MOBILE MEN

LIMITS TO SOCIAL CHANGE IN URBAN PUNJAB

SATISH SABERWAL

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for e forever one hopes

Once one leaves the empirical group one is led step by step and inevitably to consider the whole sub-continent.

LOUIS DUMONT (1957:10)

Foreword

The *Mobile Men*, published in 1976, has been out of print for a number of years. Fortunately, its author was able to revisit the locale of his field-work in 1989 to observe the change that has come about since 1969. Not only a new chapter but also a new dimension is consequently added to this revised edition.

In the first edition too, Professor Saberwal's approach was sociological as well as historical, which attracted the attention of almost all serious scholars and students of social change in modern India. The study relates to three "castes" in a Punjab town which has been steadily industrialized over the past half a century or so. However, this study is placed in the wider context of social change in India, and it takes into account sociological theory and sociological studies in the contemporary world. The scope of the *Mobile Men*, therefore, is not confined to a town, or a state, or even a sub-continent: it can best be appreciated in a universal context.

J S GREWAL
Director

Preface

Most observers of Indian society would concede that it has undergone one general sort of change over the past century or two: from a social order which placed closed corporate caste groups in a hierarchy, providing it with effective ideological supports—an order realized most fully in villages—India has been moving towards a more open society, less dependent upon the ideology of hierarchy and beginning to stress personal elements regardless of caste; this movement has hitherto been primarily urban. Agreement on the general direction notwithstanding, the variety and the texture of the *processes* underlying this movement remain inadequately specified.

The present study seeks to explore these processes. The fieldwork reported here was done in a Punjabi industrial town, a setting where one could reasonably expect to observe the processes enacted with particular intensity. Commentators on India have often been struck by the unusual attributes of the Punjabis; the terms flexibility, enterprise, and pragmatism serve commonly to contrast them with people elsewhere in India. Within Punjab I guessed that the processes would be displayed most sharply in an industrial town, especially one which had numerious small factories, bearing witness to dispersed local industrial enterprise; such enterprise in Punjab was much in the news in 1968 as I prepared for fieldwork. This, then, is a study located in a Punjabi industrial town, and many who inhabit its pages are small industrialists.

The fieldwork was done between 15 February and 5 December 1969, with several interruptions of a few days each. How my general interests were funnelled into manageable research foci is considered at some length in the Appendix. Very briefly, apart from the industrial entrepreneurs, I was also drawn initially to the facts that the town had a substantial educational complex, associated with the Ramgarhias, whose ancestors used to be carpenters and blacksmiths in Punjab, and that in recent elections the town had been a part of constituencies which had been reserved for scheduled caste candidates. The Ramgarhia educational

complex puzzled me, for the founding of schools and colleges has usually been led, in India as elsewhere, by men of high social standing, one that carpenters and blacksmiths would not have commanded traditionally. To learn, besides, that many of the town's leading industrial entrepreneurs were also Ramgarhias helped shape one clear direction for enquiry. The other directions emerged from a curiosity concerning the men who had come to surface as the scheduled caste candidates at the elections. These men had come from leatherworker (Chamar) or weaver (Julaha) castes, now known collectively as Ad Dharmis; and the ancestors of one had been scavengers (Chuhra), now known as Balmikis. As I interviewed men of these three castes—Ramgarhias, Ad Dharmis, and Balmikis—I began to notice significant differences between the patterns of social mobility characteristic of each caste, and these differences seemed to be systematically related to the caste's position in the traditional caste hierarchy, though many of them, in all three castes, had moved into industrial occupations. To compare in depth the patterns of individual mobility in these three castes promised to be an interesting focus, one which would also cover the processes of change attending the movement from the caste order to a more open society.

The first three chapters of this book, constituting Part I, have an introductory cast. I begin with an outline of the historical context wherein my data and observations arose. Only recently have social processes begun to move to the centre of the historians' attention in India, and no one has yet pulled the various strands together in order to account for the course taken by Punjabi society in the recent past. This task requires skills, time, and space of an order that I do not have, but an attempt, howsoever schematic, brief, and tentative, must be made to sketch the historical background for my material. Chapter I makes this attempt.

The next chapter introduces Modelpur, a pseudonym for the town where the fieldwork was done. I use a pseudonym not because it hides the town's identity effectively—the clues I provide will give that away quickly enough—but because I made this promise to my informants, the Modelpurias: that is, the residents of Modelpur. That promise required too that I change individual

names and, here and there, I have given misleading cues in order to impede the identification of individuals on the basis of my published data. Needless to say, these cues are peripheral, unrelated to the central points being made.

Chapter III lays out the theoretical contexts which frame the analyses in subsequent chapters. Starting from the premise that the traditional patterns of status have become destabilized, it explores conceptually some of the sources of this destabilization, its consequences for individual aspirations, for social relations, for the opportunities and the strategies for mobility, and related issues. Subsequent treatment calls for additional analytic devices, and these will be employed as necessary.

Part II also has three chapters. Each deals with one of the three castes separately, considering the developments within them over several generations past. I am interested in the variant course of events in these three castes within Modelpur's particular sociocultural milieu; I do not compare them with segments of the "same" caste in different regions, even if such information is readily available. For my argument it does not matter what, say, the leatherworkers of Agra have or have not done (Lynch 1969); beliefs and practices of people with similar occupations and status outside Punjab are not very significant for Modelpur's Ad Dharmis and others.

Part III presents the bulk of the data and arguments in six chapters. These will examine, in turn, the several domains—industry, politics, and bureaucracy—wherein my informants found the greatest room for mobility. Chapter VII concentrates, quantitatively, on the attributes and the experiences of the men in the three castes, while Chapter VIII explores the qualitative structure of these domains of mobility Chapters IX, X, and XI deal with the strategies that the ambitious men employ—social networks, political manoeuvres, and a certain organized militancy—and the consequences these have had, both for the traditional dimension of intercaste relations and for the patterns of emergent, secular inequalities in Modelpur. When the analytic eye can fasten upon a social *process*, it will tend to linger. Chapter XII draws together some of the dispersed threads of argument and reviews in conclusion the study's overall analytic stance.

I have chosen not to provide a glossary. Some familiarity with

the sociological literature on India will be taken for granted, and all terms needing explanation, whether folk or technical, will be indexed. The first page entry for a term in the Index would lead to an explanation in the text which should be adequate for most readers.

The sociologist, it may be said, has to analyse his material at several levels. It is necessary, for various reasons, that his data become professionally available while still relatively fresh from the field. When, in April 1970, I circulated the first long analysis of my material (later worked into Saberwal 1972b), I was surprised with the pace of writing I had been able to generate. Two months more, I thought, and the monograph would be done. I mentioned this to T.N. Madan. "I hope not," he said, without further comment. It is now five years since then. Parts of the data and arguments appearing here were published earlier as opportunities arose, but the intervening years allowed me to reflect on earlier data and analyses, to appraise these from alternate perspectives, to listen to the criticism of my colleagues, and to take new work in a burgeoning field into account. This leisurely consideration of one's problem is also an essential—and the more important—part of the sociologist's calling, and the outcome would need yardsticks other than either the speed or the quantity of the product.

I have many debts to record for this work. Much of it was done while I was a Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, from June 1968 to December 1973—an unusually long spell for the Institute; and for making this possible I wish to thank its successive directors, Professors Niharranjan Ray, V.K. Gokak, and S.C. Dube. Their support has always transcended the formal and the administrative, and Professor Dube very kindly made appropriate publishing arrangements also. Since December 1973, I have found a congenial home at JNU's Centre for Historical Studies; and Professor Bipan Chandra, its Chairman when I wrote the final draft, gave me generous access to the Centre's resources.

Bibliographic and critical help has come from Dr P.S. Jammu, Professor Adrian Mayer, Professor S.R. Mehrotra, Dr Harbans Mukhia, Dr Surinder Suri, Professor Romila Thapar, and Dr John Webster, and I have lifted a footnote from unpublished work by a student of mine, N. Hari Kumar. Large parts of a late draft were

read by Professors T.N. Madan, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, and Andre Beteille; and Professor W.H. McLeod commented on Chapters I and VI. My debt to them will be understood by anyone who knows the hazards an author must invariably negotiate; but they cannot relieve me, individually or together, of my responsibility for the statements made or for the many inadequacies remaining.

It is the people of Modelpur, howsoever anonymous, who made this book possible, and I would like to hope that, if any of them see it, they would not find themselves misrepresented in any way. Material given me by Gurdial Singh Rehill, himself an historian of the Ramgarhias, has provided invaluable ballast for Chapter VI. The burden of typing successive drafts was carried manfully by K. Rehman at Simla and Gabar Singh at JNU. My parents-in-law, Robert W. Storer and Caroline T. Everett, have sustained me over the years, morally and materially, in measure beyond words. For their daughter, Edith, and our children, Gayatri and Vasant, the book has, in spurts, been part of daily life for six years, and they have all treated it with infinite kindness.

Jawaharlal Nehru University

SATISH SABERWAL

List of Tables

7.1	Explanations of castemates' mobility	118
7.2	The mobile men's average age	120
7.3	Physical mobility	121
7.4	Occupations: father's and own	122
7.5	Occupational involvement: father's and own	123
7.6	The mobile men's education: level and type	124
7.7	Mode of entry into occupation	125
7.8	Family standing in past decade	126
7.9	Who aided your mobility?	127
7.10	The problems and their solutions	128
7.11	Own caste's advantage in mobility	129
7.12	Achievement compared with the high castes	130
9.1	Caste involvement	149
9.2	Caste solidarity now?	151
9.3	Explanations for lack of solidarity	152
9.4	Unity desirable in future?	154
9.5	Purpose of caste unity in future	155
9.6	Caste solidarity likely in the future?	156
9.7	Access to networks	166
9.8	Explanations of intracaste helpfulness	167
11.1	How common is untouchability?	212
11.2	Untouchability: axes for change	213
11.3	Explanations of untouchability	215
11.4	On a Harijan renting a house in a prestigious neighbourhood	216

Contents

PART I: FRAMEWORKS

1. **Historical Context** 3

2. **Town of Modelpur** 14

3. **Theoretical Contexts** 25

3.1 How the normative pressure acts 3.2 Issues of status
3.3 Issues in mobility 3.4 Unity and networks

PART II: THREE CASTES

4. **Balmikis** 51

4.1 The historical setting 4.2 A mobile Balmiki family
4.3 Social organization

5. **Ad Dharmis** 68

5.1 Historical context 5.2 Patterns of Ad Dharmi mobility
5.3 Social organization

6. **Ramgarhias** 86

6.1 The historical setting 6.2 Corporate status dissonance
6.3 Social organization
Appendix 6.4 The Dhimans

PART III: MOBILITY: DOMAINS, STRATEGIES, CONSEQUENCES

7. **The Mobile Man** 117

7.1 Who are mobile? 7.2 Age and residence 7.3 Occupational mobility 7.4 Perceptions of mobility

8. **Domains of Mobility** 133

8.1 Industry 8.2 Education 8.3 Politics

9. **Unity and Networks: Strategies for Mobility** 148

9.1 The many faces of caste unity 9.2 Social networks
Appendix 9.3 Who helps and Why?

10. Politics and Harijans 169

10.1.Political culture 10.2 The Harijan candidates 10.3 Politics and inequality 10.4 The leaders: Harijan and high caste

11. Intercaste Relations 206

11.1 The pressures 11.2 The responses 11.3 Balmiki-Ad Dharmi relations 11.4 A paradigm of change Appendix 11.5 The question of untouchability

12. Conclusions 218

12.1 The three castes 12.2 The caste system and untouchability 12.3 Facets of an urban centre 12.4 Conceptualizing the transformation

Appendix: The Procedures 239

A1 Delimiting the problem A2 Studying mobility comparatively A3 Problems of rapport A4 The lattic design A5 Data analysis

13. Postscript 1989 251

References 265

Index 275

PART I

FRAMEWORKS

CHAPTER I

Historical Context

The northwestern mountain passes in the Himalayas open Punjab towards lands further west, north, and east. Until well into the first millennium A.D., communication across the passes was frequent, and numerous migrants and invaders from the north came and settled in areas to the south, down to Punjab. This admixture of people helped make "caste observances... so slack on the frontier that easterners began to look upon Madra, Gandhara and Kamboja people as loose-lived and barbarous" (Kosambi 1965: 119).[1] Later invaders, spread over a whole millennium, tended to push on to Delhi, regarded as the gateway to the fertile Gangetic valley, and as they marched to their target or back with their booty, they ravaged whatever lay in their path—including Punjab. This appears to have prevented the crystallization of enduring power structures, at the levels both of the region and of the village. The influence of these ancient tendencies over contemporary Punjab cannot be said to have been decisive but its consistency with later forces is noteworthy.

Another influence on Punjabi society, congruent in important ways with the foregoing, can be traced to the emergence of Sikhism. In a sociologically sensitive biography of Guru Nanak, W.H. McLeod (1968) delineates the sharp cleavage between the Guru's teachings and the traditional Hindu concerns with status, ritual purity, commensal separation, and so forth. Nanak's condemnation of these may not have been as harsh as that by, say, Kabir; yet the Sikh influence in this direction was much more potent, for it came to be embodied in certain social disciplines

[1] See also Raychaudhuri (1953: 60, 65). This paragraph reflects a conversation with Romila Thapar.

(see p. 99). These were applied to Sikhs of all castes, high and low, by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, when he founded the corporate Sikh community, the Khalsa, in 1699 (see McLeod 1968: 209-11).

Close on the heels of the founding of the Khalsa, and of Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the political circumstances of Punjab entered an unusually fluid phase. Mughal control from Delhi became less and less assured just as the Sikh daring with arms grew. Sikh forces came to be organized as *misls*, more or less private armies, traditionally numbering twelve and varying in strength and influence. The misls are said to have been "republican" in character, with chiefship achieved initially on the basis of personal qualities, but later becoming hereditary.

So long as Ahmad Shah Abdali from Kabul threatened and attacked Punjab (1748-67), the misls resisted and harassed his forces; thereafter each misl sought to expand the area under its own control, sometimes clashing with similar pursuits by other misls. Of the twelve misls, the leaders of nine, and later ten, including Maharaja Ranjit Singh, were Jats; their leadership generally rested not on inherited status in society but on armed prowess, and the disturbances which they caused in the social order continue to ripple down to our time.[2] The political uncertainity abated somewhat with the capture of Lahore by Ranjit Singh, leader of the Sukerchakia misl, in 1799 when he began his four decades as the premier ruler in Punjab.

Punjabi society had come through a century of great turbulence. Given the prevalence of "adventurers or vindictive chiefs" during those long years, Tom Kessinger says (1974: 24), citing the *Final Settlement Report of the Jullundur District* (1892): "only about one fourth of Jullundur's villages in 1885 dated from Akbar's reign (1556-1605)." The revenue-paying Muslim Rajput zamindars had dominated the areas during the 16th century, but during the struggles of the 18th century (see below), they gave way to revenue-paying Sikh Jat owner-cultivators:

> The combination of a deliberate policy against former *zamindars*,

[2] McLeod (1974) enquires into the course of events, over more than two centuries, for two castes whose names have been associated with the leadership of two of the misls: Ahluwalia and Ramgarhia.

who were seen as a political threat, and Ranjit Singh's practice of frequently transferring officials, militated against any redevelopment at this level of rural society. This change represents more than the substitution of *zamindars* from one particular family, lineage, caste, or religious group for those drawn from a different background.... The elimination of the position of *zamindar* constituted a fundamental change in the structure of rural society in the Punjab (Kessinger 1974: 29).

By sustaining the elimination of the stratum of zamindars in earlier decades, as we have seen, Ranjit Singh strengthened the position of the Jats and prepared the ground for "the development of a system of land tenure under the British in which village cultivators who owned and farmed small holdings were predominant" (Kessinger 1974: 29-33). These developments were in line with the ideological changes to which the British land policy was subject during the mid-19th century. We shall return shortly to the pattern of land tenure that the British established in Punjab.

Students of India's political history have often referred to the deficiencies in the indigenous supports for state structures (for example, Kothari 1970: 25), deficiencies undoubtedly associated with the strong intra-caste loyalties which could be mobilized in order to challenge the established structures. While the issue cannot be explored here fully, it is reasonable to expect that new rulers would turn to such resources as the society offered for neutralizing these deficiencies. Upwardly mobile lower castes, including new rulers of such background, have often sought Kshatriya rank through "surreptitious legitimation by cooperative Brahman priests and genealogists" (Stein 1968: 80). For this service the rulers have paid by adding to the Brahmin's status and prerogatives in their domains. Burton Stein has analysed a relatively complex situation in South India. Even though the rising Vijayanagar power undermined the previously powerful, autonomous Brahmin *local* communities, at the *regional* level the Vijayanagar rulers "identified and justified their own power in terms of the protection of Hindu institutions from Islam" and continued their support of "Brahman religious prerogatives and high

ritual rank." In exchange, they "won recognition from the Brahmans for their own ascendant military and political power." This relationship, Stein argues (1968: 91-93), contributed to the decline of the Shudras at the Srirangam and the Tirupati temples, where the reformist Srivaishnava sect had earlier enabled them to become temple priests. In search of additional props for their own power, then, ruling groups often sought Brahmin support and, in return, endowed land and other gifts upon, and offered to uphold the religious supremacy of, the Brahmins: this is the fitfully realized social and political reality underlying Louis Dumont's dictum that, in India's hierarchical society, status encompassed power (1970).

Where large-scale land rights underpinned the Brahmins' status — as in Kerala (Kunjanpillai 1970: Ch. 7), Tamil Nadu (Gough 1955: 38), Andhra (Frykenberg 1965: 38), and Maharashtra (Kumar 1968: 38-40) — it carried also a capacity to enforce conditions which would enable them to live in greater ritual purity. Higher levels of purity for the Brahmin implied, however, (*i*) that those who had to relieve them of the polluting biological materials would have more work to do — and they became the untouchables of different sorts, and (*ii*) that the danger of external pollution, from contact with lower castes, thereby became all the greater; and therefore elaborate scales of social distance, requiring the latter to keep away from the persons and the areas of high purity, came to be prescribed.[3]

The literature concerning the pattern of relations between the Brahmins and the Sikhs, rulers or commoners, in Punjab is ambiguous. There is the common assertion concerning the Sikhs' long and widespread hostility both to Sanskritic ritual and to the Brahmins (see Khushwant Singh 1963: 54 and elsewhere; Chanana 1961: 409; McLeod 1968: 208-10). Van den Dungen refers to another element: the "egalitarian message of Sikhism," he argues (1968: 79), prevented "the adhesion of the Rajputs to the Sikh cause" and thereby "rendered them an object of hatred to the Sikh Jats." The alienation from both the Brahmin and the Rajput cultural models implied in the foregoing, however, is flatly contradicted by Khushwant Singh in a footnote to Ranjit Singh's

[3] Gould (1967) has summarized the issues in this area at length.

funeral (1963: 289n). The Brahmin *purohits* of the Jats, who dominated the region of Kessinger's village (1974: 42), are said to have been prominent; but later references (pp. 75, 96) give no clue to the content of this prominence.

Leaving this issue aside for the historians, we notice that the Brahmins' capacity, in the mid-19th century, to compensate for the deficiencies in the state's bases of power would in any case have been very small. As Stewart Gordon notes in the case of Malwa (1969), the European presence had recast the framework of political competition: the common availability of artillary increased greatly the number and the intensity of threats to all the prevailing state structures, except that of the British, and the latter watched the scene from the wings, ready to intervene whenever events took a propitious course. The principal challenge came not from within, which the Brahmins might have helped contain, but from without; there they had no say, and this could not have escaped the Sikh rulers. Consequently, even if the Brahmins were able to carve a ceremonial place at Ranjit Singh's court for themselves, there is no evidence that they acquired much land or that they were able to enforce the social circumstances which they would have required for maintaining high levels of ritual purity; and therefore the lowest castes in Punjab had to carry only a light burden of ritual impurities, much lighter, physically and socially, than the burdens elsewhere in India.

Influences convergent with the foregoing came from another direction. In the late 19th- and early 20th-century Punjab, a wide range of religious traditions — Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, and the Arya Samaj, all of them egalitarian in ideology — were locked in competition with each other as well as with orthodox Hinduism. Their struggle had substantial political overtones, implying a battle for numbers too. While the full complexity of these encounters remains to be unravelled, these appear to have influenced the environment in ways favourable to the lower castes.[4] Let

[4] Van den Dungen (1968: 63) attributes the absence of a "strict hierarchical pattern" in Punjabi society to the coexistence of "a number of status systems" — the Hindu caste system, the Islamic and Sikh variants of egalitarianism, and the

us notice briefly the course of development of each of these religious traditions in Punjab.

Conversions to Islam were spread over nearly a millennium, responding to different stimuli at different times. Sometimes it would be the promise of status mobility, emanating from Sufi saints or other religious men more or less explicitly: a promise of special interest for the lower castes; at other times the stimulus would come from the local officials' influence: exercised as administrative authority (including forced conversions) or merely felt as the likelihood of patronage for co-religionists.[5] During Aurangzeb's reign the exercise of such authority and the offer of such patronage can apparently be traced to the emperor himself (S.R. Sharma 1962: 165-74).

Evidence from 18th-century Sikh history too gives varied support to the proposition that the Sikh society at that time permitted substantial social mobility and freedom of affiliation in corporate martial groups (misl) (Gupta 1952, I: 8-9, 54): trying to explain large-scale lower-caste conversions into Sikhism, Gupta (1952, I: 63) asserts that "the commonwealth of Guru Gobind Singh recognized no caste restrictions among the members of the church"; the social principles formulated by Nanak had endured. The image may be closer to the Sikh religious ideals than to the Sikh village practice, but the ideals did temper the practice in some measure.

C. A. Oddie (1969) has analysed the social implications of Christian — Protestant — missionary activity during the late 19th century in India. "The number of Christian converts rose rapidly" in Punjab, notes Kenneth Jones (1968: 42), "from 3,912 in 1881 to over 19,000 a decade later, and by 1901 had reached nearly 38,000." Whereas the missionaries had long been *ambivalent*

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various secular marks of status. Insofar as he ignores the capacity of the caste order to encapsulate such plurality, such diversity, into mutually insulated social universes, this is less than satisfactory. The essential element in the scene was not the coexistence of these diversities but their rivalries — and *their attempts to undercut each other*. For the lower castes this had implications which have been analysed skilfully, with reference to the 1931 Census, by R. S. Smith (1971). See also Jones (1968).

[5] This interpretation is based on discussions with Dr Mushirul Haq and Dr Harbans Mukhia. See, also, Mukhia (1972: 47-49).

towards caste practices within the Christian Church, at least in South India, Oddie argues that they began, by early 20th century, to focus their attack only on the institution of caste even within Hindu society and religion. Furthermore, whereas the fear of ostracism had inhibited the individual response to proselytizing in earlier decades, the situation began to change sharply in the late 19th century: supported by its elders, "the whole caste *en masse* sometimes decided to accept baptism."[6] The trend overall was perceived to be a threat by the Hindus:

> Partly because so many converts came from the depressed classes the missionaries were among the first to draw the government's attention to their plight and disabilities.... Missionary work among ... out-castes greatly impressed some Hindu observers and fear of losing large numbers to Christianity spurred educated Hindus into increased activity. For example, Lala Lajpat Rai, the Arya and nationalist leader [a Punjabi], declared in a public speech in about 1912 that "the possibility of losing the untouchables has shaken the intelligent section of the Hindu community to its very depths" and he went on to urge Hindus to forestall the movement towards Christianity by improving the condition of these classes (Oddie 1969: 283-84).

Lajpat Rai gave expression to sentiments felt throughout the Arya Samaj, and it joined the battle for the lower castes' allegiance not only with Christian missionaries but also with Sikhs and other religious groups (Ganda Singh 1965: Ch. 43; Jones 1968). The Arya Samajis developed new, egalitarian forms of behaviour, but only in small groups in major towns, like Lahore; and for them largely in bold, public denials of social inequalities, in essentially symbolic interdining with the lower castes, and in admitting them into the schools being built by the Arya Samaj. The tide away from Hinduism, however, was slowed down.

The challenge of the western cultural threat, posed by many besides the Christian missionaries, and the rising nationalist

[6] Oddie (1969:277). See also McMullen *et al.* (1973), kindly sent to me by John Webster. The reference here would undoubtedly be to some local segment of a caste.

sentiment did bring some sanscritization to the Punjabi Hindu ceremonial and scriptures; but the Brahmins had little direct influence over these changes which, in any case, were not such as to add greatly to the polluting materials removed — or to the social distance required of — the untouchables (Chanana 1961: 411-12; Tandon 1961: 76-77).

The Brahmins were powerless both to influence and to resist the course that these potent social and religious forces took in Punjab. We have already noted the Sikh hostility which put the Punjabi Brahmins on the defensive. The Arya Samaj, likewise, could not in any sense be called pro-Brahmin even though it swore by parts of the ancient Sanskrit literature: indeed, its Gurukuls offered non-Brahmins an effective channel for becoming Pandits in the Arya Samaj tradition,[7] undercutting the Brahmin claims to hereditary status. Congregational worship gave expression to the religious egalitarianism of both Sikhism and the Arya Samaj and effectively communicated their anti-Brahminism to mass audiences throughout Punjab. This deviant worldview has percolated down to the village level where Brahmins, low in non-priestly occupational standing, tend to concede superior rank to the landowing Jats and even to the trading Banias (D'Souza 1967: 201-2). Little wonder, then, that Chanana (1961: 410n) should say, "In Punjabi the word *Pandat* [Pandit] denotes a Brahmin and may connote some respect for the latter. But the word *Brahman* [Brahmin] almost always carries a little contempt."

It is the lower castes and not the Brahmins, however, that will concern us. Forces already at play in relation to them would draw further strength from various legislative, administrative, and other pressures after independence. To these considerations later chapters will return. For now we note merely that the Punjabi society was, and continued to be, organized in caste groups, and the patterns of dominance between them reflected the distribution of power and of rights in land and other resources, but ritual differentiation did not much augment the political and economic differentiation, and therefore the Punjabis generally

[7] Personal knowledge. Perhaps even more potent was the Arya Samaji venom, directed at the orthodox faith, Sanatan Dharma, wherein the Brahmins continued to be more important.

continued to function in a relatively fluid caste order.

The century of Punjabi experience of colonial rule (1849-1947) exposed them to a great deal more than the missionary challenge and the more general western cultural threat. Few would deny that imperial powers establish control over the colonies, and maintain it, in order to advance their own economic and political interests. Imperialism generally, and the British empire in India particularly, could not but be exploitative, devoted primarily to the interests of the rulers rather than those of the ruled. Incontestable though this overall view is, the particular experiences of the various regions reveal differences in the nature and extent of exploitation. It was not identical in Bihar and in Gujarat. The colonial order in western India, considered by Ravinder Kumar (1968), Christine Dobbin (1972), and Kenneth Gillion (1968), was very different from that portrayed for eastern India by Blair Kling (1966) and Amiya Bagchi:

> The resistance of the Marathas to British occupation meant that western India was not subject to British exploitation during the days when the East India Company and its servants treated India as the prize of victory in the most literal sense. It also meant that the native merchants were not eliminated from the fields of high finance as they were in eastern India; it is even probable that the merchant classes gained by lending money to the various powers during their struggle (Bagchi 1970: 246).

This is not the place to develop a sociology of colonialism, yet its implications were clearly wide-ranging. While the colonial phase had its trauma for the Punjabis too, it had its advantages compared with earlier periods, and it had many dimensions.

There was, to begin with, land tenure. In most districts of India, apart from Oudh and Punjab, Bernard Cohn (1970: 131) has estimated that "if ... in 1880 there were 100,000 landholders, 99,900 held 70 per cent of the land and 100 held 30 per cent." In Punjab, we have seen, the 18th-century conflicts had removed the layer of the zamindars, and the administrators' current ideological preferences persuaded them not to replace it (Kessinger 1974:

31-33). A relatively large category of medium-sized landholders emerged, making for a rhomboid rather than a pyramidal form of agrarian stratification. Not only did this enlarge the catchment area for entrepreneurship, underwriting in some measure the later image of the enterprising Punjabi; it also obviated the absentee landlords whose influence in Bengal, eastern U.P., and elsewhere had been identified as social parasitism, blocking the way to significant societal movement forward (Joshi 1969: 484; 1975).

The decades of peace brought to these crowded lands substantial population growth too. Land settlements had confirmed the elimination of an intermediate layer, yet the agricultural land available per capita declined steadily during the 19th century. The consequent pressure of numbers, McLeod (1973) suggests, was not relieved quickly by opportunities away from agriculture; and this led to unrest,[8] especially among the numerous poorer Jats, a setting for the Kuka movement to grow, issuing in the Malerkotla episode (1872).

But the opportunities away from agriculture did arise. The Jats had taken to the British army early, and they fought for the British in 1857. The Mazhbi Sikhs—from a sweeper caste—fought likewise; Stephen Cohen (1969: 455-62) shows that the Ramdasia Sikhs—traditionally weavers or leatherworkers, another low caste—have also been drawn into the army, especially in times of active fighting, as in 1857 and during World War II, and discharged afterwards. All of them—Jat, Mazhbi, Ramdasia—travelled widely in Asia, Africa, and Europe, carrying the rifle for the empire. Removed for a while from his village moorings, the soldier saw something of other cultures; and those of his low-caste colleagues who chose to return to their villages met with unusual consideration from their neighbours.

Some of the demobilized soldiers, untouchables as well as Jats, along with others of peasant stock from the crowded districts of eastern Punjab, were able to spread into the agricultural lands of

[8] The population density in the districts of eastern Punjab has been no greater than that in the Gangetic plain and its delta region (Spate and Learmonth 1967: Ch. 4). To account, then, for this unrest, and for the keenness of the subsequent search for greater elbow room by the Punjabis, one would have to invoke such additional factors as the pattern of stratification and the associated distribution of personality types.

western Punjab. During the closing decades of the 19th century the government built the irrigation canals and laid out the canal colonies in what is now the Punjab in Pakistan, and these lands were sold on very attractive terms to colonists from the east (Aurora 1967: 29; Kessinger 1974: Ch. 3). Other possibilities, for land and fresh opportunity, were noticed by the soldiers during their travels in some relatively thinly populated lands, and these stimulated their explorations overseas by the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century.

There is, finally, one more feature of the landscape, especially important for our analysis: the railways. These were laid in Punjab, and further north and west, during 1860s and later, and brought into relief the skills of the Punjabi artisan, labourer, and contractor (Baden-Powell 1872: 249-52; Aurora 1967: 28); the British administrators appear to have recommended them for rail-building jobs in Assam and East Africa. Among the rail-builders were the carpenters and the blacksmiths. Their experience, especially outside Punjab, drew them into entrepreneurial roles of growing amplitude, and over time they forged for themselves a new identity: the Ramgarhias. Our analysis in this volume will concern them and the two formerly untouchable castes, now known as Balmikis and Ad Dharmis.

While one might wish to quantify the various forces noticed in these pages, the impression of movement in the larger society, and of stir in individual ambition, is strong and clear. The springs of these tendencies, we have argued, often antedated the colonial experience; and the shape the latter took did often allow them room to work themselves out.

CHAPTER II

Town of Modelpur

A distant visitor to Modelpur approaches the town by one of the fast trains from the south. Several of these arrive at about day-break. A stranger would not normally come in this manner without suitable introductions, for Modelpur has no public accommodations, if you exclude the government Rest House, the rooms in the Gurudwaras, and the like. If the stranger wished to spend several days in and around Modelpur, and had no offer of hospitality, he would probably stay in one of Jullundur's many small but good hotels and commute to Modelpur.

He would probably come from Jullundur to Modelpur by bus: it is only 20 kilometres away, and there is a bus every eight or ten minutes. These buses are not part of a local service: perhaps half of them run only between Ludhiana and Jullundur, but the others connect Modelpur with places as far away as Delhi, Chandigarh, Kalka, Hoshiarpur, Jammu, Amritsar, Kapurthala, and Patiala. The bus stands lie across the Grand Trunk Road, the historic artery of North India; a few hundred metres away is the railway station, which our visitor had earlier passed, connecting Modelpur directly with Bombay, Calcutta, Dehradun, Kalka, Pathankot, Amritsar, and elsewhere. This conjunction of roads and railways makes Modelpur a crossroads town and has helped its growth over the past three decades.

Modelpur has grown physically along the principal roads linking it to other centres. The precise limits of the Municipal Committee's jurisdiction are bitterly disputed. The ambiguity arose in the definition of the boundaries during the days before the merger of the princely state into the Indian Union. One interpretation of this boundary would include only the small confine of the old town;

the Municipal Committee's recent attempts to enlarge its jurisdiction have been thwarted by the landowners who would thus be drawn into the net for higher urban property taxes (see § 10.20). Urban growth consequently follows a course not of planned expansion but of unregulated individual choice in the following manner.

On the fringes of the inhabited areas, a non-agriculturist, anticipating a rise in land prices, buys a piece of agricultural land. For a while it might continue to be cultivated by tenants or be turned over to a use which needs a piece of land, close to town but not necessarily inside it: say a brick kiln. As the older neighbourhoods fill up, the new landowner converts his land into a neighbourhood, laying out house-plots, lanes, etc., following his own judgment. Houses are built long before the roads are paved (show-pieces like Modelpur's Model Town are remote exceptions). Paving the roads and installing a street light or a hand-pump at a road crossing (the *only* form of public water supply in most of the town) are later operations, awaiting the Municipal Councillors' discretion: acts of patronage by them.

Two of the larger factories have built their workers' housing colonies on the town fringes. The largest factory, which makes textiles, is part of a giant dispersed industrial group; and most of its managers and supervisors are primarily oriented not to Modelpur but to future postings and mobility in the industrial group: a world apart, with its own pecking orders, cleavages and conflicts, ration shop, and exclusive school. Modelpurias[1] are interested in it only for the low-level jobs it offers and some minor purchases it makes from them.

The sugar mill, the town's second largest unit, was the first to arrive, as part of India's sugar boom in the early 1930s. Part of a rather smaller industrial conglomerate than is the textile mill, its managers participate in the town's public life rather more; and since its raw material—sugarcane—comes from its immediate vicinity, its operations, such as insecticide sprays to protect the sugarcane crop, reach deep into the region. Like the textile mill, however, this one too is Hindu-controlled. Its sugarcane *suppliers* are almost entirely the area's Sikh farmers, united in a coopera-

[1] The suffix "ia" attached to a town's name denotes a resident of the town in Punjab. A Modelpuria is a resident of Modelpur.

tive, which negotiates the sugarcane price with the mill management every year. The seller here is also a Sikh and a cultivator, and the buyer is also a Hindu and a capitalist or his Hindu manager, and this coincidence of interfaces means that the negotiations are sometimes packed with tension.

The town merges into long stretches of fully irrigated, intensively cultivated lands which deliver sugarcane to the sugar mill, maize to the starch mill, and wheat and other grains to its long-established markets: thanks to the Green Revolution, at harvest time, loaded tractor-trailors, bullockcarts, trucks, and tongas stand in long queues for entry through the market gates, waiting for their turn to unload at their customary dealer's shop. At that time, too, the farmers successfully entice cycle-rickshaw pullers, unskilled factory-workers, and the like to take to the fields for short-term but better paid harvesting work.

Modelpur town is the headquarters of Modelpur Tehsil, i.e., a sub-district, covering the erstwhile enclave of a princely state, surrounded—and separated from the princely state's capital (now the district's headquarters)—by British India. How the rulers of the princely state came to acquire this enclave was not a matter of much concern to Modelpur's rather ahistorical population. It is said that the town began to grow in its present site in the middle of this millennium, when the Grand Trunk Road was relocated a mile or two to the west of its earlier course. Along this highway was a *parav,* a camping ground for the army. *The Punjab State Gazetteer* for this area, published in 1908, says:

> Founded in the reign of the Emperor Shahjahan [1628-58], it was held by Hindu Jats until Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured the place in the year 1804 and bestowed it upon [the then ruler of the princely family noted above]. Formerly the town was quite insignificant, but of late years it has greatly increased in size and importance and has developed into the chief market of the Jullundur Doab. It is famous for its manufacture of hardware and metal goods, and is now the centre of a considerable sugar trade.

Two gurudwaras commemorate the visit of the Sikh Guru, Har Gobind (1606-45), to Modelpur: the lone "historical" event in most residents' minds for mentioning to the inquisitive visitor.

Those who dominate Modelpur today—the industrial employers, the municipal councillors, the benefactors and controllers of educational, political, and religious institutions—belong to families which became prominent in (often came to) Modelpur during the mid-20th century: earlier history has little to contribute to the legitimization of *their* standing in society. The empty, crumbling shells of what must have been the mansions of the wealthy of an earlier century testify to the social upheaval the town has undergone: the rise and fall of these families during that period can probably be reconstructed, and such an exercise—along with the impressive range of data highlighted by Kessinger (1970)—would illuminate new facets of the social history of Punjab. We shall have occasion later to return to historical issues again, especially when trying to explain the rise of the Ramgarhias in Chapter 6.

The princely state which included Modelpur used to enjoy substantial autonomy in relation to the surrounding British India. For example, the taxes—especially in urban areas—were generally lower than in British India and the administration, being small-scale, was highly personalized. Two outside entrepreneurs established rather large factories in Modelpur before independence, and their present managers cite the attractive tax situation as an important consideration in their factories' location in this town. Likewise, the taxes payable by the brokers in the grain market were relatively low.

The princely rulers' personal characteristics also influenced this area's social development. For example, the most prominent occupant of the throne was a clean-shaven Sikh, said to have been sympathetic to the Arya Samaj and hostile to Christianity; consequently, Modelpur has no Christian church. The Land Alienation Act, 1900, which barred the "non-agriculturists" from buying agricultural land in British Punjab (Van den Dungen 1972), was not extended to this state, possibly because the ruler himself was of a "non-agriculturist" caste. While this Act helped preserve the Jat predominance over agricultural land in Punjab, non-Jats

could buy land in the Modelpur area. When a certain contractor of carpenter caste acquired wealth working in Simla, he decided to build a temple to Vishvakarma, the artisans' deity. Unable to buy adequate land near his own village in British India, he did so in the adjacent territory of this princely state, close to Modelpur. Built in 1910, the Vishvakarma temple became a focus for men of artisan castes, drawing them to gatherings at a fair especially on the day after the festival of Diwali, making Modelpur one likely centre for Ramgarhia sentiments to effloresce.

Several informants mentioned that only 20 years ago, Modelpur used to be quite effectively dominated by a few Brahmin families. It is said that the Sanskrit school located at the town's out-skirts was famous, attracting students from afar. Today, neither the Brahmin influence nor the Sanskrit school count for much in the town's life, reflecting the post-partition upsurge.

Before the partition, most Modelpur streets were inhabited by particular caste groups. Following the partition riots, the Muslims' houses were taken over opportunistically by high-caste Hindu and Sikh immigrants from West Punjab. Furthermore, physical mobility has since accelerated, and families leaving town rent or sell their homes to members of other high castes largely on economic considerations; consequently most Modelpur neighbourhoods show a high caste mix. Those buying plots in new neighbourhoods seek residential segregation only in relation to Harijans—and usually they succeed. Chapter 11 will show however that, although the Harijans constitute only about a sixth of the town's population and contribute few to the ranks of the wealthy and the powerful, they are able increasingly to assert their civil rights: even the barrier of segregated housing is beginning to give way here and there.

In Punjab, the Sikhs tend to predominate in rural areas and the Hindus in urban areas, and this holds in Modelpur too. The 1961 Census did not publish the town's religious composition, but the Hindu preponderance is evident in the composition of the Municipal Committee: most of its members as well as the President have, as far as I know, always been Hindus. In recent decades, however, the urban Hindu concentrations have been counter-balanced by increasing Sikh influence via the civil service, the rural control

over the Zila Parishad, and the state government.

Modelpur's population has grown from about 12,000 in 1931 (after moderate fluctuations in the previous half century) to about 38,000 in 1961, going by the Census. In 1969 a population of 55,000 to 60,000 was often mentioned for the town: the difference could be due to the ambiguity concerning town limits and to the growth since 1961. The 1971 Census recorded over 55,000 for the town's population, but Modelpur's corporate boundaries continued to be indeterminate.

This growth parallels the town's phenomenal industrial expansion. Apart from the three rather large factories built by outside entrepreneurs, this expansion is due to local enterprise, usually starting in small units and sometimes growing rapidly. Beginning in the early 1930s, when public electric supply became available, these workshops have concentrated on making parts for automobiles, diesel pumps, etc. Other workshops, begun elsewhere, shifted to Modelpur during the 1940s and the 1950s, drawn by the growing amenities of a main line town.

In the 1930s and the 1940s, when the units were small, entrepreneurship tended to rest with Muslims and the high-caste Hindus. Since late 19th and early 20th century, however, the artisans from this area had been going to Simla, then the summer capital of both India and Punjab—where quality work was much in demand—and also to eastern India and East Africa. There they often grew into large-scale contractors for the governments and other organizations, and later returned home with the confidence of successful entrepreneurs. They are now the Ramgarhias in Modelpur.

The town's industrial focus is manifest in the occupational distribution of those enumerated as "workers" in the 1961 Census: about 40 per cent of them were engaged in "manufacturing" in units of various sizes, another 20 per cent were in trade and commerce, and the balance were spread over a wide variety of work and services including some in agriculture.

What have the refugees from West Pakistan done for the town's industrial growth? First, comparing the Census figures for 1941 and 1951 it is clear that the arrival of the refugees led to a *small* rise in the town's population: in 1941 the Muslims had

comprised just over 20 per cent of the town then; the refugees who replaced them constituted, in 1951, just under 33 per cent of the town's residents: during the decade the town's total population grew by 35 per cent.

Secondly, the refugees' distribution over the different areas of economic activity: the 1961 Census gives the percentages of those born in Pakistan, as against the general population, in the nine workers' categories used therin. We can use these figures after some adjustments: (*a*) The figures are for the whole district, not for the town studied; we have to assume that the distribution of the *relevant* categories (see below) holds for the town also; and (*b*) since the under-14s are entirely absent from the Pakistan-born group, a simple correction has to be applied to the Census figures.

With these, I find that among the workers classified as engaged in manufacturing (both in small and large units), the percentage of those born in Pakistan is rather *less* than proportional to that in the general population: nor have the refugees been conspicuous as *industrial* entrepreneurs, and therefore the growth in manufacturing cannot be attributed to the refugees directly.

The 1961 Census data for Modelpur do show, however, that those born in Pakistan were more than proportionately represented in "trade and commerce," which is in line with the observation that the Hindus and Sikhs were over-represented in this field in the areas now in West Pakistan (Census 1961a: 247). I know (*i*) that several refugees are active now in Modelpur's auto-parts trade—a major item in Modelpur's manufacturing—and (*ii*) that the auto-parts trade grew rapidly in Modelpur in the 1950s; it is possible that the refugees were active in developing complementary distribution facilities, possibly aided by the fact that Punjabi refugees were emerging all over India as important auto-parts retailers. The partition may also have aided the Ramgarhia rise in industry by removing the Muslim workshop owners from the scene, making it easier for the artisans to bid locally for the entrepreneurs' role; and the auto-parts from their growing workshops rolled into the trade channels being paved by the refugees.

The two decades between about 1945 and 1965 were the period of peak growth for Modelpur's Ramgarhia educational complex.

Its motivational roots and social base will engage us in Chapter 6. A boy's high school was begun in the late twenties; later came a school for girls, several other schools in nearby villages, a college which does some M.A. teaching too, a teachers' training college, and a polytechnic. The colleges admit girls too; but most parents would rather keep their daughters out of a coeducational place, and so a women's college has been built, sponsored by the town's commercial and industrial leaders other than the Ramgarhias. Control over several additional high schools rests in a variety of hands, some governmental, some religious denominational. Primary schools are numerous, and one of these, launched by the area's Harijan MP, caters mainly to Harijan students.

Classmates in school and college become acquaintances and friends regardless of caste, and this may lead to visiting each other's homes. For men of the upper castes these relationships continue to be available for later network links and provide, say, an insurance agent with many of his clients. As the years go by, however, most Harijans become increasingly aware of the adverse stereotypes concerning them, and their relationships with former classmates tend to taper off.

Visiting among adults in homes is patterned by kinship and neighbourhood. Shops are places not only for trade but also for talk. Some shops become known as the haunts of particular politicians, their *adda* (§ 10.11), while other shops or rather their owners become associated with tips of a commercial and entrepreneurial sort (§ 9.21). The traditional seclusion of women is surely declining, yet apart from an occasional college graduate, women do not ordinarily visit or relax with men who are not kinsmen. The town club offers various facilities but, in its members' view, the place is not suitable for ladies. A religious or other public context may draw large numbers of both women and men—but they would usually sit apart.

I have already noted that the town's industrial growth owes much to men who first entered relatively prestigious roles in East Africa or eastern India. Either my informants or members of their nuclear families had worked in Assam, Hong Kong, the Philippines, East Africa, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Despite

the contemporary affluence locally, a man looking for the big chance still thinks of going abroad, and such thoughts stir even the labourer who loads and unloads luggage at the bus stand.

The town boasts of an extraordinary number of travel agents. Most journeys abroad in earlier years were by sea; and one or two local fortunes—since translated into factories—are said to have been made by shipping men illegally from India to UK. Nearly all travel now by air. Perhaps a majority of them come from the town's rural hinterland and expect to reach UK; but many return, poorer and somewhat wiser. (For a very good general account of Indians in the UK, see Aurora 1967.)

Someone already abroad is likely to visit India once every few years. These visitors are said to come loaded with goods bought in UK, whose legal import is prohibited. The movement of these goods from UK to India also serves to remit funds from these living there to kinsmen in India: the size of profits permits both a premium on the remittances and a fee for those who carry the goods. The visitor is likely to have tidy savings of his own, besides; and he too gains a substantial premium by putting these into unofficial channels. During his brief stay in India he is anxious to invest his money in agricultural or urban land or urban housing: in pushing up land values, this element acts in concert with the Green Revolution, accelerating a process which has operated in this region for the best part of the 20th century (Kessinger 1974: 155-56, 167-69).

The impression of societal movement and of individual ambition, in their historical context, gained in the previous chapter, arises again as we consider the town of Modelpur. Such forces inevitably bring changes in the boundaries of groups and in their identities as well as those of individuals—how they are known and how they wish to be known. The three castes which constitute our focus—the Balmikis, the Ad Dharmis, and the Ramgarhias—illustrate these changes especially well.

Each of these castes, I have noted earlier, has recently acquired a new name. The traditional Chuhra, associated with scavenging, is now known as Balmiki, appropriating the name of a sage,

Valmiki, who is said to have written the epic *Ramayana*. The traditional Chamar and Julaha, leatherworkers and weavers, are now known collectively as the Ad Dharmi[2] (followers of the original dharma, or the original followers of dharma), a term which became current on the eve of the 1931 Census: in effect, the Sikhs, the Hindus, and other religious blocks had been making competitive demands upon the Harijans, asking for identification in one or the other category; and led apparently by the Chamars, many of them proclaimed in response that they were the true autochthones, who had been subjugated by the Aryans, and that they wished to be enumerated as adherants of their own original religion (Census 1931b, I:289; see also p. 68). The traditional Tarkhan and Lohar, carpenters and blacksmiths, joined into one endogamous group since prior to 1881 (Ibbetson 1916: 314), are now known as the Ramgarhia, employing the name of an 18th-century Sikh misl whose leader had been a Tarkhan (see § 6.11).

The thoroughness of this change betokens more than the aggressive projection of new corporate images by the lowly in a restive society. True, the names acquired currency as part of such image-building: a necessary effort, for some of the original names, associated with "menial" occupations, had also formed part of the popular Punjabi lexicon of abuse. The changing times require, besides, a new delicacy on the part of the community at large; when the local Members for Parliament and the state legislature as well as the Factories Inspector happen to be Harijans, others have to learn to refer to them with terms that are not abusive. The Punjabis had coped with the problem once before in their history: Chuhra Sikhs have long been known as Mazhbis ("religious ones") and Chamar and Julaha Sikhs as Ramdasias ("followers of Guru Ramdas," see p. 69n); and this may have made a switch to new terms easier this time.

The Harijan's growing occupational differentiation induces a change of surnames too. The village menial has his given name, and a nickname or his father's name would help distinguish him from a namesake. Town culture, however, gives a government official a nameplate, and he is addressed by his familial name:

[2] Locally the name is pronounced *aadharmi*, as noticed in nearby Jullundur by Dua (1971) and in Vilyatpur by Kessinger (1974: 128n).

"Sharma Sahib" or "Mr Sharma"; a shopkeeper puts up a signboard: Sharma Machine Company. Modelpur's Harijans draw upon their clan names for this purpose but, as one informant put it, their clans are little known, and if your nameplate or signboard reads "R. P. Sahonta" or "Sahonta Machine Company," people are puzzled and they ask what your caste is. Rather than go into needless detail, one adapts the clan name and, instead, uses "R. P. Sethi" or "Sethi Machine Company." No questions are asked then, for Sethi is a well known high-caste name. If a stranger is misled into enquiry, say, for a marital alliance, it can be parried as occasion arises.

CHAPTER III

Theoretical Contexts

This statement of the study's conceptual orientation opens with a consideration of how the relatively traditional behavioural patterns in local communities move towards developing national norms, in situations of moderately intensive social change. Issues of status and mobility will loom large in our analysis, and §§ 3.2 and 3.3 will consider these at length. Individual mobility strategies include the forging of solidarity within a caste segment and the alignment of multi-caste networks as alternatives; § 3.4 will explore this conceptual domain. Concepts for the political domain, and for mobility therein, are best considered along with relevant data in Chapter 10.

3.1 HOW THE NORMATIVE PRESSURE ACTS

With the withdrawal of colonial rulers, perhaps the key variable determining a "new" nation's career in independence lies in the successor elite's attributes: its representativeness in relation to the various ethnic groups, the adequacy and viability of its vision of the future, the nature of its rapport with the population at large, etc. A representative, creative elite in rapport with the masses, constitutes a truly independent realm, strongly influencing the course of events wherever its writ runs (Saberwal 1969b: 126); and in societies as segmented as India's the elite necessarily seeks to bring in a widely-shared normative order. Recent literature has shown much concern with the incorporation of local communities in participative national societies (Kothari 1971, Mukherjee 1970); a rather simple model will meet the needs of this study.

The influence of elite norms, carried through elite decisions and behaviour which have sustained local consequences, I shall call *normative pressure*. This is exercised in myriad ways: through

legislation and administrative action, public speeches and mass media, alternative values articulated, and new behavioural models presented. In a revolutionary situation, such as that of China, 1950-70, the normative pressures take effect by virtue of the imperative coordination effected by the controlling elite. However, in contexts of moderately intensive change, importance attaches to an interaction between normative pressure and the society's *deviant micro-settings,* wherein children get socialized into norms which are *not* dominant in the wider society. For these children, the role models may be drawn from what they see or know of such political figures as Pratap Singh Kairon, Swaran Singh; Jaya-prakash Narayan—or such movie stars as Raj Kapoor; or their models may come from functionaries in local religious or industrial settings. India has had—as most complex societies do have—a variety of such settings: caste groups with particular commercial or industrial traditions, religious sects with anti-hierarchical ideologies, family traditions of intellectual or musical achievement, pockets of conspicuous display and consumption, and so forth.

In contexts of moderate normative pressures much social change occurs through interaction between the norms and the behaviour characteristic of elites and of the deviant micro-settings, the interaction occurring primarily in the minds of the young; where the elite norms are congruent with the "minority" norms, the young would often choose the latter in preference to majority local norms including those within their families. This applies equally to norms which urge caste-free behaviour and to those which legitimize high levels of personal consumption and of secular in-equalities in a society. Given multiple elites, the young may have to choose between alternative, mutually inconsistent, and often conflicting norms, and this may lead to any of a very wide array of outcomes.

Concerned primarily with political change, Sheth (1970: 141) notes that rapid population growth leads to a preponderence of young adults in the population; and if their political socialization has been inadequate, the *status quo* is endangered. The same process, *generational turnover*, facilitates the spread of alternative norms drawn from deviant micro-settings, selected in terms of the ideas current in the macro-environment.

This model of normative pressures interacting with deviant

micro-settings to produce social change while generations turn over is general and has only an heuristic value. Between the general explanation it suggests and the specific changes observed lies a gap which requires supplementary propositions, as will be clear in § 8.11 when we consider Modelpur's industrial growth.

3.2 ISSUES OF STATUS

3.21 Status and Standing

The term "status" has diverse meanings and we need to take account of them. For India, Dumont (1966: 17) would reserve the term for *religious status*, that is, a caste's rank in the caste hierarchy. This study is not concerned with caste ranking: yet much thought and action in urban India flow from the actor's assessment of his own and others' approximate rank in the hierarchy, and therefore I follow Dumont in using "status" in this sense alone.

Yet, the caste hierarchy, which defines Dumont's sense of the term, is far from being the encompassing dimension of urban society. For one thing, the unit for social appraisal in urban India is—increasingly—not the corporate group but the individual; and the co-determinants of this appraisal include education, economic resources, political influence, general knowledgeability, etc., besides religious status. Together these establish one's "standing" in society.[1] That is, "status" is religious and corporate; "standing" is composite and individual. There will also be occasions needing a general term to cover both the meanings, and there I shall use "status", as in "status dissonance."

3.22 Status Dissonance

In traditional India, in Dumont's terms, the ideology of the caste system, with its stress on purity and pollution, "encompassed" the dimensions of power and wealth, and several scholars tell us that the three kinds of inequality tended to coincide. Thus, in

[1] This use of the term "standing" is different from David Pocock's. For him, a person, a family, or a group of families has "*standing* ... within the caste as opposed to *status* which they may have in their relationship with other castes" (1972: 65). I shall take "standing" to refer to one's social position in one's society at large, not within one's caste alone.

Sripuram:

> Membership in one or another [caste group] was the basis of the individual's identity, not only in ritual contexts, but also in the economic and political spheres (Beteille 1965a: 223).

Exceptions to this situation are by now well known, and Dumont takes note of one of them (1966: 29-30). Especially in Punjab, the setting for this study, we have noticed that nearly a millennium of almost continuous government by non-Hindus and other influences have deprived the Brahmins of their high status: nevertheless, though denied steady Brahminical guidance, village society in Punjab did maintain a caste hierarchy, with only marginal variations on the pattern elsewhere. Even these variations did not affect the relative status of the lowest castes, who will be my primary concern, or the ideology determining their status (Kessinger 1974).

Although a measure of corporate and individual mobility has always been possible within the caste system, these were exceptional events occurring against a backdrop of immobility; even for the mobile groups and persons the changes tended to be small and slow in coming; and in any case *post hoc* legitimization of these changes within the prevailing ideology would be sought (Barber 1968: 32-33). The political, economic, and technological influences active during the past hundred years, however, have been powerful enough to wring qualitative changes in the social order. Where, formerly, at least in the rural setting the significant authorities would agree upon (*i*) the legitimacy of the hierarchical order, (*ii*) the relative status of the constituent groups, and (*iii*) the propriety of evaluating individuals primarily with reference to their caste group, the new influences have tended to dissolve this agreement with reference to both castes and to individuals: this condition I call *status dissonance*.

My use of the word "dissonance" is similar to Festinger's. Specifically, "...two elements are in a dissonant relation if, considering these two alone, the obverse of one element would follow from the other" (Festinger 1957: 13). (The obverse relation need not be exclusive. Thus, in relation to "A is superior to B," both "A is equal to B" and "B is superior to A" are dissonant.)

I employ the term "status dissonance" in preference to "status inconsistency" or other terms in current use, for Festinger has endowed the cognate term, "cognitive dissonance" with a dynamic quality appropriate to my material:

> Cognitive dissonance can be seen as an antecedent condition which leads to activity oriented toward dissonance reduction just as hunger leads to activity oriented toward hunger reduction (1957: 3).

An exploration of such activity and of its determinants occupies much of Festinger's exposition. This will be one of the themes of the following analysis also.

3.23 Corporate Status Dissonance

In Indian society generally, the "lower" castes (that is, the Scheduled Castes and the Backward Classes) have traditionally been evaluated as "low" in the caste hierarchy; and this ranking was challenged so rarely from any quarter that its objects could not expect to be able to alter it favourably. However, during the 20th century members of the lower castes have heard about, read about, and experienced increasingly discrepant evaluations concerning themselves. These discrepancies have diverse sources. For example:

—Certain categories of skilled workers may find, at certain historical junctures, that a new set of authorities attaches greater value to their skills than had previously been the case. Thus, the representatives of intrusive authority in 19th- and 20th-century India—Englishmen—appear to have been willing to offer greater praise—and payment—for the work of Punjabi carpenters than had happened in the indigenous economic systems.

—The egalitarian morality which rejects the hierarchical morality and its ideological supports, such as the purity-pollution syndrome and the *karma* theory of reincarnation. The egalitarian morality, be it noted, has been characteristic of several creeds active in India prior to the arrival of European liberal and socialist doctrines.

—Flowing from, but historically distinct from, this last influence are the adult franchise, the Scheduled Castes' reserved

constituency, the Untouchability (Offences) Act, and similar measures of a legal sort.[2]

These influences have tended to undermine the legitimacy of traditional status distinctions, thus to offer (or promise) the "lower" castes a status equal, in concept, to that of the traditionally "higher" castes; but the principal authorities for these evaluations have been concentrated in metropolitan (or some religious) centres, and their effectiveness in specific situations in a village or a neighbourhood has been highly variable (Galanter 1972). The Punjabi landowner, trader, and other notables appear to have handled the ideology selectively: to knock the Brahmin down *but to try, if possible, not to concede much opportunity to the "lower" castes readily*.

Members of a "low" caste, then, have received a low evaluation of their status from most authorities of the local community and a higher evaluation from many at the national and other wider levels. Given such discrepant evaluation of the relative status of one's closed corporate group, a situation of Corporate Status Dissonance (CSD) may be said to arise. Specifically, it arises in the gaps between: (*i*) the evaluation given to one's corporate group—that is, the caste—by those who are locally dominant, and (*ii*) the evaluation given by some other authorities: (*a*) to oneself in, say, one's occupation,[3] or (*b*) to a category which subsumes one's corporate group, say the evaluation given to the Harijans by the Arya Samaj, Gandhi, or the Constitution of India. In recent decades these latter evaluations have generally issued from the controlling elite and form part of what I have earlier called normative pressure.

The mechanisms for the reduction of cognitive dissonance analysed by Festinger (1957) would, normally, enable one to

[2] This brief statement of the complex influences operative over several centuries is not in any sense uniquely adequate. Dumont (1970: 228-9), for example, cuts the cake in another way though, overall, the masterly touch in his analysis of the traditional, hierarchical order is missing from his excursion into contemporary society (1970: 229ff).

[3] The obverse of this situation appears in the case of the unskilled Brahmin worker, the Poor White in the southern United States, etc. who, too, would display CSD. Their psycho-social responses to their situation too invite enquiry.

reduce the gap between one's self-evaluation and others' evaluation of oneself; such "self-correction" would sustain the *status quo*. If the dissonance generated in the divergent evaluations given by diverse authorities acts on very many persons who are in communication with each other, however, it may bestir a revitalization movement, entailing a restructured self-image, vastly different from the one imposed by those locally dominant.[4] For the next generation, this new self-evaluation becomes a third and important fount of dissonance, active in its own right.

Where individuals find themselves evaluated as "low" by one set of authorities and as "high" by another set, axiomatically they would like the high evaluation to prevail among all authorities. However, their capacity to persuade the local community to accord them higher status or standing depends on their capacity to demonstrate control over the critical resources. Minimally, this entails the capacity to *demand* a higher status—and to withstand the confrontation that might ensue. This does not come easily to those whose submission to a lowly station has been conditioned by cultural devices as subtle and sanctions as severe as those which the lower castes have borne for long generations. A new kind of personality is necessary and the child training practices in the group must change significantly before adults, who have not been trained fully into the habits of subservience, can emerge.[5]

The lower-caste children have traditionally learned subservience only because of their parents' wish to save them from the swift punishment that assertiveness did bring—the high-caste masters could keep continuous watch over their untouchable servants, without really having to try. Opportunities for deviant socialization have been relatively numerous in recent decades.

[4] This formulation is rooted in Wallace's constructs for the psychology of cultural change (1961: 143-56).

[5] There is another possibility: to change the adults directly. Perhaps the most convincing transformation of adults came in Hunan where, in the late 1920s, the poor peasants, organized by Mao Tse-tung into associations, succeeded not only in disciplining their landlords and taking control over their regions but also in providing the manpower for revolutionary advance in the 1930s (see Snow 1970: 150-51, 100). We noted the implied social psychological processes in the previous paragraph, following Wallace.

Thus, Lynch (1969: 35) notes the following sequence for the Jatavs of Agra: the growth of shoe industry led to their occupational and residential segregation; their interaction with other castes declined; the high castes' opportunities for observing them became fewer; and the high castes' control over the Jatav patterns of socialization was loosened. My own field data make it clear that, among the Harijans, a son was likely to grow up to be assertive if his father had been either a government employee—in the police, the railways, etc.—or self-employed as a trader or a farmer. Changes in parental circumstances presage changes in child socialization. In other words, it is essential to change both the social structure and the normative order in order to create conditions which would enable the traditionally lowly to think well of themselves; so that such parents may create nurturant familial situations wherein assertive and, hopefully, creative persons may grow.

An aggressive personality, however, is not enough. Control over resources is vital. Since their initial resources are negligible, the "lower" castes' success will depend on their ability to translate their skills (in technical work, political agitation, or whatever) into such resources (land, new houses, terylene shirts, access to officials, or whatever) as the local community will admit as symbols of change of status. What resources are acceptable thus and what skills can yield them is itself *partly* a dependent variable, strongly influenced by the changing structures of opportunity and restriction (M.G. Smith 1966: 176) which, in turn, are shaped by wider policies and their implementation. The influence of the latter—which I have already called normative pressure—can alter significantly the bargaining situation in the local community.[6]

To use a familiar example, Bisipara's Distillers were able to

[6] If the Harijans generally perceive that the "wider society"—embodied in the political authorities at the national and state levels—is more sympathetic to their aspirations that the "local" community in one's village, town, or district, this may lead at least the politically articulate among them to prefer a stronger centre, larger states, etc. It was, however, the non-Brahmin sentiment which put a regional party in power in Tamil Nadu, and it is perhaps the Tamil Brahmins who identify with the Centre most ardently. That is, one's preference on the Centre-State issue is a function of how one's relative advantages are perceived, and this may vary with the situation.

convert, in a particular historical context, their skill at distilling liquor into cash which, in turn, could be used to buy land (Bailey 197: cp. the Noniya in Rowe 1968: 70). Given control over such strategic resources, the emulative cultural change and the status mobility expressed in relationships with service castes—sometimes called Sanskritization—may follow, provided the mobile group perceives one of the traditional models as prestigious (see Aggarwal 1969a: 549-50). Conversely, lacking in convertible skills, no amount of Corporate Status Dissonance, originating in distant authorities, will aid a group's rise in status. Put another way, proclamations in favour of the oppressed are vacuous if the latter do not gain access to strategic resources.

To sum up: Where corporate groups are evaluated differentially by diverse authorities, pressures for dissonance reduction—towards securing acceptance of higher status all round—can operate only when the following conditions are met. First, there must be individuals who are conscious that these several evaluations are dissonant. Second, these individuals must have access both to ideological supports for efforts at dissonance reduction and to effective communication points for reaching others in thier own category. Finally, the corporate group must have skills which would enable it to capture the acknowledged symbols of higher status (see Lynch 1969: 67). I shall consider the course of such efforts in subsequent chapters, especially in relation to the Ramgarhias.

3.24 Individual Status Dissonance

The normative pressures and the changing opportunity structure mentioned earlier have had another important consequence. In a context of rising occupational mobility in urban areas, corporate status gives way increasingly to individual standing; and the possibility grows that individuals of widely divergent financial resources and occupational standing would form part of the same kinship groups. However, the relations of kinship are ordered by an egalitarian ideology (controlling, of course, for culturally specific criteria such as age, generation, sex, and affinity). Individuals whom the constraints of kinship require to interact as equals do have widely discrepant standings in other domains. Abbi and Saberwal (1969: 11-12), in identifying this situation, comment on

the social relations between these kinsmen:

> ...perhaps unwittingly—one of them having a higher occupational [standing] and greater financial resources... [may raise] sharply the costs of interaction to a level which strains—or lies beyond—the other's capacity. More generally, differences in education, westernization, commitment to tradition, and the resulting differences in the norms of proper behaviour may lead to conflict, embarrassment, or both.

This may appropriately be called a situation of *Individual Status Dissonance* (ISD): the cognitions concerning one's social standing made by individuals on the basis of messages received from different social domains are dissonant with each other. This is a source of *frustration*, especially for the individual whose standing is lower, and the psychologists tell us that his cognitive and behavioural responses can take a variety of forms (Krech *et al.* 1962: 35-38 and elsewhere).

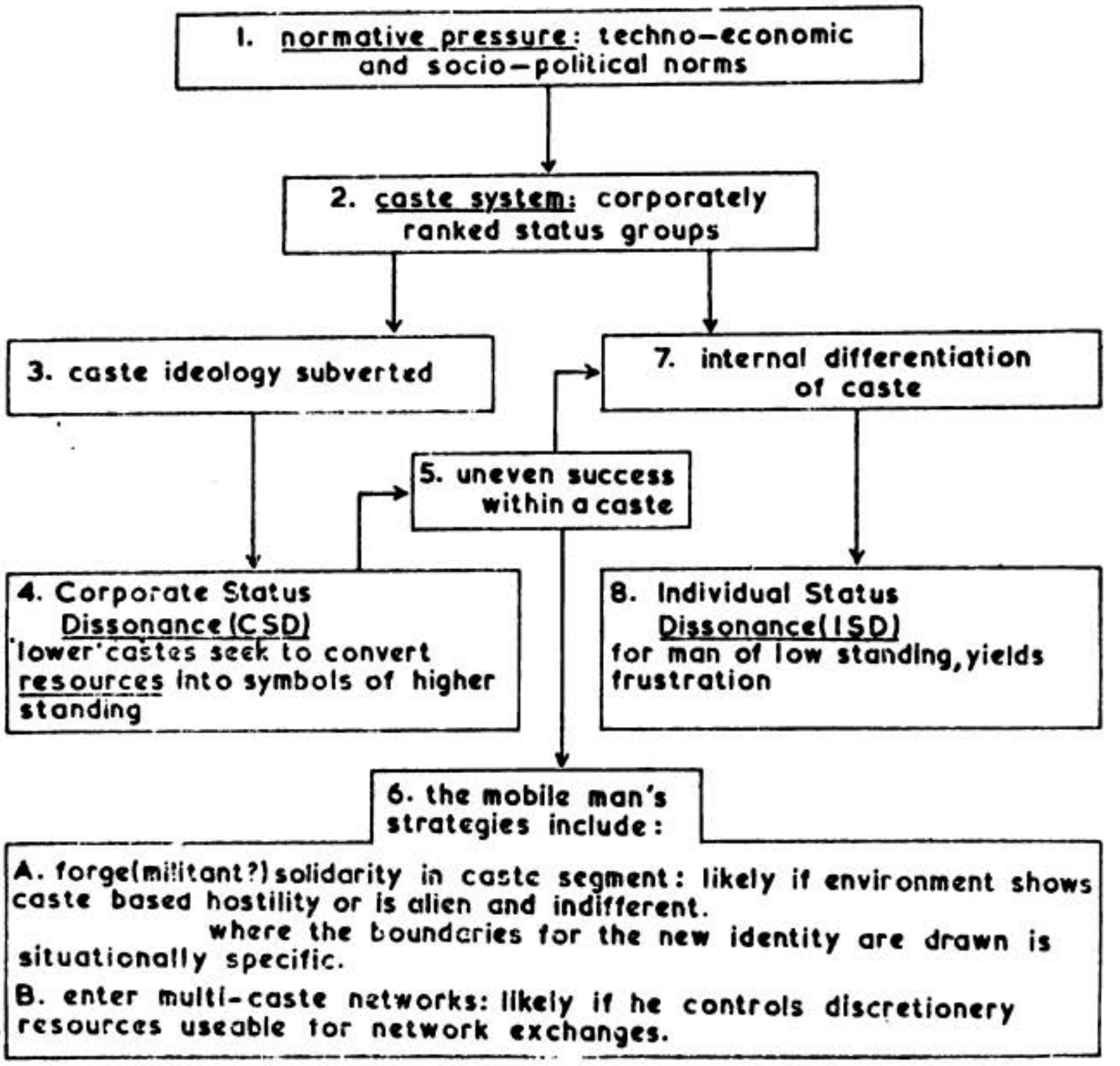
The main points made in the discussion hitherto are summarized in Fig. 3.1. The mobile men's strategies will occupy us shortly.

3.25 Illustrations

I have distinguished between two forms of Status Dissonance: Individual Status Dissonance (ISD) and Corporate Status Dissonance (CSD). ISD flows from the emergent principle that an individual's standing should be independent of the corporate traditional status of one's kin and caste group. This is related to the increasing possibility of wide differences between kinsmen concerning resources controlled. In contrast CSD reflects another emergent principle, namely, that the traditional mode of ranking corporate groups hierarchically is lacking in legitimacy. This permits marked differences in status evaluation of groups by various significant authorities. The concepts are cognate, but ISD arises in intra-caste relations and CSD in inter-caste relations: the consequent processes are likely to be psychological in one case and social in the other. To illustrate the difference, I cite below case material: from Modelpur for ISD and from Rowe's Noniyas (1968) for CSD.

Individual Status Dissonance: Prem Singh and Amar Singh are

Fig. 3·1: Status Dissonance Paradigm



castemates and distant cousins. Prem Singh is a college lecturer at a moderate salary, Amar Singh one of the most influential politicians in his district: his pervasive influence in Modelpur is indicated in the fact that my interviewees refer to him—with praise or abuse—more often than to anyone else. Amar Singh is the acknowledged leader of Modelpur's major political faction (see § 10.14).

Prem Singh believes that he should have an egalitarian relationship with Amar Singh. Until a few years ago Amar Singh's actions persuaded Prem Singh to believe that the relationship was indeed egalitarian. Amar Singh controls a large restaurant, and Prem Singh would be welcomed to a free meal there off and on. "I had a good relationship with him—with mutual visiting and all that,

but now I have stopped visiting him."

> *SS:* What happened?
> *PS:* He is a snob. He wants courtiers who will dance attendance on him. In a gathering at a function he ignores me completely, treats me as an outcaste; keeps me standing outside when I go to visit him. Their actions used to imply, "You may or may not come to visit us; big people come here." He displayed total indifference towards me. You feel that your visit is not liked; you feel your visit is discouraged. I don't care. I know that I am far ahead of him intellectually.
>
> Last year there was his son's wedding. I was invited. But at the function I was ignored, discarded. So I left. Since then I mere nod to him, say *sat sri akal*, but nothing more.

In a context of increasing social mobility, where individuals seek out new social relationships, not for the communion of kinship but for their linkage with one's goals, and where anyone can sustain only a limited number of relationships, someone upwardly mobile must prune his older ties (if only in the intensity of involvement): the other parties in these links then have to make adjustments whose implications for their self-images are often painful.

Corporate Status Dissonance: In his careful report on social mobility among the Noniya caste of eastern Uttar Pradesh, Rowe (1968: 70) reports that some of them made substantial economic gains in the emergent colonial opportunity structure: "contracting for earth work, brick making, and other traditional caste work for the British government ... profitable business in road and bridge building and in the general expansion of public works during the period after the 1857 movement and before World War I." Thanks to these gains,

> at the crest of [the caste] a small Noniya elite emerged. They were increasingly dissatisfied with the noticeable discrepancy between their customary low ritual rank and their newly acquired economic rank. Although this group was, and continues to be, quite small it has constituted an upper class elite segment within the Noniya Cauhan[7] caste.... The changing opportunity

[7] That is, Chauhan.

> structure in the colonial society, with the emergence of a newly prosperous group within the caste and the resulting incongruence of their ritual and economic ranks led to the founding and financing of a self-conscious caste mobility organization.

The theoretical framework presented above predicts a situation of Individual Status Dissonance between the wealthier Noniya who have made good and the "low status rural Noniya" mentioned by Rowe:

> ... in Bombay I found an organised group of about twentyfive Cauhans who would appear to the superficial observer as well-established middle class professional men of a Kshatriya caste. In both the rural and urban setting interaction between the relatively small group who have "passed" as Cauhans and the mass of those who have been largely unsuccessful in establishing that status, is very infrequent, uncomfortable, and difficult (Rowe 1968: 68).

It would be fair here to ask: if the consequences of ISD are predicted to be psychological, how is one to explain the emergence of this "organized group" of upwardly mobile Noniya? The answer will emerge later (pp. 46-47).

In concluding this discussion of issues of status and standing, it may be appropriate to ask whether there is adequate warrant for giving "status" the pride of place in our analysis. I think there is. Folk categories acknowledge its importance in the social structure: *hasti* throughout North India; *bhadralok* and *chhotolok* in Bengal (Broomfield 1968; Sinha and Bhattacharya 1969); and enquiry would no doubt reveal similar terms elsewhere. The reference here is to social standing; the other meaning of status is central to Dumont's model.

But the importance of these issues goes beyond India. Discrepancies in individual standing in such domains as income, occupation, education, and ethnicity (Lenski 1954) have been reported as leading to (*i*) preference for changes in the society's overall power distribution (Irwin Goffman 1957) and (*ii*) pre-

ference for upward mobility in the domain where the individual standing was lowest (Fenchel, Monderer, and Hartley, 1951, cited by Goffman, 1957: 279). The second part of this finding in the United States is consistent with my argument and data; but the presence of closed corporate groups and of discrepancies between the local and the national norms, unique to the Indian scene, gives our data and findings a different cast. Everett Hagen's argument (1962) on the maintenance of, and departures from, tradition also turns around considerations of status (see Saberwal 1975b). Overall, the theoretical issues explored above appear to be strategic.

3.3 ISSUES IN MOBILITY

3.31 A Societal Perspective

An adequate consideration of social mobility has to cover the whole continuum from mobility through immobility to decline,[8] but the conceptual domain is asymmetrical. Schumpeter showed nearly 50 years ago (1927) that mobility is usually planned and deliberate, reflecting a wilful conservation of skills and resources: decline is seldom voluntary. Asymmetry apart, questions of mobility and decline concern men in motion and, therefore, these questions have to be anchored to societies which also are seen to be in motion.

For this purpose a society may be viewed as an array of roles, organized into binary relationships or into larger groups and institutions. Each role tends to be characterized by certain levels of skill, of control over resources, of social standing, and so forth. Certain sets of roles may also become organized into occupational groups, say professional associations or trade unions, and other sets may be categorized by members of the society into distinctive strata, say "mazdoors" or "sahibs" or "black-coated workers." Occupational groups and social strata tend to share several sorts of interests and are likely to try to protect these for their members and sometimes for their children.

Motion enters this view of society when we take notice of change

[8] That is, *downward* mobility, following K. L. Sharma (1973) who makes several distinctions critical to downward mobility. My analysis deals primarily with upward mobility.

in its constituent elements. Old roles may lapse, new ones may arise. The texture of their inter-relationships changes. Administrative, political, or revolutionary fiat may abolish old institutions, establish new ones. The skills, the resources, and the social standing associated with particular roles may change. The occupational groups and the strata in a society may undergo rearrangements. Mobility and decline affect individuals, but these do so over time; and meanwhile the society wherein these occur is itself changing in myriad ways.

It is common to distinguish between (*i*) the mobility experiences of individuals—intra-generational mobility, and (*ii*) the differences between the occupations and standings of parents and children—inter-generational mobility. For the first, one asks: what fraction of people in a category go how far? What fraction, say, of the jawans in the army can become officers—or generals? Conversely, what fraction of generals, or officers, began life as jawans? Measures of inter-generational mobility seek to determine the influence of parental standing—occupation, income, etc.—upon the children's experiences of mobility and decline: what fraction of the children of stratum X, say peasants or university teachers, enter stratum Y, say industrial managers or bank clerks?

The simplest kind of mobility would be the minor, routine changes while one remained at the approximate level of initial entry into working life: some peons are junior, others senior. Or there may be limited advancement: a landless labourer may become a sharecropper. The scale of movement is somewhat larger when the rise or the fall of individuals may be large or frequent or both. The boom and the depression in a capitalist economy and the purges in Stalinist Russia exemplify such movement which may, yet, leave the society's structure unaltered overall. These are *positional* changes for the individuals; and these may result from chance, from political fiat, or from a careful husbanding of—or careless profligacy in—scarce resources. The latter would include the relationships which may be important for generating the resources that sustain one's standing in society.

Large-scale positional changes may have *structural* consequences. A depression leading to widespread unemployment may, via political action, set off new roles and institutions designed to stimulate the economy. Structural changes may range all the

way from the trivial to the momentous. Abolishing the role of the peon in offices or of the princely ruler in India both come close to the trivial end of the continuum. The society's structural principles may change more radically when, for example, an agrarian society undergoes industrialization. A major dimension of this particular process is the changing scale of productive activity, and this occurs whether industrialization takes the capitalist or the socialist road. Production becomes increasingly specialized. When customers switched to store-bought shoes, for example, the traditional leatherworkers in Punjab slid into the ranks of the landless labourers while Agra and other centres came to specialize in shoe-making, producing large quantities often in a multitude of small units (Lynch 1969).

India's independence led to other mobility opportunities of this intermediate order, though at a different level. Roles of high standing, accessible to Indians, proliferated in politics and industry. Other roles, such as that of the Maharaja, declined. The structure of opportunity and restriction changed substantially; but unless such a change sets off other self-sustaining processes, the entailed mobility would tend to taper off, as the spurt in demand for particular skills or attributes declines; limited, self-extinguishing mobility of this sort may be termed *demand mobility*. We notice that structural decline is likely to follow a *fall* in demand for high-level occupations, not a sharp increase in demand for low-level occupations. The magnitude of "mobility" was modest in India, for its mechanisms allowed those whose parents had been inhabiting the upper strata to convert their resources, by and large, into a hold over the new roles of high standing. The dominant bureaucratic groups, for example, may give evidence of the entry of new groups, but these new entrants were the sons and daughters of large landowners, traders, professionals, and so forth. Mobility here amounts to an interpenetration of the previously insulated upper strata. Recruitment and rewards, ostensibly on criteria of performance and achievement, may yet be influenced strongly by ascriptive criteria—given the prevailing levels of inequalities (Saberwal 1975c).

The change in structural principles may cut deeper. Revolutionary socialism alters the pattern of property relations, cutting down the permissible levels of inequalities. Insofar as ascriptive

elements lose their importance in shaping mobility, both intra- and inter-generational mobility would undergo major changes of magnitude.

3.32 Access to Skills and Opportunities

In a person's move from occupational group (or social stratum) "A" to "B", the B subculture intervenes at several levels. The game can scarcely begin if the B group controls all B opportunities and prohibits all non-Bs' access to them: this situation has often been characteristic of the caste system. Somewhat less exclusive would be the situation where the typical B skills are not available from non-Bs, and Bs may be reluctant to make these generally available—and therefore less valuable: this holds where skill transmission is controlled by guilds. Even if the transfer of technical skills has been institutionalized, the associated norms, values, broad orientations, etc., may be available only in informal, possibly familial contexts: the unemployed graduates of the Industrial Training Institutes testify to this lag. Alternatively, the exercise of the skills may be possible only in certain institutional settings; and if access to the latter is ascriptively controlled, disregarding the skill, the potential for mobility is again thwarted: Prakash Tandon's experience during the 1930s (1971: Prologue) is repeated today a thousand times when the young candidate learns that, his performance notwithstanding, he cannot be hired for lack of "pull" within the employing organization.

Opportunities, skills, and broad orientations, then, are likely to become available across group lines as: (*i*) interaction between the groups grows, (*ii*) the normative order supports such multilateral transfers, and (*iii*) the transfer processes can be made formal and institutional. In a highly stratified society, it is the normative order effective in the upper, controlling strata that determines the rate of transfer to the other strata; but where the demand is expanding, an individual donor may defy the norms if he expects the potential apprentice to help him advance his interests, at least in the foreseeable future.

This last possibility will be acknowledged in our data, but Victor D'Souza (1975) has provided support for the expectation that the principal tendency would be to conserve the better opportunities for the upper, controlling strata. The Scheduled

Castes are underrepresented and unevenly spread in urban centres. With the 1961 Census data from Punjabi urban centres as a case in point, D'Souza has shown that the more complex the occupational structure of a city, that is, the greater the proportion of high level occupations in the city, the smaller the proportion of the Scheduled Castes in it compared to that in its region. In other words, the more rewarding the occupations, the stronger the high-caste drive to capture them, and (excepting the small sector of reserved government jobs) the lower the Scheduled Caste chances of entering them. The underlying mechanisms have been noticed earlier.

Given its characteristic division of labour, a modern industrial or industrializing society would have an increasingly differentiated set of roles; and it would tend to reward a variety of skills and achievements. Consequently individuals may be able to rise in one of several *mobility domains* or, mixing strategies, they may be able to convert achievement or resources in one domain into a base for mobility in another. Rise in one domain would in some contexts entail a fall in another: such a trade off between ritual status and economic or political standing has often occurred in India.[9]

3.33 Mobility Leaders and Followers

Who can successfully take advantage of the new opportunities will depend on *marginal advantages*: this applies to corporate groups (such as the Noniya in Rowe's report) as well as to individuals; and such elements as particular skills (say, literacy), the achievement motivation acquired in the family context, and fortuitous connexions with unusually resourceful individuals or networks are relevant. Some combination of marginal advantages enables an individual to sieze opportunities which appear to elude others: I call such an individual a *mobility leader*.

How far a mobility leader encourages his castemates to enter his occupation is a function of his perception of (*i*) the costs and benefits to him of their entering his new occupation, and (*ii*) the fresh contours of the opportunity structure. Generally, the lower

[9] The issues have been examined at length by Beteille (1965b) and Sharma (1973: 67-74).

the costs and the higher the benefits[10] personally to the mobility leader and the larger the continuing opportunities, the more can he be expected to beacon his castemates into his own trade. Some of these *mobility followers*, upon perceiving fresh, unforeseen opportunities, may later become mobility leaders on their own.

Among the benefits that the mobility leader can derive from mobility followers is that of access to (or sometimes control over) pre-existing (caste) relationships for use in the domain of his new activity: this confers advantages both political and industrial (where the pre-existing channels for intra-caste communication and control may ease the problems of labour management).[11]

But the mobility leader has to balance these benefits against several sorts of costs. If his field is industry, inducting more people into it would generate immediate or potential competition for himself. Should he be a civil servant, who has been—or is anxious to be—accepted into multicaste, prestigious networks, continuing interaction with his castemates could be a liability for his standing in these networks, may add to the load of network calls on him (§ 9.22), and is likely to be a source of ISD, especially for his castemates. The outcomes of such calculation would be specific to individuals and to situations; § 3.4 continues with these issues.

3.34 Immobility

With societal change accelerating, *social immobility* can be due to a variety of processes. There are, first, *social sanctions*, or what has been called the widespread practice in some societies of "Keeping the Joneses Down" (Erasmus 1968: 67): the mobile person responding to new opportunity structures may endanger the prior status system, and those who feel threatened may try to restrain him (see pp. 60, 83-84). The sanctions may come from his base group or from his target group (see p. 41). Secondly, there are *technical limitations*: every social setting generates certain characteristic problems routinely (say, fluctuating cash needs,

[10] These benefits could include an increase in one's standing within one's caste; the caste's capacity to confer prestige, in turn, is a function of the caste's internal organization.

[11] See also p. 138.

competitors' skills, changing market demands, importunate kinsmen, etc.), and inability to resolve them efficiently may entail recurring crises: these prevent the focused mobilization of effort and resources necessary for upward mobility. Thirdly, there are *economic sanctions*: the rewards of one's traditional occupation may appear to be so high as to dissuade one from seeking change (for example, Modelpur's scavengers, or the Mysorean Holeru: see Harper 1968).

Let us consider economic sanctions for a moment. Once the pattern of hereditary occupations gives way to that of occupational mobility, an element of personal choice enters decisions concerning who enters which occupation. In this context, members of the low-status group which has traditionally supplied low-status services would lose the traditional occupational commitment. If technological inertia keeps the demand for the same service steady, however, the authorities concerned can try to continue to attract to it the traditionally associated status group by raising its rewards in relation to these individuals' alternatives. In terms of *occupation*, this would be a case of *demand immobility* (though the increase in rewards should yield over time a rise, both absolute and relative, in the standing of the lowly occupation). We notice that both demand mobility and demand immobility follow from the necessity to meet certain needs of the wider society, or rather of those sections of the society whose needs press upon the political and economic decision-makers at any point in time.

3.4 UNITY AND NETWORKS

McKim Marriott has characterized the modern urban or metropolitan type of stratification as " 'open', unbounded ... universalistic as well as infinitely expansible (1968: 103-4)." Anticipating my conclusions I should say that this is at best an image of an ideal type towards which the industrializing, modernizing segments of Indian society may slowly be moving. Closer to the persistent reality is ego, in pursuit of a goal, aligning dyadic links into a network whose terminal point controls the resources sought by ego; these dyadic links are based on reciprocal expectations of exchange of valued resources (Barth 1966). The following

comments draw on an earlier discussion of the morphology, the utilization, the distribution, and the culture of networks (Saberwal 1969b: 129-32).

In the course of preparing for the newer urban roles in industry, government, etc., high-caste men have achieved considerable differentiation and now control a much greater *variety* of resources than do men of the low castes. Consequently, high caste men should be more strongly notivated to establish *instrumental* relationships with others of high standing, whether for access to jobs or to officials or to things in short supply. For men of undifferentiated castes, the intercaste interaction should turn more around ceremonial events and should have consummatory emphases. We have three variables here:

S: ego's caste's *status* in the area's hierarchy,
D: the *distinctiveness* of resources controlled by ego as against those controlled by his castemates and others, and
N: the *number* of ego's dyads, their use-intensity, and the length of the networks he can align for instrumental use.

The following propositions may be considered:

N varies *directly* with *D*, holding *S* constant. The underlying rationale has been explored above.

N varies *directly* with *S*, holding *D* constant. The reasons for this are various. Lower-caste persons seem to have fewer dyads for network alignment, possibly because they have fewer resources to invest in maintaining these dyads. Besides, the upwardly mobile among them prefer high-caste partners for resources exchange: often anxious to live in middle class neighbourhoods, they may have to assume upper *caste* identities in their relations with their neighbours; and to limit the danger to these identities, they may confine interaction with castemates to events elsewhere (Isaacs 1965: 130ff). Furthermore, the high castes carry many adverse stereotypes concerning the lower castes which have a circular relationship with effectively enforced residential segregation. Consequently, where the high-caste norms discourage egalitarian interaction with the low castes,[12] a high-caste man would defy these norms to

[12] Such norms would help conserve informtion and opportunities for

activate potential links with lower-caste men only if the attendant advantages exceed by far those of dealing with an upper caste man with comparable resources: this includes the situations where *no* upper caste person with comparable resources is available and where the high caste man, for whatever reasons, wants to defy the relevant high caste norms.

To complete this set of propositions:

D varies *inversely* with *S*, holding *N* constant. That is, for the same intensity of ego's networks (*N*), the higher his caste status (*S*), the less distinctive the resources he need control (*D*), that is, the easier it is for him to enter the same range of networks. The reasons for this are similar to those for the preceding proposition.[13]

Since the low-caste groups have traditionally controlled few resources of contemporary value, their members are sought by the high castes for their networks only in exceptional circumstances: the major contemporary exception is in politics where, thanks to universal adult franchise, the low-caste votes also must be sought, a task best attempted through individuals from the lower castes.

The willingness of intermediaries to transmit ego's expectations through networks is highly variable, and I have previously argued that the greater the difference between the social standings of ego and of the intermediaries, the less *expectation flow* could egos of low standing expect (Saberwal 1969b: 131-32).

To re-phrase the foregoing: while any set of dyads may be aligned in a network for goal attainment, the probability of being so involved—and the capacity to activate a network in one's own behalf—are a function of ego's caste status and of the distinctiveness of the resources he controls.

Waiting to be recruited into the predominantly high-caste, ego-centred networks is not the only option open to a low-caste mobility leader when the most prestigious and powerful authorities in the land preach egalitarianism frequently. Where he finds adverse

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the upper, controlling strata and can be expected to outlast the decline of norms concerning untouchability and the like. See p. 41.

[13] These propositions are isomorphic with the Boyle's Law and the Charles' Law concerning the volume-pressure-temperature relations of a gas, as usually considered in elementary physics.

stereotypes frustrating his own claims to higher standing, partly because of his limited social space, he may choose to mobilize his castemates in order to attack, collectively, the stereotypes, thus generating social energy for (*i*) such collective self-improvement as would falsify the dominant stereotypes and (*ii*) confrontations to abridge the customary social distance in the local community and to contest public expressions of adverse stereotypes.

This last implies militant "unity" on the part of the lower caste; the polar opposite of this strategy is to align ego-centred networks opportunistically. Which strategy a mobility leader chooses will be determined largely by the strength of the adverse stereotypes and of the barriers between the low caste individuals and prestigious contexts. To these several questions Chapter 9 will return.

We notice, in conclusion, that the literature on networks over the past two decades has been concerned with describing certain social phenomena that cannot be explained in terms of groups. Only recently have some analysts been able to go beyond the minutiae of description and to locate networks in their larger societal contexts (Whitten 1970), Jacobson 1970, Dirks 1972). My discussion here has sought to relate networks to mobility efforts and to argue that the distribution of instrumentally useable networks is a function of social stratification.[14]

[14] The final draft of this work was almost ready when the volume on social networks in Central Africa, edited by Clyde Mitchell (1969), became available to me; but the considerable divergence between the formulations here and in that volume appears to arise, once again, in the very different grain of society in the two regions.

PART II

THREE CASTES

CHAPTER IV

Balmikis

4.1 THE HISTORICAL SETTING

Writing on religions in the report of the 1881 Census in Punjab, Denzil Ibbetson noticed that Lal Begh and Bala Shah were the figures worshipped in the Sweepers' shrines and added, "How these two acquired Mahomedan names, and who they were, is a matter which needs enquiry." To this he appended a footnote:

> It seems at any rate probable that Bala Shah is Balmik, the traditional author of the *Ramayana*. In [Hoshiarpur] the sweepers worship him under that name. (Census 1881: 154n.)

Later in the volume, in discussing the sweeper *caste*, he was able to say:

> ... Since writing that chapter I have received traditions from different parts of the Province which leave little doubt that Bala Shah, one of the Chuhra *Gurus*, is another name for Bal Mik, a hunter of the Karnal district who was converted by a holy Rishi, and eventually wrote the *Ramayana*... (Census 1881: 318.)

In subsequent decades they appear to have given, or been persuaded by the Census enumerators to give, "Balmiki" and "Lalbegi" as the names of "sects" with growing firmness, and the figures for 1911 were: Balmiki 315,675, Lalbegi 466,172 (Census 1911: 131). These numbers declined sharply over the next two decades, and in 1931 only 3,152 gave Balmiki as their religion in

Punjab (Census 1931, II: 277).[1] The Untouchables generally were being subjected to strong pressure by Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and others, each community seeking to pull them into its own fold, at least for the day of the Census: it was common then to seek to influence census results as a prelude to political claims.

Apart from these dominant religions, some of the sweepers probably gave "Ad Dharam" as their religion, and this will engage us in the next chapter. Meanwhile, they were also going over from a "we believe in Balmiki" identity to a "we are Balmikis" identity. B.R. Ambedkar had emerged, by then, as an articulate, if somewhat abrasive, spokesman for India's untouchables (Keer 1962), and their new mood was expressed in Punjab in the Balmiki Sabha: a province-wide organization, I was told, started in 1932 by several men of the caste in order to tell their castemates that "we are all Balmikis and should believe in Balmiki." The leaders of the movement published books concerning the life and character of Rishi Valmiki. One of these (Bakshi Ram, n.d.) purports to relate the social situation in Punjab during the time of *Ramayana*, when the Rishi was born, comments on his family and his life, refutes various allegations concerning the Rishi and his *jati*, and makes laudatory references to his achievements in the realms of music, philosophy, poetry, and above all literature. He is also said to have been a great teacher of the arts of war and a peace-maker. In concluding the 128-page book in Gurmukhi, the author says that by uniting in militant groups (*jathas*), "we" can improve "our" situation in politics, society, and economy.

Outside the caste, however, Rishi Valmiki carries a rather more ambiguous image. The Census (1961b: 88-89) comments on the "Birthday of Valmiki":

> As the history goes Valmiki was a Bhil, a race of mountaineers, who used to rob and kill travellers passing through the forest. One day seven Rishis journeyed by and when Valmiki attacked them, they asked him why he did so, as they had nothing worth stealing. He replied that he had vowed to kill all whom he found

[1] This statement, based upon the complete microfiche edition of the Census, supercedes the somewhat misleading earlier reference to this issue (Saberwal 1972b: 144n), based upon an incomplete set of volumes.

in the forest. The Rishis then enquired if the relations of whom he had been committing all those hideous sins would help save him from going to hell. Whereupon he asked his parents and wife if they would help him in case of need, but they declared they would not. Valmiki then told the Rishis that he was friendless, and they urged him to give up his evil ways, and to repeat "mara", "mara"[2] continuously. But rapidly recited "mara, mara" sounds like "Ram, Ram". He thus repeated God's name, sitting at one place for twelve long years. His body covered with dust was converted into a valmik or anthill. On their return the Rishis found him in this posture and named him as Rishi Valmiki.

In later years, the account continues, Valmiki gave shelter in his hermitage to Sita, banished by her husband Rama from his kingdom. Her sons, Lav and Kush, grew up in the hermitage and were trained to be great warriors who ultimately defeated their father's army.

Even though the term Balmiki provides a somewhat ambiguous identity, it does link its bearers with a figure esteemed in the "great" tradition. By the mid-40s, the Indian National Congress had harnessed the Balmiki Sabha for carrying its political message to this caste in Punjab. In contemporary society, the ambiguity of the Balmiki heritage resonates with the caste's own standing today. When, late in 1968, a Hindi movie, *Lav Kush*, portrayed Valmiki as robber, the Balmikis launched a state-wide agitation in Punjab demanding the movie's withdrawal. They were successful. Ostensibly demanding respect for the figure enshrined in their temples, implicitly the agitation also pressed for greater respect for themselves. We consider below the social context wherein they judge the respect they get, publicly and privately, to be far short of their due.

[2] The legend implicitly gives expression to the view that the lower castes and those outside the Hindu fold could not appropriately use terms such as "Ram, Ram" which have divine associations. Romila Thapar tells me that this legend about Valmiki has no basis whatever in the ancient Indian texts.

4.2 A MOBILE BALMIKI FAMILY

To make the historical context concrete, let us consider some biographical data from one of the town's leading Balmiki families. The present tense, here and later, refers to the period of my fieldwork during 1969.

Amolak Ram is 55 years old. His father's father, a trader in hides and skins, belonged to a small town in Hoshiarpur District and became a Christian, thanks to a padre who used to visit their town. Amolak's father went to Rawalpindi (adjoining the present capital of Pakistan) to work in a veterinary hospital. There the Arya Samaj was very active, trying to bring the "lower" castes back from other religions; its members inter-dined with them publicly, and its schools offered them free education. Amolak's father joined the Arya Samaj.

Amolak Ram is literate in Hindi and Punjabi and can also read a little English. From 1934, when he was about 20, to 1947 his grandfather supported him financially while he worked, sometimes for a small salary, in Ambedkar's Scheduled Castes Federation (until 1944) and later in the Congress-supported Balmiki Sabha. Following his grandfather's death in 1947, he took a job as a peon in the railways. Later he came to live in his affines' neighbourhood in Modelpur and built a house there. Thanks, presumably, to his earlier political experience, he was on the Railways' Area Staff Council for several years.

Amolak's family is one of Modelpur's most influential Balmiki families. One son, Inder Nath, a vigorous trade unionist, will engage us presently, as will another son, a recent graduate, now working for a diploma in librarianship in Chandigarh. A third son is a municipal sweeper and a fourth a blacksmith in the railways. Their two sisters are studying in class 10 and 8 respectively. As Inder Nath told me at our first meeting, in contrast to his own rather impoverished condition, his father's house "has everything": radio, electric fan, chairs, curtains.

We notice, in this family, the conflicting influences of Christianity and Arya Samaj, of Ambedkar and the Indian National Congress, and a strong tendency, from Amolak's grandfather on, to move away from the occupation of scavenging. The years Amolak spent in politics have enabled him to understand, and led him to

encourage, the political activities of Inder Nath. Like many other contemporary Balmiki fathers, he has struggled hard to help his sons succeed. This ambition for his sons makes him sharply aware of the higher castes' resistance to Balmiki advance. As a part of my questionnaire, I asked him, "Had you been an Agarwal, Khatri, or Jat, would you have gone farther, the same, or less?" He laughed: the question struck him as very very funny. He said, "Saheb, we would have gone farther [as higher castes]." Then he went into the adjoining room to tell his son the joke. Returning, he continued, "They are traders. They have money. Even without cash they can do things."

Inder Nath is 39 years old. He studied to class seven, high for a Modelpur Balmiki in the forties. During the disruption attending the partition of India, the Muslim workers left (or were dismissed from) the Hindu-owned factories and were often replaced by Harijans: Inder Nath became a labourer at the starch mill at Rs 28 a month. The mill had 175 workers in all, of whom 150 were from the sweeper community:

> We would be dismissed at will; we were not entitled to regular leave. So we organised a union. The machine-hands etc. had not helped us when we had been in trouble earlier; now they too joined the union. I became the General Secretary. ["Were you more educated than the rest?"] Yes, the other sweepers were all illiterate or barely literate. I had had the most education. In 1949 came the municipal elections. I contested the general seat against X; Y, a refugee leader; and Z [all high caste]. Harijan and labour vote was in a clear majority in this constituency and I got 520 (?) votes more than anyone else.
>
> I was only 19½ years old then. When the nomination papers were considered, no one raised any objection although 21 years is the minimum age. Later they filed a case on this count but it was rejected because the issue had not been raised earlier.
>
> Then I became Vice-President of the Municipal Committee. ["How was that?"] Well, the committee had 13 members. One group was led by Tara Chand and had seven members, the other led by Lal Chand Chopra [a major highcaste industrialist] had six. I was with Tara Chand. One of his supporters was Rup Ram. Chopra's son was then studying in the college, and there was

talk of his marrying Rup Ram's neice. Chopra's son asked the girl to have Rup Ram vote for Chopra. Rup Ram said no. Then they asked him to abstain at least. He did so. The vote was a tie. Then they cast lots: Chopra won.

Then came the Vice-President's election. At once Rup Ram proposed *my* name [as arranged initially to secure Inder Nath's support for Tara Chand], and with seven votes I won. Later on I used to tell Chopra that he was a President by lottery while I was the real President. Once Chopra arrived late for a Committee meeting, and I started it as acting President. When Chopra arrived, he asked me to vacate the President's chair: I told him to sit down like every other member. He said, "Why, you're insulting me!" I told him no, we would continue with me until the interval; then he would take over as Chairman. He said no. So I asked the Secretary to get the Deputy Commissioner by phone; the DC came at once and confirmed my stand as correct.

Soon thereafter we had a strike at the Starch Mill. The government had fixed Rs 72.50 as minimum wage; we demanded a minimum salary of Rs 75 including Rs 2.50 as dearness allowance. The strike settlement led to Rs 65 as minimum wage in the factory. Seventeen workers were dismissed [including Inder Nath?] on charges of having damaged the machines, etc. A lawsuit continued for two years. The charges were frame-ups with the factory chowkidar and the like as witnesses.

By 1954 I saw that I was ineffective in the Municipal Committee in the sweepers' cause. They used to get Rs 35 a month: other M.C. members said it was adequate. So I decided to develop outside pressure. We organized a Municipal Employees' Union; I was its General Secretary. We had a strike; the salary went up to Rs 55 a month. The Deputy Commissioner reported against me for having organized a strike while serving as a member of M.C., violating M.C. rules and recommended that I be disqualified from membership. The state government did so in 1955.

The *safai mazdoors* who were municipal employees then resolved to give me one rupee per month each: there were about 150 employees. They did this because they said I had lost my M.C. membership for their sake, and they had gotten a raise. Recently I discontinued taking this money because I can do

without it. I served them. For example, they often got chargesheets from M.C., would be discharged, etc. I used to help them with these problems. In 1956 I also became general secretary of the Modelpur General Mazdoor Union....

Over the past two decades, Inder Nath has meandered through trade union activity, strikes, court cases, imprisonments, and unsuccessful electoral contests with shifting political sponsorship—without even a stable job or even the hope of getting one.

I have no money. My wife has a salary—she is a municipal sweeper—Rs 130 a month. My father gives me Rs 50 a month.... My two brothers give me Rs 25 each. [Later he said that his INTUC trade union work occasionally brought him a little money.] There is only my wife and one daughter. They say you should have your wife operated upon [to restore her fertility] but I say there's no need. It's better this way. I'll educate my daughter: a daughter too is just like a son. My younger brother is doing B.A. [Later in the year he moved into librarianship]. My younger sisters and daughter are studying. We have had everyone in our family educated. When I see the girls who go and clean people's latrines every day and compare them with my daughter, I see the difference that education makes.

Inter Nath has an image of a militant labour organizer and therefore cannot get a job in Modelpur.

I asked the textile mill manager for a job. He said if you need ten or twenty rupees, I'll be glad to help, but I can't give you a job. I've known him a long time. It is the same everywhere else. So why not serve the labour at least.

Whether the task is to organize a meeting to denounce the Shankaracharya of Puri or to plan a day of political speeches at a Harijan fair, Inder Nath is there to help. He would like to go into INTUC at the state level, but only as a paid worker:

I would like to go there because then I can set up a statewide

stir among Balmikis. In every town people will realize the value of education. They'll fight for better salaries. If we can get high education for a few people, they'll carry the rest along. That is my objective....

I have to be tough. Otherwise they'd slap me on the right side, slap me on the left, and turn me out of town. They don't because they know I can make trouble.

He asked me to tell him if I needed help from anyone, for he knew of chinks in everyone's armour.

Inder Nath is a mobile man. Chandigarh, the state capital, is only three hours away by bus, and diverse interests take him there. The Balmiki temple there was built with subscriptions from all over the state, including Modelpur.

So when I go there, I can stay in the *mandir*. It has rooms, cots, beddings, and I can get meals there. The man in charge of the mandir knows me. So he asks me to use the cot he has in his own room: there we can talk about things at length.

Given his father's experience of public life, his own relatively high level of education, and his lively mind, Inder Nath is one of the town's political leaders. In becoming the municipal Vice-President before he was 20 years old, he had a kind of head start, but this was ephemeral: political ascent is unstable without complementary gains in income, wealth, and prestigious social networks. In Inder Nath's judgment a militant style is essential for improving his caste's lowly condition—which influences his own life chances significantly. But his own long record of militancy puts him on the high caste establishment's blacklist. It is in this context that Inder Nath has stabilized for himself a public role which, though unrewarding in money, enables him to act out his militant urges in the cause of workers generally and his castemates particularly. We shall have occasion to meet Inder Nath again (especially in § 9.21).

I turn now to *Madan Lal*, Inder Nath's 24 years old brother. Up 'o class five he went to the Harijan Primary School, up to

matriculation to the government school, and then into Ramgarhia College. Madan is the first Balmiki in town to have completed the B.A. though he had to repeat classes three times in his career. His family stood by him and met his needs—maintenance, tuition, books, college-level clothes. The magnitude of this help had to increase sharply when Madan repeated a year, for the govenrment stipend would be interrupted during that period. In recent summers he has been able to supplement the family help by holding temporary clerical jobs.

The National Cadet Corps[3] in his college has been about the only secular, extra-curricular organization wherein Madan has participated meaningfully; there he rose to a senior rank. His college also boasted of various associations, for Hindi, political science, and other subjects, but their principal activity was the taking of the members' annual photograph: one of these hangs in the room where Madan's family receives visitors.

The students of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes in the college had organized themselves into an informal society in order to be able to deal with their collective problems, such as the disbursal of scholarships, but its activities were thin. Within his neighbourhood Madan had joined in starting a reform society, especially concerned with livening up the local Balmiki temple; but he withdrew from the organization because, he said, some older factions in the neighbourhood sought to claim credit for work done by him and his friends.

At about the time of his graduation Madan was married. He had been very reluctant to marry before getting a job and a secure income, but his family had gotten him engaged years ago, and his father-in-law was becoming anxious. Madan's family clinched the issue by saying, "It is a matter of family honour. People in our *baradari* say that boys who get educated break off engagements: they'll say that you had done this."

Madan's wife has studied to class 8. Her father paints signboards and houses. Her mother, like Madan's, is a scavenger. "The expectation is that this occupation will end with these women. The children in neither family will touch it."

[3] A government-sponsored nationwide corps for giving students preliminary military training.

Considerations of prestige are important for Madan. Concerning his summer jobs he said that although he was hired as a *mazdoor*, he was usually given clerical work: the line between the manual and the non-manual coincides with that between the Class 4 and Class 3 employees of the government. In college he interacted "with the high-caste boys—those who dressed well and had a good standard of living. Not with any *ad dharmis* who came to college in dirty pyjamas—only with people who dressed well."

Madan has withdrawn not only socially from the reform society mentioned earlier but also phychically from Modelpur's Balmikis generally:

> Anyone who has been drawn to our own community has fallen. They don't like you to rise. If they see you rising, they'll try to prevent you. Back in 1964 one day before my English examination paper, our neighbours put some country liquor on their roof and asked me to come in. Then they started accusing me of having put the liquor there and a planning to sell it. Police came, other people came. Meanwhile I had to go somewhere. By the time I returned, the matter had been cleared up. Balmikis live only on one side of our house. On other sides live people of other castes. They said they had never seen me drinking or selling liquor, so the issue was closed. Had the other neighbours been Balmikis also, they might have made the accusations stick. Anyone who wants to rise has to be with people other than Balmikis: he has to be in another society.

Consistent with this tension is Madan's belief that the line between the scavenging Balmikis and the educated ones is hardening and that their separation into two endogamous units is inevitable.

Even though unemployed, Inder Nath, the older brother, moves with easy self-assurance through a wide range of contexts: his caste, politics, administrative offices, trade union work. Despite his militancy, perhaps because of it, he has a confident niche in his society. In contrast, Madan is an isolate, withdrawn from his caste and ill at ease in the white collar, overwhelmingly high-caste world of the "educated." One day when Madan was visiting me, a junior administrator in Modelpur also dropped in; the latter knew Inder Nath. Madan felt clearly uncomfortable and offered

to leave. I persuaded him to stay for a while but he continued to be tense, found the conversation a struggle to participate in, and bit his lip several times. My attempt in a subsequent visit to draw him out on this episode was unsuccessful. Possibly he knew, through Inder Nath, that this administrator was somewhat cool towards Harijans: or maybe there were cues in speech or manner which spell antagonism and which escaped me. If Madan experiences such situations often it would help explain why, despite his express desires to dissociate from his castemates and Ad Dharmis, he would choose, as an exercise in his course in librarianship, to prepare a bibliography on Ambedkar.

Such, then, is the situation for the *mobile* among the Balmikis. It excludes those unable to partake of the substantial growth in opportunities available in Modelpur. I heard of men who lost their jobs as municipal sweepers during the 1965 strike (see below) and have since eked out with odd jobs like carrying loads on donkeys. When illness or other misfortune struck, such families came to know the meaning of destitution.

4.3 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

This discussion of Balmiki social organization will have a highly selective focus, derived from my central concern with mobility. For the Balmikis, and in subsequent chapters for the other two castes, I shall ask, broadly: what consequences do given levels and kinds of mobility have on caste solidarity? Subsequent chapters will also face the reverse question: how far is caste solidarity a resource for mobility?

My Balmiki informants included: a sewing machine assembler; an official in the Community Development Programme; a trade unionist; a small entrepreneur in tailoring; several persons connected with the lathe work: two small entrepreneurs, one salesman, and one storekeeper; and some relatively affluent sweepers, apart from students. Nearly every family, nevertheless continues to be involved in the scavenging occupation through a cousin or a parent —even if a whole sibling group has taken to other occupations. This occupational focus makes for relatively homogeneous interests. Furthermore, many Balmiki scavengers have a common employer: the municipality. It has not had a Balmiki among its elected mem-

bers for well over a decade: higher caste men have captured the constituencies which include Balmiki neighbourhoods. As we have seen, the Balmikis employed by the municipality have struck work several times over the past two decades to improve their wages. They won their battles in the fifties and the early sixties, but the 1965 strike (see Saberwal 1972b: 140-41) ran into determined resistance—indeed repression—from the municipality and from the town's high castes generally. Since then the municipality has for most Balmikis come to embody the high-castes' dominance in town and their resistance to Balmiki aspirations. This perception of a hostile environment and the availability of capable organizers, such as Inder Nath, have given the caste a strong and complex internal organization in Modelpur.

Modelpur has approximately 350 Balmiki families, about 1,800 persons in all, living in two large neighbourhoods and three small ones (each of the latter adjoining a large corporate employer). The large neighbourhoods used to be located on the old town's edges, but its growth has since enveloped them. Apart from these everyone mentions one new house, owned and occupied by a Balmiki, built in a recently colonized multicaste area next to the prestigious Model Town: its owner has, in recent years, become the town's most successful Balmiki by buying sewing machine components in Ludhiana, assembling them, and selling the machines in Modelpur.

The senior male in an agnatically related group of households in a neighbourhood comes to be known as a Chaudhuri, and a gathering of such Chaudhuris is called the panchayat of the baradari, that is, the caste's local segment. In case of a dispute within a neighbourhood, one of the disputants may call the panchayat, and its verdict is likely to be accepted. General issues of collective interest may also be considered by the panchayat. The elders of one neighbourhood are said to have decided nearly 80 years ago that, gold ornaments being too expensive for them, they would give or take only three *silver* ornaments in dowries: they are able even today to enforce this rule.

While the Chaudhuris command a hearing within the baradari, they feel unequal to the modern outside institutions such as the municipality; for the latter the younger leaders of the Safai Mazdoor Union (the Sweepers' Union) are pressed into the lead. None

of these leaders is himself a scavenger, but they explain that the baradari has confidence in their ability to deal with the municipal officials. For important decisions, such as entering higher wage claims, they do consult the panchayat. Given the strong sentiments of caste solidarity, the leaders feel obliged to watch their caste-mates' interests vis-a-vis the municipality. They are among the town's most articulate and successful Balmikis, and their sincerity and willingness to suffer in collective action have been tested several times. No wonder, then, that the Union is central to the contemporary Balmiki social organizaton.

Consider now some other manifestations of the Balmiki caste solidarity. One of their larger neighbourhoods has a substantial temple: a Balmiki statue in the sanctum and a large spire above it, several rooms for visitors' stay, and a handpump where many come for evening baths, making the temple a community centre. Other neighbourhoods may have much simple a community centre. Other neighbourhoods may have much simpler temples, but Balmikis throughout Punjab are said to have them. The celebration of Balmiki's birthday in October was, in 1969, centred in the Balmiki neighbourhoods, but its colour and excitement were reminiscent of the major North Indian Hindu festivals of Dussehra and Divali (see, for details, Saberwal 1972b: 139; Mahar, 1972a: 28, reports the Valmiki complex from a village in western Uttar Pradesh).

Institutionalized mutual aid, circumscribed by caste boundaries, also bears witness to caste solidarity. The panchayat regulates *nenda*, the exchange of cash gifts at marriages. On the eve of a marriage, the panchayat members supervise payments to the bride's or the groom's father by his neighbours and kinsmen. A payment of ten rupees would include five rupees owing from a previous transaction and five more returnable at a marriage in the *neighbour's* family. The transactions are recorded, and default in payment due can bring ostracism. Nenda payments bring one or two thousand rupees for the occasion depending upon one's scale of earlier transactions.

Another way to save for marriages, house-building, and other major expenses is the *kameti* (derived from "Committee," but used in a special context). K number of participants in the kameti undertake to pay Rs M every month for K months to a man who conducts the kameti. Through its life, each participant has to pay a sum of Rs. KxM, and this sum is available in each month for

one or another participant. Some participants specify, when joining, the month when they would need this amount and are guaranteed the payment. In other months the amount is given out by lot. Municipal sweepers appear in each kameti in sizable numbers, their subscriptions collected conveniently on payday. As dues for his labour, the conductor sometimes reserves the first month's payment for himself. This is handsome reward for his (or her integrity: money is dear in Modelpur and can cost as much as 48 per cent per annum.

Most Modelpur Balmikis own the houses they live in, usually made of brick and cement; only a few mud houses remain. Governmental aid had helped make some houses pakka. The municipal sweepers' rising salaries, the growing demand for labour in this expanding industrial town (women too can make Rs 75 p.m. in steady factory work), and the daily wages of Rs 15 to 20 in the grain markets at harvest times—all these have brought good times to Balmiki neighbourhoods, expressed in electric fans, sofa sets, synthetic textiles, and other expensive tokens of social substance.

The Balmikis also employ a high-expense hospitality code: the initial offer of a cold drink in a Balmiki home, in my experience, turns into a real bottle (often of an expensive variety) more often than in those of higher castes; but given the modest, if rising incomes this code can be practised only sparingly. Consistently with this, the Balmikis generally visit each other only within their neighbourhood where, given daily visiting, no hospitality is due. Even though their two large neighbourhoods are only five minutes apart on bicycle and fifteen minutes on foot, one visits the other neighbourhood only on very special occasions such as marriages. Insofar as close agnatic or affinal ties do not stretch across the two neighbourhoods, a basis for familial visiting is lacking. Leaders like Inder Nath may visit the other neighbourhood for consultation and the municipal sweepers from both neighbourhoods meet each other at work; but a school or college student does not visit the other neighbourhood without clear reason, lest he be called footloose: *awara*. (See also § 10.13.)

Nearly every Balmiki I interviewed reported the presence of strong solidarity (*ekta*) in his community; we have seen both the context in which these sentiments arise and some of its structural

manifestations. Let us now consider some of the cleavages in Balmiki society, both actual and incipient. Informants often qualify their assertion about caste solidarity by reference to a splinter Union of municipal sweepers, led by Nathi Ram who is alleged to be willing to trade his baradari's interests for favours from Municipal Councillors. During the 1965 strike he is said to have helped the municipality recruit Balmiki strike-breakers from an adjacent village; the strike was aborted and about 30 Modelpur Balmikis lost their jobs.

An attitude of polite co-operation, whose propriety Nathi Ram explained to me cogently, is seen by his militant castemates as subservience and betrayal. His special interest, it is said, is to ensure continuing employment as municipal sweeper for his wife, though she has lost an arm in an accident. My conversation with him suggested that there may be some truth in this: it is with some difficulty that he is mobilizing the resources for putting his son through college.

At election times, several candidates inevitably compete for the Balmikis' support. Given their Panchayat and the Safai Mazdoor Union, however, they are often able to reach a consensus in support of one candidate. Until the late fifties, when new legislation for Harijan advance reached a peak, it is said that they voted solidly for the Congress, but this assurance was lost during the sixties. In recent years they have taken seriously the advice coming from those who have demonstrated, locally, their interest in the Balmiki's struggles: Inder Nath, their own man, and Bharadwaj, high-caste trade unionist who became an Independent MLA in 1962 (§ 10.2). Their rapport with the Republican Party is poor: it is controlled, overwhelmingly, by the Ad Dharmis—who seldom miss a chance to rub in their own superiority vis-a-vis the Balmikis—and, besides, being non-aggregative, the party performs weakly at the polls. During 1969 the Jan Sangh, allied with the Akalis in a coalition government, tried hard to drive a wedge into the Harijan ranks. Its Balmiki recruits included an important Sweepers' Union official, but they were generally cool towards the party which often gives voice to the Hindu tradition in politics. In sum, electoral politics does divide Modelpur's Balmikis but not yet very sharply.

Other Balmikis, especially those who are entering novel occupations, stress the incipient cleavage between families like their

own and those steeped in scavenging. The mobile seek to quit scavenging in whole sibling groups but, as with Amolak Ram's children, the aspiration is not always realized. The cleavage between the two categories will harden, the mobile men assert, for they want spouses from non-scavenging families like their own. Girls who go through school, they say, are very different from girls who go to pick faeces; and educated boys will not marry the latter.

How likely is this cleavage? To this analyst such a cleavage would appear to be probable if (*i*) the strength of the idea of pollution, attached to the occupation of scavenging, remained undiminished; and *(ii)* the "higher" castes were to show willingness to establish relationships with mobile families regardless of their ancestral occupations. On both grounds the prognosis is ambiguous.[4]

We shall see later that the idea of pollution, target of diverse attacks, is receding in Modelpur. Furthermore, the technical operation of cleaning dry latrines, unchanged over the decades, may itself be improved in various ways (Malkani 1965). If so, Modelpur's next generation might come closer to treating scavenging as one occupation like many others.

The high castes' response to the mobile Harijans appears to be individually differentiated. Overall, in this town, one comes across growing interaction (§ 11.21), and Modelpur Balmikis know of several marriages, in Delhi and elsewhere, between Balmiki officials and high-caste girls. Others continue, in many contexts, to perceive hostility in high-caste attitudes, and a large majority of them, educated or not, doubt that they could rent a house in a high-caste neighbourhood (§ 11.5).

In anticipating the most likely course of events over the next few decades, it would seem that so long as the macrosociety continues to generate normative pressures hostile to the hierarchy-pollution syndrome, the caste groups' hierarchy and exclusiveness

[4] It seems unlikely, in any case, that both the conditions could be met in a single community at the same time. If the weight of pollution remains heavy, the high-caste welcome to the mobile Balmikis cannot be very warm, and vice versa. A Balmiki from a conservative community, succeeding, say as a civil servant in New Delhi, might be able to relate to high-caste colleagues and others effectively—and he may try to wipe off his caste origins. This, however, would be a case of individual mobility, not of a cleavage within the caste.

will continue to weaken. The setting is unpropitious for the upwardly mobile segments of old castes to hive off and form new caste groups: field reports from several areas affirm that the weight given to one's caste status in evaluating individual standing is declining (Holmstrom 1972, Aggarwal 1973: 89-92).

If this trend continues, as seems likely, in reckoning the standing of the individual Balmiki, his own attributes could come to out-weigh his caste's rank; meanwhile as we have seen, at least the local society reminds him of his caste's low status in a great many informal[5] ways. The responses to this dissonance in one's status are various: acceptance of the Balmiki legend; establishment of Balmiki Mandirs, including one in Chandigarh, with various community facilities, a strong desire to "rise" oneself and, sometimes, to help "raise" one's castemates; most often, perhaps, acquiring individually the expensive tokens of social substance: sofa set, transistor radio, neon lights, and in the rare case a motorcycle and a house in a high-caste neighbourhood.

[5] Formally, too, he must identify his caste if he would avail of various scholarships, job quotas, etc.; but if he would forego the latter, he need not do the former.

CHAPTER V

Ad Dharmis

5.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The pressures from rival religious communities, we have noticed, provoked a movement seeking to defy them all:

> The Punjab Ad Dharm Mandal had petitioned the Punjab Government before the [1931] census operations started in 1930, representing that the depressed classes should be permitted to return Ad-Dharm as their religion at the time of the census as they were the aborigines of India and while the Hindus kept them at a respectable distance they did not believe in the Hindu religion. (Census 1931, I: 289.)

Concentrated in the Jullundur and Hoshiarpur districts, the Ad Dharmi drive in 1931 was thwarted elsewhere, more or less effectively, by the local landowing castes (Census 1931, I: 310-11).

During the Census "numerous Chamars and Chuhras and other untouchables" reported their religion to be Ad Dharmi. The movement was later absorbed in Ambedkar's Scheduled Castes Federation, itself transformed later into the ostensibly non-communal Republican Party. As the Chamars' control over the latter organizations in Punjab became clear, the Chuhras appear to have withdrawn from them, consolidating a new identity for themselves around Balmiki Sabha and the like. During 1969 in Modelpur the term Ad Dharmi was a polite synonym for Chamar.

While Ambedkar's was a strong influence at least among the Ad Dharmis of Punjab, few among them have taken to Buddhism as a tactic in social mobility. It was in the mid-50s that Ambedkar led his followers into Buddhism, when the Punjabi Ad Dharmis'

need to break with local society was not urgent, for its resilience allowed—indeed supported—the mobility efforts of ambitious Ad Dharmis. There was the established option of going over from Hinduism to Sikhism—highly egalitarian in precept and in religious contexts, and the heritage of Guru Ravi Das gave them an identity, distinctive yet related to both the Hindu and the Sikh traditions.

Ravi Das—also known as Rai Das and Ram Das[1]—was a man of leatherworker caste, a contemporary of Kabir. Both were active in the 15th century during the Bhakti period, but Modelpur's Ad Dharmis are not particular about his biographical data. More important is their belief that a large number of Ravi Das's hymns was incorporated into Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture;[2] and as Shardha Ram, the Ad Dharmi leader (p. 70 ff), said, this is "the most generally accepted scripture in the Punjab." This is important for the Ad Dharmis, establishing their link with a great religious tradition. Shardha Ram said that the other lower castes were *bin guru*, lacking in a guru; the Balmikis do indeed claim Balmiki as their guru, but "he was a mere robber!"

Ad Dharmi pride in the Granth Sahib goes further. In one of their major neighbourhoods in Modelpur, they also have a gurudwara housing the Granth Sahib; at the beginning of every month in the Gurudwara and recites from the sacred book. *Pershad*

[1] This variant name for Ravi Das has to be distinguished from the name of the 4th Sikh Guru, Ram Das, associated with the term Ramdasia used for Sikhs of Chamar-Julaha descent. A Ramdasia said:

> During the time of the 4th and the 5th Sikh Gurus, the Darbar Sahib [the Golden Temple] was built in Amritsar. In its building people of different communities participated, giving what they could. Those who were labourers [i.e. the Chamars] gave their labour. Guru Ramdas supervised the work on the tank called the Ramdas Sarovar in the Darbar Sahib. The *Gurus* gave recognition to everyone who worked there and those who had worked for Guru Ramdas on this tank, he called them his own dear servants, the Ramdasias. Later, in Guru Gobind Singh's time, when they tasted *amrit* [sacramental water] at the guru's hands, they became known as Ramdasia Sikhs.

[2] See McLeod (1968: 154n). A note on Ravi Das's life and ideas appears in the Census 1961b: 87-88.

is then distributed to the congregation. Raised about 25 years ago, the building meets various other community needs too, such as accommodating wedding parties.

The Granth Sahib has a special but not an exclusive place in Ad Dharmi religious practice. Shardha Ram said:

> We also believe in Hinduism: marriages may be performed by circumambulating either the sacred fire [*vedi*] or the Granth Sahib. But our people also go to the various *devis* and *devtas* of the Hindus, to their *babas*. We believe in all good things. Formerly many went to a famous *pir* of the Muslims also.

Despite the religious idiom of their initial assertion, the Ad Dharmis do not have a distinctive religious focus. Far more important has been their social and political assertiveness during the past 40 years, as is evident in the life of Shardha Ram.

5.11 Shardha Ram

The President of Punjab unit of the Republican Party of India[3] and the Commander-in-Chief of the Samta Sevak Dal[4] with "about 5,000 members," Shardha Ram, who stands over six feet high, was born 69 years ago in a village 10 km from Modelpur. His father, a weaver, died when Shardha Ram was eight and his brother only six months old. Shardha Ram had to take care of his family and continued to weave in the village. He acquired skill with the Punjabi language also; as for formal education, his father having died, he asked, who was going to educate him?

About 40 years ago, he said, he left his village because he could not get suitable "society" there. The Ad Dharmi wave was spreading in Punjab then. After the Round Table Conference (1930-32), Shardha Ram and others in Punjab met Ambedkar and accepted his guidance henceforth. Shardha Ram became Vice-President of the Achhut Federation in Punjab which was part of the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation. In their work they had the support of both the British and the Unionist government in Punjab. For the

[3] By 1969 the Republican Party had split into two; Shardha Ram was connected with one of these.

[4] "Service Corps for Equality," apparently a volunteer crops of the Republican Party.

1937 elections, the British secretly gave them cars for their campaign. In public meetings, they would attack various aspects of Hindu society, and if this led to violence, the government used to protect them. Their movement commanded support in all of West Punjab and in the east, down to Ludhiana. For several years they had representation in the Unionist ministry in Punjab. Shardha Ram met Ambedkar frequently; his photograph in a group appears in an Ambedkar biography.

Shardha Ram explained to me the origin of his honour name: Nidharak, the fearless one. A couple of miles from Modelpur, near a temple to Ravi Das, the Ad Dharmis hold a fair every year in mid-June in honour of Ravi Das. Muslim and Jat *goondas* would come every year and make passes at the Ad Dharmi girls at the fair. To deal with them, Shardha Ram organized a corps, Naujavan Jatha, of thirty strong young men like himself. They wore a uniform: khaki dress, turban, and puttees. Shardha Ram wore a leather cross-belt, just like military officers. They used to call him *senapati*, the Commander. They regulated this fair for three years, pulling up anyone whom they saw misbehaving. Shardha Ram did not care who the man was: he would kick Jat boys so hard they would fall ten feet away. Because he was unafraid of anyone, people said he was *nidharak:* they gave him this name. Today he is generally known as Shardha Ram Nidharak.

The Ad Dharmi pugnacity before independence, then, was both social and political; the latter would no doubt have brought at least to high-caste minds thoughts of imperialist "divide and rule." Having accepted Ambedkar's leadership, Shardha Ram says, the Ad Dharmis have forged far ahead of the other Harijans in Punjab. Six or seven thousand of their young men have entered the bureaucracy in New Delhi after getting good education, and most Harijan legislators from Punjab are Ad Dharmis. He is derisive about the Balmikis who, he says, believe in the *Ramayana*, speak of Gandhi as *bapu*, and go to pick faeces.

Yet, Shardha Ram bemoans that Ad Dharmi legislators, who sometimes become ministers, too, care only to feather their own nests. Electoral success depends largely on high-caste support, in cash and in votes (Ch. 10); and "if they elect you, they only want you to raise your arm when they ask you to do so; it does not help the Harijans any."

Nor does Shardha Ram see much hope in the bureaucrats. Whereas Sikh bureaucrats support Akali Dal, with cash and in other ways, the Ad Dharmi bureaucrats "are afraid: they get the fear in their mother's womb. They don't give a penny to the Republican Party. They say they have no castemates higher up who would protect them if they had trouble over links with a political party."

Despite the changing context, Shardha Ram has held fast by Ambedkar's ideas, staying off the webs of patronage growing around him. In 1958 the MLA from Modelpur, a rising star in the Congress, offered Shardha Ram Rs 200 per month to do propaganda work for the Congress: he would have to lecture only half as much as he did already.

> But I spit at the offer. I knew that they would pay me for four or five months, then say they had run out of money and would resume when money came again. One of them told me I was too egotistical. I told them I spit at the offer. [This was not election time? Why then were they making the offer?] To discredit me. If I took money from them once, they would have finished all my work at one stroke.

Instead, Shardha Ram has supported himself with his modest income as a buffalo trader. In an Ad Dharmi neighbourhood running along the railway tracks, he built himself a house—and improved it, one window, one beam, one wall at a time. One son is a clerk at a petrol pump, another has a leather shop. His various kinsmen are educated and well-placed. One sister and her husband went to Fiji; two of her sons are police inspectors. A granddaughter in Delhi is a college graduate and is going to marry an M.A.: Shardha Ram asked me how much the latter meant by way of education. They all dote on the family's grand old man.

Shardha Ram's political activity in recent years has consisted largely of lectures at rallies usually rousing the Harijans to greater assertiveness. His party colleagues sometimes do trade union work, but they are not serious contenders for public power except occasionally in league with a major party. Their last militant action was in 1964 when "five lakh people" offered to go to jail in support of a series of demands: to have Ambedkar's statue located in a

place of honour, to get lands for the landless, etc. "After 61 days the government accepted all our demands and released us—then they backed out again."

Shardha Ram contested the 1967 state elections as a Republican but received little support. His salience in Modelpur comes, instead, from his trenchment, sometimes venomous criticism of the continuing poverty of, and discrimination against, the Harijans. To the question, "Had you been an Agarwal, Khatri, or Jat, would you have gone farther, the same or less" his reply was characteristic:

> If I had funds I would have gone much further. I would have started a fire in the Punjab. If I were an Agarwal, I would have uprooted the Saberwals![5] Today you need either [agricultural] land or industry; if you have either, you are all right. If you have only a teashop, you can't even pay for your children's marriage. Not all [high-caste] Hindus are rich; they too have poor people. But if you ask me what I'd have done if I were born in Birla's house: I'd have wrought a revolution.

5.2 PATTERNS OF AD DHARMI MOBILITY

Small-scale trade in hides and skins enabled Amolak Ram's grandfather, a Balmiki, to spare enough to be able to support Amolak through more than a decade of political work (§ 4.2). For his time, he was a rare man: nearly all the Balmikis mobile today in Modelpur were born to scavenger parents. In contrast, among the Ad Dharmis, hereditarily the weavers and leatherworkers, many were by early 20th century beginning to enlarge the scale of their earlier interests. A substantial business in hides-and-skins, taking one over a large region, enabled one to observe, learn, and transmit to one's children some standard urban norms, for example, those concerning food, dress, speech, and education; for his sons, the mobility train would be that much easier to enter. Given more enterprise, and a bit of luck, the trader could sometimes become rather wealthy, although he would be competing with established men of trading castes, such as the Muslim Khojas. Thus one man,

[5] The reference, made with a chuckle, was clearly to the interviewer.

a contractor supplying bones to a Calcutta firm, could contest two lavish, and ruinous, state elections as an Independent, entirely on his own resources. Another man invested the profits from his hides-and-skins trade on agricultural land near Modelpur; and now, as the town expands the value of this land has grown greatly, giving his sons the resources for a growing enterprise making and distributing auto-parts.

By mid-20th century, the ranks of the weavers—already displaced by the textile mills—were being joined by their shoemaking castemates: the emerging centres of small-scale shoe production, such as Agra (Lynch 1969), and the factories of Kanpur and elsewhere were tough competitors. One might ask: why could the Punjabi shoemakers not cope with this latter challenge? My informants saw their caste as a victim of changing customer preferences, but why could their designs and processes not keep in step? My hunch is that the earlier successes of the Ad Dharmi movement and the Achhut Federation might have influenced their motivational patterns so that their energies could not be mobilized for improving their "polluting" occupation; these energies had to find another channel.

An aggregation of unplanned choices made Agra a shoemaking centre; a similar process turned the region around Modelpur into a centre of machine work with metals: moulding, lathework, etc. In 1944 Modelpur had only three workshops and a total of about 15 lathe operators; 25 years later the number of workshops exceeded 150 and the number of latheworkers came close to 1,500: a cumulative rate of increase of over 20 per cent per annum. To the growing demand for the town's machine products, and therefore for machine workers, the Ad Dharmis responded. They were willing to work at relatively low wages; and their capacity for the skill, aided perhaps by the dexterity learned in familial context, helped maintain, if not cut the prices. This, in turn, helped make Modelpur a centre for machine work. The Ad Dharmi advance into lathework can be projected through the career of one of the first among them.

5.21 Gur Pershad

Gur Pershad was the only son, and a favourite of his father, a mason who had settled in the Beas headquarters of the multi-

caste and syncretic congregational religious movement, Radha Soami Satsang (Khushwant Singh 1966: 125-27). Literate only in Urdu, Gur Pershad had been married while yet a boy, and his wife came to live with him when he was barely 14. Worried about Gur Pershad's livelihood, his father sought advice from the Satsang's chief, who had formerly been an engineer: this gentleman expected the demand for lathe products to grow. Gur Pershad's father's father lived in Modelpur then, and there he went in search of training in about 1940.

He was unsuccessful. His Muslim co-workers in one workshop discovered his caste and told him not to take water from their pitcher. This upset him, "for I had grown up in Beas where I had played with children of all kinds of families: there are no caste restrictions there." Other workshop owners demanded a security of Rs 500, to be forfeited if he were to quit before four years. Unable to provide the security, or to enter another occupation, he returned to the Satsang chief for help. The chief entrusted him to a Muslim follower in Lahore for training and arranged for his meals with a Brahmin follower. In two years Gur Pershad became a skilled machine operator.

Thanks to another Satsang congregationist,[6] Gur Pershad got his first job in Modelpur in 1944. During the next 14 years he held jobs in five different workshops in and near Modelpur, until he was the foreman in the town's oldest and largest auto-parts workshop.

> During my years with them I trained a very large number of Ad Dharmi and Balmiki[7] lathe operators. It was a feeling I

[6] Over the years, Gur Pershad has maintained a link with the Radha Soami Satsang and has, indeed, led many castemates into it. However, their current level of involvement in the Satsang is low; see § 9.22.

[7] For the second part of this claim I could find no support, and Balmiki informants contradicted it. In my judgment he tended to be as aloof towards Balmiki aspirants as the high-caste workshop owners had been towards him a generation earlier, but I am unable to choose between several possible explanations: politically the Ad Dharmis and Balmikis in Gur Pershad'd neighbourhood have long been rivals; he may have shared the stereotype of the unpersevering Balmiki (§ 11.3); or he may have wished, along with his castemates, to discourage Balmiki in roads into an occupation which the Ad Dharmis have made their own. Acting together,

had, a strong sentiment: to help the unskilled, poor ones get whatever skill I had the power to give them. Apart from three men [one Brahmin, one Ramgarhia, and one other], some twenty factory hands there were Ad Dharmis. The boss used to say, "Gur Pershad, you have filled my workshop with Ramdasias." [He didn't mind?] No, why should he? I got very good output from the boys: they paid attention to what he wanted done. I would pay them Rs 75 where a Ramgarhia would cost Rs 100. I got him double the output. So what does a factory owner want?

This association ended in 1958. Displeased with the previous municipal councillor from their ward, the Ad Dharmi elders put Gur Pershad up for the municipality and got him elected. Concerning his first task there—to vote for the President, to be elected by the councillors—he faced strong conflicting pressures, and he had to defy his employer's wishes in order to act on his castemates' decision. His relations with his employer worsened thereafter.

With covert support from his co-workers, largely Ad Dharmi, Gur Pershad formed a co-operative to produce auto-parts. They all continued in their jobs, working on co-op machines during off-hours only (see p. 112n). Soon, however, the employer's suspicions were aroused, and one by one, they moved to the co-op full-time. They ran the workshop in several shifts in order to meet the heavy demand of an expanding market. A fellow municipal councillor of Gur Pershad—Amar Singh, the leader of Modelpur's largest political faction (§ 10.14)—was also the President of the local Co-operative Bank; a recurring loan of Rs 20,000 from the Bank helped the co-op grow. By 1965 its annual sale touched two lakh rupees.

Ad Dharmi slidarity and its associated egalitarianism had been among the principal initial assets of the co-op. The same sentiments, however, prevented anyone's salary from exceeding about Rs 225 p.m. The evidence on subsequent events is somewhat ambiguous, but it is clear that Gur Pershad, though paid full time by the co-op, spent much of his time on political activity; rumour had it,

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these several influences may have served to overdêtermine Gur Pershad's coolness towards the Balmikis.

too, that he was able to manage substantial payments on the side from the co-op to himself. In any case, in 1965, Gur Pershad faced a revolt in the co-op, led by an exceptionally capable young Ad Dharmi, then foreman in the co-op workshop. Unable to get adequate explanations about co-op funds, this young man quit the co-op, repeating in part Gur Pershad's own career. His new enterprise grew in partnership with his brother and another man from a slightly higher caste, both of whom had also worked in the co-op. Shortly thereafter, Gur Pershad also left the co-op to start a proprietory auto-parts workshop, which did well despite his continuing involvement in politics.

Gur Pershad's relations with Amar Singh had been close over the years and, in 1967, when Modelpur constituency was declared to be reserved for Scheduled Castes (§ 10.2), he contested the state election as the Amar Singh faction's candidate, though labelled an Independent. Observers generally agreed that Amar Singh secured substantial rural support for Gur Pershad but his Akali links were a mixed blessing in this predominantly urban constituency, for the Hindus had been alarmed by the militancy of the recent Akali demand for a Sikh-majority Punjabi Suba. Gur Pershad lost by the small margin of 2,000 votes.

Political sentiment turned against Independent candidates as the 1969 elections approached, and Gur Pershad found that the Amar Singh faction would back him again only if he joined the Jan Sangh. Estimating the latter's electoral chances to be slim, he did not contest the elections. In fact, the Jan Sangh-Amar Singh candidate did as well in 1969 as Gur Pershad had done in 1967 (§ 10.2). Later in 1969, Gur Pershad did join the Jan Sangh—while loosening his link with the Amar Singh faction—owing to considerations of municipal politics in the predominantly Hindu town. During my fieldwork Gur Pershad was a municipal councillor of long standing, marking time for his eldest son to grow up and share his burden in running the workshop, and meanwhile keeping his political options open.

In concluding this consideration of Gur Pershad's biography, I should note some general features of the Ad Dharmi advance into lathework. We have noted that Gur Pershad could train a great many Ad Dharmis in lathework in the mid-50s because they were willing to work hard at relatively low wages; other Ad Dharmi

biographies illustrate the same pattern in other workshops. Those who have graduated from apprenticeship to entrepreneurship tend to save and to plough back a large part of their earnings. Recalling the Balmiki case, one may ask: why this frugality among the Ad Dharmis?

It would seem that the Ad Dharmi entrepreneur in small industry has access to the cycle of savings, capital formation, and subsequent returns—in income and in prestige—from control over his capital. As Victor Berna has shown (1960: 90-91), light engineering industry requires only a small initial outlay and can be expanded steadily in modest steps; and therefore it is well suited for small entrepreneurs generally. Yet, few Balmikis have gone far on this road. The Ad Dharmi advantage lay in a substantial lead of experience as traders, as skilled workmen, and as participants in relatively prestigious social settings with greater resources; they could mobilize resources within the caste with somewhat greater ease. Furthermore, given their large numbers, one of their entrepreneurs, such as Gur Pershad, would have somewhat easier access to politically controlled resources such as a loan from the co-op bank. The achievement of these men set the pace for their younger castemates who were under pressure, as the Balmikis were not, to secure occupations other than their traditional ones.

Caste and neighbourhood ties persuaded Gur Pershad and others to train castemates in the new skills; when these apprentices became workers, the caste relationship gave another strand to the employer-employee tie. As the current manager of the co-op workshop said:

> You can get away with being a little rough with your own boys but not with the others. With your own you can say, well, you're to work an extra hour today, and they will, while the others won't pay attention. Or you might have to say: I don't have the money to pay you yet; your own men will take that, not perhaps the others.... Men of your own *baradari* consider the enterprise their own.

The co-op has also bred a new generation of Ad Dharmi entrepreneurs:

> Many of our boys have left and set up workshops of their own. Boys want to be their own bosses now, whatever you pay them; they don't want to take jobs. It is difficult to keep them.

This manager too has bought a plot of land for building his own workshop in a couple of years: the success earlier breakaways encourages others to similar ambition.

Ad Dharmi success in recent years has, preeminently, been in metal work, but the emergent society allows other patterns too: Kashi Ram's case will exemplify one.

5.22 Kashi Ram

Kashi Ram is a 45-year-old man of very pleasant disposition. In a shop in one of Modelpur's bazars, his workmen make and sell shoes. Although one of the wealthiest Ad Dharmis in town, he commutes from a village 3 km away, and his castemates seem to be generally unaware of him: I got to know him only because his shop faces that of the Balmiki sewing machine assembler, and they are friends.

Kashi Ram's father used to make traditional shoes from used leather and the income was much too small for their large joint family. Kashi Ram quit school after Class 3 and, after a while, decided to learn shoemaking himself. He began working with new leather, making shoes of new designs. In the village he managed the family's small shoeshop also.

One day at Diwali in 1950 he started gambling in his village—and lost 50 borrowed rupees. Afraid to face his creditor, he ran away to his father's younger brother in Kasba, a small town about 70 km away, near Amritsar. This uncle had gone there some years earlier because he knew how to treat and dye skins, and this skill had been wanting in Kasba.

To cut a long story short, all of Kasba's Muslim shoemakers had gone to Pakistan at partition, and within a few months Kashi Ram rented and set up his own shoe shop and brought apprentices and shoemakers from his village to work for him. There was no substantial urban centre less than 40 km from Kasba, and at Kasba's famous gurudwara a fair was held every month. Facing the gurudwara was Kashi Ram's shop: "people would come to bow their heads at the gurudwara—and buy a pair of

shoes."[8] His uncle gave him an abundant supply of leather. Besides, he bought sackfuls of shoes in Modelpur for sale in Kasba at twice his cost. In five years he saved over Rs 30,000. Then, one day, a neighbour got drunk and, with his friends, began harassing Kashi Ram's wife. Kashi Ram decided then to move his shop to Modelpur—that was in 1956.

It should be clear by now that Kashi Ram is a good judge of men and of opportunities. His next major chance came through the link his family has nurtured for many years with Gurbachan Singh, a Ramdasia congressman who was also a minister for some years. Kashi Ram's father was the Sarpanch in his village; I did not enquire into his political base in the village, but within the panchayat he emerged as compromise candidate when the two principal factions were deadlocked for the Sarpanch's office. When Gurbachan came to their village on his political tours, he would stay in Kashi Ram's house.They helped Gurbachan otherwise too: by campaigning, for example, for the local Congress candidate who belongs to Gurbachan's faction in the State Congress. So, when Kashi Ram's brother graduated from college, their father asked Gurbachan to find him a job. He said: send the boy with me as a Personal Assistant. After eight years in this position, Gurbachan got the man into the state bureaucracy and now he is a Block Development Officer.

Not too far from Jullundur, the government was selling some land to Harijans. Gurbachan bought 32 acres himself, and 32 acres more were still to go: worth Rs 40,000, though its potential market value would be many times its cost. He urged Kashi Ram's family to buy that. Adding up their savings, the proceeds for family ornaments, loans from kinsmen, and Rs 4,000 from a moneylender, they were still short by Rs 10,000: but Gurbachan knew all about loans available from the Land Mortgage Bank, and he arranged the amount for Kashi Ram's family. They have sunk two tubewells in the farm, and put a kinsman in charge, at about Rs 200 per month, paid in cash and kind. Last year the farm gave them wheat worth Rs 20,000: or so said Kashi Ram, whose natural cautiousness may have led him to understate the output.

[8] Fairs and pilgrimage centres have long been important markets for artisans in all parts of India. See N. K. Bose (in press: Ch. 7).

Then one day Kashi Ram went to Phillaur to buy a buffalo and saw tractors levelling the Muslims' graveyard, unused since the partition. Upon enquiry he discovered that the tractors belonged to a prominent congressman and that one could acquire such lands through the Waqf Board which manages the graveyards, mosques, etc. formerly belonging to the Muslims. It cost Kashi Ram about Rs 500 in bribes, but he got an eight-acre graveyard not too far from Modelpur at a rental of Rs 100 per acre on a 99-year lease. To see an Ad Dharmi acquire this land brought the village Jats together in anger, and Kashi Ram is rather bitter over their opposition to him.

Kashi Ram also told me of smaller tidbits but we can skip the details. It is already clear that, in contemporary Punjabi society, given sustained application to chosen tasks, a broad sense of judgment, durable political links, and a pleasant manner, an Ad Dharmi would not find his caste a handicap; indeed, under certain conditions, it can be turned to very good account. If more Ad Dharmis do not do so, the explanation lies in the limited opportunities they have for learning the skills prerequisite and in the limited room in their own ranks that the upper strata find it necessary—and sufficient—to make for the Harijans.

5.3 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The 1931 Census data indicate (Schwartzberg 1965, R.S. Smith 1971) that the Chamars (including Ramdasia, Julaha, and related groups), engaged primarily in landless agricultural labour and leatherwork, constituted over one-tenth of the population in the districts surrounding Modelpur. In some districts further west, the Chuhras displaced the Chamars in agricultural labour.

Informed estimates of the town's Ad Dharmi population placed it at over 10,000.[9] During the past 50 years their population has grown three-to-four fold, and so has the number of their neighbourhoods: these continue to be more or less exclusively Ad

[9] Against this estimate rests the 1961 Census figure of under 6,000 for *all* Scheduled Castes in Modelpur. The difference is probably due partly to the vagueness of town boundaries and partly to the increase over the decade (Ch. 2).

Dharmi. From this part of Punjab, many more Ad Dharmis than Balmikis have gone to the UK; and two of them, as well as the area's Ad Dharmi MP, have built houses in the modern Model Town area. Most Ad Dharmi families—rich or poor—own the houses they live in; only government officials and other transients are likely to rent accommodation.

New, exclusive Ad Dharmi neighbourhoods emerge when a landowner decides to sell plots on his land to Ad Dharmis, fully aware that the higher castes would not buy plots there (§ 11.5). (Some Balmikis might wish to, but my guess is that the Ad Dharmis would rather not have them for neighbours.) Nor can Ad Dharmis readily buy plots in predominantly high-caste neighbourhoods: the cases in Model Town noted above are still exceptional. However, Harijan neighbourhoods alternate with those of the high castes, separated often by only a narrow lane. This boundary the high castes often try to sustain (in one case, for example, by trying to have the municipality prevent a Balmiki from putting a door in his rear wall, which would open the house into the common lane), and the low castes often try to breach (as in another case, by buying plots across the line under assumed identities).

How recently a neighbourhood was built appears to influence: (*i*) the age distribution in the neighbourhood: my impression is that those who have earned and saved enought to be able to buy a plot and build a house on it move in with their *nuclear* families, (*ii*) the family type distribution, and (*iii*) the range of neighbourhood institutions and their leadership. As among the Balmikis, inter-neighbourhood visiting is common only for the relatively affluent or the politically active, and therefore the social settings in the several neighbourhoods are dissimilar even for the young of the same caste. Hence, perhaps, the heavy concentration of Ad Dharmi entrepreneurs in one neighbourhood—the oldest large Ad Dharmi *mohalla* in town; of my sample of nineteen Ad Dharmis, nine live in this one.

Appearing in the neighbourhood panchayat here are not only the senior men form different kin groups but also younger men, in their thirties and forties whose achievements in industry and politics have legitimized their claim to be Chaudhuris. The latter have to mediate in *baradari* disputes and to supervise *nenda*, the collection of cash gifts at a marriage. The reliance upon the community

mechanisms of *nenda* and *kameti* to meet large expenses is, however, declining: such costs are rather more likely to be met with a straight loan.

The Ad Dharmis of Modelpur marry out of town and also avoid several clans of uterine kinship. Some Ramdasias, who are Sikhs, would not accept marital relations with the Hindu Ad Dharmis; but within the latter, I was told, there are no general marital barriers.

Voluntary associations are sparse among the Ad Dharmis, as among the other castes, let alone the multicaste level. Evanescent enthusiasm gets embodied in a Naujavan Sudhar Sabha (Youth Reform Society) in one or another neighbourhood; its young members would maintain order at marriages or other public events, perhaps launch a cleanliness drive or mobilize the funds to buy the neighbourhood's pots and pans for use in marriages. But the members of such a universalistic association come from families whose elders are often hostile towards each other and towards the assertive independence of the youth. Besides, there is little to bind the young latheworkers with their college-going peers. The birth and mortality rates of these Sabhas are, thus, in balance.

The sparseness of inter-neighbourhood visiting among the Ad Dharmis is reflected in the following comments by a well-established school teacher:

> I don't visit other *mohallas*. I would visit if I were in politics and went, folded hands from door to door, asking for people's votes. I told you I don't take part in politics, and so I don't visit people from other *mohallas*—or even people in my own *mohalla*. [Why not?] People in our *baradari* try to pull others down to their own level. Now I have put up this house and people wonder whether I did it by selling narcotics. Chand Ram's sons had a quarrel recently—that too was due to the same thing: others don't want educated boys to be able to rise. By implicating them in a police case they hope the boys can be prevented from getting government jobs later.
>
> So I have quit my *mohalla*. After work I come home, lie down on my cot, stretch my back, turn on the radio, put on the fan, and rest. I don't have much to do with others. I don't listen to their gossip and their backbiting. [You don't have friends—

other teachers—in other *mohallas*?] I have to see them only in connexion with the Union meetings. These meetings are in the Town Hall.

Modelpur's small workshops seem to give their workmen, young and old, a context for belonging, but the Ad Dharmi students' relationships with high-caste colleagues in college appear to be unsatisfactory (p. 140 ff). Religious events, and occasional political ones, apart, the Ad Dharmi youth, especially if educated, lead rather lonely lives, though the social universe of their elders, latheworkers and entrepreneurs, tends often to be more open than that of most Balmikis.

5.31 Politics

Presumably uncertain of the demographic facts, many Ad Dharmis believe that their caste is numerous enough that "If united we can push in someone in place of Indira Gandhi [as Prime Minister]."[10] Whether the "we" here refers to the Ad Dharmis only or to Scheduled Castes at large is not clear, but the difference does not alter the situation. The claim can be taken seriously only in the sense that in some parts of Punjab the population falls approximately equally between high-caste Sikhs, high-caste Hindus, and the Scheduled Castes; and among the last the Ad Dharmis are both numerically and politically dominant. Outside of the Republican Party, widely acknowledged to be an Ad Dharmis' party, few would think in these terms.

Effective electoral contest in and around Modelpur is contingent upon political and financial support from one of the town's principal, high-caste-controlled political factions. Associated too closely with one caste, the Republican Party cannot be a vehicle for the multicaste factions' nominees and therefore performs weakly at the polls. It serves, rather, to articulate a set of demands and a

[10] For Punjab, prior to Haryana's separation, the 1961 census figures (including all religions) are:

(*a*) Total population: a little over 203 lakhs (i.e., 20.3 million).

(*b*) Scheduled Castes: nearly 41.4 lakhs.

(*c*) Ad Dharmi, Chamar, Jatia Chamar, Rehgar, Raigar, Ramdasi, Ravidasi, Kabirpanthi, and Julaha groups: a little over 21.5 lakhs.

(*d*) Balmiki, Chura or Bhangi, and Mazhbi: a little over 13.5 lakhs.

perspective on behalf of the Scheduled Castes generally: some of these ideas are taken on by the aggregating parties, especially the Congress and the Jan Sangh, in their own competition for Harijan support.

Since the Modelpur constituency has been reserved for the Scheduled Castes for some time, the town's high-caste political decision-makers often scan the field of Harijans of political promise; but they claim to be able to find few with a "respectable" public life, intelligence, and education, let alone the capacity to finance their own election campaigns. Nevertheless, as we shall see (Chapter 10), even the relatively poor and uneducated Harijan politicians—most of them Ad Dharmis—get support from their respective factions and, through them, from the state level political leaders. Public officials defer to them, at least face to face; and the Harijan leaders claim a capacity to "get work done" equal to that of anyone else. But this influence arises in opportunistic affiliation with one or another high-caste-controlled party or faction; and canvassing for these within Ad Dharmi neighbourhoods leads to the very "disunity" which, other Ad Dharmis bemoan, prevents their being the country's rulers.

CHAPTER VI

Ramgarhias

Sharing the pattern common to North India, the late 19th-century status system in a Punjabi village would have ranked the artisans (Lohar, Tarkhan) above the "polluted" menials (Chuhra, Chamar), but clearly below the landowners (Jat, Rajput, etc.). For 1881, Ibbetson reported that the Jats and other high castes "classed [the Lohar] as an impure caste"; and though the Lohar could intermarry—and interchange occupation—with the Tarkhan, the latter's "social position is distinctly superior. Till quite lately Jats and the like would smoke with him *though latterly they have begun to discontinue the custom*." (Ibbetson 1916: 309, 312, 313; emphasis mine.)[1]

The mass of the Lohars and Tarkhans, later known as the Ramgarhias, did low status *sepi* (that is, *jajmani* work) for the landowners, but control over important resources, such as land, skill in specialized jobs like fabricating persian wheels for irrigation well, and the like would enable some families to command deference in their communities (Van den Dungen 1968: 64-66): intra-jati differences of this order are known to enable differentiation between family groups with respect to rank in the village hierarchy (see Silverberg 1968a: 120).

To understand contemporary Ramgarhia society, therefore, we must locate the processes which have enabled them, over two or three generations, to move in large numbers from jajmani work in the village to industrial, urban entrepreneurship on a growing scale. This exercise (pp. 89-102) will rely substantially on a set of interviews with a knowledgeable Ramgarhia informant (Saberwal n.d.).[2]

[1] The Tarkhan's superiority within the services group in the Punjabi village continues to this day. See D'Souza (1967: 201) for two villages.

[2] This typescript is available for consultation with the author.

It should also be noted that (*i*) the term Ramgarhia did not come into general use until the 1930s and the 1940s: I use it for the earlier period with the understanding that the contemporary sources use the terms Tarkhan, Lohar, or Lohar-Tarkhan instead; and (*ii*) only the Sikhs normally use the word Ramgarhia: their Hindu castemates are called Dhimans and will be considered briefly in an Appendix to this chapter.

6.1 HISTORICAL SETTING

6.11 Origin of the Name

The people known as the Ramgarhias trace their name back to the time between the slackening of Mughal control and the demise of Banda (1716) and the arrival of Ranjit Singh in Lahore (1799). During this period the influence in Punjab first of Delhi and then of Kabul was eroded increasingly by the forays of the Sikh misls, which engaged our attention in Chapter I. One of these misls, led by Jassa Singh of carpenter ancestry rebuilt several times a fort called Ramgarh, near the Golden Temple in Amritsar, and subsequently acquired the name Ramgarhia (Chhabra 1960, I: 483, Marriott 1953: 142). However, historians of the 18th century appear to hold unanimously that *misl membership was unrelated to one's caste*; H. R. Gupta (1952: 54) says categorically: "Every individual, even of the meanest birth, had the right of choosing the leader he would serve" (cp. Sinha 1960: 110, Khushwant Singh 1963: 133.)[3]

Between 1759 and 1799, says Kessinger reviewing the literature (1974: 22), "The Punjab was ruled by a confederation without a head." The establishment of Ranjit Singh's dominion at the end of the 18th century brought the misls' military role to an end, and in

[3] An argument between Marian W. Smith and McKim Marriott 20 years ago over the term misl illustrates neatly the importance of controlling the historical background if interpretations of Indian field data are to avoid the danger of serious embarrassment (Smith 1952, Marriott 1953). More recently, Partap Aggarwal (1973: 108) has ascribed the prevailing distribution of agricultural landownership in Punjab to "vigorous land reform" *since independence*. Aggarwal is a careful scholar usually, but our discussion in Ch. 1 suggests that he has missed the mark in this matter by about two centuries.

c.a. 1815 he removed the Ramgarhia misl from the scene formally. Thereafter, the histories of Punjab [for example, Chhabra (1961?) II] dispense with the word Ramgarhia. The Kuka movement, whose violent climax came in 1871-72, had a Tarkhan, Ram Singh for a symbolic leader but McLeod (1973) has shown that its supporters were preponderantly Jat, and its operational leaders may have been likewise.

The *Dictionary of the Punjabi Language*, published in 1854, gave "Ramgarrya" the gloss, "A title of respect applied to a Sikh carpenter...;"[4] and we gather that in later decades the descendents of the Jassa Singh family "sometimes styled themselves Ramgarhia Sikhs rather than Tarkhans [Carpenters]" (Van den Dungen 1968: 65). Among these was Sunder Singh, great-great-grandson of one of Jassa Singh's brothers, who published in 1902, while studying for the B.A. examination, a booklet on his family's history. The purpose undoubtedly was to bring his "noble blood and high birth" to the attention of the then government which, he asserted, had an appreciation of these virtues (Ramgarhia 1902: vii). By 1902, it would appear, the British rulers judged individuals substantially with reference to their caste; the author said:

> As a rule all Sikhs who belong to the same caste or clan as the Ramgarhia family call themselves Ramgarhias and I am proud to note that generally they are the most orthodox disciples of the Guru [Nanak, founder of Sikh religion]. In respect of martial qualities also they are second to none in the Punjab. In their veins runs the blood of their mighty forefathers and martyrs, their frames possess the indomitable spirit of Sirdar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, one of the greatest generals that the soil of the Punjab has ever produced (Ramgarhia 1902: 30).

Ramgarhia had been noticed as one of the many variant terms for "Tarkhan" in 1891 (Census 1891: 317), and in the 1901 Census 4,253 Sikhs were returned as Ramgarhias (Census 1901: 137,

[4] Newton's Ludhiana Mission 1854: 399. The dictionary as well as the references in the 1901 Census were called to my attention by Professor W. H. McLeod of the University of Otago. When I failed to locate the dictionary, Dr P. S. Jammu of Punjabi University came to my rescue. I am grateful to them.

183). Over the next two decades, the identity continued to gain ground, and in 1921 three per thousand Punjabis reported their caste as Ramgarhia (Census 1921b: 347). For reasons to be explored shortly, the preference for the new name had become much stronger by 1931 (Census 1931: 337). Yet, one elderly man said in 1969:

> It is only for the past twenty years or so that we have been called Ramgarhias. Previously our people were glad over the mere fact that we [*lohars* and *tarkhans*] were offered chairs to sit on in government offices.

The analysis above does not mean to question the Ramgarhias' right to choose the name they shall be known by; it seeks merely to consider the nature of the link between the 18th-century Ramgarhia misl and the 20th-century Ramgarhia caste. I suggest that the caste came to acquire the name Ramgarhia, beginning at about the turn of this century, because the British gave substantial weight to one's caste (*i*) in evaluating individuals and (*ii*) as we shall see shortly, in legislation determining, for example, the right to buy agricultural land.

6.12 Emergence of the Ramgarhia Identity

By 1930 the Ramgarhias were ready not only to be counted as such in the Census, but also to apply themselves to institution-building in the field of education: from a primary school, located a rented room in 1929, this sustained effort led to the creation, over the next three decades, of a very substantial complex of institutions (see Ch. 2). I proceed now to trace to their immediate historical roots[5] the forces which led to these outcomes.

During Ranjit Singh's reign, early in the 19th century, the standards and the rewards appear to have been high for artisans of various categories: the metal workers for their contribution to armaments (Baden-Powell 1872: 144, Bajwa 1964: 41-2, 53-4, 67,

[5] Apart from my field data including the interviews mentioned earlier (Saberwal n.d.), this analysis draws on the Souvenir (1954) published by the Ramgarhia Educational Committee and on Baden-Powell (1872), a volume based on an exhibition held in Lahore in 1864. I should note that it discusses the workmen only incidentally.

and 73) and marble workers for their decorative efforts at the Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar (Saberwal n.d.: 16). It is reasonable to assume that these artisans were the Lohars and the Tarkhans,[6] many of whose descendents, especially the Sikhs, would merge into the Ramgarhia identity in the following century.

During early British rule, these skills were harnessed to new purposes: making high quality furniture for the British, especially in Simla (Baden-Powell 1872: 204, 206, 209; Saberwal n.d.: 2); producing cutlery and doing other fine metal work, also for the British, often using imported models (Baden-Powell 1872: 144); and doing skilled work for the railways, both in laying the track and in building the rolling stock (Baden-Powell 1872: 249-52). Baden-Powell went on to remark on the high esteem in which the officers of the railway held "the Native artisans in the Punjab," their "remarkable ... skill and minute carefulness in execution." One may then presume that it was the reputation thus built that enabled the Punjabi artisans to find their way to Assam and Kenya[7] where, during the late 19th century, railway lines were being laid under very difficult conditions.

The artisans' willingness to consider opportunities in distant lands had local antecedents. My data from biographies support Kessinger (1974: 75) in that the *spidars* of this region

> were quite mobile, many staying in the village for only one generation. While this is not rapid mobility, neither is it a closed hereditary system reaching back beyond the memory of man. The system of customary relations was stable, not the individuals and families that filled it.

A move into another village required sponsorship from the landowners there, and private tips and external sponsorship may have similarly aided the artisans' moves to Assam and elsewhere. Away from Punjab, they projected for themselves the image of being ingenious Sikhs—rather than that of being low-status menials; this, I shall argue later, enabled them to enter the lucrative roles

[6]The marble workers are so identified (Saberwal n.d.: 16).

[7]Bharati (1972: 34, 36-38, 69, 73) notices the Ramgarhias' presence in East Africa but his comments on them in India—reflecting the beliefs of those in East Africa—are often wide of the mark.

of the contractor and the like *outside* of Punjab.

Events since the mid-18th century had produced several families of the Tarkhan-Lohar caste with sizable estates. By the late 19th century, men with such backgrounds were beginning to lay claim to positions of eminence. We have seen Sundar Singh Ramgarhia, but there was also Ram Singh Sohal, an architect of considerable merit, who became Principal of the Mayo School of Art in Lahore (Saberwal n.d.: 17-18). These men represented inherited wealth and prestige: hidden in the future was the Ramgarhia wave which was to rise in the decades ahead.

We have noted that late in the 19th century, the descendents of the Jassa Singh family liked to be known as Ramgarhia Sikhs; apart from this (and the dictionary entry) I have only the following references to the word Ramgarhia before the end of the 19th century:

1883-84: a "Ramgarhia Jatha [band]" in Simla, presumably active in the politics of the local gurudwara;

1893: a Ramgarhia Sabha established in Lahore;

1893: a Ramgarhia Social Club in Simla which ran for three or four years (Saberwal n.d.: 3, 18-19).

The First Decade 1901-10

In the year 1900, the Punjab Land Alienation Act came into force: classifying the Tarkhan-Lohar as a non-agriculturist, it disqualified him from buying agricultural land. Those of the caste who already owned such land were not, of course, evicted; but village Punjab had a well-established pattern of migration far and wide, designed partly to help the migrant raise his standing in his home village by buying agricultural land there (Kessinger 1974: 155-56, 167-69). To this avenue the Ramgarhias' entry was now banned. Van den Dungen (1972: 285) reports a petition from one of their leaders against this classification; and as the years passed and the processes of mobility begun earlier gathered pace, it appears that the neo-rich members of the caste found this barrier to agricultural landownership more and more frustrating. Since the barrier had been built in terms of caste, they appear to have concluded that the efforts for its removal too would have to be in terms of caste: the caste, in short, had to be mobilized. For this purpose they

would employ devices then widely current in Punjabi Society—organizational workers (*parcharaks*), journals, and schools:[8] for the individuals developing and overseeing these activities, the rewards lay in the experience of public leadership, an enlargement of social relationships, and occasional calls to conspicuous public roles.

During the first decade of the 20th century, the name Ramgarhia appears to gain in circulation, but still it alternates with the "Vishvakarma" identity—centred on the artisans' deity in Hinduism, Vishvakarma—which was also being asserted by artisan groups elsewhere in India (and Ceylon: see p. 110);

1901: a Ramgarhia Provincial Conference in Gujaranwala (Saberwal n.d.: 21);

1902 on: caste journals began to appear: *Ramgarhia Patrika*, a monthly from Lahore in 1902; *Sevak Singh Patrika*, another monthly from Lahore in 1904 (Saberwal n.d.: 27). Such journalism among the Sikhs went back at least to *Sukabi Subodhini* of Amritsar, launched in 1875 (Khushwant Singh 1966: 146 n.);

1904: formation of Ramgarhia Sevak Sabha, Amritsar, interested in social reform within the caste in the town;

1908: at a marriage in the Bagarian estate, whose owners were Ramgarhias, many Ramgarhia notables were gathered—Rai Sahebs, high government officials, Thekedars (contractors). Concerned over the need for community uplift, especially in education, they established the Vishvakarma Vansha Sudhar Sabha (VVSS—Vishvakarma Brotherhood Reform Society) for the whole baradari, with its headquarters in Amritsar. During the following year the new organization framed and announced various rules for social reform (Saberwal n.d.: 15, 22-23);

1909: a *dharamshala* which had been built earlier by a benefactor for use by the Ramgarhias in Amritsar was given to VVSS to open an elementary school for the Ramgarhias (Saberwal n.d.: 21);

two conferences were held to carry forward the rules framed for social reform (Saberwal n.d.: 22-23);

a proposal for establishing a Ramgarhia Educational Bank,

[8] Ganda Singh (1965: Chapters 35, 40 and others) and Jones (1968: 43) have traced all these devices and more to Christian missionary activity during the 19th century.

whose profits would go into scholarships for promising students, was mooted but, like many other proposals, was not carried through (Saberwal n.d.: 22).

The Second Decade 1911-20

With the renaming of VVSS in 1911 as Ramgarhia Sabha in Amritsar and that of the Ramgarhia Jatha (date?) as Ramgarhia Sabha in Simla, the institutional base—for dealings, for example, with the government—appears to have been laid. Associated with the Simla Sabha were many more government employees, familiar with the ways of the government, the bureaucracy, and complex modern organizations generally; it may have been rather more active than the Amritsar Sabha. It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of these Ramgarhia groups, in Simla and in other urban centres, for their ambitions for the future. Kessinger has demonstrated the dominance of Punjabi villages by Jat landowners during the 19th century. "Political networks," he says (1974: 73), would have "existed above the level of the individual community, but only through the clan structure of the dominant caste." Organizations such as the Ramgarhia Sabha in Simla, free of Jat control, sought channels to British authority independently, providing an additional lever for prying open the Jat grip over the villages, something achieved in Vilyatpur during the second decade (Kessinger 1974: 123-28).

In delimiting their new identity, the Ramgarhias had to cope with the stridency of the Arya Samaj and the Akalis, which was then sharpening the religious differences between the caste's Hindu and Sikh members. These appear to have been expressed, for example, over the content of—and control over—the educational institutions which all of them, Hindu Dhimans and Sikh Ramgarhias, wished to promote. During this decade much energy went into debates over this issue (Saberwal n.d.: 33ff). The caste solidarity, despite religious variation, had been expressed for example in the Vishvakarma Mandir (Ch. 2) located on the outskirts of Modelpur: apart from an image of Lord Vishvakarma, it had housed a Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture; but as, in the early twenties, the predominantly Jat Akalis mounted their campaign for gaining control over Sikh religious places, the Ramgarhias quietly removed the Book from the temple. One more tie was snapped. By now it

seemed clear that the Ramgarhias and the Dhimans would go their separate ways; yet, both the groups continued to be interested in industry, and the networks of prior marital ties ensured the continuing renewal of these bonds. A measure of involvement in each other's affairs, familial and institutional, would persist.

During the second decade, then, the "infrastructure" for the Ramgarhia identity was being laid:

1912: The Sabhas in Amritsar and Simla began to make representations to various authorities for correcting various "injustices" to the Ramgarhias (and, incidentally, sometimes to the Sikhs generally). One of these went to the commander-in-Chief of the Army in Simla in 1912, and there was much correspondence with the Financial Commissioner, Punjab, for correction of various caste-related errors in the 1881 Census, revenue records, etc. (Saberwal n.d.: 24, 22);

1915 on: the Simla Sabha sponsored the printing of several handbills concerning the Ramgarhias, the publication in Gurumukhi of a 450-page history, *Ramgarhia itihas*, and the activities of at least four parcharaks—organizational workers—who travelled far and wide from their Simla bases arousing the sentiments of caste solidarity (Saberwal n.d.: 3-4); the publication of various caste journals continued;

1918 (or 1919?): Ramgarhia returnees from the Mesopotamia campaign in World War I gave the Ramgarhia Sabha, Amritsar, Rs 11,000 for starting an engineering school, but the school was not started (Saberwal n.d.: 34);

1919: a big Ramgarhia conference was held in Amritsar, where many resoloutions were passed (Saberwal n.d.: 22).

The Third Decade 1921-30

The incipient Ramgarhia identity, noticed earlier, was consolidated during the third decade. The infrastructure and the activities begun during the previous decade continued. The parcharaks continued their tours—their modest expenses being met largely by gifts from their hosts; memorials and representations concerning land and other issues continued to be made; the various Sabhas continued and gave rise to more complex forms:

1922-23: *Ramgarhia Gazette*, a caste journal in Gurumukhi, was started in Simla and built up its circulation with the help of

the Simla-based parcharaks: in 1972 it celebrated its golden jubilee (Saberwal n.d.: 27);

the Ramgarhia Social Club in Simla was revived, providing a forum for important Ramgarhias—and sometimes raising awkward questions for others—who came to India's summer capital (Saberwal n.d.: 29, 31-32);

in Amritsar, a Ramgarhia Technical School was established and run for just about a year (Saberwal n.d.: 23);

the 1908-9 reform rules were revived and revised and, apparently a Ramgarhia Vehar Sudhar Sabha (RVSS: Ramgarhia Social Reform Society) was established (Saberwal n.d.: 23);

a Ramgarhia conference in Lahore passed resolutions for starting a school and a factory, both for educating Ramgarhia children, and also a Ramgarhia Bank[9] (Saberwal n.d.: 23);

1925: Sohan Singh Thekedar of Modelpur came to Simla. As contractor in the oilfields of Assam he had become affluent. Members of the Social Club in Simla impressed upon him the importance of education for the Ramgarhias (Saberwal n.d.: 34); this interacted with several other influences—especially the Jat landowners' rejection of his attempt to join their ranks after he had bought substantial agricultural land in Modelpur (pp. 103-4)—and led him to apply himself to the educational complex in Modelpur, begun in 1929;

a meeting of Ramgarhias from all India, which established the Ramgarhia Central Board. The Board (*i*) planned to make a Ramgarhia monument at Taran Taran, (*ii*) joined issue with the Akalis over the right of all Sikhs to buy agricultural land—and made a representation on this to the Simon Commission in 1928, and (*iii*) made plans to open an engineering college—but did not carry these through (Saberwal n.d.: 30-31);

1926: a Ramgarhia candidate in provincial elections was persuaded by the Akalis to withdraw in a manner perceived as unfair by the Ramgarhias (Saberwal n.d.: 30);

[9] Why were the Ramgarhias anxious to start a bank? Could it be that they were beginning to feel what I call status incompetence (§ 10.13, and p. 133), with their entrepreneurial efforts blocked in Punjab because they could not mobilize capital? Khatris and others, though lacking in technical skill, had meanwhile developed institutions like the Punjab National Bank and were beginning to forge ahead as industrial entrepreneurs.

1929: at a meeting in the Vishvakarma Mandir, near Modelpur, a group led by Sohan Singh Thekedar decided to start the Ramgarhia Vishvakarma Industrial School to teach the 3Rs, drawing, and carpentry to Ramgarhia students: shortly thereafter the school began with one teacher and a few pupils in a rented room (Souvenir 1954:9);

1930: it is said that the Akalis demolished the *samadh* (tomb) of Jodh Singh, Jassa Singh's son, in Amritsar. To cope with this challenge; the Ramgarhia Vehar Sudhar Sabha convened a meeting in Jullundur, drawing together men from both the Simla and the Amritsar groups. Plans were laid for a large conference next year, and Sohan Singh Thekedar was made the chairman of its Reception Committee. Nand Singh Sehra, an engineer who after many years studying and teaching in the United States had returned to India representing the Ford Motor Company, was persuaded to preside. The Conference in Kartarpur opened with its president, astride an elephant, carried in procession through the historic Sikh town: an apt projection of a changing self-image by an ambitious group.

Among the achievements of the conference was the establishment of the Ramgarhia Central Federation and witnessing of caste solidarity which, it is said, persuaded the Akalis later to rebuild the samadh in Amritsar (Saberwal n.d.: 34-36). The preparations for this conference overlapped with the 1931 Census enumeration, and the Ramgarhias' self-definition in the latter[10] would have reflected the mobilization for the conference.

6.13 Explaining the Ramgarhias' Rise

The opening chapter took notice of the stir and the movement in Punjabi society during the past century. In that context, we have analysed the successive phases in the emergence of the Ramgarhia identity, and the underlying processes. This search for a new identity was itself part of their larger move from the low status *jajmani* role of carpenter-blacksmith to that of the industrial

[10]The 1931 census gave no figures for the Ramgarhias, for the category did not meet its specific criteria for analysis by castes; but their preference for the new designation was strong enough to require particular notice (Census 1931: 337).

entrepreneur, fully inside the urban, high-caste stratum. Their occupational transformation does have some puzzling aspects—of magnitude, phases, and direction.[11] Nearly every Indian village has its carpenter and blacksmith, yet only those in Punjab have shown such enterprise. My attempt at explanation will hinge on their technological base in the mid-19th century, on Sikh religion, and on the statutory bar to their buying agricultural land, imposed in the year 1900.

Technological base: We have already noted some of the Ramgarhia skills in metal and wood which brought them to the attention of the administrators in Punjab in the late 19th century, and I have suggested that the latter facilitated their migration to Assam and Kenya in search of opportunity. But there were other skills too, for example, producing the persian wheel. In Punjab it appears to have been in extensive use by the 12th century, but south of Delhi it was infrequent even in the 20th.[12] Reporting on the 1864 Lahore exhibition, Baden-Powell (1872: 243) said:

> ....The persian wheel [is] used in most wells in the Bari Doab [between the Sutlej and the Beas rivers], and but little used in those parts of the Punjab bordering on Hindustan.... Every peg and bit of iron or other material used in making up these implements has its appropriate and distinctive name.

The Punjabi villages appear also to have employed bullock-drawn flour mills prior to the introduction of the oil-engine drive. These devices would release man- and woman-power in the villages for other tasks, like tending livestock; more important, their erection and maintenance required superior technical skills. There was, furthermore, a noteworthy amount of at least intergenerational movement of artisans between villages: their subordination to particular groups of landowners was less than complete

[11] Aurora does not deal with them at length, and the analysis in this chapter will show that his occasional comments on the Ramgarhias (1967: 30, 114) tend to be erratic.

[12] Habib 1969. On the other hand, surveying the evidence from Rajasthan, Chattopadhyaya (1973: 304n) has suggested that a simpler form of the wheel, devoid of gearing, may have been employed there as early as the sixth century; it would have required manual power to operate.

(p. 90). Superior technical skills were not denied room at least for physical mobility.

In subsequent decades, the growth of Simla, the new canal system in west Punjab, the laying of the railways, and the founding of New Delhi continued to offer the Punjabi artisan fresh challenges—and rewards—close to his home. However, the pattern was already changing. Kessinger reports (1974: 110) that the Punjab Department of Agriculture began to introduce new agricultural implements and other innovations from about 1905:

> Artisans in small towns and cities responded to the opportunities created by changing agricultural technology. Some implements introduced by the department that proved particularly popular and effective were quickly coped by blacksmiths and carpenters—particularly a simple iron plow, the land driven fodder chopper, and an improved sugarcane press. Though rough in finish, the local copies worked well and were considerably cheaper than the tools imported or fabricated by the department.

As the century wore on, the farmers had to turn increasingly to the urban centres for their implements. For reasons we shall see, however, the artisans were slow in making their mark as industrialists: of the 443 factories enumerated in the 1911 Punjab census, Lohars and Tarkhans owned only three, possibly included in the seven they managed (Census 1911: 415-21).

Sikh religion: Numerous elements of the Sikh tradition are said to have a bearing on the Ramgarhia past. The Sikh scriptures, it is said, place a high value on the work done by human hands, and the Ramgarhias relate stories about Guru Nanak, happy to visit and stay with a Tarkhan because the latter's simple bread was earned with honest labour (see McLeod 1968: 86-87). Several Sikh Gurus, especially the first and the tenth, are said to have had Tarkhan-Lohar associates in critically important episodes (Saberwal n.d.: 6-9). The Ramgarhia biographical accounts also suggest—far oftener than the Balmiki or the Ad Dharmi accounts—that religious meditation was a strong tendency in the parental generation: some theoretical constructs posit that this orientation would pave the way for creative entrepreneurial personality types to

emerge in the next generation (Hagen 1962: 209ff).

While the Ramgarhias value these elements in their tradition, clearly they choose to highlight these out of a complex, and often ambiguous past. The Hindu artisan groups throughout India have had access to the Vişhvakarma tradition, and this too would underwrite their efforts at upward mobility adequately (p. 110). Other sects in India have offered comparable cultural resources, and therefore we must look elsewhere to explain why the Punjabi Tarkhan-Lohar did so much better than his counterparts elsewhere in the country.

Rather more relevant is the egalitarian theme in the Sikh tradition. We have noted the part played by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia in the 18th century; though a Tarkhan, by virtue of his military stature he sometimes emerged as a spokesman for all the twelve Sikh misls in relation to other centres of power (H.R. Gupta 1952: 8-9). But this is ancient forgotten history: we have Ibbetson's testimony that, by 1881, the Jats were reducing the intimacy of their relations with Tarkhans. For many decades yet, the landowners would continue to remind them of their lowly status sometimes in high-handed ways. In a nearby village in the early twenties, a Muslim landowner prevented a Ramgarhia from building a house on a plot he had bought; the situation in Jat villages, I was told, could have been as difficult. Elsewhere, a Ramgarhia might be taunted with one or another derogatory stereotype; thus a Jat landowner might tell a prosperous Ramgarhia that he wanted no dealings with a man of a *kati-vadhi* baradari—that is, a man of a community whose members often hurt themselves in the course of their occupational work. Into the 1940s, even college graduates were diffident about publicizing their baradari; to put Ramgarhia for a surname on a nameplate bespoke uncommon daring.

Egalitarianism, however, found other, more serviceable expressions in the Sikh tradition. Departing from traditional Hinduism, Sikh religious activity is centred on public congregational worship, and the congregation—*sangat*—is neutral to caste status. Likewise, when the participants in formal public contexts sit down for their meals, they are not separated by caste: the row—*pangat*—is also neutral to caste. The social mechanisms of sangat and pangat have helped soften the rigours of the caste system within Sikh society even since the seventeenth century (McLeod 1968:

208-10); in the late nineteenth century, these helped also to project an image of castelessness among the Sikhs, at least to the non-Punjabis.[13] Thus, the 1921 Census reported a spurt in the Sikhs' desire to withhold information concerning one's caste; consider, however, the distribution of those doing so: 2 per cent of the Sikhs in Punjab and 54 per cent in the North West Frontier Province (Census 1921a: 226-27)! Many Sikhs, not Ramgarhias alone, appear to have found an image of castelessness away from home beneficial.

The mechanisms of sangat and pangat functioned wherever Sikhs gathered. In Assam or Bengal, the Sikh artisan would be seen overwhelmingly as the turban-wearing, bearded Sikh: the finer status distinctions within the Sikh society would be lost on the outsiders. The Ramgarhias seized upon this "status dissonance" and were able, outside of Punjab,[14] to work their way into lucrative roles, such as that of the contractors, normally associated with persons of relatively high status. Hindu Tarkhans and Lohars elsewhere would be less effective in a similar exercise in impression management.

If the Sikh egalitarianism was really facilitative in this manner, one would expect that more Sikh Ramgarhias than Hindu Dhimans in an earlier generation would have gone to areas outside Punjab in search of opportunity. I have previously examined the distribution in a sample of 19 (Saberwal 1972b: 154, Table 1). While the migrants' distribution takes the expected direction, the difference is small. We should, however, note the dilution of the expected

[13] Dr Surinder Suri has suggested to me that the Ramgarhia emigrants would have been likely to try to generalize upon their experience of egalitarian relationships within the gurudwara, an experience that most of their Hindu counterparts would not have had.

[14] The high achievement levels of the Ramgarhias today are consistent with the fact that, in the previous generation, the men were often away from home, working a distant lands: McClelland (1961: 404-6) finds that the absence of fathers is associated with high achievement motivation among the sons. In a related framework, LeVine (1966: 17-18) might argue that the colonial social space greatly increased the mobility opportunities open to the Ramgarhias, and this new "status mobility system," acting *via* changes in (*i*) parental values—that is, a concept of the ideal successful man, and (*ii*) child-training practices, would produce persons with high achievement motivation more frequently.

influence of this variable: the Ramgarhia-Dhiman intermarriages would lead to kindred co-membership, and therefore the world view, the value system, etc., would seep across the religious line.

Agricultural land: To protect the Jats and the other landowing castes of Punjab from their own improvidence—which led them to borrow the money from, and lose the land to, the urban factor-and-moneylender—the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900 debarred non-agricultural castes from buying agricultural land. Among these were the Tarkhan-Lohar. Those of them who owned land already were not dispossessed, and the law had not been directed against them in any case; yet, the neo-rich among them, who wanted agricultural land—the prevailing local status symbol (cp. Van den Dungen 1968: 66-71 and 1972: 284-85)—often found the statute in their way.

Some princely states, however, did not apply the statute. Some Ramgarhias did acquire agricultural land there, without always turning agriculturists themselves. The belief that one's talents tend to run along one's ancestral occupation is strong among the Ramgarhias to this day (p. 136f); yet it was galling to be denied the symbol of status. So they attacked their classification as non-agriculturists persistently (Saberwal n.d.: 19, 24, 31, 32); but opposed vehemently by the very much more numerous Jats,[15] they had to wait until the mid-50s before the government re-classified them, enabling them again to buy agricultural land.

Unable to influence the rural interactional patterns in his own favour, the Ramgarhia channelled his energy and resources into (*a*) going abroad in search of wealth and (*b*) participating in the urban-industrial growth, wherein his familial skills were at an increasing premium: illustrating, thus, Hagen's principle of Relative Social Blockage (1962: 241). He moved, in Marriott's terms (1968: 106), to urban areas and into the emergent urban system of stratification which were much more receptive to his talents.

To sum up, the Punjabi Lohar-Tarkhan's technical skills in

[15] All Jats—Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu—would together oppose the Ramgarhias (and others) simply to defend the boundaries of those eligible to buy agricultural land. It is with the *Sikh* Jats, however, that the Ramgarhias would interact in numerous social and religious contexts; consequently, this interface in Sikh society carried considerable tension for many decades.

mid-19th century appear to have been substantially superior to what was available elsewhere in the country; these impressed the British rulers, leading them to recommend him to areas where the local skills were particularly inadequate. Away from home, the Sikh Lohar-Tarkhan was able to project a key image of the ingenious, industrious Sikh. As a furniture-maker or a contractor in Assam or East Africa, or as a technical civil servant in canal systems and the like, he would acquire a measure of wealth. This, he reasonably expected, would enable him to enter the stratum of high standing in Punjab, but he could not buy agricultural land there, and the Punjabi agriculturist castes were quite unwilling to admit him to equality, regardless of wealth. I shall discuss shortly the feelings of status dissonance thus generated among the Ramgarhias. By the 1930s, the jajmani arrangements in villages were declining, accompanying "a great deal of experimentation on the part of individuals" in search of alternate arrangements (Kessinger 1974: 163). Yet, until the late forties, the Ramgarhia ambition had to run in the grooves of artisanship in Punjab and more rewarding careers elsewhere. As we shall see, the post-partition Punjab allowed their talents greater room (p. 133). For those who have long been deprived, dissatisfaction tends to be the greatest—within limits—not when change is impossible but when some improvement is already on (Runciman 1966: Ch. 2). In the new situation, the Ramgarhias took to industrial metal work—casting, lathework, and the like—with a certain entrepreneurial fury, and it took many of them only a decade or two to edge their way into the stratum of high standing in urban Punjab.

6.2 CORPORATE STATUS DISSONANCE

We have noticed the lack of fit, in early 20th century, between the Ramgarhias' growing wealth—and the deference given them *outside* their home areas—and their home communities' refusal to allow them the symbols of status. There were, of course, exceptional persons. A successful contractor told me about his father who owned more than ten acres of agricultural land:

> Ours was the only Ramgarhia family in the village. It was much respected. People used to borrow money from my father. He

was also a *hakim*;[16] he would give medicines free to people who came to him, especially poor people. He also knew Gurumukhi, was fond of gur bani [the Sikh religious scriptures].... He was a very religious man. He would arise at 3 A.M., go into the fields for elimination—that was the practice in those days, it still is so; return home, bathe, and do religious readings. In Kancharapara [near Calcutta, where the father had earlier been a contractor himself], he gave the land for the gurudwara building and helped pay for its construction. In recognition of his services the congregation [sangat] there gave him a [scroll of honour]....

Such cases, however, were not typical for early 20th century. Another Ramgarhia, who retired some years ago as a junior engineer in the railways, recalled that during his student days his fellow (high caste) students had a "superiority complex." I asked him, "How would you notice that they felt superior?" He said:

> Well, one might refer to a Ramgarhia man as Sardar so-and-so; they would laugh at you and say, "Don't say Sardar so-and-so, say Mistry so-and-so." Or, in a discussion, they might [dismiss your argument by saying]: "Go on, go on, you Tarkhan!" (*ja, ja, tarkaha!*).

Add to this our earlier evidence and it becomes clear that the Ramgarhias were in a condition of considerable corporate status dissonance (CSD, p. 29 ff), sure of their own skills and aware of their value elsewhere, but often denied the consideration and respect due to persons of high standing in Punjab. I have argued before that those who have CSD seek to reduce it, that is, they seek to have the higher evaluation concerning themselves prevail among those who are locally significant too. Our paradigm (Fig. 3.1) suggests that individuals will accept a rise in personal standing, if possible, without any great concern about their caste's status. The Punjabi society of the twenties appears, however, to have denied such individual rise to the mobile Ramgarhias. We have previously noted Sohan Singh Thekedar of Modelpur, a successful contractor worth several lakh rupees. The State Maharaja had sold him well over a hundred

[16] Someone knowledgeable about traditional medicines.

acres of land, but his neighbouring Jat landowners would not deal with him as one of them. Then, one day his son came home from school after his Jat teacher had yelled at him in class, "Oh *kuttea*, Tarkhana!" (Oh you dog of a carpenter!) Sohan Singh resolved that the Tarkhans would build their own educational complex.[17]

For this purpose Sohan Singh had access to considerable resources of social organization. The caste was an on-going system of social interaction: they lived in their own exclusive neighbourhoods, many in urban areas; the baradari would meet at various lifecycle ceremonies; the networks of agnation and marriage held much informal interaction; and by 1920 the supra-local voluntary associations had reached substantial dimensions (§ 6.12).

In this context, then, the Ramgarhia educational complex in Modelpur (pp. 20-21) needed for its development only the leadership of someone with the drive and the capacity to organize: the desire to respond with effort and money was already strong. To mobilize the capital needed for the buildings and other basic costs, before government grants to meet the recurring deficit became available, Sohan Singh organized a series of conferences which drew Ramgarhias from all over India; later these were routinized into the institutions' annual function. He also sent representatives to areas of Ramgarhia concentration outside of Punjab—eastern India and East Africa—publicizing their travel plans through the *Ramgarhia Gazette*. Off and on the institutions also ran a journal of their own. During the fifties their leading men spoke ambitiously of developing an engineering college and a university.

The caste's strong involvement in these institutions continued until the doors to the urban, high-caste stratum started opening for them in about 1960. With Sohan Singh's death in 1964, the Presidentship of—and control over—the governing Ramgarhia Educational Committee passed to the previous Vice-President, also a successful contractor. He had spent long years supervising, full-time but without payment, the construction of the buildings

[17] The Rudolphs have assembled references to a great many institutions of higher education, established by many castes, high and low, to advance their mobility efforts (see Rudolph and Rudolph 1972: 382, n. 36). How clearly Sohan Singh saw the earlier footsteps, I am unable to establish, but his own substantial initiative is not in doubt.

for these institutions, but he can read nothing beyond numerals. Control over this educational complex vests in less than ten persons, all appointed by the President. Many Ramgarhias, especially the educated ones, feel alienated from the institutions and prefer participation in other kinds of identities: Sikhs, soldiers, Congressmen.[18] The social setting has changed, and the younger men tend to take the educational complex for granted. One college student denied that he had received any help from his baradari:

> It has built these colleges, but if it had not, we would have gone to institutions elsewhere anyway. These institutions are for the betterment of humanity, not of a particular group. At the annual function, wealthy people come and make donations. These do help the institutions, but if they had not donated, the government would have built institutions. Sohan Singh Thekedar built these for everyone....

The corporate drive of the Ramgarhias has spent its force.

6.3 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

All the indicators point to a considerable loosening of social relations among the Ramgarhias during the past 30 years or so. A successful entrepreneur, over a period of time, is likely to acquire the tokens of wealth: in his factory, his office may be airconditioned; his large house would have a refrigerator, modern tableware, possibly liquor; he travels by car. Interacting with others of more or less similar social standing, he is at ease: if they are castemates, that might be even better, but this is not crucial for an affluent Ramgarhia. With dependent relations or poor castemates, social relations tend to be uneasy, a situation of Individual Status Dissonance (pp. 33-34), as the following cases will show:

(1) After a chequered career as an irrigation engineer in Punjab, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Assam, Bhagat Singh retired in 1956 to join his brother in Modelpur. Both the brothers had

[18] The Ramgarhia roll of honour includes Dalip Singh Saund, formerly member of the United States Congress, as well as Giani Zail Singh, elected Chief Minister of Punjab by the Congress in 1972.

picked up honeopathy in the course of their different careers, and they now have their residence and clinic in the house their father had built:

> Initially we tried to make friends with people here. When we completed an extension to our house, we held an *akhand path*[19] and went around and invited [castemates] all over town to come to it. We thought we would begin to get to know people and then continue the relationships. But they didn't come. They are wealthy.

(2) Bharpur Singh, a twenty-year-old college student, lives in a village 4 km from Modelpur. I had asked him whether his caste was likely to have "unity" in the future.

> No. As people became wealthier, the unity declines. [How?] People who used to have good relations with our grandfather, when they were financially level with us, have now become wealthier and look down upon those who are poor—they dislike the latter.

He was thinking particularly of a family which had a flour mill in the village and a small factory attached to it. The head of the family and one of his sons are in England, another son in Africa. Now the family is wealthy. I asked him, "Your relations with them have declined?"

> Yes, compared with the past they have. In the old days when they visited my grandfather, they would sit on the lower side of the cot[20] and ask him where they were to go for work the next morning. [With some emotion, in English:] Today they don't want to speak even with us. [With whom are their relations good now?] With the Jats they're all right. [Both have made money?] Yes.

[19] A Sikh religious performance: a succession of readers recites the Granth Sahib non-stop from cover to cover.

[20] Many a north Indian cot is woven so as to distinguish between "head" and "foot," and to sit on its lower side is to concede superior status to those on the upper side.

(3) Son of a *mistry* in the railways, Amrik Singh picked up various mechanical skills as an apprentice to several mechanics over 40 years ago. Later he developed a workshop in Modelpur, repairing and making utensils, but it declined in the early fifties. So with one of his sons, Ram Singh, who had recently finished high school, he went to Bombay expecting help from his sister's husband, a senior officer in a cotton mill, who lived in big house there. This gentleman was a clean-shaven Hindu.

> He gave us jobs but told us that we were not to show that he was our kinsman. For one thing he didn't like people who grow hair like us.... We had to tell people that he had known us in Kanpur [where he had been posted earlier], had liked our work, and had brought us to Bombay. All this made us very unhappy.

A year and a half later Amrik Singh returned to Modelpur but Ram Singh moved over to stay in his uncle's house.

> He gave me a cot in a dingy storeroom on the roof of his house. I had to enter the house from the back door. Inside the house I had to call them not Bhua ji and Phuphar ji but Bibi ji and Bau ji.[21] Then one day I had to go to Andheri to pay rent for the place where we had lived earlier. I asked his son to come along with me....His mother said all right. When we were leaving the house from the front door, his father came in. He was very angry. He asked where we were going, and I explained. He said that first of all my door was in the back, not front. Then there could be no equivalence between his son who was studying in school and me, a worker: so I shouldn't try to go around with him. Then he rebuked his son for accompanying me.

I shall return to this family's experiences shortly. It is clear meanwhile that the growing differences in income, occupations, and general social standing have had important consequences for social relations betwen kinsmen and within caste. The increasing

[21] The first two terms are kin terms for father's sister and her husband, the last two are terms of respect for a senior lady and a senior man, such as an employee or a servant may properly use.

differentiation has been associated with high physical mobility—within and outside India. One Modelpur neighbourhood used to have 25 Ramgarhia families in adjacent houses a generation ago; all but four have gone elsewhere. Growing affluence leads them generally into the urban high-caste stratum and therefore to areas where residence is not linked with caste.

With the basis of caste solidarity eroded, the mohalla Chaudhris —influential unitil a generation ago in match-making or even in deciding the composition of a marriage party—have lost their importance and, upon the death of an incumbent, the role has tended to lapse. Cash payments at marriage, *nenda*, used to be recorded and close reciprocity expected; with increasing affluence, these have lost in significance. Furthermore, prestigious Ramgarhias often enter into marital relations with non-Ramgarhia Sikh families.

As the institutions which embodied caste solidarity have declined, so has the level of identification with one's caste and one's castemates. Consider Amrik Singh's family again. During the past 15 years or so they have built up a substantial factory for making diesel engines for irrigation. Some time ago, they entered into a contract for some components with a castemate in Modelpur but, when they received large orders, he defaulted on deliveries and diverted supplies to their competitors. This, of course, led to the contract's termination amid much bitterness. While I was interviewing Amrik Singh, the supplier's son walked into the shop and the old man said, "There is a man of our baradari whose standing has risen in the last ten years."

Ram Singh was sitting there also and sáid, "Our baradari? He isn't in it."

Amrik Singh, "Of course he is in our baradari. It isn't good to talk too much."

Later, when alone with Ram Singh, I probed into the matter. He related the story to me and added, "Your baradari are those people with whom you have good social relations." To illustrate the point, he contrasted his difficult father's younger brother, *chacha,* with a pleasant, unrelated Hindu neighbour whom they call *chacha*. We had been standing in front of a drycleaner's shop; in terminating the conversation Ram Singh said, "I don't know whether he is a Chamar or an Arora, but I see him every evening

and have good relations with him, so he is in my baradari" and jumped into the shop.

Given his experiences with his uncle in Bombay—given his experience of what I have called Individual Status Dissonance—Ram Singh has sought to cope with the entailed frustration by reducing the weight to be given to caste and kinship as determinants of intimate interaction. His alienation from his caste appears to be relatively high.

The Ramgarhia achievements in recent decades, however, make membership in this *category* a matter of some pride to most Ramgarhias, but this identity finds expression in other ways also. Most marriages are within the caste: one's kindred is part of one's caste, and therefore at a marriage or a death, one's castemates inevitably loom large. In Modelpur, especially, the Ramgarhia educational institutions are a focus for caste sentiments. Their annual function follows two days after Diwali: lectures are given on religious and educational themes, the students give variety performances, the institutions' achievements are reviewed, and an appeal for donations made: in 1969 they collected over Rs 20,000 from the audience which had few non-Ramgarhias. The entrepreneurs among them might meet each other occasionally at gatherings of the Industries Association. "Apart from this," one man said, "If one meets [castemates] on the road, one exchanges greetings: 'Sahib, salaam!' 'Sahib, salaam!' "

For several decades Modelpur has had a Ramgarhia gurudwara also; but few people—Ramgarhia or other—visit it, and only the special collections made by its old, devoted manager can persuade its *granthi* (the reader of the sacred book) to stay there.

We have considered above the Ramgarhia experience of mobility in industry, education, and other domains; the chapters to follow will consider these themes comparatively for all our three castes.

Appendix

6.4 DHIMANS

That a Tarkhan had led the hostoric Ramgarhia misl was remembered by his latter-day castemates in building their community's new identity. The Hindu Takhans and Lohars, heirs to a different tradition, simultaneously attempted their own Great Leap Upward. From Ceylon in the south to Punjab in the north, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, artisan communities everywhere asserted the great importance of their deity, Vishvakarma, the Lord of Industry; and relying upon some Vedic and other scriptural references, assigning high status to artisan groups, claimed to be Brahmins: "because of the calibre of our work," one informant said, "not because we go around begging food from others for eating ourselves."[22]

This was perhaps one of the few caste mobility movements which took a more or less parallel course throughout the subcontinent—and Ceylon—and therefore consideration at some length may be permitted. A book published in Colombo in 1909 by Alfred Edward Roberts (a pseudonym) presented case material in support of the artisans' claim to Brahmin status: a court case near Madras in 1818, another in Masulipatam in 1894, and a couple of incidents in Ceylon; the issue every time was (*i*) the right of a Goldsmith, one of the Vishvakarma castes, to perform Brahminical ceremonies, or (*ii*) the relative caste status of "Viswa Brahmin," Vellala, etc. In each case the *European* magistrate is stated by Roberts to have given decisions favouring the "Viswa Brahmins." In support of his caste's righteousness, the author commented:

> Wherever the hearing of such a case was entrusted to a Native Magistrate, conviction [of Viswa Brahmins for offences against the Brahmins' caste privileges] followed as the wheel follows the cart, but wherever it was placed in the hands of a European Judge, acquittal followed as the shodow follows the man (Roberts 1909: 23).

While the Goldsmiths and related groups would employ textual references to establish their case before the Europeans, the "native" judges apparently looked into the contemporary social context to determine ritual prerogatives. Roberts had no taste for such distinctions. After presenting a series of "facts and opinions" drawn from Indian "authorities" he claimed that (*i*) the Brahmins included various artisan groups; (*ii*) the Kshatriyas, that is the kings

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[22] The traditional image invoked here for the Brahmin echoes that drawn by Chanana for Punjab generally (Ch. 1).

and their descendants, were extinct in Ceylon; (*iii*) the Vaishyas, that is the trading caste, were also extinct; and (*iv*) the Sudrayas were the class which included all the other castes (Roberts 1909: 40).[23]

To return to Punjab and to Modelpur, Ibbetson (1916: 312) noted, for 1881, that the Lohar Tarkhan caste was:

> ...divided into two sections who will not intermarry or even eat or smoke together, the Dhaman, from *dhamna*, "to blow" [as blacksmiths?], and the Khatti from *khat*, "wood."

He showed further (1916: 313) that the Dhamans, the most numerous of the Tarkhan "tribes" in Punjab, comprised about 40 per cent of the total.

The occasion for changing from Dhaman to Dhiman is obscure, but the motivation is clear. The word "dhiman" can be presented as an abbreviation for the word *buddhiman*, a wise person; and the Dhimans offer various supports for their title to wisdom. One of these says:

> Our sagacity was put to the test once. A man wanted to see how wise we really were. So he assembled men of different *baradaris* for the feast and invited them to eat in turn. But there was a trick; he fastened everyone's right arm to a splint so that it would not bend at the elbow. All the other *baradaris*' people were helpless and left, unable to eat the sweets offered. Then came the Dhimans' turn. They said something had to be done to save the situation. So they drew their lines closer to each other and, instead of each feeding himself, each started to feed the man in the opposite line. Thus was our *baradari's* wisdom tested.

Their new self-image received the official seal in 1931 when the Census was persuaded to enumerate them as "the Dhiman Brahmans," a caste of "all-India importance" (Census 1931b: 322).

We have previously noted the accident whereby the Vishvakarma temple came to be located near Modelpur in 1910 (pp. 17-18). This temple has emerged as the principal centre of Dhiman religious sentiment over the decades. The Dhimans too had followed their Ramgarhia cousins to eastern India as contractors and the like. One of these families acquired some considerable wealth in Calcutta:

> In the forties they used to come to our temple at the time of the annual fair in their Buick car: they wore their turbans proudly—people used to touch their feet. We used to wonder whether we would ever get anywhere close to them.

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[23] M. R. Sharma (1939), proclaiming the Brahmin status for the Dhimans, cites Roberts (1909) as one of the authorities in support of his claim! See also Beck 1970: 789n.

So recalled the temple's able and enthusiastic secretary. The fair and the celebration are organized, for two days following Diwali, by the Dhiman Brahman Sabha which manages the temple. In 1969, the Governor of Punjab came to the fair, and so did tens of thousands of visitors, using all manner of transport including an elephant. In these changing times the Dhimans who control the temple tend to understate their claims to be Brahmins; they stress, rather, Vishvakarma's role as the Lord of Industry. In this they are successful: Hindus and Sikhs of all castes connected with industry in Modelpur, and beyond, visit the fair.[24] Besides the fair, the Sabha's secretary is greatly devoted to the propagation of the Vishvakarma complex: sponsoring various religious publications, helping others all over the State with standard plans for building Vishvakarma temples, providing contacts with public performers adept at Vishvakarma themes, and helping organize annual celebrations at other centres.[25]

During the past two decades the relations between the Dhimans and the Ramgarhias have responded to the changing political environment of Punjab, with the political ascendency therein of the Sikhs. Whereas the organizers of the Vishvakarma celebration are always careful to feature eminent Ramgarhias in key roles, the annual celebration at the Ramgarhia institutions—held simultaneously—is thoroughly Sikh in idiom, with no suggestion of a link with the Dhimans. I examined 13 printed addresses by various dignitaries at functions in these institutions: prior to 1954 their language was English and their authorship is often ascribed to non-Sikhs; thereafter their language is Gurumukhi, putative authorship Sikhs', and the concluding salutation is the Sikh religious refrain: *wahe guruji ka khalsa, wahe guruji ki fateh.*

In this caste as among others in Punjab, there is a fair measure of movement across the Hindu-Sikh line: of 19 interviewees, two Sikhs were born to Hindu parents and two clean-shaven young men—possibly on way to "Hin-

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[24] This includes the Ad Dharmi workers and entrepreneurs. When Gur Pershad first organized the co-op (p. 76), at a crucial juncture he took his confidants to the Vishvakarma temple and swore them all to secrecy about their plans in the presence of the deity. The Lord of Industry has outgrown his caste associations.

[25] A brief comment on the secretary's social context would be in order. In a sense he inherited his father's active role in the temple's affairs. The father had built up a fair-sized factory also; its resources were divided between the six sons some fifteen years ago. The secretary, who is the eldest brother, and one other brother became partners in one of the successor units. The younger brother manages the factory entirely; the secretary is free for public activity full-time. This, of course, helps him enlarge his social space very considerably: it covers the Congress Party, various "co-operatives," and the far reaches of the Dhimans. These wide-ranging channels of information tip him off to entrepreneurial and other opportunities for his nephews and others, repaying his brothers for releasing him from having to make a living for himself.

duism"—were born in Sikh families. The Ramgarhia migrants to the UK these days often turn apostate. Intermarriages occur, but Dhiman informants report that, with their increasing involvement in the Sikh identity, Ramgarhia families are often reluctant to consider such marriages.

PART III

MOBILITY: DOMAINS, STRATEGIES, CONSEQUENCES

CHAPTER VII

The Mobile Man

Various facets of mobility in Modelpur will engage us in the five chapters in this part. The present chapter explores the questionnaire data on the mobile men whom I interviewed. It opens with men *reportedly* mobile: the occupational foci revealed in these reports show some interesting differences (§ 7.1). Then the interviewees themselves, their age and patterns of residence (§ 7.2), their occupations, educational achievements, and the consequences of their mobility for their family's standing in society (§ 7.3), and finally the mobile men's perceptions of their own experience of mobility (§ 7.4). The Appendix (§ A5) discusses the conventions employed in converting open-ended responses into quantitative data. This quantitative analysis will lead into the variant experiences of the mobile men in the several domains—industry, education, and politics—considered discretely in the next chapter.

7.1 WHO ARE MOBILE?

I began the mobility interviews with men who had manifestly been mobile (see Appendix, § A2, for details). The questionnaire asked:

22a. In your baradari in Modelpur, which men have gained instatus in the past ten years?
22b. Why?

The question helped identify not only further interviewees but also the key processes believed to characterize mobility. A supplementary men's perceptions of their *own* mobility will come later (p. 126 ff.). Here we consider the perceptions of castemates' mobility.

In every caste a *majority* of informants—14 Balmikis, 12 Ad Dharmis, and 14 Ramgarhias—noticed a rise in social standing for the industrial producers though, of course, the peaks of such success vary greatly between the castes (Table 7.1, item 1). The

TABLE 7.1

EXPLANATIONS OF CASTEMATES' MOBILITY*

		Balmikis	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
1.	Industrial producer	14	12	14
2.	Growth of traditional occupation	1	1	—
3.	Multiple jobs in family	1	—	—
4.	General improvement	5	—	1
5.	Successful trader	2	6	—
6.	Non manual job	6	1	2
7.	Education: own or children's	8	1	1
8.	Success in politics	4	10	—
9.	Land, *via* army or politics	1	2	—
10.	Farmer	—	—	2
11.	Contractoring	—	—	4
12.	Work abroad	—	1	4
13.	Public office (as in an institution)	—	1	8
		42	35	36

* Most informants mentioned several mobile castemates—and gave several explanations of mobility, but each of the latter was counted only once; for example, if one man mentioned five castemates as successful indistrial producers, this was counted in item 1 only once.

The explanations given by students and by elders, broadly similar, were merged.

industrial producers are Modelpur's cynosures, belonging somewhere in the town's cultural focus.[1] As we have seen before, this category represents the "growth of traditional occupation" (item 2) for the Ramgarhias. The strong positive evaluation of industrial work as against nonmanual work (items 5, 6) runs counter to Beteille's generalization (1965b: 25) that Harijans much prefer clerical over skilled manual jobs; the formulation has to be more complex (see p. 142 ff.).

The other explanations tend to be caste specific. Given the Balmikis' continuing involvement in scavenging, whoever becomes a municipal sweepers' supervisor (*meth*) gains in standing within his caste (item 2); but they have also moved into diverse new occupations, and some are active politically (item 5, 6, and 8). Overall, the Balmikis take notice of any castemate associated with (1) a move into almost any non-scavenging job, (2) education—his own or his children's—say through high school, and (3) a general rise in well-being, say through multiple jobs in the family (items 3 and 4).

The Ad Dharmis, including several successful entrepreneurs, have been prominent in politics (item 8). Political activity sometimes helps one acquire agricultural land, a symbol of status (item 9). Some have prospered as traders: in the traditional caste products of cloth and leather and, increasingly, in what is almost becoming another caste product: components for automobiles, tractors, diesel pumps, etc. (item 5).

Substantial industrial achievement characterizes, of course, the rise of the Ramgarhias. Some other notables are seen to have found prosperity in contractoring in eastern India or in working abroad; and some of these aging men play key roles in managing the Ramgarhia educational and other institutions (items 11-13).

We have noticed earlier the circular relationship between the decline of the Ramgarhia sentiments of community solidarity and of their exclusive caste neighbourhoods. Compared with the Balmikis and the Ad Dharmis, therefore (1) the successful Ram-

[1] "Cultural focus" refers to those related ideas and activities which occupy a large part of a people's time and attention and are valued highly by them. This use is neutral to the many attributes of a cultural focus listed by Herskovits (as in 1955: 484 ff); his discussion appears to misplace concreteness.

garhia industrialists tend not to be prominent in the caste-related organizations and other public activities and (2) their castemates tend to be rather less aware of their achievements: in response to the question requesting the names of those who had been recently mobile, the Balmikis enumerated an average of 4.25 mobile men each, the Ad Dharmis 4.7, and the Ramgarhias only 3.7. Even more remarkable, the Ramgarhias often identified their two principal industrialists by the names not of the men but of their companies: they are distant figures, living beyond the intimacy of a caste neighbourhood.

The rest of this chapter reports on the sample of mobile men interviewed.

7.2 AGE AND RESIDENCE

Let us begin by comparing the ages of our mobile men in the three castes (Table 7.2). The students' averages are very close but, among the elders, the Ramgarhia mobile men are clearly much older. The previous question, my mechanism for choosing the sample, had asked for those who had risen the most *in the past decade;* but most responses appear to have identified those who have *the highest social standing today*, regardless of when its foundations were laid. The two categories converge for the Balmikis and the Ad Dharmis. For the Ramgarhias, however, entrepreneurial activity—and social ascent—go back some three generations, and in many cases we have not major recent achievement but,

TABLE 7.2

THE MOBILE MEN'S AVERAGE AGE

	Students	*Elders*
Balmikis	20.2	35.0
Ad Dharmis	19.0	37.8
Ramgarhias	21.7	54.7

rather, a cumulation over the decades, drawing fame to the family's senior living man.

Social mobility influences contemporary residence. Overall, 19 out of the 20 Balmikis live in their two principal neighbourhoods; the twentieth has built himself a house in a multicaste neighbourhood (pp. 61-67). The Ad Dharmis are a little more dispersed: 15 in two of their older neighbourhoods, two in two other Ad Dharmi neighbourhoods, one (government official) in a multicaste area, and

TABLE 7.3

PHYSICAL MOBILITY

		Balmikis			*Ad Dharmis*			*Ramgarhias*		
A.	*Link with Modelpur*	S	E	T[1]	S	E	T	S	E	T
1.	Locally born	5	11	16	5	4	9	2	3	5
2.	Came to join father or kinsman	1	2	3	—	5	5	2	3	5
3.	Came to town alone	—	—	—	—	2	2	—	5	5
4.	Commutes from nearby village	—	—	—	—	1	1	2	2	4
5.	Official: in town temporarily	—	1	1	—	1	1	—	—	—
6.	No information	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
				—			—			—
				20			19			19
B.	*Experience dbroad*									
7.	Within Punjab[2]	6	11	17	6	8	14	3	1	4
8.	Out of Punjab but within India[3]	—	3	3	—	5	5	2	8	10
9.	Outside India	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	5
				—			—			—
				20			19			19

[1]S = Students, E = Elders, T = Total.
[2]As defined administratively from time to time.
[3]*Ibid.*

the nineteenth in a nearby village. Four Ramgarhias live in the predominantly caste neighbourhood of their recently developed educational complex; the others are spread over at least seven, mostly multicaste, neighbourhoods in town and over four nearby villages.

The socially mobile have also been physically mobile. Most Balmikis were born locally (Table 7.3, item 1); a large minority of Ad Dharmis came from outside (items 2 and 3) reflecting, in part, their movement from rural to urban areas; likewise for even more Ramgarhias. The impression is confirmed by what their biographies show concerning experience outside Punjab: whereas only a few Balmikis have travelled out of Punjab, a minority of Ad Dharmis and a large majority of Ramgarhias have done so (item 8); the latter includes a minority that has lived outside the subcontinent as well (item 9).

7.3 OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

My sample is biased towards those who have been occupationally mobile overall, yet the intercaste differences (Table 7.4) are inter-

TABLE 7.4

OCCUPATIONS, FATHER'S AND OWN

		Fathers			*Interviewees*		
		Balm.	Ad.	Ramg.	Balm.	Ad.	Ramg.
1.	Traditional	12	6	1	2	—	—
2.	Trad.-modified	7	6	7	2	3	—
3.	New: *via* school	—	—	1	5	2	4
4.	New: *via* apprenticeship	1	6	10	4	7	8
5.	Trader	—	1	—	—	—	1
6.	Currently unemployed				1	1	—
		—	—	—	—	—	—
		20	19	19	14	13	13
7.	Currently students				6	6	6
					—	—	—
					20	19	19

esting: the *fathers* of most Balmikis had followed their traditional occupation, those of a large minority of Ad Dharmis had moved into new ones (usually *via* apprenticeship), and those of a majority of the Ramgarhias had shifted similarly. Of the *interviewees*, a majority of Balmikis and Ad Dharmis and all the Ramgarhias have entered non-traditional occupations.

Later chapters will appraise the larger implications of Harijan mobility. Here let us scan the biographies for the two generations' levels of involvement in their occupations (Table 7.5). Generally, high occupational mobility is associated with high occupational involvement. The higher Ad Dharmi and Ramgarhia involvement in their present occupations reflects what can now be called their traditions of entrepreneurship, a demanding role in a competitive setting. Even though a majority of the mobile Balmikis has entered non-traditional occupations, half of this majority is in relatively low level jobs in the government and elsewhere, and their involvement in their work—related, possibly, to the dead ends ahead of them—appears to be low.

Consider now the resources available to, and employed by, the

TABLE 7.5

OCCUPATIONAL INVOLVEMENT: FATHER'S AND OWN

		Fathers			*Interviewees**		
		Balm.	Ad.	Ramg.	Balm.	Ad.	Ramg.
1.	Moderate: routine progression	17	11	6	10	4	4
2.	High: innovator, had organizational roles .	1	3	12	3	8	8
		18	14	18	13	12	12

* All students and one currently unemployed man were dropped from this table along with the category which accommodated some of them: "casual; occupation easily interrupted."

TABLE 7.6

THE MOBILE MEN'S EDUCATION[1] LEVEL AND TYPE

		Balmikis	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
	Level[2]			
1.	<School completed (or 11 years)	9	7	4
2.	≥School completed (or 11 years)	5	6	9
		14	13	13
	Type			
3.	General (including "arts")	7	6	5
4.	Science and Technology	4	7	8
		11[3]	13	13

[1] Elders only; for students, see Appendix, § A.2.

[2] For those who have been technical apprentices, I have estimated, for this table, the number of years of such training. The symbol < means "less than," and ≥ means "more than or equal to."

[3] For three Balmikis I lack positive information, but they are most unlikely to belong to category 4.

mobile men in embarking on their careers. Concerning education (Table 7.6), we notice that, among the elders (1) only a minority of Balmikis, about half the Ad Dharmis, and a majority of Ramgarhias had completed high school—or equivalent in years of technical apprenticeship, and (2) in the same series, a steadily rising proportion has had exposure to science and new technology (the latter often as apprentices), reaching a majority among the Ramgarhias. This reflects, of course, the traditional concerns of the Ramgarhias, and the Ad Dharmi move into lathework since the forties.

Education apart, the courses taken by the three castes in their occupations have been divergent: the Ramgarhias have risen in a context of elaborating their familial skills, attempting relatively

TABLE 7.7

MODE OF ENTRY INTO OCCUPATION (ELDERS ONLY)[1]

		Balmikis	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
1.	Hereditary	3	—	1
2.	Kin and family links	2	5	6
3.	Dyadic, non-kin links	7	3	—
4.	Political intervention	—	1	—
5.	Multicaste organizations[2]	—	1	—
6.	Open selection; survival in competition	2	3	8
7.	No reply	1	2	—
		15	15	15

[1] Some responses cited more than one element as having been helpful, and each was counted separately.

[2] The Radha Soami Satsang (see p. 75).

novel tasks, and surviving in open competition (Table 7.7, items 1, 2, and 6); the Ad Dharmis have used intercaste and other links to learn the non-familial machine skills (2, 3, 4, 5); and the Balmikis (2, 3) have leaned on many diverse contacts with high-caste men—*jajmans*, political leaders, sympathetic neighbours, classmates in school—to enter a wide scatter of occupations. Notably, political intervention is perceived to have been only a minor resource for mobility, though later evidence will modify this finding somewhat (see Table 7.9).

Not only does, a mobile man depend upon familial standing and other resources, his mobility has consequences too for his family's standing in society. The "society" here is essentially the judgments of one's castemates; and, on the basis of my interviews (especially

TABLE 7.8

FAMILY STANDING IN PAST DECADE

	Balmikis				*Ad Dharmis*				*Ramgarhias*			
	Stu	*Elders* ≤50*	>50	*T*	*Stu*	*Elders* ≤50	>50	*T*	*Stu*	*Elders* ≤50	>50	*T*
Has risen	3	9	1	13	1	11	—	12	—	3	4	7
Ambiguous/ stationary	3	4	—	7	5	1	1	7	6	2	4	12
	6	13	1	20	6	12	1	19	6	5	8	19

* Interviewee's approximate age. ≤ means "less than or equal to," > means "more than."

Qs. 22 and 23, see Appendix § A6), I tried to estimate how these families had fared in the eyes of their castemates (Table 7.8). For the *elders*, this distribution fits into patterns seen earlier. The thirties, the forties, and the fifties were the period of rapid Ramgarhia advance; with their 1960 base, the subsequent achievement seems modest. Thanks to reverse discrimination and the muting of earlier disabilities, the Balmikis and the Ad Dharmis have done better more recently; and given the additional thrust into lathework and the derived entrepreneurship, rather more Ad Dharmi than Balmiki families appear to have risen in the past decade.

Concerning the *students*, if a Balmiki family puts a boy through college, its standing rises within the caste, but this is commonplace for Ramgarhias: my informants were assessing the importance of educational achievement against the norms prevailing in the caste.

7.4 PERCEPTIONS OF MOBILITY

Supplementing the biographical data on the mobile men's resources for their own advance (Tables 7.6 and 7.7), I enquired into their perceptions of their own mobility experience with some openended questions:

21. I have heard that you are one of the important men of your baradari.

21a. What has helped you most in achieving success (mention specific area to help respondent)?
21b. What were your biggest problems?
21c. How did you overcome them?
21d. In your career was it (will it be) helpful that you were (are) a Balmiki/Ad Dharmi/Ramgarhia?
21e. Had you been Agarwal, Khatri, or Jat, would you have succeeded more, about the same, or less?
21f. In what way?

Table 7.9 presents the responses to Q. 21a. Let us note, first, some minor items. Given the Balmikis' continuing close ties with the families they service, a few of them acknowledge significant help from their jajmans (item 6); for this the Ad Dharmis and the Ramgarhias have no parallel. Secondly, Balmiki and Ad Dharmi students acknowledge governmental help through scholarships (item 9) and this is repeated in Table 7.11. Thirdly, the Ad Dharmi elders refer to their political patrons (item 7), reflecting their caste's high involvement in politics (p. 84).

TABLE 7.9

WHO AIDED YOUR MOBILITY?*

Source of help	*Balmikis*			*Ad Dharmis*			*Ramgarhias*		
	S	E	T	S	E	T	S	E	T
1. Ancestral reputation, kin ties	5	7	12	4	6	10	4	5	9
2. Teachers	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	1
3. Self, none, God, chance acquaintance	1	6	7	—	9	9	3	12	15
4. Own caste	—	1	1	—	2	2	—	2	2
5. Someone of high caste	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	1	2
6. Jajmans	1	2	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
7. Political patron	—	—	—	—	3	3	—	—	—
8. Political party	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
9. Government	1	—	1	4	—	4	—	—	—
10. Having a stable job	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
			27			28			30

* In case of multiple sources of help in one response, each was counted separately.

More conspicuous is the reference to "self," "none," or "God"[2] as sources of help in one's success: a minority of Balmikis, about half the Ad Dharmis, and a majority of Ramgarhias make this affirmation. The higher the personal achievement, it would seem, the higher the estimate of one's own contribution to it; and the importance of help by parents, kinsmen, and castemates (items 1 and 4) is seen to decline somewhat as we go from Balmikis to Ramgarhias.

Table 7.10 summarizes the "problems" encountered in one's career and the "solutions" devised (Qs. 21b and 21c). Consistently with the Ramgarhia confidence in their own competence, nearly half of them—and a few Balmikis and Ad Dharmis each—

TABLE 7.10

THE PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS

	Balmikis			*Ad Dharmis*			*Ramgarhias*		
Problems	S	E	T	S	E	T	S	E	T
1. Lack of money	2	8	10	3	9	12	—	5	5
2. Lack of skill/education	—	1	1	—	3	3	—	2	2
3. High caste hostility	2	2	4	—	1	1	—	—	—
4. Lack of guidance	2	1	3	—	1	1	2	1	3
5. Scarcity of jobs	—	1	1	—	1	1	—	—	—
6. Lack of study space etc.	1	—	1	1	—	1	1	—	1
7. None	1	1	2	2	1	3	3	7	10
			22			22			21
Solutions									
8. Hard work etc.	3	6	9	—	8	8	1	6	7
9. Public protests	1	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
10. Help from friends	—	1	1	—	1	1	—	—	—
11. Passage of time	—	3	3	2	4	6	1	1	2
12. Contacts, networks	1	2	3	—	2	2	1	1	2
13. Loans	—	2	2	—	1	1	—	—	—
14. Extreme economy	1	1	2	1	1	2	—	1	1
15. None	1	1	2	2	—	2	3	6	9
			24			22			21

[2] Is the doctrine of *karma* fading away? Success in this life is simply not being attributed to merit in an earlier life.

assert that they have had "no problem" in their careers, and hence no solutions (items 7 and 15). Of those who do identify problems in their careers, a majority in each caste has felt the constraints of poverty, of skills, and of formal education: lack of skill in English is specified occasionally (items 1 and 2). Students complain of lack of basic facilities—study space, electric lights, time for studies—and are joined by their elders in bemoaning the lack of "guidance" (items 6 and 4). One Ad Dharmi and several Balmikis report high-caste hostility as a problem, and the Balmikis tend to respond to it through militant public protests (items 3 and 9). To the other constraints, responses have been varied and individual: leaving the problem to Time the Healer, use of one's contacts and networks, taking loans, economizing on expenses, and above all hard work with plowback of earnings (items 11, 12, 13, 14, and 8).

How helpful has membership in their particular caste been (or is likely to be) to our mobile men (Q. 21d)? All the Balmiki and Ad Dharmi students refer to the usefulness of reverse discrimination; one Ramgarhia has also availed of the assistance available to the Lohars as a "backward class" (Table 7.11, item 3). Among the elders, whereas majorities among the Balmikis and Ad Dharmis report no caste-linked advantage (item 7), a majority of Ramgarhias gives credit to help received from castemates, to their caste-linked skills, and to a general environment helpful to their advance in recent decades (items 1 and 2).

TABLE 7.11

OWN CASTE'S ADVANTAGE IN MOBILITY

		Balmikis			*Ad Dharmis*			*Ramgarhias*		
		S	E	T	S	E	T	S	E	T
1.	Castemates helped	—	1	1	—	1	1	1	4	5
2.	Caste-linked skill	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4
3.	Reverse discrimination	6	2	8	6	3	9	1	—	1
4.	Govt. helps if you've political weight	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—
5.	None, very little, or castemates hurt me	—	10	10	—	8	8	4	5	9
				19			19			19

The Ramgarhia acknowledgement of help from castemates runs counter to the indications in Table 7.9 above, so let us scruitinize the content of this help. Of the five Ramgarhias in item 1, three refer to the educational complex: the student who did poorly in school but was admitted into the college; the high school headmaster who has risen in the caste-run institution; and an industrialist who recalls his own *technical* training in the Ramgarhia school during the thirties. He is joined by another man in mentioning technical advice and help received from kinsmen. Finally, there is a politician who attributes his modest success to his skill at getting support both from his castemates and from the (Jat dominated) Akali party. What we have here, then, is evidence not of contemporary caste solidarity but (1) of the use of institutions established in an earlier phase of caste solidarity and (2) of ego-centred networks—which include caste links too.

"Had you been Agarwal, Khatri, or Jat, would you have succeeded more, about the same, or less?" (Q. 21e). Table 7.12 has the responses. As might be expected, among the elders, most Balmikis, about half the Ad Dharmis, and one Ramgarhia believe that they would have achieved *more* had they been high caste (item 1); this is consistent with the combined distribution of those who (1) hold that they would have achieved the *same* or even *less* or (2) deny

TABLE 7.12

ACHIEVEMENT COMPARED WITH THE HIGH CASTES

		Balmikis			*Ad Dharmis*			*Ramgarhias*		
		S	E	T	S	E	T	S	E	T
1.	As HC w'd have done more	2	13	15	1	7	8	1	1	2
2.	W'd have done less or same; no link with caste	4	1	5	4	6	10	3	11	14
3.	Caste particularism	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	3
				20			18			19

a link between caste and achievement (item 2). In contrast to their elders, majorities among Balmiki and Ad Dharmi students also reject a link between caste and achievement. Three Ramgarhias—two students and one elder—consider high achievement to be likely only in areas where the caste has particular traditions: this explains for them their own or their castemates' success in industry (item 3).

How do the mobile men account for the foregoing beliefs (Q. 21f)? First, the belief that they *would have achieved more* as high-caste men appears in two main clusters: (1) The high castes are said to have (*a*) more initial capital, (*b*) greater current income, (*c*) a wider range of current opportunities [due possibly to (*a*) and (*b*) on the one hand and (*d*) and (*e*) on the other], (*d*) greater initial skills, and (*e*) patterns of mutual help which exclude the lower castes from their networks. The elders in this cluster are distributed thus:

Balmikis 20,[3] Ad Dharmis 8, Ramgarhias 2.

(2) The lower castes refer to their own intracaste jealousies and rivalries: (*a*) given residential segregation, castemates are thrown together a great deal, and (*b*) given the diverse ambitions of and the opportunities available to some, the immobile neighbours apply informal sanctions to hold the mobile down; but the cluster is small:

	Balmikis	Ad Dharmis	Ramgarhias
Elders	2	1	0
Students	0	2	0

Second, relatively few mobile men sought to explain why, as high castes, they would have achieved as much or even less or why achievement in unrelated to caste:

	Balmikis	Ad Dharmis	Ramgarhias
Elders	1	5	7
Students	1	—	1

[3] Some respondents gave more than one element, and each was counted separately.

These explanations range *from* the belief that the strong influence in achievement is not caste but one's own dispositions and family traditions *to* the great value of one's caste's high solidarity, low consumption levels, and useful hereditary skills: a large majority of the Ramgarhia explanations is of this last sort.

To sum up: Industrial entrepreneurship appears in Modelpur's cultural focus, and those who have engaged in it from any of the three castes are seen to have risen high. The doctrine of karma has disappeared from the scene, at least for our mobile men. Overall, however, mobility in the three castes shows sharp differences. Relatively minor achievements outside, or even within, the scavenging occupation impress the Balmikis. The Ad Dharmis have taken a firm hold on lathework and, given their political weight, look to the future with some confidence. Despite their low consumption levels, their effort to move out of their poverty is proving to be a long haul, and they attribute some of their difficulties to high-caste hostility. Benefits from reverse discrimination are acknowledged by only a small number of Harijans.

The substantial Ramgarhia achievement, built on their traditional skills, is now several generations deep. Their careers have shown great physical mobility, and we have seen evidence both of their high confidence in their own competence and of a loss of the intimate ties formerly characteristic of caste groups and neighbourhoods. These themes will continue to echo through our analysis.

CHAPTER VIII

Domains of Mobility

The association between caste and occupation, mediated by pollution, has declined in Modelpur, but this is less significant than it might seem, for the same link appears now in the unmistakable association between caste, one's life chances, and the levels of reasonable aspirations—now mediated by prior wealth, political weight, social networks, and the like. The following pages consider the contours of mobility in industry, bureaucracy, and politics, viewed from the perspective of Modelpur's lower castes.

8.1 INDUSTRY

8.11 The Setting

Many men of many castes have moved into Modelpur's small-scale industry, reflecting the post-independence support for industrialization, import substitution, and small industry. This support might have buttressed only those who had been the industrial entrepreneurs during the thirties and the forties, namely the high-caste Khatris apart from some Muslims. Their wealth, secured in trade, and high familial standing appear to have been critical to their entrepreneurial role: given these, they could mobilize technical skill, labour, equipment, and credit facilities relatively easily. Our data suggest that Punjab underwent wide-ranging status destabilization during the forties and the fifties, due partly to the vast population movements in 1947. Relative to status and standing, the importance of technical skill began to rise. Given the latter, one could increasingly mobilize labour, equipment, and credit facilities; savings and standing would follow. At this juncture, the Ramgarhias, who had been waiting in the wings for decades, began to move to the centre of the stage.

Much on this stage was directed during the fifties by Partap Singh Kairon, the late Chief Minister of Punjab: powerful individuals, in pursuit of a personal vision, can shape the course of history in some measure.[1] Let us consider what Kishen Singh, a thriving manufacturer of agricultural implements in Modelpur, told me about his father. At about the time of the partition the farmers in the region switched increasingly to diesel pumps from persian wheels, which his father had formerly made, forcing him to move over to farming his land. During his second or third year in farming, at harvest time, his bullocks were stolen, leaving him stranded for threshing. Kishen Singh's father responsed by using his skill to make a mechanical thresher for himself, in time for threshing. Kishen Singh's father and elder brother improved on the machine during the next couple of years.

> The Kairon, who was then Agriculture Minister [in the Punjab], came to our village with his Chief Engineer. They asked my father to come to Ludhiana where the government would help him develop the production of the thresher; but my father was uneducated, so he refused to go. (Modelpur was then part of PEPSU, not of the Punjab.)
>
> [Why?]...he did not see the opportunity. Kairon came to our village twice to persuade my father to go but he refused.... With Kairon also came...a *mistry* from Ludhiana; he saw our thresher and copied its design...he started making the threshers. He is still alive. He had the government's help behind him—we had none....

Kairon's visits to Kishen Singh's village were part of a wider pattern. For example, one Ramgarhia informant recalled Kairon's visit in 1960 to a Ramgarhia-owned factory in Jullundur. In his speech there he asked all Ramgarhias to move to cities and build industries there. If they had any difficulties, he asked them to go to him directly. On such occasions he would summon them emotively:

[1] For an account of the impact of Kairon upon Punjab, written from the perspective of an administrator, see Mangat Rai (1973: Ch. 10).

> Come to the cities of my Punjab and turn them into the Manchesters and Birminghams of India.

While Kishen Singh's father spurned Kairon's invitation, he continued to produce and sell a few threshers every month, and improved their design. Between 1955 and 1962 Kishen Singh was in the UK, doing various unskilled or semi-skilled jobs; on return home he saw the rising demand for agricultural implements and the high profits in them. Based on the family's mechanical skill, he has since developed a lucrative and growing industry with an annual turnover exceeding Rs 10 lakhs.

In terms of the categories advanced earlier (p. 25 ff), we notice here that the macro-setting generated the normative pressures to industrialize, disregarding the patterns of established status, and drafting technically gifted men into entrepreneurial roles: those so drafted had to shed the inhibitions of an earlier generation even as they drew on its special skills. All these elements applied, however, fairly evenly to the whole of Punjab. Why, then, the exceptionally rapid growth of Modelpur? A definitive answer would require evidence from other Punjabi urban centres, but the following considerations are relevant:

First, Modelpur lies astride the Grand Trunk Road and the trunk railway route from Amritsar to Delhi: many entrepreneurs, starting elsewhere, moved to Modelpur for its faster links with major markets. Second, at least two other nearby urban centres located along the same road-rail channel—Ludhiana and the much smaller Goraya—show significant concentrations of both Ramgarhias and industry. Agriculture in this region is based on perennial irrigation; and a rising demand for agricultural implements, including spare parts for tractors and diesel pumping sets, may well have sparked some of this industrial growth.

Then there is a historical accident: a Modelpur Khatri family used to own a coal mine near Asansol (in the coal belt) until 1910. It fell victim to flooding, however, and after trying another coal mine unsuccessfully, they withdrew from mines. Some years later a family scion completed a course from a technical institute in Lahore: in the "practicals" there he learned to make carburettor parts, which he started to produce upon graduation, employing a latheworker, and selling them marked "Made in England"

at the family shop in Lahore. The workshop was located in a Muslim part of Lahore; following communal riots in 1932, they moved it to Modelpur, their home town, which had just received electric supply. Here they trained more latheworkers who went over to the other workshops established in later years: thus was the foundation of Modelpur's auto-parts industry laid.[2] And from auto-parts to parts for tractors and diesel engines and then to complete diesel engines were steps taken relatively easily.

In Ludhiana, similarly, Pathak (1970: 1093) traces the growth of both hosiery and bicycle manufacturing to "some beginnings... made earlier." Endogenic industry, often begun by small entrepreneurs during the thirties and forties, was meshed into Punjabi culture during the fifties and sixties, and Kairon may well have catalysed the process. The 1932 workshop was a beginning for Modelpur.[3] The promise of these initial resources has been elaborated, over the years, into a specialized focus in Modelpur. Much of the skill going into this process has come from the Ramgarhias—who have been its major beneficiaries too.

8.12 Ramgarhia Skill

SS: When you were a child did you often play with machines etc.? *66-year-old Ramgarhia informant:* In those days there weren't many machines around. My brother and I did, however, buy an old type of bicycle, and we would take it apart and then put it together. [Would other people in the village—Jats, etc.—also play around with bicycles and the like?] No one else had a bicycle in the village. There were few machines then.

Children raised in families with generations of work in wood and metal behind them acquired their mechanical skills early. I knew a Ramgarhia college professor who did the entire woodwork

[2] Partially reflecting the changing composition of the town's industrial labour, the workers in this workshop were almost entirely Ramgarhia in 1944, almost entirely Ad Dharmi in 1958 when Gur Pershad quit being its foreman (p. 75), and almost entirely Balmiki in 1969 at the time of my fieldwork.

[3] I was told that the foundaries made use of molasses in their operations. Since molasses is a by-product of sugar refining, the town's sugar mill may have been a complementary resource; but I did not check this out.

himself when he built his house. "We have technical skill in our blood," informants assert, unused to separating genetic traits from early socialization.

"We had the skill to do the work," the informants continue, "and we said to ourselves: why should we not start our own workshops and businesses to make the things?" Those who emerged from the village *sepi*, we have noticed, travelled far to find their opportunities. Knowing mobile kinsmen—no doubt raised the aspiration levels of those who stayed behind, and they too sought mobility (see p. 100n). During the forties, one man left the family sepi for watch-making: an urban role with higher earnings; another insulated himself from the heavy sepi demands in his own village by setting up an industrial workshop in the land of a kinsman in another village; a third family grew out of running a small flour mill and a saw mill and developed, first, a mustard oil press, then the repair, and finally the production of diesel pumping sets. These men were joined in the forties and fifties by others, returning to a Punjab increasingly responsive to their technical-entrepreneurial initiatives. It was the beginning of what one old man called the Ramgarhia *lehar* (wave).

The technical and managerial skills employed by these men were home-grown and not professional. Over the years, through chance observations, some of them discovered the importance of trademarks, quality maintenance, after sales service, and customers' feedback on product design. Acting on these insights has served them well. Today, here and there, one finds the son of an entrepreneur doing his B.A. because he believes such education would help meet the likely demands of the future, or picking up a diploma in engineering, or even membership in the officially sponsored Productivity Council in a neighbouring city; but most of their achievements to date have been based on a willingness to try anything promising and to give it limitless attention and very hard labour.

8.13 Ad Dharmis and Balmikis

Whereas many Ramgarhias show relatively independent departures, reflecting presumably the fact that their experience of (geographically) widespread entrepreneurship is now, in some cases, in the third generation, the Ad Dharmi career paths in industry have

been much less diverse. In every case that I know about, the man began in a workshop where he learned the basic skill of running a lathe.

We have distinguished earlier between mobility leaders and mobility followers (pp. 42-43). The mobility leader pioneers a field previously neglected by his castemates. If the field is growing rapidly; his castemates may follow him and become his apprentices, then co-workers, and then possibly entrepreneurs on their own. Others may see his example and acquire the skills opportunistically: thus, one Ad Dharmi, assured of support by his father, a substantial leather trader, spent two years working in a series of workshops in Modelpur, learning whatever each specialized in, disregarding immediate income. Having completed his "training" in this manner, he launched his own workshop and it has prospered. The followers may, in time, become mobility leaders themselves. Having evaded the usual inhibitions in their childhood, the mobility leaders display unusually high exploratory behaviour as adults.

Several indicators point to the much stronger representation of Ad Dharmis compared to the Balmikis in these new skills. As the demand for locally produced cloth and shoes gave way to factory products, the Ad Dharmis were driven to look for alternative occupations and the manual dexterity, acquired in the familial cobbling context, could probably be carried into machine work. There were, then, the numerous kinsmen, waiting to learn the new skills. When the first among them emerged as entrepreneurs (p. 75 ff) they recognized that they could break through to a higher operational level by using their machines intensively to meet the rising demand, by restricting their consumption, and ploughing the savings back for expansion. Easily the most numerous of the Harijan castes (p. 84 f), they found politically controlled funds for their cooperative.

The Balmikis, in contrast, have been occupationally somewhat immobile. The demand for scavenging has *increased:* as the town has expanded, the municipal scavenging has grown and a great many people who would formerly have gone to the agricultural fields must now use dry latrines since underground sewerage has made little headway. The number of Balmikis, however, has grown much less rapidly than the town at large, possibly because they had not earlier been the region's agrarian labourers, and they

continue to monopolize the scavenging work, for members of other castes would not take it on.

The Balmmikis have also done well out of the town's grain market in recent years. The green revolution has multiplied the grain arrivals and, thanks to mechanical threshing, what arrives is much cleaner than previously. Labourers are, nevertheless, employed to clean the grain in the market at the previous rate and can thus earn very much more. This lucrative work is controlled by the factor, and his family scavenger has the first right to it.[4] In this situation, even the Balmikis who escape scavenging tend to do so after education in school, and sometimes college, and they look for white collar jobs. A couple of them did learn lathework and start their workshops, but these have not been conspicuous successes. This is due in part to their relative lack of political weight: that is, their numbers are not large enough for their votes to be traded for politically controlled funds.

The divergent orientations of the Balmikis and the Ad Dharmis towards work, savings, careers, and so forth colour their perceptions of each other; I return to these in a later chapter (§ 11.3).

8.2 EDUCATION

8.21 Harijan Expectations

So long as a Harijan student passes his examinations, the Punjab government pays his tuition at school and college and a small stipend besides, adequate for buying books and a

[4] Note may here be taken of young Balmiki women who take, instead of scavenging, to factory jobs in Modelpur or the neighbouring township of Goraya. Inder Nath, the Balmiki leader, told me about them:

> They can earn Rs 80 or so every month.... In scavenging in homes...the monthly earnings total Rs 50 to 60. Besides, factory work provides for holidays, rest from work, while scavenging requires work every day.
>
> Working in the factory makes for major changes for the women. At work they meet women of other *baradaris* also. Then on holidays, they go to visit those women in their homes, eat with them, get to know them. These women come to visit them also....

From Inder Nath's Balmiki neighbourhood, five such women have regular factory jobs.

little extra. His family has to feed him, clothe him rather expensively, sometimes pay for a private tuition or for a year repeated, and almost always forego his likely current earnings as a worker. They are aware, however, of the sharply increased mobility opportunities at the end of the educational channel. Given job quotas, they have yet to experience acute educated unemployment. Consequently, although only a few Harijan parents have completed high school—let alone college—and therefore family traditions of scholarship are lacking, one finds sometimes a desperate faith in the likely rewards of education. One Ad Dharmi father of seven children, who works six to eight hours a day close to the furnace of a steel re-rolling mill for Rs 145 a month, is putting his son through college:

> It isn't my power to educate him much. I am killing myself so that he may get educated, so his life—and the family's—goes across [from harsh to easier circumstances].

Modelpur's Harijans recognize the influence of a student's neighbourhood milieu on his development and believe their own milieux ,to be unhelpful. During 1969 Gur Pershad (p. 75) sent his son to a Jain out-of-town residential school, but the boy withdrew a couple of months later though his father denied that his son had encountered high-caste hostility at the school.

Some Harijans would like the govenrment to run special residential schools which would insulate the students from their homes and neighbourhoods; they discount the possibility that this might alienate the students from their families and community. At a higher level, the Punjab government did establish an institution in Chandigarh in 1968 where Harijan college graduates would be prepared for the Indian Administrative Service and other competitive examinations. The trainees' monthly stipend of Rs 250 enables them to supplement academic work with learning urban middle class mores; some are alleged to concentrate on the latter.

8.22 Harijan Students and the High Castes

Although Harijan students in schools and colleges have full access to public facilities there, indeed preferential access to admission quotas reserved for them, some informal disabilities

remain. Authorities in many institutions are said often to release a part of the quota to non-Harijans, alleging a shortage of Harijan candidates when in fact qualified Harijans are turned away. The Department of Social Welfare now routinely checks on such complaints, sometimes forcing the institutional management to retract.

Whereas during the forties and the fifties several Harijan school students received exceptionally helpful attention from some of their teachers, this appears to have ended during the sixties: reports of teacher hostility during this period far outnumber those of special help. Conceivably these reports might represent low-performing students' resentment at high-performance demands by the teachers; but the high-caste teachers may also perceive educated Harijans as the beneficiaries from the reservation of jobs formerly pre-empted by the teachers' own social strata.

The teacher-student relationship in college is more impersonal. Many Harijan students say that their relations with high-caste students are cordial, but some observant ones report adverse stereotypes and hostility. One Ad Dharmi man, who is performing creditably in his B.Sc. course and has a visiting (and interdining) relationship with a couple of high-caste friends, said:

> In the heart of those who call themselves high castes there is *always* a difference [concerning attitudes towards those of "low" castes and those of "high" castes], even though it may not always come to surfce.... [How do you come to feel, suspect that this "difference" is there?] Their behaviour with me generally is alright...[but] I may be passing by a group of boys. They don't know my caste. They make a comment about some other Harijan boy, so I know.... [Or] I am standing around with a group. One boy begins to say something bad about another Harijan boy. Another in the group winks at him because he knows that I am Harijan. He thinks I won't notice the wink, but one can feel it....
>
> Some of them use abuse terms about us: well, that is how some talk about anything at all. One fellow might say, "Him, that *sala*[5] Chamar!" and another responds, "yes, it's probably

[5] A mild abuse term; literally, "wife's brother."

> him." Others mimic Harijan pronunciation. They say that Ad Dharmis use *s* in place of *sh* and vice versa: saying this, they laugh about it, even if they don't know how to talk properly themselves.... If someone has dark skin colour or poor body structure, the boys say he is Harijan.

Concerning the behaviour of the families of his high-caste friends he said: "It is alright towards me, but I don't know how it will be towards my brother.I can't tell what is in their hearts."

On the other hand, a Ramgarhia student, now securely on the "high" caste side of the line, echoed a seemingly widespread indifference to caste identity among Modelpur's high-caste students. Many students from elsewhere rent residential rooms in town:

> Harijan and other students who seek rooms are all mixed. In Punjab caste is much less important than elsewhere.
>
> [Do you *know* any Harijans living in rooms nearby?] No. I don't think about caste. [You have any Harijans as friends?] I am not particular about this. Those who are good at social relationships [*bolan chalan wich*] become friends.... They are not terribly clean. Also, their living styles are such that other people may stay away: not because of caste.[Have you ever gone to a Harijan's house?] (After thinking on this:) Yes, to a worker's house once or twice [probably an employee in his brother's workshop—SS].

This high-caste assurance in their own freedom from prejudice, undisturbed by close contact with Harijans, will reappear in later analysis (§ 11.5).

8.23 Experience in Bureaucracy

Lacking in family traditions of learning, the Harijan's performance in schools and colleges is generally modest, only occasionally rising above third division. To a lesser extent, Ramgarhia students too complain of lack of guidance from close kin such as is said to be available, say, to the high-caste Khatris; but their educational standards have certainly risen in recent decades. Whether this reflects their affluence, the general rise in educational levels,

or an autonomous rise in Ramgarhia educational aspirations is unclear. Perhaps all three; but note that less than a tenth of the Ramgarhia College staff and students are themselves Ramgarhias. The Ramgarhia alienation from these institutions would seem to follow from the institutions' managers' apparent desire in recent decades not so much to create educational programmes addressed to their castemates' techno-economic place in society but, rather, to use their hold over the institutions' discretionary resources for advancing their individual interests in the larger urban system.

Apart from those aspiring to senior positions in the community educational institutions, the Ramgarhias tend to go for technical rather than general higher education, leading into technical civil service, family owned industry, or perhaps work with a close kinsman; this last relationship may be shed later for a start on one's own. Helpful advice from kinsmen with greater industrial experience is said to be fairly readily available. Those who have worked in the bureaucracy, in contrast, complain of "no hooks to pull me up," that is, no strong kin- and caste-based networks to aid one's ascent. They have probably found this area to be less rewarding than have the Balmikis and the Ad Dharmis—Scheduled Castes—whose ascriptively reserved job quotas have helped shape their rise in and preference for the bureaucratic domain. This may also account for the modesty of the Ramgarhia achievement as scholars.

The educational channel leads Harijans to jobs in the government, to school teaching, and to careers such as salesmanship. I interviewed individuals in each of these categories but their numbers are too small to permit even tentative statements. Since government employees are transferable, the Harijans in Modelpur jobs are there only temporarily; nearly all the local men are posted out of town. This may be a deliberate attempt on their part to escape the "Keep the Joneses Down" pressures: in another city one can try to live in a high-caste neighbourhood under an assumed caste identity.

The Harijan bureaucrat is often said to be delicately placed. We shall notice later the Modelpur municipal Executive Officer's ability to resist hostile local political pressure during the mid-sixties for three years: high caste himself, he could find local kinsmen willing and able to exercise political influence in Chandigarh in his behalf (§ 10.12). High-caste civil servants, many of my

Harijan informants believe, likewise help each other get out of awkward spots; but the higher up you go, the fewer the Harijans around. A Harijan Superintendent of Police was reported as saying:

> We have to do our job especially well. Never a wrong step: the others can get away with a lot—they have connexions in the government and elsewhere. We have no support to fall back upon.

8.24 Harijan Students' Alienation

To conclude this discussion of mobility through the educational channel, consider the relationship between Harijan students and their neighbourhood: it is one of alienation. The students—especially those in college—are hostile towards and wish to dissociate from their much less educated local castemates, and these feelings appear to be reciprocated. This may be responsible, in part, both for the failure of efforts at starting voluntary youth groups and for persuading these young men, upon completing education and securing a job, to prefer appointments out of town.

Similar tension often appears between the student and his family. During his college years he would have used the family resources more than proportionately but when he has a job and an income he has to balance what he allocates for his siblings and other kinsmen against what he can secure, with the same amount, for moving into a middle-class, high-caste neighbourhood and gaining acceptance in it. Those who choose the latter would have to carry the burdens of guilt, emotional insecurity, and related problems of personal adjustment. (Mahar, 1972:33, reports on the emotional toll paid by educated Harijans from a village in western Uttar Pradesh.)

Such alienation from neighbours and kinsmen, however, has to interact with the perception by the same young men that their acceptance by the high castes is much less than full. While detaching themselves from their original local community, it appears that they retain, on the other hand, a specific obligation to help their own family—variously delimited—and on the other a diffuse interest in helping castemates (or Harijans) generally;[6] to this latter, the

[6]One cannot, however, ignore numerous reports of Harijan civil servants' coolness towards kinsmen and castemates. In this they may be no

discussion of networks (§ 9.22 and 9.3) will return.

8.3 POLITICS

Several previous chapters have referred to questions of politics, and Chapter 10 will return to them at length. Only the salient elements concerning mobility need be noted here. Given universal adult franchise, the political system is believed to be responsive to every major segment of the electorate, expressed partly in pressures for diversified political recruitment at various levels: the reservation of constituencies, as in Modelpur, compels the political parties to field Scheduled Caste candidates in the elections, creating some demand mobility for the town's Balmikis and Ad Dharmis (but not for Ramgarhias, for they are not Scheduled). By and large, the different segments of the population—considered castewise—are now adequately represented in politics, and new openings arise only from anticipated shifts in the electorate's preferences, from the need to replace those dropping out of politics, and from the periodic switches of particular constituencies from General to Reserved and vice versa.

Electoral success in Modelpur requires multicaste alignments. Harijan candidates usually need these for funds, besides what everyone needs them for: votes. What brings high-caste politicians to Harijan doors also takes the Harijan politicians to high-caste doors. Where the number of candidates is small, vertical, multicaste support can outweigh horizontal support from castemates.

Active politicians find themselves exempted from the dominant Harijan community norms inhibiting wide-ranging social relationships. As we shall see, their extensive social relations and associated social competence encourage them to seek and seize opportunities beyond the reach of their quiescent castemates. Many ambitious Harijans are anxious to buy agricultural land, governmental or private, with the help of substantial governmental grants and loans. The disbursement of such land, grants, and loans—and of other "welfare" funds—vests largely in district level

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different from high-caste civil servants. Between senior civil servants and their immobile kinsmen, there may be large differences in life styles; and the civil servant role may acquire for its occupant much greater saliency than his kinship role. The issues belong to a study of caste and kinship vis-a-vis the bureaucracy.

Welfare Committees. Officers of the Department of Social Welfare—themselves usually Harijans—selected most of the members of these Committees, usually active politicians in Modelpur. The expectation that a Harijan who is not a Welfare Officer or an active politician (or a very close kin or associate of theirs) would not get much from these committees is supported by my limited data.

Unless severely compromised (say through a wide reputation for being corrupt), the active politician receives deference in government offices and the like: whether or not his party be in power now or in the future, he might seize on an issue to organize hostile public meetings, processions, etc.—which would be inconvenient—and therefore most administrators judiciously choose to placate the politicians.

Briefly, then, political success for Harijan politicians is contingent upon links which facilitate multicaste electoral support or close personal links with official agencies which allocate scarce resources to a small number of Harijans.

My Ramgarhia interviewees would like their community to achieve in politics the kind of prominence it has achieved in industry in Punjab and in education in Modelpur. One prominent man explained the sparsity of their involvement in politics thus:

> People become active in politics if they are in a bad way economically. The Ramgarhias have been prosperous, that's why we are nowhere in politics. We haven't thought about it.

Many believe, however, that though their numbers are small, they could achieve at least proportional electoral representation by offering their support to others in some constituencies in return for support in other constituencies.

The caste "unity" and discipline implicit in such a view, however, do not exist now and are unlikely to emerge in the future: within the caste the commonality of their interests is weak, and outside it the former hurdles in their way have disappeared. Overall in Modelpur, an ambitious politician would have no strong prejudices concerning the axes along which he would seek support: caste, political party, faction, neighbourhood, any of these would

do. The quantum of the total support alone matters; and therefore Ramgarhia solidarity in politics is not a serious possibility. (McLeod, 1974, takes note of other Ramgarhia political orientations in two other parts of Punjab.)

We have considered mobility in the industrial, educational, and political domains. These are an analyst's categories for exposition, and many Modelpurias organize their own observations likewise. However, as we have seen; mobile persons often mix their strategies: to secure financial help from friends and kinsmen, including those abroad; to assume high-caste surnames and, less often, live in rented or owned houses in high-caste neighbourhoods; to look for political patrons; to educate one's children; and to explore religious alternatives. This last may be done either through adoption of Sikhism or a multicaste sect such as Radha Soami Satsang which enables one to stretch one's earlier identity and relationships with some access to new experience and a new range of social networks.

Individual career paths across several domains reflect an interaction between the individual's own and familiar resources and traditions and, on the other hand, the properties and resources of particular domains: some combinations are much more likely than others. The most rewarding ones tend to include politics at one time or another. Political activity entails a substantial investment of time and effort initially; the returns from this investment—rather less assured than those from education or industry—may be slow in coming. Consequently full-time political activity can attract only those who have previously made substantial savings in one or another occupation or currently enjoy sinecures (say in a cooperative or a familial enterprise managed by kinsmen) or, in any case, one whose alternatives are even less attractive (p. 55ff). In turn, the active politician is placed strategically, as we shall see later (§ 10.3), not only for advancing the many careers of his kinsmen but also for channelling public resources to strengthen his own interests—as a farmer, an industrialist, or whatever (see also, p, 112n).

CHAPTER IX

Unity and Networks: Strategies for Mobility

The preceding discussion has suggested that the contemporary Punjabi urban society allows substantial occupational mobility, that its pollution-linked barriers are being eroded, and that, nevertheless, considerable differences of occupation, education, wealth, lifestyle, and so forth continue to be associated with caste. We shall see later that these differences are embedded in secular inequalities whose scale is large and growing.

I argued earrlier that mobile individuals employ caste solidarity and opportunistic networks as alternate, perhaps complementary strategies in their mobility efforts (p. 44ff). They would employ these strategies believing them to be adaptive to the prevailing social context of opportunity. Yet other strategies may indeed be equally viable and may be brought into play; this chapter however will concentrate on these two. In Chapters 4 to 6 we considered the *structures* of solidarity within the three castes. Now we shall examine the *perceptions* of solidarity in these castes, and the findings here will find support in later analysis of data concerning networks.

9.1 THE MANY FACES OF CASTE UNITY

I enquired into the perceptions of caste solidarity at two levels. First, I sought estimates of contemporary caste solidarity:

Q. 24a. Is there unity in your baradari now?

Q. 24b. In what kinds of actions?

Secondly, I asked for estimates for the future:

Q. 25a. Should there be more unity in your baradari in the future?

Q. 25b. Why? For what kinds of actions?
Q. 25c. Do you think this will happen? Why?

9.11 Caste Involvement

It will be useful, however, to begin with data from the biographical material which I coded for (1) articulate identification with or alienation from one's caste and (2) active membership in one's caste organization or in multicaste organizations. The cases of ambivalence, showing both identification and alienation, were dropped from the table unless the balance was clearly on one side (see Table 9.1).

In the area of *sentiments*, my judgments fail to distinguish bet-

TABLE 9.1

CASTE INVOLVEMENT*

	Balmikis	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
Sentiments:			
Identification	12	12	11
Alienation	1	2	1
	—	—	—
	13	14	12
Organizations:			
Own Caste	7	5	4
Multicaste	2	6	2
	—	—	—
	9	11	6

*Responses of students and elders, broadly similar, were merged.

ween the castes, for general support for one's caste's advancement is often articulated, while alienation from one's caste is not; but the figures for *organizations* are consistent with what we found earlier about the three castes separately. The caste *panchayat*, in the form of neighbourhood elders, is active among the Balmikis; its form has changed among the Ad Dharmis to take in the younger entrepreneurs; and among the Ramgarhias it may be noticed only in the form of the *regional* Ramgarhia Central Board, which attends to marital disputes within the caste. Likewise, only the Balmikis can be members of the Safai Mazdoor Union, and its trade union actions reinforce the caste ties. Greater occupational differentiation weakens this measure of caste solidarity; an Ad Dharmi teacher's membership in the teacher's union gives him multicaste involvement. Many Ad Dharmis assess their caste unity with reference to *politics*:their support for the Republican Party. Its central thrust is to seek to represent the Harijans generally, and elsewhere it has accommodated other interests too (see Brass 1965:103-6); but in Modelpur it is often said to be "the party of the Ad Dharmis [or Chamars]." Ramgarhias do not appear corporately either in economy or in politics. It is in their educational institutions that the sentiments of solidarity found expression in the thirties, the forties, and the fifties; by the 1960s, the sentiments were declining, but the institutions continued to symbolize Ramgarhia pride and to provide opportunities for their involvement, ranging from faculty members in key positions to annual celebrations and fund raising.

The only anamoly in the table is the low figure for Ramgarhia participation in multicaste organizations. This is an error arising in the nature of my data: I did not reckon with the Ramgarhia tendency commonly to live in multicaste neighbourhoods, nor did I probe into their pervasive involvement in such multicaste settings as the gurudwaras, the industrial association, and the friendship groups.

9.12 Caste Solidarity Now

Consistently with the foregoing, further analysis will continue to give evidence of caste ssolidarity declining, individualism growing, and pessimism about caste unity in the future increasing, as we move from the Balmikis to the Ramgarhias. First, the question: Is there unity in your *baradari* now? (Table 9.2).

TABLE 9.2

CASTE SOLIDARITY NOW?

	Balmikis			*Ad Dharmis*			*Ramgarhias*		
	S	E	T	S	E	T	S	E	T
Solidarity present?									
Yes	3	5	8	1	3	4	4	1	5
No	3	5	8	4	6	10	1	5	6
Uncertain or ambivalent*	0	4	4	1	4	5	1	6	7
			—			—			—
			20			19			18

*Ambivalence refers to reports of solidarity in some areas and of its absence in others.

Considering the *elders* only, the denial of solidarity is about constant, its affirmation declines sharply with rise in caste status, and uncertainty or ambivalence grow with rise in caste status. Contrary to the trend, however, the Ramgarhia students notice a high level of unity within their caste. These perceptions probably arise in their current experience of the Ramgarhia institutions, a collective representation which emerged in an earlier phase of solidarity; besides, their norms and expectations concerning solidarity appear to derive from those prevailing in the dispersed and internally differentiated high castes generally: if the Ramgarhia elders are sensitive to a lack of caste solidarity, it is because they witnessed, earlier in their lives, greater solidarity within their caste.

The informants refer to a large variety of *settings* in which their caste does or does not show "unity", reflecting the great variation in their existential situations. Rather more manageable are their *explanations* for the current lack of solidarity. The Balmikis attribute a large measure of their own lack of unity (Table 9.3, item 2) to the second sweeper union which commands some support in one of their neighbourhoods (see p. 65); yet they can deal

TABLE 9.3

EXPLANATIONS FOR LACK OF SOLIDARITY*

	Balmikis	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
1. Political leaders and parties	3	7	2
2. Rival caste organizations	4	—	—
3. Diffuse internal jealousies	2	2	1
4. Increasing individualism	—	2	4
5. Caste is too poor	1	4	—
6. Hindu/Sikh cleavage	—	—	2
7. No answer, not classifiable, etc.	10	7	10
	—	—	—
	20	22	19

*In case of multiple explanations, each was counted separately. The responses of the students and their elders, broadly similar, were merged.

with the municipality effectively. The Ad Dharmis see politics (item 1) and their own poverty (item 5) as the great dividers. A student said:

> Because they are poor, they have to keep on working hard, can't spend the time to get together to discuss things. So outsiders...come and drag them in all directions.

A government servant posted in Modelpur commented upon his castemates generally:

> Since our people lack education and industry, they have to be looking for work just to stay alive. Therefore they cannot unite. They do not pay attention to, together think about, this problem.

A modest politician and leather trader:

> It is wealthy, high-caste men who rule in politics. Prem Nath contested the election last time but he spent only one or two thousand rupees. So even if one of our men does get elected, he is indebted to those who spent the money to get him elected.

Verba *et al.* (1971: Ch. 6) have argued that in politics Harijans generally are externally mobilized. This proposition fits our Ad Dharmi data: the most numerous of our three castes, they are courted in politics most intensively—and therefore get politically fragmented.

We notice, however, that many more Ad Dharmis than Balmikis are conscious of their own poverty. Are they in fact poorer? Clearly, *some* Ad Dharmis, successful as entrepreneurs, do not complain and have no cause to complain of their poverty, but their number would be small. The skilled machine workers among them, too, would be reasonably well-off. Many others,[1] however, gave evidence of real deprivation. Whether or not the Ad Dharmis in and around Modelpur are, overall, worse off than the Balmikis, despite the latter's occupational immobility (see p. 137ff), only an extensive economic survey can tell.

The Ramgarhias perceive increasing individualism (item 4) and also the Hindu/Sikh cleavage (item 6) as affecting their caste. Both the men reporting the latter are in fact Hindus (see p. 110ff, concerning the Dhimans), who regret their own exclusion from the Ramgarhia Sikhs' institutions and celebrations. Reflecting the individualism, the Ramgarhias often refer to the independence of their judgments. One man said:

> Even a Ramgarhia corpse goes defiantly. I have seen the proceedings at many of our cremations: One man will say—use a long log here, another that a heavy one is necessary, a third that it should be laid crosswise. The argument continues....All this goes to confirm my view that among the Ramgarhias there can be no unity.

[1]For example, the father cited on p. 140 and others in his neighbourhood.

Such independent judgment probably reflects the prevailing organizational patterns of Ramgarhia-owned industries. The largest among them in Modelpur employs 125 persons; I estimate that the overwhelming majority of the rest employ less than 20, most of them from other castes. Since most of these units are concerned with a small range of products, their owners co-operate with each other far less frequently than they compete for skilled workers, product designs, and customers. Consequently, the Ramgarhias, now clearly out of the village status system and relatively prosperous members of the urban prestige system, find the option of opportunistic, multicaste integration much more congenial than that of caste solidarity.

9.13 The Future of Caste Solidarity

How do the mobile men see the future in relation to caste solidarity? First, is it really desirable (Q. 25a)? We notice (Table 9.4) that caste unity is rated as being a good thing by almost everyone. We shall see shortly that "unity" means different things to different castes, but consider the two Ad Dharmis who do not see unity as being desirable. One was a college student:

> Not that I want them to be quarrelling, but they should advance in *different* directions, not all [should] stay in one place.

The other is Moru Ram (§ 9.31), a trade unionist, active in the Republican Party, and owner of a lathe workshop:

TABLE 9.4

UNITY DESIRABLE IN FUTURE?

Unity desirable?	*Balmikis*	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
Yes	20	15	17
No	—	2	—
No reply	—	2	2
	—	—	—
	20	19	19

> Politics on communal lines is not good for the country....There should be unity of *baradari*, yes, but by *baradari* I mean people who sit together—whatever their caste. We should not be enslaved to the *baradari* we are born into. That is artificial. I have two uncles who live in Moti Bazar. Their neighbours there are [high caste] Hindus, Jhirs, and others: that then is their *baradari*.

To abandon the birth-ascriptive view of social solidarity so completely is still, however, a minority view in Modelpur.

What kinds of actions would require caste solidarity (Q. 25b)? The responses cohere with what we have already learned about the three castes (Table 9.5). We notice that minorities in each caste see the value of unity in global terms, as linked to all good purposes (item 1). A few persons in each caste, and more so among the Balmikis, would like solidarity for the sake of mutual aid and, especially, for internal reform and for guiding the rising generation (items 2 to 5). In similiar vein, the Ramgarhias would like to project an achievement of the past into the future: institution building as in the educational complex.

TABLE 9.5

PURPOSE OF CASTE UNITY IN FUTURE*

	Balmikis	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
1. global	8	5	6
Intra-baradari			
2. settling disputes	1	—	—
3. mutual aid	2	1	2
4. reform, guiding youngsters	4	1	2
5. institution building; caste organization	1	—	5
External relations			
6. general	4	4	—
7. economic	4	—	—
8. social	1	1	—
9. political	2	4	5
	—	—	—
	27	16	20

*In case of multiple purposes, each was counted separately. The responses of the students and their elders, broadly similar, were merged.

All the three castes are concerned about their relations with other—higher?—castes, but the anxiety weakens as we go from the Balmikis to the Ramgarhias (items 6 to 9). The Balmiki anxieties centre on their relationship with the high-caste-controlled municipality (item 7). Given their numbers, the Ad Dharmis would like to get political expression for their interests, without being compromised by the electoral system. The Ramgarhias have had it good, despite absence from the political arenas, though they believe that their economic strength would ensure success in politics if only they all stood together.

Is caste solidarity expected for the future (Q. 25c)? Pessimism in this regard rises sharply as the caste status rises (Table 9.6, items 1 and 2), and any ambiguity on this count declines (item 3).

TABLE 9.6

CASTE SOLIDARITY LIKELY IN THE FUTURE?*

Caste solidarity likely?	*Balmikis*	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
1. Yes	10	7	5
2. No	1	5	8
3. Uncertain**	9	7	6
	—	—	—
	20	19	19

*The responses of the students and their elders, broadly similar, were merged.
**This category includes "no reply" and "yes in some areas, no in others."

Finally, what are the bases for these expectations?[2] Briefly, the Balmikis are optimistic because they believe that their castemates see the link between intracaste cooperation and their col-

[2]I have deleted the table because it distinguishes between as many as 14 different categories, many advanced by only one or two men.

lective improvement. The Ad Dharmi optimism tends to be *conditional* upon achieving higher educational levels in their caste; more education, it is apparently hoped, would persuade people of the importance of collectve action. The hope might be misplaced, for education makes for differentiation, and this breeds individuality: it is this last that gives rise to the Ramgarhia pessimism concerning their solidarity in the future.

Here, as earlier, we have found the experience of, and expectations concerning, solidarity to be *inversely* related to the traditional caste status. It is necessary, however, to note that this relationship may reflect the particular circumstances of Modelpur rather than any general attributes of status and solidarity as such. The Balmiki solidarity has been and continues to be high because the traditional caste organization underlies the trade union activity which serves to advance the many Balmikis' interests vis-a-vis their common employer, the municipality. As the Ad Dharmis and the Ramgarhias become more differentiated occupationwise, their interests diverge increasingly; and for the ambitious among them the value of caste solidarity, as a resource for mobility, pales before the pay-offs from opportunistic linkages and networks which spread beyond the confines of caste.

9.2 SOCIAL NETWORKS

9.21 The Networkers

Given adult franchise and the rhetoric of socialism there are, in the highly inegalitarian Indian society, some normative pressures for some resources to trickle down to the relatively lowly, as we shall see in the next chapter. The resources, and the related capacity to incluence individual bureaucratic decisions, often pass through the politicians, and they seek to use these resources to bind potential clients to themselves. Anticipating some categories to be discussed at length later (§ 10.13), the client role is likely most to attract those (1) who have inadequate skills of *social navigation*, that is, skills in the unaided establishment of relationships with previously unknown persons, and (2) whose social standing is low. Their dealings with officialdom impress upon them their own incompetence, one which arises not in a lack of any particular

technical skills but in their low social standing. I call this *status incompetence*. A great many people have not learned to cope with the society's increasingly complex structures on their own, and those who offer to act as mediators ask for political subservience.

But suppose a man low in social standing, necessarily suffering from status incompetence, has learned the skills of social navigation well: say, a small-time Harijan politician. Even within his limited, if growing social space, he begins to establish linkages and small-scale resource exchanges with himself at the centre. Consider here the case of Inder Nath (p. 50ff). The Balmiki candidate for state elections in 1969 was very cordial with me from our first contact. He talked with me at length and, at my request, introduced me to many castemates and others. He invited me to tell him of any un-cooperative officials, for he knew, he said, how to make them see reason. For two or three celebrations, concerning the Balmikis or the Harijans generally, he collected small subscriptions from me. Once he asked me to go to Jullundur to meet some visiting members of Parliament interested in the Harijans' problems; and he enquired whether I couldn't arrange a trip for him to Simla, where my Institute was located.

Inder Nath urged me to start some industry, for *naukari* (a salaried job, with implications of being subordinate to others) was undesirable, however much it paid. He offered me his help in starting something. A couple of people from the state industries department had been staying with him. They were trying to promote a factory for making silver goods. If Rs 20,000 could be collected as cooperative shares for this, the Khadi Board would give a grant of Rs 50,000 for infrastructure and a loan of Rs 1,00,000 besides. Inder Nath had talked to someone willing to put up Rs 20,000 provided he would then become the general manager: someone else could be employed as factory manager; but the industries department man, who was promoting the venture, also wanted to become the general manager. The job would pay a thousand or twelve hundred rupees, there would be a car, servants, and so forth. It was obvious, too, that Inder Nath was not averse to finding a place in the enterprise for himself.

Meanwhile, Inder Nath was a vigorous trade unionist, with a certain reputation for militancy. His brother had completed college and was studying librarianship in Chandigarh. A cousin of

theirs worked in the local office of the Department of Social Welfare: he had helped draw them close to the District Welfare Officer in town. Inder Nath was clearly cultivating this gentleman, apparently angling for the allotment of some government agricultural land to himself. Inder Nath had learned the basic principles of network success, among these that one had to explore all possibilities: sooner or later some would work out.

When a possibility has "worked out," one would seek then to stabilize it into a relationship which allows continuing transactions over a period of time. For such a situation people say, things got set, *gal set ho gayi*. There is, for example, Amrit Lal, an Ad Dharmi, whose family has for 40 years been associated with the Radha Soami Satsang (p. 75). Thanks to contacts established in the Satsang, Amrit Lal became apprenticed during the thirties to a keeper of land records—*a patvari*—and, in 1943, was himself appointed a patvari in Modelpur. At the partition in 1947, those who lost immovable property in Pakistan were compensated with equivalent evacuee property in Punjab in India. Some of Modelpur's affluent families had property in Pakistan too but the official procedure would have given them compensatory property in a district far away. One of these men, Thapar, manager of the town's starch mill, was also active in the Radha Soami Satsang. Amrit Lal helped him, his kinsmen, and some other important men get property allotments in Modelpur rather than elsewhere. Later Amrit Lal lost his job—he had to spend some time in jail convicted of manslaughter—but returned to Modelpur as a property dealer. Thapar and some others have since channelled their property dealings exclusively through him. This activity has enabled Amrit Lal to acquire control over some agricultural land for himself too. His sons cultivate it—and Thapar gets the starch mill waste, apparently rich in crop nutrients, carted off to Amrit Lal's fields, which yield very good harvests.

My contact with Amrit Lal and one of his sons was limited to only a few hours: undoubtedly their relationship with Thapar would have many more strands to it. The point to remember is that Modelpur's highly motivated networkers, knowing the rewards of privileged access to resources and opportunities, try every contact, every possibility. This covers the visiting sociologist too: Inder Nath sounded me on a trip to Simla and a start of an industry;

Amrit Lal asked me to help him find a job for his recently graduated son; and Dev, whom we shall shortly meet, wanted me to ask my father-in-law, a Detroit banker, to arrange a job in Detroit for his brother who had lost interest in college studies (cp. Whitten 1970: 354-58).

Modelpur's strata which are populated densely with individuals controlling substantial discretionary resources operate a network subculture which provides for (1) wideranging exchange of information concerning particular problems and (2) a readiness to help even unknown strangers,[3] presumably in the expectation that such help will, over time, balance off: this is the quality of social trust, seen by Almond and Verba (1963: 261-73) to be important in what they call the "civic culture," *except that its boundaries do not include all citizens*. One's language, dress, manners, and other tokens of social standing are informal but usually dependable filters. Those who do not qualify have to do without the kinds of networks discussed below. My first example illustrates the extensive pooling of information.

Dev is a modestly qualified young architect, whose location in Modelpur's busy commercial-administrative centre enables him simultaneously to be a travel agent for foreign travel. His brother is an insurance agent, and a family friend who shares the shop with them is a property dealer. Dev's genial manner—and telephone—help make his shop a meeting place where much information is exchanged. One day I ran into Chaman in his shop) also there was Fakir, a Development Officer of the Life Insurance Corporation and a frequent visitor. All three are Khatris. Chaman wished to launch his son, who had dropped out of college, as a coal merchant. Modelpur is not short of them, but Chaman was optimistic: his coal would come on advantageous terms of price and delivery, thanks to his cousins whose father, recently deceased, left behind an industrial empire including several collieries. His immediate problem was to find a yard where coal could be stored and sold. Both Fakir and Dev scanned their memories for suitable places, suggested several, and offered to contact their owners. Dev had another idea: his work as architect

[3]See, for accounts of help readily given to me as a fieldworker, the Appendix and Saberwal 1975a.

took him routinely to the municipality, and it was leasing out a row of new, centrally located shops: why not use one of these for an office and find a yard on the town's outskirts? Besides, Chaman's father's brother's daughter's husband—Lal Chand Chopra—was a municipal councillor and had been municipal President for many years: "If he so wishes, a special low rental for the shop can be set for you."

All the participants in this situation were Khatris, but that is incidental: Dev is equally forthcoming with information and offers of help for others of high standing. Information was flowing towards Chaman as a prelude to a pooling of resources from disverse settings So that Chaman's son might make his mark, over time, as a coal merchant; but Modelpur's networkers admit a very wide range of purposes to be pursued, and the tactics for their realization are cobbled to fit the contours of each particular problem. My second example concerns a more dispersed network—dispersed both physically and socially.

I was intrigued one day when Seth, a middle-level bank official, told me how busy he had been with his son's B.Sc. practical examinations. Sitting with his colleagues, he related the magnitude of his efforts. In sum he found out who would be the examiners—all from out of town—and proceeded to contact them all through various intermediaries: a kinsman who is an accountant in a bank near the University in Chandigarh; a nephew, a neighbour of the Vice-Chancellor's nephew in Chandigarh; a salesman who books college orders for laboratory chemicals; and so forth. When, on the eve of the examination, the university changed the examiners for Modelpur, Seth started all over again and successfully contacted the new men. And everyone said, "Leave your son's roll number with me and do not worry; your work will be done!" Cash did not change hands in these contacts but some of the examiners wished to visit one of Modelpur's large mills: Seth's brother is a manager of one of these, and he arranged a leisurely visit.

How far these efforts helped Seth's son one cannot accurately assess: minimally, his confidence in his prospects was enhanced. What is noteworthy is that all the examiners failed to report this attempt to influence them to the university and that they were willing to accept the mill's hospitality through Seth; the previous

case, likewise, rested on the beliefs that Chaman's cousins would get their corporation to sell him coal at a special price and that his cousin's husband might help to reduce the municipal shops' rent for him. We have here evidence of an amoral pursuit of one's own interests, and of one's kinsmen's interests, unchecked by conventions and norms which would defend the integrity of public events, such as university examinations, or public institutions, such as the municipality. We have here evidence of weakly institutionalized, easily compromised norms of administrative, political, commercial, and academic behaviour, a situation evident also in the earlier cases of Inder Nath and Amrit Lal. It is this ease of integrity lapsing that underlies the networker's successes.

Although everyone is free to join in the game, what networks one can assemble are a function of one's own resources. One starts with the skills of social navigation, but whether or not alters agree to help ego is a function of ego's overall standing—his kinsmen, his bearing, his language, etc.—and of his specific capacities for reciprocity: not only the resources he controls but also the richness of his free associations in response to alter's queries so that the two may profitably exchange ideas and contacts. This last is an attribute of the upper strata of society, and those of low standing seldom get to learn the informally transmitted skills for pooling information, reinforcing their various other handicaps.

9.22 Harijans' Options

Collective assertion by Modelpur's Harijans, we saw earlier, helps improve their general community standing and the overall opportunity structure, but specific goals often require informal, network approaches. In seeking these, even those less versatile than Inder Nath or Amrit Lal may try links of several sorts.

Given the recent differentiation among the Harijans, some of them command relatively high standing, especially in politics and in bureaucracy: Modelpur had an Ad Dharmi Deputy Commissioner for a part of 1969. The higher a Harijan's standing, power, and authority, however, the more likely that his castemates would turn to him for help in goal attainment, that is, to make *network calls* on him, and consequently the heavier can his *network load* be: probably much heavier than for high caste men in

comparable positions, for Harijans generally have few channels to the decision-makers.

How earnestly the politician or the administrator responds to these calls is highly variable. The administrator's prospects would depend not on his castemates' but on his high-caste colleagues' and superiors' goodwill and, therefore, he may be expected not to respond to network calls except those from close kinsmen and friends (but see p. 144). The politicians' response is shaped by their own search for political support: a Harijan municipal councillor from a predominantly Harijan constituency, to stay in business, has to respond to his constituents' needs now; but a Harijan Member of Parliament, representing a diverse constituency, can choose the segment of the elecorate he would cultivate (see p. 190).

Traditional intercaste ties may also be brought into goal-seeking networks. A Balmiki who has worked in the house of, say, the municipal committee President for a decade may seek his aid in influencing some events. Modelpur's Ad Dharmis, however, would not have access to such ties, and their importance for the Balmikis is probably declining.

Finally, there are the relatively new multicaste groups which sometimes accommodate Harijans. A Harijan municipal councillor, legislator, or civil servant would have a say in important decisions and could use this to establish full reciprocity in high-level linkages within and outside his organization. Membership in other multicaste groups—such as political factions and religious sects—is optional and would be highly attractive to Harijans if it brought full access to the group's high-prestige members. People assemble linkages, however, in order to gain *preferential* access to opportunities and resources; to be able to enter them through groups as open as, say, the Radha Soami Satsang or the Arya Samaj would negate the networks' underlying purpose. When the organization has an ideology of equality, which may allow equality of access to religious settings and functionaries, there would be a certain tension between its members' religious and their secular orientations—and experiences. Such tension can probably be channelled in a variety of ways, individual and organizational, and their exploration would advance our understanding of religious and other organizations.

Our analysis of linkages and networks has shown how these are used when an individual makes a bid for particular goals and for mobility and how, given their differential distribution in society, networks join other social mechanisms in sustaining the prevailing patterns of stratification. While Harijans may, in principle, enter influential networks through a variety of channels, their capacity for making this potential real is usually slight. Since they own or control important means of production and other resources only uncommonly, they can rarely enter into the reciprocal relationships that would be highly rewarding. In return for political support, they do seek, and sometimes receive, mediatory help from politicians, but the pay-offs here are relatively small.

Appendix

9.3 WHO HELPS AND WHY?

I have argued earlier that the probability of ego's network involvement for instrumental use—and of his *capacity to activate the network* in his own behalf—are functions of his *caste status* and of the *distinctiveness of the resources he controls* (p. 45f). To test the proposition I assumed that the educated, mobile Balmikis and Ad Dharmis would control resources as distinctive as, or less so than, those controlled by the educated, mobile Ramgarhias. Among the latter, then, network help would be the commonest, and so, too, the perceptions of mutual helpfulness; these would decline for the Ad Dharmis and the Balmikis. So I asked:

> *Q. 28a.* Some people upon getting education and jobs think they have become big people; others are always ready to help men of their own baradari. In your experience, do such men of your baradari help others of your baradari?
> *Q. 28b.* Why?

I took the educated castemates' helpfulness, then, to be a measure of one's access to networks (Table 9.7). Apart from the rise of uncertainty with caste, the distribution has no clear pattern. To make the data comparable, I constructed a *Network Participation Index* (NPI) by assigning three points for each "high," two for each "medium," and one for each "low," and dividing the total for each caste by the number of respondents (excluding, that is, the "don't knows").

This NPI for the three castes (Table 9.7) is very close and provides no support for the initial hypothesis. Let us, now, look behind these figures and consider *why* the educated men are reported as being helpful—or not. For this behaviour I could identify thirteen distinct explanations falling into four categories. The explanations were:

1. One's caste's situation: own suffering, lack of opportunity.
2. Wish to help castemates move ahead.
3. Because everyone helps members of his baradari.

I categorized these as (A) *general help*, an orientation of helpfulness towards castemates as such. Then people are said to help:

4. To keep election promises.
5. To strengthen one's own standing in the baradari.
6. To ensure reciprocal help.
7. To conserve resources for kin, self, and close friends.

TABLE 9.7

ACCESS TO NETWORKS*

	Balmikis	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
High	9	7	6
Medium	4	4	5
Low	5	4	3
Don't know	2	4	5
	20	19	19
Network Participation Index	2.222	2.2	2.214

*The responses of the students and their elders, broadly similar, were merged.

I categorized items 4 to 7 as (B) *selective help*, given reciprocally in order to advance oneself. Then come the reasons why educated men do *not* help:

8. To preclude competition, potential challenge from castemates.
9. To avoid castemates evening up with themselves.
10. Because our castemates are selfish.

Items 8 to 10 add up to (C) *no help*. Closely related is the denial of help in order to protect one's relationships with the high castes:

11. To conceal own identity vis-a-vis the high castes.
12. To strengthen own ties with the high castes.

I categorized these two as (D) *concealed identity*. Finally, one Ad Dharmi and one Ramgarhia suggested that the mobile man's new role tends to overwhelm his caste identity: a policeman behaves like a policeman, regardless of caste—and therefore is not particularly helpful to castemates. I omit this last explanation from Table 9.8.

Taking Table 9.7 with 9.8, we notice first that, as the uncertainty about the educated castemates' helpfulness rises with caste (Table 9.7), the *number* of explanations of their helpfulness declines (9.8). Let us look at the question asked: I enquired about helpfulness *within* the baradari; and insofar as, with rising caste, integration into multicaste networks grows, the significance of intra-caste helpfulness would decline. In framing the question, I erred by probing for only one

TABLE 9.8

EXPLANATIONS OF INTRA-CASTE HELPFULNESS*

	Balmikis	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
A. General help	11	7	3
B. Selective help	5	4	5
C. No help	1	1	2
D. Concealed identity	6	4	1
	23	16	11

*In case of multiple explanations, each was counted separately. The responses of the students and their elders, broadly similar, were merged.

of several sorts of possible network linkages, and therefore *we have here a measure not of free-wheeling networks but of caste solidarity.*

Furthermore, my initial hypothesis assumed a tendency for upwardly mobile lower-caste men to prefer high-caste partners for resource exchange (p. 45). Many Harijans come to the conclusions that this, an aspect of participating in the high-caste social order generally, would be easier if they were to conceal their identities—say by modifying their family names so as to make these look like common high-caste names (pp. 23-24). Table 9.8, item D, meets this expectation. While individuals may do so, however, a social order which requires them to do so also breeds in them reactions, and many of them therefore go out of their way to help castemates—or Harijans generally. This is reflected in item A, which neutralizes the influence of item D. Item A, again, gives us a measure of caste solidarity—not of opportunistic networks.

The educated Harijans' helpfulness towards castemates comes through in reports such as the following. A successful Balmiki tailor, active also in the Municipal Sweepers' Union, said about educated castemates:

> They do help. My sister's husband, a lawyer, does lots of work for people. I help the Safai people. The educated man recognizes that he has come out of that baradari. He thinks, "Let me try to help those who are behind to get ahead." There is a feeling for the baradari: if they advance, they'll do good work.

Moru Ram, an Ad Dharmi entrepreneur, said:

> They give some help. We have four or five kinsmen in the military. They tell our children, "If you cannot get jobs elsewhere, you come to the military. We will help you get good jobs." Also, men who have jobs in offices pull others along: find jobs for them, help them. [Why do they help?] Because of the community link. Also there are our people in U.K. who have made money there. They give loans to castemates—kinsmen and others—at half the going market rates.[1]

Finally, I quote a Ramdasia government official who did conceal his caste identity in order to rent rooms in a high-caste neighbourhood:

> Definitely [they help castemates]. As they say, blood is thicker than water. A man may hide his [low] caste, but inside him he wants to help his castemates even if he displays hostility on the outside. The man who has risen from poverty himself will help the poor; a man who was born in riches is concerned much more with his status and his rights only.

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[1]In 1969 banks seldom paid more than 7 per cent. Since Moru Ram mentioned a "going market rate" of 37-1/2 per cent, the sacrifice here is modest and may be balanced by the greater security of capital arising in sanctions within the caste.

CHAPTER X

Politics and Harijans

This chapter continues our discussion of the strategies of mobile men, turning now to the political domain, and considers some of the consequences thereof. Modelpur constituency was reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates during the 1967 and 1969 elections. Following a discussion of some of the key dimensions of the town's political culture, I shall focus on the Harijan men who were candidates in these two elections for the state legislature, clearing the way for appraising the influence, if any, of the egalitarian principles of the political domain upon inequalities in the society at large.

10.1 POLITICAL CULTURE

Let us now consider some of the norms which influence individuals' access to and stature within the political domain, the core activities in this domain, and the nature of choices therein.

10.11 Mediation and Power

In Modelpur's political culture the mass of citizens perceives the administration and the police as arbitrary, rather aloof, and somewhat corrupt. From administrative arbitrariness they cannot seek easy redress in the Courts, for the judiciary is esoteric and expensive: complainants have to approach it not directly but through lawyers. It is also non-egalitarian; a man's status and political support often weigh covertly in particular legal outcomes. Consequently, the defence of the weak against the strong lies not in an abstract norm of justice but in seeking the protection of those who offer this protection: the politicians. The latter acquire a following not through the performance of "defining functions"—say,

law-making in the legislature—but through "mediatory functions" of various sorts, most often that of mediating between supplicants and administrators. Any politician with electoral ambitions spends enormous amounts of time on this. One leading figure, a substantial farmer in a nearby village, said:

> For a year I haven't done any work on my village land. Formerly I used to drive my own tractor. Now I only talk to my labourers morning and night. Spend all my time in town helping others.

Let me illustrate the situation. One day I was talking to Prem Nath, a recent candidate for the Punjab legislature, a core member of Amar Singh's political faction (see below, especially pp. 182-83). An electricity department employee—Ram Kumar—came to seek his help. Ram Kumar had been sent to the house of a *Panch* (a village political officer) to install an electric meter and to connect it to the main supply line. At the Panch's house, Ram Kumar found that the house had already been connected to the supply line. The Panch mentioned a wedding in his house and persuaded Ram Kumar to come later to install the meter when the Panch would be less busy. He left the meter with the Panch—without a receipt because, Ram Kumar said, he trusted the man. When he went back to do the job, the Panch demanded a bottle of liquor from him before parting with the meter. When Ram Kumar did not oblige, the Panch complained to the Electricity Department that Ram Kumar had demanded a bribe for installing the meter, had connected the house to the main line without installing the instrument, and later, he denied having received the meter earlier. Thereupon an official of the Electricity Department visited the Panch's house and found that the connection had been made; Ram Kumar was dismissed from his temporary appointment.

Ram Kumar went to a friend in a neighbouring village and was asked to seek Prem Nath's intervention.[1] Prem Nath sought

[1]The man came to the co-op office where Prem Nath was supposed to work. The office is one of a dozen or so *addas* (political dens), distributed over the town. Almost any kind of place might develop into an adda: a doctor's clinic, a cinema office, a factor's shop serve equally well, but it must have a telephone, for people are always trying to locate other politicians within and outside Modelpur. An

further details and phoned Amar Singh's son asking for his intervention with the Electrical Engineer, who had the case then.

As general advice, Prrem Nath told Ram Kumar: (*i*) you should always keep in the good books of some local influential person, for one never knows when the officials might do strange things; and (*ii*) in a case like this Ram Kumar should have come to Prem Nath much earlier so that the case could be sorted out locally, possibly through a member of Amar Singh's faction in the village concerned. One should not let those matters rise very high in the hierarchy.

I estimate that Modelpur has about 100 men (give or take 50) who spend a substantial part of their time mediating between the bureaucracy and the population at large. These men are past candidates or future aspirants for the legislature, the municipal committee, and other positions of some influence in the various political parties. What is the source of their influence with the officials? Bluntly: they have ties with state level politicians, present or potential members of the state cabinet; and the latter repay their electoral political debts to the former, in large part, by enabling the local politicians to exercise influence over the local officials: these officials have learned to defer to the local politicians, and higher level intervention is needed only for the most obdurate. Uncooperative officials can expect transfers more frequently than normal, and these would be to remote and un-attractive places: this disrupts one's family situation, not to mention the other cosy arrangements which take time to work out.

10.12 The Politicians' Pay-off

Why do the politicians engage in such strenuous efforts? For the record, their answer would be: *janata di seva*, "service to the people," and the link between political leadership and altruism did exist, at least in the pre-independence days. Such cases are rare now. A few men seek merely the honour of public deference (*chaudhar pan di bhukh*, hunger for leadership). The others are in politics, and invest their time in mediatory activity, because this

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adda is associated with a particular party or faction. It may be a place for free-floating gossip or for giving homage to a powerful man: the play depends on who the players are.

brings them in continual contact with administrators and political decision-makers: and they seek this contact because it has material value.

For their mediatory and other work, the politicians do not accept payment for particular jobs done: to do so is to descend to the rank of the petty official who takes his bribe and does your work. Similar opprobrium attaches to paid work in a political party or to a non-legislative political appointment in the government. Those who have to do this, lacking private incomes—as most Harijan aspirants in politics would lack—are berated for "making a living out of politics." The "respectable" politician expects to get his rewards, tangible but indirect: via loans from the Cooperative Bank, a permit for building a cinema, quotas for scarce commodities, etc. And *the greater the indirection, the more virtuous can one be in the political realm.*

Consider, for instance, the case of Hari Mitter, a prominent man in Amar Singh's faction. He is not interested in electoral office himself. A lawyer by profession, some members of the faction call him their "legal adviser": he helps them with legal advice generously and without payment. His concern, rather, is with protecting his general interests; specifically, in recent years, he has tried to ensure that his family's substantial property holdings continue, as long as possible, outside the taxable limits of the municipality.[2] An unusually able and vigorous Executive Officer took over the Municipality in 1965 and proceeded to strengthen its finances in various ways; these included an enlargement of the property tax base, by making the municipal boundaries realistic.

Hari Mitter and others affected by this threat responded by forging coalitions at two levels: (*i*) that of all those who had property in the affected area, and (*ii*) that of all those, including (*i*), who had any kind of complaint or grievance—just or not—against the Executive Officer. This disparate group could *always* find channels to the shifting centres of power at the state level

[2]The total arrears amount to six to seven lakh rupees for all the property owners who would be affected if broader municipal boundaries were to be recognized retroactively. Hari Mitter's family's liability probably amounts to several thousand rupees annually and to a few tens of thousand rupees if the municipality could enforce the recovery of full arrears.

no matter who was ruling, and its efforts, sustained over three years, were consummated in 1969 when the Executive Officer was transferred to a minor municipality. As Hari Mitter told me at the time:

> Modelpur has never had so intelligent an Executive Officer before....We would have preferred a stupid Executive Officer, who would go where we led him. He is too intelligent.

Most politicians who make good in Modelpur, then, are men of independent means. (See, for example, p. 112n.) Having launched themselves, the *public* domain becomes a permissible source for their rewards: municipal taxes are commonly evaded, municipal land may slowly be brought under one's own control and ownership, governmental agricultural lands (available for Harijans) may be allotted to oneself or to a close kinsman, a kinsman may be found a government job, etc. Likewise, the officials would go easy on applying any laws or rules to a man of political weight.[3]

10.13 Inequality and Incompetence

Why is the mediatory work of the politician in such great demand? One has to distinguish here between "technical incompetence," arising in low technical abilities, and "status incompetence" which afflicts those who have a low standing in society.[4] A young and perceptive civil servant noted the inevitable differences in his colleagues' dealings with different categories of visitors: someone wealthy would be offered a chair, someone poor would rather be asked to come another day. The common man's status incompetence becomes manifest on almost any occasion requiring official attention. When an issue of a personal nature led me to contact the district authorities, they sent an inquiry to the local police. A

[3]Raulet and Uppal, 1967, report similarly for rural Punjab. Partap Singh Kairon would have called all this "wangling," not corruption. Mangat Rai has analysed with great insight this politicization of administration for private gain (1973: Ch. 10).

[4]Almond and Verba (1963: 180-81, 214) distinguish between several kinds of competence in the political domain: subjective and objective, political and administrative; but these distinctions are not germane to my analysis.

constable came to my house, asking me to go to the police station along with a municipal councillor. There I found that the councillor's task was merely to affirm (1) that I was living at a particular address and (2) that there was no complaint against me! The need for such political intervention may be related to the police being short-handed in the area, but all manner of routine contingencies lead the administration to press general social standing as a substitute for its own resources and competence. And for the time and labour so spent, the politician receives substantial public deference.

In sum, the administration's technical incompetence, the masses' status incompetence, and the politicians' search for political support and public recognition have a mutually reinforcing relationship. Given this syndrome, *the more effective the exercise of mediatory functions, the greater and more stable the level of political support.*

Such functional interdependence may be supplemented by considerations in causality, and one may hypothesize several kinds of antecedent variable depending on one's theoretical predilections. If the child-rearing patterns are such as to require frequent intervention by, say, the mother in relation to other arbitrary seeming adults, a personality type requiring mediation in dealing with authority figures could well develop; the existence of such a link can be tested empirically. Alternatively, it may be that in childhood and adolescence one has opportunities for learning only low level skills in "social navigation," that is, in the unaided establishment of relationships with previously unknown persons. This too would yield adults excessively dependent on mediators: empirical scrutiny is again permissible.[5] The explanation may also turn on the scale of social inequalities; the greater the gap between the social standings of two persons, previously unknown to each other, the more important the mediator of an intermediate standing.[6] My guess is that the last explanation would be found,

[5]For an interesting attempt to relate "civic competence" with the context of socialization, see Boulding 1972.

[6]This formulation, first advanced in Saberwal (1972a: 74), is similar to Charles Morrison's statement (1972b: 327), reached independently from work on lawyers in nearby Ambala:

on inquiry, to be the most adequate, with the socialization of persons of low social standing equipping them relatively poorly for social navigation.

The functional and the causal explanations blend into a rather simple paradigm. Extreme social inequalities entail severe status incompetence for the lower strata,[7] and the latter acquire poor skills of social navigation. When a political process seeking vote aggregation enters such a society, the political aspirant may nurse his constituents by trying to neutralize their status incompetence in some measure through mediatory work of diverse sorts. While such status incompetence for the lower strata has long characterized village India, with its hierarchy of castes, it is only in a context of overall status destabilization that it becomes noteworthy, for even the lowly begin to enter into some dealings with the government off and on.

One more syndrome: In a society marked by extreme inequalities, where men in the lowest strata, facing strong barriers to mobility, find that *militant gestures are well tolerated politically*, muck-raking will bloom as a political procedure. Undisciplined by an ideological party, the procedure may be used to threaten men of power and influence opportunistically in order to secure

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...innumerable interactions in Indian life are felt to require intermediaries for their proper inception, particularly when the initiator is the socially inferior party.

Morrison is content, however, to rest his consideration of "social intermediation" with the comment that it is a "culturally acceptable process" (328); he appears not to notice its relationship to the magnitude of inequalities wherein it is embedded, possibly because of the particular context of his enquiry.

[7]Evidence in support of this proposition comes from areas as far apart as Kerala (Mencher, 1970, discussing rural developmental bureaucracies) and Gujarat (Hunt, 1971, discussing small industrialists). Verba, Ahmed, and Bhatt (1971: 161-64 and elsewhere) argue that it is much easier for those of higher socio-economic status to participate in the more potent political settings unless those of low status—such as the Blacks in the United States and the Harijans in India—have developed strong group consciousness. The analysis in Gaikwad *et al.* (1973), considering a village in Madhya Pradesh, suggests that the prevailing patterns of information flows—shaped by the established political and administrative arrangements—may sometimes underlie such incompetence.

one's personal interests. When political militancy gets aborted in this manner, it loses its potential for attacking the inequalities as such which can then continue unabridged, co-existing in a stable relationship with informal closure of mobility opportunities, political militancy, muck-raking, and the advancement of individual politicians (see pp. 55-58, 158-59).

10.14 Stability of Factions

The mediatory functions in Modelpur are performed in the context of political formations which have the general character of factions: a non-corporate group for political conflict whose members are recruited by its leader (and possibly by his followers) on diverse principles (Nicholas 1965); the group commands diverse capabilities and may cross political party lines. Modelpur had two principal factions, one led by Amar Singh and including men in both the Jan Sangh and the Akali Dal (Master group), and the other composed of several groups within the Congress. Needless to say the precise contours of a faction reflect the relative stature of its key members and other elements: the Amar Singh faction was strongly focused on its leader—and was known by his name—while the Congress faction was much looser.

The mediatory function can be effective over a broad front only if the faction controls differentiated resources. The Amar Singh faction included at least two lawyers, several small industrialists, traders, property owners, and so on. Its leader himself controls a restaurant, brick kilns, the Cooperative Bank, the Zila Parishad, and so forth. The Congress faction includes the local MLA, the municipal committee president, the chairman of the sugar-cane cooperative and the Market Committee, the larger industrial entrepreneurs, and it maintains strong links with various levels of administration. Control over the public institutions is much coveted and hotly contested: the expectation that patronage distributed through them would generate electoral support appears to be well founded.

The internal structure of each faction is complex, somewhat fluid, and sensitive to the winds outside. When Indira Gandhi took several seemingly radical steps such as bank nationalization in 1969, the Jan Sangh was hostile but some of its Harijan (or Scheduled Caste, SC) members—who were also in the Amar Singh

faction—supported these steps strongly. One protege of Amar Singh went further. Knowing the sources of wealth of the highcaste (HC) men (including Amar Singh) who run local politics, he said that brick kilns, cinema houses, etc., also ought to be nationalized. This individuality goes beyond opinions and into actions in pursuit of personal interests.

Let me illustrate this fluidity with reference to the Amar Singh faction. For the elections to the state legislature in February 1969, the Jan Sangh and the Akali Dal were allies. It is said that Amar Singh, himself an Akali, persuaded his party to concede this seat to the Jan Sangh. Then he got Prem Nath, his Harijan protege, admitted into the Jan Sangh—and Prem Nath became the Jan Sangh candidate, but his primary ties continued to be with the Amar Singh faction.

Some tension within this faction arises along the interfaces between its HC and SC members on the one hand, and between its members in the Jan Sangh, in the Akali Dal, and those outside either party on the other. The interfaces are cross-cutting, however, and the tension gets diffused. Most members attach only modest significance to their caste, their political party, and their faction. What one stresses and what one changes often depends on situational advantage. Thus, late in 1969 the Amar Singh faction lost two prominent members. One, Gur Pershad, municipal councillor and its Independent SC candidate for the legislature in 1967, formally joined Jan Sangh: rumour had it that this party had gained ground in his municipal ward, and elections to the municipality loomed ahead. The other, Vij, had campaigned for Gur Pershad in 1967 (in order to please Amar Singh—see below), which had brought him expulsion from the Congress. Now he sought readmission: Vij's relations with Amar Singh had meanwhile cooled, and the Congress seemed willing not only to take in the prodigal son but even to back him for the presidentship of the municipal committee; up for contest again, for years the office had eluded Vij. Gur Pershad and Vij had worked closely for several years, in the Amar Singh faction as well as in the municipal committee; when Vij became the Committee President, Gur Pershad acquired a much greater say in municipal affairs even though their parties were at loggerheads.

Though the factions have this fluidity and individuals do some-

times move around, one watches one's step carefully when switching affiliation. At the time of the 1969 elections, Prem Nath told me, he could have pocketed ten thousand rupees or more as his price for quitting the race, but what about all the people who had run around and laboured for him?

> The *dhara* [faction] is very important. If you leave one today and go to another, they won't trust you there either [fearing you might leave them tomorrow]: you'll be nowhere.

These ideas are shared widely enough to help bring some order to the town's political behaviour. The factions have moved towards stability (see Bailey 1969: 54-55). Yet, compared with the political parties—the Congress or the Jan Sangh—a faction is rather low on ideology other then that of advancing its members' particular interests; it is also low on corporate symbols which, therefore, do not much restrain the play of individual interest in the political domain.

In their mediatory functions, and in pursuing personal interests, faction-mates generally support each other, especially against the major rival faction, although what support one can realize depends on how useful one is to one's faction-mates. Mediatory work makes large claims on one's time and attention and, as we have seen, the politicians like to intervene at the lowest hierarchical level feasible within both the administration and tthe faction. The higher levels urge the lower ones to evaluate the issues for mediation against the likely pay-off. Only such matters are transmitted upwards within the faction as the lower level, unable to resolve adequately itself, judges to be worthy of attention higher up.

The seekers of help and protection against officialdom are many, and the wise politician's actions would seek to maximize the number of his supporters and minimize that of his enemies. specifically, active politicians told me that when someone brought them a problem, they sought to be helpful, to ensure a just and peaceful solution, that is, to try to send away both parties happy: if you are too busy to do this, your political support will fade away. In some cases, one has only to speed the flow of a case through slow and viscous administrative pipelines. The far-sighted politician

avoids sponsoring an unviable case; for, win or lose, these bring a bad name.

But there are those who gave the faction its muscle in its campaigns for electoral office or in other arenas (such as municipal decisions), and for suchlike the faction leaders will fight, no matter how unjust the cause: though, again, the quantum of battle given and the intensity of injustice defended are balanced carefully against the man's overall credit.

10.2 THE HARIJAN CANDIDATES

Let us consider briefly the background against which Modelpur became a reserved constituency. Until 1962, Modelpur was safe Congress territory. Congressman Joshi had held the constituency for several terms, and his place in the then Chief Minister Kairon's councils was noteworthy. As his political fortunes rose, he began neglecting his constituency—while harnessing the state apparatus, rumour had it, to his private ends. By 1962, he had alienated his constituency enough for nearly all his rivals to unite behind Bharadwaj, a school teacher, trade unionist, man of generally acknowledged stature, and former Congressman contesting as an Independent. Bharadwaj beat Joshi overwhelmingly.

By 1967, the constituency had been declared as reserved for Scheduled Castes: multiple reports suggested that Joshi had used his full weight in the party for this purpose, in order to deny it to his rivals who, in the nature of things, could only be HCs. Henceforth, the candidates for the state legislature would have to be SCs even though, as we shall see, the HCs continued to control almost every lever of any political consequence.[8]

Of those who contested in Modelpur in 1967 and 1969, we have considered Gur Pershad's career previously (p. 74ff). An Ad Dharmi, he was the Amar Singh faction's candidate in 1967, fielded as an Independent. I proceed now to discuss the two other principal contenders at some length and several minor

[8]The Parliamentary constituency enclosing the town had been and continued to be reserved for SCs; but the Congress MP, said to "ride" on the MLAs' campaigns, was not very active in local politics. He will appear in my analysis peripherally.

candidates briefly.

Mohan Lal won both the contests, carrying the Congress banner. He is in his mid-thirties. Of leatherworker caste from a nearby village, he mentioned a background of great poverty. He is literate, probably in Punjabi, but did not go very far in school. In his youth he had a defective gait, corrected by a bone-setter, to whom Mohan Lal then apprenticed himself. After about two years' work there, he had developed more skill than his teacher. Then he returned to his village and settled down to a decade of hard work with his new skill. In place of his old kaccha house, he built a pakka one; with new, clean clothes, bedding, etc., he changed his style of life. He drew close to the Sarpanch, keeping the Panchayati records for him, and took the first steps in developing the skills of mediation: he would invite any government officials visiting the village to his house and offer them hospitality. This enabled him to begin to "help" people in getting their jobs done. In 1963 he contested and won a seat in the Gram Panchayat elections, assumed leadership of those who had been disaffected with the Sarpanch, and was able to block all proposals of the Sarpanch from going through the Panchayat! Two or three years later he was elected to the Panchayat Samiti—and immediately became a candidate for its chairmanship. He lost (9:13), but managed to establish himself as a political figure in the area. Since the constituency for the state legislature was being made a reserved one, he applied for the Congress nomination.

> During that year I fought a great many battles with the officials: they learned to pay attention to me because I am a fighter. Thus I made a great many friends, met many people.

Gur Pershad, who later contested as an Independent, also applied for the Congress ticket but he was closely identified with the Amar Singh faction which had helped defeat Joshi in 1962: he was rejected in favour of Mohan Lal who then joined the Congress—and began wearing *khaddar*.

The various groups within the local Congress gave fairly complete support to Mohan Lal. Substantial material aid was said to have come from the Congress Party in Rajasthan, and those indebted to him for recent mediatory work also helped. Finally,

just before the poll, the supporters of one or two minor candidates were advised—by either the candidate or his key backers—to vote for Mohan Lal, lest he lose to Gur Pershad, believed to be controlled by Amar Singh.

Essentially the same array of forces enabled Mohan Lal's return in 1969 too. Intensely involved in the mediatory role, he summed up his orientation by saying:

> I don't say, now the elections are over, I'll talk to you after five years: every day I fight like the election were tomorrow.

Meanwhile he has had some government land alloted to his brother. In Modelpur politics people distinguish between the leaders and those who make leaders: as we shall see below, in 1969 Mohan Lal played a key role in making Vij the President of the Municipal Committee; and he appeared to be on the way to becoming a kingmaker in his own right.

We noticed earlier that *Gur Pershad* was a strong performer in 1967 and, had he not refused to join the Jan Sangh, he would have been Amar Singh's candidate, via the Jan Sangh-Akali alliance, in 1969 too (p. 77). In the event, they settled on Gur Pershad's successor as the key man in the cooperative, *Prem Nath*. His father had been a sharecropper, and Gur Pershad liked to mention that Prem Nath used to shine shoes until Gur Pershad made him learn lathework. Prem Nath is illiterate. How he came to occupy a key role in the cooperative is unclear to me; but once there, he had control over significant resources. Perhaps most important, it gave him abundant time for his own purposes. The cooperative's telephone gave him easy access to the town's telephone owners and made his office a place where others often dropped in: a political den (p. 170n). With Gur Pershad's departure from the cooperative, the Cooperative Bank directorship came to Prem Nath, giving Amar Singh a chance to watch him in various contexts. Then, when the 1969 mid-term elections were announced, a high-caste neighbour of Prem Nath's cooperative and a secure member of the Amar Singh faction mobilized support for him within the Jan Sangh councils to make him the Jan Sangh-Akali alliance candidate.

The broad political line up was approximately the same as in

1967. Prem Nath had active Jan Sangh support[9] but one of the Akali groups chose to set up its own candidate as an Independent. Bharadwaj, who had been the Independent MLA in 1962-67, had backed a Republican Party candidate in 1967; this time he supported Prem Nath; but Vij, an important Congress leader who had campaigned for Gur Pershad in 1967—because he needed large Cooperative Bank funds for a cold storage he controlled—withheld his support this time. To campaign for a candidate carrying the Jan Sangh banner, he judged, would damage his standing with Congressmen beyond repair. Given all this, the 1967 outcome was repeated and Mohan Lal was re-elected—again by a small margin.

Let me now refer very briefly to the other SC candidates in these two elections. One had been involved in the RSS in his village in his youth and had later worked full time in the Republican party. In 1967 he contested as an Independent with support from Bharadwaj, the outgoing MLA, an RPI splinter, and the Jan Sangh. He sought the Jan Sangh ticket in 1969, unsuccessfully because he was given to heavy drinking in public—even though he was well-read, articulate, and ideologically nimble. Shardha Ram (p. 70ff) was state President of another RPI splinter, a militant campaigner of long standing for the Harijan cause; but on the eve of the poll he decided to ask his small Harijan following to vote for the Congress candidate. He did not contest the 1969 elections, campaigning instead for his party's candidates elsewhere. Another candidate in 1967, an Independent; had retired from the Army as a captain in the mid-50s. Urged by his friends in the ex-Servicemen's Association, he offered to serve the people as their MLA; but the response to his offer was such as to cool his ardour in 1969.

In the 1969 elections, instead, a rebel Akali faction put up a Sikh Harijan candidate—who owns 40 acres—largely in order to sabotage Amar Singh within the Akali Dal. Some Congress leaders campaigned for him, hoping to deprive the Jan Sangh-Amar Singh faction candidate of some Akali vote. The other candidate this time, Inder Nath, the lone Balmiki in this list, had support

[9]The urban Hindu support for Jan Sangh had been somewhat eroded since 1967: during 1967-68, the party had been the Akalis' coalition partner in the government and was alleged to have gone soft in its defence of the Hindi language in Punjab.

from groups within the Communist and Republican parties but got few votes from outside his own small caste (see p. 55ff).

These, then, were the candidates in the reserved constituency. While anyone may become a candidate, he can be taken seriously only if he is assured of broad political support—in Modelpur, support by one of the two major factions. Were the vote heavily fragmented, the likely winners would need only small, compact bases. It is perhaps a reflection of Modelpur's social and political mobility that faction leaders can assemble large, diversified voter support for a particular candidate. The key levers in these arrangements, however, rest securely in the hands of rather affluent high-caste men, reflecting the current distribution of wealth—and of the tools for producing wealth—in Modelpur. Given their backing, the candidates' own qualities seem to be immaterial: unknown, even illiterate persons will do.

I proceed now to examine the consequences of their candidacy upon the town's sociopolitical system and especially upon the Harijans' place in it.

10.3 POLITICS AND INEQUALITY

In assessing how the town's social system was affected when the Modelpur constituency was reserved for SCs, we notice that this was only one item in a diverse package, which included, besides, an enlargement of opportunities for Harijans in education, government employment, access to public facilities, and allocation of certain sorts of governmental resources. The next chapter will return to these influences, arising at the national level; but Harijan life chances in Modelpur responded to yet another element, which drew large numbers of Harijans—especially the Ad Dharmis—into skilled lathework and enabled some of them to become entrepreneurs too. How did this package influence the inequalities in Modelpur?

We note that inequalities are of several sorts—ritual purity and pollution, social distance, power, and wealth. If cumulative in the village context (p. 27f), certainly in Modelpur these dimensions are separating out. Notions of purity and pollution will occupy us in the next chapter. Sufficient to say here that few in Modelpur would insist on excluding Harijans from any public setting, though

many may still regret that this cannot be done. Patterned limits to intimate social interaction—social distance—may, of course, apply along many other axes. Such social barriers are numerous in Modelpur, lying between the large entrepreneur and his un-skilled workers, the established politician and the ordinary townsman or villager, the Harijan official looking for accommodation in a high-caste area and the owner of such premises, those who live in the narrow winding lanes of the crowded old town and those in the relatively open new town straddling the Grand Trunk Road, and so forth. However, these barriers, lacking religious or ideological supports, are raised or lowered depending largely on individual calculation of gain or loss—in opportunity or standing—in particular contexts.

In the town's prestigious, elite interactions, the Harijans are nevertheless under-represented, due largely to their lags in power and wealth. Reverse discrimination may favour them, but it does not much erase their initial handicaps in power, in wealth, and in access to social networks. These latter dimensions will concern us below.

The reservation of constituencies helps focus some public attention on a few SC candidates at every election. Even such modest attention, however, is inconsistent with the received ideas concerning their low social evaluation, their general lack of competence, and, as we shall see, their inherited pollution; these ideas would thereby be jarred somewhat. For the candidates, this political prominence tends to be only a step in a cumulative process. Other doors may open simultaneously: the political notable may be nominated to the District Welfare Committee, allocating land and other resources to Harijans, and the committee members remember their close kinsmen. His mediatory work places many people in his debt, which they can repay by giving him a line on the resources *they* may control. Furthermore, his children are rather more likely to go through high school and college, availing of the scholarships there and the governmental job quotas later. Not that political prominence is a necessary first step in the spiral of upward mobility; rather, it is one of an array of resources, which the man on the make seeks to bring into concert for advancing himself.

The Ad Dharmi MP from this constituency—formerly a school

teacher—has over the years built himself a large house in a prestigious neighbourhood and acquired a substantial farm, which his sons cultivate with at least one tractor, and he has bought a jeep. With Harijans who seek his advice and mediation as well as with the sociologist who seeks an interview, his manner is brusque. Regardless of social origin, the resources of the middle and the upper classes are followed close on heel by the attitudes of the new class.

Need one say that the social space open to a Harijan expands rapidly as he ascends the spiral of success. Indeed the pace of his rise may depend on his vigour and skill in exploring the social space and in mobilizing its resources for his own ends. We know that Harijans usually internalize strong norms making a virue of not venturing far from their own neighbourhoods (Gumperz 1958: 679-80; Dumont 1971: 152-54; also pp. 64, 82f). These norms lapse for Modelpur's modern, successful Harijans. Insofar as mediatory work is critical to the political leader's role, the Harijan politicians often deal with a very wide range of officials, high-caste politicians, and other public figures. Achievement—whether in politics, industry, bureaucracy or whatever—brings to this small minority a strong sense of its own competence, setting it psychologically apart from the overwhelming majority of Harijans.[10]

The case of Mohan Lal, the Ad Dharmi Congress MLA from Modelpur, is illustrative. He said that during 1968 when L.S. Gill was the Punjab Chief Minister (heading a minority government with Congress support), Mohan Lal got blank sheets of paper with the Chief Minister's signature—reflecting, perhaps, the tenuous hold the latter had on his office. Seeing these sheets, the local civil servants learned to pay attention to Mohan Lal's wishes. By 1969 he had emerged as a kingmaker in Modelpur's Congress. I noted earlier that in the 1967 elections Vij, an important Congress leader, had opposed Mohan Lal and campaigned for Gur Pershad, Amar Singh's independent candidate, for Amar

[10] The consequences are similar to those reported from post-independence Zambia (Colson 1967). As the Blacks came to control the apparatus of power, their sense of competence grew sharply; as the Whites were eased out of this apparatus, they developed a sense of impotence: needless to say, this has not happened to the high castes of Modelpur.

Singh controlled the cooperative bank funds which Vij needed. The Congress had then expelled Vij. When, in 1969, court orders removed the incumbent president of the municipal committee, his successor had to be elected from among the seven continuing municipal councillors, Vij among them. Three of the seven were firmly with the Congress. Vij had long aspired for the presidentship, but he was outside the Congress now, and the others outside—including Gur Pershad—suggested to the Congressmen that he be taken back into the party and made municipal president. Mohan Lal played a key role in securing a consensus in the party for this proposition, even though Vij had opposed him in 1967. Later he told me:

> We [the Congress] needed him....People come and go all the time. Now we need people to come to us.

Commenting on the outcome immediately afterwards, Vij noted how much stronger the Congress would be in Modelpur with a Congressman as president. He was ecstatic about Mohan Lal's role in the developments:

> Though he comes from a low class, he has chosen to forget the past. This shows his great soul [*mahan atma*].

For every Harijan who feels this sense of competence, however, there are several hundred who do not. The political mediator is not often likely to exert much on their behalf, and this applies to the Harijans among the mediators also. Prem Nath, the Jan Sangh candidate in 1969, was told by his political mentors that he was sponsoring too many cases with the administration. He ought not to fritter away his party's resources in this manner. Gur Pershad, the 1967 candidate who joined the Jan Sangh in 1969, later told me that if someone brought him a problem, he sent the person on to the more active Jan Sangh leaders. If the problem was resolved, the Jan Sangh would get the credit. If not, that was too bad. By now his own electoral ambitions were in a rather low key.

Those who find the mediatory channels unresponsive—and this often happens to the poor regardless of caste—are, of course, ill-equipped otherwise too. Their occupations are lowly and some-

times carry the mark of pollution. Their incomes are low, their diet and health often unsatisfactory. Above all, they have had little or no education, and their evaluative capacities are inadequate: in the complex politico-administrative structures surrounding them, many seem to be unable to distinguish clearly between the honest and the dishonest, the friend and the foe. Consequently, their experiences overall cannot be such as to nurture feelings of positive personal competence.

The governmental measures affecting the Harijans' disabilities, then, have brought a measure of power and of wealth to a few Harijans, and their sense of personal competence grows too; but the large majority of Harijans, as well as the other poor, appear to find the political system unresponsive to their wants, and their general style does bespeak a profound lack of self-assurance.

10.4 THE LEADERS: HARIJAN AND HIGH CASTE

Even though some Harijan political leaders enter Modelpur's elite settings, they do so, in large measure, as representatives of the Harijans. Since the leaders, as well as their constituents, are generally poor and relatively uneducated and unskilled in social navigation, however, their standing remains ambiguous even when they have access to elite settings.

Let me illustrate. One day I was chatting in the Ad Dharmi cooperative's office with Hari Mitter, an importantt high-caste member of Amar Singh's faction (p. 172f). Its 1967 candidate, Gur Pershad, dropped in too. As municipal councillor, he was concerned with the imminent election of a new president. Hari Mitter asked him, "Shall we make you president of the municipal committee now?" Engaged in another conversation, Gur Pershad did not reply. A little later Hari Mitter asked again, "Let me know if you want us to make you president; don't come back later asking that Vij be made president." Gur Pershad made no reply—and left. Hari Mitter muttered, "Blockhead [*ghughu*], he is a blockhead." I said, "Oh?" Hari Mitter: "Blockhead. We might make him president. But what will he do even if we make him MLA or president?"

During rather extensive interaction with me Gur Pershad often gave evidence of his belief in an intimate friendship with Vij,

whom we have met before. For his own reasons, Vij had campaigned for Gur Pershad in 1967, and the latter helped prepare the ground for his becoming municipal president in 1969. The two had cooperated in the Amar Singh faction earlier and, after Vij's election, they worked closely in the municipal committee. In the latter's house Gur Pershad acted familiarly and would sit, shoes off, his feet on the sofa.[11] In an interview later, however, Vij said, "With rare exceptions, candidates from the Scheduled Castes are uneducated bastards [*ullu de pathe*]; but they have to come. It doesn't do the Harijans generally any good. Now their privileges were to end in 1970 but are being renewed because no one will risk losing votes by opposing these." This pursuit of votes appeared to strike him as a great curse.

The evaluations given to other Harijans leaders were not any better. Early in my fieldwork when I told the *tehsildar* (a low-level administrator) that I wished to see Mohan Lal, the MLA, he—and his two assistants—smiled with amusement and said that they would send him to my house when he came around to their office next time.[12]

The crux of the matter is that relatively affluent high-caste men occupy the society's prestigious key roles almost exclusively, and their informal relations with each other constitute effective networks. Thanks to their prior control over the mechanisms of trade, industrial production, etc., they can also control and adapt the emergent public apparatus—political parties, cooperative banks, Zila Parishads, etc.—to ensure that public resources would be so deployed as to advance their private ends in seemingly legitimate ways (see Rosenthal 1973). Harijans control few resources to start with, and it is only by becoming the clients of high-caste faction leaders that the Harijans can seek to bend the political process in their own direction. In this exposed situation, their demands, usually on a small scale, can be interpreted relatively

[11]These and numerous similar observations suggest that Gur Pershad—and other Harijan leaders—sought to publicly validate their own claim to prestige and thus to relieve some of the tension arising in the ambiguity of their place in society.

[12]The lowly evaluation common to SC candidates in reserved constituencies is evident also in Khadija Gupta's report (1971) from Sasni town in Uttar Pradesh.

easily to mean that their support in the political arena is up for sale, individually and collectively (see Verba *et al.* 1971: 133-36).

A Balmiki who used to loom large in Congress reckoning a decade ago told me proudly about his visit to Chandigarh when he needed mediation on a certain problem by Joshi, Modelpur's MLA until 1962. The latter mentioned difficulties in getting the job done, but offered his visitor tea and snacks. The visitor declined: if what he had come to get done couldn't be done, he wouldn't take tea. The man recalled:

> I asked him, "Don't you remember when you went on hunger strike and I organized the procession and helped make your hunger strike a success? Now my work can't be done?" He arranged to get my work done. Then he offered me fare for the way back. I told him I won't take it. So he asked a man to take me in his jeep to the bus stand, buy me a ticket, and put me on the bus.

By 1969 very few Harijans spoke of pursuing personal interest in the political arena in as unguarded a manner, and this gentleman had long since lost the capacity to organize a procession. In the contemporary idiom, the collective benefits were mentioned rather more often. Referring to a meeting to be addressed by a Jan Sangh minister, Gur Pershad said that he had told a party worker that they could get as many Harijans to attend as they liked. People would come once, they might come twice, but the third time they would want to know what they got for attending these meetings. So if the Jan Sangh wanted Harijan support, goods had to be delivered rapidly.

Manifestly, the high-caste political leaders get many times more of real resources out of the political process, per capita, than the Harijans—leaders or followers. Articulate Harijans are aware of this, others suspect it vaguely. On my rounds, however, it was the high-caste leaders who would make out the more cogent case regarding the Harijan tendency to demand material benefits in return for political support. Given further increments in the Harijans' cognitive and verbal skills and in their accession to the upper reaches of the political apparatus, however, the tables might well be turned.

Compared to the situation, say, two decades ago, the Harijans in Modelpur in 1969 had fair numbers of articulate spokesmen, some of whom even took a militant line occasionally. Some of them tended to be co-opted into some of the town's elite settings, enabling them to use some of the public resources for their private ends. This, of course, tarnished their image among the Harijans, and the high-caste leaders were glad enough to see this happen. In any case, Modelpur's Harijans had no leaders who understood the institutional mechanisms underlying and renewing the current inequalities, nor any who had the stamina to act on the larger system so that these mechanisms might be displaced.

To sum up, Harijan leaders active in Modelpur's politics can choose between—or mix in some manner—three basic options: (1) to enter into patron-client ties, usually with high-caste patrons, (2) to act in reference to the solidarity of one's own caste or of Harijans at large, or (3) to act in reference to the solidarity of one's "class"—usually the "working class"—regardless of caste. Their choices seem to be linked with the arena(s) in which they operate.

At the local or municipal level, the man from a predominantly Harijan ward has little need for high-caste support and, in Modelpur, caste councils continue to have some influence on the Harijan vote; these men have to continue to respond to Harijan needs. A constituency for the state legislature, however, would have a large majority of high-caste voters, making the candidates less dependent upon—and therefore rather less responsive to—the Harijan vote; support from high-caste faction leaders is crucial for success at this level. At least in Modelpur, however, these candidates were relatively new in politics, and their life styles were still fairly close to the average for the Harijans. Consequently their rapport with the Harijans was generally good. High-caste support is just as important for the national constituency, and Modelpur's Harijan MP, now an affluent man, keeps few links with the Harijans there. In widespread local judgment he continued to be the Congress candidate because he gave loyal support to the senior Harijan leaders in the Congress, and he continued to win, thanks to the Congress MLAs' work in his constituency. Those committed to Harijan interests have long known that the effect of reserving

constituencies is small when the non-Harijans dominate the concerned electorate (see Ambedkar 1945: 93-95, 153-61).

What effect would a discontinuation of the statutory reservation of constituencies for the Harijans have? Barthwal (1969) has noticed the sparsity of Harijans in arenas which do not give them statutory reservation, and therefore such a step would lead to fewer Harijans in the legislatures; then, the Harijan access to the political arenas, to various elite settings, and to those who mediate within the labyrinths of government would also decline. For the Harijans as a category, this would be a setback. Note should still be taken of the fact that the value of Harijan access to the channels of power is limited by the tendency of (or the compulsions for) the ordinary Harijan to overload the political process with relatively minor issues, his representatives' tendency to trade their political base for personal gain and consequently their alienation from this base, and their seemingly total incapacity to apply themselves to the tasks of reshaping the larger society into egalitarian structures.

CHAPTER XI

Intercaste Relations

To locate the recent,trends in intercaste relations in Modelpur let us review the sorts of differentiation summated in the traditional village caste systems. These were:

(1) the caste groups' *occupational specialization*, especially for tasks requiring purity or entailing pollution, allowing some openness in such secular work as cultivation; in the non-monetized jajmani framework, these occupations exchanged much of their goods and services;

(2) fairly consensual *hierarchical placement* of the caste groups, referring (*a*) to the purity-pollution level of the caste's inheritable occupation to justify its specific rank, especially at the hierarchy's two extremes, and (*b*) to an individual's karma, his tally of merit from earlier lives, to justify his being in a particular caste;

(3) substantial consensus over approved *interaction* across caste lines; the less the hierarchical distance between caste groups, the closer the relations permitted between their members;

(4) *differentiated civil rights* which excluded some castes, especially the lowest ones, from residence in particular areas, worship in high-caste temples, use of high-caste wells, etc.;

(5) accompanying the attenuated interaction and the public disabilities were the *stereotypes* shaping the intercaste perceptions; the dominant high castes' derogatory stereotypes concerning the lowest castes moulded the latter's self-images and life chances substantially; and

(6) *endogamy*, an important mechanism sustaining the caste boundaries, marriages being usually restricted to one's supravillage caste groups.

We have seen that, in recent years, Harijans in Modelpur have entered new occupations via formal education, thanks to the

educational subsidies and to their governmental job quotas, but much of the town's occupational flux arises, besides, in its industrial growth. The skills for a great many occupations — shopkeeper, latheworker, moulder, sewing machine assembler — can be learnt not publicly on demand but in familial privacy or through apprenticeship. Such instruction used to be restricted to kinsmen and castemates but, with demand galloping (as for machined metal goods), an entrepreneur looks for apprentices where he can find them regardless of caste; and the apprentice becomes a skilled worker over time.

Recent changes in Modelpur's normative order, which will occupy us shortly, have brought small-scale industrial enterprise within the reach of an ambitious Harijan skilled worker. And as his enterprise has grown, he has taken on employees and apprentices — occasionally high-caste men. With Harijans beginning to own industrial tools and to employ high-caste men, caste as a determinant of occupation and of production relations is clearly on the wane.

If occupational specialization has declined sharply in Modelpur, caste endogamy has not. The latter limits the relations of marriage and kinship, the most intimate forms of interaction, to castemates of equivalent ritual status. To be sure, caste endogamy is no longer prescriptive in metropolitan centres:

> Caste comes into matchmaking as one thing to be weighed against others and setting certain limits — like money and education. Castes are still supposed to be endogamous, [but] there is not much left to separate most castes, except this theoretical endogamy (Holmstrom 1972:771).

While this view from Bangalore would be reflected often in Delhi and occasionally even in Ludhiana, out-of-caste marriages are still uncommon even in the large urban centres, such as Lucknow (Gould 1971), where other key social institutions may be in flux. Modelpur's Harijans are aware of intercaste marriages in the metropolitan centres — some involving their castemates — but, for them, intermarriage with the local high castes could become a live issue only if their integration into the larger community were far greater than is now the case (but see p. 200n).

Continuing endogamy and declining occupational specialization are easy to establish. It is in the middle area of hierarchy, stereotypes, approved interaction, and civil rights, requiring a middle order of intimacy, that one finds the greatest variation. This is an important area, for it concerns what I think of another, how I behave towards him, what he comes to think of himself, and the levels of achievement others permit him. It is these issues that I shall consider in this chapter. My primary purpose is to locate the *processes* of change, and this is best done through the case material. Some supporting quantitative data, reporting on the questionnaire, appears in the Appendix to this chapter.

11.1 THE PRESSURES

Caste hierarchy in Punjab, we have earlier noted, has long been rather more flexible than that further south, yet the basic framework, requiring the lower castes to live apart and to eat apart from the higher castes, persisted essentially unchanged into the early 1940s. Moru Ram, an Ad Dharmi, was debarred from a school hostel in western Punjab because of his caste; and when, in 1943, he moved in with a Modelpur kinsman, it took considerable effort to persuade the local Government High School headmaster to admit him as a day scholar[1] and then he had not only to sit apart from the high-caste students but also to forego the drinking water from the school well. Such restrictions disappeared from Modelpur's schools within the next three or four years. While public discrimination against the Harijans continued to decline in later decades, it is still far from being unknown. Let us now consider the pressures leading to these changes, how people adapt to—and perceive—them, and their implications for the new inequalities emerging.

This analysis will stress the convergence of *pressures from above*, essentially constitutional, legal, and political, with *pressures*

[1] The school was run by the government of the princely state wherein Modelpur was then located; government schools in British-run Punjab might have been somewhat more hospitable to Harijans. This case appears in fuller detail in Saberwal 1972b: 162.

from below, arising in the Harijan will to give battle in support of their civil rights. To be sure, both these forces were foreshadowed in the last decade or two of colonial rule: from above, there was the British encouragement to the Scheduled Castes, given primarily to weaken the Congress (see p. 70f); from below, one would already have met, here and there, a combative Harijan like Shardha Ram (*ibid.*). Overall, however, these pressures were weak, for the British administration, itself manned largely by the upper castes, relied heavily on the loyalty of the propertied, upper castes; and the number of assertive Harijans was also small, pending a sharp expansion in the mobility opportunities open to them: this had to await independence and the new forces which were to influence, in some measure, governmental operations subsequently (Bhatt 1971).

11.11 Pressure from Above

Let us begin with the legal and constitutional measures. An egalitarian polity was among the premises of the Republic promulgated in 1950; but its creators recognized that such a polity could find strength only in an egalitarian society; this the India of 1950 was not. (See Austin, 1966, especially Chapters 2 and 3.) Untouchability and related practices embodied the social inequalities most conspicuously and, therefore, the fifties and the sixties saw the assembly of a substantial counterforce: the reservation of constituencies for Scheduled Caste (SC) candidates,[2] creation of special funds for SC economic advance, allotment of government lands to them, scholarships for SC students' education, special remedial institutions to prepare them for the higher competitive examinations, governmental job quotas proportionate to their overall population, the Untouchability Offences Act, and various related measures (Beteille 1965b, Galanter 1972).

These legal and administrative measures have wrought substantial changes in the circumstances of many Harijans; the evidence concerning these changes is spread through every chapter in this

[2] This reservation indeed goes back to the Poona Pact (1932), and the other measures too had some beginnings before independence (see Dushkin 1972: 170); but the array of mechanisms noted above is so much more substantial and pervasive as to be qualitatively different.

volume. Supplementing these measures, however, there has been another notable element: influential models for interaction between the upper and the lower castes coming from powerful political figures in Punjab. Sardar Swaran Singh had been a member of the central cabinet continuously since 1952. Some years ago he joined the wedding party of a Balmiki man, son of a Punjab state legislator. The legislator's nephew told me that his uncle is chummy with Swaran Singh. In the bride's house Swaran Singh announced that he was hungry and asked for tea.

Legislator: The baradari people are having tea now. We'll have it afterwards.

Swaran Singh: If baradari people are having tea, does that mean we won't get it?

Legislator: Yes, the baradari people come first.

Thereupon Swaran Singh said that he would have to leave to take the plane to Delhi; his driver would drive the car back. The legislator agreed, not pressing Swaran Singh to stay until he had tea. The nephew said that his uncle is in politics today but may be out of it tomorrow: then he would have to live with his baradari again; he does not kowtow too much before Swaran Singh and the like.

Even if we discount for exaggeration, in the nephew's account and in Swaran Singh playing a deliberate public role, clearly the two men were interacting as one politician with another, not as a Jat with a Balmiki. Many such events are recounted and these echo through lesser interactions. A leading local politician told me of a recent visit, with some Harijans, to a nearby village. They went to a landowner's house. When a particular Harijan they had wanted to meet arrived, they made him join them on a cot. The landowner served tea: cups and saucers for the visitors and a tumbler for the village Harijan.

We asked him why he did this. We gave a cup-and-saucer to the Harijan and asked him to drink out of it. We told the landowner that this would not hurt the cup at all.

Reflective of the new norms is the replacement, in the town's

lexicon, of the mildly abusive terms Chuhṛa and Chamar with the new terms Balmiki and Ad Dharmi (p. 22f).

11.12 Pressure from Below

The new mood, to be sure, cannot be attributed to pressure from above alone. Reinforcing it is the Harijans' vigour in joining issues affecting their honour and their rights. A Balmiki recalled a case about eight years ago when a shopkeeper slapped a Balmiki boy—who fell down and broke his arm. More than a hundred Balmiki men, women, and children then assembled outside the shop, detaining the man and his employees there for several hours. The shopkeeper and his men had to go to the police station; they apologized and touched the boy's feet and his father's feet. They said they would even tell their progeny not ever to tangle with Balmikis.

Another incident in a nearby village at about the same time involved a Ramdasia boy. He had gone to a Jat neighbourhood in the village, and the Jats beat him up. When his father went there, he too was manhandled. The news reached my informant, a Rámdasia political leader in the village, and he went to the area's police inspector. Being Jat himself, however, the Inspector counselled a compromise: why spread tension in the village? The leader then went to a leading Congress politician of the region who gave him a letter for the area's senior police officer. On the way, however, he met a Ramdasia police constable who said, "Why go to the senior officer? Give your letter to the Thanedar,[3] and we'll fix the Jat."

The Thanedar, a Brahmin, took the Ramdasia constable to the village, asked for the principal Jat culprit, and had the village panchayat assembled. Given this select audience, he proceeded to berate the Jat, employing the full range of abuse terms which give the Punjabi language its colour. After humiliating the man for an hour, he asked the constable to take him to the police station; the Thanedar would follow and deal with him later. The villagers then sought the leader's intercession with the Thanedar, for the Jat had been humiliated enough: the Thanedar agreed to take twenty

[3]A junior police officer.

rupees and let the man go.[4]

True, the Thanedar may have been acting out the age-old hostility between the Jats and the Brahmins in Punjab, as well as helping himself to some cash, but he could do this (1) because the legal context would see the Jats as having injured the Ramdasias and (2) because the village Ramdasias wished to and could press the matter even at the risk of setting off a confrontation with the landowning Jats.

May I note here that the Jats landowners, the Ramdasias, and the leader who related the case to me were all Sikhs. The Ramdasias, supported normatively by the emergent legal-political order and actively by a Brahmin police official, won this particular contest with the landowning Jats. The egalitarian Sikh religious doctrine did little to soften the landowner-landless class relations in the village, and such reminders of low status, coming from their co-religionists, often embitter the "lower" caste Sikhs.

11.2 THE RESPONSES

11.21 Three Views of Pollution

Given the convergence of pressures from above and from below, and given the sharp contradiction between the external, prestigious public norms and the internalized, valued familial norms, the high-caste responses have tended to vary along a continuum, ranging *from* earnest attempts to continue with the ideas and practices of purity, pollution, separation, hierarchy, and so forth, *to* deliberate attempts to scuttle this complex of ideas and to act in secular, egalitarian, non-hierarchical modes. Overall, the purity-pollution syndrome has tended to decline, and the familial norms are shifting, unevenly, towards the emergent public ones. Outside the home, the *individual* would be the unit of change in attitudes and behaviour, but familial norms would prevail in domestic contexts.[5] Overt conflict apart, familial

[4]For additional case material, see Saberwal 1972b: 165-66. Kessinger (1974: 123-28) has shown in detail how the lower castes in a nearby village used the extra-village opportunities and institutions, *early in the 20th century*, to secure some autonomy against the Jat landowners' dominance.

[5]An interpretation of data in Table 11.2 will provide support for this assertion (see p. 212f).

norms and behaviour would have to keep in step, stabilized now and again at some point along the continuum noted above. Let us travel along this continuum, considering a series of cases.

Close to the first end is Hiralal, a high-caste grocer and factor, who was among my earliest acquaintances in town (§ A3). Upon arrival in Modelpur, I was arranging the various services needed in our home. We engaged a sweeper to clean the dry latrine and sweep the house daily; and my wife, a westerner, asked her if she would do the laundry too. An extraordinary request for Modelpur, and word reached Hiralal who lived a few houses away. He told me:

> The sweeper woman's work is the latrine and its vicinity; she is not allowed inside our houses. You know this, your wife may not. If the sweeper woman goes into your house to clean, etc , then if you ask people to come and take tea at your place, there might be difficulties. So the best thing would be to let the sweeper do the latrine and have someone else do dishes, laundry, etc. Someone Brahmin, Khatri, and the like.

He also pointed out that our house had two doors: one for the sweeper and the other for everyone else.

Hiralal's relationships with sweepers are marked by unambiguous superiority and dominance, and he continues in his established ways unchallenged. When a high-caste man has to enter into novel role-relationships with Harijans, he knows that the latter have to be shown greater consideration, and one finds some social innovation. The distance maintained in public may be transmuted into the language of a private ritual or rationalization. In one neighbourhood, high-caste men have built houses adjacent to Ad Dharmi houses which had been built much earlier. I asked a high-caste friend who lived there, a modest government official, whether they visited with the Ad Dharmis:

> If we have one of them visit us for whatever reason, we do have to offer him hospitality. If the man suffers from an inferiority complex, he will say, "No, thank you, I just had tea at my house!" The others, those who have made efforts to raise their own standard, *will* accept the hospitality. In fact, they

> are anxious to have relations with us in order to raise their own standards. In their case we do offer hospitality—but the dishes are then kept separate; after a *second* scrubbing [*manjna*] these can be used along with the rest of the dishes.

Those close to the other end of the continuum appear to dispense with such private insulation. A young Balmiki, successful as an auto-parts salesman, said:

> Untouchability arises only from one's occupation, not otherwise. Now you may say you do not practise untouchability but if a man carrying a tin full of dirt comes by and his own clothes are dirty, you won't wish to touch him. No one has yet acted in terms of untouchability towards me. There is, for example, the man who is a manager of three cinemas in Patiala. His daughter is married into my employer's family. I have visited them [in Patiala] often, slept there, eaten there, carried their children around....Yesterday I went to Gupta Industries [to arrange a job] for my brother....: they told me that they avoided touch only with dirty work and dirty clothes; otherwise there are no untouchables for them.

In a case such as this it is possible for a non-scavenging Balmiki to develop for himself a round of interactions with the high castes, limited to those who are "reformed" (*sudhre hoye*): he may come to believe that, or at least to act as if, untouchability has really gone out of use.[6] Close to this position is the Balmiki tailor, Prem Nath, who runs an elegant shop in a high-caste area in partnership with a high-caste tailor. Between Prem Nath's family and many members of his partner's family there is easy mutual visiting and interdining. Prem Nath's brother said of this partner that he:

[6]I failed to ask this gentleman whether he thought he could marry into the family of one of his high-caste friends. In a sense the question does not arise. Such a marriage would necessarily be "deviant" for Modelpur. It would have to be a "love marriage," not an arranged one, but an auto-parts salesman, howsoever charming, has few opportunities for knowing the kind of girl who would take so daring a leap: that is rather more likely to happen in a college or, perhaps, in the civil service.

> ...treats with us as if he were our own brother: he is breaking the wall separating the castes. When our sister was married [1968] he came here and even cleaned our dishes. His family and ours exchange food at weddings.

Prem Nath spoke ambitiously about starting a second tailoring shop in the town's central shopping area where they would concentrate on selling readymade shirts, to be produced by them in a workshop elsewhere in town; and I could think of no decisive barrier to his ambition. Near his shop and his partner's home lives a high-caste auto-parts trader who, from diverse evidence, seems to have discarded altogether the belief in pollution. He has asked Prem Nath:

> ...again and again to come [out of our Balmiki] *mohalla*. He has offerred me his own house in Model Town to live in, but I say I want to spend a few years with my *baradari* still.

These are the perceptions of a highly competent and successful Balmiki. It is reasonable to posit here a range of Harijan perceptions paralleling the range of high-caste responses to the new pressures. Corresponding to Hiralal's position, for example, there would be the perception of persisting untouchability and of hostility, and some of this will appear in subsequent analysis (Tables 11.1 and 11.4). As we shall see, however, the Harijan perceptions at this end of the continuum are understated in my material, for my informants were, primarily, the mobile and the successful.

Three distinct ways of thinking about pollution emerge from these cases:

Inherited Pollution: We have noted that certain pollution levels have traditionally been regarded as inherent in one's caste-linked, hereditary occupation, giving a rationale to the social distance enforced by the high castes. This complex can continue in the urban context, a high-caste believer like Hiralal keeping his distance from all Harijans and practising "untouchability."

Occupational Pollution: Behaviour may, however, rest on the proposition that pollution arises not in the ancestral but in individual day-to-day occupation: an important distinction

when occupational mobility is widespread. Growing numbers of Modelpurias are beginning to think of pollution in this way. In its conservative form, commensal and other courtesies may be extended to some Harijans if novel role relationships so require, and the public social distance may be transmuted into private insulation; its radical form would predispose one to accept close interaction with anyone not daily engaged in dirty and polluting work.

Episodic Pollution: Finally, and most radically, one may contend that pollution, equated with uncleanliness, is only episodic: even a scavenger who removes nightsoil would, perhaps after a bath, be acceptable as a co-diner. Few in Modelpur think of pollution in quite so radical a form yet.

Hindu religious tradition is known to have distinguished between several possible kinds of pollution and of the ways it could be transmitted (Orenstein, 1970, and other papers cited there). I have argued that the Modelpurias' concern overall with purity and pollution has been declining. While I did not explore the differentials in the decline of the various traditional components of the purity-pollution syndrome, I imagine that the magnitude of these differences of decline within the syndrome would be small compared with that of the decline of the syndrome overall.

11.22 Conflict in Encounters

Social events are lacking in conflict when the participants in them provide a reciprocal fit with regard to their intentions towards and their expectations from each other. When their norms, their intentions, and their expectations diverge widely, the outcomes can range from social unease and embarrassment to violence. Earlier analysis suggests that a Harijan and a man of high caste in Modelpur may bring to any event very different beliefs concerning the nature of pollution, the behaviours appropriate to each of them in particular encounters, and the appropriate points of reference for resolving a disagreement between them. We have taken note of the potential for conflict inhering in this situation, and the following cases amplify the evidence.

One Ad Dharmi college student explained to me the kind of distance maintained even by educated high-caste men towards the

Harijans. He recounted his observations in his college (§ 8.22) and added:

> There was a boy, Surinder Sabharwal, who came to my house. I got tea made and offered it to him. He said no, he won't take it. I pressed several times. He refused. I took the tea and threw it out in his presence. I wanted even to break the cups but didn't do so. Then he came back a couple of days later. I asked him what service I could do for him. He said, "Whatever you wish." I asked, "Shall I get some tea made?" He said, "Yes, if you wish." So I had tea made. He drank it.

The high-caste visitor may have reflected over his first encounter, and the incident illustrates a relatively orderly change in attitudes. But consider the brawl some years ago involving Dina Nath, the Balmiki sewing machine assembler, when the water tap in the bazar, where his shop is located, went out of order:

> Everyone here then began going to the well in the nearby *mandir* for water. I too started going there. After a week or ten days—someone must have told the *mahant* [priest] that I was Balmiki—one day I went there and was about to lower the pot to draw the water when he came out and hit me a couple of times. I too became angry. He was heavier than me, but I got hold of his long hair and turned him around a few times. I beat him really hard. Hearing the noise, shopkeepers from the bazar came over and separated us. I asked them why the mahant had hit me. He said he won't let me draw water. I asked: why not? He said I was a Harijan, and he won't let me on to the well. The majority of the shopkeepers admonished him though a few supported him also. [Did you continue to draw water there?] No, I didn't go back there. Later the pump started working again.

The general tenor of Dina Nath's social relations with his neighbouring shopkeepers persuades me that his assertion of majority support for himself was realistic.

The high-caste response tends to vary with the standing of the particular Harijan. Overall in Modelpur it would appear that

one is likely to be treated less as a polluting low-caste man and more as a shopkeeper, college student, politician, entrepreneur, or bureaucrat[7] *in proportion as he succeeds in his new occupation.* His chances of such success, in turn, would depend on the subcultures prevailing in the particular occupation or institution; and there is much variation. Thus, Moru Ram, the Ad Dharmi student of 1943 (p. 194), now an entrepreneur, active in the Republican Party, and quick to support landless agricultural labourers and the like, said:

> In Punjab people may discriminate in personal relations, but in business and industry caste doesn't matter at all.

Consider here the debut made by Dina Nath in the bazar. For five years he had been apprenticing himself to various people, in and out of town, learning to repair and to assemble sewing machines. Years of almost no income, his family met most of his needs then. When he had mastered the skills, a high-caste trader in sewing machine parts in Modelpur invited Dina Nath to join him as a partner: they would assemble the machines together—his capital and Dina Nath's skill—and split the profit equally. Dina Nath did this for two years, making a modest Rs 60 to 70 per month: he believes that his partner cheated him in buying the machine parts, keeping the accounts, etc.

In 1955 Dina Nath broke with his partner and rented a shop across the road to assemble machines on his own. The other man hired a mechanic to work for him:

> Both of us were out to drive the other fellow out of business. But I was going to win because I was my own mechanic while he had to pay the other man. After six months he closed down.

In the market, then, competitive survival won out. In other situations a Harijan may face covert but effective caste-linked discrimination. Thus Amolak Ram (§ 4.2), a Balmiki, has a son who is a blacksmith in a railway workshop:

[7]Owen Lynch's important distinction between dominant status and salient status (1969:13) underlies this observation.

> It is very hot there, and not much chance of progress. So we had him transferred to better work—as a fitter. We arranged it—talked to the officers etc. Then the workers in the department where he was to go started saying, "He is a Harijan. We don't want him here. Bring someone else." That's what the Supervisor told his officers. Then we organized a large procession of Balmikis demanding that this injustice not be done. Upon this all the workers denied that they had said it.

The railway officers asked Amolak Ram's son to wait for things to cool down a bit, but he had not been transferred when I checked last several weeks later.

The mutually reinforcing cycle of discrimination against the Harijans and low achievement by them may be broken at various points and in various ways; how this happens, and whether this happens, influences the terms on which they function in particular institutional and other settings.

11.3 BALMIKI-AD DHARMI RELATIONS

I have analyzed the relationships between the high castes and the low castes. Insofar as the Ramgarhias too are high caste now—indeed my quantitative analysis takes their attitudes as typifying those of the high castes—their relationships with the Harijans do not need special attention. Let us turn, then, to the Balmiki-Ad Dharmi interface.

Generally, the social distance between the Balmikis and the Ad Dharmis in Modelpur is about as marked as that between the Harijans and the high castes. This becomes clear in an area where large Balmiki and Ad Dharmi neighbourhoods face each other. We have noted that the sense of the community continues to be relatively strong within these two castes (§ 4.3 and § 5.3); indeed the community tends to stretch only to the edge of the caste *neighbourhood*. If an Ad Dharmi student would not readily visit a Balmiki student living in the next street, nor would he visit a castemate some neighbourhoods away, though such constraints do not bind the politicians.

What about the entrepreneurs? We have noticed the Ad Dharmi lead in lathework (p. 75 ff). The first among them trained a great

many castemates in the new skills, but they were not overly anxious to train the Balmikis. Since the demand for scavenging continued to be strong while that for weaving and shoemaking declined precipitately, the Ad Dharmi mobility leaders would have been under pressure to lead their castemates into the new occupations. To communicate one's skills to others generates potential competitors but this threat, between Ad Dharmis, appears to have been overcome by positive communty sentiments; this cement was missing from the relations between the Balmikis and the Ad Dharmi mobility leaders.

The Balmikis had to reckon with derogatory stereotypes besides. Most Ad Dharmi (and other) entrepreneurs judge the Balmikis' potential as mechanics in the following terms:

> These boys are careless. They don't work hard. Even boys who have passed Class 10 go and look for sweepers' jobs at the municipal committee. They don't behave properly: no one in the market wishes to employ them. If you give them a job, they sing songs loudly all day: in that they are experts.

The social forces underlying this image have received attention before (§ 8.13). On the other hand, the Balmikis' image of the Ad Dharmi, especially the image carried by *educated* Balmikis, tends to see the Ad Dharmis as wearing unclean clothes and having a low "standard of living" (§ 4.2). This preoccupation with cleanliness and clothes undoubtedly reacts to the Balmikis' own association with scavenging; but the Balmikis see here evidence of general Ad Dharmi miserliness. They would concede that the latter do plough savings back into their workshops' expansion; but lacking comparable opportunities, the Balmikis hang on, somewhat precariously, to their pride in their own "good standard of living."

11.4 A PARADIGM OF CHANGE

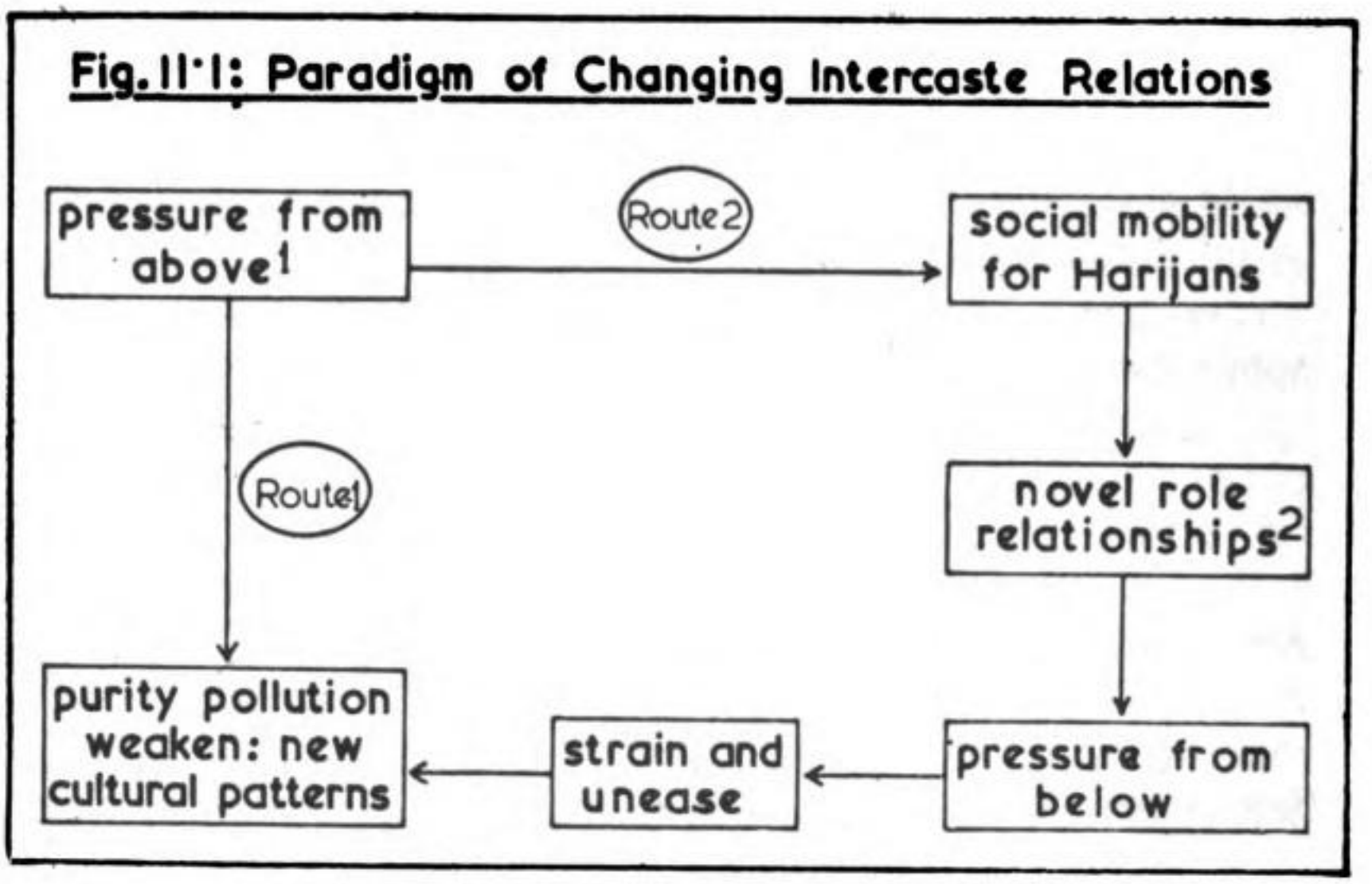
In Modelpur, I have argued, the ideas concerning pollution are moving from the "inherited" to the "occupational" and occasionally the "episodic" pole. Associated with this movement are shifts on other issues, such as those concerning the acceptability

of Harijans as residents in prestigious neighbourhoods or the general high-caste attitudes towards the Harijans. While the fact of such movement is indisputable, questions concerning its magnitude and causation received strikingly divergent answers from my informants (see 211ff).

Very briefly, the high castes, represented in my study by the mobile Ramgarhias, believe that the magnitude of change has been much greater than the Harijans are prepared to concede, and this applies equally to the high castes' general attitudes (Table 11.1) and to their willingness to accept Harijans as neighbours (Table 11.4). A similar cleavage can be noticed over the explanations they give for whatever shifts they acknowledge. Whereas the high castes attribute the changes overwhelmingly to the pressures flowing in from the national level, the Harijans trace the changes rather to their own assertive resistance in face of high-caste hostility (Table 11.3).

Differences between strata in perceiving the magnitudes of change and in explaining them do not surprise a sociologist. His task is to accommodate such differences in an overall explanation, and I proceed now to develop a paradigm to sum up our findings. I have suggested that independence changed the larger setting noticeably for many Harijans: the political, constitutional, and legal developments together produced the *pressure from above*, seeking to improve their life-chances and to enlarge the social space available to them, in law if not always in practice. To this should be added the influence of various micro-settings which had, for decades, borne some witness to egalitarian norms (§ 3.1; § 5.21): their example was now reinforced by the political and legislative dicta. Collectively, these called for *new cultural patterns*, rejecting those associated with purity and pollution (Fig. 11.1, route 1); but the effectiveness of these calls had to await the development of *pressure from below*.

The new order, however, also provided for the induction of Harijans into relatively powerful, or at leasst salient, roles in politics and bureaucracy (route 2). I suggest that the Harijans generally would develop the will to assert new identities, and the high castes to concede these, when the Harijans begin to appear in *multiple* sorts of novel role-relationships in close proximity; this appears to be necessary for challenging established patterns of social dominance.



[1]This includes pressure from deviant micro-settings (p. 26).

[2]For pressure from below to develop adequately, *several different sorts of novel role relationships have to arise in close proximity*. This has happened in Modelpur through several processes:

—reserved constituencies→Harijan politicians and legislators;

—scholarships and job quotas→Harijan bureaucrats;

—Harijan apprentices→skilled men→Harijan entrepreneurs; etc. The last element can be linked with the relative flexibility of the caste system in the Punjab which facilitated a wider distribution of entrepreneurial personality types and, later, the emergence of Harijan entrepreneurs. (I thank J.R. Kulkarni for suggesting this extension to the paradigm.)

A stray legislator or bureaucrat can be dismissed from thought as a quirk of the wayward times. As Barth has noted (1969:30):

> With a [disconfirmatory] feedback from people's experiences to the categories they employ, simple ethnic dichotomies can be retained, and their stereotyped behavioural differential reinforced, despite a considerable objective variation. This is so because actors struggle to maintain conventional definitions of the situation in social encounters through selective perception, tact, and sanctions, and because of difficulties in finding other, more adequate codifications of experience.

> Revision only takes place where the categorization is grossly inadequate—not only because it is untrue in any objective sense, but because it is consistently unrewarding to act upon, within the domain where the actor makes it relevant....

This happens when the Harijans can not only demand deference as legislators and administrators, but also demonstrate, repeatedly, their prowess, say, as school teachers, industrial entrepreneurs, property dealers, and farmers. The established stereotypes are effectively called into question, generating social strains and setting off, at numerous points in society, a search for new cultural patterns, consonant with the new evidence.[8] The *a priori* expectation that this search would appeal more to people whose investment in the older patterns is slight will find support in our data (Table 11.2, item 4, see p. 213).

Let us note here, parenthetically, that though the legislative-administrative measures affecting the Harijan life chances are more or less uniform throughout India, their realized mobility varies widely between regions. Insofar as the national job quotas are open to all Harijans, regardless of area of origin, some regions may be represented in them far more than others. The over-represented regions are able, presumably, to produce Harijans who are generally more skilful; if so, these Harijans would be able to enter entrepreneurial and other non-official roles also, and these multiple new roles would cumulatively generate the pressure from below for new cultural patterns. By the same token, the regions under-represented in the civil service probably do not send many Harijans into significant non-official roles either, failing cumulatively to generate the pressure from below for the new cultural patterns. Table 11.1 acknowledges the informants' awareness

[8]Lelah Dushkin (1972:175) has said: "If 'untouchability' is a set of disabilities traditionally imposed on certain castes, then 'removing untouchability' means ending the exclusions and humiliations practiced by others. It has nothing to do with granting individual benefits to individual members of these castes."

My argument implies that it can have a *great* deal to do: if these beneficiaries enter into novel role-relations with the high castes, forcing the emergence of new cultural patterns free from purity and pollution, such pressure from below would help in removing untouchability.

awareness of such variation between regions (see p. 211).

The question, "Does Modelpur have a caste system?", then, cannot be given a simple "yes" or "no" answer. Even among the Harijans it depends on who is talking. Within the limits of change noted in opening this chapter, the situation affects individuals in different ways, and it often develops in a rising, widening spiral. One member of a family, responding to paternal prodding or personal ambition, enters a new occupation and manages to succeed in it. Sooner or later he perceives that his own future, say in marrying well, and especially that of his children, is linked with that of his close kinsmen: if possible his brothers (and brothers-in-law) but certainly his nephews have to be urged into new occupations. Sustained application over a couple of decades may enable him to save enough, especially if he succeeds as an entrepreneur, to build a house in a multicaste neighbourhood and to become somewhat integrated into his new high-caste world. For marital alliances he will reach for families of similar station elsewhere: in 1969 one such Balmiki man in Modelpur sought my help in improving his daughters' English, for he was seriously planning their marriages to castemates in England.

But of course this is a small, if salient minority among Balmikis and Ad Dharmis: we should not overestimate their numbers or their significance. For most Harijans, the social world has much harsher contours. The high castes may actually avoid contact with them, as we have seen; and many among them know the growing weight of the new, secular inequalities: rooted in property ownership representing wealth and giving current income, in educational achievement which may bring income and lead to wealth, in social networks, and in life styles. Among the Balmikis and the Ad Dharmis we have found a measure of active *caste* consciousness; but this very consciousness also divides the poor and the propertyless into caste-groups alienated from each other. Several trade unions are active in town but their overriding concern seems to be with particular industrial units, and specific problems in them. One does not find much by way of *class* consciousness nor ideas, let alone effort, concerning the means to overcome these inequalities.

Appendix

11.5 THE QUESTION OF UNTOUCHABILITY

My enquiry into the questions of hierarchy, stereotypes, approved interaction, and civil rights was centred on two questions. The first was a general probe into the persistence of untouchability:

Q. 26a. **Some people who are Jat, Agarwal, Khatri etc. believe in untouchability and some do not. In your opinion those practising untouchability are:—a great many or—very few?**

Q. 26b. **Why do you say so?**

The second probed into the harijans' access to housing in the town's predominantly high-caste areas; it had two alternate forms:

For Balmikis and Ad Dharmis:

Q. 27a. **If a man of your baradari wanted to rent a house in Model Town, do you think he could do so without difficulty?—yes—no—only by concealing his baradari.**

Q. 27b. **Example?**

For Ramgarhias:

Q. 27a. **If a house in your neighbourhood is vacant, and if a Harijan man wants to rent it, do you think he could do so without difficulty?—yes—no—only by concealing his baradari.**

Q. 27b. **Example?**

The responses to Q. 26a attest the belief that the rigours of untouchability have declined; and my informants often said that the change in Punjab had been much greater than elsewhere. Over half the Balmikis, a minority of the Ad Dharmis, and most Ramgarhias report that untouchability is practised only infrequently (Table 11.1, items 3 and 4).

That the Ad Dharmis experience untouchability more frequently than the Balmikis is anomalous. In part this reflects sample bias. Since a great many Balmikis continue to clean the town's dry latrines and open drains, those so engaged are "untouchables" even by the new criterion of ersonal uncleanliness as against inherited pollution (see p. 201f); but those who move to other occupations—and they predominate in my purposively selected Balmiki sample—do find themselves accepted, with varying grace and pleasure, into high-caste settings including those requiring commensality. Insofar as my Balmiki informants may have been reflecting on their personal experience rather than reporting the average for the caste as a

TABLE 11.1

HOW COMMON IS UNTOUCHABILITY?

	Balmikis	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
1. High	3	6	1
2. Medium	5	5	3
3. Low	9	5	13
4. Low in Punjab only	2	2	—
5. No answer	1	1	2
	—	—	—
	20	19	19

whole, the data understate the extent of untouchability the Balmikis experience.

To be sure, the Ad Dharmis experience much less untouchability than formerly, but their evaluations reflect rather the hostile stereotypes of the high castes and the preemption of available opportunities by high-caste networks for their own, usually high-caste, proteges. Given the sharp fall in the demand for their traditional services—shoemaking and weaving—the Ad Dharmis have sought, much harder than the Balmikis, to enter new occupations; when faced with resistance in them, they are likely to echo Shardha Ram, the political leader (§ 5.11):

> ...the real issue is the difference between the rich and the poor. Pollution doesn't matter. If you ask me to stay away from you, I can ask you to stay away from me: this can be mutual.
>
> Untouchability will have been removed only if the marriage barriers also disappear.

Affirmations of declining untouchability were often qualified in various ways. An informant would say, "They pretend not to believe in it, but deep down they do," or that "the Sikhs practise it much less than the Hindus" and so forth. These comments are analysed in Table 11.2. It would seem that, in response to the divergent norms impinging on them, high-caste families adapt situationally. The old, the uneducated, and the women continue in their old ways, especially, perhaps, the old uneducated women, functioning largely in the familial round, have their way in the homes, while social distance is abridged in public contexts. The high castes—insofar as the Ramgarhias may be said to represent them — see in this

TABLE 11.2

UNTOUCHABILITY: AXES FOR CHANGE

	Balmikis	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*	*Total*
1. Surface/depth	4	5	—	9
2. In public/at home	2	2	1	5
3. Politics/otherwise	2	—	—	2
4. Young/old	4	3	2	9
5. Men/women	3	1	1	5
6. Town/village	1	2	2	5
7. Sikh/Hindu	1	1	1	3
8. Educated/uneducated	1	—	2	3
	—	—	—	—
	18	14	9	42

a precipitate decline in the precipitate decline in the practice of untouchability; the Harijans notice here an inconsistency, if not hypocrisy.

The number of persons in the various items is so small that the data can only be taken as suggestive for larger surveys. We notice, however, that age is perceived to be an axis for change by as many as nine men (item 4), underlining the importance of generational turnover in normative change (§ 3.1). Then there is the *low* salience of educattion (item 8): it may be covered partly by the age axis, for the young happen to be the more educated too; but it may also be that the content and the experience of education do not exercise an autonomous influence on intercaste relations.

Item 5 suggests that Modelpur's male and female subcultures are distinctive, especially concerning untouchability: this is consistent with the fact that the town's women participate in very few occupations outside the home: teachers in women's institutions, nurses in the hospital, sweepers, some factory workers and very little else.[9] From the hurly-burly of public political activity, certainly, they have kept safely apart.

[9]Late in 1969 a woman was appointed Deputy Commissioner for the district which covers Modelpur, but she lived at the district headquarters some 50 km away, and I did not meet her. The Ramgarhia College used to be coeducational but, in 1969, it established a separate wing for women. The direction of change in this area is far from being strong and clear.

Q. 26b asked specifically for *explanations* for the decline (or persistence) of untouchability, and many of these go beyond identifying the axes of change. I have grouped most of these explanations into four categoriess; the first two concern the *decline* of the practice:

1. *pressure from above:*
because the higher caste people are more educated now;
because of changing high-caste ideology: pollution is not inherited, it can be washed off; history textbooks say that the caste system has weakened India traditionally; pressure for "secularism"; the Congress ideology and the new laws;
informant's preference.

All these responses reflect the diverse modes of influence of changing norms at the national level; pressures arising in the day-to-day transactions locally come next:

2. *pressure from below:*
untouchability is not practised where high caste interests are at stake: their need votes, or their need for help from a Harijan man (who may be a government official);
because Harijans are militant on this issue;
because the Harijan occupations are changing (and bring them into egalitarian with the high castes).

3. *existential:*
the social distance between the Harijans and the high castes is due to the differential in resources they control;
Harijans in villages are not organized: there and elsewhere their self-images have unchanged;
Harijans' education is low.

These responses link the continuance of untouchability with certain prevailing attributes of the social scene; but the next category charges the high castes with hostile intent:

4. *high-caste hostility:*
in the high castes' view, the innate characteristics of the lower castes persist; the high castes are reluctant to concede equality to the Harijans; they try to maintain their social distance with the Harijans.

After this long preamble, let us consider the data (Table 11.3): Normative pressures, seen to be important in all three castes, appear to the Ramgarhias to be influencing the situation overwhelmingly; but the Harijans give just as much credit to their own capacity to enforce their civil rights, employing a variety of local pressures. Further, since most Ramgarhias believe—or at least say — that

TABLE 11.3

EXPLANATIONS OF UNTOUCHABILITY

Explanations of:	*Balmikis*	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
decline			
pressure from above	7	4	16
pressure from below	6	9	3
Persistence			
existential	1	3	—
high-caste hostility	5	3	1

untouchability is declining, they do not seek to explain its persistence. The Harijans, especially the Balmikis, attribute it to high-caste hostility much more than to the existential situation.

To sum up: macro-level normative pressure is widely seen to affect untouchability locally. Through reverse discrimination and other means, it has also stimulated some structural changes, among them the reservation of certain political and administrative roles for Harijans alone, and entry into them facilitates personal "success." Most mobile Harijans, however, discount the bureaucrats' and the politicians' helpfulness, individually in their own careers or collectively for the whole caste (Chapter 7).

The structural changes, however, also enable the Harijans to be militant and coercive, to generate "pressure from below," at certain points in the social process. In public contexts they can exact reductions in social distance and this, perhaps, provokes among some high-caste people a measure of hostility and a resolve to keep their distance at least in the private realm.

Several earlier findings receive support from the data concerning a Harijan's acceptability as a resident in high-caste areas (Qs. 27a and 27b). The general impression from Table 11.4 (items 1 to 4) is that the boundaries around these areas are *somewhat permeable* for the Harijans: to some, the neighbourhoods appear to be wide open, to others, closed in varying measure. Though the question concerned *renting* a house, at least some of the responses were judgements of ability to *buy* one. Transient government servants apart, most people in our three castes live, howsoever modestly, in houses owned by their families; and therefore the need to

TABLE 11.4

ON A HARIJAN RENTING A HOUSE IN A PRESTIGIOUS NEIGHBOURHOOD

	Balmikis	*Ad Dharmis*	*Ramgarhias*
A. *Can he rent one*?			
1. Yes, easily, always	2	9	3
2. Chancy; with influence	5	3	9
3. Difficult; have to hide his caste	7	3	1
4. Rarely, never	4	2	2
	—	—	—
	18	17	15
B. *What would help him do so*?			
5. His being clean	2	2	6
6. His having wealth or social standing	11	4	2
7. Other elements	2	2	—
	—	—	—
	15	8	8
C. *Explanations for his acceptability (or not)*			
8. No particular handicaps for them	—	3	7
9. HC prejudice, will to keep social distance	6	2	3
10. Harijans' poverty	5	2	—
11. Others	1	1	2
	—	—	—
	12	8	12

rent is uncommon. As we have seen, however, several Harijans in Modelpur have built or bought houses in relatively prestigious multicaste areas.

The neighbourhoods, then, are only partially closed: what, in our informants' opinion, would help a Harijan in renting a house? Items 5-7 summarize the sharp difference of opinion across the fence of untouchability; whereas the high castes—the Ramgarhias—say that the potential tenant need only be *clean*, the Harijans—especially the Balmikis—give much more weight to wealth (needed to pay either the rent or the cost of purchase or construction) and to social standing (as a government official) as elements in one's acceptability to the high castes. Further Ramgarhia comments (item 8) concentrate on why the Harijans have become acceptable neighbours; in contrast the Harijans concentrate on what keeps them out of the multicaste areas: the high castes' prejudices, their wish to keep the Harijans at a distance, and the Harijans' own poverty and inability to afford the high rents (items 9 and 10).

CHAPTER XII

Conclusions

12.1 THE THREE CASTES

"The sociological essence of the industrial revolution," Harold Gould argues (1970:55), is "the removal of occupations from the context of kin groups and their relocation in bureaucratic groups." This happens within the overarching framework of a state system which always accommodates a widely differentiated array of occupations and occupational groups. The proper study of peasants in their villages, says Gould, would take them to be *one* of the complex of occupations within the state system rather than as a society apart. Membership in the peasantry has been hereditary, recruitment taking place via the kin group. In the urban-industrial setting, "population-sorting by occupation" follows procedures relying rather on "demonstrated abilities." These new, non-hereditary occupational categories loom larger and larger in the changing social reality, and therefore "the proper units of investigation for anthropology ... are not communities *qua* communities, but occupational categories set in the context of different types of communities and integrated into a system of social stratification."

In this perspective Gould proceeds to discuss several occupational categories—peasants in Sherupur village and, in Lucknow city, certain sorts of manual workers, university students, and business and professional elites—analysing, among other things, the castes of origin of those who appear in his samples in the various categories. This monograph has built upon a complementary perspective. The caste groups, bounded by heredity, and their interrelations did traditionally canalize much of social relations both within and between castes and, in varying measures,

this continues to this day, even in urban centres. Yet, a great many people in a great many castes have moved into new industrial and bureaucratic occupations: in this study I have followed people moving out of three caste groups, considered the occupations into which they moved, and the larger society's changing balance of resources and handicaps as these pertain to their mobility.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries, we found, brought to the *Ramgarhias* substantial early opportunities, addressed to their traditional skills in wood and metal. Over the decades the range of their experiences, of technical skills, and of wealth grew, but it was only after independence that they could enter industrial entrepreneurship within Punjab, harnessing this entire range of resources for entrepreneurial achievement. As against the early British appreciation of their skill as *artisans*, Jat landowners had resisted the Ramgarhia aspirations for social standing; but the latter found considerable political support for entrepreneurial effort during the 1950s and later. Their earlier search for social recognition, commensurate with their new wealth, had meanwhile led them to build a substantial educational complex in Modelpur.

The *Ad Dharmis* were the most numerous of my three castes and, in recent decades, they have made modest but wide-ranging gains in politics, in education and bureaucracy, and in industry. The changing contours of the national industrial scene took their traditional occupations of weaving and shoemaking out of their hands; casting around for something else, they saw growth occurring in light engineering industry where the Ramgarhias had preceded them. The Ad Dharmis' tradition of manual dexterity probably helped them learn the skills with metal; and when, in recent years, they tried on the entrepreneur's role, sometimes they brought to it some experience as traders, in cloth or animal products, and the nature of light engineering industry allowed them to build gradually, even on very small beginnings. In industry, as in the other domains, their numbers have been an advantage, bringing in not only casstemates as apprentices and workers but also some politically controlled resources as every political party has sought their support. The industrial success of some enlarged the range of their skills and consciousness, giving their

cousins an edge over other Harijans, principally the Balmikis, when competing in other domains, such as the reserved govern mental job quotas.

Changes in the national industrial sceene have not, however, disturbed the *Balmikis* much occupationally. Urban growth may have *increased* the per capita demand for scavenging; and its increased material rewards, and the strong competition in alternate work, enable scavenging to hold on to the next generation too. Far fewer Balmikis than Ad Dharmis have to break into new occupations, and for such efforts at occupational change, support within the caste is relatively weak. Those who try new occupations often meet with persistent, derogatory stereotypes in the wider society and, being fewer, they draw little support that is politically controlled. The Balmiki record in modern occupations, in and around Modelpur, consequently remains quite unspectacular.

The reader will recall our point of departure, namely, that one's experience of mobility is a function, in part, of one's castes' rank in the ritual hierarchy. It is clear in retrospect that the mobility experiences in Modelpur have been influenced not so much by the caste *rank* as by its hereditary occupation, and the new opportunities coming its way, which gave it a particular mix of resources and handicaps in a changing economic and political setting.[1] In Modelpur's circumstances, the capacity of the three caste groups to build on those resources did rise with caste rank, but we argued that such an association, plausible in Modelpur, may have been fortuitous, without general validity (pp. 150-57).

Our enquiry has also shown distinctive social styles to be associated with the mobility efforts of each of the three castes in Modelpur. Taking caste solidarity and opportunistic links with social networks as analytically separable mobility strategies, we notice that the group is the intended unit of mobility in the first

[1]If hereditary occupations have shaped the complex of motivation and ressources needed for mobility in the past, and if occupations have been the focus of intra-caste differentiation in the recent past, there may be advantage in centring future studies of mobility upon the family, rather than the caste, as the unit of enquiry (Andre Beteille; oral comment).

and the individual in the second strategy. The ambitious man resorts to one or the other (or a mix), depending on his estimate of the likely situational pay-offs; but ass we ascend the lower rungs of Modelpur's caste hierarchy, if I may use that phrase, we find that the importance of caste solidarity declines and that of social networks increases.

Almost everyone interviewed places a high value on "unity" but the term was given a variety of meanings. The Balmikis continue to feel surrounded by strong fences both physical and social. Internally, they maintain effective organizations: the Municipal Sweepers' Union, institutionalized mutual aid, and various activities centred on the Balmiki temple. Their investment in these organizations echoes their emphasis on militancy in support of their rights, which have to be wrested both from the general public, whose derogatory stereotypes assail them and from the municipal committee, which employs so many of them.

Compared with the Balmikis, it has been easier for the Ad Dharmis to cross both the physical and the social fences and their vertical, multicaste links are becoming stronger. Though most of them live in caste neighbourhoods, they are fragmented politically and their mutual aid mechanisms are weaker than the Balmikis' Ad Dharmi students in college show considerable interest and involvement in each other as do the entreprenuers; and they believe that caste solidarity would bring them electoral success, but such solidarity continues to be elusive.

Ramgarhia experience of mobility has been spread over much greater time depth, and the implications of comparing the nature of their own solidarity in different periods converge with those of comparing it among the three castes contemporaneously. During the nineteen twenties, the thirties, and the forties the wider society, and especially the dominant landowing Jats, entertained strong, adverse stereotypes about them, raising social, if not physical barriers around them; almost all of them did live in caste exclusive neighbourhoods too. Correspondingly, their caste solidarity was high: witness the development of their community organizations including the remarkable educational complex located in Modelpur. As they broke into industrial entrepreneurship during the 1950s, consolidating the thrust during the following decade, the hostile stereotypes dissolved rapidly. They could pay

then for new houses in new, relatively caste-free neighbourhoods of high social standing. Social space expanded for them dramatically, and they have tended to get physically dispersed. Intra-caste mechanisms for mutual aid or corporate achievement, as in building the educational complex, are now being out-weighed by the importance of multicaste links. Though the caste's corporate thrust has lost its force, the educational and other institutions established earlier continue to give them a certain image of caste solidarity which sometimes hides the erosion of solidarity within. Were they united politically, some informants said, it would bring them political success; but given the internal differentiation and competitiveness—and the lack of external hostility—few expect such "unity."

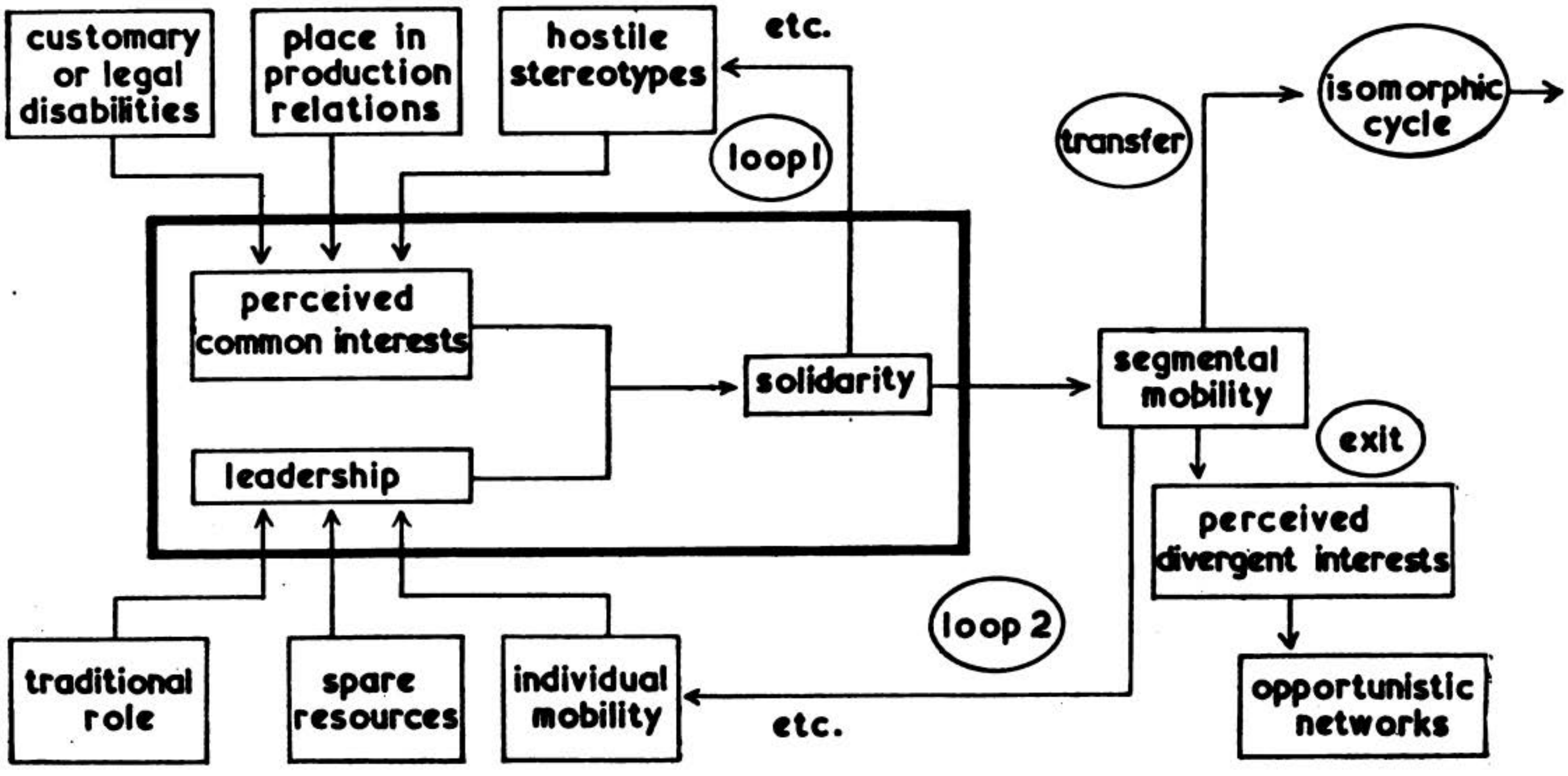
My argument on the determinants of solidarity has centred on caste groups but let us move now into more general terms. Solidarity within a caste or other category is a function (1) of perceived common interests and (2) of these having been articulated and organized (see thick box in Fig. 12.1). The common interests may arise in a shared place in the production system (as in the Balmikis' occupation), in the barriers that one's group-linked hostile stereotypes are perceived to place in one's path (again as for Modelpur's Balmikis), in shared legal or customary disabilities (as, earlier, in the Land Alienation Act for the Ramgarhias), and so forth. My material suggests castes for examples, but identities are a matter of consciousness, and it may be centred on any number of considerations: occupation, religion, political beliefs, or whatever. The second element, leadership for articulating the shared interests, may come from those who had traditional roles of high standing (such as the *ulema* among Muslims in India: see Haq 1972: Ch. 4), from those who have shown their understanding of their times through personal achievement, those who have the muscle to make the organizational effort, and so forth. Our enquiry has revealed individuals and organizations devoted to this task in all three groups: the Balmiki Sabha and the Municipal Sweepers' Union, the Ad Dharmis' Republican Party, and various Ramgarhia associations. Their efforts and exhortations at any one time, however, have to interact

with their changing milieu, and we proceed now to explore the dynamic of the growth, persistance, or decline of solidarity in any group or category.

Let us begin with Loop 1 in Fig. 12.1. Solidarity may be achieved within an ascriptively exclusive group, intensifying social relations within the group and attenuating those which spread out into presumably hostile groups. Such exclusive solidarities lead to, or reinforce, hostile stereotypes which would, in turn, suggest common interests, completing Loop 1 in a cycle of worsening intergroup relations. Persistent, indeed sometimes growing Muslim solidarity vis-a-vis the Hindus even after independence provides Loop 1 a close fit (see Aggarwal 1969b, 1971; Haq 1972: Ch. 3). On the other hand, the perception of common interests tied to such ascriptive groups makes for *discrete* mobilization into caste and religious groups, separating Muslims, the various Harijan castes, and others from each other, and dividing them through hostile mutual stereotypes; this makes it especially difficult for *economic* categories such as the agrarian labourers to be mobilized into large aggregates for political action in their own interests (see Mitra 1974:45).

Where a large enough group achieves solidarity for collective action, including political bargaining, it may be able to secure increased mobility opportunities for its members. When these concern higher education, job quotas, ministerships, and so forth, only a few of the group's members may seize them. Whether or not solidarity persists then would depend on the continuing perception of common interests by those who have, and those who have not, been mobile, and the continuing acceptability of common leaders. Insofar as the segmental mobility throws up successful men, able to provide leadership—or to spare resources—for mobilizing, say, their caste groups, this would heighten the caste's solidarity. The Ramgarhia and the Nadar experiences during the early 20th century (Ch. 6 above; Hardgrave 1969: 202ff) belong to Loop 2. Segmental mobility may, however, lead the different segments to begin to perceive cleavages in their respective interests and, as the more recent Nadar and Ramgarhia experiences show, the formerly cohesive group may then begin to fall apart, individual energies may then go not into building up caste solidarity, as in Loop 2, but

Fig. 12·1: Solidarity & Networks



in seeking to shed caste ties and to enter opportunistic networks (exit in Fig. 12.1).

I have ssuggested that segmental mobility is linked with occupational differentiation within a group, such as a caste. The consequent divergence of interests, I argued, may persuade one to seek networks opportunistically but, given appropriate leadership, one may also come to perceive a new commonality of interests—say with agrarian labourers or university teachers rather than with castemates. Such a development entails a "transfer" into a cycle isomorphic with the one we began with, in the thick box. Such "transfers" may be partial, allowing one to belong to several cycles simultaneously; these may be repeated, as one's interests change; and one may transfer back to a cycle abandoned earlier.

Whether the mobility opportunities, stimulated perhaps by a group's solidarity, lead to its growth, persistence, or decline, follows, then, from an aggregation of individual calculations of advantage one way or the other.

12.2 THE CASTE SYSTEM AND UNTOUCHABILITY

Both the caste hierarchy and its ideological supports, we noticed in the first chapter, have in Punjab been relatively soft, and been softened further in recent decade. In the domestic matter of endogamy, change may have been limited to a certain enlargement of subcaste boundaries, but in the public matter of work, the modern occupations have opened up to all castes, not only in law, as applies to all India, but also in practice, as revealed in our data. Rather more Ad Dharmis and Ramgarhias have departed from—or greatly modified—their hereditary occupations, but fair numbers of Balmikis too have done so. If many Balmikis continue in scavenging, it is due more to its rising wages and to their lags in the more competitive arenas than to pollution-linked disabilities as such. Despite the occupational mobility, however, fair numbers of Ad Dharmis continue to work with leather, and the Ramgarhias with wood or, even as industrialists, with metal; in these cases, a certain residual inherited element survives in occupations.

One of my thrusts has centred on the area of hierarchy, stereo-

types, approved interaction between castes, and Harijan civil rights—issues concerning a middle order of intimacy, where Modelpurias show wide variation in belief and behaviour. Over all, the high castes are moving from a belief in *inherited pollution* to one in *occupational pollution*, reducing the social distance kept from a harijan in a modern occupation. Some of them might go so far as to observe only *episodic pollution*, allowing even a scavenger, after a clean up, to enter close social relations, but only a few act in this manner yet.

Compared to other areas of India, this marks a major change in the high castes' beliefs and actions. Yet their relations with Harijans are turbulent. On various issues affecting their life chances, the Harijans perceive hostile intent and actions on the part of the high castes, but the latter—appearing in these pages as the Ramgarhias—tend not to be aware of these Harijan perceptions. The turbulence arises in a certain abrasive assertiveness on the part of some Harijans, contesting the pervasive high-caste dominance and control; and their pressure from below adds to the pressure from above, arising in the constitution, legislative decisions, and administrative allocations, inducing new cultural patterns, cleansed increasingly of the taint of pollution, especially of the inherited sort.

How has declining pollution affected the Harijans' integration with the larger society? Residentially, we found that, crossing the boundaries of caste neighbourhoods, they may move into new, high-status neighbourhoods; but one has to travel either with a successful entrepreneur's affluence or with a civil servant's white-collar status and discretionary resources. While the possibility of this movement is interesting, it is, and is likely to remain, sporadic.

What about residential interchange between the neighbourhoods of the Balmikis, the Ad Dharmis, and the other poor? We have noticed earlier that the lower castes' "sense of community" tends to be centred on their *caste*, not on all Harijans, let alone their *class* boundaries. Consequently, their mutual stereotypes and antagonisms continue to be strong, so that in fact the question we have asked does not arise. Whereas there is some governmental effort to remove the harijans' public disabilities, there is no attack whatever upon these divisive antagonisms

among the Harijans. Their contribution to the lack of *internal* political mobilization among the poor and the propertyless was noted earlier; but the relationship is circular. The socialist and communist movements have remained weak in Punjab, and so the old lines separating many of the lower castes from each other remain strong while those between the high castes, involved vigorously in new economic and cultural activities, have been getting erased.

This is much to the high castes' advantage, as they are able thus to expand greatly the social space available to them and more or less to preempt the key political roles—even in relation to Harijans (Mitra 1974; Bipan Chandra 1974; Verba *et al.* 1971: 145). Divided thus, the lower castes and the other poor cannot develop the class consciousness which might encourage them to challenge the inequalities of Indian society; leaving the divisions untouched suits the interests which are dominant today.[2] Consequently the residential separation of the Balmikis from the Ad Dharmis is unlikely to be disturbed.

Numerous other institutions, and associated beliefs and behaviour, give evidence of continuing, and sometimes growing, integration between the Harijans and the larger society. Even such caste institutions as the Balmiki temple and the Ad Dharmi gurudwara draw abundantly from the store of idiom, gesture, and symbol associated with the larger society; but the harijans can also feel more or less at home in such institutions as the Vishvakarma Mandir, the Radha Soami Satsang, the schools, and the political parties. If in these respects Modelpur and Punjab are more open than other parts of India, as many Harijans think, we have to recall the relative softness earlier of the caste system there and the associated Harijan ability to enter new roles, especially entrepreneurial ones.

Harijan integration into the larger society, into its framework of roles and institutions, may be growing; and given the general status destabilization, many Harijans have moved into roles of relatively high standing. As Gould (1970: 72-73) and others note, however, their "economic, educational, nepotic, and status

[2]In Merton's terms, the functional relationship here may be latent rather than manifest (1957).

resources" have been far fewer than those of the high castes, and on balance the Harijans are becoming integrated into the *lower* social strata. Their occupations, incomes, and other indicators of social standing continue to be low; correspondingly, their self-esteem carries, for most, the mark of impotence and of inability to influence the forces whch shape their lives.

A few Harijans do enter the legislatures. Like other politicians they too mediate between the officials and the public and try to use the influence so gained to place themselves in line for whatever politically controlled resources are going. Functioning in a framework of patronage politics, the Harijan legislators seek at best to advance the interests of their more fortunate caste constituents, such as those who are already educated, have good jobs, or have otherwise risen well above most of their castemates (Dushkin 1972:211). The measures for reverse discrimination, by taking care of the potentially more articulate, manage to remove the latter from the leadership of the underprivileged; and the armoury for social control managed by the ruling class thus gets stronger (Dushkin 1972: 226).

12.21 Strategy for Social Change

Let us reappraise, in this context, the argument between "the gradualist" and "the militant" over the optimal strategy for removing the disabilities of the lower castes. According to the gradualist, if they seek directly to abridge the social distance between them and the higher castes, the latter resist it more than they resist Harijan advance in education or politics; so his strategy would begin with the Harijans' education, preparing them for political articulation, and deferring such relationships as inter-dining or even intermarriage. Since the Harijans themselves accept the idea of untouchability so often, it is said, it is idle to expect them to force the pace much, and in any case they would advance most when the high castes do not find this threatening.[3]

[3]T.K. Oommen, who has restated this position explicitly (1968), also declares his own preference for "persuasive and democratic" means over "coercive and totalitarian" ones (1969b). This coupled contrast is strange since many combinations are possible beneath the rhetoric of political manifestoes.

But more "education," associated job quotas, elections to legislatures and the like, as we have seen, invoke the politics of patronage which the ruling groups employ to control the Harijans. Furthermore, the aspirations of the subjugated would not threaten only if pitched below a certain threshold; and the prevailing thresholds are low enough that the gradualist strategy may permit the sort of token mobility these pages have analysed for the Balmikis, and even the Ad Dharmis, but is quite unequal to the Harijans' central problems of poverty and impotence.

The gradualist position goes back at least as far as Gandhi and was expressed in the differences between him and Ambedkar over the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Ambedkar wanted the untouchables to control and direct its activities; Gandhi saw it rather as an organization for the high castes to expiate their past sins. Where the high castes expiate their sins or control a programme for the Harijans' education or election to legislatures, clearly the entrenched interests call the shots, the subjugated classes do not learn the means to contest their dominance.[4] For this latter, the oppressed have to understand the mechanisms of their oppression, to develop the internal capacity to resist injustice, and the ability, *through mutual support*, to challenge the inequities of the society that subjugates them. This needs a new worldview, a new mazeway in Wallace's terms (1961: 143-56), an altered view of their capacity to influence the shape of their society.[5]

The challenge to the dominance of the oppressing strata, implied in the foregoing, would lead to status disruption, and a wide array of social experience—and of sociological theory—witnesses the positive overall consequences of such disruption (see Sec. 3.23). This is clear even from its modest influence in Modelpur. Pressure from below has enabled Harijans to force the purity-pollution syndrome into retreat; in earlier decades, we have argued, it was the ambibuities of the Ramgarhias' status that

[4] Ambedkar (1945: Chs. 5 and 10) has stated his part of the argument clearly. Gandhi's position has to be inferred from his writings during 1932-33 (Gandhi 1972). The part Gandhi was willing to allot to the Harijans in this regard appears to have been a fair example of his overall sociopolitical vision and style (Bipan Chandra 1972).

[5] Shukla (1968 and 1969) has outlined the militant strategy in response to Oommen.

enabled them to work their way into industrial entrepreneurship. My interpretation of the Ramgarhia experience suggests that Everett Hagen's model (1962), placing "the *withdrawal* of status respect" causally to the onset of industrialization, is too limited and that "the *conferral* of status respect" on the hitherto oppressed can be expected to have similar effects (see Saberwal 1975b). In another framework, Smelser and Lipset advocate "the massive introduction of institutions that upset normal status definitions" (1966: 44) in order to induce the kinds of personality orientations that would underlie economic development.

12.3 FACETS OF AN URBAN CENTRE

This study has considered several sociological issues in an urban setting: the modes of mobility, the course of intercaste relations, and political culture. I proceed now to develop some related issue bearing upon urban centres.

12.31 Entrepreneurship and the Traditional Order

Modelpur is now a large town. Early in the 1930s, it entered industry with some light engineering work, and since then, people with diverse social backgrounds have made their way into industrial entrepreneurship. I have suggested that industrial enterprise, if on a modest scale, has become endowed with various positive values, and has entered the town's cultural focus.

Modelpur does have some "old" families which have been more or less prominent in its affairs for two or three generations, but they are greatly outnumbered by those who have, within the past generation, grown from small beginnings. Their achievement, as industrial capitalists, is widely seen to embody their own hard work, occasionally supplemented with political patronage. They have been appropriating the "surplus value" of course, but Modelpurias take this for granted. They accept private capitalism as the more or less inevitable entrepreneurial style, and only some trade unionists—exposed to snippets of Marx—would question this. In this early capitalism, besides, Modelpurias have witnessed several profligate entrepreneurs who have lost their fortunes in elections or in various pursuits of pleasure. Those who have husbanded the capitalist mode, dis-

ciplining themselves and harnessing their resources, consequently command the townsmen's respect, however grudgingly given, except where the initial capital came from such activities as smuggling people into England.

The industrialists' success is not attributed to their *karma*, the tally of merit from earlier lives—scarcely surprising when their actions in this life are so transparently consequential. The capitalist mechanism has not, however, stood alone in undermining key traditional ideas. We noticed the old influence of the Sikh and the Arya Samaj traditions and the new one from governmental and other public sources, bringing at least a few Harijans out of their exclusive neighbourhoods—occupationally, residentially, and even sometimes socially. But the new setting, growing more complex in institutions and resources, also provides opportunities for novel, informal alignments of men and their interests in informal networks. Working through informal networks, as much as working in industrial enterprises, would seem to have entered the town's cultural focus. The setting nurtures all sorts of networkers; but their opportunism is no more respectful of the pre-existing social formations that is industrial capitalism, and they too serve to undermine the traditional order. Insofar as the networker's successes require that the norms of public integrity be weak and easily compromised, however, these serve also to abort the rational-legal order which, many had hoped, would take the place of the traditional order.[6]

12.32 Harijans and Alienation

Our evidence concerning the decline in Modelpur of the traditional order, of the caste system, of its religious supports, and of caste solidarity—except under the special circumstances discussed earlier—can be taken to be conclusive. Among other things, this has made it possible for some men of the lower castes to be mobile. They have been our principal concern, and it is appropriate to ask how their mobility affects their relationships with various groups.

[6] These issues are discussed at some length in Saberwal 1974. Owing to a misunderstanding, this piece has been published in its unrevised first draft. I expect to elaborate the argument later.

The Harijan students' relationship to their natal neighbourhoods I characterized as one of alienation, but the issue can be pushed further. Given their educational experience, the consumption standards imbibed in the high-caste-dominated colleges, the ever-so-modest enlargement of their social universe, and the direction of their aspirations for the future, a cleavage arises between Harijan students and their neighbours, and the sentiments of community which would traditionally have tied them together come under strain.

The foregoing can be brought under conceptual control by considering this set of data alongside Gore's work on the Aggarwal family in Delhi. Comparing the rural with the urban attitudes towards membership in the joint family, Gore notes the strong preference for the joint family, with only marginal differences between the ruralites and the urbanites (1968: 11-14); the differences arise over the *reasons* given for preferring the joint to the nuclear family. These fall into two categories: (1) the joint family's "value as a system of social security": "the care of the widow, the orphan, the aged, and other dependent groups" and the "lower overheads on the costs of housing, kitchen expenses, and other needs"; and (2) "its value as a 'primary group' — a system of affective relations" (1968: 121). If we call these categories "interests" and "sentiments" respectively, Gore shows that the urbanites' attachment to the joint family rests more on interests and less on sentiments than that of the ruralites; in a context of physical and social mobility, the Aggarwals' shared *interests* continue to incline them towards joint families even when the strength of their positive mutual *sentiments* is declining (1968: 121-22).

Ascriptive groups may, then, hold together with ties either of interest or of sentiment. Among Modelpur's Harijans, it is when a *whole* sibling group can move over from its hereditary to modern occupations that its members can continue to maintain shared interests, a capacity for mutual support, and a sense of belongingness—at least to their "family." Several levels of belongingness and alienation may usefully be distinguished here.

To start with, where occupational mobility brings about a significant divergence of interests, within caste or within a family,

a cleavage may appear, separating the mobile from the immobile, and alienating them from each other. We identified this as a condition of Individual Status Dissonance (p. 33f), marked by tension and unease between kinsmen and castemates. If the mobile happen to be few, unable to raise adequate emotional support for each other, they might not be able to develop a sense of belongingness even with their mobile castemates, increasing the general sense of alienation further. Neither shared interests nor shared sentiments may remain to bind them much to kinsmen or castemates.

Nor can the mobile man count on passage into the social stratum encompassing his new occupation. In a highly integalitarian and culturally stratified society, such passage requires a certain social capital, by way of social relations with members of this new stratum, and cultural capital, residing in the nuances of language, conversation, dress, and so forth. Lacking such capital, he would find the new stratum cool, if not frigid, to his advances. In discussing migration to urban areas, Ashish Bose has spoken of the "push back factor" (1973: 7): given the inhospitality of the new setting, the mobile man is pushed back into the area of his origin. It denies him the sense of belonging to the new stratum, and if he has become alienated from his family and his caste too, feelings of great loneliness and isolation can besiege him.

To his isolation and loneliness, the mobile man may respond in several ways. He may return to his family and his caste, underplaying the cleavage and supporting his kinsmen and castemates in *their* mobility efforts; ties with men already mobile would be sought particularly keenly. Thus would arise Loop 2 of Fig. 12.1. Or he may concentrate on the social and cultural capital needed for entering the new stratum, trying to "pass" as a high-caste man, and meanwhile living a double life (Isaacs 1965: 143-49). For a successful family, the turn of a generation may in any case bring the requisite sociocultural capital through education, the previous generation's experience of modern occupations, maybe residence in a caste-free neighbourhood, and so on. The transition may be accelerated through fortuitous ties with high-caste men who, having shed the ideas of inherited pollution, may look kindly upon the upwardly mobile. Such acceptance

may sometimes follow the influence of social movements with a high political or emotional content, such as the Communist Party, the Radha Soami Satsang, or even the RSS. The upwardly mobile would thus be integrated selectively into a part of the new stratum.

This brief discussion of some general processes characteristic of our urban society may conclude by noting the relatively open, unstructured manner of this study overall. In trying to comprehend a town's society and culture, one may enlarge one's frame of enquiry, gradually or in quantal jumps, taking partially understood phenomena into one's focus as earlier enquiries reach a closure. This general approach raises several questions of strategy and tactics, and these were considered at some length in an earlier analysis (Saberwal 1975a).

12.4 CONCEPTUALIZING THE TRANSFORMATION

In opening this volume I indicated my desire to explore the processes underlying the transformation of Indian society from one with hierarchically organized corporate caste groups to a relatively open society stressing individual attributes. Our analysis has shown it to have been a many-layered structural change, shaped by a wide range of influences. We sought earlier the processes in specific domains such as politics and intercaste relations, and I move on now to suggest, in conclusion, not a comprehensive model for the overall transformation but some principles which would have to go into such a model.

We notice, first, that these structural changes do not flow from a political mass movement, mobilizing millions—to paraphrase Dahrendorf (1959: Ch. 6), following Weber—into imperatively coordinate activities. The context is one where multiple agencies seek to influence the structure or, rather the overall framework of options available in the society. The principal influences on this framework of options arise from political choices, some major some minor, within the government, leading to legislation, administrative actions, campaigns to influence the normative order, and so forth; and from second order influences flowing from one major choice, namely to industralize and to do so largely under

private capitalism.[7] One major consequence of this latter, inevitably, is to build into the society a mechanism for increasing inequality which, in turn, serves to expand the range of options available to its beneficiaries and sharply to curtail those available to its victims.

It is in this changing framework of options, then, that individuals make their Barthian choices. One does not choose between, say, being "traditional" or being "modern"; rather, one chooses to offer, or not to offer, a cup of tea to a Balmiki official who has come to visit. The choice here may be influenced by the expectation that, denied due hospitality, the official may take umbrage and create some difficulties; it may respond to the exhortations read in the newspaper or heard on radio or at a rally; or it may not be a choice: one may have had Harijan friends since childhood leaving one oblivious of caste differences.

I have begun with a trivial instance. To offer, or not to offer, a cup of tea is a minor choice. The weight of the option grows as one decides whether or not to accept a Harijan as a clerk or a partner in an enterprise, to accept a job with a Harijan employer, or to help a Harijan rent a flat nearby. These choices arise from underlying attitudes and values, and the latter are likely to change as the pattern of one's choices changes; and together these respond both to external influences and to reflection upon the actor's own experience.

If social structure is defined as the totality of the patterns of enduring social relations in a society, the burden of my argument is that, leaving aside the quick, revolutionary reshaping of societies, men change the links in their patterns of social relations *one* at a time, and when "enough" men have changed "enough" links, we are likely to say that "the structure has changed."[8] Raymond Firth's distinction (1951) between "social structure" and "social organization" is dissolved here, and different sorts

[7] To say this is not to deny the rhetoric concerning "socialism" in India which misleads many. Milton Singer's interesting paper, "Industrial leadership, the Hindu ethic, and the spirit of socialism," becomes doubly interesting in view of the absence of the word "socialism," or of anything it might reasonably denote, from the text of this long paper (1972).

[8] For an historian's account of such a transformation, see Kessinger 1974.

of change lie along a continuum between the trivial and the revolutionary.

It is not only the changing pattern of individual choices, however, that would contribute to a perception of structural change; the latter reflects also the death of an old and the rise of a new generation, the latter making choices in terms of the contemporaneous framework of options, relatively unblurred by choices made in earlier years. Generational turnover is one of the more potent mechanisms of social change, and the most neglected, by sociologists if not by social and political activists.

With these notions of structural change go certain explanatory devices which have appeared repeatedly in this monograph. Insofar as the individual has been held to be the principal unit of change,[9] individual attitudes and behaviour, along any analytic dimension, would be spread over a *continuum* as, for example, in orientations towards untouchability (see p. 198ff). The orientations at different points along the continuum may be organized around distinctive principles; if so, one may be able to isolate *ideal types* within the continuum (*ibid.*) Given the common tendency to reduce discrepancies within the repertory of one's behaviours and orientations, one would expect the distribution of individuals along a continuum to peak around the ideal types. Put another way, if enquiry reveals such peaking along a continuum, it should be possible to find distinctive principles corresponding to each peak.

What determines the individual locations along such continua as that concerning orientations towards untouchability? *Prima facie*, we would expect it to be correlated with, perhaps determined by, such personal attributes as the levels of education, income, and occupation, one's distance from one's home area, political involvement, the profile of one's interpersonal orientations, etc. These are issues not of the changing structure of society and of options therein but of variation between individual choices, between role behaviours, and these belong to social psychology.

To return to the explanatory devices. Individual positions along continua are not determined once and for all. In many domains the situation develops cumulatively, one move merging into

[9] Movements such as that of the conversion of the Mahars to Buddhism imply changes in group norms (see p. 30f), but such movements are outside the range of my data and, so, of my explanations.

another in a *spiral* of change (see pp. 145-47, 210). An individual's place along the spiral may indeed be arrested or reversed, but the image of the spiral serves to signal the proximity of the links between the various moves or items in a mutually reinforcing array of resources. It calls attention to the interrelations between what may be thought to be autonomous and unconnected.

To speak of a spiral of change is to employ a simple and very general processual model. On questions of status dissonance (Fig. 3.1), intercaste relations (Fig. 11.1) and the determinants of solidarity (Fig. 12.1), we had to fashion specific models, tailored for particular processes. Here again a model serves to highlight key relationships between determinants and consequences, bringing the analytic thrust into relief.

These processual models have necessarily been culture-bound. This appears to me to be inevitable, for every major culture area carries its own distinctive cultural traditions and social formations. Social processes in India find their grain not only with the inequalities of the caste system but also with the very great secular inequalities which have taken control within the past generation or two (see Saberwal 1974), and this larger setting has often entered our analyses of Modelpur.

Even though culture-bound, we found, on occasion, a convergence between our models and the implications of work elsewhere on other cultures, especially between our analysis of status dissonance and that of Gerhard Lenski and others on status inconsistency (see p. 37f) and of Everrett Hagen on the consequences of "withdrawal of status respect" (see Saberwal 1975b). To generate culture-bound processual models and, comparing these with each other, to move on to more general models might, thus, be a strategy for cross-cultural research especially appropriate to our circumstances in India.

Appendix

The Procedures

The preface took note of the considerations which led me to locate my fieldwork in a Punjabi industrial town. I began the search for such a town vaguely, intending to develop "a sociological model for a district," an attempt at what Douglas (1973:31) would call "*defocussing field research* in the initial stages of a research project." Remembering Richard Fox's work in a small market town in Uttar Pradesh (1967), I hoped that an industrial town of, say 10,000, would allow me *entree* into the distirct. Such a town I found, but not family accommodation in it; Modelpur, a nearby town of about 60,000, however, had plenty of small industry and also adequate accommodation. So I moved in; but the town is an enclave of one district, surrounded by two others: its links with out-of-district cities are far more numerous than with the district headquarters, and therefore I abandoned the search for "a sociological model for a district."

This chapter outlines how I proceeded to delimit my problem of enquiry,[1] the course of subsequent fieldwork, its overall design in retrospect, and how I content-analysed the unstructured responses to the questionnaire in order to proceed with quantitative treatment.

A1 DELIMITING THE PROBLEM

Immediately upon arrival in Modelpur I began to explore the town, both physically and socially, beginning with calls on the local administrators—the Sub-Divisional Officer, the Tehsildar, the Executive Officer of the Municipal Committee, and the Block Development Officer: I explained to them what I hoped to do, contacted various persons they suggested, those whom the latter suggested, and so forth. Thus the municipal Executive Officer had earlier recommended a (modestly qualified) architect for help in finding accommodation; this gentleman helped me in this and also put me on to his cousin, a grocer (who then had our custom), and whose brother was an important figure in town politics; through this brother, in turn, I met another senior Congress leader. The Tehsildar recommended a lecturer

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[1] Saberwal 1975a considers this phase of the fieldwork in greater detail; this chapter takes the overall view, following the treatment in an unpublished paper written for a seminar organized by Surajit Sinha in March 1972.

in the local Ramgarhia College; the latter knew the local Excise Inspector who persuaded one of the Ramgarhia industrialists to host a small "outing" and a dinner to which my wife and I were invited. In this manner my acquaintance with the town grew. The variety of conversations—some generally exploratory, some focused—helped make my gestalts increasingly specific. My diary for the first three months records all this as well as—perhaps more important—a wide range of hypotheses concerning the town's social structure: I was looking for the key perspective which would shape the central theme of my enquiries (see Saberwal 1975a).

Three features of the town drew me: it had been a reserved constituency in the 1969 State elections as well as in 1967; it had a very wide range—in size—of industrial units; and it had a large educational complex bearing the name of the Ramgarhia caste—whose traditional occupation, unexpectedly,had been carpentry and blacksmithy. These seemed to be the town's "high points": readily observable problem areas which made sense both to the townsmen and to me. Exploring them held my emotional involvement, and previous knowledge of the literature told me that the terrain was virgin. Issues in theory, I believed, would emerge ultimately in the broad area I had recently sketched (Saberwal 1969b).

I began my making contacts with all the Harijan candidates in the elections in 1967 and 1969. These interviews sought:

—the candidate's age,
—his caste: one of the eight candidates was a Balmiki (traditionally scavengers) and the others were (Hindu) Ad Dharmis or (Sikh) Ramdasias (traditionally weavers or leatherworkers),
—his father's occupation,
—his own career path: education, occupation, transition into politics, current income and property,
—his own career path: education, occupation, transition into politics, current income and property,
—his electoral history: how selected, strategies in relation to various rivals,
—his allies and adversaries,

This material has been analysed in Chapter 10.

It took only about three months, however, to run out of interesting leads concerning the town's political setting in relation to the reserved constituency. During this period I tried to pursue with some intensity another category of persons: the owners and the managers of several of the town's industrial units. In size these units range *from* the man who runs his lathe from a shaft in someone else's workshop *to* a textile mill employing several thousand workers—part of a very large industrial empire. Responding to this wide range, mostly endogenic, I hypothesized cautiously that factory units of each size would have certain characteristic managerial problems—maybe in finance, technical skill, knowledge of English, or whatever—whose resolution would determine whether the unit could grow further: I wondered whether interviews with entrepreneurs at different levels would reveal these problems and their characteristic sequences. However, as the weeks went by, I discovered that the returns on time spent in getting appointments with the

entrepreneurs were small. My rapport with them was poor, I concluded, and would not improve unless I had a car, a telephone, and a substantial entertainment allowance.

While I explored the foregoing, a variety of other features also came to my attention. My interaction with the politicians, the industrialists, the administrators, the landlady, the grocer, the rikshawallas, my neighbours, and my kinsmen in a nearby city led me to record in my diary what I saw and what I heard from day to day. I reflected on these initial data, sought to explain these to myself, and tried to generalize the explanations in ways that would canalize further enquiry. Interfacing the data with explanations in my diary became central to my procedure in this initial phase, analysed in some detail in Saberwal (1975a).

In sum, I came to formulate a frame of enquiry which would encompass my earlier work with the Harijan political leaders and also a little with the Ramgarhias and with the institutions which bore their name. I posited, briefly, that *although strong aspirations for upward mobility were shared by caste groups at different points in the ritual hierarchy*—and I had had experience of the Balmikis, the Ad Dharmis, and the Ramgarhias—*their real experience of mobility would be a function, in part, of their position in the caste hierarchy*. The proposition had face validity in what I knew of the town already; and the controlled comparisons would generate the explanations needed to account for the variation in the data to be considered.[2] In this context, I could explore the importance of caste solidarity and social networks in goal-seeking behaviour. The prospect of continuing to work with Harijans was especially welcome since the literature concerning them has been quite thin (see the surveys by Sachchidananda, 1971, and Ghanshyam Shah, 1971). Subsequent fieldwork attempted largely to get 20 semi-structured interviews each from the three caste groups; in fact, the pressure of time allowed only 20 Balmiki, 19 Ad Dharmi, and 19 Ramgarhia protocols to be done. I shall return to these interviews below.

A2 STUDYING MOBILITY COMPARATIVELY

The questionnaire I developed for the mobility study was partly unstructured and partly semi-structured (see pp. 249 f). I sought information on the interviewee's father's occupations, his own biography (including career path), his estimate of the major "problems" he had encountered, their solutions, and the influence of his caste on his achievement; a list of castemates whose status had risen—and of those whose had fallen—during the past decade, and the reasons therefor. Whether there was unity in the caste now, whether it was likely in the future; unity in what matters, and the basis for this judgment. How far the high castes practised untouchability, and the Harijans' access to accommodations in high-caste neighbourhoods. A question about the educated men's willingness to "help" castemates.

The interviewees were selected as follows: I had contacts with several men in each

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[2]Cp. Epstein 1962, Gough 1959, Mencher 1966; for covergent problems in a nearby urban centre, Morrison (1972a) devised a somewhat similar procedure independently. See also McLeod 1974.

caste already and began these interviews with those who had clearly been mobile in relation to their traditional caste occupation *and* who were disposed kindly towards me. The list they gave of persons who had risen in the previous decade then led to other interviewees and so forth until my quota for the caste was done. At several points I had to exercise discretion, which I did as follows: about a third of the interviewees had to be students at the highest levels I could find in the caste. The Balmiki and Ad Dharmi elders easily put me on to the advanced students within their own castes. The Ramgarhia elders, surprisingly, knew about very few students in their own caste: I interpreted this as reflecting their dispersal into multicaste neighbourhoods, one's awareness being limited to those in continual interaction. So I sought the help of the authorities in the Ramgarhia colleges. Some of the Ramgarhia student interviewees lived in nearby villages, commuting to college, just as some of the elders in my sample commuted to work from their villages.

Among the elders, if I heard about a person whose mobility pattern was different from that most frequent in his caste, I interviewed him even if he had not been listed by many previously and, given a choice, I deliberately sought to spread my interviewees over different neighbourhoods and over different factions within a caste. Subsequent analysis of the "sociometric" choices showed that I missed only one really prominent man—and that because shortly after I had contacted him he was involved in a shooting incident which injured him seriously and his brother fatally.[3]

Nearly every caste in Punjab has both Hindu and Sikh members. The Balmikis' Sikh cousins are known as the Mazhbi Sikhs, those of the Ad Dharmis as the Ramdasias. The Ramgarhias are Sikhs; their Hindu castemates are Dhimans. When opportunity offered itself, I sought to cover this dimension in my interviews to some extent. Modelpur is said to have very few Mazhbis: I did not interview any. Three Ramdasias appear in my sample of 19. Of my 19 "Ramgarhia" interviewees, two are Dhimans and two others of Sikh parentage have shaved.

Earlier work, done among the Embu of Central Kenya during 1963-64 (Saberwal 1970, 1973a), had sensitized me to the *historical* dimension of social data, and one could scarcely study comparative mobility synchronically (cp. Devons and Gluckman 1964 : 200-201). For the Balmikis and the Ad Dharmis my "historical" data do not go much beyond the interviewees' biographies, and indeed these appear to me to account adequately for the data to be explained. However, the processes which took the carpenter and blacksmith in the village jajmani—the Ramgarhia—to significant industrial entrepreneurship date from the 19th century and earlier; and I was fortunate in hearing about an old gentleman who had for decades been collecting manuscripts on his caste's history—and had written some pamphlets himself. Over several sessions together we prepared a statement of about 15,000 words on Ramgarhia history (Saberwal n.d.). This is an exercise in employing oral historical sources for sociological research (Vansina 1965; Saberwal 1973a), a practice common in African studies.

Concerning the archives, historical research on modern Punjab requires control

[3]Unknown assailants ambushed them during an early morning walk.

over four scripts: Roman, Arabic, Devnagari, and Gurumukhi. Kessinger (1970) has surveyed the very broad range of source materials available. My attempt to gain access to the archives of the former princely state was unproductive. Officials in the Deputy Commissioner's Office believed that the records had been moved to Patiala when PEPSU[4] was formed; I did not pursue the matter further.

A3 PROBLEMS OF RAPPORT

Among the universals of anthropological fieldwork is to begin with a house-to-house census in the community of study: the "natives" can thus watch the anthropologist rather closely while he becomes aware of everyone in the community, apart from learning about household composition and, in quantitative studies, defining the universe for drawing a random sample. This procedure was clearly inapplicable in a town of 60,000, most of it peripheral to my work; being a "native" myself, I aroused little curiosity, and by the time my problem was defined, I had only about six months to go.

Upon arrival in Modelpur with my family, I had moved into a house in a high-caste neighbourhood. This locality would have been neutral for work primarily with industrialists who were dispersed through town. In the comparative mobility study, the Ramgarhias too were so dispersed, but the Balmikis and Ad Dharmis had exclusive neighbourhoods. To have lived in one of these would have improved my rapport with the particular group (but not the other two[5]); furthermore, change of residence midway through fieldwork would have taken too much effort and made me needlessly conspicuous, apart from an alternative place being much less comfortable: I did not even consider the proposition.

My substitute for the census, instead, was to push whatever contacts I had in diverse directions. In weaving these networks perhaps I was being more a Punjabi than an anthropologist! In any case the town's culture allowed such behaviour. The procedure useful early in fieldwork continued to be productive later too. For example, the family of the grocer noted earlier also had a factor's shop in the lier also had a factor's shop in the nearby grain market. The grocer told me about their grain trade and about their relations with the farmers; these relations I could observe when I found an excuse to sit in the factor's shop, and some of this went into my paper on regions (Saberwal 1971: 91-92). The green revolution has multiplied the grain arrivals in the market, and what arrives is much cleaner than previously, thanks to mechanical threshing. The labourers who clean the grain in the market can thus earn very much more. The factor controls this lucrative work, and his family scavenger has the first right to do it. What the grocer told me about this threw some light on social mobility among the Balmikis.

I have noted how the mobility questionnaire set off a chain of interviews. During my first call upon an interviewee, occasionally in the company of a castemate of

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[4]The Patiala and East Punjab States Union, 1948 to 1956.

[5]Conceivably (but less than assuredly), residence with one group might have *alienated* me from the other two, as suggested by Oommen (1969a : 813); but the question will remain open until we have more evidence from urban field experience.

his, I would explain my research and its sponsorship, refer to some prominent previous interviewees, assure him of confidentiality, and respond to whatever queries he raised. In a few casess I was able to proceed with the interview immediately. Others suggested a later date, sometimes checking my credentials meanwhile with their own sources. Long acquaintantce before a reliable interview in depth was not usually necessary. These urban men were themselves moving out of multiplex, affective, and diffuse relationships into simplex, affectively neutral, and relatively specific relationships (see p. 157 ff), and they could take the latter kind of relationship with the anthropologist in their stride. In one exceptional case, the interviewee spent over half an hour questioning my reasons for wanting to confirm his being a Ramgarhia. Subsequently I learned from other sources that he belonged in fact to a less distinguished case; nevertheless, I tried to reach him several times again but was unsuccessful.

Let us now consider the specific problems of rapport with each of the three castes. Apart from the sweeper who worked at our house, my first contact among the Balmikis was with Inder Nath, a candidate in the 1969 elections. I invited him to a meal at our home and went for a meal to his. The grocer mentioned above, who lived in our neighbourhood, advised me that the sweeper who worked at our home should be admitted through a special door and restricted to the area around the latrine. I ignored this advice quietly.[6] Later when Balmiki informants happened to visit my home, we offered them modest hospitality—tea or coffee or a cold drink and, if we happened to have some, a snack—and in a couple of cases I was able to help individuals in a small way.

Among the Ad Dharmis I began with three of the candidates from the 1967 and 1969 elections, and they referred me to others. Within the caste, however, there are some sharp animosities; and as my interviews spread, the warm welcome of a couple of my initial interviewees began to decline somewhat. We have seen that inter-neighbourhood visiting among the Balmikis and the Ad Dharmis is relatively infrequent (pp. 64, 82f), so that interviews in one neighbourhood did not generally facilitate those in another—except by increasing my fund of information, available for building rapport; but an accountant who watched me several times in one workshop, I learned later, gave positive references on me to at least two more of his clients when I contacted them for interviews. I should note the rapport-creating value of one particular question, especially with students, "How did your being a Balmiki [or Ad Dharmi] influence your relations with the high caste boys [or people]?" The question often released a cathartic flow of painful memories, taking my rapport to a new depth and greatly improving the quality of subsequent exchanges.

Among the Ramgarhias I began with a shopkeeper who had rented me an electric

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[6]Did my ability to get away with such wayward behaviour reflect an urban permissiveness? I do not think so. During 1958-59 I worked for Stanley Freed in his study of a village near Delhi, and the high castes there too resigned themselves to his maintaining broad-ranging social—including commensal—relations with the Harijans. To be sure, greater circumspection would have been necessary had my work focused on my high-caste neighbours.

fan and with a couple of key officials in their educational complex. I stressed my interest in history, especially in their recent achievements, and this was usually sufficient to get them started. The exception was my second call on the man who had been involved in the shooting incident (his son—interviewed at his college—had encouraged me to try), and he almost threw me out of his house! I should add that, excepting a Ramgarhia professor in the college, I did not tell them that my frame of enquiry included the Balmikis and the Ad Dharmis also, for I did not wish them to take umbrage at the implied comparison, which might have impaired rapport. Possibly, this tactic of mine was an error. In a neglected but insightful volume George Devereux has argued (1967 : Ch. 21), among other things, that a researcher should seek to learn what he can even from the disturbances caused by his presence. If, in this case, I had revealed my comparative framework to many more of my Ramgarhia informants, possibly *after* completing a particular interview, their reactions may have provided further insight into their identities, intercaste relations, and allied issues.

Let me note here also that, in a dispersed field of enquiry such as this, one has to contend with unexpected closures by informants. Thus I had two superb interviews with an important figure in the town's major political faction although, he told me, some of his associates had objected to his lack of inhibition with me. After the second interview, however, I was unable to talk with him again. My hunch is that his associates had mentioned the matter to the faction's leader, Amar Singh, who had previously frustrated all my attempts to interview *him*, and that Amar Singh had persuaded the other gentleman that in these delicate matters silence was best. Given the spread of the field, one has to become resigned to such closures more readily than one would in a smaller community (cp. Saberwal 1969a).

Participant observation is another universal of anthropological fieldwork. It would be relevant for a town of 60,000 only in studying a compact neighbourhood, club, trade union, or the like.[7] In an enquiry such as mine, it could at best supplement more deliberate ways of generating data. During informal visits, formal interviews, shopping in the market, travelling in bus or train, I tried to be alert to unexpected events and their significance: much of my "case material" arose in this manner. Also, the use of "social networks" in goal-seeking behaviour is most common among the high castes in Modelpur. I did not focus on them, yet my analysis of these networks is based primarily on such unplanned data.[8]

A4 THE LATTICE DESIGN

As a social anthropologist, inclined to take the "holistic" view, I sought to place particular observations in their larger context, both in contemporary society and

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[7]Cp. Beteille's proposal (1970) for work on "clerks and skilled manual workers" in Calcutta.

[8]I should add that I was interested not so much in the networks' particular texture—which would have necessitated tracing them through other institutional settings—as in their consequences for inequalities, stratification, access to resources, etc. My procedure allowed some insight in this direction.

in history. Initial interviews with the industrialists helped delineate the town's industrial structure; against this backdrop, I could see the balance of exogenic and endogenic enterprises, the move of leather-workers into lathework, and related issues clearly. I interviewed upwardly mobile lower-caste men, but they were also knowledgeable about their declining and immobile castemates, their caste's history, its contemporary internal social organization, whatever new occupations they were engaged in, etc. Then there were the mobile men's new associates: colleagues in trade unions or in the municipal committee, or the high-caste politicians who *selected* the Harijan candidates for the reserved constituency, or the countless high-caste men in myriad relationships with my interviewees. Limitations of time allowed me only to sample these various categories as I went along. I did not plan the details with much deliberation: it just happened this way, but let us review what I did in somewhat formal terms.

This was a complex society (complex in the number of roles distinguished formally), with great internal inequalities (especially of power and wealth, see § 10.3) and changing with some speed. To apprehend the key forces in it I had to be able to learn about it from many different points in it; and to economize on time and effort, I had to maximize the social space explored per interviewee. A relatively simple society, distinguishing fewer roles and often brief in its cultural content, may reveal its contours adequately through interviews in depth with a small number of informants (e.g. Saberwal 1970); in a complex, stratified, changing community, such as Modelpur, the number of informants must be much larger. They would also have to be dispersed physically through the community, but it might be adequate to interview most of them for only a few hours each.

To establish rapport during fieldwork one develops a personal network; and as one's links grow, one can reach many different kinds of interviewees. An interview explores the interviewee's permitting data to be cross-checked—and informants to be evaluated—in limited measure but rather economically. This way of doing fieldwork in an urban or other large social unit I call *the lattice design*. Choosing one's interviewees purposefully, one can build a large lattice. I worked with upwardly mobile men of the lower castes: politicians, industrial entrepreneurs, teachers, bureaucrats, etc.; and mobile men, who participate in multiple spaces, permit one to build a large lattice economically. The *lattice* denotes the social space explored in interviews; one's *networks* are the social relationships which link one to the interviewees, the *nodes* in the lattice.

A5 DATA ANALYSIS

All the interviews were done by me in Punjabi. To write them out in long hand during interviews, I found, taxed my interviewees' patience excessively. Slowly, I started, instead, to take brief notes during the interview and to write up the material (in English) as soon thereafter as other commitments permitted: occasionally the time lag was as large as 48 hours. In my judgment, the brief notes provided me with adequate prompting for interview recall, and I rate the accuracy of my record to be very high. I should add that though Punjabi is my first language, I can read or write it only haltingly. In this direction a general assistant, provided me by my sponsors, was helpful.

The notebooks I used had 33 lines to a page, and the text on one such page fitted exactly into a foolscap page typed by my assistant. About once a week I went over the notebook, establishing the following controls:

Table of contents: A cronological analysis listing the interview date, page numbers, informant's name, and topics discussed in the particular interview.

Analytic index: As the fieldnotes grew, I began to isolate the major themes and subthemes, giving each a 5"x8" card, and keeping the cards in a visible card file. On each card emerged a variable number of categories reflecting the quality and the quantity of data on the particular theme. The "categories" were, sometimes, merely lists of names—say, the candidates at an election—or of events—say, a series of elections; sometimes these were more abstract. The categories on the "caste system" card include: the names of several castes, orientations towards caste system, Hindu-Sikh boundaries, public meeting condemning the Shankaracharya, high-caste professionals serving low-caste entrepreneurs, "hereditary untouchability" gives way to "personal uncleanliness," and so forth. Every week I indexed the fieldnotes on this developing system of categories so that information on any one theme, dispersed through the notebooks, could be assembled readily, during fieldwork and later during analyses for publication.

I returned from fieldwork in mid-December 1969 and, in April 1970, circulated a preliminary, qualitative analysis of a mjaor block of my field data (later published as Saberwal 1972b). The data concerning the reserved constituency were analyzed in Saberwal 1972a. This volume develops these analyses further, along with a quantitative analysis of the questionnaire responses. Since the latter were unstructured, this material was brought to quantitative treatment via content analysis in the following manner:

1. *Summary Cards:* Since one protocol, and even the material for one question, was often spread over several interviews with an informant, I decided to reduce the questionnaire data for each informant to one summary card. The 20cm x 23cm cards had space for each question, and a blank square took the spillover. Closely written on both sides, the cards were adequate to the task. It took me approximately one month to summarize the 58 protocols on these cards.

2. *Data Scanning:* Preliminary data scanning was necessary to devise a framework for the quantitative analysis. For one question at a time, I scanned all the summary cards in order to develop:

a. the dimensions of analysis: the dimensions employed for analysis had to be such as to accommodate the range of data in the interviews. The biographical data, for example, had material on the informant's own and his father's occupation in some depth, and I found it expedient to analyze it—separately for father and son—by (1) the *type* of occupation (Table 7.4), (2) the level of *involvement* in the occupation (Table 7.5), and (3) the *mode of entry* into it (Table 7.7). Insofar as some of these dimensions were identified after the interviews had been completed, or at least after these were begun, sometimes the necessary data were missing for some informants. Where the subsequent analysis did not reveal significant, interpretable variation, I have not reported the data.

b. The range of categories: For each dimension, the data scanning also revealed the range of responses. "One's entry into one's current occupation," for example, could be attributed to: (1) one's hereditary occupation, (2) ties of family and

kinship to key persons, (3) personal non-kin links or networks, (4) political intervention by a patron, (5) contacts made at multicaste, universalistic centres such as the Radha Soami Satsang, (6) open slelectionλn public competition, and then (7) a residual unspecified category (see Table 7.7).

3. *Categories for Coding:* Wherever the scanning pointed towards equivalent, alternate categories, these were sharpened and abridged in order to simplify the analysis.

4. *The Code Book:* Each category for coding was assigned a code number and a code book prepared, listing the dimensions for analysis, the categories for coding, the code numbers, and any decisions for handling particular coding problems. For example, many careers showed multiple occupations: when serial, I coded only the latest one; when concurrent, I coded the most important.

5. *The Coding:* The next step was to code the interview material for each dimension. It took only two double-foolscap sheets (34cm x 43cm), used on, both sides, to accommodate the ratings in all the dimensions for all the informants.

6. *The Tabulation:* Simple counting of the ratings generated a table for each dimension. The tables were prepared on cards (8cm x 13cm or 13cm x 16cm). In most cases the rows referred to the categories for coding and the columns listed Students and Elders separately for each caste.

7. *The Interpretation:* Finally, I examined each table individually and sought to explain the observed variation. At this stage I found it useful to merge several categories for coding into analytic categories as, for example, in table 11.3. These explanations were assembled in a list of Findings. The Tables and the Findings then became the bases for writing the concerned sections, in Chapters 7,9, and 11.

In conclusion, my procedures for fieldwork and data analysis, as for the definition of problems, allowed me to improvise a great deal and to follow the grain of the society I was analyzing. The methodological purist may find many inadequacies in the foregoing; it is my hope, nevertheless, that this study has brought some processes characteristic of urban Punjab into relief.

A6 SOCIAL MOBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I

1. Name
2. Father's name, occupation
3. Address
4. Baradari, gotra
5. Age
6. Education
7. Educational, occupational history
8. Public office
9. Current income, property

Part II

21. I have heard that you are one of the important men of your baradari.

21a. What has helped you most n achieving success (mention specific area to help respondent)?

21b. What were your biggest problems?

21c. How did you overcome them?

21d. In your career did you get any specific advantage from being a Balmiki/Ad Dharmi/Ramgarhia?

21e. Had you been an Agarwal, Khatri, or Jat, would you have gone father, the same, or less?

21f. How?

22. 22a. In your baradari in Modelpur, which men have gained in status in the past ten years?

22b. Why?

23. 23a. In your baradari in Modelpur which men have lost in status in the past ten years?

23b. Why?

24. 24a. Is there unity in your baradari now?

24b. In what kinds of actions?

25. 25a. Should there be more unity in your baradari in future?

25b. Why? For what kinds of actions?

25c. Do you think this will happen? Why?

26. 26a. Some people who are Jat, Agarwal, Khatri, etc. believe in untouchability and some do not. In your opinion those practising untouchability are:

—a large majority —about half —a small minority

26b. Why do you say so?

For Balmikis and Ad Dharmis:

27. 27a. If a man of your baradari wanted to rent a house in Model Town, do you think he could do so without difficulty?

—Yes —No —Only by concealing his baradari

27b. Example?

For Ramgarhias (asked *before* asking 26):

27. 27a. If in your neighbourhood there is a vant house, and a Harijan tries to get it on rent, will he get it easily?

—Yes —No —Only by concealing his baradari.

27b. Example?

28. 28a. Some people upon getting education and jobs think they have become big people; others are always ready to help men of their own baradari. In your experience do such men of your baradari help others of your baradari?

—Usually —About half the time —Infrequently?

28b. Why?

Postscript 1989

Mobile Men **has been out of print for over a decade. In a meeting with Professor Margaret Chatterjee, the then Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, the prospect of its reprinting loomed up, and I was tempted. Over the twenty years since I did the initial fieldwork, I had not set foot in the town named Modelpur in the monograph, and I was glad at the possibility of returning there, howsoever briefly. My own interests since its first publication have veered towards long term comparisons between civilizations, illustrated in my *India: the roots of crisis* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986). That perspective too could have generated questions for fresh fieldwork, but my present preoccupations precluded any but a very brief visit this time.**

During March and April 1989, I was able to spend six days there[1], principally renewing my contacts of twenty years ago. To establish new relationships in fieldwork is always a slow process; and in the present disturbed conditions in Punjab that was out of the question within the time available to me. My strategy was to look for five or six informants from each of the three castes I had worked with earlier, hoping through them to secure a quick review of developments within their caste—and in the town at large. Of my initial sample, my contact with the students had been relatively brief, and I planned to look for only one of them, a Ramgarhia, whom I expected to be running the family factory by now. Of the others, I expected to be transferable government servants to have moved on; the older men would have died; and there were still others whose lives had seemed in 1969 already to have set into fairly firm, relatively narrow grooves and whose observation of their milieu had not seemed to be particularly keen.

As it turned out, three of my selected potential informants had died and three others had gone out of the country on long visits;

[1]I thank the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University for a generous grant which made this field visit possible.

but I was able to revive my old relationship with most of the others. I needed to mention only a few personal details from twenty years ago, as culled from my notebooks, and it seemed that we could continue from where we had left off then. I also presented a copy of the relevant chapter from my monograph to several of my friends there.

This brief report begins by noting some general physical and social aspects of the town in early 1989 (I); discusses the situation among Balmikis (II) and Ad Dharmis (III) and then the question of untouchability in town (IV); goes on to the Ramgarhias (V) and to the presence of two major industrial corporations in Modelpur (VI); and concludes with a consideration of the consequences of terrorist activity in Punjab on economic activity and on the relationships between Hindus and Sikhs in the town (VII).

I

Modelpur town has continued to grow, its population rising from 60,000 in 1969 to over 100,000 now. Physically the growth has followed partly the path noted earlier (p. 15), namely a demarcation of houseplots by a landowner at the town's fringes, and partly the plans laid by an Improvement Trust, created for Modelpur in 1976. The physical ambience of this latter area is in sharp contrast to the older town, approximating rather to the standards set for the relatively affluent areas of Chandigarh or Delhi. In common with other towns in Punjab, Modelpur received piped water supply and underground sewerage during the 1970s—and this has had important social as well as physical consequences.

There has been a substantial immigration into this region from all parts of Bihar. This immigration initially was into villages for agricultural work whose intensity had raised wages for agricultural labour sharply. Bihari workers—and, I was told, their families—have now settled into the villages around Modelpur; and many Punjabis who would earlier have done agricultural labour have now moved into towns, taking to skilled work like masonry or lathework. Bihari workers are being drawn into Modelpur town directly also: partly, they take over the less attractive work in the informal sector, say in driving cycle-rickshaws or as construction labour; partly, the textile factory has preferred to employ them, for they would not command much social support locally—such as

available, say, to Sikh Jat workers who would therefore have greater confidence for launching industrial action.

Much as in 1969, Modelpur's economic forte continues to lie in relatively small scale machine workshops which have become even more numerous than twenty years ago. Modelpurias have not mastered the problems of organizing large scale industrial enterprises, and we shall consider the issues later (V). The thrust for the town's two major factories—in textiles and in sugar—continues to come from corporations controlled by Punjabis located elsewhere.

The visitor to Modelpur in 1969, looking for a hotel room, would have had to stay in Jullundur, 20 km. away. Today he can choose between four small hotels offerring, between them, more than fifty rooms. An attached bar and restaurant is important for each hotel. These amenities serve not only the ordinary traveller but also the Modelpurias working abroad while on trips home as well as local men of commercial and industrial wealth.

II

The most significant change in Modelpur influencing the Balmikis' lives collectively during the past two decades has been the installation of underground sewerage. This meant that the demand for sweepers' services for removing nightsoil from dry latrines had disappeared, thus ending the most important high caste justification for keeping the sweepers at a distance. This technical change does not appear to have reduced the level of employment for Balmikis, however, since a demand for services concerning other forms of cleanliness remains. The manpower—or womanpower—released from scavenging has now been drawn largely to widespread, part-time work as domestic servants: dishwashing, laundry, etc. Women of sweeper *jati* are thus entering the living areas in upper caste homes. This implies a substantial shift in Balmiki self-images, a shift associated with other processes also as we shall see.

Nearly all Balmikis, it must be noted however, continue to live within their caste neighbourhoods; the only exception to this in my knowledge is, still, the family which in 1969 was already living in a multicaste neighbourhood (p. 62; see below). Only a few Balmiki families have caught on to education at the secondary and

college levels, and whole sibling groups seek to move away from scavenging, domestic service, and the like. I was told that many young men spend their time loafing around their neighbourhoods; and, as an occupational possibility held in reserve, that of scavenging remains available, especially since it has few takers from other castes.

It is against this backdrop that we may consider two families whose members have for decades been moving away from the ancestral occupation steadily. There is, first, Inder Nath's family, discussed at length in Ch. 4 (pp. 54-61). His father, Amolak Ram, has long since retired from his service in the railways. Inder Nath himself now runs a small office in a central part of Modelpur under the banner of the Congress party. In 1970, he was elected member of the Municipal Committee a second time, and stayed there until 1976. There have been no elections to the Municipal Committee since; but at a time when other politicians have tended to shy off the political rough and tumble, Inder Nath has persisted: his visiting card records his membership—and leadership—in several bodies at the local, district, and state levels. His brother, who was studying librarianship in 1969, now works in the office of the national Planning Commission in New Delhi. Inder Nath indicated to me that his "political work"—interceding with various offices on behalf of those who seek his intermediation—is purely honorary, and that he could function this way because his wife, his only daughter, and his son-in-law (who lives in his home) all have municipal or other governmental jobs which bring in about Rs 4000 per month. Relieved of financial worry, he can apply himself to public service all the more. Even if that is the whole truth, the payoff for his political work could have taken the form of jobs for three close kin with the Municipal Committee, and for his daughter as ward attendent in a health centre in a nearby village.

Far more dramatic has been the experience of the family which had included the "sewing machine assembler" and "an official in the Community Development Programme" (p. 61). The latter, Hari Ram, was a Panchayat Officer; the former, Sada Ram, is Hari Ram's younger brother who, in 1969, was seen as a conspicuous success, having built himself a new house "in a recently colonized multicaste area next to the prestigious Model Town" (p. 62). Hari Ram worked away from Modelpur. I had

met him occasionally through his brother and my notebooks recorded several conversations with him about his life; yet I had failed to recognize his larger significance. He had been a socialist in his earlier years and had known, among others, Jaya Prakash Narain who had visited—and taken food at—his home. Hari Ram had been remarkably fluent with a wide range of social and political ideas—and this appears to have influenced his family, as well as Sada Ram's, decisively.

The former Panchayat Officer was in Holland during my recent trip to Modelpur, visiting his son who has married a castemate born in Holland to earlier migrants there. I learned that Hari Ram is now associated with running a school near Modelpur and would be returning to India shortly. The younger brother, Sada Ram, married his daughter to a castemate in California; and now the daughter has secured the immigration of both her parents to California also! They have found employment there as farm workers, but Sada Ram is also repairing (electric) sewing machines there. Sada Ram's eldest son runs the growing sewing machine business in Modelpur with much aplomb. He told me that they were in the process of moving their entire family—all three brothers—to California though they intend to continue the shop in Modelpur bazaar: the local business is much too valuable to be abandoned lightly. The experience of international travel by itself is one aspect of this famly's experience; it permits a clean break with the stereotypes associated with their caste. More striking is the ease with which the family has made this transition within one generation. Sada Ram's son attributes their success to his own father alone. My notes from 1969 include the following passage from Sada Ram:

> I had only one bad habit, if you want to call it that: I do and did see movies—*every* movie that came either to this town or to Jullundur. Even there I didn't go only for enjoyment.... In everything there is a moral and I looked for the pattern in the movie, where it began and where it ended, for the consequences. I used to think that one day I too would become big and people would reckon with me, and my father would be proud that he had these children.

We have here evidence of an unusually active mind. An equally

crucial resource for the family, in my judgment, would have been Hari Ram's fluency with ideas: evidence again of an ususual mental activity, especially for men of his social background in his generation.

III

Modelpur's Ad Dharmis have continued their social and economic advance along several fronts. Various aspects of machine work and small scale industry are one front, which we shall consider shortly. Mobility along the educational route has continued: from a single neighbourhood, I was told, men had gone into engineering, medicine, law, and bank management. Furthermore, during these two decades, they have taken to looking for work outside India: West Asia apears to draw the largest numbers, followed by U.K., Canada, and U.S.A. They have now joined the traffic begun by Ramgarhias, Jats and other Punjabis in earlier generations. They do whatever work they can get, even sweep floors, for the objective is only to earn money. These incomes have helped pay for equipment like scooters and colour television and amenities like water supply and flush toilets. Marriages to castemates who are settled abroad adds to this sense of wider connexions.

The Ad Dharmis had begun their move into light enginnering in the 1960s already, and they have continued the pattern of small scale entrepreneurship in this field. We noted then (pp. 77-79) that the co-operative established under Gur Perhsad's leadership in 1958 served as a nursery for young Ad Dharmi lathe operators who then moved out to establish their own factories: the path traced by Gur Pershad and by Prem Kumar, the leader of the revolt in 1965 (p. 77), has since been followed by many others. Both Gur Pershad and Prem Kumar now have factories housed in handsome buildings, and brief indicators of their success will suffice: Gur Pershad now owns *both* a scooter *and* a new Maruti car; and at the time of my fieldwork in 1989, Prem Kumar had gone to Canada where his daughter was to be married to a castemate living there!

Gur Pershad's political career continued and undoubtedly helped him in drawing politically disbursed resources into his factory. Given the violent turbulence in Punjab in recent years, however, his family

has persuaded him to withdraw from active politics. He has bought several plots of land, including one in Delhi. Whereas in 1969 Gur Perhsad's seemed to be the largest Ad Dharmi industrial enterprise in town, he has now been overtaken by others. One Ad Dharmi man mentioned to me repeatedly came from a village near Modelpur and has, in recent years, built up a factory which employs over a hundred workers to make parts for sprayers, used in agriculture. Some of my informants thought that this was *the* largest locally-owned industrial unit in Modelpur. I was told that its proprietor had been the first man in Modelpur to buy a Maruti car. There are several other cases of notable industrial capitalist accumulation from this caste group. And as Gur Pershad said: when you have wealth, you can stand up to the others in politics, industry, trade.

The experience of Kashi Ram's family reveals a different range of opportunities accessible to ambitious Ad Dharmis. In 1969 already he had a shoe-making shop in the bazaar, and he had acquired two farms, adding up to forty acres, besides (pp. 79-81). They continue to manage these, directly or through tenants; and the Waqf land near Modelpur is now part of the town, and its value has risen manifold. The next generation, meanwhile, is going places: a nephew is now a medical doctor; a son entered the central services of the government of India and, helped no doubt by the provisions of reverse discrimination, is now an Assistant Commissioner of Taxes; a daughter is married to a bank manager; a son has nearly completed his B.A. degree and will succeed to the shoe-making business—which has grown substantially. Another daughter is engaged to someone in Canada; she will go there—and will call her younger brothers there, for Kashi Ram wants them to look around and earn some money on their own.

IV

Given the foregoing, it would come as no surprise that the ideology of purity and pollution and the practice of untouchability have declined in Modelpur precipitately. In 1969 the question of untouchability had been live and contentious in this region. It was common during conversations with Harijans to hear accounts of incidents in which the man had experienced the practice of

untouchability, had challenged it, and the course taken by the subsequent acrimonious arguments, sometimes including violence. This time my informants were unanimous and emphatic in saying that *there is no untouchability in Punjab any more.* An exaggeration, perhaps, as we shall see; yet we have here an astonishing shift in mores, and a brief recounting of the forces at work would be in order.

Underground sewerage, as we have seen, removes the sweepers' daily burden of the town's nightsoil, making varied domestic contact with them much more acceptable to the upper castes. Secondly, the process of reverse discrimination, job reservations, etc. has now been operating for nearly two generations, and there is a substantial number of Punjabi Harijan officials in positions of considerable power. The most conspicuous of them in 1989 is, of course, Mr Buta Singh, Home Minister in the Government of India.

Thirdly, Ad Dharmi entrepreneurs have forged ahead in industry during a period when the Ramgarhias, as we shall see, appear to have levelled off. Finally, some of Modelpur's Harijans are travelling—and marrying—in distant lands across the oceans. When people move around with such facility, the stigma of untouchability ceases to be serious business.

Even as the ideology and practice of untouchability have lost their legitimacy, a retired Ramgarhia college teacher noted for me its continuing shadow. Partly it is a matter of residual discrimination: When an Ad Dharmi shopkeeper, living near the prestigious Gita Bhawan, asked its manager for permission to lodge a wedding party in its rooms, commonly available for this purpose, he was told that these were already booked for the particular days—but in fact the rooms were found to be unoccupied on those days. The inference was that an Ad Dharmi wedding party was simply not welcome there. Yet the controllers of the Gita Bhawan do not hestitate to ask for, and get, large contributions from the Ad Dharmi shopkeeper for events they organize there.

The other element arises in certain persisting images for the lower castes, associated with one or another disparaged way of functioning. Reverse discrimination and the like draw on to their beneficiaries some antagonism from the upper castes. If say an Ad Dharmi who has attained to relatively high office acts in a manner

judged strange, he may invite the comment, "You've remained a Chamar!" We may note parenthetically that very large numbers of Harijans continue in fact to live and grow up in single-caste neighbourhoods, and their access to, and socialization in, alternative life styles and normative orders could well leave something to be desired.

V

The rising star on Modelpur's industrial horizon in 1969 had seemed to be that of the Ramgarhias, men of carpenter and blacksmith background. Many of them had earlier been drawn into contractoring in eastern India, East Africa, and elsewhere—and had returned to Punjab with their resources, their horizons, and their ambitions greatly enlarged. Back home they had encountered stereotypes formed around their lowly caste rank, associated with their former menial occupations. Ch. 6 posited that the Ramgarhias consequently experienced acute status dissonance; and many among them responded to their situation through sustained effort in the fields first of industrial entrepreneurship and second of establishing a large complex of educational institutions in Modelpur. Over the past two decades they seem to have reached a plateau in both the fields.

In their industrial enterprises, the leadership would have rested with a cluster of two or three brothers, possibly along with kinsmen of the older or the younger generation. Living frugally, they ploughed earnings back into the factory's growth. In later years the enterprises have had to contend with difficulties centring principally on the inadequacy of collective experience with industrial entrepreneurship as a form of activity, and of the disciplines requisite for its long-term growth. One problem area mentioned to me repeatedly was that of *personal* discipline: one or more members of the controlling family begin to neglect the factory, turning to drink and to other pleasures. Despite such negligence, the enterprise may continue to generate incomes under others' care for years. Over time, however, this may lead to conflict within the controlling family, and such conflict could accompany also the rise of a new generation whose members might wish to go their separate ways. The partitioning of the family and of its enterprise

would sunder a team which had developed over the years; and the reconstitution of the team within the successor family(ies) would be slow and chancy.

It seems that most people who build up small-scale industries in Phagwara have not learned how to insulate their economic activity from the hazards of familial accidents and rivalries. Ramgarhias in Modelpur do refer often and admiringly to the neighbouring industrial town of Goraya, and especially to a family-controlled Ramgarhia auto-parts manufacturer there whose output is now marketted not merely in all India but also in dozens of countries abroad. No Ramgarhia in Modelpur or in nearby centres, to my knowledge, has yet tried the joint stock, public limited form of corporation.

If Modelpur's Ramgarhias have been slow in acquiring the disciplines requisite for long-term industrial growth, the rather different disciplines needed for the conduct of academic institutions have also not been easy to come by. The conditions of autonomy and peer accountability which have emerged historically as optimal for academic achievement are a far cry from the ethos prevailing in Modelpur. The Ramgarhia *jati*'s initial role in establishing the institutions introduced an unpropitious particularism at the start; and as the growing differentiation among the Ramgarhias has eroded solidarity within the caste, control over the institutions has tended to narrow into the hands of one family. The President of the Ramgarhia Educational Committee in 1969 could "read nothing beyond numerals" (p. 105). His son succeeded to the Presidentship, and the new President's son is now the Secretary. While their academic credentials are much better than the previous President's—the Secretary is a lawyer whose practice covers the Punjab High Court too—and while they speak bravely about establishing a Ramgarhia University in Modelpur, there is no evidence of the range of ideas which would be needed to take the institutions beyond the plateau they reached many years ago.

VI

Modelpur in 1969 owed its two large factories to industrial conglomerates controlled by groups centred elsewhere (p. 15). The textile mill raised its sights during the 1970s and expanded into synthetics conspicuously. It continues to be as aloof from the

town's life as ever. The sugar mill was bought in 1988 by a corporation which has been setting the pace in the Indian industrial scene during the late 1980s. It added a new highly automated sugar mill within six months, in time for the start of the 1988 sugarcane season—and plans to replace the old mill next. Its management is more marginal to Modelpur's life than its predecessor had been: the mill manager is said to live in Ludhiana, some forty kms away, and to be driven in to the factory every day. Both the textile and the sugar mills have been notable for the magnitude of technical changes during this period, production increases much larger than the new job opportunities, and the marginalizing of their trade unions.

How has the presence of these large corporations affected Modelpur town's politics? As we shall see, the town's institutionalized politics has in recent years been in abeyance. The corporations are believed locally to exercise their political influence informally, at the state or national levels. Partly, this influence seeks privileged access to such resources as continuous electric supply; and lesser issues can be arranged by extending generous company hospitality to government officials. I was told that the textile mill management threw its weight behind the Congress candidate at the last general elections, contributing to his victory in Modelpur though he did poorly in the rural parts of the constituency.

VII

Finally the effects of terrorism. Its effects on the town's industry—especially small-scale industry—were generally said to have been baleful. Buyers from outside Punjab appear to be reluctant to come to Modelpur: the image of insecurity of life and property persuades them to go elsewhere, say to the whoesale markets in Delhi. People are much less willing to extend credit to each other than was the case formerly, for the future is less assured. At least for a while, Modelpur's Hindus had withdrawn from investing in construction and in other ways; but many have concluded in recent months that they can count on being able to hold their own and are beginning to invest again.

This Hindu-Sikh interface had been marginal to my central concerns in 1969; yet my account then had noted a tendency for some

antagonistic tension to settle along this interface (pp. 15 and *passim*). In 1989, Punjab had lain under the pall of terrorism for years already; the question of Hindu-Sikh relations called for closer scrutiny.

Visual evidence, say of Hindu stridency, was substantial in 1989. At least some city walls are plastered with stencilled portraits of Dr Hedgewar, the founder of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu chauvinist organization, whose birth centenary was celebrated recently. Also plastered on the walls are various slogans accredited to him, calling Hindus to greatness. The same sentiment informs the activities of Shiv Sena, whose leader in Modelpur, Mr Ramakant Jalota, was killed by the terrorists. The Shiv Sena leader is remembered as a charismatic figure by his admirers; others remember him as having been sharp and provocative. His memory has since become a symbol of Hindu pride and will to hold the ground in the face of terrorist pressure. The Hindu holiday of Ram Naumi was approaching during my visit, and Gita Bhawan marked the occasion with a programme of speeches and celebrations, lasting several days in gaily decorated premises; other Hindu religious places also put up conspicuous decorations.

Undoubtedly there is a good deal of Sikh assertiveness abroad also: its principal expression in town that I heard about was in the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF)—the Sikh militant, chauvinist youth organization—which controls student politics in several of the town's colleges. Religious processions here, as elsewhere in India, are the established mode of proclaiming the presence of each of the religious communities. And yet, my informants held unanimously that recent events in Punjab have had *no* effect on the relations between Hindus and Sikhs in town!

If, despite all this, Modelpur has remained free of serious communal violence over the years, the explanation has several parts. For one thing, being located more than 100 km. from the Pakistan border, the level of terrorist activity has been rather low in the region around Modelpur. Also, the town has had an all-Party Peace Committee—with a non-Party man as President—which has been moving into occasions of likely conflict and working out collective solutions. There are bonds, furthermore, between Hindus and Sikhs—some bonds of kinship and often long-standing partnerships and other relationships in the bazaar. Certainly I encoun-

tered considerable evidence of bonhomie between individual Hindus and Sikhs, and no observable conflicts or brawls which may be considered communal in nature.

For those who earn a living as shopkeepers and the like, an important part of their assets is intangible, by way of their knowledge about their specific customers', social locations and the like. It is not easy for them to pack up and settle elsewhere as some who tried have discovered. Likewise Sikhs from outside Punjab who tried moving into Modelpur are said to have had difficulties in getting started there.

Among the effects of terrorism, one must of course count the scores, perhaps hundreds of men of the various armed forces all over town. On the railway station, and inside the bank which I had to use, there were guards with weapons on emplacements, ready to shoot. The bank had two such emplacements, one on each side of the long counter. Most of these armed units were mixed Hindu and Sikh, and this kind of integration would make partisan use of violence by them less likely.

Overall it would seem that many of the *ideologically* supported activities in Modelpur—whether Shiv Sena's or AISSF's—tend to be separative of Sikhs and Hindus. The integration in the bazaar serves to maintain practical arrangements which have the advantage both of long usage and of current interests. These arrangements seemed twenty years ago to be undergirded by a farly established style, which included an implicit ideology of civic life; today at least a part of the support for these arrangements comes from the armed forces. The political contentiousness of the local elective arenas which had loomed so large in 1969 appears to have been largely muted in recent years. The Municipal Committee has had no elections for over a decade, the Punjab legislature is not functioning, and there is a fear that anyone who ventures too far in the political arena may find his career nipped by a bullet.

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Index

Abbi, B.L. 33
adda (*see* dens)
Ad Dharmis 12, 23, 52, 65, 68-85, 98, 112n, 118-32, 136n, 138f, 150-57, 165ff, 180, 197ff, 202, 205f, 210, 211-17, 219, 221, 227 (*see also* Harijans); relations with Balmikis 60, 61, 71, 75n, 79, 82, 226f
administrators (*see* bureaucracy)
adult franchise 29, 46, 145, 157, 175
Africa, 12f, 19, 21, 90, 104
Aggarwal, P.C. 33, 87n, 223
agriculture 15f, 22, 135, 138f
Ahluwalia 4n
Ahmad Shah Abdali 4
Akalis 65, 72, 77, 93, 95f, 130, 176f, 181f
Akbar 4
Almond, G.A. 160, 173n
Ambedkar, B.R. 52, 54, 61, 68, 70ff, 191, 229
army 12f, 94
Arya Samaj 7, 9, 10, 17, 30, 54, 93, 163, 231
Aurangzeb 4, 8
Aurora, G.S. 13, 22, 97n
Austin, G. 195

Baden-Powell, B.H. 13, 89F, 97
Bagchi, A. K. 11
Bailey, F.G. 33, 178
Bajwa, F.S. 89f
Bakshi Ram 52
Balmiki Sabha 52ff, 68
Balmikis 12, 22f, 51-67, 69, 73, 75n, 78, 84, 98, 118-32, 136n, 138f, 150-57, 165ff, 182, 189, 196f, 199ff, 203-6, 210, 211-17, 220f, 225, 227 (*see also* Harijans, politics)
Banias 10
Barber, B. 28
Barth, F. 44, 208, 235
Barthwal, C.P. 191
Beck, B.E.F. 111
Berna, J.J. 78
Beteille, A. 28, 42n, 119, 195, 245n
Bharati, A. 90n
Bhatt, A. 195
Bipan Chandra 227, 229n
blacksmiths (*see* Ramgarhias)
Bose, A. 233
Bose, N.K. 80
Boulding, E. 174n
Brahmins 5ff, 10, 18, 28, 30, 32n, 75f, 110ff, 197f
Brass, P. 150
British rule (*see* colonial rule)
Broomfield, J.H. 37
Buddhism 68
bureaucracy 23, 60f, 85, 93, 98, 142ff, 144n, 146, 169, 170f, 173f, 199, 213n; Harijans in 72, 80, 162, 163, 168, 207ff, 214

canals 13
capitalism 16, 230f, 235
carpenters (*see* Ramgarhias)
caste groups 10, 218; alienation from (and involvement in) 60, 83f, 105, 109, 144, 149f, 166, 168, 205, 232; and neighbourhoods 18, 62, 82f, 104, 108, 120ff, 131, 140, 226; internal differ-

entiation of 33-37, 42f, 45, 60, 86, 106, 144, 150, 157, 162, 232 (*see also* status dissonance, individual); interreligious spread 93, 101, 107, 112f; local organization of 63ff, 82ff, 108; solidarity of 5, 35, 62-67, 76ff, 93f, 108, 130, 146f, 148-57, 167, 206, 220ff
caste organizations 37, 47, 59, 60, 62f, 91-96, 104, 149f, 221f (*see also* Balmiki Sabha)
caste system 7n, 27, 35, 41, 192; ideology of 27f, 29, 34f, 131f; in Punjab 1, 10-11, 28, 142, 194, 211, 225; mobility in 28, 110f; trends in Modelpur 192-217; inter-regional variation in change in 209f
census data 18, 19f, 23, 42, 51, 52, 68, 69, 81, 84n, 88f, 96, 98, 100, 111
Chamar (*see* Ad Dharmi)
Chanana, D.R. 6, 10
Chattopadhyaya, B.D. 97n
Chhabra, G.S. 87
child training 31f, 42, 73, 100n, 136, 138, 174
China 26, 31n
Christianity 7, 8f, 17, 54, 92
Chuhra (*see* Balmiki)
civil rights 192, 214, 226
civil servants (*see* bureaucracy)
cognitive dissonance 29, 30f
Cohen, S.P. 12
Cohn, B. 11
colonial rule, 5, 7, 11ff, 17f, 29, 36, 70f, 88ff, 93, 97f, 195
Colson, E. 185n
commensality 3f, 9, 54, 99f, 194, 199ff, 203, 211
Communist Party 183, 227, 233
congregational worship 3f, 10, 99f, 103
Congress, Indian National 53, 72, 81, 85, 105n, 112n, 176ff, 179, 180f 182, 185f, 189f, 195, 197, 217
Constitution of India 30, 195
contractors 13, 18, 19, 36, 74, 91, 100, 102ff, 119
conversion, religious 8f
cooperatives 15f, 76ff, 112n, 176, 181f, 186, 188
corporate status dissonance (CSD) (*see* status dissonance...)
cultural focus 119, 132, 136, 230f

Dahrendorf, R. 234
dens 21, 160, 170n, 181, 187
Devereux, G. 245
Devons, E. 242
Dhimans 87, 93f, 100f, 110-13, 153
Dirks, R. 47
dissonance (*see* status dissonance)
Dobbin, C. 11
dominance 4. 6, 10, 17, 30f, 62, 68, 93, 97, 99, 197ff, 208, 226f
Douglas, J.D. 239
D'Souza, V.S. 10, 41, 86
Dua, V. 23
Dumont, L. 6, 27f, 30, 37, 185
Dushkin, L. 195, 209n, 228

educational institutions 9, 15, 17, 21, 140ff, 161, 194, 227, 232 (*see also* students); Ramgarhia 20f, 59, 89, 92f, 95f, 104f, 109, 119, 130, 143, 213n
education and solidarity 157, 167
egalitarianism 29, 30, 33, 46 (*see also* inequality, Sikhs)
emigrants 12f, 72, 82, 90, 97, 100, 101, 106, 113, 168; and Modelpur 22, 119, 137, 147, 231
employers 17, 41, 75f, 78
entrepreneurship 12, 15f, 17, 19ff, 61, 74, 78-81, 84, 86, 95n, 98, 102, 109, 112n, 126, 132, 133-39, 193, 208, 230f
Epstein, T.S. 241n
Erasmus, C.J. 43
Europe 12f, 21f, 82, 135

evaluations 67, 89; discrepant 28ff, 53, 110f (*see also* status dissonance)

factions 35, 76f, 80, 85f, 170ff, 176-79, 180-83, 188
Festinger, L. 28f
Firth, R. 235
Fox, R.G. 239
Freed, S. 244n
frustration 34, 47, 109
Frykenberg, R.E. 6

Gaikwad, V.R. 175n
Galanter, M. 30, 195
Ganda Singh 9, 92n
Gandhi, I. 84, 176
Gandhi, M.K. 30, 71, 229
generational turnover 26f, 31, 135, 213, 233, 236
Gillion, K. 11
Gobind Singh, Guru 4, 8,69n, 98
Goffman, I.W. 37f
Gordon, S.N. 7
Gore, M.S. 232
Gough, E.K. 6, 241n
Gould, H.A. 6, 193, 218, 227
gain market 16, 17, 64, 138
Granth Sahib, Guru 69f, 93, 106n
green revolution (*see* agriculture)
Gumperz, J.J. 185
Gupta, H.R. 8, 87, 99
Gupta, K.A. 188n
gurudwaras 14, 17, 69f, 79f, 100n, 103, 109
Gurukuls 10

Habib, I. 97n
Hagen, E.E. 38, 99, 101, 230, 237
Haq, M. 8n, 222f
Hardgrave, R.L. 223
Har Gobind, Guru 17
Harijans 7, 9, 10, 12, 22ff, 28, 51-85, 139-45, 162ff, 192-217, 225-30; assertive 32, 70-73; children 31f, 75; discrimination against 6, 18, 41f, 73, 129, 132, 194, 205, 207f; evaluations of 29f, 67, 184, 187ff; in multicaste organizations 163 (*see also* Radha Soami Satsang); militancy 47, 52, 53, 58, 60, 129, 175f, 190, 195, 197f, 207f, 214f, 226 (*see also* bureaucracy; politics; social mobility; students); poverty of 55, 61, 73, 132, 140, 153, 184, 187; reverse discrimination 67n, 80f, 126, 127, 129, 132, 140f, 143, 183f, 193, 195, 209, 215, 228; stereotypes about 21, 45, 47, 75n, 141ff, 192, 206, 212
Harijan Sevak Sangh 229
Harper, E.B. 44
Herskovits, M.J. 119n
hierarchy 3, 6, 7n, 9, 27f, 34, 66, 86, 175, 193
Hinduism 70, 110; orthodox 7, 10n, 202
Hindu society 5, 9, 68
historical data 17, 51ff, 68ff, 86-102, 221f
Holmstrom, M. 193
housing 15, 17, 18, 22, 45, 62, 63f, 72, 82, 120f, 142ff, 168, 184, 194, 199, 201, 207, 210, 215ff, 221f, 226
Hunt, R. 175n

Ibbetson, D. 23, 51, 86, 99, 111
identity, change of 22ff, 31, 45, 52, 65ff, 68f, 87-96, 105, 110ff, 144, 147, 167f, 197, 206, 207, 233
Independence 10, 40, 87, 102, 133, 195
industrialization 40, 42, 74, 101, 133, 135, 218, 230, 234
industry in Modelpur 15f, 176, 230f; beginnings 17, 135f; small-scale 19, 74, 76-79, 133, 154; engineering 20, 74, 108,

135ff; 193; growth 19, 21, 74
135ff; range 15f, 154; importance, of 73, 82, 119, 132; workers in, 15, 16, 19, 55ff, 74-79, 83f, 126 138f, 183, 193
inequality 9, 10, 26, 28, 40f, 131, 133, 157, 169, 174, 175f, 183-87, 188, 190, 194f, 210, 212, 214, 227, 233, 235
intercaste relations (*see* Harijans; housing; social distance; students)
Isaacs, H.R. 45, 233
Islam 5, 7, 8

Jacobson, D. 47
jajmani 86, 90, 96, 102, 125, 127, 137, 192
Jammu, P.S. 88n
Jan Sangh 65, 77, 85, 176ff, 181f, 186, 189
Jats 4, 5, 7, 10, 12, 16, 17, 71, 81, 86, 88, 93, 95, 99, 101, 104, 136, 196ff, 221
Jones, K.W. 8, 9, 92n
Joshi, P.C. 12
judiciary 169
julaha (*see* Ad Dharmi)

Kairon, P.S. 134f, 173n, 179
karma theory of reincarnation 29, 128n, 132, 192, 231
Keer, D. 52
Kessinger, T.G. 4, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 22, 23n, 28, 87, 91, 93, 98, 102, 198n, 235n, 243
Khalsa 4, 8
Khushwant Singh 6f, 75, 87
kinship: and marriage 34ff, 54-59, 66, 83, 94, 101, 104, 112n, 130, 137, 144, 147, 192f, 210, 218, 225, 232f (*see also* caste groups; interreligious spread); and inequality (*see* status dissonance, individual)
Kling, B.B. 11
Kosambi, D.D. 3
Kothari, R. 5, 25
Krech, D. 34
kshatriya 5, 37
Kukas 12, 88
Kumar, R. 6, 11
Kunjanpillai, E.P.N. 6

Lajpat Rai, Lala 9
Land Alienation Act 17, 91, 101, 222
landownership 4f, 6, 7, 10, 15, 17f, 22, 23, 68, 73, 74, 80f, 86, 87n, 89-104, 119, 145f, 159, 173, 181, 185, 195, 198
land tenure 4f, 11f
leatherworkers (*see* Ad Dharmis)
Lenski, G.E. 37, 237
levels, structural 3, 5, 25ff, 30, 85, 93, 190, 196; normative differences between 30ff, 33, 38, 198
LeVine, R.A. 100n
lohar (*see* Ramgarhia)
Lynch, O.M. 32, 33, 40, 74, 204

Mahar, J.M. 144
Malkani, N.R. 66
Mangat Rai, E.N. 134n, 173n
Mao Tse-tung 31n
Marriott, M. 44, 87, 101
Mazhbi Sikhs (*see* Balmikis)
McClelland, D.C. 100n
McLeod, W.H. 3, 4, 6, 12, 69n, 88, 99, 241n
McMullen, C.O. 9n
Mencher, J. 175n, 241n
Merton, R.K. 227n
methodology 234, 239-50 (*see also* census; historical data)
misl 4, 8, 87, 99
missionaries (*see* Christianity)
Mitchell, J.C. 47n
Mitra, A. 223, 227
mobility: occupational 12f, 19, 23f, 32ff, 37, 39-44, 54, 61, 72, 74-81,

86, 101, 117-47, 159, 181, 192, 201f, 211f, 214, 219f, 225; physical: 18, 19, 21f, 45, 58, 64, 82f, 90, 97, 108, 121f, 132, 185, 205, 222; strategies of 35, 42, 47, 68f, 104, 147, 148, 169, 220ff, 223ff
————leaders and followers 42f, 75ff, 138, 206, 210
Modelpur town 14-24, 193, 230ff (*see also* industry; municipality)
Morrison, C. 174n, 241n
much-raking 175f
Mukherjee, R. 25
Mukhia, H. 8n
municipal: councillors 15, 17, 18, 55f, 61f, 65, 76ff, 174, 187; president 18, 56, 161, 176, 181, 186
municipality (Modelpur) 14f, 82, 156, 172f, 177
Muslims 18, 19-20, 71, 73, 75, 79, 81, 133, 136, 222f

Nadars 223
Nanak, Guru 3, 8, 88, 98
navigation, social 157f, 162, 174f
nenda 63, 82f, 108
network: call 162f; load 162f; participation index 164f
networks 35f, 42, 43, 44-47, 94, 112n, 129f, 133, 154, 157-68, 225, 231; access to 72, 93, 125, 131, 143, 162ff, 184, 210, 220ff; and differentiation 45f, 165ff; and status 45f, 58, 160-67, 212
Newton's Ludhiana Mission 88n
Nicholas, R.W. 176
normative order 32, 41
normative pressure 25f, 30, 32, 33, 35, 66, 135, 157, 194-98; and deviant micro-settings 26f, 135, 207 (*see also* generational turnover)

Oddie, G.A. 8f
Oommen, T.K. 228n, 243n
opportunity structure 32, 33, 36, 40-44, 45n, 79ff, 97f, 100n, 133-47, 176, 183, 195, 219f
Orenstein, H. 202

Pakistan 13, 20
pangat (*see* commensality)
parasitism 12
Partition of India 18, 55,79, 139, 159
Pathak, H.N. 136
Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) 134, 243
persian wheel 97, 134
personality 31f, 98, 144, 174, 185, 187, 208, 229f
Pocock, D. 27
police 60, 83, 197f
politics 83, 133, 147, 169-91, 227; and bureaucracy 145f, 171-75, 176, 178, 185; mediatory work in 85, 158, 169-76, 178, 180f, 183f, 185f, 189ff, 228; patronage in 15, 72, 78, 125, 127, 139, 146, 157, 176, 189f, 228; Harijans in 21, 23, 46, 54-58, 65, 70-73, 74, 75n, 76ff, 80f, 82, 84f, 119, 145ff, 152f, 156, 158, 163, 169-91, 196f, 207ff, 228; high castes in 71, 76f, 84f, 145f, 176-79, 187-90, 196; Ramgarhias in 95, 130, 146f, 156; women in 213 (*see also* dens; factions)
pollution 6, 7, 10, 27, 66, 86, 133, 183f, 187, 192, 198-203, 207ff, 214; three views of 201-2, 206f, 226
population density 12
pressure from above 194-97, 207f, 214f, 226 (*see also* normative pressure)
pressure from below 31, 195, 197f, 207ff, 214f, 226, 229
princely rule 14, 16, 17f, 101
Punjab 3-13, 68f, 86f, 148, 227; rural society in 3, 4f, 8, 11f, 18,

22, 28, 70, 80, 86, 91, 93, 99, 101, 170, 196ff
purity, ritual (*see* pollution)
questionnaire 117-31, 148-57, 165-68, 211-17, 248ff

Radha Soami Satsang 75, 159, 163, 227, 233
railways 13, 54, 90
Rajput 4, 6, 86
Ramdas, Guru 23, 69n
Ramdasias (*see* Ad Dharmis)
Ramgarhia, S.S. 88
Ramgarhia *misl* 4n, 23, 87f, 89
Ramgarhias 13, 18, 19, 20, 23, 33, 76, 86-113, 118-37, 150-57, 165ff, 211-17, 219, 221f, 223 (*see also* Dhimans; educational institutions)
Ranjit Singh 4, 5, 6f, 16, 87, 89
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) 182, 234
Raulet, H.M. 173n
Ravi Das, Guru 69, 71
Raychaudhuri, H. 3n
refugees 19-20
religious competition 7ff, 23, 52, 54, 68
Republican Party 65, 68, 70, 72f, 84, 182f
reserved constituencies 29f, 77, 85, 145, 169, 179-86, 190f
revitalization movement 31
Roberts, A.E. 110f
Rosenthal, D.B. 188
Rowe, W.L. 33, 36f, 42
R.S.S. (*see* Rashtriya...)
Rudolph, S.H. 104n
Runciman, W.G. 102

Sachchidananda 241
sangat (*see* congregational worship)
sanskritization 5f, 10, 28, 33
scavengers (*see* Balmikis)
Scheduled Castes (*see* Harijans)
Scheduled Castes Federation 54, 68, 70
Schumpeter, J.A. 38
Schwartzberg, J.E. 81
sepi (*see* jajmani)
Shah, G. 241
Shankaracharya of Puri 57
Sharma, K.L. 38n, 42n
Sharma, S.R. 8
Sheth, D.L. 26
Shukla, S. 229n
Sikh-Hindu relations 6f, 9, 15f, 18, 83, 107f, 112f, 153, 182n, 198
Sikhism 8, 23, 231
Sikhs 6f, 9, 90; egalitarianism of 3ff, 6ff, 10, 69, 98-100, 198 (*see also* Akalis; Jats; Ramgarhias)
Silverberg, J. 86
Singer, M. 235n
Sinha, N.K. 87
Sinha, S. 37, 239n
Smelser, N.J. 230
Smith, M.G. 32
Smith, M.W. 87n
Smith, R.S. 8n, 81
smuggling 22
Snow, E. 31
social distance 6, 10, 18, 21, 45f, 47, 66, 75, 82, 99, 139n, 141f, 167, 183f, 192-217, 221f
social mobility 17, 27-47, 73-81, 117-68, 199f; demand mobility 40, 145; downward mobility 38, 42; immobility 28, 38, 43f, 131, 138; lateral 40; orders of 39ff
————: in bureaucracy 71, 133, 143f, 183f, 215; through education 71, 123f, 126, 129, 139-45, 183f; in industry 15, 133-39; in politics 71, 139, 145ff, 215, 223
————: variation by caste status 132, 137ff, 219f; and ambiguity of status 23f, 229f
social navigation (*see* navigation)
social trust 160
society, organization of 38; change in 39f, 234-37

solidarity, determinants of 222ff, 225
Spate, O.H.K. 12
standing 17, 27, 33f, 37, 38, 39, 46, 47, 67, 103, 107, 117-20, 125f, 133, 154, 157, 158, 160, 173ff, 184, 187f, 217, 222, 227, 228
state 218; supports for 5f
status 5f, 27f, 33, 37f, 45, 133, 154; determinants of 27f; evaluations of 28, 30, 90, 99, 160; symbols 32, 33, 67, 101, 105, 106; mobility 8, 33, 99f; destabilization 133, 175, 227, 229f
status dissonance 28f, 67, 99f; corporate (CSD) 29-37, 102-5; individual (ISD) 33-37, 43, 105-9, 144, 233; paradigm 35
status incompetence 95n, 157t, 173ff, 185
Stein, B. 5f
strategies for social change 228ff
stratification 11f, 44, 47, 101, 164, 228, 233
students 126, 129ff, 151; Harijan 21, 83f, 139-45, 202f, 205, 232; high caste 103, 141f
Sufis 8
Suri, S. 100n

Tandon, P. 10, 41
tarkhan (*see* Ramgarhia)
Thapar, R. 3n, 53n
trade 10, 15f, 17, 19, 20, 21, 72, 73, 74, 80, 101, 119, 133, trade unions 55-58, 62f, 65, 84, 151, 158, 210, 230

untouchability (*see* Harijans, discrimination against)
Untouchability (Offences) Act 30, 195
urban growth 14f, 16, 19, 20, 74
urban-rural relations 15, 18, 98

Valmiki, sage 23, 51ff, 63, 69
van den Dungen, P.H.M. 6, 7n, 17, 86, 88, 91, 101
Vansina, J. 243
Verba, J. 175n, 189
Vijayanagar 5f
villages (*see* Punjab, rural society in)
Vishvakarma 18, 92f, 96, 99, 110ff, 227
voluntary associations 83, 104, 144 (*see also* caste organizations)

Wallace, A.F.C. 31n, 229
weavers (*see* Ad Dharmis)
Webster, J. 9n
Whitten, N.E. 47, 160
women 21, 57, 71, 139n, 212f
workers, industrial (*see* industry...); agricultural 16, 81; unskilled 16, 22

Zambia 185n