

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIA

APPROVED:

C. A. Bridges
Major Professor

Owen S. Jarboe
Minor Professor

Francis Norton
Director of the Department of
History

Jack Johnson
Dean of the Graduate School

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIA

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

179840

Clarence S. Bivens, B. S.

Fort Worth, Texas

August, 1950

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE CASTE INFLUENCES FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE BRITISH INVASION.	1
Origin of the Indian People	
The Aboriginal Influence on the Caste System	
The Aryan Influence on the Caste System	
Aryan and Aboriginal Culture Conflicts Resulting in the Birth of the Caste System	
The Caste System Receives Sacred Sanction	
Kshatriyas Contest the Superiority of the Brahman Caste	
Greeks Reveal the Hindu Castes of Their Time	
Buddhism Influences the Caste System	
Islam Influences the Caste System	
II. THE INTERNAL WORKINGS OF THE CASTE SYSTEM. . .	34
The Heterogeneous Nature of the Caste System	
External and Internal Defilements of the Caste System	
Marriage under the Caste System	
Brahmanism the Key to the Caste System	
Untouchability, the Scourge of the Caste System	
III. THE IMPACT OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION ON THE CASTE SYSTEM	68
European Influences before the Mutiny of 1857	
European Influences as a Result of the Mutiny of 1857	
European Influences of the Late Nineteenth Century	
European Influence on the Status of Women	
European Influences on the Status of Untouchables	
European Influences on Hindu Pollution	

Chapter	Page
IV. CONCLUSION	100
BIBLIOGRAPHY	109

CHAPTER I

THE CASTE INFLUENCES FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE BRITISH INVASION

Origin of the Indian People

The customs of a civilization would mean little if within the mind's eye one could not visualize the physical being of its men. If one were standing in the markets of Calcutta or Bombay, the most casual observer would at once notice certain clearly marked types of humanity. There are Aborigines with broad noses, thick lips, and very dark complexions. Many of them look like Negroes, but they do not have kinky hair. These people are descendants of the original pre-Aryan population of India, although most of these tribes live in the remote jungle districts.

There will be representatives of the Mongolian type from Bengal, with high cheek bones, Mongolian eyes, and a complexion more yellow than brown. The Mongolian forefathers entered India through the passes of the north many centuries ago.¹ One can also observe a few of the Arab type, with hooked noses, thin faces, and fairly light complexions. "They are descendants of the Islamic conquerors who entered

¹William W. Hunter, Brief History of the Indian People, pp. 127-128.

India in the eighth century and held the country completely in their power."²

There will be Brahmanic descendants of the Aryan invaders of over three thousand years ago who came from Central Asia. These descendants have almost European physiques and complexions because of racial purity insured by the caste system. Very numerous will be the different degrees of mixtures between the representative groups.³

The term Hindu, as applied by the natives to all these races, means not so much the people of Hindustan as it does the members of all the various sects who have adopted the system of castes and yielded to the supremacy of the Brahmans.

Caste may be called the cement that binds together all these numerous sects and classes; not merely separating the whole, forming of dissimilar and uncongenial units an almost impregnable wall that closely binds together the whole Hindu people, but equally divides them from all the rest of the world.⁴

The Aboriginal Influence on the Caste System

Our earliest glimpse of India revealed two races struggling for the soil. One race was a fair-skinned people which had lately come through the northwest passes--a nomadic tribe who called themselves Aryan. The other race was of a lower type who had long dwelt in the land and were destined to be enslaved by their arrogant conquerors.⁵

²Ibid., p. 130.

³Ibid., p. 134.

⁴Pannie Roper Feudge, India, p. 233.

⁵Hunter, op. cit., p. 39.

The oldest dwellers, non-Aryans or Aborigine, so called in the absence of a race name of their own, left no written record. Their only remaining words are rude stone circles and the upright slabs and mounds beneath which they buried their dead.⁶ These prehistoric tribes were scattered throughout the length and breadth of pre-Aryan India. This is noted today by the alteration in the Aryan languages.

Over a wide extent of the country Aryan languages are now spoken, but there remains in Aryan speech now in use clear aboriginal traces. The grammar of the various Aryan languages has become affected by Davidian usages, an indication of the wide sphere of influences brought about by early Aboriginal tribes.⁷

There is also reason to believe that aboriginal people had widespread influence throughout India because of traditions of the Indian Village Community.

Now the form of land tenure generally prevalent over more than two-thirds of the whole of India is known as the raiyatwari tenure. /the Indian Village Community/ The aboriginal tribes seem well entitled to claim it as their own institution. We imagine a village constituted under it in this way: A member of a tribe desires to cultivate a portion of waste land held by the tribe. He applies to his chief who represents the tribe and obtains permission to make a clearance and till the ground. Other members of the tribe make similar clearances alongside on like terms. They obtain a site nearby and build houses near each other for protection, so that they may be near their work and be able also to protect their crops. Each member is liable to the Chief for a demand on his own holdings. The Chief appoints a head man and an assistant able to keep accounts in order and to look after his interest. The members of the tribe who have

⁶Ibid., p. 40.

⁷William H. Gilbert, Jr., Peoples of India, p. 17.

secured holdings, for their own comfort and in order to make their village self-contained, have to attract a body of simple craftsmen and menials to do their work and to attend to their wants, as, a potter, cobbler, carpenter, washerman, sweeper, barber, and so on or several of the same. These workers are all provided with sites for houses in the village or outside. We thus obtain a community, qualified to maintain its existence independent of any assistance from outside.⁸

Benton believes that there was a great change in social arrangements when village communities began to prosper. The number of menials and craftsmen would be greatly increased. The craftsmen would be required to provide the tools and implements demanded by new industry. The number of the menial workers would be larger when there would be increased resources to employ them and when there would be demands for services and comforts for wealthier communities. There would be a changed life in the confined village settlements. social regulation of the past would no longer suffice in the new situation.⁹

If class distinctions were to be maintained, if the land holders in direct contract with the rulers were to assert a position superior to the menials who served them and to the artisans, strict social regulations would have to be enforced as to social intercourse, and many restrictions heretofore unnecessary would have to be submitted to. The institution of the system of caste ought, it appears, to be assigned to the primitive era when some progress had been made in agriculture.¹⁰

⁸Ibid., p. 16.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

Perhaps the caste system grew as the villages grew. A few authorities maintain that the Aboriginal caste system was in operation long before the Aryans made their appearance; that the Aborigines could not wait for its institution until the Aryans came and did them this service.

The Aryan Influence on the Caste System

Meanwhile from some common camping-ground, perhaps Central Asia or southern Russia, prehistoric members of the human race started migrating, some toward the east, others toward the west.¹¹

One of the western offshoots built Athens and Sparta and became the Greek nation; another went on to Italy and reared, on the Seven Hills, the city which grew into Imperial Rome. A distant colony of the same race excavated the silver ores of prehistoric Spain, and when we catch a sight of ancient England, we see an Aryan settlement fighting in battle canoes and working the tin mines of Cornwall. Meanwhile, other branches of the Aryan stock had gone forth from the primitive Asiatic home to the east.¹²

The Aryan kings came through the mountains of north-western India. The land that they first occupied was the Punjab, a land of many rivers, broad valleys, forest covered mountains, moderate climate, and deep productive soil.

It had everything to invite settlers--and to keep them a long long time even to isolation. For a glance at the map will show that this garden is in the shape of a corner of a triangle which, fenced from the other world on two sides by a well high impassible barrier, is on the third side separated from its own continent by a wide belt of desert; and its wonderful system of rivers is entirely

¹¹G. T. Garratt, The Legacy of India, p. 125.

¹²Hunter, op. cit., p. 52.

its own; their course--with the exception of the giant, Indus--begins and ends within its limits.¹³

Five turbulent streams descend from various points of the Western Himalayas; they converge, unite by twos and form a short but extremely wide and deep river, named ^{Punchnada} Pactchanada, "The Five Rivers." This name was given to the land itself. "Punjab," the name given to it by the Persians, was also widely known in Vedic times as Sapta-Sindhavah, "The Seven Rivers."¹⁴

The Aryan conquerors that descended to the land of the seven rivers lived with nature. Upon their physical surroundings they depended for food and shelter. To these people, nature pulsed with life; nature was to be appeased and courted with sacrifices and prayers.

At the time of their arrival the Aryans lived a simple life. The family was headed by the father, his sons and grandsons, and their wives and children lived under the same roof. The staple food of these herdsmen was milk, grain, and butter, although animals were often sacrificed and eaten. The father was the priest for the family; he tended the sacrificial fires and made the offerings to the gods. Upon his death, his eldest son inherited his father's rank and duties. Even at this early date considerable importance was placed upon ceremonial purity and ritual. Later, notions of defilement increased and became largely responsible for divisions into

¹³Zenaid A. Ragozin, Vedic India as Embodied Principally in the Rig-Veda, p. 116.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 107.

caste groups. There were only broad class divisions: priests who performed the sacrificial rites, chieftains who fought, and the mass of people who were herdsmen. Society was not yet divided into a formal caste system.¹⁵

Aryan and Aboriginal Culture Conflicts Resulting in the Birth of the Caste System

When the Aryans came into India new racial and political problems appeared. The Aborigines, whom the Aryans called Dasya (people), had a long background of civilization behind them. There is little doubt that the invaders considered themselves vastly superior. Yet, Hinduism drew much of its strength and many of its rites from the non-Aryan people of India. To them is due the worship of stumps of wood, of rude stones, and of trees. The primitive habits and the black-skinned, square Mongolian faces of the Aborigines were loathed by the fair complexioned, classic-featured Aryans. The old Aryan poets composed poems perhaps 3000 years ago to their bright, "beautiful-nosed" gods, asking them to destroy the "flat-nosed" primitives. The Vedic hymns describe these dark people as "disturbers of sacrifices," "gross feeders on flesh," "raw-eaters," "lawless," "non-sacrificing," "without god," and "without rites."¹⁶ In this conflict of races the seed of the caste system was

¹⁵Garratt, op. cit., pp. 125-126.

¹⁶Hunter, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

planted, the fruits of which in succeeding centuries were to affect India so profoundly. The Aryans with a certain degree of religious refinement kept strictly away from them, especially in marriage and in matters of worship. There is every reason to believe that this spirit of exclusiveness was the cause of their collecting into one body hymns and sacred songs glorifying the religion they brought with them. The collecting was accomplished by priests and poets over a period of five hundred years or more. This collection is known to us as the Rig-veda, "knowledge and praise of hymns."¹⁷

The Vedic hymns have been described as:

a poetic testament of a people's collective reaction to the wonder and awe of existence. A people of vigorous and unsophisticated imagination awakened at the fiery dawn of civilization to a sense of the inexhaustible mystery that is implicit in life.¹⁸

The Rig-veda is a mine of information about the early Indo-Aryans, and it had a unique value to the historian in being composed by the people themselves.

The Rig-veda is made up of 1,028 hymns divided into ten books and addressed to various deities. The chief gods thus honored were Vruna (god of rain), Agni (god of fire), Indra (god of the sky), and the Maruts (storm gods).¹⁹ It may, without question, be called the oldest book in the world.

¹⁷Regozin, op. cit., p. 133.

¹⁸Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 69.

¹⁹J. Allen, H. Haig, and T. Wolsely, The Cambridge Short History of India, p. 6.

The poems bear no trace of the memory of the Aryan invasion of India and seem to have been composed there. Whether it belongs to the period of 3000 B.C. or earlier is of no great importance. We only know that the Vedic religion had been at work long before the rise of Buddhism in the sixth century B.C. By the time we make our first real acquaintance with the ancient Indo-Aryans, they had already collected and arranged their vast body of wisdom into four works, known as the four Vedas.

The four Vedas are the Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Arthava Vedas: The Rig-veda is the most archaic type of Sanskrit, in the repository of the very earliest hymns which were recited at Vedic Sacrifices. The Sama-veda is a collection of verses from many of the same hymns, with some later ones also included, which were specifically intended to be sung. The Yajur-veda contains mostly spells, incantations, and medical recipes, and is really a very ancient book on magic, enshrining some of the most primitive tradition of the Indo-Aryan people.²⁰

This is Arthava Veda

Yajur Veda consists of the hymns that describe and explain in detail the rituals, rites, and ceremonies of sacrifices and of other forms of worship

In the period of the Rig-veda, the emphasis was mainly in the performance of sacrifices for the attainment of quite practical ends--long life, children, good crops, and wealth of cows.

The hymns show the Aryans on the banks of the Indus, divided into various tribes, sometimes at war with each other, sometimes united against the Aborigines. Caste, in its later sense, is unknown in the early Veda. The Vedic Aryans considered themselves as free men of equal status. They

²⁰ Monier, Monier-Williams, Hinduism, pp. 19-20.

Only one or two of the women-composers were from royal family. There were many who were the wives of Brahmin composers and still some who were of common origin. could be soldiers, herdsmen, or farmers.²¹ Women enjoyed a

high position; some of the most beautiful hymns were composed by queens.⁽¹⁾ The history of the Aryan conquest into the Gangese valley, and their spread through the length and breadth of India can be vividly followed in these ancient scripts.

Around the Vedas there soon grew up explanatory works. Each Veda had a Brahmanas, or supplementary prose manual, attached to it. In turn, the Brahmanas gave rise to the Aranyakas, or books which interpreted the Vedic doctrine symbolically instead of literally. This forest book was for the benefit of the Brahmans who had taken to forest hermitages. As a last chapter of the forest books came the brilliant Upanishads, also called the Vedanta, or end portion of the Vedas.²² *of the 'heart' portion of vedas.*

(Antah = ① the end. ② the heart)

There are eleven Upanishads going back to about 800 B.C. They consider the most profound questions man can ask about life.

. . . the purpose of life, the nature of experience, the meaning of death, the relation of man to nature and of soul to God, the ultimate spiritual oneness of all that exist. Often the writers are cryptic. The questioner has to meditate and find out the real meaning for himself.²³

²¹Hunter, op. cit., p. 54.

²²Gertrude Emerson Sen, The Pageant of India's History, Vol. I., p. 56.

²³Ibid.

As the Indian priests studied the conditions of good and evil, they were confronted with obvious injustices and cruelties of the world. They finally reconciled their idea of God and the conception of a universal ethical law of all life. This was the law of Karma. In the words of the Upanishads:

As is a man's desire so is his will, and as is his will so is his deed, and whatever deed he does that will he reap.²⁴

The same idea is expressed in the words of the Christian Bible, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." The law of Karma explains that we are the result of what we have done and said in the past; what we think and do today will make us what we are tomorrow. Whatever our past actions, good or bad, we must be born again and again, as we have been born again and again in the past. We may be born animals as well as human beings. The law of Karma is not punishment and reward, but a trial and error process by which all living things are given equal opportunity through an infinite period of time to learn to choose the better way. Eventually, all reach the same "heaven" where there is no death, rebirth, or return.²⁵

In the period of the Upanishad, the emphasis shifted from performance of sacrifice to spiritual knowledge. The Vedic gods were not altogether discarded, but they were growing dim and becoming merged into a single unit.

²⁴Hunter, op. cit., p. 77.

²⁵Sen, op. cit., p. 56.

This is an eternal, impersonal principle, neither male nor female, but neuter, which is called Brahman or Atma, and which is to be identified with the innermost being of the awakened self.²⁶

The Caste System Receives Sacred Sanction

Meanwhile the caste system had been developing. It began with a hard and fast division of the Aryans and non-Aryans, the latter again being divided into the Dravidian races and the Aboriginal tribes. The word Arya comes from the root word meaning "to till," and the Aryans as a whole were agriculturists.²⁷ Agriculture was considered a noble occupation, and as previously stated the tillers of the soil also acted as priests, soldiers, and traders. The caste divisions, originally intended to separate the Aryans from the Aborigines, reacted on the Aryans themselves. As specialization increased new classes took form of castes.

By degrees certain gifted families who composed the Vedic hymns or learned them by heart were always chosen by the king to perform the great sacrifices.²⁸ In this manner the priest probably first sprang up. To maintain their position in society they evolved the law book of Manu, a religious code which gave them a divine origin. The law book of Manu states that at the beginning of the world the priests, or Brahmans, destined to fulfill the high function of

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Nehru, op. cit., p. 75.

²⁸Hunter, op. cit., p. 59.

priesthood, issued from the head of the Creator, Brahma. The Kshatriyas, warriors and kings, endowed with force and destined to undergo the rigors of war, have their origin in the shoulders and arms of Brahma. The Visyas, or merchants, whose duty it was to provide the food and clothing and other bodily necessities of man, were born in the belly of the god. Beneath these three castes which were said to be twice born, there was a fourth caste, the Sudras, whose lot was servitude and rude labor in the fields.²⁹

Although the "untouchables," as we know them today, are not mentioned in the law book of Manu, it would be well to divulge their origin at this point. Some of the primitives who had fled in terror from the Aryans came slowly back. They meekly hung on the outskirts of the Aryan villages and timidly offered for barter their wicker baskets and crude pottery to the conquerors. They began to perform the most humble tasks of the village, such as burning the dead, removing night-soil, and skinning dead animals.³⁰

So it was written in the law-book of Manu, a post-Vedic revelation, about 500 B.C. From these Sutras, or "string of rules," came many precepts of religion, morality, and philosophy by unknown authors.³¹ In more recent times the Brahmans

²⁹Abbe J. A. Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, p. 47.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Washburn Edward Hopkins, India Old and New, p. 207.

gathered the material, edited it, and assigned its authorship to the mythical sage Manu. Holderness says in relation to the laws of Manu:

When the scholars went to work on the laws of Manu, they saw that underneath the jumble of priestly lore and childish stories there was a basis of fact. For an ancient writer never wholly invents: he takes the material for his fiction from the actual world around him. In the account of the caste system their points were clear. The system was obviously designed to glorify the Brahmans. All through they are seen to have the best of it. Secondly, the basis of the system was descent and purity of blood. And thirdly, occupations or callings were hereditary, and position in the caste scale went with the nature of the occupation. In seeking a rational explanation of the origin of caste, modern scholars have differed in the weight they have assigned to those several features in Manu's account, and thereby they have come to somewhat different conclusions.³²

Besides the traditional origin of the different castes known to all Hindus, there is another to be found in their books which trace the system back to the time of the Flood. For that terrible world disaster was as well known to the Hindu as it was to Moses. An honored Hindu named Mahanuve escaped the Flood in an ark, in which were seven famous "Penitents" of India. After the Flood, according to Hindu writers, Mahanuve and seven survivors of the human race divided mankind into the different castes.³³

Kshatriyas Contest the Superiority of the Brahman Caste

The superiority of the Brahmans in the Hindu's law

³²T. W. Holderness, Peoples and Problems of India, p. 89.

³³Dubois, op. cit., p. 28.

scheme is the hinge on which the whole social system turns. The Brahmas are supposed to constitute the great central body around which all other classes and orders of life revolve. Not only are the priests invested with "divine dignity," but are bound together by the strictest of rules; while the other three classes of soldiers, merchants, and servants are made powerless for combined resistance by equally rigid rules.³⁴

In every society there are divisions of class. The peculiarity within the Indian society is the distinctions which are so harshly set and the dividing line drawn so deep. In no other nation is man so inevitably destined to live and die in the social strata in which he was born. Within this fact lies the very essence of the caste system, as distinguished from mere class barriers, which may be forbidding but not impassible. Nowhere else do the priests demand such submission or proclaim that there are "two classes of gods," the gods in heaven and the Brahman on earth.³⁵

The general definition of Brahmins is comparatively modest, but as one reads the law-book of Manu, the priests go into detail and make their meaning clear.

A Brahman coming into existence, is born as the highest on earth, the lord of all created being, for the protection of the treasure of the law.

Whatever exists in the world is the property of the Brahman; on account of the excellence of his origin, the Brahman is, indeed, entitled to it all.

³⁴Monier-Williams, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

³⁵Ragozin, op. cit., p. 116.

. . . known that a Brahman of ten years and a Kshatriya of a hundred years stand to each other in the relation of father and son; but between those two the Brahman is the father. . . .

. . . . A Brahman, be he ignorant or learned, is a great divinity. . . .

. . . . Though Brahmans employ themselves in all sorts of mean occupations, they must be honored in every way; for each of them is a very great diety. . . .³⁶

The whole duty of the Kshatriya is summed up under three heads: "Not to turn back in battle; to protect the people; to honor Brahmans." The term "to worship" Brahmans is used numerous times. The Kshatriya is to "enrich them."³⁷ The kings are solemnly warned not to provoke them to anger, "for they when angered could instantly destroy him, together with his army and vehicles."³⁸ Still, it is very certain that the material power was in the hands of the warrior caste, and the Brahman realized that in theory he may be divine, but for worldly security compromise was the wisest policy. After a great deal of boasting and defiance the priest settled the controversy with a mutual understanding between Church and State;³⁹

Kshatriyas prosper not without Brahmans; Brahmans prosper not without Kshatriyas. Brahmans and Kshatriyas, being closely united, prosper in this world and the next.⁴⁰

As the Brahmanic priests were developing the Veda and interweaving it into the fibers of Aryan custom, the original five tribes of the Indo-Aryans spread out and multiplied.

³⁶Ibid., p. 276. ³⁷Ibid., p. 227. ³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., p. 178. ⁴⁰Ibid.

For the purpose of mutual protection, tribal villages combined themselves into larger units and pooled their fighting men. From among the warriors the raja or king was chosen to lead armies in battle. As tribes grew in power, grazing lands tended to overlap, and often men of one tribe came into conflict with another. As the Aryans spread to the Ganges and on throughout southern India, warfare developed on an ever increasing scale. This necessitated the maintaining of an organized force of trained fighting men. In turn, the welfare of the whole community depended on good crops, and so the best farmers were permanently excused from fighting and were permitted to remain behind in the villages to tend the fields. The king, who always led the battle in person, had to spend much time in training and fighting alongside his men. The priests were therefore in a position to maintain and increase their spheres of influence. As indicated previously, these three groups called themselves "twice-born," for at a certain age boys underwent a special initiation ceremony which entailed putting on a sacred cord as they began their study of the sacred scripture. The knowledge of the sacred writings constituted a second, or spiritual, birth, for it was the law of Manu.

Thus life was graded. The priests became Brahmans, the warriors and kings became Kshatriyas. The Vaishyas, later to become the merchant class, stemmed from the agriculturists. The Sunda class was to be made of conquered races, for the

caste system offered job specialization rather than the customary extermination or enslavement. At this point of development the caste system must have been in a fluid condition; rigidity came later. Probably the ruling classes had great latitude, and any person who by conquest or otherwise assumed power could join the Kshatriya and get the priests to manufacture an appropriate genealogy for him.⁴¹

The Kshatriya in the early development of the caste system held a most prominent position. From the puranas, or legends of post-Vedic times, comes the Ramayana and Mahabharata, material handed down from the ancient bards and ballad makers. Their special value is that they represent the Kshatriya, rather than the Brahman, traditions. Thirteen puranas give more or less royal lineages, famous battles, and general customs of the warrior class of 900 B.C.⁴² It is evident from these writings that though the priests, now endowed by the gods and their voice on earth, were temporarily overshadowed by the brilliance and daring of the Indo-Aryan warrior.

The Ramayana, or "Adventures of Rama", and the Mahabharata, or "Story of the Great Bharata War," were and still are to the Indian people what the Iliad and the Odyssey were to the ancient Greeks. They tell stories of the bitter struggle for supremacy between the Brahman caste and that of

⁴¹Nehru, op. cit., p. 75.

⁴²Robert A. Kennedy, Hinduism, p. 97.

the Kshatriyas. In both the Mahabharata and the Ramayana the following story is given: The Kshatriyas had become so arrogant and oppressive that the interference of Vishnu himself was needed to repress them. The god took human form and was born in the form of a priest called Parashu-rara, "Rama with the axe," who destroyed the warrior caste. It is said that he cleared the earth "three and seven times" of the Kshatriya race and filled five lakes with their blood--after which he gave the earth to the Brahmans.⁴³

Century after century, at the courts of kings, at religious ceremonies, and within the forest hermitages, these stories have been told. In the Ramayana it is stated:

Whoever reads or hears of the Ramayana will be free from all sin. A Brahman reaps the advantage of reading the Vedas, a Kshatriya conquers his enemies. A Vaishya is blessed with riches, and a Suddra gains great fame.⁴⁴

The same benefits were listed for the Mahabharata. No wonder, with such lavish promises these puranas have become known from one end of India to the other and far beyond!

Greeks Reveal the Hindu Castes of Their Time

At the height of the conflict between the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas, Alexander the Great set out on his famous expedition to the East. Alexander came as an explorer as well as a conquerer; on his staff were a number of trained historians and scientists. In the spring of 326 B.C., the

⁴³Ibid., p. 98.

⁴⁴Ibid.

army, having marched half across Asia, entered upon the plains of Punjab. Alexander's first halt was at the great city of Tasila. This city was one of the leading seats of Hindu learning, where the sons of princes and wealthy Brahmans were studying "The three Vedas and eighteen accomplishments." After defeating the Hindu princes of Porus, Alexander traveled down the Indus River to its mouth, where he fortified strategic positions. In 325 B.C., Alexander turned his Greeks homeward, never to return to his conquest. In October of the same year he died of fever in Babylon.⁴⁵

The actual effects of Alexander's conquest were negligible. Nevertheless, he had broken the wall between the East and West, and the contact once made was never again entirely lost.

In 305 B.C., a Greek prince named Seleucus Nicator tried to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, but he was defeated by Raja Chandragupta Maurya and gladly came to terms. An alliance was formed and sealed with a marriage between the Indian king and a Greek princess. This was the beginning of a long friendship between the Greek and Indian courts, which shed a great deal of light on the development of the caste system at that time.⁴⁶

The court of Asoka, great grandson of Chandragupta, was attended by a Greek ambassador named Megasthenes. This scholar wrote detailed accounts of India, many of which have

⁴⁵Garratt, op. cit., p. 10.

⁴⁶Ibid.

preserved. He tells us that a village had a town council of elders chosen from all castes and represented the interest concerned. The council had complete freedom in the management of village affairs. It maintained, with the cooperation of the different castes, order and peace, settled disputes, and upheld individual rights.⁴⁷

Megasthenes divides the people into seven classes. One he calls the "philosophers" who were employed to offer sacrifices publicly for the king. At the first of each year they were called by the king to make suggestions for improving the country for the public good; good advice was rewarded by exemption from taxation. The second class, the "agriculturists", formed the bulk of the population. They were exempt from military service and carried on their labors industriously as battles raged near. The "Megasthenes," the next class, comprised the herdsmen and hunters, who alone could deal with animals. They were given an allowance of grain from the king for keeping the fields free from birds and beasts. The fourth class included all those who worked at trades, sold goods, or performed any kind of manual labor. The fifth group consisted of warriors grouped into many specialized divisions. Megasthenes describes the next group as inspectors who watched all that went on and reported secretly to the king. These offices were given only to very

⁴⁷Washburn Edward Hopkins, The Religions of India, p. 246.

reliable men, who were believed never to make a false report. The seventh, and highest class of the population was described as the kings ministers who held the chief government posts.⁴⁸ Though Megasthenes does not adhere completely to the distinction of caste as proclaimed in the law of Manu, the general principle of the system was grasped.

It must be constantly kept in mind that the caste system was in a constant stage of change and development, as the foreign element continued to stream into India from the northwest. It is also well to remember that this process of absorption worked at both ends. New castes were formed at the bottom of the scale, and any successful invading element became transformed soon into Kshatriyas, the ruling class. Coins of the period just before and after the beginning of the Christian era show this rapid change in the course of two or three generations.⁴⁹ The first ruler would have a foreign name. His son or grandson appears with a Sanskrit name and is crowned according to the traditional rites prescribed for Kshatriyas. So it can be seen that, in the time of Asoka, the caste system was yet to set up its impenetrable barriers.

Buddhism Influences the Caste System

An incident that was greatly to influence the solidification of the caste system, and highlight the reign of Asoka,

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 111-112.

⁴⁹Nehru, op. cit., p. 168.

occurred some three hundred years before Alexander broke the barrier between the East and West. In the shadows of the Himalayas the greatest of all Indians was born, Gautama Buddha, "the enlightened one."

Buddha was the only son of Suddhodana, king of Kapilavastu. The raja wished to see his son grow up into a warrior like himself. But the young prince shunned the sports of his playmates and spent his time in the garden of the palace. When he reached manhood, however, he became skillful with his weapons. He won his bride by contest of arms over all rival chiefs. For ten years he enjoyed the pleasures of the world. But in his drives through the kingdom he was struck by the sight of death, disease, and destruction which he saw. He envied the peace and calm found by the holy men, so at the age of thirty Gautama retired to a forest hermitage where he hoped to find peace of the soul through the mortification of the body. Instead of earning peace of mind by self denial, he became torn with doubts and fell into religious despair. He felt that the path to salvation did not lay in self-torture but in preaching a better way of life to his people.⁵⁰

At the age of thirty-six Buddha began his public teaching. Contrary to the Brahmans, he preached not to a chosen few of a select caste but to all within the sound of his voice. His first converts were the common men and women who were denied religious teaching under the caste rules. Soon

⁵⁰Hunter, op. cit., p. 76.

Brahman princes, merchants, and the lowliest of the Sundras were added to the believers. For forty-four years Buddha wandered through India preaching salvation to a caste-ridden society. In his eightieth year he foresaw his death. He preached throughout the night, and the next day he calmly died under the shade of a fig tree in the year 543 B.C.⁵¹

The key to Buddha's success was that he brought spiritual deliverance to the people through righteousness of the spirit. The previous philosophies of release had been caste-conscious. He preached that salvation was equally open to all men and that it must be earned, not by beseeching idols, but by one's own conduct. He did away with sacrifices and with the priestly claims of the Brahmans as mediators of the Gods. He taught that state of man in this life, in all past lives, and in all future lives, was a result of his own action. (Hopkins tells us that Karma first arose in Buddhism and was adopted in the Upanishads by the Brahmans)⁵² What a man sows, so must he reap. As no good deed goes without reward, and no evil remains unpunished, it follows that no priest or God can prevent each man from receiving his just reward. His merits and faults are a sum total of his actions in all previous lives. A system of the kind where past, present, and future depends on ourselves can leave little room for a personal God.⁵³

⁵¹Earl of Ronaldshay, India, A Bird's Eye View, p. 78.

⁵²Hopkins, op. cit., p. 137. ⁵³Dubois, op. cit., p. 73.

Buddha taught that this end could only be reached by leading a good life. Instead of Brahman sacrifices, "he laid down three great duties: namely, control over self, kindness to other men, and reverence for living creatures."⁵⁴

As time passed the Vedic religion became clouded, partly because of the aboriginal cultures and perhaps because of the life under the terrific sway of nature as it exists in India. Man began to think of life as a burden and not as a blessing, and at the same time he thought that the soul returned again and again to the earth, in birth after birth, carrying forward each time evil and good as taught in the Vedas. "it was and still is believed by this law that evil is punished and good rewarded."⁵⁵ It was also taught that by observation of certain rituals or by observation in the knowledge of the "Absolute Reality," the soul could be set free from rebirth and, therefore, from suffering. "Absolute Reality" can only be gained after one has been reborn into the Brahman caste, which means that one has led a good life of following caste line in the past. When at last a Brahman's endless steps of self-denial and prayer end, only then can this most honored state be obtained.

Buddha had the courage to attack these popular beliefs. His appeal was to logic, reason, and experience. His whole

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 102.

⁵⁵M. L. Christlieb, Uphill Steps In India, p. 125.

approach came like a breath of fresh wind to a caste stifled India.

As Buddhism increased in momentum there rose a similar sect known as Jainism, under the leadership of Mahavira, the great reformer. The Jains, like the Buddhist, denied the authority of the Veda, except insofar as it agreed with their own teachings; disregarded sacrifice; practice of a strict morality; believed that past and future depended upon their own actions rather than on any external deity; and refused to kill either man or beast.⁵⁶

There was nothing in the doctrines of Buddhism that could not have been reconciled with those of the Vedanta (Upanishads).⁵⁷ But the driving force of Buddhism, and also of Jainism, was a spirit of social solidarity which appealed to all castes and to women as well as to men. (The Vedants reserved the study of scriptures to men of the "twice born" castes.) Buddha and Mahavira were no respectors of persons. Their religious orders invited any member of Hindu society to study to become a nun or priest regardless of his previous station in the caste system. It was this fact, in spite of the elasticity of Hinduism at the time, that made Buddhists and Jains unpardonable heretics in the eyes of the Brahmans.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Hunter, op. cit., p. 83.

⁵⁷Valentine Chirol, India Old and New, p. 27.

⁵⁸Ibid.

The emphasis of Jainism and Buddhism on non-violence led to the tilling of the soil being considered a lowly occupation, for it often resulted in the destruction of animal life. The occupation which had been the pride of the Indo-Aryans went down the scale in value, and those who actually tilled the land descended to the place of the lowly Sundra class today. Thus Buddhism was a revolt against the degradation of a countless multitude of tillers of the soil in India. Jainism pushed along in the same direction to non-violence.

The whole effect of Buddhist teaching was one of a passive attitude toward life, even more than the Jainist. There was an emphasis on other worldliness; there was a desire for liberation and for freedom from the burdens of the world. Chastity was encouraged and vegetarianism increased. All these ideals were present in India before Buddha, but the emphasis was different. The emphasis of the old Aryan ideal was a full, normal, and well-rounded life.

The survival of Buddhism in India is not to be found in any one body but in the religion of the whole Hindu people and in the principles of the brotherhood of man. Buddhism is reflected in the haven which the Hindu sect of Baishnavs offers to women who have fallen victim to caste rules, to the widows, and to the out-castes.⁵⁹ It is found in the banker's guild of Surat which devotes part of the fees, which it levies

⁵⁹Hunter, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

on bills of exchange, to maintain hospitals for sick animals. This service was a survival of a system set up by Asoka in 224 B.C. Buddha brought this new respect for life and kindness to animals, and always behind this was the endeavor to lead a higher life.

Buddha did not attack the caste directly; his order did not recognize it, and there is no doubt that his whole attitude and activity weakened the caste system. "The new religion did not divide men by their caste but according to their religious merit."⁶⁰

After Buddha's death in 543 B.C., his teachings spread throughout India. In about 257 B.C. Asoka became a zealous convert of the faith. He passed a law making Buddhism the religion of the state. Edicts were sent out, a State Department to watch over its purity was set up, and missionaries were sent to spread the doctrine.⁶¹ Castes were not abolished. On the contrary, reverence to Brahman ranked as one of the three great duties, along with obedience to parents and acts of kindness to all men and animals.

Buddhism never drove Brahmanism out of India. The two religions lived together during more than a thousand years, from before the death of Buddha to about 900 A.D. Modern Hinduism is the joint product of both. In certain kingdoms

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 156.

⁶¹Dhan Gopal Mukerji, Caste and Out Cast, p. 52.

of India, and at certain periods, Buddhism prevailed. But Brahmanism was at no time crushed, and the Brahmans in the end claimed Buddha as the ninth incarnation of their own god, Vishnu.⁶² Doubtless, one strong reason why the Buddhists ultimately failed to maintain their position in India was that while the Brahmans had adopted the caste system and made it their own, the Buddhists did not recognize it or give it due recognition.

During the latter part of this long period Hinduism was busy re-absorbing Buddhism. This absorption was made difficult because magnificent Buddhist literature had sprung up, and mammoth rock-cut shrines and palaces ever reminded the people of the beautiful releases offered by the Buddhist faith. This faith stood against the lightning raid of Alexander the Great, the invasions of wild tribes from central Asia, the breaking down of the large Indian kingdoms, and the Islamic invaders from the West. But with shock after shock, Buddhism began to decay and became deeply affected by worship of gods and demons.

Meanwhile Hinduism, stimulated by a competitive religion, had developed another Way of Release, perhaps the most significant of all. Long before Gautama Buddha, India was being taught that the right observation of caste-duties and caste-ceremonials was the main Way of Release from eternal

⁶²Ibid., p. 81.

existence. It was set forth in the Gita, the "New Testament of the Hindu." Krishna was set forth as the object of devotion, worship, and obedience. The true worshipper was to do his duty within the caste system as a member of the community, and he was to do everything in the spirit of devotion of a personal Savior-God. It was a message which spoke directly to the common man, demanding elaborate ritual or retirement from the world. It was a warm and personal religion.⁶³

Hinduism was thus revised. The feeble remains of Buddhism were steadily absorbed into Hindu religion and philosophy.

Islam Influences the Caste System

The defeat of Buddhism had thrown Hindu society into a stupor of self-sufficiency. The Indians had given up the idea of uniting themselves under one strong imperial rule. They were setting themselves into small caste societies, rigidly separated from each other. It was upon an India divided into a large number of Hindu castes and Kingdoms, frequently hostile to each other, that the main Moslem attack broke late in the tenth century. At first there were destructive raids which were soon seen to be the prelude of Moslem imperialism. The Indian people quickly bound themselves

⁶³John S. Hoyland, Indian Crises, pp. 18-19.

together by their common allegiance to the Gita (the Gita is Krishna) which the Mohammedans despised.⁶⁴

From the early sixteenth century to early in the eighteenth, most of India was loosely united under the feudal rule of the Mughal Empire. During this time of Mohammedan conquest, the worship of the gods among the Hindus assumed a more "terrific and organic character." Many of the most splendid temples were built during this period. The ancient custom of religious pilgrimages to shrines and to the banks of sacred rivers was revised and incorporated into religious doctrine. Caste, which was as foreign to Islam as to Christianity, retained its hold on the converts to Islam as it has in later times upon the Christians. The caste system ended to harden still further under the pressure of the invaders. A spirit of religious and national rebellion developed under the Mohammedan rule.⁶⁵

Akbar the Great, the real founder of the Mughal Empire as it was to exist for one and a half centuries, came to the throne in 1556. Akbar felt that with the religious exclusiveness of Islam on one hand, and the rigidity of the Hindu caste system on the other, there could be no security for the future of India. He had some of the Brahmanical sacred books translated into Persian, the cultural language of his court,

⁶⁴Maridas Ruthnaswamy, India From The Dawn, p. 136.

⁶⁵Valentine Chirol, India Old and New, p. 64.

so that he could study them for himself. Hindus, Mohammedans, and Christians were invited to study with him and present the merits of their religious systems. In the great hall of the Kbadat Khaneh, built for this purpose, Akbar himself took part in the discussions of the learned priests in search of religious truths.⁶⁶

Akbar founded a new religion. The religion borrowed its ritual chiefly from the Hindu but practically abolished Mohammedan observances. The Mohammedans threw up their hands in horror, and many preferred self-exile to conformity. He encroached upon the beliefs of the caste in forbidding Hindu infant marriages and the self-cremation of Hindu widows. The Brahmans, especially, he condemned as a constant "stone of offence."⁶⁷

The greatest effect of the Moslem invasion on the caste system was the rise of the new Rajputs caste. The ancient Kshatriya class had long disappeared and the Rajputs stepped in to take its place. The Rajputs were probably descendants of relatively recent invaders who had been quickly Hinduized. The three Rajput states stood directly in the path of the Mohammedans as they stormed India from the northwest. Stiff resistance was put up against the invaders, but disputes between the Rajput princes prevented a united resistance against the enemy. These warring Hindus migrated from their

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

homes in mass rather than submit to the strangers. Some of the Rajputs scattered throughout India; others moved to the region bordering on the desert of the Indus and there founded a military kingdom which bears their name to this day. Before the British appeared in India the Hindus had rallied. The Rajputs eventually became the military champions of Hinduism against the Moslems, and in return for their services they lay claim to the title of Kshatriya which was not likely to be disputed.

Under the Buddhist and Mohammedan influences the caste system had crystalized. Rigidity of caste, for which Hinduism is so notoriously known, had taken a death grip on Hindu society. With the British invasion came the so-called "modern influence" on the caste system. Thus an excellent opportunity is presented to discuss the enter workings of the caste system, so that further caste modifications brought about by the "Christian influences" can be more readily understood.

CHAPTER II

THE INTERNAL WORKINGS OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

The Heterogeneous Nature of the Caste System

It has already been noted how the Brahmans raised themselves to the highest rank in the Hindu society. To maintain their position they invoked a rigorous code to safeguard their ceremonial purity. ^{in order to maintain their position as the highest rank in Hindu society,} They could marry only those belonging to the same order, and the eating of unholy food was forbidden.

The enforcement of such strict rules by the Brahmans stimulated the other classes to imitate these measures. But as ordinary mortals could not always follow the path of the gods, separate codes of conduct grew up in each section of society. By demanding strict observance in marriage and diet, the Brahmans and their imitators erected caste lines among themselves and cast out the Aborigines.

Slowly, as the members of the community assumed new occupations, built towns and cities, and adopted organized government, these separate orders crystalized into the hereditary groups known as castes. In the course of time, as they multiplied, they split into numerous sub-castes, and the distinctions among them became more complex and rigid. Each held its members to a certain pattern of life.

There are supposedly between two and four thousand castes. The exact number, however, is immaterial, for the whole social body is steeped in them and their dividing lines involve the vast majority of the people in the most intricate customs.

No definition of caste can be given which is entirely satisfactory. A few statements of characteristic features can be made which, however, are frequently subject to contradiction.

... castes are inmarrying groups inherited from parents; membership is exclusive in one caste and for life; fixed social status attaches to one's caste; one must follow an occupation traditional to the caste; one considers himself descended from an ancestor common to the whole caste; one is controlled in behavior by village, district, and provincial assemblies of his caste fellows; one follows certain ceremonies and holds certain beliefs peculiar to the caste; and, finally, one maintains complex relationship of whom services are performed and from whom other services are expected. Without entering further into the complexities of the system, it must be noted that most individual castes are divided into endogamous, inmarrying, and finally, into exogamous, outmarrying, groups of varying social status and that the latter constitutes lineages of related family lines, within which marriage is not possible. Among Brahmans the exogamous sub-caste group is the gotra, among Rajputs, the clan. There are, however, many castes of Brahmans and many castes of Rajputs.¹

To make the system more real, we might put the Indian caste into a skyscraper with the upper castes at the top and the lower at the bottom.² The penthouse and upper stories

¹Gilbert, op. cit., p. 36. *ok*

²Ibid., pp. 61-62. *ok*

would be reserved for the Brahmans in all their major varieties, such as the Sanadhya, Audichya, Srasvat, and Baur. These would correspond to the clergy in our own culture such as Irish Catholic, German Catholic, Negro Baptist, and English Episcopal.

In the stories below we would place the Rajputs, Gurkhas, Dogras, and other military castes. These would correspond to our tank corps, infantry, antiaircraft units, and other military divisions.

Below the military would be the middle stories of the sky scraper occupied by Banian, Khatri, Auouas, and similar Vaisya groups. In our own society these would be small and large business men, bankers, managers, engineers and so forth.

Toward the street level the skyscraper would be occupied by the clean Sundra, such as the agricultural caste in good standing, barbers, goldsmiths, and glass makers. These would correspond to our own tradesmen such as farmers, artisans and mechanics.

But this is not all. Beneath the level of the street, in the basement and sub-basement, we would have to squeeze the remainder of Hindu society: all the unclean Sundras (fisher, washerman, shoemaker, weaver, potter, and street cleaner) which are more familiarly known as Untouchables. These would correspond in our society to migratory laborers, tramps, bums, prostitutes, and small-time gamblers.

At this point it may be well to point out a little more

clearly what sets one caste off socially from another. This shall be done by describing the six most important distinguishing characteristics or social practices that make caste, once an individual is born into a caste group. There are: segmentation of society, hierarchy, restrictions on eating and social intercourse, civil and religious disabilities and privileges, restrictions of choice of occupation, and restrictions in marriage.³ In order to illustrate the segmentation of society, hierarchy, restrictions as to vocation, and to a limited extent other distinguishing characteristics of the caste system, Hypes' description of a village in Northern India will be given. The castes are given in a descending sequence from the highest to the lowest, together with their vocations.

Brahman and related	(Brahman, priest and teacher (Bhat, family bard and genealogist
------------------------	--

Kshatriya and related	(Syasth, accountant (Sunar, goldsmith (Mali, florist
--------------------------	--

what happened to the Vaishya Caste?

	(Kachhi, vegetable grower (Lodha, rice grower (Barhai, carpenter (Lohar, iron-smith
--	--

Sundra and related	(Nai, barber (Kahar, water bearer (Gadariya, shepherd (Bharbhujja, grain (Darzi, seamster (Kumhar, potter (WahaJan, tradesman (Tele, oil presser
-----------------------	---

Teal's

is not sundra

³James Lowell Hypes, Spotlight on The Culture of India, p. 117.

Out-castes (Dhobi, washerman
 (Dhanuk, mat maker
 (Chamar, leather worker
 (Bhangi, sweeper and cesspool cleaner
 (Fakir, hereditary Mohammedan beggar
 (Mahihar, Mohammedan glass gangle seller
 (Dhuna, Mohammedan cotton carder
 (Tawaif, Mohammedan dancing girl⁴

In this classification, Hypes does not designate any of these castes as belonging to the Vaisya, or second largest division of caste below the Brahman, composed of merchants and tradesmen. It is suspected that the Mahajan or tradesman and possibly a few other castes of this village may belong to that division. It should also be noticed that this list separates castes ^{with prominent only} so far as occupation is concerned. In a religious sense all can hardly be termed castes. For example, the Fakir or Mohammedan beggar theoretically does not form a caste since the Korna does not recognize such social distinction. Furthermore Christianity is making gains in the out-caste group. In reality, at least in many sections, a new caste has been formed: the Christian caste. The complexity of the caste is intensified when we reflect that a caste in one section may not recognize any social tie with a body bearing the same name in another section of India. Castes with the same name may hold different positions in social hierarchy and profess a different form of religion in varying sections of India.⁵

⁴Ibid., pp. 117-118.

⁵Vera Anstey, The Economic Development of India, pp. 47-49.

As to the segments of Hindu society, this village is broken up into at least twenty-five distinct fragments, and in terms of hierarchy, there is a gradual elevation in social position from one of the lowest out-castes (Tsesif) to the Brahman, who is supreme in the caste system.

As to the restriction in choice of vocation, two observations should be made. First, in a village the jajmani system operates, where there is an exchange of service so that there is one who serves and one who is served.⁶ Second, such elasticity as exists in the hereditary caste vocations grows greater as the upper levels are reached. An example of the rigidity of caste observance in vocations was related to writer by a British official in Calcutta. His sweeper, alone, could not do all the work of keeping the house in proper order, and his water carrier did not have enough work to employ his full time. To solve the difficulty, the Britisher asked that the water carrier help the sweeper. The sweeper objected on the grounds that these were two separate hereditary occupations and it would be breaking caste rules to share work with a water carrier. The water carrier would not consider helping the sweeper for he feared his services might be completely boycotted by Indian employers. Under the pressure of caste traditions the Englishman had to hire another sweeper. On the other hand, a Brahman may take up a profession

⁶Hypes, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

such as law, teaching, or governmental service. When economic pressure is severe, the Brahman may even do farm labor, house work, or any position not involving actual defilement, without loss of caste.⁷

1st *External and Internal Defilements*
2 *of the Caste System*

External and Internal Defilements
of the Caste System

Food taboos and pollution by touch, form excellent criteria for classifying castes, for the basis of education of the spirit of the Hindu is external and internal defilement. This is not only true of the Brahman but of all Hindus. They have numerous precautions to prevent the possibility of coming into contact with anything that would defile their person, clothing, furniture, temples, and other common articles of every day use. It is this idea that has raised such barriers between the Hindu and his countryman and the outside world. The principal laws of the caste system direct that individuals shall eat only with members of their own caste and that food must be cooked by a fellow caste member or a Brahman. No superior shall allow one of inferior caste to touch his cooked food or even enter the room in which it is being cooked. Yet a Brahman may eat sweetmeat or wheat with men of the warrior class or trading class but no rice, for that is supposed to admit equality. Articles of a dry nature, such as

⁷Dubois, op. cit., p. 293.

rice, grain, and so forth, are exempt from defilement by touch as long as they remain dry.⁸

Hindus are never allowed to touch meat, and this includes not only anything that has had life, fish included, but also anything that has contained the germ of life, such as eggs. Vegetables, which form their principle food, are also subject to numerous exceptions. Thus they reject any vegetable root or stem which grows in the shape of a head, such as onions, garlic, and mushrooms. Whoever eats of forbidden things cannot, according to Brahmanical doctrine, keep his body really pure.

People who abstain entirely from animal food acquire such an acute sense of smell that they can perceive in a moment from a person's breath, or from the exudation of the skin, whether that person has eaten meat or not; and that even after a lapse of twenty-four hours.⁹

To kill a cow, according to the principles of Hindu law, is not only a crime, but a hideous sacrilege, which can only be atoned by the death of the offender. While to eat the flesh of a cow is a defilement which cannot be purified. Untouchables, however, are allowed to feed on the flesh of those animals which die of age or disease.¹⁰

The way in which they take their food is also a matter of much importance. It would be considered very rude to speak during meals. They eat in silence, and conversation

⁸Hubert Compton, Indian Life in Town and Country, p. 22.

⁹Dubois, op. cit., p. 192.

¹⁰Monier-Williams, op. cit., p. 117.

only begins at the end of a meal after they have washed their hands. Nothing must be touched with the left hand unless it be the vessel which contains water. Hindus drink only once, and that is when they have finished eating; then the liquid is poured into their mouths from a distance so as not to defile the fingers with saliva. To drink as we do, by putting the glass to the lips would, in their eyes, be the height of indecency. While eating, great care must be taken so that not a fragment falls into the leaf serving as a neighbor's plate. One single grain of rice would prevent the other from finishing his meal.¹¹

The remains of food are never put aside and kept after a meal. It cannot be given to the poor unless they are untouchables, who may eat anything. Food that is given to the poor must be of a certain variety (generally dried grain), and in an uncooked form.

Food taboos and pollution by touch was introduced to Hypes in his travels throughout India. Thus on one occasion in a mission school, two high class boys tied their lunches to the rafters in order to prevent the pollution of their food by the touch or shadows of the inferior caste students. These boys were orthodox Hindus abiding by the rules set down for their caste. To make this point more clear, Hypes summarized the food taboos which are formulated to prevent

¹¹Dubois, op. cit., pp. 183-184.

pollution by touch.

1. The communal taboo, which prescribes the persons in whose company one may eat.
2. The cooking taboo, which prescribes who may cook one's food.
3. The food taboo, which prescribes the kind of food one may eat.
4. The eating taboo, which prescribes the ritual one may practice at a meal.
5. The drinking taboo, which prescribes the person from whom one may take water.
6. The smoking taboo, which prescribes the person whose pipe one may smoke, and in whose presence one may smoke.
7. The vessel taboo, which lays down the sort of vessel one may use in eating, drinking, and cooking.¹²

Earthen vessels, because of the material from which they are made, differ from the metal vessels in that they can never be purified once they become unclean. Washing will purify the metal should it become defiled, but clay vessels must be broken. As long as earthen vessels are new and in the hands of the potter anyone, even an untouchable, may handle them. But from the moment that they have contained water, they can only be used by members of the caste that bought them. Brahmans carry this point so far as never to allow strangers to enter their kitchen, lest some person of an unclean caste should cast their eyes on the earthenware inside.¹³ If this should happen, each metal vessel would have to be scrubbed and the earthen ones broken to pieces. It is for this reason that women never draw water in an earthen

¹²Hypes, op. cit., p. 125.

¹³Christlieb, op. cit., p. 92.

vessel but always use one made of copper or brass. And even with this precaution, water is never pure for all to drink unless it is drawn at dawn by the hands of a Brahman.

It is the same with their clothes as with their vessels. Some clothing can be defiled; others cannot. Silk, the skin of the tiger, and the skin of the antelope remain pure always, as does cloth made of certain plants. Brahmans prefer to wear silk, especially at meals. When a Brahman doctor wishes to feel the pulse of a person of a lower caste, he first wraps the wrist in a small piece of silk so that he may not be defiled by touching his patient's skin.¹⁴ The cotton cloth worn by the majority of the natives of India is peculiarly susceptible to defilement. One dressed in cotton can be rendered unclean by the slightest touch of a person of inferior caste, or, above all, the touch of Europeans, who are on the same social level of the Untouchables. On the subject of pollution by touch, Ghandi said:

While at school I would often happen to touch untouchables, and as I never would conceal the fact from my parents, my mother would tell me that the shortest cut to purification after the unholy touch was to cancel the touch by touching any Musalaman passing by. And simply out of reverence and regard for my mother I often did so but never did so believing it to be a religious obligation.¹⁵

The Brahman will take the greatest pains to protect his clothing and person from anything unclean. Clothes returned by

¹⁴Katherine Mayo, Mother India, p. 125.

¹⁵Savel Zimand, Living India, p. 102.

Bless Miss Mayo, who learnt something things with her short stay in a country of Sagoa villages with-out visiting any one of them and without speaking even a word of the language spoken in India by Indians. She was getting certainty.

(Why take quotation from Miss Mayo, and not directly from Ghandi?)

washmen must be dropped into water and rinsed before they are worn because the defilement of the washman's hands must be removed. The same thing happens with clothes which come straight from the unclean hands of the unclean weaver.¹⁶

A Brahman is very careful in his walking, as are other castes. He would have to bathe immediately if he stepped on a bone, glass, or any other thing that might have been used by another of lower caste. The Brahman, if he is rich, carries silk to sit upon, but if he is poor he can purify the place he sits by rubbing it with cow-dung.¹⁷

An interesting account of pollution by touch was given by Hypes. A young man of a high caste family, while walking through the country one morning, was attracted by a beautiful low caste servant girl. The young man laid his hand on the girl's shoulder in order to begin a friendly conversation. The girl uttered a wild scream which brought servants running from all sides, and sank to the ground. This was only the beginning for further excitement, for the girl considered herself thus selected as the young man's mate and wished to be accepted by the boy's family. He barricaded himself in his room, while the girl and her parents took up a position outside the door. This state of affairs was quickly brought to the attention of the village council. The council finally decided that while the young man had been polluted through

¹⁶Dubois, op. cit., p. 181.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 132.

touch, the difficulty should be solved by the young man performing rigorous penance for a time, which included a pilgrimage to a distant holy place, payment of a heavy fine, and the performance of certain purification rites. The girl was also to go through a rigorous purification, and in the end the marriage was to be performed, regardless of the wishes of either of the persons involved. The new family thus to be formed was assigned a social status somewhat lower than that of the young man's parents.¹⁸

Spent The Hindu believes that the untouchables have the greatest polluting power of all, even exceeding that of the jackal. His look or shadow defiles food to the extent that it must be destroyed. Their very bodies discharge pollution. If an untouchable wishes to linger near the highway, he must measure the distance to the road. If it be within two hundred yards, he must carefully place on the road a green leaf weighted down with a handful of earth, thereby indicating that he is within pollution distance of that point. The passing Brahman, seeing the signal, halts and calls out. The untouchable must take to his heels, and when he is the proper distance calls back, "I am now two hundred yards away. Be pleased to pass."¹⁹

The effects of childbirth render women for a time unclean. The mother of a newly-born child lives entirely apart for a month or more, during which time she may touch nothing in the

¹⁸Hypes, op. cit., p. 121.

¹⁹Gasper Correa, Three Voyages of Vasco Da Gamma, p. 155.

None but Miss Mayo, yes, not even the women who have lived all their lives as caste Hindu women, in society have seen this but Miss Mayo has divine eyes. She could see even that which did not enter.

house or any clothing not her own. The time for her seclusion being over, she is bathed, or else a great quantity of water is poured over her head. Women are similarly isolated during the time of their periodical uncleanness. In all decent houses there is a small house set aside for them; but among the poor there is no such accommodation; the women are turned into the street, or else they are allowed a corner in the cow shed. When the time of uncleanness is passed, all her clothing is sent to the washman. Her clothes are not allowed inside the house, in fact, no one would dare to look at them.²⁰

The sight of a corpse in any country produces horror. The Hindus, however, consider even attending a funeral sufficient to defile them. They would not think of going home without first taking a bath. Even the news of death defiles them, and they must rush and bathe. Only the news of the death of a close friend or relative will not defile them. Even the air can be defiled by smoke of funeral pyres or the smell of cooking from the lower caste. 910 P

The doctrine laid down in Hindu creeds says that the only real defilement of the soul (internal defilement) proceeds from sin, which is caused by wilfully doing evil. One Hindu poet, Vemana,⁹² expressed himself on the subject by saying: 'It is water which causes mud, and it is water which

²⁰Mayo, op. cit., p. 143.

removes it. It is your will that makes you commit sin, and it is by your will alone that you can be purified'. This portion of Hindu philosophy seems to be entirely obscure. The Brahmans have allowed themselves to believe that without either the will or the intention of renouncing evil it is possible for the soul to be purified by various means. Pancha-
 gavya^{?? (the five things obtained from cow, including milk)} gavia (urine of a cow) is sufficient to obtain the remission of any sin whatever, even when the sin has been committed deliberately. By-products of the cow are sacred to the Hindu for the early Aryans depended upon the cow for existence. The cow provided their food and their sacred offerings; the Rig-veda gave her a sacred place in Hindu society.²¹

Absolution performed in certain sacred rivers, such as the Ganges, the Indus, the ^{Caveri} Caubery, and others, purifies both the soul and the body from any defilement they may ever have contracted. It is even possible for a person living at a distance from these rivers to obtain the advantages conferred by their cleansing waters without leaving his home. He has only to transport himself within his mind and to think of the place where he bathes.

There are several celebrated streams and tanks in India that are said to have the same purifying powers. But some of them possess this virtue only at intervals. Some famous tanks are potent only every twelve years, while others are

²¹Dubois, op. cit., p. 196.

what is the definition of guru, according to westerners?
Guru is not the term used in India either for caste headsmen or for any man having superior caste. For meaning of the term in Guru, you must read My Indian Journey by Helen of Australia page

effective every three years. When the year and the day arrives for people to bathe in these sacred waters, a pilgrimage is made to the spot by enormous crowds. These devotees have been notified by messengers sent in all directions by the Brahmans, who are interested in keeping up this holy tradition. When the signal is given, all present, men, women, and children, rush screaming into the water. They soon find themselves heaped on top of one another, so that they can hardly move. It almost always happens that in the midst of this confusion several are drowned or suffocated, and others come out with broken and dislocated limbs. Happy are those who lose their lives on such an occasion! Those victims go straight to Heaven, released from rebirth.²²

When a Hindu has defiled himself to the extent that absolution cannot take away his sin he must be cut off and expelled from his caste. Those whose duty it is to disown the culprit are the gurus, or the caste headsmen. In order to help them decide such questions, they call in a few leaders who are versed on the question in dispute.

This expulsion from caste, which follows either a breach of caste or some public offense which would upset the entire community, renders him dead to the rest of society. In losing his caste, he loses not only his relations and friends, but his wife and his children who would rather leave him than

²²Ibid.

share his disgrace. No one would dare eat with him or even give him a drink of water. If he has marriageable daughters, nobody will ask them in marriage, and his sons will be refused wives. Everywhere he goes he will be pointed out and scorned as an outcaste.²³ *408*

When expulsion from caste is the result of some offense that, upon consideration, might be forgiven, the guilty person is readmitted into his caste following one or all of the following ordeals. His tongue is burnt with a piece of heated gold; he is branded on different parts of his body with a red-hot iron; he is made to walk barefooted over red-hot coals. Finally, he is compelled to complete his purification by drinking a mixture of cow milk, butter, dung, and urine.²⁴ If he ever gets into trouble again, his excommunication is always sighted.

Marriage Under the Caste System

THIS SEEMS LIKE A QUOTE FROM THE BOOK.

India is a land where boys are husbands before they have shed their baby teeth, and, occasionally, brides are married in their cradles. There are no unmarried girls over fourteen, and many are widows of half that age. There is no courting before marriage, and a husband cannot notice his wife in public, nor a wife so much as pronounce her husband's name.

Outsiders are invariably impressed by the inter-dining

²³Holderness, People and Problems of India, p. 100.

²⁴Dubois, op. cit., p. 44.

restrictions and other barriers erected among the various castes. But the real stronghold of the caste system is the regulations concerning marriage. All castes regulate marriage, one rule forbids the members of the caste to marry outside of their own sub-caste. This is known as edogamy or marrying-in. But the caste laws also prohibit a member from marrying within a certain division of his sub-caste. This is exogamy or marrying out.²⁵

To eliminate unnecessary confusion in discussing the caste regulations of marriage we might imagine that all the people who bear the surname Smith constitute a caste.²⁶ All these Smiths trace their origin back to a mythical ancestor named Smith, who made the first bronze battle-axe. Since that time Smiths have always married Smiths, never Jones', Browns, or Hardys.

Later the entire caste of Smiths split up into a large number of inmarrying clans based on all sorts of trivial distinctions. There would be the card-playing Smiths, total-abstainer Smiths, Texas Smiths, and vegetarian Smiths, all of which would confine marriage within their own ranks. Still further, within each of these inmarrying clans a number of sub-divisions or outmarrying groups bearing distinctive names and governed by rules preventing a man of the same name

²⁵Zimand, op. cit., p. 94.

²⁶Gilbert, op. cit., pp. 61-70.

marrying a girl of that name. Each of these divisions would trace descent from a traditional ancestor.

Each inmarrying clan would be also divided into several sub-clans which would form a sort of ascending scale of social distinctions. Thus, the Texas Smiths would be divided into (1) Dallas Smiths, (2) Fort Worth Smiths, and (3) Denton Smiths. A man of the highest, or Dallas Smiths might marry any girl in his own group or of the two lower classes. A Fort Worth Smith can marry in his own class or a Denton Smith. A Denton Smith can only marry a Denton Smith.

Each of the inmarrying clans must dine with its own members. Dining relations between these groups are limited to food to which water has not been added. They may eat anything in which the products of the cow are used, such as chocolate or candy. Ice cream may be eaten on a metal but never on a porcelain plate.²⁷

Each of the two or three thousand most common American names would form a distinct caste along the lines as described above. No one could marry outside his caste line and then could marry only within limits which are prescribed by restrictions imposed by differences of residence, occupation, religion, custom, or social status. This, perhaps, gives a faint idea of the complexity of India caste society.

According to Hindu law, marriage is a duty; and "by begetting a virtuous son a man saves himself from hell as well

²⁷Ibid., p. 62.

as the seven preceeding and seven following generations."²⁸
 A son must perform the proper religious ceremonies at and after the death of his father and crack the father's skull on the funeral pyre, according to caste ritual. For this reason, as well as from desire, the beginning of the average boy's sexual life barely awaits his ability. Neither habit nor public opinion limits his activity to his wife or wives.²⁹

Mr. Gandhi has recorded that he lived with his wife, as such, when he was thirteen years old, and adds that if he had not, unlike his brothers in similar cases, left her presence for certain periods each day to go to school, he would have either fallen a prey to disease or would have lead a burdensome existence.³⁰

Every Hindu marriage is monogamous though the great majority are polygamous in practice. Yet, there is a law which allows a man to take a second wife if the first proves childless or quarrelsome. From the earliest time, kings and wealthy men have been accustomed to marrying many wives. Among the Tao, a pastoral people in the Nilgiris country, polyandry, plural husbands, is practiced. When a girl becomes the wife of a young man, it is usually understood that she becomes the wife of his brothers also. If a groom is too young to fulfill the duties of a husband, his wife's first child is credited to his oldest brother.³¹

For Hindu parents to have an unmarried daughter is a religious sin and a social shame. In order to assure themselves

²⁸Walter T. Wallbank, India, p. 45.

²⁹Mayo, op. cit., p. 26.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Hypes, op. cit., p. 138.

parents get their girls betrothed as soon as possible, sometimes even when the children are in their cradles. So important is marriage to the social status and dignity of women, that among certain primitive tribes unmarried daughters have each been ceremonially married to a tree, a flower, a sword, or a peacock in order to free her from the disgrace of celibacy.³² Hindu dancing girls are often married in this manner to avoid the entanglements of genuine marriage.

The position of a wife in Hindu society is now one of submissive servitude. It is written in one of the Hindu law books that a wife shall not laugh without drawing her veil over her face. She shall never speak to a strange man, but may converse with an ascetic, a hermit, or an old man. If her husband should go on a trip, she must not hear music or enjoy or behold things that give her pleasure; but "shall fasten well the house door."³³

Because of the great importance placed on marriage, certain castes in certain localities, such as the Rajputs in Katiawar, Rajputana, and the United Provinces, have long practiced infanticide. It was the outcome of the custom of Hypergamy, by which a woman must be married to a man of a group superior, or at least equal to her own. The choice of husbands in the higher groups was necessarily narrow, and the expense of obtaining them was enormous because of their

³²L. S. S. O'Malley, Modern India And The West, p. 354.

³³Margaret Berke-White, Halfway to Freedom, p. 121.

scarcity. In addition to this, the customary code of social honor required lavish marriage festivities. Faced with the possibility of being unable to fulfill a religious duty or, if they did so, of being ruined financially, fathers solved their problem by killing their daughters at birth or soon thereafter. O'Malley states that in a certain community of Rajputs it was reported: "Not only are there no girls to be found in their houses now, but there never have been any, nor had such an event as the marriage of a daughter taken place for more than 200 years."³⁴

Less than a hundred years ago Hindu widows practiced sutee, burning themselves alive on the funeral pyre of their husbands. It had, however, been impossible for them to acquire a new husband if they did not follow their husbands into the next world. Today, if a widow was orthodox, she must withdraw from normal activity, prepare her meals separately in some dark corner of the house, and shave her head to make herself unattractive to men for the rest of her life. This is the heavy price that must be paid by countless thousands of girls that have never reached puberty.

Brahmanism the Key to the Caste System

Savant
 The entire caste system moves around the highest caste, that of the Brahman. In understanding Brahmanism, one finds the key to the caste system.

³⁴O'Malley, op. cit., p. 258.

Because of the wide ^{Differences} dispersion of the Brahmans, the variety of caste which they serve, ~~and~~ the differences in practices of eating and speaking, innumerable barriers have been set up and minute subdivisions have been created in this top caste. In every village the rank of Brahmanical subdivision) is set and backed by public opinion. In each community there are degraded groups who, though bearing the title of Brahman, ^{are} frequently held inferior to non-Brahmans.³⁵

As stated previously, Brahmans do not confine themselves to priestly functions but take up many of the unpolluting secular occupations. Regardless of their occupation, however, they are entitled to the homage of the rest of the community.

The life of every Hindu is inmeshed in the rituals ^{per-}formed by the Brahman. When a child is born, the Brahman must perform sacred rites; otherwise, the child will not prosper. Sixteen days after birth the Brahman must be called to cleanse the child of "birth pollution." A little later the child must be named, and the Brahman must be present. In the third month, the baby's hair must be clipped under the direction of the Brahman. In the sixth month the Brahman must be called to prepare the child for taking solid food. At the completion of the first year an elaborate ceremony is held under the direction of the Brahman. Again at the end of the seventh year the boy's education begins and the Brahman must

³⁵Gilbert, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

be called. When a girl reaches her first birthday, her seventh, or anywhere up to sixteen, comes her betrothal, and the Brahman must officiate. Then, when puberty comes, or earlier if marriage is consummated, the Brahman must be notified. When a man dies, his corpse can be removed only after receiving the blessing of the Brahman. At the cremation, every month for a year the man's son must hold a feast for Brahmans. For what is used by the Brahmans is enjoyed by the dead. Thereafter, once a year, during the son's life, he must repeat the observation.³⁶

To understand the vital importance of Brahmanism as a hinge upon which the entire caste system swings, Brahmanical life must be considered in four important aspects. First is the young Brahman who has been invested with the triple cord, and who, from that time on is called Brahmachari. The second is the one who has married; he is called Grahastha. But this name is especially applied after he has become a father. The third one is the Brahman who, renouncing the world, retires to the jungles with his wife. He is known as Vana-prastha. The fourth is the Sannyasi, the Brahman who decides to live entirely in solitude, even separated from his wife. This form is considered earthly perfection.

All Brahmans wear a thin chord hanging from the left shoulder and falling on the right hip. It is composed of three strands of cotton, each strand formed by the hands of a pure Brahman, corded and spun by a person

³⁶Mayo, op. cit., pp. 148-149.

of the same class. After the Brahman is married, this cord must have nine instead of three strands.³⁷

This cord is given to children from the age of five to nine. The ceremony requires a great deal of planning and expense. The poor Brahman goes from house to house begging money to meet the necessary expense. The villagers of all castes feel that this donation is a pious act.

This ceremony is called the upanayana, which means the introduction of knowledge. The ceremony is very elaborate. The house is painted inside and out with broad stripes. Enough food must be gathered for four days of feasting. The food must be of special variations. There must be an abundance of earthen vessels, for during the four days the vessels are used only once and then broken. Long and complicated rites are performed at the body of the child receiving the cord. Each day has a special name and a special ceremony and meaning. The head is shaven, and the nails of his fingers and toes are cut. The young Brahman then is bathed and dressed to the sound of instrumental music and the singing of women.³⁸ With the continued chanting and singing, the young Brahman is now purified from all sins committed through his youthful ignorance since the day of his birth. Sacred strands of grass are wound around his body. To him is given a stick about three feet long, tied with yellow rags that have covered

³⁷Monier Monier-Williams, Hinduism, p. 64

³⁸Ibid.

the private parts of a holy man. At last the youth receives the triple cord. When the cord is vested, all present add to the uproar by beating on gongs or anything producing uproarious sounds.³⁹

It is this ceremony which gives him a new existence and makes him twice-born and raises him to the sublime status of his ancestors. He is expected to keep his anniversary every year by a feast at the time of the full moon in August.⁴⁰

The state of Brahmachari continues from the ceremony until marriage. This period of his life is looked upon as a time of study, trial, and strict adherence to regulations of the caste. It is in this time that he learns to read, write, memorize, and study branches of knowledge for which he shows special interest. Above all things he must learn arithmetic. The Brahmans have their special schools which other castes cannot attend. The Brahmachari can never chew beetle nuts, wear flowers in his hair, or wear turbans. He is said never to ornate his forehead with paste or sandalwood. This is a point of controversy among many authors. Some authors say the mark can be worn on the forehead although the body cannot be smeared until after marriage. He can never look into a mirror. It is said in this time his family and teachers take great pains in instructing him in the art of lying, cunning, and deceit. This point is also one of great

³⁹Dubois, op. cit., p. 110.

⁴⁰Monier-Williams, op. cit., p. 125.

disagreement. In spite of the stress upon conduct and to the extent which it is said to be followed, it all seems to be taken as a matter of form. It is common to see them admiring themselves in a mirror in a market while chewing a mouth full of beetle nuts.⁴¹

Of the privileges which the Brahmachari receives, one of the most interesting is that of alms. Rich and poor Brahmacharis alike feel no humility in asking for alms. According to his ideas, it is a right of which he makes free use. In begging, the Brahman walks into a house and asks for something. If he receives a gift, he turns and walks out without thanks. If he receives no gift, he retires with no grumbling or complaint. It is said that those that give to a Brahman attain heavenly life. So the Brahman is doing them a service.⁴²

The second part in a Brahman's life is Grahasta, that is, when a man is married and has a son. After the wedding he is no longer a Brahmachari; yet he is not a Grahastha until his wife is old enough to have a child. At times, marriages are made before a child is born. Usually a man marries a girl of five to eight years old. Men of all classes, if not married, retain the status of a child.⁴³

There are extremely strict rules in eating, bathing, and prayer. For example, he must get up an hour and a half before

⁴¹A personal experience.

⁴²Maud Diver, Royal India, p. 63.

⁴³Mayo, op. cit., p. 111.

dawn and call upon the sun to rise. This is a period of great prayer. It is said that if he prayed a thousand times a day he would only begin to fulfill his duty.⁴⁴

The third condition is that of Vana-Prastha, the dweller of the jungle. In ancient times the desire of sanctifying themselves in solitude and of reaching a higher degree of spiritual perfection induced numerous Brahmans to abandon their residences in town and go with their wives into the forest. He could return to civilization without losing his place as a Vana-Prastha.⁴⁵

The fourth state which a Brahman can obtain is that of Sannigasi; a state so sublime that it ensues, even during the short space of a single lifetime, more spiritual blessedness than an ordinary man can obtain in ten million reincarnations.⁴⁶ The Sannigasi is superior to the Vana-Prastha inasmuch that he gives up his wife and his children. He lives entirely on alms. He has to reflect upon this form of life for a great length of time before he is able to go through the lengthy ceremony. He obtains a staff of bamboo with seven joints. He now wears a yellow cloth denouncing his caste, and he breaks his triple cord as a sign that all vanity has gone. He smears ashes on his body every morning and takes only one meal a day. He must avoid all women and

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 112.

⁴⁵Dubois, op. cit., p. 116.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 116.

society; he cannot even look directly at a woman. He shaves his head once a month. Wooden sandals are worn on his feet, and antelope skin which cannot be defiled must always be carried as a bed or a seat. He cannot sit down to eat. It is interesting to note that nothing is allowed to upset him, not even a revolution or an overthrow of the government. They are under no food restrictions because no food can defile them.⁴⁷

All his leisure is taken up by meditation and contemplation. It is interesting to recall that philosophy flourished among these men long before it was conceived in Greece and Rome. These men are held in great reverence by the other Hindus. Even the princes of the country admire them as they do the Vana-Prastha. They hope to obtain perfect wisdom and purity. They try to destroy their three strong passions, wealth, land, and women, and free themselves from all prejudices of caste, rank, and honor.⁴⁸

Many times the Sanngasis go completely naked to show the people that they have overcome all passion. They gain purification of the flesh through feasting and self-inflicted punishment. They believe in purification of the soul by fire. For this reason the Hindus burn their bodies after death; at times they have been known to burn themselves alive to become pure.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Kate L. Mitchell, India Without Fable, p. 74.

scanned

The Brahmans have many special privileges; they are, as a rule, exempt from tax on their houses and personal property. In many regions they pay no custom duties. They never have to do public work such as building roads. In many districts servants of the people, carpenters, barbers, and washmen, are obligated to work free for the Brahmans.

In provinces governed by native princes, Brahmans are rarely condemned to any serious corporal punishment. No matter how hideous their crimes, they are never punished by death. The murder of a Brahman is the most serious of all crimes. It is absolutely unpardonable and would bring terrible calamity to the whole village in which it is committed.⁴⁹ Mayo, on the subject of Brahman murder quotes the Bhagavata: *scanned*

Whoever is guilty of it [the murder of a Brahman] will take the form of one of those insects which feed on filth. Being reborn long afterwards a parian [untouchable], he will belong to this caste, and will be blind for more than four times as many years as there are hairs on the body of a cow. He can, nevertheless, expiate his crime by feeding forty thousand Brahmans.⁵⁰

So once again the superiority of the Brahman is upheld in the sacred writings of the Hindu. Yet within the same scripture the degradation and misery of the Untouchable is decreed.

⁴⁹Owen Latamore, A Guide Book to Calcutta, Agra, Delhi, Karochi, and Bombay, p. 22.

⁵⁰Mayo, op. cit., p. 152.

India
Untouchability, the Scourge of the
Caste System

The Bhagavata, in one sweep, explained the Untouchable's existence. The indignities heaped upon him are justified; his oppressor is safeguarded, for the scriptures continue by driving home this point. "If a Brahman kills a sudra, it will suffice to efface the sin altogether if he recites the gayatri [a prayer] a hundred times."⁵¹ At the time of Vasco Da Gama, any Brahman was entitled to stab an untouchable if the out caste presumed to meet his superior face to face on the road.⁵² *Kendall*

The particulars which will be given concerning the Untouchables ~~will~~ form a most striking contrast with those related previously about the Brahmans, and they will ~~serve~~ ^{show} to ~~demonstrate a point~~; namely, how incapable the Hindus are of showing moderation in their caste customs and observations. The Hindu contempt and aversion for these social outcasts is as extreme, on one hand, as is the respect and veneration which they pay to those who have been endowed with god-like attributes.

It is the Hindu idea that God made different kinds of men as he made different kinds of animals. The very lowest of His human creations are the Untouchables. They live a twilight existence outside and below all castes.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Patricia Kendall, Come With Me to India, p. 156

Because they are regarded as sub-human, only the most menial tasks are reserved for them. Some are permitted to serve only as scavengers and removers of night-soil. They are loathsome in their habits because of their ignorance. To all of them the privilege of any sort of teaching is sternly denied; they may neither possess nor read the Hindu scripture. No Brahman priest will minister to them, and, except in rare instances, they may not enter a Hindu temple or school.⁵³ Their children may not go to a public school. They may not draw water from the public well, and if they reside in a region where water is scarce and the sources are far apart, this means no greater consideration but greater suffering.

The Untouchables may not enter a court of justice; they may not enter a hospital to find help for their sick; they may not stop at a village inn. In some provinces they may not even use the public roads. And if they are fortunate enough to be allowed to till the soil, they are continually losers in that they may not enter the shops or even pass through the streets to sell their products. They must trust go-betweens to buy and sell their meager wares. Some, in the depths of their degradation, are permitted no work at all. These may sell nothing, not even their own labor. They may only beg, and even for that purpose they dare not use the road but must stand far off, unseen, and cry out for alms. If any alms are

⁵³Wallbank, op. cit., p. 44.

given, they must be tossed on the ground, and when the giver is well out of sight, the Untouchable may come out of hiding and pick up the coin.⁵⁴

Under such miserable conditions, certain communities of Untouchables have developed a ^{specialized} business in the practice of crime. These communities specialize, one in picking pockets, another in burglary, yet another in highway robbery, in murder, and other crimes, often combining their special trade with prostitution as a side line. These clans are known as Thugs, worshipers of Kali, goddess of blood. Even as our modern criminals at times steal for the joy of stealing, so do these worshipers of Kali kill for the joy of killing. Every child born among the Thugs is a criminal and is so recorded in the books of the Indian police. Every child goes through many years of preliminary tutoring and then through post-graduate courses in the science of picking pockets and sniping jewels from the arms and ears of the rich.⁵⁵

Strange as it may seem, social intercourse and marriage among the out castes also are wholly a caste matter. Even as the higher castes, they have their own innumerable laws which govern the life within their groups and determine their relationship with outer out castes. Some groups do not eat, drink, or smoke together. Others will accept food or even

⁵⁴Dubois, op. cit., p. 53.

⁵⁵Lowell Thomas, India the Land of the Black Pagoda, p. 96.

water only from members of their own sub-castes and those which are of a higher social status. At times, members of the same sub-caste will smoke together, but if men of different sub-caste are present, each group will have its pipe.⁵⁶ They all have their own strict laws regarding marriage. Unbelievable as it sounds, there are out-caste-out-castes.

Notwithstanding the miserable conditions of these Un-^{S/T}touchables, they are never heard to complain of their hand to mouth existence or to cry out against their low estates.^c Still less do they ever dream of combining their members and forcing the other classes to treat them with common respect. The idea that they were born to be in subjection to the other castes is so strongly indoctrinated in their minds that it never occurs to the Pariah to think of his fate as anything but just.^{and} Nothing will ever persuade him that all men are created equal in the sight of God.

⁵⁶Zimand, op. cit., p. 100.

CHAPTER III

THE IMPACT OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION ON THE CASTE SYSTEM

European Influences Before the Mutiny of 1857

A new era in the development of the caste system may be said to have begun in 1498, when Vasco da Gama reached Calicut on the west coast of India after a heroic voyage from Lisbon. When he returned home his cargo was worth sixty times the cost of the voyage. This achievement caused several European nations to try for the riches of the Indies. The Portuguese led by occupying the ports of Goa and Bombay on the west coast of India. For nearly a century Portugal had no stiff competition; but this was changed when, in 1600, the English East India Company was founded. Four years later, the French East India Company was founded by Louis XIV's finance minister, Colbert.¹

The English East India Company soon edged out her competitors and started working toward British domination of all India. In the words of Robert Clive, British military hero, "fighting, chicanery, intrigues, politics, and Lord knows what" were used in consolidating India under British rule.²

¹Wallbank, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

²Ibid., p. 24.

Yet in this early period of expansion there was almost constant cooperation between the British and the Indians. The Company expanded its authority as much by alliances with Indian rulers, who turned to Britain for protection against hostile Rajas, as by the use of armed force.

As early as 1824, Britain began to be conscious of her effect on the character of the Indian people. Sir Thomas Munro, the governor of Madras, raised the question and answered it in this way:

Liberal treatment has always been the most effective way of elevating the character of any people; and we may be sure that it will produce a similar effect on that of the people of India. We should not be discouraged by difficulties, nor because little progress may be made in our own time. . . . When we reflect how much the character of nations has always been influenced by that of governments, and that done, once the most cultivated, have sunk into barbarism, while others, formerly the rudest, have attained the highest point of civilization, we shall see no reason to doubt that if we pursue steadily the proper measures, we shall in time so improve the character of our Indian subjects as to enable them to govern and protect themselves.³

The British administrators took a very commendable attitude; but the Indians felt that they had no hand in guiding their future. Hindus were employed only in a few of the Company services, and very minor posts. Parliament had recognized the right of Indians to expect honest government, but it had not given them any active share in the government. The Englishmen reasoned that the social and educational

³Chirol, op. cit., p. 77.

background of the Hindu did not fit him for a responsible position in British administration.

For about a half century after the British became the political power in India, little effort was made to introduce western learning. The existing system of education was left undisturbed but also unaided. Elementary education continued to be given in the village schools, both Hindu and Moslem. Higher education was left in the hands of the Brahmans. By 1830 private English schools, conducted by young men who had been taught in a Baptist Hindu college in Calcutta, sprang up everywhere. Those Hindus who had received European education felt that the extension of their western knowledge to their countrymen was a duty.⁴

The problem of Indian education had been foreseen by English educators, but long delay had been caused by controversy over the use of the vernaculars or of English as most suitable for education. The question was settled by Dr. Alexander Duff when he set up an English school in Calcutta in 1830. This missionary was convinced that English education alone could convert India to Christianity. During the two decades following the founding of Dr. Duff's English school, great educational progress was being made. A department of Public Instruction was set up in every province under British control. Universities were begun in three major

⁴William Roy Smith, Nationalism and Reform in India, p. 23.

cities, and government colleges were set up for training teachers.⁵ The orthodox Hindu watched these advances of European education with the same increasing fear as was caused by the spread of Christian missionaries.

The first Franciscan and Dominican missionaries made little impression on the Indian people. It was not until 1542 that Christianity made great progress. In that same year Francis Xavier came to India and captured the souls of thousands of Hindus through his example of self-privation and renouncement of physical comforts. Jesuit missionaries followed Francis Xavier in growing numbers. These men were effective, partly because they adapted themselves to the manners, dress, and food of the Hindus. Church schools were set up so that the natives could study for the priesthood and supply the church with its own staff. Throughout India, Jesuits were noted for their distinguished work in education.⁶

The Madura mission, which was founded in 1606 by Robert de Nobili, took a new approach to win converts. Their whole attention was given to concealing the fact that they were Europeans. It was believed that the slightest suspicion of this on the part of the people would ruin their chances of spreading the gospel. Christianity seems to have already had a bad name from the conduct of the priest. An English clergyman was told in 1616: "Christian religion, devil religion;

⁵Ibid., p. 80.

⁶O'Malley, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

Christian much abuse others." Shopkeepers, when bargaining about price, said: "Do you think me a Christian that I should try to deceive you."⁷ De Nobili passed himself off as a Brahman. He attacked Hinduism from within, saying that Christian teachings were contained in the Vedas which had been lost and which it was his duty to return. He organized an Indian church on the basis of caste. He retained the caste system, caste practices, and applied caste divisions to the priests. The Mission was divided into two branches. One branch ministered to the low castes; the other priests posed as Brahmans and kept strictly away from the lower castes. There was no fraternization even among the priests.

One missionary would be seen moving about on horse-back or in a palanquin, eating rice, dressed by Brahmans, and saluting no one as he went along; another, covered with rags, walked on foot, surrounded by beggars, and prostrated himself as his brother missionary passed, covering his mouth lest his breath should infect the teacher of the great.⁸

These missionaries met with overwhelming success, and by the seventeenth century they had made over 150,000 converts. The Madura mission, however, failed. Many of those who worked with the low caste fell victim to their diseases or to their social stigmas. The priest who served Brahmans would not enter the churches or houses of the Untouchables, not even to give them holy unction when they were dying. To all practical purposes, these Europeans were Brahmans.

⁷O'Malley, op. cit., p. 51.

⁸Hopkins, The Religions of India, p. 68.

Hinduism ultimately triumphed. The methods used by de Nobili, though at first sanctioned by the Pope, was eventually banned. In 1759 Portugal suppressed this Jesuit society and confiscated its property.⁹

The first protestant missionaries were Lutherans from Denmark. The Danes arrived in 1760 and, like the Jesuits, permitted their converts to retain their caste. When funds from Denmark failed, no new missionaries were sent into the field, and in 1816 only three remained in India. These Danes, however, helped the Baptists to set up their first mission in Bengal.¹⁰

In 1857 a great storm broke over India. On the surface it appeared to be a military and mainly a Mohammedan insurrection, but it was far more than that. The brains that engineered and directed the Mutiny of 1857 were Hindu, and the mutiny itself was a revolt against intellectual and moral forces of Western civilization that were steadily engulfing India. European education was rapidly "polluting" the minds of India with Western ideas which threatened not only the worship of the old gods but also the worship of their earthly counterparts, the Brahmans. No man's caste was said to be safe against the new inventions (railways and telegraphs) imported from Europe. The very life of the old religious and

⁹ Ibid., pp. 567-569.

¹⁰ O'Malley, op. cit., p. 52.

political orders was threatened. The danger that threatened came not only from the European invaders but often from men of their own race and caste.

The revolt was short lived, and in the end failed; but the hatred of the British remained. The fierce reaction that lay behind the Mutiny of 1857 was revealed by Vinayak Savarkar, a Hindu revolutionist. He concludes his version of the Mutiny with a prayer that "Mother Gangese, who drank that day of the blood of the Europeans, may drink her fill of it again."¹¹

At this time the Crown assumed direct control over all British possessions in India. The East India Company had served the mother country well, but the time had come to take the final step. The company was dissolved and England assumed the full responsibility for the government and administration of India.

European Influences as a Result of the Mutiny of 1857

The failure of the Mutiny of 1857 had an important psychological effect on the Hindu people. Up until then, there had been a feeling that British domination was only temporary. Other great empires had risen and fallen, and there seemed to be no reason why the British should be an exception. The Mutiny was regarded as a final test of strength, and the victory of England against heavy odds was considered a

¹¹Garratt, op. cit., p. 73.

catastrophe by the orthodox Hindu. The Hindu fear for the life of their religion was quieted by Queen Victoria in her proclamation of 1858 in which she stated:

We declare it to be our Royal Will and Pleasure that none be in any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted by reason of their religious faith or observances; but that all shall alike enjoy the impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under Us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of Our subjects on pain of Our highest displeasure.¹²

Until the British acquired territorial domination in India, European influence was a local problem. This was completely changed when India was transferred from merchants to rulers who began to apply western principles of government. It should be remembered that forty-five per cent of the area, and approximately twenty-four per cent of the population did not come under direct British rule, although they were under British domination.¹³ Except on a few isolated occasions, Britain did not interfere with their administration, which long continued along traditional lines. It did, however, use its influence to outlaw inhuman practices of the Hindus, such as suttee, infanticide, the Thugs, and burying alive of lepers.¹⁴

When Britain established courts of justice in India, they

¹²Robert Aura Smith, Divided India, p. 65.

¹³Reginald Coupland, Britain and India, p. 24.

¹⁴Mayo, op. cit., p. 281.

wished to interfere as little as possible with the customs. This policy was soon reversed when, in an attempt for better government, everything was made as British as possible. As a result of improvements the panchayatas, or village courts, fell into disuse, striking at the heart of the caste system. Britain soon saw that she was mistaken by her use of an European approach to the problem and revived the panchayatas. The head men of the villages (heads of each caste) were given the power to hear and determine petty suits and to perform police duty. But when civil courts were introduced, administering a definite system of law, the panchayatas failed. They were unable to survive simply because the civil courts gained greater popularity.¹⁵

The two greatest results of the British judicial system were "the establishment of the principles of equality and the creation of a consciousness of positive rights."¹⁶ The latter was slow to grow owing to the timidity of the lower caste in taking advantage of equal law and legal rights.

One of the most important factors in westernizing India was contributed by the printing press. The art of printing was introduced by Christian missionaries early in the sixteenth century, but the output was small and consisted only of a few religious works. In the early part of the nineteenth

¹⁵Malley, op. cit., pp. 57-60.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 59.

century, books began to be printed in the Indian language as well as in English. This had an extraordinary effect, for revolutionary new ideas were presented to those who could read. And still more important, translations of the holy Sanskrit Vedas were made public and no longer remained the property of the Brahmans. Knowledge was spread through newspapers published in the Indian language as well as by English papers. The first Indian newspaper was the Bengal Gazette, which was started in 1816 by a Brahman educator. This paper lived only for a year, but streams of Indian newspapers were to follow.¹⁷

This was a time of intellectual unrest, with questions about the foundations of religious and social life. Three schools of thought developed with the infiltration of western knowledge, morality, and social beliefs. The first was critical of authority and tradition; it discarded the teachings and practices set forth by the Brahmans and urged that caste be discarded. The conduct of this organization shocked public opinion by unorthodox demonstrations. They were prone to drink to excess and to throw beef into the houses of Brahmans. The followers of this movement did not adopt Christianity but "announced themselves to the world as free inquirers after truth."¹⁸ Intellectually, these men were

¹⁷William Roy Smith, op. cit., pp. 60-62.

¹⁸William Archer, India and the Future, p. 97.

Europeans; socially, both to the British and the Hindus, they were out-castes.

The second school of thought was lead by Raja Ram Mohan Ray, a Brahman, who tried to reform Hinduism through the foundation of the Brahmô Samaj movement. This movement is described as a blend of Christian and Vedic ideas. The founder took his stand on the pure Hinduism found in the Vedas, which was based on the belief in one God, and which gave no sanction to idols or suttee. This movement was separated from Hinduism because of its basic beliefs and never became a Hindu sect. Raja Ram Mohan Ray's movement represented the spread of revolutionary ideas among the people by its liberal views of the caste system, child marriages, and education for women. This organization was directly responsible for the founding of a similar movement in Madras in 1864, called the Veda Samaj.¹⁹ Soon the Parathana Samaj, meaning the Society of Prayer, sprang up in Bombay. Liberal views were held regarding social usages, particularly child marriage.²⁰

A somewhat younger movement was the Arya Samaj. It was rooted in Hindu philosophy and Hindu religious ideas. It preached social and religious reform as well; it took its stand on the Vedas and claimed to be merely a return to the old religion of the Aryans. Its missionaries appealed to

¹⁹D. N. Bannerjia, India's Nation Builders, pp. 40-52.

²⁰Kendall, op. cit., p. 332.

Indian national sentiment. The doctrine taught belief in a supreme being, condemned pilgrimages, idol worship, and bathing in sacred streams, but the caste system and transmigration were upheld. In these ways it avoided sharp contrast with orthodox Hinduism. The Arya Samaj school of thought was actively opposed to Christianity and wanted to reform Hinduism in its own way.²¹

The great majority of the educated Hindus, however, did not join these societies but turned to a refined form of Hinduism called new-Hinduism. The Vedas and other scriptures were thoroughly studied in the light of reason, those portions being rejected which clashed with western thought, while the higher concepts of Hinduism were kept. They believed that caste meant little if the individual were an intellectual Hindu.

They no longer accept a doctrine, secular or religious, They search for new rewards of their own outside Europe and its ways. . . . Their study of Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, and Locke does not in the least diminish their reverent allegiance to the Asiatic heroes, poets, and law-givers of old.²²

The idea began to grow that Europe had as much to learn from India, as India had to learn from Europe.

The third school of thought consisted of the great body of conservatives who were opposed to the infiltration of new

²¹Holderness, op. cit., pp. 122-123.

²²William Roy Smith, op. cit., p. 67.

ideas of Europe. Bitterly opposed as the orthodox and reformers were to one another in regard to such questions as suttee and caste, they presented a united front against the Protestant missionaries and launched a counter-attack. Missionary publications dwelt on the evils of the caste system and pointed to Western learning and science as proof of the power of their religion. The Hindus were told that they would be destroyed in the Hell if they persisted in their beliefs. The Hindus were particularly disturbed by the campaign conducted by the Christian missionaries against the Brahmans. As a result of the missionary campaigns, the Hindus made a furious attack on Christianity. The newspapers joined the Hindu cause with anti-Christian editorials.²³

The Hindu felt that the British were jeopardizing the things that he held dear above all else, his religion, his caste, his honor, and his life. Under the Indian princes all these things were protected. No low caste man could be his equal or address him with disrespect. In the eyes of the British the Untouchables were the equals of the Brahmans. The British disgraced the Brahman in the presence of the Untouchables in a common court. To the orthodox Hindu the British were intolerable.

The greatest blow to the caste system up to this time was probably the establishment of the principles of equality

²³Lord Meston, Nationhood for India, pp. 20-23.

before the law which affected all classes, high and low. English education was not yet widely spread and was mainly confined to the large cities. The era of industrial expansion had scarcely begun. The postal system, the telegraph, and the railways were nonexistent before 1850.²⁴

European Influences of the Late Nineteenth Century

The pressures of European ideas brought to bear on the caste system of India in the second half of the nineteenth century were so revolutionary that those which took place the first half are scarcely comparable with them. Modern India may be said to be practically a post-Mutiny creation owing to the altered conditions which followed the establishment of British law, the extension of state activities, the development of trade and industry, and western inventions such as the railway and telegraph. As early as 1865 Sir Walter Arnold said: "We are making a people in India where hitherto there have been hundreds of tribes but no people."²⁵

One of the most obvious changes of the post-Mutiny period was the decay of the Indian military caste. In the first of the nineteenth century there were many wars on Indian soil; after the Mutiny there were none until the Punjab rebelled in 1919. The result of this long period of peace is that the

²⁴Anstey, op. cit., pp. 128-130.

²⁵O'Malley, op. cit., p. 80.

Rajputs have degenerated into a merchant class, and their one-time military communities have lost the fighting spirit. Few of the Rajputs, who formed a large portion of the old army, now serve as soldiers. In general the Indian people of today do not have the desire or aptitude for military life.²⁶

The improvement of communications has had far-reaching effects on the caste system. Ease of transportation has affected the organization of village life. The villages lost much of their isolation; there was an increased mobility of labor, which was attracted by the higher wages of the cities. Artisans and laborers were no longer tied to the home village or to the occupation of their fathers. The balanced economy of the village was upset. The village servants began to work for individual employers instead of the village as a whole and to receive cash payments for their services instead of a share of the crops. The menial became more independent and less likely to be sensitive to the demands of the upper classes.²⁷

The caste system was also threatened by the activities of the state. The hands-off policy of the British changed to the western idea that the people should be more thoroughly governed for their own good. Special departments were created for different branches of the administration. The

²⁶Anstey, op. cit., pp. 390-393.

²⁷Hypes, op. cit., p. 134.

village communities were no longer left to manage their affairs without supervision. The legal status of the village council was taken from them, and the people were no longer answerable to the panchayatas which had once represented them. In reality the police powers of the council were removed, for most of the villagers had turned to the civil courts.²⁸

Perhaps one of the greatest indirect influences in the shaping of the Hindu caste system in the last century was India's spirit of nationalism. Many of the recent modifications in the caste system are a direct result of European ideology and a desire for world acceptance of India's cry for freedom.

The Charter Act of 1833 laid down that no native of British India should be debarred by reason of color from holding any position under the East India Company. It was after this enactment that the idea of establishing a parliamentary state of government first began to take root in the minds of a few Indians who had received western educations.²⁹ Little was done about Indian employment under the Company, as has been noted; thus, another grievance was added to the long list that culminated in the Mutiny of 1857. By 1879 twenty newspapers were united in asserting the right of

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹William Roy Smith, op. cit., p. 57.

Indians to express political rights and to a larger share of the higher administrative posts.³⁰ The following year the Indian Association was founded. Its purpose was stated by Sir Surendar Nath Banerjea,

The idea that was working in our minds was that the Association was to be the center of an all-India movement. For even then, the conception of a united India, derived from the inspiration of Mazzini, or at any rate of being all India upon the same common political platform, had taken firm possession of the Indian leaders in Bengal.³¹

The Indian Association was only a forerunner of the Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885 by retired members of the Indian Civil Service.³² The Congress met a demand, which had long been in existence, for an organization for the expression of Indian opinion on political and religious questions.

The growing feeling of nationalism in India was stimulated by the victory of Japan over Russia in 1905.³³ India hoped that she might attain national power as Japan had done. The nationalistic movement did not affect the general public until after World War I. In 1919 a stiff propaganda campaign spread the movement into rural India. Still a stronger influence was Mohandas Gandhi. He astounded the British by calling on the women of India to take an active part in the drive for national freedom.

³⁰Bannerjea, op. cit., p. 229. ³¹Ibid.

³²W. E. Duffett, A. R. Hicks, G. R. Pardin, India Today, p. 72.

He set moving such an urge for freedom among women of Hindustan as has not been witnessed in our country for centuries. At this urge augments it will sweep all kinds of bondage social and political, out of existence.³⁴

Mr. Gandhi's secret of success was that he not only brought India a spirit of nationalism but also religious and moral teachings as well.

From the nationalist movement came the Government of India Act of 1935, which provided for a system of "responsible government," and for a constitution "founded upon the people as the ultimate source of authority."³⁵ One feature of the new constitution which effected the caste system was the enfranchisement of women, a measure which is western in origin. The position of women in India was one of inferiority and has been through the ages. Women, with a few exceptions, accepted their proper place. The idea of women having the vote was stimulated by a few highly educated ladies. There were no suffrage campaigns, and the right was given almost as soon as it was asked for.³⁶

European Influence on the Status of Women

Women are no longer condemned to an inferior status in India. Contact with the West, the example of English women, and the activity of the Christian missionaries have had tremendous effect on the advancement of Indian women. Today there are several large women's colleges, and many of the

³⁵Dahn Gopal Mukerji, Disillusioned India, p. 31.

³⁴Ibid. ³⁵Coupland, op. cit., p. 75. ³⁶Ibid., p. 75.

men's colleges take women undergraduates. There are two all-women hospitals, including women doctors. In 1935 forty-two seats were reserved for them in the provincial and central legislatures.³⁷

The Women's Indian Association was formed in Madras in 1917. In 1926 the All-Indian Women's Conference in Education and Social Reform was set up. The purpose of this organization is to advance primary and secondary education for girls. In the field of social reform it strives for:

(1) the abolition of child marriages, (2) the abolition of the enforced seclusion of wives in purdha, (3) equal rights of inheritance for women, (4) prevention of enforced widowhood, and (5) political equality of men with women.³⁸

The All-Indian Women's Conference has long given a great deal of its time and energy to the problem of child marriage and child welfare.³⁹ The evils of child marriage and premature maternity have existed ever since before the British occupation of India, but until 1929 they were handled in an indirect manner. There was legislation, but it did not prevent marriage of children but made it a penal offense for a man to have intercourse with a girl below a certain age, or for a husband to consummate marriage with a child bride. The first legislation, in 1860, fixed the age of consent at ten years. The government was moved to legal action

³⁷T. A. Raman, Report on India, pp. 63-67.

³⁸Wallbank, op. cit., p. 52.

³⁹J. H. Hodges, Salute to India, p. 71.

because of physical injury and even death caused in the exercise of marital right. In 1892 the Age of Consent Bill was passed raising the age of consent from ten years to twelve years.⁴⁰ This measure was fanatically opposed on the grounds that early marriage of Hindu girls was ordered by the Hindu gods. The British feared that the measure might result in another mutiny. After the Bill became law, the clamor died down, and early marriages continued as before. The age of consent was again raised in 1925 to thirteen for married girls and fourteen for unmarried girls. This law was practically unknown throughout the country.⁴¹

In 1929 a direct blow was dealt to the Hindu caste system through the Child Marriage Restraint Act, or Sarda Act, which provided for fines and penalties against anyone who helped in the marriage of girls under fourteen and boys under eighteen years of age. Parents in many cases, when census was taken, described their children as unmarried to avoid the risk of prosecution. The law has done little or no good, for the orthodox Hindu always puts caste rules before civil law.⁴²

In the 1920's an investigation revealed that forty per cent of the girls in India married below the age of fifteen. In 1921 the census showed that two million were married

⁴⁰Maridas Ruthnaswamy, India from the Dawn, p. 188.

⁴¹O'Malley, op. cit., p. 359.

⁴²Spahi P. Malani, H. R. Soni, Indian Economics, p. 50.

before the age of ten years, while a hundred thousand were already widowed. Usually two hundred thousand mothers die every year during or soon after childbirth. The census of 1921 also disclosed that there were more than twenty-six million widows in India.⁴³

As a humane act to save child widows from an intolerable existence, the Widow's Remarriage Reform Act was passed in 1856. The legislation allowed widows to remarry legally. Actually remarriage was already allowed by many of the lower caste. The strongest opposition to the act came from an unexpected source, the women themselves. Their views are summarized in these words: "We are born once, we die once, and we are married once."⁴⁴ A widow Marriage Association was started as early as 1861 in Bombay; and similar organizations have been organized elsewhere.⁴⁵ Widow remarriages do take place, but they are still exceptional among the high caste. The low caste Hindu is prone to imitate the higher castes for he believes imitation will aid him in attaining a higher caste in some future life.⁴⁶

Suttee, the burning of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands, was made illegal in the time of the East

⁴³Wallbank, op. cit., p. 47.

⁴⁴Gilbert, op. cit., p. 24.

⁴⁵O'Malley, op. cit., p. 359.

⁴⁶Ibid.

India Company. The orthodox Hindu explains Suttee as an acknowledgment of the sanctity of marriage as a symbol of the unity between husband and wife which death cannot break. This inhumane practice was brought to an end not by the British, but by enlightened public opinion.

The British did take an active part in the suppression of infanticide. Eighty years after Britain first began to try to curb the murder of infants, through personal influence of their officials, legal action was taken. Act VIII of 1870 forbade infanticide, yet the practice only slightly decreased as shown in the census of 1911. The threat of having an unmarried daughter to disgrace the family was too great for the Hindu. The decrease of infanticide was attributed not so much to law as to the influence of more enlightened ideas.⁴⁷

Increasing attention is being given to the question of birth control in India. A definite movement toward artificial birth control appears to be taking place. The All-Indian Women's Conference held in 1933 passed the following resolution:

This conference feels that on account of the low physique of the women, high infant mortality and increasing poverty of the country, men and women should be instructed in methods of birth control in recognized clinics.⁴⁸

The efforts of the Hindu women to popularize birth control is negligible, for no decrease in the Hindu birth rate is noted.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 358.

⁴⁸Malani, op. cit., p. 164.

Divorce, as well as civil marriage, has legal sanction in India, but it is not generally practiced. Divorce can be obtained on the grounds of cruelty, insanity, desertion, the keeping of a mistress, and conversion to another religion.⁴⁹ The Hindu religion does not recognize divorce, and legal action in that direction would also mean divorce in the caste system.

Property rights of Indian women have always been closely associated with marriage. Under Hindu law a daughter had no inheritance other than her "dowery" which was given to husband and husband's relatives at the time of her marriage. Under the new laws the daughter receives her "dowery" at eighteen whether she is married or not.⁵⁰ The property right of widows was also insured when in 1932 the Widow's Property Bill was passed.⁵¹

The impact of the West on the caste system is most evident in the changes brought about in the position of women. To men it brought education and a new conception of the world. To women it brought a new conception of themselves.

European Influences on the Status of Untouchables

There is a general trend on the part of the lower caste to refuse to accept the lowly place assigned to them by tradition. It is not suggested that the caste system should be

⁴⁹Berke-White, op. cit., p. 122.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹John Cummings, Political India, p. 165.

abolished or that all castes should be put on the same level. There is no desire to bring the upper cast down, but there is a desire to promote economic betterment and educational advantages within each caste.

The movement for the humane treatment of the Untouchables did not start among themselves but among benevolent agencies working in their behalf. Aid has come primarily through pressures applied by Hindus, inspired by western teachings. Outstanding service has been given by the Indian Social Conference which has worked on behalf of the Untouchables for over sixty years. The Servants of Indian Society, organized by G. K. Gokhale, has had trained "missionaries" working among the Untouchables since 1905. Other organizations such as the Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, and Lord Sinha's Society have long been pledged against Untouchability.⁵²

Among the depressed castes of Untouchables Christians and Moslems find good material for mass conversion.

The Untouchable may not much longer leave his religious status to be determined at the leisure and pleasure of the Hindu caste band. Islam, utterly democratic, will readily receive him into full partnership in the fold. Christianity not only will invite him, but will educate and help him. The moment he accepts either Islam or Christianity, he is rid of his shame. The question is chiefly a question of how long it takes a man, ages oppressed, to summon courage, spirit, and energy to stand up and shake off the dust.⁵³

Alarmed by this knowledge, outstanding caste Hindus have started to rebuild the social status of the depressed class.

⁵²Zimand, op. cit., p. 102

⁵³Mayo, op. cit., p. 169.

Mohandas Gandhi has done the most to impress his countrymen of the necessity for raising the standards of the Untouchables. He traveled from one end of India to the other preaching against the abuses of the depressed people. He cried: "If this is Hinduism, O Lord, my reverent prayer is that the sooner it is destroyed the better."⁵⁴ For years he associated with the lowest classes of the depressed; he performed their tasks and taught them as he worked. He adopted completely the life of the Indian peasant. He renounced his wealth, went to live in a mud hut, and dressed in the garb of the poorest Hindu. The merits of Gandhi's work were so obvious that the most conservative Hindu leaders would not openly contradict him. So great was his influence that even in the most backward sections of India, Brahmans would sit side by side with Untouchables to hear him speak. He would tell them that the fact that Hindus addressed God as "the purifier of the polluted" shows that it is a sin to regard anyone born into Hinduism as polluted.⁵⁵ And he never tired of repeating that the basic idea of untouchability was a sin.

Gandhi had not always fared so well with his people. In his youth he was excommunicated by the panchayat of his caste. He lost his place as a Vasishya because he had crossed the

⁵⁴W. Norman Brown, "Caste Under Attack in India," The Nation, XIV (December, 1928), 712-714.

⁵⁵C. F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas, p. 164.

"black water" to Europe. When he was returned to his caste, he had to make an immediate pilgrimage to a holy place and there undergo rigorous purification ceremonies. Meanwhile the leaders of his caste in two other cities excommunicated him and excluded him from religious privileges.⁵⁶

When asked about his attitude towards the caste system, he would reply that like every other institution, it had suffered from adulteration but that he believed the four main divisions to be natural and essential. He asked; "Do you not believe in heredity?" "Do you not believe in eugenics?"⁵⁷ Yet he did not believe that a person should be treated as a saint or an outcast by reason of his birth. He did not consider the Untouchables as, in any sense, a low order.

I know many /Untouchables/ who are worthy of reverence. On the other hand there are Brahmans going about whom it would be difficult to regard with any reverence. Holding these views, therefore, if there is a rebirth in store for me, I wish to be born a pariah in the midst of pariahs, because thereby I would be able to render more effective services to them and also be in a better position to plead with other communities on their behalf.⁵⁸

Gandhi's reference to caste became progressively stronger and more pointed. He believed the modification of the caste system must start with the Untouchables. He gave a clear idea of his objective when he said:

Untouchability has gone far beyond its prescribed limits and sapped the foundations of the whole nation.

⁵⁶Zimand, op. cit., p. 94.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 103.

⁵⁸Ibid.

The touch-me-not spirit pervades the atmosphere. If, therefore, this white ant is touched at its source, I feel sure that we should soon forget the difference between caste and caste, and religion and religion; and begin to believe that even as all Hindus are one and indivisible, so are all Moslems, Shikh, Jews and Christians branches of the same parent-tree. . . .⁵⁹

The real progress toward removing the actual stigma of untouchability from the depressed classes has been painfully slow. In 1930 villages in southern India drew up lists of rules that Untouchables must follow. They were not to use umbrellas (a sign of equality) or to wear shoes. The women were not to cover their breasts or wear jewelry. Men must be bare from their waist up at all times. The children were not to be taught to read. These laws were enforced by violence, disobedience being punished by the burning of the offender's hut and by attacks on his person.⁶⁰ Not until 1932 was public opinion awakened in favor of the movement to better the conditions of the depressed classes by Gandhi's readiness to fast to death in order to secure political representation for the Untouchables. The next year he roused the people in their favor by a second fast. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, representative for the Untouchables, worked hand in glove with Gandhi for social legislation on behalf of the depressed classes. An act was passed in 1933 called the Caste Tyranny Removal System, which placed legal restraint

⁵⁹Jawaharlal Nehru, The Unity of India, p. 112.

⁶⁰O'Malley, op. cit., p. 377.

on further sub-division of castes and sub-castes.⁶¹ Previous legislation on behalf of the Untouchables made it possible to attend public schools.⁶²

Mahatma Gandhi's campaign was only a partial success, for he was unable to break down forces of conservative opinion. A compromise was reached, however, in regard to worship for the lower classes. Hindu temples were held to be defiled upon the entrance of an Untouchable. In accordance with Brahmanical law no worship or festival can be held in a shrine entered by an Untouchable until purification has been performed. A Bill, which was introduced into the Central legislature in 1933, to secure a legal right to enter the temple had to be withdrawn because of the overwhelming majority of opinion against it. The depressed class was so disappointed that they announced that they were ready to change their religion en masse. As a direct result of their decision the Malbar Temple Entry Act was passed two years later. A temple would be opened if fifty Untouchables would petition the priest and unless fifty of the higher classes of the community objected.⁶³ In the same year the Maharaja of Travancore issued a proclamation which opened up all the temples controlled by the state to the Hindus of low class.

⁶¹Wayo, op. cit., pp. 159-160.

⁶²F. R. Moraes and Robert Stimson, Introduction to India, p. 37.

⁶³Duffett, op. cit., p. 68.

The most remarkable feature is that the caste Hindus of Travancore were the advocates of this move.⁶⁴

The progress of the Untouchable was in some way insured by the desire of the people to help themselves. The depressed classes have begun to hold annual conferences to discuss common problems. But it should be remembered that the basic caste, the line that cuts the Untouchables from all other Hindus, has scarcely been touched.

The greatest influence toward modification of caste is education. Most of the difficulties which modern India has at present have their roots in ignorance caused by lack of education. While addressing the Indian Educational Conference in 1919 Lord Curzon said:

What is the greatest danger in India? What is the source of suspicion, caste superstition, outbreaks, crime, and the suffering among the masses? Knowledge. In proportion as we teach the masses, so shall we make their lot happier, and in proportion as they are happier, so they become more useful members of the body politic.⁶⁵

The British were primarily concerned only with higher education and not with primary education. The new education was intended for the upper and middle classes living in the cities. The idea was that from the cities it would gradually spread to the towns and finally filter down to the lower classes. Britain did give equal opportunity to all

⁶⁴Richard B. Gregg, "New Hope for the Untouchables," Asia, XXXXII (December, 1936), 232-234.

⁶⁵Kendall, op. cit., p. 252.

castes to attend the schools that were provided. As early as 1854, the director of the East India Company made a ruling that no boy should be refused admission to the Government school on grounds of his caste.⁶⁶ A report given by an official spokesman of the Indian Government declared that figures had been collected showing that the number of Untouchable children attending school all over India had increased from 195,000 in 1917 to 667,000 in 1926.⁶⁷

Advancements in Indian education should not be overestimated. In a population of three hundred million persons there may be a million persons that can read and speak English and most of those know it very imperfectly. It is the tendency that is important, and the tendency is for English to spread. As to education generally, the Indian population is the most illiterate in the world. Only ten per cent of the male population and one per cent of the female population can read and write. Only one boy in four attends school. Outside the missionary schools there are only a few that will accept girls. Prejudice against the education of women is as deeply entrenched in the social system as early marriage. European educations for young men are generally discouraged on the grounds that it turns them from their father's occupation and encourages them to migrate to the evil cities.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Mayo, op. cit., p. 157. ⁶⁷Zimand, op. cit., p. 104.

⁶⁸Holderness, op. cit., p. 84.

European Influences on Hindu Pollution

There has long been a natural tendency, on one hand, to rebel against the restraints placed on life by caste rules and, on the other, to adjust standards to current conditions and to modify rules which conflict with them. In large cities Hindus of different caste are known to meet secretly, to eat, drink, and smoke together; they enjoy the feeling of free social intercourse and the knowledge that they can repeat the experience without punishment. There are thousands of such men in Calcutta and other large cities, as well as in the Indian army, that took advantage of their absence from their homes to set aside rules of pollution concerning eating, drinking, and smoking with men and women of another caste.⁶⁹

Railways, schools, hospitals, and telephones are all open to public use and have had a great leveling effect on the average Hindu. Railway travel does not permit strict observance of caste rules. European owned railways do not respect caste, and unless a Hindu is financially able to secure a compartment, he is forced to rub elbows with every caste.⁷⁰

The result of the attacks on caste, though there are but few, are definite. In some of the most enlightened Hindu circles the results of the caste modification is clear. Members of different castes now associate much more freely

⁶⁹O'Malley, op. cit., p. 365.

⁷⁰Malani, op. cit., p. 21.

than in the past and have few inter-dining restrictions. Intermarriage occurs occasionally, as was true with Gandhi's son. When a high caste Hindu goes to the hospital, he accepts personal care from a low caste attendant; fifty years ago this would not have been tolerated.⁷¹ In the north-west frontier provinces, so the 1921 census reveals, Hindus observed no restrictions on inter-dining. In Bengal, the customs of the veiling of women and enforced widowhood, once regarded as caste law, have suffered a sharp decline.⁷²

Hindus have no objection to wearing leather belts and shoes made of cowhide though leather of any kind once had the strongest power of pollution. In recent times football has become a popular game among all castes. When potatoes were first introduced to India, orthodox Brahmans objected to their being eaten. Canned food is not on the prohibited list. Orthodox Hindus would not dream of taking food from the hands of a European; he would eat food without question canned in European or American factories. Caste rules are ignored by patients who take medicines prescribed and made by Christian doctors.⁷³

When water was first piped into Indian cities, there was objection because the engines were manned by Moslems and

⁷¹Compton, op. cit., p. 30.

⁷²Robert Nevill, "Caste is the Curse of India," Life Magazine, XXV (October 14, 1948), 119.

⁷³Dhan Gopal Mukerji, A Son of Mother India Answers, p. 48.

Europeans. Another objection arose when both Hindus and Moslems drew water from the same taps of the street hydrants. Some people went to the trouble of getting their water from sacred pools and rivers, rather than take the risk of pollution. The question was raised whether the use of water pipes was permissible. The Brahmans were equal to the situation and said the use of water pipes, like pilgrimages made by train, were free from pollution, because the price paid was penance which atoned for their use.⁷⁴

Another and more recent instance of adaptation to change is the excommunication from caste for voyages overseas. Such a voyage even a few years ago meant loss of caste unless the traveler submitted to purification by consuming the mixture made from the five products of the cow, previously described. Today a Hindu may visit any part of the world and yet retain his standing in the caste. Purification rites are still healing, but sugar and honey now take the place of the revolting ingredients previously used.⁷⁵

Forces causing the modification in the caste system have increased to an extent that no Indian is unaware of the dynamic nature of his environment. But it is obvious that evolution rather than revolution will be the method adopted by the wise Hindu.

⁷⁴Ronaldshay, op. cit., p. 368.

⁷⁵O'Malley, op. cit., pp. 207-208.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it might be wise to sound a note of caution to those who are prone to criticize the Hindu for not quickly abandoning his cultural heritage for new Western philosophies. The Hindu is pressed with the realization that to survive in a modern world India must meet standards set by the West. In direct conflict with that realization is the fanatical duty of every Hindu to preserve his religion. The result of this inter-conflict is "Indian Unrest," often mistaken for Indian stubbornness by uninformed Westerners. To qualify this statement, the basic features of the Hindu caste system should be reviewed.

The caste system is by far the most characteristic feature of Hindu society. The four original castes, the Brahmans or priests, the Kshatriya or warriors, the Vaisya or merchants, and the Sundras or farmers, have been subdivided into innumerable groups which in reality function as separate castes. The members of a caste or sub-caste must not dine or marry outside their particular group, and so society is divided into thousands of air-tight compartments. The Hindu caste system is distinguished from all other existing gradations in world society by the religious barrier that prevents its members from ever changing social

positions until he is again reborn. Outside the wall of caste are the Untouchables who are classed as sub-human and, as a result, are assigned the most menial tasks. The rigidity of the caste system is one of its most distinguishing marks. In India, birth largely determines a man's social and domestic life; he must eat, drink, dress, and marry in accordance to rules prescribed by the Hindu faith.

The caste system in its modern sense probably did not exist in ancient India. In historical documents written just before the time of Christ, evidence is found that caste barriers, much like those found in India today, were already in existence. However, there seems to be but little knowledge available on this matter in pre-Aryan times. It was not until the Vedic-Aryan period, about 1200 B.C., that any records were available. Some of the early hymns of the Rig-Veda give an account of the invading Aryans bringing social divisions much like those of feudal Europe into northern India. The sacred books also reveal the hatred felt by the Aryans for the dark-skinned Aborigines of India. The account of the formation of social strata plus race prejudice given there explains what was probably the beginning of the caste system. In later literature the Brahman is recognized as the head of the social order; and after the Vedic period, near the beginning of the Christian era, the Laws of Manu were compiled. The latter recognized and gave status to four social classes: the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas,

and the Sundras. The first three are designated by the Hindus as the "twice-born." The Laws of Manu also give an idea of how new castes are formed, for they state that if a man marries or reproduces himself outside his own caste, the children born to such a union must be placed in a degraded caste. Therefore, intermarriage of castes has been a major source in the formation of new castes, although migration, change of occupation, change of religion, change due to pollution, change in financial status, and countless other reasons are also factors that work toward the division of castes.

Pollution plays a vital part in the life of every Hindu. Half of his waking hours are spent in avoiding pollution and the other half is spent in avoiding the pollution of others. Each caste has rigid rules pertaining to pollution by food, drink, dress, touch, and sight. Minor pollutions, especially by accident, are removed simply by washing. The more serious pollutions are absolved through severe rites of purification such as giving feasts to the Brahmans, going on long pilgrimages to holy places, and otherwise carrying out the decisions of the village council which exercises authority in such cases.

The beliefs that caste distinctions and status are divinely appointed and that through transmigration of a man's soul may he attain perfection, are basic concepts of caste.

The Hindu assumes that the caste into which a man is born in this life is the just reward of his actions in a previous birth. If a man would be born into higher caste, he must merit the reward by exact performance of his caste duties. For this reason he must not rise above his caste even if his is the lowest of Untouchables. Stop

One reform movement after another has tried to abolish the caste institution. Long before India had any direct connection with the West there were internal movements directed against the privileges of the Brahmans who head the system. Buddah preached the brotherhood of man and the unity of man with God. The concept was not so much one of social equality of all men but rather the equality of worship in the sight of God. Its basic principle was that by faith and virtuous living all castes became equal and pure. Some reform movements rejected the caste system and they again, in the course of time, fell under its spell. The fact remains that from time to time there were movements for the abolition of caste distinctions and for the denial of the superiority and authority of the Brahman. Such movements, at least until the British invasion, tended to weld the system and give it added rigidity. In any case, the early effect of reform was ineffective as compared with widely diffused influences exerted by intellectual and economic forces of the West.

Contact with European civilization ^{is bringing} brought many forces both external and internal to the Indian caste system which are beginning to make profound changes in the caste system.

Hindu men and women educated in Western universities have stimulated a democratic movement among the depressed classes of India. The democratic ideals of the West have taken hold in the East and the low caste Hindus are beginning to contest the privileges reserved only for the ruling castes.

The British Government through its various efforts toward universal education, economic improvements, and the awarding of equal justice to all the people regardless of caste, succeeded in weakening the caste system. Many authorities feel that Britain's efforts clearly exposed India's need for further improvement.

Modern methods of travel have made cheaper transportation available to all classes. Indian railways, largely because of the cheap third-class rates, carry a vast number of passengers. By traveling on such a large scale, the castes, both low and high, associate more or less freely and thus have broken off the fundamental rules of caste.

Christian missions, through their teachings of the brotherhood of man, are forcing new concepts of life into the Indian. The various activities in which the missions engage have worked toward breaking down caste distinction. The education given to the depressed classes by the missions

has enabled young men and women to fill teaching positions and other respected positions that give them a more favored position with the upper castes.

The mass movement toward Christianity and Islam among the depressed classes has awakened an active interest in these classes on the part of the higher castes. This is evidenced by the efforts of the Aray Samaj, an organization whose purpose it is to modify traditional Hinduism and to win back countrymen forced from their original faith by the tyranny of caste.

A number of social reform movements are reducing caste distinctions. The most prominent organization heading the drive for equality is the All-Indian Women's Conference. Through the efforts of the organization suffrage was brought to India. Through various direct and indirect means, women's societies all over India are making their presence felt through sponsorship of social reform. X

Though social reformers point out the glaring defects in the present caste system, some social advantages are gained from the system. The division of labor provided by the caste system undoubtedly was necessary in the beginning. Before the industrial revolution, hereditary occupations generally prevailed throughout Europe. The defect of the caste system was that this custom became rigid. Hindu society created strong units in Hindu society and so enabled it to face foreign invasions without a great deal of adulteration.

It preserved purity of blood within the caste and insured the mental and physical power of the higher caste. The caste system developed a strong sense of discipline and its members learned to subordinate individual desires for the interest of the caste. The fatalistic philosophy of Hinduism gave contentment to those whose existence would otherwise have been unbearable. It is also responsible for the stability of Indian society. The caste system has given a strong sense of allegiance and group loyalty to fellow caste members.*

The caste system may have served India for countless generations, but it cannot be commended in its present form. By dividing society into thousands of ¹¹water-tight compartments, ²⁾ it has detained the evolution of a strong nation. Caste loyalty has taken the place of national loyalty. Constant interbreeding and especially child marriage among the low classes has caused biological disintegration of the Hindu.* Because of the laws of intermarriage set up by the caste system, suitable mates are often almost impossible to obtain, since some castes have a larger number of males and others a larger number of females. This, in turn, causes heavy doweries and in some cases even causes infanticide. Standardization of products is prevented as different castes insist on maintaining their differences in food, clothing, and furniture. The caste system divides society into divisions by birth and does not take into account individual

differences in abilities. An Untouchable with an I.Q. of 150 still must remain an Untouchable and assume that he is immeasurably inferior to a Brahman with an I.Q. of 75. A Brahman is fixed on the top rung of the social ladder, and as long as he observes the rules set by his religion he can never be removed. The Untouchable is at the base of the social order, and regardless of his native ability he must make the best of his status. This works toward making India a passive nation. Food taboos and pollution by touch prevent dining together and a free intercourse of human beings who may be intellectually equal. ✕ Taboos on certain articles of food, such as beef, also rob the people of needed food. ✕ The caste system prevents men of all castes from mixing freely and taking advantage of public services.

The lack of choice of occupation takes no consideration of potential skills of the individual but automatically fixes occupation at birth. Yet it should be added that many of the most renown Indians, praised by all castes, have come from the lower classes. Under the caste system all religious teaching is denied those outside the walls of caste.

There is no exact way of knowing how far the changes in the caste system have gone, for external appearances are often deceptive. But those who are working for its modification, if not its annihilation, may well consider a system that will take its place. A new order must fit into a country having a hot climate and an economic system

characterized by poverty and lack of individual initiative of the masses. The caste system, with all of its fallacies, has long served the spiritual-minded Hindu.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Allen, J., Haig, H., and Wolsely, T., The Cambridge Short History of India, edited by H. H. Dodwell, New York, Macmillan Company, 1934.
- Andrews, C. F., Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas, New York, Macmillan Company, 1930.
- Anstey, Vera, The Economic Development of India, London, Longmans, Green, and Company, 1929.
- Archer, William, India and the Future, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1918.
- Bannerjia, D. N., India's Nation Builders, New York, Brentano's, 1919.
- ✓ Berke-White, Margaret, Halfway to Freedom, New York, Simon Schuster, 1949. ✓
- Chisol, Valentine, India Old and New, London, Macmillan Company, 1921.
- Christlieb, M. L., Uphill Steps in India, London, Constable and Company, 1930.
- Cummings, John, Political India, London, Oxford University Press, 1932.
- K. P. Puttman's Sons*
Compton, Hubert, Indian Life in Town and Country, New York, G. P. Puttman's Sons, 1905.
- Coupland, Reginald, Britain and India, London, Longmans, Green and Company, 1929.
- Correa, Gaspar, The Three Voyages of Vasco da Gama, translated by Henry E. J. Stanley, London, Hakluyt Society, 1869.
- Diver, Maude, Royal India, New York, D. Appleton-Century Company, 1942.
- Dubois, Abbe J. S., Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies, translated by Henry K. Beauchamp, third edition, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1906.

Duffett, W. E., Hicks, A. R., and Pardin, G. R., India Today
New York, The John Day Company, 1942.

Feudge, Fannie Roper, India, Akron, The Werner Company, 1902.

Garratt, G. T., The Legacy of India, second edition, Oxford,
Clarendon Press, 1938.

~~X~~ Gilbert, William H. Jr., Peoples of India, part one, Washington, ✓
D. C., Library of Congress, 1948.

Hodge, J. H., Salute to India, second edition revised, New
York, Friendship Press, 1946.

Holderness, T. W., Peoples and Problems of India, Home
University of Modern Knowledge, No. 36, New York, Henry
Post and Company, 1912.

Hopkins, Edward Washburn, The Religions of India, Boston,
Ginn and Company, 1895.

Hopkins, Edward Washburn, India Old and New, New York,
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902.

Hoyland, John S., Indian Crises, New York, Macmillan Company,
1943.

Hunter, William W., Brief History of the Indian People,
Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1921.

~~X~~ ~~Hynes, James Lowell~~, Spotlight on the Culture of India,
Washington, D. C., The Daylton Company, 1937.

~~X~~ Kendall, Patricia, Come with Me to India, New York, Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1931.

Kennedy, Robert A., Hinduism, Baltimore, The Johns-Hopkins
Press, 1930.

Kipling, John Lockwood, Beast and Men, London, Macmillan
Company, 1892.

Latamore, Owen, A Guide Book to Calcutta, Agra, Delhi, Karochi,
and Bombay, Calcutta, United States Army, 1945.

Malani, Spahi P., Soni, H. R., Indian Economics, Benares,
India, Nand, Kishore and Bros., 1936.

Mayo, Katherine, Mother India, New York, Harper and Brothers,
1930.

- Meston, Lord, Nationhood for India, New Haven, The Yale University Press, 1931.
- Mitchell, Kate, India Without Fable, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1942.
- Monier-Williams, Monier, Hinduism, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1910.
- Morse, F. R., and Stimson, Robert, Introduction to India, New York, Oxford University Press, 1943.
- Mukerji, Dhan Gopal, A Son of Mother India Answers, New York, E. P. Dutton and Company, 1928.
- Mukerji, Dhan Gopal, Caste and Out-caste, Calcutta, Longmans, Green and Company, 1929.
- Mukerji, Dhan Gopal, Disillusioned India, New York, E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1930.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, The Unity of India, third edition, New York, The John Day Company, 1948.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, The Discovery of India, New York, The John Day Company, 1946.
- O'Malley, L. S. S., Modern India and the West, London, Oxford University Press, 1941.
- Ragozin, Zenaid A., Vedic India as Embodied Principally in the Rig-Veda, New York, G. P. Putman's Sons, 1902.
- Raman, T. A., Report on India, New York, Oxford University Press, 1943.
- Ronaldshay, Earl of, India, a Bird's Eye View, London, Constable and Company, Ltd., 1930.
- Ruthnaswamy, Maridas, India from the Dawn, Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1949.
- Sen, Gertrude Emerson, The Pageant of India's History, Vol. I, New York, Longmans, Green and Company, 1948.
- Smith, Robert Aura, Divided India, New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1947.
- Smith, William Roy, Nationalism and Reform in India, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1938.

Thomas, Lowell, India, Land of the Black Pagoda, Garden City, Garden City Publishing Co., 1930.

Wallbank, T. Walter, India, New York, Harry Host and Company, 1948.

Zimand, Savel, Living India, New York, Green and Company, 1928.

Articles

Brown, W. Norman, "Caste under Attack in India," The Nation, XIV (December, 1928), 712-714.

Gregg, Richard B., "New Hope for the Untouchables," Asia, XXXXII (December, 1936), 232-234.

Nevill, Robert, "Caste is the Curse of India," Life Magazine XXV (October 14, 1948), 119.