CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

1. *Unity in Diversity*

THE INDIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE and cultural pattern are characterized by unity as well as diversity. Historically, India has been hospitable to numerous groups of immigrants from different parts of Asia and Europe, but the culture of each group has undergone enough change over the centuries to become an integral part of the Indian mosaic. The institution of caste may be mentioned as a typical example of the paradox that is Indian society. Each caste stands for a way of life that is to some extent distinctive, but at the same time the castes of a region form part of a single social framework. It is important to note that caste is found not only among the Hindus but also among the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains and Jews. Caste is ubiquitous, and this has resulted in an ideology tolerant of diversity.

Factors making for diversity are apparent even to the casual observer. The population of India is racially diverse, containing elements from six main racial types : the Negrito, the Proto-Australoid, the Mongoloid, the Mediterranean, the Western Brachycephals, and the Nordic. All the great religions of the world are represented in this country. The tribal groups enjoy varying degrees of contact with one or the other of the great religions. The major literary languages alone number fourteen. Diversity is seen in the patterns of rural as well as urban settlements, community life, forms of land tenure and agricultural operations. In kinship, marriage rites and customs, inheritance, and the general mode of living, there are striking differences between groups.

Diversity is, however, only one side of the picture. There are unifying factors as well. India is a political entity, every part of which is under the same Constitution. The process of unification developed as several great rulers—Aśoka, Samudragupta, Akbar—brought large parts of the country, under their power ; but it was only during British rule that India became for the first time a single political entity.

The concept of the unity of India is inherent in Hinduism. There are sacred centres of Hindu pilgrimage in every corner of the land. Certain salient aspects of Sanskritic culture are to be

found all over the country. India is the sacred land not only of the Hindus but also of the Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists. The Muslims and Christians, too, have several sacred centres of pilgrimage in India. The institution of caste cuts across diverse religious groups and gives them all a common social idiom.

The declaration of India as a secular State provides one more evidence of the tolerance of diversity which has been characteristic of Indian history from its beginning. The process of economic development ushered in by the Five Year Plans and the spread of egalitarian ideals have brought about revolutionary changes in the Indian pattern of social life. A single government and a common body of civil and criminal laws, a developing economy, and a secular approach to public life and problems are now providing substance and reality to India's claim to be a nation.*

2. *Structure of Indian Society*

Caste

Historical

The first literary traces of the caste system are to be found in the Ṛg-*Veda,* where three groups are mentioned : *Brāhma* (Priests), *Kṣātra* (Kings or Rulers), and *Viś* (common people). The *Puruṣasūkta* hymn, however, speaks of four classes originating from four parts of the body of the creator. These classes, *Brāhmaṇa, Rājanya, Vaiśya* and *Śūdra,* are referred to in later literature as *Caturvarṇa.* The term *varṇa* does not seem to have been applied to these classes in the earliest literature, except to contrast the fair *Ārya* with the dark *Dāsa.* The initial distinction of people into two *varṇas* later developed into three (*Brāhma, Kṣātra and Viś*) and finally into four. The occupations of the first two *varṇas* are clearly stated to be priesthood, and administrative and military duties respectively. But the duties of the Vaiśya and Śūdra are not very clear. The village headman was usually a Vaiśya, and Śūdras were servants. The *varṇa* categories do not, however, exhaust the various occupations practised in Vedic India. The *Ṛg-Veda,* for instance, mentions several occupations by name—chariot-builder, goldsmith, barber, physician, leather-worker, potter, merchant and others. The question arises whether these occupations referred to endogamous *jātis* as we know them today.

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It is not known how they fitted into the *varṇa* framework. The post-Vedic period saw the growth and consolidation of the power of the Brahmins. Brahmin writers continually discussed and defined the duties and rights of each caste and its place in the hierarchy. (The relation which these writings bore to the empirical reality is not clear.) Justifications and rationalizations of the hierarchy were also produced during this period. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, for instance, the caste system is sought to be justified on the basis of the ideas of *guṇa*, *karma*, and *dharma*.

The 6th century B.C. saw the rise of Buddhism, which is believed to have questioned the basis of the caste system itself. Some scholars, however, have said that Buddhism on its social and political side was chiefly a Kṣatriya movement against Brahminical supremacy.

Post-Vedic Brahminical writers continued their attempts to systematize and codify inter-caste relations. The idea of pollution was elaborated to define the distance separating the castes. Violations of caste rules were punished either by the village panchāyat or the panchāyat of the locally dominant caste or by the king.

The Bhakti movement with its long history contained elements which ran counter to caste ideology. The Bhakti saints came from all castes, including the Harijans. It appears as though the path of *Bhakti* offered a way out of the tyrannies of the caste system, and as the Bhakti saints commanded respect from every one, the movement itself served to stress the worth of an individual irrespective of his caste affiliations. The origins of the Bhakti movement are traced to the Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva cult in the first century B. C. The Śaiva (Nāyanār) and Vaiṣṇava (Āḷvār) saints of the Tamil country, the Haridāsas and Liṅgāyat saints of Karnātaka, Vallabhācārya and his followers in Gujarāt, Caitanya in Bengal, and Tulasīdās, Sūrdās, Kabīr and Rāmānand in the North, were all representatives of the Bhakti movement. The movement was more or less continuous in Indian history, and it spread right across the subcontinent. It may not be too fanciful to regard it as a protest in the realm of religion against the division of human beings into high and low castes.

The Liṅgāyat movement which came into existence in Karnātaka in the 12th century A.D. rejected many ideas of traditional Hinduism, including karma, ritualism and caste. It also emphasized the necessity as well as the dignity of labour. The movement attracted converts from all castes including Harijans, but over the centuries it became a congeries of small, endogamous *jātis*. The followers of Kabīr (Kabīrpanthī) also became a caste.

Caste even survived conversion to Christianity and Islām. During the last century there came into existence the Ārya Samāj in the Punjab and the Brāhmo Samāj in Bengal. These movements, as well as the Ramakrishna Mission, represented a shift towards the liberalization of caste.

We shall now consider the main features of caste before it was deeply affected by recent changes. Those changes, which present a quite different picture of the Indian social structure today, are discussed in the last pages of this chapter.

The features of caste prevailing through the past centuries may be described under nine heads; hierarchy; endogamy and hypergamy; occupational association; restriction on food, drink and smoking; distinction in custom, dress and speech; pollution; ritual and other privileges and disabilities; caste organization; and caste mobility.

Hierarchy

The essence of caste is the arrangement of hereditary groups in a hierarchy. The popular impression of the hierarchy is a clear-cut one, derived from the idea of *varṇa*, with Brahmins at the top and Harijans at the bottom. But, as a matter of fact, only the two opposite ends of the hierarchy are relatively fixed; in between, and especially in the middle regions, there is considerable room for debate regarding mutual position. In a dispute over rank each caste would cite as evidence of its superiority the items of its dietary, the other caste groups from which it accepted or refused to accept cooked food and water, the ritual it performed and the customs it observed, its traditional privileges and disabilities, and the myth of its origin. The fact that mutual position is arguable if not vague over great areas of the hierarchy permits social mobility. Mobility, it may be noted, is not a recent phenomenon. Even in the traditional system it was possible for a caste to move up. The Rāj Goṇḍs of Central India, for instance, successfully claimed for themselves the rank of Kṣatriyas on the basis of their acquisition of political power. At the coronation of Śivājī, Brahmin priests declared him a Kṣatriya. Not infrequently, the claim of a caste to a higher rank is not conceded. Thus, the Smith group of castes in South India have claimed to be a twice-born caste and call themselves Viśvakarmā Brahmin. The other castes resent this and even the Harijans do not accept drinking water from a Smith. The Liṅgāyats consider themselves superior to the Brahmins but others do not accept their claim.

Disputes regarding mutual position occur even at either extremes of the hierarchy. In Kerala, Nambutris consider themselves superior to Tamil Brahmins, and among the Nambutris

those who have a hereditary right to study the Vedas claim superiority over the others. Again, there are very low groups among the Brahmins. No caste, including the Harijan, will accept cooked food or water from the Mārka Brahmins of Mysore. Likewise, the Vātima Brahmins in the Tamil country and the Tapodhan Brahmins in Gujarāt are considered as inferior.

All Caste Hindus regard Harijans as being at the bottom rung of the ladder. But the category of Harijans is not homogeneous. In each linguistic area there are a few Harijan castes which form a hierarchy. The leather-working Camār in Uttar Pradesh considers himself superior to the Bhaṅgī, aa sweeper. The Kannada Holeya places himself above the Mādiga; he proudly stresses the fact that he does not accept even water or betel leaf from either the Smith or the Mārka Brahmin.

Islām proclaims the idea of equality of all those who profess the faith, but in India it has been characterized by caste. Muslim caste differs in some respects from the Hindu caste system; there are no ethico-religious ideas justifying the hierarchy or regulating inter-caste relations through ideas of purity and pollution; there are no *varṇa* categories. What we have is a hierarchy formed by several *jātis*.

Muslim cast-hierarchy

In Uttar Pradesh, Muslims who have a tradition of foreign ancestry (Īrān, Arabia) are called Shurafa or Ashraf and are considered to be the highest. After them come converts from high-caste Hindus, such as Rājputs. Next come occupational castes such as the Weaver (Julāhā), Barber (Nāi), Cotton Carder (Dhuniyā), Potter (Kumhār) and Oilman (Telī). Last come the Sweepers. Among the Ashraf, the Syeds rank as the highest.

The Moplah (Māppilla) Muslims of Kerala are also divided into castes. The Thangals, claiming descent from the Prophet's daughter, Fāṭima, are at the top; next to them are the Arabs, descendants of immigrants from Arabia. The Pusālars, said to be recent converts from the Fisherman caste, occupy the third position while the Ossans, who are barbers, are at the bottom.

Equality is a tenet of Sikhism also, but that has not prevented the existence of castes, including Brahmins, among Sikhs. Sikhs are broadly divided into Sardārs and Mazhabis, the former consisting of high castes and the latter of Sweepers. The Sardārs include Jāṭ and Kamboh (landowners), Tarkhān (Carpenter), Kumhār (Potter), Mehra (Water-carrier), and Cimba (Washerman). The first two castes regard themselves as superior to the others. The Mazhabi not only came from a low caste but were converted to Sikhism later than the higher caste groups. In some parts of Punjab

Hierarchy among the Sikhs and others

there exist the Sānsi (Shepherd) who were formerly included among the "Criminal Tribes"; Sānsi converts to Sikhism rank even lower than Mazhabis.

There are three divisions among Indian jews: Beni-Israel, Cochin Jews and Baghdādi Jews. The Beni-Israel are to be found principally in Bombay. They are divided into groups, *Gorā* (White) and *Kālā* (Black), the former being considered higher in rank. The Cochin Jews are divided into similar White and Black groups, and there is a third division called Meshurarim comprising the descendants of Cochin Jews and their slave concubines ; the Meshurarim who are descended from a White Cochin Jew claim superiority over those descended from a Black Cochin Jew. The third Jewish group, the Baghdādi, are later immigrants, and are found in Bombay and Calcutta.

Caste divisions occur among Indian Christians, Catholics as well as Protestants. The Syrian Christians of Kerala, the earliest converts to Christianity in India, claim to have been recruited originally from Nambutri Brahmins and Nāyars, and caste distinctions are conspicuous among them. Caste restrictions are rigidly observed among the Christians of the West Coast. A Catholic Brahmin from Mahārāshtra would marry none other than a Catholic Brahmin. Some West Coast Christians have migrated to East Africa and their descendants try to marry within their particular subcaste.

Conversion does, however, weaken pollution ideas, and social life among Christian converts is more free than among Hindus. Again, all over India, caste restrictions are far less meticulously observed today than they were a few decades ago. Social institutions are changing, and this affects all social groups, though in varying degrees.

Occupational association

The hereditary association of a caste with an occupation has been so striking that it has occasionally been argued that caste is nothing more than the systematization of occupational differentiation. Even though a caste is not only associated with an occupation but has a limited kind of monopoly over it, it is not true to say that every member of the caste practises that occupation exclusively. This kind of association is suggested when, for instance, the term Kumhār is translated as Potter, and Dhobi as Washerman. But, generally speaking, most castes also practise agriculture in addition to their traditional occupation. A Kumhār may be an agriculturist in the monsoon months, and a trader in grain for a brief period after the harvest. Often, the artisan and servicing castes do not have an adequate income from their traditional occupations and

they therefore work on land, either as tenants or as casual labourers. It could be argued that, in the context of a growing population, the occupational aspect of the caste system would have broken down completely if the surplus in the artisan, trading and servicing castes had not been either absorbed in agriculture or able to migrate to other areas.

Traditionally, agriculture (used broadly to include even mere landownership) was a common occupation for all castes. The profession of arms was also practised occasionally by the non-Kṣatriya castes, including Brahmins and the locally dominant peasant groups.

To associate a caste invariably with a single occupation is an oversimplification. Even "agriculture" can mean a variety of things : landownership, tenancy and labour. Each may be practised exclusively or in combination with the others. Sometimes cultivation includes processing the grown crop into a saleable commodity. Thus the cultivation of sugar-cane, except when grown for a factory, includes the processing of cane into jaggery and its sale to a middleman. Again, different members of a family may have different occupations. All women cook and they may also take some part in agriculture. Women of the artisan castes may in addition participate in the caste craft.

Occupations are also classified into high and low, those practised by the high castes being regarded as high. Manual labour is looked upon as low, and certain occupations like swine-herding and butchery are considered to be polluting.

Among Muslims, only artisan castes such as the Telī, Darzī, and Julāhā are associated with traditional occupations. Priests tend to come more from the Syed and Shaikh castes than from the others. Among the Sikhs, the traditional occupation is often practised along with agriculture. Jāṭs are generally landowners, while the Mazhabis are agricultural labourers. Sikhs Tarkhāns are carpenters. An occupation which is indispensable everywhere except among the Sikhs is hair-cutting. But the Sikh Nāi renders other services: he clips the nails of his patrons; he carries news of birth, marriage and death. He is also a *masseur*.

Restrictions

An individual in a caste society lives in a hierarchical world. It is not only the people who are divided into higher and lower groups, but also the food they eat, the dress and ornaments they wear, and the customs and manners they practise. In India's dietetic hierarchy the highest castes are usually vegetarians and teetotallers. Even in meat there is a hierarchy. The highest non-vegetarian castes eschew chicken, pork and beef. Wild pork is superior to domestic

pork, since the village pig is a scavenger. Eating beef in rural India means eating carrion and it comes accordingly under a double ban. Liquor is prohibited to the high castes.

Elaborate rules govern the acceptance of cooked food and water from another caste. Food cooked with ghee, milk or butter is called *pakkā* food and may be accepted from inferior castes. (Higher castes buy sweets from the *Halwāī* because he is supposed to be cooking them with ghee). *Kaccā* food, on the other hand, is food cooked with water and it may be accepted normally only from one's own or equivalent or superior castes. When two castes are contending for superiority, they stop accepting cooked food and water from each other. Sometimes, a very low caste refuses cooked food or water from a high caste. We have already mentioned the instance of the Kannaḍa Holeya. The explanation of these usages lies in the history of inter-caste relations in the area in question, and in particular, in the attempts of individual castes to raise themselves up.

There are exceptions to the general restrictions on the acceptance of food and water. Food or drink which has been sanctified by being offered to a deity in a temple may not be refused, even though the cook is from a low caste. (The cooks in the famous Jagannāth temple at Puri are Barbers by caste.) Significant regional variations also occur. Further, women tend to observe restrictions more strictly than men, and the old more strictly than the young. Among the highly Westernized sections in the big cities, such restrictions are minimal.

In North India, *hukkā* smoking offers an index of caste-status. Castes which may share, on occasions, a single *hukkā* are equals. Thus Jāṭs and Ahīrs may smoke from the same *hukkā*. Sometimes the Lohār (Blacksmith) and Khātī (Carpenter) are allowed to smoke from the same *hukkā* as the Jāṭ and Ahīr. The Nāis (Barber), like many other castes, have their own *hukkā*.

Muslim castes freely accept cooked food and water from one another. Such restrictions regarding food and drink as obtained among Muslims are common to them all. As for the Sikhs, Sardārs have reservations about *kaccā* food cooked by Mazhabis, but accept liquor brewed by them.

Each caste has a culture which is to some extent autonomous: there are differences in dress, speech, manners, ritual and ways of life. The higher castes wear fine clothes and gold ornaments while the lower castes wear coarse material and silver ornaments. The speech of the higher castes is refined while that of the lower castes is rugged. Traditionally, the lower castes were prohibited from taking on the

Customs, Dress and Speech

dress, ornaments and customs of the higher, and the offenders were punished by the village panchāyat.

Pollution

The concept of pollution plays a crucial part in maintaining the required distance between different castes. A high caste man may not touch a low caste man, let alone accept cooked food and water from him. Where the two castes involved belong to either extreme of the hierarchy, the lower caste man may be required to keep a minimum distance between himself and the high caste man. In Kerala a Nāyāḍi had to keep 22 m. away from a Nambutri and 13 m. from a Tiyan, who himself had to keep 10 m. away from a Nambutri. A few decades ago, in most areas of South India, there were rules which laid down what parts of a high caste man's house the others could enter. The rules of pollution, at least so far as inter-caste relations were concerned, were more clearly elaborated in South than in North India.

There is a broad line between Caste Hindus and Harijans in the matter of pollution. The village barber and washerman will not serve Harijans, and the latter have to provide for these services from among themselves. Harijans have to take water from a lower end of a river or canal than the high castes and they may not use the Caste Hindu well.

The breaking of pollution rules results in the higher castes becoming "impure", and the latter have to perform certain purificatory rites to regain their normal status. Where the breach of the rule is serious, as when a high caste person eats food cooked by a Harijan or a high caste woman has sex relations with a Harijan, the offender may be thrown out of caste irrevocably.

The idea of pollution is present among the Sikhs. The Mazhabis have a well of their own everywhere, and in rural areas they may not be allowed to enter the houses of Sikh high castes beyond the cattle-yard.

The culture of each caste is to some extent peculiar to itself, and this is related to the fact that the lower castes are barred, at least in theory, from taking over the customs and rituals of the higher castes. Only the "twice-born" castes are entitled to study the Vedas and perform rituals in which Vedic mantras are chanted. Traditionally, the Brahmin was exempt from capital punishment and his land was assessed at a lower rate. These restrictions and disabilities operate fully against the Harijans —they may not use Caste Hindu wells or enter temples and tea-shops. In some parts of the country they were prohibited from entering the high Caste streets. The high castes also kept away from the Harijan ward of the village.

Among the Sikhs, Mazhabi wedding parties are not accommodated in gurdwāras as they are regarded as impure. Among Muslims, however, lower caste groups are not subjected to disabilities. The Christians on the west coast of India observe caste restrictions: there are separate pews for the Brahmins and the Harijans in some churches, and very rarely, even a separate church for the Harijans.

Caste organization

Villagers are subject to the twofold control of caste and village panchāyats. (Caste panchāyats, however, are not well developed among Brahmins.) When the disputes concern law and order in the village—for example, setting fire to someone's hayrick, grazing cattle on another's land, stealing fuel or vegetable—it is reported to village elders who may levy a fine on the offender or subject him to corporal punishment or declare a boycott against him. In a marital dispute the council of the concerned caste is the proper body to adjudicate. But the village council may take a hand in the dispute. Where a man is accused of having sex or commensal relations with a member of a lower caste, his own caste or the council of the locally dominant caste, or the village council might be called upon to adjudicate. Punishment may include a fine, temporary outcasting and fine, or permanent outcasting. Readmission to caste requires that the offender undergo purificatory ritual, express his regret to the caste assembly, and give a dinner to the caste. Occasionally an offender may be readmitted to caste after having been outcasted for a decade or two.

Many Muslim castes, excepting the Ashraf and Shaikh, have councils like Hindu castes. Generally, a caste council deals with all questions concerning trade, morals and religion. Sometimes a caste may not permit its members to take up an occupation considered less honourable than its traditional one.

Caste in the village community

We have given a brief description of the general features of the caste system and we shall now show how it actually functions in the context of the village community. Inter-caste relations at the village level constitute "vertical" ties. They may be classified into economic, ritual, political and civic ties.

Economic ties

The castes living in a village, or a group of neighbouring villages, are bound together by economic ties. Generally, peasant castes are numerically preponderant in villages and they need the Carpenter, Blacksmith and Leather-worker castes to perform agricultural work. Servicing castes such as Priest (Brahmin as well as non-Brahmin), Barber, Washerman and Water-carrier cater to the needs of

everyone except Harijans. Artisan castes produce goods which are wanted by everyone. Most Indian villages do not have more than a few of the essential castes and depend on neighbouring villages for certain services, skills and goods.

Jajmāni system

In rural India, with its largely subsistence, and not fully monetized economy, the relationship between the different caste groups in a village takes a particular form. The essential artisan and servicing castes are paid annually in grain at harvest. In some parts of India, the artisans and servicing castes are also provided with free food, clothing, fodder and a residential site. On such occasions as birth, marriage and death, these castes perform extra duties for which they are paid a customary sum of money and some gifts in kind. This type of relationship is found all over India and is called by different names : *jajmāni* in the North, *bārā balūte* in Mahārāshtra, *mirāsi* in Madras and *aḍade* in Mysore. The relationship between a *jajmān* and his *kamin* is unequal, since the latter is regarded as inferior. Though primarily an economic or ritual tie, it has a tendency to spread to other fields and become a patron-client relationship. The relationship is generally stable, and usually inherited. The right to serve is hereditary, transferable, saleable, mortgageable and partible. Thus, for instance, the right to officiate as priest to high castes living in some sixty villages in the Mysore District is shared among the different branches of a single Brahmin lineage in Bannūr.

The *jajmāni* system bound together the different castes living in a village or a group of neighbouring villages. The castewise division of labour and the consequent linking up of different castes in enduring and pervasive relationships provided a pattern of alliances which cut across the ties of caste. The modern "caste problem" is to some extent the result of the weakening, in the last fifty years or more, of these vertical and local ties and the consequent strengthening of horizontal ties over wide areas.

Land system

Caste was related to the exercise of differential rights in land. At the top were the castes who were either absentee or non-cultivating owners. Next came the cultivating tenants (not infrequently owning a little land as well), and at the bottom of the hierarchy came the landless labourers. There was regional variation in this matter. Kerala, for instance, had a chain of intermediaries between the owner and the actual cultivator. There was more or less perfect congruence beween caste hierarchy and differential rights in land in Kerala. At the top of the hierarchy were the Nambutri Brahmins who were

non-cultivating owners (*Jenmi*). The "high" Nāyar castes were the non-cultivating lessees of Nambutri land on twelve-year leases (*Kāṇam*). The agricultural labourers, both tied and free, came from the lower castes like Cerumān and Pulayan and from the Pāṇan tribes. In Punjab, however, there was a lack of coherence between the agricultural and caste hierarchies, Brahmins being the cultivating tenants of Jāṭ landowners. But, in both areas, agricultural labourers come from the Harijan castes. In some parts of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, only a few castes showed a direct concern with land and agriculture, the owner-cultivators being either Jāṭs, Ahīrs and Rājputs (Ṭhākurs) or Gūjars, while the agricultural labourers were mostly Camārs.

The existence of a high degree of congruence between caste and agricultural hierarchy meant that the stratification ran deep: economic stratification strengthened ritual stratification and vice versa. This enabled the landowners to exploit the tenants as much as they could—rack-renting, eviction and forced labour were usual features of rural life. But where the tenants' caste was higher than that of the landowner, and particularly when a tenant was also the landowne 's priest (as was sometimes the case with the Brahmin tenant of a Rājput landowner) exploitation had to be much less extreme.

In pre-British India, in many parts of the country, the lower castes were serfs or slaves, either attached to the land and liable to be transferred along with it, or attached to the landowner and liable to be sold by him. The economic forces released under British rule (e.g., the starting of tea and coffee plantations, and of factories and railways) enabled the law abolishing slavery to be translated into reality. But even now the agricultural hierarchy is mixed up in different ways and degrees with the caste hierarchy in several parts of India.

Master and servant

The relationship between master and servant is another type of bond which often cuts across caste, and more rarely, even religion. The terms and conditions of this bond vary from region to region. A common form is the advance by the master of a loan which is worked off by the servant in the course of two or three years in the master's house. Frequently, before the expiry of the period, the servant takes another loan which results in prolonging his servitude. It is not unusual to come across families linked with each other for generations by ties of master and servant. In some parts of the country, like Mysore, there was until recently a traditional bond as of master and servant between the landowning castes and the local Harijans. The obligations involved were

only a few duties on occasions such as marriage and death. The payments were also traditionally fixed.

The relationship between landowner and tenant, master and servant, creditor and debtor, may all be subsumed under a single category—patron and client. This relationship is widespread and crucial to the understanding of rural India. Voting at elections, local and general, is influenced by the patron-client tie.

Ritual occasions, e.g., life-cycle ceremonies, festivals and fairs, require the co-operation of several castes. Life-cycle ceremonies are somewhat more elaborate for the "twice-born", especially the Brahmin castes. Certain rituals which are common for all the castes occur at birth, a girl's puberty, marriage and death. Thus when a son is born to an Ahīr or Ṭhākur, a Bhaksorin (Harijan) womaṇ helps in the delivery and a Bhaṅgī beats a drum before the house in which the birth occurred. A Brahmin casts a horoscope while the village barber acts as a messenger and also serves food at the feast. These services are paid for by gifts in cash as well as kind. In Kerala, the Washerwoman gives freshly-washed clothes to her high caste patrons after the termination of birth, menstrual and death pollution. In rural Mysore there is a saying that eighteen castes have to come together at a wedding : the Harijan servants cut the wood, whitewash the house and clean the grain; the Barber not only shaves the groom but provides the wedding band ; the Washerman supplies the washed cloth for the bridal pair to walk on ; the Potter provides the utensils and ritual pots ; the Carpenter puts up the wedding *pandal*; the Goldsmith makes the ornaments ; the Oilman supplies the oil ; the Brahmin acts as priest ; the dancing girl threads the *tāli* ; the Trader supplies several articles ; the Shepherd provides a woollen thread which is tied as *kaṅkaṇ* round the wrists of the bridal pair, and so on.

Ritual ties

Several castes are also required to co-operate in the performance of calendrical festivals, and festivals of village deities. In the case of the latter, the castes may come from more than one village. Thus, Baṇṇas from Malabār dance at the festivals of some Coorg village deities. The festival of a village deity always involves the co-operation of several castes, and frequently a few of these castes come from neighbouring villages.

The temple organization itself needs the coming together of several castes. In Kerala, for instance, the head priest of a Sanskritic, vegetarian and teetotal deity is a Nambutri Brahmin. A few Nāyar castes have the task of washing the vessels and cleaning the temple. The Ambalavāsis perform a variety of tasks and they make garlands, assist the chief priest, provide music.

There is a caste of story-tellers attached to the temple. In temples to non-vegetarian deities, a member of the Piḍārar caste is the priest. Low caste dancers get possessed by the deities, and sing and dance in that state.

It may be taken as axiomatic that all the local castes are involved in the festival of a village deity. Even the Harijans have important duties, such as beating the drum, carrying messages, and removing the leaves on which the villagers have dined.

In many parts of India, villagers believe (or at least believed until recently) that the goddesses Māri, Kālī and Śītalā presided over epidemic diseases such as smallpox, plague and cholera. An outbreak of one of these diseases was attributed to the wrath of the village goddesses and their propitiation followed. The priest was usually a member of a non-Brahmin caste, and occasionally even a Harijan. Members of all castes including the Brahmin sent their contributions in cash as well as in kind to the ritual propitiation. The fact that occasionally a Harijan or other low caste priest catered to the religious needs of all, including the highest castes, affected the quality of inter-caste relations.

Sometimes the ties of ritual stretch even across religious cleavages. A Sikh farmer may go to a Brahmin priest to find out an auspicious hour for starting ploughing operations. Until forty years ago, Brahmin priests officiated at life-cycle ritual in Sikh homes. In recent years the Akālī Movement has enjoined religious self-sufficiency on the Sikhs, and the Sikh Granthī is increasingly acting as priest at Sikh weddings. The Sikh priest may come from any caste except Mazhabi. Sikhs and Hindus attend festivals in honour of Pīrs (Muslim saints). In Mysore a Muslim peasant may vow to Mādēśvara that he will give a money-offering if his cow calves, or if it is cured of a disease. However, the tendency to religious and even sectarian self-sufficiency has gained strength in recent years.

The functioning of the village as a political and social entity brought together members from different castes. First, there was the traditional village panchāyat which, though run by the locally dominant caste, usually included a few representatives from the other castes. The available historical evidence points to the existence of vigorous communities in South India in the panchāyats of which members of every caste took part.

Village organization

Every village had a headman usually belonging to the dominant caste. The accountant was always a Brahmin in South India. Every village had a watchman and messengers and town-criers. In irrigated areas, there was always a man to look after

and regulate the flow of water in the canals feeding the fields. The headman and accountant collected the land taxes with the aid of the Harijan village servants.

The village council performed a variety of tasks, including the maintenance of law and order, settling of disputes, celebration of festivals and construction of roads, bridges and tanks.

Dominant caste and village councils

In many parts of rural India there exist castes which are locally numerically preponderant, own the bulk of the arable land, occupy a fairly high position in the ritual hierarchy, and wield power over the other castes. Examples of such castes are Jāṭs, Ahīrs and Rājputs in the North, Pātidārs in Central Gujarāt, Marāṭhās in Mahārāshtra, Kamma and Reḍḍi in Andhra Pradesh, Liṅgāyat and Okkaliga (Vakkaliga) in Mysore, Veḷḷāḷa and Gouṇḍer in Madras and Nāyar in Kerala. Sometimes the dominance of a caste is decisive, all types of power being concentrated in it. At other times, however, the different elements of dominance may be distributed among several castes. In the first instance, the dominant caste wields great power over the others, while in the second there is likely to be a balance of power among the powerful castes. It should be noted in this connection that the maintenance of law and order in rural areas even now depends to some extent upon the leaders of the dominant caste. They are the people who can punish errant individuals and ensure the maintenance of the caste codes. When a caste is politically or economically dominant, its religious position tends to fall in line with its secular position.

The Sikhs as a whole are dominant in many parts of Punjab and Sikh Jāṭs are dominant among the Sikhs. Similarly, in parts of Kerala, the Syrian Christians and Moplahs are dominant. In Malīhābād Tahsīl in the Lucknow District there are villages in which Pathāns are dominant.

Inter-caste conflicts in villages

The village community consisted of hierarchical groups, each with its own rights, duties and privileges. The castes at the top had power and privileges which were denied to the lower castes. The lower castes were tenants, servants, landless labourers, debtors and clients of the higher castes. There was competition among the former to be clients of the rich and powerful patrons while the latter wanted to have as many clients as possible. The patrons had duties towards clients and vice versa. The caste system together with the inequalities of landownership produced a deeply stratified society, but that did not prevent the village from functioning as a community. Conflict and co-operation went together. There

was economic conflict between masters and servants, landowners and tenants, and competition between members of the same caste. The struggle for higher status between structurally neighbouring castes also produced conflict. And in recent years the lower castes have shown an increasing desire to free themselves from the control of the locally dominant caste. This has been assisted by political forces operating from higher levels.

Religious Groups

Census classification

The 1931 Census classifies Indian population under ten religious groups. They are Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Muslims, Christians, Jews and Other Religions (Tribal), and Other Religions (Non-Tribal). The designation of tribal religion as separate from Hinduism (except where a tribe had been converted to Christianity or Islām) was unsatisfactory. A study of the religion of the different castes and tribes will show the presence of elements, from different layers of Hinduism, from the Sanskritic to the tribal, mixed in different proportions ; and it is arbitrary to draw a sharp line between Hinduism and tribal religion. It is difficult to separate the religion of castes at the bottom rung of the hierarchy from the religion of the tribes. The former contains many tribal elements just as the latter contains many "Hindu" elements. Thus the Santāls observe several high caste festivals; Bhagwān is the supreme deity of the Bhīls; the Solagas of Mysore worship Ranganātha in the Biligiri hills; and the Toḍas and Baḍagas of the Nīlgiris worship Śiva in Nanjangūd. Different tribes are Sanskritized in different degrees, and different sections of the same tribe may not be uniformly Sanskritized. Thus, the Khonds of Khondmāls are less Sanskritized than Khonds in Puri who resemble an Oṛiyā caste in their religious life. These remarks should be borne in mind while reading the census data given below.

Table I on p. 517 gives the varying figures for the growth and decline of each religious group over a period of 30 years (1921-51) for the present territory of India.

The highest increases have been experienced by the Hindus, Christians and Sikhs. The decline in the number of the followers of tribal religions may be attributed to their inclusion in one or the other of the advanced religions. The decline in the number of Muslims and the increase in the number of Sikhs are both due to the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pākistān and the immigration of Sikhs into India.

TABLE I

Number per 10,000 *population by religion* (1951)

Religion	1921	1931	1951	Net variation (1921-51)
Hindus	8,440	8,434	8,689	+249
Sikhs	37	46	77	+40
Jains	51	50	52	+1
Buddhists	5	4	3	—2
Zoroastrians	5	4	3	—2
Muslims	957	986	909	—48
Christians	179	211	235	+56
Jews	..	..	..	..
Other Religions (Tribal)	326	265	32	—294
Other Religions (Non-Tribal)	..	..	..	..
All Religions	10,000	10,000	10,000	

NOTE :—The figures do not include the population of each religion in the three States of Assam, West Bengal and Punjab.

The 1961 Census* has, however, removed the anomalies described above. It classifies Indian population under seven religious groups : Hindus (366,526,866), Muslims (46,940,799), Christians (10,728,086), Sikhs (7,845,915), Buddhists (3,256,036), Jains (2,027,281), Other Religions and Persuasion (1,611,935).

A proper explanation of the differential rates of growth of various religious groups can only be made after a religionwise study of the birth and death rates, and of migration and other factors. But a detailed discussion of the demography of religious groups is outside our scope. One factor which has been significant in the growth of some of the largest religious groups in this country is conversion. According to the Census Report of 1931, "The increase under the head of Christian is of course largely due to conversion which causes a steady transfer to Christianity from the depressed classes and still more, except in Madras, from the hill and forest tribes. If the natural increase be 12%, then over 20% of the total increase of 32·5% must be due to conversion." There are similar remarks about the sizeable (33·9%) increase in the number of Sikhs. The Census Report of 1931 also states that some Muslims and Christians, but not a large number, have been reconverted to Hinduism. The increase in the number of Christians and Sikhs is complementary to the decrease in the number of people under Tribal Religions. The Census Report again comments that the decrease in the percentage of tribal people is primarily due to losses by conversion to Hinduism or Christianity.

*Religious break-up of 297,853 persons in the NEFA is not available; includes figures of Sikkim.

A similar remark is made in the 1951 Census Report. (It is more likely that nowadays many tribals declare themselves as Hindus.) In the last few years, thousands of Harijans in Mahārāshtra became converted to Buddhism.

Before describing the role of religious groups in Indian social structure, we shall consider the relation between religion and rural-urban residence, and literacy and occupational affiliation. According to the 1931 and 1941 Censuses, the tribal people were predominantly rural. The relative urban percentage of Muslims, Christians and Jains was higher than their rural percentage. Pārsīs and Jews were mainly urban while Hindus, Sikhs and tribals were minimally urban.

Some features

Again, religious groups were least urbanized in the Provinces where they were numerically preponderant. Even Pārsīs were less urbanized in Bombay than in other places. Conversely, religious groups were most urbanized in provinces where they were least represented. Another point worthy of note is that migration was generally to urban areas and not from one village to another. This may, however, be due to the fact that inter-village migration is more difficult to trace than migration to towns.

Kingsley Davis has said that on the basis of census figures for the period 1891-1931 for persons aged ten and above, Pārsis show the highest percentage of literacy. Jains, Jews and Christians follow in order. It is pointed out in the Census of India, 1931, that the high literacy rate for Pārsīs and Jews is due to their activity in trade, which requires literacy. This explanation is perhaps too simple. It does not explain why Christians, who as a body are not active in trade, show a high literacy rate.

TABLE II

Literate number per 100 *of each main religion*

	Muslim	Hindu	Sikh	Christian	Jain	Pārsī
1891 . .	4·2	6·3	6·8	26·5	32·6	66·2
1901 . .	4·4	6·5	7·5	26·6	30·9	76·2
1911 . .	5·2	7·3	8·8	28·5	34·8	82·7
1921 . .	6·2	8·6	8·0	31·7	37·8	83·7
1931 . .	7·2	9·3	10·2	30·5	38·2	83·0

From the above table it is seen that minority religions show a greater percentage of literacy than the majority religions. Again, the fact of being in a majority in an area seems to work against

a high literacy figure. Thus, Muslim males in the former Central Provinces and Berār, an area in which Hindus were in a majority, had the highest percentage of literates while, in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistān, which were predominantly Muslim, there was the lowest number of literates.

In his book *Hinduism and Economic Growth* (Bombay, 1962), Dr. Vikas Mishra has made a study of the occupational pattern of the different religious groups in India. He concludes that the occupational distribution of the Pārsīs, Jews and Jains is "advanced" though not diversified. Hindus and Muslims have a diversified occupational pattern while the tribals' pattern is neither advanced nor diversified.

Dr. Mishra's analysis points to the conclusion that minority religions are advantageously situated as far as occupational distribution is concerned. It is likely, however, that there are differences between one region of India and another. Syrian Christians, for instance, show a more "advanced" pattern in Travancore than in North Kerala. Similarly, Moplahs in North Kerala are more advanced than their co-religionists in South and Central Kerala. This is perhaps related to the fact that in North Kerala the Moplahs formerly wielded political power.

On the whole, minority religions have fared better in the economic field, and especially commerce. Caste seems to be of crucial significance in this connection. Where there was no local trading caste, a minority religious group seems to have stepped in to fill the breach. The Moplahs have, for instance, played an important role in Kerala commerce.

In the case of Christians, especially recent converts, conversion has been followed by intensive efforts to educate the converts and to find employment for them. The money and political influence commanded by the foreign missions enabled them to provide employment for the converts in a variety of occupations.

We shall now consider the role of religious groups in the social structure, the latter term being used broadly to include also the economic and political structure. This topic may be discussed under the three following heads : (i) The relations between different castes and religious groups at the village and other local levels ; (ii) the general role of religion in the economic development of the country ; and (iii) religion and socio-economic privileges.

Role of religious groups

Though villages embracing multireligious groups are not as common as multicaste villages, they are not infrequent. Such villages are not confined to any one part of India, but are found everywhere. There are villages with Hindu tenants and Muslim

landlords (Uttar Pradesh), and Hindu landlords and Muslim tenants. Rāmpura village in Mysore, for instance, was dominated by Kannaḍa-speaking, Okkaligas (Hindu peasant caste) who owned the bulk of the land. There were also many landowners from other Hindu castes (from the Brahmin to the Harijan), and a few Muslim landowners as well. A few big Hindu landowners had Muslim tenants and servants, while Muslim landowners had Hindu servants. The bulk of the Muslims were engaged in a variety of activities—trading in several articles including paddy and mangoes; hiring out carts, cycles and gas lanterns ; tailoring ; carpentry; smithy ; and butchery. Ownership of land, except in the case of a few big landowners, seemed to prevent a majority of the Hindus from becoming traders. Thus, though the mango trees were owned by Hindus, the entire mango trade was in the hands of Muslims. This phenomenon (as was the trade in hides) is regional and not confined to Rāmpura. There are prosperous Muslim traders and landowners in the neighbouring villages of Kalkuni, Bannūr and Gargheshwari. There exist in this area Hindu and Muslim families linked together by friendship and patron-client ties. Apart from this, Muslims perform certain tasks which the dominant Hindus cannot undertake. For instance, Hindu reluctance to kill cattle gave rise to a form of exchange trade called *cati* by which itinerant Muslims exchanged their superior animals for the inferior ones of Hindus for a consideration. These animals ultimately reached the butcher's yard. Muslims often provide the goods needed in Hindu festivals. Muslims are invited to Hindu weddings, and sheep and goats are slaughtered ritually by a Muslim butcher so that Muslims may eat the wedding dinner. Occasionally, an old Muslim client may be sent by his Hindu patron to find out the correct subcaste and sectarian affiliation of a Hindu peasant with whose family matrimony is contemplated.

When the members of a religion or sect dominate trade or commerce, the customers are drawn from several religions. Thus the basis of the specialization itself creates ties between several religious groups. This is true of all parts of India. Pārsīs controlled the liquor trade not only in the former Bombay Presidency, but outside as well. Moplah traders are to be found not only in Kerala but also in Mysore, Madras and Bombay. Jain traders are prominent in Bombay, Ahmedābād, Rājasthān and Mysore.

In brief, economic, social and other ties obtain between members of different religious groups at the local level. It is, however, true that the pro-Pākistān movement of the forties disturbed the integration of Hindus and Muslims into local communities.

It is well known that some religious groups have played an

important role in the economic development of the country. The small community of Pārsīs in Bombay is an example. (The Bombay or urban Pārsīs offer, however, a contrast to the poor and backward Pārsīs in the rural areas of the Surat District). The Jains have also played an important part in economic development, especially Jains from Bombay, Gujarāt and Rājasthān. Some Muslim groups in Gujarāt, the Dā'ūdī Bohoras, Khojas and Kutchi Memons, have shown a marked predilection for trade and commerce. The Syrian Christians of Kerala have played a pioneering role in banking and in growing plantation crops such as tea, coffee and rubber.

It is necessary here to enter a caution against a conclusion likely to be drawn from the above remarks. While minority religions have undoubtedly played an important part in economic development, a closer look will show that in India commercial activity has always been confined to small groups. Among Hindus, a few groups such as the Gujarātī Baniyās, Telugu Komaṭis, Tamil Ceṭṭiārs and the trading castes in Uttar Pradesh have shown a greater sensitivity to commercial opportunities than non-trading castes. It is hardly necessary to add that an effect of the caste system is to confine a skill to a hereditary group. In some areas there are Muslim trading groups—Moplahs in Kerala, Labbe in Madras and the Gujarātī Muslim groups mentioned earlier. Nowadays, however, with growing population and the weakening hold of caste, new groups have entered the commercial and industrial field. The Pātidārs of Charotar, originally a peasant caste, have shown great ability in commerce and industry not only in Gujarāt and the rest of India but also in East Africa. In South India the anti-Brahmin movement forced the Brahmins out of government jobs and made them enter trade, commerce and industry, fields in which some of them are doing remarkably well.

So, too much should not be read into the fact that minority religions are found to be active in trade and commerce. Even among Hindus, trade is confined to a few caste groups. Again, in a changing socio-economic situation, new groups have entered the field and shown their competence. Finally, it is beyond dispute that Western India, especially the area including modern Gujarāt, Rājasthān, Punjab, and the Pākistān areas of Sind and West Punjab, have produced commercial groups which have dominated trade and industry in India and even beyond. On the East Coast, only the Ceṭṭiārs have shown similar ability.

Religious and sectarian organizations are frequently found running schools and colleges in which members of the religion or

sect running the school or college enjoy some preference. Christian missions have been responsible for starting many a school and college in various parts of the country. Khālsa colleges in Punjab and Western Uttar Pradesh are run by the Śiromaṇi Gurdwāra Parbandhak Committee which is in charge of gurdwāras. The Ārya Samāj and the Sanātan Dharam Sabhā likewise run several schools and colleges in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Sectarian nd religious organizations try to find employment for their members. Caste may be said to be an effective employment agency in all parts of India.

Religion and Politics

The role played by religion in the political life of the country is similar to that of caste. In the thirties the Muslim League first began to press its demand for an independent Muslim state to be called Pākistān. Before the formulation of this demand, Muslims and Hindus together formed fairly integrated local communities in many parts of the country and we have already given an idea of the kind of ties binding them. The intimacy and closeness of these ties did not prevent an occasional outburst of rioting over religious matters. But that was not very different from inter-caste or inter-village fighting which also occurred in spite of normally friendly and intimate bonds prevalent between neighbouring castes or villages.

It may be noted in this context that Muslims lagged behind the Pārsīs and Hindus in taking to Western education, and in attempting to reform their traditional institutions. That meant exclusion from government service and the professions. It was with a view to remedying this situation that Sir Syed Aḥmad founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Alīgarh in 1875, and this developed into the Alīgarh Muslim University in 1920. The Muslim League was founded in 1906 and it became the spokesman for the protection and furthering of Muslim interests conceived in a narrow sense. It did not emulate the Indian National Congress and try to speak for the country as a whole. Mahatma Gandhi's espousal of the cause of the displaced Turkish Caliphate in 1919 resulted in the League and the Congress coming together but only for a brief while. In the thirties the Muslim League found an astute leader in M.A. Jinnah, an ex-Congress member and he succeeded in founding Pākistān. The creation of Pākistān did not, however, mean the dissolution of the Muslim League in India. It is still active in the South, and in the 1959 elections in Kerala it formed an alliance with the Prajā Socialist Party, the Congress, the Catholics and the Nāyar Service Society against the Communists.

The Akhil Bhārat Hindu Mahāsabhā is another religious

party, which has as its aim the promotion of Hindu culture and Hindu *Rāṣṭra*. It aims at re-establishing the integrity of India through constitutional means. Its membership in 1960 was 4·5 lakhs and in the General Election of 1957, it secured 3 seats in the Lok Sabhā and won 7 out of 40 seats it contested in Madhya Pradesh. In the General Election of 1962, it secured 1 seat in the Lok Sabhā and 6 seats in Madhya Pradesh Legislature. The Bharatīya Jan Sangh is yet another party with a membership of 6 lakhs. In the General Election of 1962, it won 14 seats in the Lok Sabhā and 116 in the various State Legislatures.

In this connection, reference must be made to the Rāṣṭrya Swayam Sevak Saṅgh. While claiming to be an organization interested only in reviving Hindu religion and culture, it exhibited a para-military character, with uniforms, drill and training in the art of self-defence. The movement grew as a reaction to the Muslim League's activities in the forties. After the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 the Saṅgh came under a cloud.

Sikh politics is closely connected with the control of the gurdwāras, which are in charge of the Śiromaṇi Gurdwāra Parbandhak Committee (S.G.P.C.). The Akālī Dal, led by Master Tara Singh, was long in control of the S.G.P.C., but it has recently come under the control of another Akālī group. The Akālī Dal has been agitating for a Sikh-dominated "Panjābī Sūbā".

The Christians have not formed a separate political party anywhere in India. The Syrian Christians, however, have had a part in Kerala politics similar to that played by dominant castes elsewhere in the country. The politics of the former Travancore State was marked by keen rivalry between the Syrian Christians and the Hindus. For a year before the general elections in 1951, the Democratic Congress, a Hindu-dominated party, carried on propaganda against the Indian National Congress on the ground that the latter was dominated in Travancore by the Syrian Christians. The attempt of the Congress Government in Travancore-Cochin to obtain financial control of the schools in 1951 resulted in its alienating the Christian missions which ran many schools. The clergy and the Catholic Congress supported Independent Catholic candidates against the National Congress nominees in the General Elections of 1957. In the 1959 elections, however, the attempts of the Communist Government of Kerala to exercise control over the appointment of teachers in schools and to extend their authority in other matters relating to education evoked systematic opposition from the Christians, especially the Catholics. An alliance of the Catholics, the Muslim League, the Nāyar Service Society, the Prajā Socialist Party and the National Congress

resulted in the defeat of the Communist Government and in the establishment of a Coalition Government.

According to the 1951 Census (adjusted to 1961 boundaries), the Hindus represent 85% of the total population, Muslims 9·9%, Christians 2·3%, Sikhs 1·7%, Jains 0·5%, Buddhists 0·05% Zoroastrians 0·03%, Other Tribal Religions 0·47% and Non-tribal Religions 0·03%. Systematic information is lacking on the place and role of religious minorities in Indian social life, and on the relations between majority and minority religious groups. It may be noted in this connection that, even after the creation of Pākistān, India has a large Muslim population of more than 40 millions, and third largest group in the world. The Republic of India is a secular state and there is no discrimination between one citizen and another on religious grounds.

During British rule the Sikhs, Panjābī Muslims, R jputs, Gurkhas and Marāṭhās were classified as "martial races" and enjoyed preference in recruitment to the armed forces of the country. The distinction between martial and non-martial races was ignored in World War II, when there was a large demand for fighting men at all levels. In Independent India only the Scheduled Castes and Tribes enjoy some concessions and privileges, including reservation of seats in the legislatures and the local self-governing bodies. The Anglo-Indians (numbering 111,637 in 1951) also enjoy some concessions including reservation of seats in the central legislature and a few State legislatures. Every State in the Indian Union has made rules giving preference to "Backward Castes" in the matter of appointment to Government posts, admission to schools and colleges, and the award of scholarships and free studentships.

With the achievement of Independence, Sikhs, and Punjābī and Sindhī Hindus poured into India from West Pākistān, while the bulk of the Bengali-speaking Hindus evacuated East Bengal and moved into West Bengal. The problem of the resettlement of refugees from West Pākistān is no longer there, but that cannot be said about refugees from East Pākistān.

The sociologist looking at the problem of minorities in a segmented, stratified and multireligious society finds that, really speaking, everyone is in a minority. The numerically small Hindu castes feel that they are not getting their due share of power and Government jobs. The tribes are in a minority *vis-ā-vis* the total Hindu population. The sense of being in a minority is widespread; but even so, the problem of religious minorities is a special one.

In Independent India legislation has been passed modifying some institutions of the Hindus. (The term "Hindu" includes also

Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains). Monogamy is binding on Hindus and bigamy (including polygyny and polyandry) is an offence. Certain females relatives such as widow, daughter and mother are now entitled along with the sons to a share in the estate. The payment of dowry has been banned. But there is reluctance on the part of the Government to undertake legislation to change any institution of Muslims and Christians. Only ocial legislation (e.g., factory laws) which does not touch religious susceptibilities has been made applicable to all.

Towns and Villages

Rural and urban differentiation

A population of 100,000 or more entitles a place be classified as a "city"*. Census Superintendents have the power to classify places with less than 100,000 people as cities when they have special reasons (unspecified) to do so. It may be noted here that whereas in the previous censuses all places with a population of 5,000 and more, and in some special cases, even places with less than 5,000 were classified as towns, in the 1961 Census, certain uniform criteria have been laid down for determining whether a place is a village or a town. A place is considered as a town when it satisfies the following conditions: (1) population is more than 5,000; (2) density is not less than about 400 per sq. km. and (3) not less than 75% of the adult male population is engaged in non-agricultural activities.

The changing proportions of rural-urban to total population for the 1901-61 period are given below:—

TABLE III

Rural and Urban population (1901-61)

Year	Percentage of rural population to total population	Variation	Percentage of urban population to total population	Variatior
1901	89·16	...	10·84	...
1911	89·71	+0·55	10·29	—0·55
1921	88·82	—0·89	11·18	+0·89
1931	88·01	—0·81	11·99	+0·81
1941	86·14	—1·87	13·86	+1·87
1951	82·71	—3·43	17·29	+3·43
1961	82·03	—0·68	17·97	+0·68
1901—61	...	—7·13	...	+7·13

*It is interesting to note that in the United States of America, a population of over 10,000 entitles a place to be classified as a city while a town is a place with a population of 2,500—10,000.

Less than 18% of the total population is urban. The ratio of rural population began to decrease gradually from 1921. In the 1941-51 decade the ratio of urban population rose by 3·43%, due to the heavy influx into towns and cities of persons displaced by the Partition. In the Table below is given the distribution of urban population in the major States, along with their respective rank-order for the period 1921-61.

TABLE IV

Percentage of urban population to total population for 15 *States from* 1921 *to* 1961* *and their rank*

State	1921	Rank	1931	Rank	1941	Rank	1951	Rank	1961	Rank
Andhra Pradesh	10·21	10	11·13	10	13·43	8	17·42	8	17·44	7
Assam	2·80	14	3·06	14	3·33	14	4·65	14	7·69	14
Bihār	4·14	13	4·54	13	5·40	13	6·77	13	8·43	13
Gujarāt	20·15	1	20·50	1	23·79	1	27·23	2	25·77	3
Jammu and Kashmīr	11·04	8	11·90	8	13·12	9	14·05	9	16·66	8
Kerala	8·73	11	9·64	11	10·84	11	13·48	11	15·11	10
Madhya Pradesh	7·51	12	8·30	12	9·81	12	12·02	12	14·29	11
Madras	15·85	3	18·02	3	19·70	4	24·35	3	26·69	2
Mahārāshtra	18·50	2	18·60	2	21·11	2	28·75	1	28·22	1
Mysore	13·76	6	15·30	5	16·94	5	22·95	5	22·33	5
Orissa	2·52	15	2·54	15	3·00	15	4·06	15	6·32	15
Punjab	11·20	7	12·98	7	15·00	7	19·01	6	20·13	6
Rājasthān	14·33	5	14·72	6	15·27	6	18·50	7	16·28	9
Uttar Pradesh	10·58	9	11·19	9	12·41	10	13·64	10	12·85	12
West Bengal	14·41	4	15·32	4	20·41	3	23·88	4	24·45	4

*Adjusted to 1961 boundaries.

There is certainly much difference between the various States in the distribution of urban and rural population. Orissa and Assam are at one end of the scale with a great proportion of rural population, while at the other end are Mahārāshtra, Madras and Gujarāt. Rapid rise or decline in the ranks of urban population is not experienced by any State except Andhra Pradesh which, in three decades, moved up from the tenth to the seventh position

Urban population is subdivided into six categories on the basis of size. The index of growth of population in each category is given below.

TABLE V

Index of growth of population in towns

(Base 1901=100)

Year	Total urban population	100,000 I	50,000-100,000 II	20,000-50,000 III	10,000-20,000 IV	5,000-10,000 V	Less than 5,000 VI
1901	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00
1911	100·35	107·68	83·86	111·56	92·07	98·17	111·09
1921	108·64	120·61	107·02	116·62	92·29	102·14	128.04
1931	129·41	143·48	140·93	150·82	112·29	112·97	117·30
1941	170·79	246·96	194·24	183·90	131·88	131·68	95·63
1951	241·55	416·87	258·64	253·62	160·40	159·61	126·40
1961	305·34	617·04	323·26	359·36	193·26	118·97	53·94

From the above Table it is seen that Class I towns have grown spectacularly during the period 1931-61 while Class II and III have grown more or less uniformly. Again, while Class IV towns are consistent in their growth, Class V and VI towns have shown a marked decline in their index of growth during 1951-61. In 1951 there were 76 cities, and 111, 374, 675, 1,195 and 629 towns in Classes II, III, IV, V and VI respectively, making up a total of 3,060 towns. Further, in 1951, there were 5 metropolitan cities, each with a population of a million or more. They were Greater Calcutta, Greater Bombay, Madras, Delhi and Hyderābād. Of these, the last three cities attained metropolitan status only in 1951. The number of towns in 1961 has decreased to 2,700.

As for the rural population, 68 per cent of a total of 558,088 villages have less than 500 people each, 19·6 per cent have 500-1,000, 9·3 per cent have 1,000-2,000, 3·6 per cent have 2,000-5,000 and 0·4 per cent have more than 5,000.

Some characteristics

A few characteristics which distinguish rural from urban population may be mentioned here. They may be listed under four heads : sex composition, literacy, marital status and livelihood.

Table VI on p. 528 gives the sex ratio of rural and urban populations in India as a whole and in the major States.

TABLE VI

*Number of females per 1,000 males, urban and rural, 1951**

State	Rural	Urban
Andhra Pradesh	985	987
Assam	887	682
Bihār	1,002	842
Gujarāt	964	920
Jammu & Kashmīr	882	823
Kerala	1,033	992
Madhya Pradesh	975	907
Madras	1,014	986
Mahārāshtra	1,000	807
Mysore	974	941
Orissa	1,015	807
Punjab	870	812
Rajāsthān	919	928
Uttar Pradesh	925	820
West Bengal	939	660

*Figures of 1951 Census are provisional.
Adjusted to 1961 boundaries.

Table VII gives the number of females per 1,000 males for the total population of each State in 1961, and the number of females per 1,000 males for the urban population of each State in 1951 and 1961. The sex ratios for rural population are not yet available.

TABLE VII

Number of females per 1,000 males in urban areas

State	Total population 1961	Urban population 1961	Urban population 1951*
Andhra Pradesh	981	951	987
Assam	876	677	682
Bihār	994	811	842
Gujarāt	940	896	920
Jammu and Kashmīr	878	844	823
Kerala	1,022	991	992
Madhya Pradesh	953	856	907
Madras	992	963	986
Mahārāshtra	936	801	807
Mysore	959	913	941
Orissa	1,001	807	807
Punjab	864	814	812
Rājāsthān	908	882	928
Uttar Pradesh	909	812	820
West Bengal	878	701	660

*Figures of 1951 Census are provisional.

Men preponderate over women in urban areas and this is probably due to the character of the migration to urban areas. The ratio of women in urban areas does not, however, vary inversely with the degree of urbanization. Thus, West Bengal as well as Assam show a more or less similar ratio of urban women. On the other hand, Madras, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh have the highest ratio of Urban women.

Marital status

The marital status of persons under the categories of unmarried, married and widowed or divorced seems to vary with rural-urban residence. The following Table from the 1961 Census gives the rural-urban distribution of population according to their marital status by sex and age;

TABLE VIII

*Marital Status, India** (1961)

(Percentages)

Age group	Rural-Urban	Never Married		Married		Widowed		Divorced	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
All ages excluding	R	31·9	15·8	61·9	67·6	5·6	15·8	0·6	0·8
0—9	U	39·5	24·2	56·5	61·2	3·7	14·0	0·3	0·6
All ages including	R	52·4	41·5	43·3	47·0	3·9	11·0	0·4	0·5
0—9	U	55·2	46·5	41·8	43·2	2·8	9·9	0·2	0·4
10—14	R	92·1	77·7	7·7	22·0	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·1
	†U	89·1	93·1	1·9	6·8	N	0·1	N	N
15—24	R	56·5	14·2	42·3	84·0	0·7	1·0	0·5	0·8
	U	73·1	29·4	26·4	69·4	0·3	0·7	0·2	0·5
25—34	R	11·5	1·2	85·2	93·2	2·3	4·6	1·0	1·0
	U	19·0	3·0	79·1	92·2	1·5	3·9	0·4	0·9
35—44	R	4·2	0·6	89·9	82·6	5·1	15·8	0·8	1·0
	U	4·8	1·3	91·4	82·5	3·4	15·2	0·4	1·0
45—54	R	3·3	0·4	85·3	62·0	10·7	36·8	0·7	0·8
	U	3·3	0·9	88·1	60·2	8·2	38·1	0·4	0·8
55—64	R	2·9	0·3	77·2	38·5	19·3	60·6	0·6	0·6
	U	2·7	0·9	80·4	35·7	16·4	62·9	0·5	0·5
65—69	R	2·9	0·3	70·2	27·6	26·3	71·6	0·6	0·5
	U	2·7	0·9	73·2	25·2	23·6	73·5	0·5	0·4
70 and	R	2·8	0·3	60·2	15·1	36·4	84·2	0·6	0·4
above	U	2·6	0·8	62·4	13·1	34·5	85·8	0·5	0·3
Age not	R	71·7	72·9	24·1	20·7	3·1	5·7	1·1	0·7
stated	U	73·0	72·9	24·1	20·0	2·6	6·6	0·3	0·5

'N' denotes negligible figures.

*Excludes that portion of North East Frontier Agency for which an abridged family schedule was canvassed instead of the general all-India individual slip and household schedule.

†Figures have been worked out after excluding the figures of unspecified status from total population.

The urban percentage of married males and females in the age group of 15-24 is significantly lower than the rural percentage. There are more early marriages in rural areas than in urban areas.

Literacy

Literacy is another feature by which rural population might be distinguished from urban population.

TABLE IX

Literates aged 10 *and over as percentage of total population aged* 10 *and over* (1961)

	Rural	Urban
Males	37·06	69· 7
Females	10·14	41·41

It is seen from the above Table that urban literacy percentages for both males and females are significantly high.

The following Table gives literacy rates for the year 1961.

TABLE X

Literacy rates (1961) (*excludes* 0-4 *age group*)

Total per thousand	282
Males per thousand	404
Females per thousand	153

The Rural pattern of life

The rural pattern of livelihood is different from the urban, a high proportion of people living in villages being either engaged in agriculture or dependent indirectly upo it. Against the general background of rural-urban differentiation, some of the more specific features of rural life are delineated below. They are described under the following heads: land relations, self-sufficiency of the village community, unity of the village community, and urban life in pre-industrial India.

Land relations

The rural pattern of life is largely organized around land, still the most important source of wealth. Even in villages, dominated by artisan and trading castes, land is the ultimate source of prosperity. Arable land is a scarce commodity and there is heavy pressure on it.

The average size of landholdings in India in 1951 was 3.03 hectares and the estimated number of holdings was 35·5 millions. The average size compares favourably with 0·81 hectare in Japan and 0·91 hectare in Egypt, but unfavourably with 26·73 hectares in the United Kingdom and 87·21 in the United States of America.

TABLE XI

Average size of landholdings in census zones (1951)

	Average holdings (in hectares)
North India	2·14
East India	1·82
South India	1·82
West India	4·97
Central India	4·93
North-West India	5·09
All-India	3·03

TABLE XII

Average size of holdings in selected States (1951)*

States	Hectares	States	Hectares
Assam	2·19	Hyderābād	5·70
Bihār	1·65	Madhya Bhārat	5·13
Bombay	3·92	Mysore	2·91
Madhya Pradesh	5·62	PEPSU	6·24
Madras	1·82	Rājasthān	6·83
Orissa	4·77	Saurāshtra	11·87
Uttar Pradesh	2·14	Travancore-Cochin	0·97
West Bengal	1·90	Jammu and Kashmīr	1·53

All-India 3·03 hectares.

There is great variation in the average size of holding between the different States, Travancore-Cochin having the lowest with 0·97 hectare and Saurāshtra having the highest, 11·87 hectares.

TABLE XIII

Pattern of landholdings†

Size of holding (hectares)	% of total number of households
Nil	6·3
0·04—1	48·5
1·01—2	15·9
2·02—3·03	9·3
3·03—4·04	5·6
4·04—6·06	5·5
6·07—10·10	4·9
10·11 and above	4·0
Total	100·0

**The Agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee Report*, Vol. I, 1954.
†*National Sample Survey*, July 1954—March 1955, 8th round.

From Table XIII p. 531, it is seen that among landowners 64·4% of the households have less than 2·02 hectares each. Whether land is owned by a family or not, the area of land owned, the form of tenure under which land is held, the cropping pattern which prevails, and the availability or otherwise of irrigation facilities have a bearing on inter-caste, and inter-familial relations. The landowning pattern, for instance, is such that a small number of people own the bulk of the local resources and the majority of the villagers are dependant upon them. Irrigated areas are able to support a larger number of landless folk than non-irrigated areas.

It is well known that the entire family of the peasant, including young boys, work on the family farm. According to the National Sample Survey, the average size of the rural family for India is 5·2. Generally speaking, the families of landless labourers are small, less than the national average. Only when there is wealth in some form—land, herds, trade or industry—does the size of the family exceed the national average.

The picture we then get of the rural family pattern is of a very small number of large families owning big farms (relatively) and a large number of small families owning little or no land.

Two other characteristics of Indian agriculture may be mentioned here : fragmentation, and dispersal of holdings. The holding of a peasant may be in several pieces and the distance between one piece and another may be more than 1·5 km.* The dispersal of holdings is minimal in dispersed villages where each farmer lives on his farm.

In rural areas, the rhythm of social and ritual life bears a close relation to the pattern of agricultural activity. Each stage of the growth of the staple crop is marked by the performance of ritual. The first ploughing takes place on an auspicious day and harvesting is followed by festival and dance. The eating of first fruits is a ceremonial occasion. Weddings, pilgrimages and journeys are also undertaken after harvest. In those areas where two major crops are grown, peasants have little leisure while in unirrigated areas where a single crop is grown, peasants are under-employed.

The physical isolation of the village, the incredibly bad roads connecting it with other villages, the payment for services and goods by means of locally grown grain and the fact that each

*Attempts have been made in some parts of the country to bring about the consolidaton of holdings. They have not been conspicuously successful because of Hindu inheritance law on the one hand and the growing population on the other. The former requires the distribution of land among all sons, and the latest changes in the Hindu law make the position worse by giving shares to certain female relatives.

village produced many of the things it wanted including tools, cloth, blankets and jewellery created the illusion of self-sufficiency.

Village self-sufficiency

Even at the beginning of the 19th century villages were not self-sufficient. Today they are far less so ; they are inalienable parts of a wider economic, political and religious kinship and social networks.

Weekly markets (*hāṭs* in North India, *santhe* in South India) occur all over the country. Peasants from many villages make use of weekly markets, and some markets are famous over a wide area. Some of these markets specialize in certain goods such as cattle, livestock or cloth. When the weekly markets do not meet his wants, the peasant makes a journey to town. For instance, shopping for a wedding is done in the nearest big town.

The existence of weekly markets underlines yet another fact : most villages do not have the artisan and servicing castes which can make them self-sufficient. Artisan and servicing castes are frequently found serving more than one village and this is specially true of castes which do not meet everyday wants.

The pattern of landholding also cuts across villages. Some part of the arable land in village is owned by people resident in neighbouring villages and towns. Again, tenants in one village may be cultivating land lying in another, and outsiders also may be cultivating village land.

Under British rule the village became, however incompletely, a part of national as well as international economy. The development of textile industry in Lancashire, for instance, hit the village weaver hard, and village crafts suffered generally from competition with mass-produced goods from Britain. Commercial crops such as cotton, tobacco, silk, sugar-cane, coffee and tea subjected the peasants growing them to the vagaries of world prices. And during World War II, rationing covered a great many villages in the country. The economic net is indeed being drawn tighter every day over India's numerous villages.

The village was always a part of a wider political system. The smallest political unit in Indain history seems to have been a chiefdom comprising a few villages. Above the chiefdom was the kingdom, the king exercising suzerainty over several chiefdoms. Above the king was the emperor or his representative, the viceroy. In pre-British India wars between rival chiefs and kings were frequent, and villages felt the effect. The maintenance and movement of troops meant the taking away of grain and fodder from the farmers as also the livestock raised by them . A "scorched earth" policy was occasionally followed by retreating troops to prevent supplies from falling into enemy hands.

Under British rule, administration was gradually extended to include villages in every part of the country. The development of communications—roads, railways, post and telegraph—facilitated the movement of goods to and from villages. This helped to reduce the menace of famine, while the develolpment of medicine enabled epidemics to be fought and rural health improved. Attempts were made to introduce local self-government in the villages. During World War II certain administartive measures such as the rationing of essential commodities, procurement of grain, and a ban on the movement of foodstuffs affected practically every village in the country. Independence has accentuated this tendency for the village to be sucked in more and more effectively into the politico-economic system of modern India. The abolition of princedoms, *zamīndāri* and *ināmdāri* streamlined the administrative machinery and helped to bring the Government into closer contact with the actual tiller of the soil. The State Governments are following a policy of protecting the tenant from eviction, and imposing a ceiling on the amount of arable land a man may hold. The Constitutional abolition of untouchability and the passing of the Untouchability (offences) Act (1955) make the subject of social relations between the high castes and the Harijans a matter of direct concern to the Government. The village panchāyats have been strengthened by policy decisions at the all-India level. Adult franchise for elections to the State as well as the Central Parliament has made the village an effective part of the political structure of India. The Community Development Programme and the National Extension Service will soon cover every Indian village.

The villages were not self-sufficient in the field of religion either. Hindus, Muslims and Christians regularly made pilgrimages to nearby shrines and other holy places. Villagers often owed allegiance to nearby monasteries which appointed agents to look after the religious life of the faithful. The popularity of religious discourses (*harikathā*, *kīrtan* and *bhajan*) carried to the villager Hindu mythology and the theological notions of Sanskritic Hinduism.

No village is able to find within its boundary spouses for all its boys and girls. Some of them have to marry out. Even in the South, where cross-cousin marriage and cross-uncle niece marriage are preferred, a multicaste village has marital relations with at least a few dozen villages; in the North, where the village is exogamous, the circle is much wider.

Does a multicaste village have any unity? The village is often divided into discrete wards where different castes live. In Gujarāt such areas are referred to as *phaliya*, in the Karnātaka

as *kēri* and in Mahārāshtra as *wāḍa*. This type of segregation is found in other parts of India as well. In Punjab the *tholla* or *panna* is the residential area of a lineage or its segment. For instance, in Shamepur village, 10km. from Delhi, there are three *pannas*, *Tehai*, *Pachu* and *Nawade*, the first being relatively a new settlement of two segments of single lineage of the locally dominant caste of Ahīrs.

Unity of the Village

Sometimes this principle of aggregation and segregation on the basis of caste leads to a "village" being formed of a few discrete hamlets. Everywhere the Harijans live separately from the caste Hindus.

The members of a ward show a strong sense of unity. This is partly territorial and partly due to the existence of other strong bonds such as those of caste and lineage. Inter-ward disputes occur occasionally like inter-village disputes. But, then, the verydivision into wards enforces interdependence because of the castewise division of labour. The weaving of stratified castes into a unity on the basis of division of labour and common loyalty to the village may be termed "vertical solidarity", which may be distinguished from "horizontal solidarity", i.e., the solidarity of a caste.

The people of a village have a sense of unity and identity. The celebration of village festivals brings out this latent characteristic. When epidemics or drought hit a village, the local deities are propitiated for protection.

Indian rural society is marked by solidarities such as caste, kin and village. Religion underwrites each of these solidarities and also links up the village with wider solidarities. The patron-client tie is another important solidarity and this frequently cuts across kin, caste, village and religion. The patrons have the duty of looking after the interests of the clients in return for labour, service and loyalty on the part of the latter. But then, only some of the clients are "core" clients while the others are "marginal" clients owing allegiance to more than one patron . Marginal clients transfer their allegiance from one patron to another

It is now appropriate to mention the existence of factions which are nothing other than groups dividing the village community. Each faction is headed by a patron or leader. Where factions coincide with pre-existing bonds of caste, kin, lineage and ward, they tend to be very strong. And this in turn means that the factions replace the village as the focii of the villager's loyalties. There is no easy solution to this situation as development workers have discovered.

There is a view that village solidarity as such does not exist, and the only solidarity is that of caste. When an inter-village fight

occurs, the leaders (patrons) of the dominant castes get involved and the others, especially the members of the lowest castes, are dragged into it because of their clientship and fear of the dominant castes. This is a plausible view, but it ignores the fact that all rural folk are distinguished on the basis of village membership in a caste context, and distinguished on the basis of caste in the context of village membership. All the solidarities we have mentioned do exist, including loyalty to one's village, and they result in a network of ties which make rural society.

Urban life in pre-industrial India

Towns are not new in India. They existed as far back as the time, when the Indus Valley Civilization flourished. Several types of towns existed in pre-industrial India—pilgrim-centres, and "political", commercial and university towns.

Pilgrim-towns are located at holy places—on the banks of a sacred river, at the confluence of two rivers, on the sea coast or on a hill-top. Some pilgrim-centres attract pilgrims only from a small area, while a place like Vārānasi or Allahābād or Tirupati or Mathura attracts pilgrims from all over the country. Pilgrim-centres have a large floating population for whose convenience hospices have been built by rich men or religious organizations or the Government. They abound in religious medicants. They also attract traders. Some of these temples have a very large income ; for instance, the Tirupati temple has an annual income of over sixty lakhs of rupees and a part of this money goes towards meeting the expenses of Sri Venkateswara University. Some Sikh gurdwāras also have a large income which is used for running educational institutions. Occasionally, the pilgrim-towns are centres of traditional learning and culture. People from all parts of the country, including tribal areas, go to the more famous of the pilgrim-towns; and in the case of Hindus, they are an important source of Sanskritization.

Delhi, Āgra, Ahmadābād, Hyderābād, Poona and Mysore are examples of "political" towns : they were the capitals of rulers, Hindu and Muslim. A capital means an army, police, bureaucracy and market. Traditionally, the ruler was expected to be a patron of the arts and learning, and his court attracted artisans, literary men and scholars from surrounding areas. The large number of people living in the capital had to be fed, and this involved the exploitation of the country-side both by merchants and bureaucrats. A king usually built a new temple or patronized an old one, and his devotion resulted in the temple becoming popular with his subjects. The fortunes of political towns varied with the fortunes of their rulers.

The "Commercial" towns varied from small market-towns (*maṇḍī*), where the peasant sold his surplus and bought the goods he wanted, to big centres of banking and trade. Frequently, the latter were located in capitals. India had a developed system of banking even before the arrival of the British. The bankers were occasionally called upon to stand surety for their king when he had to buy off an invader. In Gujarāt, every town had a council (*mahājan*) consisting of the representatives of the important trades and crafts, and the head of the council was called *Nagar Sheth*. He was an important and powerful figure and had some ritual privileges.

There were also centres of traditional learning. In ancient times Taxila and Nālanda were University towns. There were six hundred resident teachers in Nālanda.

It should be emphasized here that the distinctions we have made between different kinds of towns were not mutually exclusive. A political town was also a centre of trade and commerce and of traditional learning, and a pilgrim-town was also a centre of learning and trade. One kind of speciality tended to attract the other specialities.

The traditional towns did not involve any sudden break with rural social life. Rural-urban continuum did exist even though the residents of the towns, especially the richer people, were more sophisticated in their speech and behaviour. The term *nāgarika* (resident of a city) also means one who is refined or civilized.

An important reason for the existence of continuity between rural and urban life was the fact that the better-off townsmen owned land and thought of land as a major source of investment. In fact, the status of a man even in urban areas improved if he owned land.

3. *Marriage, Kinship and Inheritance*

Marriage

The traditional literature of pre-British India, including the Vedas, Smṛtis, Epics, Purāṇas and other literary works, and Buddhist and Jain literature, provides information on the religious, social and political life of the Hindus. The source material is not all of the same kind, nor equally rich in all sectors of social life. In the field of marriage and kinship, however, the material is more copious than in some others, but a few limitations of the data need to be mentioned. It is obvious that the material covers only the

Hindus, and among them only the higher castes. This latter fact has been frequently ignored ; worse still the institutions and beliefs of the "twice-born", and especially the Brahmins, have been interpreted to be the institutions and beliefs of all Hindus. Thus, the ban on divorce and widow marriage has been unquestionably assumed to hold good for all whereas it holds good only for the "twice-born" castes. Again, it is assumed that the rules governing marriage, adoption, inheritance, inter-caste relations, etc. were observed by everyone, everywhere, while it is likely that the degree of observance varied from one section of the society to another and from one part of India to another. Intensive field research carried out in recent years in different parts of India has thrown a great deal of doubt on the picture which Indologists had presented to the scholarly world about Indian society. It is now seen that this represented a book view and an upper caste view, and that the reality was far more complicated and diversified.

While there is much variation between different groups in the customs and beliefs regarding marriage and kinship, the institution of marriage itself is common to all. It is well known that marriage is an essential duty for all Hindus. It is a sacrament, and among the "twice-born" castes religious considerations are especially prominent in making marriage obligatory. A son is thought to be necessary because he performs periodical rituals, including the annual *Śrāddha*, which keep the dead ancestors out of a hell called *put*. Marriage enables the individual to enter the second stage of *gārhasthya* (householdership), and through its ritual the husband and wife perform five great sacrifices to the creator (*Brahmā*), ancestors, deities, elements, and fellow human beings. Among the non-*dvija* castes, however, marriage has a more secular character. In the rural areas a son is essential to cultivate the family land and to look after the parents in their old age. Even among the *dvija* castes the secular importance of marriage is considerable, often huge dowries being paid to the groom.

Marriage among Muslims is a contract which a man and a woman enter into by mutual agreement, but rituals are performed on the occasion of marriage. A sermon (Khuṭbā) sanctifies the contract before the parties announce their acceptance of it.

Early marriage is still common in India though the marriage age has been going up in the last few decades among the urban and educated sections. The median age at marriage in different countries is given in Table XIV p. 539.

It is seen that India has the lowest median age at marriage both for females and males. The highest median age at marriage is registered by West Germany.

TABLE XIV

*Median age at marriage of those married up to age 52·5**

Country	Females	Males
Egypt (1948)	19·4	25·2
Canada (1951)	21·1	24·8
U.S.A. (1950)	20·4	23·2
Japan (1950)	23·1	25·8
India (1951)	14·5	20·0
U.K. (1951)	21·9	25·2
W. Germany (1946)	24·7	27·4
France (1946)	22·6	26·0
Guatemala (1950)	18·69	22·88

*S. N. Agarwala, The Age at Marriage in India, *Population Index Vol.* 23, 1957.

There are significant differences between the various religious groups and castes in the matter of age at marriage. Dr. Agarwala observes, on the basis of census data for the 1891-1931 period, that Christians have the highest mean age at marriage (17·1 for females and 23·9 for males) followed, in order, by Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus (Table XV). Dr. Agarwala also states that women of the Harijan castes have the lowest mean age at marriage followed respectively by Brahmins, and Warrior (Kṣatriya) and Trading (Vaiśya) castes, except in Mysore, Madras and Kerala where Brahmin women have the lowest mean age at marriage. The same pattern is found to prevail for men also. A caution must be entered here about the above generalizations for different *varṇas*. A *varṇa* includes innumerable *jātis* speaking different languages and also differing from each other in several other respects. Thus, two Brahmin groups from different parts of the country differ from each other in important respects—the marriage age of Brahmin girls in South India has gone up strikingly since the thirties. Even within the same linguistic region, two *jātis* belonging to the same *varṇa* may differ from each other in custom, ritual and way of life.

The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 prescribes the minimum age of marriage as 18 for boys and 15 for girls. But this law is not strictly enforced. This is specially true of rural areas where the marriage age for girls is usually lower than 15.

TABLE XV

Mean age at marriage of religious groups in India
(Average of 1891-1913)

Religious groups	Females	Males
Hindus	12·5	19·7
Jains	13·1	20·5
Muslims	13·2	21·0
Sikhs	15·0	22·5
Christians	17·1	23·9

Attempts were made to classify Hindu marriages as early as the beginning of the Christian era. Manu classified them into eight forms : *Brāhma, Daiva, Ārṣa, Prājāpatya, Āsura, Gāndharva, Rākṣasa* and *Paiśāca*. The *Āsura and Paiśāca* forms were both regarded as unlawful. Commentators coming after Manu accepted the eightfold classification though they evaluated the relative merits of each form differently. Generally, the first four forms were regarded as good or merit-conferring. The above classification was apparently an "ideal" one and not the outcome of an analysis of different forms of marriage obtaining among different sections of early Indian society.

Forms of Marriage

Monogamy, polygyny and polyandry all occur amongst Hindus. Here it is necessary to distinguish between what is permitted and what is practised. Until the passage of the Hindu Marriage Act in 1955, every Hindu was in theory free to marry a number of women. In fact, however, a very small percentage of Hindus were polygynous. The barrenness of a wife or her failure to give birth to a son was generally the reason for taking a second wife. Among some trading or warrior castes, a wealthy or powerful man took a second wife. Among the higher castes monogamy prevailed, the ideal of having only one wife (*ekapatnīvrata*) being as old as the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

That applies to the Jains also, but they have no religious necessity for a son. Muslims are permitted to take four wives each, provided all are treated as equal. Again, the actual incidence of polygyny among Muslims is small; only the wealthy and powerful occasionally take a second wife. Christians are forbidden to take a second wife.

Polyandry—the custom of having more husbands than one—is even less common than polygyny. A few Kerala castes practised polyandry until recently and it is not unlikely that it still continues to be practised to some extent in remote places. The Toḍas and Kotas of the Nīlgiris, the Khāsa of Jaunsar Bāwar (Dehra Dūn District) and a few other North Indian castes also practise

polyandry. There are two forms of polyandry, fraternal and disparate. In the fraternal form, the husbands are brothers, while in the disparate, the husbands are not related to each other. The Nāyars of Kerala formerly practised disparate polyandry, whereas in the Cis-Himālayan region the fraternal form is practised even today. In the latter area the eldest brother has more rights in the wife than his younger brothers. Amongst the Toḍas, it is the eldest brother who marries a girl but the younger brothers also have access to her. The eldest brother performs a ceremony with a bow and arrow in the seventh month of the wife's pregnancy and this makes him the legal father of the child. In fact, he is the father of all the children born subsequently till another brother performs the bow-and-arrow ceremony. The Toḍas formerly practised female infanticide and this meant that there were fewer women than men. With the abolition of infanticide, women became more numerous and the Toḍas began to combine polyandry with polygyny.

Leviratic alliances occur among the Ahīrs of Hariāna, some Jāṭs and Gūjars and several other castes in Uttar Pradesh, the Koḍagus of Mysore and among some Muslim castes. In leviratic marriage a man is obliged to marry the widow of a brother, and the children born to the new couple are their own, whereas in levirate proper a man has sex relations with his brother's widow to continue the dead brother's line. In the leviratic alliances mentioned above it is customary for the widow to marry the husband's younger brother, and not the husband's elder brother, though the latter is not unknown. Sororatic alliances, i.e., the marriage of a widower with his wife's younger sister, occur in South India and probably in other areas as well.

A widower is permitted to marry in all religious groups but that is not true of a widow. Widow remarriage is permitted among Muslims, Christians and Pārsīs. Among the Jains, local and caste custom determines the question. For instance, among the lower Jain castes of the Deccan, widow remarrige is common. Though it is allegedly forbidden among the Jain Baniyās of the former Central Provinces, it occurs frequently among them.

Widow marriage is common among the Hindus of the "lower" castes. But when a low caste wants to move up in the hierarchy, it imposes a ban on such marriage as also on divorce. The widespread belief that widow marriage is prohibited in Hinduism is an example of the way in which a Brahmin institution is mistaken for the institution of all Hindus. The Hindu Widows Remarriage Act, 1856, legalized the remarriage of Hindus of all castes.

Hindu marriage is in theory a sacrament and irrevocable.

Actually, divorce is practised among non-*dvija* castes in every part of the country. It was particularly easy among the matrilineal Nāyars even as recently as sixty years ago. The husband had to supply his wife with oil and cloth at three calendrical festivals and his failure to do so was regarded as a sufficient ground for divorce. Divorce is also permitted among tribal folk. The Khāsis, for instance, allow divorce for adultery, barrenness and incompatibility. Consent of the elders, and occasionally of the local panchāyat as well, is a necessary condition for the grant of divorce.

Divorce

During 1940-48, several Provinces and States passed laws permitting divorce for Hindus. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 allows divorce for incurable insanity, incurable and virulent leprosy, and venereal diseases in an acute form. Presumption of death, conversion to another religion, assumption of *sannyāsa* and adultery also provide grounds for divorce. A wife is entitled to sue for divorce if her husband commits rape, sodomy or bestiality.

Divorce is allowed in other religious groups also. There are two forms of divorce among Muslims : divestiture (khul) and dismissal (*talāq*). In the former, divorce is the result of friendly agreement between husband and wife, and *mehr* (dower)* has to be returned by the wife to her husband. In *talāq* the husband has the right to dismiss his wife by thrice repeating the dismissal formula. The wife's right to demand divorce is conceded by the *Qurān* 'Ḥadīth', 2). The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939, enables a Muslim wife to seek the dissolution of her marriage on certain grounds.

In most societies there are rules, positive as well as negative, regarding the selection of spouses. The positive rules lay down whom a person may marry, while the negative rules lay down whom he may not marry. Thus endogamy and hypergamy specify the groups in which a person is expected to find a bride, while exogamous rules prohibit him from marrying in certain groups. Endogamy and hypergamy are both intimately related to the caste structure. A man has to marry within his subcaste or *jāti*. *Varṇa* affiliation is not as significant as *jāti* affiliation for purposes of endogamy. For the vast majority of the people, however, the endogamous unit consists of a series of kin-clusters living in a fairly restricted area. In South India the preference for marrying people related in specific ways as also the absence of a ban on marrying members of one's own village, results in restricting the field of marriage socially as well as spatially. Village exogamy as well as the ban on the marriage

Selection of Spouses

*See p. 477 [Ed.]

of cross-cousins, which are features of North India, extend the field. This is further accentuated in the Ganga valley where the village which receives girls in marriage regards itself as superior to the villages which supply girls to it, and therefore refuses to give its girls in return to the latter. Two factors which limit the field in the North should also be mentioned : the tendency to marry into villages not farther than 12 or 13 km. away; and to confine marital links to a few kin-groups.

Endogamous *jātis* also exist among Sikhs, Jains, Christians and Muslims. The Syeds, the aristocratic Muslim caste, are divided into endogamous groups. Sometimes the endogamous group is so small that it includes only the extended families of a man's parents. Such a group is called a *kufw* while the maximal endogamous group is called *birādari.* Among some Gujarātī castes there is strict spatial delimitation of the endogamous field.

Hypergamy occurs in different parts of India : among the Brahmins of Bengal ; Anāvil Brahmins and Leva-Pātidārs of Gujarāt ; Rājputs in Gujarāt and Rājasthān ; Marāṭhās of Mahārāshtra; and Nāyars, Kṣatriyas and Ambalavāsis of Kerala. Hypergamy tends to occur where the structural gulf is narrow—in fact it may be said to occur among the different sections of a single caste rather than between castes which are widely separated. The custom of high caste Nāyar women having *sambandam* with Namburti Brahmin men is perhaps an exception to the rule, but *sambandam* is not exactly marriage. (This is related to the tendency to minimize the husband's and father's role, an important feature of the Nāyar kinship system). Not all Nāyar marriages are hypergamous. It may be noted here that in the traditional literature of India hypergamous (*anuloma*) marriages are permitted while hypogamous (*pratiloma*) marriages are prohibited. According to the latest legislation, all inter-caste marriages, whether of the hypergamous or hypogamous kind, are valid.

In Bengal, the Rāṛhīya Brahmins are divided into three *jātis*, Kulīn, Bansaj, and Śrotriya. The last mentioned are subdivided into Suddha Śrotriya and Kaṣṭa Śrotriya. The Kulīns are the highest among the three *jātis* and Kulīn bridegrooms are in great demand. A few decades ago, the demand for Kulīn men was so great that they could (and did) demand huge dowries from the parents of girls who sought to marry them. It also gave rise to polygyny among Kulīns.

Leva-Pātidār hypergamy is more intricate than the Kulīn hypergamy. The Pātidār of Charotar are divided into the people of the twenty-six, twelve and finally, six villages respectively. The women of the first group may marry men in the first, second and

third groups, while the women in the second group may marry men in the second and third groups, and the women in the third group only men in the third group. This means that there is a great demand for men in the third group. Huge dowries are paid to Pātidār bridegrooms.

Educated Indians are critical of the institution of hypergamy, and especially, of the large dowries associated with it. The classical form of Kulīn hypergamy has disappeared, while the Nāyar practice of entering into *sambandam* alliance with Nambutris is on its way out. But Pātidār hypergamy continues to flourish.

Exogamous rules are complementary to endogamous rules and they prohibit marriage between members of the same group. As mentioned earlier, in North India, high caste Hindus regard the village as an exogamous unit. Girls born within the village are called "village daughters" and they do not cover their faces before local men, whereas girls who come into the village by marriage do so.

Two other kinds of exogamy have to be mentioned : *sagotra* and *sapiṇḍa*. *Gotra*-exogamy applies in its fullness to all the "twice-born" castes. These castes have a tradition of descent from certain sages who are believed to have lived in the remote past, and two persons claiming descent from the same *gotra-ṛṣi*, even when they came from different linguistic areas, were forbidden from marrying each other. It may be added that several ambitious non-Brahminical castes have either claimed descent from traditional *gotra-ṛṣis* or have invented new *gotras*. The Liṅgāyats of Mysore have *gotras* which are quite different from the Brahminical *gotras*. Gūjars, Ahīrs, Jāṭs and other castes in villages near Delhi have *gotras* but these are also different from Brahminical *gotras*. Often, a non-Brahmin caste which was divided into exogamous clans with each clan claiming descent from a plant or animal changed the totem names for *gotra-ṛṣis*. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 legalizes marriage between members of the same *gotra*.

The marriage of *sapiṇḍa* relatives is prohibited among Hindus. The term *sapiṇḍa* has two meanings : (1) those who share the particles of the same body; and (2) those who are united by offering balls of cooked rice (*piṇḍa*) to the same dead ancestors. Hindu lawgivers vary in defining the kinship group outside which marriage may occur. Gautama takes an extreme position, prohibiting seven generations (called "degrees" in Hindu law) on the father's side and five on the mother's. But several others have narrowed the circle to permit the marriage of cross-cousins; i.e., descendants from the same pair of grandparents may marry, so long as they are not parallel cousins. The Hindu Marriage Act

of 1955 bars marriage within five generations on the agnatic side and three on the mother's side. But it permits the marriage of cross-cousins where this is customary.

The observance of pollution at birth and death marks off the members of a kin-group, patrilineal as well as matrilineal. Full pollution obtains among the closest relatives; and who the closest relatives are, depends on the form of the kinship system. Broadly speaking, patrilineal relatives are regarded as closer than affinal or cognatic relatives among patrilineal castes; and matrilineal relatives are regarded as closer than patrilineal relatives among matrilineal castes.

The patrilineal joint family is an important exogamous unit among most Hindus. The enormous amount of attention bestowed on *sagotra* and *sapiṇḍa* exogamy has served to obscure this simple fact. In some parts of South India, the institution of domestic deity (*mane devaru, vīṭṭu perumāl*) serves to define the exogamous unit in the absence of known genealogical links. The institution of surname serves a similar purpose in certain other areas, though identical surnames are not always evidence of the existence of agnatic or matrilineal relationship.

With Christians and Muslims, the elementary or nuclear family is the exogamous unit. Outside of it, marriages are possible. Moplah Muslims of North Malabār live in matrilineal units and among them the matrilineage is the exogamous unit. Lineage exogamy also exists among the Muslim Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmīr.

Subcaste endogamy does obtain among Muslims, even though it is not as rigid as among the Hindus. Castes at either end of the scale appear to be more particular about observing endogamous rules than the middle-range castes. For instance, generally speaking, a Syed marries another Syed, and a S̲h̲aik̲h̲ another S̲h̲aik̲h̲. Sometimes, however, a Syed man may marry a S̲h̲aik̲h̲ girl but a Syed girl would not normally marry a S̲h̲aik̲h̲ boy. This would be against the rule of hypergamy which is occasionally practised. Hypergamous marriages occur particularly among converts to Islām from Jāṭ and Rājput castes. Castes which consider themselves mutually equal, such as the artisan castes, intermarry among themselves. But then castes which are considered equal in one area may be regarded as unequal in another. In Eastern Uttar Pradesh, the Darzī (Tailor) and Julāhā (Weaver) are regarded as mutually equal and intermarry, while in the western part of the State the Darzī regards himself superior and does not intermarry with the Julāhā.

The Sikhs are generally endogamous, though hypergamy does occur occasionally among castes with a tradition of hypergamy

(e.g., Jāṭs) prior to conversion. The Jewish subdivisions, mentioned earlier, are endogamous. Among Pārsīs, the Dastūrs (priests) accept girls in marriage from the non-Dastūrs but do not give their girls to the latter.

Preferential marriages

We have already mentioned that in South India marriage with some relatives is preferred. In the Marāṭhi-Telugu-Tamil-and Kannaḍa speaking areas, marriages with the cross-cousin and cross-niece are preferred. (Descendants of the siblings of the same sex are parallel cousins to each other, while descendants of the opposite sex are cross-cousins to each other. Similarly, a man is parallel uncle to his brother's children and a cross-uncle to his sisters' children.) Among the higher castes, however, marriage with the father's sister's daughter is not popular. But marriages with the maternal uncle's daughter and cross-niece are both preferred and such preference finds expression in ritual and custom. Horoscopes may not be consulted when a relative is being married. Among Telugu Komaṭis (traders) there is a strong obligation to marry the mother's brother's daughter or elder sister's daughter. The marriage of near kin helps to mitigate the conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and thereby strengthens the patrilineal joint family.

Among the matrilineal Nāyars marriage with the mother's brother's daughter is preferred. the Nāyar kinship system, while the maternal uncle is the actual or potential head of the *tarawāḍ*, his own children are in his wife's *tarawāḍ*. The marriage of a man's daughters with his cross-nephews helps to continue in the next generation the link which has been forged in his generation between his natal *tarawāḍ* and his conjugal *tarawāḍ*. Likewise, the son's marriage with his maternal uncle's daughter continues the bond between his natal *tarawāḍ* and his mother's brother's conjugal *tarawāḍ*. The net result is a model in which three *tarawāḍs* are continually linked with each other through kin marriages. Marriage between a cross-uncle and niece, so favoured in the other regions of South India, is forbidden among Nāyars, since the maternal uncle is in *loco parentis* to his nieces (and nephews). Preferential marriage with the father's sister's daughter occurs among the matrilineal Gāros in Assam.

South Indian Jains prefer cross-cousin marriage, and the Jains of Karnātaka even practise cross-uncle-niece marriage. Muslims show a preference for marriage with the father's brother's daughter. Among the Syrian Christians of Kerala, and several other groups in South as well as North India, the exchange of brother and sister is often practised : X marries Y's sister and Y in turn marries X's sister. "Exchange marriage" circumvents the obligation to pay

dowry. "Exchange marriages" occur among the Kannaḍigas though they are not approved.

Arranged marriages

A traditional marriage is more the concern of two groups of kindred than of two individuals. Each kin-group has an interest in the marriage and its continuance. The head of the household and his wife take the initiative in finding the bride or groom. Among the higher castes and especially the Brahmins, the parents of the girl go in search of the groom while among the lower castes it is the other way about. Among the former, a dowry has often to be paid to the bridegroom. The Nambutris of Kerala, the Ceṭṭyārs and Brahmins of the Tamil country., the Pātidārs of Charotar in Gujarāt and the Rājputs are among those who pay high dowries. The dowry system has extended to the lower castes also. Among non-Hindus, the Syrian Christians of Kerala, Sikhs and Jains pay dowry.

In rural North India, the Barber acts as match-maker for non-Brahmin castes. Brahmin priests may also perform the role of intermediaries. In Bengal the *Ghaṭaks* were professional match-makers. The preference for marrying certain relatives in South India reduces the need for the services of a professional match-maker. The urban middle classes have started using the advertisement columns of newspapers to secure brides and grooms.

The matching of the horoscopes of the boy and girl, the exchange of gifts between the two parties, and elaborate ritual are all features of the traditional type of marriage. And the kin-group of the boy and girl have an important say at every stage of the marriage. It is only among the Westernized and urban sections of Indians that the boy or girl has a dominant voice in the choice of partner. Inter-caste and inter-regional marriages are becoming increasingly frequent among them.

Marriage rites

Rites are a very important part of marriage and they show great variation not only from one region to another, but also within a single region on the basis of religion, sect, caste, income and rural-urban residence. The sacramental character of Hindu marriage is particularly evident among the "twice-born" castes and especially the Brahmins. The marriage rites include the ritual of engagement (*niscitārtha*), the fixing of an auspicious day and time (*muhūrta*) for the wedding ceremony, the reception of the bridegroom by the bride's parents (*kāśīyatrā* and *varapūjā*), the formal seeing of the bride (*mukhadarśana*), the mutual garlanding of bride and groom, the giving of the bride to the groom (*kanyādāna*), clasping of the bride's hand (*pāṇigrahaṇa*), circumambulation of the sacrificial fire (*agnipariṇaya*)

the offering of parched grain to the sacrificial fire (*lājahoma*), and walking the seven steps (*saptapadī*). We have only mentioned the main items of ritual which form the core round which is built an elaborate complex of rites. The rites and accompanying hymns are taken from the Vedas, Gṛhya Sūtras and Smṛtis. The existence of a ban on the use of Vedic mantras in the weddings of the lower castes has led to the adoption of *mantras* from the Purāṇas to accompany Vedic rites. Every wedding, whether Brahmin or Harijan, also includes ritual performed exclusively by women.

Weddings also mean processions; the feasting of relatives, castefolk and villagefolk; fireworks; and sometimes dancing by women of the Courtesan caste. Formerly, among the landowning and trading castes, marriage rites continued for three to five days and involved considerable expense. A recent tendency, among the Westernized sections, is to reduce the ritual to the minimum. An opposite tendency may be seen among the more prosperous of the lower castes; they are adopting Sanskritic ritual and custom in order to move up in the hierarchy.

It is necessary to stress that the Sanskritic and sacramental elements are minimal in the wedding ritual of some "low" castes and tribes. Among some Kerala tribes marriage "ritual" consists in nothing more than the exchange of new cloth between the bride and groom. Even among a high caste like the Nāyars, the exchange of cloth, mutual garlanding and circumambulation of lighted lamps constitute marriage. (We are excluding from our consideration the elaborate pre-marital ritual of *tālikaṭṭukalyāṇam*.)

The increasing Sanskritization of the "low" castes has made marriage ritual more complex among them, and has often necessitated the employment of a Brahmin or Sanskritized non-Brahmin priest. For example, the Iḷavans (Tīyans) of Kerala, traditionally toddy-tappers, have accepted Sanskritization of customs and rituals, including wedding ritual, under the leadership of the late Sri Nārāyaṇa Guru. In the Punjab the Ārya Samāj has been an agent of Sanskritization, and in Gujarāt the Swāminārāyaṇa Movement has played a similar role. It is interesting to note that the most Sanskritized castes at the top are reducing ritual and becoming more Westernized.

The marriage rites of the two Jain sects, Digambara and Śvetāmbara, are identical in important respects. They are on the whole similar to Hindu marriage rites, and vary in some respects from region to region. The main rites are engagement (*vāgdāna*, promise), the presentation of jewellery by the groom's father to the bride (*pradāna*), the giving of the bride to the groom

(*kanyādāna or varaṇa*), the groom clasping the bride's hand (*pāṇigrahaṇa*) and the seven steps (*saptapadī*).

Muslim marriage rites show some variation on the basis of sect and region. Among the high caste Sunnī Muslims in Uttar Pradesh, marriage negotiations begin with a mediator approaching the bride's kin on behalf of the groom's kin. When the proposal is accepted, the sum to be paid as *mehr* to the bride is agreed upon, and a date fixed for the wedding. The groom's kin send sweets to the bride's kin. On the wedding day the groom's party goes in procession to the bride's house. The bride's parents make gifts of clothes to the groom who puts them on. Then a representative (*vakīl*) of the groom goes to the bride, accompanied by two witnesses. After obtaining the bride's formal consent, the party returns to the groom to secure his consent. The *kāzi* then recites a passage in which are mentioned all the famous marriages in the Islāmic tradition. A prayer follows and then the *vakīl* goes with the witnesses to the women's quarters where the marriage is confirmed.

The Shi'ahs differ from the Sunnīs only with respect to the ritual in which the formal consent of the bridegroom is sought and obtained. Two *mudjtahids* (priests) stand facing each other, one representing the bride and the other the groom, and one asks the other whether the party he represents has given consent.

Converts to Islām from Hinduism retain some of their pre-conversion rites. Blunt noted in 1931 that several Muslim castes employed a Brahmin priest to fix an auspicious day and time for wedding ritual. Muslim Bhāṭs, for instance, first celebrate marriage in the Hindu way and then in the Islāmic way.

Converts to Christianity also retain some of the customs of their former castes. For instance, the South Indian Hindu rite of tying the *tāli* by the groom to the bride is also an essential part of the marriage ritual of the Syrian Christians of Kerala.

The Special Marriage Act, 1954, provides for secular, civil marriage which may be dissolved by mutual consent. The Act applies to all Indian citizens who choose to avail themselves of its provisions, irrespective of religious affiliation. Civil marriage enables persons to avoid the expense of traditional weddings.

Reformers and writers on Indian economics have deplored the huge cost of weddings, especially among the peasantry. The amount of money spent varies according to incomes, caste, region, rural-urban residence and the extent of Westernization. Generally, among the patrilineal high castes, marriage means heavy expense for the bride's kin. Large sums of money, gifts of jewellery, furniture, vessels and

Marriage expenses

clothes have to be offered. In some parts of the country there is a "tariff" for grooms based on education, the kind of job held, and the amount of ancestral wealth. Among some castes, however, not only is there no dowry, but the groom's kin have to incur more expenditure than the bride's kin. Among the Okkaligas (Peasants) of Mysore, for instance, the groom's representatives have to state at the marriage agreement ceremony the details of the jewellery and clothes they are going to give to the bride. A similar situation obtains among the Marāthās.

Before the Indian rural economy became monetized to the present extent, the various castes which contributed to the work of the wedding were paid in grain and cooked food. Also, ostentatious display on the part of the lower castes was not encouraged by the locally dominant caste. Nowadays, the lower castes imitate the higher freely. In several parts of India, relatives, neighbours and friends of the bridal party are required to make cash contributions, which have to be returned when a wedding takes place in each donor's household.

The social institution of marriage ensures the children born of it a recognized and legally sanctioned positionin society.

Kinship groups

Where marriage is monogamous, the husband and wife become the nucleus of a domestic group. A domestic group consisting of a man and his wife and unmarried children is called an elementary or nuclear family. The elementary family is widespread over the world, either by itself or as a part of a wider group.

It is not only in a polyandrous or polygynous marriage that the elementary family is part of a wider domestic group. Often a group of married brothers and their wives and childrern are found to live under a single roof under the authority of the eldest brother. Or the domestic group consists of a man and his wife, his married sons and their children. Domestic groups which are bigger than the elementary family, and often include two or more elementary families, are termed joint or extended families. They may be patrilineal, as in most parts of India, or matrilineal as among the Nāyars of Kerala or the Khāsis of Assam. Several joint families descended from the same ancestor, and acting together on certain occasions form a lineage.

In several parts of the country people live in lineage groups. Large lineages were probably more frequent during the nineteenth century than they are today.

Lineages as corporate groups

The members of the lineage lived under the same roof, or in a group of neighbouring houses, held property together, and ate together. Such a lineage formed a coparcenary, every member

(male in the case of a patrilineage and female in the case of a matrilineage) having a share in the ancestral property. Among some groups, including the Nāyars, Nambutris and Koḍagus ancestral property was traditionally impartible. Over a hundred years ago, village headmen in Bundelkhand periodically redistributed the arable land among the lineages of the dominant landowning castes. (The same was true of the Pathāns of the North-West Frontier Province.) In the Thanjāvūr District it was common for arable land in a village to be owned by members of a patrilineage who were called *pangāḷi* (sharers).

The matrilineage of the Nāyars is called *tarawāḍ* and it consists of all the descendants, in the female line, of an ancestress. A Nāyar household may include a woman, her brothers and younger sisters, her children, and her sisters' children and her daughters' children and her sisters' daughters' children. The Nāyars are not a single caste but a group of castes divided into high and low, and some of the high caste Nāyars owned land while the others held land on the twelve-year *kāṇam* lease from those (Nambutris or Kṣatriya Nāyars) with a superior title to land. The lessees in turn sublet land to tenant cultivators on a three-year tenure.

In pre-British Kerala, Nāyars formed the soldiery of the Zamorin of Calicut, the Rājās of Cochin and other local rulers. Nāyar men either remained in the villages, looking after land, or stayed in a prince's court as soldiers. Except in North Malabār a Nāyar girl was not required to leave for her natal home on marriage. She continued to stay with her sisters, brothers, mother and mother's brothers and sisters. The husband was only a visitor and the children born of the marriage were regarded as members of the mother's natal *tarawāḍ*. The oldest living male was the manager of the *tarawāḍ* and it was his duty to look after its property which was considered impartible. The members lived in the ancestral home, situated on the ancestral estate, which included a sacred serpent-grove (*kāvu*) and even cremation ground. The *tarawāḍ* was a corporation which continued in perpetuity.

Nambutri Brahmins lived in patrilineages which were called *illam*. The Nambutri house, like the Nāyar house, was situated on the ancestral estate, and near it were the serpent-grove and cremation ground. The Nambutris were landowners and their land was leased to Nāyars on *kāṇam* tenure. Land was considered impartible, and impartibility was ensured by the rule of primogeniture. Only the eldest son was permitted to marry a Nambutri girl and the younger sons had liaison (*sambandam*) with girls belonging to the higher Nāyar castes. The younger sons visited their partners at night and the children born of the union became

members of their mother's *tarawāḍs.* The Nambutri *illam* consisted of a man, his wife or wives, his children, and his younger brothers. Sometimes the *illam* included his old parents or his eldest son's children.

The *okka* of the Koḍagus resembled the Nambutri *illam.* It consisted of all the descendants, through males only, of an ancestor and their wives and children. The oldest living male was usually the head of the *okka.* The *okka* house was situated on the ancestral estate, and until 1840 land was regarded as impartible. Just as primogeniture helped to ensure the impartibility of land, the institution of leviratic alliance helped to contribute to the unity of the *okka.* The members of an *okka* regarded the spirits of dead ancestors (*kāṛaṇavar*) with reverence and periodically propitiated them.

Joint and elementary families

Among the poorer and uneducated folk in rural areas, the residential groups generally tend to be small, being confined to members of the elementary family and one or two other relatives. In this section of the population, the family group holds together during the father's lifetime, partition being usual after his death. Among the richer rural folk and among the urban-educated, joint families tend to be more frequent. A joint family consists of a man, his married sons and their wives and children, and his unmarried daughters. A joint family may persist even after the father's death, the eldest son becoming the head in place of the dead father. Occasionally a widowed sister or daughter and her children may be part of the joint family. An affinal relative of the head may also be living in a joint or elementary family.

The members of a joint family live under the same roof, eat from the same kitchen, perform their rituals together, and their common expenses are met out of the income of the ancestral estate. Every joint family has a manager who takes decisions on behalf of all. Every male member has a vested interest in the ancestral property. Some joint families are big, having as many as twenty or thirty or more members, while others are small. In the former case, it is usually found that members of three different generations are living together. In the latter, the joint family may consist of an elementary family and one or two additional relations such as a younger unmarried brother or sister or nephew or niece of the head of the household.

A joint family loses members through marriage of its girls and through death, and gains members through marriage of the boys and through birth and adoption. Sometimes a woman returns to her natal joint family after the death of her husband. A joint family splits up into constituent elementary families when partition

occurs. But partition is a periodical process, the elementary families resulting from partition in time developing into joint families. Joint and elementary families are parts of a single cyclical process and failure to perceive this fact has resulted in much misinterpretation of facts.

The composition of a joint family depends upon the mode of descent and the pattern of residence general to a group. Descent may be patrilineal or matrilineal or cognatic, and residence may be virilocal (staying with husband) or uxorilocal (staying with wife) or neolocal (both moving to a new house). Matrilineal descent does not always mean uxorilocal residence. In North Malabār descent is matrilineal but residence virilocal. A woman moves into her husband's house after marriage and the children born of the marriage stay with their parents till they reach adulthood and then they move into their mother's natal *tarawāḍ*. The composition of a *tarawāḍ* in North Malabār may be similar to that of a patrilineal joint family, but the juridical rights of the members living in it are entirely different.

Virilocality is the general rule in India, and this is not confined to Hindus but extends to Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Jains. The wife joins her husband soon after marriage and the latter generally lives with his own parents and brothers. It is only later, after the death of the parents, that the brothers separate from each other. Even this may not happen and the brothers may decide to stay together. Among the poorest groups and the lowest castes, the family breaks up soon after the parents' death. Among the highly Westernized and urban sections, neolocality is coming to be the rule. But the establishment of a new home does not mean the severance of ties with kin-groups of the husband and wife. Kinship connections are recognized on both the sides, and a close relative on either side may live with the couple. It may be added here that in recent years spatial mobility has increased considerably and young men have jobs away from their natal towns. This means that in urban areas there are many families which are seemingly elementary.

The female members of a Nāyar *tarwāḍ* receive their husbands at night, while the male members go to their wives. So there is variation in the diurnal and nocturnal compositions of the Nāyar *tarawāḍ*. The custom of visiting wives and choice of place of residence is a complicated matter. Nowadays, in urban areas, patterns of residence are changing towards virilocality if not neolocality.

The Khāsi of Assam are also matrilineal but the pattern of residence obtaining amongst them is somewhat different from that

amongst the Nāyars. Marriage is followed by matrilocal residence which lasts till a child is born, the couple then moving into a new house. But if the wife is the youngest daughter of her mother, the couple continues to stay in the wife's natal household permanently. A form of ultimogeniture seems to prevail amongst the Khāsis. Among the Gāros also, residence is uxorilocal.

While the composition of a household is usually determined by the particular principle of descent and the type of post-marital residence obtaining in a caste, the bilateral principle finds greater recognition than is commonly thought. A household may include not only patrilineal relatives such as two full brothers, their wives, their children and unmarried sisters, but also the brother or sister of a wife of one of them. In a matrilineal household, on the other hand, increasing recognition of the bilateral principle may result in the parents of either the husband or wife residing with the couple. It may be added that, among the urban and educated sections of the population, the household consists of the husband, wife, their children and a relative of the husband or, less frequently, a relative of the wife. These households are justifiably considered as part of wider kinship groups elsewhere. In big cities like Bombay and Calcutta high rents act as a limiting factor on the size of the household.

In the traditional Hindu joint family the senior male, either father or eldest brother or son, was usually the head of the household. It was his duty to look after the property, meet the expenses out of the income of the ancestral estate, and clear the debts. He was expected to keep the estate in good order and manage the resources carefully. The education of the younger members, the marriage of adults and the expenses of funeral ceremonies for the dead were all legitimate charges on the ancestral estate. The head of the household was the manager of the joint family corporation and as such he wielded much power and authority. The members were expected to obey him in all matters. Even today in rural areas the head of the household tells everyone, including the adult members, what they should do during the course of the day. The head is respected in proportion to his impartiality and concern for the common good of the family.

Behaviour pattern in joint families

General principles of the social structure, such as differentiation on the basis of sex and age, regulated relationship between members of a joint family. Differentiation on the basis of sex resulted in intensifying social interaction among members of the same sex and correspondingly weakening interaction between the different sexes. A married girl, for instance works in the kitchen with her mother-in-

law and sees her husband only at night. In Western Uttar Pradesh, to give an instance, the house of a rich landowner comprises two parts; one, where women cook and sleep; the other, consisting of a raised platform and a room or two, where the men meet their friends and smoke the *hukkā*. Cattle are parked in the men's *caupāl*. At caste or village dinners men and women dine separately; women take their turn after the men and children.

Age is another operative principle, the younger members being required to show respect to the elder. In formal greeting, obligatory on ceremonial occasions, the younger person is expected to place his head on the elder's feet. The distinction on the basis of age cuts across the distinction on the basis of sex—a young man is expected to salute and take the blessing of an old female relative. When an exception is made, it only serves to emphasize the rule. Among the Koḍagu, while generally young people have to show deference to the old, a wife must salute her husband's younger brother by touching his feet, even when he is younger than her. Formerly there was a general preference for leviratic marriage among the Koḍagu; the younger brother often became the husband of his elder brother's widow. And as between husband and wife, the former has to be treated as superior.

Respect for age resulted in power and privilege being concentrated in the hands of elders. Generally the male head of the joint family was the oldest living agnate, and the female head, his wife. The one exercized authority over men, the other over women. Difference in generations meant only an accentuation of age difference. But sometimes, thanks to early marriage, a man is younger than his elder sister's or brother's children. In such cases there is a conflict between the two principles.

We have already described the relations obtaining between the head of the joint family and the other male members. Where the head is the father of the older male members, his authority as head is reinforced by the general rule which requires sons to obey their parents and especially the father. When the eldest brother succeeded to the father's position as head of the joint family, the younger brothers had to obey him as they did their father. The position of the eldest son as the future head of the family marks him off from the other sons who are taught to respect him from an early age. This is specially true of the richer sections and higher castes. It is to be noted, however, that this transfer of authority from father to eldest son is only partial. Here is one of the reasons why families generally split up after the father's death.

Ideally, the children in a joint family are the children of all

the male members of the parental generation, and discrimination by a parent in favour of his own children is regarded as reprehensible. The different units of the joint family pose a potential threat to its continuity, and as long as the joint family exists the units are subordinated to the bigger entity.

The relation between women members in a joint family is frequently one of conflict. The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship is celebrated in folklore for the intensity of its conflict. Relations between a woman and her husband's sisters, and between her and her husband's brothers' wives, are also conflict-ridden. The basic fact of rivalry between brothers (or sons) and the conflict between women lead to the splitting up of the joint family. In North India a man has a friendly and even joking relationship with his elder brother's wife and a formal one with his younger brother's wife. In South India a man treats his wife's younger brothers and sisters with familiarity. The relation between a man and his parents-in-law is a formal one and only gradually, with the lapse of time, does it become less formal.

Nowadays, traditional patterns of behaviour are yielding place to new ones over a wide area. For instance, educated daughters-in-law do not obey their mothers-in-law as completely as before. There is a wide cultural gulf between the old-fashioned mother-in-law and the educated daughter-in-law and this, as may be expected, is a constant source of friction.

The principle of differentiation on the basis of age and sex holds good in matrilineal systems also. Respect is paid to older relatives and strict segregation is the rule between the sexes. The women confine themselves to a particular part of the house. Sisters have an "avoidance relation" with their brothers (including parallel cousins) and especially the eldest brother, the future head (*kāraṇavan*) of the matrilineal household.

Uxorilocality, polyandry and easy divorce in the traditional kinship system of the Nāyars were all intended to strengthen the sibling bond and weaken the conjugal bond. The head of the *tarawāḍ* was expected to treat his sister's children as his own and be indifferent to his own children. The changes which have occurred in recent years have strengthened the father's position at the expense of the maternal uncle's.

A Joint family is bound together by periodic propitiation of the dead ancestors. Among Brahmins this happens at the *Śrāddha* ceremony, where a man propitiates his dead father's or mother's spirit (*pitṛu*) by offering it *piṇḍa*. The dead person's parents and grandparents are also propitiated at a *Śrāddha*. Among non-Brahmin castes ancestor

Ritual bonds

propitiation takes different forms. Highly Sanskritized non-Brahmin castes, including the Kṣatriya and Vaiśya, perform the *śrāddha* ritual. On the west coast of India, groups with a developed lineage system such as the Nāyar and Coorg have elaborate ancestor propitiation in which the spirits of the dead "possess" low caste oracles. Where lineages are not so developed, all the dead ancestors are propitiated collectively on a particular day. A favourite period for the propitiation of ancestors is the fortnight preceding the *Dusserah* festival, known as *pitṛu pakṣa* (ancestors' fortnight).

In many parts of South India a joint family or lineage has a tradition of worshipping a particular deity. Vows are made to this deity in times of trouble, and the first tonsure, the donning of the sacred thread, and the marriages of the members of the client-family are celebrated in or near the deity's temple. Śrīnivāsa of Tirupati and Subrahmaṇya of Palni are two well known deities who have innumerable families attached to them.

Another important bond is pollution. When a member of a joint family or lineage dies, pollution has to be observed, the maximum period being ten days for the upper castes. Birth also results in pollution up to a maximum of ten days for the upper castes. The pollution group always includes the members of the joint family, patrilineal or matrilineal. It may be noted that the bonds created by the worship of family deities and ancestors and by the observance of pollution persist even after a joint family has split up into its component units or are residing in different places.

Changes in joint family

The political, economic and ideological forces that were released during British rule brought about certain changes in the joint family system. Large kin-groups, in rural areas at any rate, had been confined to a few landowning high castes. Residence in the same village, absence of economic differentiation between the different members of the joint family and the difficulty of getting the caste or village panchāyat to agree to partitioning the joint family had been factors which kept the institution as a going concern. British rule altered that situation. The new economic opportunities which came through the link-up of the local economy with a much wider one increased monetization; and greater opportunities for trade and increased spatial mobility due to the building of roads and railways led to the emergence of smaller kin-groups. The rapid growth of population with the resultant pressure on land was felt especially at the lower levels of the rural economic order. The Hindu Gains of Learning Act, 1930, declared that property acquired by a Hindu

as a result of his education was his personal property, even though his education was paid for by his joint family.

While the forces mentioned above certainly operated against living in big joint families, it must be remembered that the rural poor probably always lived in kinship groups which were not very much bigger than the elementary family. Living in big joint families is generally associated with wealth from land or trade or industry. It seems likely that the family pattern of the rural poor did not undergo as serious a change as that of the comparatively rich. Even among the latter, the cost of education and increased mobility did contribute to strengthening joint family links. The earners in a joint family often made higher education possible for the younger members even when they themselves were uneducated. Residence away from the natal kin-group removed the stresses and strains of day-to-day living, while increased communications kept the links alive. This is borne out by recent studies supporting the conclusion that the urban family is larger than the rural family.

Even if figures for urban areas show a dwindling in the size of the family, it does not necessarily mean that the joint family system is breaking down. Urban families are frequently not autonomous entities but only limbs of bigger families situated elsewhere. Any crisis in the parent or offspring family will be faced as a common problem. Weddings, funerals and other ceremonies are usually celebrated in the "parent" household. There is occasional transference of persons from one to the other family.

Succession and inheritance

Generally speaking, in the matter of succession to a traditional office, the rule of primogeniture is observed. That is, the eldest son of the incumbent of an office succeeds to it on the death of the latter. The eldest son becomes priest or headman or village watchman in the areas where those posts are hereditary. Sometimes the office may be split up like property among the sons of the office-holder. In parts of Gujarāt, for instance, the hereditary headmanship of a village rotates among the different branches of a lineage, each of which has a share in the office. The principle of splitting up a hereditary office is not, however, as widespread as primogeniture.

Among the matrilineal Nāyars, the managership (*kāraṇavan*) of the *tarawāḍ* passes from maternal uncle to nephew. Among the matrilineal Khasis, the office of the priestess of the matrilineage devolves on the youngest daughter (*ka khadduh*) of the incumbent.

All Hindus are patrilineal, with the exception of the Nāyars and Bants and other castes on the West Coast and Khāsis and Gāros of Assam. Muslims, excepting the Moplahs of North Malabār, and Christians, excepting Khāsi converts, are patrilineal.

All Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs are patrilineal. But even among the patrilineal groups some movable property is given to daughters and this property shows a tendency to devolve matrilineally. *Strīdhana*, gifts made to a bride (in contrast to the dowry), devolve eventually on her daughter. Again, the fact that women (until recently) did not inherit immovable property in patrilineal households was compensated for by their possession of rights in two households, natal and conjugal. Among the matrilineal Nāyars, on the other hand, the women inherited the immovable property while the men managed the *tarawāḍ* property.

Patrilineal Hindus were (and still are, to some extent) governed by two main schools of law in the matter of succession and inheritance, viz., the Mitākṣara and Dāyabhāga. Founded by Vijñāneśvara and Jīmūtavāhana respectively, they flourished in the 11th-12th centuries A.D. There were other schools which varied slightly from the Mitākṣara. The Mayūkha school is followed in Bombay, Gujarāt and North Konkan; the Mithilā school in Bihār; and the Vārānasi and Madras schools in their respective areas. We shall confine ourselves only to the chief differences between the Mitākṣara and Dāyabhāga schools. The Dāyabhāga school is followed in Bengal and Assam. Under the Mitākṣara, a son has a vested interest in his father's ancestral property from the moment of his birth. The father cannot alienate any part of the ancestral property to the detriment of a minor's interest. Buyers hesitate to buy ancestral property when the seller has a minor heir. Under the Dāyabhāga system, however, the father is the absolute owner of his share and the presence of a minor son does not constitute a bar to alienation. The term *sapiṇḍa* refers in the Mitākṣara school to all relatives who are bound by ties of flesh and blood (particles of a single body), while in the Dāyabhāga it refers to relatives bound by the ritual offering of funeral cakes. This difference results in certain non-agnatic kin being given preference over agnatic kin in the Dāyabhāga school : the sister's son, father's sister's son and father's father's sister's son are included in the list of heirs and take precedence over some agnates.

In the matrilineal system of inheritance, a person inherits from his maternal uncle and not from his father. Amongst the Nāyars the father had no obligation to maintain his wife and children, who belonged to a different *tarawāḍ* from his. Property descended from a mother to daughters. The men only managed their sister's or mother's property. The Marumakkattāyam Act of Malabār, 1933, gave the children of a man the right to inherit his self-acquired property. (A similar Act had been passed even earlier in Travancore and Cochin.) Even the self-acquired property of a man did

not, however, go to his son's children but to his daughter's children. Until 1956, when the Hindu Succession Act was passed, there were two systems of inheritance in Malabār: the *tarawāḍ* property which devolved matrilineally, and the self-acquired property which devolved on the children of a man and his daughter's children. The Hindu Succession Act and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, make the husband legally responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children.

All Muslims excepting matrilineal Moplahs are governed by the Shariat Act of 1937. Under Islāmic law, the mother, wife and daughter are the three female heirs. The maximum share of the mother is one-third and the minimum one-sixth, depending on the existence or otherwise of other heirs. The share of the wife is one-fourth or one-eighth, depending on the absence or presence of a child, or child of a son. The wife is also the owner of the *mehr* given to her at wedding. She is also entitled to be maintained by her husband. The daughter is a primary heir like the son. Her share fluctuates, depending upon the number of surviving children. The daughter's daughter, however, does not stand on a par with the son's daughter.

Recent changes

The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 governs the inheritance of Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains. It applies to both matrilineal as well as patrilineal groups. According to this Act, the property of a Hindu dying intestate devolves on his sons, daughters, widow and mother. But in the Mitākṣara school the shares of the female heirs extend only to the share of the deceased in the coparcenary property. Another change introduced by this Act is the inclusion of the mother in the same category of heirs as the widow and children of the dead man.

4. *Conclusion*

Recent changes in the social structure may be discussed under the following head : (i) caste in modern India; (ii) changing rural and urban life; and (iii) changes in the position of women.

Caste in modern India

Dr. Bailey's study, *Caste and the Economic Frontier* (1958), provides a good example of the kind of changes which came in the wake of British rule. In Bisipara, a village in Khondmāls in Orissa, two non-landowning castes, made money because they could get a monopoly of the profitable trade in hides and liquor. It would have been polluting for the higher castes to handle liquor or hides. Of the

two castes one was able to raise itself up in the hierarchy by Sanskritizing its ritual and way of life; the other, found that untouchability came in the way of its mobility.

The dissociation between caste and occupation is greater in the towns than in the rural areas, and much greater in the big, industrialized towns. A number of occupations have come into existence in the big cities and these are, to some extent, "castefree". For instance, several castes, including Brahmins, are found driving taxis in Indian towns.

The policy of giving preference to Harijans in appointment to Government posts has helped in breaking the traditional association of that caste with agricultural labour, sweeping and leather-work. In one tāluk of Mysore State, for instance a majority of the teachers in the primary schools are Harijans.

While the association between caste and traditional occupation has been disturbed to some extent, the fact that high castes had a literary, commercial or military tradition has resulted in their dominating the liberal professions, the higher posts in the government and the army, and the new commerce and industry. At the other end, the urban proletariat consists, by and large, of the "lower" castes. The Camār repairs shoes in a small shop, or works as a labourer in a shoe factory, the Dhobī in an urban laundry, the Darzī in a tailor's shop, the Nāi in a "hair-cutting saloon" and so on. There is a modicum of continuity between rural and urban hierarchies. Opportunities for social mobility are greater in cities than in villages. An industrious, shrewd and lucky Camār may in course of time become an owner of a small shoe factory and the Dhobī of a big laundry.

The idea of hierarchy is central to caste. The customs, rites and way of life were different among the higher and lower castes.

Sanskritization and Westernization

The dominant caste punished those who encroached on forbidden ground, but the process could not be stopped. This adoption of the symbols of higher status has been called Sanskritization. The Liṅgāyats of Mysore Sanskritized their way of life over eight centuries ago. In recent times, Sanskritization has been widespread both spatially as well as structurally. The Iḷavans of Kerala, the Smiths of South India, the Rāmghaṛias of Punjab, the Camārs of Uttar Pradesh and many other castes have all tried to Sanskritize their way of life. Liquor and forbidden meals are given up. Sanskritic ritual is increasingly adopted and there is an increasing demand for the services of a Brahmin priest at wedding, birth, funeral rites and *śrāddha*.

On the other hand, the higher castes, especially those living in the bigger cities, are undergoing a process of Westernization.

Westernization, like Sanskritization, is a blanket term : it includes Western education as well as the adoption of Western ways of life and outlook. It also implies a degree of secularization and rationalism, and in these two respects it stands opposed to Sanskritization. In certain other respects, Westernization helps to spread Sanskritization through the products of its technology—newspapers, radio and films.

In some exceptional cases, the lower castes and tribes are being Westernized without undergoing a prior process of Sanskritization. Again, Sanskritization occurs generally as part of the process of the upward movement of castes while Westernization has no such association. In fact, unlike Sanskritization, Westernization is more commonly an individual or family phenomenon and not a caste phenomenon, though some groups (Koḍagus)and some areas (Punjab) may be said to be more Westernized than the others. Again, some groups may be more Westernized in the sense that they are highly educated, whereas some others may be Westernized in their dress, food habits and recreation.

Hypergamy and endogamy

Hypergamy, a manifestation of the hierarchical aspect of caste, is becoming less popular in certain parts of the country. Kulīn hypergamy has largely disappeared. A movement is afoot among the Nāyars to marry within caste and stop giving girls in *sambandam* to Nambutri men. Correspondingly, Nambutri leaders look down upon *sambandam* and encourage the younger sons to marry Nambutri girls. In Gujarāt, however, hypergamous marriages continue to be popular with Pātidārs and Anāvils, though perhaps not to the same extent as before.

Pollution and privileges

We have already commented on the importance of pollution in maintaining the structural distance between the various castes. Pollution rules are much less strictly observed in cities than in villages. In fact, in certain areas of urban life pollution has ceased to have any application. People mix freely in factories and schools, and very few bother about the caste of fellow-passengers in train and buses. In cities pollution is being increasingly confined to the house, to women and to ritual occasions.

In older days the higher castes regarded contact with the lower castes as polluting, and the latter were also subjected to some disabilities. For instance, the lower castes were not allowed to build tiled houses, wear the clothes which the upper castes wore or take out wedding processions in streets inhabited by high castes. Punishment for an offence varied according to the caste of persons who committed it and against whom it was committed. Mahatma

Gandhi roused the conscience of educated Indians about the practice of untouchability. Apart from the injustice, educated Indians realized the political dangers of trying to deny the basic conditions of decent living to large numbers of people on the ground of birth in a particular caste. It is this awareness that has led to the adoption of various measures in Independent India to put an end to untouchability and to enable the Scheduled Castes and Tribes to advance to the level of the high castes. The grosser expressions of untouchability have disappeared in the cities, but in rural areas it still holds sway. The economic emancipation of the Harijans and their increased migration to urban areas are necessary for the complete eradication of untouchability.

Caste Panchāyats

The British not only introduced a new body of legal ideas (including that of equality before law) but also new procedural methods. Some of these were not understood by the litigants, the bulk of whom were illiterate. The language used in the higher courts was English and there was a hierarchy of courts, the higher court occasionally reversing the decision of the lower—that deepened the mystery of the new legal processes. Justice seemed to the peasant a gamble in which the rich had a better chance than the poor—they hired the cleverer lawyers and moved from one court to another. The British lawcourts greatly reduced the power of the panchāyats, but the latter continued to function. Even today people take a variety of disputes to the elders and abide by their decision. Occasionally, a case pending before a lawcourt is withdrawn and submitted to the panchāyat.

In the last few decades, with the great improvement in communications, castes have shown a tendency to extend the area of their operations. The settlement of an intricate caste dispute or the defence of a caste interest might call forth a meeting of the representatives of the concerned caste from fifty or more villages. Sometimes, several endogamous *jātis*, all belonging to the same level (e.g., all the untouchable *jātis* in an area) might come together to fight for a privilege or a right, while to decide an accusation of adultery with a person of another caste the elders of a single endogamous unit or the two concerned units may come together. Castes have shown much organizational ability in meeting the challenge of new social, economic and political situations. This brings us to the functions of caste in modern India.

The new activities which castes have undertaken may be considered under four heads: reformist and philanthropic; educatinal; economic and political. One of the results of British rule was to

make sensitive and intelligent Indians critical of their own society and some of its institutions. Many political leaders of all-India stature were also earnest social reformers. Meetings of castes such as Kāyasthas took place and passed resolution on a variety of matters. Caste newspapers, journals and conferences had as their main aim the safeguarding of the interests of the caste in the context of the new situations which British rule had brought about. In the towns there came into existence caste hostels, hospitals, banks, orphanages, co-operative societies and organizations undertaking a variety of charitable tasks for a particular caste. Matters such as the age of marriage of girls, girls' education, high dowry, widow remarriage, high cost of wedding and funeral ceremonies and many other matters were discussed in caste conferences. Concessions and privileges in education and appointment to government jobs were demanded for the caste from the Government. On the one hand, there was an attempt to argue that a particular caste was backward and that concessions were necessary to enable it to catch up with the advanced castes. On the other hand, the Sanskritization of the customs, manners and way of life of the caste was advocated to claim a high place for it in the ritual hierarchy. Backwardness was claimed in a secular context and a high status in a ritual context.

Functions of caste: Reformists

Some Indian towns have hostels for the locally important castes. The great peasant caste of Okkaligas of Mysore, for instance, collect during the harvest a grain contribution from every landowner in the Mandya and Mysore Districts, and this is sent to Okkaliga hostels in towns. Scholarships have been endowed for which only members of a particular caste are declared eligible. All over India even the middle-range castes have realized the importance of edcation and consequently there is keen competition to secure opportunities for education at all levels for members of their castes. Nowadays, State Governments discourage caste hostels and give grants only to "cosmopolitan" hostels.

Educational activities

Castes with a literary tradition were the first to take to Western education, and this naturally meant that they dominated the liberal professions and higher posts in the Government. These castes did not exploit the new commercial opportunities because of an initial resistance against trade. It is only when the kind of jobs they preferred became very difficult to secure that they entered trade and commerce. Even the traditionally commercial castes could not trade in certain articles: we have already mentioned how in Orissa two low castes

Economic functions

made money out of trading in liquor and hides, articles which the high castes would not handle. On the other hand, Brahmins in South India took to restaurant-keeping not only because cooking was their traditional occupation but also because food cooked by them is acceptable to all. In Mysore, the Liṅgāyats also took to hotel-keeping since food cooked by them is acceptable to most non-Brahmin castes.

We have already mentioned co-operative societies formed on the basis of caste. The Sāraswat Housing Colony in Bombay is an example. The Nāṭṭukoṭṭai Ceṭṭiyārs of South India, a trading caste, have built a co-operative banking organization. There are other caste banks in South India—the Vyśya Bank, Kaṇiyara Bank and Mandyam Bank are instances.

Political functions

We have earlier mentioned that British rule set in motion a number of forces which facilitated the horizontal organization of castes. This was specially true of the lower castes which felt that the higher castes, thanks to their education along Western lines, had obtained a near-monopoly of the higher posts in the Government, of the liberal professions, and of positions of power in local self-government. The British admitted their demand for concessions and privileges as reasonable. In the former Bombay State, for instance, castes were classified as backward, intermediate and advanced and the first two were given preference in appointment to official posts. They were also given representation in local self-governing bodies.

In Madras the Justice Party was founded in 1917 to promote non-Brahmin interests. The party co-operated with the British to form the government in the Madras Presidency under the Government of India Act of 1919. At this time the Congress was fighting the British. In the inter-war period the Congress, under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, succeeded in winning the masses to its side, and in the 1937 elections it swept the polls in large areas of the country, including Madras. The Justice Party suffered heavily. This did not mean that "casteist" parties suffered a permanent defeat. The Drāviḍa Kaḷagam, which aims at creating a State of Dravidian-speakers, is still active in Madras. It is anti-North, anti-Hindī, anti-Brahmin, and atheistic. The Drāviḍa Munnetra Kaḷagam owes its birth to personal and ideological differences between the leaders of the Drāviḍa Kaḷagam. The D.M.K. seems to be more alive to economic issues than the D.K. It is certainly more popular than the D.K. It won 50 seats in the Madras Legislative Assembly at the 1962 General Elections.

The gradual transfer of power from the British to the Indians

has been accompained by an increased activity of caste in the political sphere. In its simplest manifestation this shows itself as the tendency to vote for a man of one's own caste, other things being equal. Nowadays, all political parties try to put up candidates belonging to the locally preponderant castes. The Communist Party of India calls this "social base", and makes sure that the candidates it puts up have a "social base".

Caste and political parties

Caste considerations influence politics in other ways as well. In Mahārāshtra the Koṅkaṇastha Brahmins were the first to become Westernized and they dominated the political arena for several decades. (There was also a non-Brahmin movement in Maharāshtra, and in the early years of this century the Mahārājā of Kolhāpur played a leading part in it). In 1948, a large block of the Maharāshtra Congress left the party to form the Peasants and Workers Party. According to Miss Maureen Patterson, this was "both an attempt to protest against what was considered the overtly 'capitalistic' domination of the Congress and to bypass what was claimed to be continued Brahmin control over positions of leadership in the Mahārāshtra Congress organization".* Selig Harrison writes that the rivalry between the two dominating landowing castes, Kammas and Reḍḍis, "is only a modern recurrence of a historic pattern dating back to the fourteenth century"† In 1955, the Kammas were predominantly in the Communist Party while the Reḍḍis were in the Congress. Even during the "violent phase" of the Andhra Communist Part, Kamma landlords were spared by the Communists while the other landlords were not. In the Mysore Congress today, rivalry between the Okkaligas and the Liṅgāyats is a well known fact, and it influences in one way or another every important decision. The opposition of the Mysore Okkaligas to the formation of a Kannaḍa-speaking State inclusive of North Karnātaka, Coorg and South Kanara was due to their fear of domination by the Liṅgāyats, the largest single caste in the new State.

It is not only in the South that caste finds expression in politics. Gujarāt, Bihār and Uttar Pradesh show evidence of caste-activity in political parties and elections. The 1957 elections provided positive proof of the active part played by caste. In March 1957 the Congress Working Committee expressed its deep alarm at the rise of communal, caste and subcaste feelings in the country.

The new opportunities which we have referred to increased

* "Caste and Politics in Maharashtra" Economic Weekly, Sept., 1954.
† "Caste and the Andhra Communists", American Political Science Review, June, 1956.

caste consciousness and inter-caste competition. In South India, this was accompanied initially by anti-Brahmin sentiments. In other parts of the country there was opposition and hostility to the caste or castes which enjoyed a dominance in government jobs, professions, and commerce and industry.

Caste and Conflict

Nowadays, in the South, there is a struggle between the locally dominant castes for a larger share of power and pelf. The process of democratic decentralization (*Panchāyātī Rāj*), and Community Development and allied programmes have all benefited the locally dominant castes and not the poorer and smaller castes. In fact, the position of the latter has worsened because of increased pressure on land. The Harijans, for whom the Government is trying to do a great deal, feel that they are far from being equal, economically or otherwise, to the high castes. They have been pressing for the continuation of constitutional safeguards for a further period of six years (till 1970). The high castes, on the other hand, resent the privileges given to the Harijans.

The land reform measures have increased the tension between landowners (generally belonging to high castes) and tenants. Even within a caste, they have set the poor against the rich. The attempt by the Harijans to assert their rights has often resulted in fighting, bloodshed and arson. The anti-Brahmin riots in Mahārāshtra after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the rioting in Rāmanāthapuram in Madras in 1957 and the clashes elsewhere between the Harijans and the high castes provide evidence of the underlying tensions in rural areas.

We have earlier made the point that there is a broad coherence between the caste hierarchy and the economic hierarchy, and this coherence continues to exist in the towns and cities. Where there is inconsistency between ritual and economic status, two consequences are possible : if the ritual status is high while the economic status is low, the gap between the two can exist for a long time. But when the economic status is high and the ritual status low, the latter tends to adjust itself to the former. Such a tendency has been inherent in the caste system for a long time.

Caste and Class

It is true that industrialization and urbanization weaken the hold of pollution ideas. Western education has resulted in the spread of a liberal, democratic and secular ideology among the Indian intelligentsia. The advent of universal adult suffrage abolishes the distinction between high and low as far as voting is concerned. The Congress, Communist and Samyukta Socialist Parties have all accepted the creation of a "classless and casteless society"

as their ultimate goal. But the formulation of a goal is not the same thing as making a sustained and systematic effort to realize it. Neither the traditional institutions nor the ones created under the British rule show a consistent movement towards egalitarianism. What is now coming into being is a new type of stratification in which caste and class are mixed up in an inextricable tangle.

The Future

It must be stressed here that the formulation of the goal of a "casteless and classless society" by the principal political parties is an important event. The measures undertaken to abolish untouchability constitute a definite advance towards a more egalitarian society than before. The various measures designed to help the Backward Castes have enabled at least the middle-range dominant castes to come up. But it is also true that the latter have a vested interest in keeping down the Harijans and other low castes who supply them with tenants and agricultural labourers. Devolution of power has added to the power of the locally dominant castes and this has enabled them to collar the benefits of Community Development and other rural welfare programmes. Indian society today is stratified along the lines of caste as well as class. The desire to bring about an egalitarian society is no doubt there; but it needs a systematic programme of action spread over a long period of time if inequalities have to be reduced appreciably. The task of transforming the most rigidly staratified society in the world into an egalitarian one is indeed Himālayan.

Changing rural and urban life

Rural society is undergoing changes and they may be considered under the following heads: industrialization; urbanization; and political and administrative changes.

Industrialization

During British rule, Indian economy became a "colonial" one—geared to subserve the needs of the developing British economy. The beginnings of industrialization also occurred during British rule. These facts adversely affected some artisan castes and especially the Weavers and Potters, many of whom were faced with the prospect of joining the growing ranks of landless labourers and tenants or migrating to towns. Villagers became increasingly dependent on nearby towns for many goods and services. The growing of commercial crops such as cotton, jute, tea, coffee, indigo and tobacco brought cash to the village and made village economy and society sensitive to changes in the external demand for these commodities. In those villages where the growing of commercial crops became the major concern, *jajmāni* relationship tended to disappear.

When the new economic opportunities benefited the higher

castes, the gulf between them and the lower castes widened still further. When they benefited the lower castes, the latter tried to move up in the hierarchy and this increased caste consciousness.

Traditionally rival patrons competed with each other for land, clients and women. With the establishment of British rule, seeking the favour of officials became very important. Nowadays, patrons compete with each other to start rice and flour mills, operate bus lines, and become *sarpanch* and secretaries of co-operative societies. Urban political leaders cultivate rural patrons for votes at elections.

Urbanization

Over the last hundred years migration from villages to town has been steadily increasing. The "push" factor has been probably more important than the "pull" factor in this : the increased pressure of population on land has driven the most vulnerable section of rural population, the poorer tenants and landless labourers, to the cities and plantations. ("Dry" or non-irrigated areas have been more vulnerable to such pressure than "wet" or irrigated areas.) For instance, the textile mills of Bombay have attracted large numbers of Mahārs, a Harijan caste of Mahārāshtra, as also Muslim Julāhās (Weavers) from Uttar Pradesh. The towns also beckoned the higher castes who saw in them the means of obtaining Western education, without which well-paid and prestigious jobs could not be secured. The trading castes and the artisans migrated into towns in search of new opportunities.

The city not only provides employment but also it changes the way of life of the rural people living in its hinterland. Nearby villagers take to dairying, poultry-keeping and market-gardening to supply the urban demand for milk, fruit and vegetables. The villagers make use of the medical, educational and recreational facilities available in the city. More money circulates in the nearby villages, and villagers get increasingly urbanized and Westernized.

Political and administrative changes introduced in recent years have had important effects on the rural social structure. Most important of these are the various land reform measures including the abolition of *zamīndāri and ināmdāri* and the Tenancy Reform Acts giving the tenant a greater share of the produce and protecting him from eviction by the landowner. Restrictions have been imposed on the area of land a person may own. *Panchāyatī Rāj* has been introduced in most States of the Indian Union. Universal adult franchise has given the underprivileged groups new political opportunities and sense of power.

Before Independence, even educated Indians in the towns used to invest some of their savings in arable land. Urban gentry having *pied-á-terre* was a common phenomenon. But the land reform measures have resulted in discouraging urban people from investing in land. Even the bigger rural landowners have come to realize that it is risky to own too much land. Savings are being diverted into other channels, and the ceiling scare has resulted in the formal—and only formal—partitioning of family land to circumvent possible legislation. Land is now passing into the hands of owner-cultivators. A land-based but urban living intelligentsia will fairly soon become a thing of the past.

The enhanced powers given to village panchāyats, the abolition in some places of the hereditary principle in the holding of village offices (e.g., headman and accountant), and the Untouchability Offences Act, 1955, are all beginning to change village life. The changes will probably be more radical in the near future. The Community Development Programme, which now covers most of rural India, has made some impact on the rural population: it has made them aware of the fact that a new nation-wide organization has come into existence with the avowed aim of helping them to change their lives and economy.

Changing urban life

Though the Portuguese built the first towns (e.g., Crānganūr) on the Western model in India, it was during British rule that the Western-type town became a familiar phenomenon. Four types of towns came into existence: ports, cantonments, administrative capitals, and industrial and commercial centres. Frequently, the British urban pattern was superimposed on a traditional town. Examples of such cultural schizophrenia are Bangalore, Poona, Ahmādābad and Delhi. In Bangalore, for instance, the traditional part of the town with its narrow, congested streets and even narrower lanes leading off them offers a perfect contrast to the cantonment with its broad and straight roads, bungalows, parks and playing fields. Again, social life in the traditional part of the town differs from social life in the cantonment.

The ports of Calcutta and Bombay have developed into huge, sprawling cities. They are an unprecedented phenomenon in India's social history. People have migrated to them not only from all parts of India but also from different cultural groups, and this has resulted in a rich and diversified social life. That a certain amount of tension should occasionally show itself between these groups, and that sometimes personal and group frustration is translated into hatred of a group, are not at all surprising. What is indeed surprising is that they are living together in peace most of the time.

During the last sixty years, several industrial towns and cities have come into existence. Some of them have literally sprung up in jungles where previously tigers roamed. India's first steel town, Jamshedpur, today employs a large number of Santāls, the tribal inhabitants of that area. Now the tribes not only work in the factory but live in close relationship with groups which come from different parts of India and speak different languages. Bhadrāvati in Mysore State has also developed into a steel, cement and paper town in an area which was tiger-infested even as recently as the forties. In Independent India, three new steel towns have emerged: Bhilai in Madhya Pradesh, Rourkela in Orissa and Durgāpur in West Bengal. These factories have not only brought prosperity but are altering the social landscape of the areas. Regions which were only recently backward, economically and culturally, are being pitchforked suddenly into prosperous, urban and cosmopolitan social life.

The manufacture of steel is not the only industry around which towns are being created. Sugar, paper, chemicals, fertilizers, textiles, and mining and dams provide other nuclei. Social life in the new industrial towns is different from social life in cities which grew around or near extant and traditional towns. In the former, the civic hierarchy shows a tendency to follow the factory hierarchy. The town is nothing more than a place where the factory workers live when they are not working. (There are, of course, small shopkeepers and others who are ultimately dependent upon the factory.) As in these towns the factory-employees live in houses built by the employers, they cannot choose their neighbours. Thus, in a textile factory near Mysore, a Brahmin may have a Harijan or Muslim or Christian for a neighbour. In Neyveli there are seven types of houses according to different income-categories. The lower income-levels tend, however, to overlap somewhat with the lower castes, and to this extent even the new towns tend to perpetuate traditional distances between higher and lower castes.

By far the most common are the "mixed" towns: the capital which is also a centre of trade and has a well known temple or two, the commercial town which is also an important railway junction and houses a big university and so on. In such a city there is usually a "core" consisting of people who have lived in it for a long time and whose way of life is different from that of the immigrants. Usually the "core" inhabit the older parts of the town while the immigrants occupy the fringe. The residential pattern of the older parts of the city shows a close relation to language, caste and religion. Even in a city such as Bombay residence is associated with these factors. Tuḷu-speaking Billavas holding

lower posts in offices and restaurants live in the Fort area; Mātunga and Sion are areas inhabited by Tamil Brahmins and Nāyars holding white-collared jobs; Mahārāshtrians live in Girgaum, Dādar and Shivāji Park, while Gujarātis live in Bhuleshwar, Mātunga, Santa Cruz and Vile Parle. Muslims live in Masjid Bunder, and Goan Catholics in Marine Lines, Mahim and Bandra. Pārsīs are concentrated in Dādar and a few other areas. Marine Drive, Malabār and Cumballa Hills are on the whole cosmopolitan and affluent, while industrial workers are concentrated in Parel, Worli and Cotton Green. Immigrants at lower economic and educational levels tend to gravitate to areas where their caste-fellows and language-speakers live.

In the smaller towns and cities, segregation is recognized to occur on the basis of caste. (Caste in the sense of *jāti* usually also means linguistic and religious homogeneity.) Caste enters into urban life in other ways too. In the rural areas, members of different castes are tied together by patron-client and economic ties while members of the same caste are riven by economic competition. In the towns this dependence between members of different castes is absent. The result is an increase in horizontal solidarity at the expense of the vertical. Cities are centres of caste consciousness. There is intense competition for securing educational facilities and Government jobs. Economic competition and frustration increase inter-caste tension. Where one or the other caste speaks a different language or comes from a different region, inter-caste tension may assume the form of inter-regional tension.

Social values

In understanding urban social values, it is relevant to consider the way Indian cities have grown. Usually, several villages exist on the fringe of an Indian city. As the latter expands, these villages are sucked in and the villagers lose their land. They take to new occupations such as selling milk, factory-work, domestic service and tonga-driving. The sucked-in villages present a striking physical contrast to the other areas of the city. Socially, the villagers, especially the older people, are rural in their habits and outlook. Their attitude to work, leisure, recreation, ritual, etc. is different from that of the people in the other areas. This difference often results in tension : for instance, the educated and upper class citizens in a fashionable area may value silence and privacy while the rustics do not mind noise and do not care for privacy. Again, the former are hygiene-conscious while the latter have no conception of hygiene. There are areas in Indian towns which are socially more or less rural. This is minimal in big cities such as Bombay.

Modren urbanization differs from traditional urbanization in important respects. Industrialization, which is a potent source of urbanization, has come to India from the West, and in particular from the British. It was contact with the British and the study of English that led Indians to be critical of many of their customs, manners and ideas. The English-educated in the cities are partly Westernized in their way of life: in their dress, manners, furniture, in the language they use and in the books they read. More important, it is these sections which have to some extent rejected traditional values and institutions. Such rejection is associated with education, income and, of course, urban residence. In the highly Westernized sectors of Indian society in the big cities, caste, pollution, extended kin connections, ritual and astrology seem to play a minimum part, though it is not as "minimal" as it may seem at first sight. Industrialization also means the development of what Weber calls "rationality". It means the development of discipline, punctuality, time-consciousness, hard work and acquisitiveness—attitudes which tend to increase production and profits, which in turn contribute to capital-formation. It leads to greater industrialization. So, once the people are on an industrial axis, there is no going back. Their attitudes contrast in some ways with those of villagers.

Westernization

Indian urbanism is, however, not the same as Western urbanism. B.F. Hoselitz remarks, "Ahmadābād resembles much more the Manchester of 150 years ago than a modern city." This may be so in the way Ahmadābād's industries are organized and in the progress of civic consciousness, but it should not be forgotten that the culture of Ahmadābād is quite different from that of Manchester. Social life in the latter city has never been regulated by caste and all that it implies. But ethnic affiliation is important in Western cities. In the United States of America, for instance, the Whites, Negroes, Chinese, and others tend to live in distinct areas of the city. In the older European cities, Jews were forced to live in ghettos. In modern England, West Indians and East Indians are beginning to occupy distinct areas of cities. But caste is not the same as membership of an ethnic group.

Again, caste and religion tend to cut across the lines of class. A poor man may live next door to a rich man because both belong to the same caste. We have already referred to the existence of wards in urban areas, each ward being homogeneous in its caste composition. In many an Indian city non-vegetarians are excluded from some parts because the residents have a religious objection to meat-eating.

In the matter of sanitation Indian towns leave much to be desired. This is partly due to the fact that Indians carry over their rural sanitary habits to urban areas. But, as we have said earlier, the educated and high-income groups living in the biggest cities are far more urbanized than the poorer and less educated people living in the small towns. Just as there is a continuum between rural and urban life in India, there is a continuum between urban life in India and in the West. This should not be taken to mean, however, that there are no cultural and other differences between India's highly urbanized sections and people living in Western cities.

Changes in the position of women

It is a popular belief that urbanization, industrialization and Westernization have secured for Indian women an increased measure of freedom. This may be true of women of the highest castes but not necessarily of the others. For instance, women of the lower castes have the right, given to them by custom, to marry again if widowed. Divorce is also permitted by custom. The income from the sale of dairy products goes to women. The ornaments and money of a woman pass on to her daughters after her death. In some parts of the country a portion of the ancestral land is held for the maintenance of a widowed mother, and is redistributed after her death.

It may be recalled that among the matrilineal castes on the west coast of India and among the Khāsis of Assam it was the women who inherited the ancestral estate. Among the matrilineal Bants women are also heads of households. Among the patrilineal Nambutris, after the passing of the Nambutri Act of 1933, women had equal rights with men in the ancestral property.

It is only among the high castes in towns and cities that women lead a narrow, secluded and pollution-ridden life. Indian intellectuals coming from the urban high castes have written chiefly about this section, and it has been assumed in this connection that when rural people become rich, their women acquire the disabilities of high caste, urban women. This is one of the results of the process of Sanskritization.

During the last hundred and fifty years Hindu reformers worked hard to remove some of the disabilities of Indian women, especially those from the high castes. Satī was abolished in 1829. The age of consent for girl was raised to ten in 1860. The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 laid down fourteen as the minimum age for girls. The evil effects of child marriage were publicized by reformers for decades before legislation was passed. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 raised this minimum to fifteen.

Upper-caste Hindu reformers also conducted propaganda in favour of widow marriage. Reformers in Bengal and Mahārāshtra led the rest of the country in this respect. It was due to their efforts that the Widow Remarriage Act was passed in 1856. The Indian Divorce Act, 1869, enabled marriages entered into by Christians to be dissolved. Under this Act, a husband was entitled to divorce an adulterous wife while a wife had to produce evidence of an aggravating circumstance such as desertion or cruelty in addition to adultery on the part of the husband. (A bill is pending before the Parliament to consolidate the marriage law applicable to Christians.)

Until 1954 when the Special Marriage Act was passed, a marriage solemnized under the Special Marriage Act of 1872 was also governed by the Indian Divorce Act, 1869. The 1872 Act was passed to enable Brāhmos to solemnize marriages according to their own ritual, discarding the rules laid down by the *Śāstras*. The Special Marriage Act, 1872, did not apply to Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Pārsīs and Jews. But a large number of Hindus and others appeared before the registrars and declared that they did not profess any one of the above religions, and married under the Act. Subsequently, a Privy Council decision held Brāhmos to be Hindus and to be governed by the marriage and inheritance laws applicable to Hindus. The Act was amended in 1923, and made applicable to Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains.

The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, includes provisions for divorce. We have already mentioned that Islām provides for divorce. Pārsī and Christian (except Catholic) marriages may also be dissolved.

European, and especially Christian, criticism of Hindu polygyny created in some educated Indians a desire to introduce legislation to put an end to it. The first attack on it was made in the Special Marriage Act, 1872. In the forties, a few States including Bombay attempted to declare bigamy an offence. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 makes bigamy (both polyandry and polygyny) an offence. The Special Marriage Act of 1872 also legalized marriage between members of different castes, but the partners were required to renounce their religion and membership of their joint families as a prior condition. An amendment of the Act in 1929 did not remove all the drawbacks. The Hindu Marriages Validity Act was passed in 1949 and under it a marriage between two Hindus could not be deemed invalid on the ground that the parties belonged to different castes. This Act was repealed by the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, under which parties to a marriage need not be identified according to caste.

In the matter of property, the widow, daughter and mother of a Hindu are now heirs, with full and unfettered rights over their share of the property. In the Mitākṣara school, however, the son's right by birth in the ancestral property continues to exist. This means that the female relatives only take equal shares in the dead man's share of the ancestral property whereas each son of the dead man has a share equal to his father's.

In several parts of India, big temples had attached to them "dedicated" women who performed a variety of task : they sang and danced before the deity on certain occasions, performed certain routine menial tasks in the temple, and looked after the comfort of pilgrims, sometimes even catering to thier sexual needs. Indian public opinion was roused against these temple servants (called *devadāsīs* or *basavīs*) in the first few decades of this century. The Bombay Devadāsī Prevention Act X of 1934 and the Madras Devadāsī (Prevention of Dedication)Act XXXI of 1947 declared this institution illegal.

The problem of prostitution as well as immoral traffic in women has roused the indignation of reformers all along. Several States have passed legislation to stop or reduce trafficking in women and limit prostitution.

Between the passing of laws which intend to improve the position of women and their translation into practice, there is a gulf which needs to be bridged. In rural areas girls are often married when they are less than fifteen, and widow marriage and divorce are still rare among the upper castes, especially Brahmins. Among the higher castes living in towns, the age of marriage for girls has gone up owing to a variety of factors, economic as well as social. Unmarried girls aged twenty or more are to be found in many upper-caste homes in towns. Again, the rich and Westernized Hindus living in cities no longer view widow marriage and divorce with horror. It is in this section that inter-caste as well as inter-regional marriages are beginning to occur. The laws governing inheritance will probably be more generally observed than laws regarding age at marriage. The economic interest of people will make them seek the enforcement of inheritance law by resorting to lawcourts.

Apart from legislation, the social economic, and political changes which have occurred in the last sixty years have contributed greatly to the emancipation of women. The education of women, migration into towns, the weakening hold of caste and the demand for dowry are some of the factors. Mahatma Gandhi drew women into the Nationalist Movement, and during the Civil Disobedience Movements of 1930 and 1942, thousands of women

left the shelter of their homes to disobey laws, face *lāṭhi* charges and enter jails. In 1937, when the Congress contested elections, scores of women stood for election to the Provincial Legislative Assemblies. One of the successful candidates became a Minister in a Province. With the achievement of Independence, several women became Ministers, Ambassadors, Governors and Parliamentary Secretaries. Hundreds of educated girls are employed as clerks, *grāma sevikās*, teachers, sales girls, typists, officials, doctors and research scientists. What is even more significant, women in the rural areas now serve as members of panchāyats and occasionally even as presidents of panchāyats.

With the emancipation of women new problems have arisen. Educated young women find the traditional type of marriage not quite to their liking. But new institutions which enable young men and women to come together and know each other have not yet been evolved. Educated girls find it difficult to live with their parents-in-law, obeying the mother-in-law at every point. They desire separate homes. When girls marry late, the conflict between competing loyalties to natal and conjugal homes becomes acute. Conflict between home-making and seeking a career also occurs. The stability of marriages can no longer be taken for granted. The changing values of women force men to change their values also.

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