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THE MODERNITY OF TRADITION: THE DEMOCRATIC INCARNATION OF CASTE IN INDIA

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Marx's century-old socio-political analysis of peasant nations and of India's traditional village and caste society, because it captures so much of contemporary social and political analysis, provides a convenient framework for critical discussion and evaluation of the relationship between traditional society and modern politics in India. Peasant nations such as mid-nineteenth century France, Marx observed in the *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, are formed "by simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sackful of potatoes."[1] Objectively, peasants form a class; the mode of life, interests and culture which flow from their productive circumstances separate peasants from other classes and place their class in opposition to other classes. But subjectively and practically, peasants form a vast mass, "the members of which live in similar conditions, but without entering into manifold relations with one another." They are isolated from each other by their mode of production, poor communications and poverty. The small holding, because it cannot support division of labor or the application of science, lacks multiplicity of development, diversity of talents and a variety of social relationships. Peasant society consists of self-sufficient peasant families; " . . . a few score of these make up a village, and a few score villages a Department."[2]

Peasants do not form a class, Marx argued, because their relations are "strictly local." They know each other only parochially. Because the "identity of their interests begets no unity, no national union and no political organization," they "cannot represent themselves, they must be represented." "Their representative," he continued, "must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against other classes and sends them the rain and the sunshine from above. The political influence of the small peasants, therefore," he concludes "finds its final expression in the executive power subordinating society to itself."[3]

[1] Karl Marx, *Selected Works* (2 vols., New York, International Publishers, n.d.) II, 415.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 414–415.

[3] *Ibid.*

Many contemporary social scientists would agree with Marx that in the early stages of economic development, social change and political modernization in peasant societies will produce popular authoritarian or revolutionary ideological regimes which subordinate society to themselves. The circumstances of mid-twentieth century India bring these possibilities into sharp focus and provide the basis for an assessment of Marx's view of the politics of peasant nations in the course of modernization.

At Independence, Indian society encompassed active but receding feudal classes; a growing, vigorous but divided bourgeoisie; a visible, important but still immature industrial economy; and a massive peasantry.[4] Despite

[4] See Howard L. Erdman, "India's Swatantra Party," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 36 (Winter, 1963–64), pp. 394–410, for the political role of India's feudal classes. For its business classes see Helen B. Lamb, "Indian Business Communities and the Evolution of an Industrial Class," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 28 (June, 1955), pp. 101–116 and D. R. Gadgil, *Origins of the Modern Indian Business Class* (New York, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1959). For India's social and political development see B. B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times* (London, Oxford University Press, 1961); Charles Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1964) and Bruce T. McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1940). For industrial development see Vera Anstey, *The Economic Development of India* (4th ed., London, Longmans, Green, 1952); H. Venkatasubbiah, *Indian Economy Since Independence* (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1961); and Charles A. Myers, *Labor Problems in the Industrialization of India* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1958). Myron Weiner's *The Politics of Scarcity* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962), provides a useful analysis of interest groups in Indian politics.

See the Government of India, Central Statistical Organization, Department of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of the Indian Union, 1961* (Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1961), for particulars on the distribution of national income among sectors of the economy. Agriculture,

increasing fragmentation and debt, Indian peasants—like peasants elsewhere[5]—have not, as Marx thought they would, parted with their attachment to the small holding nor provided that "chorus without which the solo song [of the urban proletariat] in all peasant nations becomes a swan song."[6] Instead of surrendering themselves to a political master in the hope of protection and benefits or recognizing their "natural ally and leader" in the industrial proletariat, Indian peasants have found the means in traditional social arrangements to represent and rule themselves.

Indian peasants through self-transformation have begun to realize in their consciousness and organization a modern society and a democratic polity. In Britain, aristocracy saved itself by timely reform; in India, caste is doing so. The leading and most pervasive natural association of the old regime—caste—is transforming itself from below and within. From an expression of the hierarchy, privilege and moral parochialism of the old order, caste has become the means to level the order's inequalities by destroying its moral basis and social structure. In doing so, caste, in its new form, the caste association, has served to attach the peasantry to the ideas, processes and institutions of political democracy.

I

India's old regime was—and is—diffuse and decentralized, dominated by micro- rather than macro-institutions. The traditional society of villages, castes and families had been in considerable measure self-regulating; social integration and control were given form and substance by the high culture, by Hindu metaphysics, morals and social organization. But the high culture was widely varied in its practical expression and increasingly dilute as it approached the lower reaches of society and its little traditions.[7] The weakness and failure of revolution and reaction, the strength and persistence of traditional values and social forms and the fact that social and political change has come from within and below as well as from without and above—all are closely related to the relative weight of micro- as against macro-institutions in traditional Indian society. The predominance of micro-institutions deflected and contained the extremes of organized change through political action. India's traditional macro-institutions were difficult to attack or defend nationally: Hinduism had no church, no ecclesiastical hierarchy, no doctrinal orthodoxy; the nobility of the sword, like that of the robe, lacked institutional means to give it political standing or effectiveness as an estate of the realm; nor was India's third estate organized or represented as such.[8]

The strength and importance of macro-institutions in Indian society and government also affected the quality of imperial rule. Imperial rule, like that of a revolutionary ideological regime in a new nation, manufactures and induces change from outside and above.

Imperialism, at least as it was practiced in India, was not so sweeping in its concern to create a modern economy and to realize new values, nor so eager for quick results, nor so coercive and total in its methods as revolutionary ideological regimes like those in Russia or China. Yet it remains true that the imperialism of the British *raj* in its tasks of destruction and reconstruction was restrained and hindered by the strength and predominance in traditional society of diffuse and decentralized micro-institutions.

"England," Marx wrote in 1853, "*has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing.*"[9] It has, however, "a double mission to fulfill . . . one destructive, and the other regenerative—the annihilation of old Asiatic society [or despotism]—and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia."[10] It had begun the latter[11] by imposing political unity, now [1853] to be strengthened and perpetuated by the electric telegraph; by introducing the first free press in Asia, "a new

not including Forestry and Fishing, accounted for 46.8 per cent of National Income in 1959–60. See p. 21.

[5] See for example, David Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasant: A Study in Social Dogmatism* (New York, Collier Books, 1961).

[6] Marx, II, "Brumaire," p. 419.

[7] For a discussion of the structures, processes and roles which link the society and culture of the locality in India with that of its civilization, see Milton Singer, "The Social Organization of Indian Civilization," *Diogenes*, 45 (Spring, 1964), pp. 84–119. It surveys and integrates the relevant monographic literature, particularly the work of Singer himself, M. N. Srinivas, Bernard S. Cohn and McKim Marriott.

[8] For India's modern constitutional history see Reginald Coupland, *The Indian Problem, Report on the Constitutional Problem in India* (London, Oxford University Press, 1944).

[9] Karl Marx, *Selected Works*, II, "The British Rule in India," p. 652 (underlining mine).

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 658.

[11] "The work of regeneration hardly transpires through a heap of ruins," he observes. "Nevertheless it has begun." *Ibid.*

and powerful agent of reconstruction;" by creating private property in land; by educating Indians and thereby producing "a fresh class . . . endowed with the requirements for government and imbued with European science"; by connecting India through steam navigation with itself and the world, thereby breaking the isolation "which was the prime law of its stagnation"; and by gifting India "with the means of irrigation and of internal communication [railroads] which will, when completed, liberate her productive powers by revitalizing agriculture and enabling her to exchange what she produces."[12]

The railroads, along with the multiplication of roads, he predicted, would destroy village isolation and its accompanying "self-sufficient inertia" by supplying that intercourse with other villages without which *"the desires and efforts indispensable to social advance"* are absent. By introducing foreign and domestic manufactured goods, modern transportation and communication would "put the hereditary and stipendiary village artisanship of India to full proof of its capacity, and then supply its defects."[13] Because the railway system requires industrial processes for its support and because Indians had the aptitude and were getting the requisite training to man it, the railway system "will become the forerunner of modern industry." Modern industry in turn "will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress. . . . "[14] When the people have appropriated all the English bourgeoisie has created, they will be able to emancipate themselves and mend their social condition by using the material civilization it brought forth. For Marx, the India of tomorrow was both western and socialist.

England's mission of destruction, "the annihilation of old Asiatic society," was not yet complete in 1853. "We know," he wrote, "that the municipal organization [village and caste *panchayats* or councils] and the economical basis of the village communities have been broken up, but their worst feature, the dissolution of society into stereotype and disconnected atoms [*i.e.*, the India of villages and castes], has survived . . ."[15] the revolutionary impact of British imperialism. The *raj* did indeed undermine the "self-sufficient inertia" of village and caste, and release "the desires and efforts indispensable to social advance."[16] Improved communication, particularly the railroads, did further this process. But what form and purpose did these desires and efforts for social advance assume? Marx left this question unanswered because unnoticed, concentrating his attention instead on the development of the material bases for a modern economy and society which he expected would be appropriated by the people for their emancipation and well-being. Caste, that most pervasive and, for most students of Indian society—Marxian and non-Marxian alike—most retrograde of India's social institutions, has not only survived the impact of British imperialism but also transformed and transvalued itself. In doing so, it has helped dissolve what Marx called the "village system,"[17] including a caste-based social hierarchy, and contributed to the success of political democracy.[18] Change in India has come from within and below as well as from above and outside.

II

Kamaraj Nadar, formerly the Chief Minister of Madras State, now President of the ruling Congress Party and, along with Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, the dominant figure in Indian public life after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru, is the descendant of a caste whose recent history illustrates the process of social change and modernization from within and below. At the time Marx wrote, Shanans were toddy tappers, an occupation considered polluting by Brahmanical Hinduism. Over the past century, the caste has transformed itself by creating new units of consciousness, organization and action. Today, by successfully changing its caste culture and getting this change recognized by the state and by Madras society, it—like other castes which have participated in the same process[18a]—occupies a new and higher place in a changed social order.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 658–660.

[13] Marx quoting Chapman, *The Cotton and Commerce of India, ibid.* at page 661 (underlining mine).

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 661–662.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 660.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 661.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 654–655.

[18] See Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 33 (March, 1960), pp. 5–22.

[18a] See below, section IV, for the Vanniyars. Although the Nadars and the Vanniyars are Madras (southern India) castes, developments similar to those detailed here can be found in other states and regions of India. Some indication of them in Gujarat (western India) is given in the discussion of the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha, also in section IV, below. Nirmal Kumar Bose deals with two

One of the first evidences of Shanan aspirations for greater equality and dignity is found in the homely story of the "bosom" controversy. Shanan women had for a generation clothed themselves above the waist even though caste custom dictated that dressing in such a manner was reserved for higher castes only. Threats and disturbances provoked by this practice culminated in the Travancore Riot of 1858. The question of whether Shanan women would or would not give ". . . up the practice of going about without an upper cloth"[19] had become sufficiently serious to require state intervention. The next year, Sir Charles Trevelyan, the Governor of Madras, granted them permission to wear a cloth over the breasts and shoulders; and the Maharaja of Travancore, in whose princely state the riot had occurred, found no objection to Shanan women putting on a jacket, tying themselves round with coarse cloth or "to their covering their bosoms in any manner whatever, but not like the women of higher castes."[20]

Soon after these events, pamphlets setting out the caste's claims to *kshatriya* (warrior-ruler) status appeared. Members began to claim the right to wear the sacred thread, symbol of the spiritually twice-born Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaisya *varnas*, and to be carried on palanquins at their wedding ceremonies—also a custom previously confined to the highest castes. "Kshatriya" academies, open to all, but designed particularly for the education of Shanan boys, were started, marriage rules tightened, Brahmans "of a less particular kind" induced to act as priests and "a sort of incomplete parody of the ceremony of investiture with the sacred thread" symbolizing twice-born status practiced.[21] "We humbly beg," a group of Shanan petitioners addressed the Census Commissioner in 1901, "that we are the descendants of the Pandya or Dravida Xatra race who . . . first disafforested and colonized this land of South India" and presented him with an historical volume entitled *Short Account of the . . . Tamil Xatras, the Original but Downtrodden Royal Race of Southern India.*"[22] Shanans claimed that ancient coins called Shanans proved that they long ago had the authority to strike coinage and that the honorific, Nadar, by which leaders of the caste were addressed, proved they were *kshatriyas* because it meant ruler of a locality. In 1891 the Census Commissioner observed that the Shanans were ". . . usually placed a little above the Pallas and Paraiyans, and are considered to be one of the polluting castes, but of late many have put forward the claim to be considered Kshatriyas, and at least 24,000 of them appear [*i.e.*, gave their caste to the census enumerator] as Kshatriyas in the caste tables." To the learned commissioner, this was "of course, absurd as there is no such thing as a Dravidian Kshatriya" although he conceded that the Shanans may have been "at one time a war-like tribe. . . ."[23]

Leading Shanans saw matters differently; through a new associational life[24] which organized and gave expression to their changing

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Bengali (eastern India) caste associations, of the Yogi and the Namasudra, in "Some Aspects of Caste in Bengal," in Milton Singer, ed., *Traditional India* (Philadelphia, 1959), pp. 199–200. William Rowe has explored the history of caste associations among two castes distributed throughout northern India, the Noniya and the Kayastha, in "The New Cauhans: A Caste Mobility Movement in North India," in J. Silverberg, ed., *Social Mobility in Caste in India* (forthcoming) and "Mobility in the Caste System," a paper delivered at the Conference on Social Structure and Social Change, University of Chicago, June 3–5, 1965. For social and cultural change at the local level among the Chamars, an extensive "untouchable" caste found primarily in Uttar Pradesh, see Bernard S. Cohn, "The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste," in McKim Marriott ed., *Village India* (Chicago, 1955) and "Changing Traditions of a Low Caste," in Milton Singer, *op. cit.* above. Owen M. Lynch, "The Politics of Untouchable," another paper at the University of Chicago Conference, June 1965, above, describes the origin and changing ideology and functions of Chamar caste association in Uttar Pradesh. Robert J. Miller dealt with the Mahars, a numerous "untouchable" caste of Maharashtra (western India), in "Button, button . . . Great Tradition, Little Tradition, Whose Tradition," mimeo., University of Wisconsin, 1 March 1965.

Returning to the South, two well established and powerful caste associations represent the Nairs and the Ezhavas in Kerala, while in Mysore the Lingyats and the Okaligas are well organized and highly influential.

[19] Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (7 vols., Madras, Government Press, 1909), VI, 365.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 365–366.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 367.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 369.

[24] There are two Nadar Caste Associations, the Nadar Maha Jana Sangam of Madurai and the Dakshina Mara Nadar Sangam of Tirunelveli. The Nadar Maha Jana Sangam, the larger and more influential of the two, has organized annual Nadar conferences since 1910.

consciousness, culture and identity, they pressed for recognition and legitimation from orthodox Hindu society. At its moral and ritual center lay religion and its most visible and accessible target, the temple. In 1874, the Shanans pressed unsuccessfully to establish their their right to enter the great Minakshi Temple at Madurai.[25] In the *Kamudi Temple* case of 1899[26] the Shanans through the legal system of the British Raj made a major effort to cross the pollution barrier of orthodox Hindu society and establish their claim within it to be a twice-born caste. They hoped to win through the legal processes and sanctions of the alien and secular political order what they had been denied by the religious macro-institutions of traditional society, sacred legitimacy for their claims to a greater measure of equality.

Their hopes were cruelly dashed by the courts. The District Court at Madura, and, on appeal, the High Court of Madras and the Privy Council agreed, in the face of Nadar claims that it was their immemorial right to enter the temple at Kamudi, that neither custom nor *sastras* (sacred texts) sanctioned their doing so.

"There is no sort of proof," the High Court held, "that even suggests a probability that the Shanans are descendants from Kshatriya or warrior castes of Hindus, or from Pandiya, Chola, or Chera race of kings." Nor did the honorific appellation Nadar entitle them to claim higher status or greater rights; it in no way changed their ritual status. From time immemorial, the Shanans had cultivated the Palmyra palm and collected and distilled its juice, an occupation that placed them in general social estimation "just above that of . . . Pariahs . . . who are on all hands regarded as unclean, prohibited from the use of Hindu temples and below that of the . . . Maravans [one of the caste directly concerned] and other classes admittedly free to worship in Hindu temples." Further, the court held, there were no grounds whatsoever for regarding them as of Aryan origin; their worship, said the court, was a form of demonology.

The Court was not unaware of the radical changes in Shanan circumstances:

> No doubt many Shanans have abandoned their hereditary occupation, and have won for themselves by education, industry and frugality respectable positions. . . . In the process of time, many Shanans took to cultivating, trade, and money lending, and today there is a numerous and prosperous body of Shanans who have no immediate concern with the immemorial calling of their caste. In many villages they own much of the land, and monopolize the bulk of trade and wealth.

The Court recognized that these *de facto* changes created difficulties: the Shanans have "not unnaturally sought for social recognition, and to be treated on an equal footing in religious matters." It was also "natural to feel sympathy for their efforts . . . but such sympathy," the court warned, "will not be increased by unreasonable and unfounded pretensions, and, in the effort to rise, the Shanans must not invade the *established rights* of other castes."

The Court invoked Brahman written and edited law and the testimony of Brahman witnesses concerning local custom to sustain its interpretation:

> According to the Agama Shastras which are received as authoritative by worshippers of Siva in the Madura district, entry into a temple, where the ritual prescribed by these Shastras is observed, is prohibited to all those whose profession is the manufacture of intoxicating liquor and the climbing of palmyra and cocoanut trees.

Plaintiffs' thirty-four witnesses were unanimous in testifying that Shanans did not enter the temple at Kamudi. "Most of them are Brahmans," the Court observed, "who, being in a position of acknowledged superiority to both contending parties, Shanans and Maravans, are less likely than others to be swayed by personal bias or self-interest."[27] Although some among the Shanans' twenty-eight witnesses were Brahmans, they were generally "men of much lower standing and respectability, and are to large extent in the pay or under the control of the Nadars . . . " The Court's allegations were confirmed but seemed to cut both ways when the Rajah of Ramnad, the trustee of the temple and the original plaintiff, agreed —after he had won the case in the district court —to "compromise" in the face of the Shanans' appeal to the High Court, by allowing them to enter the Kamudi temple and worship there.

[25] Thurston, *op. cit.*, VI, 355.

[26] Sankaralinga Nadan *v.* Rajeswara Dorai, Indian Law Reports, 31 Madras 236 (1908). The quotations below are all drawn from this report of the case.

[27] For a discussion of the critiques of the Madras High Court, particularly its Brahmanic bias, see Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Barristers and Brahmans; Legal Cultures and Social Change," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (December, 1965).

"A very sordid motive for this surrender," their Lordships of the Privy Council observed, "was specifically asserted and has not been disproved." When the High Court joined other plaintiffs to the original plaintiff so that the suit could be heard on appeal, the Rajah's confidence in the justice of his suit "convalesced."

In the Court's judgment, birth, not achievement, defined social identity. Rights were rooted in Brahmanically defined custom and Brahmanically edited sacred texts, not in treating equals equally or in "right reason." Only Aryans, not Dravidians, could be *kshatriyas;* the pollution of the fathers followed the sons into commerce, the professions and agriculture. The Court advised the Shanans, in phrases reminiscent of the United States Supreme Court's doctrine in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* with respect to Negro claims to equality,[28] to be separate but equal by using their own temples. Shanans were "numerous and strong enough in wealth and education to rise along their own lines . . . without appropriating the institutions or infringing the rights of others."

A minor civil war in the form of the Tinnevelly Riots of 1899 followed close on the heels of the *Kamudi Temple* case. "The pretensions of the Shanans to a much higher position in the religio-social scale than the other castes are willing to allow," the Inspector-General of Police wrote in his *Administration Report* for that year, was the cause of extensive civil disorder and violence.[29] High on the list of Shanan "pretensions" was their claim to entry of temples. When the manager of the Visvanatheswara Temple at Sivakasi closed it rather than give in to the pressure of a massive Shanan agitation for entry—an act again reminiscent of American events in the struggle for integration—Shanans and their enemies agreed that they had gained at least a partial victory. Most opposed to Shanan mobility were the Maravans, their near neighbors in space and status. A "clean" caste, the Maravans could enter the temple at Sivakasi. To share it with the Shanans, a polluting caste according to the ritual definitions of traditional society, seemed intolerable. The Maravans struck back by organized attacks on Shanan villages and sections, burning, looting and sometimes killing. The Shanans violently resisted five thousand Maravans who marched on Sivakasi to enforce their demands. The police summed up the struggle in the following statistics: 23 murders; 102 robberies; many cases of arson; 1958 arrests; and 552 convictions; including seven death sentences.

By 1921, the Shanans had gained sufficient social esteem and political influence so that they alone, among the many castes making the attempt, succeeded in changing their name and shedding officially their traditional occupation. Their metamorphosis was wrought neither by the macro- or micro-institutions of traditional society nor by the legal system of the British state finding in the custom or the sacred texts of traditional society grounds to justify Shanan claims. Instead it was the Government of Madras, responding to the determined representations of the organized "Nadar" community, that did so. "The Shanar of 1911," Census Commissioner G. T. Boag wrote in 1921, "now appears as a Nadar; this is done under orders of the Government of Madras, that the word Shanar should cease to be used in official records."[30]

The Shanans' secular and official social transformation extended to occupation as well as name when the Government decided to list in the census actual rather than traditional ones. The Census Superintendent observed that neither common names nor common traditional occupations were "safe guides" to the defini-

[28] 163 U. S. 537 (1896). "If one race," the Court observed, "be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them on the same plane." "We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff's argument [that by enforcing segregation between whites and negroes the states were denying the equal protection of the laws assured by the Fourteenth Amendment] to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it." (p. 551).

[29] Thurston, *op. cit.*, VI, 364.

[30] Census of India, 1921, Vol. XIII, *Madras* (Part I) *Report* (Madras, Superintendent, Government Press, 1922), p. 153, note. The relevant Government Orders are: Government of Madras, Law (General) Department, G.O. No. 56, dated 8 April 1921 and G. O. 785, 7 July 1921. Circulars No. 4 and No. 5 of the Nadar Maha Jana Sangam contain the instructions of the caste association to its followers concerning the responses to be given to census enumerators. Census Commissioner Boag's description and analysis of changes in caste names generally on pp. 153–155 of Vol. XIII is particularly instructive for the shift from Shanan to Nadar. I wish to thank Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr. for his help in obtaining the texts of the relevant G.O.s and the Sangams circulars and the Nadar Maha Jana Sangam for its courtesy in making its archives available to him.

tion of caste or the identification of a particular caste. The Nadars, for example, who were in earlier censuses shown as toddy-drawers, ". . . now claim that they are by tradition and inheritance lords of the soil and that toddy-drawing was the occupation only of comparatively few degenerate members of the caste." In deference to the wishes of the representatives of the Nadar community," he continues, "the Madras Government have decided on this occasion not to show traditional occupations in the census tables . . ."[31]

Today only those relatively few who live in more remote villages and engage in toddy tapping know themselves and are known to others as Shanans; for a number of generations Shanans have increasingly shared the public identity, Nadar. The community has breached the polution barrier, changed its rank within traditional society and now occupies an important place in the modern society of Madras and India.[32]

[31] Census of India, 1921, Vol. XIII, *Madras*, p. 154.

[32] See *Man in India*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (April–June 1959), particularly McKim Marriott's "Interactional and Attributional Theories of Caste Ranking," for discussions of the relationship between caste mobility and caste ranking. Marriott is critical of Srinivas for being too "attributional." For Srinivas' views see his *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays* (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1962). Milton Singer in his ". . . Indian Civilization . . . ," *Diogenes*, tries to accommodate both views but suggests that Marriott may have overstated the case against attributional ranking. See particularly the sections on "Sanskritization and Cultural Mobility," ". . . Attributes vs. Interactions in Caste Mobility" and "Westernization and Sanskritization," pp. 99–108.

The case of the Shanans who became Nadars seems to suggest that the study of caste ranking, like the study of social change generally, has not paid enough attention to middle sector analysis, which examines change as it occurs in the social space between village and *jati* on the one hand and society and *varna* on the other and takes several generations as its relevant time span. It is less (narrowly) behavioral and philosophical, more historical and sociological, in its ideas and methods.

How much and in what ways the Shanans' changing social standing was reflected over time in village consciousness and behavior is not yet entirely clear. Because their rise was accompanied by increasing wealth and education, decreasing pollution and the emulation and appropriation of high caste behavior and symbols, it seems reasonable to assume that locally the Shanans' change of name and status was in considerable measure recognized *over time* by appropriate changes in the evaluations and behavior of non-Shanans of all ranks and castes.

The story of the Shanans illustrates in some measure the general processes of social change and political modernization which have affected traditional Indian society. Castes, "the stereotype and disconnected units" which Marx, over a century ago, described as having survived the break-up of the village economy and government, but which were to be dissolved by the effects of industrialization, have not yet been so. Instead, they seem, in good Hindu fashion, to have been reincarnated in a modern form as the caste association.[33] This has become a vehicle for internal cultural reform and external social change. It enables middle and lower castes to establish self-esteem under circumstances in which they had begun to feel the inferiority rather than the inevitability of their condition and to win social esteem, first from the state, then from society at large and last and most slowly from the village and locality. A vehicle of consciousness and organization, it enabled lower castes to emulate twice-born castes' norms and practices, and by doing so to appropriate some of their charisma and prestige for themselves. The result has been to level the ritually based social hierarchy of the caste-ordered society. Uniting similar but dispersed and isolated *jatis* (subcastes) of village and locality in larger organizations with common identities, the caste association has contributed significantly to the success of political democracy by providing bases for communication, representation and leadership. It taught and enabled illiterate peasants to participate meaningfully and effectively in politics. Lower castes whose large numbers gave them an advantage in competitive democratic politics, gained influence, access and power in state and society. With these at their command, they have changed in their favor the allocation of resources, privilege and honor.

[33] See L. Rudolph and S. H. Rudolph, "Caste Associations," *op. cit.*, *passim*.

III

If India, a peasant nation, is not what Marx thought such nations must be—a "sackful of potatoes," the result of the "simple addition of homologous magnitudes," a society of stereotype and disconnected atoms—if it does not need a political master to which its peasants may subordinate themselves, as he thought they would, and has not developed revolution-

ary consciousness, it is because India's peasants can represent and rule themselves; and caste helps them to do so. This is not to underestimate the problems caste poses for the creation of a modern society and the realization of individuality but is to place caste in its incarnation as caste association in an analytic context and there assess its meaning.

The caste association has contributed to the decompression and deparochialization of the *jati* and the locality, particularly the village, which is the *jati*'s historical and natural home. By reaching out toward the state and national legislative constituency, to the Community Development Block and District and their recently created parallel organs of local government, to legislative, administrative and executive arms of the State Government, and even to the government in Delhi and the politics of the nation, the caste association has educated and elevated caste consciousness, interest and purpose and given caste a voice in decisions at these levels. Doing so has helped inform the *jati*, aroused its imagination along with its ambition, and led it to larger and more inclusive identities and loyalties. As the block and district headquarters, the market town, local school and nearby cinema become increasingly relevant to village lives, as they energize and shape identities, they create alternative environments for prestige and self-esteem. The expansion of horizons and the growth of empathy have reduced the concentration of affect, power and economic dependence at the local level.[34] The caste association both independently and as the carrier of other forces and institutions contributes to the reduction of the affect and interest invested in the face-to-face communities of caste and village. A unit of consciousness and organization which transcends both, it leads its members to new symbols, models and reference groups and to contexts of action which are structurally less diffuse but affectively more so. The drift of power, profit and honor away from the locality has not yet made Indian villages into bedroom suburbs but it has broken their ancient monopoly on all aspects of life.

Membership in a caste association is based on both birth and choice. One must be born into a particular *jati* to qualify, but then one must choose to join the association. The ascriptive element strongly suggests that there is a natural limit to the caste association's capacity to approximate a wholly voluntary association. However far it may lead those who identify with it from the narrow confines of the traditional face-to-face community, it can not, so it is argued, lead them beyond ascriptive boundaries. The individual can never be fully free to define himself, to make his own destiny, and as a consequence he is unable to act politically in ways that are untainted by group parochialism and selfishness.

Several recent developments have challenged this view. First, in so far as it is possible in India to "leave" traditional and "join" modern society by, for example, being educated in the English medium and "western" ideas, being trained in a modern profession and practicing it, marrying out of caste, and associating with people who, at least ostensibly, do not take caste into account in their friendships—and this is possible up to a point in India today—the modernization of Indian society and politics through the transformation of caste becomes only one of two ways to achieve modernity. But the kind of westernization that Marx was talking about and the kind that Srinivas hypothesizes,[34a] that is, an alternative process of change that results in the formation of soci-

[34] The caste association can be viewed as both an independent and dependent variable in the processes of decompression and deparochialization. A few studies that highlight these processes are F. G. Bailey, who describes how the extension of the economic and political frontier (by which he means primarily the State administration) has liberated several castes, particularly the Boad Outcastes, from the social, cultural and governmental authority of the village of Bisipara: *Caste and the Economic Frontier* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1957); T. Scarlett Epstein, who shows how in the "dry" village of Dalena (but not in the wet one of Wangala) in Mysore, radical economic change led to its integration into the regional economy, undermined the principle on which its society was organized (p. 325) and displaced ritual by economic aspects of prestige (p. 334): *Economic Development and Social Change in South India* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1962); and William S. Rowe, who has shown how the Noniyas, an aggressively upward mobile caste of Senapur, loosened the hold of the village's dominant caste by building a school with tiles purchased outright from a potter's village adjacent to Banaras twenty-five miles away: "Changing Rural Class Structure and the Jajmani System," *Human Organization*, Vol. 22 (Spring, 1963.) For the concept of empathy, its role in modernization and its relation to communication, see Daniel Lerner, *Modernizing the Middle East; The Passing of Traditional Society* (Glencoe, 1958), esp. chs. 1 and 2.

[34a] M. N. Srinivas, *op. cit.*, chs. 1–3.

ety in western terms, is more an analytic construct than a description of reality. Westernization has created a "shadow" society, like the opposition's cabinet in British politics, ready to take power but for the moment serving as a critic of those in power and an innovator or catalyst of change. Like a shadow cabinet, it can change the existing regime's direction without ever replacing it. Modernity has entered into Indian character and society but it has done so through assimilation not replacement.[35] The changes that now appear on the horizon with respect to the further evolution of the caste association and its transcendence of ascription have to do with internal differentiation (fission) and the operation of integrative institutions upon it and federation or consolidation of caste associations into larger groupings (fusion).

IV

In 1952, the Vanniyars, largest single caste in Madras state, capped a history of internal reform (Sanskritization) and organizational modernization not unlike that of the Nadars (formerly Shanans) by contesting the first General Election under the standards of the Tamil Nad Toilers (hereafter TNT) and Commonweal Party, the first strongest in South Arcot District but reaching into Salem and Tiruchirapalli Districts, and the second strongest in North Arcot. The two were virtually caste parties. The TNT captured nineteen and the Commonweal Party six seats in the Madras Assembly, or 13 per cent of the total. After S. S. Ramaswami Padayachi, head of the TNT, in 1954 joined N. A. Manickkavelu Naicker, leader of the Commonweal Party, in the reorganized Congress Government of Kamaraj Nadar, the Vanniyars, who represent ten per cent of the state's population, occupied two of the eight (25 per cent) cabinet seats. Their slogan in the 1952 election had been "Vanniyar Vottu Anniyarukku Illai" (Vanniyar votes are not for non-Vanniyars). In 1957, at the time of the second General Election, the Vanniyars, now solidly entrenched in Kamaraj's Congress Party, seemed to have perfected the technique of *caste* representation. Nominated in large numbers by the Congress, they helped it gain an impressive victory that year.

By 1962, however, radical changes had taken place in the Vanniyars' social and political circumstances. Internal differentiation along economic, cultural and social lines and personal ambition were articulated and reinforced outside the Vanniyar community by parties competing for support. The result shattered Vanniyar corporate power. They were subsumed to an even greater degree than had been the case when they had moved from their own parties into Congress by the leadership and policy of a voluntary association and integrative institution, the political party. This effect is most sharply etched in South Arcot District, over half of whose 2.5 million population are Vanniyars and where the TNT in 1952 had captured thirteen of the District's nineteen MLA seats.[36] In 1954, when that party's chief had led his followers into Kamaraj Nadar's Government and he had become a Minister, the first crack in Vanniyar solidarity had appeared. A splinter TNT group under A. Govindaswami, MLA, opposed the merger and joined what has come to be Madras's leading opposition party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazagam (Dravidian Progressive Federation, hereafter DMK).[37]

In 1957, when the Congress Party gave tickets to (nominated) former TNT members in preference to old-time Congressmen, K. S. Venkatakrishna Reddiar, along with other higher caste landowning notables from his own (Reddiar), Naidu, Vellala and Mudaliar castes and with the support of dissident or still dependent sections of the Vanniyars, helped form the Congress Reform Committee (hereafter CRC; later the Indian National Democratic Congress, hereafter INDC). Despite the fact that the leadership of the CRC was drawn from a class which had been and in some measure still was the master and sometimes the oppressor and exploiter of its Vanniyar tenants and laborers, it was able to rally considerable numbers to its electoral cause and gain a modest electoral success. By 1962, however, the INDC, some members having made their peace with the Congress, others having joined the DMK or the Swatantra Party, had evaporated. In 1960,

[35] The burden of Edward Shils' argument in *The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity; The Indian Case* (The Hague, Mouton, 1961), seems to me to be consistent with these thoughts.

[36] *Express* (Chittoor), March 7, 1962. I should like to acknowledge the very helpful extensive and detailed articles of the *Expresss*'s Special Correspondent, M. Mohan Ram, on the 1962 election in North Arcot, Salem, Tiruchirapalli, Tanjore and South Arcot Districts; see the *Express* (Chittoor) for March 7, 15, 17, 20 and 21, 1962, upon which much of the analysis below is based.

[37] For an analysis of it and Dravidian politics generally, see Lloyd I. Rudolph, "Urban Life and Populist Radicalism; Dravidian Politics in Madras," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 20 (May, 1961), pp. 283–297.

a year after the Swatantra Party was created, S. S. Ramaswami Padayachi, the creator and leader of the TNT, began to move in its direction; by 1961, he had joined it and become its head in South Arcot District.

The once monolithic Vanniyar political front in 1962 was "divided into three contending groups—one supporting the Congress under Mr. Srinivasa Padayachi, the second owing allegiance to the DMK, led by Mr. Govindaswami, and the third under Swatantra influence, loyal to Mr. Ramaswami Padayachi."[38] The effect was to place all three major parties in South Arcot District under Vanniyar leadership. And of the District's fifteen non-reserved seats (four seats were reserved for Harijan candidates) in the 1962 General Election, thirteen were won by Vanniyars—eight as Congress and five as DMK candidates. S. S. Ramaswami Padayachi and a number of other Swatantra candidates lost, however, some by close margins.

The external boundaries of the caste association began to collapse under pressure from outside as the internal forces and strategic calculations which maintained the caste association's solidarity were weakened by differentiation, the absorption of more modern ideas, and political calculations designed to express both. A modern aggregative and integrative institution, the political party, by capitalizing on internal differences, destroyed its monolithic solidarity, further weakened caste's ascriptive and particularistic hold on social identity and behavior, divided and diffused the association's political power and brought it into closer approximation with the assumptions and behavior of modern society and democratic politics (*i.e.*, more universal and functionally specific norms).

The ascriptive and particularistic qualities of caste associations are being affected by higher levels of integration (fusion) as well as by disintegration (fission). The Kallan, Maravar and Agamudiar castes[39] of central and southern Madras have been defined and separated historically by ritual rank, social distance and endogamy. Recently their caste associations and leaders, under the interacting influences of democratic institutions and processes and those of traditional society,[40] have begun to create new and larger forms of consciousness, organization and action.[41] Experience in the Madras Assembly, the lessons of party and electoral politics, a growing sense of common purpose and the importance of numbers for realizing political objectives contributed to this result. The three castes have styled themselves Mukkulator (literally "three castes") and have begun to represent themselves in terms of this common name; and the organization and leadership which brought it into being contribute to its growing importance and strength. The basis of Mukkulator social and political identity remains that of an ascriptive social and cultural group with a given geographic location. But just as the caste association attenuated the importance of these factors by upgrading and extending the *jati*, so this federation of caste associations has further attenuated them by again diluting birth and particularism with choice. The self and public definition of the Mukkulators and their organization and political role approach even more closely than the caste association the qualities, form and functions of voluntary associations with political objectives. By further blurring the line between natural and voluntary association, the caste federation seems to break down the dichotomy between ascription and choice which helps to distinguish traditional from modern societies. What appeared to be an absolute division in theory if not in practice has

[38] *Express* (Chittoor), March 21, 1962.

[39] For the Parumali-nadu Kallans see Louis Dumont's *Une Sous-Caste de L'Inde du Sud; Organisation Sociale et Religieuse des Pramalai Kallar* (Paris, Mouton, 1957); for Kallans generally see Thurston, *Castes*, III, 53–91; for Maravans, Thurston, *Castes*, V, 22–48; and for the Agamudiar, Thurston, *Castes*, I, 5–16. The link among these castes is older than the present beginnings of political federation. They share common mythological ancestors (see Thurston, *Castes*, I, 7 for two versions of the Agamudiar creation myth) and a common mobility pattern in traditional society. "There is a Tamil proverb," Thurston writes, "to the effect that a Kallan may become a Maravan. By respectability he may develop into an Agamudiyan, and, by slow degrees, become a Vellala, from which he may rise to be a Mudaliar." *Ibid.* Vellala and Mudaliar are traditionally ranked above Agamudiyan.

[40] W. H. Morris-Jones' analysis of the "languages of politics" and of the "dialogue" between government and political forces have been very helpful for the formulation and statement of the argument here. See his *The Government and Politics of India* (London, 1964), ch. 2, "Politics and Society" and ch. 6, "The Ordering Framework" for these two ideas.

[41] The discussion below is based in part on an interview with Mr. Ramanchandran, MLA, Chief Whip of the Congress Party in the Madras Assembly. He is in no way responsible for my judgments.

become, in the Indian context, an increasingly relative one suggesting that a continuum which bridges the two rather than a dichotomy may be a more appropriate statement of both the practical and theoretical issues involved.

A recent study by Rajni Kothari and R. M. Maru, "Caste and Secularism in India; A Case Study of the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha,"[42] confirms and deepens these observations. The Sabha is a federation of many economically depressed cultivators and landless laborers. Over time it has helped them to become "kshatriyas" in their own and society's eyes, by articulating their "common economic interests and a growing secular identity born partly out of past folk-lore but more out of common resentment against well-to-do castes. . . ."[43] The caste federation's break with the ascriptive and particularistic features of traditional society and its assumption of a modern social and politically democratic character is found, Kothari and Maru argue, in the motivation "that lies behind such a process of group assertion." Caste consciousness plays a part but it is no longer geared, they believe, to the preservation of caste traditions and customs but rather to "the acquisition of power and the transformation of traditional positions." This process, including its accompanying transformation of consciousness, the authors call "secularization." They relate it to the simultaneous sanskritization (the emulation of high caste norms and practice) of lower castes and the westernization (acculturation and social organization based on western values and forms) of higher;[44] sanskritization narrows the gap between lower and higher castes and westernization widens it. Secularization, however, joins lower and higher castes in a common experience of social levelling and articulation of group purposes. Although both higher and lower castes are concerned respectively to preserve or improve their status through political action, political considerations fuse them together: the upper castes need numerical strength to sustain their power and status, the lower need access to resources and opportunities which support from the higher can yield. Lower castes may agree to be led and even governed by upper castes but their agreement to do so is " . . . increasingly conditioned by norms of accountability and notions of 'interest' and 'right.' "[45]

V

Political man in democratic India has been wrought out of traditional materials; he is not a new man. Acting through caste associations and federations he is capable at various levels and contexts of the pursuit of countervailing power and the calculation of political advantage. Parties seeking to integrate group purposes while differentiating themselves from their competitors have in most instances harnessed and subsumed India's transformed associational life. The result has been to make representative democracy meaningful and effective in a peasant nation and caste society.

The role of caste in Indian politics has nevertheless been subjected to severe and often uncomprehending criticism. Its ascriptive and particularistic features and the parochial selfishness and chauvinism which they support deeply trouble those committed to the progressive realization of a liberal democratic or socialist society and state. The individual must precede the group in time and importance for the contractual civil society or the ideological collective to have meaning and validity. Yet the blurring of the line between natural and voluntary associations in India has placed her associational life in a situation not too different from that of modern western nations. Natural associations based on language, religion, ethnicity and locality have not been assimilated or dissolved and continue to play a crucial, sometimes decisive part, in their politics.[46] Nor is it true, despite the cross-cutting pressures of structural, economic and cultural pluralism in a democratic society and state, that formally

[42] *Journal of Asian Studies* (forthcoming). Myron Weiner's excellent study "Segmentation and Political Participation: Kaira District, which came into my hands too late to be taken into account in this text, also deals with the [Gujarat] Kshatriya Sabha. His analysis complements and sharpens that of Kothari and Maru.

[43] The new identity and organization brings within its fold a fairly broad social spectrum ranging "from *Rajputs* who are highest in the Kshatriya hierarchy to *Bhils* who are semi-tribal, with Bariyas middle on the way." Kothari and Maru, "Secularism," pp. 7–8.

[44] See Srinivas, *op cit.*, ch. 2, "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization."

[45] Kothari and Maru, "Secularism," p. 55.

[46] For America, see Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday Anchor, 1960); Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, M.I.T. and Harvard University Press, 1963); and Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life; The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1964).

voluntary associations are free from the characteristics and behavior attributed to natural associations.[47] Efforts to distinguish traditional from modern society, in terms of a natural versus a voluntary basis for their associational life, run the risk of confusing structure and formal requirements with a more indeterminate reality in which one blends into the other and is affected over time by contextual forces. Other ways may have to be found for distinguishing natural associations that find benign ways of merging the concerns for individuality and for achievement in modern society from those which are disruptive.

Massive natural associations based on religion led to the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947; the tribal associations in Ruanda led the Watusi to bring charges of genocide against the Bahutu;[48] and tribal politics in the Congo fuelled chronic political instability and supported rebellion and civil war. When natural associations are too few, when they are socially and morally independent of each other, and when they lack a limited but critical identification with leaders, ideas and institutions capable of sustaining a national politics and modern state, they destroy the possibility or viability of a civil society that transcends them. Natural associations—including caste associations—in India in a few contexts such as Kerala, where society has become divided into five (Ezhavas, Harijans, Nairs, Christians and Muslims) large, roughly equal and relatively rigid groups, have contributed more to political instability than to political modernization. As the state's political parties have become increasingly congruent with these social differences, their integrative capacities have declined. Instead of subsuming, combining or disintegrating social differences based on birth, they have in considerable measure begun to re-enforce them. But the situation in Kerala is more the exception than the rule. The difficulties being experienced in Belgium, and Canada in recent years[49] derive from natural associations which have resisted or absorbed strong modern pluralistic forces,

[47] For a recent critical view of social pluralism as it has hardened and subordinated itself to bureaucratic leadership, see Henry Kariel, *The Decline of American Pluralism* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1961). Kariel is so concerned that he "would have us move . . . from the much celebrated ideal of Tocqueville toward the still unfashionable one of Rousseau."

Milton Gordon in *Assimilation in American Life* (New York, 1964), mounts an impressive case for the rigid compartmentalization of American communal life at the rank and file level. S. M. Lipset, Martin Trow and James Coleman in *Union Democracy; The Inside Politics of the International Typographical Union* (Glencoe, 1956), examine the rigidities and bureaucratic domination of union and professional associations by analysing the exceptional case. Everett C. Hughes in *Men and Their Work* (Glencoe, 1958), suggests how occupational associations in America, like castes in India, upgrade themselves by changing their names and histories and purify themselves and their rituals by emulating "higher" occupational groups in the matter of educational requirements, licensing standards and ceremonial niceties. John R. Murphy's "Professional and Occupational Licensing: A National Problem with State Control," a term paper in Government 155a, Government Regulation of Industry, Harvard University, 1959–60, along with Hughes' analyses, suggested these comparisons with caste mobility in India.

For social and political statements of the viability and benefits of social pluralism based on individuality, voluntarism and liberty, see William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960) and David B. Truman, *The Governmental Process; Political Interests and Public Opinion* (New York, 1951).

Kariel and Lipset, Trow and Coleman emphasize the inability of members of formally voluntary associations, like peasants in Marx's analysis, to represent and rule themselves; therefore they fall victim to the executive power (the bureaucracy). William H. Whyte, Jr., in *The Organization Man* (New York, 1956), while not ignoring structural factors, emphasizes the ways in which formally voluntary organizations absorb and tend to monopolize the affective life and identities of their members and their families.

[48] See Jacques J. Maquet, *The Premise of Inequality in Ruanda* (London, Oxford University Press, 1961). For the genocide charge see *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Vol. 14 (1963–1964), pp. 20085–86.

[49] For Walloon-Flemish differences in Belgium see Ernest Mandel, "The Dialectic of Class and Region in Belgium," *New Left Review*, No. 20 (Summer, 1963), pp. 2–31; *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Vol. 13 (1961–1962), pp. 17968, 18391, 18623, and 18941 and Vol. 14 (1963–1964), p. 19601. For the differences in Canada between the French Catholics and English Protestants see the *Preliminary Report* of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Ottawa, 1965). The Commission warned that Canada was undergoing "the greatest crisis in its history." (p. 13). See also Edmund Wilson, *O Canada* (New York, 1965).

values antithetical to ascription and particularism, and integrative institutions, particularly the political party. The caste association has created less severe strains in modern Indian politics than have religion and language in these modern societies even while it has contributed to political socialization, modernization and meaningful participation in a society whose economic and social underdevelopment stands in marked contrast to these.[50]

Because caste in most instances continues to divide society horizontally and not (like religion and language) vertically, and because the horizontal divisions continue to be many rather than few, it remains primarily an instrument of political representation capable of being aggregated, integrated and led. Its closest functional equivalent now may be the ethnic and religious groups in American politics which, contrary to "official" ideology, retain great influence particularly at the local and state level.

If this is so or is proving to be so, the situation is paradoxical and ironical. Indians, unlike Americans, were not, as Tocqueville put it, born equal. They have had or will have to become so. In so far as they have achieved equality, they have done so by transforming the most rigidly hierarchical and compartmentalized system of social stratification, the caste system. The measure of equality that has been realized is in part the result of a marriage between the transplanted and assimilated liberalism of the British *raj* and traditional Indian culture. The offspring of this union is a political culture with characteristics that embrace not

[50] See S. M. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," this REVIEW, Vol. 53 (March, 1959) for a proposition and supporting evidence which strongly suggest that democracy should be an utter failure in India. On almost every statistical measure of the "requisites of democracy" (per capita income, literacy, industrialization and urbanization) India stands at or near the bottom, yet it is a democracy. Lipset derides those who use a deviant case to challenge the validity of the notion that there are "social conditions which are regularly associated with a given complex political system" (p. 70) such as democracy. Theoretical propositions "must be subject to test by a systematic comparison of *all* available cases . . . " A deviant case, according to Lipset, is properly treated as one out of many. Only woolly minded and unscientific political philosophers would argue that "a given situation clearly violates [a] thesis . . . " (p. 70). Yet Lipset, in selecting his cases on the basis of "whether a country had had a history of more or less free elections for most of the post-World War I period" (pp. 73–74) does not consider India, although she meets the test. It seems reasonable to question, therefore, whether *all* available cases have been considered. It also seems reasonable to inquire whether it is valid to treat this deviant case "as one case out of many." In the name of aggregative characteristics of systems and multivariate analysis of causality, we are asked to treat the experience of India's almost 500,000,000 people as equivalent to that of the smallest Latin American "nation."

Lipset himself, drawing upon Weber, suggests an alternative theory of cumulative causation (see below) to explain the existence and persistence of democracy, but unfortunately abandons it in favor of aggregative social characteristics, on the basis of what seems at best a marginal and at worst a meaningless distinction between the "social conditions" which "support" democracy and the "internal mechanisms" which "maintain" it. It would seem that both theories deserve a place in the sun: the theory of cumulative causation explains better the supports for and the continued existence of democracy in India, while the aggregative social conditions theory, which Lipset advances as a *general* theory, does not. This suggests that the Indian case may very well be a "universe" unto itself rather than "one case out of many." A general theory would then have to "explain" the Indian case *and* the cases with which Lipset deals. Instead, Lipset claims to deal with all cases but does not do so and treats, by implication, "universe" differences as "deviant" cases.

The theory of cumulative causation would explain the support and maintenance of democracy by proposing that " . . . unique events may account for *either* the persistence *or* the failure of democracy in any particular society . . . key historical events . . . set one process in motion in one country, and a second process in another . . . once established, a democratic political system gathers momentum . . . " (p. 72). Lipset warns us, in the light of this line of analysis, not to "overstress" the high correlations he displays between democracy and his measures for requisites. He also allows that what he calls "premature" democracies which survive will do so by "facilitating the growth of conditions conducive to democracy . . . " But his choice of examples here, universal literacy and autonomous private associations—presumably not ones based on caste—highlight his bias toward certain "modern" aggregative social characteristics as the requisites of democracy. The Indian "universe" radically contradicts Lipset's view (as it does Marx's) but supports the abandoned theory of cumulative causation.

only political democracy and parliamentary government but also caste associations. It is a political culture that includes, in Morris-Jones' terms,[51] traditional, modern and "saintly" languages. Those who know and love one parent often ignore or reject the displeasing features of the other. Yet Indian political culture is surely a product of this union, a "genetic" fusion which some may think impossible, others immoral, but which by its vigor and viability over the years is hard to deny or ignore.

Changes in the internal arrangements and public function of caste and in political culture and structure are necessary but not sufficient if caste is to be made compatible with democracy. A profound change in the nature of human sensibility is also required but to a lesser extent realized. Tocqueville contrasted the state of human sensibility in aristocratic and democratic nations by observing that "real sympathy can exist only between those who are alike, and in aristocratic ages men acknowledge none but the members of their own caste to be like themselves. . . . When all the ranks of a community are nearly equal, as all men think and feel in nearly the same manner, each of them may judge in a moment of the sensations of all the others; he casts a rapid glance upon himself and that is enough."[52] Yet Indians have been profoundly separated by their traditional social arrangments. "The survival of the caste system," Edward Shils observes, " . . . cuts human beings off from each other. It inhibits the growth of sensibilities which are required for the perception of the moral quality of other human beings. . . . It is the caste system which helps deaden the imagination to the state of mind of other human beings."[53]

Democratic ideas and the equality of conditions, Tocqueville argues, turn superiors and inferiors into " . . . new beings and place them in new relative positions." In hierarchical societies as yet unaffected by these influences, inferiority does not degrade the character of those who are inferior because they neither know nor imagine any other self-definition.

But while the transition from one social condition to another is going on, there is almost always a time when men's minds fluctuate between the aristocratic notion of subjection and the democratic notion of obedience. Obedience then loses its moral importance in the eyes of him who obeys . . . he does not yet view it under its purely human aspect; it has to him neither the character of sanctity or justice. The lines that divide authority from oppression, liberty from license, and right from might are . . . jumbled together and confused [so] that no one knows exactly what he is or what he may be or what he ought to be. Such a condition is not democracy but revolution.[54]

India may have been spared such a revolutionary situation by the transformation of caste over more than a century. But because it is still identified with ritual rank and sacred duty rather than social levelling and democratic representation, the degree to which Indians have put aside the aristocratic notion of subjection and accepted as moral and just the democratic one of obedience remains obscure.

Rajputs who ruled the former princely states which comprise contemporary Rajasthan, for example, saw their Congress opponents in the 1952 General Election as "no-account," no longer guided by duty and loyalty, trouble makers and riff-raff, not so much because they resented them as because their social circumstances prevented them from knowing or imagining what Congressmen were like as human beings. Ten years later their human and highly differentiated view of the Rajasthan Congress leadership was in part the result of the attention that power commands. Those Shanans a century ago who thought they were entitled to be known and treated as *Kshatriyas* (warrior-rulers) became in time Nadars; one of their descendents now sits on the Congress *gaddi* (royal cushion). What Edward Shils has called the democratization of charisma[55] has come about in part from the successful emulation of higher by lower castes and the greater homogeneity of society that it produced, in part through the use of caste in a secular form to achieve influence and power and through them self-esteem and public respect. The Nadar who sits on the Congress *gaddi* symbolizes a massive historical change. Castes no longer live as races apart, capable of fellow feeling for their caste brothers only. A deepening sense of universal citizenship and a broadly shared political culture may have made Indians, in Locke's phrase, "capable of a majority," and in

[51] Morris-Jones, *op cit.*, ch. 2.

[52] *Democracy in America* (Anchor ed.), II, 173, 175–6.

[53] *Op. cit.*, note 35 above, p. 70.

[54] *Democracy in America, ibid.*

[55] "Concentration and Dispersion of Charisma; Their Bearing on Economic Policy in Underdeveloped Countries," *World Politics*, Vol. 11 (October, 1958), pp. 1–19.

Aristotle's, of ruling and being ruled in turn. Tocqueville's tests for the transition from aristocratic subjection to democratic obedience—the capacity to be governed by authority rather than oppression, to practice liberty rather than license and to maintain order through right rather than might—may be passed successfully.[56]

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[56] This is more apparent at the national and state than at the local level of government. The literature on village factionalism and the failures of *panchyati raj* suggest that oppression, license and might in some localities are stronger than authority, liberty and right. But much of this literature reflects an administrative not a political view. A recent study by Adrian C. Mayer sees the problem rather differently. He finds that "caste ties help a leader to gain power in the rural committee system; but that his allocation of development funds does not unduly favor supporters of his own caste. . . . His favours may stem from the influence he has with officials and politicians as a leader of the rural system; but the favours do not form part of that system, while his allocation of development funds does. Hence, the rural leader controls the committee system and the attached development allocation as much to attain the external benefits (for which the system provides the springboard) as to hold power within the system.

"Community development *is* therefore a factor in rural politics; but its role is part of a much wider process, in which rural leaders are asserting themselves in a changing balance of general political power. For rural leaders are using the influence which they are gaining as brokers outside the rural system to compete for power with the incumbent, mainly urban-oriented, politicians of the national parties." "Some Political Implications of Community Development in India," *Arch. Europ. Sociol.* Vol 4 (1963), p. 106.

This headline from the *Statesman* of June 19, 1961, CASTE HIERARCHY DECLINES, AS CASTEISM RISES, sums up some of the case for the modernity of tradition through the democratic incarnation of caste.