THE CASTE SYSTEM OF INDIA

MASON OLCOTT
Central College

I. WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIALS OF THE SYSTEM?

1. **Endogamy.** The Caste system is a hierarchy of endogamous groups that individuals enter only by birth. A caste differs from a clan or sib in being endogamous and recognizing various ranks. It differs from a class in its strict enforcement of permanent endogamy within caste groups.

The largest enumeration of castes was in the 1901 *Census* which listed "2,378 main castes and tribes" (No. 1, 537, 557) some of which in turn are divided into endogamous subcastes of which the Brahmans are said to have 800. All ancient occupations used to be organized on a caste basis, even those now considered anti-social. The *Census* speaks of 4,500,000 persons belonging to castes and tribes "whose hereditary occupation is crime of one kind or another—theft, burglary, highway robbery, or even assassination, combined in many instances with prostitution."

2. **Compelling religious sanctions.** The caste system of India differs from the class systems of other countries mainly in being invested with the mighty sanctions of the ancient Hindu religion, as is evidenced by the very name given to the system, *varna ashrama dharma*. *Varna* means color, *ashrama* may be translated religious discipline, while *dharma* covers religio-social righteousness, obligations and mores. The families of a caste often have a common name and occupation. To be a good Hindu a man may believe anything or nothing but he must fulfill his caste obligations. Orthodox Hinduism prohibits him from marrying his child to a person of another caste, from eating and drinking with an outsider, from eating unfit or unclean food, from touching an Outcaste or letting his shadow fall upon him, and from following an unsuitable occupation. A villager’s failure to observe minutely all the taboos and elaborate ceremonial rules usually leads to his being boycotted by his fellow caste-men as to marriage and food, and sometimes as to companionship, drink and tobacco. Even the village artisans will not deign to serve him. Until a few decades ago no strict Hindu might cross the "black waters" of the ocean with impunity. To be received back into caste he had to make atonement by swallowing a pellet of the five products of the sacred cow, including the dung and urine.

In the authoritative Bhagavadgita, when Arjuna hesitates to slay his distant relatives, his divine charioteer Lord Krishna reminds him that he is a *Kshatriya* (warrior) and that he must never swerve from his caste *dharma*:

"Better to do the duty of one's caste, Though bad and ill-performed and fraught with evil, Than undertake the business of another, However good it be. For better far Abandon life at once than not fulfill One's own appointed work."[1]

3. **Hierarchy based on birth and reincarnation.** The caste system recognizes an indefinite number of groups of different ranks, each one standing on the shoulders of the castes below it. Every aspect of the life of an orthodox Hindu hinges on what the Westerner calls the accident of birth. His domestic ceremonies and customs, his home and temple worship, his circle of friends and relatives, his occupation and trade union, all depend upon the level of the group into which he was born. His pay, his perquisites, and benefits to be received in times of distress are also largely determined by birth.

Hinduism lends weighty support to the hierarchy of caste by declaring that a man’s caste is the exact index of his soul’s behavior and piety in previous births. If born a Brahman, the so-called "pinnacle of perfec--

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tion," "lord of creation," his soul has been scrupulous in its observances and ceremonials during countless earlier lives. But if he is born a lowly Sudra, he has not fulfilled his caste dharma, while if he is born a despised Outcaste, that is convincing proof of the foulness of his deeds in previous incarnations.

4. Social-economic interdependence. The far reaching mutual relationships at the heart of the caste system are well brought out by Dr. W. H. Wiser whose minute daily observations during his several months of residence during each of five years in Karimpur in the United Provinces are summed up in his excellent study from which I quote:

In a Hindu village in North India, each individual has a fixed economic and social status established by his birth in a given caste. If he is born into a carpenter family, he finds himself related by blood to carpenters exclusively. . . . The men in all these families earn their livelihood through the carpentry trade, sometimes supplemented by agriculture. Each carpenter has his own clientele (or jajman), which has become established through custom and which continues from generation to generation. . . . This relationship once established cannot be broken except by the carpenter himself who may choose to sell his rights to another carpenter. . . . The relationship fixes responsibilities both on the carpenter and on the one whom he serves. The carpenter during the sowing season must remove and sharpen the plow point once or twice a week. During the harvest he must keep sickles sharp and renew handles as often as demanded. He must be ready to repair a cart whenever called upon by a customer, or to make minor repairs on a customer's house. In exchange he receives at each harvest 28 pounds of grain for every plow owned by his client. Similar relationships of mutual service exist between practically all the 24 castes of the village of Karimpur. In return for services rendered, payments in cash or kind are made daily, monthly, semi-annually, or on special occasions. Even more important are the various concessions granted, usually without payment: residence site, rent-free land, funeral-pyre plot, food for family and fodder for animals, clothing, timber, cattle dung fuel, credit facilities, supplementary employment, use of raw materials, tools, implements or draft animals, hides, casual leave and aid in litigation. These rights are valued so highly that many a villager prefers them to a steady cash income from a neighboring mill.2

In large cities such custom-fixed interdependence has been breaking down.

5. The Outcaste substratum. The cultured Hindu has his menial and defiling drudgery performed for him by forty to seventy millions called Outcasts, Depressed Classes, or Untouchables. Divided into 280 sections often struggling one against the other, they are mostly descended from the ancient races who inhabited India before the invasion of the Dravidian-speaking Mediterraneans and the Aryan peoples. Later they accepted servitude on the lowest fringes of Hindu society. They commonly live outside the village in unspeakable filth, eking out their existence by menial and polluting labor. Carrion is the only meat that millions of them can obtain. In dry areas they find it difficult to find water for bathing, and even for drinking. They sacrifice animals to appease the dreaded demons and demonesses that dominate their dreary lives. Their touch, their very presence is thought to contaminate others. Caste mores have held them down in abysmal ignorance and degradation on the assumption that they suffer justly for their vicious deeds in previous lives. The 1931 Census spoke of their being debarred from the use of tax-supported roads, reservoirs, wells and schools, from temples, burning grounds and other religious institutions, and from private tea shops, hotels and theatres. In some places such prohibitions are now being relaxed.

II. WHAT FACTORS MOLDED THE CASTE SYSTEM?

Many studies of caste have suffered from the single-cause fallacy. Ibbetson proposed his theory of the tribal origin of caste. Risley thought that caste was caused by race and hypergamy (marrying women into higher groups), while Nesfield and Dahlmann pronounced occupation as the chief reason for its origin, and Senart said that the family worship of the gens was the cause of caste.

There is an element of truth in each of these theories but none is complete in itself. We cannot make the generalization that there is any single cause for caste. Nor can we assume that the entire caste system took definite shape at one particular time and was not later modified. Rather we can trace many diverse factors working together with various potency at different times and places.

1. Food and occupational taboos. The 1931 Census argues that “the essential ingredients which made the growth of caste possible were of pre-Aryan origin, without them the development of caste would not and could not have taken place.”

Caste is weakest in North India and especially in the Panjab where the Aryan racial element is strongest. The animistic Nagas of Assam are modern representatives of very ancient aboriginal tribes. These people taboo alien food on the ground that it is connected with the strangers’ soul matter and thus has a dangerous magical effect on the Nagas who eat it. Other unassimilated tribes in inaccessible parts of Assam have taboos against visitors following their former handicrafts since they would offset the logical mana or magic. “The sentiments and beliefs on which caste is based presumably go back to the totemistic Proto-Australoid and Austro-Asiatic inhabitants of pre-Dravidian India, and we may conceive of their becoming effective in contact with Dravidian-speaking strangers bringing new crafts from the West. Hence would arise local taboos against certain crafts and persons, taboos which tended to become tribal and to erect rigid divisions between communities.”

The same authority regards these taboos as the main source for the untouchability of the Outcastes.

2. Tribal cohesion. The aboriginal tribes, as they became accessible, gradually entered the religious and social systems of the more civilized peoples with whom they came in contact. In doing so they retained their original unity based on socio-religious mores and folkways. The tribe thus became an endogamous caste. This slow process of assimilation may be seen in various stages of development in different parts of India. The fact that so many of the old customs have been retained is due to the Hindu’s spirit of compromise and tolerance of strange ideas and practices. These two factors may easily have been at work for centuries before the advent of the Aryan. They have certainly been effective ever since.

3. The Aryan desire for racial purity. When the Aryans entered India from the northwest during the second millennium before Christ, they were divided into three social classes similar to those of their Iranian kinsmen: the ruling or military, the priestly, and the Aryan commonality, but it was possible for a person to pass from one class to another. The Aryans, wishing to preserve their fair color, seem to have prohibited intermarriage with the aborigines not long after their invasion. To this day the higher castes generally have lighter skins and narrower noses than the castes lower on the scale, though many North Indian Outcastes are fair.

4. Guild perpetuation. The existence of different cultures side by side and the gradual development of industry brought division of labor. The Aryans with better paying occupations protected the interests of their children by apprenticeship combined with guild endogamy, and forced on some of India’s previous inhabitants heavy manual labor, scavenging and working with the hides and carcasses of dead cattle. Those who were compelled to carry on such demeaning occupations were prohibited from marrying those whose work was honored. The desire to perpetuate the guild and its rights is still a factor that strengthens caste in those places that have been little touched by the forces of modern life.

5. Priestly supremacy and religious dogmas. As the Aryans came into India the priesthood was admitting recruits from other classes, and was subordinate to the military class. Before very long the Brahmins, by gaining a monopoly of magic, learning, professional work and statecraft, gained the supremacy. But about 550 B.C. a Kshatriya...
prince, Gautama, founded Buddhism, which was accepted by other warrior nobles and many commoners and became the state religion. It opposed the caste system by emphasizing virtue rather than birth as the means of salvation. The Buddhists struggled for twelve centuries with the Brahmans, who regained the ascendancy only after the Kshatryias had been bled white by continual warfare and after the Brahmans had accepted elements of Buddhist philosophy. The Brahmans imposed their control over state and religion, and promulgated dogmas to perpetuate their supremacy. For example, the great Hindu lawgiver Manu, following earlier writers, proclaimed as one of his basic doctrines that the resplendent One had assigned distinctive occupations and duties to each of four great orders: to the Brahmans who issued from his mouth, teaching, receiving alms and sacrificing for others; to the Kshatryias who sprang from his arms, protection of the people; to the Vaisyas who came from his thighs, trading, money lending and land cultivation; and to the Sudras who were made of his feet, service of the other three orders. This clever scheme outlined what the Brahmans wanted every one to accept, but it probably never accurately corresponded to actual conditions, even when it was elaborated by theories about hundreds of other castes springing from unlawful marriages between the four great orders. Below these a fifth order of Outcastes was later added to do the menial and scavenging work of the Sudras and the others. Fiction though these teachings were, they were piously believed and gave strong religious backing to the maintenance of caste barriers throughout the ages. The imitation of religious ideas has been infectious. On account of their stabilizing effect on a heterogeneous people, the vested interests of the priests have for centuries been supported by the civil powers.

Holding an established monopoly of teaching and priestcraft, the Brahmans kept enlarging upon the necessity of elaborate rituals to be performed by themselves. New genealogies and fables of the origin of new castes were ingeniously fabricated and quickly accepted. Armed with one of these and some new rituals, many a subcaste has ventured forth to claim full status as an endogamous caste, with stereotyped ideas of its own superiority. In no land did group snobbery become such a basic and permanent principle of life as in India. The lower caste groups, being ill treated by the higher castes, wanted some one on whom they could project their spite and contempt and thus raise their own social prestige. This made them join in walling off the Outcastes as despicable and untouchable.

6. Migration. As groups moved to new places, they were soon isolated from their relatives, since travel by foot or oxcart was the only means of keeping in touch. Their food, work, customs and rituals gradually changed through the years. These variations gave rise to new caste groups.

III. TO WHAT EXTENT IS CASTE BEING MODIFIED IN MODERN TIMES?

1. The British hands off policy tends to produce gradual change. After defeating the French, the East India Company took over the remnants of the Mogul Empire at bargain prices. The Company exercised the political power needed to maintain law and order, its trade with India, and its exploitation of the country's fabulous wealth. Except for abolishing the Thugs (clever gangsters inflamed by religion) and the practice of Suttee (the immolation of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres), the British did little to modify India's religious and social customs. Queen Victoria in 1857 promised her new subjects complete religious neutrality and freedom of worship. Like their predecessors the Great Moguls, the British have sought out and strengthened the existing vested interests as the best means of preserving vested interests as the best means of preserving law and order. The collectors of land taxes whom they found have been elevated into Zamindars and Maharajahs. Men at the top of the caste hierarchy have been confirmed in their prerogatives and powers over the destinies of their fellows. The sacred laws and customs of the Hindus are largely

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*Book I, lines 87-89.*
recognized in civil law. Under such conditions many of the customs connected with caste continue to flourish. Some exceptions are that the civil statutes (for example, Removal of Caste Disabilities Act) and courts sometimes regulate marriage, and that the criminal courts, instead of the caste councils, decide cases of assault, adultery and rape. In spite of the legalization of intercaste marriages by the Special Marriage Act of 1872, these have never become numerically important.

2. Many minor rules are losing hold under the harsh impact of modern industrial civilization. For strategic and commercial purposes the British early established a good system of highways and railroads. The new transportation facilities, especially crowded busses and third-class train compartments jammed to the doors and ceilings, throw together millions of people of all castes and of no caste, and leave little room for the niceties of ceremonial purity.

City factories and slums also force people of various castes close together. Modern machinery is destroying the old crafts and providing unheard of ways to earn a livelihood. Occupational mobility and movement from the compact ancestral village are breaking down those caste rules which do not concern marriage. A new money economy is destroying age-old customs and offering novel chances to win social recognition.

About a century ago the British started schools with English as the medium of instruction to train clerks and subordinate officials. Secularist teachings, scientific questionings and ideals of individual freedom soon took root and brought forth the fruit of criticism of the ancient mores. The telegraph, the newspaper, and the radio have also rapidly spread fresh concepts and standards throughout India. Professional men have come to disobey dietary and commensal restrictions on activities outside their homes, while their illiterate wives and mothers at home have scrupulously observed the sacred traditions. The sweeping advance of women's education in recent years is now accelerating the tempo of change.

The notion that a person is defiled by a lower caste man coming in contact with him is no longer universally held by Hindus. Some castes that were formerly split in two by migration are now tending to amalgamate.

People who have crossed the deep ocean are almost never required to make atonement by swallowing the five products of the cow. Taboos against some foods and against accepting food and water from persons of other castes are also gradually being weakened under the weight of modern conditions. Such changes are taking place most rapidly in city-dominated areas among English educated and business people.

3. Caste organizations are being definitely strengthened. At the same time that modern transportation, communication and education are weakening the prohibitions regarding food and drink, they are also tending to strengthen other features of caste. Millions of devotees jam the buses and trains every year to visit distant sacred places they once could not reach. These expanded mass pilgrimages, the printed page, the radio, popular education and keen competition for jobs have worked to strengthen caste solidarity and the influence of caste customs regarding marriage.

Ghurye claims that the studies of caste in the Indian Census have strengthened the caste system. The author of the 1931 Census argues against this view, but admits that every census "gives rise to a pestiferous deluge of representations, accompanied by highly problematical histories, asking for recognition of some alleged fact or hypothesis. . . . As often as not, deterrent action is requested against the corresponding hypothesis of other castes. . . . Its standing is to be obtained by standing upon others rather than with them."6

The first caste conference was that of the Kayasths or accountants in 1887. Since then hundreds of castes have met and organized themselves to perpetuate and extend their special privileges, to raise their social status by reforms, to provide for the education of their needy and deserving children, to help their poor, and to petition for larger employ-
ment in government service. Most provinces have been forced by such pressures to pass rules that a definite proportion of the posts in the various services shall be filled from members of different castes, provided that they have the minimum qualifications. Sometimes even those who have failed in the examinations are admitted to office.

Castes having similar occupations and those residing in different parts of a language area are consolidating to secure greater social and political power. Together with this broader basis of caste life and endogamy goes the claim to higher rank in the caste hierarchy. For example, the Kamars called themselves Kshatriyas in 1921 and Brahmins in 1931. Some outcaste leather workers of the United Provinces have returned themselves as Rajputs (princely warriors). Such social ambitions have given rise to new forms of inter-caste competition. Each caste, fearing that some other caste will gain an advantage over it, seeks to build up its educational, economic and religious position and to tear down its hated rivals.

4. The Outcastes’ lot is being slowly improved. Ever since the beginning of the modern missionary movement, most Christians have treated these people as human beings and children of the Heavenly Father. They have offered them medical, educational and economic service on the same basis as anyone else. Outcastes joining Protestant Churches have lost the stigma with which they had formerly been stamped, even in the eyes of most Hindus. Since 1906 liberal Hindus have had their own missions to provide these exploited people with education and work, to remedy their social disabilities and to preach to them. In recent years the Government has issued rules that all public wells, roads, railways, schools, post offices and other public buildings be opened to the Depressed Classes on equal terms with other people, but the enforcement of these rules rests upon local public opinion, which is often hostile. Not many years ago the only schooling allowed to Outcaste children was what they could get as they stood outside the school door. If they were admitted inside, the caste parents would withdraw their children. But between 1917 and 1926 the number of India’s Outcaste pupils rose from 195,000 to 667,000. The latter figure being barely over one percent of the Outcaste population. With thousands of the Depressed Classes being admitted to the franchise on property or literacy qualifications, and with their special representation in the legislatures, their votes are becoming an important political prize. This fact tends to improve their treatment by caste-men.

The lasting solution of the problem rests, not with missions or with Government, but rather with the Depressed Classes themselves and with the Hindu majority. Many Outcaste groups have organized themselves for their educational, social and political advancement. One of the best developed of these movements has been that started during the last century among three related groups of outcaste origin in Travancore, Malabar and South Kanara by the great religious leader, Sri Narayana Guruswami. He united them into a single Union for the Protection of the Sri Narayana religion, which has its own temples and priests but worships in the orthodox Hindu fashion. A few years ago these same Izhuvars not only were deprived of temple entry but had to stay 325 feet from the Hindu temple at Guruvayur, though they were well to do and well educated. However, as a result of the passive resistance and suffering of nationalist Hindus, the state temples of Travancore were opened to all cleanly dressed Hindus. Temples in the Madras Presidency have also been thrown open. Under Gandhi’s inspiring leadership the National Congress has struggled hard and long to have the Untouchables admitted to the Hindu temples, on the ground that if this were conceded all other disabilities would in time disappear.

A number of years ago the national leader, Lajpat Rai wrote, “National decline has its origin in the oppression of others. If we Indians desire to achieve national self-respect and dignity, we should open our arms to our unfortunate brothers and sisters of the Depressed Classes.” More recently Gandhi

*The Arya Samaj, p. 232.*
writes, "This untouchability will soon be a thing of the past. Hindu society has become conscious of the hideous wrong done to man by this sinful doctrine. Hundreds of Hindu workers are devoting themselves to the uplift of these suppressed classes. . . . The masses give intellectual assent to the reformer's plea; but are slow to grant equality in practice to their Outcaste brethren."8

IV. WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES WHEN INDIA WAS RELATIVELY STATIC?

An evaluation of India's caste system depends entirely on whether we look at it from the standards of a static or of a dynamic society. Until about a century ago, India's life was largely static, though not so stagnant as the self-satisfied West has contemptuously assumed.

1. Caste furnished a recognized pattern for numberless competing groups to dwell side by side with little or no strife. For at least 5000 years India was the meeting point for the most diverse racial strains, as we know from the recent Indus Valley discoveries. Geographical, linguistic and cultural factors made for the widest variety. This long period saw many wars between local kings, but few acute conflicts between different social groups, on account of the restraining hand of caste. It often served as a Pax Indica enabling the most heterogeneous peoples to live contentedly side by side in recognized, stable relationships. Not war but clever compromise was the desire of the Brahman priests who dominated the Hindu caste system after their overthrow of Buddhism about 650 A.D.

2. Caste and its religious basis gave strong continuity to Hindu life and learning. Sir Valentine Chirol speaks of "the Hindu's fine conception of the continuity of the family as one unbroken chain, sanctified by common worship, which stretches back to remote ancestors and forward to all the future generations."9 This was one of the factors making it possible to preserve the high contributions of Indian culture in spite of Moslem incursions, repeated wars, famines and catastrophes. Most of these traditions were linked with religion and maintained by the Brahmans. On this point, R. P. Masani says, "The mystic and miraculous hymns and liturgies had to be preserved and handed down from father to son by word of mouth. Their sanctity depended not merely on their words or general sense, but on every accent rightly placed. There was need for men who could specialize in the study of the texts, comprehend the symbolic meaning of the ritual, and assist in the perpetuation of this textual tradition."10 A whole literature of deep philosophic insight and great beauty was thus memorized and transmitted orally from father to son for many centuries. This would have been impossible without specialization and very difficult unless that specialization had been hereditary.

3. A wide range of beautiful arts and crafts were preserved through father-son apprenticeship. In the Indus Valley sites inhabited fifty centuries ago, almost every household had its hand spindles. Archeologists have ascertained that these people were the first to spin and weave fiber from the real cotton plant. Sindon, the Greek word for cotton, is named after the Sind or Indus Valley. They and the Romans admiringly imported the fabrics made by the weaving castes of India. India's arts and crafts survived until they were destroyed by the competition of Western machine goods during the past 150 years. With little population growth and almost stationary demand for the products of each craft the system of occupational endogamy supplied the number of workers needed in every craft. If there came to be excess of families in one village, they could move to a neighboring place.

4. Within each caste grew up a firm group solidarity and sense of responsibility, which lasted throughout the centuries, in spite of war and confusion. This close bond of kinship brought together socially the rich and poor members of a caste in the prolonged marriage and funeral rites and all other festivals and solemnities. In addition the

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9 India, p. 25.
wealthier members of a caste saw that the poorer did not starve, thus taking care of dependents and defectives and largely obviating the need of public charity. This system of relief worked fairly well except when the whole country-side was suffering from famine or epidemic, or in the case of the Outcastes and lower castes where all the members were poor and downtrodden. Class lines were never sharply drawn until modern times. As opposed to Western individualism and its frequently excessive mobility, Hinduism always exalted the static caste and the welfare of all its conformist members. Gandhi feels very keenly about this: "Free competition is excessive individualism, enabling the strong to exploit the weak, whether this is done within the same race, between capitalists and laborers, or among the colored races by the white man. This free competition is threatening India. Therefore I want to protect my country through a reformed caste system, removing untouchability and retaining the group loyalty and the hereditary craftsmanship of the castes."

5. Caste status prevented personal choice and lessened maladjustment. No problems arose of choosing occupation or career. Every man inherited his work from his father and continued it using the traditional methods and serving the ancestral patrons. Almost all women followed in their mothers' footsteps of ministering to husband and children. Friends and companions did not have to be carefully selected by the individual, but were decided for him by birth. A person did not have to struggle to make a niche for himself; his place was already made for him when he was born. In all these ways a person had none of the troubled effort of striking out and choosing for himself. His path was already determined for him. His status was clearly defined by birth and ancient custom. This hampered broad personality development, but at the same time obviated many conflicts and frustrations.

6. The caste system involved unjust treatment of the Outcastes and some low-caste people. The men at the top could command servile obedience from the lowest castes, while all the groups at the bottom were deprived of human rights and made subordinate to higher groups. Men and women may have resented their misfortunes and hated their oppressors, but in a stable society ruled by the aged with their age-old ideas, injustice seemed part of a divinely established order. What could they do about their lot? They meekly resigned themselves to the fate written on their foreheads. Orthodox Hinduism, with its promises of rewards in future births for caste conformity in this birth, was truly "the opiate of the people," dulling the senses of the oppressed to their terrible degradation and lulling them into silent acquiescence. For centuries it produced the slave mentality, which Gandhi has blamed on the British.

V. WHAT ARE THE PRESENT OUTCOMES IN A DYNAMIC SOCIETY?

The intellectual, religious, political, and industrial revolutions, each of which in turn shook Europe to its foundations between the Renaissance and the present day, have all been telescoped together in India during scarcely more than a century. Save for inaccessible mountains and jungles, "the unchanging East," no longer exists. India is on the move. The leaven of Western ideas, discoveries and inventions is so powerfully at work in the lump of India's four hundred millions that no one can fully control the outcome. World War II is greatly expanding India's industries. The first major famine in thirty years is shaking India to its foundations. For these reasons the only accurate standard by which to measure the caste system at present is based on its outcomes in a society that is becoming more dynamic with every passing year.

1. Recent changes are giving rise to extremely bitter inter-caste strife. The old taboos that kept every one in the position where he was born are noticeably weakening, and no fresh controls are taking their place. Members of castes are branching out into occupations infringing on the prerogatives of other castes. Each caste seeks by all possible means to gain the ascendancy over the castes that used to be of equal or slightly superior

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rank. Some caste councils obtain higher educational degrees and better paying jobs for their young men, while others increase their prestige by new prohibitions on diet. According to the former Maharajah Gaekwar of Baroda, a progressive Hindu, "the eternal struggle between caste and caste for social superiority has become a source of constant ill-feeling in these days. The human desire to help the members of one's caste leads to nepotism, heart-burning and consequent mutual distrust."

2. Latent injustices are rendered patent by new social ideals and the acids of modernity. The theory that everyone in the village would be served by every one else, and in turn would equally serve him through his special occupation, does not correspond to the facts. The interrelationships are extremely asymmetrical, the Brahmans, the big landlords, the grain dealers, and the money lenders (sometimes the same people) being scrupulously served but not giving commensurate service. At least they do little or nothing that costs them exertion or loss of prestige. At the other end of the scale the lowest castes and the Outcastes are badly maltreated and forced into most degrading servitude.

3. The Outcastes are feeling most bitterly the inhumanities heaped upon them. For centuries they have been constantly subject to the mental and moral degradation of serfdom. Direct overt reaction would be least harmful to their mental health, but this course is usually blocked by disadvantages real or imagined. The direct covert reaction of resentment is extremely common, but may be completely concealed from the members of the oppressing castes. At other times the impulse to strike back is forced into some indirect channel. This whole matter has been ably treated by Dr. J. C. Heinrich in his *Psychology of a Suppressed People*.

In recent years the Kallars of South India, whose caste occupation was robbery, attempted to enforce the following among other rules upon the Outcastes: "No males shall be allowed to wear clothes below the knees or above the hips. The men shall not use umbrellas and should not wear sandals. Their children should not get themselves educated. The children should be asked only to tend the cattle of the Mirasidars (a class of landlords). Their men and women should work as slaves of the Mirasidars. They must sell away their own lands to Mirasidars at very cheap rates, and if they won't do so, no water will be allowed to them to irrigate their lands. Even if something is grown by the help of rain water, the crops should be robbed away when they are ripe for harvest." When the Outcastes disregarded these regulations, the caste men burned their huts, destroyed their property and looted their livestock.\(^\text{12}\)

Restrictions of this kind used to be enforced as part of the unwritten mores, but now in many cases they are no longer carried into effect. But serfdom for debt continues, the debt being passed on from father to son. In Travancore several branches of the Depressed Classes must never approach nearer than forty or eighty feet of a caste person, and must always call out before they enter a main road. The Mahars of Western India wrote to the British Secretary of State, "We are sick of the bondage which the barbarism of Hindu customs imposes upon us. . . . We have long submitted to the Jaganaut of caste; we have for ages been crushed under its wheels. But we can no longer submit to the tyranny." Gandhi has said, "I consider untouchability to be a heinous crime against humanity. It is . . . an arrogant assumption of superiority. . . . It has suppressed vast numbers of the human race. . . . I know of no argument in favor of its retention."\(^\text{13}\) M. D. Altekar writes of the effects of injustice, "At present a sudden and terrific explosion of resentment is being witnessed all over the country. The outburst is so great that the political unity, laboriously built up for half a century by patriotic men, has been consumed in the twinkling of an eye."\(^\text{14}\)

4. Sacred traditions are stifling needed social progress. At a time when social cus-
Attitudes of American Farmers: International and Provincial

Carl C. Taylor
Bureau of Agricultural Economics

In an attempt to answer the question of whether farmers are more "isolationist" than others the author has tried to use data from public opinion polls, voting behavior and resolutions passed by general farmers' organizations. These appear to be the only sources from which quantitative data are available and they do not yield precise conclusions.

From the hundreds of questions which have been asked by the American Institute of Public Opinion, Fortune, and the National Opinion Research Center all those which meet the two tests of usefulness for the study in hand have been culled: first, those which deal in any way with the conduct of the war, those which ask for responses about other nations, or which deal directly with cooperation between nations; second, all those which have been reported in such form as to make possible segregation of farmers' or farming area responses from those of other occupational groups or from other than farming areas. An attempt has been made to assemble data from records of national elections, the voting behavior in Congress of representatives from farming areas, and the behavior of and resolutions passed by large general farmers' organizations.

Information from Public Opinion Polls

In poll reports that do not segregate responses of farmers as an occupational group but which do present results by geographic regions—the East Central and West Central areas, in Gallup reports, and the East North Central and West North Central areas, in the Fortune reports—were used as probably best representing farmers' opinions. The South, though more dominantly rural than

* Paper originally read at the American Sociological Society Meeting, December 4, 1943, New York City and subsequently revised and reorganized.

1 80 poll questions which bore directly or indirectly on war or defense issues appeared from 1938 to 1943 were selected for analysis.