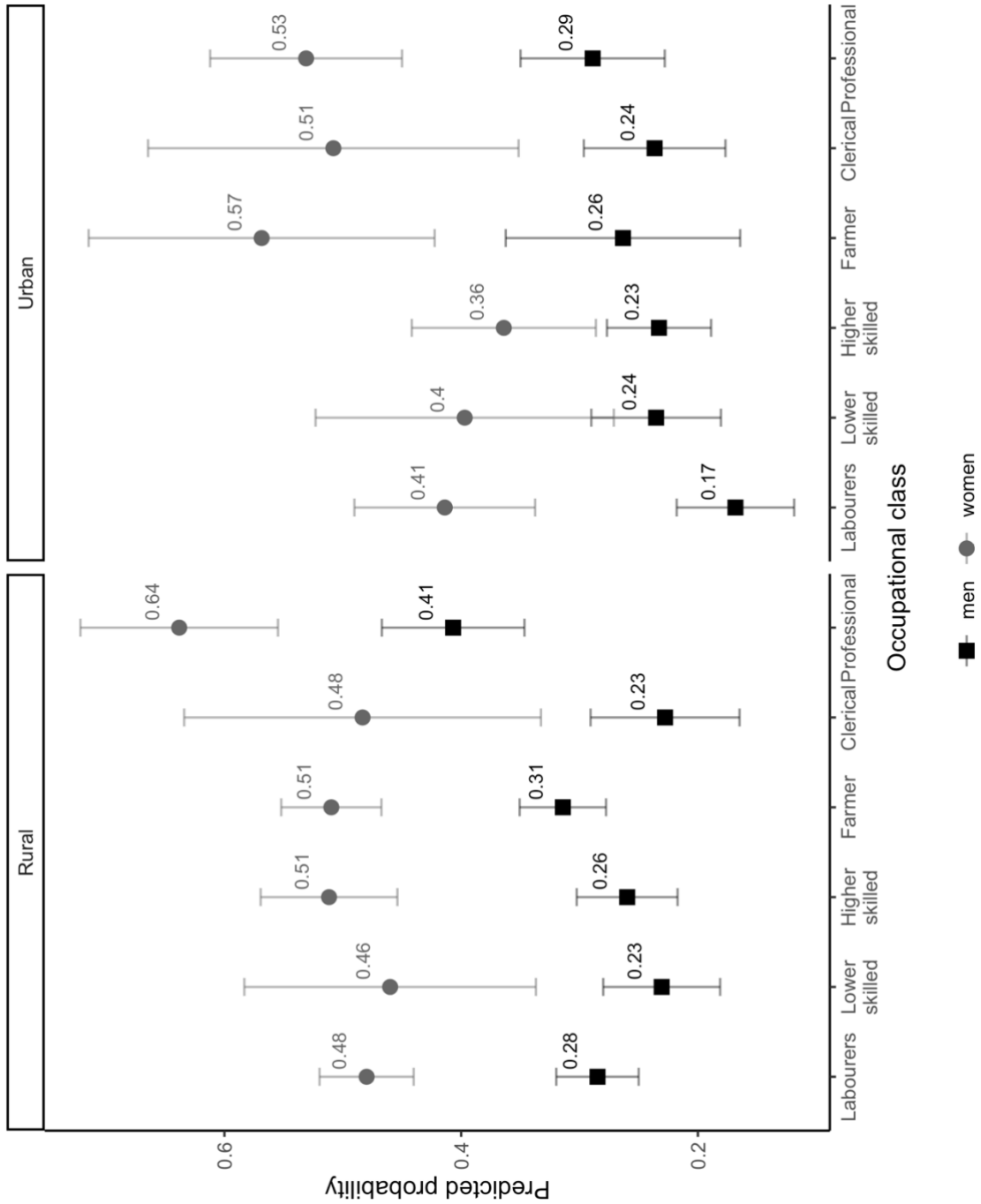

*Note: The predicted probabilities are computed from the multilevel linear probability model (M1) predicting vegetarianism where the independent variable of interest is material wealth. This variable interacts with sex and residential area, the model adjusts for age (continuous and scaled variable) and a varying-intercept for jati categories is introduced. In rural areas, 44 percent of the poorest women are vegetarian against 52 percent of the richest women.*

*Sample: All Hindu male (15-54 years old) and Hindu female (15-49 years old) individuals who responded to the individual questionnaires, with complete information ($N_{male}$=10,758, $N_{female}$=74,493).*

*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

Turning to the occupational class, Model M2 (Figure 6.3) reveals that the predicted level of vegetarianism is higher among professional workers compared with other occupations, a result holding for both men and women, in rural as well as in urban areas. Differences in the adherence to vegetarianism between other occupations are less clear, but remarkably, individuals working as laborers in urban areas are the least likely to be vegetarian. This category of workers, more than any other, corresponds to seasonal migrant workers who work away from their family as they settle for a few months in urban areas, so that they possibly are less subjected to family norms and dietary constraints and are more inclined to enjoy occasional non-vegetarian food.

*Figure 6.3 - Predicted probabilities of vegetarianism depending on occupation*



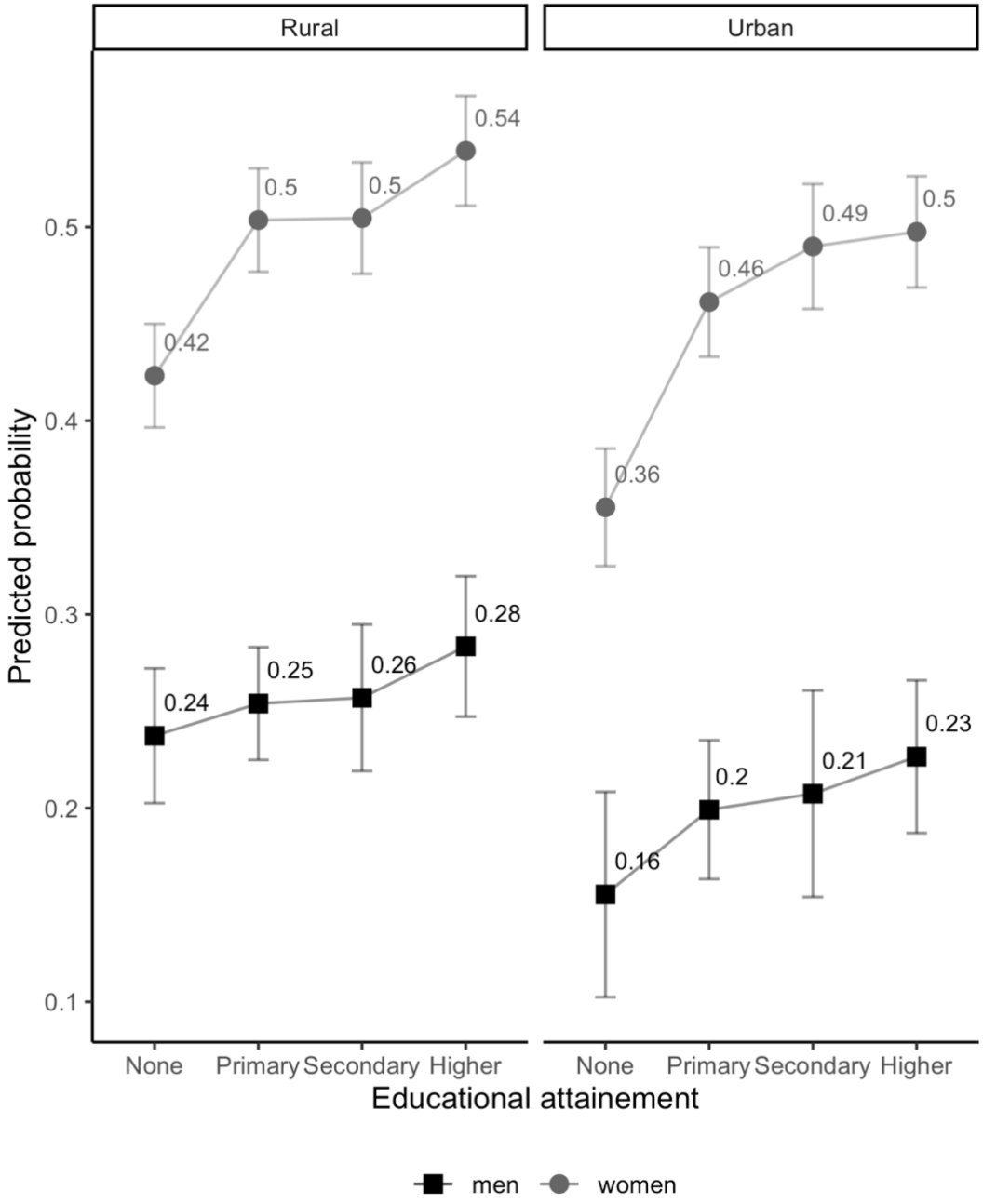

*Note: The predicted probabilities are computed from the multilevel linear probability model (M2) predicting vegetarianism where the independent variable of interest is the occupational class. This variable interacts with sex and residential area, the model adjusts for age (continuous and scaled variable) and a varying-intercept for jati categories is introduced. In rural areas, 48 percent of female laborers are vegetarian against 64 percent of female professionals.*

*Sample: All Hindu male (15-54 years old) and Hindu female (15-49 years old) individuals who responded to the individual questionnaires and who declared an occupation (among women, only those from the "state module" were asked about their occupation), with complete information ($N_{male}$=8,214, $N_{female}$=3,016).*

*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

Finally, the predicted probabilities of vegetarianism depending on educational attainment also show strong contrasts between worse-off and better-off individuals (model M3, Figure 6.4). Non-literate men and women tend to be less frequently vegetarian compared with higher educated individuals. This association holds for both urban and rural dwellers. As observed regarding material wealth, the gaps in predicted probabilities between the least educated and the most highly educated tend to be larger for women (12 and 14 percentage points of difference in rural or urban areas) than for men (4 and 8 percentage points in rural or urban areas). The gaps are also larger in urban areas than in rural areas even though vegetarianism is always higher in rural areas. These empirical results therefore suggest that status-seeking strategies related to the adherence to vegetarianism are more salient regarding women than men and that the social dynamism of these strategies may be more salient in urban areas.

*Figure 6.4 - Predicted probabilities of vegetarianism depending on educational attainment*




*Note: The predicted probabilities are computed from the multilevel linear probability model (M3) predicting vegetarianism where the independent variable of interest is educational attainment. This variable interacts with sex and residential area, the model adjusts for age (continuous and scaled variable) and a varying-intercept for jati categories is introduced. In rural areas, 42 percent of non-literate women are vegetarian against 54 percent of higher-educated women.*

*Sample: All Hindu male (15-54 years old) and Hindu female (15-49 years old) individuals who responded to the individual questionnaires, with complete information ($N_{male}$=10,758, $N_{female}$=74,493).*

*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

On the whole, these models largely support hypothesis H1a, modulo the "U-shape" effect that exists for men when looking at material wealth, which in all likelihood denotes the economic constraint of accessing animal products. These models do not find any support for westernization or modernization relating to vegetarianism (H1b), where higher education levels or class positions would lower the frequency of vegetarianism.

### 3) Women and partner's social position

The preceding models adjusted for sex highlighted both a stronger adherence of women to vegetarianism and a higher involvement in vegetarian status-seeking strategies as a response to higher achieved positions. Yet, women's own achieved position may not be the right predictor of their social position, given that almost 75 percent of women in the sample do not report any occupation.[93] Besides, looking at educational attainment, female hypergamy (a married couple in which the woman's social position is lower than the man's position, which can be alternatively called male hypogamy)[94] is much more common than homogamic situations (Table 6.1).

*Table 6.1 - Matrix of women's and their partners' educational attainment*

| | | Partner's educational attainment | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **None** | **Primary** | **Secondary** | **Higher** |
| **Own educational attainment** | **None** | **15.6** | 8.2 | 22 | 1.4 |
| | **Primary** | 2.1 | **3.3** | 23.9 | 4.4 |
| | **Secondary** | *0.1* | *0.3* | **4.4** | 3.1 |
| | **Higher** | *0.1* | *0.1* | 3.3 | **7.9** |

*Note: Proportions are calculated for all married couples. For instance, 15.6 percent of married couples are composed of two members with no educational achievement, but 8.2 percent of couples are composed of a woman with no educational achievement and a partner with primary school attainment.*

*Sample: All married women aged 15-49 years who are included in the "state module" sample (who were asked about their partner's educational attainment), with complete information ($N_{female}$=8,574).*

*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

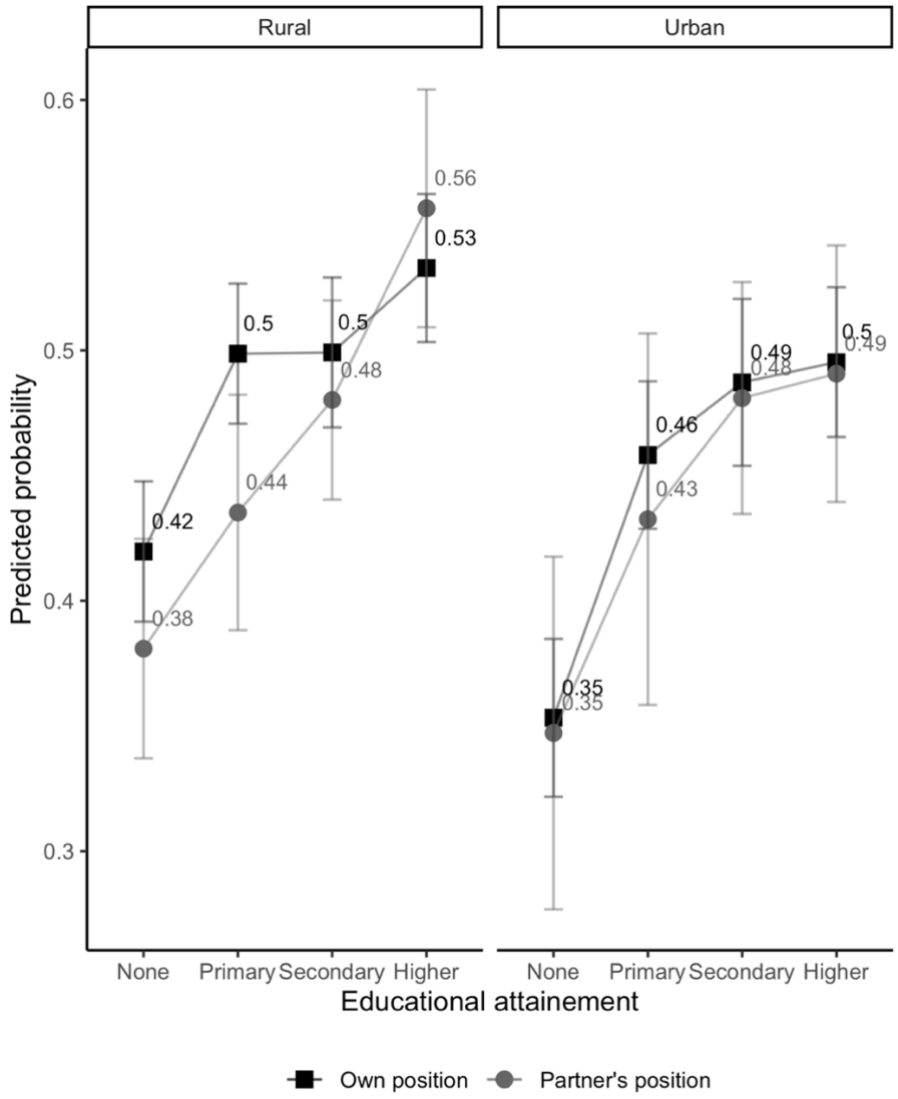
Indeed, educational homogamy corresponds to 31.2 percent of the married couples (calculated by summing up the percentages of the diagonal in Table 6.1), but female educational hypergamy corresponds to 63 percent of the married pairs (top-right quadrant of the table). It is to be noted that male hypergamy barely exists (6 percent of the couples, and the

[93] This figure is calculated for women belonging to the "state module" sample, the only female sample where the occupational position was asked. As a point of comparison, 23 percent of men declared an occupation. If I restrict the sample to women aged 20 and above, the percentage of women not reporting any occupation falls to 73 percent, denoting that the non-recognition of women's involvement in the labor force is barely related to age.

[94] Bouchet-Valat (2014) notes that female hypergamy is more often called hypergamy, thus retaining the woman's point of view.

hypergamy situations tend to show a low educational "distance" between women and men).[95] For these reasons, it is worth investigating whether women's vegetarianism may be also driven by their partner' social position, here focusing on educational achievement.

*Figure 6.5 - Predicted probabilities of vegetarianism among women depending on one's or one's partner's educational attainment*




*Note: The predicted probabilities are computed from the multilevel linear probability models predicting vegetarianism among women where the independent variable of interest is the educational attainment of the respondent or of her partner (two different models, MW1 and MW2, are estimated). This variable interacts with the residential area, the models adjust for age (continuous and scaled variable) and a varying-intercept for jati categories is introduced. In rural areas, 42 percent of non-literate women are vegetarian against 53 percent of*

[95] These trends seem to go against recent works which document a rise in female hypogamy in India among recent marriage cohorts (Lin et al., 2020). Unfortunately, this work did not present a spatial decomposition of this rise over the years but my own calculations tend to show that female hypogamy is rarer in Uttar Pradesh than in the rest of India. The consequences in the adherence of vegetarianism of this trend would require further scrutiny.

*higher-educated women. When looking at the educational attainment of their partner, 38 percent of women whose partner is non-literate are vegetarian against 55 percent of women whose partner is higher educated.*

*Sample: All Hindu married women aged 15-49 years who are included in the "state module" sample (who were asked about their partner's educational attainment), with complete information ($N_{female}$=8,574).*

*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

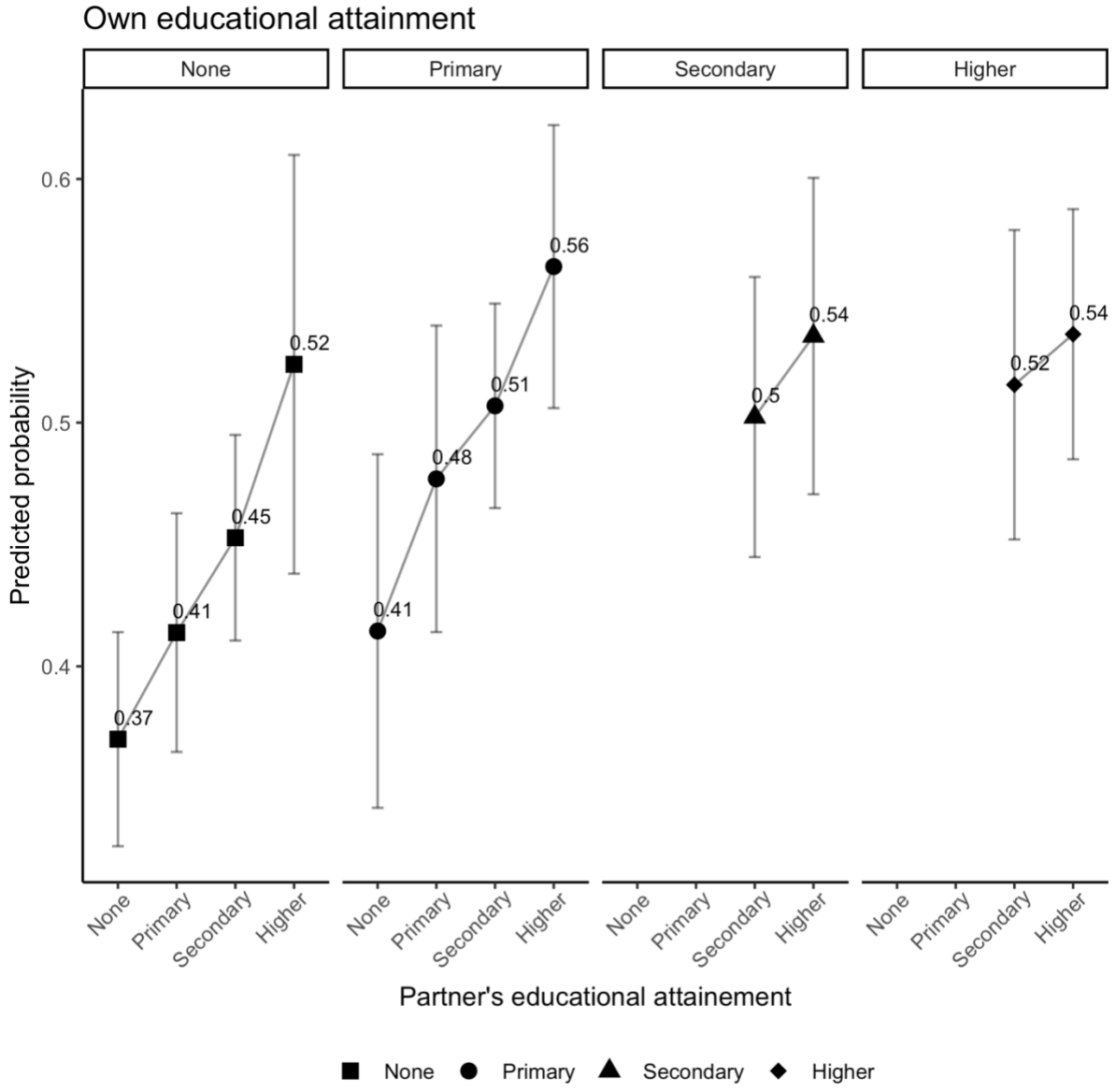
I first estimate two models focusing on women and looking at their educational attainment (MW1) and, for the second one, replacing this variable by their partner' educational attainment (MW2). Overall, both these models indicate that women's vegetarianism is driven by educational position, whether considering their own or their partner's educational attainment (Figure 6.5).

Then, I consider a model (MW3) predicting vegetarianism among women where both one's and one's partner's educational attainment interact together (in this model, age and residential area are control variables and do not interact with the educational interaction due to empty cell count issues). Figure 6.6 presents the predicted probabilities of vegetarianism among women depending on their partner's educational attainment for varying levels of their own educational attainment. Holding one's own educational attainment fixed, the predicted probabilities vary according to the women's partner's educational level. For instance, for women with no educational degree or having reached primary education, the gaps in the partner's educational attainment make respectively a 13 and 15 percentage point difference in the adherence to vegetarianism. Besides, partner's educational attainment seems to impact women's vegetarianism more than their own social position. Indeed, holding women's partner's educational attainment constant (e.g., at the secondary level), and looking at the predicted probability of being vegetarian depending on their own educational level (across the different facets) indicates variations from 45 percent of vegetarians (when women do not have any educational degree) to 52 percent (when they have reached higher education), i.e., a 7-percentage point difference.[96]

This model hence suggests that women's partner's social position is more important in women's status-seeking strategies fostering the adoption of vegetarianism. Overall, these results support Hypothesis 2.

[96] Arguably, one's own position and one's partner's position effects may be better grasped using Sobel's models (Sobel, 1985, see for instance Cautrès, 1995, Coulangeon, 2015), but they have recently been criticized, see http://paa2019.populationassociation.org/uploads/190797 (communicated by Louis-André Vallet). Here, I only aim at obtaining predicted probabilities adjusting for the jati position through varying-intercepts, as presented in the figure.

*Figure 6.6 - Predicted probabilities of vegetarianism among women depending on one's and one's partner's educational attainment*




*Note: In the figure, categories intersecting no education or primary educational degree for women's partners and secondary or higher educational degree for men are not plotted, since they correspond to male hypergamic situations which are very rarely found in the population (see right-bottom quadrant of Table 6.1).*

*Sample: All married women aged 15-49 years who are included in the "state module" sample (who were asked about their partner's educational attainment), with complete information ($N_{female}$=8,574).*

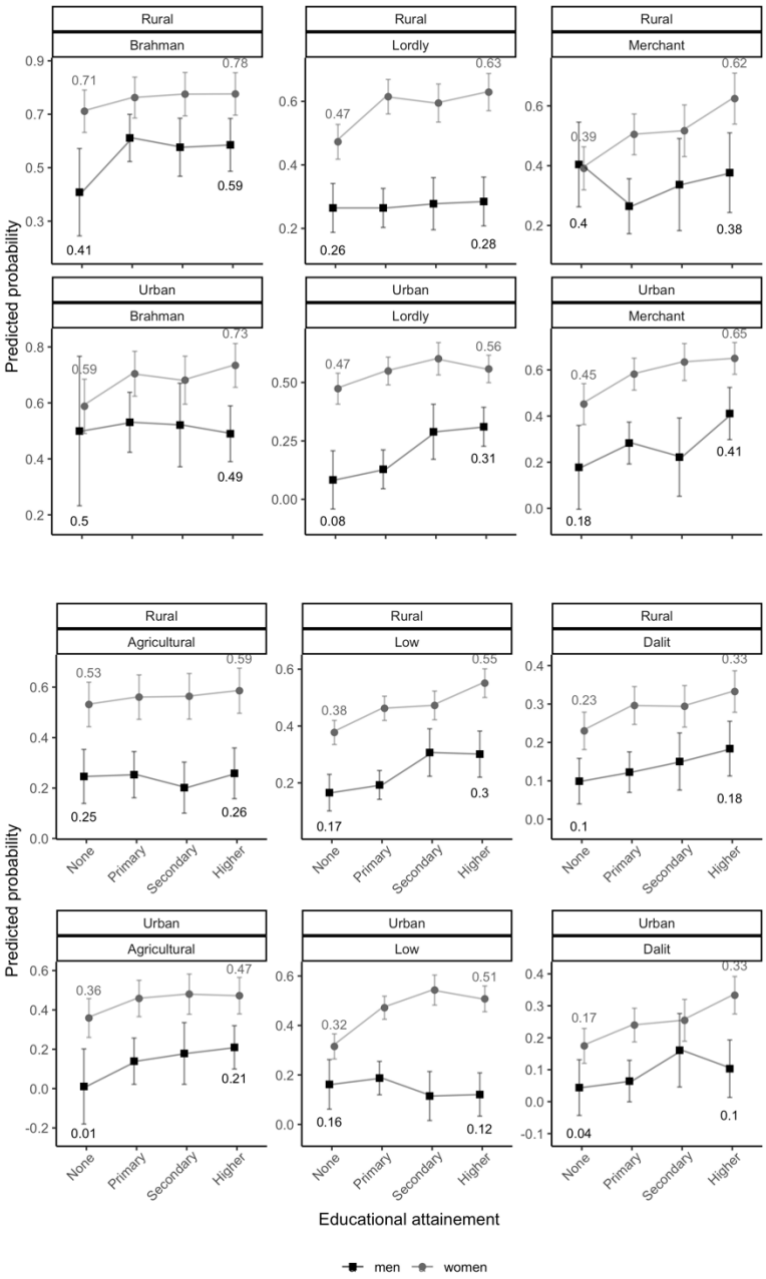
*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

### 4) Caste effects and caste as jati within multiple hierarchies

While preceding models demonstrate the impact of socioeconomic position on vegetarianism after adjusting for the jati position, it does not test for a differentiated effect of achieved position on vegetarianism depending on the caste category. Model 4 precisely tests this hypothesis (H3), by introducing an interaction term between educational attainment and caste. The log-likelihood ratio test and the AIC both confirm the better fit of this model to the data and hence support this hypothesis.

Three remarks can be drawn from this model (Figure 6.7). First, for all caste groups, the model predicts a differentiated effect of educational attainment on women's vegetarianism. Higher educated women tend to be more vegetarian than lower educated women. Second, the effect of educational attainment on men's vegetarianism is clear and substantial among rural Brahmins, Low castes and Dalits. Men belonging to other caste groups, in particular those that fall into the "Kshatriya" caste model, are less affected by educational attainment. For men residing in urban areas, the effects of educational attainment are more substantial, among Lordly, Merchant and Agricultural castes in particular. Third, the effects of educational attainment on the adherence to vegetarianism tend to be more uniform and more substantial in urban areas for all caste groups. Again, even though the proportion of vegetarians is lower in urban contexts, status-seeking strategies based on the adoption of vegetarianism are larger in urban contexts when it comes to the measure of educational attainment. Overall, these results point to the salience of educational achievement as a marker of achieved position which fosters the adoption of Brahmanical practices.

*Figure 6.7 - Predicted probabilities of vegetarianism according to educational attainment and caste position*




*Note: The predicted probabilities are computed from the multilevel linear probability model (M4) predicting vegetarianism where the independent variable of interest is the educational attainment. This variable interacts with sex, residential area and caste categories, and the model adjusts for age (continuous and scaled variable) and a varying-intercept for jati categories is introduced. In rural areas, 42 percent of non-literate women are vegetarian against 54 percent of higher educated women.*

*Sample: All Hindu male (49-54 years old) and Hindu female individuals (15-49 years old) who responded to the individual questionnaires and who declared an occupation (among women, only those from the "state module" were asked about their occupation), with complete information ($N_{male}$=10,758, $N_{female}$=74,493).*

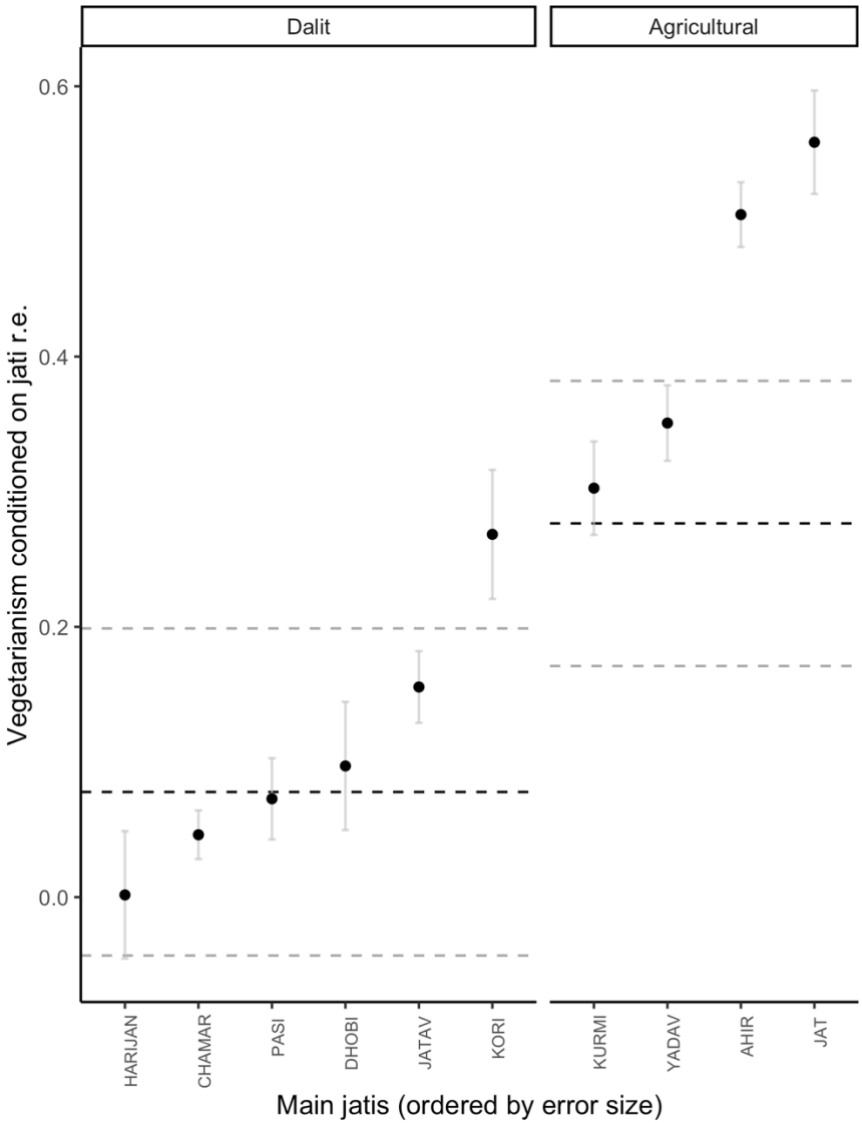
*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

Even after studying inter-caste variations, there may be intra-caste differences which are not accounted for by caste categories in the last model. To exemplify this point, I look at the predicted probability of vegetarianism of the largest jatis among Agricultural castes and Dalits (those for which more than 1,000 individuals identified to). Indeed, arguably, these caste categories gather more heterogonous jatis than other categories (as seen in Chapter 4).

Figure 6.8 shows that the predicted probability of vegetarianism among the largest Dalit jatis is close to the estimated predicted level of vegetarianism for Dalits. Still, individuals identifying as “Harijan” tend to be less frequently vegetarian and those identifying as “Kori” tend to be more frequently vegetarian. One may be surprised about the predicted level of vegetarianism among “Harijans” since this label applies to individuals adopting a strategy of sanskritization to invisibilize their jati. Indeed, this label corresponds to a term popularized by M. K. Gandhi from the 1930s onwards to identify Dalit individuals within the Hindu fold and to avoid using a stigmatizing term in their respect. Here, the model suggests that adopting this label may signify masking one’s stigmatized jati position while actually not adopting Hindu upper caste dietary practices.

Among Agricultural castes, intra-caste variations are more substantial. Individuals identifying as “Ahir” or “Jat” are clearly more frequently vegetarian than individuals identifying in other jati categories. Jats are known as historically-dominant agrarian castes in the western part of Uttar Pradesh (Jeffery et al., 2011). Surprisingly, individuals identifying as “Yadav” or “Ahir” are not equivalently vegetarian, the former being more frequently non-vegetarian, even though these terms are often considered as synonymous. Still, “Yadav” denotes a category that unites different low-ranked jatis in Uttar Pradesh as a way to claim political power (Michelutti, 2008), while “Ahir” refers more clearly to a traditional occupational-based jati (cow herding). The Yadav community is politically dominant in Eastern Uttar Pradesh and it has risen as a politically dominant caste in Uttar Pradesh politics through the Samajwadi Party. Following Michelutti's (2008) work on the Yadav community, the distinction between “Yadav” and “Ahir” suggests that power-seeking strategies may be distinct from status-seeking strategies based on vegetarianism.

*Figure 6.8 - Extract of the caterpillar plot of the jati varying-intercepts in the multilevel linear probability model predicting vegetarianism*



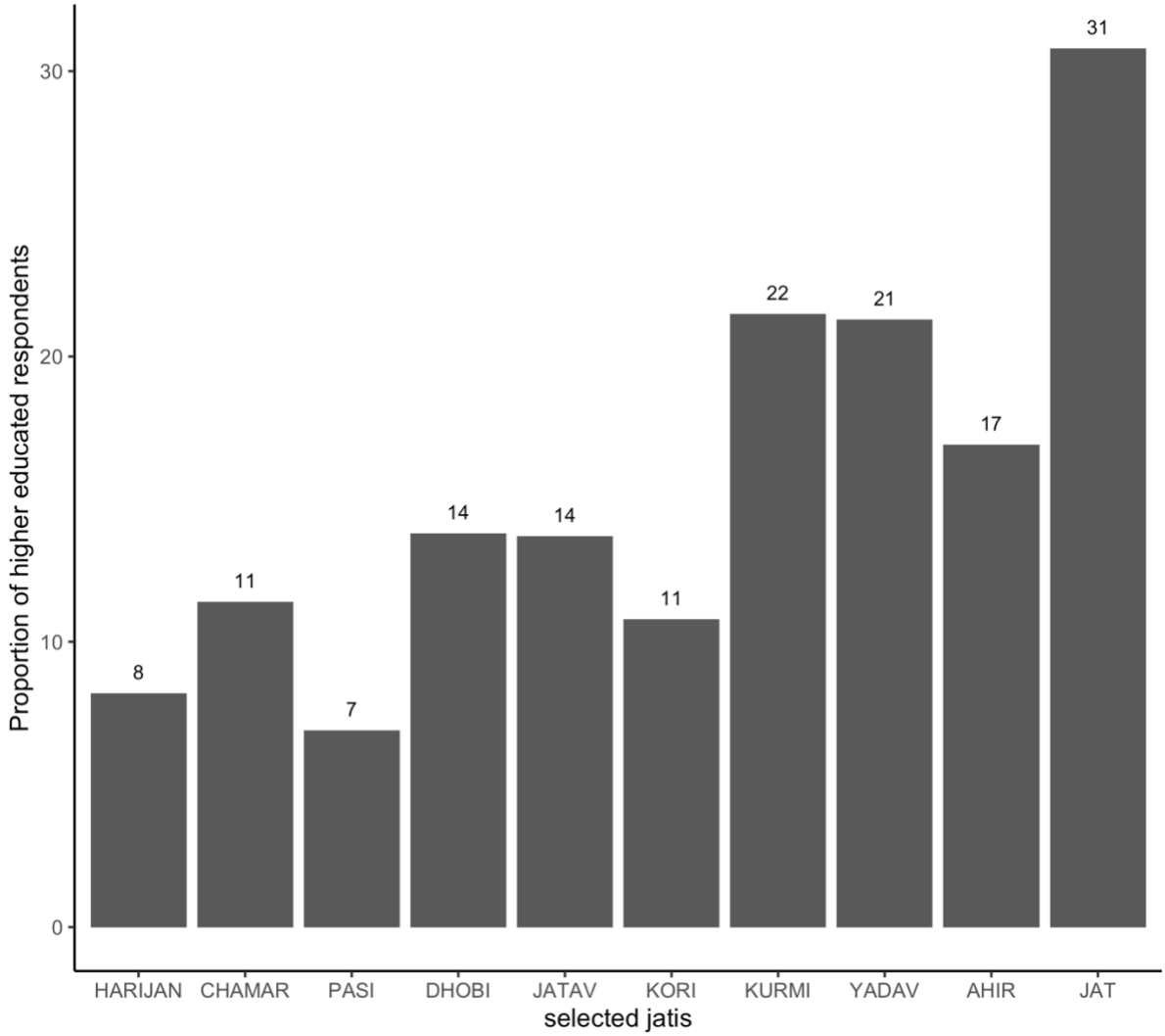

*Note: This caterpillar plot is based on the multilevel linear probability model predicting vegetarianism (M4) where the independent variable of interest is the educational attainment of the respondent. This variable interacts with caste, sex and residential area, the model adjusts for age (continuous and scaled variable) and a varying-intercept for jati categories is introduced. This figure plots the predicted probabilities of vegetarianism for the numerically largest jatis among Dalits and Agricultural castes. They are represented by dots along with the standard errors. The dashed lines represent the estimated average vegetarian level among Dalits and Agricultural castes. Among Dalits, individuals who self-identify as Harijan are less likely to be vegetarian contrary to individuals who identify as Kori. The predicted probabilities are computed holding educational degree, sex, age and residential area constant (respectively, no educational degree, male, average age, rural).*

*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

Possibly, these jati variations in vegetarianism also reflect different achieved group positions. In Figure 6.9, I show that overall, individuals identifying as "Harijan" tend to be less educated than other Dalit jatis, while Jats are clearly more educated than other caste categories. It suggests that jati-level variations in the adoption of vegetarianism may in fact reflect

variations in achieved positions at the categorical level, following a collective – and not only individual – strategy of legitimization of higher achieved position by the adoption of vegetarianism (Srinivas, 1956).

*Figure 6.9 - Proportion of higher educated individuals among the numerically largest jatis of Dalits and Agricultural castes*




*Note: I estimate the proportion of individuals holding a higher educational degree for the numerically largest jatis among Dalits and Agricultural castes. Among Dalits, individuals who self-identify as Harijan and Pasi have the lowest educational attainment. Among Agricultural castes, individuals who self-identify as Jats have the highest educational attainment.*

*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

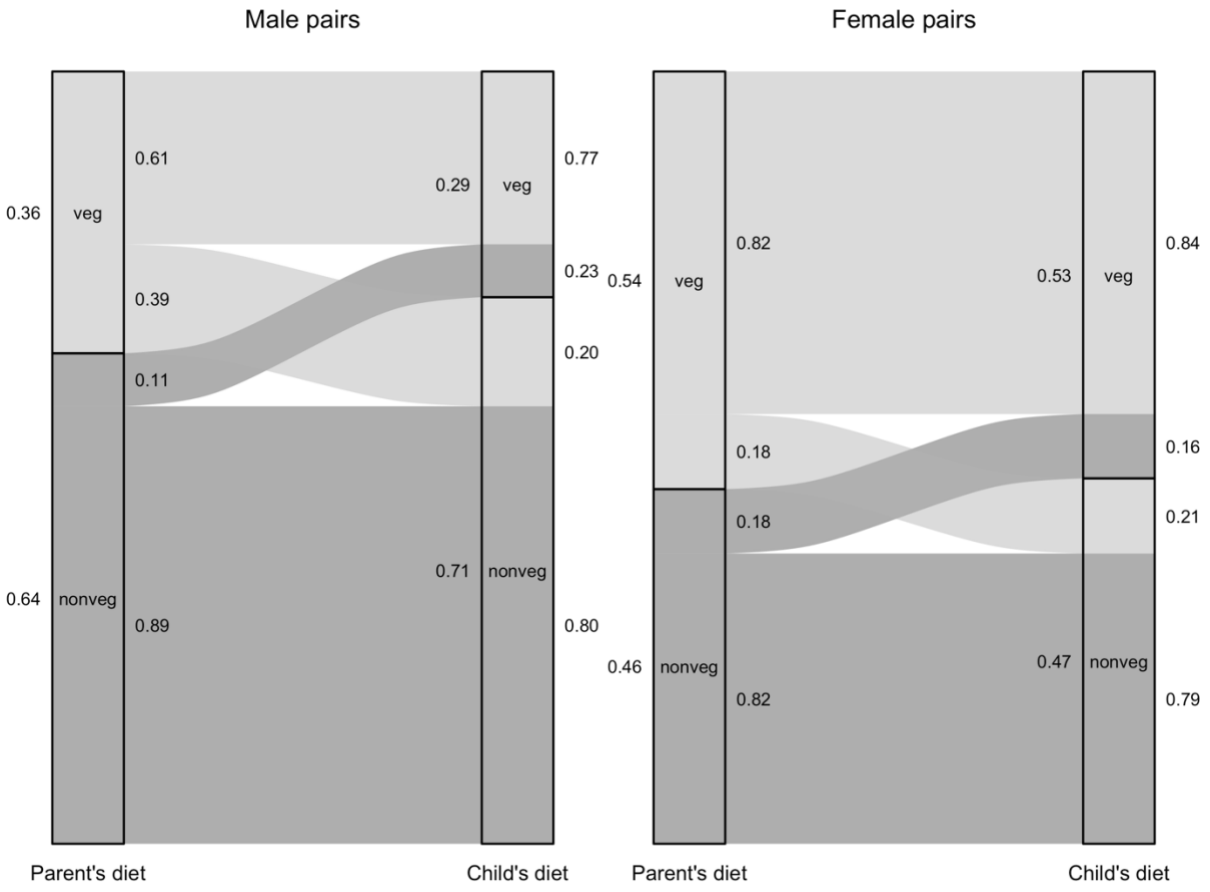
These results point to differentiated effects of achieved positions among different caste and jati categories – thus supporting hypothesis H3 – while still outlining the overarching strategy of vegetarianism adoption across the caste spectrum.

### 5) Vegetarian parents with non-vegetarian children?

Previous analyses have pointed out the role of achieved position in the adherence to vegetarianism, but this analysis remains a cross-sectional one. It is in fact the account of a social portrait of vegetarianism resulting from different and conflicting social processes. In particular, following previous analyses, diets may be affected by intergenerational mobility. If one's achieved position is different from that of their parent, it should affect one's diet. The sanskritization process would assume that a son having a higher achieved position than his parents would turn vegetarian. Yet, intergenerational differences may be masked by at least two other different processes occurring in terms of diets. First, a son's diet may not differ as much from his father's because of the transmission of cultural norms and habits, all the more so if father and son are still cohabiting. Households are indeed an important locus of cultural reproduction. Second, I have already discussed how one's diet is not fixed and changes during the lifecycle (see Chapter 3): individuals tend to become more vegetarian as they grow older.

I exemplify the role of these last two mechanisms in Figure 6.10 by looking at the diets of co-residing father-son pairs and mother- or mother-in-law-daughter pairs. These figures should be treated with caution given the age limitation on individual respondents in the survey (only men aged 15 to 54 years and women aged 15 to 49 years were surveyed). Still, I here point to the importance of the social mechanisms of household cultural transmission and life cycle. Indeed, sons' and daughters' diets largely reproduce the diet of their parents. For instance, 77 percent of vegetarian sons have a vegetarian father and 80 percent of non-vegetarian sons have a non-vegetarian father. Similarly, 84 percent of vegetarian daughters have a vegetarian mother or mother-in-law while 79 percent of non-vegetarian daughters have a non-vegetarian parent. Besides, the figure suggests that intergenerational transitions from non-vegetarian diets to vegetarian ones are more common than the reverse, but they in fact reflect that parents being older, they are more likely to be vegetarian than their younger children, who are therefore slightly more likely to be non-vegetarian.

*Figure 6.10 - Sankey diagrams of diets among co-residing parents and children*




*Note: I construct co-residing parent-child pairs and look at their respective diet. In order to do this, I compare sons with their fathers and daughters to their mothers or their mothers-in-law. The numbers to the right of each generation give the proportion in each flow respective to the number of parents or sons and daughters in the origin or destination category. For instance, 0.61 indicates that among vegetarian fathers/mothers and mothers-in-law, 61 percent of sons/daughters are also vegetarian. 0.77 (on the right of the child's bar) indicates that among vegetarian children, 77 percent of their parents are also vegetarian.*

*Sample: All Hindu male (15-54 years old) and Hindu female (15-49 years old) individuals who responded to the individual questionnaires and who are identified as "son," "daughter" or "daughter-in-law" and whose male or female parent or parent-in-law also responded to the individual questionnaire (identified as "head," "husband," or "wife"),* $N_{male}$*=1,825,* $N_{female}$*=14,551.*

*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

Do these social mechanisms challenge status-seeking strategies based on vegetarianism? I identify co-residing male and female parent-child pairs where the child responded to the individual questionnaire so that their vegetarian or non-vegetarian diet is known. Note that the parent-child pairs here represent a biased sample of all parent-child pairs since they only cover cohabiting intergenerational pairs, where fathers are still alive and where married sons have not moved away to settle in a different household. Given that the structure of patrilocal extended families (the so-called "joint family") is still very widespread in the Indian context (Allendorf, 2013), this exercise is quite common when looking at intergenerational mobility

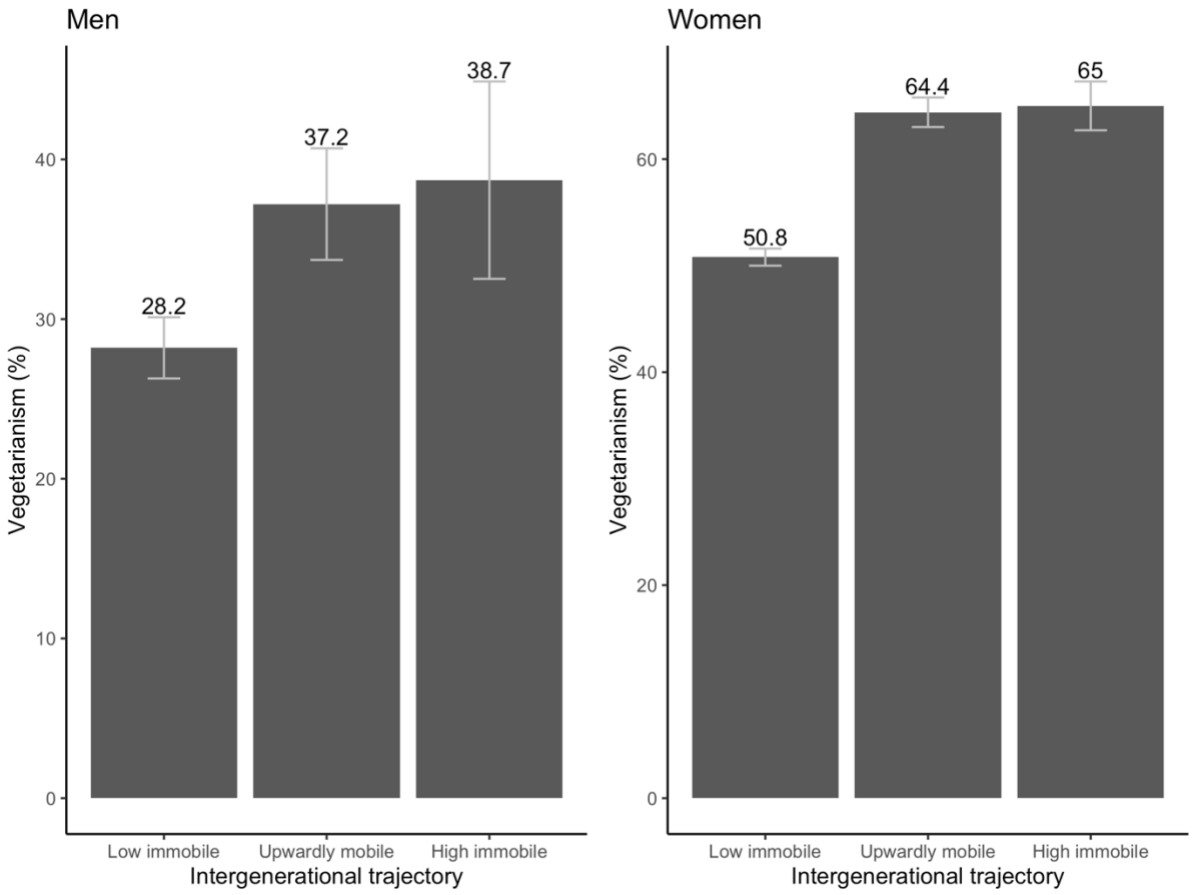
(see for instance Hnatkovska, Lahiri and Paul, 2013, Azam and Bhatt, 2015). Besides, I am interested in identifying an intergenerational effect of achievement on diets, so that if it exists among co-residing pairs – where cultural transmission is higher than among non-co-residing pairs –, intergenerational effects also prevail in other pairs.

Based on the information on educational attainment of parents and children,[97] I categorize the pairs according to whether they reflect a *low immobile* trajectory – both parent's and child's educational attainments are lower than higher educational degree –, an *upwardly mobile* trajectory – parent's educational attainment is lower than higher educational degree and child's educational level is higher – or a *high immobile* trajectory– both parent's and child's educational attainment corresponds to higher educational degree. Comparing child's diets according to their intergenerational mobility trajectory (Figure 6.11) shows that for both men and women one's achieved position, rather than one's parent's achieved position, is more crucial in adhering to vegetarianism. Indeed, low immobile children are substantially less frequently vegetarian than upwardly mobile and high immobile vegetarians.

Taking into account intergenerational mobility hence confirms the salience of one's achieved positions in adhering to vegetarianism as well as the robustness of previous findings on the role of achieved positions in adhering to vegetarianism despite the importance of household cultural reproduction and lifecycle effects.

[97] These pairs are constructed relying on the information in the household listing of the NFHS 4. The listing surveyed the educational attainment of all household members but not their occupational position so that I here rely on educational attainment as the prime indicator of achieved position.

*Figure 6.11 - Proportion of vegetarians depending on the intergenerational educational mobility trajectory*




*Note: 28.2 percent of men who are in an intergenerational low immobile position are vegetarian against 37.2 percent of upwardly mobile men and 38.7 percent of high immobile men.*

*Sample: Father-child pairs are identified in two different ways. For men, I select those categorized as "son" in the individual questionnaire, and their fathers are identified in the household listing as "head" or "husband" (of the head). Alternatively, I select men categorized as "head"/"husband" in the individual questionnaire and I identify their fathers in the household listing as those categorized as "father." For women, pairs are selected based on women either categorized as "daughter" or "daughter-in-law" in the individual questionnaire and their fathers are then identified in the household listing as "head" or "husband." Alternatively, I select women categorized as "head"/"wife" in the individual questionnaire and I identify their fathers as those categorized in the household listing as "father" or "father-in-law." I consider men and women aged 20 years and above. In all cases, I compare men's and women's educational attainment with their father's or father-in-law's educational attainment. I code pairs where both members have a lower educational attainment than "higher" as* low immobile, *pairs where both members have a higher educational degree as* high immobile. Upwardly mobile *individuals are individuals holding a higher educational degree but whose father does not.* Downwardly mobile *trajectories rarely happen so I do not consider them here.* $N_{male}$*=3,240 and* $N_{female}$*=22,054.*

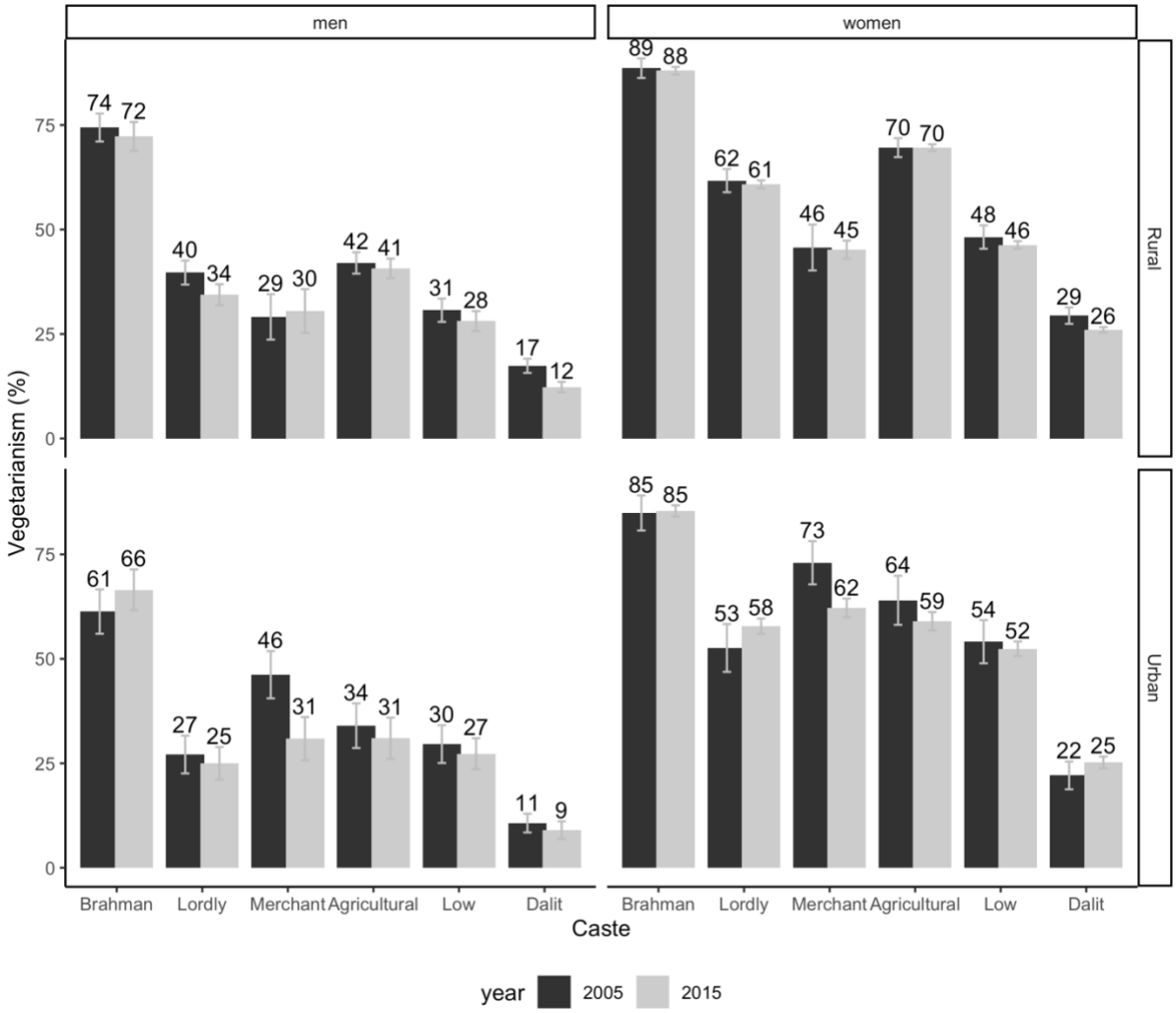
*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of Hindu individuals in the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

### 6) The lower salience of vegetarianism over time?

If the role of achieved position in adhering to vegetarianism is confirmed when taking an intergenerational dynamic lens, is it also robust in a diachronic analysis? In Chapter 3, I showed that vegetarianism in India tends to recede overtime. This is also the case when

centering on Uttar Pradesh: between 2005 and 2015, the frequency of male vegetarianism decreased from 34 percent to 29 percent and female vegetarianism decreased from 53 percent to 50 percent. Examining the evolution of the proportion of vegetarians by sex, residential area and caste category (Figure 6.12) does not show any clear uniform temporal pattern across caste groups. Among men, there seems to be a larger decrease in the proportion of vegetarians among urban Merchant castes and among rural Dalits. But these observations do not challenge the salience of vegetarianism in the social order, especially since Brahmins remain largely vegetarian in the two periods.

*Figure 6.12 - Evolution of vegetarianism among large caste categories*




*Note: Estimations are drawn from the National Sample Survey 3 (2005-2006) and 4 (2015-2016).*

*Sample: Hindu men (between 15 and 54 years old) and Hindu women (between 15 and 49 years old) residing in Uttar Pradesh in 2005-2006 and 2015-2016 (N2005=17,969 and N2015=85,251).*

These observations tend to support the preceding results on the centrality of vegetarianism in status-seeking strategies to legitimize achieved positions, a phenomenon that concerns at least the first two decades of the twenty-first century.

## *E - Discussion*

Overall, the results demonstrate that caste is not the sole determinant of vegetarianism in Uttar Pradesh, and indicators of achieved position in the social stratification, along with gender, are strongly associated with vegetarianism. Drawing the social portrait of this diet – in place of adopting a deterministic view of caste position equating (non-)adherence to vegetarianism – de-essentializes caste and shows the fruitfulness of a probabilistic approach on vegetarianism. In the models, after adjusting for caste position and other covariates, we see that individuals in higher achieved positions tend to be more frequently vegetarian as compared with individuals in lower achieved positions.

The implied mechanism of this result points to the process of sanskritization, in the perspective of legitimizing a higher achieved position by adopting the culturally dominant diet. Analyzed dynamically in an intergenerational approach, individuals who experience an upward mobility trajectory tend to be more frequently vegetarian than individuals in lower immobile positions.

These results tend to go against some recent empirical observations in India, made in other contexts. Fischer (2019) observed that the “veg” and “non-veg” divide was only weakly related to caste belonging in Hyderabad, the capital city of Telangana in the south of India. In the same city and concentrating on students, Gundemeda (2020) found that the social acceptability of meat, in particular of beef and pork flesh, was much higher than what is held hegemonically. Yet, by replacing the present analysis within a larger picture of vegetarianism in India, the results presented here are in line with the analysis pointing the continuing, and to some extent “deepening,” geographical divide based on the cultural hegemony of vegetarianism (Natrajan and Jacob, 2018, Jacob and Natrajan, 2020). If anything, this demonstrates the importance of large-scale surveys in assessing the social reality of the salience of vegetarianism, and so despite the limitations of these data as outlined in Chapter 3.

Declaring oneself vegetarian in a status-seeking or -legitimizing strategy may be supported by pressures for social conformity and class lifestyles. In particular, low caste individuals belonging to higher achieved positions, which are predominantly high castes, are drawn to a culturally different environment. Achieved position such as occupational class is indeed not only a socioeconomic position but also reflects different circles of socialization and

lifestyles. One's workplace, leisure spaces (e.g., restaurants) and residential quarter depend on class position where caste practices may or may not become salient. Hence, working with predominantly vegetarian individuals, visiting upper middle class restaurants with little choice on meat dishes (where upper caste standards are clearly maintained, see for instance: Iversen and Raghavendra, 2016) or residing in an affluent neighborhood with barely any option to buy meat may foster vegetarianism. I will further investigate these last two places in the next chapter on the contextual dimension of vegetarianism. Regarding workplaces, lower caste individuals may try to hide their caste origin notably by turning vegetarian to avoid any form of stigmatization, especially in professional working environments where they are a minority. As studied in the previous chapter (Chapter 5), high castes are predominant in these professional circles. Besides, ethnographic studies of professional workplaces reveal the importance of "caste privilege" within these environments (Subramanian, 2019), where caste cultural markers are commonplace (e.g., the separation of canteens and utensils between vegetarian and non-vegetarian eaters in universities, Benbabaali, 2008) though they are discursively described as "casteless."[98] Low castes accessing these social universes may hence adapt their cultural practices to fit in their environment. Inversely, the workplace at the other end of the social class spectrum may be a factor of relaxation of vegetarian and caste norms, especially those related to non-commensality between distinct groups, since the workplace fosters links between different social groups and cultural contacts, a point ethnographically explored notably among factory workers (Parry, 1999; Strümpell, 2008).

The higher proportion of female vegetarianism as compared with male vegetarianism also reminds us that vegetarianism is strongly associated with household dynamics. Indeed, female participation to the labor force is very low and most of their productive activity is related to unpaid work within the household.[99] But women's domestic work does not only consist in meal preparation when it comes to food inside the household: it also corresponds to a role of moral educator, assigned to women to ensure that their family is provided with food worthy of its social status within the home. Indeed, in the course of my interviews, several of the male respondents declared that whenever meat is cooked in the household, they prepare it themselves instead of their wives. Men also more frequently provision the household with meat when it is

[98] For a short report of "Brahmin culture" at the Indian Institute of Technology based on ethnographic observations, see https://theprint.in/opinion/brahmins-on-india-campuses-studying-science-is-natural-to-upper-castes/378901/ (last access on October 20, 2020).

[99] A recent time use survey conducted by the National Sample Survey Office in 2019 reveals that men barely contribute to the unpaid housework contrary to women: in Uttar Pradesh, less than 10 percent of women's working hours result in a pay (see https://www.livemint.com/news/india/your-caste-and-class-determines-how-you-spend-time-11602657834829.html, last access on October 21, 2020, and also read Chandrasekhar and Ghosh, 2020).

consumed inside the household, even if their wives are usually in charge of the household food supply (but according to the National Family Health Survey of 2005-2006, only 42 percent of Hindu women in Uttar Pradesh are allowed by other members of the household to go out alone for household provisioning). The gender divide in food provision and preparation then reflects gender norms where men buy and cook meat becomes an occasional transgression in a usually vegetarian household diet. Besides, the moral educational work of women is a reminder of the status assigned to them in other contexts as moral prescribers of health or eco-citizen standards (Régnier and Masullo, 2009). I therefore suggest that this gendered difference around vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism leads to a gendered distribution of statutory work in India. Whereas men are engaged in the accumulation of material resources of social stratification, women are more central in the statutory valorization of these material resources by being vegetarian, which is even more critical when their husbands access a higher achieved position. Women are thus the gatekeepers of the statutory position of the household. Gender inequalities observed here in looking at food seem to suggest that the patriarchal organization of the household makes it possible to maintain the social order of vegetarianism.[100]

More broadly, these empirical results both emphasize and relativize the centrality of households as loci for food socialization. As observed for intergenerational changes, co-residence limits individual differences because it implies food sharing and cultural transmission. Given the strong caste homogamy in India, family socialization is strongly related to caste. It functions as a matrix of socialization shaping food practices, in other words it functions as a caste habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Under the effect of upward social mobility, low caste (e.g., Dalit) habitus slowly changes as it has a "hysteresis" power: cultural routine helps conserve food practices over several generations despite the encounter of new cultural dispositions through class mobility (which as I have discussed also means encountering higher caste habitus) and limits the cultural legitimation of a higher class position. Yet the empirical evidence does suggest that individuals in higher achieved positions negotiate their "cleaved habitus" by turning vegetarian. This finding reveals the ambiguities of upwardly mobile individuals in legitimizing their achieved destination positions, especially for Dalits. On the one hand, they adopt the norms of groups corresponding to their achieved position. Upwardly mobile Dalits hence sometimes reject certain meat practices as "uncultured behavior" in their autobiographies (Beth, 2007). On the other hand, social mobility of Dalits is also "above all

[100] Arguably, this gender configuration in diets is all the more salient that Uttar Pradesh ranks as one of the most patriarchal state in India according to the India Patriarchy Index (Singh et al., 2021).

experienced through a specifically Dalit prism" (Naudet, 2018). In this context, upwardly mobile Dalits would self-assert their caste identity in a positive light by claiming meat practices to counter vegetarian cultural domination. The recent emergence of "beef festivals" may be read in this light. It may indeed suggest the formation of a "minority culture of mobility in the making" (Naudet and Shahrokni, 2019), where low caste individuals assert their specific cultural dispositions by not conforming to the culturally dominant practice of vegetarianism. It may suggest different strategies of negotiating one's caste identity and food practices among different generations, though these effects are at present not statistically visible.[101]

The empirical analysis shows some limitations that are important to keep in mind. First, it is possible that achieved position differences in vegetarianism are sharper when examining more micro differences between occupational categories. For instance, the status of being in a salaried position, of being a government civil servant or the difference between owning a petty business and owning a large business may be substantial in asserting one's social status. The data limitations, the sample size and the interpretation of regression models prevented me from digging into this direction. Second, the absence of any individual longitudinal survey on food practices prevents us from drawing strong conclusions on lifecycle effects as well as on effects of their association with achieved position in case of intragenerational mobility. Third, the analysis centered on achieved position mobility as a vector of cultural change but it remains blind to the structural dimension of the sanskritization process. Indeed, I did not empirically investigate whether adopting vegetarian practices raises one's perceived status or more generally the jati status. Since this part of the process is considered a more "longue durée process" (Srinivas, 1956), it would require larger historical depth in data availability.

## *F - Conclusion: taking stock of sanskritization*

In this chapter, I discussed and quantitatively investigated the contemporaneity of sanskritization. As a process of cultural emulation, the concept assumes an association between achieved position and adherence to vegetarianism, so that after adjusting for caste and more precisely jati positions, individuals in higher achieved positions tend to be more frequently

[101] Another hint of this generational difference in the valorization of meat-eating practices among upper class Dalits is the recent emergence of cookbooks and novels that record these practices in a positive light (contrary to older autobiographies that were more ambivalent towards them, see Beth 2007). For instance, covering blood fry as a feature of the Dalit community, higher-educated Vinay Kumar starts his article by stating: "My mom hasn't cooked blood fry in 27 years." (see "Blood Fry and other recipes from my childhood", *Goya*, September 22, 2020: https://www.goya.in/blog/blood-fry-other-recipes-from-my-dalit-childhood, last access on January 31, 2021). Another example of Dalit cookbook is *Anna He Apoornabrahma* (2018) by Shahu Patole, see "Why I wrote a book on Dalit food," *Express Foodie*, September 10, 2016: http://www.expressfoodie.com/main-course/why-i-wrote-a-book-on-dalit-food/ (last access on January 31, 2021).

vegetarian than individuals in lower achieved positions. Using linear probability multilevel models where individuals are embedded in jatis, I statistically tested this association with data from the National Family Health Survey of 2015-2016. I showed the relevance of this association, which resists alternative mechanisms such as economic constraint, household cultural transmission and lifecycle effects. Importantly, I exposed gender differences in the adherence to vegetarianism. Within the household, women are more frequently vegetarian, all the more when their partners are in higher class positions and they can hence be considered as the gatekeepers of the household's status position. Overall, these results point the important aspect of caste as a matrix of socialization, so that caste habitus shapes dietary habits which are largely adjusted according to the achieved position.

The present contribution clearly shows the legitimizing role of vegetarianism in achieved positions, and it demonstrates the relevance of sanskritization as a social process affecting dietary habits. Yet, the analysis investigated the association between achieved position and vegetarianism from a cultural practice point of view. Individuals acknowledge vegetarianism as a status marker and adhere to it, so that cultural emulation is an important mechanism of the food practice dynamics in contemporary India. But by being vegetarian they may not necessarily articulate their dietary practices around Vedic Hindu values as the process of sanskritization suggests. It remains to be observed whether individuals justify and mobilize cultural repertoires from the religious sphere when they mention their dietary practices, a point investigated in Part 4. At this stage, the empirical demonstration simply validates the existence of cultural emulation in terms of practices, but not in terms of values.

Finally, this empirical analysis needs to be further complexified by taking into account local contexts of the social stratification, an intuition developed by Srinivas (1959) by suggesting that the "dominant caste" in a locality is not necessarily vegetarian, so that vegetarian emulation would be less salient in this case. The contemporaneity of this spatial conceptual approach is the object of the next chapter.

# Chapter 7 – When neighbors deprecate one's non-veg diet. Positional and contextual factors in cultural stratification

*Shahid: Mr. Chaubey is eating kebabs.*
*Murad: Oh! Hear this, listen! Chaubey is secretly eating kebabs.*
*Sonkar: He eats it every day without his wife's knowledge.*
*[…]*
*Murad: Let's teach Chaubey a lesson! Give me a bowl of korma.*
*Aarti: Father, don't…*
*Murad: Keep quiet,*
*Aarti: Why are you doing this?*
*Murad: Mr. Chaubey… Have some piping hot korma!*
*Mrs. Chaubey: No, we're vegetarians.*
*Mr. Chaubey: We're vegetarians.*
*Murad: Oh, really! Well, then enjoy the bitter gourd and okra.*

Mulk, *2018, Sinha, A.*

Research on the social stratification of cultural consumption usually agrees that people's cultural preferences reflect their status position, resting on Weber's (2010) association between status groups and lifestyles, albeit engaging with it in diverse ways (Flemmen et al., 2019, Chan, 2019). The literature points that the relation between social and symbolic boundaries (Lamont and Molnár, 2002) varies amongst others according to the congruence between the status and the class order, as the status group may not be the reference group if it is not socioeconomically dominant (Merton and Rossi, 1968). This conceptual framework has been applied to the study of vegetarianism in the preceding chapter. Yet, empirical studies rarely take into consideration the spatial contexts in which individuals are embedded, while the spatial contexts may precisely be the loci of important variations of the social stratification, producing different local strategies to distinguish from others. In fact, cultural distinction may depend on both one's identity and the identity of the individuals living around them.

In this chapter, I observe the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism and beef consumption in India, focusing on both positional and contextual indicators in order to understand the cultural stratification of food consumption patterns. Are Brahmins considered the highest status group in all spatial contexts, irrespective of their economic position, so that vegetarianism constitutes a salient social norm in every place? How does the residential area affect cultural practices, and in particular, food practices? Does the neighbors' social status and class influence one's diet?

Using multilevel linear probability regressions applied to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS, 2015-2016) data and the "Consumer Expenditure Survey" data of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO, 2011-2012), I examine the association between caste, class, religious belonging, vegetarianism, and beef consumption in Uttar Pradesh, building on the previous chapter, although I also take into account here the district of residence. I am mostly highlighting contextual effects. Vegetarianism among Hindus is more frequent in districts where Brahmins are socioeconomically better-off compared with their position in other districts, but more importantly compared with when Agricultural castes are socioeconomically privileged. Besides, Hindus also tend to be more vegetarian if they reside in districts where Muslims and Dalits are socioeconomically better-off. Finally, Muslims are more likely to consume beef when they reside in localities where they are socioeconomically better-off but all the more when Dalits are socioeconomically worse-off. These exploratory contextual variations point to different spatial mechanisms of social diffusion. On the whole, both positional and contextual factors are important dimensions in understanding cultural stratification.

In the following, I first describe why geographic space might be of interest when studying social stratification and meat consumption. This leads me to explain how I empirically take space into account in quantitative analyses, by proposing a multilevel approach based on multilevel regression models. I then turn to the quantitative empirical results, demonstrating that vegetarianism among Hindus and beef consumption among Muslims varies according to the social position as well as the locality of residence. I introduce explanatory factors for these variations, and attempt to analyze the local social configurations that influence these practices. I then qualitatively explore social mechanisms explaining the importance of variations of meat consumption at a more local level, i.e., the neighborhood and the village. I conclude on the significance of these results for the study of cultural stratification.

## *A - Why does social environment matter?*

### 1) Symbolic boundaries in space

Symbolic boundaries have been defined as "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space… [they] separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership… [and they] are an essential medium through which people acquire status and monopolize resources" (Lamont and Molnár, 2002). For instance, the concept of "cultural legitimacy," derived from the study of the French

context of the 1960s, indicated the existing opposition between the dominant classes who successfully legitimize their own culture and the lower classes whose culture is thereby considered inferior.

Furthermore, differences based on spatial contexts have been an important field of investigation for sociologists to reveal symbolic boundaries and their own idiosyncrasies. Indeed, some scholars have used national comparisons to study how different "cultural repertoires" shape symbolic boundaries, i.e., the fact that individuals draw from different cultural "tools" to think and elaborate strategies of action. For instance, Lamont (1992) showed how American and French upper-middle classes drew a number of boundaries with lower classes by emphasizing either moral values (in the US) or cultural distinction (in France). However, less attention has been given to subnational contexts other than to note that geographic differences in cultural availability also shape cultural repertoires that individuals draw upon in their practices (Lamont et al., 1996).

Overall, the possibility that the social composition of the local environment in which individuals live impacts the extent to which they perform symbolic distinctions has not been extensively explored. If the class and status order are strongly correlated (Flemmen et al., 2019), the demographic weight of each class group may also influence individual lifestyles. In cases where status groups (such as ethnic or caste groups) have clearly different boundaries than class boundaries, the local disjunctions between the status and economic order (Weber, 2010) may affect symbolic boundaries. Distinguishing cultural features may consequently not be valorized in a specific context where status groups are not socioeconomically dominant.

In particular, if at the local level, individuals of high status are not socioeconomically dominant, their distinguishing cultural features may be less salient and individuals of all groups may restrain from adopting them. Inversely, individuals of privileged status who feel that their position is under threat may all the more assert their distinguishing features as a strategy to identify with their ingroup members. Finally, individuals in lower status positions may also refrain from engaging in practices from which they could be prejudiced in order to avoid stigma. In short, differences in the local social composition may affect the strategies by which individuals make use of boundaries to assert their status position, here focusing not on social boundaries, i.e., how they identify themselves and others (Wimmer, 2008), but rather on their strategic use of symbolic boundaries, by adhering to different cultural practices.

Hence, taking spatial contexts into account when studying individual or household consumption patterns leads us to analyze not only status and class positions that affect

consumption lifestyles, but also the social environment in which individuals and households are embedded.

### 2) Theoretical grounding of spatial scales in the Indian society

As seen before, dynamic processes of cultural emulation, where low castes emulate the beliefs and practices of upper castes driven by the aspiration to reach a higher socioeconomic position, have been underlined and summarized in the process of "sanskritization" (Srinivas, 1952).

While vegetarianism is a distinctive diet for Hindu upper castes, beef and buffalo consumption has been depicted as a low caste and Muslim diet, because the cow is a sacred animal in Hinduism. Since the nineteenth century, reformist movements in Hinduism have pushed for cow slaughter bans in legislations so that in North India it is hard to legally find beef meat, meanwhile buffalo meat consumption is deprecated. In the past ten years, a renewed use of this symbol by Hindu nationalism has targeted Hindu castes, and even more so Muslims, for allegedly eating beef (Ferry, 2018). Beef consumption has hence become more secretive and may also be avoided to prevent stigmatization (see Parts 1 and 2).

Nonetheless, this interplay between religion, caste and food patterns needs to be examined by including geographic contexts. Natrajan and Jacob (2018) have used large-scale surveys to show that although vegetarianism is symbolically dominant in the subcontinent, it is certainly not numerically so. The ritual purity values of Hinduism associated with vegetarianism are far from hegemonic. Moreover, the authors observe important intra-group variations. In particular, they identify large geographic variations in vegetarianism across the country, and they suggest that the incidence of vegetarianism varies according to the degree of "cultural dominance" of vegetarian castes in a region. They suggest that if middle- and low-ranked castes are socioeconomically and socio-politically dominant in a region, the incidence of vegetarianism will be lower among this group, showing that these castes "ideologically break free" from higher castes. This leads Natrajan and Jacob to call for "provincializing" analyses of food consumption. This hypothesis may nonetheless be reversed. If middle- and low-ranked castes adopt vegetarianism as a strategy to legitimize their upward socioeconomic mobility, their spatial socioeconomic dominance may also foster vegetarianism as a status marker at the local level, ultimately leading to a higher adherence to this diet. This may be particularly the case of Agricultural castes in Uttar Pradesh, as observed in the previous chapter. This framework echoes the concept of the "dominant caste," which suggests that caste hierarchy depends more on socioeconomic and socio-political dominance in villages (Srinivas, 1959).

Further, this also raises the question of the scale of contextual variations. While there may be regional variations, villages and cities in India have also long been segregated in terms of caste and religion, notably between Hindus and Muslims (Gayer and Jaffrelot, 2012: 322). Cultural differences have long served as a justification for these fragmented spaces, since Hindus, especially from upper castes, were indisposed by animal sacrifices and by the Muslims' non-vegetarian diet. In Aligarh, for instance, Galonnier (2012) reported that the justification provided by her Muslim interviewees for not living in a Hindu dominated area and vice versa was based on differences in food practices. The increasing marginalization of Muslims which can be observed in several Indian cities (Gayer and Jaffrelot, 2012) is specifically linked to contestations concerning the presence of meat in urban spaces (Ahmad, 2014) and to Hindu-Muslim riots (Gayer and Jaffrelot, 2012). However, one should not overlook the main pattern of mixed religious residential composition, even if Muslim "ghettos" and "enclaves" exist in urban spaces (Susewind, 2017).

### 3) Social configurations of meat consumption

This requires relativizing diets as solely based on caste and religion, and to depart from an idealistic homology between caste, religion and meat consumption that would essentialize caste and religious identities. Besides integrating individual measures of social class, I also study the embeddedness of diets in local social configurations at the district level. I specifically study the variations in the adherence to vegetarianism focusing on Hindus, and I study beef consumption among Muslims, given that 0.3 percent of Hindus eat beef in Uttar Pradesh according to the Consumer Expenditure Survey.

Aspects of local social configurations are of particular interest here. Relative socioeconomic dominance in terms of caste and religious groups might possibly interact with individual diets. Since ritual purity values are more attached to castes claiming a Brahmin identity, I assume that vegetarianism is central in drawing a social boundary between Brahmins and other Hindu groups. I also assume that adopting these values are key displays of high social status: they affect other caste and religious groups, specifically those that are socioeconomically successful, following sanskritization (Srinivas, 1956), in particular Agricultural castes and Dalits as seen in the previous chapter. This mechanism may be especially relevant when Brahmins, Agricultural castes or Dalits are socioeconomically better-off in a district compared with other districts (but it remains open whether at a certain stage they would also challenge this Hindu upper caste marker). Inversely if these caste groups are worse-off in a district, their values may be less critical in the local social order. Reflecting the

theory of reference group behavior (Merton and Rossi, 1968), social groups may then eat meat. Additionally, the socioeconomic dominance of Muslims may also trigger vegetarianism among Hindus, as the latter experience a form of "status threat" and may respond by emphasizing their most characterizing lifestyle features. One may think that the same mechanism happens for Dalits but their position is ambiguous, since they are of low status although still within the Hindu fold. Their local socioeconomic dominance may ultimately foster counter-cultural values of non-vegetarianism among Hindus. These social mechanisms assume a form of spatial social diffusion of values, and consequently of food lifestyles.

Looking specifically at Muslims and at beef and buffalo consumption, I assume that non-beef consumption is key to drawing a social boundary for Hindus vis-à-vis Muslims. This meat item is hence more closely related with the assertion of a religious identity. The trajectory of Muslim socioeconomic and spatial marginalization, linked to the Hindu-Muslim riots which have historically affected them (Brass, 2003) along with the more recent "cow mob lynching attacks" (Ferry, 2018), might also affect Muslims' food patterns. This hypothesis is driven by one of Galonnier's Hindu respondents: "Muslims can live among Hindus but Hindus can't live among Muslims" (2012: 135). Hence, the question is: what does it take for a Muslim to reside in a Hindu-dominated locality? When they reside in localities where Hindus are socioeconomically dominant, Muslims might tend to restrict their consumption of beef, a food item that is not critical to the assertion of their religious identity while remaining an element that might affect their social relations with surrounding Hindus. In particular, abstaining from beef might prevent the development of interreligious tensions. This social mechanism assumes a form of spatial social control over Muslims depending on their local socioeconomic dominance. Yet, I further dissect this effect by considering whether Muslims perceive Hindus as a single entity and whether the relatively higher socioeconomic level of Brahmins, Agricultural castes or Dalits may more substantially affect their beef consumption practices.

## *B - Method: large-scale surveys and local scales*

### 1) Data

Two quantitative sources are mobilized for the analysis: the fourth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS, 2015-2016) and the National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO, 2011-2012) "Consumer Expenditure Survey." In the first survey, I focus on Hindu households

in Uttar Pradesh (N=85,251 individuals) while I use the second one to specifically study Muslims (N=1,604 households).[102]

The fourth wave of the NFHS survey provides district-level representative data, so that, as explained below, I build district contextual variable on the socioeconomic configurations of castes at the district level which are then merged with the NFHS data to study vegetarianism and the NSSO data to study beef consumption. Uttar Pradesh gathers 71 districts that corresponds on average to a population of 2.8 million inhabitants (the most populated district is Allahabad with about 6 million inhabitants and the least populated district is Mahoba with less than one million inhabitants, Census 2011).

### 2) Outcome variables

Like in the previous chapter, in the first set of models, the outcome variable is being vegetarian (1) versus nonvegetarian (0) in the NFHS.

In the second set of models, I take advantage of the detailed inventory of household expenditure in the NSSO (see for instance an analysis of household budgets using this survey, Ferry et al., 2018), especially on meats consumed at home in the past 30 days. The outcome variable is consuming beef in the household (1) versus not consuming beef (0). Note that according to the survey documentation, this refers to cow, bullock or buffalo meat. Officially, the slaughter of cow and bullock and the sale of their meat are not permitted in the State, whereas buffalo meat is allowed. Yet, cow or bullock may be secretly available and Hindus and Muslims in the region usually indistinctively refer to both as "beef" (or if they want to keep their consumption more discrete, they may use code words such as "bada," that is to say "big")[103] so I keep this qualification in the following. According to the survey, 47 per cent of Muslims consume beef.

### 3) Variables of interest: Caste and religious socioeconomic configurations

To capture socioeconomic differences of caste and religious categories at the district level, I first compute their relative socioeconomic level at the State level. I use an indicator

[102] Rows with missing information are not retained in the analysis. Note that the NFHS overrepresents women in the sample and they are the only district-level representative individual population (household variables are also district-level representative but not for men).

[103] Other code words are used in different regions of India, see Gundemeda (2020). Since the NSSO is a government agency, it is likely that Muslims stating to the surveyors that they consume "beef" refer to buffalo rather than cow or bullock meat.

provided by the NFHS which aggregates several dimensions of material wealth[104] as a proxy for socioeconomic level. For each group, I compute the relative difference in the median socioeconomic level compared with other groups. In Table 7.1, one can observe that at the State level Brahmins are clearly socioeconomically privileged, whereas Dalits are at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale (following observations conducted in Chapter 5). I conduct the same calculation within each district. Using an unequal variance t-test, I compare the relative socioeconomic difference within each district to the State value. If the difference is significant and positive, the categories are deemed better-off in the district whereas if the difference is significant and negative, the categories are deemed worse-off in the district of interest. If the difference is not significant, then the relative position of the category is considered the same at the district level as at the State level. This test indicates whether each category is significantly better-off or worse-off at the district level compared with the State level. It should not be read as overall changes in categorical privileged positions (which do not vary much between districts).

*Table 7.1 - Relative socioeconomic privilege and district variations in Uttar Pradesh*

| | **State position** | **District comparison** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Category** | **Relative difference (percent)** | **Worse-off** | **Same** | **Better-off** | **Total** |
| **Brahmin** | 207 | 36.6 (26) | 45.1 (32) | 18.3 (13) | 100 |
| **Agricultural** | 11 | 18.3 (13) | 46.5 (33) | 35.2 (25) | 100 |
| **Dalit** | -359 | 5.6 (4) | 23.9 (17) | 70.4 (50) | 100 |
| **Muslim** | 99 | 47.9 (34) | 32.4 (23) | 19.7 (14) | 100 |

*Note: Brahmins are 207 per cent more socioeconomically privileged than the rest of the population in Uttar Pradesh. Note that Muslims here appear as socioeconomically privileged as their urban socioeconomic level is much higher than their rural socioeconomic level (and they tend to reside more in urban settings). In the right part of the table, 37 percent of districts (26 districts) correspond to regions where Brahmins are relatively socioeconomically worse-off compared with the State average.*

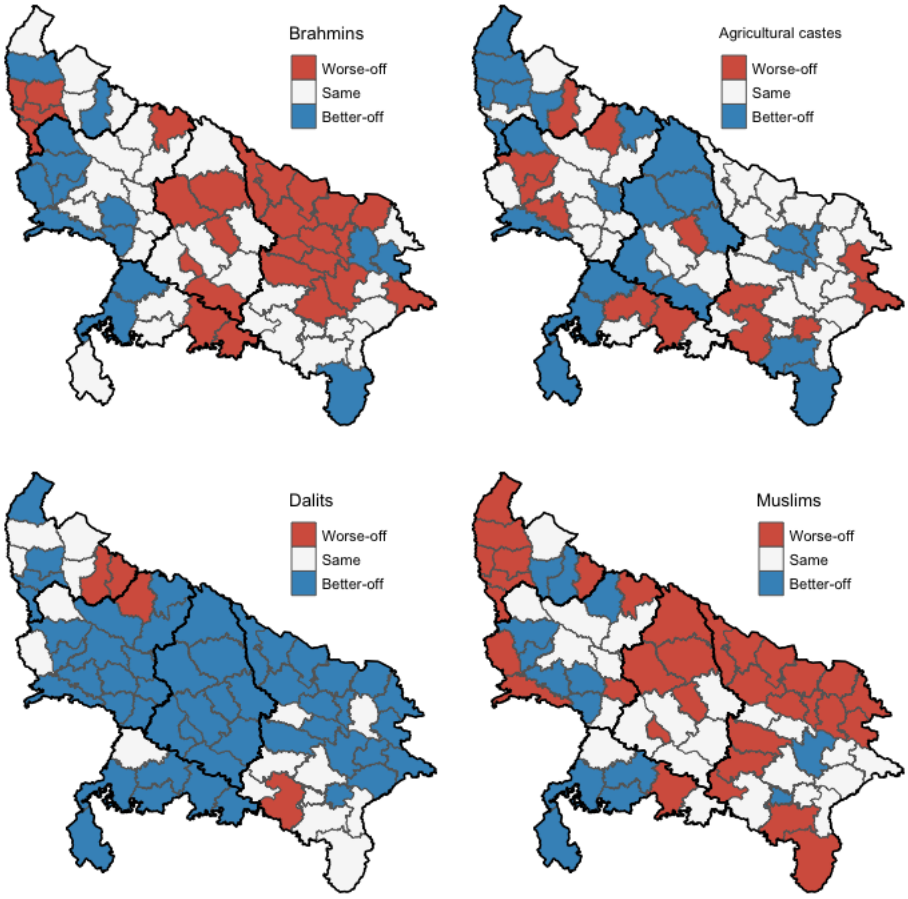
*Source: National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

Table 7.1 summarizes the relative position of categories within each district and Figure 7.1 presents the geographical distribution of the relative position of Brahmins, Agricultural castes, Dalits, and Muslims. Brahmins tend to be better-off than the State average in the Western part of Uttar Pradesh, along with Agricultural castes (who are also better-off in Central Uttar Pradesh). Dalits are particularly worse-off in a few districts of Northwestern Uttar Pradesh (Jyotiba Phule Nagar, Moradabad and Rampur) so that they appear relatively better-

[104] See the *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015-16 Report* (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF 2017: 16).

off in most other parts of the State. Finally, Muslims tend to be relatively worse-off in districts of the west border and in Eastern and Northern Uttar Pradesh.

*Figure 7.1 - Geographical distribution of caste and religious relative position in Uttar Pradesh*




*Note: Districts colored in red indicate that the given category is relatively worse-off in the district compared with the State average. In blue, categories are relatively better-off compared with the State average. Districts colored in white correspond to districts where categories' socioeconomic position is not significantly different from the State average.*

*Source: National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

### 4) Control variables

The control variables analyzed in this study pertain to respondents' position in the social stratification (following Chapter 6). In modelling vegetarianism, I include the caste nomenclature position, following the already-discussed categorization in Chapter 4. Further, I also include measures of achievement: education (number of completed years of education), household material wealth (based on a combined index of asset ownership and living

conditions)[105] and household agricultural land size. Including these different measures of social position may seem redundant, but educational achievement does not necessarily translate into higher class positions in India (Jeffrey et al., 2004) whereas households may hold agricultural land while not being primarily engaged in agriculture themselves.[106] Gender and age are also included as individual predictors of food consumption, in particular of vegetarianism.

In modelling beef consumption among Muslims, I also include the same socioeconomic positions (and occupational positions) assuming that Muslims in higher socioeconomic positions may depart from beef consumption to avoid stigmatization (since the unit of analysis is households, household head positions are accounted for).[107] When modelling beef consumption, I include the local price of beef meat, measured as the unit value derived from the declared quantity and expense of beef consumption in the NSSO. This controls for the local economic meat supply effect (Atkin et al., 2018). Given that the control variable only marginally affects beef consumption, I am confident that it does not affect the results on vegetarianism.

### 5) Econometric modelling avoiding the ecological fallacy

I conduct multilevel regression analyses, which allows to simultaneously model the effects of different cluster-level variables, while considering the possibly unobserved characteristics of clusters. This method decomposes the variance of the dependent variable between individual and cluster-level effects as recalled earlier (see Chapters 4 and 6).

I use multilevel linear probability regression models. In the case of the NFHS, I run a four-level regression (individual, household, jati, district)[108] and in the case of the NSSO, I run a two-level regression (household and district). More precisely, the multilevel models used here have level-varying intercepts, so that the error terms are level-specific. This means that they take the unexplained factors at the cluster level into account when modelling the coefficients of the regressions. Basically, these models include the unobserved heterogeneity of the

[105] The wealth index has been developed by the Demographic Household Survey and is consistent with expenditure and income measures (International Institute for Population Sciences, 2007).
[106] Contrary to the previous chapter, I do not include an occupation-based class variable since this variable has not been collected for the entire sample (the sample of the NFHS 4 is larger than the previous wage at the cost of not collecting all variables of the survey for the entire sample).
[107] In the NSSO, standard of living is measured by the Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE), summing up the household's total expenditure over the last 30 days divided by the number of household members.
[108] All individuals between 15 and 49 years old (54 in the case of men) of the same household have been included in the sample so that household contextual effects can be accounted for. Besides, I also include a jati level following the identification strategy justified in Chapter 4.

household, the caste self-identifications and the locality in modelling the probability of vegetarianism or beef consumption.

I first run models accounting for individual, household and jati covariates, and including varying-intercepts at the district level (Models MV0 for modelling vegetarianism and MB0 for beef consumption).[109] This helps assess the variance of the adherence to vegetarianism among Hindus and the consumption of beef associated with district localization, using a variance partition coefficient. I also plot district-level errors of these models on maps of Uttar Pradesh. I check whether these contextual effects are more substantial in rural areas by running these models on the rural subset of the samples (see the appendix, Models MV0R and MB0R). Second, I include district-level variables of interest in the models (adjusting for individual, household and jati covariates, Models MV1 and MB1).

To ease the interpretation of these contextual effects, I compute the predicted probability difference of being vegetarian (for Hindus) or consuming beef (for Muslims) between better-off or worse-off categories at the district level compared with districts where these categories are not significantly different from the State-level (the full parameters of the models are provided in the appendix of the chapter). Besides, I re-run the model in the case of vegetarianism by including an interaction between caste and district contextual effects to assert whether contextual effects are caste differentiated (Model MV1I), but the fit is not better than with Model MV1 (using AIC and BIC) and I therefore cannot conclude that locality effects are overall caste differentiated. But it is likely that spatial variations affect more middle castes than lower and upper castes for whom caste identities are more assigned. Hence, I hypothesized that spatial configurations affect Agricultural castes more by introducing a dichotomous variable of belonging to the Agricultural category in place of the caste nomenclature variable (Model MV1A). Interacting this variable with spatial contextual variables provides a better fit so that I can check whether spatial configurations are more substantial for Agricultural castes (Model MVAI).

Finally, I introduce varying-intercepts at a more local scale, the village or the neighborhood (Models MV2 and MB2). Indeed, surveyors first randomly selected First-stage units (FSUs) in the NSSO and Primary Survey Units (PSUs) in the NFHS, and later they randomly selected households within these areas. FSUs and PSUs correspond to villages in rural areas and to neighborhoods in urban areas (smaller than wards, equivalent to a Census Enumeration Block,

[109] Models are fitted using lme4 and lmerTest packages in R.

or about 150-200 households).[110] It provides a very fine, local, geographic scale. Though it is not possible to derive representative contextual variables for this scale of analysis, one can compute a variance partition coefficient to determine whether the remaining variance in vegetarianism among Hindus and beef consumption among Muslims can be attributed to village or neighborhood location. Based on these last results, I then qualitatively discuss village and neighborhood contextual effects on vegetarianism in the last section.

## *C - The ubiquitous and the taboo? Vegetarianism and beef in localities*

### 1) Do regional variations matter?

#### a) District-level variations of vegetarianism among Hindus

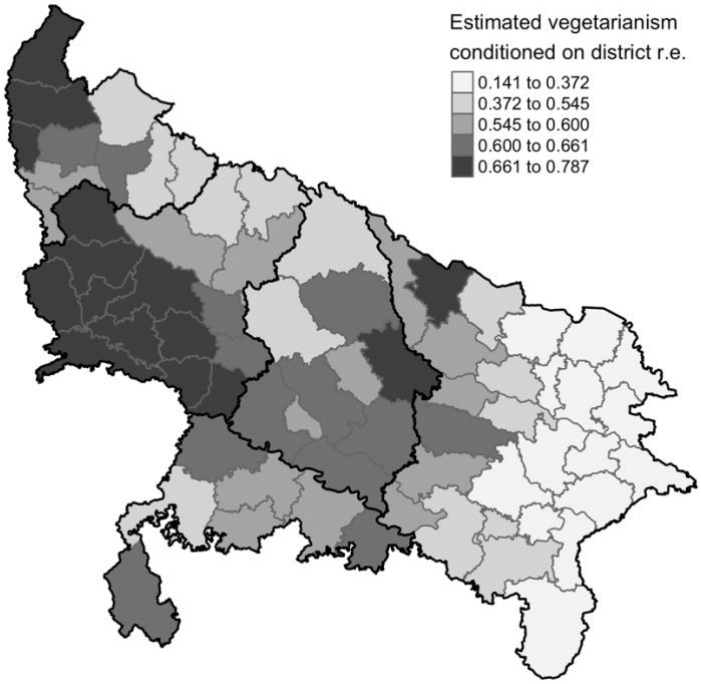
After adjusting for individual, household and jati covariates, and based on the Variance Partition Coefficient, 12 per cent of the unexplained variance in the adherence to vegetarianism results from district residence (focusing on the rural sample, this variance is only slightly higher, at 13 percent). Comparing this figure with other multilevel variance decompositions, vegetarianism proves to be quite regionally clustered (at the district level).[111]

Figure 7.2 shows the estimated level of vegetarianism conditioned on the district-level standard error, after adjusting for lower-level covariates. Vegetarianism is clearly lower in Eastern Uttar Pradesh and is the highest in the bordering districts of Western Uttar Pradesh. Comparing this map with the caste and religious spatial configurations (Figure 7.1), areas with a higher adherence to vegetarianism are associated with districts where Brahmins are not worse-off, Agricultural castes are relatively better-off and Muslims are better-off. Whether these district-level associations hold when they are controlled for together remains to be seen.

[110] Wards are usually the units of analysis in urban segregation, see for instance Haque et al. (2018).

[111] For instance, in their study on alcohol drinking in England, Rice et al. (1998) found that only 2 per cent of variations can be attributed to localities. In their study on poverty in India, Kim, Mohanty and Subramanian (2016) found that only 4 per cent of the unexplained variance of poverty can be attributed to district-level factors (village-level factors explain 12 per cent of differences).

*Figure 7.2 - Estimated vegetarianism among Hindus conditioned on district random effects*




*Note: District-level vegetarianism is estimated using the fixed effect intercept coefficient to which the district-level error term is added. These terms result from a multilevel model adjusting for individual-, household- and jati-level covariates, along with district varying-intercepts. The full model (MV0) can be found in the appendix.*

*Sample: Hindu individuals in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

### b) District-level variations of beef consumption among Muslims

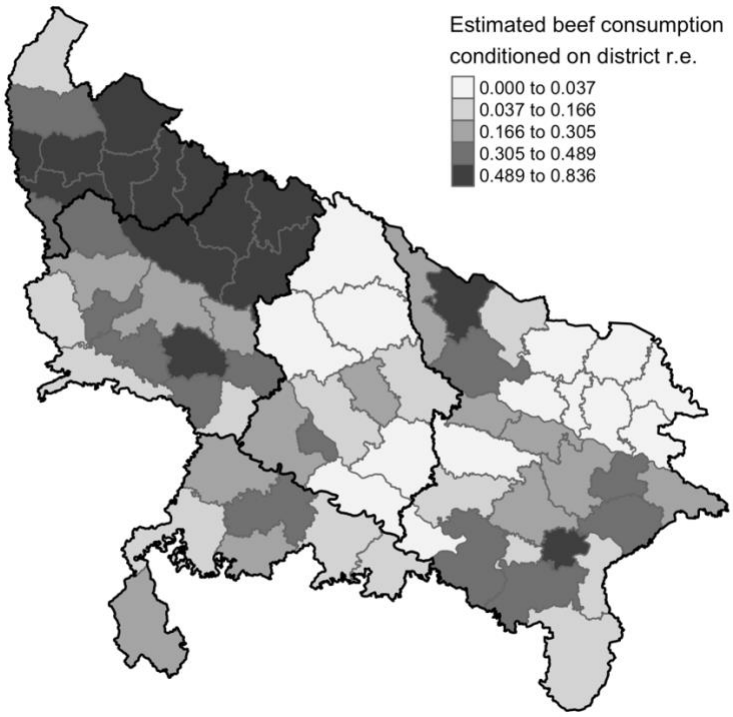
Beef consumption among Muslims is much more evidently associated with unexplained district-level contextual factors. Indeed, after adjusting for household covariates, 67 per cent of the unexplained variance of beef consumption is attributed to unobserved district-level variables (focusing on the rural sample, this variance is slightly lower, at 61 per cent). The modelling of beef consumption among Muslims presented here (model MB0 presented in detail in the appendix) suggests that the household covariates included in the analysis explain the probability of beef consumption more marginally than does the context. Only education, along with Clerical class positions,[112] significantly affect beef consumption. Muslims with higher education or in these class positions are less frequently beef consumers, a strong signal that belonging to higher social positions leads to a certain extent to avoiding stigma by turning their

[112] The significant and negative impact of being in a Clerical working position but not in a Professional position is rather surprising. Arguably, avoiding stigma is less important in the highest-class positions which assert other visible signs of class position, while being less at risk of stigmatization in case of beef consumption.

back to beef consumption. Beef meat used to be a rather cheap meat item when compared with other meats (Ferry, 2020), even though significantly, the standard of living less consistently affects beef consumption. Besides being a religiously- and caste-segmented meat, beef is then also a lower-class food item.

The estimated beef consumption proportion at the district level shows important variations. It is notably higher in the northwestern part of Uttar Pradesh and lower in Central and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, notwithstanding a few exceptions (Figure 7.3). Interestingly, in Western Uttar Pradesh, in districts where vegetarianism among Hindus is higher, beef consumption among Muslims tends to be lower. But it is not the case in the central and eastern parts of the State as vegetarianism among Hindus and beef consumption among Muslims seem to be visually correlated. Visually, it seems that in districts where Muslims or Dalits are worse-off, beef consumption is lower (Figure 7.1), but these associations have to be further statistically assessed.

*Figure 7.3 - Estimated beef consumption among Muslims conditioned on district random effects*




*Note: District-level beef consumption proportion is estimated using the fixed effect intercept coefficient to which the district-level error term is added. These terms result from a multilevel model adjusting for household-level covariates, along with district varying-intercepts. The full model (MB0) can be found in the appendix.*

*Sample: Muslim households in Uttar Pradesh.*

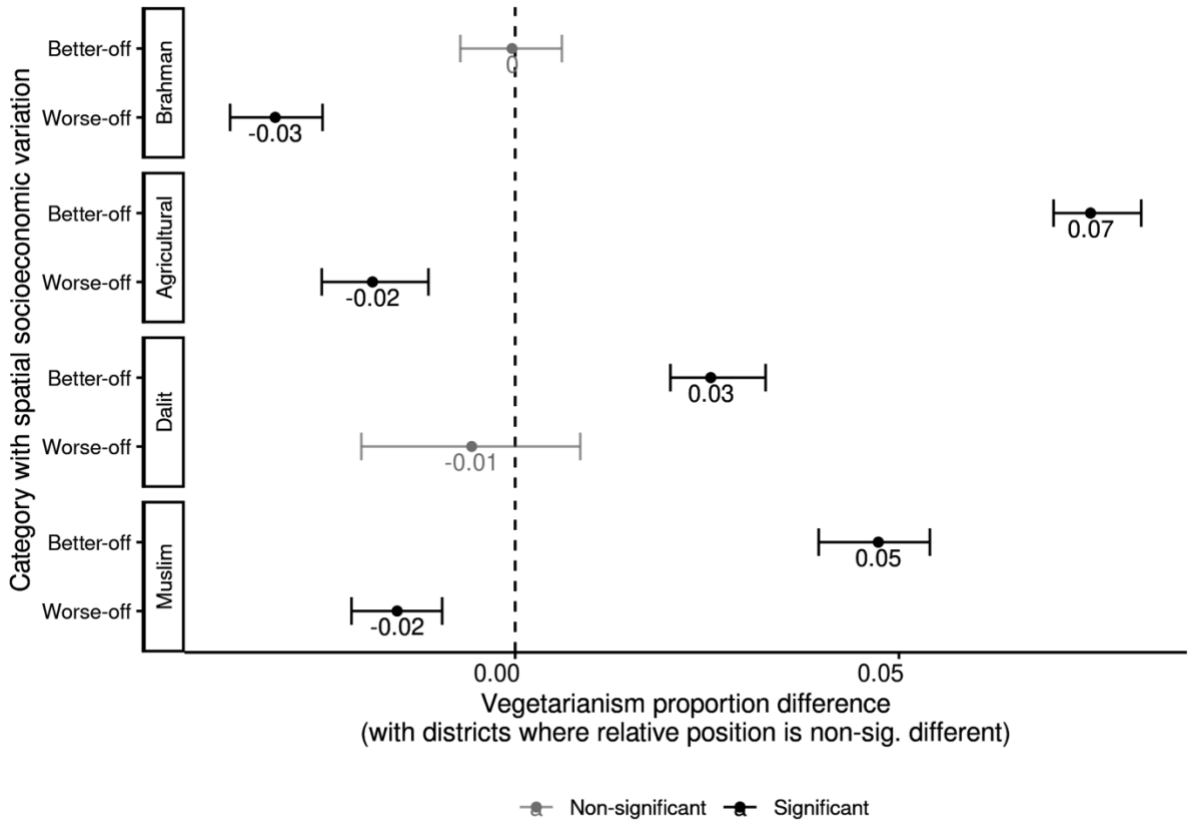
*Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey, National Sample Survey, 2011-2012.*

## 2) The effect of district-level social configurations

### a) The case of vegetarianism among Hindus

Considering the previous multilevel models provided ground that vegetarianism and beef consumption are associated with district-level factors, I introduce the caste and religious spatial configuration variables in the models (models MV1 and MB1, see the full parameters of estimation in the appendix). Regarding vegetarianism, the model confirms the visual intuition (Figure 7.4) and the theoretical assumptions.

*Figure 7.4 - Predicted probability difference in vegetarianism between districts with relatively better-off or worse-off categories and other districts*




*Note: The interpretation of the figure is as follows: in districts where Brahmins are significantly worse-off, vegetarianism among Hindus is 3 percentage points lower than in districts where their relative privilege is the same as the State average. 95 per cent confidence intervals are calculated using a bootstrap resampling procedure (1,000 resamples). Predicted probabilities are estimated from MV1 and are calculated at the reference modality of control variables (i.e., for a man of mean age, with average educational level, land ownership, wealth level, residing in a rural area and belonging to an Agricultural caste). 95 percent confidence intervals are plotted.*

*Sample: Hindu individuals in Uttar Pradesh.*

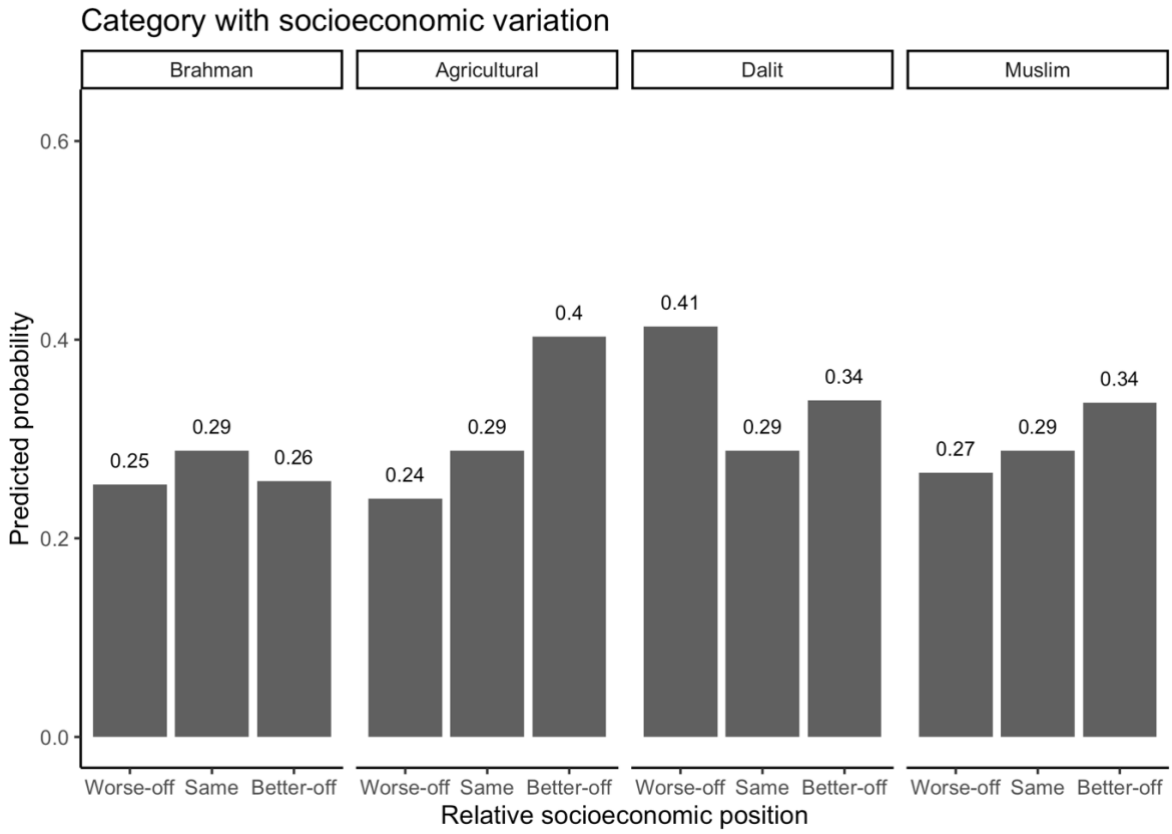
*Source: National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

Indeed, vegetarianism is clearly associated with the relative socioeconomic privilege of caste and religious categories in the district. When Brahmins are relatively worse-off compared

with the socioeconomic position at the State level, vegetarianism among Hindus tends to be lower. A similar and substantially higher effect is observed for Agricultural castes. When they are relatively better-off, vegetarianism among Hindus is higher whereas when they are relatively worse-off, vegetarianism is lower. This tends to confirm the social mechanism of a higher salience of the vegetarian order when the most vegetarian categories are relatively more privileged. Besides, Dalits do not challenge the vegetarian order, since when they are relatively more privileged, vegetarianism among Hindus also increases. It seems that their local socioeconomic upliftment is associated with a strengthening of the vegetarian order. Finally, vegetarianism among Hindus also varies according to Muslim relative socioeconomic privilege. When they are locally better-off (i.e., Hindus are worse-off), vegetarianism among Hindus increases, whereas it decreases when they are worse-off (i.e., Hindus are better-off). This tends to support the mechanism of a status threat that strengthens the adherence to the vegetarian order among Hindus.

Further, there is some hint that middle castes are more susceptible to adapt their diet according to the district caste and religious configuration, in particular depending on the relative socioeconomic privilege of Agricultural castes. Indeed, the overall difference in probability highlights that the proportion may be in total of 9 percentage points (2+7) in case of variations of the socioeconomic privilege of Agricultural castes (Figure 7.4). But this difference in probability goes up to 16 percentage points when focusing on Agricultural castes (Figure 7.5). Note that other dimensions of the spatial configuration do not appear more salient among Agricultural castes and may even be more limited (when it comes to Brahmins' or Dalits' socioeconomic privilege). Overall, it confirms the importance of Agricultural castes' and Muslims' socioeconomic privilege in understanding district-level variations of vegetarianism.

*Figure 7.5 - Predicted probabilities of being vegetarian among Agricultural castes depending on spatial configuration*




*Note: Predicted probabilities are calculated based on Model MV1AI, where the dichotomous variable of belonging to the Agricultural caste interacts with the spatial configurational variables.*

*Sample: Hindu individuals in Uttar Pradesh.*

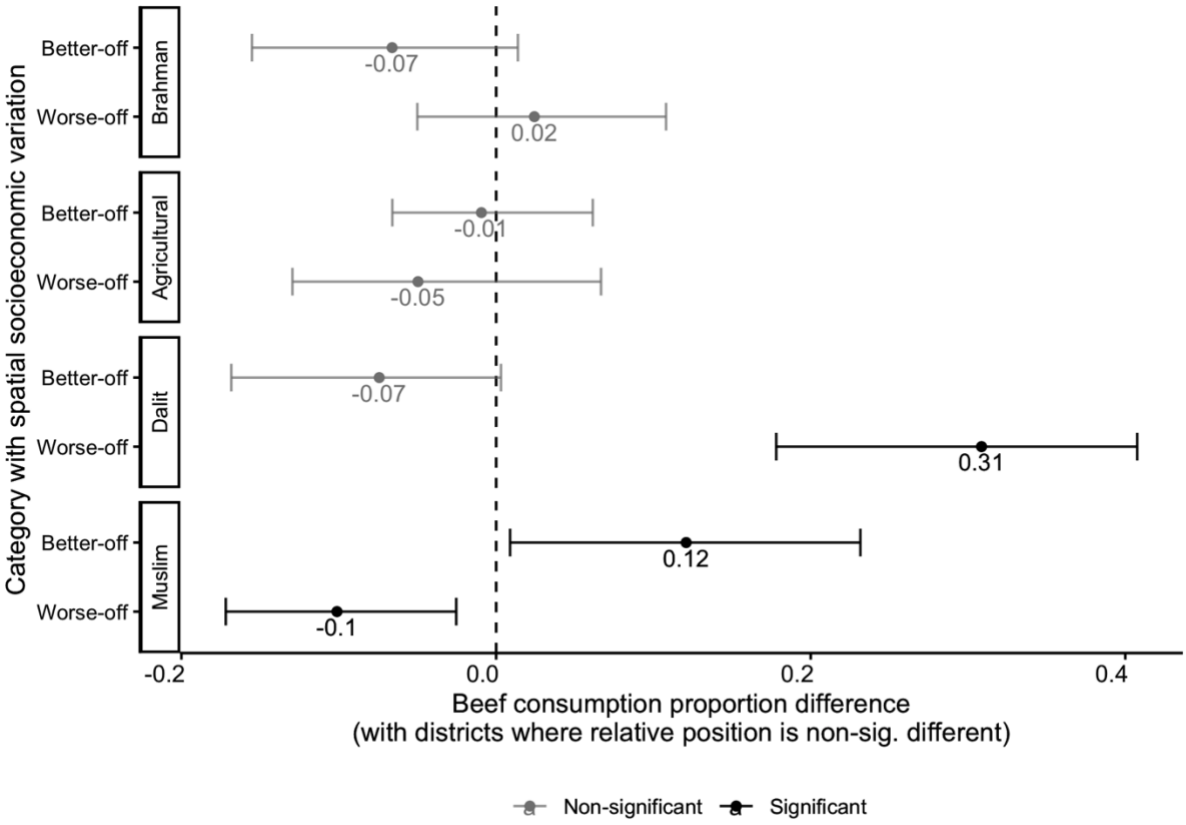
*Source: National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

### b) The case of beef consumption among Muslims

When it comes to beef consumption among Muslims, it appears little affected by the relative socioeconomic privilege of Hindu upper castes (Figure 7.6). Rather, it is associated with the relative privilege between Hindus and Muslims. Indeed, when Muslims are better-off (i.e., Hindus are worse-off), Muslims tend to be more frequently beef consumers and vice versa. These statistical associations support the social mechanism of beef consumption depending on Muslims' local socioeconomic privilege. Beef consumption tends to be avoided in case Muslims are not socioeconomically better-off since they do not want to face social stigma. Finally, rather unexpectedly, Muslims' beef consumption is also associated with the relative position of Dalits in districts. If Dalits are socioeconomically worse-off, Muslims tend to consume beef much more frequently. In these districts, the proportion of beef consumers among Dalits is slightly higher than 0 (at just 1 percent) whereas it remains null elsewhere else.

It may be that in these districts, beef consumption among Muslims is supported by Dalits' engagement into this consumption.

*Figure 7.6 - Predicted probability difference in beef consumption between districts with relatively better-off or worse-off categories and other districts*




*Note: The interpretation of the figure is as follows: in districts where Muslims are significantly better-off, beef consumption among Muslim is 12 percentage points higher than in districts where their relative privilege is the same as the State average. 95 per cent confidence intervals are calculated using a bootstrap resampling procedure (1,000 resamples). Predicted probabilities are estimated from MV1 and are calculated at the reference modality of control variables (i.e., for a man of mean age, with average educational level, land ownership, wealth level, residing in a rural area and belonging to an Agricultural caste). 95 percent confidence intervals are plotted.*

*Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey, National Sample Survey, 2011-2012.*

### 3) The weight of villages and localities

Finally, do variations in the adherence to vegetarianism also reflect more localized contextual effects? To assess the extent to which residing in a village or a neighborhood rather than another affects the overall adherence to vegetarianism, I introduce varying-intercepts at the village or neighborhood level after adjusting for the previously discussed parameters (Model MV2). The variance partition coefficient indicates that 4 percent of the unexplained variance in vegetarianism results from unobserved variations at the village or neighborhood level (running this model on the rural or urban subsamples also shows 4 percent of remaining

variance attributed to this local level). To recall, 12 percent of the unexplained variance of the adherence to vegetarianism is associated with unobserved district variables in model MV0. This tends to show that caste and religious spatial dynamics are more salient at the district level than at the village or neighborhood level. This does not mean that spatial mechanisms of cultural stratification do not operate at the village or neighborhood level (perception of socioeconomic privilege is likely to be very locally based) but that they reflect more regionally-based caste and religious dynamics. If anything, this analysis calls for articulating the geographic scales of mechanisms social configurations such as the ethnographically-based "caste dominance" by M. N. Srinivas (1959).

Localized effects are more substantial when it comes to beef consumption among Muslims. Adding varying-intercepts for localities then shows that 33 percent of the unexplained variance in beef consumption can be attributed to unobserved variables at the village or neighborhood level (the variance partition coefficient shows slightly higher effects in the case of urban neighborhoods – 38 percent – than in the case of rural villages – 27 percent). Adding this local level also decreases the variance associated with the district level (accounting now for 19 percent of the variance). Contrary to vegetarianism among Hindus, beef consumption among Muslims is hence more localized. This may be the result of high segregation levels between Hindus and Muslims at the local level (Susewind, 2017).

## *D - Discussion: What is behind spatial contexts?*

Whether localities reflect local or higher-level caste and religious configurations, it still means that the vegetarian order is subjectively experienced at a local scale. In this section, I use my material drawn from interviews to understand how local spatial contexts, in particular neighborhoods, are an important level of analysis to understand meat consumption. I first discuss the spatial segregation of meat availability, then I analyze how neighborhoods are labelled as "veg" and "non-veg" and outline the importance of outside-the-home consumption in escaping the local social order of vegetarianism.

### 1) The availability of non-vegetarian products

Local consumption partly depends on local food availability. If no meat outlet exists in a locality, it may be that meat consumption is locally lower, since location implies different access to "circuits of meat" (Bruckert, 2018). Material access can certainly not be underestimated in an explanation of contextual variations, and availability also shapes "cultural repertoires" that individuals draw upon in their practices (Lamont et al., 1996).

But meat access may itself be the result of a local social order. Its geographic availability may be the result of cultural and social tensions, as illustrated in the ethnographic study of the Qureshis, a Muslim community traditionally engaged in butchery (Ahmad, 2014). This community was largely engaged in the Idgah abattoir of New Delhi, which was shut down and relocated to the fringes of the capital city in Ghazipur after decades of legal protests by vegetarian societies and environmental activists. The latter wanted to close the slaughterhouse since it was "a source of great environmental pollution and unhygienic conditions," but Zahrin Ahmad demonstrates that the case was filled with religious beliefs (cow protection) and prejudice against Muslims.

The presence of meat shops and non-vegetarian restaurants in a locality is also the product of local social configurations. This is illustrated by an interview I conducted with Vinu, a Hindu restaurant owner in Lucknow. He now owns a vegetarian restaurant in Rajajipuram, but he used to run a non-vegetarian restaurant in the same locality, which he shut down due to the fact that Hindus abstain from meat on certain weekdays:

> *"Vinu- In this place in Rajajipuram, it's a big problem over there, if you put veg and non-veg [on the menu], some people will not come, because the community here is vegetarian.*
> *Interviewer- The community around here?*
> *Vinu - Yeah, it's vegetarian here.*
> *Interviewer - So what kind of people live around here?*
> *Vinu - Here, if we are talking about the Hindus, here the Brahmins are there, the main community is Brahmin, they are not eating the non-veg, that's the main thing. [I had a non-veg restaurant in the area before], the problem is like, you know that the week is of seven days, here people are not eating on Tuesdays and some people are not eating on Thursdays, and some people are not eating on Saturdays, you have a business of only three or four days but you are working for 6 days but you are getting business for only three days, you are getting a loss, if you are talking about the business."*
> (Vinu, interview 7)

In the same neighborhood, when asked why he does not offer meat, Faisal, a Muslim fast-food restaurant owner, clearly associated meat outlets and restaurants with Muslim residential areas:

> *"There are [areas], you can say in old Lucknow, like Nakhas, Aminabad, they are called Old Lucknow. They have a lot of restaurants because there are a lot of numbers of Muslim majorities. In Rajajipuram there are more Hindu majorities here. There are some changes, it is a good change, but in India, there is a problem that people don't describe non-vegetarian or vegetarian people, people here describe as Hindu and Muslim. If he is Hindu that means he is eating only vegetarian food, if he is Muslim that means he is eating only non-vegetarian, so this is the mentality of Indian people. So, in Rajajipuram, there are a lot of Hindu people, so they don't like to go to non-vegetarian hotels [i.e., restaurants]."*
> (Faisal, interview 6)

Heena, a Muslim woman, told me that she has to go "two to three kilometers away" to access meat shops, because in her neighborhood, "all Hindus are here so they are hardcore vegetarian, not non-veg." She further referred to legal restrictions on the presence of butchers in urban neighborhoods:

> *"Heena- There was some restrictions now, Everywhere, every place, they cannot open the butcher place and just start selling the meat, the places are specified, certain restrictions are there, some guidelines they have to follow and then only they can open a butcher shop otherwise it is not allowed at all.*
> *Mathieu- And do you know these guidelines? Like in general?*
> *Heena- No, it's not general, it's just that if you want to open, what generally I have heard from a person was there should be glasses, the place should be clean and it should not be visible and it should be far from the general residence, the residential area, that's all the guidelines..."*
> (Heena, interview 8)

These guidelines refer to the "No Objection Certificate" that businesses need to obtain to legally establish their shops. After the arrival in power of the Bharatiya Janata Party led by Yogi Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh in 2017, the local government shut down all "illegal" (i.e., non-legally certified, so informal) slaughterhouses in the State[113] and, subsequently,

[113] See "Illegal vs informality: What the crackdown on slaughterhouses in Uttar Pradesh is really about," Nikita Sud, *Scroll.in*, March 27, 2017: https://scroll.in/article/832886/illegality-vs-informality-what-the-crackdown-on-slaughterhouses-in-uttar-pradesh-is-really-about (last access on December 9, 2020).

regulations were strengthened for meat shops and slaughterhouses. Although the guidelines do not imply any restriction concerning residential areas neither precise equipment to ensure hygienic conditions, meat vendors must stay out of the 50-meter-radius from religious places and 100-meter from the main gate of these places (meat vendors can also not sell in vegetable markets, but I have observed instances, in particular in rural areas).[114] Such regulation has little to do with concerns for sanitation but rather more with religious sentiment. What is meant by "religious places" is mainly Hindu temples. Residing in an affluent Hindu neighborhood, Heena then directly draws the conclusion that it concerns residential areas. These new regulations in Uttar Pradesh, previously already informally set up in some places, also existing in other States (e.g., in Tamil Nadu, Bruckert, 2018), hence reinforce the segregated access to meat products.

The correspondence between local social configurations of consumers depending in particular on their religious and caste belonging and their perceived diet is hence associated with the (non-)presence of meat slaughterhouses, shops and restaurants. This reminds the correspondence between the field of consumption and the field of production suggested by Bourdieu (2000), as both fields are embedded in social structures, which are here characterized by the importance of the religious composition.

### 2) Food mental maps of segregated groups in poor neighborhoods

It was not possible to derive a quantitative measure of caste and religious segregation at the local level in the above quantitative analysis since the sample at hand is not exhaustive. But it provides evidence that the groups' "sense of closedness" (Susewind, 2017) expressed here through food preferences is highly associated with the objective share of groups in districts. It suggests that individuals' "mental maps" of their residential environment, i.e., their subjective understanding of the district social composition, are highly associated with its objective reality, as measured by survey data.

This adequacy between the subjective perceptions of the spatial configurations and its objective social composition is locally reinforced by neighborhood names. In villages, they may reveal what the main caste or community living in the area is and it is also sometimes the case for urban neighborhoods, particularly at the fringes of cities, which were previously rural. For instance, in Lucknow I came across neighborhoods named "Bengali Tola" (neighborhood

[114] See "UP lays down strict guidelines for meat business," Aditya Dev, *Times of India*, April, 1, 2017: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/up-lays-down-strict-guidelines-for-meat-business/articleshow/57964695.cms (last access on December 9, 2020).

of Bengalis, where inhabitants originally hail from West Bengal), "Telibagh" (neighborhood of Telis, a Merchant community, rather of low socioeconomic status, see Chapter 4), "Pasiana" (neighborhood of the Pasis, a Dalit community), "Kumharmandi" (the market of Kumhars, who are a low caste whose main traditional occupation is potter), "Bhimtola" (neighborhood of Dalits). Neighborhoods composed of a large fraction of Muslims may also be recognizable by their name. Sometimes, neighborhood names have been changed to avoid caste stigma, because it mostly qualifies low castes (e.g., "Pasiana" was renamed "Ramtola," although the first qualifier is still used).

The spatial segmentation is often referred to when asking respondents whether some communities tend to be vegetarian or non-vegetarian. Neighborhoods are labelled "veg" or "non-veg" depending on their caste and religious composition. This is illustrated, for instance, by a conversation with Ujagar (interview 31) in Lucknow:

> *"Mathieu- So in your area, are there people who eat meat?*
> *Ujagar- Like the area is divided! Like there is my village Longa Khera!*
> *Anil- So you are from Longa Khera!*
> *Ujagar- Yes! Here I have my shop! So, In Longa Khera, there are more backward class people! Yadav, and Gadadia [shepherds]! So, in their houses, it is not made! But in the next area, there it starts!*
> *Anil- In the Pasiana?*
> *Ujagar- Where the Pasiana starts, so they eat! And then the Bhim [Dalit] people they eat."*
> (Ujagar, interview 31, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

Respondents often connected residents' community (caste or religion) with their alleged diet. Usually, respondents alleged that low castes, and particularly Dalits, along with Muslims, are meat eaters. But in poorer neighborhoods in particular, and ultimately in slums, respondents seemed to be able to draw more reliant associations between someone's assigned identity and their diet. This relates to the higher promiscuity of space, resulting in a high proximity between households. This goes to the point where in unnotified slums food is cooked outside. It is then more evident to see (and smell) what residents cook and eat.

This also impacted my interviews. Since there was sometimes not enough space inside the dwelling to conduct the interview, we talked outside of it. It was not rare for neighbors to come and participate in the conversation, which reveals the lack of private spaces. For instance, when interviewing Halima, a Muslim woman residing in Lovekush Nagar in Lucknow

(interview 22), another woman listened to our conversation and intervened when we asked Halima whether her husband (who was absent at the moment of the interview) smoked tobacco and consumed alcohol:

> *"Woman's voice- He smokes beedi!*
> *Halima- Liar! Array [Come on]! Sometimes. Once in a month or 2.*
> *Woman's voice- Ugh... I am a proof!*
> *Anil- So how are you related to her?*
> *Halima- She is my Chachi [Paternal uncle's Wife – the woman lived in a different abode]*
> *Anil- Okay.*
> *Woman's voice- I am in the society so can't I see? Now if someone is smoking daily! You will always find him smoking."*
> (Halima, interview 22, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

She later on again intervened while we were talking about who eats what:

> *"Anil- So tell me, for eating non-veg food, do some specific community eats it or everyone eats it?*
> *Halima- No, according to my knowledge, everyone who is living here uses it.*
> *Anil- Everyone uses it. There's the only difference in the beef.*
> *Halima- Yes, it's only different in beef.*
> *Anil- Muslims eat the beef and the Hindus only eat the smaller ones?*
> *Halima- Yes. That's the difference.*
> *Woman's voice- No, no. Many Hindus also eat beef.*
> *Halima- This in the front, they eat beef in their house.*
> *Anil- Okay, Hindu also eat beef?*
> *Halima- Only she doesn't eat, who is sitting. About her, I can tell that she doesn't eat.*
> *Woman's voice- 25 out of 100 don't eat.*
> *Halima- Otherwise all of them eat.*
> *Anil- Okay...*
> *Male voice- Many! Doctor! We see many!*
> *Anil- So even Hindus have started eating?*

*Everyone- Yes!*

*Woman's voice- And more than Muslims! If Muslim gets 250 Gms, Hindus will bring 1kg.*

*Anil- Okay.*

*Woman's voice- Whoever got the taste of it, we haven't got it in our mouth!"*

(Halima, interview 22, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

Obviously, I cannot take for granted that Hindus in this slum eat beef as alleged by Halima (who insisted that they would eat more beef than Muslims) but her certainty definitely comes from some degree of observation given that women were cooking and washing their utensils outside in this slum (where abodes are made of plastic and wood). Still, while interviewing Ram (interview 21) in the same slum but in a different lane, he had not mentioned Hindu's beef consumption.

Stereotypes on who eats what are then more easily based on observations in poorer neighborhoods given the lack of privacy. It also means that it is more difficult to assert one's status through a diet. Secretive practices of meat eating (or even beef consumption) inside the private space of the home are then less likely, and for these fractions of the population with low economic resources, outside-the-home consumption, a practice allowing secretive meat consumption as shown in Chapter 4, is barely existent (none of the five individuals interviewed in this neighborhood, among which three resided in the unnotified slum, declared occasionally eating meat outside of their home).

Yet, the absence of secrecy of at-home food consumption for poorer households should be relativized. While food sellers come to neighborhoods and sell their vegetables, Rishi (interview 35) residing in Pasiana in Lucknow (a neighborhood mainly composed of Pasis, a jati belonging to Dalits) recalled that meat and fish sellers are sent away:

*"Sometimes when a fish seller comes, 'What are you selling?' 'Fish!' 'Take it away! No one eats here!' Hahaha. They are sent away!*

*Anil- Okay. Why? What is the problem?*

*Interviewee- The thing is that it is claimed no one eats this side so it is said 'No one eats here, take it away'. If we have to eat then whatever it is like 250Gms or 500Gms, we go to the market secretly and bring it! We cooked that secretly and eat it! Haha! This is the thing! People don't know what we eat or what we don't! We secretly cook it and eat it!"*

(Rishi, interview 35, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

It may be that this collective refusal of openly buying meat stems from a collective assertion of a higher status from this low Dalit jati in the neighborhood. Yet, overall, more affluent households have more opportunities to assert their public image as vegetarians while still having non-vegetarian eating practices.

### 3) The fridge and the food court of affluent classes

In more affluent urban neighborhoods, naming the locality according to the name of a community is very rare (with sometimes the exception of places gathering a large segment of residents from a different State, e.g., Bengalis). The stricter separation of the public and private spaces also renders allegations of who eats what less conclusive. Prem (interview 23), who resided in a neighborhood close to the previously mentioned slum, declared: "I won't be able to tell about what is prohibited in people's homes. Will you be able to tell what is prohibited in our homes? You won't!" Further, evoking whether her neighbors know that she consumes meat products, Shiraji (interview 49), a Rajput woman in Gorakhpur, declared rather indignantly: "they will not ask what is there in our fridge!".

The separation between the home sphere and the outside public sphere may create stronger differences between the assertions of one's diet (vegetarian) and actual food practices (which may be non-vegetarian). This was fully acknowledged by Durgaprased (interview 50), a Yadav man living in Gorakhpur who declared being vegetarian and insisted on the importance of the projected public image that one asserts with this diet, even though it might not correspond to actual food practices inside the home:

> *"See the work of the Brahmins, in today's time, it is the trust, because the meaning of Brahmins is that the one who does prayers, so he tries to show they are vegetarian, even if they are not, but it shows. They should look pure and simple because when we do some rituals, some prayers so we try that the person, pundit [priest] who is sitting in the front, at least he should be Satwik [simple], or should be ideal. We realize if he is talking good things in the front and keeps a bottle of alcohol with him. So, we avoid such people. Now what they do at home, that is their independence."*
>
> (Durgaprasad, interview 50)

If private spaces are more clearly bounded in more affluent neighborhoods, it should not be overemphasized, particularly regarding meat consumption. Indeed, the smell of cooking spreads easily in apartment complexes. Dolphijn (2006) reports that there are still many

apartment complexes in Bangalore that do not allow residents to cook meat in order to not offend Brahmin households who could be outraged by the smell of meat coming out of the ventilation systems.[115]

Finally, affluent individuals have more economic resources to eat outside their home, an opportunity to consume non-vegetarian products, as I already developed this point in Chapter 3. These outside-the-home food practices usually happen in a different neighborhood than the residential neighborhood, as I recalled in the example with Kartikkeya and his younger brother. Going out is therefore a way of bypassing the local social order of the locality and it is easier to do it in urban areas and for relatively affluent individuals. The importance of going out of the neighborhood to enjoy a meat dish strengthens the previous quantitative results on the cultural stratification depending on the context. It is in line with the importance of the context for shaping "orders of worth," i.e., the predominant values that justify the (non-)consumption of meat (Thorslund and Lassen, 2017). While vegetarianism is acknowledged as a status marker within the neighborhood, it does not contradict meat consumption outside of it since it happens in a different social context where Brahmin values are momentarily neutralized.

In Chapter 3, I exposed how I encountered Hindu individuals (usually men) going to the Muslim neighborhoods in Lucknow for a meat meal. More recently, the emergence of shopping malls has provided a new avenue for outside food consumption in food courts where different vegetarian and non-vegetarian caterers are available, usually on the last floor of these buildings.[116] The emergence of these buildings in major urban cities meets the demand of upper middle class individuals (men and women, and families) for spaces of sociability (Rault et al., 2018). They have emerged in parallel with the rise of the IT industry and the emergence of IT professionals. This category of workers, notwithstanding the fact that it is still dominated by Hindu upper castes (Henry and Ferry, 2017; Subramanian, 2019), gathers vegetarians and non-vegetarians. The latter are then in line with Indian and foreign restaurants chains serving global and foreign foods (usually meat products are chicken, in rare case, mutton, but never beef or pork).[117] While shopping malls are spaces of social distinction, and may even lead to conspicuous consumption (Rault et al., 2018), they also act as spaces in which individuals may

[115] Investigating the micro-level mechanisms of social control within the neighborhood and apartment complexes is beyond the scope of this research, but housing societies (resident welfare associations) may play an important role in this regard, see in particular "Rumble in India's RWA jungle", *Livemint*, April 3, 2020 (https://www.livemint.com/news/india/rumble-in-urban-india-s-rwa-jungle-11585931653952.html, last access on December 16, 2020). For a literary social portrait of social relations among residents of a middle class apartment complex (in Mumbai), see *Last man in tower* by Aravind Adiga (2011).

[116] In Lucknow, the biggest shopping malls (such as Phoenix Avenue Mall, Wave Mall, or One Awadh Centre) are located at the fringes of the city centre, close to affluent neighbourhoods such as Gomti Nagar.

[117] Some of these brands are Barbecue Nation, KFC and McDonalds.

neutralize and emancipate from Brahmin values (Dolphijn, 2006). In this perspective, social distinction in these contexts is more largely based on the ability to navigate the consumption possibilities of global capitalism than on the Brahmin social order.

While fully acknowledging the importance of shopping malls in shaping new cultural and social codes among dominant classes, I also want to nuance this view. Indeed, ultimately one could argue that Brahmin values are totally taken down and replaced by cultural distinctions drawing from "global capitalism." Vegetarianism would then not be challenged from below by low castes promoting alternative animal-sourced foods but rather from above. Yet, as I exposed in Chapter 5, the high congruence between caste and class, particularly at the top of the class hierarchy, means that upper classes (Professionals) are also often from upper castes. Entering shopping malls, Brahmin individuals do not switch from a caste identity to a class identity. As I have also shown, Brahmins are no less vegetarian when they belong to upper classes. Further, food caterers in shopping malls always offer vegetarian meals along with non-vegetarian options, and global brands have adapted to the idiosyncrasies of Indian tastes (Fischer, 2019). While I interviewed Saumya (interview 12), a 23-year-old Brahmin woman self-identifying with the "upper middle class," she declared going often to food courts in shopping malls with her friends. Yet, she also said that she was eating only vegetarian food, even if some of her non-vegetarian friends consume meat next to her. We had been put in touch by a common acquaintance in Lucknow and she had suggested to meet in the food court of a shopping mall, thus asserting the ubiquity of such places to go out and socialize for the dominant classes. Hence, while in some contexts there may be a lower salience of vegetarianism as a status marker, since what is more distinctive is to hang out in the shopping mall and eating out at the food court, the Brahminical social order may not be necessarily questioned. As I will show in Part 4, belonging to upper classes generally does not necessarily lead to reconsidering vegetarianism, because of the mobilization of different moral values.

To sum up, I have uncovered different social mechanisms that contribute to the importance of spatial contexts in the social stratification of vegetarianism. First, I have argued that the availability of meat has to be understood in parallel with the social composition of the neighborhood. Second, I have shown how neighborhoods are labelled "veg" or "non-veg" depending on its caste and religious composition. In poorer spatial contexts, this labelling is more ubiquitous given the lack of private spaces for households. Yet, even in more affluent neighborhoods, one's food consumption may not be fully hidden in the households. It justifies occasional outside-the-home meat consumption, including in food courts with international

brands serving non-vegetarian meals. Yet, these spaces do not challenge the salience of vegetarianism as a status marker as they remain spatially circumscribed.

## *E - Conclusion: the local social configurations of vegetarianism*

The multilevel approach to the social stratification of meat consumption in Uttar Pradesh, a region in North India where the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism is very salient, reveals the importance of both social position and local social configurations in food lifestyles. It complements previous studies on the role of geographic location in the salience of symbolic boundaries (Lamont et al., 1996) by approaching it through the study of social contexts.

At the individual and household level, caste and class are key predictors of vegetarianism, following the findings of Chapter 6. Among Muslims, the positive association between refraining from beef consumption and educational achievement as well as, to a certain extent, higher class position, points that households also adapt their diets according to their socioeconomic status. It unveils that beef meat may be avoided to limit social stigma for higher classes and it more largely shows that food is driven by social conformity.

As I have shown, contextual variations also explain the heterogeneity in the adherence to vegetarianism and the engagement in beef consumption. The importance of these local configurations shows that social values are not only determined through collective social identities. To put it succinctly, it is not only who you are but also who lives around you that determine your food values and lifestyles. Social norms hence play both a micro and a macro role, which quantitative research on lifestyles needs to be able to grasp. Spatial social diffusion of values and lifestyles is key in understanding meat-eating patterns. The salience of the vegetarian social order that encourages abstinence from meat locally depends on Agricultural castes' relative socioeconomic status. Spatial variations in the proportion of vegetarians hence mainly relate to the Agricultural castes' relative socioeconomic privilege in a district. Depending on the social configuration, Agricultural castes will also be more or less likely to adopt vegetarianism. This analysis hence points the salience of this middle caste category in strengthening the vegetarian social order if it is more socioeconomically privileged. The reference group (Merton and Rossi, 1968) is not necessarily vegetarians. Overall, this points that the status order strongly depends on the economic order (Weber, 2010) and that the local social structure may complicate this relation, in line with the role of the socioeconomically "dominant caste" in villages that is still acknowledged in contemporary India (Jeffrey, 2001). Higher commitments to vegetarianism as a reaction to status threat is also identified. Indeed, vegetarianism here appears as a religious identity marker and Hindus react by more clearly

adopting the values and practices of their group of belonging when their socioeconomic position is challenged by Muslims. This point reminds of Weber's considerations on the challenges to the status order: "all groups having interests in the status order react with special sharpness against the pretensions of purely economic acquisition because, again, it threatens the Stand [status] at its roots. In most cases they react more vigorously the more they feel themselves threatened" (Weber, 2010).

The religious composition of the local social environment also clearly affects Muslims' declared consumption of beef or buffalo. A mechanism of social control is at play, so that when Muslims live in Hindu socioeconomically privileged localities, they tend to refrain from declaring their consumption of beef. This result complements previous research work on religious social identities (Atkin et al., 2018), on the marginalization of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent (Gayer and Jaffrelot, 2012), on the role of food, and more specifically meat in religious segregation, and it helps us better understand the display of religious identities in inauspicious environments. It suggests that strategies of boundary-making (Wimmer, 2008) do not only relate with people's social boundaries but also to the symbolic boundaries that crystallize into groups. Changing one's position within the symbolic boundary system by abstaining from beef consumption then becomes a form of "individual crossing" and a strategy to avoid religious stigma in inauspicious neighborhoods, in fine as a form of assimilation.

Overall, these results suggest the importance of looking at both positional and contextual indicators when it comes to understanding the social segmentation of cultural patterns. Logics of cultural distinction are spatially embedded, especially given the variations in the congruence between acribed and achieved positions.

# Fourth part
# Consuming and despising meat at the individual level

# Chapter 8 – Making ends meet: The stylization of vegetarianism through economic justifications

*Shyam Prakash: These people… They are nouveau poor. What happened?*
*Raaj Batra: Just like you said… Bankrupt, we went bankrupt. […] We're bankrupt now, there's nothing we can do to make things right.*
*School officer: You're absolutely right. But if you feed your children with such expensive stuff daily then how will you educate them in such a big school?*
*Raaj: What to do? It wasn't intentional.*
*School officer: Such an expensive mistake.*
*Raaj: We'll learn… slowly…*
*Shyam: How can you learn like this?*
*Raaj: What else should I do?*
*Shyam: Living in poverty is an art. I'll teach you… because I have a legacy in poverty. My father was poor, grandfather was poor, my forefathers… and even their fathers were poor. I am from a lineage of poor people. Not like you, who were rich first and then became poor. No. We're the pure kind of poor.*
*Raaj: Even we're poor, but we became rich by accident. But now we're poor again.*
*School officer: You teach them about poverty.*

Hindi Medium, *2017, Chaudhary, S.*

The anthropological understanding of the opposition between vegetarians and non-vegetarians classically refers to an opposition between "purity" and "impurity" (Douglas, 1966; Dumont, 1974). In expressing judgements about others' diets, Indians would articulate their caste position to a worldview according to this binary categorization. Yet, in the contemporary Indian society, openly displaying one's caste or religious superiority is not always well perceived in a context where upper castes discursively downplay the privileges of their ascribed position, as is denoted in the discursive "new middle class" category (Fernandes, 2006). Indeed, insisting on one's achieved status position rather than on one's ascribed status position denotes an upper caste viewpoint of "castelessness" (Deshpande, 2015). If vegetarians may well justify their diet according to their caste position, how do they express negative judgements towards non-vegetarians and how do non-vegetarians respond to these allegations? In other words, what are the justification repertoires used to assert the salience of the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism?

In order to respond to these questions, I follow R. S. Khare's suggestions of studying food as both culture and nutrition (Khare, 1980). I hence look at the materiality of food, in particular its nutritive property and its economic constraints in its obtention. Indeed, food practices are shaped by economic constraints and resources, which strongly affect the

composition of the food basket. But these material properties also constitute criteria of rationalization of food practice differences between caste and religious groups. They are important elements of the "stylization" of food practices (Grignon and Grignon, 1980), i.e., vegetarian and non-vegetarian practices are rationalized according to the norms specific to the position of the households in the food lifestyle space.

To study both the social structure of food practices and the content of the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism, I follow a mixed-methods approach inspired by Jarness (2018). I first use quantitative data from the "Consumption Expenditure Survey" of the National Sample Survey Office subsampled in Uttar Pradesh to describe the social structure of food lifestyles, emphasizing the position of non-vegetarian practices. I show that they are little related to the polarization between the "choice of the necessary" and comfortable food lifestyles. Still, non-vegetarian groups are heavily associated with economic constraints in their food practices.

Then, I use interviews collected in the same region to understand how individuals judge others' food practices according to their social position. While caste may be a non-acknowledged category in negatively judging others, economic inequalities are pervasive and the rich openly acknowledge their fear of being contaminated by the allegedly undesirable lifestyles of the poor (Paugam et al., 2017). Here, I advance that the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism draws from this binary categorization between rich and poor. People's perception of the economic position of vegetarians and non-vegetarians as rich or poor leads them to mobilize these economic positional categories to value or devalue their food practices. Hindu upper castes negatively perceive non-vegetarian practices among poor lower castes and Muslims. The former consider that the latter misuse their economic resources in consuming non-vegetarian products. Among poor households, this repertoire is also articulated around the importance of self-discipline in managing the household budget and by negatively perceiving alcohol consumption. The articulation of a moral economic repertoire thus reinforces the legitimacy of vegetarianism by not openly displaying exclusive caste and religious status boundaries. It echoes strategies of downplaying one's cultural snobbishness in egalitarian contexts while also asserting cultural exclusiveness in other forms (Jarness and Friedman, 2017). In the Indian context, a class narrative reinforces caste distinctions.

In the following, I first present the theoretical and methodological approach to study the composition of the food basket. I build on previous sociological works to investigate the distinctive practices in the space of food practices, using both quantitative and qualitative interviews. Then, I describe the food lifestyle space. Finally, I uncover how differences in the

food lifestyle space relate to distinctive practices that heavily draw on perceived material constraints.

## *A - Theoretical and methodological approach*

### 1) The "stylization" of food practices according to social position

Within the social sciences, Engel's seminal research on the distribution of household budgets according to living standards has historically enshrined the importance of consumption studies (Cardon et al., 2019). Subsequently, Halbwachs's work has helped understand that variations in budget items reflect class-related living conditions. Social norms specific to employees or workers are thus linked to a differentiated distribution of spending (Halbwachs, 2015).[118] Bourdieu's work in *Distinction* then sought to systematize these results by arguing that budget items, including food items, reflect "lifestyles" (1984). Thus, consumption practices reflect symbolic struggles between social groups over the valuation of different goods. The observation of food preferences would reflect a food hierarchy, a relatively stabilized positive and negative valorization of food items, depending on social position, in particular class position.

Further, Grignon and Grignon (1980) have insisted that individuals at the bottom of the social hierarchy have their own criteria of "good taste." They have outlined that social position, including for the apparently dominated classes, shapes food practices in accordance with cultural models that are not necessarily those of the dominant classes. In other words, individuals "stylize" their food practices. This "stylization" implies that individuals adapt the different aspects of their food practices (and more generally of their lives) in accordance with the standards or norms of the valued tastes associated with their social position. Food practices do not only reflect the economic constraints faced by households, but they are also mediated by the social norms of the group(s) of belonging. In this perspective, different food practices do not only reflect different "ways of life" (shaped by economic constraints) but also different and concurrent "food lifestyles" or "eating styles." In short, not only are food practices differentiated according to people's social position, but they also have a symbolic value and are distinctive, since they are shaped by individuals' dispositions and reflect the symbolic struggles to impose one's tastes as the most valorized one (or the most dominant one).

[118] See Lhuissier (2017) for a historical overview of the study of household budgets by Maurice Halbwachs. For an overview of the study of the social stratification of food practices, in particular in French sociology, see Cardon, Depecker and Plessz (2019: Chapter 1, pp. 17-41).

In order to understand how non-vegetarian food practices are stylized in regard to other food items, I proceed to study the social structure of the food basket to both understand the principles of social differentiation of food practices and the meanings associated with vegetarian and non-vegetarian according to people's food lifestyles.

### 2) Reinvesting household consumption surveys in the Indian context

In the Indian context, the study of the food budget has mostly focused on highlighting the economic constraints faced by households depending on their economic resources. Yet, noting the non-linearity of the association between nutritional intake and standard of living (and in particular, the reduction in absolute nutritional intake over time), Deaton and Drèze (2009) have questioned this model. Some recent works have then reinvestigated the importance of Veblen's conspicuous consumption among deprived households. They suggest that spending in "visible" consumption (in particular, luxury goods, clothing and appliances) may be undertaken at the expense of food consumption among lower caste households (Bellet and Sihra, 2016, Ramakrishnan et al., 2020). But overall, little analysis of the food lifestyles of Indian households has been conducted, notwithstanding exceptions, notably highlighting the importance of the "weight of need" and the rural and urban embeddedness of consumption practices (Ferry et al., 2018).

"Consumer Expenditure Surveys" conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) present the most comprehensive household expenditure data for looking at food consumption in the Indian case. The latest round dates back from 2011-2012. Unfortunately, more recent data from the NSSO are not available. Even though a newer household consumption survey was conducted in 2017-2018, the raw data has never been never released, despite explicit demands from the research community.[119] The use of this survey over the consumption data from the Indian Human Development Survey (2011-2012) is preferred as it allows the disaggregation of meat and fish items, even though the NSSO data are less precise as it comes to caste belonging. Given the spatial focus of the dissertation, in this chapter

[119] See "Consumer spending: Angus Deaton, Thomas Piketty, 200 other academics seek immediate release of data," *Scroll.in*, November 21, 2019 (https://scroll.in/latest/944431/consumer-spending-angus-deaton-thomas-piketty-200-other-academics-seek-immediate-release-of-data?fbclid=IwAR0ozVbTiadaZEgGAWh12pZZpDr6B3pQN4ymM6Nj3YqsLZLV3GSU-Ki0DsE, last access on February 1, 2021). The Central government used the pretext of survey instrument biases in order to justify to never release the complete raw data of the most comprehensive of existing surveys for studying household consumption in India. In fact, press reports leaked and it seems that the total household spendings between the last two surveys fell for the first time in four decades. The impact of the 2016 policy shock of demonetization may have affected Indian households' expenditures on the long run, a point that the government is reluctant to acknowledge. More recent surveys by other institutions do not have the same methodological robustness, geographical coverage, or do not allow access to detailed results.

motivated by the mixed-methods approach where I relate these data with qualitative interviews conducted in the region (see next subsection), the quantitative analyses are run on the Uttar Pradesh sample (9,015 households out of 101,662 households for the all-India sample).

The analysis here explores twenty aggregated and disaggregated food items representative of the entire food basket (Table 8.1). Surveyors recorded consumption, in terms of both quantity and expenditure, that occurred in the past thirty days at the time of the survey.[120] As Chauvel (1999) notes for the French case, the analysis of budget data is complex for quantitative researchers.[121] In particular, contrary to previous chapters where quantitative analyses were based on the individual unit, I here study consumption at the household level. Besides, the levels of aggregation of food items are not necessarily the ones that are the most sociologically meaningful. For instance, even though one of the food items records outside-the-home paid food, it is impossible to know whether non-vegetarian consumption happened during this occasion (but we now know it is a significant occasional practice for Hindu upper caste individuals who cannot eat non-vegetarian food inside their home, see Chapter 3). Additionally, the survey records meat consumption from different animals, but it is impossible to know what part of the animal is consumed, particularly whether it is offal meat, a characteristic food practice of the deprived non-vegetarian households (see last section of this chapter). All in all, I study disaggregated items for non-vegetarian products in relation to the consumption of aggregated food items of other products. This statistical choice is motivated by the need to keep a reasonable number of variables to analyze, while allowing an exhaustive study of the food basket.[122] The statistical analysis of the composition of the food basket, and specifically, of the consumption of non-vegetarian products in relation to the overall food basket, allows to understand the objective social structure of food practices. After studying the

[120] The period of thirty days necessarily implies some methodological issues in terms of memory bias. Yet, a shorter period of reference may imply counting zero consumption for items that are only occasionally consumed. Besides, the survey also includes the quantity of food items consumed even if they have been self-produced (see the end of the chapter for more developments on this point). In this case, the surveyors reported as expenditure a calculated amount based on the local price for the given item. This procedure is needed to compare the relative weight of food items in terms of value in the household. For this reason, the "food budget" is a statistical artefact and I prefer to call it "food basket." I also tend to avoid using the terms "expenditure" or "spending" as they may be misleading.

[121] Louis Chauvel notes at the beginning of his paper that: "Consumption is a dream object for the sociologist of social structures, even if, when the empirical work begins, the dream becomes a nightmare." (Chauvel, 1999, my translation).

[122] Within each aggregate food item, there may be significant variations of consumption depending on the social position of households. For instance, among cereals, wheat is the most consumed item in Uttar Pradesh, and only poorer and more rural households tend to consume other cereals (millets and sorghum). Among vegetables, onions and tomatoes are considered as staple food but other items (other than potato with a high caloric value) may be less frequently consumed depending on class position. The study of these variations is nonetheless beyond the scope of this chapter which focuses on non-vegetarian consumption in relation to the composition of the overall food basket.

economic cost of non-vegetarian products and the economic hierarchy of food items, I study the food lifestyle space in relation to the social position of households, by way of a Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA). More methodological precisions will be presented in the course of the quantitative analysis in the next section.

*Table 8.1 - Composition of the food basket in Uttar Pradesh, 2011-2012*

| **Food item** | **Value share in food basket (per cent)** |
|---|---|
| Chicken | 0.85 |
| Mutton/Goat | 0.90 |
| Beef/Buffalo | 0.66 |
| Pork | 0.03 |
| Fish | 0.67 |
| Eggs | 0.36 |
| ***Total non-vegetarian*** | ***3.47*** |
| Cereals | 24.83 |
| Milk & Dairy | 19.43 |
| Vegetables | 10.80 |
| Oil | 8.45 |
| Pulses | 7.79 |
| Sugar | 4.81 |
| Spices | 4.19 |
| Packaged food | 3.16 |
| Pan/Tobacco | 2.98 |
| Fruits | 2.84 |
| Drinks (non-alcohol) | 2.55 |
| Outside-the-home food (paid) | 2.07 |
| Free assistance food | 1.98 |
| Alcohol | 0.64 |
| **Total** | **100** |

*Note: The table presents the share of food items or aggregates in the total food expenditures. I have included beverages (alcohol and non-alcohol), along with pan and tobacco consumption. Tobacco can be either chewed or smoked. Pan (or paan) is a preparation combining betel leaf and areca nut and is chewed (and usually spat out) for its stimulant effects.*

*Source: "Consumer Expenditure Survey", National Sample Survey Office, 2011-2012, Type 1.*

### 3) Meanings of food practices through qualitative interviews

If the study of the social structure of food practices reveals socially differentiated patterns of food consumption, it is not so clear how they produce advantages and privileges in social life. In other words, the way in which they also have a symbolic value and the way in which food practices are stylized are not obvious. In order to understand how non-vegetarian practices are stylized, I further study the meanings associated with these consumption practices based on people's position in the food lifestyle space. In particular, I aim at understanding how people make sense of the symbolic boundary (Lamont and Molnár, 2002) of vegetarianism.

Here, I study the repertoires of justification that people use to draw a symbolic boundary around vegetarianism, and I investigate whether it varies according to the position of households in the food lifestyle space. These positions indeed refer to different "frames," i.e., to "how [people] cognitively perceive themselves, the world, or their surroundings" (Small et al., 2010).

In doing so, I am inspired by Lamont's approach of measuring the salience of different forms of symbolic boundaries (cultural, moral, economic) that individuals draw to distinguish themselves from those they consider above or below them. I focus on one boundary related to a specific diet in the context of food practices. In this manner, this analysis also uses Jarness's method (2018) which emphasizes that symbolic boundaries take on different forms depending on one's position in social space. Like in the stream of research on mapping symbolic boundaries (Lamont and Swidler, 2014), I here use 75 qualitative interviews collected in the course of my fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh (see Chapter 2 for a description).[123] Following Sølvberg and Jarness's reflections (2019) about using interviews to infer symbolic boundaries, I used a broad range of prompted and unprompted questions to understand how interviewees mobilize different repertoires, and in particular here, how they classify non-vegetarian consumption according to economic resources and constraints. In doing so, I aimed at going beyond the "honorable" discursive statements where respondents do not emit negative judgement about others' practices (a common response in the course of interviews was "everyone should eat according to their own choice"). When asked directly, respondents usually refrained from judging others negatively. But in the course of the interview, I usually understood that people subjectively related (non-)vegetarian consumption to economic means by asking them about their own consumption or about others' consumptions.[124] These relatively basic and broad questions suggested the importance of the perceived economic position in drawing boundaries but to ascertain this, I had to understand whether they produced a positive or negative judgement about it. In other words, I wanted to understand whether these

[123] Contrary to Jarness (2018), I did not ask my interviewees all the survey questions that are used to construct the food lifestyle space (asking them about the entire food basket would have been too cumbersome given the large number of themes I also enquired about). Yet, I asked broad questions about the frequency of their consumption of non-vegetarian and common products and I also asked them about their occupational and economic position, so that I was able to position them on the cloud space. For clarity, for this analysis, I focus on respondents who were rather clearly poorer than others, or alternatively more affluent than others.

[124] It was not necessarily the only justification that emerged. Many interviewees also mentioned their family traditions, or explicitly asserted their caste and religious belonging to justify their diet. Yet, economic position was one common discursive theme.

perceptions were related to "visceral" judgements (for instance, I prompted them with the sentence: "Some people say that eating meat is a way of displaying one's wealth").[125]

Having broadly set out my theoretical and methodological approach for this chapter, I now turn to the detailed empirical analysis.

## *B - Objective material constraints in shaping non-vegetarian consumption*

The analysis of the non-vegetarian products in the food basket unfolds in two distinct moments. First, I examine the objective cost of non-vegetarian products compared with other protein-rich food items to assert the economic barriers of non-vegetarian diets. Then, I study the social structure of the food basket in order to identify coherent food lifestyles related to households' social position.

### 1) The cost of eating non-vegetarian food

In economics, it is usually admitted that the consumption of a good is adjusted depending on its cost. The consumption of a good therefore oscillates between income and price constraints. Following the seminal works of Halbwachs (2015), the prices of goods are an essential element of the measure of the "cost of life." Sociologists outline that the most expensive goods are usually more frequently consumed among upper classes, irrespective of income. In India, it is considered that non-vegetarian products are costly so that it constitutes an important barrier to their consumption (Bruckert, 2018: Chapter 4). Among meat items, beef is nonetheless considered as cheaper, while the industrialization of chicken production has reduced the cost of this item relative to other meats in the past thirty years (Ferry, 2020). Yet, the study of the cost of non-vegetarian items suffers from a lack of comparisons with other food items. Are non-vegetarian items more expensive than vegetarian items?

Answering this question assumes that food items are substitutable. It constitutes a utilitarianist assumption since households would prefer to consume certain goods solely in accordance with their price. Households would act as economic agents and consume irrespective of the social and cultural dimensions of food, an assumption that I refuted throughout this dissertation. Still, such a comparison does have value because it allows to deconstruct discourses and perceptions of the cost of non-vegetarian products.

[125] Other beliefs related to the importance of caste, purity or legality of meat consumption were also asked about. Among all the beliefs, the ones related to economic position presented the most incisive and coherent answers. See the appendix of the manuscript for a full presentation of the interview guide.

I suggest comparing the cost of non-vegetarian products with food items that have a high protein value, i.e., cereals, pulses and milk and dairy products (Table 8.2). These items are also widely consumed, so that they are widely available to households.[126] I compare the cost of these products by dividing the total expenditures of each good by the total quantity consumed. It provides the unit cost of each item (expressed in Indian National Rupee – INR).[127] Yet, egg and milk costs are not comparable with the other items since they are given in different units (number and volume instead of weight). More importantly, this comparison fails in considering the nutritional properties of these foods. While vegetarian items are cheaper than non-vegetarian items, it may be because they have poorer nutritive properties.

To ensure the quality of the comparison, I first suggest looking at the caloric energy provided by these different food items. The energy content of the different food items presented in Table 8.2 (Column 2) shows that meat has less energy content (1,131 kcal per unit) than vegetarian items like pulses (3,375 kcal per unit) and cereals (3,420 kcal per unit). The energy cost of meat (Column 4) is then much higher than vegetarian items. Indeed, the intake of 100 kcal through meat eating costs 12 INR while the intake of 100 kcal through pulse eating or cereal eating respectively costs 1 and 0.4 INR. Other animal-origin foods stand in-between, but the energy brought by these items is much more expensive than for vegetarian items.

Looking at the cost of proteins coming from these different items, animal-origin proteins are also more expensive than vegetarian proteins (Column 5). While 100 grams of meat proteins cost 56 INR, the same quantity of proteins costs only 23 INR for pulses and 12 INR for cereals. Again, meat appears as an expensive option compared with vegetarian foods. But comparing meat proteins with other animal-origin proteins, the difference is not so clear. In fact, one needs to differentiate the different meat items: goat and mutton proteins are more than twice more expensive than other meats. Beef and buffalo proteins appear to be the cheapest meat proteins. Overall, chicken, beef/buffalo and pork proteins are cheaper proteins than other animal-origin proteins (fish, eggs and milk).

Hence, this comparison reveals a strong economic barrier between animal-origin food items and other food items (cereals and pulses). This can be related to the high value-share of

[126] The calculated costs are computed for the Uttar Pradesh sample. The energy value and protein content of each food item are based on the nutrition chart of the report "Nutritional Intake in India" (NSSO 2014, p. 14). Some other food items such as dry fruits are also very protein-rich but they are not widely consumed so that I do not include them in the comparison.

[127] It should be noted that the estimated costs collected by the survey are lower than the prices I collected in the course of my fieldwork. Indeed, the unit-price for chicken and beef/buffalo evolved between 160 and 200 INR, and the one for goat/mutton was higher than 450 INR. Few of my respondents were aware of the price of pork but a meat shop in Meerut was selling it for 150 INR. The variations between the survey and my own observations are mostly the result of inflation between the two periods.

the latter items in the total food basket (Table 8.1). Yet, the valorization of milk is less clear. Although it has a high value share in the total food basket, its protein content is more expensive than other animal-origin items, including meat (except goat/mutton). The analysis positions non-vegetarian products as expensive food items, but they are less expensive than milk, a widely consumed item in the Indian context. It suggests that if cost dynamics should be born in mind, they are not the only drivers of food practices.[128] This would indeed require consumers to have extraordinary sophisticated rationalized knowledge of their food practices.

*Table 8.2 - Estimated costs of protein-rich food items in Uttar Pradesh (2011-2012)*

| Item (unit) | Average cost per unit (INR) | Estimated calories per unit (kcal) | Estimated proteins per unit (gm) | Estimated cost of 100 kcal calories (INR) | Estimated cost of 100 gms proteins (INR) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***total meat (kg)*** | ***131*** | ***1132*** | ***235*** | ***12*** | ***56*** |
| **chicken (kg)** | 121 | 1090 | 259 | 11 | **47** |
| **goat/mutton (kg)** | 213 | 1180 | 214 | 18 | **100** |
| **beef/buffalo (kg)** | 89 | 1140 | 226 | 8 | **39** |
| **pork (kg)** | 99 | 1140 | 227 | 9 | **43** |
| **fish (kg)** | 85 | 1050 | 140 | 8 | **61** |
| **egg (no)** | 4 | 100 | 8 | 4 | **49** |
| **milk (L)** | 24 | 1000 | 40 | 2 | **59** |
| **pulses (kg)** | 50 | 3375 | 221 | 1 | **23** |
| **cereals (kg)** | 12 | 3420 | 105 | 0.4 | **12** |

*Note: The focus is on protein-rich food items. I calculate the average cost per unit for these items or food groups. Since the unit of reference for these items is different (weight, volume or number) and in order to explore the energy cost and protein cost for each food, I compare the estimated cost of calories and proteins provided by these food items. Column 1 is based on my own calculation (averaging the divide between total value consumption and total quantity consumption across households), columns 2 and 3 are based on the nutrition chart of the report "Nutritional Intake in India" (NSSO 2014, p. 14, for aggregated food items, I compute a weighted average of calories and proteins per unit based on the quantity and estimation for each food item among the group). The last two columns are computed by dividing the cost per unit (column 1) by the estimated calories (column 2) or proteins (column 3) of each food and by multiplying by 100.*

*Source: "Consumer Expenditure Survey", National Sample Survey Office, 2011-2012, Type 1.*

This leads me to more broadly question the social logics that structure the food basket. How do expenditures in non-vegetarian products structure the food basket? Are they associated with expenditures for other food items? Is the food basket structured around different food lifestyles, i.e., different food tastes and practices, including those shaped by economic constraints? How does this system of food lifestyles relate to households' social properties, including their caste and religious group positions, and their standard of living?

[128] A limitation of this analysis is that I do not consider other nutritive properties that are more specific to meat items, for instance iron or vitamins B. But including these dimensions would all the more valorize the nutritive wealth of these products compared with vegetarian items.

### 2) The social structure of the food basket

Inspired by the model of *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984), I study the space of food lifestyles and its associations with the social position of households. I here use a Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) where the "active variables" (the variables of interest) are the different (aggregated except for meat) items of the food basket in the form of budget shares. These variables are continuous and take a 0-to-100 value and I categorize them to conduct the factorial analysis.[129]

With two axes, the MCA accounts for 13.5 per cent of the variance of the cloud of food budget variables. Going up to four axes, it accounts for 23.2 per cent of the variance. In this section, I describe the first two axes which are the most important for the analysis. The third and fourth axes are not structured by non-vegetarian food items and are described in the appendix of the chapter.[130]

The first axis distinguishes between frugal (left) and comfortable (right) food consumption. Figure 8.1 depicts the explicative modalities of this axis – the modalities with a contribution that are higher than the average contributions. The axis distinguishes between restricted consumption with a null or low consumption of dairy products or fruits and more comfortable consumption with a relatively high weight of these products in the food basket. On the side of restricted food consumption, households are characterized by a relatively high consumption of basic food items such as cereals, pulses, vegetables, oil and spices. On the side of comfortable food consumption, households devote a smaller proportion of their food basket for these basic products. On the contrary, they consume relatively more of milk and dairy products and pulses.

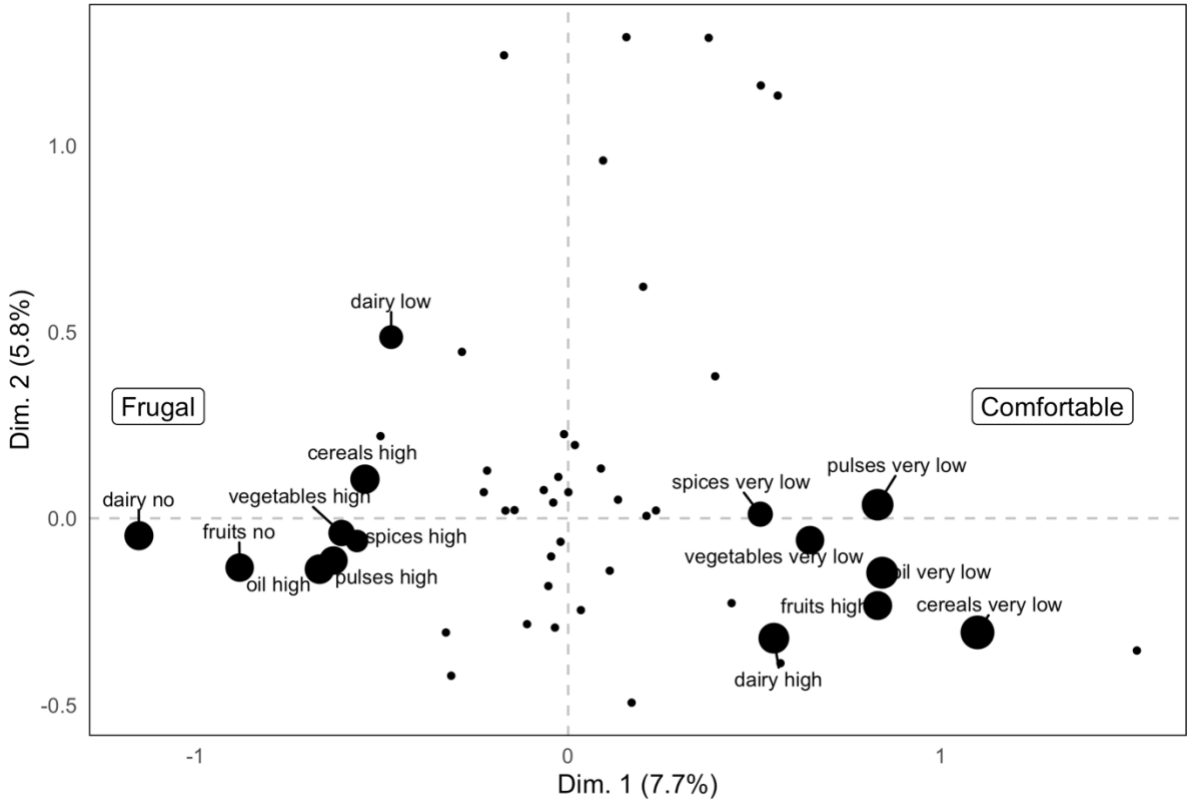
The high constraint of the "weight of need" that was identified in the study of the social space of household budgets in India (Ferry et al., 2018) also heavily structures the food basket

[129] The continuous variables could have been studied in a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) but the high number of variables of interest along with the possible non-linearities between these food item shares (for instance, some of the variables – the non-vegetarian items in particular – present many zeros) led me to categorize the food shares. This strategy is also the one that Flemmen, Hjellbrekke and Jarness (2017) followed in their study of food lifestyles in Norway.

[130] I also show a scree plot of the explained variance of the cloud for each axis in the appendix. The third axis shows an opposition between rural (free meals, especially implemented through rural schemes, and pan and tobacco) and urban (outside-the-home food and drinks, manufactured food items, locally non-available items – fruits) consumption. On this axis, beef consumption also characterizes urban consumption and Muslims are strongly correlated to this axis. It then segments Dalits (associated with rural consumption) and Muslims (associated with urban consumption). The fourth axis denotes a "Guttman effect" (a form of redundancy in the information extracted between two axes, where variables are then plotted in a "U-shape") when plotted in the same factorial plane as axis 1. It nonetheless distinguishes between households whose food is cooked outside the home (free meals and outside food) and other households.

in Uttar Pradesh. In other words, the composition of the food basket is heavily shaped by economic constraints. All in all, the restricted orientation in food consumption on the left side of the axis is also indicative of the "choice of the necessary" referred to by Bourdieu (1984). Households located on this side of the first axis consume relatively more of affordable, easily accessible and functional foodstuffs. It is not totally surprising to observe this structuring dimension in a highly unequal setting such as India (Chancel and Piketty, 2017). Indeed, even in more egalitarian societies such as Norway, the food basket is primarily shaped by economic constraints and resources. This structuring dimension of the food basket also echoes the study of the social space of diets in India (Ferry, 2020). While this analysis had specifically focused on the social distribution of diets with different types of animal-protein intakes, it also revealed a strong dependence on economic resources.

*Figure 8.1 - The space of the food basket, contributing active modalities to axis 1, factorial plane 1-2*




*Note: The MCA is calculated for households residing in Uttar Pradesh. In this figure, only active budget share modalities that have a contribution higher than the average contribution on the first axis are labelled (100/number of modalities = 100/52 = 1.92).*

*Source: "Consumer Expenditure Survey", National Sample Survey Office, 2011-2012, Type 1.*

On this axis, non-vegetarian products do not contribute to the structure of the axis. It confirms that the consumption of non-vegetarian products is not the most discriminating food pattern between households. It also indicates that the segmentation of households between non-vegetarian food lifestyles and vegetarian food lifestyles is relatively independent from the "choice of the necessary."

The second orthogonal axis distinguishes between food baskets that include non-vegetarian consumption and food baskets that do not. Figure 8.2 shows the explicative modalities of this axis. The most contributing modalities are the consumption of chicken, fish, goat/mutton, and eggs at the top (beef consumption is also characteristic of households at the top though its contribution to the axis is lower). This non-vegetarian consumption contrasts with the absence of meat, fish and egg products at the bottom of the axis.

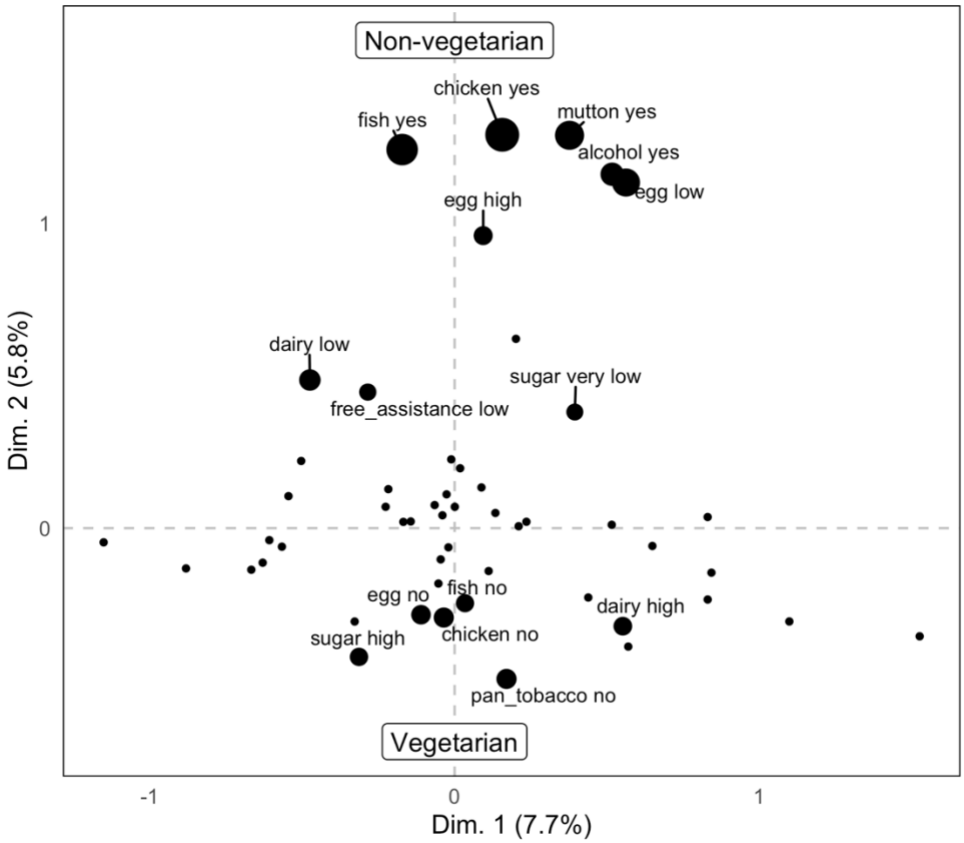
On this side of the axis, households are also characterized by the absence of tobacco and pan in their food basket, while non-vegetarians are characterized by alcohol consumption. The presence of these items on the vegetarian versus non-vegetarian dimension suggests that vegetarianism does not only relate to animal food items but that its boundary may also relate to other food items and life conducts that are judged in a positive way among vegetarians (see Chapter 3 for more developments on this point).

Two other non-animal food items are correlated to this axis. First, while high milk and dairy consumption appeared as associated with comfortable food lifestyles, it also distinguishes vegetarians from non-vegetarians. The positive valorization of milk that has appeared throughout this chapter in examining protein intake and the economic hierarchy of the food basket is therefore a distinguishing feature of vegetarians too. Second, the axis is also associated with a distinction between vegetarians with a relatively high consumption of sugar and non-vegetarians with a lower consumption of sugar. Contrary to dairy products where one could associate their higher consumption with a relatively lower intake of proteins from other sources as for vegetarians, sugar defies this explanation in terms of nutrient compensation. It is a strong reminder that food consumption is anything but a realm solely characterized by its nutritional composition.

So, why do vegetarians sweeten more their mouth than others? In the religious culture, sugar and milk are perceived positively. In Hindu religious festivals, weddings and social gatherings, it is customary to offer and eat sweets that are mainly composed of sugar and milk (such as "ladoos"). Hindu religious offerings are notably composed of "amrit" or "soma," the drink of deities which ensure them immortality, knowledge and power. They are notably

composed of sugar and milk products (milk, ghee[131] or butter). While visiting households in the course of my fieldwork, I was sometimes offered sugar and milk-made sweets in Hindu households (on the contrary, while visiting my informant Mohit in Lucknow, his wife always gave me meat dishes at any time of the day). Along with milk, especially if it comes from the cow, a sacred animal, sugar has a symbolic value in Hinduism.

*Figure 8.2 - The space of the food basket, contributing active modalities to axis 2, factorial plane 1-2*




*Note: The MCA is calculated for households residing in Uttar Pradesh. In this figure, only active budget share modalities that have a contribution higher than the average contribution on the second axis are labelled (100/number of modalities = 100/52 = 1.92).*

*Source: "Consumer Expenditure Survey", National Sample Survey Office, 2011-2012, Type 1.*

Finally, food assistance also appears to be correlated with non-vegetarian consumption (the modality of high share of free assistance is close to the modality of low, though it is less highly contributing to the axis).[132] Non-vegetarian households are hence also distinguished by

[131] Ghee is clarified butter made by simmering butter, removing impurities from the surface and retaining the clear liquid below.

[132] This item of the food basket includes free cooked meals received as assistance (and to a lesser extent cooked meals from the workplace). It excludes meals than have been received by other households and therefore relates to existing government schemes, mainly for children (through the National Food Security Act, 2013) and adults

a higher preponderance of the item that is most characteristic to the poorest households (see appendix). This suggests that non-vegetarian households are more subject to facing economic constraints, leading them to rely proportionally more on food assistance. Importantly, government food schemes do not offer non-vegetarian food. Only certain States, mostly Southern and Eastern States in India, include eggs in their food programs. States that do not include eggs, including Uttar Pradesh, are mostly ruled by the Bharatya Janata Party, which supports a Hindu-majoritarian ideology and favors vegetarianism.[133] Besides, nutritionists developing food programs often themselves belong to vegetarian Hindu upper castes (Sébastia, 2020). The analysis here clearly confirms a paradox in nutrition programs in India: while those who establish the programs are rather vegetarian, the recipients of these programs tend to be non-vegetarian. The lack of inclusion of non-vegetarian products in government food schemes deprives households of protein resources that they would otherwise consume.

Overall, this second axis distinguishes vegetarian from non-vegetarian households. But non-vegetarian food items are not the only items characterizing this axis, which shows that vegetarianism is embedded in cultural and economic constraints.

The social property most associated with the first axis is the standard of living, with which classes (laborers are located on the left, while professional occupations are on the right) and residential area (rural households tend to be located on the left, while urban households are on the right) are also highly correlated. The second axis is more correlated with caste and religious belonging. Figure 8.3 shows the projection of these social positions. The interaction between standard of living and group position helps assess the salience of the first axis for all households, irrespective of their caste and religious belonging.

Overall, households' food consumption is equally affected by economic resources and constraints. Indeed, among all groups, the poorest households are characterized by a frugal food basket (among all groups, the first quintile of the standard of living is located on the left of the axis) while the most affluent households are characterized by comfortable food consumption (among all groups, the fifth quintile of the standard of living is located on the right of the axis).

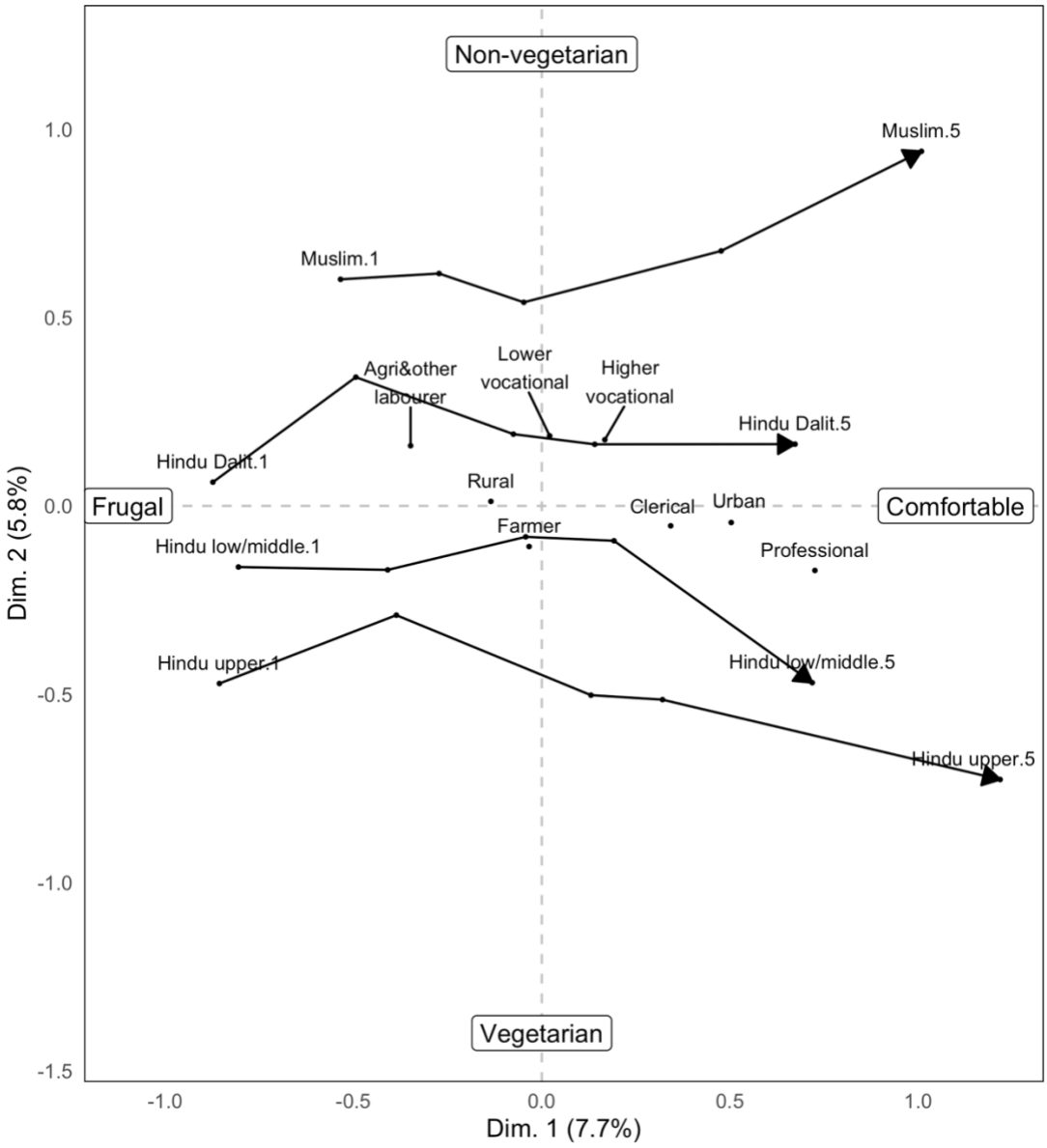
But this observation also needs to be qualified: religious and caste group gaps are larger on the right (towards comfortable food baskets) than on the left (towards frugal food baskets).

(mainly through charity). Government free meals are mainly covered by two schemes: the Mid-day Meal Scheme which offers meals at school as well as free meals offered in "anganwadis," child care centers in rural areas.

[133] See "Despite Nutrition Benefits, Most BJP States Keep Eggs Out of Mid-Day Meals," *The Wire*, 09/07/2018 (https://thewire.in/health/bjp-states-health-children-eggs-mid-day-meal-nutrition, last access on 22/01/2021).

Indeed, for the richest quintiles, the figure suggests a divergence between groups along the second axis. While the richest Muslims tend to diverge towards the top of the second axis, the richest Hindu upper castes tend to diverge towards the bottom of the second axis. Dalits remain more parallel with the first axis, but the richest Hindu low and middle castes also tend to diverge towards the bottom of the second axis.

*Figure 8.3 - The weight of the standard of living on the space of the food basket, supplementary variables, factorial plane 1-2*

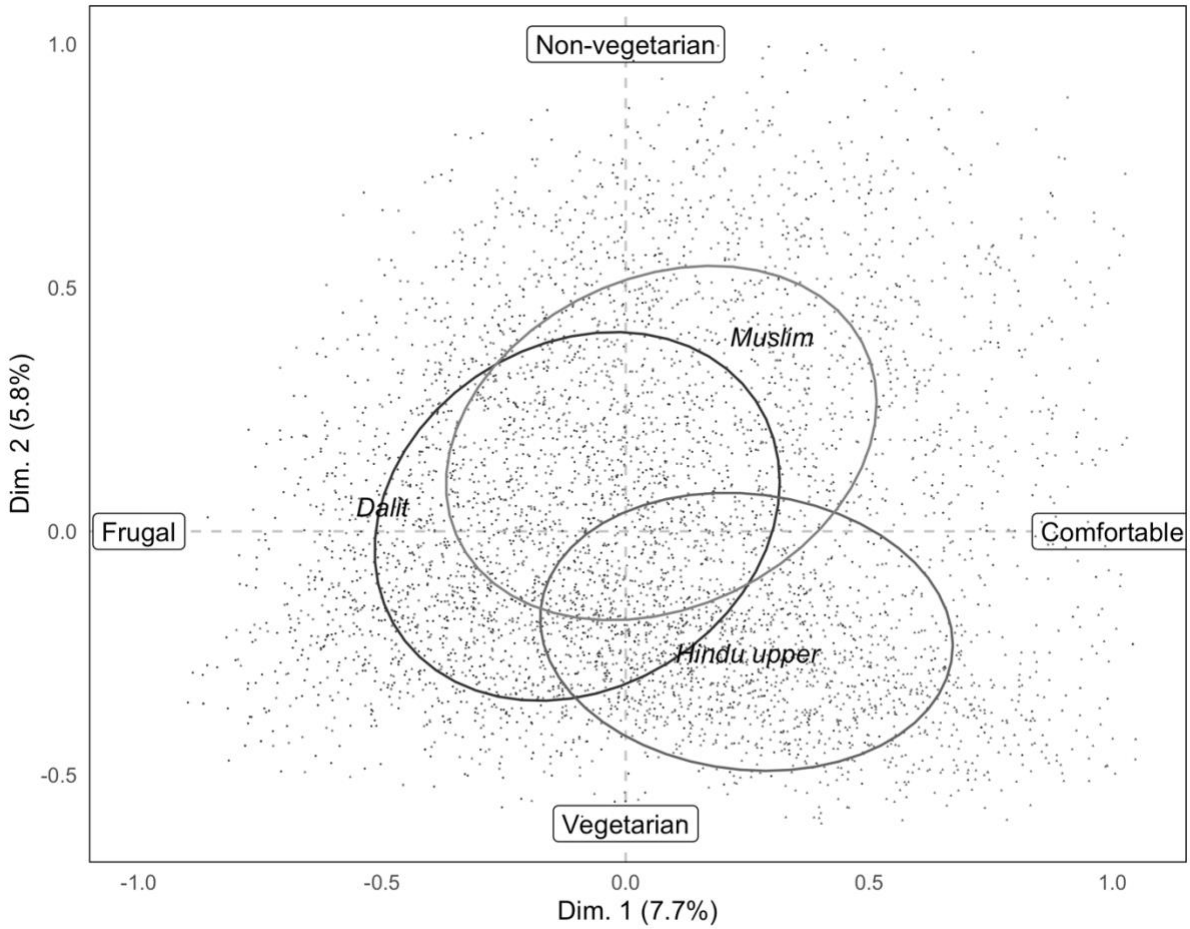



*Note: The MCA is calculated for households residing in Uttar Pradesh. Caste/religion and standard of living (measured as the total per capita expenditure in quintiles) are plotted as supplementary variables, along with the residential area (urban or rural) and the occupation of the household head.*

*Source: "Consumer Expenditure Survey", National Sample Survey Office, 2011-2012, Type 1.*

In other words, while the "choice of the necessary" affects all caste and religious groups, the richest Muslims tend to be more non-vegetarian, while the richest Hindu low, middle and upper castes tend to be more characterized by vegetarian food consumption.

*Figure 8.4 - Cloud of households and median ellipses of Muslims, Dalits and Hindu upper castes, factorial plane 1-2*




*Note: The MCA is calculated for households residing in Uttar Pradesh. Muslim, Dalit and Hindu upper caste households' points are plotted along with the median ellipses of households belonging to these groups. Median ellipses are inspired by concentration ellipses (Chiche and Le Roux, 2010) but they gather only half of the population belonging to each group. In this way, they represent the average "ideal-typical" position of households belonging to these groups.*[134]

*Source: "Consumer Expenditure Survey", National Sample Survey Office, 2011-2012, Type 1.*

Besides, caste differences are not only based on a distinction based on vegetarian versus non-vegetarian food consumption. While the preceding analysis differentiates each caste and religious group according to the standard of living, it is useful to depict the concentration of households depending on their caste/religious groups (Figure 8.4). As identified above, the first

[134] This type of ellipse is advocated by Philippe Cibois, see "Visualiser les individus d'une modalités: l'ellipse médiane," *QUANTI*, May 15, 2017 (https://quanti.hypotheses.org/1215, last access on February 9, 2021).

axis reflects an economic position, with which classes are also highly correlated (laborers are located on the left, while professional occupations are on the right).

Hindu upper castes are clearly positioned on average in the bottom-right quadrant and are hence characterized on the whole by comfortable and vegetarian food consumption. Statistically, they belong more frequently to the richest households and to the professional occupations (as demonstrated in Chapter 5).

Muslims are in the top part of the quadrant and are hence on average characterized by non-vegetarian consumption. On average, Dalits are positioned in the top-left quadrant and are hence characterized by frugal and non-vegetarian food consumption. Statistically, they are more frequently laborers and in the poorest fractions of the society.

Hence, between the different Hindu castes, food distinctions relate as much to food lifestyles characterized by the "choice of the necessary" versus comfortable food lifestyles as to non-vegetarian versus vegetarian food consumption.

## *C - Boundary drawing and diet justifications*

How does the social space of food lifestyles relate to the distinctive strategies of boundary-making for vegetarians? How do non-vegetarians judge others' food practices? While the analysis of the social space of food practices demonstrates differentiated food patterns between caste and religious groups, it also highlights the weight of economic constraints and resources in shaping the food basket. Although they objectively constitute two distinguished principles of social differentiation, they subjectively interact in discourses classifying vegetarian and non-vegetarian practices.

In the following, I mostly mention Hindu upper castes to qualify Brahmins and Merchants, except when I indicate otherwise. I refer to Hindu lower castes to include both Dalits and Low castes (usually classified as Other Backward Classes). I denote affluent classes to distinguish individuals who hold professional or clerical occupations. Poor classes belong to the laboring class, or, in some cases, to low vocational occupations. These distinctions are objectively meaningful since they describe different "areas" of the food lifestyle space. They are also subjectively coherent since these categories gather common justifications of food practices.

### 1) Class position as a discursive marker among vegetarians

In drawing symbolic boundaries vis-à-vis non-vegetarians, vegetarians (at the bottom of the food lifestyle space) importantly rely on repertoires of economic evaluation of non-

vegetarians' position (at the top of the food lifestyle space). While Hindu upper castes are more frequently vegetarian, on average they also benefit from a more comfortable food lifestyle (since they are located in the bottom-right quadrant of the social space). On the contrary, Dalits are more frequently non-vegetarian (although not to the same extent as Muslims), but they are also more frequently constrained by the "weight of need" in their food practices (as they are located in the top-left quadrant of the social space).

While vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism are caste and religious markers, they are also subjectively considered as class markers among vegetarian affluent classes. The stigmatization of non-vegetarians mobilizes class discourses which may be little associated with caste prejudices. Just as the moral order conveyed by the high castes within the public space is not simply based on the caste system and Hindu ideology (Paugam et al., 2017), they also use class discourses and a stigmatization of poverty to depreciate alleged food practices.

In distinguishing from non-vegetarians based on the first structuring dimension of the food basket, vegetarians discursively reshape the social logics of the structure of the food basket. This ultimately reinforces the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism.

### a) "They misuse their earnings": naturalizing poverty

Most of the time, vegetarians judge non-vegetarian practices in a negative way. If they draw clear social boundaries related to caste and religion to depreciate non-vegetarian consumption (see the final section of Chapter 7 and the next chapter), they also very commonly draw an economic boundary to make sense of the non-vegetarian practices. In doing so, they reinforce the symbolic boundary of vegetarianism as a class marker. They use an economic repertoire associated with moral judgements on the poor's food practices. But they also naturalize class and economic inequality between Hindu upper castes and Dalits because they associate the consumption of non-vegetarian products with a "misuse" of their expenditures, even though I have highlighted the nutritive properties of these products.

In the course of my fieldwork, several vegetarian interviewees repeatedly associated non-vegetarian consumption with class position. For instance, Anant, a businessperson in the construction sector belonging to a Merchant caste, assessed that individuals who spend money in non-vegetarian products are "illiterate" and that "middle class and higher class" individuals do not make these choices. He hence used a class boundary to depreciate non-vegetarian practices:

> *"Anil- So, do you think money affects the food habits in the family? Like if there is more money then you will spend more on meat and fish or like this?*
> *Anant- These things happen where people are bit illiterate and have less money, it happens there! But according to me it doesn't happen in the middle class and higher class! There is no effect of it!"*
> (Anant, interview 30, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

Vegetarian interviewees also went further. Not only did they distinguish vegetarians and non-vegetarians based on their class belonging, but they also explained the poor's lower-class position by critically judging their non-vegetarian practices. According to vegetarian interviewees, class reproduction of low socioeconomic positions derives from their consumption practices. By "misusing" their spending on non-vegetarian products, poor people remain poor. Vegetarian interviewees hence revealed a peculiar version of the economic theory of the "vicious circle of poverty," where poverty is explained by a lack of ability to accumulate capital due to other economic constraints. For instance, Rambabu, a Brahmin retired fruit shopkeeper first drew my attention to this idea of "misusing" money:

> *"Anil- So according to you what are the things that decide who should eat what? Like you are saying some communities eat more meat and fish, so what are the things that decide why they eat that?*
> *Rambabu- It becomes a habit! If there is more money, then low communities eat!*
> *Anil- Money is also with many Brahmins!*
> *Rambabu- It is there but they don't misuse it! But those people misuse it when they have more money!"*
> (Rambabu, interview 29, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

This type of discourse contributes to assigning the responsibility of their poverty to the poor themselves, as Colombi (2020) reminds us. According to more affluent classes, the poor would not know how to manage their money. The consumption of non-vegetarian products, along with other depreciated items such as alcohol, traps Dalits into their economic condition (the consumption of alcohol was repeatedly associated with money mismanagement, yet it characterizes richer households rather than poorer households as I have shown earlier). On the contrary, as Ujagar, a Yadav dairy farmer articulates below,

individuals who do not belong to the Dalit caste make more reasonable choices in managing their earnings:

> *Anil- Some people say that they eat meat and fish because they want to show that they have more money?*
> *Ujagar- It's not like that, poor people also eat it.*
> *Anil- Poor people also eat?*
> *Ujagar- They eat daily, they eat daily and bring meat of 500!*
> *Anil- Some people say that the people who eat meat are poor!*
> *Ujagar- Yes, it is there! They earn 1000 rupees and then they buy meat and alcohol and are getting poorer.*
> *Anil- They are getting poorer!*
> *Male voice- Their money is spent regularly, that's why?*
> *Ujagar- Mostly like 90% of people spend money on this.*
> *Anil- Spend on this!*
> *Ujagar- that's why there is more poverty! The 5th community that we are talking about [the Dalits] is stressed just because of this!*
> *Anil- That's why they are stressed?*
> *Ujagar- We are upper caste or we are Yadav or backward class, if it will come to our house, we will manage in the same pulses! We won't use 1 rupee! In their place they will buy meat, they will buy alcohol! It is necessary, poor or poorer, they will definitely bring! Now on that, how that 1000 rupees came, is gone! And we will only increase pulses for 20-30 rupees, that's it!*
> (Ujagar, interview 31)

The discourse on poor money management was mostly articulated by vegetarian individuals belonging to more affluent classes. But some non-vegetarians belonging to lower castes and classes also drew an economic boundary to rationalize others' non-vegetarian practices. For instance, Prem, a daily-wage carpenter residing in the Lovekush Nagar slum in Lucknow (albeit in the notified part, i.e., in a concrete housing) and belonging to the Lonia caste (a Hindu low caste classified as Other Backward Class) explained dietary differences between Hindus and Muslims in economic terms. He declared: "Muslims, they eat more Bada [beef/buffalo]. That item is cheaper so they eat, they are more in poverty" (he himself eats chicken and goat/mutton, but not beef/buffalo). Contrary to preceding excerpts, the direction of causality is here reversed. According to him, Muslims consume beef or buffalo meat because

they are poor, they are not poor because they eat beef or buffalo meat: "Bada [beef/buffalo] is cheaper… Now goat meat costs 500 and bada is sold at 200!" Yet, he then added that "there is poverty with the likings!" suggesting a negative appreciation of this practice, confirmed when his wife sitting next to him said: "I feel disgusted after listening to this."[135] Hence, even though the disapproval of beef consumption does not lead to naturalize Muslims' poverty according to their consumption choices, Prem still draws a downward boundary in economic terms.

This suggests that caste and religious practices are rationalized at different levels of the vegetarian versus non-vegetarian hierarchy using economic evaluations. As I have argued for the relevance of understanding categorical differences of caste and religion as "gradual inequality" following Ambedkar (quoted in Herrenschmidt, 1996), it shows that the "obsession for small differences" between caste and religious categories may well be rationalized using economic repertoires of evaluation. Ultimately, this repertoire may also naturalize socioeconomic inequality and reinforce categorical inequality.

#### b) "How will poor people be able to eat?": nuances among the affluent classes

This economic repertoire was notably less used by affluent classes who hail from meat-eating communities and are themselves meat-eaters, in particular Lordly castes and Muslims. In that case, poverty is perceived in terms of lack of economic resources to buy non-vegetarian products, or only the cheaper ones. Here, the economic repertoire also exists but it is not associated with moral qualities. For instance, Anand, belonging to the Thakur caste (Lordly) and working as a District Nutrition Specialist, asserted that: "if the poor person is eating meat once in a month, the medium one will eat 3 days and the rich one will eat 7-8 days."[136] Further, Sadhil, a Muslim professional also working as a nutrition specialist asked: "how will poor people be able to eat non-vegetarian? But he can take eggs, which is cheaper."[137]

Some interviewees also went up to the extent of saying that Brahmins have started eating non-vegetarian products themselves, causing a rise in the price of these products, as Shiraji, a Thakur housewife married to a retired veterinarian expressed:

[135] Prem, interview 23, interview conducted with Anil for language assistance.
[136] Anand, interview 39.
[137] Sadhil, interview 40. I was introduced to these last two interviewees through Anil who had worked as a consultant in various nutrition programs with them. Possibly, their knowledge in nutrition issues in India influenced their answers, but they were also among other affluent Lordly and Muslim interviewees.

> *"Shiraji- Like, in us we only know that previously Yadav people also eat, Harijan also eat, your community used to eat, my community used to eat, but now the Harijans left it more, Yadav also left.*
> *Javed- Yadav have become vegetarian?!*
> *Shiraji- They became vegetarian, but since the Pundits [Brahmins] started eating, the meat has become costly.*
> They laugh
> *Javed- So Pundits are eating more?*
> *Interviewee- They are eating more."*
> (Shiraji, interview 49, interview conducted with Javed for language assistance)

Hence, even though the economic repertoire served to express negative judgements on non-vegetarian consumption among the poor, it is mostly articulated by vegetarian affluent individuals, in particular belonging to Brahmin castes. Downward boundary drawing through this repertoire is not universally adopted and is not even used among all castes of individuals belonging to affluent classes: it mostly depends on the respondents' food practices. It is characteristic of vegetarian affluent classes, in particular Brahmins and Merchant castes.

#### c) "Have true foods, one shouldn't lie!": the class ethnocentrism of vegetarians

The moral judgements based on the economic repertoire reflects caste and class ethnocentrism of the vegetarians. Indeed, they judge others' food practices according to their own way of life, and more precisely according to the food practices of their group of belonging. Importantly, even among Brahmins and Merchant castes, some individuals occasionally eat non-vegetarian food. These "secret" individual and outside-the-home food practices (see Chapter 3) which are not fully hidden from members of their own caste groups are not well perceived. After Rambabu (quoted earlier) had accused lower castes of misusing their money by purchasing non-vegetarian products, he added:

> *"Simple living, high thinking! There should be no change in the thoughts! And have true foods, one shouldn't lie! There is a bad punishment for lying!"*
> (Rambabu, interview 29)

Here, by mentioning that people "lie" about their food practices, he does not refer to lower castes (who do not hide their non-vegetarian consumption), but more specifically to

individuals of his own caste group, Brahmins. He also produces a negative moral judgement towards these individuals, but not in economic terms. This mention illustrates how individuals in upper class positions consider meat eating negatively, according to the occasional non-vegetarian practices of their own caste group. Indeed, these practices are associated with young, male, and deviant practices, and may also include alcohol consumption. Among Brahmin and Merchant castes, meat consumption exists as a form of momentary and spatially located contestation of the social order of the group, without however calling it at large into question. Meat consumption exists and may be sought for within these castes precisely because it is otherwise forbidden by the group.[138]

But, having these practices in their "universe of reference," vegetarian affluent classes neglect the different social roles that non-vegetarian practices play among other castes. In doing so, rich Brahmins and Merchant castes neglect the nutritive support of non-vegetarian products among poor lower castes. Non-vegetarian products are then not considered as a food resource, but they are eaten out of "fondness," as expressed by Kanshi, a vegetarian Dalit (he more specifically belongs to the Chamar caste) with an affluent socioeconomic condition (he holds a clerical job in the public administration):

> *"Mathieu- But still there is a thinking that Pasi community or SC community, they are eating [meat]!*
> *Kanshi- The thing is that before it was like that! Whatever compulsion they had before... they didn't have any arrangements for puri or chapatti so they slaughtered the animal and eat it!*
> *Anil- Yes, yes!*
> *Kanshi- Due to poverty they eat meat and fish to fill their stomach, they caught the fishes and brought them and eat! Now it is not like that, now it is not like that! Many big people eat it as their fondness!"*
> (Kanshi, interview 32, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

Class ethnocentrism leads affluent vegetarians to consider meat eating negatively among the poor, even though it may be a nutritive resource for those who engage into it. When asked

[138] On the role of food practices in which individuals engage because it is "exciting" and as a way to contest the social order, see the analysis of Desoucey (2016) on foie gras consumption in "duckeasies" (a clear reference to the "speakeasies" of the Prohibition period of alcohol) in the United States after its prohibition in certain States and cities.

to precise who these "big people" are, Kanshi declared that they are upper class people and not poor, again using a class criterion to describe non-vegetarians.

The existence of occasional non-vegetarian practices among vegetarian upper castes prevents the mobilization of a moral order based on food asceticism, which is part of the Hindu moral order, to draw a symbolic boundary against the lower castes. "Fondness" is not a particularly positive characteristic compared with the "simple living, high thinking" advocated by Rambabu, lauding a form of food ascetism by saying so. But Hindu upper castes are faced with the threat of this moral order being called into question by the existence of non-vegetarian practices among their group of belonging. The articulation of a social order based on class belonging and a moral-economic repertoire therefore allows the rich upper castes to distance themselves more efficiently from the poorer low castes.

In doing so, they also justify the poor's low socioeconomic condition according to alleged low caste-specific practices. According to this rationalization, if low castes would leave their non-vegetarian practices, they would be better-off in economic terms. In short, while these discourses among rich vegetarians are characterized by a form of class ethnocentrism, they also project a caste ethnicization of the justifications of poverty. How do poor respondents respond to these allegations?

### 2) Non-vegetarians' economic constraints

How does caste and religious belonging shape discourses on food practices among the poor? How do poor households justify their engagement into non-vegetarian practices? Do they aspire for non-vegetarian consumption at the expense of other food items? The representations of the rich regarding poor people's food practices suggest that from their point of view, structural factors are less important than cultural ones in explaining their socioeconomic conditions. They reveal a discourse that resonates with the "culture of poverty" hailing from the theory developed by Oscar Lewis (1966). In this thesis, a set of values, discourses and attitudes among the poor are different from those of more affluent classes and primarily contribute to their social marginalization. Without refuting that culture shapes food practices among the poor, I suggest here that it rather provides tools to cope with their socioeconomic condition.

### a) "You cannot use non-veg regularly": the limitations of poor practices

The valorization of vegetarianism among Hindu upper castes contrasts with the overall positive valorization of meat-eating practices among lower castes and Muslims. Yet, these food practices are economically constrained and are reserved for exceptional occasions, for instance during Hindu festivals or weddings. While Hindu upper castes rather tend to abstain from non-vegetarian products (and even sometimes from onion and garlic as illustrated earlier) in the first case, lower castes on the contrary may take the opportunity of these special occasions to eat meat. Among lower castes, receiving guests also invites for serving meat. It is all the more evident among Muslims, where religious festivals (Eid) are associated with meat consumption. This special occasion associated with meat consumption is for instance illustrated in what Pawan, a Dalit (belonging to the Chamar caste), declares about the diets of his caste group members:

> *"Pawan- Smaller castes have mixed diets, they do according to their economy!*
> *Anil- But they eat meat?*
> *Pawan- Yes, they eat, people who have money they might eat in a week, people who don't have maybe they eat once in a month and if they even don't have that then maybe they eat once in 2 months, when some guests arrive. People who don't have a budget and a guest arrives, then they will have it.*
> *Anil- One reason you said that people who have the money they prefer to eat, secondly if there is a guest, what other reasons are there why non-veg is preferred?*
> *Interviewee- Or sometimes there are some festivals.*
> *Anil- Festivals!*
> *Interviewee- Yes, festivals like Diwali! After the Diwali! Like meetups! If guests arrive."*
> (Pawan, interview 33)

Among lower castes and Muslims, eating non-vegetarian may then be perceived as a form of displaying one's relative economic success, along with other consumption markers, such as "drinking alcohol" and "going around in vehicles," as Rishik, a Hindu low caste member (belonging to the Kahar community, classified as an Other Backward Class), declared:

> *Anil- Some people say that people start eating meat and fish to show off their wealth!*
> *Rishik- Yes, that is there, like if there is money, I am also drinking alcohol, also eating meat and chicken, also going around in vehicles! Also doing shopping at the festivals, so they have so... They are showing off. And since I don't have so we show what we have! In the festivals, people have things for 1000 rupees and we cook the same which we cook every day! All 30 days! We cook the same at the festivals too!*
> (Rishik, interview 36, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

This positive valorization of meat practices may appear contrasting with the cultural emulation process that leads to the adoption of vegetarian practices as Hindu lower castes move up the social ladder, as I have empirically tested in Chapter 6. Yet, two factors explain this apparent paradox: relative perception of economic position and cultural frames. The people "showing off" that Rishik refers to live in his neighborhood and are also Hindu lower castes. Even though they may display more affluence than his own condition, they overall do not necessarily hold a different occupation, they only have slightly more economic means. Besides, they still reside in his neighborhood: relatively to the residents of the locality, they are richer, but not relatively to the entire society. This suggests that individuals' beliefs are shaped by "cultural frames" (Small et al., 2010) that depend on the locality of residence, since socioeconomic spatial segregation is substantial in Indian cities. Lower caste individuals who have accessed upper class positions are likely to reside in other localities and to have then adopted other cultural schemas. Thus, the present analysis does not contradict results from the previous chapters which emphasized that Dalits tend to be more frequently vegetarian as they grow up the social ladder.

This explanation is confirmed in the following interview, where Rishik, a cycle rickshaw (a passenger cart) driver compares himself with electric and auto rickshaw drivers. Even though they have the same occupations, earnings are higher in the latter case:

> *Anil- But some people say that poor people eat more meat!*
> *Rishik - Poor! That's what I am saying, people who are earning 8,000-9,000-1,0000. If they are drivers then they will get 9,000! So they will eat every day! Now if we take the rickshaw and people go in the battery one, then there is no income! If we earn 200 rupees and we use that to bring pulses, rice,*

*chapatti, vegetables; to bring oil! Or to bring medicines for the kids! Or do I get a chicken for 200?*
(Rishik, interview 36, conducted with Anil for language assistance)[139]

While non-vegetarian products are positively valorized, their consumption is economically constrained as the preceding excerpts showed. On a regular basis, lower castes and poor Muslims are then vegetarian, as Pawan declares:

*"Mathieu- So most people here [in the neighborhood, mainly composed of households belonging to the Chamar caste] eat the same? Vegetarian?*
*Pawan- Vegetarian, but this is there that sometimes we eat meat... but you cannot use non-veg regularly! And this vegetarian food, you can use it regularly!"*
(Pawan, interview 33)

Rishan, a Dalit (belonging to the Pasi caste) working as a daily-wage painter, also said that meat consumption is very occasional, and that cheaper meat (chicken) is preferred:

*"Rishan- Meat, sometimes it is consumed after two or three months. We don't eat daily!*
*Anil- Okay, you don't eat daily! So you eat chicken or?*
*Rishan - Array, we eat chicken, it is cheaper, and the goat is not less than 500.*
*Anil- Yes!*
*Rishan's wife- Meat is there, which comes once in three months. That is 250gms for us!*
*Rishan- We eat it for two days!"*
(Rishan, interview 34, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

Poor Muslims also face this economic constraint, as Raisa and her husband, a construction laborer, told me in Aligarh:

*Raisa- We are poor people so we can't cook much meat. Fish is cooked more.*
*Mujebur- So how do you eat meat? Do you eat daily? In a week?*

[139] The comparison between different rickshaw drivers came up several times in the course of the interview. The mention of 8,000 to 10,000 INR is the perceived montly earning. 200 INR is his declared daily earning (which comes up to a maximum of 6,000 INR for a month if he works every day).

*Raisa's husband- No, not in a week! When there is money! When there is money then we eat and when there is no money then it is not coming!*
*Mujebur- Okay!*
*Raisa- It is there in fifteen days or even in one month! We are labor people so we don't eat that much.*
*(Raisa, interview 54, conducted with Mujebur for language assistance)*

The perceptions of affluent classes on poor lower castes and Muslims may lead to understand their food practices as reflecting a "poor culture," where they lack the legitimate cultural codes to appropriate the most valorized food practices, vegetarianism. This understanding of the existence of meat-eating practices among Hindu low caste groups would result in a culturally "miserabilist" view of their food practices (Grignon and Passeron, 1989). Yet, it is apparent here that lower castes and Muslims have meat aspirations, and hence that they follow different cultural frames from the Hindu upper castes'.

### b) Non-vegetarian self-production and offal consumption

The poor's economic constraints may nonetheless also appear as "miserabilist" since their non-vegetarian cultural aspirations are not met with regular non-vegetarian practices. In fact, the justifications of poor people's non-vegetarian practices would remain incomplete if I did not emphasize two elements that help cope with the "choice of the necessary." As indicated above in the interview excerpts, many poor households prefer buying cheaper meat to save money. Goat and mutton are hence usually not favored among the poorest households, except for festivities. But two other repertoires of action are also at play: self-production and offal consumption. These options provide food subsistence means that are unequally adopted yet significant in their nutritive intake.

The self-production of non-vegetarian products provides a way to avoid purchasing these items in the market. Non-vegetarian self-production appeared several times in the course of my fieldwork. In the slum of Lovekush Nagar in Lucknow, a few pigs were going around. When I enquired about them, I was told by Dalit households that they were for home-consumption. In the district of Gorakhpur, I encountered one household who told me that in the past they would fish in rivers and eat their catches, but that they did not do it now (they were members of the low caste Nishad community, known for being fishers). I also met a community of Musahar people, a highly stigmatized community, called this way because they catch rats given their

low economic resources.[140] When I enquired about it, they told me that it was also a practice of the past, though children still do it at times.

Overall, non-vegetarian self-production is rather existent in rural and the poorest households (those who belong to the first quintile of the standard of living) as the estimates of the "Consumer Expenditure Survey" for Uttar Pradesh show: among these households who consume the following items, 5 per cent consume self-produced goat or mutton, 3 per cent consume self-produced beef, 77 per cent consume self-produced pork, 3 per cent consume self-produced chicken and 2 percent consume self-produced eggs. Apart from pork (which is itself very little consumed), it suggests that non-vegetarian self-production is not very widespread, this practice being specific to the poorest rural households since other urban and/or more affluent households do not self-produce non-vegetarian items (except for eggs, also present in more affluent rural households). Compared with the self-production of vegetarian products, it also appears as not very frequent. Indeed, in rural areas, 48 per cent of households self-produce part or all of their milk production, they also self-produce 14 per cent of their pulse consumption and 56 per cent of their cereal consumption.[141] Paradoxically, self-production for vegetarian items is more common among richer households. Self-production indeed requires means of production (agricultural land and livestock) which are not necessarily available to the poor. Non-vegetarian self-production hence also depends on hunting and gifts. Historically, Dalit castes, among which Chamar who are traditionally associated with tanning occupations, were associated with handling dead cattle in rural areas. The novelist H.S. Shekhar recounts this specific village organization from a recollection of his father's memories in Jharkhand, a State in eastern India:

> *"The Santhals [Adivasi caste] do not just dump the dead cattle at the bhagar [the place where carcasses are stored]. They use whatever can be used of the dead animal. The skin is used for making drums and other objects. If the carcass is fresh, the flesh is cut away to be eaten as food, especially the flesh*

[140] "Mus" means rat in Hindi. This community lived in a separate village neighborhood in small mud houses. In the course of my visit with Javed, all the people to whom we talked told us that they lacked economic resources to buy food.

[141] These are my own calculations from the Uttar Pradesh sample of the "Consumer Expenditure Survey", National Sample Survey Office, 2011-2012, Type 1.

> *from the rump of the cattle. Those with a taste for the entrails take those away as well. The rest of the carcass is left for the sokun, the vultures."*[142]

He published this testimony in the context of emerging lynching violence against Dalit, Adivasi and Muslim minorities in the subcontinent under the pretext of cow butchering (Ferry, 2018). These practices of obtaining meat seem to have become less prevalent but they are specific to poor households of lower castes.

The second repertoire of action that demonstrates resourcefulness in getting meat among the poor lower castes and Muslims is their positive valorization of organ parts of butchered animals, in particular legs, liver (known as "kalayji"), heart, brain, or blood. Indal, a Dalit (belonging to the Valmiki caste) man working as an electrician, recounted how organ meats are valorized because they are both cheaper and nutritive:

> *"Mujebur- Many people can't afford meat, meat is costly, no?*
> *Interviewee- No, no, no. If it is like that then they will not take one kilogram, they will take half a kilogram! The one, who doesn't take half a kilogram, he will take 250 grams. Now, imagine there is one chicken being slaughtered, you eat meat, so there is chicken being slaughtered, you can take leg pieces! Someone took the chest, so there is also the neck left, the liver and other things. People buy these pieces for cheap and bring it!*
> *Mujebur- So they can eat meat?!*
> *Interviewee- Some people take the feet! Now everyone has their own experiences! Like we drink soup, we add a bone of the goat feet, there is a soup made from that! There are four bones that come from one goat, if you*

[142] H.S. Shekhar is the author of *The Adivasis will not dance* (2015), a collection of short stories on Adivasis, a marginalized group in India (barely present in Uttar Pradesh). The present excerpt is drawn from "'These people do not know hunger': An author struggles to make sense of the Jharhand lynchings," May 21, 2017, *Scroll.in* (https://scroll.in/article/838241/these-people-do-not-know-hunger-an-authors-anguish-at-the-jharkhand-beef-lynchings, last access on January 31, 2021). A similar account is made by Shahu Patole who has written a Dalit cookbook about two communities in Maharashtra: "In old days, you could not afford to buy live animals and slaughter them. As a rule, these two communities (Mahars and Mangs in Marathwada) had to clear away carcasses of animals, and they would eat the flesh. If there was a festival, or if there was a sacrifice of an animal, that was the only time you got live or halal meat. And we ate what we had to eat, because that was what was available. Now, you can buy meat from shops and so on." This quote comes from an interview on *Scroll.in*, "Why an ex-journalist chose to document his Dalit culture in a food book," November 15, 2016 (https://scroll.in/magazine/820140/why-an-ex-journalist-chose-to-document-his-dalit-culture-in-a-food-book, last access on January 31, 2021).

> *get bones from 6-7 goats then the smoothness is gone from your own feet, the joint pain that is there, it is benefited!*
> (Indal, interview 59, conducted with Mujebur for language assistance)

These food practices that include meat items hence resemble the "necessity made virtue" evoked by Bourdieu (1984) to describe cultural practices among the popular classes. They contrast with the "fondness" which at times motivates affluent classes to consume non-vegetarian products.[143] This description of subsistence repertoires of resourcefulness to obtain meat outlines the material dispositions by which poor lower castes and Muslims adjust their food consumption, valorizing otherwise depreciated practices.[144] But overall, food tastes accommodate a vegetarian diet in which non-vegetarian products are exceptional as Rishik recalled:

> *"Anil- So according to you what is good food?*
> *Rishik- According to me, cooked pulses, rice, chapati,[145] and vegetables! Cook breakfast in the morning! So, it is the best food is the vegetarian food! In this there is everything! If you only cook pulses and rice then there is no oil to fry! There is no chili! If you are hungry then eat chutney[146] and chapatti! If someday that is not there we cook rice and make some chutney! That can be also done! So, the best food is vegetarian food!*
> *Anil- It is vegetarian!*
> *Rishik- And there is everything in it!"*
> (Rishik, interview 36, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

[143] Although it is less central in my interviews, alcohol consumption also emerged as an item that is not consumed out of pleasure among poorer people, in contrast to affluent classes. It was rather justified as an item that eases the pain of physical work. For instance, Ram, a sweeper from the Bhangi caste (a lower caste classified as Other Backward Class) declared: "I drink every day, I just came back from drinking. I am a laborer so I have to drink." (Ram, interview 21).

[144] The author Shahu Patole (2018) evokes the material constraints that frame the way in which people of lower castes cook food: "In these castes, the food that is being made or has evolved, have come out of necessity and not out of fun and experimentation. […] This is the food my parents ate and their parents ate, and I, too, sometimes eat. It is an acquired taste, especially one that has been acquired due to centuries of discrimination." Excerpts from *Anna He Apoornabrahma*, quoted in "Why an ex-journalist chose to document his Dalit culture in a food book," *Scroll.in*, November 15, 2016 (https://scroll.in/magazine/820140/why-an-ex-journalist-chose-to-document-his-dalit-culture-in-a-food-book, last access on January 31, 2021).

[145] An unleavened flatbread also known as "roti" that is made in the household, usually out of wheat flour.

[146] Chutney refers to a condiment made out of vegetable and spice relish in the household. The quantity of vegetables required is then low.

### c) Managing the household budget with dignity

Finally, when talking about the frequency of non-vegetarian consumption, lower caste and Muslim households belonging to the poorer segments of society often emphasized that they do not pour money down the drain. Whatever economic resources they have at their disposal, they emphasize that they are careful in their spending. In doing so, interviewees mention the importance of feeding everyone in their family.[147] They emphasize the importance of self-discipline and in this, they also use a moral economic repertoire. This point emerged in particular when evoking alcohol consumption, usually perceived as a waste of money that needs to be prevented. Indeed, alcohol drinking involves spending money on items that cannot be spent elsewhere. By negatively perceiving alcohol consumers, poor households hence suggest that those who consume alcohol are morally inferior, as Fakurdin, a Muslim working as a security guard, explained:

> *"Anil- Does anyone drink alcohol in your place?*
> *Fakurdin – Now, we cannot say anything about it. It shouldn't be asked! In today's situation it's 50 percent, but people who get the free money they waste it, they don't spend for their stomach, they spend somewhere else, and if someone is helpless then they don't help them for even ten rupees. So, this is that time now. You cannot ask anyone what they eat and drink or not? So, it's useless to tell."*
> (Fakurdin, interview 19, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

Women sometimes intervened in the conversation, suggesting again that they play an important role of "gatekeepers" in the household. I emphasized this female role since they preserve the social image of households by being vegetarian among higher strata (particularly among low and middle castes achieving upper positions, see Chapter 6). Here, they appeared as financial gatekeepers of the households, by which they safeguard a form of respectability. This was particularly exemplified in the following excerpted conversation with Rishan, in which his wife intervened:

> *"Anil- Okay now you tell me, the people who drink alcohol or eat meat and fish. On what basis it is decided who should eat and who shouldn't!*

[147] For instance, after listing a list of basic vegetarian items, Rishik (interview 36) declared: "This is what we are able to feed the children and what we are able to eat." Raisa (interview 54) also insisted on the importance of feeding everyone in the family: "We are laborers! So we have to manage with vegetables, now if we decide to eat meat, how will the kids eat?"

> *Rishan- Now you see if someone is working as labor, a labor guy gets like 350 rupees, the builder gets 500-600. The labor guy won't be able to eat. If there is a drunker then how will he eat?*
> *Anil- So it depends on the income and as the income increases.*
> *Rishan's wife- It depends on themselves!"*
> (Rishan, interview 34, conducted with Anil for language assistance)

Contrary to upper castes in affluent positions, these moral judgements never concerned non-vegetarian products, demonstrating that according to their caste and class position, households perceive meat in different ways. As suggested above, the valorization of food items is "gradual," so that the same principles of justifications of one symbolic boundary is applied for different items. Indeed, affluent classes morally judge the economic use of meat to depreciate meat consumption among the poor while among the poor the same rationalization serves in depreciating alcohol consumption. It shows that among the poor and low castes or Muslims, people also discursively draw boundaries with others that they perceive "below" in order to assert their own dignity.

The results seem to contradict the analysis of the symbolic dimension of food among the American working classes, who use food as a buffer against deprivation (gifting sodas and fast-food to meet the demands of their children since they cannot offer adolescents their material desires). In doing so, working class parents emotionally satisfy their children, and pleasure is an important logic underlying their food practices (Fielding-Singh, 2017). But in the Indian context where food represents a more sizable share of the total household spending,[148] the importance of being careful even in food spending is all the more salient. Besides, this self-discipline is asserted against alcohol consumption which, when it is present, is more prevalent among male adults (International Institute for Population Sciences and ICF 2017). Certain food and beverage consumption meeting children's immediate desires also exist even among the poorest segments in Indian context (e.g., soda beverages).[149]

The importance of self-discipline in the management of the household budget thus also reminds the logics of respectability among popular classes in other contexts, in particular

[148] The average share of food in household total spending amounts to 43 percent in urban India and rises to 53 percent in rural India. As a point of comparison, French households spent about 20 percent of their total expenditures in food and beverages in 2014. For the Indian data, the figures derive from Tables 6C-R and 6C-U p. 106-107 from the report *Level and Pattern of Consumer Expenditure 2011-2012 (NSSO).* The French figure is based on INSEE estimates from the survey *Budget de Famille, 2014.*

[149] As is indicated by the frequency of consumption of aerated drinks at least once a week in India, 26 per cent of women aged 15-19 years and 36 per cent of men aged 15-19 years (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF 2017, p.340-341).

among the working class in France and in the United States, which also draws these symbolic boundaries and justifications to assert their worth (Lamont, 2000).

### *D - Conclusion: the economic dimension of vegetarianism*

In this chapter, I have aimed at studying the salience of the objective and subjective costs of non-vegetarian products in the food basket in Uttar Pradesh. I have highlighted the importance of looking at the entire food basket to understand the consumption of a family of food items. I have also outlined the multidimensionality of the principles of differentiation of food practices from which different food lifestyles derive. Finally, this analysis has examined the way in which vegetarian practices are "stylized," in particular by drawing on a moral economic repertoire rather than on a religious or caste-based symbolic boundary.

The non-recognition of the diversity of food practices and the imposition of a vegetarian cultural legitimacy has negative nutritional consequences. First, government nutrition policies never include non-vegetarian products (eggs being a contentious one) in in-kind or subsidized food programs (Sébastia, 2020). This is all the more problematic that the primary beneficiaries of these programs are non-vegetarian groups.[150] Second, slaughter ban policies also have negative nutritional consequences. Indeed, comparing regions with and without beef bans in India over the last decades, Majid, Orman and Dasgupta (2019) show that the implementation of beef slaughter bans increases by 10 per cent the proportion of anemic women among marginalized communities. While the Hindu upper caste moral economic repertoire insists on meat-eating practices as maintaining the poor into a deprived condition, the cultural dominance of vegetarianism in fact harms poor people's health conditions.

Finally, this study echoes research from the neo-Bourdieusian agenda on lifestyle and status in the Norwegian egalitarian context (Flemmen et al., 2019). I have followed Jarness's suggestion of complementing the study on how food practices are objectively classified by the examination of how people subjectively classify others in terms of their food lifestyles, using the conceptual tool of symbolic boundary (Jarness, 2018; Jarness and Friedman, 2017). This

[150] In a 2014 interview, nutritionist Veena Shatrugna told: "The RDA (recommended dietary allowance) was calculated in laboratories by well-meaning, nationalist scientists and economists. Eminent people like C. Gopalan, V. M. Dandekar, Nilakanth Rath and M.S. Swaminathan. When you do nutrition in a lab cost becomes a major factor. These were all upper class, upper caste – Brahmins, for the most part – who used their own preference for vegetarian diets to offer simple, scalable solutions to provide 'adequate' calories to the vast numbers of the poor of the country. They did not understand the food culture of the poor people who ate a variety of meats from mutton to pork, rabbits, tortoises, beef, and birds, apart from a whole lot fruits, berries, tubers and eggs," see "Meaty tales of vegetarian India," Latha Jishnu, *Down to earth*, December 31, 2014 (https://www.downtoearth.org.in/coverage/meaty-tales-of-vegetarian-india-47830, last access on February 14, 2021).

complementing analysis strengthens the interpretation of the segmentation of food practices as reflecting different food lifestyles. Indeed, it reveals a strong encompassing moral economic repertoire in positively or negatively classifying food practices, including non-vegetarian practices. In the Norwegian egalitarian case, Jarness and Friedman (2017) showed that the display of moral egalitarian sentiments leads upper-middle-class individuals to openly refute their alleged "snobbish" character. Yet, this ultimately helps secure the legitimacy of cultural distinctions by deploying a strategy of condescension. In the Indian case, openly displaying one's caste or religious superiority is not always well perceived in a context where upper castes discursively downplay the privileges of their ascribed status position (Deshpande, 2015). But economic inequalities are pervasive and the rich openly acknowledge their fear of being contaminated by the undesirable lifestyles of the poor (Paugam et al., 2017). While bypassing caste and religious stigma, the moral economic repertoire hence reinforces the legitimacy of vegetarianism by "flying under the radar" of exclusively caste and religious status assertions.

# Chapter 9 – Rationalization, tolerance and stigmatization: the articulation of the vegetarian and cow protection boundaries among higher educated Hindus

*Balram's grandmother: Eat the chicken, I made it myself. You haven't had any like it in ages.*
*Balram: Ashok sir is a vegetarian.*
*Grandmother: America made him completely lose his mind.*
*Balram: I'm thinking of doing the same.*
*Grandmother: What? Are you a Brahmin? Eat. You've gotten so thin.*
The White Tiger*, 2021, Bahrani, R. (based on Adiga A.'s novel).*

How do improvements in educational attainment change the attitude towards vegetarianism? I precedingly uncovered the positive statistical association between class and education level on the one hand, and vegetarianism on the other, even after controlling for caste position (see Part 3). This correlation was interpreted as proof of the legitimizing role of vegetarianism in the social structure as a status marker. Yet, this association may be sociologically questioned on two levels. First, educational attainment may be a marker of entering into modernity, allowing a break with traditional culture, particularly religious culture. Second, the sociological literature often positively associates the most highly educated with the adoption of egalitarian values, which at the very least implies the concealment of inegalitarian practices. Thus, while the status mechanism is a relevant interpretation of the observed statistical association, the other two sociological mechanisms could have reversed it. Should modernity and egalitarianism be dismissed as sociological mechanisms for understanding the vegetarianism of the most highly educated? In order to answer this question in this last chapter, I suggest examining the relation that the most highly educated vegetarians have with their diet by examining the justifications that they mobilize. I also study their attitude towards the protection of the cow, a marker of belonging to the Hindu community.

I show how the social norm of vegetarianism persists among higher educated vegetarian Hindus. From the qualitative material collected through interviews, I first analyze how the most educated mobilize a multiplicity of repertoires to justify vegetarianism and cow protection. These repertoires go far beyond the Hindu religious identity and the moral repertoire. The justifications of the most highly educated are marked by a scientific or pseudo-scientific rationalization of vegetarianism and of the exceptionality of the cow in the animal order, by an economic rationalization of animal protection and an attachment to respect for the legal

institutional framework that legitimizes these practices. Rather than overturning it, these repertoires of justification complement and reinforce the Hindu identity and moral repertoire. Rationalization through the "discursive consciousness" (Giddens, 1984) of the most educated tends to make explicit what is otherwise more often expressed as religious magical thinking, identity attachment or dietary routine. By justifying vegetarianism through multiple repertoires, the qualitative analysis then suggests that the most highly educated vegetarians mobilize their skills to adhere to the social order of vegetarianism. I also suggest that they do not necessarily reject discourses of exclusion and stigmatization of low caste Dalits ("untouchables") or the Muslim minority. In order to objectify this hypothesis, I mobilize two quantitative surveys, the Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS 2011-2012) and the Social Attitudes Research India Survey (SARI). I examine the probability of adhering to values that stigmatize Dalits and Muslims. Controlling in particular for caste position, I show that access to levels of higher education only marginally reduces stigmatization. Indeed, as soon as caste stigmatization is not made explicit as a form of "untouchability," which is rooted in the religious sphere and is now illegal, the difference in probability of adhering to stigmatizing values between graduates and non-graduates becomes marginal. Similarly, when the violent stigmatization of Muslims is justified by an actual beef diet, the more educated castigate this religious minority just as much as the less educated. Thus, the egalitarianism of the more educated, seen as a form of "castelessness" (Deshpande, 2015) and religiouslessness, plays an ambiguous role, since it does not challenge the social order of vegetarianism.

In the following, I first review the association between educational attainment, modernity and food practices, as well as the relation between egalitarian values and graduation, based on the sociological literature and the Indian case. I then present the material used to examine these two mechanisms. The results are presented in three parts: the justifications of vegetarianism, the protection of the cow, and the statistical analysis of the adherence to practices of social exclusion among the most educated. In the conclusion, I discuss the implications of these results.

## *A - Religion, distinction and exclusion*

### 1) The rationalization of religiously embedded food practices

The seminal works of Durkheim as well as Weber have made it possible to associate the emergence of differentiated societies (through urbanization and industrialization, resulting in the separation of intellectual and manual work) with a process of rationalization of beliefs and

rites. But the secularization of societies led by the progress of science and technics does not necessarily entail an inevitable decline in religious practice, about which Weber himself doubted (Séguy, 1986). In India, the creation of the Arya Samaj in the second half of the nineteenth century exemplifies a Hindu reform movement that unified, institutionalized but also rationalized and moralized Hindu rites (Clémentin-Ojha and Gaborieau, 1994).

More largely, food practices associated with a religious orthopraxy or orthodoxy maintain and adapt to secularizing individuals or environments. Indeed, vegetarianism in the Western world has historically been the object of ethical and moral justifications, backed by a religious discipline. However, health arguments based on the nutritional qualities of such a diet and its physiological benefits have contributed to popularize this practice, while also secularizing it (Ouédraogo, 1998). Besides, the study of "halal" food practices among Muslims in the French context highlights the institutionalization and revival of a religious tradition through market mechanisms (Bergeaud-Blackler, 2017) and the rationalization of religious dietary rules that can almost be likened to a sporting discipline among the younger generations (Rodier, 2014).

In the Indian context, Meera Nanda (2009) argues that middle classes compartmentalize a rational and scientific mind on the one hand and traditional and religious beliefs on the other, which explains the continued high religiosity among the more educated group. But the rational and the religious are not antagonistic, since modern religious life incorporates and uses technological means of communication to ensure renewed wonder among its followers (Srinivas, 2018). At the same time, the scientific and religious domains coexist, the former being used to legitimize the latter. In particular, Hindu nationalism maintains the confusion between what belongs to mythology and history (Jaffrelot, 2021). But it also tends to exalt Vedic knowledge (knowledge drawn from the vedas, Hindu sacred texts), not hesitating to adorn them with a pseudo-scientificization in order to legitimize this knowledge. Banu Subramaniam (2019) argues that this coexistence of religion and science reveals a vision of an "archaic modernity," where the original Hindu religious mythology and civilization is conceived as prefiguring modern scientific inventions in medicine, genomic sciences or architecture.

The secularization and rationalization of religious practices also echoes the debates around cow slaughter bans since the nineteenth century. After Independence, religious actors have tended to frame their position in Parliament or in Courts in terms of economic utility to reach a legal ground on slaughter ban. The importance of milk production has hence been continuously emphasized over the religious value of the cow (Gundimeda and Ashwin, 2018).

These positions reject non-vegetarian consumption – and, in particular, beef-eating practices - of religious and caste minorities. They are depicted as based on a "communal sentiment," while Hindu upper castes claims are judged as revealing a "popular sentiment" (Jaffrelot, 1996). Here, Weberian "material rationality" (the economic utility of the cow) and "formal rationality" (the legal prohibition of cow slaughter) are tools to secularize and rationalize religious beliefs and practices (Weber, 1978). This reliance on formal regulations seems to have become a key element of Indian middle classes to secure their social position, as they also for instance rely on the State and the law to further their environmental agenda, in a form of "bourgeois environmentalism" (Baviskar, 2020).

Whether vegetarianism is also justified according to rationalized arguments among higher educated Hindus remains to be seen in the analysis of their discourses.

### 2) Castelessness and religion tolerance versus exclusion and distinction

The adherence to vegetarianism and cow protection by the most highly educated also raises questions linked to the fact that vegetarianism is a status marker. This diet and these attitudes socially appear exclusive with respect to other social groups. Yet the most educated categories are also those who tend to disavow caste or religious domination, while claiming lifestyles supported by openness values.

As already noted, insisting on one's achieved status position rather than on one's ascribed status position denotes an upper caste viewpoint of "castelessness" (Deshpande, 2015). Indeed, displaying one's caste or religious superiority is not always well perceived in a context where upper castes discursively downplay the privileges of their ascribed status position. For instance, employers dismiss caste for hiring in the name of more modern criteria such as merit (Jodhka and Newman, 2007). The emergence of the discursive category of the "new middle class" also suggests the promise of openness to reach the upper segments of society through credentialism (Fernandes, 2006). Among privileged castes and middle classes, a common discourse is then to consider that caste has nothing to do with inequality anymore. They consider that caste brings neither advantages nor discrimination, so that it does not need to be regulated by law (in particular, by affirmative action under the reservation system, see e.g., Subramanian, 2019). If anything, Hindu nationalism and privileged castes tend to enclose caste within the Hindu religious realm but reject it as a component of the unequal socioeconomic structure (Mosse, 2020). Caste is then portrayed as a cultural identity and a private family matter that has nothing to do with exclusion and separation (Natrajan, 2012). Regarding religion, one of the key finding of the 2021 Pew Research Center's report on

"Religion in India: Tolerance and segregation" (Saghal et al., 2021) is that most Indians see respecting all religions as very important (84 per cent), suggesting an overall strong support for religious tolerance.

Asserting open attitudes reminds of the "cultural omnivorism" debate in cultural stratification. Indeed, Chan (2019) argues that cultural eclectism (the engagement into multiple cultural repertoires) reflecting cultural engagements of the most educated respondents reflects a higher degree of tolerance and a weakening of cultural markers shaped by social distinction. Yet, Flemmen, Jarness and Rosenlund (2019) reason that political tolerant attitudes associated with cultural omnivores does not necessarily imply the absence of symbolic demarcation regarding specific cultural practices. Besides, like Baumann (2019), they stress that cultural distinction does not necessarily imply "snobbishness" (open status display) and may well be expressed as "naturalness," an ease of embodiment of privilege.

Coming back to the contemporary Indian context, it appears that claimed tolerance goes in fact along with numerous caste and religious exclusionary practices. Indeed, untouchability, as a form of caste segregation based on ritual pollution, is still heavily practiced in homes (it is illegal to openly practice it in public spaces), especially by Brahmins in Central regions (including Uttar Pradesh), even though higher secondary individuals tend to declare practicing caste separation less (Borooah, 2017). Besides, caste homogamy, a measure of social exclusion, remains widespread and although improvements in educational attainment are associated with less opposition to intermarriage, effect sizes remain very small (Hathi, 2018). Overall, the key message of the 2021 Pew Research Center's report (Saghal et al., 2021) is that even though Indians support religious openness, they also maintain strong caste and religious segregation practices, expressed in terms of marriage preference, friendship circle keeping or residential choices. Specifically regarding Muslim stigmatization, quantitative surveys report widespread prejudice against this community, especially when it is assumed to support cow vigilantism. In particular, educational attainment then only slightly reduces bigotry (Khalid et al., 2020).

Hence, it suggests that studies focusing on discourses show the way in which the most educated mask their caste prejudices behind an egalitarian and meritocratic veil where caste is only at best recognized as a cultural matrix and all religious groups are respected, despite the maintenance of exclusionary practices. Overall, although the impact of educational attainment on caste or religious stigmatization exists when measured through quantitative survey data, it remains rather low. It remains to be determined whether the diet of vegetarianism, as well as the assertion of cow protection, are directly associated with exclusionary attitudes among

vegetarian higher educated Hindus, or whether they are also practiced by claimed tolerant higher educated individuals, be it a veil of social distinction or not.

### *B - Method: interviews and quantitative surveys*

To investigate the justifications of vegetarianism among higher educated Hindus, I rely on a selection of seven interviewees conducted in different districts of Uttar Pradesh (see Table 9.1). I focus on these respondents because they cover the different justifications and discourses on caste and religious belonging related to vegetarianism among the higher educated respondents of my sample (two respondents, Ankit and Pawan, occasionally eat meat but they provided strong arguments supporting vegetarianism). These respondents all have graduated from universities or colleges of the State. The sample here includes most of the vegetarian higher educated respondents, i.e., individuals who have at least reached graduation. Apart from their educational attainment, the respondents' social positions are diverse: they hail from different caste positions, have different work positions, live in different urban or semi-rural contexts and are of different ages.

Compared with less educated respondents, these respondents usually tended to justify their vegetarian diet at much greater length. Indeed, justifying one's practices did not always make sense because respondents had not always consciously reasoned on why they eat what they eat.[151] Most of the time, diets' justifications relied on the respondents' caste or religious identity (e.g., "I am religious, because I am religious I don't eat"),[152] religious rules and orthopraxy (e.g., "my Guru Ji also said this"),[153] inherited routinized food practices (e.g., "This is just what I am used to")[154] or expressions of likes and dislikes (e.g., "I like the taste so I eat it").[155] In short, diets related more to "practical consciousness" among lower educated respondents, whereas the verbose diet justifications of more educated respondents indicated a form of "discursive consciousness" (Giddens, 1984; Vaisey, 2009). In other words, higher educated respondents tended to articulate more elaborate principles of moral judgements when it came to their food practices, thus highlighting the role of education as competence and,

[151] In other words, asking why they are vegetarian does not provide rich answers among this group while it does for higher educated respondents, and generally reflects the fallacy of asking "Why" rather than "How" (Becker, 1998). The answers to vignettes with assumptions on food behaviors and values also prompted less verbose answers. It should be noted that these interviewees were more verbose on other questions (the length of their interviews is on average the same among the two groups).
[152] Ramji (interview 10), responding to the question on why he is vegetarian.
[153] Anokhlal (interview 60), responding to the assertion that vegetables are better for health.
[154] Rishi (interview 35), describing and commenting on the meals he had the day before the interview.
[155] Prasad (interview 13), asking him whether he thinks his favorite dish (puri sabji: vegetables and fried bread) is good for health (he said, "I don't know" and reiterated that he just liked it).

possibly, as a body of knowledge that problematizes the association between one's own believes and their practices (e.g., through scientific reasoning, a form of secularization).[156] Analyzing these discursive diet justifications, I investigate whether and how they depart from religious moral judgements and how respondents relate to minorities' stigmatizations based on the minorities' known or alleged diets.

*Table 9.1 - Sociodemographic summary of higher educated respondents quoted in the chapter*

| Name (interview number) | Caste | Occupation | Educational attainment | Location | Age | Sex | Declared diet |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manoj and his son (2) | Brahmin | Book publisher + High school student | Bachelor of Arts and Law diploma (LLG) + son: high school (aspiring for engineering) | Socioeconomic mixed neighborhood in Lucknow | 40 + 17 | Both male | Vegetarian |
| Ankit (3) | Marwari (Merchant caste) | Business owner (including restaurants) | Bachelor of Commerce | Gated community in an affluent neighborhood in the north of Lucknow | 34 | Male | Mainly vegetarian (occasional meat, including buffalo meat consumption) |
| Sharad (4) | Brahmin | Sub-editor in a regional Hindi newspaper | Master of Hindi | Old Lucknow (city center, in a Muslim-majority neighborhood) | 60 | Male | Vegetarian |
| Rekha (5) | Brahmin | Housewife (+ online selling of home-made snacks) | Master of History | Affluent neighborhood in the south of Lucknow | 45 | Female | Vegetarian |
| Pawan (33) | Chamar (Dalit) | Student | Bachelor of Homeopathic Medicine and Surgery | Semi-rural neighborhood in the south of Lucknow, former caste-segregation of lanes by caste names | 29 | Male | Omnivorous (avoids buffalo meat) |
| Durgaprasad (50) | Yadav (Agricultural caste) | Inter-college government teacher (teachers' training) | PhD in political science | Outskirts of Gorakhpur (semi-rural) | 52 | Male | Vegetarian |
| Madhav (71) | Brahmin | Electrical engineer working in a public department | Engineering degree | Shamli district, semi-rural | 25 | Male | Vegetarian |

*Note: This is an excerpt of the summary of my interview respondents quoted in this chapter. The full summary can be found in the appendix of the dissertation.*

[156] There are exceptions to this distinction between the levels of consciousness to justify one's diet, in particular among meat-eating individuals who do not fit on the right side of the social norm of vegetarianism, or when individuals mention others' food advice such as advice from a doctor.

In order to ascertain the prevalence of stigmatization values among higher educated respondents, I then use two quantitative surveys openly asking respondents whether they acknowledged stigmatizing Dalits or legitimated violence against Muslims if they had eaten beef. In India, few quantitative surveys record both food practices and attitudes and I rely here on two of the few quantitative large-scale exceptions.[157] First, I focus on the subsample of Hindus in Uttar Pradesh from the Indian Human Development Survey (2011-2012). The survey contains two questions of interest. Household heads were asked: "In your household, do some members practice untouchability?" In case respondents answered negatively, a follow-up question asked: "Would there be a problem if someone who is scheduled caste were to enter your kitchen?" I code two dichotomous variables, where respondents are considered as acknowledging untouchability if they answered "Yes" to the first question ("No" otherwise), and respondents are considered as acknowledging caste separation if they answered "Yes" to one of the two questions and "No" if they answered negatively to both questions. I compare the rates of caste stigmatization according to the caste position of respondents, highlighting its association with levels of vegetarianism.

Based on the analysis of the qualitative material, I then hypothesize that *educational attainment reduces caste stigmatization, as higher educated respondents tend to hold more egalitarian values*. But I also hypothesize that *differences in caste stigmatization according to educational attainment are lower when it is not labelled as "untouchability."* Indeed, higher educated respondents may hold discriminatory attitudes but distance themselves from a religiously embedded and illegal practice. I test these two hypotheses using two logistic binomial models where the dependent variable is acknowledging practicing untouchability or caste stigmatization and the independent variable of interest is educational attainment. The models also adjust for caste, class (farmer or not), residential area, sex and age. Results are presented in the last section of the section and more details can be found in the appendix.

Second, I use the Social Attitudes Research India Survey (SARI) of the Research Institute for Compassionate Economics (RICE). The SARI is a mobile phone-based survey which interviewed samples of adults aged 18 to 65 years in several Indian States and which measures attitudes towards marginalized groups.[158] Questions analyzed here relate to the extent

[157] This is not an exception to the Indian society, Chan (2019) also notes that surveys asking questions on cultural practices and political attitudes are scarce.

[158] SARI builds representative samples of adults using probability-weighted random-digit dialing and within-household respondent selection (since men tend to more frequently have a mobile phone than women). See Coffey et al. (2018) and Hathi (2018) for further details on the methodology.

by which cow vigilantism is sanctioned by the non-Muslim population.[159] Each respondent was randomly assigned one of the four combinations of the following situations, whether it is acceptable for a Muslim to face violence if they have actually eaten or are suspected to have eaten beef: "Some days ago, a Hindu [individual/mob] [suspected/saw] that a Muslim person had eaten beef and beat him up badly. According to you, was it acceptable what the Hindu [individual/mob] did to the Muslim person?" The different framings acknowledge the literature on hate crimes which makes a distinction between individual and group perpetrators, but as Khalid et al. (2020) show, in the Indian case it makes no difference in condemnation of these different crimes. Besides, surveyors suspected that "actions based on the mere suspicion of consuming beef would be viewed differently than the ones where actual beef consumption is involved" (Khalid et al., 2020).

Based on the analysis of interviews, I hypothesize that *individuals with higher educational attainment tend to condemn more frequently crimes against Muslims*. But I also hypothesize that *differences in crime condemnation according to educational attainment are lower when actual beef consumption is involved.* Indeed, higher educated respondents may adhere to a form of justice where the evidence of guilt is central, which would therefore mask their bigotry (the uncertainty of beef eating renders violence unwarranted). I test these two hypotheses using three logistic binomial models where the dependent variables are: asserting that violence is acceptable if beef consumption is suspected, asserting that violence is acceptable if beef consumption is ascertained and asserting that violence is acceptable whether beef consumption is suspected or ascertained. The independent variable of interest is educational attainment. The models also adjust for caste, State, residential area, sex, and age. Results are presented in the last section of the chapter and more details can be found in the appendix.

[159] Unfortunately, these questions were not asked in the Uttar Pradesh questionnaire conducted in 2016 before the large mediatization of cow vigilantism. I rely on the surveys conducted in Maharashtra, Bihar and Jharkhand conducted in 2018. Given the only small differences between these regions, I am confident that they also reflect attitudes in Uttar Pradesh (in particular, given its social and spatial proximity with Bihar).

## *C - Results: rationalization, openness and distinction*

### 1) Defending vegetarianism among the most educated: hybrid arguments and apparent openness

#### a) Ascetism as a functional response to a concrete dietetic issue

While the Hindu ascetic way of life suggests relying on vegetarianism, more educated respondents tended to provide scientific reasons to their life rules. They rationalized and explained religious rules as functional responses to concrete dietetic issues.

If higher educated interviewees did not necessarily reject the category of "purity," they rationalized it to relate it to dietetic properties. The religious categories of "purity" and "impurity" are not missing in discourses, but they are usually reframed. The "pure" food may qualify food eaten in ancient times, while now religious food rules are less applied. "Pure" food may also relate to "hygienic" food. Meat being sometimes displayed outdoors in meat shops, it does not fit into the category "hygienic."[160] Finally, "impure" sometimes qualifies more generally tasty food items, such as meat, from which one should refrain.

These categories also refer to being easily digested. Vegetarianism should hence be preferred as it helps keep peace and mind control. As Sharad summarized: "You become what you eat, we have this thinking. What a man eats, he has a same way of thoughts flowing."[161] He opposed present lifestyles governed by medicines to ancient lifestyles regulated by rituals and purity principles, which are slowly disappearing:

> *"Sharad- For impure food, we have this thought that it is not good. So, it had become a thinking in society I mean we always have been eating clean and pure, our ancestors had even cleaner and purer food. Now you are seeing. The life is dependent on medicines. When a man wakes up in the morning, he is testing his sugar and BP [blood pressure], etc... People have machines in their home nowadays. So, this type of life which is going on, it was not like that before, people didn't have to do these things. They used to worship God, so that kind of thinking was there and was enough."*
> (Sharad, interview 4)

[160] More largely, "pure" food may also refer to non-artificial (without chemicals) and unadulterated (e.g., packed milk is often perceived to be mixed with water) food.

[161] This way of thinking also prevailed among certain Muslim respondents. For instance, Sahdil declared: "In our place, it is like, eat meat, eat it of course, because it is like a lion, don't eat it too much that your stomach becomes a graveyard! So, it is said that you eat limited. If you eat more the stomach will become a graveyard, which means it should be eaten limited. It is prohibited to eat too much."

Yet, the more educated Hindus usually tended to take some distance with this view. While ascetism is commonly summarized in the phrase "simple living, high thinking" ("saadaa jeevan, uchh vichaar"), it is also used sometimes in a rather light and ironic manner.

Further, respondents commonly emphasized the dietetic benefits of abstaining from meat, particularly for elder people. It was for instance the case when I interviewed the two brothers, Parv and Rachit (interview 37). They belong to a Yadav family (Agricultural caste) and the former takes care of the agricultural land of the family while the latter is a medical doctor. When asking why some members in the family did not consume meat, they first emphasized their health problems (diabetes), but then they also added (regarding women), "they don't eat because they do religious work." The distinction between religious and dietetic reasons is very porous here. It is all the more so among the more educated respondents. For instance, when asked how frequently he ate onion and garlic, Durgaprasad rationalized his abstinence rules that he applies during religious festivals:

> *"Durgaprasad- Like in Navratri [a religious festival], even if I don't have fast, then garlic and onion are avoided! Not to eat! On the day of festivals.*
> *Javed- Why do you believe why is this?*
> *Durgaprasad- The biggest reason for this is* ***we believe that garlic and onion are tamsik foods****, it is an exciting food.*
> *Javed- It doesn't keep you calm!*
> *Durgaprasad - Doesn't keep you calm, there will be burning in the stomach, sometimes there will be something, so in the season of festival or in fasting,* ***it is for our own purity, we are fasting for the purity of the soul so we don't eat these things or use them****.*
> *Javed- Meaning, eat those things which keep you at peace!*
> *Durgaprasad- There is peace! Like, take light meals… that is the reason for taking milk and fruits so that the impurity of the body gets out, and for life...*
> *Javed- There is also a dietetic reason, that you eat those things that don't burn the stomach, and there is also the religious reason; so how much is religious and how much is dietetic?*
> *Durgaprasad- See, whatever religious system was molded in the starting, in prehistoric age, we had no knowledge, we used to live in primordially, so no one had this knowledge and* ***it was also difficult to make everyone understand, so they added this to religion****."*

(Durgaprasad, interview 50, conducted with Javed for language assistance)

He clearly suggests that religious lifestyle rules have been created to spread dietetic rules which would otherwise not have been understood by others with less education. The same argument is also put forward with Pawan who studied homeopathic medicine. This time asking him directly about the Ayurvedic principle of "cold" and "hot" food (which appeared many times in the course of interviews to be mixed with purity, though they are more clearly differentiated in other regions, see Bruckert, 2018 for Tamil Nadu), he answered:

> *"Pawan - There is no concept about hot or cold, the one which can be digestible are good food. The ancient people, to make their language understandable that if you eat more of something... See what happens is previously we couldn't explain things scientifically, but* ***they thought 'how to explain to the people in the front,' so they spoke in the same language as them****, so they said that this food is good, that this is cold, this is hot!"*
> (Pawan, interview 33)

This rationalization of food rules, regarding the "pure" versus "impure" or "hot" versus "cold" attributes of food items, refers to the attributes of foods as established in Hinduism or Ayurvedic medicine (which are partly mixed here). But by insisting on the fact that they have understood and are able to decipher the reason for the existence of food rules, Durgaprasad and Pawan draw a boundary with respect to less educated individuals, who according to them are unable to understand dietetic logics. This type of discourse echoes the symbolic violence resulting from the interactions of poor and uneducated people with health professionals. Doctors indeed often prefer relying on their patients' fears and beliefs rather than on medical explanations since they are deemed more efficient to justify medical treatments (Jullien, 2019).

#### b) Caring for animals: religious heritage and scientific popularization

Compassion towards animals is a key element of Hindu values. In the name of "ahimsa" ("non-violence"), many Hindus explicitly justify their abstinence from meat. This principle highlights the sensitivity of animals and thus presents a cosmology where the boundary between humans and non-humans is questioned and replaced by a boundary between living species with feelings and those without.[162] Although it hails from religious values, this

[162] On the separation between nature and culture and its resulting cosmology in the Western world compared with societies, see Descola (2009). On the status of animals in Hindu mythology, see Doniger (2010).

justification advocates a form of vegetarianism that draws from moral rules as it incorporates elements of animal welfare (rather than status logics, dietetic reasons or religious orthopraxy alone).

There is a clear continuity among vegetarians who mention animal welfare depending on their educational attainment. Overall, this principle is often mentioned as inherited from the family or advocated for by a religious guru (a Hindu priest). But as the example of Madhav illustrates here, this repertoire of justification is strengthened by non-religious elements, such as scientific popularization. When I interviewed Madhav, he very clearly associated his vegetarian diet with animal welfare as something he inherited from his family:

> *"Mathieu- And why would you say that you are following vegetarianism?*
> *Madhav- I love it, I just don't want to kill anyone for my eating, why would I kill someone just to eat when there are other options! Without killing I can also eat and fill my stomach then why should I kill someone and eat. So this is the basic theory taught by our grandparents and I agree on it! [...] Our parents have taught us... They have told us that the animals have the feelings, it shouldn't be killed for food, like dogs, they are having feelings, they can feel their master!"*
> (Madhav, interview 71)

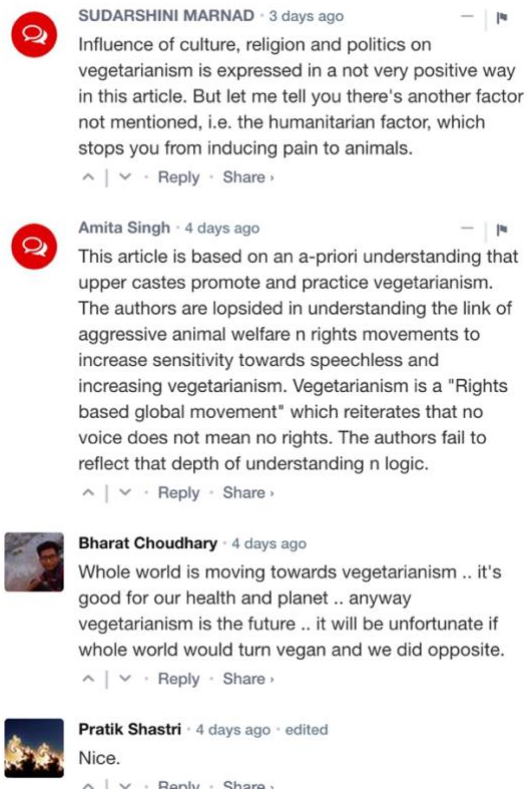
He then associated vegetarianism with a civilizational breakthrough by emphasizing that Hindu rules advocating vegetarianism helped people get a "sense of humanity" (thus suggesting that individuals following other religions have not understood it or are not as culturally developed):

> *"Madhav- I heard, early men, so I said if early men theory is true and if they came from the cave then our ancestors, all of them have eaten meat.*
> *Mathieu- So what made them stop eating meat?*
> *Madhav- The sense of humanity, like the sense of people, like refusing, like we feel very displeased when our near ones die so we got to understand that, maybe the animals would be feeling it too and in Hinduism, it is written like from generation to generation."*
> (Madhav, interview 71)

Still, the mention of the "early men theory" does not draw from religious ideas. Here, Madhav seems to draw reference to modern scientific theories of human evolution. It suggests

a form of rationalization of religious animal welfare that is accommodated with other forms of scientific knowledge. Besides, after I later asked how he was so sure that animals have feelings, he said: "Discovery channel, if they are saying the truth their channel, animals have feelings." Instead of being an antithetical body of knowledge, scientific popularization confirms religious beliefs (in a form of a confirmation bias: scientific popularization serves the purpose of supporting one's religious beliefs).[163]

*Figure 9.1 - Excerpts of comments of the articles "Provincialising vegetarianism" on the Economic & Political Weekly website*




*Note: The snapshot was made on the online version of the article "'Provincialising' vegetarianism: Putting Indian Food Habits in Their Place," by Natrajan and Jacob (2018).*

Importantly, none of my respondents explicitly connected vegetarianism to global anti-specist movements. These movements that also advocate animal welfare suggest to not use any animal products, which is not the case of most of vegetarians in India (who include milk products in their diets and use leather – Madhav for instance told me he has no problem in

[163] The release of the Netflix documentary *The Game Changers* (released in 2019 on Indian platforms) on athletes eating plant-based diets and having enhanced physical capacities is another example of the confirmation of religious values with scientific popularization. The cricket player Virat Kohli for instance published a tweet stating: "Saw game changers on Netflix. Being a vegetarian athlete has made me realise what I have believed all these years regarding diet was a myth. What an amazing documentary and yes I've never felt better in my life after I turned vegetarian." (published on October 23, 2019, https://twitter.com/imVkohli/status/1186846323137380352, last access on March 15, 2021).

wearing a leather belt). Yet, the publication of the article "'Provincialising' vegetarianism: Putting Indian Food Habits in Their Place" by Natrajan and Jacob in *Economic and Political Weekly* (2018) led to reactions that negated the Indian specificity of vegetarianism. Indeed, while the authors explained the prevalence of the diet in India according to regional, religious, caste and gender dimensions, some of the Indian readers reacted to it by refuting these associations (Figure 9.1). In the comments' section, some of them expressed that vegetarianism was adopted due to a "humanitarian factor" that corresponds to a "global movement."

These readers are in all likelihood highly educated since *Economic and Political Weekly* is a peer-reviewed academic journal.[164] By emphasizing the global animal welfare movement, they ultimately refute the vegetarian diet as a result of a religious identity repertoire.

### c) Caste and religious belonging and free choice

With one exception, the more educated respondents tended to relativize the association between their religious belonging and values and their vegetarianism. On the contrary, they emphasized free and conscious choice in their food practices.

When asked whether he consumes meat, Sharad was very straightforward: "No, no we are Brahmins. We do worship." He clearly associated both his caste position and his active religious practice with his vegetarian diet. Among higher educated respondents, he was very straightforward in not showing tolerance regarding others' food practices. When asked about his feelings about the presence of a chicken meat shop close to his house, he said: "It should be kept hidden, the thing which I don't like, it should be closed. Even if it gives employment, it should be closed." Brahmins and some Hindus in lower socioeconomic conditions also usually similarly mentioned their religious values when talking about their vegetarian diet. This overt display of caste superiority may possibly result from individuals socioeconomically lagging behind (Sharad started the interview by claiming he was underpaid and explained his lack of upward occupational mobility as a result of caste affirmative action). Hence, they tend to assert all the more their caste status, since they do not socioeconomically "stand out" (Flemmen et al., 2019). But Sharad is also the oldest of my respondents, which may influence a stricter adherence to religious norms.

Without necessarily rejecting their caste and religious belonging, respondents with higher educational attainment relativized it. They emphasized that religious values may differ

[164] Their names also likely correspond to Hindu individuals.

between individuals and that there is no social compulsion to be vegetarian. For instance, Madhav relativized his own beliefs regarding others':

> *"Madhav- We are living in a world where everyone has got their values and no one can define other's values.*
> *Mathieu- Yes, but you don't...*
> *Madhav (interrupting)- I cannot make myself superior to you just because you eat and I don't eat or I am inferior to you because I am not eating it. It's the belief, beliefs are in ourselves, if I believe in something then let me believe myself. And if you are believing in something then let you believe yourself."*
> (Madhav, interview 71)

Without rejecting that his food habits are inherited from his family, Manoj also asserted that everyone can eat according to their own will:

> *"Manoj- I have no problem [that people eat meat] because we have this type of culture, for the last 3-4 generations, we are only using the veg material but others can have, there is no compulsion."*
> (Manoj, interview 2)

His son then asserts: "Actually our constitution and our religions are also getting the freedom to live their lives the way we want" (Manoj and his son, interview 2). Hence, without necessarily questioning the association between their religiousness and their diet, higher educated vegetarians demonstrated their openness regarding others' diets. Rekha went even further as she refuted her caste position to be the reason for her vegetarian diet:

> *"Mathieu- But you say you are a pure vegetarian because you are a Brahmin?*
> *Rekha- It's not because of that, there is nothing about Brahmin, if I was a Brahmin, I never restricted, and I never have related food with the caste. My kids liked it, so they have consumed it from their childhood. So I have never restricted it. Actually, when we were growing up, our parents never fed us, so we never came to know about the taste, and also it was also in our mind that 'oh it's non-veg! We shouldn't eat it' so I still don't feel it in my mind today. But I never say no to my children. Whatever they like they can*

> *eat. Basically, it is not cooked at home or brought home, it should be eaten outside."*
> (Rekha, interview 5)

In this excerpt, Rekha clearly demonstrated tolerance for her sons' meat practices. Still, meat items are neither to be cooked or brought inside the home. Similarly, Ankit declared he started occasionally eating meat when he included meat items in the menus of his restaurants, so he had to "try" it since he wanted to test all the different dishes he was offering. He also emphasized the openness of the residents of his apartment complex:[165]

> *"Mathieu- But so, I also heard sometimes that people say because those people who eat impure foods, who eat like animals, then it makes you inferior into society.*
> *Ankit- No, I don't think so, that's a personal thinking and at least I'm in a society [in an apartment complex] that is such open-minded that they don't pressurize you that you quit eating meat."*
> (Ankit, interview 3)

Yet, his discourse contrasts with his behavior. Indeed, I interviewed him in his apartment where his mother was initially present, and he was fearing that she could hear that he sometimes eats meat, so he was whispering when talking about it. Further, since he had escaped from the party for the interview and out of curiosity because they had seen me, his male friends and neighbors joined our conversation in the apartment. When he saw that they were arriving, Ankit asked me not to repeat that he eats meat. The scene clearly suggests that the tolerance for meat practices is not necessarily as ubiquitous as respondents say. The apparent openness and free choice in food practices is not devoid of religious and status logics.

Hence more educated vegetarians are usually careful and avoid the open expression of caste stigma regarding meat, and they tend to avoid anchoring their dietary justifications as reflecting their religiousness or caste belonging. Still, this apparent openness masks religious inherited practices which are still followed and may be related to status markers.[166]

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[165] He resides in a gated community in Lucknow and I interviewed him on the day of the celebration of Ganpathi, a Hindu festival celebrating the god Ganesh, for which a party gathering the residents had been organized downstairs in the evening (a music band was playing and vegetarian food was served).

[166] Openness in others' diets was in fact more clearly asserted among meat-eating caste and religious minorities, for instance with Indal (a Dalit working as an electrician in the government sector) who used an animal metaphor: "Imagine there is a big lake, the swan will come and eat the grains and Bagula [Heron bird] will catch fish! Swan never says anything to the Heron, 'why are you catching fish?' and Heron doesn't say to the Swan that, 'why are you eating grains?' Both are working fine, they don't talk about it with each other!"

## 2) The specific case of the cow: the useful Mother which justifies violence

### a) The consciousness of the cow

While compassion towards animals is justified by their sensitivity, some animals are deemed more sensible and conscious than others. In drawing boundaries between humans and non-humans, Hindus often acknowledge the exceptionality of the cow, a sacred animal in Hinduism. Several cattle owners compared their cows to "pets" and differentiated them from buffaloes. For Madhav – after I mentioned it –, the level of consciousness of the cow exceeds the importance of the cow as a sacred animal in Hinduism:

> *"Madhav- Yes, yes I am talking about, here we are talking about for me, myself, I am talking about the conscious level. A Buffalo hasn't got any level of consciousness if you live with a buffalo for 10 years she will not know you, who you are? She is just for milking, but if you live with a cow for 5 years she will know your voice, if you once say her name, she will come running to you like a dog, like a dog a cow will also come running to you just when you call his or her name, but a buffalo can't do that.* ***So you are just making it religious thing and I am talking about the conscious level thing.***
> *Mathieu- I understand.*
> *Madhav- I feel it that the conscious level an animal is having like then nobody eats a dog, no one eats him because it is a pet animal, it lives in people's house and if* ***someone tries to eat it will not feel very pleased, so from the ancient times the cows are having the conscious level, they are nearer to us, they are dearer to us, why would I like someone to kill them?*** *So, a ban is very good. Yes, you can say people got off from their job, many of them got off from their job because Uttar Pradesh is highly exporting beef, but it could be said there is something for everything, there are profits and non-profits, losses for everything."*
> (Madhav, interview 71)

Hence, higher educated tended to emphasize the characteristics of the cow using an analogy with domesticated animal companions.

### b) The economic utility of the cow

But cows are also working domesticated animals. In particular, cow milk is usually considered more nutritive than buffalo milk. According to Durgaprasad, the sacredness of the cow results from a scientific reason, since cow milk is deemed better:[167]

> *"Mathieu- So when Yogi Adityanath came in Uttar Pradesh, so the meat was banned?*
> *Interviewee- Meat was not banned!*
> *Mathieu- Meaning?*
> *Interviewee- Meat was not banned! Cow meat was banned! Cow, because of the religious reasons, this is believed that cow is worshipped by Hindus!* ***And there is a reason for that worship, there is a scientific reason! Any cow should be celebrated!*** *The reason for that is the older cows that were there, older cows in a sense in the prehistoric times.*
> *Javed- Desi (local).*
> *Interviewee- Desi (local)!* ***In that milk and the milk from the mother, the nutrients that were there was found to be almost the same****. Whoever tasted the milk of the mother! So that's why it was called a mother and there was no other sense to call it a mother because* ***the nutrients that are there in the milk of a mother were the nutrients that were in those cows****. Today we all are tying then and breeding, we are feeding hay and chaff, it's a seed. So those things are not there now, but since it is going through our traditions that cow is our mother! So, we still follow that! So, they thought at that time to save them, and at that time it was also our need."*
> (Durgaprasad, interview 50, conducted with Javed for language assistance)

Milk production is not the only claimed economic utility of the cow with respect to other animals. While casually talking at the end of the interview, Durgaprasad mentioned a newspaper article which recalled a Rajasthan judge (sitting in the High Court, the highest jurisdiction of the State) who asked the government to make the cow India's national animal.

[167] This ubiquitous difference between cow and buffalo milk is not that evident from a nutritional point of view since buffalo milk is more caloric, contains more fat, more proteins and less cholesterol than cow milk. Besides, in India, Indian cow breeds have long been mixed with foreign cow breeds to increase milk productivity. See "After govt 'admission', desi cows no longer the gold standard," *The Telegraph*, March 11, 2021 (https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/after-govt-admission-desi-cows-no-longer-the-gold-standard/cid/1809204, last access on March 16, 2021).

The judge justified this demand as cows would be the only animal capable of exhaling oxygen, which is of course a scientific fallacy. Durgaprasad claimed that it is possible and that this point needs to be further researched.[168]

The emphasis on the economic utility of the cow reflects a long-deployed strategy to legally protect the cow from slaughter in post-Independence India (Gundimeda and Ashwin, 2018). In the past decade, Hindu nationalists have also emphasized the economic utility of the cow by outlining the supposed properties of cow dung ("gobar") and urine ("gau mutr"), but not its leather. The by-products of the metabolism of the cow have long been used in agriculture as fertilizers (manure) and as fuel after drying cow dung. They are also used in Hindu rituals as they are supposed to provide spiritual cleansing.[169] Following their use in ayurvedic medicine, cow urine has also been advocated as a possible cure against cancer. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hindu Mahasabha, a political party supporting Hindu nationalism, organized a "cow urine drinking party" claiming it is a cure against the virus.[170] In February 2020, the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Indian Central Government issued a call for "research and development proposals" for a funding program on the "Scientific Utilization through Research Augmentation-Prime Products from Indigenous Cows." Proposals may either investigate the "uniqueness of pure indigenous cows" (though most of the cows in India are mixed Indian and European breeds, see note 167), the use of cow products for medical purposes known as "cowpathy," the advantages of indigenous cows for agriculture, the nutritive properties of cow products and the promotion of cow-based utility items (such as mosquito repellent, floor cleaner, personal care products).[171] Following the publication of this call, more than 500 Indian scientists asked for its withdrawal and denounced it as "faith-based pseudoscience."[172] Still, products made from cow dung or cow urine are commonly sold in ayurvedic retail shops, or by online general retailers. For instance, the widely known brand

[168] The information circulated widely at the time of the judge's declaration, see for instance "Cows exhale oxygen, absorb cosmic energy, home to gods: Rajasthan HC judge," *Hindustan Times*, June 19, 2017 (https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/after-govt-admission-desi-cows-no-longer-the-gold-standard/cid/1809204, last access on March 16, 2021).

[169] The house-blessing ceremony requires a cow to cross the threshold of a new house. T. Srinivas (2018) in her book titled *The cow in the elevator* narrates a ceremony in a luxury apartment where the cow was made to walk through the apartment and left dung on the floor of the kitchen, which was considered an extra blessing by the participants to the ceremony.

[170] "Hindu group offers cow urine in a bid to ward off coronavirus," Danish Siddiqui, *Reuters*, March 14, 2020 (https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-cow-urine-pa-idUSKBN2110D5, last access on March 15, 2021).

[171] The call for proposals can be downloaded on the website of the Ministry of Science and Technology: https://dst.gov.in/callforproposals/call-proposal-sutra-pic-india-program (last access on March 15, 2021).

[172] "Indian scientists decry 'infuriating' scheme to study benefits of cow dung, urine and milk," Vaishnavi Chandrashekhar, February 14, 2020, *Science* (https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/02/indian-scientists-decry-infuriating-scheme-study-benefits-cow-dung-urine-and-milk, last access on March 16, 2021).

Patanjali commercializes "Godhan Ark," an ayurvedic medicinal product that supposedly "cures eczema, controls diabetes and cancer."[173]

The claim of the economic utility of the cow is hence not based only on its milk production but also on a "rationalized" valorization of its by-products. The latter are legitimized by the pseudo-scientific rationalization of the dietary and medical benefits associated with their consumption. The institutional support of the rationalization of the properties associated with the use of these products as well as the commercial development of ayurvedic medicine contribute to the legitimization of the economic utility of the cow.

### c) Cow slaughter condemnation and legal cow protection

How do individuals react to violent lynching episodes of Muslims who have allegedly eaten beef? A campaign called "Not in my name" initiated by the documentary filmmaker Saba Dewan in June 2017 led to protests in several large cities across the country, including in Lucknow. Protestors denounced the bigotry of the cow protection movement which mainly targets Dalits and above all Muslims.[174] Yet, in the course of my fieldwork, apart from respondents belonging to these minorities, few if any denounced these violent attacks, even among higher educated respondents.

Most of the Dalit and Muslim respondents denounced the violent acts perpetrated by "Gau Rakshaks" (Cow protectors) as politically motivated. They were fully aware of the possible threat to their life if they ate beef. They also perceived lynching violence as calls for strengthening a Hindu group identity at the expense of the Muslim minority for electoral purposes.[175] But among Hindus in general, reactions to these episodes oscillated between silence, support for violence and marked hostility towards Muslims.[176] Overall, clear condemnations of the violent acts were rare among Hindus. These reactions – at best of indifference – among Hindus are all the more impressive that about half of my interviews were

[173] See the online page of the website: https://www.patanjaliayurved.net/product/ayurvedic-medicine/godhan-ark/divya-godhan-ark/50 (last access on March 16, 2021).

[174] See "What is the 'Not in my name' protest about?," *The Indian Express*, June 28, 2017 (https://indianexpress.com/article/what-is/what-is-the-not-in-my-name-protest-lynching-junaid-khan-4725668/, last access on March 17, 2021).

[175] Abdur (interview 72), a Muslim tailor, said he consumes only buffalo meat and not beef meat because "if someone is caught [eating beef], his ass will be torn!" Heena (interview 8), a Muslim teacher, repeatedly asked to not nominally disclose what she had told me: "See, violence is bad in any way. Whether it's lynching or mob lynching or any kind of murder or attacks anything, it's not good for the society as a whole means whether it's religious fights or it's a political fight or political issues or it's any terrorist attacks, it's not good in any way, but what I feel about lynching is that, there are a lot of religious sentiments over here."

[176] For instance, when asked what he thinks about Muslim men being lynched in the course of transporting cows on roads, Rohan (interview 26), a Yadav (Agricultural caste) village doctor, declared: "That is right! That is right, they should be killed! If they carry a cow they should be killed."

conducted with Muslim or Christian interview assistants.[177] The assistants' religious identity (along with my status of foreigner) may have fostered the strategy of remaining silent on these topics, but it did not encourage the condemnation of violence against Muslims either.

Among higher educated respondents, some also remained silent when evoking lynching violence. For instance, when interviewing Rekha (interview 5), this topic came up towards the end of the interview, as in most of the interviews. When I asked about lynching attacks, she whispered: "Well, I was sure he would come to this point! I saw him coming!" But she then eluded my questions.[178] Sharad (interview 4) rather revealingly dodged the issue as he pointed that the real problem was not lynching attacks but the lack of protection for cows: "if cows are so useful, there should be proper protection. If we don't protect and just leave them on streets, that will only cause accidents and other things."

Only Pawan (interview 33), himself a Dalit, denounced "Gau Rakshaks" as "criminals" who foster "discrimination." He assured that now Dalits and Muslims are "careful" in what they eat, but that it is partly useless since cases are made up, in particular by the media and the courts, which are biased towards upper caste assailants even if they are not in their right:

> *"Pawan- They [the media] are doing it, they are justifying mob lynching! There is meat in the fridge, it is of buffaloes but when the police came they forcefully proved it that it is cow meat. The court is also not defending. In the court also, all the judges who are there, they are the ones who are sitting! Brother! All the judges in the court, all the lawyers more than 97% of people are Upper caste, why will they want that their people get stuck… So, law and order are also like that, everything is like that! It affects this!"*
> (Pawan, interview 33)

This criticism of institutions contrasts with the reactions of other highly educated respondents, who, on the contrary, stress the importance of respecting the legality of cow protection. They were rather critical of the method of cow protectors (Gau Rakshaks) who intercept cattle convoys on the roads. But their discourses were different from Dalit or Muslim

[177] In the interviews conducted with Himanshu, it is likely that his Christian identity was unknown or that interviewees assumed he was a Hindu since we did not know the interviewees beforehand (and Himanshu may be assumed as a Hindu name). Indeed, one Muslim respondent clearly assumed he was Hindu (Mohammed, interview 73). In interviews with assistants' acquaintances or when we introduced ourselves by our first name with Monish, Javed and Mujebur, their religious identity was straightforward.

[178] Another rare strategy of the respondents was to declare that they hadn't heard about these violent incidents, an unlikely situation that was defended by Swapnil (interview 11). When presented with such cases, he then alleged that the most important matter was to respect the law, and in particular to legally enforce cow protection.

minorities who may be targeted by these violence. Indeed, they only denounced violent attacks because these events as narrated in the media or social networks did not make it clear whether the targeted victims were indeed responsible of misdoings. In particular, it was not sure whether victims of violence really wanted to slaughter cows or eat beef, and according to higher educated respondents, violence may be unwarranted. For instance, when I evoked these attacks with Manoj, purposefully stating that they were disturbing to me, he responded that they were bad, but only because they have happened while the matter is not certain:

> *"Mathieu- I get some videos of violent attacks on Muslims because they are transporting cows,* ***I was very disturbed by this****. Have you received yourself, in your family or your smartphone these videos?*
> *Manoj's son- We do get instances like these on like news channels. I think it's really bad for creating so much of violence for these things when* ***you don't even know what the issue was****. Like if a truck or something is carrying cows, they just started feeling that they were going for the slaughtering of these cows,* ***they don't look into the matter what it was****?* ***what it wasn't?*** *they just created violence and the driver was accused of these things.* ***This might not have been the case, but they just got into violence*** *and just created the whole scene.*
> (Manoj's son, interview 2)

His father then suggested that the Muslim community was "responsible" for the respect of beliefs of the Hindu community towards the cow. Besides, he also asserted the importance of legal cow protection to guarantee religious beliefs:

> *"Manoj- Actually it's responsibility of other community, if any animal whether it's cow or goat or dog, anything, so* ***if any community worship any animal, so it's another community responsibility to protect them****, to make them safe, and it's also the* ***responsibility of the government****, the present government, who makes some kind of steps, who make some kind of laws who can protect these animals from treating like unlawful activities or something like cow slaughtering, or cows trafficking,* ***which is illegal in India****. This is the thing actually."*
> (Manoj and his son, interview 2)

The need for government intervention in cow protection was also articulated by Sharad (interview 4), even though he claimed that the Uttar Pradesh government led by Yogi Adityanath since 2017 had not taken proper action, in particular by not building cow shelters:[179]

> *"Sharad- There should be cow protection, the cow is very useful for us, in the religious view and also in a way that it gives milk and it should be protected, for this, there should be proper management. Like here [in the center of Lucknow] the cows are open and free, there should be grazing fields,* ***shelters should be built****.*
> *[…]*
> *Mathieu- Yogi Adityanath is now a Chief Minister, isn't he famous for cow protection?*
> *Sharad- No, he is good, but there is nothing happening like I said. I mean what is happening for cow?* ***Shelters are not being built, no one cares, and if there are some, they are just for saying****. But nothing else. For the protection of cow, for the good which they should receive, there is nothing."*
> (Sharad, interview 4)

While urban dwellers often refer to cows wandering in cities, where they are emaciated and reduced to eating garbage and plastic (a point also emphasized by Manoj, interview 2), rural dwellers have a different relationship to cows, in particular if they own some. Cattle owners, mostly Hindus, were often vague about the fate of unproductive dairy cows. If they sometimes admitted to selling them (although this has become more difficult in Uttar Pradesh due to the rise of lynching cases), they rarely acknowledged what happened to their sold cows, in particular their destiny as meat.[180] But these statements also reflect deliberate strategies of maintaining ignorance, so as not to contradict one's own beliefs (Staples, 2019). Durgaprasad, however, reacted differently when we referred to the cow meat ban in Uttar Pradesh. At first, he declared that he was letting his unproductive cows go free, but he later admitted that it would be folly to do so, and that he preferred to sell them for economic reasons. This principle of economic reality is recognized and even assumed by Durgaprasad, possibly because we met him through Javed's father, who was a veterinarian who took care of his own cows. This proximity undoubtedly facilitated the exchange when we evoked the cow meat ban:

[179] See Chapter 3 on cow shelters.
[180] See Chapter 3: this is the case, for example, of Parv and Rachit (interview 24).

*"Durgaprasad- I should say it like it was less of a ban but more of a* ***political stunt****! Like you keep a cow or any buffalo, or any animal, so they can produce calf 6-8 times, and also in the calf, if it is not a female calf, there is male, so what happens? What happens to them? Like imagine, there are some cows and buffaloes which cannot breed, they cannot become pregnant, and so what happens to them? All the animals like this...*

*Javed- Which are not useful!*

*Durgaprasad- Which are not useful for us! Okay!* ***So generally, what we do is, there is a forest close to the neighborhood, we take them there and leave it! 'We cannot raise you, go, eat and live your life!'*** *For this, there are also things made by the government, where the animals are kept, where they are given food and drinks, but the condition which is there! It's better to leave them in the forest because there is more suffocation here! The population is more and since they are useless!* ***So here people are not able to take care of the useful ones! So, who takes care of the useless! So, it is a way to get some funds! So, we leave them in the forest! And a better way than that is the slaughterhouses which are opened, I don't think there is anything wrong in that****! […] So, we are raising a cow, for us! But when I am 100% confirmed that she cannot produce a calf and cannot produce milk or it cannot be used for farming. So, to raise one animal, there is a cost of 4000-5000 rupees, per month!*

*Javed- Per month!*

*Durgaprasad- So 5000 rupees, wasting it uselessly on an animal, from which we don't get anything... If there is a cow which gave 10 liters of milk, then I understand that we are spending 5000 and producing 10 liters of milk.*

*Javed- If they stop giving milk? Then?*

*Durgaprasad- If it stopped giving milk and we have no hope that she will give milk again, if there is hope then we will raise it for 6 months of for a year. Okay if it didn't give this time, it will have next month or next year!* ***When I am confirmed that no matter what I do, she will not give milk, so what to do by keeping it? We will remove it! And if I am able to cheat***

> ***someone, then I will be able to cheat!***[181] *If I am not able to cheat, then I will leave it in a place where... or if there are people who eat, so they will slaughter and finish it!"*
> (Durgaprasad, interview 50, conducted with Javed for language assistance)

Hence, apart from the higher educated cattle owners for whom cow reselling is part of the milk production economy, higher educated respondents mostly rely on a form of legal rationality to judge violent attacks due to cow slaughter or beef consumption. Contrary to the protestors of the "Not in my name" campaign, few of them denounced the religious prejudice caused by "Gau Rakshaks."

### 3) Vegetarianism and cow protection as caste and religious boundaries

Based on this analysis of diet justifications and opinions on cow protection, can we expect that Dalit and Muslim stigmatization is lower among higher educated Hindus? The analysis shows that the most educated tend to reframe rather than go against vegetarianism and cow protection, so that those are still status markers. In the following, I show that there is little variation regarding caste and religious exclusionary attitudes depending on educational attainment.

#### a) Vegetarianism and untouchability as caste-associated practices

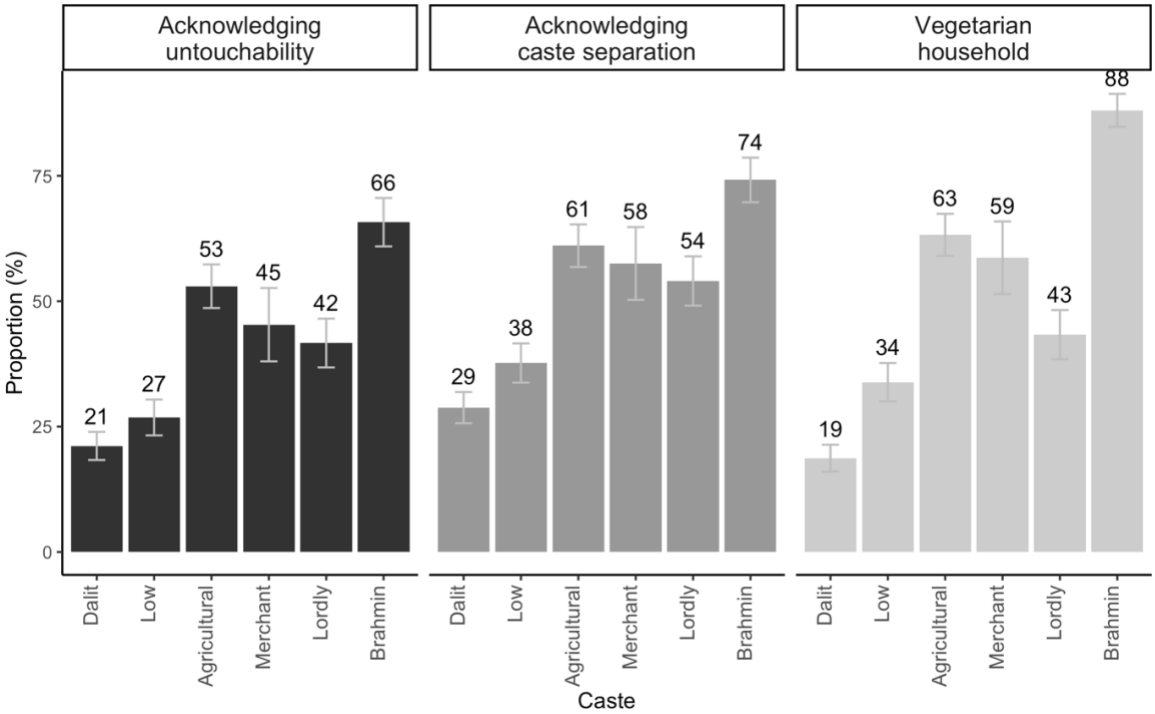
Exclusionary caste practices exist among all caste groups. But the acknowledgement of these practices and vegetarianism are associated with individuals belonging to the middle and upper caste positions, and particularly Brahmins. Further, while drawing caste boundaries by stigmatizing lower castes, the most educated Hindus do not name it under a now illegal religiously inherited form of segregation, untouchability.

Open declarations on untouchability practices are lower (38 per cent) than when also accounting for exclusionary caste practices (47 per cent). But in both cases, these acknowledgements of caste separation practices are associated with caste position. Individuals who acknowledge forms of caste exclusionary practices tend to belong to the same caste positions for which vegetarianism is higher (Figure 9.2). Indeed, between two thirds and three fourths of Brahmins acknowledge exclusionary caste practices. These proportions are substantially lower for other middle and upper caste groups (Agricultural, Merchant and Lordly

[181] The condition for a cow to produce milk is that it gives birth, which happens about eight times in its lifetime. The strategy is therefore to sell a milk-producing cow when she can still produce but is towards the end of its cycles.

castes). Remarkably, the most "sanskritized" middle and upper caste groups (Agricultural and Merchant castes) are more prone to acknowledge caste segregation practices, while they are also more frequently vegetarian than Lordly castes.

*Figure 9.2 - Caste-associated practices according to caste position in Uttar Pradesh*




*Note: Household heads admitting practicing untouchability have positively responded to the question "In your household, do some members practice untouchability?" If they answered negatively, they were asked a second question: "Would there be a problem if someone who is scheduled caste were to enter your kitchen or share utensils?" The combination of the positive answers to the two questions corresponds to acknowledging caste separation practices. The diet indicator corresponds to the question "Does anyone in your household eat non-vegetarian food?" If the answer is negative, then the household is considered vegetarian. In addition to the figure, a coefficient indicating the strength of the association between caste position and practices was calculated (Cramer's V is equal to 0 for no association and 1 for full association): Cramer's V is 0.30 for the cross-tabulation of untouchability practice and caste separation with caste position and 0.45 for the cross-tabulation of diet with caste position. Confidence intervals in this figure and the following ones indicate the margin error for 95 per cent confidence.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey II (2011-2012), Hindus in Uttar Pradesh.*

Individuals in lower caste positions (Dalits and low castes) tend to be less frequently vegetarian and to declare less frequently exclusionary caste practices. It is worth noting that even low caste individuals practice untouchability, even though they are the target of exclusionary caste practices. Yet, reminding that caste is a system of "gradual inequality" (Ambedkar, quoted in Herrenschmidt, 1996) sheds light on this aspect, since it highlights that caste is a form of categorical inequality where each sub-category (the jati) has advantages and superiority regarding those below. Indeed, in the course of my fieldwork, when some Low caste and Dalit individuals were prompted to, they also acknowledged practicing

untouchability with jatis that are supposedly lower in the caste hierarchy (e.g., Chamar, a caste traditionally associated with tanning, Bhangi, a caste traditionally composed of sweepers, or Musshar, named as such because they were considered as rat eaters due to their poor condition).[182]

On the whole, individuals belonging to vegetarian castes also tend to publicly acknowledge forms of caste stigmatization. But why do individuals – irrespective of their caste position – refute the term "untouchability" to label their exclusionary caste practices? I hypothesize that these differences derive from educational attainment as higher educated respondents may be more reluctant to label their stigmatization practices according to illegal, religiously inherited practices.

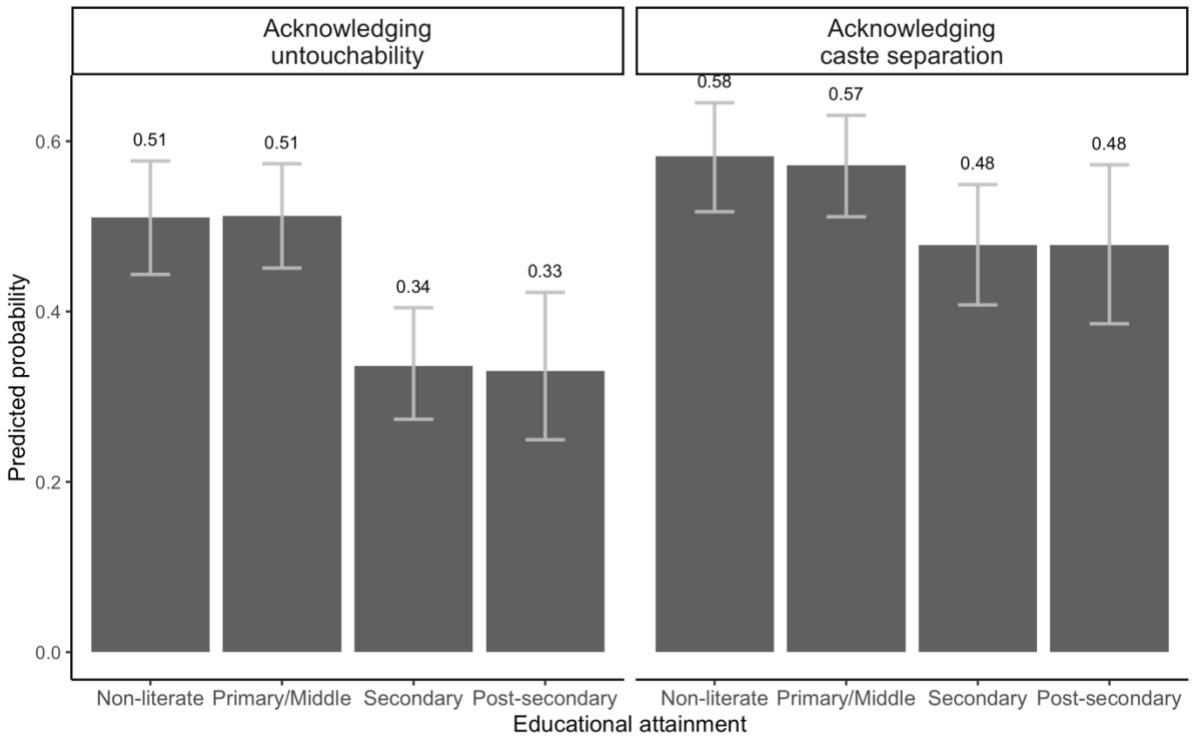
I model the odds of acknowledging untouchability or caste separation using two logistic regressions, where the dependent variables are the two forms of exclusionary caste practices. Among the independent variables, the variable of interest is the educational attainment of the household head, and the models adjust for their age, sex, social class (in a simplified form, whether farmer or not) and caste position. Figure 9.3 presents the predicted probabilities of the two models for varying educational attainments.[183]

The figure shows that in both cases, individuals with higher educational attainment (in particular if they have at least attained the secondary level) are less prone to acknowledge exclusionary practices. But the difference is more substantial in the case of untouchability (17 percentage points) than in the case of caste separation (9 percentage points).

[182] Some lower caste individuals also tended to refute untouchability since they work with individuals from different jatis and eat with them. It should also be noted that exclusionary caste practices extend beyond Hindus: in Uttar Pradesh, about 18 per cent of Muslims admit practicing untouchability, and it amounts to 29 per cent when including caste separation practices, so these proportions are comparable to exclusionary caste practices among Dalits.

[183] See the appendix of the chapter for the presentation of the full coefficients of the models. In Figure 9.3, the probabilities are predicted for varying educational attainments at the reference modalities of other independent variables, i.e., for a 48-years-old man, belonging to the Agricultural caste and not working as a Farmer. For robustness checks, predicted probabilities were computed for different fixed modalities with varying educational attainments and they never change the interpretation provided in this chapter. In the appendix, I also formally test the significance of the magnitude difference in caste separation acknowledgements using bootstrap confidence intervals on the difference between the predicted probability of caste separation for non-literates compared with other education levels.

*Figure 9.3 - Predicted probabilities of acknowledging untouchability or caste separation depending on educational attainment in Uttar Pradesh*




*Note: Predicted probabilities are derived from two logistic binomial models where the dependent variable is acknowledging untouchability and acknowledging caste separation (including untouchability). The independent variables include educational attainment, caste position (using the categories of Chapter 5), residential area, class (simplified as farmer or not), age and sex of the household head. Models with an interaction term between caste and educational attainment were tested but were not more parsimonious. The predicted probabilities are computed for a man of mean age (48 years old), not engaged in farming, living in a rural area and belonging to the Agricultural caste. The full models can be found in the appendix of the chapter.*

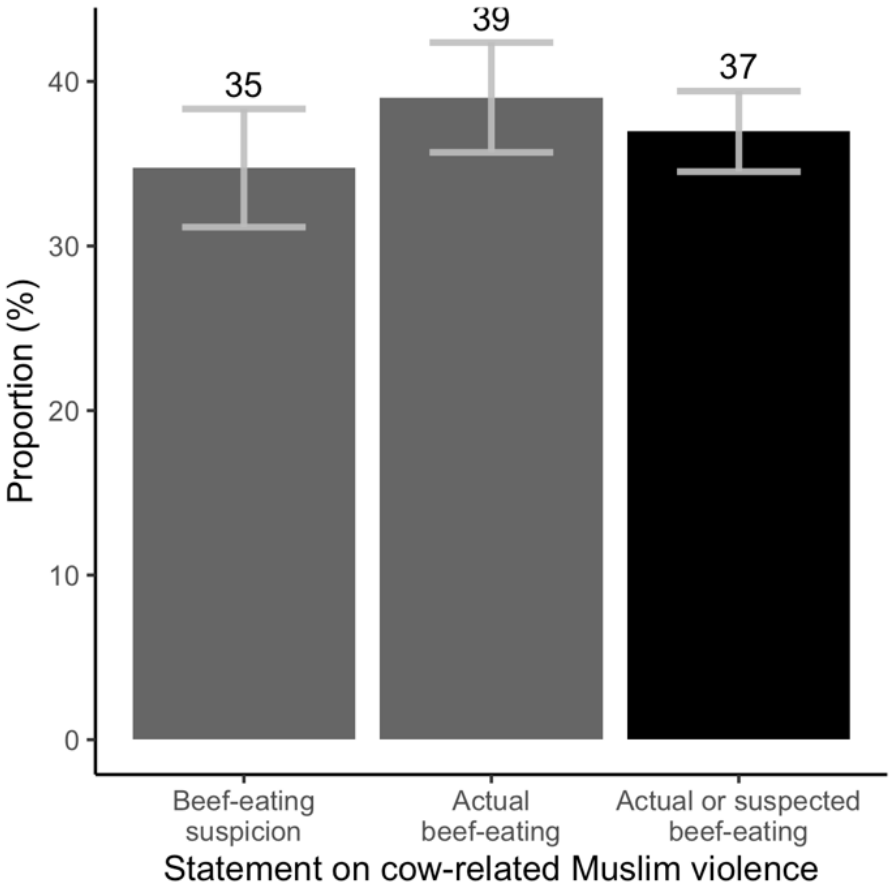
*Source: Indian Human Development Survey II (2011-2012), Hindus in Uttar Pradesh.*

These models suggest that individuals with higher education levels are less prone to name their practices of caste exclusion as untouchability. Yet, the impact of educational attainment is more marginal when examining general acknowledgements of caste exclusion.

### b) Cow protection as legitimizing violence against Muslims

A large fraction of Hindu individuals does not condemn and support lynching episodes. The support for lynching violence represents more than a third and almost two fifths of Hindus (Figure 9.4). It is only marginally lower in case where beef consumption was only suspected. Besides, the support for violence is similar among the different Hindu castes (Figure 9.5): only upper castes (i.e., Merchant and Lordly castes, excluding Brahmins) tend to be slightly more supportive of violence against Muslims but the difference is not significant.

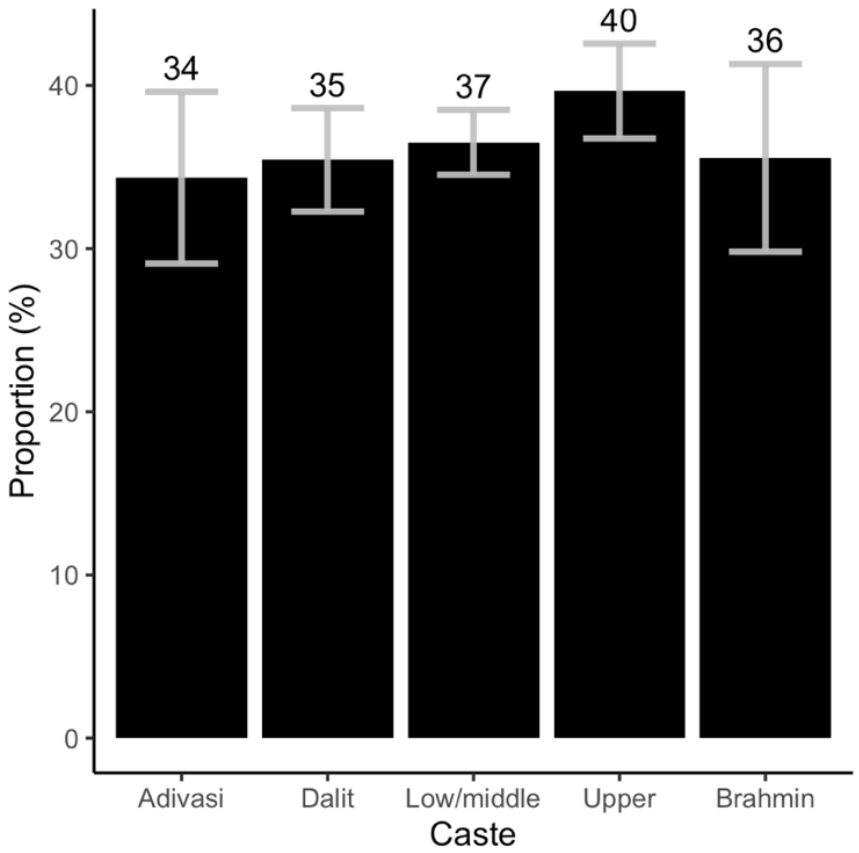
*Figure 9.4 - Proportion of Hindus legitimizing violence against Muslims in case of suspected or actual beef consumption among Hindus*




*Note: Respondents were asked whether they legitimize violence against Muslims in case of beef-eating suspicion (first bar) or actual beef-eating (second bar) and I aggregate responses in the third bar.*

*Source: Social Attitudes Research India Survey, 2016, Hindus in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Bihar.*

*Figure 9.5 - Proportion of Hindus legitimizing violence against Muslims in case of suspected or actual beef consumption among different Hindu castes*

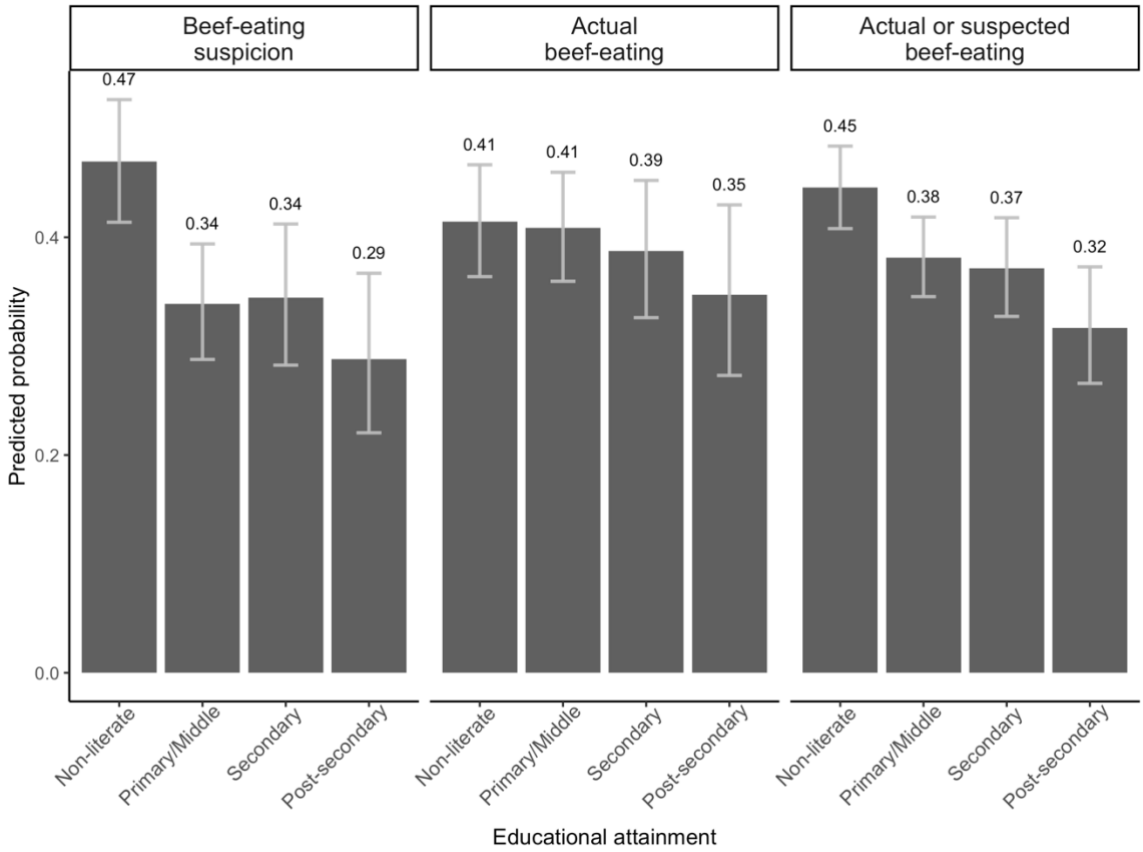



*Note: Caste categories are the ones provided by the survey and hence differ from the ones presented in Chapter 5. Low/middle castes correspond more or less to Low and Agricultural castes, while Upper castes correspond to Merchant and Lordly castes.*

*Source: Social Attitudes Research India Survey, 2016, Hindus in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Bihar.*

Does educational attainment reduce the support – or the absence of condemnation – for violence against Muslims? I model the odds of declaring that violence against Muslims is right in case they are suspected or have actually eaten beef. I also model a third model including both cases. The predicted probabilities of supporting violence against Muslims vary according to educational attainment in case of suspected beef consumption (Figure 9.6): individuals with higher educational attainment, and those holding a post-secondary degree more particularly, declare less frequently that violence against Muslims is right. Importantly, even among individuals holding a post-secondary degree, almost a third still legitimizes violence. Yet, non-literate individuals are substantially more prone to justify violence in these cases so that the difference is of 17 percentage points between the educational levels.

*Figure 9.6 - Predicted probabilities of legitimizing violence against Muslims in case of suspected or actual beef consumption, depending on educational attainment*




*Note: Predicted probabilities are derived from three logistic binomial models where the dependent variable is acknowledging violence against Muslims in case of beef-eating suspicion, actual beef-eating or any of these cases. The independent variables include educational attainment, caste position (using the categories of Figure 9.5), residential area, State of residence, age, and sex of the respondent. Models with an interaction term between caste and educational attainment were tested but were not more parsimonious. The predicted probabilities are computed for a man of mean age (34 years old), living in a rural area in Bihar and belonging to a Hindu low/middle caste. The full models can be found in the appendix of the chapter.*

*Source: Social Attitudes Research India Survey, 2016, Hindus in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Bihar.*

If respondents are prompted with a case where Muslims have actually eaten beef, a higher educational attainment only marginally reduces the support for violence (the difference between non-literates and post-secondary attainment is of 6 percentage points) and it is not significant. Thus, in case of ascertained beef consumption, more than a third of Hindus, irrespective of their caste and educational attainment, support lynching cases against Muslims.

Caste and religious boundary drawing, asked about in the form of stigmatization and violence legitimation in these surveys, are highly prevalent among Hindus. The level of education only marginally changes the relation to these boundaries. The more educated do not name their exclusionary practices through a religious lens with respect to caste discrimination, and they are less likely to legitimize violence against Muslims only if it is unwarranted.

## *D - Conclusion: the guru, the scientist, and exclusionary practices*

In this chapter, I have exposed how vegetarian Hindus justify their diets when they have completed higher education levels. I have also examined whether these diets are less distinctive and exclusionary for individuals depending on their educational attainment.

Less educated respondents rely on inherited family values, routinized food practices and religious beliefs and rules to justify their diet. But higher educated respondents justify their vegetarian diet by rationalizing the Hindu orthopraxy. To put it clearly, the guru is supported by the scientist, and the economist and the lawmaker act as moral entrepreneurs (Becker, 1963) of vegetarianism. Higher educated vegetarians engage in different forms of rationalizations. They argue that religious rules have health benefits, and individuals reframe medical prescriptions of vegetarian diets (Sébastia, 2010, 2020). They rely on scientific popularization to emphasize ethical vegetarianism that values care for animal welfare, for the cow more particularly. They also engage with discourses about the utility of the cow to justify its non-ingestion. Finally, higher educated respondents often mention their reliance on legal regulations, more than religious rules. These scientific, material and formal rationalizations (Weber, 1978) secularize discourses but they also reinforce religious and caste practices. By engaging into these different diet rationalizations, higher educated respondents use various repertoires of justifications and hybridize different criteria to make sense of their religious and caste dispositions through their acquired reflexivity. These rationalizations show that religiously based vegetarianism and cow protection are not self-evident among the higher educated Hindus and they reflect the tension between inherited religious practices and secularized practices. The hybridity of repertoires of justifications reminds of Gandhi's considerations towards his diet, notably the debates he engaged in with the London Vegetarian

Society and later with his own followers in India, where religious rules were secularized yet not absent from his reflections.[184]

The rationalization of vegetarianism and cow protection also tends to hide that these practices are distinctive and that they are the result of caste and religious struggles. On the surface, the most educated vegetarians appear tolerant and would reject religious or caste stigmatization, especially when it is related to eating practices. In doing so, they conform to the image of open and casteless privileged middle classes (Deshpande, 2015). This discourse also allows a certain flexibility in judging one's family members', neighbors' or friends' occasional meat-eating practices. But this veil of tolerance masks acknowledged caste and religious exclusionary discourses. While untouchability may not be acknowledged in public spaces, it keeps existing as a private practice, especially if it is not labelled as such. Besides, violence against Muslims is rather legitimized, especially if it is based on an objective illegal ground, such a beef eating. Hence, vegetarianism, as well as the assertion of cow protection, are directly associated with exclusionary attitudes. They are only marginally lower among higher educated respondents, especially if these attitudes are not framed in terms of illegal, religiously-based, gratuitous acts. While the State apparatus indeed condemns untouchability in public spaces, it somehow condones private caste separation attitudes. Besides, the bans on cow slaughter provide enough legal justifications so that many Hindus including higher educated ones agree that justice be violently ensured by private militias. Both caste and religious boundaries are hence strongly asserted even among higher educated Hindus.

An important difference emerges between caste and religious prejudices. While caste stigma tends to be no longer publicly legitimized by so-called untouchability practices (although caste violence does exist), public attacks on Muslims appear disturbingly accepted. That almost two-fifths of the Hindus surveyed would legitimize a public lynching attack on Muslims reveals the popular legitimization of India as a "Hindu Rashtra," an Indian nation reduced to its Hindu population (Jaffrelot, 2021). These results point to the core of the electoral base on which Hindu nationalism, through the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, can be deployed. However, it is also clear that while the stigmatization of Muslims deploys homogeneously among the various Hindu castes, it does not mean that stigmatizing caste attitudes are left out. Hindu nationalism is at its core hierarchical and upper caste based. In this sense, Muslims

[184] A collection of his transcribed speeches and writings on vegetarianism and cow protection has been edited in French (Gandhi, 2018). These considerations are also found in his autobiography (Gandhi, 2006).

cannot adequately be described as the "new untouchables," since caste and religious stigmatizations too persist.

# Conclusion

## *A - Summary*

Far from solely being a religious prescription following written, fixed and immutable rules, being a vegetarian in India is the result of social norms embedded in power relations. Analyzing the social dynamics of vegetarianism makes it possible to grasp processes of appropriation, claims and assignment of symbolic and material resources within the social stratification. Therefore, this dissertation set out to study the association between this status marker – vegetarianism – and ascriptive categories – caste and religion, and how they are associated with achieved positions, i.e., class.

After a historical account of the emergence of vegetarianism and cow protection as components of Brahmin cultural hegemony, and therefore of the cohesion of the Hindu category, I underlined three contemporary tensions surrounding these markers in India. First, the strengthening of the protection of the cow tends to reinforce Brahmin and Hindu cultural domination, and second, the statutory claims of the Dalit lower castes around beef eating as an activist repertoire challenge it. Third, the transformations of the social structure and the emergence – at least discursively – of a middle class question the continued salience of the ascriptive categories of caste and religion. I therefore proposed a theoretical framework that draws on the study of the symbolic and social boundaries of vegetarianism to understand how this diet articulates with ascribed and achieved positions. Using a boundary framework allows to depart from an essentializing view of caste as the sole determinant of cultural behaviors – a notable pitfall of colonial anthropology (Bayly, 2001) – without either falling into the trap of seeing caste as a cognitive construction that is not consequential for the allocation of resources – what some postcolonial critiques end up assuming (Dirks, 2001). I operationalized this framework through the statistical analysis of large quantitative surveys and through interviews conducted in Uttar Pradesh, a region in northern India that is considered part of the “cow belt.”

In the second part of the dissertation, I examined the boundaries of the objects under scrutiny: vegetarianism, caste, and class. I highlighted discrepancies between one’s effective, claimed and perceived diet according to caste position and importantly according to one’s position within the household. Secrecy is a key element of meaty habits so that one’s declared practices reflect before all the salience and the adherence to vegetarian norms. Besides, I also noted a relative fluidity in the boundary of vegetarianism. Its contraction – where for instance one is deemed vegetarian while consuming eggs – reveals a certain relaxation of group norms. On the contrary, its expansion – where for instance meat is negatively equated with alcohol or cigarette consumptions – denotes a higher adherence to this norm. But overall, the cultural

realm and public institutions contribute to reassert the stability of the norm of vegetarianism and to ensure its legitimizing role.

Then, I scrutinized caste categories. I highlighted how the most commonplace quantitative measures of caste rely on administrative boundaries that unsatisfactorily quantify the social reality of caste. Depending on the question framing, surveys indeed measure different caste dimensions that need to be clarified. I argued that open-ended questions on jati belonging are best suited to assess processes of social closure and to study caste as a matrix of socialization. Inspired by recent studies on ethnicity (Wimmer, 2013), I presented a methodological framework to operationalize caste using the large number of jati self-identifications and a conceptually defined caste nomenclature. This categorization synthetically groups jatis according to religious and occupational assumed hierarchical position, while considering processes of ethnicization and contestations of these orders of worth. This methodological procedure aims at avoiding the risk of essentializing and reifying caste boundaries while conducting a statistical analysis.

Finally, in the last chapter of this part, I discussed and empirically operationalized material wealth, occupational class and educational attainment as markers of achievement in the social stratification. By crossing these different dimensions with the ascriptive categories of caste and religion, I have emphasized that caste boundaries correspond to dynamic – in particular, intergenerational – processes of appropriation and accumulation of economic resources. Conversely, one's ascribed position also influences one's perceived subjective class position. I hence outlined both the high congruence and at the same time relative slack between ascribed and achieved positions.

Thus, the discrepancies between an ascribed dominated position and an achieved dominant position, and vice versa, can feed inconsistencies in status, which calls for examining the role of vegetarianism as a status marker legitimizing an achieved position. I quantitatively tested this process of cultural emulation in the third part of the dissertation. After adjusting for caste position, I showed that increases in material wealth, occupational class and educational attainment are associated with a higher adherence to vegetarianism among Hindu individuals. This effect is more uniform and stronger for women and all the more so when accounting for their partner's achieved position. It suggests a gendered division of labor within the household in ensuring status positions, where women are the gatekeepers of the group's honor. Importantly, when examining diets intergenerationally, hysteresis effects (Bourdieu and Chartier, 2010) – related to family-level food socialization – and lifecycle effects are important, but they do not challenge the role of vegetarianism in status-seeking strategies. Cultural

emulation also corresponds to a mechanism of social conformity given the social closure of Brahmins in the top occupational positions.

Further, I then hypothesized that status-seeking strategies all the more build on the adherence to vegetarianism that they are salient in the local social order. I have uncovered the importance of socio-spatial configurations that take stock of the congruence between ascribed and achieved positions. The vegetarian social order is especially salient when caste categories adhering to vegetarianism are locally socioeconomically better-off. Besides, Hindu individuals adhere more to vegetarianism in cases where Muslims and even low caste Dalits are locally socioeconomically better-off. This importantly points to a reactive strategy in which vegetarianism serves as a symbolic boundary to strengthen the group boundary of the Hindus. Thus, vegetarianism also corresponds to a strategy of religious boundary-making to respond to perceived status threats from other minorities. Meanwhile, Muslims' diets also vary according to their relative socioeconomic level. Indeed, Muslims tend to engage less frequently in bovine meat consumption if they are not locally socioeconomically better-off. This points that they respond more frequently to Hindu cultural hegemony stigmatizing them if they are not socioeconomically better-off. Inversely, a relatively higher socioeconomic position "protects" them from responding to cow-related stigmatization processes.

Overall, this part empirically distances from the risk of essentializing caste lifestyles. By showing the role of positional and contextual factors in the adherence to vegetarianism, I have outlined the importance of examining achieved position along with ascribed status. In doing so, one sees that caste is both central and largely insufficient in studying vegetarianism and that other key dimensions of the social stratification should be taken into account.

In the final part of the dissertation, I centered the analysis on the justifications of being vegetarian. I examined the positive and negative forms of valorizing vegetarianism and I questioned in particular whether individuals draw different justifications according to their achieved position. Do individuals explicitly associate vegetarianism with religious values, such as ascetism? Do they explicitly associate vegetarianism with caste positions? How does it correlate to caste and religious prejudice?

First, I analyzed how meaty habits are correlated with other food practices. The social space of food practices reveals a strong segmentation of food habits according to the household socioeconomic conditions. The economic gradient structurally divides households between rich and poor diets. Interestingly, non-vegetarian practices do not correlate to this structural dimension, but determines a specific caste and religious gradient. Yet, lower castes and Muslims are structurally more frequently poor so that their food practices are both

characterized by poor and non-vegetarian practices. This reflects in discourses by the use of a "poor" and "rich" binary categorization that at times distinguishes "non-veg" from "veg" individuals. More affluent vegetarian individuals then disqualify non-vegetarians along this line, notably by considering that meat eating reflects misuses in household budget allocations by buying meat. Besides, meat eating is at the same time perceived as lower-caste or Muslim practices, so that meat-eating practices associated with ascribed categories are rendered responsible of their condition of poverty and contribute to naturalize achieved inequalities. Thus, I pointed that not only do prejudices related to ascriptive position are masked by criteria related to achieved position, but also that class markers reinforce ascriptive inequality.

Finally, in the last chapter, I examined how the adherence to vegetarianism is associated with caste and religious exclusionary attitudes. In particular, I focused on higher educated respondents to understand the way in which they justify vegetarianism and cow protection. I revealed how rationalized discourses, that either use an economic reasoning or pseudo-scientific arguments, either insist on the legal framework, are at the core of the support for these attitudes and practices. In doing so, the higher educated respondents distance themselves from the idea of vegetarianism and cow protection being traditional or status-related practices. Besides, while higher educated respondents tend to less frequently legitimize caste and religious exclusionary attitudes, these rationalizations rather support than challenge stigmatizing attitudes. Behind the veil of casteless and religiousless justifications for vegetarianism and cow protection, these practices and attitudes are thus highly distinctive and exclusionary. The last chapter outlines an Indian social space in which social boundaries and violence based on food prejudices – specially to target Muslims – are highly routinised.

## *B - Contributions*

This work has brought to light two major theoretical contributions.

First, the research contributes to the sociology of social stratification by outlining the interplay between ascribed and achieved inequalities in processes of resource accumulation and appropriation. In a context of heavily rising economic inequalities and of the emergence of so-called middle classes, I have pointed how ascribed privileges maintain and reproduce. Ascribed hierarchies continue to determine social life chances and lifestyles attached to the most privileged categories, which still shape status dynamics. As such, "new middle classes" – as they are labelled in the Indian public sphere to denote the categories that benefitted from the economic liberalization from the 1990s onwards – are certainly most distinctive in their effort to reframe – and therefore, legitimize – practices and values associated with ascribed

categories. Self-identification with the "middle class" thus makes it possible to deny the privileged conditions of access to dominant positions, while naturalizing and disseminating the codes of the most privileged ascribed categories. Though the positive valuation of vegetarianism could have been overturned by the global consumerism to which dominant fractions are more and more attached, animal welfare, dietary concerns and even environmentalism allow the repertoires of justification of this status marker to remain significant.

At the same time, caste privilege is also masked by efforts to homogenize the Hindu religious category, in opposition to other religious minorities, especially Muslims. The insistence on a polarization between Hindus and Muslims makes it possible to pretend that the Hindu category is a homogeneous group when in fact it includes categories with very different privileges and lifestyles. Thus, the adoption of Brahmanical codes and values is as much a response to statutory strategies as it is an effort to consolidate the boundaries of the Hindu group. It is no coincidence that Muslims tend to declare less often to be "middle class." Marginalized socioeconomically, they are also symbolically excluded as they are pointed at as vilified adversaries in the social integration narrative.

Given the substantial legacy of ascribed privilege in a context of rapid structural transformations, this contribution has an important consequence for cultural stratification in geographical contexts outside India: ignoring ascribed categories in studying social closure that helps securing group honor may overlook substantial cultural segmentation processes. Including this dimension of social stratification may be inspired by the statistical research design regarding caste, that I partly drew from Wimmer (2013), of which two points are particularly significant. First, by drawing on open-ended self-identifications, I avoided the use of imposed and possibly meaningless categories. Second, I used quantitative tools that avoid the reification of caste. In doing so, I defended the use of a caste nomenclature, but I was also cautious in using these large categories as units of analysis and by examining the internal diversity attached to conceptually defined boundaries. Open-ended questions in the study of ethno-racial categories are more and more advocated to understand whether they are consequential regarding social life chances, and this framework may be of some use outside India as well. In particular, I think of geographical contexts in which surveyors have noted the rising number of individuals identifying as multiracial – such as in the United States or in Brazil – and thus rendering existing closed-ended answers meaningless, or contexts in which these questions are not commonly asked and closed-ended categories are therefore not routinized in surveys – such as in France.

The second theoretical contribution relates to the sociology of culture and to the specificities of studying food as a cultural object. While disciplinary boundaries often imply that food is understood in its symbolic dimensions by anthropological approaches, on the other hand this realm is more often apprehended in its material reality by studies in nutrition. Yet, these two dimensions interrelate and considering both shows that the economic cost and nutritive aspects of food affect the symbolic classification struggles that shape the vegetarian versus non-vegetarian boundaries.

Further, food is a cultural object that is physically attached to its consumers since it is bodily ingested. As such, logics of cultural "tastes" are not only metaphorical. Stating this is not only a literary remark: it summarizes how food cultural distinctions are less subject to social change – food taste is more routinized and logics of family inheritance are substantial – and how they imply stronger prejudice towards the social categories that engage into one's disliked food practices. Judgements on who eats what are thus influenced by one's experience with food, whether it relates to sought-for or rejected food items. For many Hindu individuals, Muslim stigmatization efficiently draws on cow protection as this religious category is depicted as cruel.

Besides, food is a common cultural realm used to essentialize individuals according to one's regional, ascribed or achieved categories of belonging. This process of essentialization is commonly conducted by individuals according to their alleged observations of others. Thus, symbolic boundary-drawing relating to food tend to be more long-lasting than for other cultural domains. As I exposed in the dissertation, these essentialization processes may therefore naturalize others' perceived conditions, in particular to reinforce their dominated position. The usefulness of mixed methods is then that they are able to confront these discourses with a statistical analysis of the objective conditions associated with food lifestyles, whether by structural analyses – which bring out individuals at the average points of their social properties – or by "other things held constant" analyses (regression analyses) – which allow probabilistic reasonings on the social determinants of food practices.

Finally, perhaps more clearly than for other cultural objects, food appears as many-ended. Individuals attribute different meanings to it, along the spectrum between biological needs and symbolic distinctions. These values intertwine and respond to each other in a mutually reinforcing way. I have presented here some aspects that make vegetarianism a "polytelic" object in the sense defined by Bouglé (1914). Indeed, the convergence between different meanings attributed to this diet – ranging from a religious, economic, political, dietetic to an environmental nature – favors the centrality of vegetarianism in social relations, as it

plays a key role in social dynamics of status, integration and stigmatization in contemporary India.

# Appendices

# Appendix A – Complementary elements for Chapter 2

## *A - Fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh*

*Table A.1 – Description of interviewees conducted in Uttar Pradesh*

| Name (interview number) | Ascribed category (caste/religion) | Occupational class | Material wealth position | Location | Sex | Declared diet | Interview assistant | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Prithi (1)** | Merchant (Talwar, Punjabi Khatri) | Professional (teacher in English medium school) | Richer | Socioeconomic mixed neighborhood in Lucknow | Female | Nonveg | Monish | 2018-09-16 |
| **Manoj (2)** | Brahmin | Clerical (book seller representative) | Intermediary | Socioeconomic mixed neighborhood in Lucknow | Male | Veg | Monish | 2018-09-16 |
| **Ankit (3)** | Merchant (Marwari) | Clerical (business owner, including restaurants) | Richest | Gated community in an affluent neighborhood in the North of Lucknow | Male | Nonveg | Monish | 2018-09-16 |
| **Sharad (4)** | Brahmin | Professional (sub-editor in a regional Hindi newspaper) | Intermediary | Old Lucknow (city center, in a Muslim-majority neighborhood) | Male | Veg | Monish | 2018-09-17 |
| **Rekha (5)** | Brahmin | Higher vocational (home snacks making) | Richest | Affluent neighborhood in the South of Lucknow | Female | Veg | None | 2018-09-17 |
| **Faisal (6)** | Muslim | Higher vocational (Partner in fast-food business) | Poorest | Affluent neighborhood in the South of Lucknow | Male | Nonveg | None | 2018-09-17 |
| **Vinu (7)** | Merchant (Punjabi) | Clerical (restaurant) | Poorest | Affluent neighborhood in the South of Lucknow | Male | Nonveg | None | 2018-09-17 |
| **Heena (8)** | Muslim | Professional (part-time teacher) | Richer | Affluent residential area in Lucknow | Female | Nonveg | Monish | 2018-09-18 |
| **Suer (9)** | Low (Darzi) | Higher vocational (shop helper) | Poorest | Mixed area in Lucknow | Male | Nonveg | Monish | 2018-09-18 |
| **Ramji (10)** | Agricultural (Yadav) | Professional (operator clinician in clinic) | Intermediary | Old Lucknow (city center, in a Muslim-majority neighborhood) | Male | Veg (with eggs) | Monish | 2018-09-18 |
| **Swapnil (11)** | Lordly (Kayasth) | Professional (lawyer in private firm) | Richest | Affluent residence in the North of Lucknow | Male | Nonveg | None | 2018-09-18 |
| **Saumya (12)** | Brahmin | Clerical (business owner, food company) | Richest | Affluent residence in the North of Lucknow | Female | Veg | None | 2018-09-19 |
| **Prasad (13)** | Agricultural (Chaurasia) | Higher vocational (pan/tobacco seller, tenant) | Intermediary | Mixed are in Lucknow city | Male | Nonveg | Monish | 2018-09-20 |
| **Renuka (14)** | Brahmin | Higher vocational (husband in government electricity department) | Richer | Mixed are in Lucknow city | Female | Veg | Monish | 2018-09-22 |
| **Ajay (15)** | Lordly (Kayasth) | Clerical (student) | Richest | Mixed are in Lucknow city | Male | Nonveg | Monish | 2018-09-22 |
| **Angely and Rajindr (16)** | Dalit (Rawat) | Professional (student) | Richer | Lucknow city (Muslim-dominated) | Female+Male | Nonveg | Monish | 2018-09-23 |
| **Renu and Adhira (17)** | Brahmin | Professional (housewife, graduated as a charter accountant, husband as well) | Richest | Lucknow city (Muslim-dominated) | Female (x2) | Nonveg | Monish | 2018-09-23 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pranav (18)** | Merchant caste | Professional (teacher) | Richer | Hindu dominated neighborhood in Lucknow city | Male | Veg | Anil | 2018-10-19 |
| **Fakurdin (19)** | Muslim | Lower vocational (security guard) | Poor | Notified slum in Lucknow city | Male | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-10-19 |
| **Mohamad (20)** | Muslim | Laborer (garbage recycler) | Poorest | Unnotified slum in Lucknow city | Male | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-10-19 |
| **Ram (21)** | Low (Bhangi) | Lower vocational (cleaner) | Poorest | Unnotified slum in Lucknow city | Female | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-10-19 |
| **Halima (22)** | Muslim | Lower vocational (housewife, husband: cycle rickshaw puller) | Poorest | Unnotified slum in Lucknow city | Female | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-10-19 |
| **Prem (23)** | Low (Lonia) | Lower vocational (carpenter) | Intermediary | Notified slum in Lucknow city | Male | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-10-19 |
| **Parv and Rachit (24)** | Agricultural (Yadav) | Professional (medical doctor / farming) | Richer | Yadav-dominated village in Ghazipur district | Male | Nonveg | Rajit | 2018-10-22 |
| **Pyare (25)** | Low (Bhind) | Laborer (agriculture) | Poorest | Yadav-dominated village in Ghazipur district | Male | Nonveg | Rajit | 2018-10-22 |
| **Rohan (26)** | Agricultural (Yadav) | Professional (village doctor) | Poorest | Yadav-dominated village in Ghazipur district | Male | Nonveg | Rajit | 2018-10-22 |
| **Sofi (27)** | Muslim | Professional (musician) | Poorest | Muslim area in village in Ghazipur district | Male | Nonveg | Rajit | 2018-10-22 |
| **Rajees (28)** | Low (Kumhar/Prajapati) | Higher vocational (pottery maker / cook) | Poor | Semi-rural neighborhood in the South of Lucknow, former caste-segregation of lanes by caste names | Male | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-11-23 |
| **Rambabu (29)** | Brahmin | Clerical (retired, former fruit seller) | Intermediary | Semi-rural neighborhood in the South of Lucknow, former caste-segregation of lanes by caste names | Male | Veg | Anil | 2018-11-23 |
| **Anant (30)** | Merchant caste | Professional (construction company owner) | Richest | Semi-rural neighborhood in the South of Lucknow, former caste-segregation of lanes by caste names | Male | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-11-23 |
| **Ujagar (31)** | Agricultural (Yadav) | Farmer (dairy, also tea shop owner) | Intermediary | Semi-rural neighborhood in the South of Lucknow, former caste-segregation of lanes by caste names | Male | Veg | Anil | 2018-11-24 |
| **Kanshi (32)** | Dalit (Chamar) | Clerical (retired, former jail service) | Intermediary | Semi-rural neighborhood in the South of Lucknow, former caste-segregation of lanes by caste names | Male | Veg (with eggs) | Anil | 2018-11-24 |
| **Pawan (33)** | Dalit (Chamar) | Professional (medical doctor) | Intermediary | Semi-rural neighborhood in the South of Lucknow, former caste-segregation of lanes by caste names | Male | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-11-24 |
| **Rishan (34)** | Dalit (Pasi) | Laborer (painter, construction labor) | Poor | Semi-rural neighborhood in the South of Lucknow, former caste-segregation of lanes by caste names | Male | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-11-24 |
| **Rishi (35)** | Dalit (Pasi) | Laborer | Poor | Semi-rural neighborhood in the South of Lucknow, former caste-segregation of lanes by caste names | Male | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-11-24 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Rishik (36)** | Low (Kahar) | Lower vocational (domestic employee+husband:electric rickshaw puller) | Poorest | Unnotified slum in affluent neighborhood in the North of Lucknow | Female | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-11-25 |
| **Tanvi (37)** | Dalit (Chamar) | Clerical (shop owner and farming) | Intermediary | Rural neighborhood in the North of Lucknow | Female | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-11-25 |
| **Veeru (38)** | Dalit (Pasi) | Higher vocational (electrician) | Poor | Rural neighborhood in the North of Lucknow | Male | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-11-25 |
| **Anand (39)** | Lordly (Thakur) | Professional (consultant as District Nutrition Specialist) | Richest | Affluent residence in the North of Lucknow | Male | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-11-25 |
| **Sadhil (40)** | Muslim | Professional (local development agency head) | Richest | Old Lucknow (city center, in a Muslim-majority neighborhood) | Male | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-11-25 |
| **Gianthi (41)** | Low (Lohar) | Clerical (shop owner) | Poor | Old Lucknow (city center, in a Muslim-majority neighborhood) | Female | Nonveg | Anil | 2018-11-26 |
| **Rajee (42)** | Merchant (Gupta) | Professional (tuition teacher, father: ambulant ready-made clothes seller) | Intermediary | Old Lucknow (close to city center, rather poor) | Female | Veg (with eggs) | Anil | 2018-11-26 |
| **Jay (43)** | Low (Koeri) | Farmer | Poor | Rural area in Gorakhpur district (Yadav dominated) | Male | Nonveg | Javed | 2018-11-29 |
| **Anaisha (44)** | Dalit (Pasi) | Clerical (shop owner and farming) | Poorest | Rural area in Gorakhpur district ("Pasi Tola": Dalit area in Yadav-dominated village) | Female | Nonveg | Javed | 2018-11-29 |
| **Rajeesh (45)** | Brahmin | Farmer | Poor | Rural area in Gorakhpur district | Male | Veg | Javed | 2018-11-30 |
| **Ganesh (46)** | Low (Nishad) | Higher vocational (electrician) | Intermediary | Rural area in Gorakhpur district | Male | Nonveg | Javed | 2018-11-30 |
| **Multiple interventions (47)** | Dalit (Musshar) | Laborer (mostly agricultural) | Poorest | Rural area, Musshar neighborhood in village, Gorakhpur district | Male+Female | Nonveg | Javed | 2018-11-30 |
| **Sneha (48)** | Low (Kumhar/Prajapati) | Farmer | Poorest | Rural area in Mharajganj, close to Gorakhpur district | Female | Nonveg | Javed | 2018-12-01 |
| **Shiraji (49)** | Lordly (Thakur) | Professional (housewife, husband: former animal doctor) | Richest | Affluent neighborhood in Gorakhpur city (upper caste and Muslim inhabited) | Female | Nonveg | Javed | 2018-12-01 |
| **Durgaprasad (50)** | Agricultural (Yadav) | Professional (government teacher) | Richer | Semi-rural area in Gorakhpur district | Male | Veg | Javed | 2018-12-02 |
| **Bittu (51)** | Low (Nishad) | Clerical (housewife, husband: bank employee) | Intermediary | Affluent colony in Gorakhpur city | Female(+Male) | Nonveg | Javed | 2018-12-02 |
| **Parvez (52)** | Muslim | Higher vocational (cloth and tailor shop) | Richest | City center in Gorakhpur city | Male+Female | Nonveg | Javed | 2018-12-02 |
| **Iqbal (53)** | Muslim | Professional (medical doctor) | Poorest | City center in Gorakhpur city | Male | Nonveg | Javed | 2018-12-02 |
| **Raisa (54)** | Muslim | Laborer | Poorest | Muslim neighborhood in Aligarh city | Female(+Male) | Nonveg | Mujebur | 2019-03-22 |
| **Asif (55)** | Muslim | Higher vocational (electrician) | Richer | Muslim neighborhood in Aligarh city | Male | Nonveg | Mujebur | 2019-03-22 |
| **Mohamed (56)** | Muslim | Lower vocational (craftsman, petty hawker) | Poorest | Muslim neighborhood in Aligarh city | Male | Nonveg | Mujebur | 2019-03-22 |
| **Abdur (57)** | Muslim | Higher vocational (tailor) | Richer | Muslim neighborhood in Aligarh city | Male | Nonveg | Mujebur | 2019-03-22 |
| **Rahul (58)** | Dalit (Valmiki) | Lower vocational (rickshaw driver) | Poorest | Muslim neighborhood in Aligarh city | Male+Female | Nonveg | Mujebur | 2019-03-22 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Indal (59)** | Dalit (Valmiki) | Higher vocational (electricity) | Intermediary | Muslim neighborhood in Aligarh city | Male(+Female) | Nonveg | Mujebur | 2019-03-22 |
| **Anokhlal (60)** | Dalit (Jatav) | Laborer | Intermediary | Mixed neighborhood in Aligarh | Male | Veg | Mujebur | 2019-03-23 |
| **Amar (61)** | Dalit (Jatav) | Laborer (construction worker) | Poorest | Mixed neighborhood in Aligarh | Male | Veg | Mujebur | 2019-03-23 |
| **Babulal (62)** | Low (Kumhar/Prajapati) | Laborer (retired) | Middle | Mixed neighborhood in Aligarh | Male | Nonveg | Mujebur | 2019-03-23 |
| **Akash (63)** | Dalit (Jatav) | Laborer (tile worker) | Poor | Mixed neighborhood in Aligarh | Male | Nonveg | Mujebur | 2019-03-23 |
| **Gulsher (64)** | Muslim | Farmer (dairy) | Intermediary | Mixed neighborhood in Aligarh | Male | Nonveg | Mujebur | 2019-03-29 |
| **Bablu (65)** | Low (Pal) | Farmer | Intermediary | Jat dominated village in Shamli district (close to Unn) | Male | Veg | Himanshu | 2019-03-29 |
| **Joni (66)** | Agricultural (Jat) | Farmer | Poor | Jat dominated village in Shamli district (close to Unn) | Male | Veg (with eggs) | Himanshu | 2019-03-29 |
| **Kishan (67)** | Lordly (Rajput) | Farmer (also village Pradhan) | Intermediary | Jat dominated village in Shamli district (close to Unn) | Male | Veg (with eggs) | Himanshu | 2019-03-29 |
| **Mahek (68)** | Lordly (Rajput) | Farmer | Intermediary | Jat dominated village in Shamli district (close to Unn) | Male | Veg | Himanshu | 2019-03-29 |
| **Jitender (69)** | Agricultural (Jat) | Higher vocational (electricity operator) | Poor | Jat dominated village in Shamli district (close to Unn) | Male | Veg (with eggs) | Himanshu | 2019-03-29 |
| **Sachin (70)** | Agricultural (Jat) | Higher vocational (electricity operator) | Intermediary | Jat dominated village in Shamli district (close to Unn) | Male | Veg (with eggs) | Himanshu | 2019-03-29 |
| **Madhav (71)** | Brahmin | Higher vocational (electricity engineer) | Richest | Jat dominated village in Shamli district (close to Unn) | Male | Veg | None | 2019-03-29 |
| **Abdur (72)** | Muslim | Farmer | Intermediary | City center in Meerut (Muslim dominated area) | Male | Nonveg | Himanshu | 2019-03-30 |
| **Mohammed (73)** | Muslim | Higher vocational (retired) | Poorest | City center in Meerut (Muslim dominated area) | Male | Nonveg | Himanshu | 2019-03-30 |
| **Kumar (74)** | Dalit (Valmiki) | Higher vocational (electrician) | Richer | Hindu dominated neighborhood in Meerut | Male | Nonveg | Himanshu | 2019-03-30 |
| **Vivek (75)** | Merchant (Banya) | Clerical (student, father:shopkeeper) | Intermediary | Hindu dominated neighborhood in Meerut | Male | Veg (with eggs) | Himanshu | 2019-03-30 |

*Note: Ascribed categories and occupational classes follow the categorization discussed in chapters 4 and 5. In case the individual does not declare any occupation (student, housewife), I may code following the partner's or father's occupation. The material wealth position is based on the geometric data analysis presented in Chapter 5 where interviewees from this survey are projected as "supplementary" individuals on the first factor. To ease the reading in the table, I categorized the coordinate of interviewees in this factor into five segments (from "Poorest" to "Richest"). Residential areas are briefly described depending on the elements I could collect during my fieldwork (mixed indicates a mixed religious composition, semi-rural indicates the absence of close agricultural land and rural indicates a close proximity to agricultural land).*

## *B - Interview guide*

**General note for interview assistants**

Follow as much as possible the different sections of this interview protocol. In the course of the interview, some topics might come up before they have been asked about. In that case, it is not necessary to repeat them.

If you have difficulty in asking about one question or if the respondent does not feel comfortable about it, try to reframe it, give explanations, but do not insist too much especially if the respondent feels offended. The questions are suggestions of formulations in English but feel free to adapt it (beyond translation).

Some answers are expected to be very short (especially in the section 'Current food practices') but others are expected to be a bit more developed (especially in the sections 'Current food beliefs', 'Meat controversies' and 'Reflections').

The interview protocol has been framed to be adapted to different households (Hindu, Muslim, low and more affluent class, rural or urban area). Hence, some questions might seem irrelevant in the course of the interview given the information already given. Also, questions on ahimsa and purity do not appear to be suitable to Muslim respondent; still, do not hesitate to ask about it, but in a more general sense, 'have you heard of it…'). The goal remains to interview primarily Hindu households.

Some questions might seem very commonplace but it is important to get the own words of the respondent on the topic.

**Presentation**

*I would like to start with a few questions about you. Tell me about you, can you introduce you? [Gather data on: household size (details on each member, is this a joint family? Who is the household head?), occupation (along with employment status), income breeders and sources, evaluation of total income, education of household members, parents' occupation and education. If some information is missing, leave it, they will be asked at the end of the interview.]*

**Food memories**

*When comparing what you eat these days with your growing up days, have food items and meals changed? How?*

*When you grew up, did you eat meat in your family? Did someone eat meat (which kind of meat)? Fish? Eggs? Milk products? Alcohol?*

**Current food practices**

*What is your favorite meal? Is it typical of this region?*

*Describe me what all you ate yesterday (all meals). Would you consider it a typical day?*

*How often do you yourself eat the following food items : daily, weekly, occasionally or never? (Questions from NFHS – Details on meat and last two items are added)*

*-Milk, curd or milk products?*

*-Pulses or beans?*

*-Dark green leafy vegetables?*

*-Fruits?*

*-Onions?*

*-Garlic?*

*-Eggs?*

*-Fish?*

*-Meat?*

*-Detail which meat (if answer is not never): chicken, mutton, goat, beef, other meats.*

On meat consumption, do not hesitate to ask WHY at this point, and it will be further enquired later.

*-Fried foods?*

*-Aerated drinks (soda)?*

*-Packaged food? (Maggie, … ask for details)*

*-Alcohol?*

*-Cigarettes?*

*Where do you usually buy your grocery? Who usually buys? If relevant, do you grow some of your food yourself?*

*What about meat, what is its provenance? Is there a meat store in your area? If not, what is its nearest location? Where do people acquire meat from? Do you pass through this area sometimes?*

*How much does one kilo of chicken cost? One kilo of goat/mutton? One kilo of buffalo/beef? How have the meat prices changed in the last months/years? [Ask even if interviewee declares he does not consume]*

*Have you ever seen raw meat?*

*Who cooks at home? Who gets to decide what to eat?*

*Do all members eat the same meal? Do you take your meals together? Or does the person who cooks eats after the others?*

*Are there days when you abstain from certain food items? What food items? When (is it weekly or during certain festivals)? Why?*

*Tell me about eating at home versus eating out. How often do you go out to eat? Where do you go? Who do you go with (family members, friends)? Do you happen to eat meat [which kind of meat] / fish / eggs /milk products there? Do you drink alcohol there?*

*Do you attend religious festivals? What kind of food is served there? Is there meat? What about weddings? Have you ever seen meat served at a wedding?*

*To sum up, would you consider yourself veg or non-veg?*

To add here if person declares him-/herself vegetarian: *Do you wear leather shoes/clothes/bags? Where do you buy it from (craftsman, ready-made)*

**Circle's food practices**

*In particular, if the interviewee declared eating meat/drinking alcohol: do people of your **family/community/neighborhood** know about it? Have they ever expressed discontent about it?*

*Are you aware if other **household members** eating meat? / Drinking alcohol / Smoking? How did you come to know about it? Do you think it is ok?*

*Are you aware if some of your **neighbors** eating meat? / Drinking alcohol? What religion/caste do they belong to? How did you come to know about it? Do you think it is ok?*

*Would you be fine living in a neighborhood where people eat meat, buffalo/beef meat, or where all are vegetarians?*

*Are you aware if **members of your caste/religious community** eating meat, drinking alcohol? What do you think about it?*

*Are you aware if some people you know eat meat/drink alcohol? What religion/caste do they belong to?*

*What do you think of it?*

**Current food beliefs**

*Take a moment to think about the factors that contribute to how you make decisions about food eating. How would you rank those factors? [Pay attention to the relative importance of cost, convenience, access, taste, health, ahimsa, religion, caste, other factors?]*

*What does the word 'good' mean to you when related to food?*

*-How do you know what is good to eat or not?*

*Let's talk more specifically about meat if you will. Repeat the same questions applied on alcohol.*

*What does the word 'healthy' mean to you?*

*-How do you know what is healthy for you? Where did you find this information?*

*-How do you know what is unhealthy for you? Where did you find this information?*

*(in particular, do people refer here to the biomedical vocabulary – proteins, carbohydrates, etc – or to the ayurvedic values)*

*If this informant (e.g. a doctor, in school) tells you that consuming meat is healthy/unhealthy, do you consider it is true? Does it affect your food habit? Do you observe health improvement in following these instructions?*

*Animals are prohibited to eat in some communities because they claim they don't want to injure animals. They refer to non-violence (ahimsa) values. Have you heard about that? How do you know about it? Can you explain it to me? Do you consider these rules to be important for your food diet? Please provide examples.*

*Some food items are sometimes considered to be 'cold' or 'hot', the second should then be avoided. Have you heard about that? Can you explain it to me? Do you consider these rules to be important for your food diet? Please provide examples.*

*Some animals are prohibited to eat in some communities because they are considered to be impure. Have you heard about that? How do you know about it? Can you explain it to me? Do you consider these rules to be important for your food diet? Please provide examples.*

*Some people hold that eating meat makes you impure and renders you inferior in society. Do you agree with that statement? So, based on your own practices, do you consider yourself inferior/superior? Some people also assert that only Muslims eat meat, and to show that you are a true Hindu, one should not eat meat. What do you think of that statement?*

*Some people say that eating only vegetarian food makes you more virtuous. Do you agree with that?*

*Some people say that in order to have a balanced diet, you need meat. Do you agree with that?*

*Some people also say that meat provides strength, power, virility and even lead to sexual passion. Do you agree with that statement?*

*Some people also say eating meat is a way of displaying one's own wealth. Do you agree with that?*

*Some people also say that meat consumers are poor. Do you agree with that?*

**Meat controversies**

*Can you tell about the beef ban in Uttar Pradesh? What happened? Is beef available in your area at the moment? How have the beef meat prices changed?*

*Have you heard of the 'Gau Rakshaks'? What are they? What kind of activities do they have? Have they, or some similar association, been active in your area? What do you think of them? Have their activities changed your relations to others/your food habits?*

*Has any violence based on beef consumption or cattle smuggling occurred in your area/village/or have you heard about it? Are you related to one of such events? Have you received/watched videos about it (on social media, e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook)? Please, describe it to me. What do you think about it [Do you think these violence fair/unfair/justified/non-justified/well-deserved]? Has it changed your relations to others/your food habits?*

*[If relevant] Do you own cattle? Did you own cattle in the past? What do you do when your cattle have become unproductive? Do you sell it? To whom? Explain. Has the price of unproductive cattle changed after Gau Rakshaks incidents? The price of new cattle?*

**Reflections**

*If you had significantly more money for food, how do you think you would eat in your family? [Would you spend more on food, would buy different food items, of different qualities, from a different place] Why?*

*In particular, would you afford more meat/eggs/milk products? Precise.*

*[If children in household] how would you compare the decisions you make about food now to the time before you had children? What changed? In particular, did it change anything regarding your consumption of*

*meat/eggs/milk products?*

*If someone from the Indian government or from an Indian institute came to ask you similar questions on your food habits, do you think you would give the same answers?*

**Group practices**

**Religion & Caste*

*I would to talk a bit about your religious and caste (jati) identity if you will. How do you identify yourself, in terms of religion? In terms of community/caste/jati?*

*Is this community classified as backward? (If yes, precise; SC, ST, OBC).*

*If Hindu, among these categories, which one does* ***your community*** *fall in:*

*-Brahman*

*-Kayasth*

*-Lordly castes, Rajput*

*-Merchant caste, Baniya*

*-Agricultural caste, Kisan*

*-Lower castes*

*-Dalits*

*Among the communities listed above, which are the ones that consume meat, buff/beef meat? (You can express it in %, e.g. "10% of Brahmans eat meat").*

*Would you consider that your lifestyle, especially with respect to food, conforms to what would be expected from an individual of your community? How so?*

*What is typical about your community in terms of food? How do you conform – or not – to its food specificities?*

**Social class*

*In terms of social class, how do you position yourself? According to you, is your household poor/middle-class/comfortable? What does being "middle class" mean for you?*

*Would you consider that your lifestyle, especially with respect to food, conforms to what would be expected from an individual of your class? How so?*

*What is typical about your class in terms of food? How do you conform – or not – to its food specificities?*

**Social background and status**

*In your household, do you own:*

*-chairs and table (do not ask if it is visible)?*

*-a pressure cooker?*

*-a fridge?*

*-a mixer?*

*-a microwave oven?*

*-If household is affluent: fan, AC, motorbike, car?*

*Complete data on: household size (details on each member, is this a joint family? Who is the household head?), occupation (along with employment status), income breeders and sources, evaluation of total income (do not delve too much into it), education of household members, parents' occupation and education.*

*Do you own land? If yes, how much? Do you cultivate it yourself? Is this leased out? Do you lease in land?*

*Do you belong to a caste/religious/political association? [Name it]. Describe its activities?*

*Are you a member of any association? Describe its activities.*

*Do you visit temples/mosques? How often?*

*Would you eat food prepared by an untouchable?*

*Do you practice untouchability?*

*When you are sick, what do you do? Do you visit a doctor? Is it an ayurvedic doctor? How many times in the past year have you visited him?*

*Tell me about the location where you live:*

*If it is a village, can you tell me to which religion/caste is the land mainly owned by?*

*What is the prevalent community (religion/caste) living in your neighborhood? If it is a village, is this neighborhood separated from the others in the village?*

*Could you live in a Muslim-dominated area? Could you live in a Hindu-dominated area?*

*Do you consider that in your neighborhood/village, relations are peaceful between communities? Have in the recent past some events occurred aroused tensions between communities?*

*Have you always lived in the same location [name of the village/neighborhood]? Where did you live before? Tell me about this location.*

**Wrapping up**

*Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your family?*

*In order to complete my research, I would be interested in asking questions to other members in your household. Would you agree? I would also like to come back to ask you more questions, if you are fine with it?*

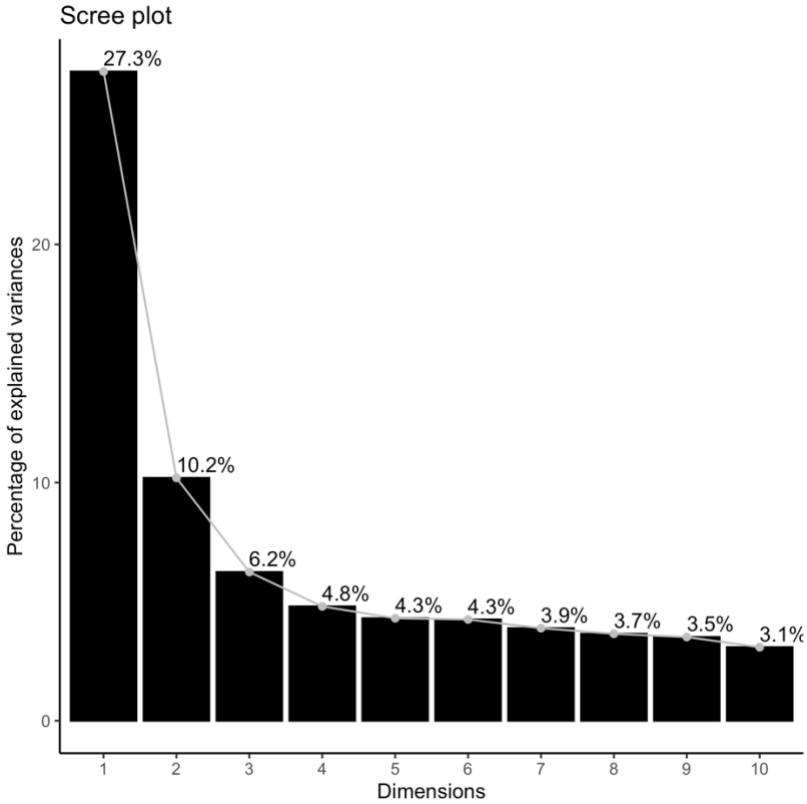
*Also, I would be very keen if you could think of two other households who would be willing to talk to me?*

*Thank you for all these information and for your time!*

# Appendix B – Complementary elements for Chapter 5

## *A - Geometric Data Analysis of the ownership of durable goods*

*Figure B.1 – Proportion of the MCA cloud inertia explained by the first ten factors*




*Note: The MCA of durable good ownership shows that the first factor accounts for a large share of the total variance of the cloud of households in the analysis which justifies that I analyze only this factor in the chapter (subsequent factors notably depict distinctions between rural / urban households).*

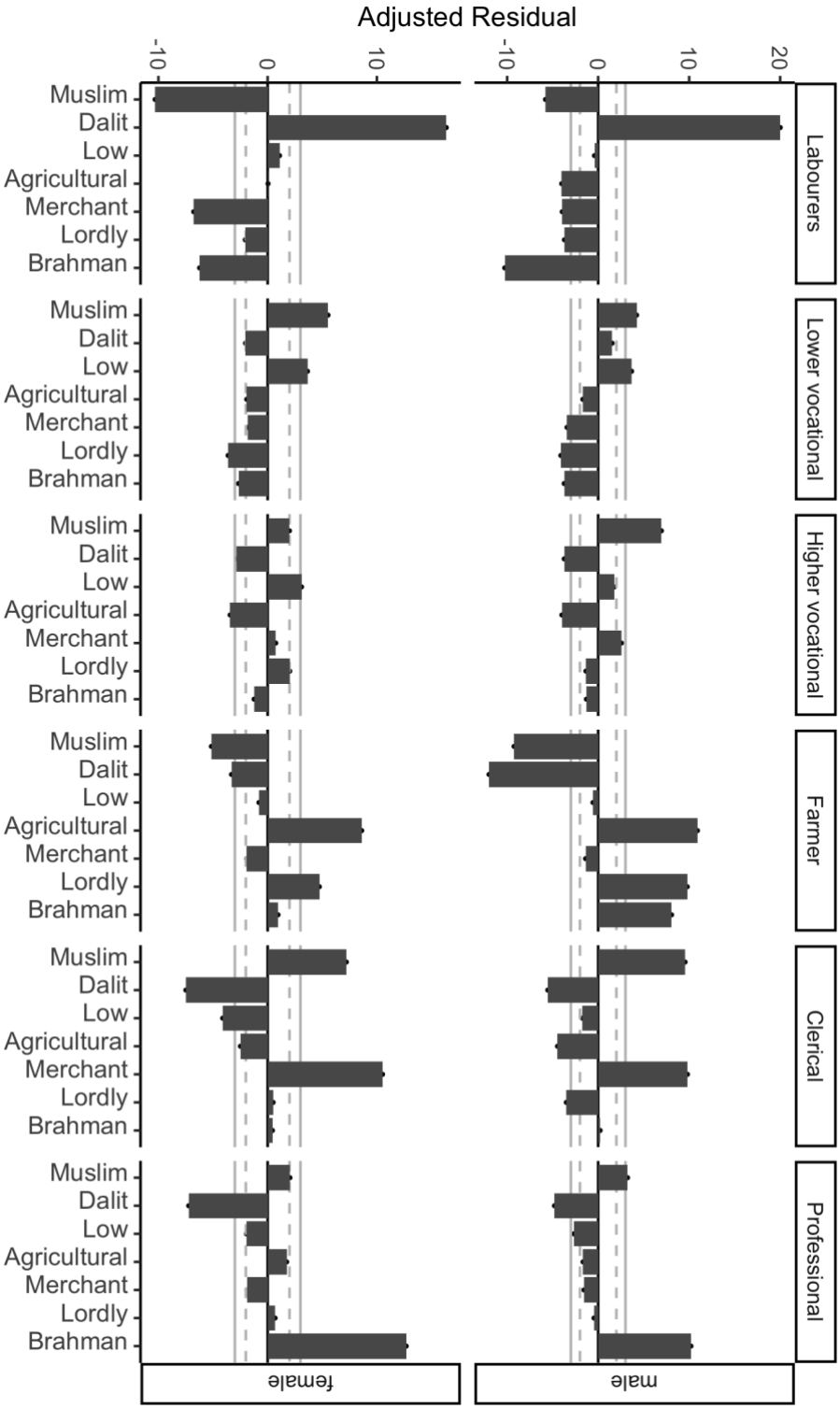
*Table B.1 – Statistical indicators of the modalities used in the construction of the MCA on the first factor*

| Variable | Modality | Coordinate | Contribution |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Fridge** | Fridge_Y | 1.94 | 7.8 |
| **Cooler** | Cooler_Y | 1.88 | 7.39 |
| **Cable_Dish_TV** | Cable_Dish_TV_Y | 1.56 | 6.81 |
| **Electronic_mixer** | Electronic_mixer_Y | 2.20 | 5.83 |
| **WashingMach** | WashingMach_Y | 2.76 | 5.8 |
| **Col_TV** | Col_TV_Y | 1.10 | 5.71 |
| **Motorbike** | Motorbike_Y | 1.30 | 5.1 |
| **Sewing** | Sewing_Y | 1.06 | 4.46 |
| **Fan** | Fan_Y | 0.69 | 3.52 |
| **Pressure_cooker** | Pressure_cooker_Y | 0.70 | 3.38 |
| **Fan** | Fan_N | -0.64 | 3.25 |
| **Computer** | Computer_Y | 2.97 | 3.05 |
| **Chairs_Table** | Chairs_Table_N | -0.64 | 3.01 |
| **Laptop** | Laptop_Y | 3.40 | 2.99 |
| **Car** | Car_Y | 2.69 | 2.81 |
| **Chairs_Table** | Chairs_Table_Y | 0.59 | 2.78 |
| **Pressure_cooker** | Pressure_cooker_N | -0.57 | 2.77 |
| **Col_TV** | Col_TV_N | -0.49 | 2.58 |
| **Clock** | Clock_N | -0.78 | 2.55 |
| ***AC*** | *AC_Y* | *3.73* | *1.99* |
| ***Mobile*** | *Mobile_N* | *-0.73* | *1.86* |
| ***Sewing*** | *Sewing_N* | *-0.37* | *1.54* |
| ***Credit_Card*** | *Credit_Card_Y* | *2.32* | *1.54* |
| ***Cable_Dish_TV*** | *Cable_Dish_TV_N* | *-0.35* | *1.52* |
| ***Microwave_oven*** | *Microwave_oven_Y* | *4.63* | *1.26* |
| ***Motorbike*** | *Motorbike_N* | *-0.32* | *1.25* |
| ***Phone*** | *Phone_Y* | *1.95* | *1.24* |
| ***Fridge*** | *Fridge_N* | *-0.30* | *1.22* |
| ***Cooler*** | *Cooler_N* | *-0.30* | *1.17* |
| ***Generator*** | *Generator_Y* | *2.60* | *1.13* |
| ***Clock*** | *Clock_Y* | *0.30* | *0.97* |
| ***Mobile*** | *Mobile_Y* | *0.22* | *0.56* |
| ***Electronic_mixer*** | *Electronic_mixer_N* | *-0.19* | *0.5* |
| ***WashingMach*** | *WashingMach_N* | *-0.15* | *0.3* |
| ***Car*** | *Car_N* | *-0.07* | *0.07* |
| ***Computer*** | *Computer_N* | *-0.07* | *0.07* |
| ***Laptop*** | *Laptop_N* | *-0.06* | *0.05* |
| ***Cycle*** | *Cycle_N* | *-0.10* | *0.04* |
| ***Credit_Card*** | *Credit_Card_N* | *-0.04* | *0.03* |
| ***Phone*** | *Phone_N* | *-0.04* | *0.03* |
| ***BW_TV*** | *BW_TV_Y* | *0.13* | *0.02* |
| ***AC*** | *AC_N* | *-0.04* | *0.02* |
| ***Cycle*** | *Cycle_Y* | *0.04* | *0.01* |
| ***Generator*** | *Generator_N* | *-0.03* | *0.01* |
| ***Cot*** | *Cot_N* | *-0.20* | *0.01* |
| ***Microwave_oven*** | *Microwave_oven_N* | *-0.02* | *0.01* |
| ***BW_TV*** | *BW_TV_N* | *-0.01* | *0* |
| ***Cot*** | *Cot_Y* | *0.00* | *0* |

*Note: Modalities are ordered in the table according to their contribution – i.e. to their relative importance in structuring the axis. Since there are 48 modalities, the average contribution is 2.08 so that the interpretation of the structure of the factor should preferably rely on the top rows of the table.*

## B - Association between ascribed categories and occupational classes

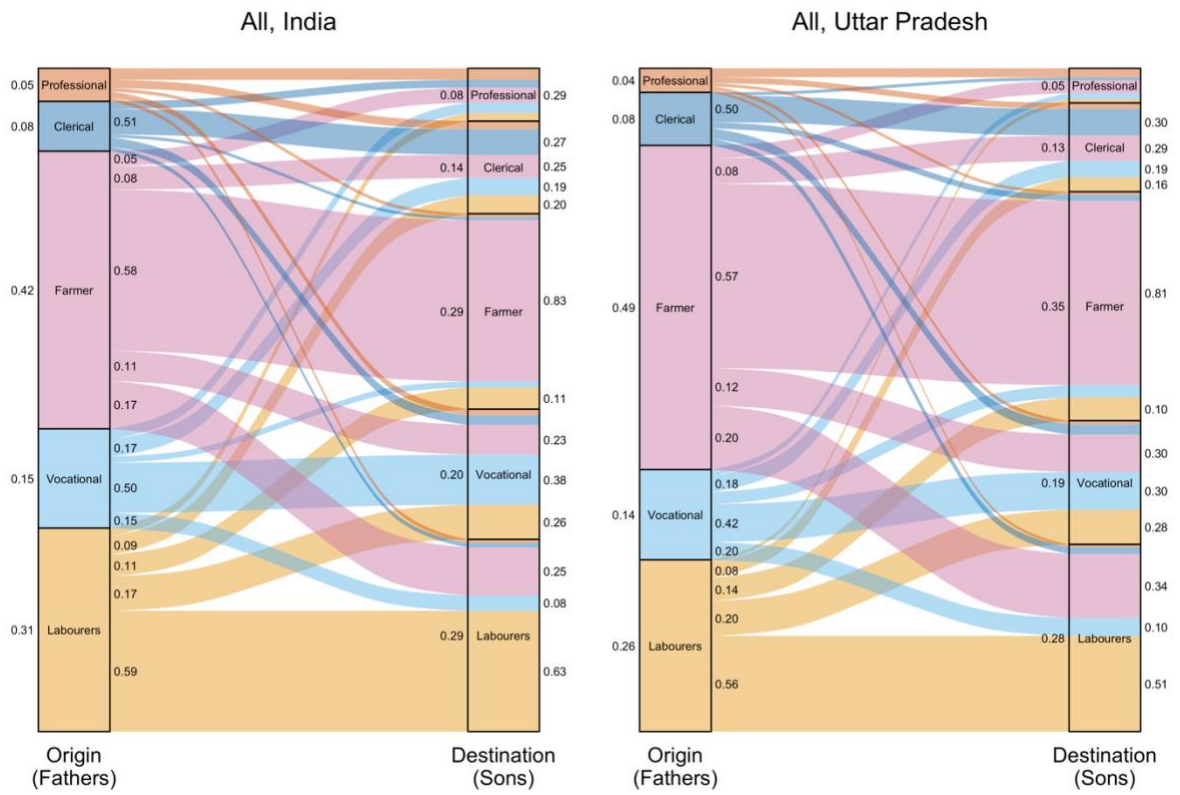
*Figure B.2 – Adjusted residuals of the ascribed position and occupational class association in Uttar Pradesh*




*Note: Positive (or negative) large adjusted residuals (greater than 2 or lower than -2, with 3 and -3, considered to be a very large difference) indicate that for a given cell there are more (or less) people than would be expected by chance alone.*

## C - Occupational class mobility

*Figure B.3 - Class origin and destination, (a) All India and (b) Uttar Pradesh, relative flows of mobility*

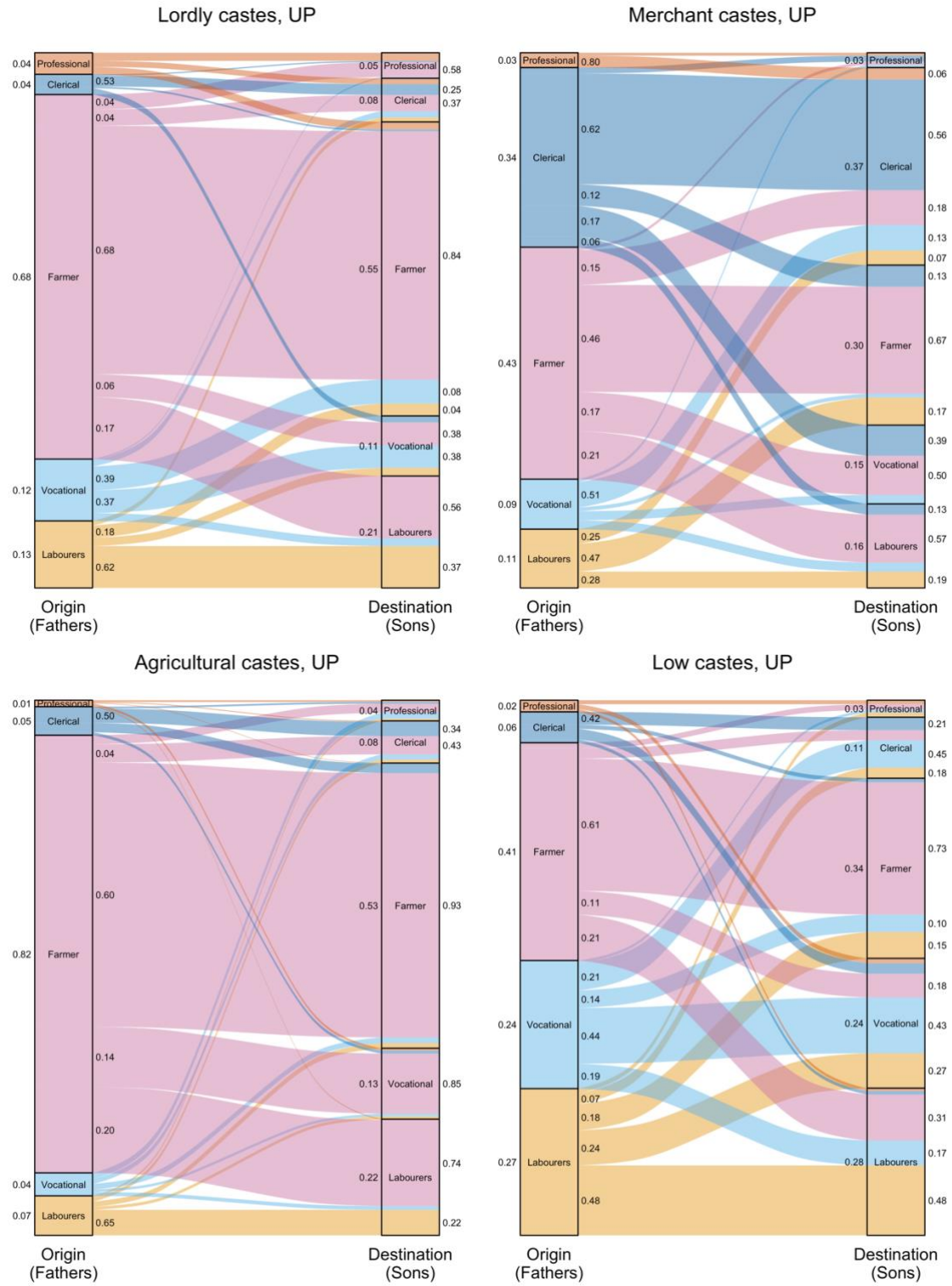



*Note: The numbers to the right of each class origin and destination give the proportion in each flow respective to the number of working male fathers or sons in the origin or destination category.*

*Sample: Male household heads above 20 years old declaring an occupation and residing in India (left) or Uttar Pradesh (right).*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

*Figure B.4 - Class origin and destination, (a) Lordly castes, (b) Merchant castes, (c) Agricultural castes and (d) Low castes, relative flows of mobility*

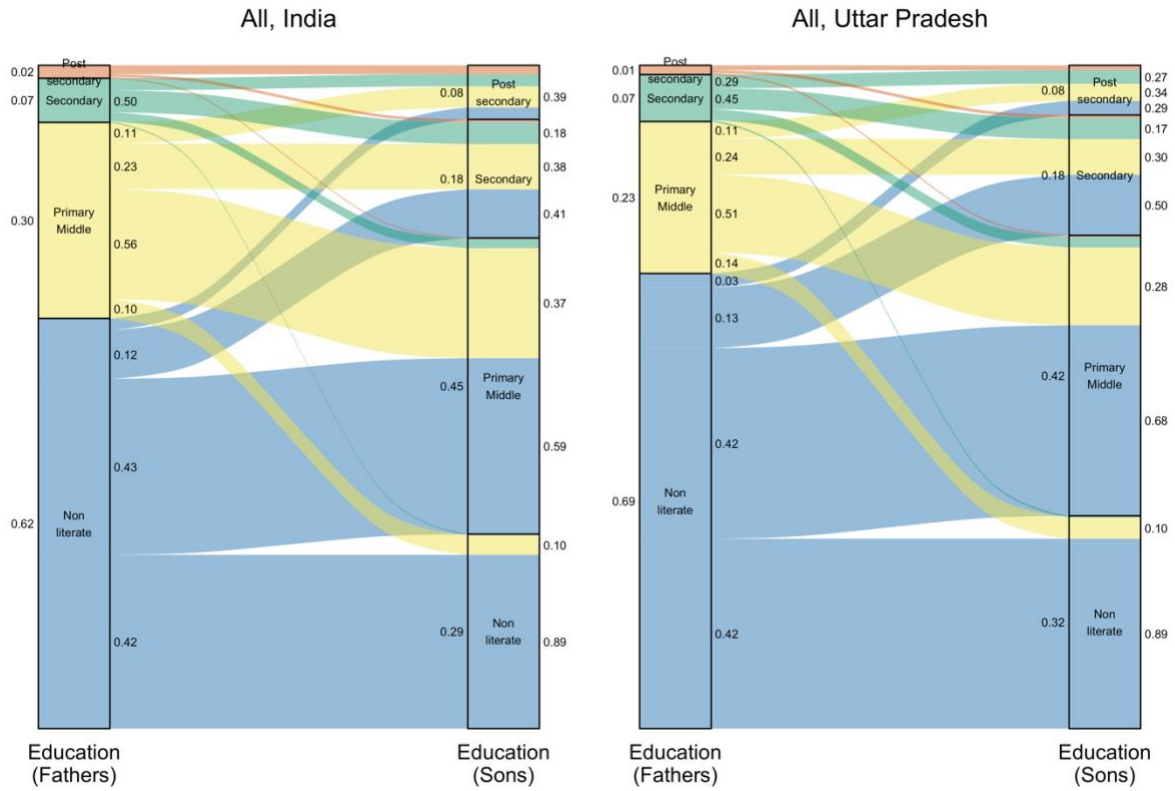



*Note: The numbers to the right of each class origin and destination give the proportion in each flow respective to the number of working male fathers or sons in the origin or destination category.*

*Sample: Male household heads above 20 years old declaring an occupation and residing in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

*Figure B.5 - Educational attainment origin and destination, (a) All India and (b) Uttar Pradesh, relative flows of mobility*

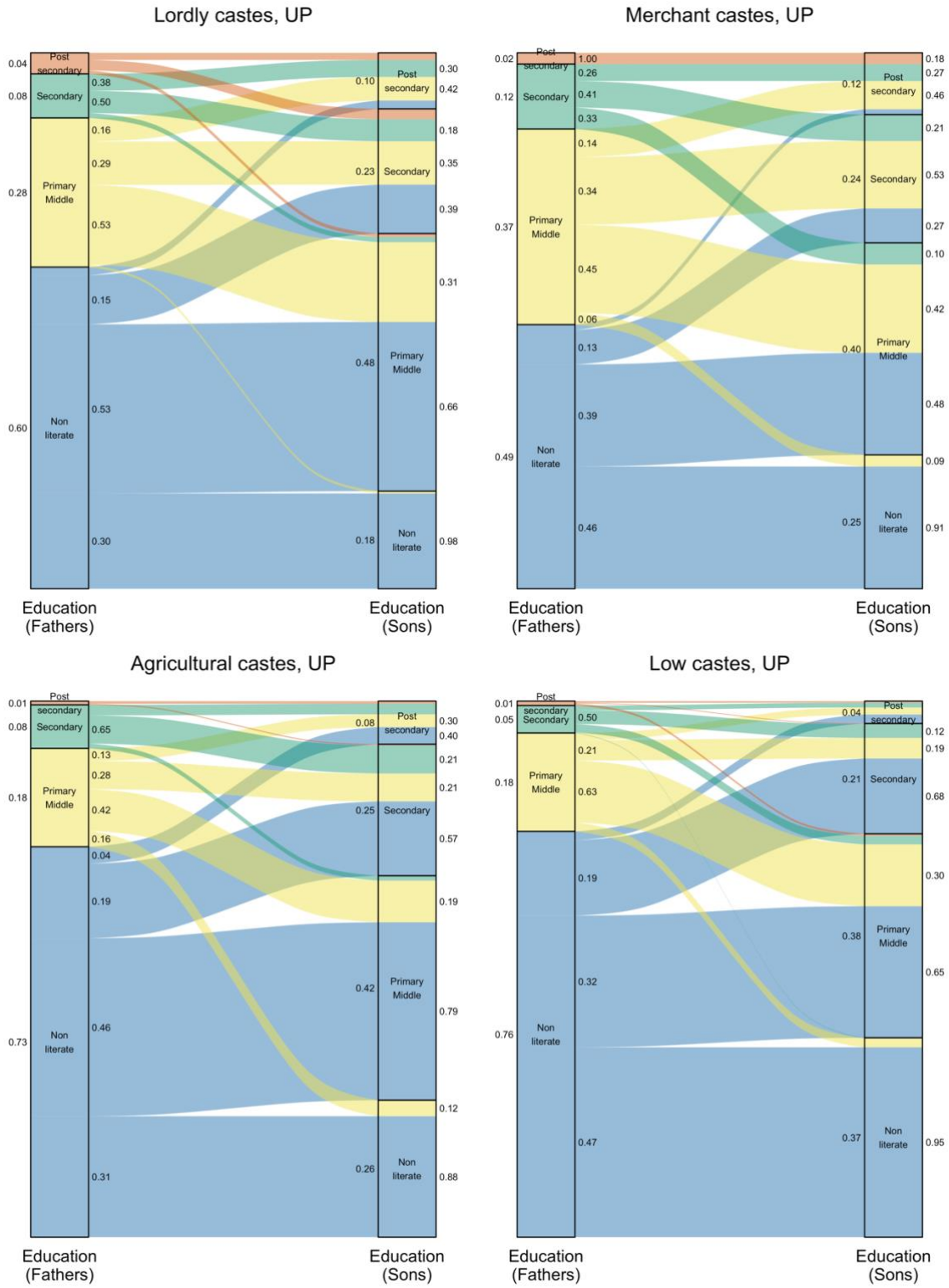



*Note: The numbers to the right of each class origin and destination give the proportion in each flow respective to the number of male fathers or sons in the origin or destination category.*

*Sample: Male household heads above 20 years old declaring an occupation and residing in India (left) or Uttar Pradesh (right).*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

*Figure B.6 - Educational attainment origin and destination, (a) Lordly castes, (b) Merchant castes, (c) Agricultural castes and (d) Low castes, relative flows of mobility*




*Note: The numbers to the right of each class origin and destination give the proportion in each flow respective to the number of male fathers or sons in the origin or destination category.*

*Sample: Male household heads above 20 years old declaring an occupation and residing in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey 2011-2012.*

*Table B.2 - Logistic regression models predicting being a professional worker*

| | | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **Modality** | **Coef (SE)** | ***AME*** | **Coef (SE)** | ***AME*** | **Coef (SE)** | ***AME*** | **Coef (SE)** | ***AME*** |
| **Ascribed category (ref=Brahmin)** | Lordly | -1.327*** (0.264) | *-0.12* | -1.142*** (0.275) | *-0.08* | -0.993*** (0.283) | *-0.06* | -0.984** (0.3) | *-0.05* |
| | Merchant | -2.287*** (0.468) | *-0.15* | -2.007*** (0.483) | *-0.11* | -1.81*** (0.488) | *-0.08* | -1.906*** (0.51) | *-0.07* |
| | Agricultural | -1.252*** (0.253) | *-0.11* | -0.992*** (0.262) | *-0.08* | -0.685* (0.269) | *-0.04* | -0.768** (0.283) | *-0.04* |
| | Low | -1.691*** (0.259) | *-0.13* | -1.427*** (0.274) | *-0.1* | -1.071*** (0.284) | *-0.06* | -0.998*** (0.303) | *-0.05* |
| | Dalit | -1.949*** (0.247) | *-0.14* | -1.588*** (0.268) | *-0.1* | -1.125*** (0.279) | *-0.06* | -0.997*** (0.298) | *-0.05* |
| | Muslim | -1.248*** (0.206) | *-0.11* | -1.051*** (0.226) | *-0.08* | -0.562* (0.238) | *-0.04* | -0.22 (0.257) | |
| **Father's occupational class (ref=Professional)** | Clerical | | | -1.97*** (0.3) | *-0.19* | -1.929*** (0.308) | *-0.14* | -2.396*** (0.335) | *-0.14* |
| | Farmer | | | -1.96*** (0.227) | *-0.19* | -1.53*** (0.24) | *-0.13* | -1.84*** (0.262) | *-0.13* |
| | Vocational | | | -1.703*** (0.253) | *-0.18* | -1.45*** (0.263) | *-0.12* | -1.582*** (0.286) | *-0.11* |
| | Laborer | | | -2.376*** (0.287) | *-0.21* | -1.831*** (0.302) | *-0.14* | -1.685*** (0.321) | *-0.12* |
| **Father's educational attainment (ref=Higher)** | Secondary | | | | | 0.063 (0.381) | *0.01* | 0.557 (0.417) | |
| | Primary/Middle | | | | | -0.748* (0.378) | *-0.06* | 0.329 (0.416) | |
| | Non-literate | | | | | -1.405*** (0.384) | *-0.09* | 0.078 (0.429) | |
| **Educational attainment (ref=Higher)** | Secondary | | | | | | | -1.242*** (0.192) | *-0.14* |
| | Primary/Middle | | | | | | | -3.171*** (0.257) | *-0.22* |
| | Non-literate | | | | | | | -2.717*** (0.287) | *-0.21* |
| **Residential area (ref=Urban)** | Metropolitan city | -0.623+ (0.333) | | -0.551 (0.346) | | -0.555 (0.352) | | -0.619 (0.385) | |
| | More developed village | -1.42*** (0.235) | *-0.1* | -1.154*** (0.247) | *-0.07* | -1.251*** (0.252) | *-0.07* | -1.066*** (0.261) | *-0.05* |
| | Less dev. Village | -1.644*** (0.168) | *-0.1* | -1.332*** (0.186) | *-0.08* | -1.265*** (0.187) | *-0.07* | -1.07*** (0.194) | *-0.05* |
| **Age** | (scaled) | -0.107 (0.077) | | -0.12 (0.08) | | -0.013 (0.083) | | 0.031 (0.093) | |
| | Constant | -0.548** (0.173) | | 0.841*** (0.233) | | 1.128** (0.379) | | 1.753*** (0.418) | |
| | AIC | 1544 | | 1467 | | 1432 | | 1235 | |
| | Log likelihood | -761 | | -719 | | -698 | | -596 | |

*Note: $^{+}$: p<0.1; $^{*}$: p<0.05; **: p<0.01; ***: p<0.001. Coefficients are presented along with the standard error in parentheses. AME indicates the Average Marginal Effect.*

*Sample: Male household heads above 20 years old declaring an occupation and residing in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey II, 2011-2012.*

# Appendix C – Complementary elements for Chapter 6

*Table C.1 - Multilevel linear probability models predicting vegetarianism M1, M3, M3*

| **Model M1** | | **Rural** | | **Urban** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **Modality** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** |
| | **Constant** | 0.44***<br>(0.014) | 0.275***<br>(0.017) | 0.317***<br>(0.027) | 0.227***<br>(0.054) |
| **Age** | **(scaled)** | 0.006***<br>(0.002) | 0.03***<br>(0.004) | 0.02***<br>(0.004) | 0.045***<br>(0.008) |
| **Material wealth (ref=Poorest)** | **Poorer** | 0.024***<br>(0.005) | -0.012<br>(0.015) | 0.086**<br>(0.03) | -0.005<br>(0.067) |
| | **Middle** | 0.032***<br>(0.005) | -0.04**<br>(0.015) | 0.117***<br>(0.027) | -0.065<br>(0.058) |
| | **Richer** | 0.055***<br>(0.006) | -0.039*<br>(0.016) | 0.109***<br>(0.024) | -0.057<br>(0.055) |
| | **Richest** | 0.078***<br>(0.008) | -0.006<br>(0.019) | 0.157***<br>(0.024) | -0.005<br>(0.053) |
| | **Sigma (residual)** | 0.434 | | | |
| | **sigma (jati)** | 0.246 | | | |
| | **AIC** | 110607 | | | |
| | **Log likelihood** | -55278 | | | |
| **Model M2** | | **Rural** | | **Urban** | |
| **Variable** | **Modality** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** |
| | **Constant** | 0.476***<br>(0.02) | 0.271***<br>(0.018) | 0.401***<br>(0.04) | 0.149***<br>(0.025) |
| **Age** | **(scaled)** | 0.011<br>(0.008) | 0.04***<br>(0.005) | 0.035+<br>(0.02) | 0.053***<br>(0.01) |
| **Occupational class (ref=Laborer)** | **Lower skilled** | -0.02<br>(0.062) | -0.054*<br>(0.022) | -0.017<br>(0.072) | 0.067*<br>(0.031) |
| | **Higher skilled** | 0.032<br>(0.028) | -0.025<br>(0.018) | -0.05<br>(0.051) | 0.065*<br>(0.026) |
| | **Farmer** | 0.03<br>(0.019) | 0.029*<br>(0.013) | 0.155+<br>(0.081) | 0.095+<br>(0.052) |
| | **Clerical** | 0.003<br>(0.077) | -0.057+<br>(0.03) | 0.094<br>(0.086) | 0.068*<br>(0.034) |
| | **Professional** | 0.158***<br>(0.042) | 0.122***<br>(0.028) | 0.117*<br>(0.052) | 0.121***<br>(0.034) |
| | **sigma (residual)** | 0.418 | | | |
| | **sigma (jati)** | 0.198 | | | |
| | **AIC** | 14157.491 | | | |
| | **Log likelihood** | -7048.746 | | | |
| | | **Rural** | | **Urban** | |
| **Variable** | **Modality** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** |
| | **Constant** | 0.423***<br>(0.014) | 0.237***<br>(0.018) | 0.355***<br>(0.015) | 0.155***<br>(0.027) |
| **Age** | **(scaled)** | 0.028***<br>(0.002) | 0.034***<br>(0.005) | 0.036***<br>(0.004) | 0.049***<br>(0.008) |
| **Educational attainment (ref=Non-literate)** | **Primary** | 0.08***<br>(0.005) | 0.017<br>(0.013) | 0.106***<br>(0.01) | 0.044<br>(0.027) |
| | **Secondary** | 0.081***<br>(0.007) | 0.02<br>(0.018) | 0.135***<br>(0.013) | 0.052<br>(0.033) |
| | **Higher** | 0.116***<br>(0.007) | 0.046**<br>(0.018) | 0.142***<br>(0.01) | 0.071*<br>(0.028) |
| | **sigma (residual)** | 0.433 | | | |
| | **sigma (jati)** | 0.242 | | | |
| | **AIC** | 110203.251 | | | |
| | **Log likelihood** | -55079.626 | | | |

*Note: The multilevel linear probability models M1, M2 and M3 predict vegetarianism where the independent variable of interest is material wealth. This variable interacts with sex and residential area, the model adjusts for age (continuous and scaled variable) and a varying-intercept for jati categories is introduced. Further details on the construction of these models is available in chapter 6.*

*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

*Table C.2 - Multilevel linear probability models predicting vegetarianism among women, MW1 and MW2*

| | Variable | Modality | Rural | Urban |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Model MW1** | | Constant | 0.42*** (0.014) | 0.354*** (0.016) |
| | **Age** | (scaled) | 0.028*** (0.002) | 0.036*** (0.004) |
| | **Own educational attainment (ref=None)** | Primary | 0.079*** (0.005) | 0.105*** (0.01) |
| | | Secondary | 0.08*** (0.007) | 0.134*** (0.013) |
| | | Higher | 0.113*** (0.007) | 0.142*** (0.011) |
| | | sigma (residual) | 0.435 | |
| | | sigma (jati) | 0.253 | |
| | | AIC | 96825.797 | |
| | | Log likelihood | -48400.899 | |

| | Variable | Modality | Rural | Urban |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Model MW2** | | Constant | 0.364*** (0.023) | 0.341*** (0.037) |
| | **Age** | | 0.047*** (0.006) | 0.019 (0.013) |
| | **Partner's educational attainment (ref=None)** | Primary | 0.054** (0.019) | 0.085+ (0.045) |
| | | Secondary | 0.099*** (0.014) | 0.134*** (0.034) |
| | | Higher | 0.176*** (0.02) | 0.144*** (0.036) |
| | | sigma (residual) | 0.424 | |
| | | sigma (jati) | 0.249 | |
| | | AIC | 11075.913 | |
| | | Log likelihood | -5525.956 | |

*Note: The multilevel linear probability models predicting vegetarianism among women MW1 and MW2 predict vegetarianism where the independent variable of interest is the educational attainment of the respondent or of her partner (two different models, MW1 and MW2, are estimated). This variable interacts with the residential area, the models adjust for age (continuous and scaled variable) and a varying-intercept for jati categories is introduced. Further details on the construction of these models is available in chapter 6.*

*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

*Table C.3 - Multilevel linear probability models predicting vegetarianism among women, MW3*

| **Model MW3** | | **Educational attainment** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **Modality** | **Non-literate** | **Primary** | **Secondary** | **Higher** |
| | Constant | 0.353*** (0.023) | 0.397*** (0.037) | 0.33+ (0.168) | 0.201 (0.188) |
| **Partner's educational attainment (ref=None)** | Primary | 0.044* (0.02) | 0.062 (0.041) | 0.213 (0.191) | 0.387+ (0.23) |
| | Secondary | 0.083*** (0.016) | 0.092** (0.033) | 0.155 (0.169) | 0.298 (0.189) |
| | Higher | 0.154*** (0.041) | 0.15*** (0.039) | 0.188 (0.169) | 0.318+ (0.188) |
| **Age** | (scaled) | 0.049*** (0.006) | | | |
| **Residential area (ref=Rural)** | Urban | -0.03* (0.012) | | | |
| | sigma (residual) | 0.424 | | | |
| | sigma (jati) | 0.247 | | | |
| | AIC | 11105.428 | | | |
| | Log likelihood | -5532.714 | | | |

*Note: The multilevel linear probability models predicting vegetarianism among women MW3 predict vegetarianism where the independent variable of interest is the educational attainment of her partner. This variable interacts with one's educational attainment, the model adjusts for age (continuous and scaled variable), residential area and a varying-intercept for jati categories is introduced. Further details on the construction of these models is available in chapter 6.*

*Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

*Table C.4 – Multilevel linear probability models predicting vegetarianism M4*

| Model M4 | | Brahman | | | | Lordly | | | | Merchant | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Rural | | Urban | | Rural | | Urban | | Rural | | Urban | |
| **Var** | **Modality** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** |
| | **Constant** | 0.711*** | 0.408*** | 0.588*** | 0.5*** | 0.473*** | 0.264*** | 0.474*** | 0.083 | 0.391*** | 0.404*** | 0.452*** | 0.178+ |
| | | (0.04) | (0.083) | (0.049) | (0.136) | (0.028) | (0.039) | (0.034) | (0.064) | (0.037) | (0.072) | (0.045) | (0.093) |
| **Age** | **(scaled)** | 0.018** | 0.034* | 0.03*** | 0.052* | 0.043*** | 0.053*** | 0.035*** | 0.082*** | 0.061*** | 0.022 | 0.06*** | 0.048* |
| | | (0.007) | (0.016) | (0.009) | (0.021) | (0.005) | (0.011) | (0.009) | (0.019) | (0.011) | (0.023) | (0.01) | (0.022) |
| **Educational attainment (ref=Non-literate)** | **Primary** | 0.051** | 0.203** | 0.116*** | 0.031 | 0.142*** | 0 | 0.076** | 0.045 | 0.114*** | -0.14+ | 0.13*** | 0.105 |
| | | (0.018) | (0.077) | (0.035) | (0.137) | (0.011) | (0.033) | (0.026) | (0.066) | (0.025) | (0.073) | (0.037) | (0.093) |
| | **Secondary** | 0.064** | 0.168* | 0.093* | 0.021 | 0.122*** | 0.013 | 0.128*** | 0.206** | 0.126*** | -0.067 | 0.182*** | 0.044 |
| | | (0.023) | (0.085) | (0.039) | (0.145) | (0.017) | (0.043) | (0.032) | (0.079) | (0.037) | (0.098) | (0.043) | (0.119) |
| | **Higher** | 0.065** | 0.177* | 0.146*** | -0.01 | 0.156*** | 0.02 | 0.084*** | 0.227*** | 0.233*** | -0.027 | 0.198*** | 0.233* |
| | | (0.021) | (0.081) | (0.034) | (0.134) | (0.016) | (0.04) | (0.025) | (0.066) | (0.037) | (0.089) | (0.038) | (0.099) |

| Model M4 continued | | Agricultural | | | | Low | | | | Dalit | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Rural | | Urban | | Rural | | Urban | | Rural | | Urban | |
| **Var** | **Modality** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** |
| | **Constant** | 0.531*** | 0.246*** | 0.359*** | 0.011 | 0.377*** | 0.166*** | 0.315*** | 0.162** | 0.23*** | 0.099** | 0.175*** | 0.044 |
| | | (0.045) | (0.055) | (0.05) | (0.098) | (0.022) | (0.033) | (0.026) | (0.051) | (0.025) | (0.03) | (0.028) | (0.044) |
| **Age** | **(scaled)** | 0.038*** | 0.06*** | 0.047*** | 0.061** | 0.02*** | 0.033** | 0.044*** | 0.08*** | 0.011* | 0.015+ | 0.016+ | -0.013 |
| | | (0.005) | (0.01) | (0.011) | (0.022) | (0.005) | (0.011) | (0.009) | (0.019) | (0.004) | (0.008) | (0.008) | (0.015) |
| **Educational attainment (ref=Non-literate)** | **Primary** | 0.029** | 0.007 | 0.099*** | 0.129 | 0.085*** | 0.027 | 0.157*** | 0.025 | 0.066*** | 0.024 | 0.065*** | 0.02 |
| | | (0.01) | (0.035) | (0.029) | (0.096) | (0.01) | (0.03) | (0.02) | (0.054) | (0.009) | (0.022) | (0.019) | (0.043) |
| | **Secondary** | 0.032* | -0.044 | 0.121** | 0.168 | 0.095*** | 0.141** | 0.228*** | -0.047 | 0.064*** | 0.051 | 0.08** | 0.117+ |
| | | (0.015) | (0.041) | (0.037) | (0.109) | (0.017) | (0.046) | (0.029) | (0.066) | (0.014) | (0.034) | (0.027) | (0.065) |
| | **Higher** | 0.055*** | 0.012 | 0.114*** | 0.199* | 0.173*** | 0.135** | 0.192*** | -0.041 | 0.102*** | 0.085** | 0.159*** | 0.059 |
| | | (0.013) | (0.041) | (0.03) | (0.093) | (0.018) | (0.045) | (0.024) | (0.062) | (0.014) | (0.033) | (0.023) | (0.054) |
| | **sigma (residual)** | 0.432 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | **sigma (jati)** | 0.202 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | **AIC** | 110163.2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | **Log likelihood** | -54959.6 | | | | | | | | | | | |

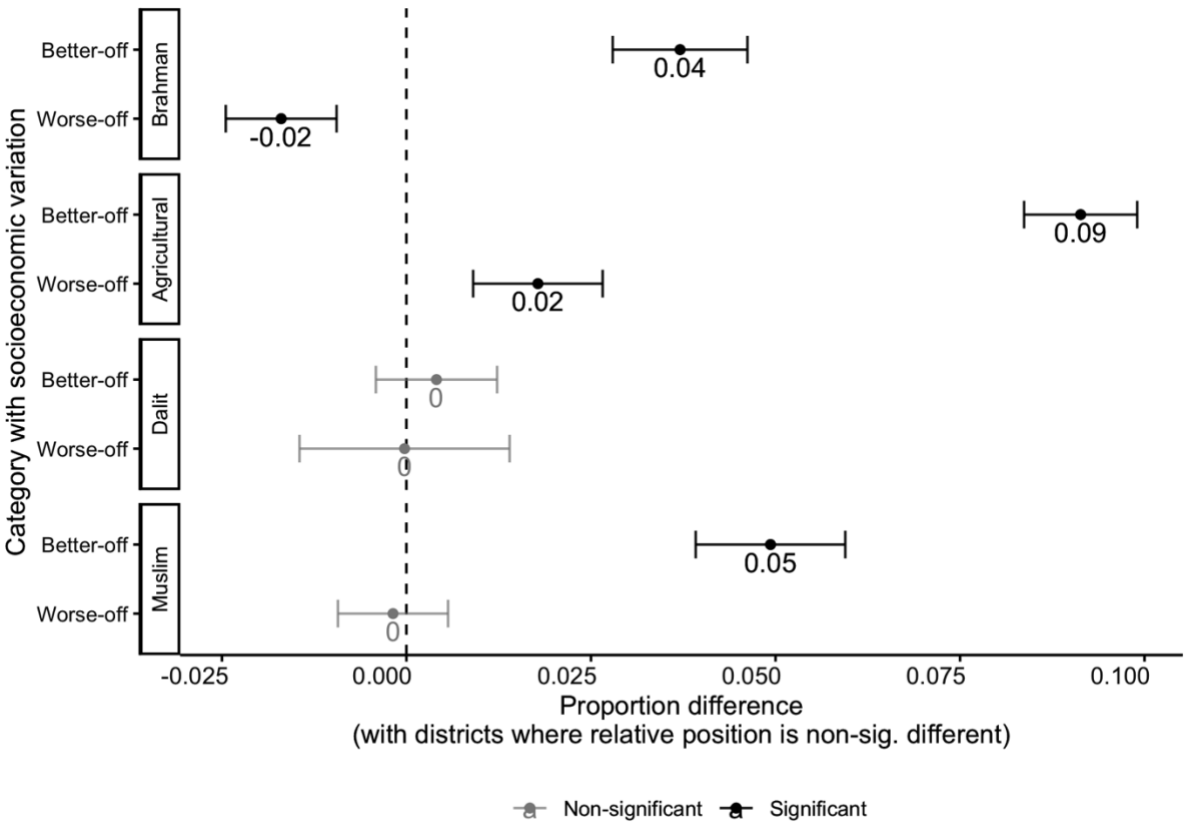
*Note: The multilevel linear probability models predicting vegetarianism M4 predicts vegetarianism where the independent variable of interest is the educational attainment. This variable interacts with sex, residence and caste categories. The model also adjusts for age (continuous and scaled variable), and a varying-intercept for jati categories is introduced. Further details on the construction of these models is available in chapter 6. Source: Uttar Pradesh subsample of the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

# Appendix D – Complementary elements for Chapter 7

In the following, I document the statistical models used in chapter 7. Most of the relevant information are already shown in the chapter.

## *B - Descriptive statistics*

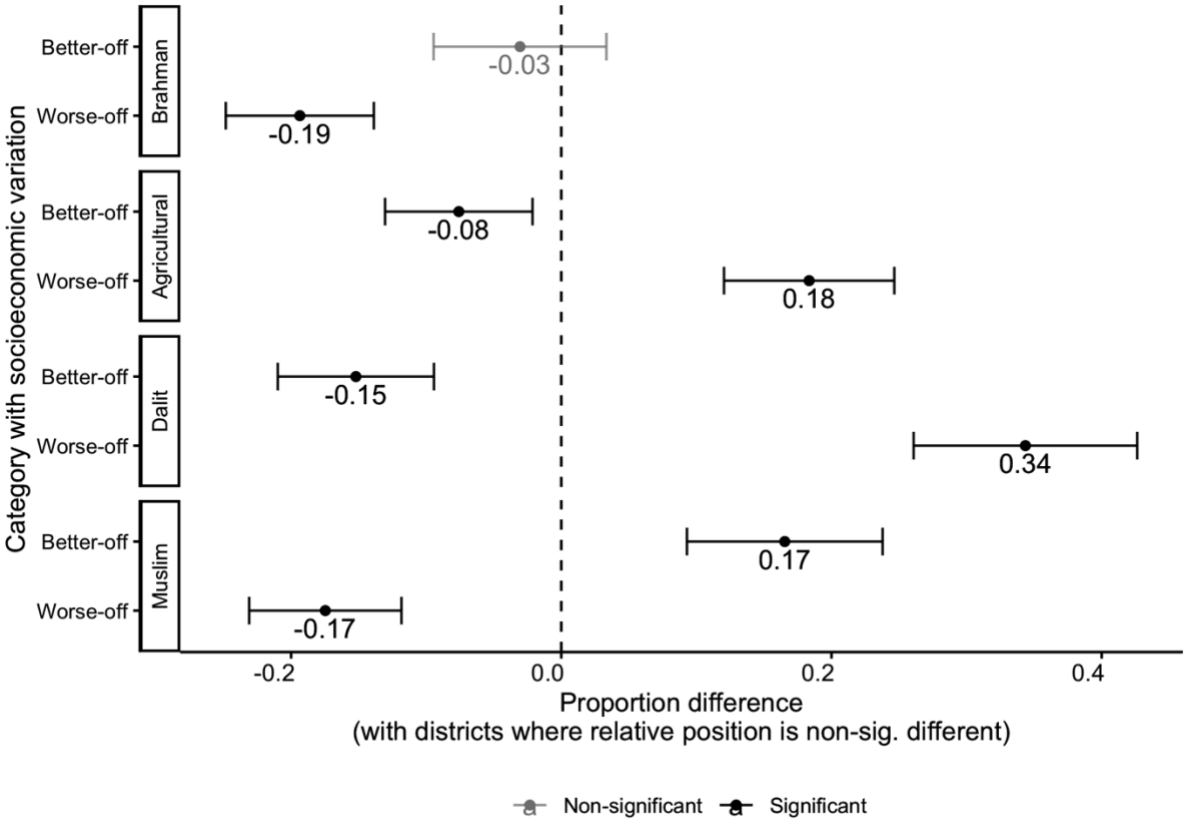
*Figure D.1 - Difference in probability of vegetarianism among Hindus, between districts with relatively better-off or worse-off categories and other districts*




*Note: These descriptive statistics are computed and their statistical significance is assessed using an unequal variance t-test. I do not use any control here so these statistics may be subject to ecological fallacy. In districts where Brahmins are relatively socioeconomically better-off compared to districts where their socioeconomic level is the same than the state level, the proportion of vegetarians among Hindus is 4 percentage points higher.*

*Source: National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

*Figure D.2 - Difference in probability of beef consumption among Muslims, between districts with relatively better-off or worse-off categories and other districts*




*Note: These descriptive statistics are computed and their statistical significance is assessed using an unequal variance t-test. I do not use any control here so these statistics may be subject to ecological fallacy. In districts where Muslims are relatively socioeconomically better-off compared to districts where their socioeconomic level is the same than the state level, the proportion of beef consumers among Muslims is 17 percentage points higher.*

*Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey, National Sample Survey Office, 68th, 2011-2012.*

## B - Multilevel models

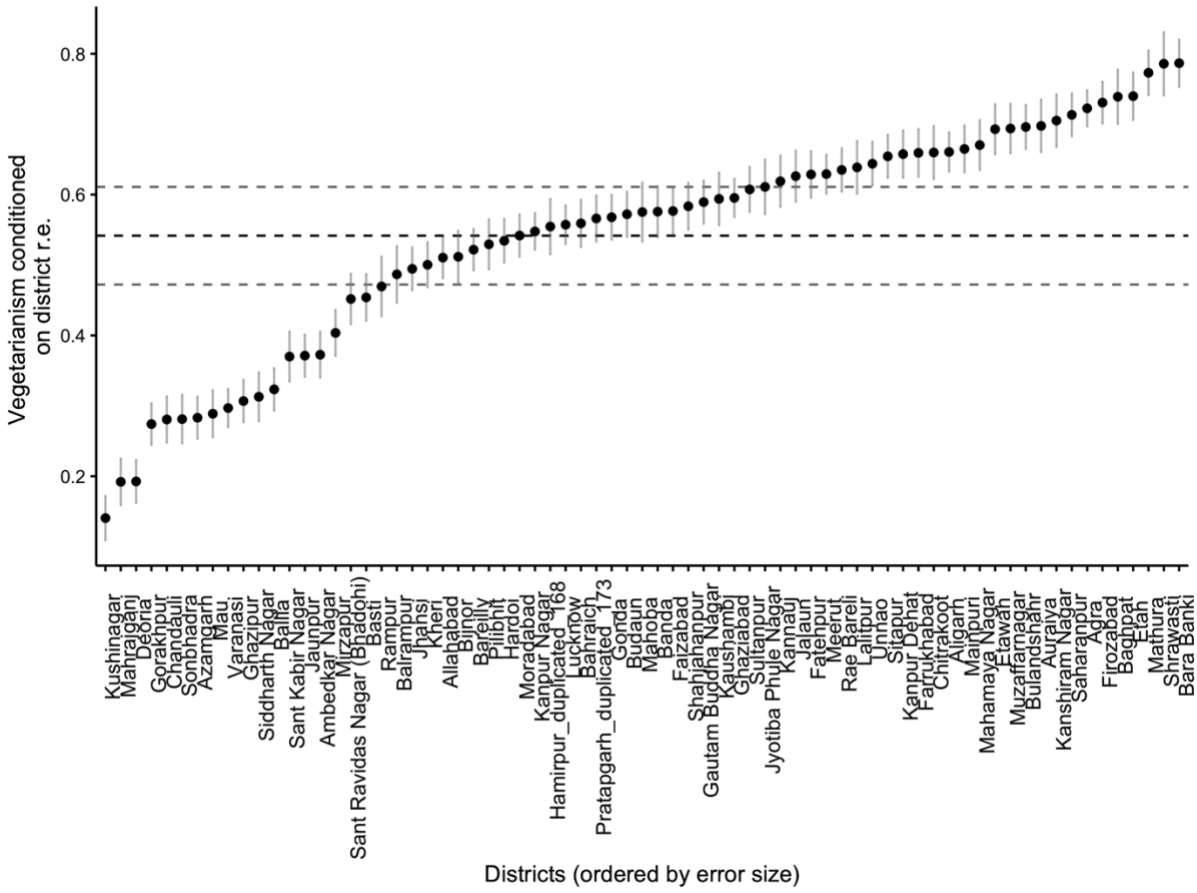
*Table D.1 - Multilevel model estimating vegetarianism among Hindus (Model MV0)*

| Level | Variable | Modality | Coef (SE) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Individual | Gender (ref=Man) | Woman | 0.245*** (0.004) |
| | Age | (scaled) | 0.027*** (0.001) |
| | Educational attainment (years) | (scaled) | 0.037*** (0.002) |
| Household | Material wealth | (scaled) | 0.012*** (0.003) |
| | Residence (ref=Rural) | Urban | -0.084*** (0.005) |
| | Land ownership | (scaled) | 0.005** (0.002) |
| Jati | Caste (ref=Agricultural) | Brahmin | 0.189*** (0.045) |
| | | Lordly | -0.029 (0.04) |
| | | Merchant | -0.014 (0.042) |
| | | Low | -0.086* (0.038) |
| | | Dalit | -0.255*** (0.039) |
| | Constant | | 0.353*** (0.039) |
| | | sigma (residual) | 0.312 |
| | | sigma (hhd) | 0.264 |
| | | sigma (jati) | 0.138 |
| | | sigma (district) | 0.159 |
| | | AIC | 90180.259 |
| | | Log likelihood | -45074.13 |

*Note: $^{+}$: p<0.1; $^{*}$: p<0.05; **: p<0.01; ***: p<0.001. The model is estimated using a multilevel linear probability model framework and is estimated using the "lme4" package in R. District-level coefficients (model MV1) are directly presented in the chapter as predicted probabilities.*

*Source: National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

*Figure D.3 - Caterpillar plot of the estimated adherence to vegetarianism among Hindus by district conditioned on district random effects*




*Note: This caterpillar plot is estimated using Model MV0. For each dot, the fixed effect intercept and the district residual are added together. The error bars are calculated taking into account the district standard error. The horizontal black line is the fixed effect intercept of the model and the grey lines indicate the error band around its value using the fixed effect standard error. Districts on the left of the figure are those where beef consumption among Muslims is estimated to be less frequent (Kushinagar, Mharajganj) whereas those on the right present a higher beef consumption frequency (Shravasti, Bara Banki).*

*Source: National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-2016).*

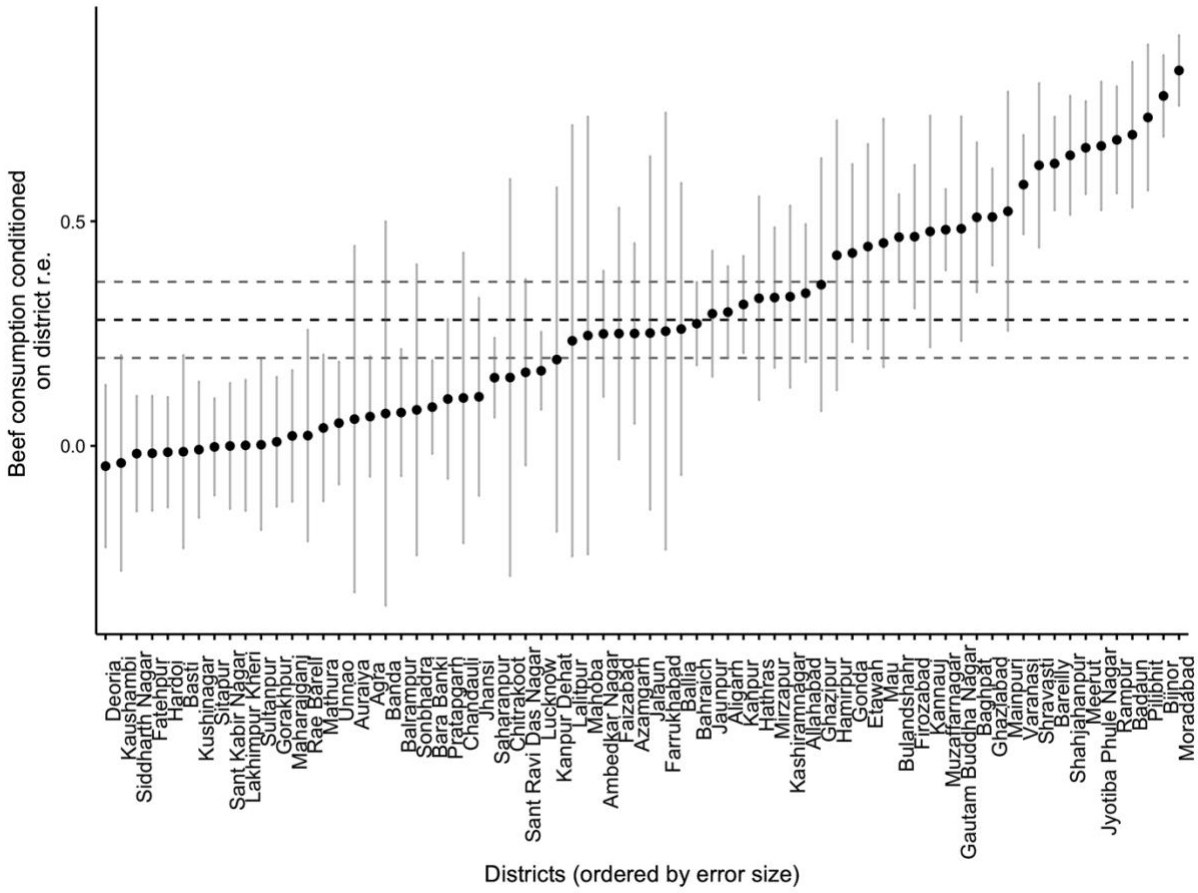
*Table D.2 - Multilevel model estimating beef consumption among Muslims (Model MB0)*

| Level | Variable | Modality | Coef (SE) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Household | Class (ref=Lower skilled) | Professional | 0.05 (0.039) |
| | | Clerical | -0.124*** (0.039) |
| | | Farmer | -0.02*** (0.034) |
| | | Higher skilled | -0.007*** (0.036) |
| | | Laborer | 0.007 (0.03) |
| | Total expenditures/capita | (scaled) | -0.024*** (0.016) |
| | Educational attainment (years) | (scaled) | -0.088*** (0.013) |
| | Land ownership | (scaled) | -0.009*** (0.015) |
| | Residence (ref=Rural) | Urban | 0.235 (0.025) |
| District | Beef price | (scaled) | -0.008*** (0.045) |
| | | Constant | 0.281 (0.043) |
| | | sigma (residual) | 0.379 |
| | | sigma (district) | 0.266 |
| | | AIC | 2777.093 |
| | | Log likelihood | -1375.546 |

*Note: $^{+}$: p<0.1; $^{*}$: p<0.05; **: p<0.01; ***: p<0.001. The model is estimated using a multilevel linear probability model framework and is estimated using the "lme4" package in R. Adding spatial contextual variables (MB1) tends to reduce the marginal effects associated to household-level coefficients. District-level coefficients (model MB1) are directly presented in the chapter as predicted probabilities.*

*Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey, National Sample Survey Office, 68$^{th}$, 2011-2012.*

*Figure D.4 - Caterpillar plot of the estimated beef consumption probability among Muslims by district conditioned on district random effects*




*Note: This caterpillar plot is estimated using Model MB0. For each dot, the fixed effect intercept and the district residual are added together. The error bars are calculated taking into account the district standard error. The horizontal black line is the fixed effect intercept of the model and the grey lines indicate the error band around its value using the fixed effect standard error. Districts on the left of the figure are those where beef consumption among Muslims is estimated to be less frequent (Deoria, Kaushambi) whereas those on the right present a higher beef consumption frequency (Bijnor, Moradabad).*

*Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey, National Sample Survey Office, 68th, 2011-2012.*

# Appendix E – Complementary elements for Chapter 8

## *A - Non-vegetarian products in the economic food hierarchy*

The price of food items is only one dimension of the social cost of food items. I also focus on the value share of food items in the food basket. According to Engel's law, the poorer a family is, the larger the budget share it spends on food. Yet, among the food basket, there may be goods which are more economically valorized among richer households than among poorer households. Food items whose share is larger among poorer households can be considered as goods that face larger economic constraints. On the contrary, food items whose share is larger among richer households are more likely to be adopted free of economic constraints, in other words, by "choice" (even though they may well face other social norms and constraints, especially non-vegetarian products). In the end, the study of the composition of the food basket and its variations between the richest and poorest households provides an indication of how food items are economically segmented. How does household standard of living affect the share of spending on non-vegetarian goods in the food basket? How do these non-vegetarian goods position themselves relative to vegetarian goods in the economic hierarchy of food goods? Do they correspond to goods on the side of the logics of constraint or the logics of distinction?

I analyze the economic segmentation of the food basket by calculating the share of food items representing the total food basket value in the total population in Uttar Pradesh. I calculate the share of these food items among the poorest quintile (the 20 per cent poorest households) and the richest quintile (the 20 per cent richest households). The degree of economic distinction (for the rich and for the poor) that is associated to each food item is calculated by computing the relative difference of each food item shares of the highest and lowest quintile.[185] A relative difference of 100 for a given food item would signify that the richest quintile dedicates the same share for this item than the poorest. A relative difference higher than 100 indicates that the richest quintile consumes relatively more of this item and a relative difference lower than 100 indicates the poorest quintile consumes relatively more of

[185] The relative difference is a subtraction of the item share in the richest quintile and in the poorest quintile, adjusted for the share of the food item in the richest quintile. Contrary to an absolute difference, the value adjusts for the overall share. It makes the degree of economic segmentation comparable between food items which have different shares in the food basket. See the note of Figure E.1 for an explanation of the calculation of the relative difference.

this item compared to the richest quintile. Figure E.1 plots the relative difference of all the food items composing the food basket.

The composition of the food basket varies widely according to the economic position. Fruits and milk and dairy products are the most characteristic food items of the richest quintile in Uttar Pradesh. They consume respectively 3.2 and 2.7 times more on these items than the poorest quintile.[186] Given the high average weight of milk and dairy products in the average food basket (19 per cent of the total value of the food basket, it is the second highest food item in the food basket), its discriminating feature according to the standard of living of households is all the more remarkable. Outside food (cooked meals and snacks such cooked fried food) is the next most economically discriminating item, along with alcohol. Finally, packaged food and drinks (non-alcoholic drinks, including mineral water, cold beverages, served tea and coffee, and leaves and powder) are also characteristic of richer households. Baviskar (2018) argues that a typical packaged food item – instant noodles – is branded as a popular snack that creates a "consumer citizenship" – and as such has an integrating function by allowing social membership above other caste and religious food divides.[187] Yet, the economic hierarchy suggests here that it also remains a food item distinguishing the rich (which is not contrary to what she identifies as a good that is aspired for by the poor).

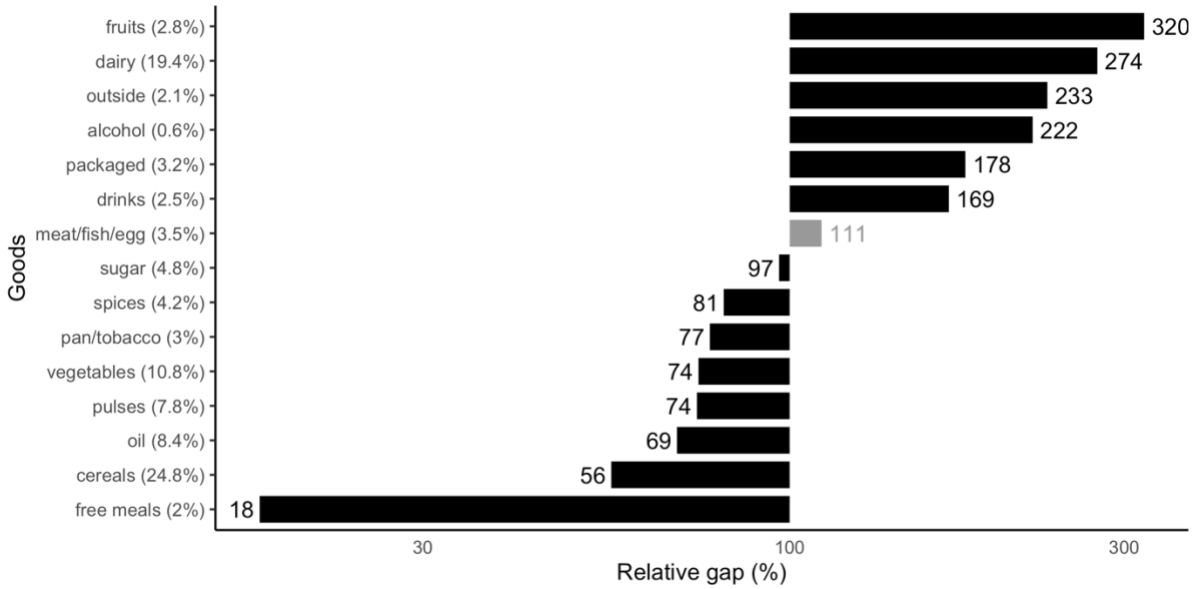
Inversely, food assistance is the most characteristic item for the poorest quintile. This item of the food basket includes free cooked meals received as assistance (and to a lesser extent cooked meals in the workplace). It excludes meals than have been received by other households and hence relates to existing government schemes, mainly to children (through the National Food Security Act, 2013) and adults (mainly through charity). On average, the largest share in the food basket is devoted to cereals (25 per cent of the food basket). A much higher share in the food basket is also observed for the poorest quintile: on average, the richest households devote about half less of their food basket for cereals. The share of oil, pulses, vegetables and pan/tobacco also segments households: their share is notably higher among the poorest households.

[186] In other words, households in the richest quintile dedicate 320 per cent more of their food basket value to fruits compared to the poorest households.

[187] She writes: "Errington et al. (2012: 20–21) note that these convenient, inexpensive, and easy-to-like 'proletarian hunger killers' are at the center of a global project pursued by Nestlé and other giant food corporations to transform the poor into consumers, thereby realizing the potentially immense profits lurking in low-income yet aspiring markets". She adds in her conclusion: "At the same time, for poor people stigmatized by caste, religion, and rurality, eating processed foods signifies participation in a desired modern lifestyle, of being as good as anyone else, so these foods play an important part in claiming social belonging and equality".

Finally, non-vegetarian products (meat, fish and eggs) are not economically discriminating compared to the other food items. Their share in the food basket is only slightly higher in the richest quintile (the richest households allocate 10 per cent more of their food basket to non-vegetarian products compared to the poorest households). Focusing on non-vegetarian households (households which declared non-zero consumption of meat, fish or eggs, see Figure E.2) nuances this result. Mutton and eggs indeed appear as economically discriminating among non-vegetarians (the richest households allocate twice more of their food basket to this food item as compared to the poorest households), while fish is characteristic of the poorest non-vegetarian households. Yet, overall, fruits, milk and dairy products (and alcohol) on the one hand, and free assistance and cereals on the other hand are always economically segmenting food items irrespective of non-vegetarian consumption in households.

*Figure E.1 - Economic hierarchy of the food basket in Uttar Pradesh, 2011-2012*

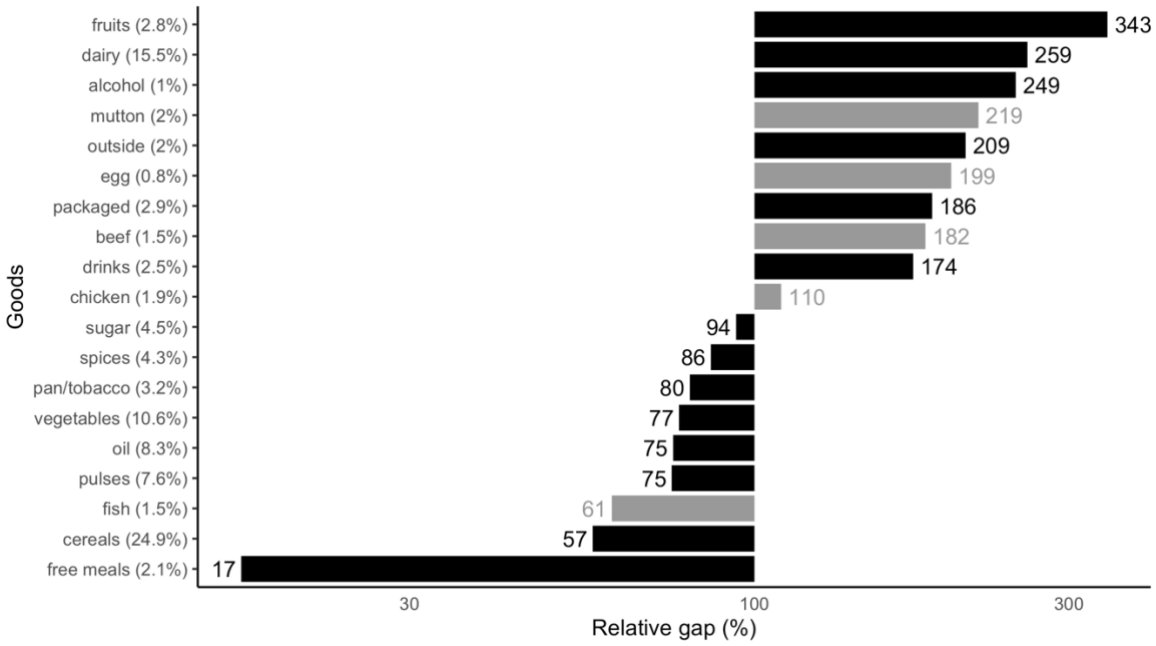



*Note: For each food item, I compute its budget share in the top and bottom quintiles of the total per capita expenditure. I then compute the relative gap of the two budget shares of the same item as follows:* $share_{item}^{Top}/share_{item}^{Bottom}*100$*. The interpretation of the relative gap is: the share of fruits in the food basket among the top quintile is 3.2 higher than among the bottom quintile. Fruits is a highly discriminating food item according to the standard of living and it is favored by the richest households. Inversely, the share of free meals in the food basket among the top quintile weighs 18 per cent of the share in the bottom quintile. In other words, free meals are also a highly discriminating food item and it best characterizes the poorest households. The horizontal axis is on the log-scale to better observe relative gaps below and above 100 (the value for which a food item is equally among the bottom and top quintiles).*

*Sample: Households in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Source: "Consumer Expenditure Survey", National Sample Survey Office, 2011-2012, Type 1.*

*Figure E.2 - Economic hierarchy of the food basket for non-vegetarians (disaggregating non-vegetarian products) in Uttar Pradesh, 2011-2012*




*Note: The same calculation procedure is applied in this figure.*

*Sample: Non-vegetarian households in Uttar Pradesh.*

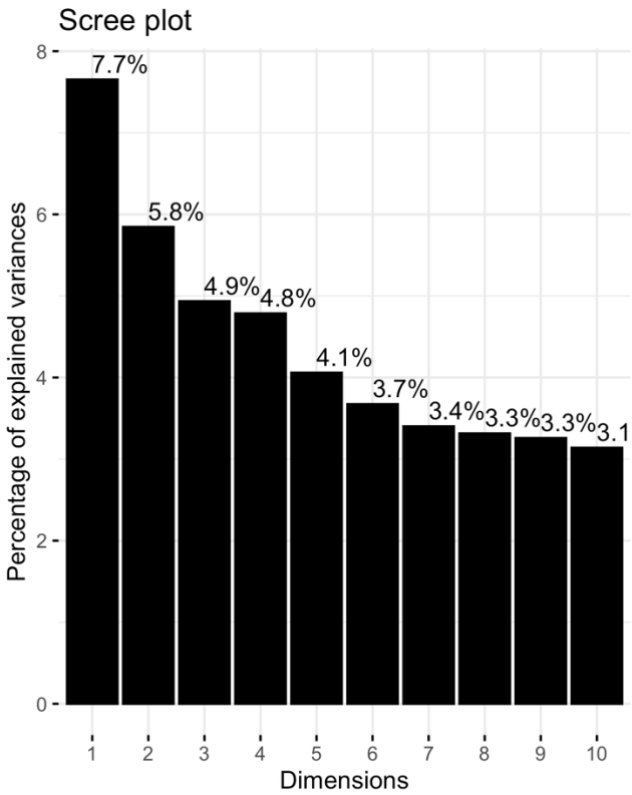
*Source: "Consumer Expenditure Survey", National Sample Survey Office, 2011-2012, Type 1.*

The "choice of the necessary" hence somewhat impacts the poorest non-vegetarian households in terms of their meat consumption. But more importantly, the poorest households are more economically constrained regarding fruits and milk, the latter having a sizable share in the total food basket irrespective of the standard of living. The social logics related to the amount of consumption of non-vegetarian products thus does not appear as primarily shaped by economic resources and constraints.

## B - The food lifestyle space: supplementary elements

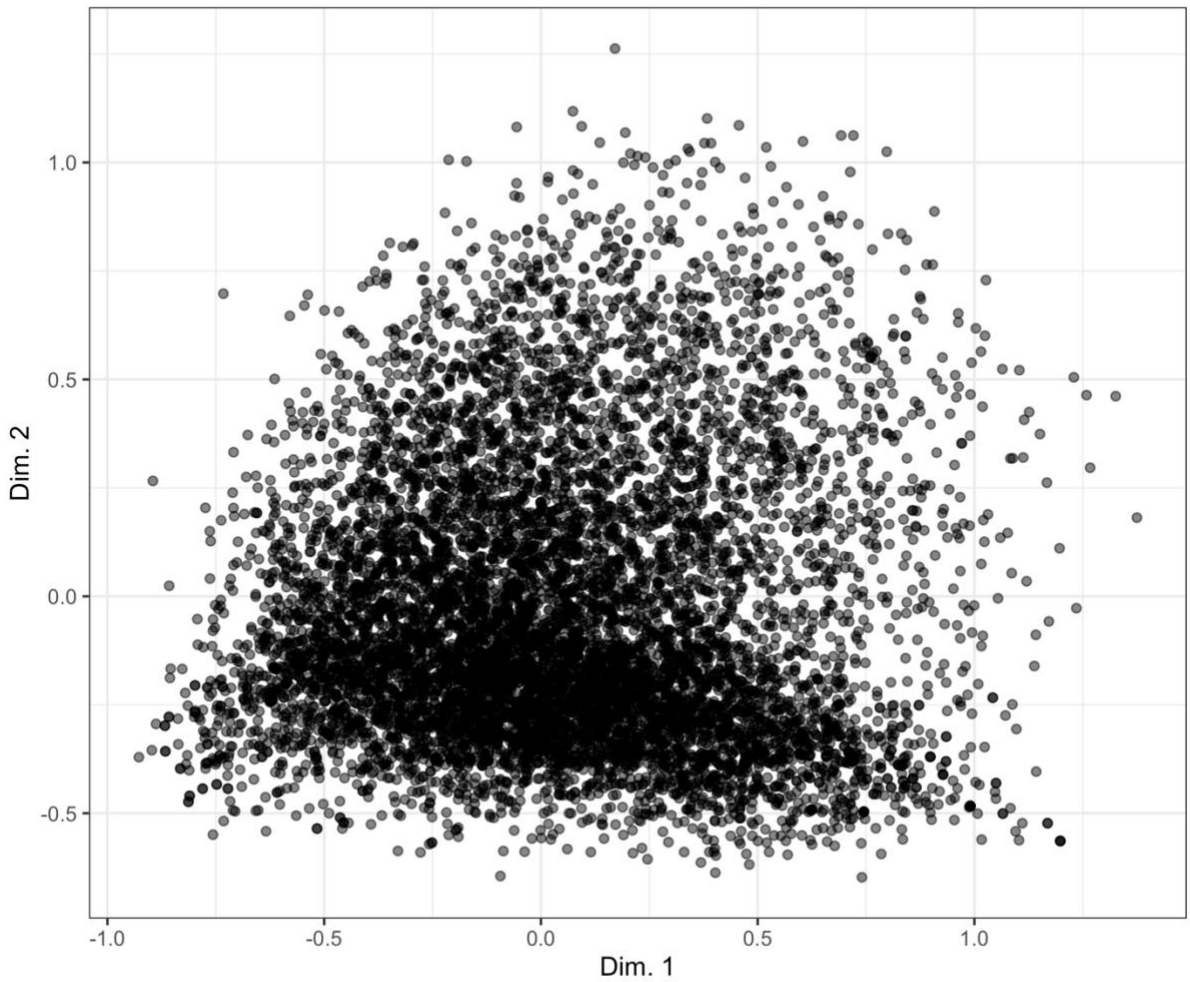
In addition to the statistical information provided in the main text of the chapter regarding the Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), I here provide extra elements to ascertain the analysis.

*Figure E.3 – Scree plot of the explained variance on the first 10 axes*




*Note: The statistical criterion called "elbow criterion" suggests to retain either two or four axes in the analysis (this criterion suggests to retain only the axes which have a clearly higher explained variance, until one observes a recess on the figure).*

*Figure E.4 – Cloud of households, factorial plane 1-2*




*Note: Visually, the density of the cloud is higher in the lower part of the figure.*

*Table E.1 - Statistics of active variables in the Multiple Correspondence Analysis*

| Variable | Modality | Frequency | Dimension 1 | | Dimension 2 | | Dimension 3 | | Dimension 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Coord. | Contrib. | Coord. | Contrib. | Coord. | Contrib. | Coord. | Contrib. |
| **Chicken** | No | 81.49 | -0.04 | 0.04 | **-0.29** | **3.64** | -0.03 | 0.05 | -0.04 | 0.07 |
| | Yes | 18.51 | 0.16 | 0.18 | **1.29** | **16.01** | 0.15 | 0.24 | 0.17 | 0.33 |
| **Mutton** | No | 87.64 | -0.05 | 0.10 | -0.18 | 1.50 | -0.05 | 0.15 | 0.01 | 0.00 |
| | Yes | 12.36 | 0.38 | 0.70 | **1.29** | **10.67** | 0.38 | 1.09 | -0.05 | 0.02 |
| **Beef/Buffalo** | No | 90.79 | -0.02 | 0.02 | -0.06 | 0.19 | -0.08 | 0.34 | 0.09 | 0.47 |
| | Yes | 9.21 | 0.20 | 0.15 | 0.62 | 1.85 | **0.77** | **3.31** | **-0.89** | **4.67** |
| **Fish** | No | 83.45 | 0.03 | 0.04 | **-0.25** | **2.64** | 0.00 | 0.00 | -0.11 | 0.61 |
| | Yes | 16.55 | -0.17 | 0.19 | **1.25** | **13.33** | 0.01 | 0.00 | **0.54** | **3.08** |
| **Egg** | High | 6.35 | 0.09 | 0.02 | **0.96** | **3.04** | 0.70 | 1.90 | -0.33 | 0.44 |
| | Low | 14.47 | 0.56 | 1.82 | **1.13** | **9.59** | 0.22 | 0.44 | -0.30 | 0.84 |
| | No | 79.18 | -0.11 | 0.38 | **-0.28** | **3.30** | -0.10 | 0.45 | 0.08 | 0.34 |
| **Dairy** | High | 53.22 | **0.55** | **6.42** | **-0.32** | **2.89** | -0.23 | 1.75 | **-0.30** | **2.95** |
| | Low | 36.22 | **-0.48** | **3.24** | **0.49** | **4.45** | **0.43** | **4.05** | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| | No | 10.56 | **-1.15** | **5.54** | -0.04 | 0.01 | -0.30 | 0.57 | **1.49** | **14.84** |
| **Pulses** | High | 33.52 | **-0.63** | **5.28** | -0.11 | 0.22 | 0.16 | 0.56 | -0.02 | 0.01 |
| | Low | 41.09 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.07 | 0.10 | 0.02 | 0.01 | -0.20 | 1.09 |
| | Very low | 25.39 | **0.83** | **6.92** | 0.04 | 0.02 | -0.26 | 1.02 | **0.36** | **2.12** |
| **Cereals** | High | 48.05 | **-0.54** | **5.63** | 0.11 | 0.28 | -0.18 | 0.94 | 0.05 | 0.06 |
| | Low | 34.76 | 0.21 | 0.60 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.20 | 0.81 | **-0.38** | **3.10** |
| | Very low | 17.19 | **1.10** | **8.19** | -0.30 | 0.82 | 0.10 | 0.11 | **0.63** | **4.35** |
| **Vegetables** | High | 29.19 | **-0.61** | **4.28** | -0.04 | 0.02 | 0.30 | 1.64 | **0.62** | **7.12** |
| | Low | 39.47 | -0.07 | 0.07 | 0.07 | 0.11 | 0.16 | 0.63 | **-0.30** | **2.32** |
| | Very low | 31.33 | **0.65** | **5.24** | -0.06 | 0.05 | **-0.49** | **4.53** | -0.19 | 0.75 |
| **Fruits** | High | 20.11 | **0.83** | **5.48** | -0.23 | 0.56 | **0.68** | **5.76** | **0.44** | **2.44** |
| | Low | 62.83 | -0.03 | 0.02 | 0.11 | 0.39 | -0.11 | 0.48 | **-0.33** | **4.21** |
| | No | 17.06 | **-0.88** | **5.27** | -0.13 | 0.15 | -0.39 | 1.63 | **0.68** | **5.02** |
| **Sugar** | High | 29.21 | -0.31 | 1.14 | **-0.42** | **2.70** | 0.10 | 0.17 | -0.21 | 0.79 |
| | Low | 43.18 | -0.04 | 0.03 | 0.04 | 0.04 | 0.21 | 1.12 | **-0.29** | **2.37** |
| | Very low | 27.61 | 0.40 | 1.71 | **0.38** | **2.09** | **-0.42** | **3.06** | **0.68** | **8.06** |
| **Oil** | High | 32.41 | **-0.68** | **5.87** | -0.13 | 0.29 | 0.27 | 1.50 | 0.11 | 0.26 |
| | Low | 41.96 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.18 | 0.72 | -0.01 | 0.00 | -0.27 | 2.00 |
| | Very low | 25.63 | **0.84** | **7.14** | -0.13 | 0.23 | -0.34 | 1.79 | 0.31 | 1.53 |
| **Spices** | High | 21.73 | **-0.57** | **2.78** | -0.06 | 0.04 | **0.43** | **2.52** | 0.30 | 1.28 |
| | Low | 42.52 | -0.14 | 0.35 | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.11 | 0.34 | -0.21 | 1.22 |
| | Very low | 35.75 | **0.52** | **3.77** | 0.01 | 0.00 | **-0.40** | **3.52** | 0.07 | 0.10 |
| **Packaged Food** | High | 13.83 | 0.57 | 1.78 | -0.39 | 1.09 | **0.65** | **3.62** | 0.54 | 2.60 |
| | Low | 32.29 | 0.13 | 0.23 | 0.05 | 0.04 | **0.36** | **2.55** | 0.01 | 0.00 |
| | Very low | 53.88 | -0.23 | 1.09 | 0.07 | 0.14 | **-0.38** | **4.84** | -0.15 | 0.73 |
| **Drinks** | High | 8.29 | 0.44 | 0.62 | -0.23 | 0.22 | **0.82** | **3.39** | **0.85** | **3.78** |
| | Low | 29.21 | 0.23 | 0.63 | 0.02 | 0.01 | **0.47** | **3.88** | -0.07 | 0.09 |
| | Very low | 62.50 | -0.17 | 0.69 | 0.02 | 0.01 | **-0.33** | **4.07** | -0.08 | 0.25 |
| **Pan/tobacco** | High | 19.79 | -0.22 | 0.37 | 0.13 | 0.18 | 0.10 | 0.13 | 0.03 | 0.01 |
| | Low | 51.57 | -0.01 | 0.00 | 0.22 | 1.35 | **-0.30** | **2.92** | -0.08 | 0.21 |
| | No | 28.64 | 0.17 | 0.33 | **-0.49** | **3.64** | 0.48 | 4.00 | 0.12 | 0.27 |
| **Alcohol** | No | 91.89 | -0.05 | 0.08 | -0.10 | 0.50 | 0.04 | 0.10 | -0.06 | 0.19 |
| | Yes | 8.11 | 0.52 | 0.87 | **1.16** | **5.67** | -0.47 | 1.08 | **0.64** | **2.11** |
| **Free assistance food** | High | 4.47 | -0.49 | 0.43 | 0.23 | 0.12 | -0.83 | 1.88 | **0.96** | **2.61** |
| | Low | 21.22 | -0.29 | 0.69 | **0.45** | **2.19** | **-0.92** | **11.12** | -0.22 | 0.67 |
| | No | 74.32 | 0.11 | 0.36 | -0.14 | 0.77 | **0.31** | **4.48** | 0.01 | 0.00 |
| **Outside paid food** | High | 2.01 | 1.52 | 1.84 | -0.35 | 0.13 | -0.40 | 0.19 | **2.31** | **6.82** |
| | Low | 69.88 | 0.09 | 0.21 | 0.13 | 0.64 | 0.20 | 1.64 | 0.02 | 0.01 |
| | No | 28.11 | -0.33 | 1.19 | -0.30 | 1.35 | **-0.46** | **3.61** | -0.20 | 0.74 |

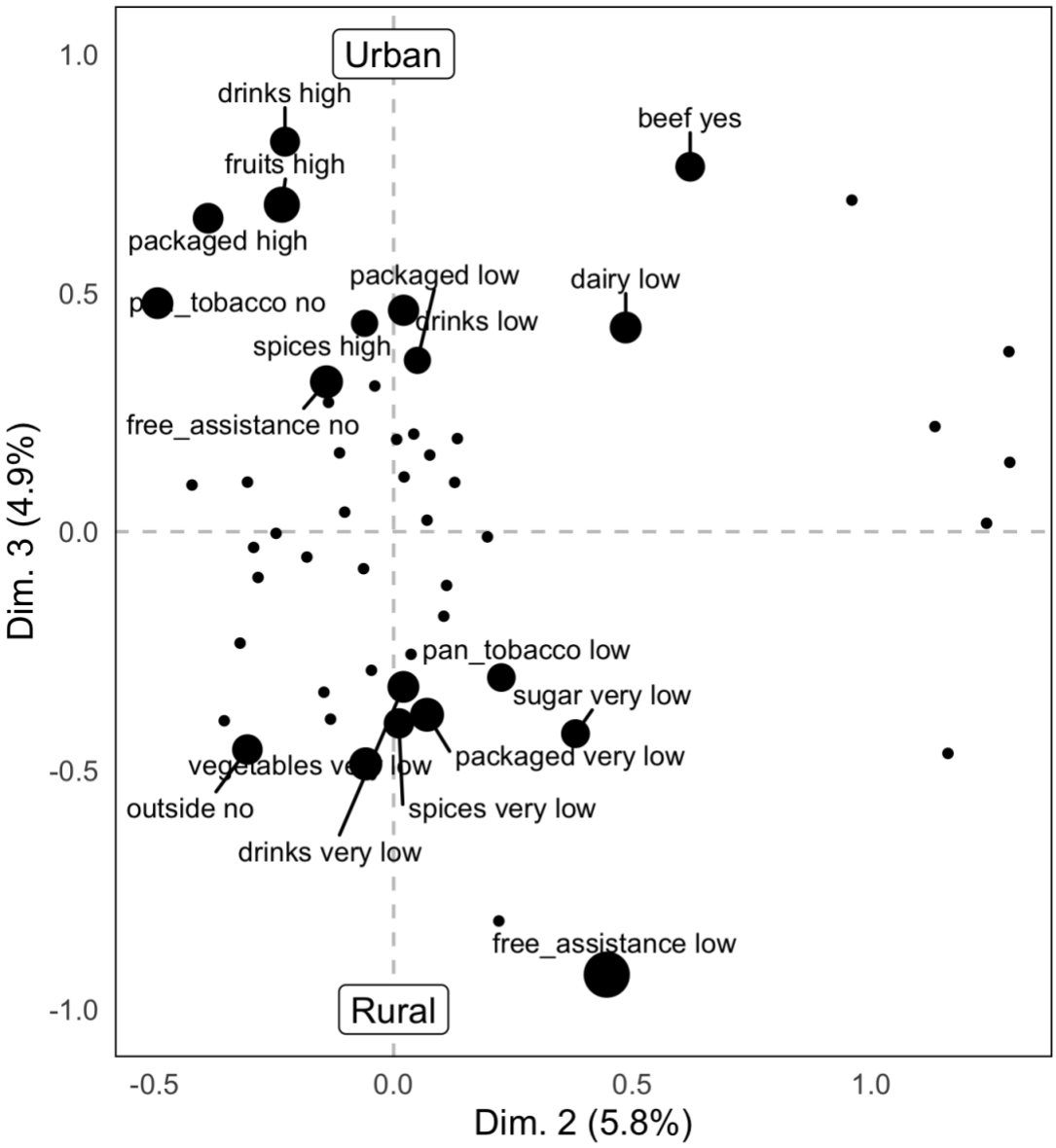
*Note: Variables have been constructed from the food value share in the food basket. They are categorized identifying "cuts" in the distribution of each food value share through k-means clustering. In addition, if the proportion of households with 0 consumption share in the food basket was at least of 5 per cent, a specific modality was created. In the categorization of the variables, no modality with a frequency lower than 5 percent was allowed (two exceptions: free assistance food and outside paid food, but it does not affect the overall interpretation). Different categorizations were tried in the analysis and all gave the same interpretation on the first four axes so that it appears very robust. For each axis, I present the coordinate and the contribution of the modality. If the contribution is higher than the average contribution (100/52=1.92) coordinates are written in bold.*

*Table E.2 - Statistics of supplementary variables in the Multiple Correspondence Analysis*

| Variable | Modality | Frequency | Dimension 1 | | Dimension 2 | | Dimension 3 | | Dimension 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Coord. | Eta2 | Coord. | Eta2 | Coord. | Eta2 | Coord. | Eta2 |
| **Caste/religious group** | Dalit | 23.81 | -0.30 | 0.08 | 0.18 | 0.16 | -0.19 | 0.06 | 0.25 | 0.05 |
| | Hindu low/middle | 41.41 | -0.09 | | -0.19 | | -0.14 | | 0.02 | |
| | Hindu upper | 15.24 | 0.59 | | -0.59 | | 0.14 | | 0.07 | |
| | Muslim | 19.53 | 0.07 | | 0.66 | | 0.43 | | -0.43 | |
| **Residence** | Rural | 78.82 | -0.14 | 0.07 | 0.01 | 0.00 | -0.14 | 0.08 | 0.01 | 0.00 |
| | Urban | 21.18 | 0.50 | | -0.04 | | 0.53 | | -0.03 | |
| **Total per capita expenditure** | Quintile 1 | 20.00 | -0.78 | 0.35 | 0.05 | 0.02 | -0.26 | 0.03 | 0.25 | 0.05 |
| | Quintile 2 | 20.00 | -0.40 | | 0.15 | | -0.10 | | -0.07 | |
| | Quintile 3 | 20.00 | -0.03 | | 0.06 | | -0.01 | | -0.24 | |
| | Quintile 4 | 20.00 | 0.26 | | 0.02 | | 0.12 | | -0.22 | |
| | Quintile 5 | 20.00 | 0.95 | | -0.28 | | 0.26 | | 0.28 | |
| **Class** | Agri and other laborer | 25.06 | -0.35 | 0.08 | 0.16 | 0.03 | -0.15 | 0.05 | 0.12 | 0.02 |
| | Lower skilled | 12.26 | 0.02 | | 0.19 | | 0.14 | | -0.06 | |
| | Higher skilled | 8.32 | 0.17 | | 0.18 | | 0.42 | | 0.00 | |
| | Farmer | 39.80 | -0.03 | | -0.11 | | -0.18 | | -0.13 | |
| | Clerical | 5.36 | 0.34 | | -0.05 | | 0.26 | | 0.09 | |
| | Professional | 9.20 | 0.73 | | -0.17 | | 0.35 | | 0.11 | |

*Note: For each variable integrated as a supplementary variable in the analysis, I present the coordinates of the modalities on the first four axes and the eta$^2$ statistic, a correlation measure between the axis and the variable (its value is 0 if there is no association and 1 if the association is at its maximum).*

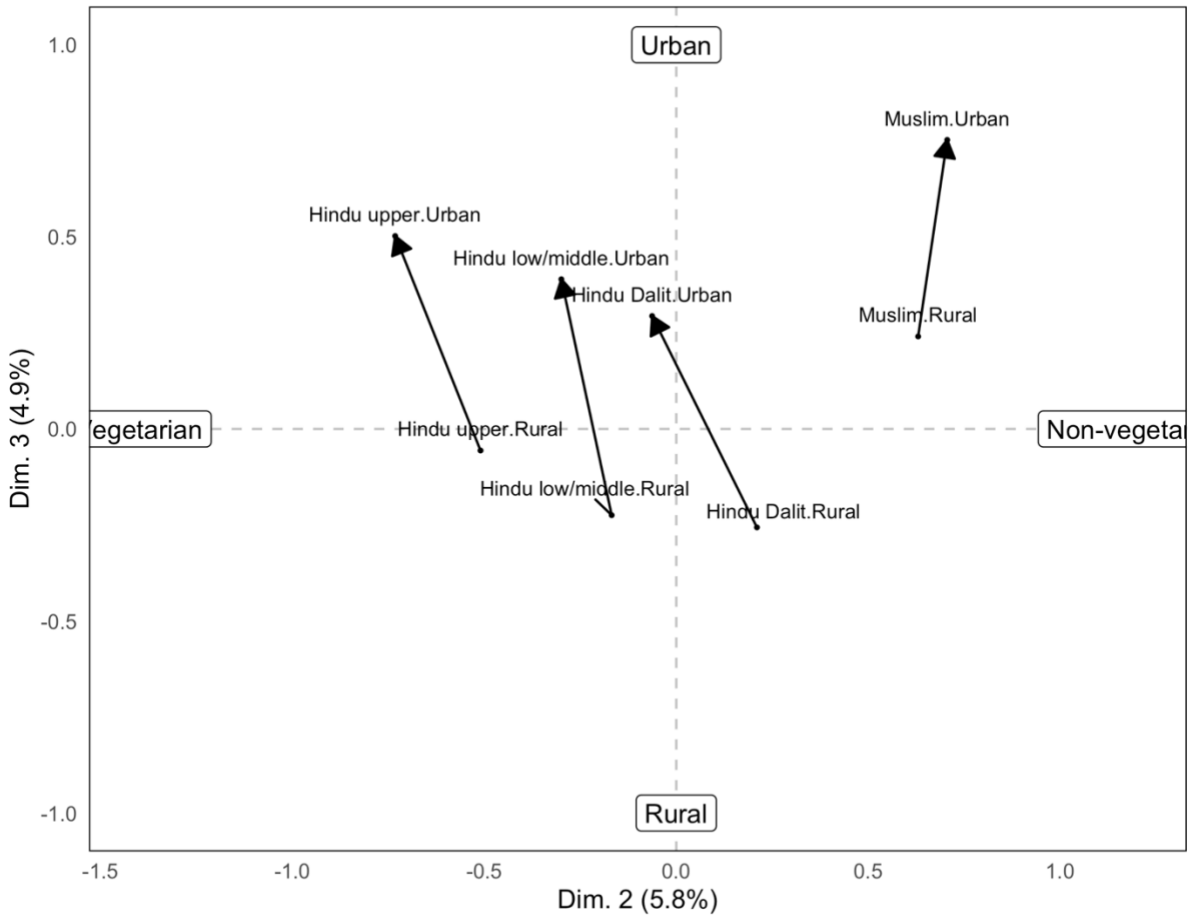
*Figure E.5 - The space of the food basket, contributing active modalities to axis 3, factorial plane 2-3*




*Note: The MCA is calculated for households residing in Uttar Pradesh. In this figure, only active budget share modalities that have a contribution higher than the average contribution on the third axis are labelled (100/number of modalities = 100/52 = 1.92).*

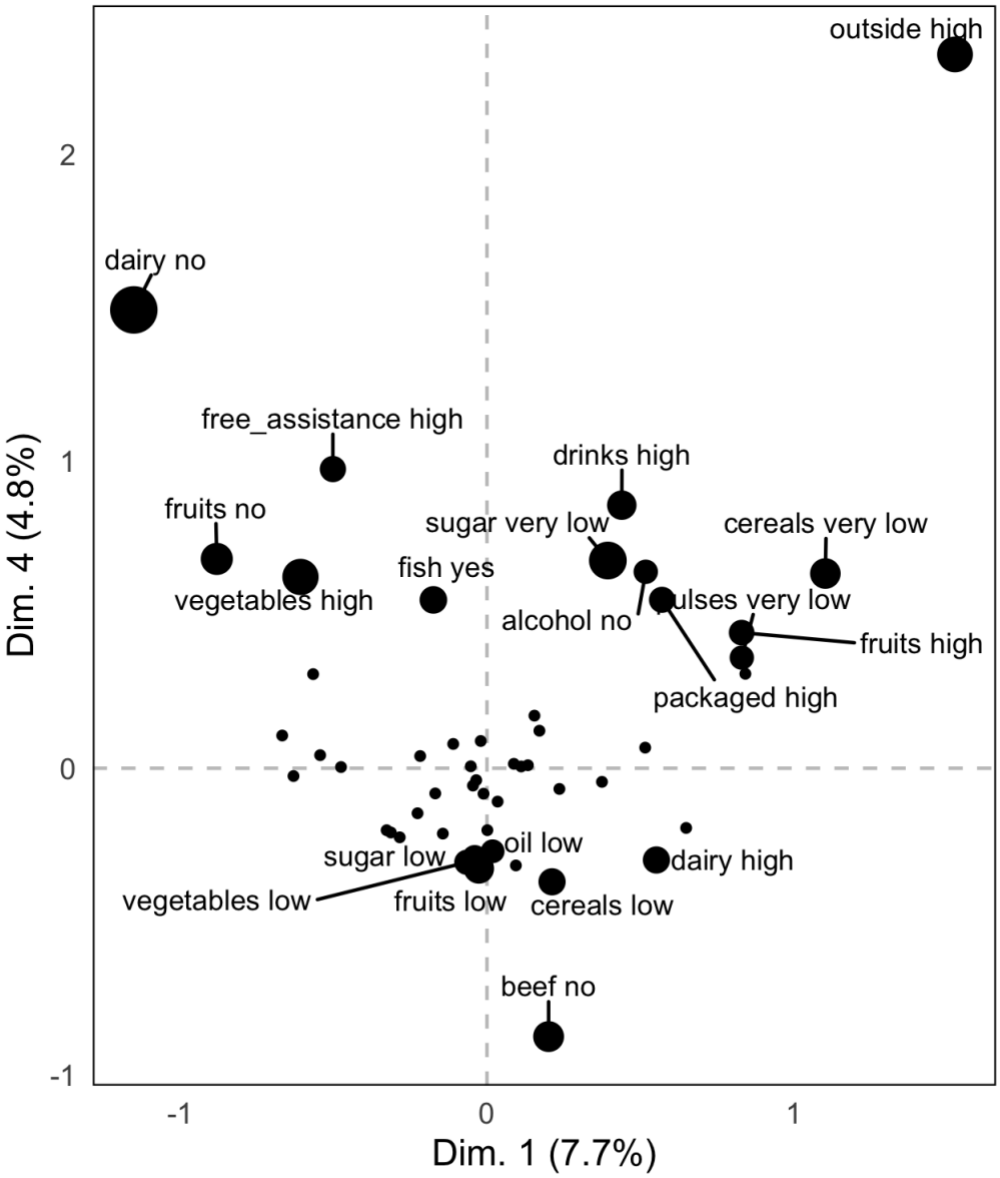
*Source: "Consumer Expenditure Survey", National Sample Survey Office, 2011-2012, Type 1.*

*Figure E.6 – Supplementary variables, factorial plane 2-3*




*Note: Caste and religious groups are segmented on the third axis according to their residential area (urban at the top and rural at the bottom). Note that urban Dalits tend to be closer to other Hindu groups than rural Dalits, while urban Muslims tend to be more segmented than rural Muslisms.*

*Figure E.7 - The space of the food basket, contributing active modalities to axis 4, factorial plane 1-4*




*Note: The fourth axis opposes food items which are either highly consumed or not consumed at all (at the top) versus modalities which are not or poorly consumed (at the bottom). It is typical of a "Guttman effect."*

# Appendix F – Complementary elements for Chapter 9

This appendix presents the full regression analyses used in the last part of Results section of Chapter 9 and presented in the Methods section.

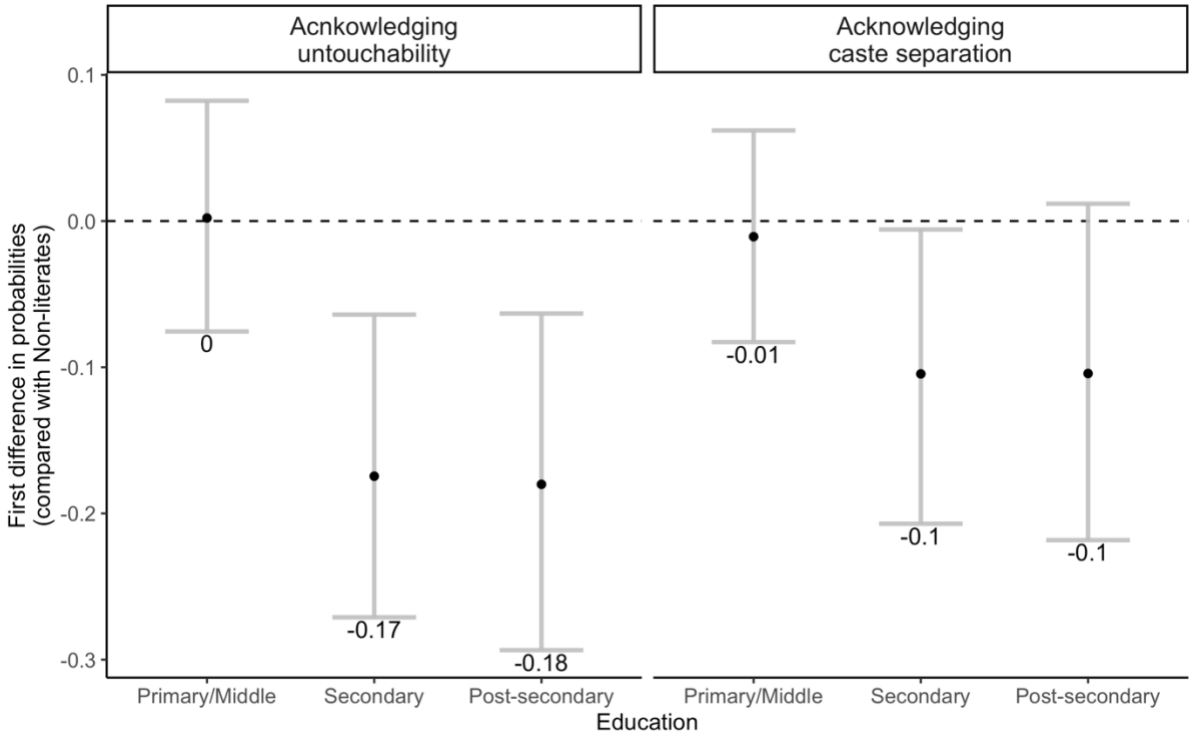
*Table F.1 – Logistic binomial models on acknowledging untouchability or caste separation among Hindus in Uttar Pradesh*

| | | **Model 1 Acknowledging untouchability** | | **Model 2 Acknowledging caste separation** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **Modality** | **Coef (SE)** | **AME** | **Coef (SE)** | **AME** |
| **Caste (ref=Agricultural)** | | -1.39*** | | -1.251*** | |
| | Dalit | (0.137) | *-0.3* | (0.132) | *-0.29* |
| | | -1.082*** | | -0.901*** | |
| | Low | (0.142) | *-0.24* | (0.137) | *-0.22* |
| | | -0.219 | | 0 | |
| | Merchant | (0.203) | | (0.203) | |
| | | -0.568*** | | -0.335* | |
| | Lordly | (0.152) | *-0.13* | (0.15) | *-0.08* |
| | | 0.708*** | | 0.827*** | |
| | Brahman | (0.168) | *0.16* | (0.178) | *0.17* |
| **Educational attainment (ref=Non-literate)** | | 0.008 | | -0.044 | |
| | Primary/Middle | (0.112) | | (0.108) | |
| | | -0.723*** | | -0.421** | |
| | Secondary | (0.147) | *-0.14* | (0.138) | *-0.09* |
| | | -0.748*** | | -0.42* | |
| | Post-secondary | (0.201) | *-0.14* | (0.191) | *-0.09* |
| | | 0.53*** | | 0.503*** | |
| **Class (ref=Not farmer)** | Farmer | (0.105) | *0.11* | (0.102) | *0.11* |
| | | 0.074 | | -0.04 | |
| **Residence (ref=Rural)** | Urban | (0.136) | | (0.13) | |
| | | -0.085 | | 0.061 | |
| **Sex (ref=Male)** | Female | (0.166) | | (0.159) | |
| | | -0.129* | | -0.164*** | |
| **Age (centered and scaled)** | (mean=48,SD=14) | (0.051) | *-0.03* | (0.05) | *-0.04* |
| | | 0.025 | | 0.312* | |
| | Constant | (0.137) | | (0.135) | |
| | AIC | 3124 | | 3310 | |
| | Log likelihood | -1549 | | -1642 | |

*Note: + p<.10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (two-sided). AME stands for Average Marginal Effect.*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey II (2011-2012), Hindus in Uttar Pradesh.*

*Figure F.1 – First difference in probabilities between non-literate respondents and other educational attainments (probabilities computed at the reference levels of other variables of regression models)*




*Note: 95 per cent confidence intervals are calculated using a bootstrap resampling procedure (1,000 resamples).*

*Source: Indian Human Development Survey II (2011-2012), Hindus in Uttar Pradesh.*

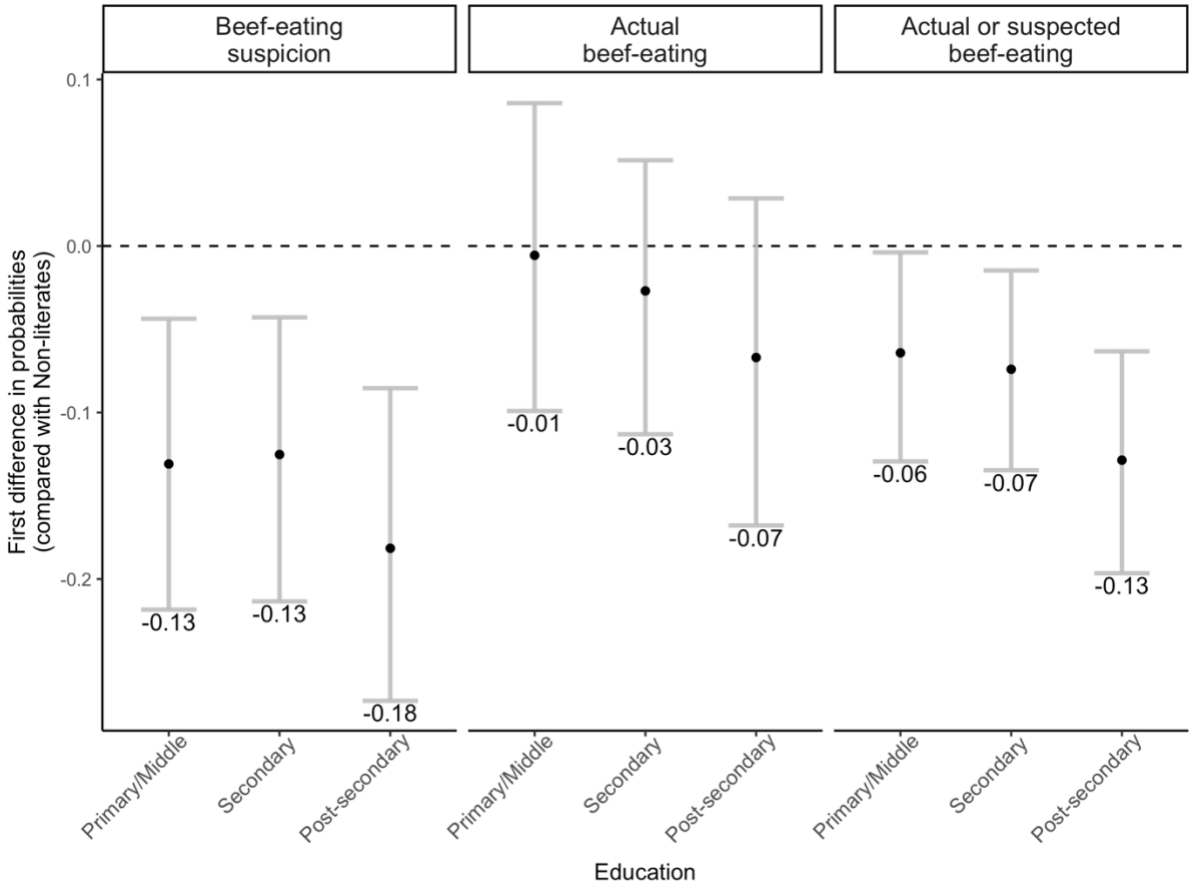
*Table – Logistic binomial models on legitimizing violence against Muslims whether suspected, actual beef-eating, among Hindus in Bihar, Jharkhand and Maharashtra*

| ***Legitimizing violence against Muslim whether:*** | | **Model 1 Beef-eating suspicion** | | **Model 2 Actual beef-eating** | | **Model 3 Actual or suspected beef-eating** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Variable** | **Modality** | **Coef (SE)** | **AME** | **Coef (SE)** | **AME** | **Coef (SE)** | **AME** |
| **Caste (ref=Hindu low/middle)** | Adivasi | 0.059 (0.213) | | -0.102 (0.2) | | -0.038 (0.145) | |
| | Dalit | -0.145 (0.136) | | -0.035 (0.127) | | -0.114 (0.092) | |
| | Upper (excl. Brahmin) | 0.366** (0.131) | *0.08* | 0.3* (0.121) | *0.07* | 0.313*** (0.088) | *0.07* |
| | Brahmin | 0.052 (0.231) | | -0.063 (0.208) | | -0.034 (0.154) | |
| **Educational attainment (ref=Non-literate)** | Primary/Middle | -0.547*** (0.124) | *-0.12* | -0.023 (0.112) | | -0.265** (0.082) | *-0.06* |
| | Secondary | -0.522*** (0.153) | *-0.12* | -0.112 (0.141) | | -0.307** (0.103) | *-0.07* |
| | Post-secondary | -0.783*** (0.19) | *-0.17* | -0.285 (0.184) | | -0.549*** (0.131) | *-0.12* |
| **Residence (ref=Rural)** | Urban | -0.336** (0.13) | *-0.07* | -0.42*** (0.124) | *-0.1* | -0.377*** (0.089) | *-0.08* |
| **State (ref=Bihar)** | Jharkhand | -0.344* (0.156) | *-0.07* | 0.142 (0.14) | | -0.086 (0.103) | |
| | Maharashtra | -0.386** (0.12) | *-0.08* | -0.1 (0.117) | | -0.242** (0.083) | *-0.05* |
| **Sex (ref=Male)** | Female | -0.009 (0.104) | | -0.01 (0.096) | | -0.024 (0.07) | |
| **Age (centered and scaled)** | (mean=34,SD=12) | 0.033 (0.047) | | -0.118** (0.043) | *-0.03* | -0.042 (0.031) | |
| | Constant | -0.125 (0.117) | | -0.338** (0.108) | | -0.215** (0.079) | |
| | AIC | 2215 | | 2522 | | 4751 | |
| | Log likelihood | -1094 | | -1248 | | -2363 | |

*Note: + p<.10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (two-sided). AME stands for Average Marginal Effect.*

*Source: Social Attitudes Research India Survey, 2016, Hindus in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Bihar.*

*Figure F.2 - First difference in probabilities between non-literate respondents and other educational attainments (probabilities computed at the reference levels of other variables of regression models)*




*Note: 95 per cent confidence intervals are calculated using a bootstrap resampling procedure (1,000 resamples).*

*Source: Social Attitudes Research India Survey, 2016, Hindus in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Bihar.*

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# Le prix de la chair

*Le végétarisme comme marqueur statutaire dans l'Inde contemporaine*

*Résumé*

En septembre 2015, au moment de l'Eid, Mohammed Akhlaq est accusé par son voisin hindou à Dadri, dans l'Uttar Pradesh, du vol de son veau et de sa consommation. Le premier dément les accusations, mais la rumeur se répand et un lynchage planifié réunissant une foule munie d'armes blanches a lieu dans la nuit, blessant mortellement l'accusé. La police, appelée par les voisins, n'arrive qu'une heure plus tard, et arrête au total dix-huit assaillants dans les jours qui suivent. Alors que ceux-ci sont rapidement libérés sous caution, le jugement du procès intervenu en mars 2021 est toujours en attente. La famille Akhlaq, indemnisée par le gouvernement de l'Uttar Pradesh a dû déménager à Delhi, craignant pour sa sécurité. Par ailleurs, une plainte a également été déposée contre elle par leur voisin, pour abattage d'animal bovin. La viande retrouvée dans le réfrigérateur de la famille a été analysée et pourrait constituer une preuve à charge. Toutefois, différents tests ont donné des résultats contradictoires, l'un l'identifiant comme de la viande de chèvre et l'autre comme étant de la viande de bœuf. Moins d'un an après ce lynchage très médiatisé, en juillet 2016, près de la ville d'Una au Gujarat, sept hommes Dalits – la caste considérée comme la plus basse au sein de la hiérarchie hindoue –, ont été battus et fouettés en public pour avoir dépecé une vache morte. Deux ans plus tard, en octobre 2018, à Gurgaon dans l'Haryana, ce sont environ 400 bouchers, qui ont été harcelés et contraints de fermer leurs échoppes pendant le festival hindou de *Navratri*. Ces événements font partie des quelques 200 épisodes les plus médiatisés de violences contre les basses castes et les minorités religieuses sur le sous-continent indien, au prétexte de la vente ou de la consommation présumée de bœuf ou de produits non végétariens, recensés entre juin 2014 et septembre 2020[188].

Comment des pratiques alimentaires – la consommation de bœuf, mais aussi, plus généralement, de viande – peuvent-elles faire l'objet de telles violences ? Ces cas d'agressions perpétrées par des protecteurs de vaches autoproclamés (*Gau Rakshaks*) reflètent la prévalence de la suprématie des membres de la communauté hindoue, et en leur sein, des Brahmanes – les castes supérieures hindoues – en Inde. À partir d'une analyse de la stratification sociale contemporaine, ma thèse suggère que ces violences sont la partie la plus visible de luttes symboliques de groupes religieux et de castes pour maintenir leur hégémonie culturelle, dans un contexte de transformation de la structure sociale. Ce faisant, j'avance que le végétarisme est un marqueur statutaire qui dénote les tentatives de la communauté hindoue, et en particulier des Brahmanes, pour conserver leur position culturelle dominante. Ainsi, en fonction de la

[188] Parmi différentes sources, la *Documentation of the Oppressed (DOTO*, https://dotodatabase.com, dernier accès le 13/07/2021) recense les violences dont sont victimes les minorités religieuses.

classe sociale à laquelle on appartient et des positions statutaires revendiquées, l'analyse du régime alimentaire végétarien – qui concernerait jusqu'à près d'un tiers des ménages – révèle les tensions qui se jouent dans la structure sociale indienne contemporaine.

Les contextes sociaux qui font l'objet d'études empiriques dans le champ de la stratification culturelle correspondent le plus souvent au pays dits « développés » du Nord. Ainsi, les sociétés plus égalitaires économiquement – telles que les pays scandinaves – apparaissent adaptées pour saisir les effets des logiques statutaires, du fait du moindre rôle des contraintes économiques pesant sur les individus[189]. Ma thèse propose cependant d'adopter un point de vue inverse. En effet, comme la société indienne correspond à un contexte de très fortes inégalités économiques[190], il faut alors comprendre comment des dynamiques statutaires peuvent être également saillantes dans un contexte fortement inégalitaire, en particulier lorsque ces distinctions statutaires ne sont pas directement associées à des positions économiques. La société indienne remet en effet en question notre compréhension des logiques statutaires puisque certaines d'entre elles sont fortement associées à des catégories auxquelles les individus sont assignés (*ascribed categories*), en particulier la caste et la religion. Bien que les *ascribed categories*, telles que la race ou l'ethnicité, structurent aussi des régimes inégalitaires dans la plupart des sociétés, les études de la stratification indienne y soulignent l'importance majeure de ces catégories, qu'Ambedkar conçoit comme des « inégalités graduelles[191] ». Il souligne ainsi que les inégalités catégorielles s'y distinguent par des différences plus granulaires mais aussi probablement plus saillantes que les catégories ethno-raciales. Ainsi, la mise au jour des processus qui perpétuent les formes de différenciations culturelles dans ce contexte marqué à la fois par de fortes inégalités économiques d'un côté, et par des inégalités catégorielles de l'autre, apparaît comme particulièrement fécond pour renouveler la compréhension des logiques statutaires au sein des études de la stratification culturelle.

#### a) Un cadre théorique pour comprendre les marqueurs de statut liés à l'alimentation

Comme nous le rappelle la sociologie des pratiques alimentaires, ce que les individus consomment est associé à qui ils sont et avec qui ils vivent. Partant, les habitudes alimentaires

[189] FLEMMEN, Magne, Vegard JARNESS, et Lennart ROSENLUND. « Class and status: on the misconstrual of the conceptual distinction and a neo-Bourdieusian alternative », *The British Journal of Sociology*. juin 2019, vol.70 nº 3. p. 816-866.

[190] CHANCEL, Lucas et Thomas PIKETTY. *Indian income inequality, 1922-2014: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?* Rapport 11. World Wealth and Income Database. 2017.

[191] Cité dans HERRENSCHMIDT, Olivier. « « L'inégalité graduée » ou la pire des inégalités. L'analyse de la société hindoue par Ambedkar », *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*. 1996, vol.37 nº 1. p. 3-22.

reflètent aussi des processus d'inclusion et d'exclusion sociale, tout autant qu'elles sont des marqueurs de positions statutaires au sein d'une hiérarchie sociale[192]. En quoi le végétarisme renvoie-t-il à une forme de prestige social dans l'Inde contemporaine ? Quels sont les groupes sociaux qui s'appuient sur ce régime alimentaire pour revendiquer une position statutaire ? Le végétarisme fait-il l'objet d'une reconnaissance symbolique unanimement partagé en contexte indien ou est-il contesté ? Quels sont les ressorts discursifs de cette valorisation symbolique ?

En tant que mesure de la valeur sociale, le statut social est un concept à la fois central et élusif en sociologie[193]. Le concept de statut renvoie au cadre théorique de la stratification sociale de Weber[194], où il est conçu comme une forme de prestige social, le distinguant théoriquement de la classe, qui désigne une position ancrée dans le domaine économique. L'opérationnalisation de cette distinction fait pourtant débat et les mesures quantitatives contemporaines du prestige social s'appuient le plus souvent sur l'unité de la profession, en négligeant les autres catégories qui présentent des formes de « fermeture sociale » – suivant un autre concept clef de Weber, qui désigne l'existence de règles sociales restreignant les relations entre groupes. Le cadre théorique de Wimmer sur les processus de formation de frontières entre groupes sociaux[195], qui découle de cette définition wéberienne, permet alors de saisir les logiques statutaires liées à la fois aux catégories de caste, de religion et de classe. Ma thèse adopte donc une perspective nominaliste de la distinction entre le statut et la classe, c'est-à-dire qu'elle cherche à éviter le piège de l'essentialisation et du « groupisme » entre ces deux dimensions conceptuelles[196].

Parallèlement, le traçage de frontières symboliques est au cœur des dynamiques statutaires : les individus font sens de leurs styles de vie et de ceux des autres, en les catégorisant et en les hiérarchisant[197]. En même temps que ces significations sont produites à une échelle individuelle, elles s'inscrivent dans une structure sociale. Je m'efforce donc d'étudier les conditions dans lesquelles les significations liées aux styles de vie alimentaires, et plus précisément au végétarisme, sont source d'exclusion sociale, en fonction des positions

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[192] BOURDIEU, Pierre. *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement.* Paris. Éditions de Minuit. 1979. 670 p.

[193] SØRENSEN, Aage B. « The Basic Concepts of Stratification Research: Class, Status, and Power » *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*. Routledge. [s.l.]. D. B. Grusky. 2001, p.

[194] WEBER, Max. *Les communautés*. Paris : La Découverte, 2019. 300 p., voir le Texte 8 : « Classes », « groupes statutaires » et « partis ».

[195] WIMMER, Andreas. *Ethnic boundary making: institutions, power, networks*. New York. Oxford University Press. 2013. 293 p. (Oxford studies in culture and politics).

[196] BRUBAKER, Rogers. *Ethnicity without groups*. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard Univ. Press. 2006. 283 p.

[197] LAMONT, Michèle et Virág MOLNÁR. « The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences », *Annual Review of Sociology*. 2002, vol.28. p. 167-195.

sociales individuelles, et comment les frontières symboliques deviennent des frontières sociales, qu'elles soient associées à des catégories religieuses, de caste ou de classe. Ce faisant, je vise à identifier les multiples répertoires par lesquels les individus justifient leurs régimes alimentaires. Je cherche en effet à mettre au jour les éventuels différents « ordres de grandeur[198] » – des valeurs morales concurrentes – qui justifient les comportements et les pratiques alimentaires, tels que par exemple la sphère religieuse, économique ou diététique, en supposant que ces sphères n'ont pas la même importance suivant la position des individus dans la structure sociale.

### b) Une approche mixte des données et des méthodes

Pour mener à bien ce projet de recherche, ma thèse se concentre sur l'État de l'Uttar Pradesh. Cette région nord-indienne est parfois surnommée la « ceinture de la vache » (*cow belt*), dénotant ainsi l'importance symbolique de la vache dans cette région. Par ailleurs, le nombre déclaré de végétarien·ne·s y est en moyenne plus élevé qu'à l'échelle nationale, alors que la proportion de basses castes Dalits et de la minorité musulmane, deux catégories supposément non-végétariennes, y est aussi en moyenne plus élevée. Cette énigme peut être mise en parallèle avec un degré élevé de violences inter-castes et inter-religieuses dans cet État, suggérant la prégnance de la frontière symbolique du végétarisme en lien avec l'agencement de caste et de religion dans cette région.

Je mobilise à la fois des données quantitatives étudiées par les outils économétriques et de l'analyse géométrique des données, et des données qualitatives issues d'entretiens semi-directifs, conduits en anglais et hindi. Là où la sociologie en Inde a traditionnellement plutôt privilégié les enquêtes fondées sur des approches ethnographiques, l'agencement des données proposé ici offre l'occasion de mettre à l'épreuve de la représentativité les mécanismes sociaux de diffusion des pratiques alimentaires, tout en saisissant leur compréhension intersubjective. L'approche par méthodes mixtes permet ainsi la « triangulation[199] » des données empiriques, c'est-à-dire la diversification des ressources pour appréhender la saillance du végétarisme. D'abord, l'utilisation de données issues de grandes enquêtes statistiques permet de dresser un tableau social de l'adhésion au végétarisme en fonction de la position sociale des répondant·e·s. Plusieurs jeux de données différents sont mobilisés :

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[198] BOLTANSKI, Luc et Laurent THÉVENOT. *De la justification: les économies de la grandeur*. Nachdr. Paris. Gallimard. 2008. 483 p.

[199] SMALL, Mario Luis. « How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature », *Annual Review of Sociology*. 2011, vol.37 nº 1. p. 57-86.

- Les enquêtes du « Consumer Expenditure Survey » menées par la statistique publique indienne (le National Sample Survey Office) permettent d'avoir une profondeur temporelle allant des années 1980 au début des années 1990 en ce qui concerne les pratiques alimentaires. Ces enquêtes offrent par ailleurs un degré de précision important sur la composition du panier alimentaire, son origine (autoproduction ou achat) et le lieu de la consommation alimentaire (au sein du ménage ou à l'extérieur).
- L'« Indian Human Development Survey » (2011-2012) et le « National Family Health Survey » (2005-2006 et 2015-2016) permettent d'affiner le lien entre végétarisme et position sociale, grâce à l'analyse d'une question ouverte sur les auto-identifications à la caste, données inédites pour l'Inde contemporaine puisque cette catégorie ne fait plus l'objet d'une classification statistique depuis l'Indépendance (1947), hormis par le biais de catégories administratives qui ne reflètent qu'imparfaitement la réalité sociale de la caste.
- Enfin, peu de données statistiques sont disponibles mesurant les attitudes et les valeurs en ce qui concerne l'alimentation. L'enquête Social Attitudes Research India (SARI) est une exception et j'utilise ces données pour mesurer le degré de légitimation des violences à l'encontre de la minorité musulmane lorsqu'elle est soupçonnée d'avoir consommé de la viande bovine.

Ces données sont enrichies par 75 entretiens qualitatifs menés entre septembre 2018 et juin 2019, sélectionnés à partir d'un échantillon raisonné reflétant la diversité des positions sociales. Ce matériau permet de comprendre les représentations subjectives du végétarisme et les répertoires de justification qui valorisent ce régime alimentaire. L'ensemble de ces données – statistiques, mais aussi celles issues des entretiens – correspondent à des données déclarées, et peuvent donc souffrir d'un « biais attitudinal » (*attitudinal fallacy*). Ce que les individus disent qu'ils font ne correspond en effet pas forcément à ce qu'ils font réellement. Cependant, mon objectif est moins de soumettre ces déclarations à des épreuves de vraisemblance (via par exemple l'observation directe, même si les entretiens en donnent aussi parfois l'occasion) que de saisir les normes sociales qui régissent les pratiques. Le recueil déclaratif constitue ainsi un matériau privilégié pour comprendre comment les individus tracent des frontières symboliques et sociales autour des pratiques alimentaires[200].

### c) Résumé des résultats empiriques de la thèse

Loin d'être uniquement une prescription religieuse suivant des règles écrites, fixes et immuables, être végétarien en Inde est le résultat de normes sociales ancrées dans des luttes symboliques et sociales, comme le montre la première partie de la thèse. Après un retour historique sur l'émergence du végétarisme et de l'affirmation de la protection des vaches comme composantes de l'hégémonie culturelle brahmanique, et de la cohésion sociale de la catégorie hindoue, j'ai souligné dans la première partie de la thèse trois tensions autour de ces marqueurs dans l'Inde contemporaine. Premièrement, s'il semble que les épisodes de violence à l'encontre des mangeur·euse·s de viande bovine reflètent une réaffirmation de la domination culturelle hindoue et brahmanique, deuxièmement, celle-ci est aussi contestée, notamment par

[200] LAMONT, Michèle et Ann SWIDLER. « Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing », *Qualitative Sociology*. 2014, vol.37 nº 2. p. 153-171.

les mouvements militants Dalits. Troisièmement, l'émergence – au moins discursivement – de la catégorie de la « classe moyenne » interroge sur la pertinence des marqueurs religieux et de caste, et du maintien du végétarisme comme régime alimentaire distinctif.

Cette contextualisation m'a conduit dans la seconde partie de la thèse à interroger ce que signifie être végétarien en contexte indien. Ainsi, se revendiquer de ce régime alimentaire peut revêtir des définitions différentes (par exemple, inclure ou non les œufs), ce qui montre une relative fluidité dans la frontière symbolique du végétarisme. Les pratiques alimentaires carnées individuelles sont par ailleurs parfois frappées du sceau du secret, vis-à-vis de la famille, du voisinage, ou du groupe d'appartenance. Ces éléments témoignent des ajustements auxquels procèdent les individus pour se conformer à la norme sociale du végétarisme. Mais les institutions culturelles (par exemple, les sites de rencontre en ligne) et publiques (les labels alimentaires) contribuent à réaffirmer la stabilité de la norme du végétarisme et à conforter son rôle légitimant.

Dans la même partie, j'ai souligné la difficulté de saisir empiriquement la caste, notamment dans des enquêtes statistiques. J'ai suggéré que les mesures quantitatives les plus courantes de la caste reposent sur des frontières administratives – issues de politiques de discrimination positive – qui ne quantifient pas de manière satisfaisante cette catégorie en tant que matrice de socialisation. La thèse propose alors de catégoriser les réponses aux questions ouvertes sur l'appartenance de caste. J'ai présenté un cadre méthodologique mobilisant les modèles multiniveaux pour opérationnaliser la caste en tenant compte à la fois du grand nombre d'auto-identifications à la caste dans ces questions, tout en l'associant à une nomenclature définie conceptuellement, en m'inspirant de travaux récents sur l'étude de l'ethnicité dans d'autres contextes[201]. Cette partie s'achève sur une étude de l'intersection entre position de caste, ou de religion, et différents marqueurs sociaux de classe : la richesse matérielle, la position occupationnelle, le niveau d'éducation et le positionnement subjectif de classe. Je montre à la fois la forte congruence entre ces dimensions de la stratification sociale – dénotant que les logiques d'appropriation et d'accumulation ont partie prise avec la caste –, et en même temps des situations de non-cristallisation entre caste et classe, notamment grâce à l'éducation qui permet d'accéder à des positions de classes plus élevées.

Les effets de la non-cristallisation entre caste et classe sur la saillance du végétarisme, probablement à la source d'« incohérences de statut[202] », sont étudiés dans la troisième partie.

[201] WIMMER, Andreas, *Op. cit.*

[202] LENSKI, Gerhard E. « Status Inconsistency and the Vote: A Four Nation Test », *American Sociological Review*. 1967, vol.32 nº 2. p. 298-301.

Je rappelle d'abord la très forte corrélation entre le végétarisme et la religion et la caste : à l'instar de modèles anthropologiques canoniques[203], les personnes hindoues, et parmi elles les hautes castes Brahmanes, ont tendance à être plus végétariennes. Mais je mets aussi en évidence des logiques d'émulation culturelle, suivant un processus de « sanskritization[204] » : après avoir contrôlé par la position de caste, un niveau de richesse et surtout d'éducation plus élevé, ou une profession de classe supérieure sont associés à une plus grande probabilité d'être végétarien. Cet effet est plus uniforme et plus fort pour les femmes que pour les hommes et d'autant plus lorsqu'on tient compte de la position de leur partenaire. Ce résultat suggère une division genrée du travail statutaire au sein du ménage, où les styles de vie des femmes légitiment la position sociale des hommes. Par ailleurs, la prise en compte des configurations socio-spatiales au sein desquelles résident les individus permet de nuancer ces résultats. En effet, l'émulation culturelle apparaît d'autant plus visible que les catégories de castes les plus notoirement végétariennes (notamment les Brahmanes) sont localement socio-économiquement dominantes. En outre, l'analyse de l'environnement social met également au jour un effet lié à la position socio-économique relative des basses castes Dalits, et surtout de la minorité musulmane. Ainsi, lorsque ces derniers ont localement une position relativement plus élevée, les individus hindous ont tendance à être davantage végétariens. Le régime alimentaire apparaît alors comme un critère de différentiation culturelle permettant de renforcer la cohésion hindoue face aux minorités. Parallèlement, les pratiques alimentaires au sein de la communauté musulmane varient également en fonction de sa position socio-économique : lorsqu'elle est localement davantage marginalisée, ses membres ont moins tendance à adopter des pratiques alimentaires carnées bovines qui peuvent être une source potentielle de stigmatisation.

Dans la dernière partie de la thèse, j'ai centré l'analyse sur les motivations et les justifications d'être végétarien. J'ai d'abord statistiquement montré que le panier alimentaire des ménages était structuré autour de deux dimensions : d'une part, une segmentation en fonction des conditions socio-économiques (frugales versus confortables), et d'autre part, des habitudes alimentaires carnées face à celles non carnées, ce qui correspond à un gradient social de caste et de religion. Or, les ménages de basses castes et musulmans sont plus fréquemment pauvres, de telle sorte que leurs pratiques alimentaires sont à la fois caractérisées par des pratiques frugales et non-végétariennes. Aussi, dans les entretiens recueillis, les individus

[203] DUMONT, Louis. *Homo hierarchicus: Essai sur le système des castes*. Paris. Gallimard. 1967. 714 p.
[204] SRINIVAS, M. N. « A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization », *The Far Eastern Quarterly*. 1956, vol.15 nº 4. p. 481-496.

végétariens les plus aisés disqualifient alors les non-végétarien·ne·s suivant cette double opposition : ils considèrent que la consommation carnée reflète un mauvais usage des dépenses budgétaires des ménages, et que ces habitudes de consommation sont en partie responsables de leur condition de pauvreté – en négligeant de ce fait les apports nutritionnels de la consommation carnée. Les pratiques alimentaires contribuent ainsi à naturaliser les conditions socio-économiques : les préjugés liés à la caste et à la religion sont renforcés par des rationalisations économiques. Enfin, j'ai mis au jour l'importance pour les individus les plus éduqués de l'usage discursif d'arguments légaux, pseudo-scientifiques et économiques pour valoriser le végétarisme et la protection de la vache. Ces formes de rationalisation s'articulent avec des traditions plus religieuses et les renforcent. Par ailleurs, elles ont aussi tendance à soutenir des attitudes de stigmatisation à l'encontre des basses castes et des musulmans. Derrière un discours en apparence aveugle aux privilèges de caste et de religion, les pratiques alimentaires et leurs significations mettent clairement en lumière leur rôle distinctif et excluant vis-à-vis de ces catégories, et battent en brèche l'affirmation d'une « classe moyenne » indienne qui ne serait pas fondée sur des privilèges de caste et de religion.

#### d) Deux contributions théoriques à l'étude du végétarisme en Inde

Ce travail met en lumière deux contributions théoriques principales. Premièrement, ma recherche contribue à la sociologie de la stratification sociale en soulignant l'interaction entre les dynamiques statutaires et les inégalités de classe dans les processus d'accumulation et d'appropriation des ressources. Dans un contexte de forte augmentation des inégalités économiques et d'émergence de la catégorie des « classes moyennes » en Inde, j'ai souligné que les privilèges de caste et de religion se maintiennent et se renouvellent. Les hiérarchies de caste et religion continuent de déterminer les opportunités sociales, ainsi que les styles de vie des catégories les plus privilégiées. En tant que telles, les « nouvelles classes moyennes » – ainsi qualifiées dans la sphère publique indienne pour désigner les catégories qui ont bénéficié de la libéralisation économique à partir des années 1990 – se distinguent certainement par leur effort pour ajuster – et donc continuer à légitimer – les pratiques et les valeurs associées à leurs positions religieuses et de caste. L'auto-identification à la « classe moyenne » permet ainsi de nier les conditions d'accès aux positions dominantes, tout en naturalisant et en diffusant les codes culturels des catégories de caste les plus privilégiées. Alors qu'on aurait pu penser que la valorisation positive du végétarisme serait bouleversée par le consumérisme global auquel les fractions dominantes ont accès dans l'Inde contemporaine, le bien-être animal, les

préoccupations diététiques, voire les préoccupations environnementales contribuent au maintien de la saillance du végétarisme et de la protection de la vache.

Dans le même temps, les privilèges liés à la caste sont également masqués par les efforts d'homogénéisation de la catégorie religieuse hindoue, notamment par opposition aux minorités religieuses, au premier rang desquelles la communauté musulmane. La polarisation entre hindous et musulmans laisse entendre que la catégorie hindoue constitue un groupe homogène alors qu'elle comprend en fait des catégories aux privilèges et aux modes de vie très différents. Ainsi, l'adoption des codes et valeurs brahmaniques, notamment le végétarisme, est autant le reflet de mécanismes d'émulation culturelle que le résultat d'une consolidation des frontières sociales du groupe hindou. Ce n'est ainsi pas une coïncidence si les membres de la minorité musulmane déclarent moins fréquemment appartenir à la « classe moyenne » que les individus hindous, à position socio-économique égale. Marginalisés sur le plan socio-économique, ils sont aussi symboliquement exclus du récit de l'intégration nationale.

Étant donné l'importance des privilèges liés à la caste et à la religion dans ce contexte de transformations structurelles, cette contribution a une conséquence importante pour la stratification culturelle dans d'autres contextes géographiques : ignorer les logiques statutaires fondées sur des catégories auxquelles on est assigné (telles que le statut ethno-racial) peut conduire à négliger des processus de segmentation importants au sein des études quantitatives de la stratification culturelle. L'étude plus systématique de ces catégories pourrait s'appuyer sur la méthodologie que j'ai proposé ici et pourrait être adaptée à d'autres contextes géographiques. Ce pourrait être par exemple le cas dans des sociétés où les enquêteur·rice·s recensent un nombre croissant d'individus s'identifiant comme multiraciaux – comme aux États-Unis ou au Brésil –, et où l'usage de questions fermées est alors caduque, ou bien dans des contextes où la collecte de ces données sur l'origine ethno-raciale, parfois contestée, n'est pas courante et où il n'existe donc pas de catégories préexistantes qui peuvent être proposées dans les questionnaires – comme en France.

Le deuxième apport théorique de la thèse concerne la sociologie de la culture et les spécificités de l'étude de l'alimentation en tant qu'objet culturel. Si les frontières disciplinaires impliquent souvent que l'alimentation est appréhendée dans ses dimensions symboliques par les approches anthropologiques, en revanche ce domaine est plus souvent étudié dans sa réalité matérielle par le champ des études nutritionnelles. Pourtant, ces deux dimensions sont interdépendantes et leur prise en compte simultanée montre que le coût économique et les aspects nutritifs de l'alimentation influencent les classifications symboliques qui façonnent les frontières entre individus végétariens et non-végétariens.

En outre, la nourriture est un objet culturel qui est physiquement liée aux consommateurs puisqu'elle est ingérée corporellement. Là où la stratification culturelle évoque métaphoriquement les « goûts » et les « dégoûts[205] » culturels des groupes sociaux dans l'espace social, ces oppositions renvoient à un sens littéral dès lors que les objets culturels analysés touchent également au corps[206]. Les « goûts » alimentaires ne sont donc pas seulement métaphoriques et le souligner n'est pas uniquement une remarque littéraire. En effet, les distinctions culturelles alimentaires sont en partie plus difficilement perméables au changement social, de par les logiques d'héritage familial et la routinisation des habitudes alimentaires – comme en témoignent les pratiques alimentaires des Brahmanes –, même si elles ne sont pas figées. Dans le même temps, le domaine alimentaire favorise des préjugés extrêmement puissants envers les catégories sociales qui ont des pratiques alimentaires déconsidérées. Pour de nombreuses personnes hindoues, la stigmatisation envers la minorité musulmane trouve appui sur la protection des vaches, sa consommation supposée par les individus musulmans étant en effet considérée comme cruelle. En outre, pour les individus, la nourriture est un domaine culturel communément utilisé pour essentialiser les autres en fonction de leurs catégories d'appartenance régionales, de caste, de religion. Ainsi, les délimitations symboliques liées à la nourriture ont tendance à être plus résistantes que pour d'autres domaines culturels : or, ces processus d'essentialisation favorisent la naturalisation des inégalités. L'intérêt des méthodes mixtes est alors de pouvoir confronter ces discours à une analyse statistique des conditions sociales objectives corrélées aux styles de vie alimentaires.

Enfin, peut-être plus clairement que pour d'autres objets culturels, l'alimentation apparaît comme le support de valorisations et dévalorisations plurielles. Les individus lui attribuent des significations multiples, dans un spectre allant des besoins biologiques aux distinctions symboliques. Ces valeurs s'entremêlent et se renforcent mutuellement. J'ai ici montré que le végétarisme est un objet « polytélique[207] », c'est-à-dire qu'il est le support de différents répertoires de valeurs symboliques. Au final, la convergence entre les différentes significations attribuées à ce régime alimentaire – allant de la dimension religieuse, économique, politique, diététique, voire environnementale – favorise la centralité du végétarisme dans l'espace social indien, et il joue ainsi un rôle clef dans les dynamiques sociales de statut, d'intégration et de stigmatisation dans l'Inde contemporaine.

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[205] BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Op. cit.*

[206] GRIGNON, Claude et Christiane GRIGNON. « Styles d'alimentation et goûts populaires », *Revue Française de Sociologie*. 1980, vol.21 nº 4. p. 531.

[207] BOUGLÉ, Célestin Charles Alfred. « Remarques sur le polytélisme », *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*. 1914, vol.22 nº 5. p. 595-611.

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