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THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

THEIR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITION

BY

MOHINDER SINGH

M.A., PH.D.

INTRODUCTION BY

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE

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INTRODUCTION

I have much pleasure in introducing this scholarly and systematic social and economic survey of the Harijans of Northern India that was undertaken by Dr Mohinder Singh as his doctorate work under my guidance in the University of Lucknow. Dr Singh has toured in many Harijan villages in the Punjab, U.P., Bihar and Bengal, and given us a full and accurate picture of the Harijans as small tenants, agricultural serfs and labourers, as rural artisans, servants and sweepers—all economically and socially depressed for centuries. As small tenants they occupy the most unfertile of the rural land and the smallest sized holdings but pay the highest rents, and are subjected to harassing *abwabs* and illegal exactions. As agricultural labourers they earn meagre pittances of 3 to 8 as., but many are bond-slaves for generations, with no freedom to move out to other masters when there is no work nor food for them in their own villages. As leather-workers, tanners and weavers they are pressed to the wall by the competition of organized industries and the exploitation of middlemen. As sweepers in the towns they suffer from low earnings and chronic unemployment and a strike is the only weapon in their hands if they wish to get their grievances considered by apathetic municipalities. All of them, whatever their occupation, are untouchables and cannot use public wells and schools, are not served by either barbers or washermen, and silently endure humiliating restrictions in such matters as the use of umbrellas and *dolis* and even women's dress. And yet there are 5 to 6 crores of them in the whole of India, half of them in the plains of the North. Here and there they show disaffection, and even stubborn resistance, especially in areas where there is scarcity of agricultural labour, but, generally speaking, economic bondage and social servitude are to them as natural an order of things as the everlasting hills, and the sin-cleansing rivers. Dr Singh's comprehensive and exact investigation does credit to the profession of economists many of whom are still too apt to prefer problems that can be solved from blue-books and reports on the desk. This book is born of genuine social sympathy and justice. Based as it is on field survey covering a number of years, it is the best account available for the wages, conditions

of employment, indebtedness and semi-slavery of the submerged one-eighth of the Indian population.

It cannot be gainsaid that there must be economic misfits in any vast country with a population of 40 crores. In the vicissitudes of social history, conquest, expropriation and economic degradation have all conspired to lower the social status of many ethnic groups in India. Many ethnic groups, again, have not been able to wean themselves from vagrant habits; they eat carrion and vermin, drink hard and indulge in extra-marital license. The only occupations they can learn with ease are plaiting grass and basket-making; such occupations cannot give much economic opportunities. Many, again, cannot obtain land; given agricultural opportunities primitive tribes and castes have succeeded remarkably as settled agriculturists in Assam, Chota Nagpur and the Central Province. On the other hand, in Central and Southern India, in the Central Province, Rajputana, Chota Nagpur and Orissa, the majority of the Harijans do not possess land at all and are agrestic serfs often bound hand and foot, like the old Negro slaves, to the land, and no social legislation such as the Kamiauti Agreements Act of 1920 in Chota Nagpur, has been able to fully meet the situation presented by an over-plus of farm-hand population crowding in agriculture. In Northern India on account of the heavy population pressure such Harijans as the Chamars who represent 12 per cent of the total population in the United Provinces can only obtain the worst and the most distant plots and the worst wells, and pay the heaviest rents and rates of interest. Their holdings are as a rule under-sized and the smallest. They cannot even in the best years make both ends meet by cultivation, and resort to keeping pigs and flaying dead carcases, occupations which prevent them from rising in the social scale. In Western India much of the social unrest among the Harijans has arisen also because the lands set apart for the services of village servants or shares of grain at each harvest can no longer maintain the castes who have increased in numbers and cannot obtain employment.

These are essentially economic, and not social and political problems and could only be solved by special measures and legislation such as the following: making it penal to keep

bond-slaves and extinguishing all debts of agricultural labourers below, say, Rs. 50 that have continued for more than a year; the free assignment of newly reclaimed lands for collective farming by the Harijans; vesting proprietary rights in house sites in the State and recognizing the present occupants as lessees; making the extortion of *begar,* including under-payment of wages, a criminal offence; the provision of new village sites where they would be free from the oppression of landlords and their *begar;* the construction of wells or excavation of tanks for their exclusive use; the provision of burning ghats and burial grounds and other sanitary requirements; the organization of co-operative credit and thrift societies; and above all, the provision of training in crafts and occupations subsidiary to agriculture so that the growing pressure on the land and the overcrowding of agriculture may be adequately relieved.

The Census of 1931 estimated the Harijan population at 5 crores. According to the Census of 1941, the Harijan population of India numbers 4·8 crores. But 6 crores would be a truer estimate. Many aboriginal tribes, especially of the Bhil, Koll and Gond groups, fade off into Harijans, and undertake agricultural labour in the plains. Thus it is a reasonable estimate that out of 8·5 crore Harijan castes and forest tribes not less than 5 crores are bond-slaves—whether the Chamars of Northern India or the Padials of the South, whether the Baramasiya Chakars of Orissa or the Kamias of Bihar and Chota Nagpur, whether the Shalkaris of Berar and Bombay or the Harwahas of Central India and Rajputana. Tied to the same master's family from generation to generation due to a loan incurred for a marriage or a compulsory advance and practically restricted in his movements, an agricultural labourer of the Harijan caste and aboriginal tribe cannot appeal to the Courts for redress and protection, and in some areas is purchased and sold, his price being the amount of his debt. Sad to relate, cases of mortgage and sale of husband and wife as bond-slaves are frequent in Central India, Rs. 60 to Rs. 80 buying both a 'Harwaha' and his wife. In Chota Nagpur the law which abolished agrestic serfdom yet remains a dead letter. On the Pous Sankranti day, oral indentures are still entered into between the Zamindar and the farm-hands who live like the Negro slaves, bound hand and

foot to the farmer. The Kamia cannot escape from his clutches, for where can he find the cash to pay interest on the loan he has been advanced, not to speak of the repayment of the principal? Social degradation and economic bondage are in nefarious combination in aid of the landlord-cum-moneylender for the servitude of a considerable section of the agricultural workers, belonging to the Dosadh, Chamar, Mushar, Bhuiya and Tatwa castes in Bihar as well as the aboriginal tribes in Chota Nagpur. I had an occasion to study agricultural labour conditions only few years back in the districts of Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Bhagalpore, Gaya, Palamau and Monghyr where I found hereditary bond-slaves still existing with a burden of debts usually incurred for marriages going back to five generations. Tied to the holding like the Negro slave, the Harwahis live on a mere pittance of 3 as. or $2\frac{1}{2}$ seers of coarse millets a day and their debt is transmitted from generation to generation, their sons, grandsons and wives living and dying as hereditary slaves. This picture of rural Bihar has reminded me of the Halis of Rajputana, the Harwahas of Central India and Rajputana and the Padials of Southern India, slaves by birth in a modern aspiring free India. In a prosperous year the serf may get a single meal, thin gruel and loin cloth, but starvation and death wait for him in a year of drought and famine. Such is the condition of the Harijans—that toiling, unorganized, long suffering, but all-important factor in the machinery of Indian rural life.

This picture would at once indicate the colossal and intricate nature of the social issue. A country-wide campaign of land reclamation and vocational education, of temperance, cleanliness and social purity among the less favoured and untouchable castes must be undertaken if their economic condition is to be improved. New crafts have to be taught; new lands have to be set apart for collective colonization and farming; customary loose sex relations have to be condemned and new marital customs introduced; instead of unclean and putrified food new wholesome diet should be brought to their home; a wide-minded campaign for bettter occupation and living has to be undertaken; and all economic and social disabilities connected with untouchability and unapproachability abolished, and their continuance made penal by the levy

of collective fines on whole *muhallas* and villages. The work of the sweeper must be made clean and wholesome through the adoption of modern methods of collection and disposal of night-soil. Individual effort, even under such distinguished leadership as that of Mahatma Gandhi cannot do much; there must be social planning by Government. The Central and Provincial Governments ought to have separate Departments to deal with the economic and social amelioration of the Harijans. The Harijan Sevak Sangh has done excellent pioneering work, which has now to be systematically taken up by Government agencies, Central and Provincial.

A mere change of religion can hardly offer opportunities for such social transformation, which must be a long-drawn-out process. That a change of religion offered such opportunities to the lower castes explains the success of such caste-free religions like Buddhism in ancient India and Islam and Vaishnavism in medieval Bengal and of Christian missionary activity in parts of Chota Nagpur, Assam and South India in recent decades. But where conversion has disintegrated tribal or caste solidarity and has been unable to build up a new social morality among certain primitive tribes and castes, the new religion has brought about a change for the worse. Christianity has been a remarkable success in parts of Chota Nagpur, for instance, where it has evidently contributed to protect the aboriginal Munda and Oraon tenants against oppression and expropriation by the landlords. Elsewhere the disestablishment of old culture contacts has worked social havoc as, for instance, among the Christian Khasis and Manipuris of Assam. Christian conversion among the Sontals has not made progress, because of the economic opportunities the Sontal could obtain by migrating to unreclaimed or under-cultivated lands in Northern and Western Bengal, along with facilities of cultural uplift in association with the upper class Hindus. A dissociation from the older cultural *milieu* and bolstering up of an artificial standard of living without its necessary economic base account for the existence of vast numbers of Christian converts in India who are neither animists, nor Hindus, nor Christians, nor economically efficient, in their new social order. Islam adds a fresh complication in Northern and Eastern Bengal by its approval of polygamy which

is an economic misfit in this over-crowded country, apart from the dangers of missionary activities in the hands of bigoted preachers. Amongst rural folks who have accepted and practised noble ideals of monogamy and chastity, that have proved helpful towards the transmission of the joint property and the preservation of the integrity and continuity of the family faith and traditions, the institution of polygamy adopted side by side will corrode the ancient virtues of sacrifice, self-control and forbearance which have taken centuries for the Hindus to acquire and will speed up the process of fractionalization of property, which has now become such a menace to efficient farming in the country.

An institutional religion, like all other human institutions, is to be judged as an implement of social adjustment, in the light of the guidance it gives to the group towards a more effective adaptation. Even a religion of local spirits, forest deities, ordeals and ostracisms may have a better survival value for a backward caste or community, and its supersession may engender a loss of morale, efficiency and even numbers.

Besides, the democratic appeal of Islam has easily been and can be met by the Vaishnavism of Ramananda, Kabir and Chaitanya and other Bhakti systems which owe their inspiration to many popular saints. Many of the latter have belonged to the Harijan castes and yet commanded the adoration of the entire Hindu community. Similarly the fervent appeal of the Christian faith in redemptive love and sacrifice of Jesus has been spontaneously echoed by Saiva and Ramanuja Bhakti systems in which God sweats, cries and suffers for, and with, man's travails, imperfections and sins. There is something pathetic in the vain idea that a change of label and religion can alter status or do away with the economic disabilities of centuries. It obscures real social groupings and develops fissiparous tendencies of the wrong kind which have nothing to do with an upward economic movement and consequent mitigation of social distance. Thus, conversion to Christianity has often imposed additional social disabilities, besides the denial of right to public wells, and schools in the villages of the United Provinces, where out of about 1,75,000 Christians about 1,25,000 belong to the Harijan classes.

A change of religion or nomenclature cannot work an economic miracle. It cannot abolish century-old economic or social bondage, which more than anything else no civilization should tolerate and to which the attention of all Indian social reformers and workers must now be directed. The eyes of all leaders must be focussed primarily towards the economic and social amelioration of the Harijans, and secondarily, to the religion, whether Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam or Christianity, which offers the best environment and spiritual outlook for individual initiative and social advance.

It is high time that educated India realized that the benefits of economic and social progress which will be accelerated with our new-born freedom must be fairly shared with the masses; today 5 to 6 crores of them do not at all participate in these. There must be a 'change of heart' of the upper caste Hindus, to use the familiar phrase of Mahatma Gandhi who has travelled throughout the length and breadth of India for some decades now to bring the gospel of social equality to the door of the Harijans. Before long we should have an institution like the Tuskegee Institute which has played such an important role in the development of Negro leadership in social and economic movements of the U.S.A. The establishment of a residential college for the Harijans where the highest education may be imparted to them free has been long overdue. We have to train up bands of educated Harijan youths who will go to their castemen for organizing schools and adult classes and for social propaganda for their use of public schools, wells and temples and insist on the Brahman priesthood conducting their marriages and domestic rituals. There is need also of a temperance campaign. Cleaner, better and more nutritive food must replace carrion and vermin. Improvement of food habits and social uplift are tied to each other in the Indian village. But all rests mainly, as Dr Singh strongly urges, on work on the economic front. Collective farming and abolition of landlordism can alone finally abolish agrestic serfdom, *begar* and other malpractices. There is no more appropriate Province than Bihar, where we have whole big villages inhabited exclusively by the Harijans, numbering even a thousand, for starting an experiment in collective farming for them under State auspices.

For stable employment in the villages there should be re-education and re-organization of such crafts as tanning, leather-work, wood-work, basket-weaving, grass-plaiting, rope-making and toy-making, while pig and poultry farming can also be easily modernized in order to enable the Harijan classes to reap the full benefits of their toil or to reduce unemployment. Out of the economic and social movements will emerge a new conception of the dignity of man in rural India. But perhaps this will wait for some kind of religious idealism or movement like that represented in the past by Ramananda, Kabir and Chaitanya. India's dualistic metaphysics has conceived of man's trials and sufferings being reciprocated in infinite love and compassion by the Divine suffering and of man's limitations being a phase of the Divine self-limitation. Could not such a metaphysics give birth to a new consciousness of the majesty and dignity of the common man, and sponsor a new country-wide campaign of social goodwill and amelioration born in the womb of aggressive Hinduism? Could not the Constituent Assembly give the lead to this movement by the declaration, backed by penal measures, that all serfs and bond-slaves are emancipated from the day of Indian Independence? Dr Mohinder Singh's competent work raises such deep social and moral issues in the country that it must lead to a searching of hearts and to each educated Indian thinking out and practising his own moral and social solution in this regard. Written with the quiet dignity and detachment of a scholar, it is, nevertheless a gripping, compelling book

University of Lucknow RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE

PREFACE

The problem of the depressed classes has of late become the focus of public attention. There is hardly any book, however, which gives a comprehensive account of their conditions of life. The available literature on the subject deals generally with their political or ethnological problems. In this volume an attempt has been made to analyse the fundamental social and economic problems of the depressed classes in the Punjab, the United Provinces, Bihar and Bengal. These four provinces together account for about 65 per cent of the total population of the depressed classes in India (provinces only).

The work was commenced in 1938 and the collection of data was completed before Indian economy had been seriously disturbed by the stress of War-time conditions. Though the picture presented in the book is that of 'normal conditions', I have no doubt that the impact of War has not materially changed the basic problems of these classes.

The major part of the work is based on intensive first-hand investigations, but books like Ghurye's *Race and Caste in India,* Blunt's *Caste System of Northern India,* Mukerjee's *Economic Problems of Modern India,* and Government Publications like the Census Reports and the District Gazetteers have been freely referred to.

For the collection of the bulk of the data, I have had to visit a large number of villages with predominant or scattered depressed class populations. The selection of the districts surveyed depended principally on the distribution of important depressed castes and the natural regions of each province.

Investigations were undertaken with special reference to the conditions of small farming, rents, agricultural wages and *begar* (forced labour) as well as small industries and subsidiary employment. The social disabilities of the various depressed castes have also been studied first-hand together with recent improvements in their education and status and the movement that is now in progress for their assimilation in the Hindu caste hierarchy. The basic causes underlying indebtedness and *harwahi* (agrestic serfdom) have been analysed and an attempt has been made to present a realistic picture of their standard of

living. Finally, a programme of social and economic amelioration has been envisaged which it is hoped does justice to the grave social issue which Indian rural economy faces today as represented by the economic and social degradation of about 5 crores out of India's total population of nearly 40 crores.

I wish to express my grateful thanks to Dr Radhakamal Mukerjee, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Economics and Sociology, University of Lucknow, for very valuable guidance and encouragement throughout the preparation of this work. To Prof. D. P. Mukerji of the Department of Economics and Sociology, University of Lucknow, I am also obliged for guidance and helpful criticism. My friend Mr G. L. Bansal, Senior Assistant Secretary of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, has helped me in the diagrammatic presentation of facts. Grateful thanks are also due to a large number of public-spirited men, who, by sparing their valuable time, helped me in overcoming the fears and suspicions of the depressed classes, especially in the countryside. But for their assistance and willing co-operation, a socio-economic enquiry of this nature would have been extremely difficult.

NEW DELHI
June, 1947

MOHINDER SINGH

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CHAPTER I

NATURE AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

A characteristic feature of Hindu society is its segmentation into a large number of groups with varying degrees of prestige, respectability and circles of social intercourse, membership whereof is determined by birth. These social groups or castes, as these are called, are distinguished from one another by the existence of special rights for some groups and disabilities for others as well as by the existence of certain vocational, connubial, and commensal restrictions. And there exists too a definite scheme of social precedence with the Brahmin at the top of it. This system of social differentiation is not without parallels in history. The citizens and the helots and slaves of Sparta, the patricians and the plebeians and slaves of ancient Rome represented well-defined social groups differentiated by privileges and disabilities as well as by vocational and connubial restrictions. These were, however, mere approaches to a caste system for these status groups " were frankly based on wealth and land holding and unlike Hindu castes were of political importance."[1] Coming to more recent times we find that in Europe there developed during the Middle Ages "a quasi-caste system with aristocratic rank and privileges, sumptuary laws, feudalism, and occupation guilds in control of much of industry. The classes, however, never crystallized into complete castes and final religious sanction was never obtained."[2] But a feature of the Hindu social system that has no parallels elsewhere is the existence of certain untouchable and unapproachable groups. It is mostly with these groups, and with a few others which are not untouchable but yet must be considered as depressed, that we shall be concerned during the course of this work.

Definition of Depressed Class

The term 'depressed class' does not lend itself to a precise

1 *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences,* Article on 'Caste'.

2 Ibid.

definition. It comprehends untouchability though it is not synonymous with it. It connotes not only a low place in the caste hierarchy together with the existence of social and religious disabilities but a low economic position as well. Evidently we are concerned with a group of castes whose social, economic and other circumstances are such as deserve special protection in a society. But to be able to say whether a particular caste belongs to this category is not an easy matter. Conditions vary not only from province to province but also from caste to caste in the same province, and therefore no 'universally' valid definition of the term 'depressed class' is possible.

To facilitate the task of picking out castes that may be considered depressed, Dr Hutton, the Census Commissioner for 1931, suggested certain tests. These are:

1. Whether the caste or class in question can be served by clean Brahmins or not.
2. Whether the caste or class in question can be served by barbers, water-carriers, tailors, etc. who serve the Caste Hindus.
3. Whether the caste in question pollutes a Caste Hindu by contact or by proximity.
4. Whether the caste or class in question is one from whose hands a Caste Hindu can take water.
5. Whether the caste or class in question is debarred from using public conveniences such as roads, ferries, wells, or schools.
6. Whether the caste or class in question is debarred from the use of Hindu temples.
7. Whether in ordinary social intercourse a well-educated member of the caste or class in question will be treated as an equal by high caste men of the same educational qualifications.
8. Whether the caste or class in question is merely depressed on account of its own ignorance, illiteracy, or poverty and but for that would be subject to no social disability.
9. Whether it is depressed on account of the occupation followed and whether but for that occupation it would be subject to no social disability.

That these tests do not resolve all our difficulties is obvious, for they involve many terms that are themselves indefinite. What, for instance, constitutes pollution? "It is a mistake", says Sir Edward Blunt, "to suppose that all Hindus of respectable social position have the same standard of touchability. The Brahman's standard has always been higher than that of others and castes may be touchable to a Rajput or Vaishya that are untouchable to a Brahman." [1] Again, what constitutes the right to use a temple? Is it to be taken to mean *darshan* or admission to the 'sanctum sanctorum'? About pollution of food and drink, Mr Porter, the Bengal Census Superintendent has some interesting remarks to offer. He says: "It is clearly a little unreasonable for any one to make a grievance of the fact that his presence in the kitchen of a Brahman will spoil the food and pollute the utensils therein if he has no right to be there at all and no title to demand that he should be admitted therein." [2] His contention seems to be that the existence of certain civic disabilities as well as a low economic position alone should entitle a caste to be classified as depressed and that the social and religious disabilities should be ignored. This clearly betrays a lack of appreciation of the interconnexion of social, religious and civic disabilities and their influence on economic position. Some even contend that if contact with an untouchable entails purification on the part of the twice-born, that if the use of a well by an untouchable makes it unfit for use by a high caste man, the disability is clearly that of the high caste man and not that of the untouchable. Logical though it is, it is disproved by the 'logic of facts'. The point is that the high caste men to whom the untouchables are very repugnant, are in a position to take and very often do take concerted action to deprive these people of the use of public wells and to prevent them from sending their children to schools. To be brief, in deciding whether a caste can be classified as depressed we have to take into consideration not only the social, religious and civic disabilities of the caste, but its economic position as well.

It is clear from a consideration of the above points that the

1 E. A. H. Blunt: *Caste System of Northern India*, p. 100.

2 Bengal Census Report, 1931, Pt. 1, p. 496.

drawing up of a list of depressed classes is a matter of considerable difficulty involving as it does a close examination of the position of each caste in a particular region. Two lists of depressed classes are available at present, one by Hutton and the other the official list of the Scheduled Castes. The latter might be called the *de facto* depressed classes, for Government have recognized that their social and economic condition is such as to entitle them to special treatment in the body politic. A reference to Appendix I shows that the differences in the two lists are not very important. The major depressed castes like Chamars, Bhangis, etc. are to be found in both the lists. We propose confining the scope of this survey to the Scheduled Castes and the term depressed classes will accordingly be used as a synonym of Scheduled Castes. The only justification for the use of the term 'depressed' is that it is suggestive of certain aspects of the life of these people.[1]

Explanation of Degraded Position

How these castes became depressed is a question for which the answer must be sought partly in racial differences, partly in religious and social customs. It is not difficult to interpret the low position of the depressed classes in terms of the Indo-Aryan conquest that occurred about 2000 B.C. Race conflicts have played a very important part in world history. "Sociologists like Gumplowicz and Oppenheimer hold that States were founded upon conquest and migration and that in organizing society the conquering race constituted itself the ruling class while the conquered were relegated to servant status."[2] But the Indo-Aryan people did not have to deal with one race. It is now generally accepted that the non-Negratoid aborigines of India (to which racial stock most of the depressed castes have been held to belong),[3] were the earliest inhabitants of India and that they were followed by several other races including the Mediterraneans and Alpines. Another fact that has come to light in recent years is that at the time of Indo-Aryan invasion

1 The term 'Depressed Classes' is more popular than the term 'Scheduled Castes'.

2 *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences,* Article on 'Race Conflict'.

3 See Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Pt. III.

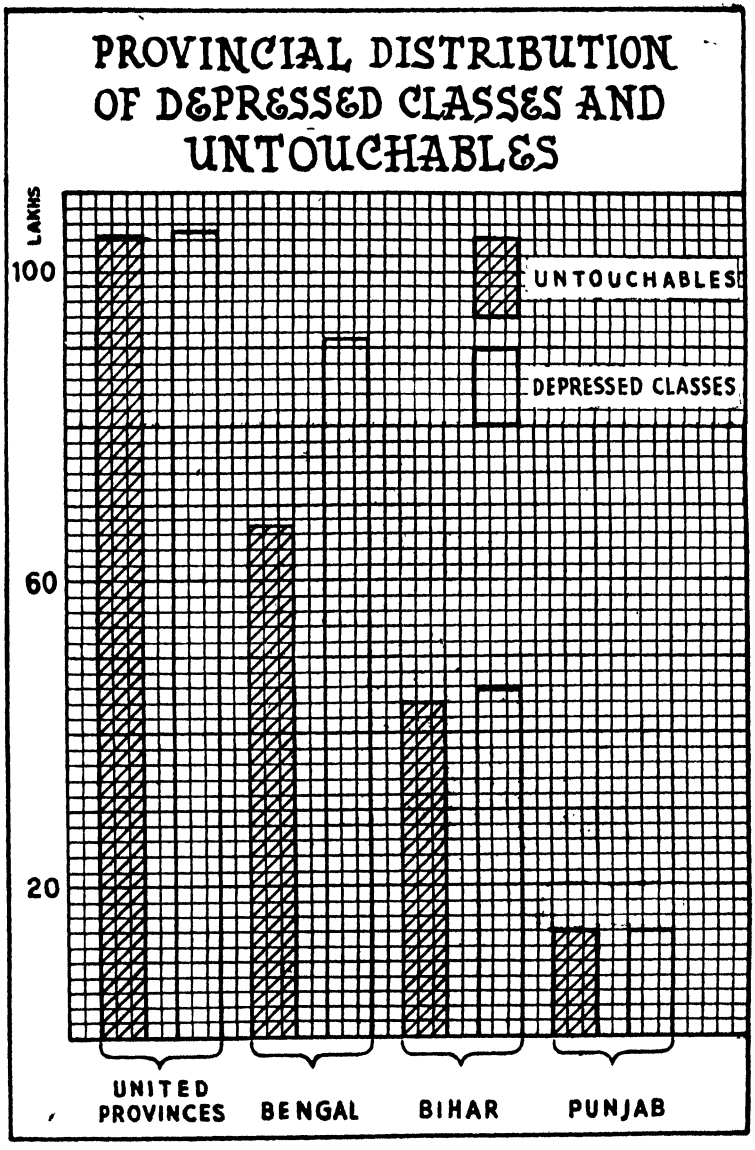

PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF DEPRESSED CLASSES AND UNTOUCHABLES
LAKHS
100
60
20
UNTOUCHABLES
DEPRESSED CLASSES
UNITED PROVINCES
BENGAL
BIHAR
PUNJAB

Diagram 1

there existed in India a highly developed civilization upon which they imposed themselves. And this conquest of the Indo-Aryans was probably a peaceful one.[1] The statement might be hazarded that those racial groups to which the depressed classes belong occupied a low position in the Pre-Vedic civilization of Mediterranean-Armenoid races and that their position was further lowered as a consequence of the Indo-Aryan invasion. It is significant that in Hindustan, where the 'Aryan' civilization was developed, the strength of depressed classes is much greater than elsewhere.

Regional Distribution

In Appendices I & II are given the total strength of the depressed classes as a whole and that of the untouchables. The 'untouchables' there given are castes that have been returned as such by the Provincial Census Superintendents.

The total population of depressed classes in Northern India (British districts) is about 2·56 crores which is about 65 per cent of their total strength in the whole of British India.[2] A reference to these tables as well as to Diagrams 1 and 2 brings to light the fact that the strength of Depressed Classes in Bihar, Bengal and the U. P. is 3·2, 6·4 and 7·4 times higher, respectively, than that in the Punjab. And the strength of the untouchables of Bihar, Bengal and the U. P. is, respectively, 3·1, 4·7 and 7·4 times higher than that in the Punjab. Nowhere else in India are the depressed classes so numerous as in Hindustan (U. P.).

1 W. Crooke : *North-Western Provinces of India,* pp. 60-1.

2 Hutton's estimates of the population of depressed classes in British India and the whole of India are 3·9 and 5 crores respectively. (Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Pt. I, p. 494).

As shown in Appendix I, the 1941 strength of Scheduled Castes in Northern India (provinces only) can be estimated at 2·62 crores. According to the 1941 Census Report the population figures of the Scheduled Castes for British India and India are 3·9 crores and 4·88 crores respectively. But making allowance for the under-estimation of Scheduled Castes in Northern India, we may put their population figures for British India and India at 4·15 crores and 5·04 crores respectively.

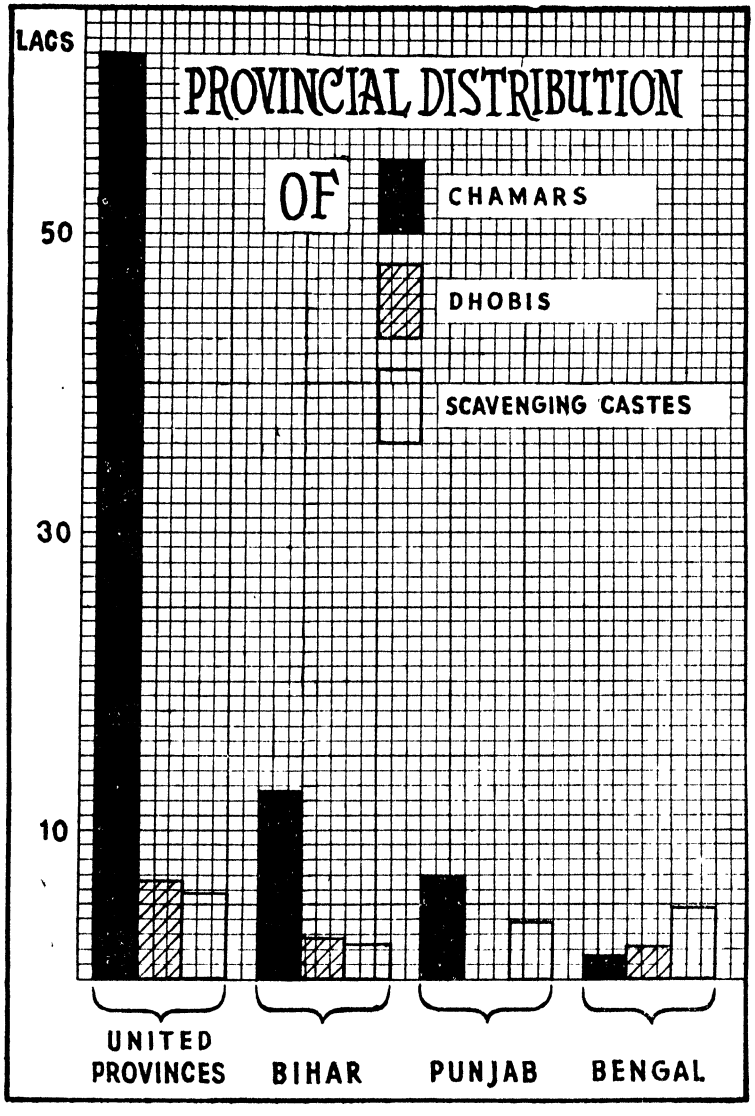

LACS
PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION
OF
CHAMARS
DHOBIS
SCAVENGING CASTES
50
30
10
UNITED PROVINCES
BIHAR
PUNJAB
BENGAL

Diagram 2

Some Important Depressed Castes

Numerically the Chamars are by far the most important depressed caste in the whole of India. It is in the United Provinces that they flourish. In Bihar and the U. P. their strength is 1·8 and 8·7 times higher, respectively, than that in the Punjab. In Bengal their population is small, being about one-fifth of their total number in the Punjab. The Chamars of the U. P. alone exceed by about 16 lakhs the total depressed class population of Bihar and fall short of the total strength of depressed classes in Bengal by about 30 lakhs.

The Pasis

They are mainly found in Bihar and the U. P. though a few are found in Bengal also. In Bihar and the U. P. their strength is 9·2 and 77·6 times higher, respectively, than that in Bengal. A few Pasis are found in the Punjab also but the Census Report contains no information about their population.

The Dhobis

They are mainly confined to Bihar, the U. P. and Bengal. There are no Hindu Dhobis indigenous to the province of Punjab and the few Hindu Dhobis that are found there belong to the U. P. Their population in Bihar and the U. P. is 1·2 and 2·9 times higher, respectively, than that in Bengal.

The Sweeper and Scavenging Castes

They are on the whole well distributed throughout Northern India but are more numerous in the U. P. than elsewhere. In Bengal and the U. P. their strength is 1·3 and 1·6 times higher, respectively, than that in the Punjab. In Bihar their population is smaller, being about three-fifths that in the Punjab.

Composition and Regional Distribution of Depressed Classes

The United Provinces

A reference to Appendix 1 and to Diagram 3 shows that in this province the eight castes, Chamars, Koris, Pasis, Dhobis, Bhangis, Doms, Silpkars and Khatiks account for 95·6 per cent

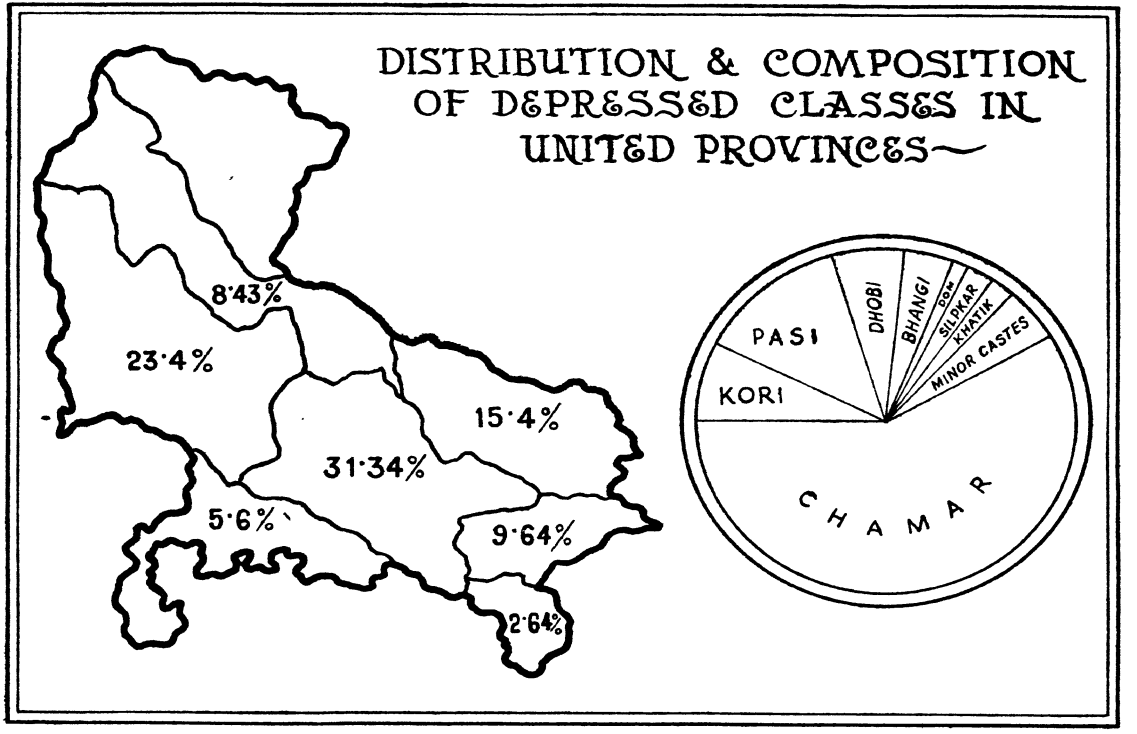

DISTRIBUTION & COMPOSITION
OF DEPRESSED CLASSES IN
UNITED PROVINCES—
8·43%
23·4%
15·4%
31·34%
5·6%
9·64%
2·64%
PASI
DHOBI
BHANGI
SILPKAR
KHATIK
MINOR CASTES
KORI
CHAMAR

Diagram 3

of the entire depressed class population of the province, the remaining 4·4 per cent being accounted for by minor castes. The Chamars alone account for about 59 per cent of the total depressed class population, while the Pasis and Koris account for about 14 and 7 per cent respectively.

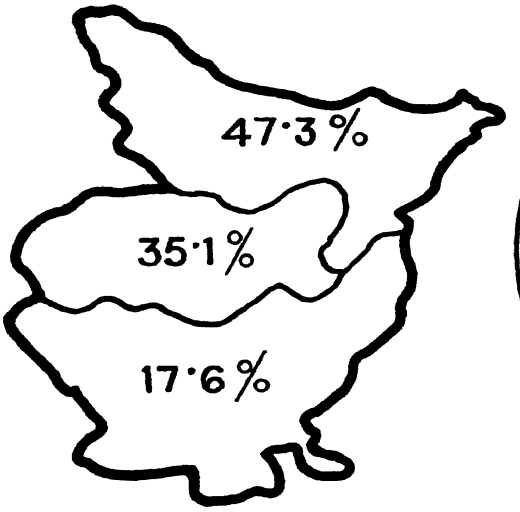
The vast majority of depressed class people are to be found in the Indo-Gangetic plain, about 31 per cent of them being found in the central portion, 23·5 per cent in the western part and 10 per cent in the eastern part. In Sub-Himalaya East are to be found 15·4 per cent of these people, while in Sub-Himalaya West only 8·4 per cent. Central India Plateau and East Satpuras (Mirzapur district) account for 5·6 per cent and 2·5 per cent of the total depressed class population respectively. The regional distribution of the other Hindu castes does not, however, correspond with that of the depressed classes as a whole. Thus, while in the central parts of the plain the depressed classes form about 30 per cent of the total Hindu population, their proportion in the western and eastern parts of the plain is 24 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. In Sub-Himalaya West they form about 28·5 per cent of Hindu population and the corresponding figures for Sub-Himalaya East, C. I. Plateau and East Satpuras (Mirzapur district) are 23, 28 and 36 per cent respectively.

The individual distribution of important depressed castes corresponds closely to that of the depressed classes as a whole. The Chamars are on the whole well distributed throughout the province; but the Pasis are almost exclusively confined to the central parts of the Gangetic plain. The Koris and Dhobis are mainly found in the central parts of the plain and the Sub-Himalaya East, their population in the western parts of the plain being comparatively small. The Khatiks are mainly found in the Sub-Himalaya East and the central and western parts of the plain. The Agariya and Banmanu groups which comprise several numerically unimportant castes are mainly found in East Satpuras (Mirzapur district), and Benares Division.

Variations in Population

In Appendix III are given the figures relating to the population of some of these castes in the years 1911 and 1931. These

DISTRIBUTION & COMPOSITION OF DEPRESSED CLASSES IN BIHAR—



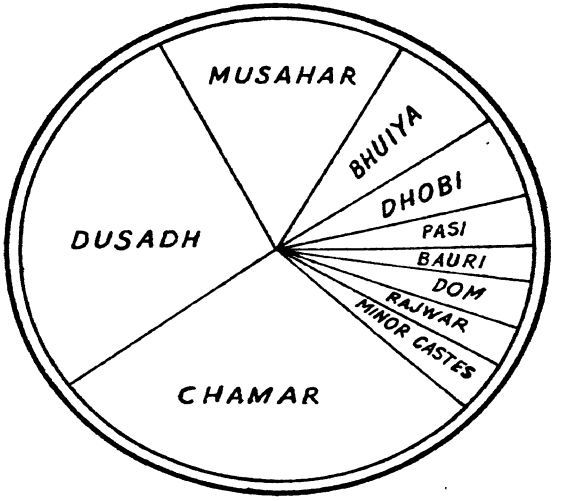


Diagram 4

figures have been taken from the Census Report (Volume 1) for 1931. For purposes of comparison figures for certain high castes are also given. A reference to these figures will show that during 1911-31 the Chamars, Pasis, Koris, Dhobis, and Khatiks have all increased and that the rate of increase has been, in each case, greater than the rate of increase of the total population as a whole. It might be interesting to notice that during the same period the Brahmins, Kayasthas, Kurmis[1] and Ahirs have all decreased and while the Rajputs show an absolute increase, their rate of increase has been smaller than the general rate.

Bihar

In this province the nine castes Chamars, Dusadhs, Musahars, Bhuiyas, Dhobis, Pasis, Bauris, Doms and Rajwars account for 96·5 per cent of the entire depressed class population. Diagram 4 illustrates the composition of the depressed classes in this province. A reference to Appendix I reveals that the Chamars form about 27·5 per cent of the total depressed class population, the Dusadhs 28·3 per cent, the Musahars 15·7 per cent, the Bhuiyas 7·2 per cent and the Dhobis 5·8 per cent.

The majority of the depressed class people are to be found in Bihar proper, North Bihar accounting for about 47·3 and South Bihar for 35·1 per cent. In Chota Nagpur plateau are to be found about 17·6 per cent of these people.

The distribution of the Chamars of Bihar corresponds to the distribution of depressed classes as a whole. About 56 per cent of the Chamars are found in North Bihar, about 30 per cent in South Bihar, and the remainder in Chota Nagpur. The Dusadhs are almost entirely confined to Bihar proper, about 57 per cent being found in North Bihar and 37 per cent in South Bihar. The Musahars too are mostly found in Bihar proper, about 57 per cent being found in North Bihar and 40 per cent in South Bihar. The majority of the Bhuiyas (91 per cent) are to be found in South Bihar and Chota Nagpur plateau. Gaya and Palamau districts account for about 49 and 30 per cent of the Bhuiyas respectively. The Pasis are mainly concentrated in South Bihar though they are found scattered in small numbers throughout

[1] See Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Pt. I, p. 466.

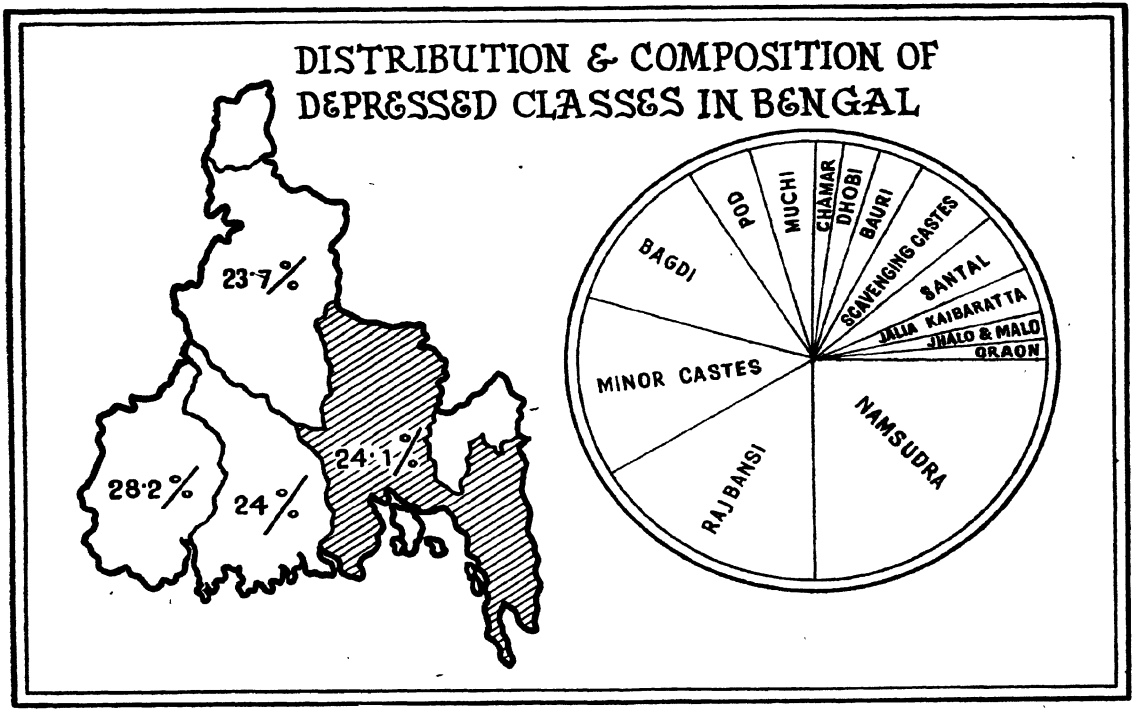

DISTRIBUTION & COMPOSITION OF
DEPRESSED CLASSES IN BENGAL
23·7%
24·1%
28·2%
24%
BAGDI
POD
MUCHI
CHAMAR
DHOBI
BAURI
SCAVENGING CASTES
SANTAL
JALIA KAIBARATTA
JHALO & MALO
ORAON
MINOR CASTES
NAMSUDRA
RAJBANSI

Diagram 5

the province. Bhogta, Ghasi, Turi, Pan are mainly confined to Chota Nagpur plateau while Hari, Kanjar, Kuriar are to be found in Purnea district only.

Variations in Population in Bihar

A reference to Appendix III reveals that during the period 1911-31 the Chamars, Doms and Pasis show not only an absolute increase but also a rate of increase greater than that of the whole population. While the Dusadhs and Rajwars show absolute increase, the rate of increase of either has been slower than the general rate of increase. The Dhobis and Haris have registered a net decrease. During the same period the Brahmins, Kayasthas and Rajputs show not only absolute increase but the rate of increase is in each case greater than the general rate. It may be mentioned that the rate of increase of the Brahmins is much greater than that of the depressed castes.

Bengal

In this province the Namasudras, Rajbansis, Bagdis, Pods, Muchis, Bauris, Chamars, Dhobis, Tiyars, Scavenging Castes, Oraon, Santal, Jaliya Kaibaratta, Jhalo, and Malo account for 88·1 per cent of the total depressed class population. The relative numerical importance of the various depressed castes is brought out clearly by Diagram 5. The Namasudras account for 22·9 per cent of total depressed class strength, the Rajbansis for 16·3 per cent, the Bagdis for 10·8 per cent, the Pods for 7·3 per cent, the Santals for 4·8 per cent and the Muchis for 4·5 per cent.

The depressed classes as a whole are fairly evenly distributed in the various natural divisions of Bengal. Contrary to prevalent notions, 28·2 per cent of depressed class people are found in Western Bengal and only 24·1 per cent in Eastern Bengal. Central Bengal accounts for 24 per cent of these people and Northern Bengal for 23·7 per cent.

The important depressed castes of Bengal, individually, are not so evenly distributed as the depressed classes as a whole Namasudras are almost exclusively confined to Eastern and Central Bengal, 66 per cent of them being found in the former part and 25 per cent in the latter. North Bengal accounts for

about 5·5 per cent of Namasudras. Rajbansis are concentrated in North Bengal where as many as 85 per cent of them are found. In Central Bengal they are found to a small extent, the actual proportion being 7 per cent. The Bagdis are mainly found in Western and Central Bengal, 76 per cent being found in the former portion and 22 per cent in the latter. The Pods too are exclusively confined to Central and Western Bengal, 89·5 per cent being found in the former part and 10·4 per cent in the latter. The following table shows the regional distribution of the less important castes :

TABLE I

Caste	Percentage of total found in			
	Northern Bengal	Western Bengal	Central Bengal	Eastern Bengal
Muchis ...	10	37	38	15
Dhobis ...	4·5	24	16	55·5
Bauris ...	...	96·6	2·4	...
Oraons ...	88	5	6·5	...
Santals ...	38	59·5	2	...
Chamars ...	15	23	44	...

Variations in Population in Bengal

Turning now to Appendix III we find that during the period 1911-31, the Bagdis, Dhobis, Doms and Haris registered a decline in their populations. While the Namasudras and Bauris show an absolute increase, their rate of increase has been slower than the rate of increase of the total population. The Pods alone show an absolute increase as well as a rate of increase greater than the general rate. During the same period the Brahmins, Rajputs, Kayasthas and Baidyas show an absolute increase as well as a rate of increase greater than the general rate.

The Punjab

Unlike Bengal and Bihar, the Chamars of the Punjab are the most important depressed caste of the Province, forming as they do about 50 per cent of the total depressed class strength. Chuhras or Balmikis account for 26·6 per cent of depressed

class population and rank next to Chamars in numbers. The relative importance of the various castes is shown in Diagram 6. The Chamars, Chuhras, Dagis, Kolis, Dumnas, Meghs, Ods, Ramdasias, Sansis, Gagras, Bawarias, and Sareras account for about 91 per cent of the entire depressed class population. It will be observed that the numerical composition of depressed classes in this province bears a resemblance to that of the U. P.

About 59 per cent of the depressed class people are to be found in the Indo-Gangetic plain West, 9 per cent in the Himalayan region, 22·5 per cent in the Sub-Himalayan and 9·5 per cent in the North-West dry area. The four districts, Hissar, Rohtak, Gurgaon, and Karnal account for about 31·5 per cent of the total strength of depressed classes; Simla and Kangra districts account for about 9 per cent; and Ambala and Hoshiarpur for 18·5 per cent. Thus in these eight districts are to be found 59 per cent of depressed class people.

The Chamars are almost entirely confined to the districts of Hissar, Rohtak, Gurgaon, Karnal, Ambala, Kangra, Hoshiarpur, Jullunder and Ludhiana. More than 98 per cent of them are found in these districts. The majority of the Balmikis are also to be found in these districts, but their population in the districts of Lahore and Amritsar is considerable. Bawarias are found in Hissar and Sansis in the districts of Lahore, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Sialkot, Gujranwala and Sheikhupura. Dagis, Dumnas and Sareras are mainly found in Kangra, though some Sareras are found in Jullunder as well. The Ods are confined to Ambala and Multan Divisions.

Variation in Population

During the period 1911-31 the Chamars registered an absolute increase but their rate of increase was smaller than that of the total population of the province. During the same period the Brahmins show an absolute increase though in this case too the rate of increase is smaller than the general rate. The Balmikis, on the other hand, show a decrease in their population.

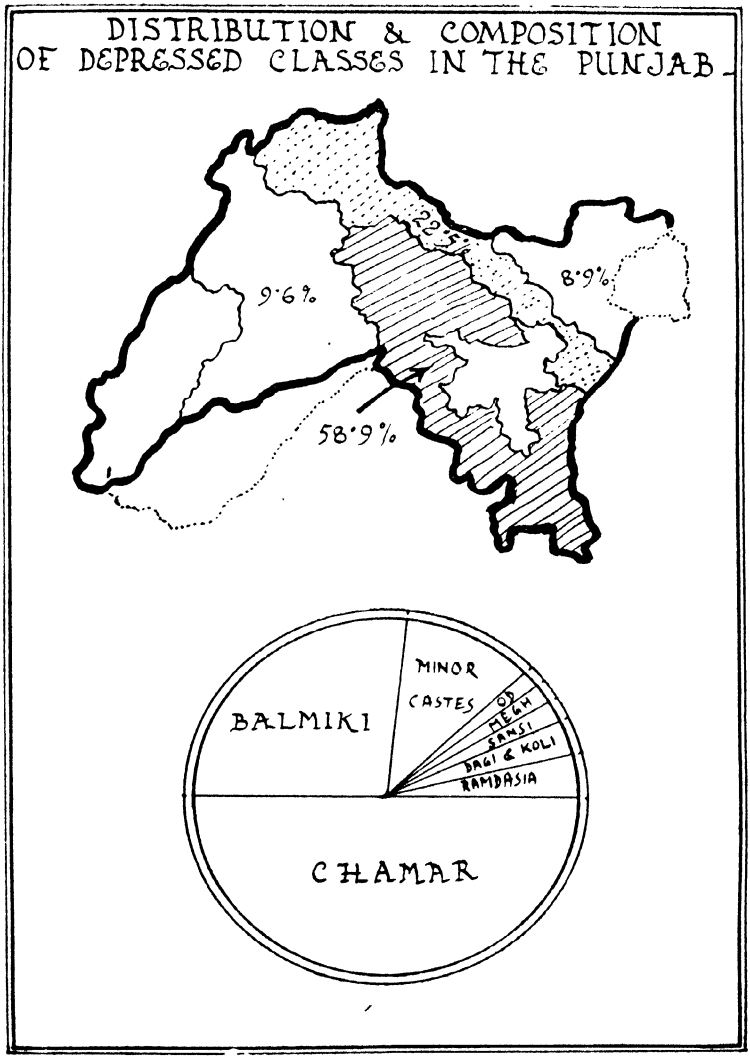

DISTRIBUTION & COMPOSITION
OF DEPRESSED CLASSES IN THE PUNJAB
9·6%
8·9%
58·9%
BALMIKI
MINOR
CASTES
OD
MEGH
SANSI
BAGI & KOLI
RAMDASIA
CHAMAR

Diagram 6

Variations Explained

It will be interesting to recapitulate the main points in connexion with the variations of population.

U.P. (1) In the U. P. the main depressed castes—Chamars, Pasis, Koris, Dhobis—show an absolute increase as well as a rate of increase greater than the general rate.

(2) The high castes of the U. P. either show an absolute decrease or a rate of increase slower than the general rate.

Bihar (3) In Bihar, the Chamars, Doms and Pasis (roughly one-third of total depressed class population) all show an absolute increase as well as a rate of increase greater than the general rate.

(4) The Dusadhs (about 28·3 per cent of the total depressed class population) show a rate of increase slower than the general rate.

(5) The Dhobis and Haris (about 7 per cent of the total) show a net decrease.

(6) During the same period the Brahmins and Rajputs increased at a rate faster than the general rate.

(7) The increases relative to the total population registered by high castes are, on the whole, much greater than those of depressed castes.

(8) The rate of increase of Brahmins is much greater than that of any depressed caste.

Bengal (9) In Bengal the Namasudras and Bauris (about 27 per cent of the total depressed class population) show an absolute increase but a rate of increase slower than the general rate.

(10) The Bagdis, Dhobis, Doms and Haris (about 16 per cent of depressed classes) show a decrease in their respective populations.

(11) During the same period Brahmins, Rajputs, Kayasthas and Baidyas show an absolute increase and a rate of increase greater, in each case, than the general rate.

Punjab (12) In the Punjab the Chamars show an absolute increase but the rate of increase is slower than the general rate.

(13) The Chuhras or Balmikis show an absolute decline.

Some of the causes that have contributed to the apparently slow growth or decline of certain important depressed castes of Bihar, Bengal and the Punjab are conversion to another religion, failure to return any caste, giving a wrong caste, usually one higher in the social scale. In the Punjab, where the fickleness of the Chamars and Balmikis in the matter of religion is proverbial, the apparently slow growth or decline of these castes can be explained by conversion to another religion. It may be mentioned that conversion movements have been particularly strong in this province. These causes do not, however, offer a very satisfactory explanation for the slow growth or decline of certain depressed castes in Bihar and Bengal. No important conversion movements resembling those of the Punjab in their magnitude were reported in these provinces. And be it remembered that these causes, if they were effective at all, were operating in the U. P. too, where most of the important depressed castes showed not only an absolute increase but a rate of increase greater than that of the general population. Probably the slow growth of some castes and the decline of others in Bengal and Bihar is a real one and is not due to errors in enumeration.[1]

1 In Appendix IV are given the 1931 and 1941 population figures for the few castes for which information is available in Table 14 of the 1941 Census Report, Vol. I. The majority of the castes appearing in this Appendix have registered a net decrease during the period 1931-41; the others have mostly increased at a rate slower than the general rate. The decrease in numbers shown by some of the castes (Agariya, Bahelia, Tharu, etc.) is very large and might be due, to a certain extent, to 'errors in enumeration'.

CHAPTER II

CULTIVATORS AND HARWAHAS
(United Provinces)

India is primarily an agricultural country and the greater proportion of the people derive subsistence directly from land. And this dependence of the people on land has been increasing from decade to decade. While in 1891 the percentage of population supported by land was 61 it had increased in 1931 to 71. Industry employed 10 per cent of India's workers in 1931 as compared to 11 per cent in 1921. The 1931 Census revealed that only 1·5 per cent of our total workers were supported by organized industry.

The vast majority of the depressed class people are engaged in the exploitation of animals and vegetation. Below is given the occupational distribution[1] of certain important depressed castes which were in the past associated with some distinct traditional occupation.

TABLE II

Caste	Earners and working dependents	Number of earners whose traditional caste occupation was returned as their		(3) % (2)	(3)+(4) (2) %	Number of earners engaged in exploitation of animals and vegetation (principal occupation)	(5) % (2)
		Principal occupation	Subsidiary occupation				
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)			(5)	
Bhangi-Scavengers	5,55,829	3,10,983	10,335	559	57·8	1,18,838	12·4
Chamars-Skinners & Tanners	50,75,307	3,86,197	89,877	76	9·4	35,58,939	70·1
Dhobi-Washerman	9,51,058	4,36,699	93,631	45·9	55·8	3,45,881	36·4
Khatick-pig breeder	1,03,582	22,258	2,844	21·5	24·3	51,699	49·9

[1] See Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Pt. II, pp. 416-417

It will be observed that the proportion of those who still follow their traditional calling, as a principal means of livelihood, is small. For instance, only 7·6 per cent of the Chamars are skinners and tanners. On the other hand, as many as 70·1 per cent of the Chamars are engaged in the exploitation of animals and vegetation. But in the case of castes like the Musahars, Dosadhs, Namasudras, who have no specific traditional occupation, the proportion of those engaged in the exploitation of animals and vegetation is likely to be greater than that of Chamars even.

Depressed Classes in U.P.
Traditional Occupations

TABLE III

Caste	1911			1931		
	Number per mile of workers who returned their traditional caste occupation as:—					
	Principal Occupation	Subsidiary Occupation	Principal or Subsidiary Occupation	Principal Occupation	Subsidiary Occupation	Principal or Subsidiary Occupation
Bhangi	767	21	788	647	14	661
Dhobi	527	74	601	526	113	639
Khatik	145	8	153	227	24	251
Chamar	37	11	48	48	9	57
Pasi	5	3	8	22	4	26

In Appendix V is given the occupational distribution for certain important depressed castes in U.P. These figures bring out clearly the small proportion of depressed class people now engaged in traditional occupations. In the case of the Chamars 84·8 per cent earners are engaged in the exploitation

of animals and vegetation and the corresponding figure for the Pasis is 88·7 per cent. The Dhobis and Bhangis are notable exceptions to the above statement. In the case of the former 52·6 per cent of the workers are engaged in their traditional occupation and the corresponding figure for the latter is 64·7 per cent. TABLE III (page 21)[1] brings to light changes in the importance of traditional occupations for certain castes.

An examination of these figures shows that during the period under review the importance of traditional occupation increased in the case of Dhobis, Khatiks, Chamars and Pasis. But this cannot be interpreted as indicating that tanning or shoe-making industries were in a flourishing state at the close of the last decade. It must be remembered that the actual number of workers employed in industries of all kinds, in 1931, was well below the 1911 figure. The Census Superintendent for 1931 observes: "The manufacture of boots, shoes, etc. and making of clothes appear to be suffering severely from foreign competition."[2] Further, towards the end of the last decade began the movement of agricultural labourers back into the villages and this movement must have continued apace.[3] It must also be borne in mind that at the time of the 1931 Census the country was in the grip of an economic depression and the problem of unemployment of industrial labour had become acute. The conclusion then is unavoidable that if more and more Chamars were taking to their traditional calling it was due mainly to the absence of other avenues of employment and not because their traditional occupation had become more profitable. Even if the margin of profit is very small, caste occupation saves them from starvation. As regards the Khatiks the increased importance of traditional occupation is ascribable to the development of the bristles trade. The increased importance of toddy-tapping was due partly to the fillip given to liquor trade by the then existing excise policy of the government. In the case of Dhobis an additional reason might have been the increased importance of laundry work in the cities, the population of which was growing.

1 U. P. Census Report, 1931, Pt. I, p. 409.
2 U P. Census Report, 1931, Pt. I, p. 399.
3 Ibid.

Proportion of Tenants, Harwahas,[1] *etc.*

It has already been pointed out that the depressed classes depend mainly on land. An analysis of the data collected by us reveals the basic fact that the proportion of the depressed class people who have acquired any rights in land is extremely small. Nowhere are they the owners of the land they cultivate. Taking the province as a whole, of the depressed class workers in the countryside, about 10 per cent are occupancy or statutory tenants, 20 per cent are non-occupancy tenants, 6 per cent follow some traditional occupation and 64 per cent are *harwahas* and agricultural labourers. These proportions vary with the locality. Thus in the eastern and central parts of the province, about 35 per cent of the workers are cultivators, about 3 per cent follow some traditional occupation and the rest are *harwahas.* In the western district, on the other hand, about 10 per cent workers are cultivators, about 20 per cent follow some traditional occupation and the rest are *harwahas* and labourers.

Variations in the Proportion of Tenants (occupancy or statutory.)

That the proportion of tenants varies considerably in different areas has already been mentioned. For instance, in areas where there are big landlords the proportion of depressed class people, who are occupancy or statutory tenants, is very small, the actual figure rarely exceeding 5 per cent. These landlords have large *sir* or *khudkasht* lands and they can seldom countenance the acquisition of occupancy or statutory rights by the depressed classes. Thus, in a village where the landlord resides and in the neighbouring villages where he has *sir* or *khudkasht* we can be sure of finding a large number of *harwahas,* a vast majority of whom are recruited from the depressed classes. This is the zamindar's method of creating a reservoir of labour force which he needs so much for the cultivation of *khudkasht.* In big estates the proportion of occupancy and statutory tenants goes up to about 7 per cent. Again, the

1 A sort of farm-hand with status verging on slavery. Full explanation of the term will be given at a later stage.

proportion of tenants often goes up to 10 per cent in areas where there are large numbers of petty high caste zamindars as for instance in certain areas of eastern U.P. Here, there is a plethora of petty zamindars who are only slightly better off than the cultivators. As a consequence of the rivalries and feuds that exist among them, a zamindar very often helps his rival's *harwaha* in fighting for statutory rights. It is, however, in inaccessible areas, areas that are inhospitable or are extremely susceptible to floods, that the proportion of the depressed class tenants is greater than elsewhere. Also, it is there that the holdings of these people are bigger than elsewhere.

Reasons for Small Proportion of Depressed Class Tenants

An important reason explaining the small proportion of depressed class tenants is to be found in the existence of large areas of *farzi khudkasht*. Ever since the land-laws put a premium on the acquisition of *sir* and *khudkasht*, the landlords have striven assiduously to have the maximum possible area recorded as their *khudkasht* and *sir*. While in Agra Province the proportion of the total area that could be demarcated as *sir* was fixed by law, the tenancy law for Oudh contained no parallel provision. And in neither province were there any limits to the total *khudkasht* area a landlord could possess. For the zamindar, *sir* and *khudkasht* are a sort of insurance against adversity. Should he fall on evil days and lose proprietory rights in land, he can acquire occupancy rights in his *sir* as well as *khudkasht* of ten years standing (12 years in Oudh) at rates of rent more favourable than those paid by occupancy tenants. Such being the legal position, it is easy to understand the desire of the landlord to get the maximum possible area recorded as *sir* or *khudkasht*. But it is not so easy to manage large areas of *khudkasht*. For the zamindar the only way of realizing this ambition lay in permitting regular tenants to cultivate a portion of his land and in getting it recorded as *khudkasht*.[1] With the rural community steeped in ignorance, with their attitude

1. *Khudkasht, nijjot, sir* are terms commonly used for proprietor's private land. In the U.P. there is a subtle distinction between *khudkasht* and *sir*. Acccording to the Agra Tenancy Act, land cultivated by a proprietor for a period of ten years (12 years in Oudh) could on the application

of regarding everything as the landlord's favour, and with the *patwari*, an ill-paid servant, at the beck and call of the landlord, this could easily be managed. So in addition to the land actually cultivated as *khudkasht* there came into existence vast areas that were being cultivated by regular tenants since thirty or forty years but were entered in Government records as *khudkasht* of landlord. There were villages (at least in the Basti district) where more than 90 per cent of the village area was entered as the zamindar's *khudkasht*. Even a cursory examina-

of the proprietor or permanent tenure holder be demarcated as *sir* by the Collector. The proportion of the total area that could be recorded as a zamindar's *sir* was limited in the following manner:—

(1) If the cultivated area in the mahal owned by the landlord or held by the permanent tenure holder is not more than 30 acres.	Total *sir* area cannot exceed 50% of such area.
(2) If such area is more than 30 acres but not more than 600 acres.	As above on 30 acres and 15% on the balance.
(3) If such area is more than 600 acres.	As above on 600 acres and 10% on the balance.

The tenancy law for Oudh did not contain any provision that limited the *sir* area of a zamindar.

Sir holders enjoyed certain special privileges. In Agra province every landlord or permanent tenure holder who lost his proprietory rights in land except by way of gift or exchange between co-sharers in a mahal, became an ex-proprietory tenant in his *sir* and *khudkasht* of ten years' standing (12 years in Oudh) at the date of transfer. These ex-proprietory tenants enjoyed all the privileges of occupancy tenants and, in addition to that, held land at more favourable rates of rent. In Agra the rent payable by ex-proprietory tenants was 2 annas in the rupee less than the rate prescribed for occupancy tenants for the same class of land and in Oudh it was 4 annas in the rupee less than the rate payable by non-occupancy tenants.

If *sir* land was mortgaged and possession transferred, statutory rights could not accrue for 12 years.

According to the U.P. Tenancy Act, 1939, the total *sir* area that a landlord can acquire cannot exceed 50 acres. There is, as before no limit to the *khudkashty* area. A landlord losing his proprietory rights becomes an ex-proprietory tenant in *sir* or *khudkasht* of 3 years' standing. It should be mentioned that in no other province in Northern India do *sir* owners enjoy privileges similar to these. In fact in Bihar and Bengal, *sir* is synonymous with *khudkasht* or *nij*.

tion of the home and hearth of these cultivators could not fail to reveal to one familiar with the conditions of the countryside that these were regular tenants, and not mere *harwahas*. Now it comes about that the depressed class people on account of their greater ignorance, are much more numerous in *farzi khud-kasht* than castes like the kurmis and Ahirs. It is true that these people could seek the aid of law; but it was not so easy. The cultivator knows it too well that he might have to face starvation in the event of his losing the case. Court proceedings usually drag on for a long time and the zamindar manages to win by starving out his opponents who cannot hold out very long. By virtue of his power and influence the zamindar can institute false cases against his opponents, nay, he can often take the law into his own hands and escape without serious consequences to himself. But this is not the end of it. Often the tenant is prevented from sowing his field till it is fairly late simply because he has to attend the court daily. And it was on account of these very reasons that so many of the depressed class tenants who applied for statutory or occupancy rights withdrew their claims within a month or so of making their applications.

Another reason explaining the small proportion of depressed class tenants lay probably in the ejectments consequent upon non-payment of rent. As a result of the agricultural depression that overtook the country towards the beginning of the last decade, arrears of rent began to pile up and many ejectments followed. With the advent of Congress Ministry and the impending tenancy reforms the rate of ejectment went up. It may be mentioned that in the past the landlords seldom issued receipts for payments of rent. But with the growing consciousness regarding tenancy rights among the peasantry and with the party in power promising drastic tenancy reforms the relations between tenants and landlords did not remain cordial and so the 'arrears' of rent began to mount. The tenancy law as it existed provided for the ejectment of any tenant in the case of non-payment of rent while non-occupancy tenants could be ejected simply because the landlord so desired. For improved farming a zamindar could acquire land from statutory tenants and heirs of statutory tenants by applying to the Collector.

The zamindar made full use of his powers to deprive as many people of tenancy *rights as he possibly could.*[1]

The growing indebtedness of the tenants, whether due to bad harvests, agricultural depression, usurious rates of interest, or uneconomic expenditure, also explains the large number of ejectments that occurred during recent years.[2]

Caste and Tenancy Rights

While considering the rights in land of depressed classes we pointed out that the majority of them were, especially in eastern and central parts, *harwahas.* It must not, however, be understood that all the depressed castes do *harwahi.* The Khatik never does *harwahi.* Where he has not acquired occupancy or statutory rights, he takes land on lease paying often very high rates of rent. But he can usually afford to pay high rates of rent for he practises market gardening and fruit culture. The Dhobis and Bhangis are other notable exceptions. These are 'professional' groups par excellence. And *harwahi,*

1 Towards the close of the last decade, however, Government came to the rescue of the tenant. The Board of Revenue stopped, by executive order, all suits and other proceedings for the recovery of rent of kharif 1344 Fasli (1936-37) and previous years and also of rabi 1344 Fasli in places where remissions for agricultural calamities had been given. Suits for ejectment and enhancement of rent and execution of decrees in suits of the above type were also stopped by executive action. The U. P. Stay of Proceedings (Revenue Court) Act of 1937 was subsequently passed to regularize the above orders of the Board of Revenue. The duration of the Act was extended by an amendment Act of 1938. The United Provinces Stayed Arrears of Rent (Remission) Act was subsequently passed by the Congress Government. This Act remitted all arrears of rent due from tenants (except those the rent payable by whom in the year 1344 Fasli was more than 500 rupees) in respect of kharif 1344 Fasli or prior fasals and for rabi 1344 Fasli in areas where remissions for agricultural calamities had been given. These measures benefited a considerable number of the tenants.

2 It might be interesting to notice that in India the proportion of tenants as compared to agricultural labourers declined during the period 1921-31. While in 1921 there were 291 farm servants and agricultural labourers per 1,000 ordinary cultivators (tenant cultivators and cultivating owners), in 1931 there were as many as 407 farm servants and agricultural labourers to 1,000 cultivators. This may be taken as indicating the concentration of land in the hands of non-cultivating owners.

as will be shown later on, is incompatible with any other independent profession. In villages, the majority of the Dhobis have acquired occupancy or statutory rights, the proportion at times going up to 80 per cent. Of the remainder some hold land on lease while a few depend exclusively on their 'profession'. Amongst the Bhangis the proportion of occupancy and statutory tenants is extremely small. They depend mainly on their traditional occupation though at times they become labourers. They are often employed as field watchmen to protect crops from wild animals. In the case of the Chamars the proportion of occupancy and statutory tenants is very small and may be estimated as not exceeding 5 per cent and the proportion of non-occupancy tenants as not exceeding 15 per cent. Thus about 80 per cent Chamars may be estimated as mere *harwahas*.[1]

Size of Holding

We have already seen that the proportion of depressed class people who have acquired occupancy or statutory rights is small. The holdings of these tenants are also very small. About 80 per cent of their holdings lie between ¼ to 1½ bighas. As already pointed out, it is usually in inaccessible and inhospitable areas that the proportion of occupancy tenants as well as the average size of their holding go up. About 60 per cent of the holdings in such tracts are found to lie between 1½ to 4 bighas. Holdings bigger than these may also be found, though in such cases it is invariably a case of joint family property. Thus if holdings are bigger the number of adult male workers in the family is also greater. Speaking generally, holdings are bigger in the western parts of the Plain than in the centre and the east.

The holdings of non-occupancy tenants are also small, the size varying from ¼ to 2 bighas. There is a keen competition for land and, therefore, these tenants have often to pay very high rents. It has already been mentioned that in villages those Khatiks who have not acquired occupancy or statutory rights cultivate land as non-occupancy tenants. The Chamars

1 Excluding those engaged in leather work.

and other depressed caste men are often allowed possession of a non-occupancy holding simply because they do *harwahi*. In such cases ejectment follows speedily upon the cultivator's refusal to do *harwahi*. During recent years there have been several ejectments of non-occupancy tenants especially in the eastern parts of the province where propaganda was being carried on to dissuade such tenants from doing *harwahi*.

Livestock

The majority of the holdings of depressed class tenants being so small it is both unnecessary and uneconomic for many of them to keep any livestock. But, generally, with an increase in the size of a holding beyond half a bigha, plough cattle will be kept. So long as the holding is less than one and a half bighas, one bullock is usually kept and ploughing is done by borrowing a fellow tenant's bullock. When, however, the size of the holding increases beyond this limit, two bullocks will invariably be kept. The non-occupancy tenants, who do *harwahi*, normally use the zamindar's cattle for ploughing their fields and seldom maintain any livestock of their own. In the central and eastern U.P. the cattle kept by these people are small and emaciated and often cost Rs. 15 or less per pair. In some localities, especially in the flood-stricken eastern districts, the bullocks are mere skeletons and can be had for even less than Rs. 8 per pair. The cattle are kept on grass and paddy or wheat stalks and these things too are available in insufficient quantities. Oil-cakes, gram, etc. the cattle never get. The holdings being small, the tenants can hardly afford to grow fodder crops and those who do grow can seldom spare more than one and a half *biswas* of land for this purpose. Generally speaking, the cattle kept by depressed class tenants in the western districts are of a much better quality than those found in the eastern and central parts of the province. This is attributable mainly to the grazing facilities available in the western districts, to the better breed of cattle and to the better economic position of the tenants of these districts. Moreover, the holdings of the tenants in the western districts are bigger and they invariably grow fodder crops as well. Again, in the same area,

the cattle kept by a tenant will be of better quality when carting is a subsidiary occupation.

Seed

For the supply of seed the majority of these people depend on Zamindars, Banias and high caste tenants, who have adopted the lucrative profession of giving seed on *bisar*. According to this system for every seer of seed borrowed during sowing season one and a quarter or one and a half seers have to be returned at harvest time.

Cash Crops and Rent

The majority of depressed class tenants (80 per cent to 90 per cent) practise subsistence farming. They do not, as a rule, grow money crops. Subsistence, indeed, is the most important problem confronting a depressed class tenant. Rent, he usually pays by working as a labourer by taking to service or *harwahi* or from the proceeds of any ancillary occupation that he might have. Only occasionally do depressed class tenants pay their rent by selling a part of their produce. This happens where the holdings are of fair dimensions. It is either wheat or rice, according as rabi or kharif is important, that goes towards the payment of rent.

New Crops

New crops are being taken up for cultivation even by the depressed classes. Sugar-cane is now being grown in certain localities chiefly as a cash crop. Potatoes, too, are being produced though mainly for home consumption. During winter months, potato forms an important constituent of the diet of depressed class people. Tobacco is grown in certain localities mainly for home consumption. Vegetables like radishes, carrots, *palak* (spinach of finer variety) are not grown by depressed class tenants, especially by Chamars, because they are afraid that their crops would be taken away free by men of other castes. The Khatik, however, is a notable exception for he grows almost exclusively vegetables and fruits. He can protect his fields effectively from the depredations of birds, wild animals and men of other castes.

Disposal of Produce

As indicated above, the proportion of depressed class tenants who grow cash crops is small. The methods of disposal of such crops vary from locality to locality. In some localities the Bania advances money to the cultivator at the time of sowing for purchase of seed, etc. and buys the crop when it is ready. The practice of hypothecation of crops is not confined to the depressed classes but, as is well known, it is true of our tenantry in general. The Bania buys at rates lower than those prevailing in the market and he cheats them often in weighment as well as in calculating the amount due to them. The other tenants too suffer on account of these evils but the depressed class tenants are probably the worst sufferers on account of their gullibility and ignorance. But such evils tend to decrease as the people increase their general awareness. The periodical visits to towns go a long way in educating the tenants. The disadvantages connected with the system of hypothecation of crops cannot, however, disappear so long as the Bania continues to be a very important source of credit in the village. Wherever the tenants can help it, they themselves take their produce to the nearest market either on pack animals or on carts according to the state of communications and the quantity to be disposed of.

Economic Condition of Tenants

It has been indicated above that the great majority of the holdings of depressed class tenants are extremely small. Some of the holdings are mere tiny bits of land. That the majority of these cultivators cannot make ends meet from the proceeds of cultivation is an obvious inference which emerges from an examination of the size of their holdings and the fact that intensive cultivation is an exception rather than the rule.[1]

An analysis of the data collected by us reveals that 67·3 per cent of the cultivators are either cultivating their plots at a loss or are making no net profit; 17·3 per cent of them make a

1 It is only the Khatiks who practise vegetable gardening and are able to make cultivation of small plots a profitable concern. This is, however, specialized cultivation. The position of Khatiks will be examined in the next chapter.

net profit of less than Rs. 25 per annum; 3·4 per cent of them make a net profit of Rs. 25 to Rs. 50 per annum; and the remaining 12 per cent make a net profit of more than Rs. 50 per annum. Since a net profit of Rs. 25 represents a small margin, which will very often be wiped away by the vicissitudes of agricultural seasons, we may say that the condition of 84·6 per cent of the tenants is very unsatisfactory.[1]

It may be pointed out that if no allowance is made for family labour 71·1 per cent families make a gross profit of less than Rs. 25 per annum; 15·4 per cent families make a gross profit of Rs. 25 to Rs. 75 per annum; and the remaining 13·5 per cent families make a gross profit of more than Rs. 75 in a year.

The tenants in the western districts are comparatively better off than those in the central and the eastern parts of the province.[2] While in these latter parts 76·3 per cent tenants are cultivating at a net loss, the corresponding figure for the western districts is 43 per cent. Further, it is only in the western districts that we come across tenants making a net profit of Rs. 50 or more from the cultivation of their holdings.

It is clear from the above that the economic condition of the majority of depressed class tenants is highly unsatisfactory. This conclusion is supported by their low standard of living and

1 In calculating net profit, allowance has been made for family labour. Three women days have been taken to be equivalent to two men days and two child days as equivalent to one man day. The data relate to 135 tenant families.

2 Several causes are responsible for this difference. Holdings in the western parts are relatively big and the proportion of holdings that yield no profit to the cultivator or are cultivated at a loss is comparatively small. While in the eastern and central parts the tenants practise subsistence farming, in the western parts the bigger holdings and more favourable conditions of soil and climate make it possible for the cultivator to raise important money crops like wheat and cotton. Means of communication and transport are also better developed in the western districts compared to other parts of the province. This enables the agriculturists to realize better price for his produce. *Jowar* stalks, *bhusa* etc.—the by-products of agriculture—find a ready market in the large towns of the western districts and bring in a considerable income to the agriculturists in these parts. *Begar* naturally should exist to a smaller extent in the west as compared to other parts of the province. The existence of better grazing

by the extent and burden of indebtedness among them.[1] Speaking generally, there do not appear to be any very pronounced differences between the condition of depressed class tenants and *harwahas*. Undersized holdings alone cannot explain this sorry plight of the tenants; for they do not thrive even where their holdings are relatively big. There are several natural and artificial causes that explain this.

Natural Causes

We have seen that it is in inaccessible and inhospitable tracts that the holdings of these people are fairly big. In such areas either the land is being eroded by a river or the crops are spoiled by floods. Often as a result of recurrent floods production begins to fall off. This has happened in many a place in the eastern U. P.

Artificial Causes: Rent

In this case actual rent is to be distinguished from nominal rent. Since the latter half of the 19th century various measures have been placed on the statute book to prevent zamindars from charging excessive rents or from levying illegal cesses. The evil, however, still persists. Often the rent charged is excessive. But that is not all. The actual rent that the tenant has to pay to zamindars may be twice or thrice the nominal rent, i. e. rent actually due from the tenant. These people seldom have any idea of the rent they have to pay. The zamindar's agents, *sepahis* as they are called in villages, also appropriate a portion of the receipts because the tenant generally pays rent in instalments and keeps no accounts. Steeped in ignorance and without a literate friend, these people succumb easily to the wiles of zamindar's agents. Add to this the fact that until recently it was not customary for the zamindar to issue receipts for the payment of rent and the net result becomes easily intelligible. Thus it is that the actual rent paid by tenants may be two to three times the nominal rent.

acilities in the western districts enables the cultivators to keep milch cattle nd supplement their income by selling ghee. Lastly, wages of unskilled abour are higher in the western districts and days of enforced idleness ewer.

1 See Chapters VI and VII.

Begar

The second point that helps to explain the unsatisfactory condition of these people is the prevalence of *begar*. The word '*begar*' is commonly used to denote forced labour.[1] Generally it means work without wages, but sometimes the labourer gets, for a day's work, about half the prevailing wage. At times the term *begar* is used in a wider sense to include all illegal exactions by zamindars.

In this province, *begar* is extorted mainly for cultivating *sir* and *khudkasht*; but in certain cases the annual repairs to the zamindar's buildings may also be effected by similar means.

Whilst in the past there were legal and quasi-legal sanctions that explained the existence of *begar*, it is mainly the isolation of the village that explains its persistence. For a proper understanding of the position, it is necessary to bear in mind that in spite of about 100 years of peace that India has enjoyed, in spite of the steam engine and the rail, much of Rural India remains isolated for a considerable part of the year. In regions that are almost entirely cut off from the rest of the country from July till the middle of October, the life of the people is influenced

1 This relic of serfdom had its origin, probably, in race conflict. The *Rigveda* depicts the Sudra as a domestic servant who could be turned out or slain at will. In the Mahabharata it is laid down that "the Sudra can have no absolute property because his property can be appropriated by his master at will. If the master of a Sudra has fallen into distress the latter shall support him, and his treasure, if any, shall be placed at the disposal of the poor master." According to Gautama, "a Brahmin may help himself to the money of a Sudra by fraud or force in order to defray the expenses of a marriage or a religious rite" (See *Caste and Race in India* by G. S. Ghurye, pp. 54-7). If this was the position of the Sudra, the position of the Chandala can well be imagined. In any case, by its persistence through ages *begar* has marshalled on its side the forces of tradition, conservatism and apathy.

But *begar* is not a unique feature of our socio-economic system. Foreign countries provide many parallels. In Ireland of the 18th and early 19th centuries *begar* did exist. "By a written or verbal agreement or sometimes in virtue of a tacit understanding the tenant bound himself to work at the landlord's demand for a very low wage or even without payment. Both landlords and agents were wont to call attention with pride to this voluntary service of the natives whenever they did the honours of an estate to some foreign visitor." (Elie Halevy: *A History of the English People*, Vol. II, p. 20.)

very slightly by external forces. New ideas and ideals—the life-blood of a dynamic civilization—do not circulate. That the zamindar is all-powerful in such places need hardly be stressed. The threat of demolishing a man's dwelling or ejecting him therefrom are powerful weapons in his hand for extorting *begar*. Till recently the cultivators did not have any rights in their house sites. The position has been slightly changed by the Tenancy Act of 1939 which provides that a tenant may not be ejected from his dwelling merely on the ground that he has ceased to be a tenant. But the zamindar cares little about the legal position. If necessary, he uses force to compel these people to do *begar*.

As many tenants are indebted to the zamindars, the latter, as creditors, can often compel the former to do *begar*. Incidentally, the zamindar is a very important source of credit, at least so far as depressed classes are concerned.

Extent of Begar

In certain districts of Sub-Himalaya East, zamindars often employ men at one anna per day while the bazar rate of wages varies from two to two and a half annas. In certain localities every cultivator has to work for 48 days a year on *begar*, and besides this, has to present annually to the zamindar 1¼ seer of ghee and about two to three maunds of wheat straw (worth a rupee). In one estate of a Raja, tenants have been paying, ever since 1911, annas three per rupee of rent as contribution towards expenses of Delhi Durbar! The actual number of *begar* days varies with the zamindar, i. e. according to *sir* and *khudkasht* area and other work connected usually with the maintenance of zamindar's houses. At times even in the case of small zamindars, the number of *begar* days per year stand as high as 24. Artisans, generally, get from six to eight annas per day when market rate varies from ten to twelve annas. In certain parts of the province, zamindars were wont to levy a tax for almost everything the tenant did. Whenever there was a birth, a betrothal, or a marriage, the tenant had to pay something to the zamindar. Cases have come to light where the tenant had to pay a tax if his wife ran away (Aurat Bhagi)! Even now when the cultivators are unable to decide a dispute and refer the

matter to the zamindar, he usually fines both parties, the fine money going into the zamindar's pocket.

Depressed Classes in Begar

While most of our peasants suffer from *begar*, the depressed classes are the worst sufferers. Most of these people, especially the Chamars, are psychologically depressed. They are more docile than others and are in fact cowed down with fear. To understand the formation of this behaviour pattern we have to take into consideration the entire social environment in which a depressed class child is nurtured. A depressed class man cannot keep sitting in the presence of a zamindar or other high caste people; he cannot put on white clothes, or shoes and he cannot even tie his *dhoti* in the style of high caste Hindus. He has to remain at a respectable distance from high caste Hindus and is usually addressed by names that imply rebuke. While the disabilities from which these people suffer will be discussed in greater detail in another place, suffice it to say here that these humiliating social conditions have existed since time immemorial. To the extent that Sutras reflect prevailing social conditions it is clear from these that "the mark of inferiority was permanently impressed on the Sudra."[1] And it might be remembered that the Nisada and the Chandala, who account mostly for our depressed classes have, ever since the time of their differentiation from the Sudra, occupied a much lower position than the latter.

Disappearance of Begar

Of late, people appear to have become conscious of the anomalous position of feudal practices in a 'democratic age'. Already much of *begar* has been swept away by the organized opposition of the peasantry. But it has not ceased to exist, not even in the midst of such organizational activity. It has now assumed the more modest name of 'voluntary assistance'. Another form in which it is becoming more widely prevalent is under-payment of wages, the zamindar usually paying one anna while the market rate of wages varies from two to three annas. *Begar* in its more naked form, i. e. work without wages is tending to disappear.

1 Ghurye, op. cit., p. 62.

As regards legislative action, Government have made the exaction of *begar* illegal. The United Provinces Tenancy Bill of 1939 prohibits the taking of *begar* and *nazarana*. The Bill includes provisions similar to those of the present law in Agra as regards cesses which are not of the nature of rent defined in Section 86 of the Land Revenue Act, 1901. These will now be applicable to Oudh as well. Under the new law payments in kind which are of the nature of rent are not forbidden but if these are taken then in suits for enhancement or abatement of rent their value will be taken into consideration in determining the account of rent to be paid in each. Laudable and necessary though such an enactment is, it is not likely to prove immediately effective in rooting out this evil. It has already been indicated that in this province zamindars take *begar* mostly because they have *sir* and *khudkasht*. The amount of *sir* has no doubt been limited to 50 acres but the temptation for employing unpaid labour still remains.

Besides *begar* which is only an extreme instance of the evil, various economic disabilities make for the highly unsatisfactory economic and social condition of the depressed classes. Two examples only are mentioned here, pending a later description in detail. They are often prevented from ploughing and sowing their fields at proper time simply because they have to work for the zamindar. At times they are prevented from using tank water for irrigating their *rabi* crop till the zamindar's fields have been irrigated. Often they are given a chance very late and if, maybe, they have the misfortune of incurring the zamindar's displeasure their turn may never come.

CHAPTER III

CULTIVATORS AND HARWAHAS
(United Provinces)

Meaning of Harwaha

We now propose to deal with *harwahas* who form by far the greater proportion of depressed class people dependent on land. It would be desirable, at this stage, to define the term '*harwaha*'. Literally it means a tiller of the soil. In actual practice, a *harwaha* is a man in the employ of a zamindar or a tenant, for a part or whole of the year, who does ploughing, sowing, reaping and in fact any other work that his employer bids him do. The term 'farm-servant', as understood in other countries, denotes a master-servant contractual relation. In India that relation is not actually well-defined. It fails, moreover, to connote the element of compulsion that is invariably involved in *harwahi*. In fact *harwahi* is a system of bondage bearing marked resemblance to ancient serfdom.[1]

Necessity of Harwaha

It has already been seen that zamindars have usually big *sir* and *khudkasht* areas for the cultivation of which they need

[1] Such systems of employing labour have existed in other countries too. The hind of early 19th century England and the cottier of Ireland occupied a position resembling that of our *harwaha*, though the resemblance was more marked in the latter case than in the former. In Ireland, as Wakefield points out, there was usually a small plot of land attached to the dry cottier's dwelling on which he could grow oats and potatoes and in return for these the cottier undertook to work for the farmer at a low wage. (*Ireland*, Vol. II, p. 740.) At the end of the year the cottier was invariably found in the farmer's debt and the accounts were adjusted by the system of conveniences, that is, by an exchange of services. Put briefly the cottier system means that the richer party grants land to the poorer in exchange for his labour and as a consequence the latter becomes practically the former's serf. The analogy between India of today and Ireland of early 19th century cannot be carried too far because here, especially in the interior, exploitation of *harwahas* exists in a much more naked form.

Our *harwahas* also show a marked resemblance to the peons of Mexico. (see W. E. Carson: *Mexico*)

some constant labourers—'men who have no other means of support than their daily labour'.[1] But the demand for *harwahas* is not confined to big zamindars. The small zamindars and tenants, who belong to the high castes—Kshatriya, Thakur, Brahmin—also need *harwahas*. These castes will not drive the plough themselves. For them it is '*infra dig*' and against caste rules. While some of the ancient Hindu law-givers did not permit Brahmins to take to agriculture, Gautama permitted them to do so provided they employed servants to do the actual work.[2] And most of the high caste people who have taken to agriculture follow faithfully the law laid down by Gautama.

In the sowing season, if one cares to visit villages with a fairly large proportion of high caste tenants, one often sees even boys of seven or eight years of age holding the plough handle, while an adult is driving the bullocks. These are mostly Chamar boys and the man driving the bullocks is a high caste man. He can bring the plough to the field but drive the plough he will not. It is because of the great demand for depressed class people in some villages at the time of sowing that even boys of tender age have to do such jobs.

Harwahas exist because of *sir* and *khudkasht* as well as caste or social prejudices. But the forms of land tenure, i. e. conditions of agricultural production have supported the above.

Remuneration

The remuneration and terms of employment of *harwahas* vary from locality to locality. They depend also on the importance of the *harwaha* to the zamindar. While big zamindars employ *harwahas* for the whole year, petty zamindars and tenants employ them for three to six months in a year. Their remuneration takes the form of either a monthly cash payment varying mostly from Re. 1-8 to Rs. 2 but occasionally going up to Rs. 3, or it is a definite share of the produce from the land cultivated by the *harwaha*. In the latter case, the *harwaha*'s share is not uniform. In Basti the *harwaha* gets one-sixth of the produce of a few bighas of *sir* land but his work is not confined to these few bighas only. In Gonda they get one-fifth of

1 Marshal: *Western Department*, p. 115.

2 *Dharmasutra* (Buhler's trans., in SBE., Vol. II, p. 225.)

the produce of the land they cultivate or 22½ per cent of the total produce of *sir* area, and if the wife of a *harwaha* also works, she gets 9 per cent of the produce. Where the *harwaha* is remunerated by a share of the produce, he generally gets a weekly advance of about 15 seers of grain—rice, *kodo*, *gujai*, etc. As in the case of the Irish cottier, at the end of the year a *harwaha* is found to have consumed more than his due share, and accounts are adjusted by a system of 'conveniences'. The grain debt invariably increases year by year, thus securing in perpetuity the services of a *harwaha* for the zamindar. In some areas we find *bisarwaras* as well. They are *harwahas* with a different system of remuneration. A *bisarwara* gets the produce of 1 bigha if the zamindar has 50 bighas of *sir*. His work, of course, is determined by the zamindar. Among Tharus a *harwaha* eats in his master's house, and uses his master's bullocks for ploughing as much land as can be sown with 1½ maunds of paddy seed, which is supplied free by the zamindar. In the interior, these people do not know anything about bighas and the only way of limiting the land given to a *harwaha* is by giving a fixed quantity of seed. Where, however, they have come under the influence of 'civilization' they have limited the number of bighas of *sir* that a *harwaha* can sow, but here too the quantity of seed given free to a *harwaha* remains the same. A Tharu *harwaha* is treated as a member of the zamindar's household and like a journeyman of the middle ages often ends by marrying the Tharu zamindar's daughter. Usually the *harwaha's* wife also works in the zamindar's house. Besides her food, she gets every year 1 *lenhga* (petticoat), 1 jumper and 1 *urhni*. Tharus do not work as *harwahas* with non-Tharus.

Land in Lieu of Harwahi

We have seen that like the cottier of Ireland and the hind of England, the *harwaha* too gets a small piece of land varying from one to three bighas (*kachcha*)[1]. He is allowed to cultivative this so long as he continues to do *harwahi*. The rent per bigha (*kachcha*) is generally equal to the monthly pay of the *harwaha* though it may occasionally exceed it. This amount is deducted from the pay of a *harwaha*. In Gonda such land is called *ukhra-*

[1] 1210 Square Yards approximately.

kasht. There, no cash rent is charged but the zamindar gets a share of the produce. Out of the total produce the zamindar takes one-eighth as rent etc. and the balance is divided between the *harwaha* and the zamindar in the ratio of 3 : 2 or 2½ : 2.

This mode of paying the *harwaha* partly in cash and partly in kind has certain distinct advantages. It satisfies the labourer's love for land; it satisfies too his desire to be a cultivator; and it enables the landlord to reduce the *harwaha*'s wages.

Causes of Low Harwahi *Wages.*

It has been noticed that a *harwaha* normally gets from Re. 1-8 to Rs. 2 per month which comes to 9 pies to 1 anna a day. The market rate of wages of unskilled labour varies from 2 to 3 annas. This difference requires explanation. It has to be remembered that an average depressed class man loves his home and will not leave it unless compelled to do so; that he has no confidence in himself as a social unit and is inured to hardships; that, even if he does not want to do *harwahi*, the zamindar forces it on him by resorting to corporal or other forms of punishment. It has also to be taken into account that agricultural work is of a seasonal nature and during off season it is difficult to find work for more than ten days a month Further, almost every *harwaha* is indebted to the zamindar and his debt goes on increasing year after year. Indebtedness to zamindar brings about the virtual enslavement of the *harwaha.* For, if the latter runs away to another locality, the zamindar invokes the aid of law and gets him arrested for being a dishonest debtor. And so long as the *harwaha* remains in the same locality the zamindar would not let him work for another person. It must not be forgotten that in the countryside the zamindar possesses unbridled power.

Securing Services of a Harwaha

Zamindars, generally, succeed in inducing these people to work for them as *harwahas* by lending them some money. In some parts of the province, this advance is called *sanwak.* In Basti district when a zamindar wants a *harwaha* to settle on his land, he gives him either Rs. 16 or 1 bigha (*kachcha*) of rent free

land. Sometimes the zamindar gives only Rs. 4 per annum for two or three years. As noted above, the *harwahas* are all indebted, to a smaller or greater extent. When the debt is small, say Rs. 20, and the *harwaha* wants to go to another zamindar in the same locality or in a nearby place, he uses part of the *sanwak* to repay the debt to his old master. If, however, his new master can give him the necessary protection the *harwaha* can straight off repudiate his former debt. When the *harwaha's* debt is more than Rs. 50, he seeks a new master in a distant place and does not bother about repayment of old debt. The *sanwak* is never repaid by a *harwaha*. In fact it goes on mounting steadily by periodic additions of interest and fresh debt. It is by keeping the *harwaha* always indebted that his services may be retained. That these means are not always effective will be shown in Chapter VII.

Harwaha's *Holding*

It has already been mentioned that the plots of land held by *harwahas* are small. The actual size of a *harwaha's* holding depends upon the position of the zamindar, and the importance of a *harwaha* to the zamindar. Moreover, the landlord sees to it that the land at a *harwaha's* disposal does not take too much of his time. Speaking generally, whenever the land held by a *harwaha* family exceeds 1 bigha we are sure to find two or three members of the same family working as *harwahas*. Some of the occupancy and statutory tenants having tiny holdings may take to *harwahi* either of their own accord[1] or because they have to do so.

Quality of Land

The quality of land held by *harwahas* need not be bad for the *harwaha* must be able to get something out of it even with the little time he can devote to its cultivation. This is obviously necessary to keep the *harwaha* from running away. The *harwaha* cultivates his holding with the zamindar's bullocks, giving him in return his paddy or wheat stalks. A few *harwaha* families, some of whose members do not work as *harwahas*, manage

1 This happens when the only way of getting more land for cultivation is by doing *harwahi*.

to get land on lease as well. Such families keep bullocks but they hardly form more than 3 per cent of the *harwaha* families. Some of them get their fields tilled by a neighbour for a payment of one to two rupees and thus obviate the necessity of keeping plough cattle.

Subsidiary Occupations

These people often rear for others kids and calves on *hissa* system ; that is, when these grow into goats and cows the *harwaha* is entitled to half their market value. At times they get calves at cheap rates from Brahmins and rear these up for themselves. Bullocks are sold off but cows may be kept to bring up calves and to supply cow-dung. In the villages, cow-dung is a coveted thing. It is used as manure, as fuel and for plastering the walls and floors of houses. A small number of the Chamars, Khatiks and Doms rear pigs also.

Seed Supply

For sowing his field a *harwaha* usually obtains seed on *bisar* from the zamindar. According to the *bisar* system, if the *harwaha* gets 1 maund of seed during sowing season, he has to return 1¼ to 1½ maunds at harvest time. Taking six months as the period of loan, the effective rate of interest paid by a *harwaha* varies from 56 per cent per annum to 125 per cent per annum. The *bisar* system, however, affects most of our cultivators though the depressed classes are perhaps the worst sufferers. This is because they have invariably got to get seed on *bisar* and also because their incomes being smaller, the burden of interest is heavier.

Crops

It is hardly necessary to point out that the *harwahas* confine their plots almost exclusively to the production of food crops. And it is food grains of the coarser varieties—*kodo, gujai* and *mattar*—that are mostly grown. This is partly because such crops require less time and attention, and partly because these would give a better yield even on comparatively poor lands The produce left over after paying back the grain debt is small and hardly lasts more than two months. It is easy

to understand why the produce is small when we remember that not only is the *harwaha's* holding small but it is seldom well manured or left fallow and the *harwaha* also suffers from economic disabilities similar to those of depressed class tenants.

Dealings with the Bania

Small though his produce be, the *harwaha* too has to make certain purchases. He has to buy salt, oil, *gur,* clothes, etc. Purchases of clothes are made either at the onset of winter or when rabi is harvested or on both occasions. These may be purchased for cash or on promise of repayment at rabi or kharif harvest according as the former or the latter crop is important. The *harwaha* has no big sales or purchases to make. But when the harvest is reaped and so long as the produce lasts, he goes occasionally to periodical marts to purchase salt, *gur,* tobacco, etc. And the Bania is there to deceive him both in the matter of rates as well as weighments.

Average Harwaha Family

For estimating the total income of a *harwaha* family it is necessary to have an idea of the average size of a *harwaha* family.[1] Our observations show that families in the eastern parts of the U. P. are bigger than in the centre and west. While in the eastern parts of the province an average *harwaha* family consists of 6·42[2] persons the corresponding figure for western and central parts is 5·54[3]. The modal value of the size of a family for the whole of U. P. is 5·3. This has been calculated by taking the median values for the eastern and central and western parts of the province and finding the weighted mean. It may be mentioned that these regional variations in the average size of a family are not exclusive characteristics of depressed class families but are true of others too. The U. P. Census Report for 1931 gives the average size of a rural family for the whole of U. P. as 4·8 and the corresponding figures for western and eastern parts of the Indo-Gangetic plain are 4·7, and 5·3

1 A number of persons living and eating together in one mess.
2 Standard deviation of average=0·9.
3 Standard deviation of average=0·1.

respectively.[1] Our data show that while in the east the average number of children and aged per family is 3, in the centre and west it is 2·4. In the eastern parts of the province the average number of adult males and females per family is 1·9 and 1·5 respectively. But in the central and western parts the average number of adult males and females per family is 1·5 and 1·8 respectively.[2]

Income of a Normal Harwaha Family

It would not be unreasonable to take six as the size of a normal *harwaha* family. Six is the modal value of the size of a *harwaha* family for the eastern as well as central and western parts of U.P. Moreover, the figure is sufficiently close to mean value. Such a family can be taken to consist of 3 children and aged persons and 3 workers. Now of these three workers there is one principal earner, one is the housewife, and the third may be a son or a brother or a married daughter or a sister below the age of fifteen. By the time a boy or a girl attains the age of 15, the *gauna* ceremony has usually been performed. Thereafter, the boy would set up a separate establishment and the girl would go and live with her husband.

It has been mentioned that a *harwaha* generally gets from Re. 1-8 to Rs. 2 per month. But he does not get any pay for the days he is absent. And such days of absence come to about a month a year. His maximum annual contribution to the family budget may be estimated at Rs. 22. He does not get his pay in a lump sum but gets two to three annas at a time according to his needs and according to the convenience of the zamindar. We have seen that a labourer is often allowed to cultivate a small plot of land[3] so long as he continues to work as a *harwaha*. But, as a whole, hardly more than 50 per cent of *harwahas* hold such plots of land. The rate of rent payable per bigha (*Kachcha*) is either equal to the monthly pay a *harwaha* or exceeds it. The bigger the holding the greater the rent and smaller the income from *harwahi*. Moreover, the *harwaha* gets no wages for the days spent on the cultivation of his holding. While analysing

1 U. P. Census Report, 1931, Part I, p. 45.

2 See Appendix XII.

3 Generally 1 bigha (*Kachcha*) or less.

the condition of tenants it has been noticed that the cultivation of such small holdings (one or two *kachcha* bighas) yields no net profit. At times such land is held free of rent but in that case the *harwaha* gets no pay. We believe that on the whole the net income of a *harwaha* seldom exceeds Rs. 22 per annum even when he holds some land in lieu of *harwahi*. The wife of the *harwaha* does the lighter type of agricultural work like carrying manure to fields, sowing, weeding, irrigation, etc. Taking into consideration the seasonal nature of agricultural work, and the various onerous tasks of a housewife, we do not think she can work for more than 60 days a year. A woman usually gets from one and a half to two annas per day. This means that the contribution of the *harwaha's* wife to the family income does not exceed Rs. 8 per annum. The work done by a boy or a girl of 10 to 15 years of age is tending cattle, selling grass or fuel and some light type of agricultural work. The normal rate of wages for such work varies from nine pies to one anna. For tending cattle a lad may get four to eight annas per mensem. We believe that Rs. 5 per annum would be a very liberal estimate of such a worker's contribution to the family income. Thus the total annual income of a *harwaha* family can hardly exceed Rs. 35. In the majority of cases it will be found to lie between Rs. 30 and Rs. 35. In any case it is always less than Rs. 40. It means that the amount available per day for the family is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ as. And even if the whole of this were spent on food-stuffs like *gujai, dhankodo,* maize, the quantity of the food grains available per day would never exceed $2\frac{1}{4}$ seers.

The income of those families who do *harwahi* only for about 6 months in a year is likely to be less than that of those families whose principal earners are whole-time *harwahas*. This is because so long as agricultural season lasts, so long as there is demand for labour in the countryside they have to work as *harwahas* and it is only in the off season when there is little or no demand for labour that they have to shift for themselves.

Where the *harwaha* gets a share of produce it is not possible to give a monetary estimate of the family income.

When a *harwaha's* wife also works with the same landlord the couple gets a weekly advance of about 15 seers of some food grain like *kodo, gujai, mattar.* At the end of the year this

advance is deducted from the quantity that falls due to them. If during the course of the year they have taken more than their due share, the excess would form their grain debt. Now this grain debt of the *harwaha* mounts up year by year. Of its repayment there can be no question. Under the circumstances this weekly advance of grain may be considered one source, and not a rich one at that, of the family's ways and means. Taking the contribution of the remaining adult to be the same, viz. Rs. 5 and assuming that the whole of this is spent in purchasing some cheap cereal at 20 seers to the rupee, the total quantity of food grains available for the entire family may be estimated at $2\frac{1}{3}$ seers per day. Obviously $2\frac{1}{4}$ or $2\frac{1}{3}$ seers of food grains are quite insufficient for a family of six. And be it remembered that in actual practice the whole of the income does not go to provide food grains, because the family needs also salt, *dal*, vegetables, oil, tobacco, etc.[1]

1 While the above account of their condition holds good of most parts of the U.P., the condition of the people in the western parts of the province (Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, etc.) is not so bad. Here, the people appear to have emerged from the position of servitude in which they were about twenty years ago. The majority of them are labourers and the proportion of *harwahas* is small. In these districts the depressed class people occasionally work as *baldia* or *hali* for about 7 months in a year. *Baldia* is one who tends cattle and *hali* is a variant of *harwaha*. These servants are engaged at the time of Ganga Ashnan in Jeth (June) and the period of service ends on Sakrant Chauth in Magh (January). The remuneration of these servants varies with the age of the worker and the nature of work. A lad of 15 years of age gets 6 maunds of food grains per season while an elderly person may get for light type of work about 10 maunds of food grains. Generally they get cheaper food grains like *sanwak*, maize, etc. A *hali* usually gets one-eighth of the produce of *sir* or a monthly pay varying from Rs. 6 to Rs. 6-8. If a zamindar has a number of *halis* engaged on sharing basis the total share of all of them will be one-eighth of *sir* produce. At times a *kashtkar* gets ploughing and sowing done by a *hali* promising him one-eighth of *sir* produce.

It will be observed that a *hali* in these districts gets two to three times the pay of a *harwaha* in the eastern and central parts. In fact the remuneration of a *hali* corresponds to a daily wage of about four annas on the basis of twenty working days per month. And the wages of unskilled labour, in these parts, vary from four to five annas. Assuming that the *hali* is able to work for about 60 days in the off season his annual contribution to the family income may be estimated at Rs. 57. The wages of a woman worker are about three annas a day and hence the housewife's contribution to family

Conditions of Work

We turn now to the conditions of work of *harwahas*. Of the atmosphere that pervades the countryside we have spoken at length in earlier pages. It has been pointed out that *harwah* is a form of peonage. The zamindars who belong mostly to the high castes—Kshatriyas, Thakurs and Brahmins—despise the *harwaha* and do not let him develop notions of self-respect For them he is an unavoidable necessity. It has been indicated elsewhere that the zamindars prefer Chamars as *harwahas*. The reason is not far to seek. It is because the Chamars have a reputation for docility.[1] The zamindars try to get as much work out of the *harwahas* as possible. They work for excessively long hours during the sowing season. At about 12 o'clock at night they have to get up and feed the zamindar's bullocks. By about 3 a.m. when the bullocks have had their feed, the *harwaha* repairs to the field to commence ploughing operations Up to 9 or 10 a.m. the work continues and by 11 a.m. the *harwaha* is in his hut. The bullocks have to be fed again. This finished he has a dip in the village pond and sits down to his frugal meal which is very often nothing more than salted *bhat* Hardly has he taken his meagre fare when the zamindar's overseer comes along and bids him get ready for the after-

budget is about Rs. 11. Similarly, the other worker contributes about 8 maunds of food grains annually, his contribution during off season being taken as one-third of his income during working season. This is equivalent to about Rs. 16. Thus the annual income of a *hali* family in these parts may be estimated at Rs. 84 which means that the family has at its disposal Rs. 7 per month. This is slightly more than double the maximum income of a *harwaha* family in the east and centre. The income of a family depending exclusively on labour is not different. Here, the *hali* is a farm servant.

One reason for the better condition of these people lies in the fact that in these districts there do not exist so many big zamindars as in the eastern and central parts and in consequence the occasion for *begar* is less. Even if the zamindar pays them half the normal rate of wages they get about two annas per day. Higher rates of wages and fewer days of enforced idleness are other reasons that explain their comparatively better position The conditions in these districts form an exceptional case and conform in no way to the conditions in other parts.

1 Incidentally, Wakefield explains the preference of 'gentry' in Ireland for Catholic servants on exactly similar grounds. (*Ireland*, Vol. II, pp. 773-74).

noon's work. By 2 p.m. he has to be in the field, ready to begin work afresh which continues till about 7 p.m. The day's work over, he returns to his hut. After a bath and meals and a chat over the pipe he snatches a few hours' sleep. By 12 o'clock the daily round begins again. When sowing operations end irrigation begins and, at all events, the *harwaha* has never an easy time. From dawn till dusk he toils and is always ready to follow the zamindar's bidding. The onerous conditions of work and the miserable wages paid often force a *harwaha* to seek newer surroundings.

Labourers's Lot

We have seen that the proportion of depressed class people who do not do *harwahi* is small. In the eastern parts the proportion of such people hardly exceeds 5 per cent, but in the central parts it is slightly higher and may be estimated at 10 per cent. We have seen too that those who do *harwahi* for a part of the year are labourers for the remaining period. A labourer pure and simple may be, especially in the remote interior, in a worse position than that of a *harwaha*. For his freedom simply means that his employer does not want his services even at the low wages of a *harwaha*. He too has to work from early morning till late at night. But he has to do less *begar*. He cannot find work on all days. Seldom does he get work for more than 20 days a month during the agricaltural season. And then there is off-season to be reckoned with. When crops have been harvested there is little work to be found till the beginning of the next sowing season. During these periods *mahwa*, seeds of mango, and roots and weeds sustain these people. Little security has the labourer to offer and consequently he can get little or nothing on credit from the village Bania. And the zamindar too does not require his services. Very often starvation stares him in the face. And yet either on account of their love of home, their ignorance, or lack of initiative, these people continue to live in remote villages apparently satisfied with their lot.

In the interior, wages tend to be still lower, the normal rate varying from one and a half to two and a half annas. But many zamindars seldom pay a labourer more than an anna for the day's work. At times, after the day's work he is sent off with a

seer of *kodo, gujai* or *mattar,* and occasionally he has to be content merely with *chabina.*[1] This is, however, not the rule. *Kashtkars* and other people usually pay the normal rate of wages.

1 The majority of the wage earners get their wages in cash but the proportion of those who still get their wages in kind or partly in cash and partly in kind is not insignificant and may be estimated at 25 per cent. It is mostly in the interior that wages in kind are still customary. In this connexion there are a few points that merit notice. First, it is incorrect to assume that wages in kind do not vary. It has been noticed that zamindars do vary the quantity of food grains given for a day's work with fluctuations in prices of these, though the quantity given is seldom less than one seer. Secondly, it is the inferior cereals—*kodo, gujai, mattar, bajra*—that are given in wages. These are invariably the cheapest food grains. Thirdly, the quantity of food grains to be given as wages is often determined by the prices of superior cereals which form the staple food of the people. For instance, if wheat sells at 16 seers to the rupee in a western district, market rate of wages may vary from one and a half to two seers of wheat. But the zamindar would give for a day's work 1½ to 2 seers of some cheaper food grain like barley, *gujai, kodo, bajra.* This mode of remunerating labour is a form of truck system and as such a means of exploiting labour. Fortunately, however, this method of paying ages is falling fast into disuse and may soon disappear. In certain localities its disappearance has been hastened by propaganda against receiving wages in kind.

CHAPTER IV

CULTIVATORS AND HARWAHAS
(Bihar, Bengal & the Punjab)

BIHAR

In the province of Bihar, 77·8 per cent of the workers were, in 1931, found engaged in the exploitation of animals and vegetation, and the vast majority of depressed class workers also came under that category. In Appendix VI is given the occupational distribution of Chamars and Dhobis, the two depressed castes of Bihar that have well-defined traditional occupations. While only 8·4 per cent Chamars are engaged in their traditional occupation, the corresponding figure for Dhobis is 47·9 per cent. A tendency towards a decline in the proportion of those following their traditional calling is noticeable,[1] which might be interpreted as indicating an increased dependence on agriculture.

Though the greater proportion of depressed class people is engaged in agricultural pursuits, the proportion of occupancy tenants is small. In Bihar proper only about 4 per cent of these people are occupancy tenants. The regional variations in the proportion of occupancy tenants and the size of their holdings noticed in the case of the U.P. are observable in this province as well, and the causes explaining these variations, being similar to those of the U.P. need not be repeated. Generally speaking, the proportion of depressed class people who are occupancy tenants is much greater in Chota Nagpur plateau than in Bihar proper, but even there it does not exceed 23 per cent. In Chota Nagpur about 80 per cent Bhumijs are occupancy tenants and the corresponding figures for Bauris and Bhuiyas are 42 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. Holdings are also bigger in this part of the province as compared to Bihar proper.

It might be noticed that according to the Census Report for 1931, 29·7 per cent Chamars are cultivators.[2] These figures, include the tenant-at-will who is, in our opinion, indistinguishable from a labourer. It has also to be remembered that during

1 See Appendix VII.
2 See Appendix VI.

recent years there have been a considerable number of ejectments.

Ejectments, Bakasht Land

As in the U. P., a tendency towards concentration of land in fewer hands is noticeable. While in 1921 there were 1,09,11,349 rent payers, the corresponding figure for 1931 is 92,17,555[1]. Moreover, the agricultural labourers increased from 33,13,253 in 1921 to 39,70,963 in 1931[2]. During the same period the labourers, as a whole, increased from 40,79,592 to 50,61,806[3]. These figures may be taken as indicating a considerable number of ejectments, though the increase in the strength of agricultural labourers might have been due, to a certain extent, to the fact that petty cultivators were returned as labourers.

But ejectments increased perceptibly during the last decade as compared to the period 1921-31. In 1929 began an unprecedented fall in agricultural prices which continued up to 1937. As a result of this, arrears of rent began to increase and many ejectments followed. So numerous, indeed, were the ejectments that special legislation was deemed necessary for protecting the interests of the tenants. It should be mentioned that though tenants belonging to various castes were dispossessed, the depressed class tenants were probably the worst sufferers in this respect. This was due partly to their comparatively greater proportion of undersized holdings, partly to their greater ignorance of land-laws and partly to lack of resources to defend ejectment cases. The Congress Ministry was responsible for the enactment of the Bihar Restoration of Bakasht Lands and Reduction of Arrears of Rent Act. According to this law all lands sold between January 1929 and December 1937 were to be restored to their respective raiyats on the latter paying 50 per cent of the sum for which the lands were sold and of the expenses incurred by the landlord in obtaining possession.[4] This

1 Bihar Census Report, 1931, Part I, p. 195. The figure for 1931 is obtained by adding the figures for cultivating owners and tenant cultivators.

2 Ibid., p. 192.

3 Ibid.

4 But such lands were not to be restored if some other tenant had been settled before the 22nd March, in 1938 (in some cases 19th April, 1938) or

measure undoubtedly benefited a considerable number of the tenants but it would have been better if the facilities for payment of restoration money by instalments had been granted in every case.

Sir, Khamat, Nij

The problems of *sir, khamat,* or *nij* are similar to those of the *sir* and *khudkasht* problems of the U.P. Though, unlike the U.P., the Bihar landlord does not acquire occupancy right his *sir* or *nij* when land is sold in execution of a decree, the other reasons that impel a landlord to have a large *sir* and *khudkasht* area in the former case operate in this province with equal force. Here, too, we find large areas of *farzi nij.* It need hardly be pointed out that the landlord can get much more rent from a cultivator who is permitted to cultivate *nij* and is prevented from acquiring any rights in land, than from an occupancy tenant. Further, *begar* labour is frequently employed in the cultivation of *nij* or *sir.* As the differences between *nij* and *sir* or *khudkasht* lands of the U.P., are not vital, *nij* land does not offer new problems in the social economy of the depressed classes in Bihar.

Holdings, Live-stock, etc.

It has already been pointed out that the holdings of the depressed class tenants of Bihar proper are very small. Our observations show that about 70 per cent of the holdings lie between $\frac{1}{8}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ bigha; about 15 per cent between $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1 bigha; 10 per cent between 1 and 2 bighas and the rest between 2 and 5 bighas. In Chota Nagpur about 20 per cent of the holdings are less than 2 bighas, 60 per cent lie between 2 and 3 bighas and the rest between 3 and 5 bighas.

if they were in the Khas cultivating possession of a petty landlord or had been converted by the landlord into a garden, tank, or building site.

With the Collector's permission, the restoration money could be paid in instalments extending over a period of five years. Many contend that the Collectors did not make a liberal use of the powers conferred upon them for permitting payment by instalments. The peasants of the province are extremely poor and the condition of the co-operative credit movement is far from satisfactory. Under these circumstances, a tenant is inevitably driven into the clutches of the money lender if he has to pay the money in a lump sum.

The holdings being small the proportion of those tenants who keep any live-stock is also small. As the size of the holding approaches 1 bigha a tenant tends to keep 1 bullock. It is only when the holding is larger than 2 bighas or when carting is a subsidiary occupation that 2 bullocks are kept. For Bihar proper, the proportion of tenants who have any live-stock hardly exceeds 15 per cent. On Chota Nagpur side about 30 per cent tenants do not have any live-stock, about 40 per cent have two bullocks each, and the rest keep one bullock. In this part of the province as many as 20 per cent of the depressed class families have cows but in Bihar proper their proportion is extremely small.

Seed is obtained from zamindars and Banias on *bisar*, i.e. for every maund, of grain borrowed at the time of sowing the borrower agrees to return at harvest time 1¼ or 1½ maunds of grain.

Condition of Tenants

Our enquiry into the costs and profits of cultivation of depressed class tenants of Bihar shows that 79·9 per cent of the cultivators either cultivate holdings at a loss or do not make any net profit; 10·5 per cent do not make a net profit of more than Rs. 25 per annum; 2·4 per cent make a net profit of Rs. 25 to Rs. 50; and only 7·2 per cent make a net profit of more than Rs. 50.[1] Since a net profit of Rs. 25 represents a very small margin and since favourable agricultural seasons are uncommon, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that the position of 90·4 per cent of the cultivators is extremely unsatisfactory. If no allowance is made for family labour, 75·8 per cent families make a gross profit of less than Rs. 25 per annum; 19·9 per cent families make a gross profit of Rs. 25 to Rs. 75; and in the remaining 4·3 per cent cases the annual gross profit exceeds Rs. 75.

The depressed class tenants of Bihar are practically indistinguishable from labourers. In Bihar proper their holdings are extremely small. If holdings are bigger in Chota Nagpur, the soil is less fertile and the position is altered but little. Rarely

1 In calculating the net profit, allowance has been made for family labour at 2 as. per day. The data relate to 87 tenant families.

can they make both ends meet without hiring themselves out as field workers. This represents their most important, if not the only subsidiary occupation. Incidentally, the condition of other tenants of Bihar is also unsatisfactory. Towards the end of the last century Dr Grierson wrote that 70 per cent of the agricultural holdings of Gaya District could not support their cultivators, unaided by supplemental sources of income and that 45 per cent of the entire population suffered from under-nourishment during certain periods of the year. Mr Stevenson Moore, the Settlement Officer, considered the above estimates to be wide of mark. According to him, 25 per cent of the agricultural holdings were uneconomic and only 20·86 per cent of the entire population suffered from under-nourishment.[1] Other District Gazetteers also show that the condition of the tenantry is unsatisfactory. Elaborate enquiries made during recent years show that the majority of holdings of proprietors and tenants of Bihar are definitely uneconomic.[2] As a result of their investigations the Banking Enquiry Committee were satisfied that the peasants of the province were extremely poor and that the food consumption of the masses was below the level of efficiency.[3]

Causes of Unsatisfactory Condition

The above account of the depressed class tenants in Bihar will have made it clear that their condition is more unsatisfactory than that of their brethren in the U.P. There are several reasons for this. It is a well-known fact that the Bihar tenant is less well-off than the U.P. tenant. And it is the economic condition of the tenantry that determines largely the extent of employment in the countryside, especially during off season. Not only is the scope for employment more limited in this province as compared to the U.P., but the wages of daily labour are also lower. Further, the holdings of depressed class tenants of this province are smaller than those of the depressed class tenants of the U.P. On the other hand the average number of non-working dependents per depressed class family is greater in Bihar than in that

1 Gaya District Gazetteer, pp. 150–1.
2 R. K. Mukerjee : *Land Problems of India*, p. 279.
3 Report of the Bihar Banking Enquiry Committee, Vol. I, pp. 215–6.

province.[1] The means of communication are more unsatisfactory than in the U.P. Many areas are accessible only after considerable delay and during the rainy season some of these become almost inaccessible. In such areas, administration is less effective; the zamindar is all-powerful; and the tenant is much oppressed. Exaction of *abwabs* and *begar*, institution of false criminal cases and illegal ejectments are very common. On the whole, the exaction of *begar* and *abwabs* exists in a more acute form in Bihar than in many parts of the U.P. These causes explain the difference in the condition of the depressed class tenants of the U.P. and Bihar. Other causes explaining the poverty of the depressed class tenants of this province are similar to those existing in the case of the U.P. tenants and need not be gone into again.

Kamias

The majority of the depressed class people of Bihar are *kamias* or labourers, and the converse also holds good. The proportion of *kamias* who do not belong to the depressed classes is very small. As in the case of the *harwahas* of the U.P., it is not feasible to differentiate the *kamia* from the labourer. A *kamia* is a labourer who has borrowed some money from a zamindar and has agreed, in return, to work at a reduced wage. In the past he used to sell both himself and his heirs into bondage for a lump sum down, but, this practice having been declared illegal, he now agrees to work for the zamindar till he has discharged his debt. But the position remains unchanged. The *kamia* continues to be in a state of thraldom. It is usually to meet the expenses of a marriage or some other social ceremony that debt is contracted in the first instance. This is true particularly of Musahars and Bhuiyas. On attainment of majority they borrow money to get married and thus become *kamias* and remain so throughout their lives. Running away from one place to another means only a change of masters. But the Chamars, Dosadhs and Rajwars are often able to redeem their debt by migrating to some industrial centre. This generally happens in the case of families with more than one adult male worker.

1 See Appendix XII.

As in the case of the *harwaha* a *kamia* often gets a tiny plot of land free of rent, of a size varying from one-tenth to one-sixth of a bigha. Occasionally the land thus held by a *kamia* is 1 to 2 bighas. In such cases the land is rent-free but the *kamia* gets no wages for the work he does. It will be observed that in Bihar the exploitation of the agricultural labourer is carried a stage further than in the U.P. No fixed minimum pay is guaranteed as in the case of a *harwaha*. But the *kamia* cannot seek work elsewhere except with the permission of his master, and this will be forthcoming only in the off season. Thus during the busy season the *kamia* has to work for his master at very low wages and during the off season, when wages are usually low and work scanty, he is left to shift for himself. Like a *harwaha*, a *kamia* is usually saved from starvation by his master.

Wages of Labourers and Kamias

The wages of a *kamia* vary with the locality and the nature of the agricultural work. The main point to be noticed is that a *kamia* gets less than the market rate of wages. Near urban areas ploughing wages vary from three annas to three annas plus half a seer of *satu*. The corresponding wage of a *kamia* is one and a half annas. At times he gets two small *rotis* of *marhua* in addition to the cash wage. In the interior, wages for ploughing vary from one and a half to two annas, and for weeding from one to one and a half annas .... Where wages are paid in kind, *kamia* gets about $1\frac{1}{8}$ seers of some cheap food grain like *marhua* or $1\frac{3}{4}$ seers of unhusked rice. But wages in rice and wheat are an exception rather than the rule. In Purnea district the wages of a *kamia* vary from 6 pies to 2 annas. If paid in kind he gets $1\frac{1}{2}$ seers of some coarse food grain plus *jalpan* (tiffin). In Bhagalpur, wages in sowing seeson are 6 poilas (3 seers) of paddy. During harvesting season wages take the form of one bundle of paddy out of 16 harvested. On Chota Nagpur side ploughing wages are $2\frac{1}{8}$ seers of unhusked rice and weeding wages $1\frac{1}{8}$ seers of unhusked rice. Generally speaking, wages in kind vary from $1\frac{1}{8}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ seers of some coarse food grain in Bihar proper and are slightly greater in Chota Nagpur plateau. Our investigations show that in certain parts of the province wages have declined during the last ten years. Whilst in the past zamindars used to

give two annas plus one *roti* for a day's work they now give one and a half annas only.

Average Size of Family

It has already been stated that in Bihar families tend to be bigger than in the U.P. The data collected by us show the size of an average depressed class family of Bihar to be 6·96.[1] Incidentally, the number of families of different castes investigated when arriving at the above estimate corresponds approximately to the provincial strength of each caste. The average number of children and aged per family is 3·66 and the average number of adults is 3·3. Compared to the U.P. a tendency towards a greater proportion of children and aged per family is observable.[2] According to the Census Report for 1931, the average size of a family in Bihar proper is 5·4 and the corresponding figure for Chota Nagpur is 5.

We propose taking 7 as the average size of a typical depressed class family of Bihar. Such a family may be taken to consist of 3·7 non-working dependents and 3·3 workers. The workers comprise the labourer and his wife and younger brothers or sons or daughters or sisters who are married but whose *gauna* ceremoney has yet to be performed. In other words, a family usually contains one principal earner and 2·3 working dependents.

Family Income

That the wages of agricultural labourers are small and vary with the nature of agricultural operations has been seen already. We shall now try to form an idea of the income of a typical labourer family.

Bihar lies in the Middle Ganges Valley. It is a region of moderate rainfall. As the annual rainfall is greater than in the Upper Ganges Valley, though less than in the deltaic region, it is possible, especially in North Bihar, to complete three harvests in a year, Working season is, therefore, longer than in the U.P. The average number of working days for a labourer in Bihar during working and off seasons can be taken to be 90 and 60

1 Standard deviation of average=0·12.

2 See Appendix XII.

respectively. Taking two annas as his average daily wage during working season and one anna and three pies as his average daily wage during off season, his annual contribution to the family budget would be about Rs. 15. But this would be a very liberal estimate of his income which is, in most cases, between Rs. 12 and 13. The number of working days in the case of the housewife and the other workers is smaller than that of the principal earner. This is due partly to the fact that the housewife is first a domestic drudge and only secondarily a labourer, and partly to the fact that she can only take to the lighter type of agricultural work which is not always available. The other workers, to repeat, may often be boys or girls below the age of fifteen[1] and, in either case, there are definite limits to the type of work they can do. In our opinion the annual number of working days for the housewife and the other working dependents may be taken to be 60 and 100 respectively. Assuming that on an average they earn about one anna and three pies per day their combined annual income amounts to Rs. 14-14. Thus the average annual income of a depressed class labourer family of Bihar may be estimated at Rs. 29-14. This represents more or less the upper limit to the annual income of a labourer family. In most cases it will be less than this amount, especially in places where it is not possible to raise more than two crops a year. That the incomes of *kamia* families are less than the above amount need hardly be pointed out. It would be recollected that a *kamia* has to work on about half the normal wage during the working season. The income of a *kamia* family would be about Rs. 20 per annum. But even if a labourer family has an income of Rs. 29-14 per annum it means that a family has at its disposal only one anna and four pies per day. And even when the whole of this amount is spent in buying some coarse food grains and assuming that these sell so cheap as twenty seers to the rupee, a family can have only about 1⅝ seers of such food grains per day. This quantity of food-stuffs is obviously inadequate for a family of seven.

Such is the lot of the vast majority of the depressed classes who depend on labour. Lest it be imagined that we have

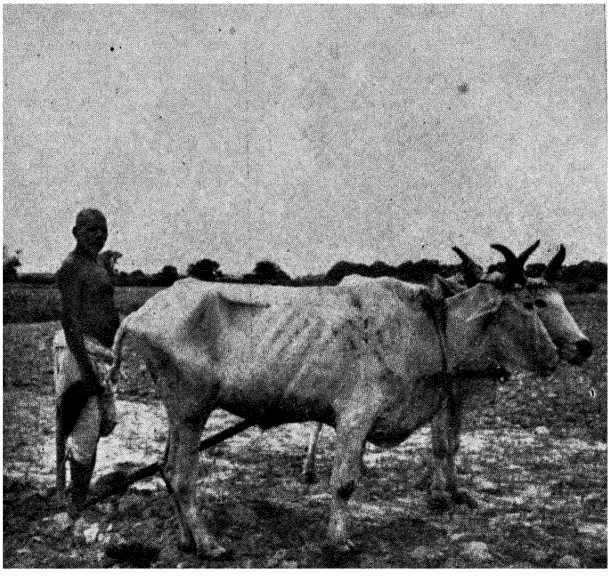
1 This point has already been discussed while considering the composition of a *harwaha* family.

painted too gloomy a picture of their condition we would like to refer briefly to the opinions of some District Officers. Writing in 1886 about the people of Muzaffarpur, the Collector observed: "Extreme poverty is undoubtedly the lot of the great majority of the inhabitants of the district. The prevailing poverty is accompanied by a degree of dirt and sordidness in the personal habits of the people and of grinding penuriousness which I have not seen in other parts of India. The circumstances of the lower classes have approached dangerously to the limits of destitution."[1] In the District Gazetteer written in 1907, Mr O'Malley admits that the above description of the destitution of the people is applicable to the landless labourer. According to him the average annual income of the landless labourer is about Rs. 10/15/- or Rs. 2-6-0 less than the amount required to maintain him in a fair state of comfort.[2]

Towards the close of the last century Dr Grierson in his Notes on the District of Gaya said that all landless labourers and 10 per cent of cultivators and artisans could be considered as insufficiently fed or insufficiently clothed or both.[3] A little later Mr Stevenson Moore, the Settlement Officer worte: "Dr Grierson's finding that the labouring classes are insufficiently nourished can be accepted so far as it concerns the landless lobourer." Writing in the District Gazetteer in 1906, Mr O'Malley appears to accept the above account of the plight of the labourer. Muzaffarpur and Gaya are two typical districts of North and South Bihar respectively. The condition of the landless labourer during the first decade of this century as depicted in other District Gazetteers does not differ materially from the above account.

And be it remembered that the majority of the depressed class people have probably always been landless labourers. If such was the state of the depressed class people in the beginning of the first decade we can safely conclude that there has been practically no improvement in the economic condition of these people during the last three decades. Even the Great War brought no luck to the unskilled labourer. According to the

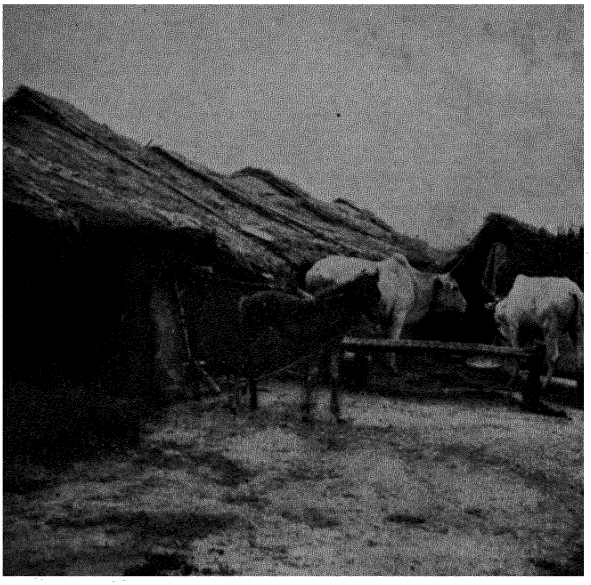
1 Muzaffarpur District Gazetteer, p. 85.
2 Ibid., p. 87.
3 Gaya District Gazetteer, p. 151.



A HARWAHA

A KORI WEAVER





DEPRESSED CLASS
QUARTERS IN
A U.P. VILLAGE



SOME DEPRESSED
CLASS
TOWN DWELLERS

provincial Census Superintendent, the general price level of 1916 represented more or less the pre-War cost of living. And during the period 1916-24 the increase in the wages of unskilled labour tallied almost exactly with the rise in prices (about 60 per cent). From 1925-27 prices tended to rise, but harvests were unfavourable and any rise in wages must have been offset, at least to some extent, by decrease in the number of working days. Besides, wages lag behind prices. Thus from the beginning of the first decade till 1927 there was practically no improvement in the lot of the labourer. In 1928 began the fall in agricultural prices which brought about lower wages and fewer working days especially during off season. Investigations made by Dr R. K. Mukerjee near about 1932 revealed that the condition of the labourers and *kamias* of Bihar was extremely unsatisfactory.[1] The rates of wages were very low. "While the Kamia earns (Hazaribagh district) 3 poilas (1½ seers) of paddy, *marua* or *makai*, the ordinary labourer received 5 poilas. In Gaya the Kamia gets 2½ seers as wages and 1 seer jalpan (tiffin) whereas the ordinary labourer gets 3 seers and 1 seer jalpan. Elsewhere I found the Kamia receiving 120 poilas per month and two meals a day and a cash payment of Rs. 12 to Rs. 18 per year."[2]

There is but one word—destitution—that sums up effectively the position of the depressed classes of Bihar. If a few of them are able to make both ends meet it is only by migrating to some big city or industrial centre. In such places, wages are high, work more frequent and *begar* non-existent. Over there, they rarely suffer from starvation.

That the incomes of the greater proportion of the depressed class people are grossly inadequate has been indicated above. How these people manage to live on such low incomes will be explained elsewhere.

BENGAL

At the time of the 1931 Census, 68·34 per cent of the workers (earners and working dependents) of Bengal were found engaged in the exploitation of animals and vegetation.[3] The proportion

1 *Land Problems of India*, pp. 229-34.

2 Ibid.

3 Bengal Census Report 1931, Part I., p. 201.

of workers supported by industry appears to have decreased. While in 1921 industry provided employment for 16,42,004 persons (10 per cent of total workers), the corresponding figure for 1931 was 12,69,073 (8·8 per cent of total workers).[1] During the same period the number of persons engaged in 'Domestic Service' and 'Insufficiently described occupations' showed substantial increase. These two heads probably hide the increasing dependence on land.

The occupational distribution of certain important depressed castes is given in Appendices VIII and IX. It will be observed that the proportion of workers engaged in the exploitation of animals and vegetation is 82·4 per cent in the case of Namasudras, 85·2 per cent in the case of Bagdis and 69·8 per cent in the case of Bauris. Another point worth noticing is that castes having distinct traditional occupations are numerically less important in this province. Castes relating to which no information is given in the appendices do not have any distinct traditional occupations. These are engaged mostly in the exploitation of animals and vegetation.

Proportion of Tenants

It will be noticed from Appendix IV that the proportion of cultivators of all kinds is 40·7 per cent, 54·9 per cent and 69·8 per cent in the case of Bauris, Namasudras and Bagdis respectively. These high proportions do not in any way represent the proportion of tenants who have acquired some sort of rights in land. The Census Superintendent observes: "Under the Bengal Tenancy Act, indeed, certain persons who cultivate land on condition of giving a share of the produce to the person from whom they hold possession of the land are at law agricultural labourers, although for Census purposes they are tenant cultivators."[2] According to the instructions issued to the staff, "even if the cultivator was not a tenant under the definition in that Act he was still to be regarded a cultivating tenant and returned as a cultivator but without permanent rights if he was entitled to remain in possession of his land during the season in which crops sown and tended by him were in the ground although he

1 Bengal Ceusus Report 1931, p. 201.

2 Ibid., p. 268.

might be liable at the end of the season to make over a proportion of the crops to the person with a title in the land."[1] Desirable though it may be to differentiate the *krishak* (cultivator) from the *krishimajur* (agricultural labourer) we do not think it is always possible to do so. Moreover, the economic condition of the tenant-at-will differs but little from that of the *krishimajur*. In our opinion the proportion of depressed class occupancy tenants in Bengal is in no way greater than in Bihar.

As in Bihar the proportion of depressed class tenants increases in hilly tracts or in comparatively less fertile and inhospitable parts of the province. In the Tarai area are a considerable number of these people have tenancy rights and their holdings are often sufficiently large. But here, diseases like malaria and kala-azar take a heavy toll and make these people depressed and unhappy. The dismal outlook of these people is a great contrast to the cheerful and contented spirit of the hill people. And even in such places the depressed classes are being dispossessed of land. In Mymensingh, for instance, the Garos were undisputed holders of the land over which they roamed but gradually their rights to the land on this side of the Assam border have been reduced by expropriation on account of non-payment of rent as well as by pre-emption under the Bengal Tenancy Act, according to which one tenant transfers his right to another. The heavy pressure of immigrants after lands have been cleared and brought under cultivation by the Garos is a contributory cause of the expropriation of these tenants. Similar is the fate overtaking the Meches. "The advance of settled cultivation is driving these shy people from Bengal into the less developed parts across the border of Assam."[2]

Condition of Tenants

As is the case in the U. P. and Bihar, the holdings of the depressed class tenants of Bengal are generally small. Where the soil is good and other conditions of agricultural production favourable, it is seldom that their holdings are bigger than 4 bighas.[3] It is only in inhospitable tracts where the climate is bad and soil less fertile that relatively big holdings are frequently

1 Bengal Census Report, Part I, p. 270. 2 Ibid. p. 479.

3 1 acre=3 bighas approximately.

ound. It should be mentioned in this connexion that ıccording to most of the estimates of raiyati holdings made by ;ettlement Officers, the average raiyati holding is less than 2 ıcres. Although these estimates ignore the fact that a man may ıave more than one tenancy, in some cases the size of the aver-ıge raiyati holding has been put at 2 acres after allowing for his fact.[1]

The cultivation of a holding of 4 bighas is not a profitable ;oncern even under very favourable conditions. In order to ake into account the value of family labour we shall assume hat all work is done by hired labour. The cultivation of an ıcre of kharif crop requires 39 man days and 31 bullock days, ınd the cultivation of an acre of winter crop requires 21 man lays and 26 bullock days.[2] Taking the average daily wage to ɔe 4 as. and the cost of a pair of bullocks to be 10 as. per day ve find that the cultivator has to spend about Rs. 77 on labour ınd bullock power. Besides this he requires for seed two naunds of paddy. Taking Rs. 2-12 per maund to be the price ɔf paddy, the cost of seed for two rice crops will be Rs. 5-8. If we take the average rent to be Rs. 3-8 per acre and the *abwabs* ıs equivalent to Rs. 25 per cent of this amount, the cultivator ıas to spend Rs. 5-13 on both of these items.[3]

The total expenditure will, thus, come to Rs. 88-5. The out-urn of paddy will be about 35 maunds. Taking Rs. 2-8 to be he sale price of a maund of paddy, the produce will bring in Rs. 87-8. There will, therefore, be a loss of 13 as.

But the cultivator does not care to know whether there is a net loss. He is satisfied so long as there is a gross profit. To him, a holding, however small, is an insurance against unem-ployment and starvation and he is not interested in knowing the cost of this protection. The labour required for cultivation is supplied mainly by the cultivator's family, though sometimes labourers have to be hired. Sometimes an agricultural operation has to be performed within a short time to take the maximum advantage of weather conditions. Fields must be ploughed

1 Report of the Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee. pp. 23–4.

2 Ibid.

3 See Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal, Vol. VI, p. 33.

before the soil hardens and sown just when it is likely to rain. But a cultivator will not, generally, spend more than Rs. 10 on hired labour. Then, a cultivator normally keeps a pair of bullocks whose upkeep does not cost much. A good pair of bullocks costs about Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 and may last for six years. Loss of cattle through disease has also to be reckoned with. The annual charges on account of the bullocks, including maintenance and provision for replacement, may be put at Rs. 10 per annum. On this basis the gross profit of the cultivator would be Rs. 56 approximately. In most cases, however, the gross profit will be less than this. First, because much more will be taken as rent than the average amount of rent indicated above; secondly, because only a part of the area will be double cropped; and thirdly, because most of the holdings will be less than 4 bighas. Speaking generally, the difference between the condition of depressed class tenants and labourers is not appreciable.

Causes of Unsatisfactory Conditions

One of the causes of the unsatisfactory condition of depressed class cultivators is to be found in the high rents they have to pay. The majority of depressed class tenants are under-raiyats. Such raiyats have normally to pay double the rent paid by raiyats at fixed rates. Writing about 1918, Mr Jack gives the following figures for the average rates of rent per acre paid by different classes of tenants.[1]

	Rs.	A.	P.
Cultivating tenure holders ...	3	8	5
Raiyats generally ...	4	8	10
Raiyats at fixed rates ...	3	1	11
Non-occupancy raiyats ...	3	12	8
Under-raiyats ...	7	3	9

"At times the under-raiyat has to pay as much as Rs. 36 per acre as compared with an average rental of Rs. 3 to Rs. 4 per acre for occupancy raiyats."[2]

Besides high rates of rent, *begar* and *abwabs* are widely prevalent. Almost every zamindar or tenure holder has some

1 Bakarganj District Gazetteer, p. 72.

2 Land Revenue Commission Report, Vol. VI., p. 33.

khas. This is generally cultivated by hired labour, though the Mahajans and other non-agriculturists prefer to get their *khas* cultivated on the *barga* or *sanjha* system. In the latter case the *bargadar* is prevented from acquiring any rights in land either by propitiating the underlings of the Revenue Department or by ejecting him for a short time every now and then. Bengal, too, has its problems of *farzi khas* similar in nature to those of *farzi khudkasht* of the U.P. It need hardly be emphasized that the zamindar can get much more by way of rent from the *bargadar* than from a cultivator who has acquired tenancy rights. And when cultivation is done by employing labourers, the zamindars may either pay less than the market rate of wages or may not give any wages at all. *Khas* is often cultivated by *begar* labour. But this is not all. *Begar* labour is often employed for jungle clearance from the zamindar's estate, for excavating tanks and digging ditches, for carrying materials for the zamindar's buildings, etc. etc.

Abwabs or illegal levies by zamindars and their agents are universal. Some of these are: *rariana, tahsilana, pyadgana, khalbandi* (embankments), *bhandari kharach*. Besides these there are certain levies connected with social ceremonies. For instance, on the occasion of a marriage, the father of the bride and bridegroom have to pay a tax to the zamindar. Again, the people have to give something to the zamindar whenever there is a birth, marriage, or funeral ceremony in the latter's house. In some cases, if the cultivator refuses to pay *abwabs*, or breaks some vexatious estate rule, he is fined by the zamindar's agent. In certain districts, as a whole these illegal exactions may amount to 25 per cent or more of actual rent.[1] It should be mentioned that Government has several times declared the exaction of *abwabs* illegal but these have not ceased to exist. The causes explaining the persistence of *begar* and illegal exactions have already been examined while discussing the problems of the U. P.

As in other zamindari provinces, the severity with which *begar* and *abwabs* are exacted depends partly on the position of the zamindar, partly on the number of his agents, and partly on the state of communications. Normally these agents get only

1 Bakarganj District Gazetteer, p. 73.

a nominal pay and are given a free hand in making illegal demands upon the tenants. In many parts of Bengal, particularly East Bengal, the means of communication are very defective. There are several rivers and streams with neither bridges nor ferries, and there are areas with impassable marshes. Some areas remain isolated for several months in the year. In such places administration is not so strong and the oppression of the cultivators by the zamindars is at its height.

Other causes that explain the unsatisfactory position of the depressed class tenants are similar to those existing in the U.P. and need not be repeated.

Labourers

The vast majority of the depressed class people are labourers or nomadic cultivators, cultivating for others on the *bhag-jot* or *bargadar* systems. In the western and central parts of the province where delta formation has been completed the fertility of the soil has declined and in many a place malaria has become rife. No sharp distinction is possible in such parts between the poor cultivators and agricultural labourers. There must be few cultivators indeed with holdings less than 3 acres who do not have to work as labourers, while there are few labourers who do not hold *some* land—from 10 *kathas* to a share in a rice field.

Krishans

In this part of the country there are several types of field labourers—*krishans, mahindars, gatania munis,* etc. *Krishans* or *mahindars* are regular farm servants like the *harwahas* of the U.P. who may be paid in cash or kind. When paid in cash they usually get from Rs 30 to Rs. 36 per annum. "In the Birbhum District the annual wages of the day-labourer vary from Rs. 8 to Rs. 24 together with 6 or 8 bish of paddy."[1] At times they get some food as well in addition to the cash remuneration. "Wages in kind for agricultural labourers who are on a yearly contract are 8 to 10 maunds of rice a year, two pairs of cloths and two napkins, together with other small requisites."[2] Sometimes they get a share of the produce of the land they cultivate, such share

1 R. K. Mukerjee, *Land Problems of India*, p. 221.

2 Ibid.

varying from ⅓ to ½ of the produce according as seed and cattle are supplied by the zamindar or the *krishan*. Generally the *krishan* gets about ⅓ of the produce. It may be pointed out that, in certain parts of East Bengal, the *bargadar* has to pay one-half of the produce as rent. Now and then the *bargadar* may get seed from the landlord but never the plough or cattle. This division of the crop between the cultivator and the owner is carefully adjusted to agricultural conditions, district by district.

Besides these, there are several other types of agricultural labourers. There is, for instance, the *danda muliya* who enters into a short contract with his employer to work at specified wages. In Midnapur the *danda muliya* gets 5 annas per 15 *gandas* of sheaves reaped. "He enters into an agreement called kuta to plough or harvest the fields. The *Kuthia* is given 18 gunts of land. From Chait to Bhadra he is given 15 Kathas of paddy and from Ashwin to Falgun 6 Kathas. He is also allowed one chaddar a year".[1] The services of a *krishan* like that of a *harwaha* are secured by giving him an advance which is rarely repaid, and which is instrumental in keeping the *krishan* in perpetual bondage. If the *krishan* deserts, the zamindar often manages to get him back by legal or extra-legal methods.

The labourers known as *gatania munis* are paid about a seer of parched rice and 3 seers of paddy daily. They may also be remunerated by the grant of land which rarely exceeds one bigha. The produce of such land is entirely their own. In some localities this is known as *bantaria*, meaning land due to the holder of the yoke (banta) of the plough. These labourers, it will be noticed, resemble the *kamias* of Bihar and the *bisarwaras* of the U. P.

Besides these, there are some labourers who do not work under any of the above-mentioned systems. Their wages generally vary from 3 to 4 annas per day though during harvest time they may get some food in addition to this. Wages in kind are not so common now as was the case thirty years ago. Where wages in kind are still common, the labourer usually gets four to five seers of paddy. Here and there, they may get a light meal in addition to the above amount. "In South-Western Districts

[1] Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 228.

the wages are at the rate of 4 to 5 annas per 15 *gandas* or 16 sheaves. For the pulse and rabi crops the rates are less."[1] In N. Bengal we find labourers engaged on an annual basis. Generally they get two or three years' wages in advance and execute a bond to work for the zamindar. Their position differs slightly from that of the *gatania munis*. The demand for labour being somewhat greater in this part of the country, labourers are not so much oppressed as in certain parts of West and Central Bengal. The market rate of wages of unskilled labour varies from 4 to 5 annas. In the tea gardens a man is able to earn about Rs. 6 p. m. while a woman and a child can earn about Rs. 4-8 and Rs. 2-8 p. m. respectively. These labourers work only for about 18 days a month. The semi-aboriginal castes like Santals rarely work for more than 10 days a month, the rest of the time being spent in hunting or idleness.

Generally speaking, wages in eastern Bengal are higher than in other parts of the province. Natural conditions make it possible here to raise four or five crops a year and working season is consequently longer. Further, jute and aman rice are very important crops in the deltaic districts of East Bengal. Cultivation of these crops, particularly that of jute, has considerably increased the demand for labour.

Size of Family and Income

Our data show that the average size of a depressed class family of Bengal is 7·5.[2] The modal value is 5. The average number of children and aged per family is 3 and the corresponding figures for adult men and adult women are 2·5 and 2 respectively. Of the 4·5 adults one is the principal earner, one is the housewife and the others are generally sons or daughters between the ages of 10 and 15 years. In other words, an average family consists of one principal earner and 3·5 working dependents.

We have seen that *krishans* and other labourers engaged on an annual basis generally get from Rs. 24 to Rs. 36 per annum. The average annual income of a labourer, especially in the central and western parts of the province, may be taken at Rs. 30.

1 R. K. Mukerjee, op. cit., p. 221.

2 Standard deviation of average = 0·3.

Assuming that each working dependent works on 60 days in a year at 1½ annas per day, their total contribution to the family chest would be Rs. 19-11. Thus the income of an average family would be Rs. 49-11 or Rs. 50 approximately.

In East Bengal incomes are somewhat higher. Assuming that the principal earner is able to find work for about 90 days at 5 annas per day during the working season and for 60 days at 2½ annas per day during the off season his annual income will be Rs. 37-4. If each working dependent works for 60 days in the year, their combined earnings would amount to Rs. 26-4. Thus, in this part of the province, the annual income of an average family would come to about Rs. 64. This figure represents more or less the upper limit to the income of a depressed class labourer family of the province.

These estimates show that the average daily income of a typical depressed class family of Bengal may be between 2 as. 3 ps. and 2 as. 10 ps. Coarse varieties of rice often sell at about 16 seers to the rupee. We may, therefore, say that a typical family gets on an average 2¼ to 2⅝ seers of rice per day. In many cases the quantity available will be well below the upper limit. Though wages are somewhat high in East Bengal, unemployment is considerable and for some months labourers have to live on sweet potatoes to the exclusion of rice.[1] The amount of food-stuffs that a family has at its disposal is obviously insufficient. The problem of the inadequacy of their incomes will be examined in greater detail in another chapter.

Economic Conditions

It is clear from the above account that the present condition of these people, though slightly better than in Bihar, is far from satisfactory. Official records appear to support this conclusion. Enquiries made regarding the material condition of the agricultural classes of Bakarganj during the course of settlement operations of 1900-1908 revealed that one-fifth of the population was in struggling circumstances. And this one-fifth of the population included outcastes and gypsies. Writing in the District Gazetteer, in 1918, Mr Jack appears to endorse the

[1] R. K. Mukerjee, in Land Revenue Commission Report, Vol. VI., p. 570.

above findings. In Noakhali, the people were in no way better off. Towards the close of the last century, the Collector wrote that at least 10 per cent of the population suffered from chronic insufficiency of food. These hard-pressed people were mostly labourers. The lot of the labourer in other districts of East Bengal was much the same. Writing in 1910 in the Bankura District Gazetteer, Mr O'Malley observed that the lot of the labourer was a hard one. "Spending what he earns from day to day he has little to pawn or sell in times of distress; he gets no credit from the mahajan; and he is the first to succumb if the crops fail and he cannot get labour."[1] The other District Gazetteers tell invariably the same sad tale of the labourers' plight. And it is the depressed classes, to repeat, who constitute the greater proportion of the labourers.

This then is the 'official' version of the condition of the depressed classes during the first decade of this century. During the last 20 or 30 years their condition appears to have remained unchanged. According to the Census Superintendent, from 1911-25 wages of agricultural labourers increased by 84·4 per cent in West Bengal, 100 per cent in Central Bengal, 30·6 per cent in North Bengal and 73·5 per cent in Dacca Division.[2] This increase in wages was largely brought about by the rise in prices of agricultural commodities, especially food-stuffs. In the absence of any 'cost of subsistence' index it is difficult to state precisely the effects of the upward movements of wages and prices. Probably the lot of the labourer improved but little during this period. A word appears to be necessary about *krishans* and others who get a fixed share of the produce. We do not agree with Mr O'Malley when he says that the position of such labourers has improved because the produce they get is worth more.[3] This assumes two things. First, that these people have a surplus of food grains (or other things they usually get) and, secondly, that the prices of the things they have to buy have either remained stationary or have increased to a smaller extent. As regards the first, it might be said that these people do not normally have any surplus of food-stuffs and the

1 Bankura District Gazetteer, p. 103.
2 Bengal Census Report, 1931, Part I, pp. 12–13.
3 Bankura District Gazetteer, p. 108.

things they have to buy from the market are purchased usually by borrowing money from the zamindar and, as in the case of the *harwaha* their debt generally increases year by year. And for the period under review, the validity of the second assumption too is questionable.

According to Dr R. K. Mukerjee the real wages of agricultural labourers had declined in 1922 as compared to 1911. While in 1911 wages of field labourers were 4 annas per day, in 1922 these varied from 4 to 6 annas. During the same period the price of rice, the staple food of the Bengali, rose from 15 seers to the rupee in 1911 to 5 seers to the rupee in 1922.[1] It may be pointed out in this connexion that while in 1909 paddy sold at Rs. 2-2-5 per maund, in 1925 the price was Rs. 4-2-11 and in 1929 Rs. 4-14.[2] Thereafter commenced a rapid decline of agricultural prices followed closely by a decline in wages. As indicated elsewhere, economic depression brings in its wake lower wages and fewer working days. If in 1936 the price of paddy approached the pre-War level (1909), wages also touched the pre-War level (1911) and in some places were even less.[3] Recent enquiries made in connexion with the work of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal, show that the average rates of agricultural wages for Bengal as a whole during harvesting and other seasons are $4\frac{1}{4}$ and $3\frac{1}{4}$ annas respectively.[4] Detailed information concerning the rates of wages is given in Appendix XIII. It appears from these figures that in eleven districts wages during the harvesting season vary from $2\frac{3}{4}$ to 4 annas; in seven districts wages in the same season are more than 4 annas but less than 5 annas; and in the remaining seven districts wages vary from 5 to 6 annas. During other seasons wages in thirteen districts vary from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 as. and in ten districts from 3 to 4 annas. These low rates of wages call for no comment. The Land Revenue Commission came to the conclusion that 30 maunds of rice or 45 maunds of paddy are sufficient to provide two meals a day for the average family 'though many families may not be able to afford even 24 maunds of rice.'[5] It shows clearly

1 Mukerjee, op. cit., p. 222.
2 Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal, Vol. II, p. 104.
3 Ibid., pp. 49–50.
4 Ibid., Vol. VII. p. 117.
5 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 99.

that even at present there is a good deal of privation amongst the people of Bengal. The Commission further observe that the agricultural community would have little cause to complain if paddy sold at Rs. 2-8 per maund. On this basis there will be underfeeding if the average family income is less than Rs. 112-8. This estimate of family income taken in contrast with our estimate of the family income of the average depressed class family can safely be interpreted as indicating a considerable amount of under-nourishment amongst the depressed classes.

THE PUNJAB

According to the Census Report of 1931, 63·6 per cent of the earners were engaged in the exploitation of animals and vegetation as compared to 58·7 per cent in 1921. The proportion of earners employed in cultivation increased from 56·2 per cent in 1921 to 60·9 per cent in 1931.

In 1921, 19·8 per cent of the earners were engaged in industry but in 1931 the proportion had declined to 17·1 per cent.[1] During the same period agricultural labourers increased by 58·7 per cent though unspecified labourers registered a decline of 0·4 per cent. This increase in the strength of agricultural labourers was in no way uniform over the whole of the province. While the districts of Amritsar, Hoshiarpur and the Simla Hill states showed an increase of more than 100 per cent, in Rohtak, Hissar, Ferozepur, Lahore the increase was between 50 per cent and 100 per cent and in the case of Karnal and Ambala the increase lay between 20 per cent and 50 per cent.[2]

It will be observed from Appendix X that the proportion of depressed class people engaged in their traditional occupations has declined during 1921-31. In 1931, 18·5 per cent Chamars and 57·5 per cent Chuhras were found to be following their caste occupations. Detailed information regarding the occupational distribution of certain important depressed castes is given in Appendix XI. It will be noticed that 19·5 per cent of the Chamars are cultivators and that the corresponding figure for Chuhras is 5·1 per cent. In this province the depressed castes have all been classified as non-agricultural tribes and as

1 Punjab Census Report, 1931, Part I, p. 214.

2 Ibid., pp. 222-23.

such have been statutorily debarred from acquiring tenancy or proprietary rights in land.[1] The above figures for cultivators relate mainly to *sanjhis*[2] and others having a similar status. In certain areas of Eastern Punjab which suffered from almost regular visitations of famine during the last few years, the proportion of *sanjhis* appears to have declined. Hardly more than 10 per cent of these people cultivate as *sanjhis* now. The great majority of them are labourers.

Sanjhi

The word *sanjhi* literally means a petty partner. It is analogous to the *bhag jot* system of Bengal. The landlord gets half the produce as rent and the remainder is divided between the cultivator and the landlord in proportion to the man-power and bullock-power contributed by either. Usually a *sanjhi* or *jika sanjhi*, to use the correct term, gets from 20 to 25 maunds of food grains per annum. The position of a *sanjhi* differs but little from that of an ordinary labourer.

They rarely keep bullocks. About 20 per cent of them have milch cattle and are able to sell ghee. Some of these people rear calves on the *adhia* system.[3]

Athari or Basodia

In the Punjab also, we find labourers engaged on an annual basis. They are known as *athari, siri, sepi, basodia,* or *hali* in the various parts of the province. It may be noticed that the word *hali* is the exact equivalent of the word *harwaha*. In certain parts, a *hali* is paid 14 maunds of food grains per year and besides that one *roti* and some *lassi* (butter-milk) on every working day. At times a *hali* gets about one-seventh of the produce from the zamindar's land if he contributes only his labour and about one-fourth of the produce if he pays 25 per cent land revenue as well. A *basodia* usually gets from Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 per annum, or Rs. 24 to Rs. 30 plus food.

1 In no other province of Northern India do they suffer from legal disabilities similar to these.

2 A sort of tenant-at-will.

3 On maturity these are sold and the sale proceeds are shared equally between the owner and the man who reared.

In the hill tracts the Chamars are mostly employed as regular agricultural labourers and get from Rs. 18 to Rs. 20 per annum plus food. The depressed castes in these places occupy themselves very largely in field labour and in some parts the Koris are generally known as *halis* or *sepis*. Wages of these agricultural labourers are lower than in the plains and there is much oppression. Their condition resembles that of the *harwahas* in the eastern districts of the U. P.

The services of the *hali, basodia, sepi*, etc. are usually secured by giving them some advance which may vary from Rs. 100 to Rs. 125. It seems hardly necessary to point out that this advance usually prevents these people from changing masters.

These permanent or semi-permanent servants are employed mostly by Brahmins, Rajputs, etc. who do not themselves cultivate their land. Such castes do not, however, form so important a part of the land owning classes in the Punjab as they do in the U.P. Unlike the U.P., Bihar and Bengal, the Punjab is a land of peasant proprietors. In this province we do not find zamindars having big *khudkasht* lands. In the south-eastern parts of the Punjab, where the depressed classes are thickly concentrated, the majority of the peasant proprietors are Jats who cultivate their own fields and rarely employ any permanent field labourers. Only at the time of harvesting does a Jat peasant employ any labourers. Thus it comes about that in this province the majority of the depressed classes are not *harwahas* as in the U.P. but are free labourers.

But the above-mentioned factors alone cannot explain fully the restricted scope of employment for these people in the fields. Agricultural conditions also play an important part. While in Bihar, Bengal and eastern parts of the U.P., rice is the principal crop, in the Punjab its place is taken by wheat. Now rice cultivation necessitates employment of a large labour force but wheat cultivation requires very few hands.

Nature of Labourer's Work

Though these people do not find work in the fields so often as in other provinces there is more demand for labourers arising out of work of non-agricultural type. Generally speaking, work during the off season depends on the importance of

the middle classes as well as the general economic development of the region. The standard of living of the Punjab peasant is higher than that of the peasant in any other province of India. When the peasant has disposed of his crops there is considerable activity in the village in connexion with the construction of houses, wells for irrigation, etc. Besides this, there are a large number of brick-fields, flour mills, etc. in some villages which provide employment for some of these people. It may be mentioned that the proportion of earners engaged in industry in the Punjab is greater than that in the U. P., Bihar, or Bengal.

Wages

Wages of daily labour vary from 4 to 5 annas in villages, though at harvest time these go up to 7 or 8 annas. In certain areas a labourer gets 4 annas plus one meal for a day's work. It has been pointed out elsewhere that wages vary according to the nature of work. Thus, wages for weeding and harrowing are lower than those for ploughing. A man often gets for ploughing 4 annas plus one meal. Women usually get from 3 to 4 annas while boys when engaged to tend cattle get about Re. 1 p. m. plus food. For reaping corn wages are often paid in kind, the remuneration being one *bhari* which is equivalent to about 8 seers of grain. In the Malwa tract, besides getting one *bhari* a labourer is given some opium and tea during the course of the day's work. The employer expects to get more work from the labourer by giving him narcotics. For separating grain from chaff, they generally get 5 per cent of grain separated. When unable to get work, they usually manage to earn about 2 annas per day by selling grass or fuel.

Size of Family and Income

The data collected by us show the average size of a depressed class family to be 6·46[1] though the modal value is about 5·5.[2] The average number of children and aged per family is 3·37, while the average number of adult men and adult women is 1·67 and 1·41 respectively. It may be mentioned that the average size of a family in the rural areas of

1 Standard deviation of average = 0·12

2 See Appendix XII.

the Punjab is 4·77.[1] In the south-eastern parts of the Punjab, families are comparatively bigger, the average size of a family in Rohtak and Hissar being 5·08 in each case.[2] We propose taking 6·5 as the average size of a depressed class family. Such a family would consist of 3·4 dependents and 3·1 workers. The workers comprise the principal earner, the housewife and other working dependents.

It has already been pointed out that it is only during the harvesting season that wages are high and plenty of work is found. Thus if we take 50 working days for the principal earner at 6 as. per day and 120 working days at 4 as., his contribution to the family budget may be estimated at Rs. 48-12. Taking 210 working days for the 2·1 working dependents at 3½ as., their contribution may be taken to be Rs. 45-15. The maximum annual income of a depressed class family of average size may be taken to be Rs. 95 per annum. This will be the income if work is found fairly regularly. In the majority of cases the family income would be found to lie between Rs. 80 and Rs. 90 as the upper limit. In the south-eastern parts, work is not found so often and wages are slightly lower than in Central Punjab. But in these parts a considerable proportion of them have milch cattle and are able to add something to their family income by selling ghee. Even when this is taken into account, incomes in Eastern Punjab will be found to be less than in Central Punjab. Again, incomes will be lower in hills than in plains for reasons already explained. Generally speaking, a depressed class family will have at its disposal, on an average, between 3½ annas to 4 annas per day. It has to be remembered that when regularly employed these people have just enough to make both ends meet. They have little credit with the Bania. When crops fail, prices of food-stuffs rise and there is little demand for labour. In that case it is only the fruits of *jal* tree and the carcasses of animals that stand between them and starvation.

Begar

And while reviewing the economic condition of these people we must remember that they suffer from *begar*. In this

1 Punjab Census Report 1931, Part I, p. 83.

2 Ibid. p. 82.

province too, especially in the hill tracts, *begar* is not uncommon. In fact, in certain parts of the province, '*begari*' is a synonym of Chamar. Excepting the hill tracts, *begar* is not extorted in connexion with work in the fields but for repairing houses etc. For this latter type of work, the labourer gets 1½ to 2 annas per day while the market rate of wages is 4 to 5 annas. Besides this, they may have to do all sorts of odd jobs without expecting any remuneration. The houses of depressed class people are often situated in *shamlat* land in which they do not have any right. The zamindars can, therefore, compel them to do *begar*. Moreover, the majority of them are indebted to some zamindar or other. Another way of bringing pressure to bear on these people is by imposing professional taxes which vary from 8 as. to Rs. 3 per annum per family. Thus the means of extorting *begar* are more or less the same as in other provinces. But *begar* exists to a much smaller extent in the Punjab compared to other provinces of Northern India. This is due mainly to the absence of big zamindars and the comparatively greater development of the means of communication.

Changes in Economic Condition

The condition of the depressed class people is distinctly inferior to the poorest self-cultivating proprietor and, at times, there is amongst them a good deal of privation. During the last few years there has been some improvement in their economic condition. This is attributable to the increasing demand for labour, the improvement in the means of transport and communication, and last, but not least, to a growing spirit of independence, especially in the plains, as a result of which they have emerged from a state of serfdom in which they were three or four decades back.[1] Generally speaking, these people are better off than their brethren in other parts of Northern India.

1 Ludhiana District Gazetteer, pp. 64-5; Rohtak District Gazetteer, pp. 78-9.

CHAPTER V

ARTISANS AND SERVANTS

The social position of a man has at all times and at all places been influenced profoundly by the occupation which he follows. Certain occupations are considered suitable to certain ranks of life and by following any occupation other than that considered suitable to his rank, a man incurs the disapprobation of his class. While in other societies his choice of occupation is free, in Hindu society it is the caste that chooses his occupation. Therefore, the social position of the Hindu is that of the caste to which he belongs.[1] In the remote past, there was probably an intimate association between certain castes and certain occupations and attempts were made by the conquering Aryans to prevent the original inhabitants from following any occupation not considered suitable to their rank. It was in fact the most unremunerative and unwholesome occupations that were assigned to some of them. Of late, however, the proportion of those who are engaged in traditional occupations is getting less. This is true especially of the depressed classes.[2] In India, as a whole, only 7·6 per cent of the Chamars and 45·9 per cent of the Dhobis are still engaged in their caste occupations and the corresponding figures for the Khatiks and Bhangis are 21·5 and 55·9 per cent respectively.[3]

Occupational apostasy is fairly wide-spread these days. While in the past the fear of being outcasted by the caste *panchayat* was a 'wholesome' deterrent to occupational apostasy, it is no longer proving effective. Both social and economic forces are responsible for such changes. First, there is the desire to rise in the Hindu social system by abjuring occupations that are repugnant to high caste Hindus. The *panchayat* usually connives at such acts and at times even approves them. Secondly, such occupations have become unremunerative and sticking to these is not an economic proposition. This last reason

1 Blunt: *Caste System of N. India*, pp. 229.

2 R. K. Mukerjee: *Economic Problems of Modern India*, Vol. I, pp. 73-4.

3 See Chapter II, Table 2.

is probably the most important one. The position of village artisans is changing rapidly with the import of cheap machine-made goods. "The tendency is for them to lose their status as village servants, paid by the dues of the village community, and to become more and more ordinary artisans who compete freely among themselves for custom; in some cases, notably that of the village leather worker, they are disappearing under the competition of organized industries." [1]

In the course of this chapter we shall examine the position of those members of the depressed classes who still follow some traditional occupation.

Chamars

The traditional occupation of the Chamars has been described as leather work. It will be observed from TABLE II in Chapter II that in 1931 the proportion of the U.P. Chamars having leather work as a principal or subsidiary occupation was only 5·7 per cent. It may be mentioned that some of the Chamar sub-castes (e.g. Dakhinahas of Basti district) claim that weaving was the traditional occupation of their ancestors. Moreover, Koris, whose traditional occupation is weaving, were till recently treated as a Chamar sub-caste. For these reasons we think it incorrect to conceive of a Chamar as primarily a worker in leather, at least so far as the U.P. is concerned. Our observations show that in the eastern and the central parts of the U.P. only about 2 per cent of the Chamars are now engaged in leather work, and that the corresponding figure for the western parts of the province is 5 per cent.

In Bihar, as has already been seen, the importance of the Chamars' caste occupation has been tending to decline. Our data reveal that about 6 per cent of the Chamars depend mainly on their traditional occupation, while 22 per cent of them follow it as a subsidiary occupation. These latter are mostly shoe-menders and village Muchis. Tanning is usually combined with leather work but the proportion of tanners-cum-shoe-makers does not exceed 3 per cent.

Further down the Ganges Valley (Bengal), the proportion of Chamars and Muchis engaged in leather work increases. Thus,

1 Industrial Commission Report, p. 10.

at the time of the 1931 Census, 25·9 per cent of the Muchis and 20·6 per cent of the Chamars were engaged in tanning and leather work.

In the Punjab, the importance of this occupation continued to be appreciable till 1931 but tended to decline thereafter. While at the time of the 1931 Census 18·5 per cent of the Chamars were engaged in leather work the corresponding figure at the time of the present survey was 10 per cent.[1]

Tanning

Village tanning is one of the industries that have suffered considerably from the competition of organized industries. The Industrial Commission observed : "The village tanner finds that the continued rise in prices is placing local hides to an increasing extent beyond his reach. His methods are extremely inefficient; he has justly been described as making a good hide into bad leather; and there seems little hope that his industry can or will ever deserve to be saved."[2] Whilst in the past carcasses were considered the perquisite of the Chamar who was under an obligation to supply shoes and certain other leather articles to his Jajman (client), the custom is rapidly disappearing owing to the rise in the value of hides. In most places, the Chamar now gets a day's wage for skinning a dead animal and selling the hide on behalf of the owner. Often, the Chamars look askance at this work. In some villages there is only one *ganwaha* (skinner), the rest having given up this work. In certain areas, zamindars auction annually the right to skin dead animals and in such villages all the dead cattle belong to the person who possesses this right.

Disposal of Hides

Hides—tanned and untanned—can be disposed of in periodic leather markets, to local leather dealers in towns or to the *biyapari* who goes about from village to village buying hides from the Chamars. The *biyapari* sells these in turn to the local leather dealers or agents of exporting firms or factories in

1 Since the outbreak of the present war the importance of this occupation appears to be increasing everywhere.

2 Industrial Commission Report.

Cawnpore, etc. It should be mentioned here that trade in leather is mostly in the hands of Khojas (Mohammedans). Usually, the village tanner is indebted to the local leather dealer or *biyapari* and has to sell his goods to him. The leather dealer is in fact the town prototype of the village Bania. If raw hides are sold through the leather dealer, he charges a commission amounting to about Rs. 2 per maund. In the case of tanned hides, his charges come to about 7 per cent of the sale value. While in 1911, not a single tannery, leather factory, or boot and shoe factory in the U.P. was managed by a Chamar or Muchi,[1] they have now started a few. The Census Report for 1931 shows that there were 586 Chamars and 8 Muchis engaged in industry as owners, managers, clerks, etc.[2] In the Punjab, too, some of the Chamars have now taken to this trade. That so few of them have taken to trade in leather is attributable mainly to lack of capital.

Tanned hides from this country have a low value in foreign markets. This is due to defective tanning, to the inferior quality of the cattle, to the widely prevalent practice of branding cattle and to the fact that the majority of the cattle being used for draught purposes the hides show signs of wear and tear. Defective tanning is in turn due to over-liming, the use of antiquated tools for fleshing and removing the hair, the hurrying of the process of tanning and little attempt at currying. An important reason explaining the existence of bad curing is that the mofussil prices of well-cured and badly cured hides do not differ appreciably.

Profit in Tanning

An untanned hide of 10 lbs. costs about Re. 1-8 and a tanned hide costs about Rs. 2-12. The materials required for tanning this cost about 3 as. and there is thus a margin of about Re. 1-1 to cover the wages of the workers. Tanning is usually a family occupation in which hired labour is seldom engaged. And for this very reason is it difficult to determine accurately the net profit to the tanner. It may be mentioned, however, that a tanner bothers as little about the economics of his

1 U. P. Census Tables, 1911

2 U. P. Census Tables, 1931, p. 441.

occupation as the cultivator of a tiny patch of land about the economics of his holding ; and, as in the latter case, he would continue to follow his calling because of the absence of other avenues of employment even when the profits are nil. In fact, the question of profit and costing seldom arises in such calculations. Suffice it to say that the economic condition of the tanner differs but little from that of the *harwaha*.

Governmental Efforts to Revive Village Tanning

With a view to reviving village tanning, the U.P. Government have started tanning demonstration classes in six districts of the province and as a result of these activities village tanning is said to be reviving rapidly.[1] In the absence of any statistical information, we find it somewhat difficult to share the official optimism. Government tanning institutes exist in Bengal and the Punjab. It has, however, to be remembered that the Chamar cannot maintain himself and his family during the period of training and is, therefore, not in a position to derive much benefit from such facilities.

Muchis

The Muchis can be divided roughly into two categories according as they live in villages or towns. The village Muchi has invariably another source of income in land. In certain parts of the country, the Chamars employed as village servants get about 30 seers of grain per plough. But the shares in produce are no longer sufficient to support these people since they have grown in numbers.

It is rarely that the village Muchi lives exclusively on his craft. This is due partly to the small demand for shoes in villages and partly to the competition of cheap canvas shoes of Japanese make. The Director of Industries (U.P.) observes: "Like the preceding year the market was full of cheap canvas and rubber shoes especially from Japan but the Bata product from the factory at Batanagar is rapidly capturing the market. The import of canvas and rubber shoes from Japan fell from

1 Administration Report of the Department of Industries and Commerce for 1939, p. 14.

3,85,961 pairs in 1937-8 to 3,15,616 pairs in 1938-9."[1] Competition of factory-made shoes, however, affects all shoe-makers, and is in no way peculiar to the depressed classes.

Equipment

The Muchi's tools are few and simple. Everyone of them has a *rampi*, two instruments for rough and fine stitching, a shoe frame and a wooden stick for applying starch. The whole equipment costs about Rs. 3. A few of the town Muchis, who make shoes in the English style, keep also a machine for stitching.

Profit per pair and Income

For meeting his leather requirements, the Muchi usually buys tanned leather. It is only a few of them who themselves tan hides. This usually happens in the case of large families. With a 10 lb. hide costing about Rs. 2-12 he prepares about 8 pairs of *desi* shoes. Besides this, for every pair of shoes, he requires thread and paste worth about a pice each. (In towns, they also use chrome leather worth about two pice.) A man working alone usually takes a day to prepare one pair of shoes which can be sold at a price varying from nine to twelve annas. A village Muchi normally prepares thirty to forty pairs of shoes in a year. Taking an average profit of 4 as. per pair, his annual income from this business would vary from Rs. 7-8 to Rs. 10. In the U.P., Bihar and Bengal, the incomes of village Muchis would tend to the lower limit; but in the Punjab the majority of the incomes would correspond to the upper limit which might also be exceeded occasionally. It is true that besides making shoes the village Muchi also prepares other leather goods like buckets and ropes but the income from such sources hardly exceeds Rs. 3 per annum. It is mostly repair work that he is called upon to do and for this he may be paid little or nothing. To be brief, the economic condition of the village Muchi is only slightly better than that of a labourer since in leather work the former finds a supplementary source of income.

In small towns about half the total number of Muchis will be found to be mere shoe-menders and the rest will be shoe-makers, working independently. In cities like Cawnpore and

[1] *Ibid.* p. 7.

Lucknow, a considerable proportion of the shoe-makers are employed in factories and workshops where all sorts of leather articles are manufactured. In such places the proportion of Muchis working independently will be comparatively small. The Muchis in towns, it may be mentioned, depend almost exclusively on their craft. It is rarely that they work as unskilled labourers.

Income

The shoe-maker is usually assisted by his wife or child and is able to make more than one pair per day. Assuming that he is able to prepare 40 pairs per month, the average daily income of a family may be taken to be 5 as. per day. This would be the upper limit for the majority of the incomes of Muchi families excepting in the Punjab where the upper limit would be in the neighbourhood of 8 as. per day. The average daily income would, however, be seldom below 3 as. It should be mentioned here that the output of the Punjab Muchi is greater than that of the others.

In industrial centres like Cawnpore and other important towns leather articles fetch better prices and incomes of Muchis are higher. This is true especially of those of them who manufacture shoes in the English style, as well as other leather articles like suit-cases. Though the margin of profit per pair is greater in the case of such shoes, these take more time to make and consequently a Muchi can hardly prepare more than 25 pairs per month. Profit per pair usually varies from 8 as. to Re. 1. His average monthly income may, therefore, be estimated at Rs. 19, assuming an average profit of 12 as. per pair. The incomes of most of these people would be found to lie between Rs. 15 and Rs. 25.

There are two solid reasons why most of the Muchis do not start making shoes in the English style. First, the equipment required for this work costs about Rs. 150 and only a few of them can afford this. Second, it is only a few of them who know the work and these too have learnt it either after several years' work in leather factories or from their elders. A few schools have been started by Government to impart instruction in the methods of manufacture of shoes and other leather

articles. But they are not very popular, one of the reasons being that the students trained therein do not have a reputation for success in life. Most of them develop middle-class notions of respectability and try to look for jobs in leather factories. And those of them who wish to work independently do not have money enough to buy the machines and tools with which they have learnt to make shoes. Another point against these schools is that very few of the Muchis can afford to train their sons in such institutions, not only because the cost of training is comparatively high but also because during the period of training the son would be contributing nothing to the family income.

The shoe-mender occupies the lowest rung amongst the Muchis. He is in fact an unskilled worker whose position is similar to that of a casual labourer. Some of the Chamars take to shoe-mending when work cannot be easily found in the village. Usually they return home after a few months' stay in towns, not because they have any land but simply because they have a home. In every important town may be seen large numbers of them wandering from street to street in search of work. The shoe-mender can earn anything from 1 to 8 as. per day, but his average monthly income seldom exceeds that of an unskilled labourer by more than 8 as.

Hand Spinning and Weaving

Spinning and weaving are other occupations that provided employment in the past to a considerable proportion of our population. Even now a small proportion of the Chamars are engaged in this occupation. In the past, the Dakhinaha Chamars of the Eastern U.P. and the Tanbina Koris probably had weaving as their traditional caste occupation but the members of these castes are mere *harwahas* now. The word 'Tanbina', it will be observed, is indicative of the process of weaving.[1]

1 Hand spinning and weaving began to be affected adversely owing to the competition of Lancashire goods in the eighteenth century. Writing in 1890, Sir Henry Cotton observed: "Less than a hundred years ago the whole commerce of Dacca was estimated at one crore of rupees and its population at 200,000 souls. In 1787 the exports of Dacca muslin to England amounted to 30 lakhs of rupees; in 1817 they had ceased altogether. The arts of spinning and weaving which for ages offered employment

Census figures have invariably been showing a decline in the number of weavers from decade to decade. According to the Industrial Commission the apparent tendency for the number of weavers to decrease, in so far as it is real, is mainly if not wholly confined to the coarse weavers who are often not whole-time weavers, whose products are less specialized and more exposed to mill competition and who find it easy to take to unskilled labour.[1] The depressed class weavers being mostly coarse weavers, these drawbacks are all too true of them. Might we not infer, therefore, from what the Commission says, that from 1872 to 1911 there was a real decrease in the number of depressed class weavers ?

Proportion of Weavers

In the U.P., there are only two depressed castes engaged in weaving, viz. Chamars and Koris. The Koris were not long ago called Kori Chamars. Only during recent years have they successfully separated themselves from the Chamars.[2] Our observations show that it is only in the eastern and the central parts of the province that about 1 per cent Chamars are still engaged in weaving. In these parts weaving is done mostly by Momins and Julahas. The Chamars of the western districts do not follow this occupation at all. Here, weaving is in the hands of Vaish or Mathuria Koris. About 70 per cent of these people still

to a numerous industrial population have now become extinct. This decadence has occurred not in Dacca only but in all districts". (Industrial Commission Report, p. 249). Speaking about the condition of this industry Romesh Dutt observes: "After 1820 the manufacture and export of cotton piece goods began to decline steadily, never to rise again." (*Economic History of British India*, p. 296.) This result was brought about by imposing prohibitive import duties on Indian goods and by using the political power of the East India Company to discourage Indian manufactures.

Hand-loom weaving is still an important cottage industry in India. The Industrial Commission estimated the number of hand-looms at two to three millions and their gross earnings at about 50 crores of rupees. (Report, pp. 391-94.) Towards the beginning of the last decade hand-loom output was estimated at 61-39 per cent of mill output and the number of hands employed at about five millions. (Dey, H.L., *Indian Tariff Problems in relation to Industry and Taxation*, p. 89.)

1 Report, pp. 393-94.

2 Blunt, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

follow this occupation, whether as a principal or a subsidiary means of livelihood. In the Punjab, some of the Chamars and Dhanaks do weaving. The proportion of Chamars engaged in weaving is about 3 per cent in the Hariana tract and 15 per cent in central Punjab.

A large number of the weavers are engaged in agriculture as well, usually as non-occupancy tenants. When not engaged in weaving they often work as agricultural labourers. This is especially the case at harvest time when wages rule high.

Cost of Production and Profit

The depressed class weavers usually prepare *garha, dosuti* and *daura* cloths. For weaving a piece of cloth 8 yards long and ½ yard wide they require 1¾ seers of yarn, which costs about 14 as. The work engages two adult workers for two days and besides this other members of the family also help occasionally. Weaving is, in fact, a family occupation that requisitions alike the services of the aged and the child. The finished piece may fetch about Re. 1-4. Thus, in the case of a family having two adult workers the family income per working day would be about 3 as. In other words, if the assistance given by the aged and children is ignored, an adult can earn about 1½ as. per day. The villagers get cloth woven from them by paying them 4 as. per seer of yarn used. This works out to about 3½ as. per working day for the family. For preparing *dotai* (a sort of counterpane) the weaver gets about 12 as. as weaving charges, the yarn being supplied by the customer. The work engages 3 adults for two days and wages per working day come to about 2 as. In the case of articles that have no mill-made substitutes the weaver is able to earn more. Such articles, however, are made only to order. The weaver does not produce such articles regularly for sale mainly for two reasons. First, the market for such things is limited to his own village or at the most to a neighbouring village only. Second, the weaver must needs dispose of his goods as soon as they are ready. And as already indicated, there is no well-developed market for such goods.

Weaving of *garha* and other less specialized cloth is uneconomic. And if the weaver still depends mainly on his calling it is due more to the absence of other avenues of employment

than to any other single reason. It is possible too that the weaver may not be 'conscious' of the uneconomic nature of his calling.

In this trade also the middle-man plays an important part. The weaver invariably gets yarn on loan from the local cloth dealer and sells the cloth to him.

The majority of the depressed class weavers are also cultivators or general labourers. The weaving season is at full swing when crops are harvested and the agriculturist has some cash on hand. At this time, work in the fields is at a standstill and the weaver is consequently at an advantage as compared with a mere labourer. When crops are good the weaver gets work for two to three months a year and his annual income from weaving may be estimated at about Rs. 15. The average monthly income of a weaver-cum-labourer family can rarely exceed that of a labourer family by more than a rupee.

Shortcomings and Means of Improvement

Some of the problems of the industry are the ignorance and poverty of the weaver, the use of inefficient tools, the competition of mill-made cloth and the large number of middlemen in the trade. If his lot is to be improved, the weaver must be provided better education, greater facilities for the purchase of raw materials and disposal of finished products, improved appliances like the fly shuttle, and cheaper finance.

Masons, Brick-Moulders, etc.

The majority of depressed class people who have become masons are Chamars. The wages of a mason vary from 6 to 12 as. in the eastern districts of the U.P. and from 8 as. to Re. 1 in the western districts, the factors determining them being the skill of the worker as well as the requirements of the locality. A mason can rarely have a subsidiary source of income. A skilled mason, although he has all the disadvantages of a casual occupation, is however, better off than most of the Muchis.

Brick-moulding is a seasonal occupation which is a subsidiary source of income of some of the agricultural labourers. The season begins by the time the sowing of rabi crops is

completed. The moulders work in sets of four men. A set of workers is able to mould from 1,000 to 1,500 bricks a day. They are paid about a rupee per 1,000 bricks. Thus a moulder is able to earn four to six annas per working day. The work is very troublesome and a man seldom works for more than 20 days a month. Usually they get work for about four months in a year. Assuming that a moulder can maintain himself at Rs. 3 per month during the working season, his contribution to the family budget would be between Rs. 10 and 15.

Other sources of income of the Chamars are pig rearing, working as drummers, making baskets, selling grass and fuel, etc. It may be mentioned that in the U.P., the number of those engaged in basket making and other industries of woody material declined by 28 per cent during the period 1911—31.[1]

Women's Occupations

Midwifery is the traditional occupation of Chamar and Kori women. Where more than one woman does this work, each has her clientele (*jajmans*), and encroachment on another's *jajmani* rights is punishable. The income from this source hardly exceeds Rs. 2 per year. Other ways of contributing to family income are rice husking, flour grinding, etc. Owing to the increased popularity of rice and flour mills, the number of those engaged in rice husking and flour grinding appears to be declining.[2]

Khatiks

The special function of the Khatiks has been described as grocery and chandlery but only 15·3 per cent of them are engaged in this work.[3] A reference to Appendix V shows that 24·7 per cent Khatiks are fruit and vegetable sellers and butchers, while 31·6 per cent are cultivators. Producing and selling of vegetables and fruits is, indeed, the most important occupation of this caste. In fact, in the eastern and the central parts of the U.P. they have no rivals in these occupations and it is only in some of the western districts that a few Mohammedans

1 U. P. Census Report, 1931, Part I, pp. 434-35.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Blunt, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-52.

are found engaged in producing and selling vegetables and fruits.

The majority of Khatik cultivators live either in towns or at least in close proximity to towns. A considerable proportion of them are non-occupancy tenants paying very high rates of rent. Some occupancy tenants have orchards but these are generally small. When a number of sons inherit an orchard they divide the fruit trees among themselves. At times a few of them join hands to get fruit gardens on lease.

The Khatik is a very efficient cultivator. Producing vegetables is no easy job. It requires work with spade before sowing and also in connexion with hoeing at a later stage. The field has to be well-manured to yield a good return. Irrigation is much more important, especially in the case of vegetables produced during the summer season. And because of the difficult nature of the work the area set apart for cultivation of vegetables will not generally exceed half a bigha in the case of a family of average size.

Fruits and vegetables are disposed of either at retail shops or by going out *gawain, i.e.* peddling them. While it is mostly their women who look after fruit shops it is mainly men who go out *gawain.* Peddling fruits by women was at one time considered so outrageous that persistence in it, even after warning, involved excommunication.[1] This prejudice is slowly disappearing.

Another important occupation of the Khatiks, especially in the western districts, is tanning of sheep and goat skins. This work requires some capital and for this very reason it is rarely that a Chamar takes it up. An important point to be noticed is that the Khatiks are not only tanners but also dealers in skins.

In 1931, only 8·2 per cent Khatiks were found to be herdsmen. It should be pointed out in this connexion that Dr Hutton gives pig breeding as the traditional occupation of Khatiks.[2] Our observations show that it is only in the eastern districts that they still follow this occupation and here too their proportion hardly exceeds 5 per cent. Pig rearing is now mostly in the hands of Chamars, Bhars and Bhangis and it is only the poorest among the Khatiks who still pursue this calling.

1 Blunt, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

2 Census of India 1931, Vol. I, Part II, Table XI.

The Khatiks are now taking to bristles trade. A considerable number of them go about from village to village buying bristles from the herdsmen and selling them to the wholesale dealer or the agent of some exporting firm. A few of them have made quite a lot of money by this trade and have now become important wholesale dealers. Some of the Chamars and Kanjars (Kuchbande sub-caste) have also taken to this trade.

Of the minor subsidiary occupations of the Khatiks, the more important ones are making of ropes, mats and brooms, selling fuel, *palodari* and carting. A Khatik, it may be mentioned, prefers piece wage system to a fixed daily wage. He has developed the trader's outlook and avoids working as a labourer.

Economic Condition

Speaking generally, the economic condition of the Khatiks is better than that of other depressed class people excepting perhaps the Dhobis. To a considerable extent this is due to the fact that the Khatiks have important subsidiary occupations and the number of non-Khatik middlemen engaged in their occupations is small. On the whole those living in small towns do not appear to be less well off than those living in big towns and cities. In the latter case, they depend mostly on one occupation. Besides this, living is much more expensive in cities than in small towns. In cities like Lucknow about 70 per cent families have monthly incomes ranging between Rs. 15 and 20, about 10 per cent, greater than Rs. 20, and about 20 per cent, less than Rs. 15. In the case of the majority of families, incomes are not large enough to leave any surplus for unforeseen contingencies. The vegetable and fruit sellers in such places do not, usually, have any subsidiary occupations.

During the last two or three decades there has been considerable improvement in the condition of Khatiks. This is ascribable partly to the rise in the value of bristles and skins due mainly to the development of export trade in these and partly to the development of the fruit trade.

Dhobis

The Dhobis are largely dependent on their traditional calling.[1] While in 1911, 60·1 per cent of the Dhobis in the U.P. followed their traditional occupation as a principal or subsidiary source of livelihood, in 1931 their proportion had increased to 63·9 per cent.[2] In Bihar, 47·9 per cent Dhobis were returned as washermen at the time of the 1931 Census and the corresponding figure for Bengal was 48·7 per cent.

Village Dhobis

Large concentrations of Dhobis are found only in towns. In the contryside they are found sparsely scattered. Seldom do we find more than three Dhobi families in a village and at times there is only a single family catering to a clientele distributed in a few villages. About two-thirds of village Dhobis possess land as occupancy or statutory tenants. The reason why such a large proportion of Dhobis have been allowed by Zamindars to acquire tenancy rights is that this caste is specially treated as village servants. Castes like the Chamars were too numerous to be permitted to enjoy any special privileges. Moreover, the holdings of Dhobis are also bigger than those of other depressed castes. In the majority of cases, the Dhobis combine cultivation with the pursuit of their caste occupation.

The village Dhobi washes clothes with *reh* but does not starch or iron any. Even at present, when most of the transactions of the villagers are in cash, the Dhobi is paid in kind. Usually he gets about 30 seers of grain per plough per year. These customary dues vary somewhat from locality to locality. Those Dhobis who possess land are better off than the ordinary depressed class tenants and the condition of others who have to depend exclusively on their tranditional calling is similar to that of Khatiks.

Dhobis in Towns

Most of the Dhobis in towns depend almost exclusively on their caste occupation while a few are employed in laundries or railway workshops. A town Dhobi has to face competition from

1 U. P., Census Report, 1931, Part I, pp. 434-35.

2 *ibid.*, p. 409.

other Dhobis as well as laundries—organized workshops of Dhobis.

In towns every Dhobi has to keep a donkey or a bullock for carrying clothes to the ghaut and bringing them back. Besides this, he must also have an iron, a table, a flat piece of wood for washing clothes, a vessel and a rope. His whole equipment costs about Rs. 30.

The materials used for washing clothes are washing soda, soap, indigo, rice for preparing starch, and fuel. For washing 100 clothes the Dhobi has to spend about Re. 1-4 on these materials. And it takes about three days to do the actual work. The rates charged by Dhobis vary with the position of the client as well as with the locality. Thus customers living in civil lines have usually to pay more than those living in the town proper. Generally, the Dhobis are paid from four to six rupees per '100' clothes. Like the baker's dozen, the Dhobi's '100' is greater than 100, for certain small clothes like handkerchiefs, socks, etc. are washed free. Assuming that he spends 4 as. in buying washing material for such clothes as are not paid for, his profit per '100' clothes may be taken to vary from Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 4-8. In other words, a Dhobi earns about 13 as. to Re. 1-8 per working day.

Washing clothes, like weaving, is a family occupation in the sense that most members of the family help in the work. The Dhobi's wife brings him the mid-day meal at the ghaut, and, besides that, helps him in drying and ironing the clothes. At times, she takes the clothes to the *jajman's* house. The actual washing work is an irksome job and is generally done by the menfolk. A Dhobi normally washes between '400' to '600' clothes per month and, therefore, his monthly income may be taken to vary from Rs. 10 to Rs. 27. In Bihar and eastern U.P. incomes are lower than in Bengal and western U.P. For instance in the former areas, the majority of the incomes would lie between Rs. 8 to Rs. 12, while the corresponding limits for the latter would be Rs. 10 to Rs. 20.

The economic condition of the Dhobi depends not only on the locality in which he works but also on the status and number of his clients. It is not, however, so easy for a new comer to get a sufficient number of 'good' clients. Washing of clothes

also requires some skill. About 15 per cent of the Dhobis in cities like Lucknow and Cawnpore are really semi-skilled Dhobis who wash clothes with *reh* but do not iron or starch any. They are mostly new comers to the town. Their clients belong mainly to the poorer strata of the population. Generally these Dhobis get one pice per cloth. The average monthly income in such cases does not exceed Rs. 10. It is with difficulty that they manage to make both ends meet.

Bhangis

The word Bhangi has been used here as a generic for several castes like Hela, Lalbegi, and Balmiki who are mainly engaged in scavenging. Helas are found mostly in the eastern parts of the U.P. while in the western districts Lalbegis and Balmikis predominate. It should be mentioned that, in the eastern parts of the U.P., Hela and Bhangi are synonyms. In Bihar and Bengal, scavenging work is mainly done by Doms, Haris, Lalbegis, Halalkhors, Bhuinmalis, Kaoras and Mehtars. The term 'Mehtar', it may be pointed out, is often used as a generic for all those engaged in scavenging work whose caste cannot be specified. In the Punjab, the important groups engaged in this work are the Balmiki, Sattishahi, Be-parwah. Some Dumnas and Dhanaks do scavenging work but the latter will not touch night-soil. Incidentally, the Dhapra Doms of Bihar also do not touch night-soil.

Village Bhangis

The number of Bhangis found in the countryside is small. They are found as sparsely scattered as the Dhobis. The work normally done by them is that of field-watchmen though they also help in threshing grain. Very few of them are cultivators and it is rarely that we come across a Bhangi occupancy or statutory tenant. Besides following their traditional occupation, they work as village watchmen, messengers, musicians, drummers, comb makers, field labourers, etc. It is the Dom who usually brings bad tidings. Other subsidiary occupations followed by them are rearing pigs, making baskets, ropes, etc.

In the villages, the agriculturists still pay the Bhangi in kind. He usually gets one *bhari* (bundle) at harvest time. This

amounts to ten or fifteen seers of grain. From the non-agriculturists, he generally gets one *roti* per house per day. In some areas they get one to two rupees per house per year in addition to the daily *roti*. This practice of giving *roti* is common in the western parts of the U.P. and the Punjab. Elsewhere they get only a rupee or so per year.

There is practically no difference between the condition of field labourers and Bhangis except in the western U.P. and the Punjab. And over there too the only important difference between the condition of a Bhangi and a labourer is that the former is assured of food supply while the latter is not.

Bhangis in Towns

It is in towns that they are found in large numbers. Here almost all of them follow their traditional calling. The majority of these people are in the employ of local bodies—District and Municipal Boards. The proportion of families from whom no member is thus employed seldom exceeds 20 per cent.

Employees of Local Bodies

There are no uniform scales of pay for Bhangis in the various local bodies. In most of the places a sweeper's pay varies from Rs. 5-8 to Rs. 8 p.m. But the corresponding range for the Punjab, western U.P. and the important cities of Bihar and Bengal would be Rs. 8 to Rs. 12. The pay of a Bhangi varies also with the nature of the work he does. Those engaged in carting night-soil to places outside the town get double the pay of an ordinary sweeper while those engaged in cleaning drains get about 25 per cent more than an ordinary sweeper. A woman sweeper gets about Re. 1 less than a male sweeper.

Equipment

In most cases the sweeper has to provide himself with a broom and a basket. This involves an annual expenditure of about Rs. 3 per head. The Bhangi engaged in carting night-soil has got to maintain a bullock or a he-buffalo and this involves an expenditure of at least Rs. 2 per month. In bigger towns, it may amount to Rs. 7 or Rs. 8 per month.

Conditions of Service

The Bhangis in the employ of Municipal and District Boards are not treated as permanent servants. They may be on the scavenging staff but their position is more or less similar to that of casual labourers. In actual practice, they continue to be in service so long as they do not incur the disapprobation of the Jamadar or Sanitary Inspector. No casual, earned, or sick leave with pay is allowed them. Until recently women sweepers were not given maternity benefits. But as a result of the efforts of the Congress Ministry a few Municipalities in the U. P. have already given these benefits to their women sweepers and it is hoped that other local boards would soon fall in line. Being temporary servants, they are not eligible for the benefits of provident fund, gratuity, or pension. Whenever a Bhangi wants to go on leave without pay he has to provide a substitute and has often to propitiate the Jamadar as well as the Sanitary Inspector. Seldom is there any adequate arrangement for giving them first aid treatment when they meet with an accident while on duty. The facilities for free medical treatment of the sick are not always satisfactory. They often experience difficulty in getting admitted to hospitals as indoor patients. If a Bhangi meets with a fatal accident while on duty his dependants do not always get adequate compensation. Seldom do the local bodies provide for their employees a sufficient number of suitable residential quarters. Even in the case of big Municipalities the proportion of those Bhangis who have been provided with some sort of living place is rarely more than 25 per cent. The hours of work are usually long and not only is the work of an extremely unpleasant nature but is also at times irksome.

It is not so easy for a new-comer to get a job in a local body. He has often to bribe the Jamadar and the Sanitary Inspector and the bribe may mean as much as 3 months' wages! At times these supervisors have been alleged to get a regular monthly commission of about one rupee from each employee. It should be mentioned that the number of Bhangis who have become Jamadars is very small.

Other Sources of Income

The Bhangis supplement their incomes by working as scavengers in private houses. Here, they get from 2 as. to Rs. 2,

per month per house according to the amount of work, the locality and the status of the *jajman*. Generally, rates vary from 8 as. to Re. 1 per house in civil lines and from 2 to 4 as. in old quarters of the town. In the Punjab and certain western districts of the U.P. it is customary to give a Bhangi a *roti* a day and about Rs. 2 per annum. The monthly income from work of this nature varies from Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 in the case of a family working in old quarters while that of a family working in civil lines will vary from Rs. 8 to Rs. 15.

Total Income

Thus the income of a family of average size having one person employed in a local body may be estimated at Rs. 10 in the case of Bhangis living in small towns. As already indicated, incomes in big towns and cities are somewhat higher. In such places the income of a family working in old quarters will vary from Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 per month, while in the case of a family working in civil lines it will vary from Rs. 10 to Rs. 20. But in every important town we come across Bhangi families (about 20 per cent) who manage to make both ends meet with difficulty. They do not either have enough *jajmans*[1] or none of their

1 A word might be said here about the practice of *Jajmani* whereby competition is avoided between the members of a caste. The word 'Jajmani' means clientele. The social codes of the various Bhangi sub-castes prevent a member from serving another's clients without the latter's approval. Transgression of this rule is promptly punished by the caste *panchayats*, the penalty varying from simple fine to excommunication. As each man owes allegiance only to his own sub-caste, this mode of regulating competition usually proves ineffectual where members of more than one sub-caste are found. There is nothing, for instance, except mutual understanding that can prevent a Hela from poaching on a Lalbegi's *Jajmani*. That the different Bhangi sub-castes can come to terms and create a united front where common interests are involved has been shown by the recent successful strikes staged by these people to get their demands accepted by local bodies. (See note on Sweepers' strikes at the end of this chapter.) *Jajmani* rights, it may be mentioned, are heritable and transferable. The U. P. Banking Enquiry Committee found that in three districts 84 *Jajmanis* had been mortgaged, and most of these belonged to Bhangis. (Report Vol. I, pp. 129 and 137.) At times Bhangis can sell their *Jajmani* rights for as much as two hundred rupees. This mode of checking competition between the different members of a caste is even at the present time very effective in the case of castes like Doms and Bhangis which are still

members is employed in a local body. The incomes of such families vary from Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 per month. Some of them work as musicians and are able to supplement their family income by 8 as. to Re. 1 per month. A Hela often gets some musical instrument in dowry.

Pasis

They have been dealt with elsewhere. But a word may be said here about those of them who still follow their traditional calling. In 1931, only 2·3 per cent of the Pasis in the U.P. were returned as *tari* makers and of these too a considerable number were, probably, in the employ of *tari* shop owners. This work is generally combined with cultivation.

In Bihar as many as 60 per cent of the Pasis are still engaged in their traditional calling and about 29 per cent of them combine it with cultivation. A family having money takes six to eight *tari* trees on lease and is able to make a profit of about Rs. 4 per tree per year. One adult male worker cannot manage more than the above number of trees. Thus the annual income of such a family from this work would be between Rs. 24 and Rs. 32. Where cultivation is combined with the traditional occupation a family would take a smaller number of trees on lease. The Pasi women also contribute something to the family income by making mats and brooms as well as by working in the fields at the time of sowing, weeding and reaping. Those Pasis who are in the employ of others get about Rs. 20 per year. There is practically no difference between the condition of Dhobis and Pasis.

Vagrant Tribes

The Nats comprise a number of clans who may be dancers, tumblers, acrobats, makers of candles, articles of grass and straw and metal; conjurers, jugglers, snake charmers, tatooers, musicians, thimble-riggers, quack doctors, etc., etc. They wander from one village fair to another, making a living which is always

largely dependent on their traditional occupations. In the case of Chamars, *Jajmani* has lost much of its importance partly because only a small proportion of them are at present engaged in their traditional occupation and partly because of the waning influence of their *panchayats*.

disreputable and often dishonest.[1] Some of them are, however, settling down as cultivators. A reference to Appendix V shows that in 1931, 29·3 per cent of the Nats in the U.P. were returned as cultivators and 9·5 per cent as agricultural labourers. It may be noticed that the Nats have a much higher proportion of beggars, prostitutes, etc. than any other caste.

The Bhantu, Habura, Sansia and Kanjar are all vagrant tribes that are criminally inclined. All these castes are proclaimed under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1924.[2] In the Punjab the Bawariyas and Sansis are considered to be notorious criminals. Some of the Haburas and Kanjars have settled down as cultivators. In the U.P. 26·5 per cent Haburas and 19·8 per cent Kanjars were found to be cultivators at the time of the 1931 Census. Amongst Kanjars a new sub-caste called Kuchbande has come into existence. These people make brushes, *sirkis, khas tattis* and trade in bristles. In Bihar, the women of one of the Kanjar sub-castes tattoo Hindu women.

The economic condition of these castes is very unsatisfactory even as compared with the labourers. Their ways of living are repugnant to the high caste Hindus who would not let them follow any of the more lucrative occupations. Perhaps one of the reasons explaining their criminal proclivities is that the possibilities of permanent agriculture have not always been available for them.[3]

General Tendencies

In the course of the preceding few pages we have examined the condition of artisans and village servants in the different parts of Northern India. The following are some of the general tendencies revealed by the above survey.

1. Generally speaking, the proportion of the members of a caste who are engaged in their traditional calling is inversely related to the total strength of the caste in a region. In the case of the Chamars the percentage of those who are engaged in their caste occupation decreases as we move into the U.P. from the Punjab but thereafter it begins to increase as we move

1 Blunt, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

2 See also note on 'The Criminal Tribes' at end of this Chapter.

3 R. K. Mukerjee: *Economic Problems of Modern India*, Vol. I., p. 40.

along the Ganges valley and is greatest in the deltaic region. In the case of the Dhobis the Ganges valley registers a decrease in the percentage of those engaged in their traditional occupation until in the deltaic region there seems to be an upward tendency. Though the importance of traditional occupations is tending to decline on the whole, in the case of a few castes like the Bhangis and the Dhobis the proportion of people still engaged in their traditional callings is high.

2. The economic condition of the artisans and village servants tends to deteriorate as we move eastwards from the Punjab though those living in the deltaic region are slightly better off than those who live in the middle Ganges valley.

3. In the same province, the economic condition of these people tends to approximate to that of unskilled labourers. Those living in the villages tend to gravitate towards the level of the field labourers and those in towns towards that of the unskilled town labourers.

4. It is only those who are either highly skilled or have a sufficient number of good *jajmans* who are better off than the casual labourers.

5. Generally speaking, in the same province the Dhobis are better off than the Chamars.

6. The economic condition of a caste is usually better when it depends on two or more occupations, or when it has captured the trade in an article in addition to its manufacture.

7. Some of the caste occupations like weaving of less specialized cloth have become uneconomic. Instead of being the principal means of livelihood they are coming to be followed more and more as subsidiary occupations. As subsidiary means, caste occupations often serve as a sort of insurance against unemployment, *i.e.*, a supplementary source of income.

8. Defective marketing organization not only deprives these people of a considerable share of their profit but also retards introduction of improved processes of manufacture.

CHAPTER V

NOTE ON SWEEPERS' STRIKES

Strikes by the Bhangis in cities and towns are becoming quite common these days. The Bhangis are coming more and more to believe in the utility of strike as a weapon for getting their demands accepted. In this, they have been influenced by the strikes of industrial labourers as well as by the general political awakening in the country. It may be mentioned in this connexion that when popular governments came into power in the provinces the atmosphere became favourable for the consideration of such questions as increase in wages, fixation of a minimum wage, reduction of hours of work, etc. A happy feature of the numerous sweepers' strikes is that the different sub-castes of Bhangis come together for such purposes and are willing to act in concert with men of other castes. For instance, the labour staff and the scavengers of Calcutta Corporation staged a successful strike in March-April 1940. Be it noted, however, that these strikes have mostly been organized by educated men of other castes and faith.

Main Causes

Perhaps the most important cause of such strikes lies in the desire to increase income. As indicated elsewhere in this chapter, the economic condition of these people is very unsatisfactory. Their incomes are meagre. House rent, interest on debt, and expenditure on liquor make serious inroads into the family budget and in consequence if there is no deficit, at least no surplus is ever left. The economic life of the Bhangis as of all working class people is extremely sensitive to fluctuations in prices. Rise in prices is, therefore, an additional economic reason for strikes. An increase in the income can be only achieved from the local bodies. In cities and towns the main sources of income of a Bhangi family are pay from a local body and income from *jajmani*. But the payment receivable from the *jajman* is fixed by custom and the number of *jajmans* is also more or less fixed. With an increase in the size of the family

and its ultimate subdivision, the income from this source would tend to decline. An increase in population need not mean a corresponding increase of *jajmans*. It is really the number of houses or, to be more precise, the number of latrines, that determines the income from this source. Moreover, if new houses are springing up, new Bhangi families are also coming up from the rural areas. Thus the only way by which all of them can increase their incomes is by demanding an increment or an allowance from the local bodies.

But these facts alone cannot account for strikes. Their condition has been unsatisfactory for very many years but it is only recently that they have become conscious of their plight and of the possibility of improving it through the agency of strikes. It is the active propaganda carried on by educated men of other castes and religions that is responsible for this consciousness of Bhangis.

The atmosphere too is congenial, thanks to the partly awakened conscience of high caste Hindus who would much rather tolerate, nay sympathize with attempts to raise the wages than go the whole hog and abolish caste distinctions.

Demands

A fairly comprehensive list of the demands that are being put forward by Bhangis is given at the end of this note. It ranges from 'increase in pay' to 'recognition of Union'. Usually only a few of these items are included in the list though at times these may be quite elaborate. The demand that figures prominently in every list is the one relating to increase of pay or grant of an allowance. The items marked with an asterisk are recent additions to the list. For instance, even in Calcutta the demand for maternity benefit occurred for the first time in connexion with the strike of Corporation scavengers in December 1933. One of the latest additions to the list is the demand for recognition of their Unions. But it is doubtful whether the average sweeper in Calcutta understands or appreciates the demands marked with an asterisk; in upcountry places the Bhangis may not have heard of such things. Any way, the list is an index not of the political consciousness of the average Bhangi but that of the person who works among them.

The fact remains, however, that they have rarely succeeded in getting anything more than a small increase in pay. Consider for example the case of the sweepers of Calcutta Corporation. From May 1924 to April 1940 the scavengers of the Corporation staged five strikes. The demands put forward at the time of the first strike of 1928 were similar to those of the April 1940 strike. Two other strikes occurred in between. After the second strike of 1928 they obtained an allowance of Re. 1 per head. As a result of the last strike of 1940 they secured another allowance of Re. 1 per head. In addition to these pecuniary gains, they received at the termination of each strike promises from the Corporation regarding provision of residential quarters and other ameliorative measures. But these promises have yet to be fulfilled.

Conventions for Strike Settlement

As soon as a strike breaks out some city fathers (including the Chairman) and other influential persons form a committee for effecting a compromise between the strikers and the local body. The promise of sympathetic consideration of all grievances, if work is resumed within a stated time, is held out. If this inducement does not prove strong enough, part or whole of the increment demanded is sanctioned for an interim period pending examination of all demands by a specially constituted committee. This offer generally satisfies the Bhangis and the strike is called off. In some cases, however, the demand for increment has to be finally conceded before work is resumed.

These specially constituted committees seldom take less than three months to submit their report. They rarely recommend grant of any increment or its continuance if it has already been granted for an interim period. Their positive recommendations, generally, relate to provision of residential quarters, stoppage of graft and a few measures of a similar nature. All of their recommendations are accepted by the local body concerned but nothing is done to improve the general condition of these people. If the sweepers are strongly organized they may stage another strike, in which event they either get the increment asked for or only retain the increment granted for the interim period. But it is not so easy to start a fresh strike within

a short period. Consequently, the net gain to the sweepers does not come to much.

DEMANDS PUT FORWARD BY SWEEPERS

1. Increase in pay or dearness allowance.
2. Permanency of service.
*3. Grant of Provident Fund benefit.
4. Stoppage of illegal gratification.
*5. Leave with pay. Period may vary from a fortnight to one month.
6. Holidays with full pay.
7. Free medical aid during illness.
8. Free supply of uniform.
*9. Maternity benefit for women workers.
*10. Provision of creches where women sweepers may keep their babies while at work.
11. Grade system instead of fixed pay.
12. Provision of free family quarters.
13. Jamadars to be recruited from them by promotion.
14. Extra pay for extra work.
15. No dismissal without an enquiry.
*16. Saturday benefit for two hours.
17. Reduction of hours of work.
*18. Abolition of double shift work.
19. In case of an employee's illness or leave on other grounds the substitute taken should be his relation.
20. Sweepers employed on work of a seasonal character should be given allowance during off season and at the time of resuming work no new man should be employed in place of an old one.
*21. Sunday leave with full pay or extra pay for the day.
*22. Recognition of their Union.

NOTE ON THE CRIMINAL TRIBES

The Criminal Tribes Act, 1924, empowers the local Governments to notify as a criminal tribe any tribe, gang, or class of persons, believed to be addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences, and to direct the registration of some or all of its members. The local Governments have been authorized

to impose certain restrictions on the registered members of a criminal tribe. Thus under Section 10 of the Act such persons can be required to report their movements, while under Section 11 they may be restricted to a specified area or may be committed to a criminal tribes settlement. Some of these restrictions are of a vexatious character. To mention but one example, the registered members of a criminal tribe are at times asked to report themselves at the police station or to some village officer at 11 P.M. and 3 A.M. every night. But the restrictions under these sections are imposed only on refractory criminal tribes or on refractory members thereof. In the United Provinces out of a total population of nearly 15 lakhs of criminal tribes only 25,774 persons are liable under Section 10 and 14,898 under Section 11.

While the Act provides for drastic punishment of members of criminal tribes for committing theft or offences referred to in Schedule 1 of the Act, in actual practice a punishment much less than the maximum is generally awarded. It is only in the case of the recidivists that the maximum punishment is usually awarded. In regard to matters arising out of the administration of the Act, the District Magistrate is the final authority. Although the District Magistrate possesses unlimited powers, the Act appears to have been administered with discretion and discrimination.[1]

But the administrative action taken so far to rid society of the menace of crime is more of a negative than a positive character. No attempt appears to have been made so far to analyse the causes of crime amongst these people. In branding whole groups as criminals (including those with a clean record) the authorities show lack of appreciation of the fundamental principle of modern criminology, *viz.* individualization.[2] The problem of crime amongst these people requires investigation on scientific lines by persons conversant with the principles of

1 See report of the Criminal Tribes Enquiry Committee appointed by the U. P. Government in 1938.

2 In the U.P. the Congress Government laid down the rule that no tribe should be regarded as criminal and only individuals convicted of serious offences should be registered. In other provinces the position remains unchanged.

criminology and modern statistical technique. Undoubtedly, crime presents a baffling social problem. Recent investigations by Dr Hermann Mannheim relating to English convicts show that poverty is the basic cause of most of the crimes.[1] In India, too, poverty may be responsible for the majority of crimes committed by the so-called criminal tribes. But poverty alone cannot explain the existence of crime. The mores of some of the groups do not support the laws of the country. As an example may be mentioned the case of excise laws. Far from discouraging illicit distillation of liquor, in some cases social customs actually encourage it. In such cases it is not deficiency of 'social feeling and impulse in the offender' that accounts for crime;[2] for, here, society is synonymous with caste[3] and caste opinion does not support such laws. A person convicted of such offences does not go down in the estimation of his brethren. Similar is the attitude of certain groups towards crimes against property.

These are some of the problems that have to be borne in mind in studying the problem of crime amongst these castes. A full treatment of those who live by committing crime is not within the scope of this survey; but the condition of those members of these castes who follow socially recognized callings has been discussed in the course of the preceding and the present chapters.

1 Mannheim, H., *Aspects of Crime in England between the wars.*

2 See 'Crime and Circumstances' in the *New Statesman and Nation* of January 18, 1941.

3 This will be explained in detail in Chapter X.

CHAPTER VI

THE STANDARD OF LIVING

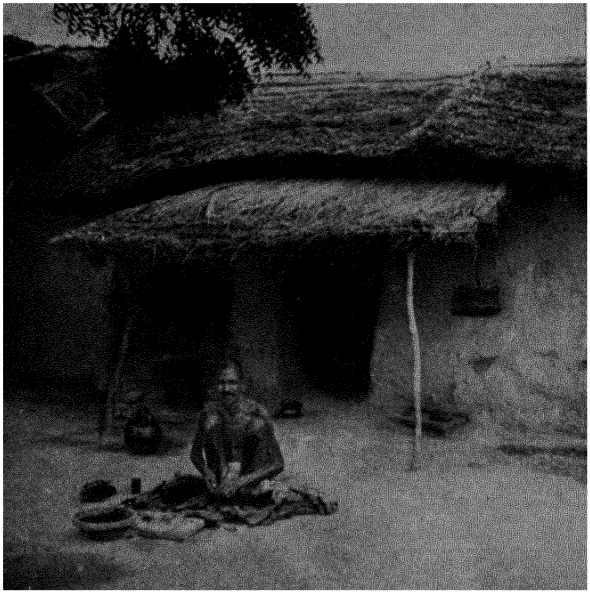
Standard of living is as yet a vague concept. Though classical economists made use of the notions of standard of living in discussing the cost of labour as a factor of production and the Austrian School emphasized its importance in connexion with the theory of consumption, neither group made any attempt at an analysis of the concept itself. It is only during recent years that economists have made any attempt to clarify the issues involved.

There are two aspects of the problem. We may conceive of standard of living as the standard of activities adjusted to wants or as the standard of comfort—a term that may suggest a mere increase of artificial wants, among which perhaps the grosser wants may predominate.'[1] It will be noticed that while the former definition brings to the fore the social aspects of the question the emphasis of the latter is on the individual's material needs. Perhaps the idea underlying is that of a particular system of wants as connected with a specific system of productive services designed to transform these wants into efficient demand in the market. And since the wants and capabilities of the various social groups differ and also since these change with the lapse of time, it is clear that it is neither an absolute nor a static standard. It may be mentioned that the stable standard of living that is supposed to exist in static economic conditions is merely a stable relationship existing between the different standards belonging to the various social groups.[2]

According to some people standard of living represents the 'natural or physical conditions of a certain minima of existence' but this use of the term is not quite appropriate. The use of this term is justifiable only for the conditions of a 'cultural minima' of existence. An important use of this concept is that of perceiving differences as well as changes in the manner of life of the various strata of society. How exactly such changes are to

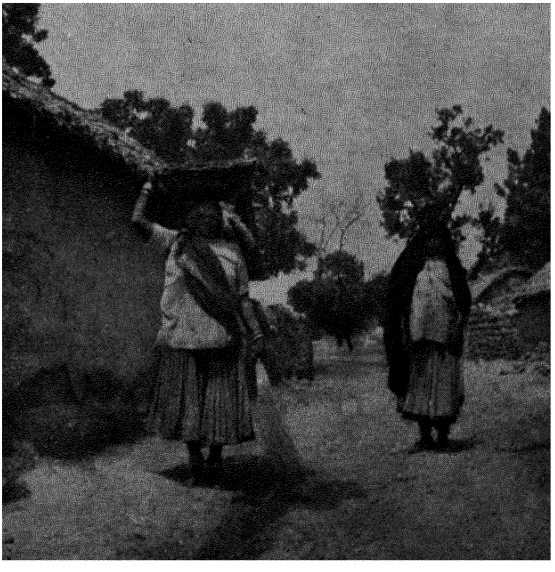
1 Marshal **A**: *Principles of Economics* (Eighth Edn.) p. 690.

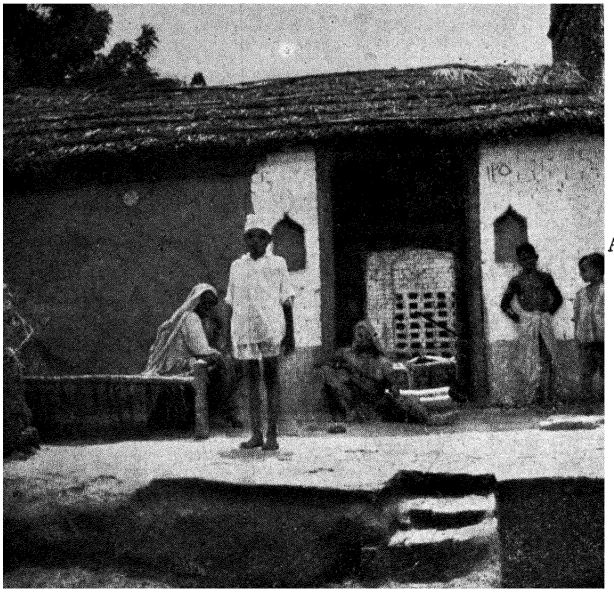
2 *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, Article on 'Standard of Living.'



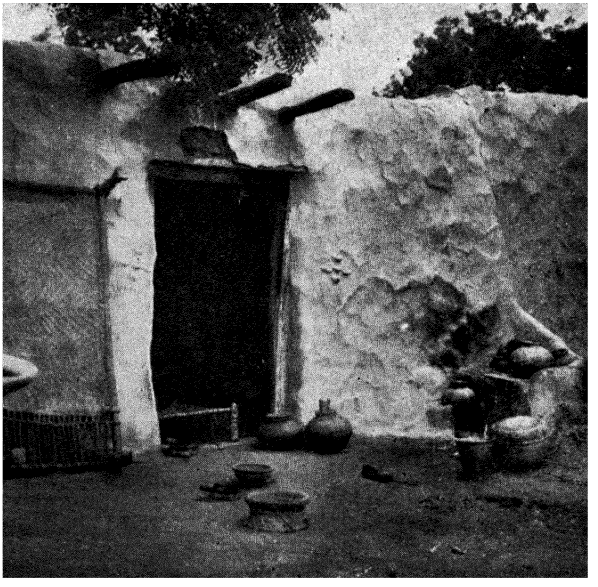
A VILLAGE
MUCHI

A WOMAN
SWEEPER





A DEPRESSED CLASS
DWELLING IN
DELHI



A DEPRESSED CLASS
DWELLING IN
THE PUNJAB

be measured, is a matter involving considerable difficulty. For Marshall 'a rise in the standard of living implies an increase of intelligence and energy and self-respect; leading to more care and judgment in expenditure and to an avoidance of food and drink that gratify the appetite but afford no strength and of ways of living that are unwholesome physically and morally.'[1] For most people, however, it means merely a rise in the standard of comfort and it will be conceded that generally this does involve a rise in the 'standard of life' in Marshall's sense. But an increase in expenditure on conventional necessities does not always result in an improvement in the standard of living, especially when this increase is at the cost of biologically necessary things. Another point to be noticed in this connexion is that improvements in the standard of living may be quantitative or qualitative or both.

These are some of the considerations that we have to bear in mind while studying the conditions of life of the depressed classes. The subtler difficulties connected with the problem of standard of living are not likely to arise in this particular case as the majority of these people have to face the sole problem of satisfying their minimum biological requirements.

Inadequacy of Harwahi Incomes

We shall now attempt a 'quantitative' as well as 'qualitative' analysis of the family budgets of some of the important depressed castes. An item of special importance in their budgets is expenditure on food. It has been pointed out in Chapter III that in the U. P. a normal *harwaha*[2] family consists of six persons. Using Lusk's coefficients of comparison of the food requirement of children with those of an average man or woman,[3] we find that a normal *harwaha* family of the U.P. represents a 'man value' of 4·93. Taking 2,400 calories to be the normal requirements of a man,[4] the total calories needed for a normal *harwaha* family in the eastern and the central parts of

1 *Ibid.*, p. 689.

2 The term is used in this Chapter as a generic for the various types of farm hands described in Chapters III and IV.

3 R. K. Mukerjee: *Food Planning for Four Hundred Millions*, pp. 23-24.

4 *Ibid.*

the U. P. would be 11,832. We have seen already that these people consume mostly *kodo*, barley and other cheap millets, and that the amount of these food grains available per day per family varies from 2¼ to 2⅝ seers.[1] It means that the total energy available for the family varies from 7,139 to 8,085 calories. There is thus, on an average, a shortage of 3,747 to 4,693 calories per day. The shortage of available energy increases as we move into the middle Ganges valley (Bihar). For that region the total energy requirements of a typical family may be estimated at 13,512 calories and the available energy at 5,200 calories. This means a shortage of 8,312 calories. The situation changes for the better, but not appreciably, in the lower Ganges valley. The energy requirements of an average family in Bengal come to about 13,920 calories but the available energy varies from 7,139 to 8,924, indicating a shortage of 4,996 to 6,781 calories. Thus, in these areas of Northern India the shortage of energy available per day varies from 3,747 to 8,312 calories.[2] Now in each region, the shortage of energy available per day would generally reach below the lower limit for that region because the food grains consumed do not always sell so cheap as has been assumed in the above calculations; and, moreover, the whole of the family income is seldom available for buying food-stuffs. Some portion of it is always spent on clothing, conventional necessities, etc. It should also be remembered that our estimates of the incomes of typical *harwaha* families represent more or less the upper limits to the incomes of these people. Even if the composition of the family changes slightly and in consequence income increases, food requirements of the family will also increase and the position as regards insufficiency of food supply will be altered but little. To be brief, the food supply of these people is grossly inadequate. The proportion of those who have enough to eat is insignificant.

The Punjab and the western districts of the U. P. constitute a wheat eating region and the normal energy requirements of a man over there may be taken to be 3,000 calories. Thus the

1 See Chapter III.

2 The size of a typical family and the amount of food-stuffs available per day have been taken from Chapters III and IV. The calorie values of food-grains are given in Appendix XIV.

energy requirements of a family in the Punjab may be estimated at 15,570 calories and the corresponding figure for the western districts of the U.P. would be 14,790. Assuming that maize, barley and other inferior millets sell at 20 seers to the rupee and that the entire family income is used for buying these food-stuffs, the total calories available per day will vary from 14,000 to 16,000 in the Punjab and from 14,400 to 15,000 in western U. P. Obviously the energy available, in either case, is just enough to meet the minimum biological requirements. But here too the food supply is occasionally inadequate for reasons already explained.

Seasonal Changes in Food Position

When we say that in most parts of Northern India the food supply of the *harwaha* is grossly inadequate we do not mean that most of these people suffer from continuous under-feeding. It only means that periods of normal feeding alternate with periods of gross under-feeding. Near about harvest season the *harwaha* has enough to eat. Cereals form a pretty high proportion of his food at this time of the year but within a month or so it begins to decline. Of his own produce little is left after repaying his grain debt and in any case it does not last more than a month or two. During the months that intervene between the harvesting of rabi and the break of monsoon, it is not easy to find work in the countryside. In Tarai area rabi is unimportant and with the harvesting of *jarhan* commences a period of enforced idleness that lasts till the beginning of the next sowing season. In these circumstances a *harwaha* has to live on niggardly advances of money or food grains from the zamindar. And it might be mentioned that the zamindar gives a *harwaha* only the minimum amount of money or food grains that is necessary to keep him alive. The inadequacy of food supply during such periods, is also indicated by the consumption of things like dried *mahwa,* fruits of *saku, kernel* of mango stone, weeds, roots, etc. In Appendix XV is given a list of the roots and weeds that sustain many of the depressed class families of Bihar and Bengal during periods of food shortage. Some of the sedges like chichor have been described as famine thermometers, for people take to these only in times of scarcity. Incidentally, the fact that the depressed

classes have normally to depend upon such weeds is a proof of the existence of a chronic state of under-nourishment.

With the break of the monsoon the sowing of kharif crops and transplantation of *jarhan* are taken in hand and there is plenty of work to be found with the result that food supply increases though insufficiently. There are very few kinds of *sags* available during this part of the year and these people have to depend mainly on cereals. During the period immediately preceding the kharif harvest, consumption of cereals is at its lowest but it is frequently supplemented by fish. When kharif crops are harvested their food supply approximates once again to the normal requirements. After a few days, however, the food position of the *harwaha* begins to deteriorate[1] and Magh-Phagan (January-February) is generally a period of considerable hardship, for when irrigation of rabi crops is finished there is practically no work till the beginning of the next harvesting season. And then with the harvest commences another cycle.

Food grains

"The modern eater of the great modernized communities," says H. G. Wells, "stretches his hand half way round the world for every other mouthful";[2] but the Indian villager still continues to live on food that grows near his hut. And this dependence on local produce means necessarily regional variations in diet. These people eat mostly *kodo, gujai, marhua,* maize, *kirao, bajra, sawan, pulsai,* barley and other inferior millets. Rice is the staple food of the people in Bihar, Bengal and the eastern parts of the U. P. but the depressed classes can only afford coarser varieties of it. On his own land, too, the *harwaha* grows coarser varieties of rice for these demand less care and attention. But even where the *harwaha* does grow *jarhan* the zamindar generally appropriates it and gives him in return some coarser variety of rice. When a *harwaha* has to purchase food grains, he buys invariably the cheapest in the market. In those areas where wages for harvesting are still paid as a share of the

1 In the main rice growing areas the situation is relieved somewhat by the harvesting of winter paddy but begins to deteriorate within a month or so.

2 *Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind.*

harvested crop, a *harwaha* family gets something of every kind of food grains grown in the locality. It brings about a diversification in their diet which is very desirable. But this mode of remunerating labour is fast disappearing. Where it is still customary to pay labourers in kind, the zamindars try to give them the cheapest food-stuff available and the quantity of this may also be varied to correspond to a cash wage of one anna or one anna and six pies though the quantity given is rarely less than one seer.

Methods of Consuming Food Grains

The food of the *harwaha* consists mostly of salted *bhat* though in the Punjab and the western parts of the U.P. both these modes of consuming cereals, viz. *bhat* and *roti*, are prevalent. *Mattar* is consumed in various ways. It may be parched and used as *chabina*; it may be ground and the flour used for preparing *roti*; it may be cooked in the form of *dal*; or it may be boiled, salted, and eaten with onions. The last method of taking *mattar* is quite common in the eastern districts of the U.P. and Bihar, especially during the rainy season. Maize may be parched and eaten as *chabina*; it may be boiled to prepare *bhat*; it may be ground and the flour cooked with *sag* and eaten; or the flour may be used to prepare *rotis*. *Kodo*, they usually prepare as *bhat*, though at times it is taken in the form of *dhunda*, i.e. elongated sticks of it heated in steam. Barley is often eaten after being ground into *sattu*.

In the eastern districts of the Punjab, they consume *bajra* and *jowar* in the form of *roti* and *rabri*. To prepare *rabri*, they put some *jowar* in *lassi* (butter-milk) and keep it in the sun till it ferments. Some salt and *lassi* are then added to it and it is cooked on slow fire. During winter they take *khijri* of *bajra* and *mung*. In the central parts of the Punjab they take *roti*, morning and night.

Dals and Vegetables

The *harwaha* does not get *dal* more than five or six times a month. Rarely does he buy it from the bazaar. The main sources of its supply are the *harwaha*'s own produce, if any, and the wages of harvesting pulses. The *dal* taken by these people

contains a lot of water and small quantities of chillies and turmeric. No oil or ghee is used in its preparation.[1] Vegetables too are taken as infrequently as *dal*. The *harwaha's* vegetable supply comes from the creepers round his hut which, besides providing vegetables of the gourd variety, adorn his dwelling. During winter season he takes *sags* of *mattar, bathui, sarson,* etc. from the field of his master whenever he gets an opportunity to do so. *Sags* that grow wild are also consumed. Vegetables are fried in oil or cooked in water according to the type of the vegetable but little or no spices are used.

Fish

Fish forms an important part of their food. But it is only during Asar-Sawan (June-July) and again from Aghan to Kartik (October-November) that they get fish for a few days. Usually they catch it for their own requirements. During the monsoon season it becomes particularly easy to catch certain varieties of fish. It is amusing to see a Kori or a Chamar catch fish. Wherever some shallow water is found, whether by the road-side or in fields, two or three of them will join hands and divide the water into small compartments by using mud. The water is then thrown off from these compartments with hands and the fish caught when little or no water is left. At times they use a crude bamboo screen for catching fish. The Tharu uses excellent contrivances for catching fish, but fishing is the hobby of their women-folk and only occasionally do men engage in it. It is rarely that the depressed class people buy fish. During September-October the catch is at times so big that the whole of it cannot be disposed of in one day. The stale fish is sold very cheap the next day and it is this stuff that the depressed class people buy now and then. It may be mentioned in this connexion that unlike the others, the Tharu preserves his surplus fish. This is usually done by drying it on smouldering fire. Before cooking the preserved fish they keep it in water for some time to remove

1 The *dal* consumed by these people in the Punjab is very thick as compared to that used by the rice eaters. Besides, consumption of oil per family is appreciably higher over here. Usually it varies from ½ to 1 seer per month.

its toughness. In Bengal too some of the depressed class people preserve fish for use during the dry season.

Methods of Cooking Fish

Fish may be cooked in oil or merely roasted on fire. But the latter method of taking fish is common amongst the depressed classes. To cook fish, the Tharu puts salt, spices, fish and water in a vessel and keeps it on fire for two or three hours. No oil is used. This method of cooking fish is also common in Bengal. The fish that the Chamars and most of the other depressed class people eat is not properly roasted and consequently causes indigestion which predisposes them to cholera. The prevalence of cholera in the countryside during September and October can probably be attributed to the consumption of stale and insufficiently cooked fish as well as to the consumption of certain types of *kodo*.

Ghee and Oil Consumption

Ghee is beyond the reach of these people and oil too is rarely consumed. Usually the *harwaha* sows some *sarson* (mustard) in his field. If a woman is in family way it would be kept for home consumption, otherwise it would be disposed of to buy something. Oil is required mostly for massaging a new born baby and is occasionally used for cooking vegetables. The mother of a newly born baby also takes oil, gur, and certain spices at least for a few days after delivery. The average annual oil consumption per family does not exceed 3 seers except in the Punjab and Western U.P. where it varies from 6 to 12 seers. Besides, in the Punjab some ghee may occasionally be used.

Milk

These people cannot afford milk. Seldom does a *harwaha* child get it after weening. The cows that the *harwahas* generally keep yield no milk but are kept mainly for bringing up calves, though cow-dung is another attraction. In the western districts of U.P. about 15 per cent of the depressed class people keep either a cow or a buffalo—mainly for selling ghee. For the Punjab the corresponding figure would be 30 per cent. But even in such families it is not customary for the adults to take milk;

it is only the children who occasionally indulge in such luxuries. There is, however, a liberal use of *lassi* (butter-milk) amongst these families. And this is an important source of calcium supply.

Pork and Meat

These people have a reputation for being fond of pork but they get it only when somebody sacrifices a pig to propitiate a *deota* (godling). Such occasions are not frequent and a man can seldom feast on pork more than three or four times a year. A few of them are swine-herds but they too cannot afford to kill more than two pigs a year for home consumption. It is usually on the occasion of some social ceremony that most of them can hope to get meat.

Carrion

A considerable number of Chamars and Bhangis eat carrion. Those living in towns or cities, as well as those who have come under the direct influence of Congress or some other organization interested in social uplift, have abjured carrion. In the Punjab and Western U. P. the proportion of those who still take carrion is very small.

Fruits

These people can only have such fruits as *jaman* and *mahwa* that grow wild and do not cost anything. During the mango season they occasionally manage to have a few mangoes from the zamindar's orchard. The Khatiks keep *mahwa* for consumption during the rainy season. And the *harwaha,* who is hard-pressed during this season, often eats bread of the fermented kernel of mango stone.

Gobraha

Most of the *harwahas* in the eastern parts of the U.P. eat *gobraha ;* in the central parts of the province they eat it to a lesser extent ; but in the western districts it is unknown. *Gobraha* is grain obtained from cowdung. So hard pressed are these people that they will not allow the undigested grains of food-stuffs that are excreted by animals to be wasted.

The consumption of *gobraha*, carrion, roots, weeas, etc. indicates the efforts made by these people to adjust themselves to 'perpetual famine conditions'.

Dietary of Tenants

Let us now turn to tenants. We propose dividing tenants into the following three categories:

(1) those with holdings of two bighas and less;

(2) those with holdings of between 2 and 4 bighas; and

(3) those with holdings bigger than 4 bighas.

The condition of a tenant whose holding does not exceed two bighas is similar to that of a *harwaha*. His own produce hardly lasts more than two months after a harvest and for the rest of the season he must needs take to labour or borrowing. The majority of them are non-occupancy tenants who combine cultivation with *harwahi* and as such the considerations determining the limits of credit are the same in the two cases. Where, however, the services of a tenant are not required by the zamindar either as a *harwaha* or as a labourer the chances of his occasionally going without food are greater than those of a *harwaha*.

As regards tenants coming under the second category, it may be mentioned that they are almost all occupancy or statutory tenants. There is a qualitative as well as a quantitative improvement in the dietary of these people as compared to that of *harwahas* and tenants of the first category. Food grains remain almost the same, there being only a slight addition of superior food grains. Vegetables and *dal* are taken more frequently. Fish, too, is taken more often, not only because they can spare more time for fishing but also because they can, now and then, buy it from the market. Consumption of oil increases by about 50 per cent, though it is still far from adequate. And, above all, everything is cooked better. Some of them keep pigs and goats which form not only an additional source of family income but also a source of pork or meat supply. But these tenants too cannot pull on without taking to labour. Two or three months after a harvest they begin to borrow grain and cash, promising repayment at the next harvest. There is no starvation in this case but the people have to keep their belts tight.

The condition of depressed caste tenants having holdings greater than four bighas is similar to that of tenants of other castes. Here food improves, starvation disappears, and consumption of fats increases. In Bihar and the eastern and central parts of the U.P. the average annual consumption of oil is about 6 seers in the case of this class of tenants, though in western districts of the U.P. it goes up to about 12 seers. The consumption of fish is also greater. For paying rent, they have usually to sell a part of their produce. Notions of respectability are perceptible amongst these people. They avoid working as labourers but some of them cannot escape it.

In spite of the improvement noticeable in the position of tenants of the second and third category, their diet is woefully deficient from the point of view of nutrition. The consumption of oils, for instance, falls far short of any recognized standards and the consumption of milk and milk products is negligible.

Khatik's Diet

The diet of the Khatiks is similar to that of tenants of the last type. The food grains used are similar to those consumed by tenants of other castes. Vegetables, *dal*, fish and meat are consumed more frequently and it is rarely that they take salted *bhat* alone. Consumption of oil varies from half to one seer per month.

Dhobis' and Shoe-Makers' Diet

The diet of the Dhobi does not differ materially from that of cultivators of other castes. They take both rice and wheat and supplement it, occasionally, with *mattar* etc. Generally a Dhobi takes *roti* in the morning and *bhat* at night, but in the rice eating parts of the province they depend almost exclusively on *bhat*. In some areas, they take *roti* of *mattar* during winter and of wheat during summer. On working days they usually take vegetables in the morning and *dal* at night, while, on non-working days, they may content themselves with *dal* both times. Oil consumption varies from one seer to one and a half seers per month per family. As in other cases, consumption of milk and milk products is negligible. A family consumes about half a seer of gur per month. The diet of the shoe-maker who lives in towns is similar to that of the Dhobi.

Bhangis

They eat the leavings of almost everyone and consequently do not have to go without food. Usually they have *dal* or vegetables with *bhat* etc. A point worth noticing is that the Bhangi does not have to spend much on cereals. Rarely does a week pass when he does not take meat or fish. Consumption of oil varies from half to one seer per month.

Luxuries—Tobacco, Tari, Pan, etc.

Tobacco is the most important conventional necessity of the depressed classes. It is used for chewing as well as smoking. In the case of *harwahas* expenditure on tobacco varies from 2 to 8 as. per family per month, while in the case of Khatiks, Dhobis, Shoe-makers and Bhangis, it normally varies from 8 as. to a rupee.

Tari *and Wine*

In the countryside, consumption of *tari* (toddy) and other country spirits appears to have declined considerably during the last decade or so. This is attributable partly to the increased price of country spirits, partly to the deterioration in the economic position of these people and partly to the temperance propaganda carried on by organizations interested in social uplift. The *harwahas* and cultivators generally take *tari* in Chet-Baisakh (March-April) which is the *tari* season. Moreover, this is the time when rabi is harvested. In the case of *harwahas* the annual expenditure of a family on drink does not exceed Rs. 2; but in the case of tenants of the second and third category it is between Rs. 2 and 5. The Pasi takes *tari* more often than the Chamar because of his connexion with toddy tapping; but the Tharus take more country spirits than any other depressed caste. In towns and cities, most of the Khatiks, Dhobis, Bhangis and Shoe-makers drink every second or third day; a few of them, especially the Bhangis, drink almost daily. In fact, excessive expenditure on spirituous liquors is an important reason explaining the low standard of living of the depressed class people living in urban areas.

Pan (betel leaf) is another important conventional necessity of these people. In the countryside they take it but seldom, in

towns they take it frequently. Almost every Dhobi, Khatik, Muchi, or Bhangi family spends 8 as. to a rupee per month on *pan*.[1]

Clothing

In the past a depressed class man would tie a *khaddar dhoti* dyed *garu* (ochre) in such a way that his knees were bare. This style of wearing *dhoti* differs from that of high caste people in whose case *dhoti* covers the calf as well. No one now uses the *garu*-coloured *khaddar* though most of these people still wear *dhotis* in the old style. The new generation is, however, taking to the methods of high castes.

Dhoti, indeed, is the only garment that most of these people wear during summer, though during winter a few of them wear shirts as well. Often the *dhoti* is nothing more than a small piece of rough cloth. Shirts are uncommon except in Western U.P. and the Punjab. In the Punjab they wear a shirt, a *dhoti* and a turban.

Most of their women, especially in Bihar and Bengal, wear only a *sari*. Jumpers are less common in Bihar and Bengal compared to the U.P. The Peliya and Rajbansi women wear a piece of cloth wound once round the body and folded across the breast. In the eastern parts of the Punjab, the depressed class women wear a *gagra* (petticoat), and a bodice and cover their heads with *orhna*. In Central Punjab, they wear shirts and *salwars* (trousers) and cover their heads with *dopta*.

Speaking generally, the depressed class people in the Punjab and Western U.P. are better clad than those living elsewhere in Northern India. But in the same region, it is the Khatiks and the Dhobis who are better dressed than the rest of the depressed class people.

The expenditure on clothing does not generally exceed Rs. 5 per annum in the case of a *harwaha* family, though it is somewhat greater in the case of cultivators. In the Punjab and Western U.P., the expenditure on this item is appreciably higher. It should be mentioned here that though the Dhobi dresses

1 In the Punjab these people have not developed the *pan* habit and consequently expenditure on this item is extremely small. But in this province, tea is becoming popular.

better than many, his expenditure on clothing is not so high as for instance that of the Khatik. This is because the Dhobi often gets as *bakshish* old clothes of his clients. The Khatiks are traders par excellence and have developed middle class notions of respectability.

Shoes

Walking barefoot is not considered *infra dig* and most of the people in mofussil manage without shoes during summer. While the high caste people possess shoes and use these when needed, the majority of the depressed class people do not possess shoes. With the onset of winter, some of these people get either crude wooden sandals or second-hand shoes which cost 2 to 4 as. per pair. The proportion of people having shoes declines as we proceed from the Punjab towards Bengal. Thus, while in the Punjab most of these people have shoes or sandals, in the U.P. the proportion of such people is about 40 per cent and the corresponding figure for Bihar is about 18 per cent. But in the same region the proportion of people using shoes is greater in towns as compared to villages.

Umbrellas

Umbrella is another luxury in which some of them (5 to 10 per cent) indulge during summer. It is not an uncommon sight to see a barefooted man using an umbrella. Even the Tharu has an umbrella which he makes himself. It is a sort of circular hat about 2 feet in radius and is made of bamboos and palm leaves. In the centre there is a hole to fit over the head.

Utensils

Utensils are probably the most valuable possession of a depressed class man. During the last two or three decades, metal utensils have almost completely ousted earthen vessels from the kitchen. Only about 20 per cent of these people still cook in earthen vessels. But even the poorest among them have a *lota* and a *thali* of bell metal. This is usually a wedding gift that the bridegroom gets from his father-in-law. As we move eastwards from the Punjab, the amount spent by a family on metal utensils decreases. Thus, while in the Punjab

about 50 per cent families have metal utensils worth more than Rs. 8, in the U.P. about 80 per cent families spend less than Rs. 5, on this item. In Bihar about 70 per cent families have utensils worth Rs. 2 or less. The majority of the Khatik and Dhobi families have utensils worth Rs. 6 to 10. But we rarely come across a Bhangi family having utensils worth more than Rs. 6.

Ornaments

The ornaments used by these people cannot go beyond silver. The poorest amongst them manage only with trinkets of bell metal worth a rupee or two. While in the Punjab only 10 per cent families do not have any silver ornaments, the corresponding figures for the U.P. and Bihar are 31 per cent and 80 per cent respectively. The expenditure on this item also shows regional variations similar to those observed in the case of expenditure on utensils. In the Punjab 40 per cent families spend Rs. 5 to 10 on ornaments, 20 per cent families spend Rs. 10 to 20 and 40 per cent families spend more than Rs. 20. In Central and Eastern U.P., the average expenditure per family on ornaments is Rs. 7 and the corresponding figure for western districts is Rs. 17. But in Bihar only 2 per cent families spend more than Rs 10 on this item. Here, only about 20 per cent families have any ornaments. Speaking generally, in the same region, the Khatiks and Dhobis spend more on this item than the others.

Charpoys, Bedding, etc.

The greater proportion of depressed class families possess only one or, at the most, two charpoys During winter, they sleep on the ground using paddy straw as bedding. Some of the high caste tenants, especially in Tarai, also sleep on paddy straw but they use quilts as covering. The depressed class people have to manage almost solely with paddy straw, for it is only a few of them who possess even *katharis*. A *kathari* is simply a thick mattress of rags. And in summer too most of them sleep on the ground exposing themselves to snakes and poisonous insects. In some areas where a family has an insufficient number of charpoys, the menfolk would sleep on these while women and children sleep on the floor. Most of the Khatiks, Pasis, Dhobis and Bhangis possess sufficient charpoys and something in the

nature of bedding as well. In the Punjab almost every family has an adequate number of charpoys and about 70 per cent families have quilts or mattresses as well.

Dwellings

The *Chamrauti* or depressed class quarters are always outside the village and are invariably in its southern corner. It is there that Chamar, Kori, or Bhangi houses will be found.[1] Pasi houses may, however, be found near the houses of high caste people. According to some foreign observers *Chamrauti* is the filthiest quarter of the village. But our observations lead us to the conclusion that *Chamrauti* is in no way more dirty than the quarters of high caste Hindus; and in fact, Chamar houses in the outskirts of the village are often more neat and clean than those of Kurmis, and Ahirs inside the village. The abominable smell associated with Chamar houses is present only where tanning is done. But tanning is uncommon now.

A typical depressed class dwelling would consist of a two-roomed cottage with mud walls and a roof of thatch. In tracts that suffer from floods every now and then, or where rainfall is heavy, the walls are of split bamboo or reeds. Where rainfall is heavy the roof projects well beyond the walls which are thus protected from being damaged by rain. The main hut which serves as the bedroom is usually about 15 feet long and 7 feet wide. The walls are 4 to 5 feet high and the centre height is about 10 feet. Connected to this main hut, there is often another one of about the same size which serves as a kitchen as well as a store room. A considerable number of huts in the U.P. and Bihar have a door which is nothing more than a rough wooden frame with wattle and dab panelling swinging on two vertical wooden pivots. But in Bengal doors of matting are common. In the countryside 20 to 30 per cent of the families manage only in single huts.

The dwellings of tenants are more elaborate than those of *harwahas* and can be picked out without much difficulty. The size of a dwelling depends partly on the number of members in

1 It is only in Western Bengal that we come across villages. Elsewhere in Bengal the dwellings of the people are scattered in the midst of their farms or else we find long lines of houses on land higher than the surrounding country.

a family, partly on the economic condition of the family and partly on the land available. Seldom do we find a depressed class dwelling roofed with *khupra* (brick tiles), and, whenever we find one, we may safely infer that some member of the family has worked as an industrial labourer.

In the Punjab and western districts of U.P., the houses of *harwahas* are much better than in other areas. These generally consist of one or two rooms with mud walls. Usually the rooms are 15 feet long and 10 feet wide. The centre height seldom exceeds 8 feet. In the centre of a room there is a beam supporting the roof which consists of rafters covered with mud. Every house has a crude wooden door. These rooms have no ventilators or windows.

The depressed class people living in towns and cities rent one or two rooms. Normally these rooms have no arrangement for light or ventilation. Nobody cares much about the sanitation of mohallas where these people live and, in fact, conditions are similar to those of chawls and bustis of industrial cities. Arrangements for water, lighting, and latrines are seldom satisfactory. A few of the Dhobis, Bhangis and Khatiks, especially those living in small towns, possess their own houses. Usually these houses have walls of *kaccha* and *pukka* bricks and roofs of *khupra*. In these houses too there is seldom any arrangement for light or ventilation. Most of the town dwellers spend less than Rs. 2 per month on house rent.

CHAPTER VII

PROBLEMS OF DEBT AND CREDIT

Indebtedness is an unavoidable evil in all agricultural communities though its evil effects are aggravated in countries like India where 'petite culture' obtains. A fairly large number of our countrymen are unable to maintain themselves in normal years. In such cases indebtedness is unavoidable. But even those fortunate few who have some surplus in 'normal' years get indebted. This is due partly to the fact that 'normal' years are so uncommon[1] and partly to the inexorable demands of social ceremonies. Expenditure on marriage, death, competitive presents between families and groups, and various social ceremonies undoubtedly explain the origin of debt in most cases and such expenditure often amounts to extravagance but only in those cases where incomes leave some surplus in normal years can we justifiably attribute indebtedness to the ryot's improvidence. Where people have to borrow in order to live even the smallest expenditure on social ceremonies will necessarily involve indebtedness. Whether any expenditure incurred under these circumstances amounts to improvidence is a debatable question but society makes it impossible for most of the people to avoid it. To be brief, insufficient incomes, vicissitudes of nature, and expenditure on social ceremonies explain the origin of agricultural debt in almost every case.

Depressed Class Tenants

It has already been pointed out that the greater proportion of depressed class holdings are very small and the cultivators cannot make both ends meet without taking to labour or borrowing money. The tenant's own produce seldom lasts for more than eight weeks after a harvest and thereafter he has to borrow or find work as a labourer. But it is not so easy to find work in the countryside during off season. Indebtedness is, under such circumstances, inevitable. Thus the main causes of indebtedness among depressed class tenants are insufficiency of

[1] R. K. Mukerjee: *Economic Problems of Modern India*, Vol. I, p. 168.

agricultural incomes, and long periods of enforced idleness during off season. Next in importance to these is expenditure on social ceremonies. There are, however, two points to be noticed in this item. (i) Such expenditure is usually competitive under the name of keeping up appearances; and (ii) it is recurrent. For example, marriage is not the end of the business. It usually leaves a trail of expensive presents. Whatever function these competitive presents played in the past in the way of mitigating tribal feuds, their present role is to enhance poverty.

Economic Features of Debt

While these causes explain the origin of debt, its accumulation is explained by usurious rates of interest. The major portion of the debt is more than three years old and may be considered long term debt. What usually happens is this. A tenant borrows something to meet a pressing demand. After harvest a part of the debt is repaid but during the next few months the tenant has to borrow again for seed, subsistence, etc. and by the time the next harvest is reaped his debt stands at the old level and may even exceed it. In this manner the tenant goes on borrowing and repaying but is seldom able to wipe off the debt completely. When, therefore, we say that much of the debt is long-term debt we mean that the first transaction was completed long-ago. The second important feature of the problem is the seasonal variation in the amount of debt. Immediately after the reaping of a harvest, the amount of debt is comparatively small but within a few weeks it begins to swell and by the time the next harvest is ready its amount is pretty high. With the reaping of the harvest begins another cycle. Third, while the bulk of the agricultural debt in India is of a social nature the same is probably not true of the depressed classes. Here borrowings for subsistence are as important as those on social ceremonies. This follows readily from the fact that the majority of their holdings are undersized and that it is not easy to find work in the off season. But admittedly it is difficult to determine accurately the proportion of the unproductive debt. Often the cultivator knows nothing about his loan account with the money-lender. Fourth once indebted always indebted is the invariable rule. The absence of any surplus, the usurious rates of interest, and the

malpractices of the money-lender make redemption a remote possibility in the majority of cases. When the money-lender needs the services of the tenant as a *harwaha* or labourer or has an eye on his holding he takes good care to see that the debt is not redeemed. Lastly, besides his cash debt, every cultivator has grain debt. Almost every one gets seed on loan and for subsistence, too, most of them borrow in kind.

Sources of Credit

The main sources of credit are Zamindars, high caste tenants, and Banias, though in some areas Kabulis and Tambolis also lend money on *kisht* system. Here and there a few occupancy tenants are able to get Takkavi or borrow from a Co-operative Credit Society. Where the Zamindar requires the services of a tenant in the capacity of a *harwaha*, he is the main and in many cases the only source of credit. The amount of debt due to non-agriculturist professional money-lenders does not exceed one-third of the total. It may be mentioned in this connexion that, according to the U.P. Banking Enquiry Committee, agriculturists themselves were creditors to the extent of 53·6 per cent of the total debt.[1] For debt in kind the main sources of credit are the Zamindar and the village Bania.

Rates of Interest

Cash Debt

In the case of cash loans the rate of interest usually varies from 18½ to 37½ per cent per annum, and at times it goes up to 75 per cent per annum. The most common rate of interest is 25 per cent per annum. In parts of the U.P. and Bihar the common rate of interest is two pice per rupee per month or 37½ per cent per annum. These rates of interest are all nominal rates payable twice. It seems hardly necessary to point out that the *effective* rate of interest involved in these transactions is much higher than the nominal rate. Where money is borrowed from Tambolis, Kabulis, etc. on *kisht* system, the borrower has to pay a very heavy rate of interest. In some areas they lend eight rupees and get back twelve rupees in monthly instalments of one

[1] U. P. Census Report, 1931, pt. I, p. 47.

rupee each. At times, the Kabuli lends Rs. 9-8 and gets back Rs. 15 in five monthly instalments of Rs. 3 each. In this case the nominal amount of loan is Rs. 10 and the deduction of annas eight represents charges for writing out the pro-note. It may be mentioned that since time immemorial the depressed classes have probably been paying rates of interest much higher than those paid by high caste Hindus. Thus according to the Artha Sastra the rate of interest to be charged to a Brahmin debtor was 2 per cent, to a Kshatriya 3 per cent, to a Vaishya 4 per cent and to a Sudra 5 per cent per month. These sacred texts reflect more or less the prevailing social conditions. And if such was the state of Sudra debtors the position of Chandalas was probably worse.

Grain debt

In the case of a loan in kind the usual rate of interest is one-fourth the quantity borrowed. This is popularly known as borrowing on *Sawai*. At times, however, the tenant has to repay in kind at the ensuing harvest with fifty to hundred or more per cent increase on the quantity borrowed. Assuming that there is an interval of six months between the lending and return of grain, the *effective* rate of interest involved under *Sawai* system is 56¼ per cent per annum. But even if the debtor borrowed a maund of food grains only a month before a harvest, he has to give back one and a quarter maunds of food grains when the harvest is reaped. Thus the *actual* effective rate of interest involved in such transactions is much higher than 56¼ per cent per annum.

The Tenant's Security

The credit of a tenant depends on the nature of his tenure, the size of his holding, the value of his stock and other material possessions. While an occupancy tenant can transfer his holding, statutory and several similar classes of tenants do not possess this right. The former can at times raise substantial loans against a mortgage of their holdings. But mortgages invariably end in foreclosure. Where a money-lender is desirous of getting such a holding he goes on advancing money against a mortgage of the holding till the amount thus lent is beyond

the paying capacity of the borrower. Then at an opportune moment he demands transfer of the holding in his favour and the tenant is unable to resist it. At times the mortgagor is allowed to keep the land in his possession for a limited number of years and thereafter the mortgagee gets it back free of all encumbrances. In such cases the use of land is offset against both interest and capital. Now and then a hard-pressed tenant permits the money-lender to retain possession of the land in lieu of interest. Land mortgaged is, however, as difficult to get back as it is for a man to escape from the embrace of a boa constrictor when once the latter gets round him. Sometimes a tenant, who does not possess the right of transfer, uses the right of subletting as a 'substitute' for it. Besides these ways of raising a loan, a tenant can often get a considerable loan on his personal security. But this would be determined by two main considerations. First, the need of the tenant's services to the Zamindar and second, the mutual relations of the two.

Extent of Indebtedness

The extent of indebtedness varies from region to region according to variations in the tenant's credit. An analysis of the data collected by us shows that in the western districts the debt of 30 per cent families varies from nil to Rs 20, of 10 per cent from 20 to 50, of 30 per cent from 50 to 100, of 21 per cent from 100 to 200 and in the case of the remaining 9 per cent it is more than Rs. 200. Here about 20 per cent families are debt-free. As we move eastwards along the Ganges Valley the proportion of debt-free decreases and so does the debt per debtor. Thus, in the central and eastern parts of the U.P. the debt of 36·8 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 20, of 44·7 per cent from 20 to 50, of 2·6 per cent families from 50 to 100, and of 15·9 per cent families from 100 to 200. Here only about 8 per cent families are debt-free. In Bihar the debt of 46 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 20, of 41 per cent families from 20 to 50, of 5 per cent families from 50 to 100, and of 8 per cent from 100 to 200. Only about 6 per cent families are debt-free. It will be noticed that although debt per debtor is less in the eastern parts of the Ganges Valley, the burden of debt is likely to be heavier

compared to that in western parts. This follows readily from a comparison of the economic condition of the tenants in the different parts of the Valley.

It would be interesting to refer now to the figures for indebtedness of the various castes given by the U.P. Banking Enquiry Committee.

Caste Group	Debt per debtor
High Castes ...	624
Good agricultural castes ...	162
Low agricultural castes ...	54

High castes include Brahman, Rajput, Musalman, Rajput, Saiyid, Sheikh and Pathan. Good agricultural castes include Ahar, Ahir, Kisan, Kurmi and Lodh. Low agricultural castes include Chamar, Pasi and Bhar. In the absence of standard deviation the information regarding average debt per debtor is likely to prove more interesting than useful. Further, it is not clear how an average for the whole province has been found. But these figures can be of some use for a comparative study of the position of the various social groups. We might say that there is a correspondence between the amount of debt per debtor and the social status of the debtor's group. The Banking Enquiry Committee found that debt per debtor varied directly with the size of the holding but the burden of debt was heavier on the small holder.

Burden of Debt and Fall in Prices

We have seen that a considerable portion of the debt is long term debt and that the real burden of debt is very heavy when we take into account the fact that the incomes of most of them are not sufficient even to meet their minimum animal requirements. The general effect of a fall in prices is to increase the *real* burden of debt, for the debtor has to pay in goods much more than he receives. Since 1929 the prices of agricultural commodities began to fall and this tendency continued to exist till recently. It may be mentioned that even by 1933 the prices of these commodities had registered a decline of about, 50 per cent. This meant an increase of more than hundred per cent in the real burden of debt. Speaking

generally, these people do not bother very much about the future so long as they can go on borrowing. "The present with its cares and troubles, its joys and pleasure, suffices for them."[1] And indeed, knowing the circumstances under which most of them live, it is difficult to find fault with them for somehow living for the day only.

Harwahas, Kamias and Labourers

One of the worst results of indebtedness is that it entails servitude. Formerly, judgement-debtors could be imprisoned. The position has been changed to a certain extent by an amendment of the Civil Procedure Code according to which an honest debtor cannot be imprisoned. We have seen already that *harwahi, kamiauti,* etc. are forms of peonage. In most of the places there is no formal agreement between the Zamindar and the 'farm servants' by which the latter bind themselves to work for the former; the promissory note for the loan taken is the only weapon in the lender's hands. At times the only evidence of loan is an entry in the Zamindar's cash book. In Bihar a *kamia* used to enter into an agreement[2] with the money-lender by which the former bound himself to work for the latter till the redemption of the loan due from him.

In 1920 an Act was passed in Bihar declaring such agreements null and void unless these were terminable within a year

1 Bankura District Gazetteer, p. 109.

2 Such agreements were often in the following form:

"Agreement between A. B. a Musahar of village ...., pargana ...., Zila ...., on the one hand and Babu C. D. a Rajput on the other. In consideration of receiving Rs. 10 in cash to celebrate his marriage, A. B. hereby binds himself to plough, sow, irrigate and reap the fields of C. D. and perform faithfully all the duties of Kamiya or bondman. The said A. B. binds himself to continue in the service of his master C, D. and never to refuse any work imposed on him. Morning and evening, day and night he will be present and ready to work and he will never absent himself even for a visit to a friend or relation without leave. If on any occasion the said A. B. should absent himself that day's work will be placed to his debit and he will be liable for such damages as His Majesty's Courts of law may direct. In addition to the above duties the said A. B. binds himself to furnish the said C. D. with the following commodities, as may be directed by a council of peers of the said C. D.:—thatching grass, bamboos, strings, wood and other things. This deed is executed in good faith ....".

and provided equitable remuneration for labour. The *kamia* is, however, too powerless to set the law in motion and the position has not been changed by the placing of this Act on the statute book. But an agreement of this nature is hardly necessary. A promissory note is quite enough. The Zamindars make it difficult for the borrower to work for anybody else in the same locality and in the event of his running away he would be considered a dishonest debtor and consequently arrested. The fear of being arrested hangs over the *harwaha's* head and makes him serve his master until conditions of work become intolerable. The labourer who is indebted to the Zamindar has to work on reduced wages and occasionally even without wages. "Wherever the money-lender is an influential local notable, especially if he is also the landlord, the ryot has to do free service when called upon and when he fails to do so, civil or criminal suit may follow." [1]

We have seen that the usual way of securing the services of a *harwaha* is by giving him a loan. This initial advance or *Sanwak*, as it is called in some parts of the country, marks the beginning of a series of advances which terminate with the death or decamping of a *harwaha*. The amount of the initial and subsequent advances is determined by conditions of demand and supply. Thus in Bihar where it is comparatively easy to find *kamias* the amount of money that has to be lent to a labourer is less than the amount required in the U.P.

Inevitability of Indebtedness

It has already been pointed out that except in the Punjab the incomes of *harwahas* and labourers are nowhere adequate to meet even their minimum animal requirements. Under such conditions indebtedness is unavoidable, and redemption of debt only a remote possibility. While a free labourer may have to go without food, the Zamindar sees to it that the *harwaha* has something to eat. Indeed it is as much to the interest of a Zamindar to keep the *harwaha* alive as it is in a slave-owner's interest to keep his slave alive. It is not only for subsistence that the Zamindar has to lend to the *harwaha* but also for buying clothes as well as for expenditure to be incurred in connexion

1 R. K. Mukerjee: *Economic Problems of Modern India*, p. 173.

with social and religious ceremonies. The usual practice is to give the *harwaha* the minimum possible amount. Complete refusal to give any more advance involves the danger of losing the *harwaha* and hence is a rare occurrence. But with the mounting up of a *harwaha's* debt the amount of such advances diminishes and their frequency declines. In the eastern parts of the U.P. this limit lies in the neighbourhood of rupees fifty. At this stage, the *harwaha* normally finds a new master. Everyone of them is not, however, capable of changing masters. The Musahars and Bhuiyas, for instance, rarely change masters.

Rates of Interest

As these people have no tangible security to offer, they have to pay very high rates of interest. These usually vary from 24 per cent per annum to 75 per cent per annum, but 37½ per cent per annum is the rate most common. These are all nominal rates of interest payable twice a year. Some of them do not have to pay any interest but have to work on wages lower than the market rate. In the case of loans in kind, the range within which the rate of interest varies is the same as in the case of tenants.

Extent of Indebtedness

The amount of debt per depressed class debtor varies from locality to locality but in the same locality it depends on the number of years that have elapsed since the beginning of *harwahi*. In the eastern and central parts of the U.P. the debt of 32 per cent *harwaha* and labourer families varies from nil to Rs. 20, of 47 per cent families from 20 to 50, and in the remaining 21 per cent cases it is more than Rs. 50. Rarely does the debt of a family exceed Rs. 100. If at times we are told that the debt of a *harwaha* family comes to several hundred rupees, we can safely attribute it to the manipulations of the money-lender. This is done simply to impress upon the *harwaha* the impossibility of his ever becoming free. Here only about 9 per cent families are debt-free. In Bihar the debt of 35 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 20, of 38 per cent families from 20 to 50, and, in the case of the remaining 27 per cent families it is more than Rs. 50. As in the eastern and central parts of the U.P. Rs. 100 serves more or less as the upper limit to the debt of a

labourer family of Bihar. In Bengal the debt of 34·1 per cent families lies between nil and Rs. 25, of 25·8 per cent families between 25 and 50, of 23 per cent families between 50 and 100, and in the remaining 17·1 per cent cases it is more than Rs. 100.

In the western parts of the U.P. as well as in the Punjab the labourers have emerged from a state of serfdom in which they were twenty or thirty years ago. The conditions that have brought about these changes have already been discussed in another place. In the Punjab the debt of 23 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 25, of 31 per cent families from 25 to 50, of 21 per cent from 50 to 100, of 17 per cent from 100 to 300, and in the remaining 8 per cent cases it is more than Rs. 300. About 19 per cent families in this province are debt-free. In the western parts of U.P. the debt of 38 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 25, of 22 per cent from 25 to 50, of 16 per cent from 50 to 100, and in the remaining 24 per cent cases it varies from Rs. 100 to 250.

Nature of the Problem

The problems of indebtedness of the Punjab and Western U.P. differ fundamentally from those of other parts of Northern India. The difference lies in the fact that in the former parts the labourers are frequently able to redeem their debt, but in the eastern parts of the Ganges Valley debt is redeemed only when the borrower dies or decamps. The debt of a *harwaha* is a fictitious asset of the money-lender. These people never take their debt seriously, for they know that their incomes being grossly inadequate redemption of debt is out of the question. They look upon the money that they are able to borrow from the Zamindar as their 'income'. And the Zamindar too does not consider the money advanced to a *harwaha* a loan. He does not want the debt to be redeemed. But he wants the *harwaha* to be ever ready to do his work. Such being the case no useful purpose would be served by comparing the burden of debt in different parts of Northern India.

Artisans and Village Servants

We have seen that the Khatiks are traders *par excellence*. They borrow mostly for trade in bristles, fruits, skins, etc. and

return the money within a year or two. Long-term debt is invariably traceable to loss in business, some calamity or expenditure incurred in connexion with a social ceremony. Their main source of credit is the Mahajan but to a certain extent Zamindars also lend money to these people. In Basti District we come across co-operative credit societies membership whereof is confined to Khatiks. The avowed object of such societies is to provide cheap credit for trade in bristles, etc. but loans are also given for meeting the expenses of marriage or other social ceremonies. The debt of 20 per cent Khatik families varies from nil to Rs. 30, of 55 per cent families from Rs. 30 to 70, of 14 per cent families from Rs. 70 to 100 and in the remaining 11 per cent cases it is greater than Rs. 100. The proportion of the debt-free hardly exceeds 15 per cent. It may be mentioned, however, that amongst the Khatiks a man owing Rs. 25 to 30 would consider himself debt-free. The rate of interest charged to these people varies from 18 per cent to 37½ per cent per annum payable half-yearly. In the majority of cases it does not exceed a nominal rate of 25 per cent per annum payable half-yearly. The lower rates of interest paid by these people are due partly to the fact that they can offer some tangible security in the form of ornaments, houses, etc. and partly because their credit in the money market is higher than that of other depressed caste people.

Tanners and Shoe-makers

Those engaged in this business have often to borrow money for purchasing raw or tanned hides. The main source of credit is the leather dealer, especially when money has to be borrowed on personal security. Tanned hides and shoes have in such cases to be sold to him or through him. This practice, it will be recalled, is similar to that of hypothecation of crops. Often the money-lender buys tanned hides in bulk for the Muchi and keeps the stock in his own godown, releasing it only in small quantities according as money is repaid by the leather worker. Interest rates are much the same as those in the case of Khatiks. In the Punjab the debt of 29 per cent tanner or Muchi families varies from nil to Rs. 30, of 42 per cent from Rs. 30 to 60, of 14 per cent from Rs. 60 to 100, and of 15 per cent from

Rs. 100 to 300. Only about 18 per cent families are debt-free. In the U.P. the debt of 59 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 30, of 17 per cent families from Rs. 30 to 50, of 15 per cent from Rs. 50 to 100, and of 9 per cent from Rs. 100 to 250. Here, the proportion of debt-free does not exceed 14 per cent. In Bihar the debt of 62 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 30, of 24 per cent from Rs. 30 to 50, of 8 per cent from Rs. 50 to 100, and of 6 per cent from Rs. 100 to 250. The proportion of the debt-free does not exceed 8 per cent. It will be observed that as we move eastwards in the Ganges Valley the proportion of the debt-free and the debt per debtor tend to decrease.

Weavers

In the case of weavers the main source of credit is the cloth merchant who gives yarn on credit and buys the finished cloth. His role is similar to that of the leather dealer. In the United Provinces the debt of 42 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 20, of 27 per cent between 20 and 50, of 19 per cent between 50 and 100, and of 12 per cent between 100 and 300. The proportion of debt-free is about 21 per cent. In the Punjab the debt of 38 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 20, of 26 per cent between 20 and 50, of 21 per cent between 50 and 100, and of 15 per cent between 100 and 300. The proportion of the debt-free in this province is about 25 per cent. Thus the proportion of the debt-free and the debt per debtor is somewhat higher as compared to the U.P.

Dhobis

The proportion of the debt-free Dhobis is 35 per cent in the U.P. and 30 per cent in Bihar. These figures, it may be mentioned, are higher than those of other castes. There are two reasons explaining this. First, the Dhobis are comparatively better off than the others, and, secondly, they can often raise an interest-free loan of Rs. 15 to 30 from their clients. This latter is advance payment, and not debt. The main cause of indebtedness is expenditure on social ceremonies. In the U.P. the debt of 46 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 20, of 34 per cent between 20 and 50, of 12 per cent between 50 and 100, and of 8 per cent between 100 and 300. In Bihar the debt of 51 per cent families

varies from nil to Rs. 20, of 32 per cent between 20 and 50, of 13 per cent between 50 and 100, and of 4 per cent between 100 and 300. Much of the debt is wiped off within four or five years.

Bhangis

Amongst Bhangis the main causes of indebtedness are excessive expenditure on liquor and on social ceremonies. At times they borrow for buying a musical instrument or building a house. This latter represents their 'productive' debt. There are four main features of the problem of indebtedness of the Bhangi. First, the proportion of the debt-free is extremely small, the respective figures for the Punjab, U.P. and Bihar being 11, 7 and 5 per cent. Secondly, there is a tendency for the amount of debt per debtor to decrease as we move eastwards along the Ganges Valley. This will be clear from a consideration of the following figures regarding the extent of indebtedness. In the Punjab the debt of 26 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 20, of 34 per cent families between 20 and 50, of 29 per cent families between 50 and 100, and of 11 per cent families between 100 and 250. In the United Provinces the debt of 37 per cent families lies between nil and Rs. 20, of 31 per cent families between 20 and 50, of 25 per cent between 50 and 100, and of 7 per cent between 100 and 200. In Bihar the debt of 46 per cent families varies from nil to Rs. 20, of 33 per cent between 20 and 50, of 15 per cent families between 50 and 100, and of 6 per cent families between 100 and 200. Thirdly, these people have no suitable security to offer to the money-lender and hence have to borrow money from Tambolis, Kabulis, etc. on very heavy rates of interest. On pay day one often finds these money-lenders collected together outside the precincts of 'local bodies'. The lender has very little chance of getting his *kisht* (instalment) unless he gets it then and there. The malpractices of these money-lenders and their usurious rates of interest have already been referred to while discussing the problems of tenants. While only a few tenants borrow money on the onerous terms of such money-lenders the Bhangis have generally to do so. Fourthly, a Bhangi goes on borrowing and repaying money but can seldom escape the clutches of the money-lender. And even when he secures his freedom, he cannot retain it for any length of time.

CHAPTER VIII

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DISABILITIES

A unique feature of Hindu Society is its classification of certain groups as untouchables and unapproachables.[1] But the term untouchability has no precise meaning, for all the twice born do not have the same standard of touchability. There may be castes that are touchable to a Rajput but are untouchable to a Brahmin. Moreover, while in Southern India the untouchables are supposed to emanate impurity and can pollute a Brahmin from a distance of as much as thirty-two yards, in Northern India their untouchability was never so potent. There are no unapproachables in this part of India. Here the untouchables can only convey pollution by contact.[2] In most parts of Northern India untouchability in this form is confined mainly to the members of the scavenging castes. And in this last case, too, most of the people would take notice of such physical contacts only if the Bhangi was out on duty with his broom and basket. Generally

1 Ghurye: *Caste and Race in India*

2 Untouchability, we believe, was not a creation of the Indo-Aryans though some would have us believe so. The idea probably originated in taboo. The social stigma attached to the profession of grave-digging in Burma, which stands in the way of these people associating with members of other professions, is reminiscent of such a taboo. "The treatment of washermen all over India as a depressed caste is almost certainly traceable to a similar taboo, the objection perhaps arising from an association with menstrual clothes of women and consequently an infection which, in the first instance, is magical though it later comes to be regarded merely as a matter of personal cleanliness." (See Census of India, Volume I, Part 1, p. 486.)

It might be mentioned that the idea of tactile untouchability is not confined exclusively to the attitude towards the depressed classes. The high caste Hindus, too, observe untouchability amongst themselves when a birth or death occurs in their family. The number of days for which untouchability is observed depends on the nearness of relationship. *Sapindas* usually observe untouchability for ten days, *Samanodakas* for three days, and *Sagotras* for a single night. All these ideas probably originated in taboos, though the danger of catching infection from men who had come into contact with disease and death was recognized at a later stage presumably.

speaking, the superstition is stronger amongst the Brahmins than amongst the members of other castes. In spite of the changes in the attitude of high caste Hindus towards these people, a depressed class man dare not enter the house of a high caste Hindu, especially through the main entrance. When summoned by the high castes these people stand at a respectable distance from the former and even when encouraged to advance, do so with hesitation.[1]

In most areas untouchability now means that the high castes would not accept food or water touched by the untouchables. Almost all of them are *jalachal.* It is only some of the members of the new generation or those influenced by the advanced views of the Congress who would not mind accepting food or water from the hands of the depressed class people. But it is not so easy for the high caste Hindus to get rid of prejudices that have been fostered for centuries. There are spiritual injunctions against acceptance of food or presents from the depressed classes.[2] According to Baudhayana, a Brahmin eating the food of or accepting the presents of a Chandala is outcaste.[3] Speaking to or looking at a Chandala was considered an offence by Apastamba.[4] Minor relaxations of the food taboos of the high castes are observable even in mofussil. While in the past the Thakurs would not permit Chamars to touch their metal untensils now they often send home *gur,* etc. packed in such vessels through Chamar *harwahas.* Further, it is not uncommon for a Thakur to use a Chamar's *chilam.*[5]

Untouchability within Untouchability

It should be mentioned in this connexion that an untouchable often considers the members of certain other castes as untouchables. Thus, a Chamar thinks that he would be polluted by coming into physical contact with a Dhobi or a Dom. Such

1 In the Punjab, however, they are not so 'depressed'.

2 Nobody cares much for such 'injunctions'. But, as indicated elsewhere, these sacred texts probably reflect the then existing lofty attitude of high caste Hindus towards the depressed classes.

3 Dharmasutra (Buhler's trans. in S.B.E., Vol. XIV) p. 235.

4 Dharmasutra (Buhler's trans. Vol. II), p. 103.

5 A sort of tobacco-pipe similar to hooka.

depressed castes as the Bhuiya, Bhuiyar, Byar, Khatik and Majhwar are very particular in keeping the castes they consider untouchables at a distance. According to Sir Edward Blunt, "eleven castes will not touch a Bhangi, seventeen will not touch a Chamar, ten will not touch a Dharkar, six will not touch a Dhobi or a Dom."[1] In the above case the data relate to twenty-five depressed castes of the U.P. Our information shows that the depressed class people would not now bother about taking a purificatory bath after coming into physical contact with an untouchable. But no untouchable would ordinarily accept food or water from the hands of a man whom he regards as untouchable unless both are Congress workers.

Service by Brahmins

Generally speaking, good Brahmins do not come to the houses of depressed class people to perform *puja*. Some of the untouchable castes like Pasis and Koris form an exception to this rule, for they are served by Brahmins, though of a low type of hedge-priests. The priestly functions are normally performed by members of their own caste. Thus, for instance, the Chamar has his Chamarwa Brahmins or *masands*, etc. But in every case the Brahmin serves as an astrologer. He tells them the auspicious days for *lagan*, marriage and other social ceremonies. For these services he receives certain fees. Often he washes a coin obtained from a depressed class man before pocketing it. The majority of the depressed class men do not have much faith in the important Hindu gods and goddesses, who are, in their opinion, too big to bother about the worries and troubles of the poverty-striken people. They are satisfied with their own deities and know how to propitiate them. Here and there a Brahmin has started going to a Hela or a Chamar house for *puja*, but even in such places they requisition the services of the Brahmin only occasionally. This is due partly to the fact that they cannot afford to have a *puja* performed frequently and partly because they call a Brahmin to their house simply to announce a rise in the social scale.

1 Blunt, op. cit. pp. 102-3.

Temple-Entry

The depressed classes are not allowed access to Hindu temples. They can make offerings but are not allowed to be present when the priest presents these to the deity. In many a place a Hari or a Dom would be hunted out of a place of worship as unceremoniously as a dog. "If anything the dog will get off more cheaply than the other two, as they are supposed to know better."[1] As a result of the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, a large number of temples have, during recent years, been thrown open to the depressed classes.[2] But even now a considerable number of temples in cities and towns are barred to these people. At times they can enter a temple simply because the priest does not know their caste. In villages there are mostly private temples and access to these is denied to the depressed classes.

It may be mentioned that according to some of the Hindu law-givers a Sudra commits a heinous offence if he listens to Vedic texts. According to Apastamba if a Sudra tries to hear Vedic texts his ears should be filled with molten tin or lac, and if he recites the Veda his tongue should be cut off.[3]

Deep-rooted prejudices cannot disappear in a day and it will take a long time before the depressed classes get religious equality. It has been suggested by some that the problem of temple-entry is not a very important one, for even if this disability is removed, their social position is not likely to improve. The Hindu temple is, however, not only a religious institution but a social institution as well. Often there is a school attached to a temple and the right to enter a temple will make them eligible for admission to such schools. For these reasons we believe that the right of temple-entry will remove at least some of their social disabilities. We cannot, however, expect it to remove all their disabilities unless we seek to solve their economic problems.

Service by Barbers, Dhobis, etc.

While the Brahmin refuses to minister to their spiritual needs, the barber may refuse to shave them, the Dhobi to wash their

1 U. N. Mukherji: *A Dying Race*, pp. 34, 37-8.

2 The famous Meenakshi Temple at Madura has also been thrown open to them.

3 op. cit. p. 165.

clothes and the Hindu water-carrier to supply water in their homes. We have pointed out already that the Chamars, Bhangis, Doms, etc. regard the Dhobi as untouchable. Now the Dhobis heartily reciprocate the feelings of these depressed castes and refuse to serve them. It is only in a few places that the Hindu Dhobi washes the clothes of the Chamars, Bhangis, etc. either openly or covertly. At times the Bhangi refuses to serve the Dhobi unless the latter agrees to wash his clothes. In cities and big towns these people do not experience any serious difficulty in getting their clothes washed. There are always some Dhobis to be found who are hard up and would wash their clothes without much ado. And then there may be some Muhammedan Dhobis. At times these latter also share the prejudices of the Hindu Dhobis. It is mainly in small towns and villages that these people are deprived of the services of the Dhobis. All the depressed castes do not suffer from this disability. It is only a few castes like the Chamars and the Bhangis that have to manage without Dhobis. Such castes are, however, very important from the point of view of numerical strength. The Hindu barbers refuse to shave the depressed class people and most of the depressed castes have to have their own barbers. Occasionally, they requisition the services of Muhammedan barbers. Though the Hindu water-carrier refuses to supply drinking water in their homes, this does not constitute a serious disability for they cannot afford to engage a water-carrier.

Housing Problems

As has already been explained elsewhere, the houses of these people are far removed from those of the high caste Hindus and are often near the village midden. They do not normally have any legal rights in the land on which their dwellings stand and the threat of ejecting them from their houses is a powerful weapon in the hands of the Zamindar for exacting *begar*. Demolition of a dwelling is one of the punishments that may occasionally be inflicted on a depressed class family. At times the Zamindar would not permit them to use his earth for repairing their dilapidated huts. In the hills, high caste Hindus often prevent them from building houses which exceed a certain size or from raising their houses above one floor. In urban

areas the better off members of depressed castes like Bhangis and Chamars often experience difficulties in renting houses in good localities.

Other Social Disabilities

In some places the high castes take good care to see that the depressed class people do not develop notions of self-respect. They would not allow them to assume decent names; nor would they permit them to dress after the manner of the high caste Hindus. While in most parts of the country humiliating restrictions of the above type have disappeared, in the hills and other inaccessible places conditions continue to be much the same as in the past. In Kangra, for instance, depressed class women are not allowed to wear flounces deeper than four inches to their dress nor to use gold ornaments. Restrictions similar in nature to these are also found in Tehri Garhwal. Even at present these people are not permitted, in the hills, to carry the bride or bridegroom in a *doli* or *jhampan*. In the countryside they cannot always use shoes and umbrellas in the presence of the high caste Hindus. Instances are not uncommon of Chamars being deprived of umbrellas, penknives, etc. by the Zamindars. A depressed class man cannot keep sitting when a high caste man passes by. This practice derives its sanction not only from immemorial custom but, probably, from the injunctions of Hindu law-givers as well. Gautama laid down that the Sudra should respect the Arya by rising to his feet.[1] Apastamba recommended corporal punishment for the Sudra who tried to assume a position of equality with the twice-born men either in sitting, conversing, or going along the road.[2] Even in cities the orthodox Hindus do not treat educated members of the depressed classes on the same footing as the educated members of high castes.

Use of Wells

From the point of view of the State, far more important than the above, are disabilities in regard to the use of public wells, schools, etc. Usually these people have separate *kachcha* wells

1 op. cit. p. 206.

2 op. cit. p. 165.

in their hamlets, but during summer the water in these often dries up. At times these are filled up with flood water and the water becomes dirty and undrinkable. Many villages in the eastern parts of the U.P. have common wells from which members of all castes may draw water. In such places, a depressed class man cannot draw water when a high caste man is doing so or wants to do so. The result is that the depressed class people have to wait for a long time, especially during summer, before their turn comes to draw water. But villages where there are no separate wells for these people and where high castes would not allow them to use their wells also exist. Under such circumstances, the depressed class people have to wait near the well till some one takes pity on them and fills their *lotas* with water, or else they give something to the Kahar and entrust him with the task of filling their vessels with water. For this service the *jhinwar* gets, in some parts of the Punjab, one maund of food grains per family per annum. In the hills, the high caste people would not let these people use the same springs that they themselves use. In some areas of Western U.P., the Chamars and Dhobis are allowed to use wells of the high caste people provided they use metal utensils for drawing water. But this concession is not extended to the Bhangis. In some towns the high castes object to the Bhangis using the public taps. Sometimes the Bhangis get separate water taps in their *mohallas* (quarters) on giving an undertaking not to use the common taps. Such cases are rare, however. Generally speaking, the only difficulty that these people experience in cities is that the water taps provided by the municipality are usually at a considerable distance from their *mohallas*.

No legislative or administrative action can restore to the depressed class people the right to use public wells. This disability of theirs springs from their abject dependence on the land-owning high castes. Concerted pressure is often brought to bear on them to dissuade them from exercising their right. The Zamindar may refuse to employ them ; the Bania may refuse to sell them provisions ; the Zamindar may let loose cattle on their crops destroying them ; and if that does not suffice, the dwellings of such obdurate people may also be demolished. The depressed classes have neither money nor influence to assert their rights.

Use of Schools

Educationally these castes are extremely backward. At the time of the 1931 Census there were only 16 literate persons per mille of their total population in British India.[1] The high castes have not fully got over their dislike for allowing depressed class children to sit shoulder to shoulder with their children. Local bodies have opened *Achchut Pathashalas* (Schools for untouchables) in many a village wherein instruction is imparted up to the lower primary standard. Such schools have been opened more as a concession to the prejudices of high castes than out of solicitude for the welfare of depressed classes. These institutions emphasize and perpetuate caste cleavage. Further, these are below the normal standard. As a matter of fact these are places where underfed and ill-equipped children try to learn something from an ill-informed teacher. In cities and towns they do not, generally, experience any difficulty in getting their children admitted to Government or aided institutions. At any event, instances are uncommon of depressed class children having been refused admission to aided schools. In urban areas they evince a keen interest in the education of their children mainly because of the lure of Government jobs.

In the countryside, where no separate schools exist for them, they are admitted to common schools, but often the high caste teacher does not treat them well. He may refuse to instruct them unless paid a rupee or so per month per ward. Here and there, a Bhangi child may be compelled to do scavenging work in school premises. Then there are other difficulties to be reckoned with. We have seen already that most of them do not get enough to eat. Their parents cannot provide books and other reading material to them, and they cannot afford to keep a child idle for a few years. Family interest demands that every hand should bring grist to the mill. It has been pointed out elsewhere that amongst them even a child can earn something by tending cattle or doing some other light work. The Zamindar too has to be taken into account. He does not want that his *harwaha*'s son should be educated, for that would mean losing a labourer. He knows full well that education will surely sow the seeds of discontent

1 Census of India, Vol. I, Pt. 1, p. 331.

among his labourers and then there would be an end to *harwahi* and all forms of *begar*. For these very reasons he dissuades these people from educating their children; he tempts them by offering employment to their children; and at times he even compels them to withdraw their wards from schools. It is not so much caste prejudice as economic self-interest that explains the hostile attitude of the high caste Zamindars towards the education of these people. For all these reasons the number of those who are able to take advantage of existing educational facilities is comparatively small, especially in the mofussil.

Hearth Fees and Chowkidari Taxes

The power to levy hearth fees, and *chowkidari* taxes is another weapon for the coercion of the depressed classes. In the Punjab every family has to pay hearth fees to the village proprietary body, the amount of such fees being about Rs. 2 per family per annum. In other parts of Northern India they have to pay *chowkidari* taxes, the amount of which may vary from one to three rupees per family per annum. Though the nominal amount payable appears to be small, when it is related to their incomes the real burden would appear to be heavy.

Treatment in Hospitals and Courts

They are not always treated well in hospitals, partly because they belong to the dumb millions, and partly because of the prejudices of high caste Hindu underlings. It should be mentioned that the prejudices of the Hindus are in many cases shared by the non-Hindus also. Where, however, conditions are favourable they are being weaned from their faith in evil spirits as agents of disease and are taking to medicine. In the Tarai area of the U.P., for instance, they are taking to quinine for counteracting malaria.

In courts, too, they cannot always get a square deal. They have no money wherewith to engage lawyers. Neither are they influential enough to be able to find witnesses against the Zamindar or other high caste men. Legal proceedings are often protracted and these people cannot hold out long. And then cases are not unknown where Hindu judges have been influenced by their prejudices against these people.[1]

1 L. S. S. O'Malley: *Indian Caste Customs*, p. 149.

Economic Disabilities

The majority of the depressed class people are either labourers or are engaged in other low-paid occupations Nowhere are they the owners of land they till. While in the U.P., Bihar and Bengal there are no legal impediments to their owning land, in the Punjab they are statutorily debarred from acquiring proprietary rights in agricultural land.[1] They have all been classified as non-agricultural tribes. This is a case of grave injustice at least so far as the Chamars, Dagis and Kolis are concerned. Mr Joseph wrote in the Rohtak District Gazetteer: "Of the non-agricultural tribes, Chamars are by far the most important and they almost deserve to be called agricultural. Not only is their trade essential to the farmer but they give a great deal of assistance either in return for a share of the crop or as day labourers in the actual process of agriculture, while it is very common to find them associated in cultivation as *sanjhi* and dividing the profits."[2] In some parts of Kangra district the Kolis are generally known as *halis* or *sepis*, words in common use in the plains for two classes of agricultural labourers.[3] Whether the wrong done to these people will be undone in the near future is very doubtful partly because they have no effective voice in the Province, and partly because the agriculturists who are in a majority in the Provincial Assembly would not countenance an improvement in the position of agricultural labourers.

Begar, Rabi Irrigation

Almost everywhere the depressed classes are desperately poor. Many of them are in a state of peonage. In spite of the Bihar Kamiauti Act of 1920, the *Kamia* continues to be the 'slave' of his master. And the position of the *harwaha* and his prototypes in other parts does not differ very much from that of the *Kamia*. Their incomes being insufficient, they are unable to escape the clutches of the money-lender. Hence results peonage. We have seen that even those who are comparatively debt-free have to do *begar* for the Zamindar. The causes explaining the persistence of *begar* have been analysed elsewhere and need

1 They can buy agricultural land only from a non-agriculturist.

2 pp. 78-79.

3 Kangra District Gazetteer, p. 180.

not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that the *begar* taken at the beginning of the sowing or irrigation seasons is, probably, much more harmful than that taken at any other time.

Change of Occupation

In the ancient past not only were the least remunerative occupations assigned to them but they were probably prevented from taking to any of the more lucrative callings. Thus Gautama enjoined upon the king to see to it that the prescribed duties were carried out by the prescribed individuals. If a man followed a forbidden occupation his property, excepting that required for food and raiment, was to be attached till he reformed his ways.[1] Though there are no kings now to act upon the precepts of the Hindu law-givers the prejudices of the high castes stand in the way of depressed classes taking to new occupations. Who would, for instance, buy milk from a Chamar or a Bhangi? While in the western U.P. and the Punjab a Chamar can often sell ghee through the mediation of the Bania, he cannot do so in other parts of Northern India. But nowhere can the Bhangi take to such an occupation. Similarly, if a Dhobi opens a provision store he is not likely to enjoy the patronage of high caste Hindus or even of all the depressed castes. A Chamar, for instance, regards a Dhobi as an untouchable and would hesitate to buy things from a Dhobi shopkeeper if he knows the latter's caste. But in cities and towns people do not take the trouble of enquiring about a shopkeeper's caste, and consequently there are no serious obstacles in the way of depressed class people taking to such occupations; in the mofussil this is as yet impossible. Another difficulty which often prevents them from taking to some lucrative occupation is the absence of cheap credit. It has been indicated in the last chapter that these people have often to pay exorbitant rates of interest. Other economic disabilities of these people have been described previously and need not be repeated here.

It may be mentioned that while the high castes represent the land-owning class, the depressed class people represent the labourers, or what some would call the proletariat. The economic life being a closed one, there is an inherent conflict between

[1] op. cit. p. 238.

the interests of the two classes. While the former desire high prices of agricultural commodities and low wages, the interests of the latter demand high wages and low prices of foodstuffs. In the face of the chasm that yawns between the two groups social equality is a Utopian dream and under the present circumstances even an appreciable improvement in their social status will take a long time. A few of them who have acquired wealth or political power will be able to improve their social position but the lot of their entire caste will not improve thereby. It will be at best a case of 'assimilation' of a few families in the fold of the high caste Hindus. So long as we do not remove the abject economic dependence of the depressed classes on the high castes, we cannot hope to bring about an improvement in the social position of the depressed classes as a whole.

Ameliorative measures initiated by popular Governments

With the advent of popular Governments in the provinces special attempts have been made, almost everywhere, to improve the lot of the depressed classes. The main effort has been directed towards increasing educational facilities for them, though efforts in other directions have not been lacking. We shall refer briefly, at this stage, to the work done by the different provincial Governments.

U.P.

When the Congress assumed control of the Government of the province, it increased the special expenditure on depressed class education by Rs. 1,25,000. New schools were opened for depressed classes and several old schools for these people were given grants-in-aid. About 8,000 scholarships were awarded and about 40,000 students were supplied text-books and writing material also. Besides, the depressed class students have been exempted from payment of fees in all Government schools. During the year ending 31st March 1940 the total recurring expenditure on depressed class education was Rs. 3,89,491.[1] The total number of depressed

[1] General Report on Public Instruction in the U.P. for the year ending 31-3-40.

class scholars increased from 1,82,181 in 1938-9 to 1,94,092 in 1939-40.

There are about 77 supervisors to look after the education of these castes and to carry on propaganda in favour of education amongst them. Every district has a committee consisting of officials and non-officials to watch their educational progress. There is also a provincial committee of a like nature which deals with provincial matters.

Special instructions have been issued regarding the recruitment of depressed class candidates to gazetted and non-gazetted posts. It has been decided to reserve at least one vacancy annually among deputy collectors for depressed and tenant class candidates. Formerly, the depressed classes were debarred from police service. This disqualification has now been removed. Several depressed class candidates were appointed Sub-Registrars, Excise Inspectors, Divisional Superintendents, etc. A special officer has been appointed to look after the general interests of these people.

Funds were also sanctioned for construction of wells in depressed class quarters.

Orders were issued to prevent Government servants from taking *begar*. Instructions have also been issued to District Officers to prevent Zamindars from extorting *begar* by initiating action under Section 347 of the Indian Penal Code wherever expedient.

Bihar

The Congress Government decided to set apart annually a sum of Rs. 18,310 for the award of special educational scholarships to depressed class students; and a sum of Rs. 5,140 was set apart for awarding scholarships to technical and non-technical students. Besides, orders were passed exempting depressed class college students from payment of tuition fees. The number of depressed class scholars increased from 56,667 in 1937-8 to 65,903 in 1938-9.

Government also sanctioned Rs. 1,25,000 in all for the provision of water supply in rural areas and of this amount Rs. 50,000 was ear-marked for depressed classes and aboriginal tribes.

The total money spent from public funds for the special benefit of depressed class education amounted to Rs. 44,450 in the year 1938-9.[1]

All heads of departments have been instructed to show special consideration for depressed class candidates in filling vacancies in Government services of all grades.

Section 8 of the Bengal Troops Transport and Travellers' Assistance Regulation of 1806 has been repealed. This Section empowered the police to impress labour and transport for the benefit of civil officers and others touring in mofussil. The depressed classes suffered most on account of this. Its abolition was highly desirable because of the element of compulsion involved. It accustomed the police to make the people work against their wishes. *Begar* was only the next step. It may be mentioned that the above Section is still in force in most of the other provinces of Northern India.

Bengal[2]

The Government has sanctioned a recurring grant of Rs. 29,160 for award of scholarships and stipends. In addition, a grant of Rs. 19,200 was given in 1938-9 for providing increased educational facilities. During the same period a special non-recurring grant of Rs. 5 lakhs was sanctioned for the spread of education amongst the depressed classes. Of this amount about Rs 2,27,500 have been spent as building grants to schools and colleges and the balance in giving scholarships, stipends and other grants to educational institutions. One State scholarship for foreign study has also been created for the benefit of these castes. The Government is spending Rs. 1,35,500 per annum (approximately) in providing scholarships and stipends to depressed class candidates. In the year 1938-9 there were 4,72,560 scholars of these castes, of whom 77,670 were girls.

Government have appointed a Special Officer for Scheduled Caste Education. As in the U.P., a Provincial Committee has

1 Report on the Progress of Education in Bihar for the year ending 1938-9; see also 'The Bihar Government and Its Work.'

2 This note is based on information supplied by Mr Rajkumar Das, Special Officer for Scheduled Caste Education, Bengal.

been appointed to watch the progress of education among these castes.

A special committee was appointed in 1938-9 to investigate ways and means of accelerating the progress of education amongst these people.

Government have decided to reserve 15 per cent of the vacancies, arising in future, for the depressed class candidates, provided they are suitable.

The Punjab

During the year 1939-40 some scholarships and stipends were awarded. In a few cases fees were remitted or writing materials supplied. Depressed class students are mostly admitted as free students in primary schools and as half free students in the secondary stages of middle or high schools. The total number of depressed class scholars in 1939-40, was 33,250[1] of which 1,639 were girls. The official report[2] is reticent about the money spent in awarding scholarships and stipends to students of these castes. Presumably it is small.

The Harijan Sevak Sangh

The Harijan Sevak Sangh was formed in September 1932 with the object of eradicating the evil of untouchability. It has its headquarters at Delhi and ramifications over several areas. There are at present 25 Provincial and State boards and 169 district committees.[3] The Central Board co-ordinates and directs the work of the branches besides giving financial assistance.

Its activities range from propaganda amongst high caste Hindus for the removal of untouchability to work of more constructive nature for ameliorating the social and economic conditions of the depressed classes. In 1939-40 the Central Board spent Rs. 8,645 in awarding scholarships to depressed class college students. During the same period a sum of Rs. 30,000 was set apart for encouraging vocational education among girls by awarding scholarships; and a sum of Rs. 5,000 was

1 Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab, 1939-40.

2 Ibid.

3 Rameshwari Nehru: *The Harijan Movement.*

ear-marked for scholarships to High School students in comparatively backward provinces like Bihar and Delhi.

In 1938-9 there were 340 separate primary schools for depressed classes which were being run or aided by the Sangh. There are 94 hostels run by the Sangh to provide free boarding and lodging to depressed class students.

The Sangh is also running 17 vocational schools, of which the Harijan Udyogshala at Delhi deserves special notice. It is a residential institution which imparts instruction in paper-making, tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry, smithy, etc. Boarding, lodging, and instruction are all free of charge.

Construction of wells for the benefit of these people has also been subsidized by the Sangh. The total annual expenditure of the various branches of the Sangh is in the neighbourhood of Rs. 3,00,000 and that of the central office Rs. 42,500.[1] Income is derived mainly from donations from high caste Hindus. The workers are mostly honorary.

1 Report of the Harijan Sevak Sangh for the period 1st October, 1937 to 30th September, 1940.

CHAPTER IX

CUSTOMS, BELIEFS, AND CULTURE

The depressed classes do not constitute a homogeneous group. They are in fact as disparate as are the high caste Hindus. As has already been explained elsewhere, for an untouchable too there exist certain untouchable castes. And the phenomenon of temporary untouchability also exists amongst the depressed classes. Along with the high caste Hindus the depressed classes believe that a person in a state of ceremonial impurity is capable of causing pollution and hence contact with such a person should be avoided. Thus after child-birth the mother is in a state of ceremonial impurity and so is the chief mourner after a death. The number of days for which this form of untouchability is to be observed is in most cases fixed by custom though in the case of a few castes this duty devolves on the Brahmin.

Acceptance of Food and Water

There are definite rules about acceptance of food and water from members of other castes and these have to be strictly adhered to. As regards restrictions on acceptance of food, it may be pointed out that what really matters is the caste of the cook and not of the host. Another fact that merits notice is that the number of people from whose hands a man can accept *pukka* food is much larger than the number of those from whose hands he can take *kachcha* food. But all castes are not equally strict in such matters. While some of the castes like Chamars, Bhangis, Bajgis, Doms and Kanjars have no scruples in taking *kachcha* food cooked by anybody, others like Pasis and Koris are very careful in observing the customary commensal restrictions. For instance, a Pasi can accept *kachcha* food only when it has been cooked by a member of his own endogamous group, a *guru*, or a Brahmin. The Koris are slightly less exacting in this respect, for they can accept *kachcha* food when it has been cooked by a member of their own caste, a *guru*, a Brahmin, or a a Rajput. As regards *pukka* food the Pasi and Kori take it not

only when it has been cooked by those whose *kachcha* food is acceptable, but also when it has been cooked by a member of those depressed castes that are superior or at least equal to them in rank. It may be mentioned in this connexion that the precedence of the different depressed castes is not definitely fixed. Notions about this matter vary from locality to locality. The severity of the cooking taboos of the depressed castes like Kharwar, Majhwar, Panka parallels those of high castes like the Khatri.[1] But this is not all. Almost every caste has certain rules regarding acceptance of water from members of other castes which are similar to the restrictions regarding acceptance of *kachcha* food though there is more laxity in this case. And there are inhibitions too in regard to the persons in whose company food may be taken. Persons belonging to the same exogamous group can eat together, for they are supposed to be relatives by blood. Generally speaking, members of different exogamous groups can also eat together if their groups can intermarry. It does not, however, follow that if persons belonging to two exogamous groups eat together they can also intermarry. For instance, in Rajshahi the Namasudras have three sub-castes—Halia Namasudras, Jalia Namasudras and Karati Namasudras. The members of these sub-castes can eat together and smoke the same *hookah* but there can be no intermarriage between them.[2] And inhibitions in regard to such matters vary not only with different castes but also with the same caste in different localities.

Beliefs

The depressed classes are saturated with animistic ideas. Spirits are supposed to dwell in trees, plants, stones and several other inanimate objects. The majority of them worship pipal (ficus religiosa), banyan, or tulsi (holy basil). These trees and plants occupy, moreover, an important place in magic and medicine. The worship of pipal is probably a contribution of Negritos, the earliest inhabitants of India, to Hindu beliefs.[1] Most of them have a vague belief in re-incarnation. This is generally associated with ancestor worship. In the compound

1 Blunt, *Caste System of Northern India*, pp. 93-4.

2 Rajshahi District Gazetteer, p. 59.

of a depressed class dwelling or under a pipal tree one often finds a number of carved or unhewn stones. Some of these represent godlings while others represent the abodes of the spirits of dead ancestors. Especially necessary is it to take care of certain dangerous spirits. There is a widespread belief amongst our illiterate masses including the depressed classes that the spirits of those dying a violent death are dangerous and must needs be propitiated. This is usually done by providing an abode for the spirit in the form of carved or unhewn stones and by making sacrifices and other offerings on suitable occasions. The reverence paid to stones is the outcome of their belief in the necessity of propitiating the *bhut* or soul of the departed. It is belief in the doctrine of soul-matter. Besides these, the worship of snakes, of the Sun and the Moon, of Ganwan (village goddess) or Dihwan are characteristic features of the beliefs of most of the castes. It should be mentioned in this connexion that the cult of snakes, the worship of a mother goddess, and the worship of the Sun and the Moon are not attributable to 'Aryan' invaders but were 'probably brought in by earlier invaders of Mediterranean or Armenoid Race speaking no doubt a Dravidian language, whose religion must also be associated with fertility cults, phallic symbols, the Devdasi cult and probably human sacrifice.'[2]

There is amongst the depressed classes a widespread belief in magic, both white and black. This is not, however, confined to these people but is shared by all the more ignorant classes in our country. Places like cremation grounds, deserts, empty houses, are supposed to be infested with evil spirits. Illness is invariably attributed to the wrath of some *deota* who is usually propitiated by sacrificing a fowl or a sheep. In the case of children almost every malady is attributed to *nazar* or the influence of evil eye. It is not children alone who have to be protected against *nazar*, but property and animals as well. There are several ways of counteracting *nazar*. Thus movable property may be marked with black spots; while a house may be protected by placing a blackened earthen pot in the courtyard. The beads hung round the necks of cattle are primarily for warding

1 Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, p. 393.
2 Ibid., p. 394.

off evil spirits and only secondarily as an adornment. Children are generally protected by rubbing a bit of lamp-black on cheeks or forehead.

Calamities and epidemics are usually ascribed to the malevolence of witches. According to some, a woman dying while pregnant or in child-birth becomes a *churel* (witch). Most of the castes have professional witch-doctors called Ojhas or Sokhas who indicate the witch responsible for a calamity. At times the unfortunate person suspected of witchcraft is belaboured to death.

Matriarchy and Marriage Customs

Probably most of the depressed castes were originally matrilineal, for even at present many castes show important traces of the matriarchate. The employment of sister's or daughter's husband to officiate as priest on marriage ceremonies is a feature common to most of the castes. Amongst Saheriyas the marriage ceremony is performed by an old man of the caste or the bride's brother-in-law. In the case of many castes, e.g. Chamars, Korwas, etc. the maternal uncle either himself arranges a boy's or girl's marriage or has a final say in the matter. It is customary in certain castes for the girl's maternal uncle to receive the whole or a part of the bride price. Descent through female line exists in some castes. For instance, among the Garos the husband of the youngest daughter is the de facto owner of the family land and property. Again, their womenfolk enjoy freedom little dissimilar from that of the menfolk. Often women are treated on terms of perfect equality. In the case of castes like Nats women can and do become headwomen (*mukhia*); while the Kanjars have, in many places, a headman as well as a headwoman.[1] The beliefs and religious practices of some of the depressed castes bear the impress of matriarchy. For instance, in the Himalayas of U. P. and the Punjab, worship of goddesses in whose honour fairs are held is far more important than that of gods. This is, however, a feature of the religious practices of most of the hill castes, both high and low.[2]

1 U. P. Census Report, 1931, Pt. I, p. 612.
2 Census of India, 1931, Vol. 1, Pt. 1, p. 458.

Importance of Marriage

Universality of marriage is a feature characteristic of our society, the celibates being a few ascetics, lunatics and beggars. The importance of marriage is indicated by the proverb, "Na mili nari to sada brahmachari". It means that he who cannot find a bride must perforce remain a bachelor. The Hindu law-givers enjoined on their followers to get married and beget sons. As Baudhayana puts it: "By begetting a virtuous son a man saves himself as well as the seven preceding and seven following generations." But these and similar religious injunctions are probably a rationalization of a belief more primitive. Even the least sophisticated caste attaches as much importance to marriage as the high caste Hindus. In some parts of the country if a husband cannot be found for a girl before puberty, she is married to a flower, a tree, or an arrow. So much importance is attached to marriage that the ceremony has to be performed even in the case of a girl intended for prostitution. She is married to a knife, or a sword, or a plant, or to a man who is only a pro forma husband.[1] It would be interesting to notice that amongst castes like Todas of South India and Nambudris the corpse of a person dying unmarried is married before cremation to ensure future happiness.[2] Some of the castes like the Chamars believe that a man dying unmarried becomes a harmful evil spirit. These facts show that the importance attached to marriage cannot be attributed to the Indo-Aryans. It is due probably to the primitive belief in 'life-giving soul-matter' and the desire to pass it on reduplicated to the next generation.[3]

Features of Civil Condition

We have indicated above that marriage is a universal feature of our society. This is borne out by the figures relating to marital conditions given in Appendix XVI. Consider, for instance, the proportion of unmarried females aged 44 years and over for the various depressed castes. In the case of Namasudras only 7 per mille of the females of these ages are unmarried and the corresponding figures for the Chamars of the U.P.,

1 L. S. S. O'Malley: *Indian Caste Customs*, p. 91.
2 Ibid; Census of India, Vol. 1, Pt. 1, p. 405.
3 Census of India, Vol. 1, Pt. 1, p. 405.

Bihar and the Punjab are 7, 3, and 4 respectively. The proportion of unmarried females in this age-group represents roughly the proportion of those who never get married. It is significant that, in the case of the numerically more important castes, the proportion of unmarried women aged 24 years and over is in no case greater than 11 per mille.

Another fact that merits notice is the comparatively early age at which most of the girls get married. To illustrate this, let us take the case of the Chamars in the U.P. Of their women aged 0-6 years 95·4 per cent are unmarried, of those aged 7-13 years 54·1 per cent are unmarried, of those aged 14-16 years 9·4 per cent are unmarried, and of those aged 17-23 years only 2·6 per cent are unmarried. As the Census Superintendent of the U.P. aptly puts it: "After twenty practically every female who does not suffer from some infirmity or disfigurement or who is not a concubine or a prostitute, has been married."[1] These remarks hold good in the case of all the depressed castes which have been referred to in Appendix XVI. The data given there reveals three interesting features of the civil condition of depressed castes.

First, the tendency towards early marriage is more pronounced amongst the depressed classes than amongst the high castes. For purposes of comparison the data relating to marital conditions of the Brahmin women in the various provinces are also given along with the data for certain important depressed castes. It will be observed that in the age groups 0-6 years, 7-13 years, and 14-16 years, the proportion of unmarried Brahmin women of the U.P. is higher than the corresponding figures for the Chamars, Pasis and Dhobis of the same province. In Bihar, in the above-mentioned age groups the proportion of unmarried Brahmin females is in each case higher than that of the Chamars and Musahars. And the figures relating to the Bauris, Doms, Jaliya, Kaibarattas and Namasudras of Bengal and the Chamars, Chuhras, Dagis and Kolis of the Punjab tell the same story.

Secondly, amongst the depressed castes the marriage age of women tends to decrease as we move eastwards from the Punjab. Consider for instance the case of the Chamars. While in the

[1] U. P. Census Report, 1931, Pt. I, p. 291.

Punjab 991 per mille of women aged 0-6 years are unmarried, in the U.P. the proportion of unmarried women is 954 and the corresponding figure for Bihar is only 891 in that age-group. In the age-group 7-13, 725 per mille of the Chamar women in the Punjab are unmarried and the corresponding figures for the U.P. and Bihar are 541 and 451 respectively. In the next age-group, 164 per mille of the Chamar women in the Punjab are unmarried, and the corresponding figures for the U.P. and Bihar are 94 per mille and 91 per mille respectively. Similar is the case of scavenging castes. In the age-group 0-6 years 992 per mille of the Chuhra (Punjab) women are unmarried and the corresponding figures for Bhangi (U.P.) and Dom (Bengal) women are 986 and 930 respectively. In the age-group 7-13 years while 839 per mille of Chuhra women are unmarried, the corresponding figure for Bhangis is 741 and that for the Doms is as small as 433. Again, in the next age-group 362 per mille of the Chuhra women are unmarried and the corresponding figures for Bhangis and Doms are 168 and 87 respectively.

Thirdly, considering the depressed castes of the various provinces as a whole we notice that marriage age of women tends to decrease as we move from the Punjab into the U.P. and Bihar but appears to increase again in Bengal where it is higher than in Bihar. Incidentally, the Brahmins also show this tendency. This last inference is, however, only tentative, for the data available, especially for Bihar and Bengal, are not sufficient.

Age of Marriage

It will have been noticed from the preceding two paragraphs that the important depressed castes practise child marriage. But this is not true of all of them. A few of the castes like Haburas, Dharkars, Thaurs, Bhumijs, Bhogtas, Rajbansis practise adult marriage.

Wherever the custom of child marriage obtains, *gauna* is usually given when the girl attains puberty. In such cases marital relations begin soon after puberty. This is, according to some, as harmful as pre-puberty intercourse. Our observations show that amongst most of the castes infant marriage is still in vogue though there is a tendency to raise the marriage age by a year or two.

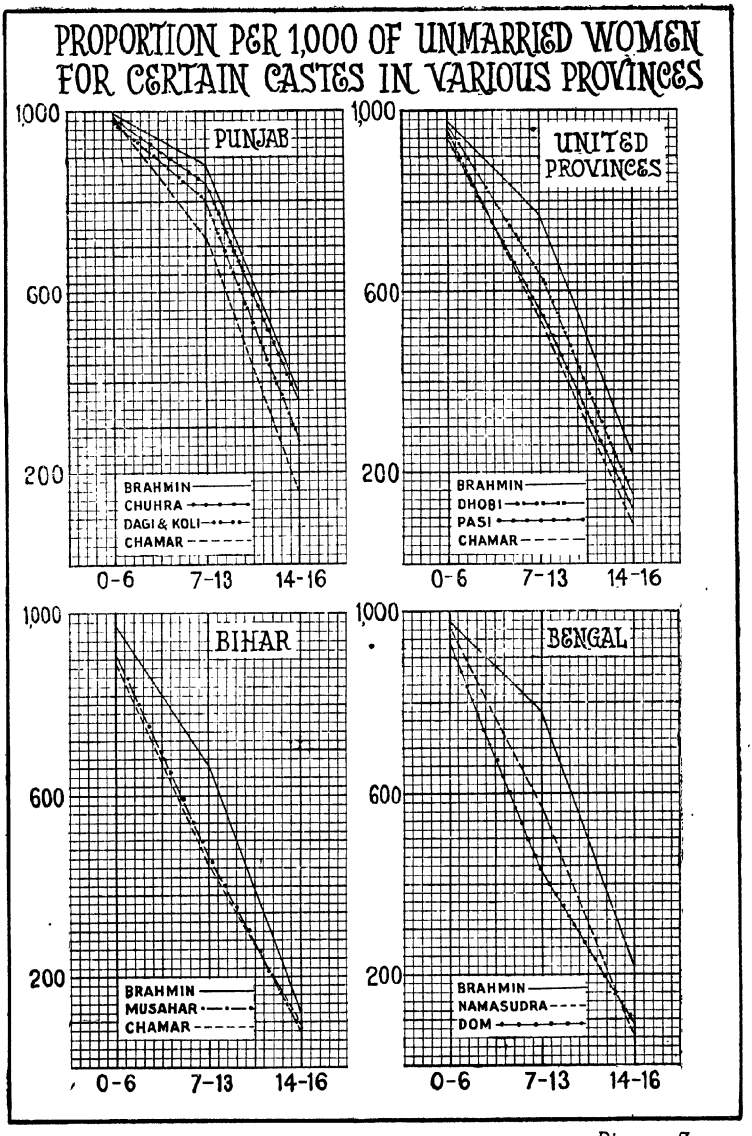

PROPORTION PER 1,000 OF UNMARRIED WOMEN FOR CERTAIN CASTES IN VARIOUS PROVINCES
1,000
600
200
PUNJAB
BRAHMIN
CHUHRA
DAGI & KOLI
CHAMAR
0-6
7-13
14-16
UNITED PROVINCES
BRAHMIN
DHOBI
PASI
CHAMAR
BIHAR
BRAHMIN
MUSAHAR
CHAMAR
BENGAL
BRAHMIN
NAMASUDRA
DOM

Diagram 7

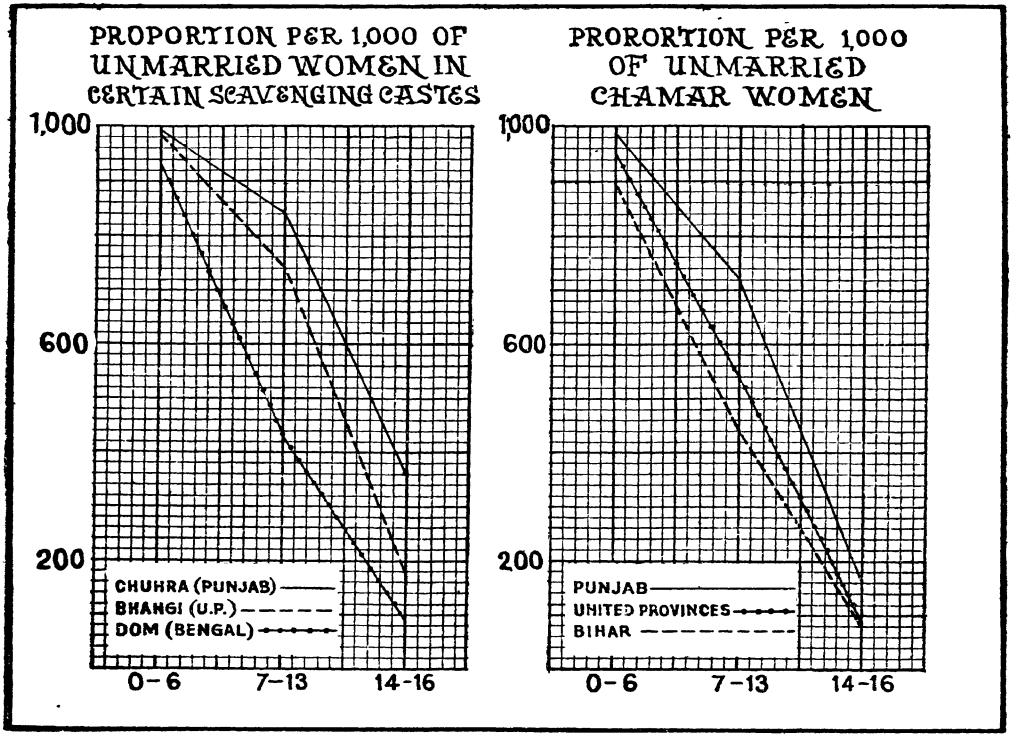

PROPORTION PER 1,000 OF UNMARRIED WOMEN IN CERTAIN SCAVENGING CASTES
1,000
600
200
CHUHRA (PUNJAB)
BHANGI (U.P.)
DOM (BENGAL)
0-6
7-13
14-16
PROPORTION PER 1,000 OF UNMARRIED CHAMAR WOMEN
1,000
600
200
PUNJAB
UNITED PROVINCES
BIHAR
0-6
7-13
14-16

Diagram 8

The main consideration determining the time of marriage is their ability to bear the expenses, or what comes to the same thing, their ability to raise a loan for meeting marriage expenses. It is mainly economic causes that are bringing about a rise in marriage age. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, popularly known as Sarda Act, has proved ineffectual in preventing infant marriages, especially in mofussil. It is only in towns and cities that these people appear to be taking the Act seriously. Here and there, they have become conscious of the evils of child marriage and are making efforts to raise the marriage age. To mention but one instance, a few years ago, the Namasudras in Bengal resolved at a general conference to outcast a man who married a son under twenty or a daughter under ten years of age. Though the pious resolutions passed at such general conferences are not productive of much good, they show at least the desire to change existing practices.

Forms of Marriage

Marriage by Purchase

Marriage by purchase is the most common form of marriage amongst Hindus. This form of marriage as practised by the depressed classes, differs fundamentally from that of high caste Hindus. While amongst the depressed classes brides are purchased, amongst high caste Hindus bridegrooms are purchased. Another point of difference is that while in the case of the depressed classes bride price is mostly fixed by custom and has no relation to the value of the bride, among the high castes bridegroom price tends to correspond closely to the value of the bridegroom, i.e. his income.

Bride price generally takes the form of a cash payment plus presents of clothes, sweets, food grains, etc. to the bride's people. It varies not only from caste to caste but also with the same caste in different localities. In certain areas of Eastern U.P., the bride price amongst Utraha Chamars is a cash payment of Rs. 6 plus presents of two seers of curd, five seers of rice, five lumps (*bhelis*) of *gur* and one *dhoti*. In the Case of Tharus it is five *kachcha* maunds of rice plus two-and-a-half *kachcha* maunds of *urd*. In addition to this a Tharu bridegroom may

have to give some money to the bride's people if it is demanded. The main point to be noticed, however, is that in most cases bride price has no relation to the value of the bride. But the practice of charging a fairly high bride price is not altogether unknown. Thus in the case of Rajbansis of Bengal it varies from Rs. 40 to Rs. 120. Again, the bride price amongst Punjab Chamars varies from Rs. 50 to Rs. 200. The existence of a comparatively high bride price is invariably due to shortage of women of marriageable age. For instance, in the age-groups 7-13, 14-16, 17-23 and 24-43 years, for every 1000 male Chamars in the Punjab the number of females is 838, 841, 917, and 856 respectively. And then there is a considerable demand for Chamar women by members of certain other faiths. This aggravates the existing shortage of women.

Adla Badla

Another form is that of marriage by exchange, known commonly as *adla badla* or *gurawat*. In this the son of one man marries the daughter of the other and the latter's son marries the former's daughter. This form of marriage still exists amongst Bhuiyas, Dharkars, Ghasiyas, Santals, Bhumijs, Musahars, Kuch bande Kanjars, Gual Nats, Khatiks, etc.

There is a variant of this form of marriage known as *Tigadda*. It is a triangular arrangement. Thus A's son marries B's daughter, B's son marries C's daughter, and C's son marries A's daughter. This form of marriage by exchange is common not only amongst the depressed classes but also amongst some of the higher castes like Vaishyas.

Ghar Damadi or Ghar Jamai

In this case the suitor lives with the girl's family and works there for a few years before marriage. It is tantamount to payment of bride price in the form of service. Most of the castes do not permit connubial relations during the period of service. This form of marriage is practised by Bhuiyars, Cheros, Ghasiyas, Majhwars, Parahiyas, Kalabaz Nats, Rajbansis, etc. The period of service is not fixed but in the case of most of the depressed castes of the U P. it is about three years; in the case of Rajbansis it varies from one to seven years. In some

areas, a Brijbasi Gual Nat bridegroom married in this way cannot leave his father-in-law's house even on expiration of the term of service and solemnization of marriage but has to stay on so long as the 'in-laws' are alive. If he wishes to leave earlier he has to pay a bride price which is then fixed by the caste panchayat.[1]

Ghar Baitha

This is a form of marriage resembling *ghar-jamai*. When a widow is mistress of her own house with no male collaterals or other relations she takes unto herself a mate of her own choice who lives in her house. Such a person stands very low in social estimation. He can usually be turned out by the woman at her sweet will. Marriage in this form is practised by castes like the Chamars, Pasis, Rajbansis.

Connubial Restrictions

A man's choice of a mate is hedged round with restrictions of endogamy, exogamy and other special rules. Caste endogamy is rigidly enforced by most of the castes and the penalty for transgression of this law is excommunication. Marriage outside the caste is, indeed, inconceivable except in the case of some vagrant castes and a few castes like Bagdis and Bauris who admit outsiders to their caste. It should be mentioned that, in the cases of evasion of caste endogamy referred to above, the outsider is invariably initiated into the caste before marriage. Thus, apparently, even in such cases there is no evasion of the rule regarding caste endogamy. But this is not the only restriction. Almost every caste is divided into a number of sub-castes which are usually endogamous. Now sub-caste endogamy, though as rigid as caste endogamy, is not immutable. For instance, in certain areas of the U.P., the Sarwaria Chamars can marry girls of the Utraha or Mahauliar Chamars though the former will not give their girls in marriage to the latter. In Pabna the Namasudras are divided into eight sub-castes—Halia, Chasi, Jalia, Karal, Karati, Nalo, Kora, Kahar. The Halia, Chasi, and Karati consider themselves superior to the others. While these three groups will intermarry amongst themselves, they

1 U.P. Census Report, 1931, Part I, p. 31.

will not eat or marry with the lower groups.[1] Then there are exogamous restrictions to be reckoned with. An endogamous sub-caste is generally divided into a number of exogamous groups within which a man cannot marry. The village is usually the exogamous group and members of an endogamous group living in the same village consider themselves to be relatives. For this very reason it is customary to go to another village for a bride. But this is not the invariable rule. Often in the same village would be found families belonging to the same endogamous group but different exogamous groups. Under these circumstances marriages within the same village do take place. For example, in certain areas of the U.P., a Chamar will marry in his own village, if possible, avoiding only the daughters of the same parental lineage which are distinguished by *chint*. The *chints* go by means of places and not of persons, e.g. *Rafh ka chint, Bilgaon ka chint*, etc.[2]

In addition to the endogamous and exogamous restrictions referred to above there are several rules that prevent a man from contracting a union with some of his near relations. Of these the memory of man rule is probably the most common of all. This rule prohibits marriage between two families so long as a past intermarriage is remembered. For instance, the Musahars in Bihar follow this rule. Next in importance to this is the avuncular rule or *chachera, phuphera, mamera, mausera* rule. It forbids union with any persons in the line of the paternal and maternal uncle and aunt. Castes like the Bhuiyar, Chamar, Chero, follow this rule. Some castes there are that do not allow marriage "in the line of the paternal aunt and maternal uncle and also either within a man's own family or within his exogamous group".[3] These include: Baheliya, Dhanak, Dharkar, Dom, Kharwar, Kol.

Ceremonies connected with Marriage

There are three main ceremonies. First is the betrothal ceremony known popularly as *mangni*. In some areas it is known as *haludjal*. An important point that has to be noticed

1 Pabna District Gazetteer, p. 32.
2 U. P. Census Report, 1931, Part I, p. 309.
3 Blunt, op. cit. p. 62.

in this connexion is that, like high caste Hindus, marriages are arranged by senior relatives and the bride and bridegroom are not the contracting parties. The depressed classes do not usually have any professional match-makers. In some cases either a part or the whole of the bride price is paid at the time of betrothal. Second is the marriage ceremony proper and the third is the *gauna* ceremony. Wherever the custom of *gauna* exists the ceremony is as important as the marriage ceremony. It is only after *gauna* that the wife first goes to live with her husband. But all castes do not have a *gauna* ceremony though even in such cases the wife begins living with her husband only after attaining puberty.

Charhawa and Dola Ceremonies

There are two main forms of *byah*[1] ceremony—Charhawa and Dola. In the former case the ceremony is performed at the house of the bride but in the latter case the bride comes with her people to the bridegroom's house where the ceremony is performed. Like high castes, the depressed classes also believe that *byah* can be performed but once in a life time. Hence, ceremonies of the above type are performed only in the case of virgin marriage.

Widows are married by a maimed rite known variously as *dharewa, sagai, karao, sangha,* etc. The ceremony is extremely simple. It may be merely the rubbing of sindur (vermilion) on the parting of a woman's hair, or the recitation of a *Katha* and the knotting together of the clothes of the pair, etc. But there is invariably a feast for the caste brethren.

Priests at Marriage Ceremonies

As has already been indicated elsewhere, the majority of depressed class people are not served by Brahmins. They have their own priests who officiate at marriages though at times these duties are discharged by the brother-in-law of the bride or bridegroom. Even those castes that are served by Brahmins do not generally requisition their services for solemnizing marriages, because a Brahmin priest is a costly luxury. For instance, the Rajwars, Musahars, Dosadhs, Bhuiyas are served by Brahmins

1 Term used for virgin marriage.

but it is the *Napit* (barber) who officiates at their marriages. Now and then a few of them call in a Brahmin to perform a marriage ceremony. But this happens mainly in cities and towns.

Expenditure on Marriage Ceremonies

The expenditure incurred in connexion with a marriage is a function of three variables, viz. the individual concerned, the caste and the locality. For this very reason we can only arrive at a rough estimate of the money generally spent on marriages by the majority of these people. While in the Punjab most of them spend between Rs. 100 to Rs. 150 on marriages, the corresponding limits for the western and eastern parts of U. P. are Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 and Rs. 30 to Rs. 50 respectively. The Musahars, Bhuiyas, Dosadhs, Doms, Rajwars usually spend from Rs. 20 to Rs. 40 on a marriage. Castes like the Khatiks and Dhobis spend as much as Rs. 100 to Rs. 200 on such occasions.

In many a place the expenses that must needs be incurred in connexion with a marriage have been reduced considerably during the last ten or fifteen years. This has been made possible by doing away with nautch, by reducing the number of *baratis* (bridegroom's party), by cutting down expenditure on wine, etc. In some cases expenses have been reduced by as much as fifty per cent.

Divorce

Almost every caste allows divorce. Now and then a few of them advance claim to a higher status in the caste hierarchy; and, in order to strengthen their claim, they relinquish practices like divorce upon which the high caste Hindus look down. As an example the case of Bhumijs may be mentioned. While Chota Bhumijs permit divorce, Bara Bhumijs do not. The latter consider themselves superior to the former. Other cases of this type are Mewafrosh Khatiks, Jatav Yadavs (Chamars). The main ground on which a man can seek divorce is the wife's adultery for which the panchayat requires ocular evidence. In addition to this ground castes like Baiswar and Dhangar also allow divorce if the wife eats and drinks with a man of a strange caste or is suspected of wizardry. Excepting a few castes like Agariya, Barwar, a divorcee is allowed to remarry. In some cases,

e.g. Chamars, a wife is allowed divorce if the panchayat is satisfied that the husband is impotent. But practice in regard to such matters varies with the endogamous group and the locality.

Widows and Widow Remarriage

In spite of the fact that the tendency towards early marriage is more pronounced in the case of depressed classes as compared to high caste Hindus, the proportion of widows is smaller amongst them as compared to the latter. The Doms, Jaliaya Kaibarattas and Namasudras are, however, exceptions to the above statement. Amongst these the proportion of widows per mille of the women of all ages is 203, 218, and 217 respectively. These proportions are much higher than those for any other castes mentioned in Appendix XVI. It will be observed that in the case of Chamars and scavenging castes the proportion of widows tends to increase as we move from the Punjab towards Bengal. Incidentally, this suggests a correspondence between low marriage age and a high proportion of widows.

The comparatively small proportion of widows amongst depressed classes as compared to high caste Hindus is due mainly to the fact that almost every depressed caste permits widow marriage while the latter do not permit it. When, however, a group advances claims to a higher status in the caste hierarchy it usually forbids widow marriage. The Chasi, Mecho, and Tanti sub-castes of the Pods, the Bara Bhumijs, Mewafrosh Khatiks, etc. do not now permit marriage of widows.

Where marriage of widows is permitted, the usual practice is for the widow to marry her late husband's younger brother. But levirate, though permitted, is never enforced. When a widow marries some person other than the levir, the man who marries her has often to pay some compensation to her former husband's family. In some cases the amount of such compensation equals the bride price paid by her former husband.

Polygamy

There are very few depressed class people who can afford more than one wife. Caste customs, too, stand in the way of a man taking a second mate. Thus, in the case of Bhuiyars and certain Bhangi sub-castes, the consent of the first wife to a

second marriage is necessary. Again, the number of wives a man can have is at times fixed by caste custom. For instance, while Barwars allow a man to have two wives, the maximum number of wives permissible in the case of Aheriyas is four.[1] A Rajbansi can have as many as ten wives. It should be mentioned that the majority of cases of polygamy are due to the custom of levirate.

Concubinage

Many castes permit concubinage but the practice is uncommon. In most cases the concubine must be of the same caste but in a few castes like the Chamars and the Bhangis a man can keep a concubine belonging to a higher caste. Then there are castes like the Rajwars who permit concubinage in any form. The penalty for unrecognized concubinage is excommunication. Where concubinage is recognized, the children of the concubine have often a restricted right of inheritance. In some castes, e.g. Bhumij, a man can keep a concubine of another caste and escape ex-communication if he does not accept food from her hands. In such cases, however, the children of the concubine do not have a right in their father's property.

Immorality -- Pre-Marital and Post-Nuptial

Most of the castes condone pre-marital immorality on payment of a fine and provision of a feast to the brotherhood, provided the pair concerned marry afterwards. This, of course, pre-supposes that the pair belong to the same endogamous group and their relationship is such as could end in marriage. The majority of the castes would excommunicate a girl if she has an affair with a man of another caste; but a few castes would condone it if the outsider is of a higher caste. Some of the castes like Bauris and Bagdis have very lax views on sexual morality. They tolerate not only pre-marital immorality but also allow their women to live openly with men of other castes. Then there are vagrant castes like the Nats who prostitute their women. In the majority of castes, however, adultery is not tolerated. This is indicated by the heavy penalties normally imposed for an offence of this nature.

1 Blunt, op. cit. pp. 67-8.

The lax views on sexual morality of castes like Bagdis, Bauris, and Nats, who permit their women to live openly with others or who prostitute their women, can probably be explained by their initial association with the idea of acquiring additional soul-matter from strangers "to ensure that life should be propagated and earth should fructify." This was the idea underlying the practice of consecrated prostitution which existed in ancient times in Babylon and Babylus. About the Nat caste, Dr Hutton observes: "It may be that the profession of tight rope walker, acrobat, dancer and prostitute take their origin in services performed primarily for the benefit of crops."[1] It is not that some of the members of such castes are 'fallen angels' but their mores have no place for sexual immorality.

A word now about the official version of immorality. While in 1911 there were 19,46,831 beggars, vagrants and prostitutes, in 1931 their number had declined to 13,50,979, thus registering a decline of 19·9 per cent. Some of the depressed castes have a particularly high proportion of people engaged in such professions. For instance, in 1931, 13·5 per cent of the Habura workers were beggars, prostitutes, etc. while the corresponding figures for Kanjars, Nats and Sansis were 19·4 per cent, 36·9 per cent, and 32·4 per cent respectively.[2]

Disposal of the Dead

The depressed class people both bury and burn their dead though the former mode of disposal of dead is probably more common. Wherever they have come under the influence of high caste Hindus there is a tendency to prefer cremation to burial, provided, of course a family can afford it. Burial costs very little compared to cremation.

The bodies of those dying of diseases like cholera, plague, etc. are not disposed of in the normal way. Usually these are thrown in some stream or river. It is probably the belief in "soul-matter as a fertilizing agent" which explains the "distinctive treatment of the bodies of those who die by bad deaths and are therefore probably either unfertile or unsuitable or likely to lead to the reproduction of bad results."[3]

1 Census of India, 1931, Vol. I., p. 411. 2 Appendix V.
3 Census of India Vol. 1, Pt. 1, p. 402.

Expenditure on Death Ceremonies

For a few days after a death the chief mourner remains in a state of ceremonial impurity. The termination of the period of impurity is marked by a feast to the brethren. This involves considerable expenditure. Some of the castes make it obligatory for the chief mourner to stand the brethren drinks as well in addition to a feast. Special importance is attached to these last ceremonies. A Khatik, for instance, must feast the entire *thok* on such an occasion, but on no other occasion is the feasting of the whole *thok* essential. The money spent on such occasions generally varies from Rs. 15 to Rs. 30. Here and there, steps have been taken to reduce the expenditure that has to be incurred on such occasions. This usually takes the form of doing away with *tari* or wine, or reduction of the number of people who have to be feasted.

Literacy

Educationally the depressed classes are extremely backward. A reference to Appendix XVII will reveal that of the Chamar (U.P.) and the Pasi (U.P.) males aged seven years and over only 6 and 5 per mille respectively were found to be literate in 1931. It may be noticed that the proportion of literates amongst the male Chamars of Bengal is much higher than elsewhere in Northern India. In the case of the Namasudras 145 per mille of the males aged 7 years and over were literate. Probably the Namasudras are educationally the most advanced depressed caste. Next in importance are Jaliaya Kaibarattas with 122 literate males per mille of males aged seven years and over. The position of the depressed class females in regard to literacy is much worse. While in the U.P., 0·4 per mille of the Chamar females aged seven years and over were, in 1931, found to be literate, the corresponding figures for Bihar, the Punjab and Bengal were 0·7, 1 and 15[1] respectively. Of Jaliaya Kaibaratta females 22 per mille were literate. This figure for female literacy is much higher than that of any other depressed caste referred to in Appendix XVII. Incidentally, the figure for female literacy of Brahmins (U.P) and Rajputs (Punjab) are 25 per mille and 13 per mille respectively. Speaking generally, the

[1] The figure for Bengal relates to females aged four years and over.

proportion of literate males and females amongst the depressed castes of Bengal is much higher than amongst the depressed castes of Bihar, the U. P. or the Punjab.

Women and Work

Unlike their high caste sisters the depressed class women are not prevented by social usages from working outside their homes. Not only is a depressed class housewife a domestic drudge but she contributes her quota to the family income as well. Thus, in the case of the Chamars, Pasis, Dhobis and Bhangis—all from the U.P.—the number of women earners per mille of male earners is 529, 426, 487 and 600 respectively. In Bihar there are 760 Chamar women workers and 610 Dhobi women workers per mille of male workers. Again, in the case of the Bauris and Bagdis the proportion of women workers per mille of of males is 520 and 290 respectively. Amongst the Dagis and Kolis there are as many as 799 women workers per mille of male workers. Perhaps in the case of no other caste is this last figure exceeded. The depressed class women do all sorts of light work in the fields, while occupations like paddy husking and flour grinding are almost entirely in their hands. The vast majority of women workers engaged in industry are recruited from amongst the depressed classes. In Cawnpore city, for example, three-fifths of the women operatives belong to the depressed classes.[1]

Outlook

The depressed class people suffer from a sense of inferiority which is probably the result of their having occupied a degraded position in society for centuries. This psychological depression is more marked in mofussil than elsewhere. The way they *salam* (salute) and address a well-dressed person and indeed, their whole behaviour is deprecatory. But all are not alike in this respect. For instance, the subdued manner of the Chamar throws in vivid relief the dare-devilry of the Khatiks. The Khatiks can never be made to do *harwahi*. While a Chamar boy normally becomes a *harwaha*, a Khatik boy normally becomes *biyapari*. The children of such castes as Dhobis and Khatiks

1 U. P. Census Report, 1931, Part I, p. 423.

develop at an early age notions of respectability partly because these castes pursue more or less independent callings, partly because they are better off than the others, and partly because they live in towns and cities where the social environment is more favourable for the growth of such notions than in the countryside. In mofussil, the depressed class people do not generally infringe the rules of conduct laid down by the high castes. For instance, even if a reformist Thakur asks a Chamar to give him drinking water the latter would think twice before complying with the former's request and may even refuse to do so for fear of being reprimanded by *his own* caste brethren. The behaviour of educated members of the depressed classes in the presence of high caste Hindus has often a note of hesitancy. But conditions are changing fast.

Recent Changes in Attitudes and Social Position

The depressed classes have, during recent years, become conscious of the advantages of educating their children. This is due partly to the lure of Government jobs and partly to their desire to improve their social position. As has been previously noted, most of the provincial Governments are trying to ensure fair representation of depressed classes in Government services by giving preference to candidates of these castes if found suitable. In fact the association between education and Government jobs is as firmly established in the minds of most of them as in the case of high caste Hindus. As a result of education and acquisition of Government jobs, a middle class is coming into existence amongst them. But theirs is not an enviable lot, at least at present. Barring a few individuals, high caste Hindus do not mix freely with them and they do not naturally like the company of illiterate members of their own castes.

It is not uncommon now to find members of the depressed classes occupying positions of responsibility. Only recently one member of the depressed classes was nominated by the U.P. Government for the Provincial Civil Service. In the U.P. and Bihar some of their members were till recently working as Parliamentary Secretaries and in the last-mentioned province one of them even occupied the unique position of a member of the cabinet. The present Bengal cabinet includes two

representatives of the depressed classes. These and similar other privileges have enhanced considerably the prestige of the depressed classes. We have already pointed out that the depressed classes do not constitute a homogeneous mass. Now that they have been given special representation in legislatures as a result of the Poona Pact it is possible that the "minority castes" may, in the near future, ask for special protection of their rights.

In spite of these politico-economic changes, the method by which a caste tries to rise in the social scale remains unchanged. Still the standard method is to advance a claim to a higher status in the caste hierarchy, to invent an explanation of their present degraded position, and to abjure food and other practices repugnant to high castes. In the western districts of the U.P. the Jatav Chamars have now adopted the designation of Jatav-Yadavs and promptly refute any suggestion to the effect that they are Chamars. They now claim to be Jats. Similarly the Dhankar Khatiks of western U.P. claim to be Dhankar Rajputs. In Bengal the Rajbansis have of late advanced a claim to Kshatriya status. The Koris who have given up weaving, style themselves Kush Kuleen Rajputs or Tantuvai Vaishyas.[1] There is, however, one serious obstacle to such aspirations of the depressed classes. It consists in their standing to lose the politico-economic privileges they have recently gained if their claim to belong to a high caste is recognized by Government. But they do not wish to lose these privileges. For this very reason they demand from Government merely an official recognition of change in the name of the caste by adding the new name to the existing list of schedule castes. Some of the caste names like Chamar, Chuhra, Kanjar have bad associations and change of such names would be desirable. It might help them in getting rid of their sense of inferiority. It is hoped that Government would not discourage such formal changes.

All of them do not, however, claim Kshatriya status. The aspirations of some of them are more modest, at least in the initial stages. They are content with a small rise in the social

1 U. P. Census Report, 1931, Pt. I, p. 538.

scale.[1] For instance, some of the Kanjars have settled down as brush makers and have started calling themselves Kunchbandhia. They are considered somewhat superior to Jallads, Supwallas and Jangal Basis. Some of the Gual Nats have settled down as traders in Rohilkhand and the adjoining district. They call themselves Badi Banjaras and consider themselves superior to the parent stock.[2] Bhuiyars are Jatiya Chamars who have taken to weaving. They are superior to Chamars who skin dead animals or tan hides. In Bengal some of the Jaliaya Kaibarattas have abandoned their traditional occupation and have taken to cultivation.[3] They call themselves Mahishyas and claim to be superior to the parent stock. Satchasis are Dhobas who have abandoned their caste occupation and have taken to cultivation. The former consider themselves superior to the latter.[4]

1 The most palpable effect of a rise in the social scale is that the social and economic disabilities from which the parent group suffers are enforced less rigorously against the new group whose claim to superior status has been tacitly accepted. It should be mentioned that the probability of an untouchable group's claim to Kshatriya status being conceded by high caste Hindus is practically nil but when they pitch their claims so high the chances of their getting better treatment at the hands of high caste Hindus are, probably, increased.

2 Blunt, op. cit., p. 50.

3 R. K. Mukerjee: *Economic Problems of Modern India*, Vol. I, p. 47.

4 The social status of a group is the resultant of several forces like the occupation of the group, its social practices, its food, habits, and its economic position. When a large number of people belonging to an endogamous group take to a new occupation, they secede very soon from the parent caste and form a new group. But this by itself does not bring about an improvement in their social status. For this, it is necessary, first of all, that the new occupation should be either more respectable or at least as respectable as the old one. Second, the new group must abandon social practices and food habits that are looked down upon by the high castes. If, as a result of the adoption of a new occupation, there is an improvement in the economic condition of the group, the chances of recognition of its claim to a higher social status are considerably increased.

New groups sometimes come into existence on account of changes in religious beliefs, e.g. Panchpiriya Biyadah Pasi, Nanak Shahi Bhangi. At times an entire local section of a group adopts certain new social customs or abandons certain social practices followed by the others. They restrict marriage to those who conform to their usages and in the course of time form a new group. Examples of this type are the Basor and the Bansphor. An interesting case is that of the Bhumijs of Manbhum district who are in

This breaking off from the parent stock and claiming slightly superior status is the first step towards an improvement of social status. Any group that breaks off from the parent stock may again be sub-divided into two groups, the new group claiming a status higher than that of its parent stock. For instance, some of the Mahishyas are trying to form a new group called Devadas, having a higher status.[1] The Rajbansis have successfully separated themselves from Koches and Paliyas and are now advancing claim to Kshatriya status.[2] As pointed out above, the final step in this upward movement in the social scale usually consists in the advancement of claim to Kshatriya status. The process, may, however, be short-circuited when the whole group advances claim to Kshatriya status.

Conversion

One result of giving the depressed classes special representation in legislatures and services has been the virtual discontinuance of conversion to other religions. By changing their religion, they cannot hope to secure the political and economic privileges that they have gained as Hindus. In fact such privileges are already proving too powerful an attraction for many of the recent converts to other religions to resist.

Till recent years, however, conversion movements were quite prominent amongst the depressed classes. These conversions have added largely to the strength of Christianity, though Mohammedanism and certain other religions have also had their share. An important feature of such movements has been the change of

the process of forming two castes—Bara Bhumij and Chota Bhumij. The former have abandoned widow marriage and divorce while the latter permit it. Intermarriage between these groups is uncommon though not expressly forbidden. Occasionally the Bara Bhumijs take brides from the Chota Bhumijs but do not give their daughters in marriage to the latter. It is not necessary, however, that there should be any tangible reasons for the formation of new groups. At times caste quarrels result in the formation of new groups. Not long ago the Khatiks of Lucknow formed one endogamous group but now, as a result of caste quarrels, they are divided into three groups. To repeat, whatever the reasons for the formation of a new group, the method by which it generally tries to improve its social status is the one indicated above.

1 Mukerjee, op. cit. p. 47.

2 Ibid.

religion by the entire local sections of certain castes and not only of a few individuals. As a result of such religious changes the social solidarity of the group has rarely been undermined; the power and influence of the caste panchayat has generally remained unaffected; and the feeling of corporate life has seldom disappeared. Even after conversion an endogamous group continues to be endogamous; and not only that, infringement of rules relating to exogamy is not tolerated. There is little social contact between converts recruited from different castes. In short, the essential features of caste life are retained even after conversion.

Some men there are who advocate conversion of the depressed classes to other religions as a solution for most of the ills of these people. They hold that a spiritual rebirth will give these people a new conception of God, will help them form a new opinion of themselves, will remove the inhibitions from which they suffer, and will develop self-confidence in them. These changes will enable them to seize the opportunities available and will thus result in their general social and economic betterment. But against this it is suggested that belief in a personal God is not easy to acquire and we cannot expect to bring about spiritual regeneration by mass conversions. The spiritual transformation of the individual requires intensive religious instruction and even then it may be possible only in a few cases. Very few of the converts, who are the products of mass conversions, have had any new spiritual experience.[1] In many cases there is only a light veneer of the new religion superimposed on a firm mass of old beliefs and practices.

According to some people most of the converts to Christianity and other religions have changed faith purely from secular motives. It is undeniable that the majority of them are desparately poor and are oppressed by landlords. They need allies who would support them in their fight against the Zamindar and would help them in their struggle against starvation. In many cases they cast their lot with the Christians partly because they

1 In regard to the depressed class converts to Christianity many eminent Indian Christians hold similar views. See Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur's letter to Mahatma Gandhi in *Christian Missions, Their Place in India*, by Gandhiji, pp. 123-5.

expected substantial financial assistance from Mission Funds, partly because it was easy to get Government jobs with the backing of the Missions, and partly because the Missionaries often helped them in their fight against the Zamindars. It may be mentioned that, because of his influence with the officials, the European Missionary is at times able to save these people from the oppression of the Zamindars. About conversion from secular motives, the Census Superintendent of Madras has some interesting remarks to offer. He observes: "The hope of a decent life on earth is not any more or any less a bribe than the hope of a blissful eternity hereafter."[1] To a student of Sociology, religion is an agency for the adaptation of the individual to his environment. If, therefore, change of religion results in better social adjustment, it is not to be deprecated.

Some converts have undoubtedly been able to improve their lot as a result of the assistance of Christian and other missions. But the process by which this result has been achieved is similar to that followed by those who have not changed their faith, viz. education, Government job, economic and social improvement. In some cases, conversion has resulted in maladjustment to the environment. Along with the teachings of the Church the missionaries have introduced new wants, new standards and new ambitions. This has often seriously upset the traditional pattern of life. New wants have come in but new opportunities to satisfy them have not always been available. The standard of comfort has increased more rapidly than income. To keep up appearances, some of them cut down expenditure on food with devastating consequences for health. It should be mentioned that many of the Christian Missionaries have become conscious of these defects and are trying to remove them. Though in some cases there has been an improvement in the condition of the converts, in the case of the majority of them there has been practically no change. They retain their caste consciousness and continue to suffer from the civic disabilities from which they were suffering before conversion. Change of religion, indeed, offers no escape from these disabilities even if the new religion lays great emphasis on social equality. Social equality cannot exist in the face of glaring economic inequality.

1 Madras Census Report, 1911, Pt. I, Chapter IV.

The economic exploitation of these people by Zamindars is supported by the system of land tenures, by the bad state of communications, by the ignorance and superstitions of the people, and by their incapacity to defend their rights. Religious considerations hardly support the cause of economic justice. A Musalman Zamindar will not cease to exploit a Chamar *harwaha* if he becomes his co-religionist or adopts any other religion. Similarly, a Hindu Zamindar does not stop taking *begar* from a labourer if he becomes an Arya Samajist or takes to any other religion. To be brief, change of religion has not removed the incentive for the exploitation of these helpless people, nor mitigated the social barrier between the exploiters and exploited depressed classes. In most cases, conversion has merely resulted in the formation of another low caste, e.g. Bhangi Isai, Musalman Chuhra, etc.

CHAPTER X

CASTE ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT

Caste is the corner-stone of Hindu social organization. But social differentiation does not end with caste. Barring a few, like Saherias, almost every caste is divided into a number of endogamous groups; at times these groups are further sub-divided into those of a like nature; and finally these sub-castes or sub-sub-castes are split up into a number of exogamous sections. A man owes allegiance not to the caste as such but to the endogamous section or sub-section of it to which he happens to belong. The persons with whom he can eat, drink, or smoke, or from whose hands he can accept *kachcha* or *pukka* food are determined by this group These general principles obtain among the depressed classes whom we have studied.

It has been indicated in the previous chapter that connubial and other restrictions are usually conterminous; for if two groups can intermarry they can also eat and drink together. The converse, however, is not always true. For instance, some intermarriages have, during recent years, occurred between Arakhs and Pasis, but the members of these two castes will not smoke from the same *hukka*.[1] These matters have already been discussed elsewhere and need not be repeated. But the main point to be noticed in this connexion is that it is the endogamous group that prescribes certain rules of conduct for its members and enforces them. Within this group the number of restrictions on the liberty of the members is practically nil.

Sectional Names and Totemism

Amongst the depressed castes most of the sectional names, especially those of endogamous sections, are local or occupational, but there also exist names that are associated with those of the upper castes. A few examples of such names are: Dakhinaha Chamar (hailing from west), Sikhari Bauris (from Sikharbhum), Karati Namasudra (sawyers), Cheronkata Haris (comb makers), Chamarwa Brahmins, Kahar Namasudra. A few

1 U. P. Census Report, 1931, Pt. I, p. 609.

castes like Bagdis, Bauris, Bhuiyas have exogamous sections bearing names derived from plants, animals, or material objects. Some have called these castes totemistic but a careful examination of the information available shows that this inference is not legitimate. Exogamy is a common form of social organization found in many a society and is in no way a proof of the existence of totemism. These exogamous sections also do not worship the plant, animal, or material object from which they derive their names. This is a vital part of totemism in other parts of the world. Further, they do not seem to trace in their legends descent from the plant, animal, or material object after which they are named. It should be mentioned that the totemic relationship which is believed to exist amongst them is in no way connected with food taboos, for many of the so-called totems are not edible things. The existence of names derived from plants, animals, or material objects must, therefore, have some other explanation. Perhaps it was due to accidental association in the early stages of a group's life.

Villages and Caste Quarters

The depressed class people live mostly in common villages where men of other castes, both high and depressed, are also found, though occasionally a depressed caste may have a separate village of its own. But it is only the numerically more important castes like the Chamars, Dosadhs, Bhangis or castes living on the outskirts of forests or in unhealthy places who have separate villages. Every common village has its own complement of the Chamar, Dhobi and Bhangi families, for it is difficult to find any one else to do the work commonly done by members of these castes. For instance, who but a Bhangi would work as a sweeper and who but a Dhobi would wash clothes? In addition to performing certain essential services for the benefit of the village community, the depressed classes supply the labour force necessary for agricultural and non-agricultural purposes. It may be pointed out that men belonging to other than the above three depressed castes need not necessarily be found in every common village.

In such villages the houses of depressed caste people are generally separated from those of other castes. Further, the

houses of each depressed caste are found clustered and apart from those of other depressed castes.[1] When more than one endogamous section of a caste is found in a village, the members of each section are found living in adjoining houses and often the houses of each section are separated from those of the other sections.

Where a caste has a separate village the inhabitants are found to belong to the same endogamous sub-group. At times they also belong to the same exogamous section but this is not the invariable rule.

Social Contacts

It has already been indicated that, so far as village life is concerned, each sub-caste is a distinct social unit. There is little social contact with members of other castes—high or depressed. As a matter of fact, a depressed caste man normally comes into contact with members of other castes only when the latter requisition his services. There is no common social life even in the case of members of the same caste who belong to different sub-castes. They may join in the fun and frolic of such festivals as Holi, Nagpanchmi, or Divali but only the members of the sub-caste will participate in a birth, marriage, death, or *puja* ceremony. It is the *jat bhais*[2] who share a man's joys and sorrows, who comfort him when in distress, and who may help him in need. But the straitened circumstances of most of them often rule out pecuniary assistance. There is no active economic collaboration between the sub-castes of a caste having a common occupation but *jajmani* rights of members of other groups are usually respected. This is true especially of the Bhangis living in villages. Perhaps this is due to their regard for the established customs which are perpetuated by the limited social contacts.

An individual has his duties towards his family, towards his sub-caste, as well as towards his caste. The interests of the

1 Government and Corporations have been known to allot separate chawls to caste Hindus and depressed classes. Generally, separate chawls are assigned to the different depressed castes. See V. N. Barve's article 'How far is it true?' in the *Social Welfare* (Bombay) of 12th June, 1941.

2 Term commonly used for men of the same sub-caste.

individual families are subordinated to the interests of the sub-caste. In case of a conflict between the interests of the family and the sub-caste, the advice of elders of the group is sought and it is they who decide the course of action for the individuals concerned. In fact in all important matters, especially those that have no precedent, the elders are consulted and their advice generally accepted. It is both unnecessary and dangerous for a man to act independently in important matters. The elders are ever ready to guide him and he stands to lose much by incurring their displeasure. The fear of social boycott hangs over a man's head and prevents him from deviating from the established norms of conduct. Such an environment is, obviously, not favourable to the development of individuality.

Social Control

Speaking generally, the depressed classes have a highly developed system of institutional control. The main agencies through which control is exercised are taboos, ceremonies, mores and the unwritten law of the caste which is as efficient an engine of social control as the common law of modern States. Probably the most important aim of law is to define anti-social conduct and to serve thereby as a means of forming public opinion and individual conscience And this function the unwritten caste law serves admirably. But that is not all. Excepting a few castes like the Bhogtas and Korwas, they have all a permanent organization to repress anti-social conduct, viz. caste *panchayats*. A *panchayat* is both the judiciary and the executive of the caste. It acts mainly as a tribunal for trial of cases involving infringement of caste rules, though occasionally it also frames rules for regulating the conduct of its members. A *panchayat* is able to enforce its decrees because of the active co-operation of the majority of members. A halo surrounds the *panchayat*. It is often addressed as 'Panch Ganga'.

Area Administered

Usually there is one *panchayat* to each independent local section of an endogamous group. The area administered depends on several practical considerations such as the strength of a group, the number of villages inhabited, distances apart,

state of communications. The *panchayats* of the brotherhood in the neighbouring villages though independent of each other respect each other's decrees. But it is difficult for a *panchayat*, especially now, to enforce its decrees in a distant territory. There are well-defined boundaries of a *panchayat*'s jurisdiction. Several terms are in use for the area administered by a *panchayat*. Of these, the more common ones are *tat, jawar, thok, barag*, etc.

In some cases there is a regular gradation of caste councils, those for a small area being subordinate to those for a big area. These upper councils are federations of small local *panchayats*. The members of these upper councils are usually the local headmen. In Darbhanga district, for instance, each village of the Dosadhs has a *panchayat* of its own. The officials of these *panchayats* are *manjan* (local headman) and *chaharidar* (wand-bearer). There is an upper council consisting of *manjans* of twenty-two villages. This is presided over by a Sardar. Matters of general interest as well as those matters that affect members of more than one *panchayat*, are dealt with by this upper council.

It has been pointed out that the *panchayat* is that of the independent local section of the endogamous group. It follows from this that if in a particular locality two sub-castes intermarry they will have one *panchayat*. Sir Edward Blunt mentioned in this connexion the case of Dhanaks of Cawnpore who are divided into five sub-castes: (i) Laungbarsa, (ii) Badhik, (iii) Katharia, (iv) Hazari, and (v) Tahal In East Cawnpore all the sub-castes are endogamous and there are five *panchayats*. In South Cawnpore groups (i) and (ii) intermarry and the other three groups are endogamous. There are, here, four endogamous groups and four *panchayats*. In North-East Cawnpore the first four groups intermarry and the last is endogamous There are, here, two endogamous groups, and two *panchayats* "This makes it clear," says Sir Edward, "that the *panchayat* is that of the local endogamous group."[1] But like most of the generalizations of social sciences this does not always hold good. In Pabna district, for instance, the Namasudras are divided into eight sub-castes—Haliya, Chasi, Karati, Jaliya, Karal, Nalo, Kora, and Kahar. Of these

[1] Blunt: *Caste Systems of Northern India*, p. 128.

the first three intermarry but the others are endogamous. Each sub-caste has, however, its own *panchayat*.[1] In Moradabad city there is a joint *panchayat* of the Chamars and Muchis though the latter will not intermarry with the former. The Muchis are, probably, an occupational offshoot of the Chamars.[2] This is an interesting though somewhat unusual instance of two endogamous groups having a common *panchayat*. Again, inter-marriages between the Arakhs and Pasis have occurred in Fatehpur district but the two castes do not have a common *panchayat*.[3]

Constitution of Governing Body

Literally the word *panchayat* means an assembly of five but in no case does it consist of exactly five men. Generally a *panchayat* is an assembly of all the adult male members of the brotherhood, everyone present having the right to speak and vote. Occasionally it is a council consisting of heads of families who hold office by hereditary right. In the majority of cases, however, there is a committee or council of elders that guides the deliberations of the main body. This often consists of five members. Some castes like Kanjars have enfranchised their women who are eligible for the highest office, viz. headwoman.

The majority of the depressed caste *panchayats* are of a permanent nature, for they have a permanent executive. In some cases there is only a headman; in others the headman is assisted by other officers also whose duties vary from that of vice-headman to that of messenger. These offices are mostly hereditary though in some cases these are elective for life or even a shorter period. In the last mentioned case the same person tends to be elected again and again so long as he is alive so that in effect it is election for life. These permanent officials are members of the council of elders referred to above. They are the guardians of the unwritten laws of the caste. Convening of *panchayat*, bringing to its notice offences connected with breaches of caste rules, and executing its decrees are some of the duties that devolve upon them.

1 Pabna District Gazetteer, pp. 32-3.
2 U.P. Census Report, 1931, Part I, p. 457.
3 Ibid., p. 693.

For these services performed for the benefit of the caste, they do not usually get any monetary reward. Normally they do not get anything more than an extra helping at feasts. But in some cases the perquisites of the headman are certain fees and a certain percentage of all fines connected with trials. At times the messenger also gets a pecuniary reward for summoning people.

When an office is hereditary, the eldest son, if not unfit, succeeds to it. But when there is no son, or the eldest son is incompetent, the next heir may succeed, or some other member of the family may be elected. In the event of a minor succeeding to a headman's post, some near relation discharges the duties of office during the period of minority. The emblem of office of headman is, in many cases, the turban.

Matters dealt with

The *panchayats* usually deal with offences connected with marriage and morals, food and drink, smoking with men of other castes, and prohibited pursuits. Of the cases arising out of breaches of the marriage law the important ones are seduction of wife, adultery, immorality, concubinage, breach of promise of marriage, and refusal to perform *gauna* ceremony. Infringement of the caste custom in the matter of feasts is also dealt with. In the case of several castes cow-killing is an offence of a serious nature; but in the case of a few castes it is the killing of some animal like a cat or a dog that constitutes a heinous crime. For instance, a Bauri will not kill a dog or touch a dead dog's body. Insulting of Brahmins is another offence which is punished by most of the castes. Again, a few castes like the Bhangis guard carefully their *jajmani* rights and infringements thereof are punished severely.

Punishment

The tariff of punishment varies with sub-caste and locality. An offence which is punishable with fine in one locality may involve expulsion in another. Considerable ingenuity is shown by *panchayats* in varying punishments according to triviality or enormity of offence. The most common forms of punishments are fines, feasts to the brotherhood, and expulsion.

An outcaste is debarred from social intercourse with his caste brethren none of whom will eat, drink, or smoke with him. Even his own kinsmen disown him. It becomes impossible for him to marry his sons or daughters. Where a caste is served by the Dhobis or barbers, expulsion from caste may involve deprivation of their services. But this is not all. In addition to these temporal penalties, expulsion from caste involves certain spiritual penalties as well. Thus where a caste is served by the Brahmins the latter will decline to perform any domestic or religious ceremony for an outcaste and where a caste has its own priests they too will refuse to minister to the spiritual needs of a man who has lost caste.

Only offences most heinous involve permanent expulsion. For less serious offences a man may be outcasted either for a definite period or till he performs some purificatory ceremony. When an accused is sentenced to a fine or some other form of punishment and the sentence cannot be carried out immediately, the accused is expelled till the sentence is carried out. The original sentence of excommunication need not always be carried out. It may be commuted into fine or the guilty person may be readmitted to caste merely on showing signs of contrition.

The outcaste has invariably to feast his brethren before he can be restored to caste. At times this has to be preceded by penances or purificatory ceremonies of various kinds. This would especially be the case if the offence involved is of a religious nature, e.g. insulting a Brahmin or killing a cow. In the case of the Doms of Almora a cow killer has to go on a pilgrimage which lasts from three to six months. Three shrines have to be visited during this period. The pilgrim lives by begging.

Humiliating punishments are also at times awarded. For instance, the face of a man may be blackened or one moustache and one eyebrow may be shaved. A common form of punishment for adultery amongst Haburas is to shave one side of a man's face and head and bury the woman up to her thighs in the ground.[1] And when a man is sentenced to a fine which he cannot pay he may often escape payment by placing the shoes of the *panchayat* on his head. Corporal punishment is also at

1 U. P. Census Report, 1931, Pt. 1, p. 550.

times awarded but this is becoming very uncommon due to the fear of criminal proceedings being instituted by the accused.

Fine money is generally used to provide sweets or wine to the caste brethren. There is, however, a growing tendency to use the money for charitable or 'socially' useful purposes. This is particularly true where large sums are involved. The *panchayat* may not realize the money but may ask the accused to spend it on the construction of a well, temple, etc.

Extra-judicial Functions of Panchayats

All matters do not come up before the *panchayat*. The permanent officials and other influential elders often settle disputes and effect compromises without the formality of a trial. The *panchayats* often arrange for the partition of property between members of a family who are desirous of separating, enforce promises of marriage, and arrange return of wives who have deserted their husbands.

Differences between Depressed and High Caste Panchayats

Speaking generally, the higher up we go in the social scale the weaker becomes the *panchayat*. Nowhere have high castes like the Brahmins and Rajputs strong and powerful *panchayats*. Weak and impermanent *panchayats* are a feature characteristic of high castes. As an institution of social control, the *panchayats* of high castes are structurally defective inasmuch as these lack continuity. It is not enough to have laws for repressing anti-social conduct but there must also be an authority to enforce these laws. This the high castes do not have. Further, the authority must be accepted by the majority of the people controlled. The reverence and awe in which the institution of *panchayat* is held amongst the depressed classes finds no parallel amongst the high castes. To a certain extent this is explainable on ethnological grounds. Complete subordination of the individual to the community is probably a feature characteristic of 'Dravidian' speaking races. Perhaps a more important reason explaining the might of depressed class *panchayats* is that social equality is, here, reinforced by economic 'equality', for differences in individual incomes are small. In fact almost all of them are desperately poor. Amongst

the high castes, on the other hand, individual incomes differ widely. An institution like the caste *panchayat* which is avowedly based on social equality cannot function successfully against economic inequality.

Recent Changes in Caste Government

The last two or three decades have witnessed the waning power of caste *panchayats* in many a place. But that is not all. A transition from permanent to impermanent *panchayats* is imperceptibly taking place. For instance, when a *chowdhri* dies his successor is not always elected or recognized. And as many of the castes have only one officer in the person of a *chowdhri*, the *panchayats* of such castes would, under the above circumstances, partake of the character of impermanent *panchayats*. There would be no one responsible for bringing offences to the notice of the *panchayat*. Meetings of the *panchayats* are becoming infrequent partly because the *panchayat* has suffered a loss of prestige, partly because the cost of summoning a *panchayat* proves prohibitive in many a case, and partly because of disorganization of the executive of the type indicated above. As in the case of high castes, public opinion is becoming the sole agency of social control. When a person is suspected of an offence of a serious nature, the elders often meet informally or even acting on their own individual initiative send the suspect to coventry. It rests with him then to summon the *panchayat* and clarify his position. But excommunication, too, has lost its terror. A man who is outcasted in his own village can leave it and enjoy equal privileges elsewhere.

Tendencies of the nature indicated above are more marked in the Punjab and the U.P. than elsewhere in Northern India. Even those parts of the U.P. like the Sub-Himalaya East which were, a decade back, least affected by such disintegrating tendencies have now been considerably affected.

Causes and Effects of Weakening of Panchayats

Of the causes that are undermining the prestige and authority of *panchayats* perhaps the most important one is the growth of a spirit of independence. This is probably the outcome of spread of education and improvement in the means of

communication and transport. Men who would, not long ago, have bowed silently to the caste *panchayat* are now ready to defy it.

It has already been indicated that excommunication has lost much of its terror. To a certain extent this is due to the Shudhi movement which aims at reclaiming outcastes as well as those who have embraced other religions. Then there are bodies like the Arya Samaj and the Congress that preach the doctrine of 'no caste'. Conversion to other religions is also a means of outwitting the *panchayat*. The main point to be noticed is that a man can often find means of escaping the penalties involved in excommunication. At times it is possible for an outcaste to find some caste fellows who would be prepared to associate with him. These families would then secede from the parent *panchayat* and have one of their own. Then, an outcaste can migrate to another place and enjoy equal privileges there. Due to the improvements in the means of communication and better prospects of finding employment in towns and cities, migration to these places is becoming an important means of evading the authority of the caste.

Generally, *panchayats* do not bother about an offender who leaves their jurisdiction and cases of women eloping with men of other castes and escaping punishment by leaving the *panchayat*'s jurisdiction are not uncommon. All these matters have led to a lowering of the prestige of the *panchayat*.

Another point that merits notice is that the *panchayats* do not generally mete out justice as they used to. This is inevitable when *panchayats* become amenable to external influences and in discharging their duties show consideration for the rich.

The bulk of the work done by the *panchayats* pertains to marriage and morals. In the past the *panchayats* were in many cases consulted in arranging marriages. Amongst Malos, for instance, no marriage can take place unless sanctioned by the *panchayat*. In this case about 5 per cent of bride price, which usually varies from Rs. 100 to Rs. 250, goes to the *panchayat* and is divided among the members. Fixing of the number of feasts to be given and the number of guests to be invited on the occasion of a marriage is another function performed by the *panchayats*. But there is a tendency now to manage these

affairs independently of these bodies. Cases of enticement, adultery, etc. which were in the past decided by the *panchayats*, are now often taken to courts of law.

As has already been indicated in another place, members of functional castes are leaving their traditional occupation and taking to other occupations in increasing numbers. For this reason as well as for the fact that members of other castes and religions are taking to occupations, which were in the past exclusively confined to certain depressed castes, the control of the *panchayats* over professional matters has weakened to a great extent.

The rigid control exercised over members of *panchayats* has its good as well as bad points. The caste *panchayats* with minute laws regarding eating, drinking, smoking, marriage, etc. leave little scope for individual initiative. As the permanent officials and other influential persons who manage caste affairs are usually older members, *panchayats* perpetuate conservatism. They do not easily reconcile themselves to any departure from the established mode of life.

The weakening of the *panchayats* may, by giving greater individual liberty, help bring about a better adjustment of these people to changed social and economic conditions. On the other hand, the weakening of the *panchayats* of functional castes means increased competition among the members of such castes and consequently an intensification of the struggle for existence.

Be it noted, however, that such disintegrating tendencies are perceptible only on a limited scale. On the whole, the institution of the caste *panchayat* still possesses considerable vitality.

Changes in Social Organization

In the course of the present and the preceding chapters we have examined the social aspect of the life of the depressed classes and the way it is being modified. The material aspect of their lives has been examined in Chapter VI. It would be desirable here to analyse the forces at work, to assess the importance of each and to examine, as far as possible, the resultant effect.

It should be pointed out that the depressed classes do not live in isolation. Many of the more important depressed castes

have been in contact with the high castes since times immemorial. They have borrowed many culture traits from high caste Hindus and the former might have been influenced by some of the beliefs of the latter, as for example belief in magic, witchcraft and in evil spirits. But the composite culture patterns of the depressed castes that resulted from contact with high caste Hindus had been influenced by an attitude of hostility, which is also a form of social contact, existing between these two groups. The high castes might have tolerated minor changes in matters of dress, food, etc. of the depressed classes but they did not countenance any radical departure from the established mode of life, especially if it amounted to an assertion of equality. On the other hand, the depressed castes have probably always been conscious of their economic exploitation by high caste Hindus. These feelings may now be dormant but they do find overt expression here and there. Changes are, however, in evidence and the forces responsible for change are gradually gathering momentum. The main agencies of change can roughly be classified into the following categories :—

(i) Economic forces ; (ii) Social forces ; (iii) Administrative action ; (iv) Political consciousness.

Economic Forces

We have seen elsewhere that the importance of traditional occupations is declining ; in some cases members of other religions are taking to occupations which were in the past the preserve of certain depressed castes. As a result, the control of caste over professional matters has become loose. But this has involved a loss of prestige of the *panchayat* which has had repercussions in other spheres.

The development of the means of communication and transport has enabled many of them to migrate to industrial centres and towns. Here, they develop new wants, new pleasures and new attitudes. They find, too, the means of satisfying their new wants, and they begin to be influenced by the prestige of wealth The scheme of values tends to be modified. But changes in the lives of these migrants depend largely on the time during which the new forces have been at work. In the case of those who return home after a brief stay in such places, changes are slight,

and superficial and they rarely succeed in introducing any change in the lives of their brethren. In fact, they themselves do not take a long time in lapsing into the traditional mode of life. But perceptible changes occur in the material aspect of life as well as outlook of those who stay out for a fairly long time. On return home, they may be able to introduce new ideas and new wants in the traditional pattern of life, especially if they have acquired some money, but they are too weak to modify the social life of their brethren. The social importance of wealth is no doubt increasing but the forces of tradition and conservatism are too powerfully entrenched to be shattered by such spasmodic assaults. And then the proportion of these people who migrate to industrial centres for long periods is small. The great majority of the people continue to be labourers and bond slaves who are still subject to the old social and economic disabilities. For them the economic barometer has registered no change.

Social Forces

Several important social forces are influencing the lives of a considerable number of these people. Foremost amongst these is the recent change in the attitude of high caste Hindus towards depressed classes. They are now encouraging the depressed classes to imitate their customs, social standards and religious beliefs.[1] Efforts are also being made, though on a very modest scale, to improve the economic condition of the depressed classes. On the other hand, the depressed classes are questioning the right of high caste Hindus to subject them to social, economic and civic disabilities, to keep them in bondage and to exploit them economically.[2] To a considerable extent, this change in their attitude is due to the general political awakening in the country. But these changes are noticeable mainly in urban areas or in those places in the interior where advanced political education of the people has been possible.[3]

Then there is the desire of these castes to rise in the social scale. This often results in their relinquishing occupations, food

1 This is due mainly to the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi.

2 Most of the Zamindars are high caste Hindus but the non-Hindus do not treat these people differently.

3 Effects of this are observable mainly in parts of the U.P. and Bihar.

habits and social practices at which the high castes look askance. An upper limit has, however, been placed to their advance in the caste hierarchy. For, if they now claim to belong to one of the twice born castes and insist on governmental recognition of it, they stand to lose the politico-economic privileges to which they are now entitled as members of the depressed castes.

Conversion to other religions results at times in some minor modification of the material aspects of their life though the social life of the converts often remains unaffected. But conversion movements have suffered a serious setback because of these special politico-economic privileges. Conversion to other religions means losing these privileges. True, now and then, some depressed class leaders threaten wholesale conversion of depressed classes into other religions to get more privileges from high caste Hindus but such leaders have no solid backing.

Administrative Action and Political Consciousness

Administrative action has been taken to stop *begar*[1] and to remove other civic disabilities. Although this has not always resulted in the disappearance of their disabilities, their rigour has in many cases been diminished. Better results have, however, been achieved in other spheres.

Special efforts are being made to promote education among the depressed classes. This is one of the most important agencies of socio-economic change and one that will become more effective with the spread of education. The educated members amongst them have become conscious of their political power. This consciousness has been increased because some of them have occupied important positions in the popular Governments. They have made full use of their powers to improve the lot of their brethren. But there are certain obvious limitations to such efforts. The magnitude of the problem is such as to require considerable expenditure of money which may not be possible because of the limited financial powers of Provincial Governments under the new constitution. Then we must not forget that there can be no separate planning for the depressed classes, because they do not live in isolation.

1 See note, towards the end of Chapter VIII, on ameliorative measures initiated by popular Governments.

So far, Government effort has been directed towards increasing the facilities for education and ensuring adequate representation of these people in the public services. In fact, the number of those whose aim in life is the securing of Government jobs, is fast increasing. Education, accompanied by economic improvement through securing Government jobs, is resulting in the creation of a middle class. Their habits, attitudes, social practices and social standards are tending to approximate closely to those of high caste Hindus. They are acting as the vanguard of reform. New ways of living, new social standards tend slowly to be introduced among the less advanced members through imitation of this class. It is possible that this class may in the near future become sufficiently important and may tone down the difference between high caste Hindus and the depressed classes.

But all these changes have so far occurred on a limited scale. The proportion of people who have been affected by these forces is very small. For the vast majority of them, especially in the interior, life continues to be much the same as in the past. No fundamental change in the attitudes of the great majority of these people is perceptible. The opportunities for economic improvement are not adequate in relation to the magnitude of the problem. When the pangs of hunger remain unsatisfied, all talk of education, of social reform and moral well-being falls on deaf ears. Probably the absence of any significant change in the social organization of the depressed classes can be accounted for by the absence of any fundamental change in the economic sphere.

CHAPTER XI

MEASURES OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AMELIORATION

Problems of Cultivators and Harwahas

We have come to the end of our survey. Let us take stock of the situation. In the course of the preceding chapters we have seen that the vast majority of the depressed class people are desperately poor. They do not get enough even to satisfy their minimum physiological requirements.

Most of the holdings of tenants are undersized. Only in inhospitable tracts are their holdings fairly big. Here Nature takes its toll. The recurrent ravages of drought and flood take away almost completely the advantages of bigger holdings and the tenants are no better off than those with undersized holdings in more favourable areas. Where Nature is more kind, social and economic causes operate to the disadvantage of these people. We have seen that the rent actually paid by them is much more than the rent they are officially supposed to pay. *Begar* and other economic disabilities have also to be reckoned with in understanding their unsatisfactory economic position. Often they are prevented from sowing, irrigating, or reaping their crops in time. It has also to be borne in mind that the majority of these people are immersed in debt and that the Zamindar is in most cases the creditor. Incidentally, this is one of the reasons explaining the existence in the countryside of *begar, harwahi,* and low wages. Other important causes that explain their poverty are absence of any subsidiary occupation save that of agricultural labour, low wages and enforced idleness during a considerable part of the year. These three causes affect alike the tenants and the labourers. In addition to these there are the problems of *farzi khudkasht.* It has been explained elsewhere that there are large areas under cultivation of regular tenants which the Zamindars have managed to get entered in Government records as *khudkasht* land.

The position of *harwahas* has been discussed fully in the preceding chapters but it is so important that no apology is

needed for recapitulating the main points. An analysis of the condition of *harwahas* and its comparison with the peons of Mexico and the cottier of Ireland reveals the following basic facts: (i) These labourers, who are virtually bondsmen, belong to a racial stock different from the land-owning classes. (ii) They have to work because they are indebted to the landlords. (iii) Wages are so low that it is virtually impossible for them to work out the debt. (iv) A system of large estates co-exists with bondsmen of this type. (iv) Both force and fraud are used to bring into existence this form of servitude.

These are some of the causes that explain the unsatisfactory condition of depressed class tenants and *harwahas*. It will be noticed that such causes as absence of subsidiary occupations, low wages and enforced idleness during a considerable part of the year are not peculiar to the depressed classes but operate to a smaller or greater extent in the case of other tenants and labourers as well. These can be removed only by the general economic development of the country.

Timing of Public Works

Something can be done to ameliorate their lot as well as that of labourers in general by carefully timing public works. In America and several European countries it is a popular practice to reserve public works for periods when the wheels of private industry slacken. The TVA represents an experiment in this field on a gigantic scale. This method of counteracting cyclic and seasonal fluctuations in employment requires firstly the laying out in advance of a programme of public works to be taken up during several years and, secondly, careful planning of the works to be taken up in lean years. Some countries have created special funds by taxation or loan to finance public works during periods of depression.

Conditions in this country are somewhat different from those obtaining in western countries. Although most of our labourers eke out a mere pittance in the working season and have to remain idle for a considerable part of the year, yet this sort of unemployment has not become a problem for our Government in the sense in which unemployment is a problem in the European countries. Governments rarely bother about unemployment

unless it becomes (or is likely to become) a menace to *status quo*. It is possible, however, that in the post-War years conditions may change radically and our Government may have to do something in the matter. Our administrators would therefore do well to plan ahead for such a contingency. And in any scheme for reducing unemployment in this country an important place must be assigned to public works. Other countries have used public works as an equalizing reservoir of the labour market with considerable success and this ought to be tried here too.

Work on sewers, streets, land reclamation, drainage, irrigation, fisheries, improvement of the means of communication, etc. can be used to combat depression and can be so timed as to ensure regular employment. In addition to this, we should encourage private persons to take up construction of houses, wells, etc. in the countryside only during off season. It is worth noticing that works such as land reclamation and improvement of the means of communication would tend to increase the permanent demand for labour. Meanwhile, Government should see to it that as far as possible public works that are normally done are taken up in the slack season. This would ensure regular employment for a considerable number of the labourers. Adjustment of this type only requires foresight and the desire to be helpful.

Eradication of Begar

Though the general level of wages cannot be easily raised, under-payment of wages can be stopped. Under-payment of wages is but another form of *begar*. It exists partly because the landlord is all-powerful, partly because the people are steeped in ignorance, and partly because of the abject dependence of these people on the landlord. The majority of these people are indebted to the Zamindar and do not desert him for fear of being arrested. The Zamindar compels them to work for him at wages lower than the prevailing rate. In the case of *harwahas* and labourers redemption of the debt is not a practicable proposition. The only way out seems to be in the provision of a simple insolvency act. Besides, the wages of all persons who support themselves and their families by the labour of their hands should be exempted from attachment. This exemption should apply to at least 75 per cent of the wages due.

Fixation of a minimum wage for each district may be a remedy, but it must be admitted that it is not easy to enforce it. Minimum wages fixed by legislation should be sufficient to meet the minimum physiological requirements of a normal family and may be varied with changes in the prices of foodstuffs commonly consumed by the people. The main idea underlying the suggestion is the preventing of under-payment of wages. Obviously the general level of wages cannot be raised by a legislative fiat in a country with an excessive and increasing population and with the considerable majority of holdings now reduced to an uneconomical size.

It has been pointed out in Chapter II that the United Provinces Tenancy Act of 1939 prohibits the taking of *begar*, *nazarana*, and cesses which are not of the nature of rent. But is it enough? In Bengal the exaction of *abwabs* has been declared illegal on several occasions. This has, however, been of no avail. *Begar* in the wider sense of the term continues to be extorted. It is indeed like the heads of Cerberus. Strike off one and another yet more detestible springs up suddenly in its place. One inference emerges clearly from a study of past attempts to tackle the problem: *begar* is a deep-rooted malady. It requires remedies much more drastic than those employed hitherto.

Extorting of *begar* (including *abwabs* and *nazarana*) must be made a criminal offence. And we must also remove the temptation to take *begar*. We have explained elsewhere that the existence of large areas of *sir* land tempts Zamindars to extort *begar*. *Sir* land must therefore be reduced perceptibly if not abolished totally. The new Tenancy Act of the U. P. (1939) provides for a considerable reduction of *sir* area. This is a step in the right direction.

In this context a pertinent question is: To what extent is the existence of a large number of intermediaries between the State and the actual tillers of the soil socially desirable? But this is apparently outside the purview of this work. It is however patently clear that the relationship subsisting between the farm-hand and the Zamindar can no longer be left to individual bargaining. For, the parties concerned have vastly unequal bargaining powers. Past experience shows that this system works

to the disadvantage of the labourer. No civilized Government can afford to be indifferent to the fate of its toiling millions. But let us not leave everything to the Government. Let those interested in rural welfare create in these people consciousness of their rights and the desire to fight for them. Rights have always to be won. They never take the form of Christmas gifts. Associations of rural workers should be formed. Even if these associations do not last very long, they will help to weed out such feudal practices as *begar*, *nazarana*, under-payment of wages, etc.

Proprietary Rights in Village Sites

It has already been explained that the threat to eject a man from his hut or to demolish it is a powerful weapon in the Zamindar's hands for extorting *begar*. Past experience shows that this power is often abused. It would, therefore, be desirable to divest the Zamindar of proprietory rights in the homestead land of tenants and labourers. The Zamindar need not take fright at the suggestion. This will not involve any financial loss to him He pays no revenue for the village site and does not charge[1] his labourers and tenants any rent for the plots of land on which stand their huts.

Proprietary rights in land occupied by the houses of tenants and labourers should in theory as well as in practice vest in the State and the present occupants should be recognized as lessees without the right to sublet or transfer. On the death of a lessee the right of occupation of a house should automatically pass to his heirs When there is no claimant to a house, all occupants having migrated or died, the dwelling might be assigned to another person by the village *panchayat*, a body to be elected (from amongst the tenants and labourers) on the basis of adult franchise. Fresh allotments of land for construction of dwellings may be made by this body with the advice of the Patwari. But these bodies should not be empowered to eject a family from its dwelling.

The idea underlying the proposed restriction of the rights of transferability and subletting is to prevent the Zamindars from buying up again the homestead land or the dwellings. Moreover, it is not desirable that labourers and tenants should borrow

1 Excepting Bengal.

on the security of their dwellings, for that ultimately leads to enslavement of the debtor.

When proprietary rights vest in the State, the destruction of the dwellings of these people would probably be tantamount to damaging of State property. This might curb the high-handedness of Zamindars. Besides, these people must become capable of defending their hearths and homes.

The U. P. Tenancy Act of 1939 provides that no tenant shall be liable to ejectment from his residential house in a village merely on the ground that he has been ejected from his holding in that village. Those familiar with rural India know that so long as proprietary rights vest in the Zamindar, he will be in a position to coerce the tenants. Besides, it leaves labourers and *harwahas* out of account. And the majority of depressed class people belong to these categories.

A law recently enacted in the Punjab merits notice. According to it the house property of a judgement-debtor valued at less than Rs. 5,000 cannot be sold in execution of a decree. This is a useful piece of legislation. The importance of keeping intact the family unit can hardly be over-emphasized. But this too affects a small proportion of the depressed class people.

Other Suggestions concerning Tenants

The lot of occupancy and statutory tenants can be improved by checking *begar* and the malpractices connected with realization of rent and payment of wages. The right of free transfer, the right to make improvements and get compensation therefor, the right to plant fruit trees and appropriate the fruit thereof are some of the measures required to improve their condition. Above all, it is necessary to provide them subsidiary occupations and to reduce the days of enforced idleness.

The non-occupancy tenants deserve special attention because of their extremely insecure position. They should not be ejectable at the sweet will of the landlord. It would be desirable to give them life tenancy. No family should be deprived of the means of earning its livelihood. In this context it is worth mentioning that the practice of ejecting a tenant in the event of his inability to pay rent is un-Indian. We owe it to our British administrators. In Mughal India, for instance, if a tenant failed to

pay rent it was recovered from him by easy instalments spread over a number of years. This practice enabled the State to recover the arrears and at the same time it did not deprive a family of the means of earning its livelihood. Besides, it prevented an abnormal increase in the number of landless agricultural labourers and its concomitant, the concentration of land in fewer hands. Will it not be possible to revert to our past practice of recovering arrears of rent by easy instalments? Its merits are obvious. If, however, Government cannot see their way to adopting it, they should at least avoid resorting to ejectment until all other methods of recovering rent have proved ineffective. Let them remember that the practice of ejectment if followed freely will have disastrous social and economic consequences.

The problems of *farzi khudkasht* have also to be taken into account. A careful examination of the home and hearth of a cultivator would seldom fail to make it clear as to whether he is a tenant or a mere *harwaha*. For instance, a *harwaha* rarely keeps bullocks. Moreover, the dwellings of tenants are more spacious and neat and clean than those of *harwahas*. Can we not base our definition of a non-occupancy tenant on the above facts? A non-occupancy tenant, for example, may be defined as a cultivator who owns plough cattle. But such a definition does not comprehend the case of a genuine tenant who does not own a team usually because his holding is very small. The distinction between a non-occupancy tenant and a *harwaha* is a subtle one and no hard and fast definition of either of the terms is possible. It would be necessary to go into the details of each case. In our opinion, the officials concerned would do well to take the following points into consideration:

(i) Does the cultivator possess plough cattle? (ii) Is the cultivator independent in regard to farming operations? (iii) Does the cultivator have legal possession and the right to divide the crop at the end of the season?

If the cultivator possesses plough cattle, he is certainly a tenant and not a *harwaha*. But cases may arise where a cultivator does not own a team. In such cases it is necessary to find out which party has control of the farming operations. Thus, if the cultivator enjoys freedom in regard to farming operations,

has the legal possession of the crop and gives the landlord his share, he is a tenant. On the contrary, if the landlord gives orders as to cultivation and has the legal possession and the right to divide the crop, it is in all probability, a case of *harwahi.*

It would also be desirable to set maximum limits to the Zamindar's share in the case of *bhagjot* tenancy (share-crop tenancy). It appears reasonable to fix the maximum share of the landlord at one-half of the product when he furnishes everything except labour. If, however, the cultivator furnishes all the operating capital, the landlord should not be 'permitted to take more than one-third of the grain, and one-fourth of a crop like cotton or sugar-cane.

Furthermore, the cultivators involved in *farzi khudkasht* have got to be made conscious of the fact that they can acquire statutory or occupancy rights. They must also be told the ways and means of achieving this end. This is a work that can be performed best by non-Governmental agencies. In parts of the U. P. and Bihar this is already being done by individuals interested in social welfare. Where settlement operations are in progress, arrangements should be made to provide free legal advice to those who cannot afford it and yet want to fight for tenancy rights. In many an American city legal aid societies have been organized with the object of giving free legal aid to all who deserve it but cannot afford it. The members of our legal profession ought to emulate the example of their co-professionals in America. Besides, the authorities must see to it that justice is meted out speedily, for these cultivators being men of little means cannot hold out long. In their case, as in so many others, justice delayed is justice denied.

Problems of Artisans and Servants

We have seen that the main reasons explaining the unsatisfactory condition of tanners, weavers and Muchis are ignorance, indebtedness, the use of inefficient and antiquated tools, and the existence of a large number of middlemen in their trades. In many villages the lands set apart for the services of village artisans and servants or the shares of grain at each harvest can no longer maintain the castes who have increased in numbers and cannot obtain employment. The shoemaker appears to be

suffering from the competition of cheap Japanese and Bata shoes. And the weaver too suffers from the competition of Indian machine-made goods as well as those of Japanese origin. In the case of certain types of cloth, e.g. *khaddar*, the competition of machine-made goods is very keen, and the margin of profit almost negligible.

The condition of these people can be improved by providing suitable facilities for education, by popularizing improved methods of manufacture, by selling them improved tools and machines on easy instalments, by providing cheap credit, and, last but not least, by eliminating the large number of middlemen in their trades. It would be desirable to have co-operative societies that will supply machines and raw materials and arrange sale of finished products. Further, the leather workers and the weavers should be encouraged to take to the manufacture of specialized articles which do not have to face competition of machine-made goods. We cannot afford to see cottage industries crushed out of existence by large-scale manufacture. They ought to have an important place in India's national economy.

Mention may be made here of the existing facilities for sale of goods manufactured by village artisans. In the Punjab, the Co-operative Department has opened stores in important cities for the sale of goods manufactured by craftsmen. In the U.P. the Co-operative Department has opened Arts and Crafts Emporiums at Lucknow and a few other places. But these facilities exist on a limited scale. They have merely touched the fringe of the problem. Moreover, only the artisan engaged in the manufacture of specialized goods has been affected by these facilities. Nothing has been done for the worker who suffers most from the keen competition of machine-made goods.

The position of the Dhobis would be improved considerably if there were less competition amongst them. This will be possible when other avenues of employment become available. Some improvement can also be effected by reducing expenditure on drink and social ceremonies.

Bhangis

The Bhangis suffer considerably on account of lack of security of employment, the unwholesome nature and long hours of

work, bribery and jobbery in the matter of recruitment to service of local bodies, and indebtedness. Like other large-scale employers of labour, local bodies have hitherto been taking advantage of the unequal bargaining power of their employees. This state of affairs must now be ended. Local bodies must stop treating the Bhangis as casual labourers. They should place the majority of these people on a permanent basis. At no time should a local body employ more than one-fourth of the total number of Bhangis on a temporary basis. Instead of a fixed monthly pay, they may be given a suitable scale of pay having increments at regular intervals. This would increase efficiency. It is desirable too that these people should be entitled to about ten days' leave with pay during a year. Furthermore, the women employees of local bodies should be allowed maternity leave. Bribery and jobbery must also be weeded out. Only by strict vigilance over Jamadars and Sanitary Inspectors can this be achieved. The recruitment of Bhangis should be entrusted to specially constituted committees consisting of a few respectable local citizens, with the Secretary and Chairman of the local body concerned as ex-officio members. In selecting candidates for the posts of Jamadars and Sanitary Inspectors preference should be given to the Bhangis themselves when they are qualified. Local bodies must also provide suitable residential quarters for these people. One of the reasons explaining their unsatisfactory condition is excessive consumption of liquor. But this can only be reduced by making their work less unwholesome (through adoption of modern methods of disposal of night-soil), by reducing the hours of work, by providing them better houses in better surroundings, and by educating them. Provision of cheap credit is a crying need of theirs. They borrow not only for meeting unforeseen contingencies but also for making their day-to-day purchases. Local bodies ought to adopt the system of bi-monthly payment of wages. Besides, co-operative credit and thrift societies should also be started.

Criminal Tribes

The only way of reclaiming tribes that are inclined towards crime appears to lie in settling them on the land and in training them for occupations that are likely to prove profitable. Facilities

for the pursuit of such occupations must also be provided. But it is not merely an economic problem. It is also socio-psychological in so far as it requires a change in the mores of these tribes. For this very reason is it necessary that the Managers of Criminal Tribes Settlements should be conversant with the principles of modern criminology and should have experience of modern reformatory treatment. The criminal tribes and castes represent a problem by themselves, which is not within the purview of the present survey.

Problems of Indebtedness

How indebtedness leads to enslavement of these people has already been explained. In the case of tenants and artisans indebtedness aggravates poverty. They have to buy seeds or raw materials from the creditor at a price higher than the prevailing market rate. Often the produce has also to be sold to the creditor at a price lower than the market rate. Provision of a large number of co-operative societies that will lend money, sell seed or raw materials on credit, and arrange sale of produce or finished goods will go a long way in ameliorating the lot of tenants and artisans.

The problems of indebtedness of *harwahas* and their prototypes are, however, different from those of others. The lender does not consider the money advanced to these people to be a good asset and the borrower too does not take the debt seriously. On account of the extremely inadequate incomes of these people redemption of debt is out of the question. Provision of a simple Insolvency Act seems to be the only way of freeing the majority of them from the clutches of the moneylender. But mere wiping off of debt will not do. The freedom thus secured for the debtor will not last long. For, to a considerable extent, the problem is really one of increasing their incomes. Although by freeing a *harwaha* from the clutches of the Zamindar we enable him to migrate elsewhere and improve his lot, yet no substantial improvement in his condition is possible unless wages increase and days of enforced idleness diminish. Obviously, this can come about only as a result of the general economic development of the country. Experience of other countries lends support to the view that serfdom grows up as a

consequence of customary subjection in an agricultural system and disappears with the advent of the industrial age. And in this respect, the reaction of our country to industrial development is not likely to be different.

It appears desirable in this context to refer to the main features of the new debt redemption laws of the U. P. The most important feature is the one relating to scaling down of agricultural debts. In the case of secured loans the rate of interest is to be brought down to a simple interest of 4½ per cent per annum and in the case of unsecured loans to 6 per cent. It provides also for reduction of unpaid interest according to the custom of *Damdupat*. The provisions of the Bill regarding reduction of unsecured debt have also been made applicable to debts that have been decreed before the Bill comes into force. A portion of land of the judgement-debtor, the local rate for which does not exceed Rs. 12-8 in permanently settled areas and Rs. 25 elsewhere, is exempt from sale. A decree can be executed against the protected land by the grant of a self-liquidating mortgage for a period not exceeding twenty years. Only one-third of the agricultural produce of a debtor can now be attached at any particular time. The period of limitation for the execution of decrees against such produce has been reduced to six years. The provisions of the Bill apply to all agriculturists as well as to those employed on wages not exceeding Rs. 60 per month.

These measures are likely to benefit the depressed class tenants, but being of the nature of palliatives they do not remove the cause of indebtedness. As indicated above, the problem is mainly one of increasing their incomes. Side by side with reduction of debt must go provision for cheap credit, an increase in the incomes of these people and reduction of expenditure on social ceremonies. Then only can agricultural credit be placed on a sound footing. But so far as *harwahas* and labourers are concerned the position remains unchanged. For these people, redemption of debt is out of the question.

Educational Reform

One fact revealed by the present survey is that the appalling ignorance of the depressed classes is often a hindrance to

their advancement in the social and economic spheres. But their extreme poverty, their backwardness and their social disabilities conspire to prevent them from making full use of existing educational facilities. This vicious circle must, therefore, be ended. The remedy seems to lie in the provision of residential schools where instruction is imparted free. It is only by some such means that equality of opportunity can be translated into practice. But if this is not possible, there should be a substantial increase in the number of scholarships available for these people. Other concessions like exemption from payment of tuition and examination fees, the provision of textbooks and stationery at a nominal cost should be given much more liberally than at present. Intensive propaganda in favour of education is also necessary. This work can be entrusted to societies interested in rural welfare as well as Headmasters of village schools. There is need, too, of increasing the number of village schools. Our aim should be "one village, one school". Thus alone can we hope to liquidate illiteracy. All this requires efforts on a gigantic scale. Our past progress in this sphere has been extremely unsatisfactory. But the task would be somewhat easier for a representative Government. In Russia the enthusiastic effort of the people backed by the prestige and influence of a people's Government succeeded in liquidating illiteracy in a very short time.

It may be mentioned here that 'Achchut Pathshalas' (Schools for Untouchables) are ill-equipped in almost every respect. They are more a concession to the prejudices of high caste Hindus than a sign of solicitude for the depressed classes. This segregation of depressed class children is highly undesirable. It perpetuates caste cleavage and creates a sense of inferiority in the minds of educands. And then the very name of such schools is objectionable. The sooner these schools are absorbed into common schools the better.

Social Disabilities

The social disabilities of these people spring partly from prejudices of high caste Hindus and partly from the economic cleavage between the high castes and the depressed classes. They can be removed by the spread of education, by propaganda

for their removal and by an improvement in the economic conditions of the depressed castes.

They have to be induced to abjure hard drinking, eating carrion or vermin which are so repugnant to high castes. Where they indulge in extra-marital licence and give up their women to prostitution the standard of morality has to be raised and new marital customs introduced. The ministration of a Brahmin priest at the time of marriages may contribute towards the approximation of their marital standards to those of the other Hindu castes. The high castes look askance at the moral standards as well as the standards of cleanliness of these people. But it is only gradually that the mores of these people can change. This does not mean that social reform may be relegated to the background. In fact, intensive propaganda in favour of social reform must go hand in hand with economic uplift. The fruits of hard economic toil are now dissipated in drink and coarse recreations because the acquisition of wealth is not always a passport to social recognition. Thus economic advance of the depressed classes can only be stabilized with opportunities for the improvement of social status. Social reform and economic uplift must aid each other in a collective, planned drive in the villages. Not only is an absolute improvement in their economic condition desirable but their position must also be improved relatively to others. In other words, the question is also one of better distribution of wealth. So long as these people remain at the lowest rung of the economic ladder they will continue to be subject to certain disabilities. New crafts have to be taught expanding or superseding grass plaiting, basket making, or tanning—occupations which cannot give much economic opportunities. Virgin lands have to be reclaimed and set apart for them for colonization and settlement. For, under present conditions they usually cultivate the worst and the most distant plots and pay the heaviest rates of rent and interest. Where they cannot even in the best years make both ends meet by cultivation, they naturally resort to keeping pigs and flaying carcasses—occupations which prevent them from rising in the social scale—or they contract debts which cannot be repaid by the toil of one generation in the field and tie themselves to a Zamindar or a tenant as their bondslaves or serfs who can virtually be

purchased and sold with their lands. They are thus caught in a vicious circle which has held them in the grip of economic bondage and social degradation for centuries.[1]

Government must abolish by penal legislation bond-slavery or peonage to which the depressed classes have been reduced here and there. They should also remove their civic disabilities. Depriving a person of the use of public property like wells should be made a criminal offence. This will not be enough. We have seen that high castes often take concerted action to deprive these people of the use of public wells, schools, etc. To counter this pressure, the depressed classes may also have to be organized. Doubtless, the depressed castes are disparate. But such groups will derive the necessary cohesive force from the urge to win certain rights. The throwing open of these wells will not, however, remove all their difficulties. In many a place depressed class quarters are a long way off from those of high caste Hindus. In such cases provision of *pukka* wells in depressed class quarters is highly desirable. Government should bear the entire cost of construction of such wells, for these people can hardly afford to contribute anything.

So far as schools are concerned Government must see to it that there is no discrimination against depressed class students. Educational authorities should keep a strict watch over teachers in the countryside. Institutions which refuse admission to depressed class children should not be given grants from public funds.

The throwing open of temples to these people will be highly desirable, for the temple is a socio-religious institution. This is, however, a matter of reform for the Hindu community and does not concern the Government directly. But if the Hindus want to seek the aid of law in removing this disability of the depressed classes, Government must not stand in their way. Giving them the right to enter temples will not remove all their disabilities, but it will help in removing some of them at least. At any rate, it will be conducive to the growth of harmonious relations between these people and other Hindus.

1 R. K. Mukerjee: "The Present problem of the Depressed Castes in India", a lecture delivered at the Lucknow University, 1939.

General Economic Development

Though some improvement in the condition of the depressed classes is possible by giving effect to the ameliorative measures suggested above, no far-reaching changes may be expected without bringing about the general economic development of the country. In other words, no substantial improvement in their economic condition is possible without bringing about an improvement in the condition of Indian masses in general. To do so, concerted action in three directions is necessary. First, a vigorous policy of industrial and rural reconstruction to utilize fully the resources of the country. Secondly, propaganda in favour of birth-control to check an abnormal increase in population. Unless cheap fool-proof contraceptives are popularized, population is likely to go on increasing rapidly. Thirdly, education in the widest sense of the term and encouragement of social reform. Especially important is it to bring about a reduction of expenditure on social ceremonies.

Safeguards

Under the present conditions it would be desirable to have a special board attached to the Central Government to act as the 'guardian angel' of these people. Such a board should be composed of the representatives of Provincial and Central Governments as well as those of the important depressed castes and organizations engaged in the uplift of these people. Its main function would be to review periodically the progress of the depressed classes and to indicate the direction in which special effort is needed. It can serve, moreover, as a clearing house of information concerning these people. Government should also see to it that these people are adequately represented in the public services. The Central Government and some of the Provincial Governments have already issued instructions to various recruiting bodies to show preference for depressed class candidates whenever they are found to be suitable. But a sufficient number of depressed class candidates of the requisite standard is not likely to be forthcoming unless the number of scholarships available for them is increased considerably. This would look like subsidizing the education of these people by the State, but that is exactly what appears to be necessary at

this stage. The economic gain from their getting more Government jobs may not be appreciable but these will enhance their prestige. And this may bring about the removal of some of their social disabilities. The middle class that will come into existence as a result of their getting Government jobs may tone down the differences between the high caste Hindus and the depressed classes. Besides, is not Government service our most important 'occupation'?

More imperative is the change of the social attitude of the high caste Hindus to these classes. No nation can be strong and efficient which has doomed about sixty million people to economic and social degradation. A country-wide campaign of land reclamation and vocational education, of temperance, cleanliness, and social purity, of removal of untouchability and better living among the less favoured and depressed castes can alone contribute towards eliminating one of the darkest blots on the face of Indian civilization. It is necessary that a programme like that of the Harijan movement sponsored by Mahatma Gandhi should win the devotion of hundreds of social workers in different parts of India who may speed up the process of social uplift and assimilation of the depressed classes. Individual effort towards social reform and amelioration of the depressed classes, however distinguished, will be futile: it must be a collective social planning directed by the State and supported by the social good-will of the entire nation.

APPENDICES, GLOSSARY OF HINDUSTANI TERMS AND INDEX

APPENDIX I

United Provinces

Scheduled Castes	Strength in 1931	Per cent of total Scheduled Castes		Castes given in Hutton's list which have not been classified as Scheduled Castes
Chamar ...	61,97,113	58·87		Baiyar
Pasi ...	14,46,115	13·73		Musahar
Kori ...	7,26,089	6·89		Saun
Dhobi ...	6,56,913	6·24	95·6	Pasia
Bhangi ...	4,76,634	4·52	per	Bandi
Silpkar ...	2,52,403	2·39	cent	Kabaria
Khatik ...	2,08,288	1·97		Chik
Doms ...	1,08,581	1·03		Balai
Kol ...	75,391	—		Bhar
Agariya ...				Bhil
Bhuiya ...				Dhari
Bhuiyar ...				Kingharia
Chero ...				Pawaria
Ghasiya ...				Dosadh
Khairaha ...	68,044			Gidhiya
Kharwar ...				Muchi
Majhwar ...				
Panka ...				
Parahiya ...				
Patari ...				
Banmanu ...	71,326			
Dhangar ...				
Bahelia ...	43,785			
Beldar* ...	44,117			
Nat ...	36,232			
Tharu* ...	31,587			
Aheria ...	23,084			
Kanjar ...	23,211			
Saharia ...	14,113			
Bengali ...	12,089			
Bhantu ...				
Barwar ...	4,314			
Habura ...	1,915			
Badhik ...	1,367			
Sansia ...	886			

Appendix I—(*U. P., contd.*)

Scheduled Castes	Strength in 1931	Per cent of total Scheduled Castes	Castes given in Hutton's list which have not been classified as Scheduled Castes
Badi ...			
Bajaniya ...			
Bajgi ...	34		
Gual ...			
Kalabaz ...			
Kaparia* ...	803		
Khairwa* ...	81		
Dhabgarh ...	657		
Gharami ...			
Kharot* ...	356		
Sanaurihiya ...	31		
Koraw ...	467		
	1,05,26,057	(Hutton's total 1,13,22,281)	

* These castes are touchable but depressed. The total strength of such castes is 76,935. The rest have all been treated by the Census Superintendent as untouchables.

The touchable but depressed form 0·7 per cent of Scheduled Castes.

Scheduled Castes form 25·7 per cent of Hindus and 21·7 per cent of total population.

In 1941, the total strength of Scheduled Castes in the U. P. was 1,17,17,158.

Bihar

Scheduled Castes	Strength in 1931	Per cent of Total	Castes given in Hutton's list but not found in the list of Scheduled Castes	
Dusadh ...	12,90,398	28·3	Ghusuria	Found almost entirely in Orissa
Chamar ...	12,55,412	27·5	Godra	
Musahar ...	7,19,535	15·7	Gokha	
Dhobi ...	2,65,150	5·8	Irika	
Pasi ...	1,71,341	3·7	Kandra	
Bhuiya ...	3,27,883	7·2	Kela	
Dom ...	1,50,381	3·3	Mahuria	
Bhumij* ...	...	...	Mangan	
Rajwar* ...	1,12,669	2·4	Siyal	
Hari ...	62,405			
Pan ...	...			
Bauri ...	121,321	2·6		
Kanjar ...	2,215			
Kuriar ...	631			
Lalbegi ...	102			
Mochi ...	22,863			
Nat ...	8,436			
Chaupal*	2,737			
Bhogta* ...	11,600			
Ghasi* ...	8,839			
Turi* ...	10,534			
Halalkhor ...	20,742			
	45,65,194	(Hutton's total is 57,44,393 for B. and O.)		

Of these, untouchables account for 44,18,815. Scheduled Castes form 17·6 per cent of Hindus and 14·1 per cent of the total population. Castes marked with an asterisk are touchable but depressed. The strength of Bhumij and Pan castes is small.

Untouchables form 96·8 per cent of Scheduled Castes. According to the Census Report for 1941 the total strength of the Scheduled Castes in this province is 43,40,379. This might be an under-estimate. It should be noted here that during the period 1931-41 the total population of the province increased by 12·3 per cent.

Appendix I—(*contd.*)

Bengal

Scheduled Castes	Strength in 1931	Per cent of Total
Namasudra ...	20,86,213	22·86
Rajbansi* ...	14,85,473	16·27
Bagadi ...	9,87,333	10·81
Muchi ...	4,11,819	4·51
Bauri ...	3,30,993	3·62
Chamar ...	1,48,661	1·62
Bhuiya ...	49,226	
Bahelia ...	4,449	
Bind ...	19,160	
Bhinjhia ...	203	
Dhenuar ...	44	
Dhobi ...	2,28,667	2·50
Doai ...	1,073	
Dosadh ...	35,928	
Ghasi ...	5,222	
Hadi* ...	14,334	
Hajong* ...	19,693	
Kadar ...	1,078	
Kan ...	28	
Kandh* ...	850	
Kochh* ...	80,002	
Konwar ...	133	
Kotal ...	7,651	
Lohar ...	49,953	
Mahli* ...	16,262	
Mal ...	1,11,154	
Mallah ...	25,001	
Malpahariya* ...	11,781	
Musahar ...	11,515	
Paliya ...	43,160	
Pan ...	791	
Pasi ...	18,628	
Patni ...	39,290	
Pod ...	6,67,731	7·31
Rajwar ...	21,315	
Sunri ...	76,779	
Tiyar ...	96,375	1·05

Bengal—(contd.)

Scheduled Castes	Strength in 1931	Per cent of Total
Bhuinmali ...	69,803	
Dom ...	1,38,926	
Halalkhor ...	876	
Hari ...	1,31,852	5·22 (4,77,197)
Kaora ...	1,07,867	Sweeper & Scavenging
Lalbegi ...	4,965	Castes
Mehtar ...	22,908	
Agaria* ...	230	
Bhumij* ...	83,995	
Garo* ...	35,516	
Ho* ...	19	
Kaur* ...	1,664	
Koda (Kora) ...	46,617	
Lodha* ...	10,964	
Mech* ...	4,798	
Munda* ...	61,043	
Nagesia* ...	2,017	
Oraon* ...	1,35,412	1·48
Rabha* ...	1,138	
Santal* ...	4,32,761	4·75
Turi ...	16,059	
Baiti ...	8,888	
Bediya ...	6,891	
Beldar ...	3,139	
Berua ...	367	
Bhatiya ...	322	
Gonrhi ...	5,149	
Jaliya Kaibaratta ...	3,49,859	3·83
Jhalo and Malo ...	1,97,789	2·16
Kandra ...	4,690	
Kapuria ...	170	
Karenga ...	9,855	
Khatik ...	1,157	
Konai ...	41,058	
Mahar ...	1,791	
Nat ...	7,348	
Kastha ...	2,600	
Khaira ...	38,154	
Nuniya ...	28,100	
	91,25,625	

Of these, 61,00,592 have been considered to be definitely untouchables and 6,38,518 to be probably untouchables. Thus the total number of untouchables is 67,39,110 (73·8 per cent of Scheduled Castes).

The names marked with an asterisk do not occur in Hutton's list.

Scheduled Castes form 42·3 per cent of Hindus and 18·2 per cent of the total population.

The 1941 Census Report for Bengal gives the total strength of Scheduled Castes as 73,78,970. But this is an under-estimate. A considerable number of these castes appear under the Census head 'Tribes' and have been excluded from the Scheduled Caste total. According to the Census Superintendent the total for 'Tribes' includes 12,07,523 Scheduled Caste Hindus and 1,84,320 other Hindus. Rectifying this defect we get 85,86,493 as the total strength of Scheduled Castes. But it is probable that the Census head 'Tribes' includes a larger number of Scheduled Castes than 12,07,523. Besides, some members of the Scheduled Castes might have failed to return their caste and as such might have been shown as 'Other Hindus'.

The Punjab

Scheduled Castes	Strength in 1931	Per cent of Total
Chamar ...	7,09,104	49·9
Ad Dharmi* ...	...	...
Chuhra or Balmiki ...	3,77,504	26·56
Dagi and Koli ...	47,824	3·36
Dumna ...	12,587	0·88
Megh ...	22,047	1·55
Od ...	19,578	1·37
Ramdasia ...	56,447	3·97
Sansi	27,174	1·91
Gagra ...	581	1·21
Bawaria ...	10,006	
Sarera ...	6,717	
Marija, or Marecha ...		
Bengali ...		
Barar ...		
Bazigar ...		
Bhanjra ...		
Chanal ...		
Dhanak ...		
Ghanak ...		
Gandhila ...	1,31,300	9·24
Khatik ...		
Kori ...		
Nat ...		
Pasi ...		
Perna ...		
Sapela		
Sirkiband ...		
	14,20,869	

All the Scheduled Castes are untouchable. They form 22·8 per cent of Hindus and 6·1 per cent of the entire population.

According to the 1941 Census Report the total strength of Scheduled Castes in this province is 12,48,635. But Ad Dharmis, who number 3,43,685, have been excluded from this total. Thus, the total strength of Scheduled Castes (including Ad Dharmis) would be 15,92,320.

* Ad Dharmis have been split up into Chamars, Balmikis, etc. according to the caste returned. Ad Dharma is a new 'religion' that came into existence at the time of 1931 Census. There seems to be no justification for treating it as a separate caste. As a new 'religion', too, it has only some political significance.

APPENDIX II

	PUNJAB	U. P.	BIHAR	BENGAL
Scheduled Castes	14,20,869 (15,92,320)	1,05,26,057 (1,17,17,158)	45,65,194 (3,40,379)	91,25,625 (85,86,493)
Strength compared to Punjab	1 (1)	7.4 (7.4)	3·2 (2.7)	6.4 (5·4)
Untouchable	14,20,869	1,04,49,122	44,18,815	67,39,110
Strength compared to Punjab	1	7.4	3·1	4·7
Strength of Chamars	70,91,104	61,97,113	12,55,412	1,48,661
Strength compared	1	8·7	1·8	0.2
Scavenging Castes	3,77,504	5,85,215	2,33,630	4,77,197.
Strength compared	1	1·55	0·6	1·3
Dhobi	...	6,56,913	2,65,150	2,28,667
Strength compared	...	2·9	1·2	1
Pasi	...	14,46,115	1,71,341	18,628
Strength compared	...	77.6	9·2	1

The total strength of depressed classes in N. India is 2,56,37,745 (2,62,36,350) approximately. Figures in brackets relate to the 1941 Census; the others have all been taken from the Census Reports for 1931.

APPENDIX III

Caste	Total Population in		Net Variation	Proportion per mile of total population in	
	1911	1931		1911	1931
The United Provinces					
Chamars	60,83,401	63,12,203	+ 2,28,802	126·7	127·2
Pasi	13,11,415	14,60,326	+ 1,48,911	27·3	29·4
Kori	8,60,434	9,23,410	+ 62,976	17·9	8·6
Dhobi	7,25,719	7,76,159	+ 440	15·1	5·6
Khatik	1,82,495	2,15,531	+ 33,036	3·8	4·3
Brahmin	47,01,179	45,55,965	− 1,45,214	97·9	91·8
Rajput	36,57,557	37,56,936	+ 99,379	76·2	75·7
Kayastha	4,85,073	4,78,657	− 6,416	10·1	9·6
Bihar (*including* **Orissa**)					
Chamar	11,14,467	12,96,001	+ 1,81,534	29·0	30·6
Dusadh	11,89,274	12,90,936	+ 1,01,662	30·9	30·5
Dhobi	4.27,079	4,14,221	− 12,858	11·1	9·8
Dom	2,41,903	2,69,346	+ 27,443	6·3	6·4
Pasi	1,50,142	1,72,061	+ 21,919	3·9	4·1
Rajwar	31,971	1,33,952	+ 1,981	3·4	3·2
Hari	1,19,468	1,15,613	− 3,855	3·1*	2·7
Brahmin	17,55,424	21,01,287	+ 3,45,863	45·7	49·6
Kayastha	3,47,613	3,83,435	+ 35,822	9·0	9·1
Rajput	12,39,826	14,12,440	+ 1,72,614	32·3	33·4
Bengal					
Bagdi	10,15,738	9,87,570	− 28,168	21·9	19·3
Bauri	3,13,654	3,31,268	+ 17,614	6·7	6·5
Chamar	1,36,553	1,50,458	+ 13,905	2·9	2·9
Dhobi	2,31,890	2,29,672	− 2,218	5·0	4·5
Dom	1,73,991	1,40,067	− 33,924	3·8	2·7
Hari	2,65,679	1,32,401	− 1,33,278	5·7	2·6
Namsudra	19,09,794	20,94,957	+ 1,85,163	41·2	41·0
Pod	5,36,568	6,67,731	+ 1,31,163	11·6	13·1
Brahmin	12,53,841	14,47,691	+ 1,93,850	27·1	28·3
Kayastha	11,13,684	15,58,475	+ 4,44,791	24·0	30·5
Rajput	1,30,221	1,56,978	+ 26,757	2·8	3·1

* Figure in Census Report 31·1 which is absurd.

APPENDIX III—(*contd.*)

Caste	Total Population in		Net Variation	Proportion per mile of total population in	
	1911	1931		1911	1931
Baidya	88,796	1,10,739	+ 21,943	1·9	2·2
Punjab (*including* **Delhi**)					
Chamar	11,39,941	11,48,271	+ 8,330	47·1	39·4
Chuhra	12,35,103	11,14,797	− 1,20,306	51·0	38·3
Brahmin	10,17,743	11,08,908	+ 91,165	42·0	38·1

The figures given above have been deduced from Census of India, 1931, Volume I, Part I, pp. 462-9.

APPENDIX IV

Variation in the Population of some castes during 1931-41

Tribe	Strength in		Variation
	1941	1931	
Agariya ...	39,811	69,141	— 29,330
Bahelia ...	14,037	48,447	— 34,410
Habura ...	2,168	1,916	+ 252
Kanjar ...	10,175	24,126	— 13,951
Nat ...	41,209	58,239	— 17,030
Saharia ...	7,494	14,113	— 6,619
Sansia ...	974	886	+ 88
Pasi ...	1,589,516	1,459,940	+ 129,576
Tharu ...	22,381	31,583	— 9,202
Pan ...	3,107	11,105	— 7,998
Turi ...	71,277	53,379	+ 17,898
Santal ...	829,025	796,656	+ 32,369

This table is based on Table XIV of the 1941 Census Report (Vol. I).

APPENDIX V

Caste and Occupation	No. per 1000 earners (1) (principal occupation only) engaged in each.	No. of female earners (principal occupation) per 1,000 male earners.
(1)	(2)	(3)
Chamar	1000	529
Leather—workers ...	51	223
Cultivators ...	355	251
Agricultural labourers ...	469	830
Cattle and sheep breeders, herdsmen, etc. ...	24	229
Industries, transport and general labourers ...	74	965
Trade ...	11	1,489
Domestic Service ...	3	649
Others ...	13	367
Pasi	1000	406
Tari-makers ...	23	239
Non-cultivating landlords and tenants ...	8	17
Cultivators ...	559	223
Agricultural labourers ...	307	992
Cattle and sheep breeders, herdsmen etc. ...	26	368
Industries, transport, trade and general lobourers ...	24	478
Public force ...	3	—
Domestic Service ...	8	265
Others ...	42	491
Dhobi	1000	487
Washing clothes ...	556	758
Cultivators ...	329	167
Agricultural labourers ...	71	724
Cattle and sheep breeders, herdsmen, etc. ...	14	169
Industries, transport, trade and general labourers ...	19	433
Others ...	11	418

APPENDIX V—*(contd.)*

Caste and Occupation	No. per 1000 earners (1) (principal occupation only) engaged in each.	No. of female earners (principal occupation per 1,000 male earners.
Bhangi	1000	600
Scavengers ...	661	908
Cultivators ...	124	71
Agricultural labourers ...	71	187
Cattle and sheep breeders, herdsmen, etc. ...	21	111
Industry, transport, trade and general labourers ...	54	259
Domestic Service ...	23	318
Others ...	46	955
Khatik	1000	301
Fruit and vegetable sellers and butchers ...	247	521
Cultivators ...	316	139
Agricultural labourers ...	150	407
Cattle and sheep breeders, herdsmen ...	82	181
Industries ...	57	701
Transport ...	21	67
Trade ...	51	248
Domestic service ...	15	169
General labourers ...	21	410
Others ...	30	316
Habura	1000	340
Cultivators ...	265	52
Agricultural labourers ...	139	126
Industries ...	140	918
Trade ...	152	427
Domestic service ...	83	159
General labourers ...	48	250
Beggars, prostitutes etc. ...	135	1,897
Others ...	38	67
Kanjar	1000	598
Cultivators ...	189	232
Agricultural labourers ...	79	444

APPENDIX V—*(contd.)*

Caste and Occupation	No. per 1000 earners (1) (principal occupation only) engaged in each.	No. of female earners (principal occupation) per 1,000 male earners.
Cattle and sheep breeders, herdsmen etc. ...	16	196
Fishing and hunting ...	15	151
Industries and transport ...	257	937
Trade ...	161	403
Arts and professions ...	28	822
General labourers ...	32	560
Beggars, prostitutes etc. ...	194	1,243
Others ...	21	445
Nat	1000	554
Cultivators ...	293	183
Agricultural labourers ...	95	643
Cattle and sheep breeders, herdsmen etc. ...	24	273
Industries ...	29	574
Trade ...	31	312
Arts and professions ...	93	773
General labourers ...	39	373
Beggars, prostitutes etc. ...	369	1,072
Others ...	27	470
Sansia	1000	291
Non-cultivating land-lords and tenants ...	27	—
Cultivators ...	199	—
Agricultural labourers ...	236	127
General labourers ...	85	185
Beggars, prostitutes etc. ...	324	1,346
Cattle and sheep breeders, herdsmen etc. ...	106	—
Others ...	23	—

U. P. Census part I 1931, pp. 438 et. seq.

APPENDIX VI

Occupation of Selected Castes

	No. per 1000 earners engaged in each occupation as principal means of livelihood	No. of females per 100 males
CHAMARS	1,000	76
Bihar		
Hide dressers ...	84	58
Cultivators of all kinds ...	297	55
Field labourers, wood-cutters ...	468	93
Exploitation of minerals ...	9	66
Labourers unspecified ...	115	107
Others ...	27	40
Chota Nagpur Plateau	1,000	71
Hide dressers ...	90	32
Cultivators of all kinds ...	408	52
Field labourers, wood-cutters ...	303	139
Exploitation of minerals ...	103	61
Labourers unspecified ...	47	133
Others ...	49	27
DHOBIS	1,000	61
Bihar		
Washermen ...	479	83
Cultivators of all kinds ...	343	37
Field labourers, wood-cutters ...	130	64
Labourers unspecified ...	29	77
Others ...	19	31
Chota Nagpur	1,000	59
Washermen ...	446	109
Cultivators of all kinds ...	344	22
Field labourers, wood-cutters ...	127	78
Raisers of live-stock, milkmen and herdsmen ...	13	4
Exploitation of minerals ...	23	45
Labourers unspecified ...	16	75
Others ...	31	32

APPENDIX VII

	Proportion per mille of earners who still follow their traditional occupation as their principal means of livelihood	
	1931	1921
CHAMAR		
Bihar ...	84	92
Chota Nagpur Plateau ...	90	
DHOBI		
Bihar ...	479	539
Chota Nagpur Plateau ...	446	

APPENDIX VIII *

Distribution of 1,000 earners (Principal occupation)

Caste	Exploitation of animals and vegetation	Extraction of minerals	Industries	Transport	Trade	Public Force	Administration	Arts and profession	Persons living on their-income	Domestic service	Insufficiently described occupations	Non-productive occupations	Number of female earners per 100 male earners (all subclasses)
Bagdi	155 (697)	11	50	12	18	4	1	2	2	33	12	3	29
Bauri	290 (408)	104	41	11	8	3	1	3	2	67	58	4	52
Chamar	135	20	346 (206)	57	18	2	7	13	17	42	131	6	17
Dhobi	327	5	56 (487)	7	33	3	3	9	10	27	23	10	16
Dom	421	29	58 (296)	10	14	12	3	10	6	69	61	11	33
Hari	491	12	73 (158)	37	23	10	7	57	7	70	39	16	32
Jaliya Kaibaratta	252 (601)	3	45	9	22	1	1	8	4	25	18	11	19
Muchi	461	10	105 (259)	14	24	1	1	9	5	53	48	10	13
Namasudra	824	2	52	14	31	2	2	12	9	22	19	11	7

(Figures in parenthesis are of traditional occupations and have to be added)

* Bengal Census Report, 1931, Part I, p. 300.

APPENDIX IX

	Population Dealt with			Income from rent of land	Cultivators of all kinds	Field labourers, etc.	Fishers and Huntsmen	Percentage of cultivators to total earners
	Earners	Working Dependents	Non-working Dependents					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Bagdi ...	3,66,455	58,578	5,62,282	3,768	2,55,737	43,803	2,404	69·8 %
Bauri ...	1,43,468	18,264	1,69,506	1,039	58,519	36,076	126	40·7 „
Chamar ...	74,017	6,372	70,069	323	2,699	6,371	118	3·6 „
Dhobi ...	73,456	15,052	1,41,100	1,647	14,131	76,420	43	19·2 „
Dom ...	58,199	7,824	74,039	439	4,719	16,811	1,451	8·1 „
Hari ...	50,605	9,154	72,634	351	5,711	16,610	1,198	11·3 „
Jaliya Kaibaratta ...	1,09,269	25,706	2,17,097	2,352	14,092	6,031	4,608	12·8 „
Muchi ...	1,43,349	21,078	2,49,788	1,568	17,458	44,959	196	12·2 „
Namasudra ...	5,52,796	1,07,736	14,34,404	27,738	3,03,582	85,839	33,674	54·9 „

The table has been deduced from the Bengal Census Report, 1931.

Figures in columns 1 to 7 are for both sexes.

APPENDIX X

	No. per 1000 workers engaged in traditional occupation		No. of workers per 1000 of the total strength		No. of female workers per 1000 male workers in 1931
	1921	1931	1921	1931	
Chamar (Hindu) ...	482	185	368	442	271
Chamar (Sikh) ...	511	276	369	355	...
Chuhra (Hindu) ...	677	575	435	469	362
Dagi & Koli ...	...	...	...	...	799
Bawaria ...	...	...	...	...	194

This Table has been deduced from the Punjab Census Report, 1931.

APPENDIX XI

	Population dealt with			Income from rent of land	Cultivators of all kinds	Field labourers, wood-cutters	Raisers of live-stock, milkmen & herdsmen	Percentage of cultivators to total earners	Percentage of field labourers to total earners
	Earners	Working dependents	Non-working dependents						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Chamar (Hindu)	2,20,168	82,400	3,82,395	480	50,519	71,200	7,559	19·5 %	31·4 %
Chamar (Ad Dharmi)	78,800	13,278	1,64,271	288	7,762	22,659	916		
Chuhra (Hindu)	1,44,212	28,643	1,95,369	64	8,343	30,872	3,961	5·14 %	24·7 %
Chuhra (Ad Dharmi)	31,911	3,028	51,619	10	715	12,707	354		
Dagi & Koli (Hindu)	51,380	66,031	63,959	62	...	4,976	976	...	...

APPENDIX XII

Province	Number of families	Average number of persons per family	Standard deviation of average	Average number of children & aged per family	Average number of adult males per family
U.P. (East) ...	594	6·42	0·09	3·01	1·9
U.P. (Western & Central) ...	468	5·54	0·1	2·4	1·48
Bihar ...	568	6·96	0·12	3·65	1·69
Bengal ...	136	7·52	0·3	3·0	2·52
Punjab ...	252	6·46	0·12	3·37	1·67

APPENDIX XIII

District	Rate of Agricultural wages				Remarks
	Harvesting season		In other seasons		
	As.	Ps.	As.	Ps.	
Bakarganj ...	4	9	2	9	These figures have been taken from the Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal, Vol. II, p. 117.
Bankura ...	3	6	2	6	
Birbhum ...	3	9	2	9	
Bogra ...	4	0	2	6	
Burdwan ...	5	9	3	6	
Chittagong ...	6	0	3	9	
Dacca ...	4 food	3+	...	...	
Dinajpur ...	3	0	2	6	
Faridpur ...	5	6	4	0	
Hooghly ...	6	0	4	0	
Howrah ...	6	0	4	0	
Jalpaiguri ...	4	9	3	9	
Jessore ...	4	3	3	3	
Khulna ...	5	3	3	3	
Malda ...	2	9	2	9	
Midnapore ...	4	0	3	0	
Murshidabad ...	2	9	2	9	
Mymensingh ...	3 food	3+	...	...	
Nadia ...	3	3	2	9	
Noakhali ...	4	3	2	9	
Pabna ...	5	3	4	0	
Rajshahi ...	4	0	2	9	
Rangpur ...	3	9	2	3	
Tippera ...	4	3	2	9	
24-Parganas ...	4	9	3	9	
Average ...	4	3	3	3	

APPENDIX XIV

Food Grains	Number of calories available per seer of food grains
Jowar ...	3,026
Barley ...	3,200
Rice ...	3,173
Maize ...	3,072
Bajra ...	3,488
Gram ...	3,072
Wheat ...	3,264

APPENDIX XV

List of roots, etc. eaten by the depressed classes in Bihar and parts of Bengal

Putal Koura (Batatas paniculata)—a creeper—roots used.
Gaithi—a species of Dioscorea—roots used.
Tamuli (Curculigo orchioides)—a small plant—roots used.
Sutawar (Asparagus sarmentosus)—root of a creeper.
Siyah Munsli (Murdannia Scapiflora)—a small plant—root used.
Kand—has a root resembling sakarkand.
Asar—a creeper—tubers used.
Bongo—a climbing plant—root used.
Ijwar—a tree—bark is taken off the root which is scraped and the inner part boiled.
Piska—root of a creeper.
Kakori (Momordica dioica),—a plant—root used.
Tona—a creeper—root used.
Gorkhundi—a small tree—root and fruit used.
Musla Simul—root of cotton tree—used as food in rainy season.
Boruni—a plant—fruit is used as a vegetable.
Kand Bisara—root of an aquatic plant.
Karhal—probably a species of Nymphoea. When water of marshes recedes leaving the land dry such roots are dug up and eaten.

APPENDIX XVI

Distribution by Marital Condition of 1000 Females

	All ages			Aged 0-6			Aged 7-13			Aged 14-16			Aged 17-23			Aged 24-43			Agd. 44 & over			
	U	M	W	U	M	W	U	M	W	U	M	W	U	M	W	U	M	W	U	M	W	
Bauri ...	271	535	194	979	20	1	585	404	11	57	899	44	9	913	78	3	748	249	1	341	658	
Dom ...	235	562	203	930	69	1	433	552	15	87	858	55	22	903	75	8	745	247	7	292	701	
Jaliya	292	490	218	946	46	8	562	419	19	134	787	79	45	815	140	20	664	316	20	300	680	Bengal
Kaibaratta																						
Namasudra ...	298	485	217	962	36	2	564	425	11	66	888	46	16	864	120	11	663	326	7	261	732	
Brahman ...	340	460	200	975	24	1	778	214	8	224	732	44	40	866	94	12	708	280	8	322	670	
Chamar ...	305	563	132	954	44	2	541	451	8	94	883	23	26	944	30	10	858	132	7	398	595	
Pasi ...	304	568	128	945	53	2	554	437	9	120	855	25	30	942	28	9	871	120	10	413	577	
Dhobi ...	326	546	128	964	35	1	637	356	7	148	830	22	37	931	32	13	861	126	9	426	565	U. P.
Bhangi ...	360	525	115	986	13	1	741	254	5	168	814	18	43	930	27	16	864	120	10	423	567	
Brahman ...	311	473	216	977	21	2	787	205	8	240	726	34	36	899	65	12	748	240	7	326	667	
Chamar ...	274	588	133	891	106	3	451	533	16	91	878	31	21	942	37	6	846	148	3	422	575	
Musahar ...	303	593	104	905	90	5	467	519	14	80	883	37	26	936	38	5	883	112	2	537	461	Bihar
Brahman ...	275	483	242	972	26	2	674	313	13	127	821	52	20	885	95	6	705	289	3	296	701	
Brahman ...	315	469	216	980	19	1	769	223	8	228	736	36	40	884	76	11	731	258	7	321	672	India (Whole)
Chamar ...	362	522	116	991	9	—	725	273	2	164	826	10	25	957	18	7	861	132	4	395	601	
Chuhra ...	432	477	91	992	8	—	839	159	2	362	632	16	73	912	15	18	875	107	12	471	517	Punjab
Dagi & Koli ...	328	543	129	984	16	—	795	202	3	268	719	13	62	911	27	18	880	102	9	458	533	
Brahman ...	365	437	198	995	5	—	877	121	2	381	601	18	55	890	55	10	757	233	5	321	674	

U = Unmarried M = Married W = Widowed

APPENDIX XVII

Literacy by Caste

Caste	No. of Literate per 1000 aged 7 years and over in 1931	
	Male	Female
U.P.		
Brahman ...	293	25
Chamar ...	6	0·4
Pasi ...	5	0·2
Dom (Plains) ...	10	1
Bhangi ...	10	1
Nat ...	13	2
Kori ...	19	1
Silpkar ...	27	1
Habura ...	34	3
BIHAR		
Brahman ...	356	28
Bhuiya ...	12·8	0·4
Chamar ...	9·2	0·7
Dhobi ...	29·2	1·7
Dom ...	7·3	0·7
Dosadh ...	12·3	0·7
Pasi ...	25·5	2·3
Rajwar ...	16·7	1·2
Rajput ...	217	13
PUNJAB*		
Chamar ...	14	1
Chuhra ...	13	3
Dagi & Koli ...	9	1
Khatri ...	438	114
Brahman ...	268	34
BENGAL		
Bauri ...	14	5
Dom ...	39	8
Jaliya Kaibaratta ...	122	22
Namasudra ...	145	15

* The heading of column 3 on p. 266 of the Punjab Census Report, 1931, is identical to that of col. 1. This is obviously a mistake. Our figures relate to col. 1.

APPENDIX XVII (*contd.*)

Literacy by Caste

Caste	Number Literate* in 1931, per 1000 of the same sex, all ages	
	Male	Female
Bagdi ...	34	5
Chamar ...	63	15
Hari ...	36	5
Garo ...	14	6

* Aged 4 years and over.

This Table has been deduced from the relevant provincial Census Reports for 1931.

GLOSSARY OF HINDUSTANI TERMS

Abwabs	...	Illegal exactions by Zamindars
Achchut	...	Untouchable
Adhia	...	Half and half
Adla Badla	...	Exchange
Ahratiya	...	Commission Agent
Athari	...	A farm-hand in parts of the Punjab
Aurat	...	Woman ; wife
Baithak	...	Sitting room ; a sort of 'drawing room'
Bajra	...	A species of millet (Panicum spicatum)
Barga	...	Sharing basis
Bargadar	...	A cultivator who has to give about half the produce to the landlord
Basodia	...	See 'Athari'
Bathui	...	A sort of spinach
Batuli	...	Kettle
Begar	...	Work without wages
Bejhar	...	Mixture of wheat and bajra
Bhai	...	Brother; brethren
Bhagjot	...	Share-crop tenancy
Bhari	...	Bundle
Bhat	...	Boiled rice or any other food-grain like maize or kodo
Bhusa	...	Wheat straw
Bhut	...	Ghost
Bisar	...	Grain debt usually repayable at next harvest
Biyapari	...	Merchant ; trader
Bulari	...	Messenger
Busti	...	Hamlet
Byah	...	Term used for virgin marriage
Chabina	...	Generally roasted grams or other food grains
Chachera	...	Descended through paternal uncle
Chatni	...	Pickle
Chcharidar	...	Wand-bearer
Chowkidar	...	Watchman
Chowkidari	...	Pertaining to Chowkidar

Churel	...	Witch
Dal	...	The cooked grain of any kind of pulse
Dandamuliya	...	See 'Krishan'
Darshan	...	Sight; to see and pay respects
Daura	...	A type of hand-woven cloth
Desi	...	Indigenous
Dhankodo	...	Mixture of rice and kodo
Dhoti	...	A piece of cloth tied round the waist and falling over the leg
Dola	...	A litter or palanquin; term used for a form of marriage
Doli	...	A litter
Dopata	...	A piece of cloth used to cover head
Dosuti	...	A type of hand-woven cloth
Dotai	...	A counterpane
Durbar	...	A royal court; an audience or levy
Durries	...	Rugs or carpets
Fasal	...	Crop
Fasali	...	Pertaining to a crop
Farzi	...	False; forged; untrue
Ganwaha	...	Skinner
Garha	...	Hand-woven cloth from hand-spun yarn
Gataniamuni	...	See 'Krishan'
Gauna	...	Bringing home of wife to her husband
Gawain	...	Peddling fruit etc.
Geru	...	Ochre
Ghardamadi	...	'Son-in-law at home'
Gharjamai	...	
Gharjanwai	...	
Gobraha	...	Grain separated from cow-dung
Gujai	...	Mixture of wheat and barley
Gur	...	Juice of sugarcane boiled till it is solid
Gurawat	...	Marriage by exchange
Guru	...	A spiritual preceptor
Haldi	...	Turmeric
Hali	...	See 'Athari'
Harijan	...	Lit. 'people of god'; used of untouchables

Harwaha	...	A sort of farm hand with status verging on slavery
Harwahi	...	The work of a harwaha
Hasli	...	An ornament worn round neck
Hissa	...	Share
Hooka	...	A tobacco pipe in which the smoke is made to pass through water
Ilaqa	...	Jurisdiction
Jajman	...	Client
Jajmani	...	Clientele
Jalachal	...	A person from whose hands high caste Hindus would not accept water
Jalpan	...	Tiffin
Jamadar	...	An overseer
Jamun	...	A fruit (Syzygium Jambolanum)
Jarhan	...	A superior kind of rice grown in nurseries and transplanted
Jhampan	...	A litter
Jhapta	...	An ornament
Jatbhais	...	Term generally used for persons of same endogamous group
Jowar	...	A species of millet (Holcus sorghum)
Jhinwar	...	Water-carrier
Kachcha	...	Unripe; uncooked; food cooked in water; something not standard
Kamia	...	Lit. a 'bondsman'. A sort of farm-hand resembling a harwaha
Kamiauti	...	The work of a kamia
Kashtkar	...	Cultivator
Katha	...	A sacred recitation
Kathari	...	A mattress of rags
Kathas	...	
Khaddar	...	See 'Garha'
Kharif	...	Autumn season; the autumnal harvest
Khesari	...	A grain (Lathyrus Sativus)
Khichari	...	A preparation of cereals and pulses
Khijari	...	
Khas	...	Proprietor's land
Khudkhasht	...	

Kirao	...	An inferior food-grain
Kodo	...	A species of millet (Paspalum scrobiculatum)
Krishak	...	Cultivator
Krishan	...	A sort of farm-hand in Bengal
Krishimajur	...	Agricultural labourer
Lehnga	...	A petticoat
Lota	...	A shallow vessel of brass or bell metal
Mahajan	...	Merchant; a trader cum money-lender
Mahindar	...	See 'Krishan'
Mamera	...	Descended through maternal uncle
Mausera	...	Descended through maternal aunt
Mahwa	...	Bassia Latifolia
Makai	...	Maize
Mangni	...	Engagement
Marhua	...	A kind of millet (Eleusine coracana)
Mattar	...	Peas (Pisum sativum)
Mochi, Muchi	...	Leather worker; name of a caste
Mohalla	...	Quarters
Mung	...	A kind of pulse (Phaseolus mungo).
Nand	...	A tub
Nazar	...	Influence of evil eye
Nazarana	...	Tribute money; usually an illegal exaction by Zamindar
Nij, Nijjot	...	See 'Khudkasht'
Orhna	...	A piece of cloth used to cover head
Orhni	...	
Palak	...	A kind of spinach
Pan	...	Betel-leaf
Panchayat	...	Governing body of a caste
Pathshala	...	School
Patwari	...	Keeper of revenue records of a village
Phuphera	...	Descended through paternal aunt.
Puja	...	See 'Katha'
Pukka	...	Cooked; food cooked in ghee; something standard
Pulsai	...	An inferior food-grain
Purdah	...	Custom of secluding women
Rabi	...	The spring; the spring harvest

Raiyat	...	Cultivator; peasant
Raiyati	...	Pertaining to raiyat
Rampi	...	Cobbler's tool
Reh	...	Impure carbonate of soda
Roti	...	Unleavened bread
Sags	...	Spinach
Salam	...	Salute
Sanwak	...	The loan given to a harwaha
Sanjha	...	Sharing basis
Sari	...	A woman's garment similar to dhoti
Sattu	...	Flour obtained by grinding roasted food-grains
Sawai	...	One and a quarter
Sepi	...	See 'Athari'
Shamlat	...	Common land
Shirrt	...	An ornament
Sir	...	See 'Khudkasht'
Siri	...	See 'Athari'
Syce	...	A horse groom
Thala, Thali	...	A dish
Tarai	...	Jungle land at foot of Himalayas
Tari	...	Toddy
Teet	...	The fruit of a wild thorny shrub
Urd	...	A kind of pulse
Urhni	...	See 'Orhni'

Indian Weights and Measures

16 Chattaks	=	1 Seer
40 Seers	=	1 Maund
	=	82·28 lbs. Av.

In the countryside the common unit of weight is the *Kachcha* maund. It is generally less than the standard maund. (82·28 lbs. Av.).

20 Biswas	=	1 Bigha
20 Kathas	=	1 Bigha
1 Bigha	=	1200 to 1600 sq. yards generally. There is no fixed standard Bigha

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