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CASTE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN INDIA

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE

ABSTRACT

Caste, the rural community, and the joint family have contributed to social and cultural solidarity in India, where differences of race and culture were likely to provoke perpetual conflict. Although they make up an interwoven compact and solid structure they are plastic, bending to economic forces. Through the caste system the aboriginal tribes have been gradually absorbed into Hindu social organization. As peasants, artisans, and traders rise in the economic scale, they rise also in caste, not as individuals but as groups. Almost unceasing are the processes of differentiation and fusion of castes and subcastes, especially in the lower rungs of the Hindu social ladder. With the growth of cities and of industrial development caste has abandoned many of its restrictions and has demonstrated its adaptability to become the guild or trade-union in the new system of industry.

The dominant feature of India's social history is the incursion from age to age into a single enormous land of different races possessing different standards of culture. The presence of different racial elements and the disparity of stages of economic development among the various races and peoples gave an indelible impress upon the Indian social structure. The tribe, the caste, the village community, and the joint family represented an effort to organize a workable social system based on the autonomy of each group, collective discipline, and mutual tolerance. No doubt caste, the rural community, and the joint family collectively played an important historical role as a great contribution to social and cultural stability in a country in which differences of race and standard of culture were likely to provoke perpetual social discord. These still secure to the individual members of each group the much-needed protection, and this explains why the social organization which imposes upon the individual fairly rigid rules of conduct in all phases of human relations still dominates the life of the people.¹

There are few countries, therefore, where there is so much of institutional control over occupation and economic life. On the other hand, since culture and economic life are not static, a *modus vivendi* was established by which the tribe and the caste could not disregard

¹ R. Mukerjee, *Foundations of Indian Economics* (London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1916), chap. iii.

the claims to culture and advancement, and by which the rural community and the family must recognize the need of economic progress and individualism. Along with the rigidity of Indian social control, nothing is truer in India than the plasticity and responsiveness of these very institutions which control everyone's social, economic, and domestic life.

Tribes, castes, rural communities, and families, though making up an interwoven compact structure which is ancient and solid, are plastic, bending to economic forces. The ever growing pressure of newcomers, who occupied the more fertile and more salubrious lands, has no doubt driven back many primitive peoples to swamps, forests, and mountain fastnesses. Natural obstacles and malaria have here protected the latter from frequent disturbance, and this explains why the aborigines in some parts of India are still thriving. On the other hand, many aboriginal tribes who have advanced to a higher level of economic life have merged more or less rapidly in the Indian social organization. Such for instance are the Bhumuj, Mahili, Kora, and Kurmi of Chota Nagpur; the Bhar, the Dom, and the Dosadh of the United Provinces and Bihar; the Koku in the Narboda Valley; the Koli and Mahar of Bombay; the Bagdi, Bauri, Chandal, and Rajbanski-Kochh of Bengal; and in Madras, Mal and Thiyan. On the other hand, such depressed castes as the aboriginal Cheru of the United Provinces, the Koibarttas and Pods of Bengal, and the Pariah of the south retain traditions of a time when they ruled the land, possessed an independent organization of their own, and had not been relegated to a low place in the Hindu social system.² Similarly, on the southwest coast of India, the Pulayas, Parayas, Kuravas, and Vetas were probably primitive tribes who have been made agrestic serfs. As a matter of fact, in the whole of southern India the depressed castes—which are generally derived from various classes of cultivating serfs—are probably descended from the aboriginal tribes. In the Central Provinces the Gandas, Pankas, Kollis, Pradhans, Ojhas, Nararchis, and Paikra Kanwars, which are all primitive tribes, have all become Hindus both in religion and customs and are included among the depressed classes.

When the aboriginal tribes attain economic advance they every-

² For the Pariahs see H. H. Risley, *The People of India*, pp. 74, 94, and 95.

where claim inclusion in the Hindu fold. It is the universal effort to secure social recognition through economic uplift which we encounter when a section of a gipsy and vagrant tribe, the members of which hunt animals, eat carrion and vermin, plant grass, live with their women in a sort of group marriage, and pilfer at every opportunity, gradually settle as menials in a village. Here they will still plant grass or learn a new craft like basket-making, but adopt scavenging as their main occupation. From a vagrant tribe they would now become a caste, though occupying the lowest rung in the Hindu social ladder. Gradually they resort to a yet higher occupation, such as tanning and leather-working or labor in the fields. Such occupations establish and maintain contacts with the vast mass of Hindu agriculturists, and profoundly influence their living and social standards. They modify their promiscuous habits, supersede mountain and forest spirits by Hindu gods and goddesses, and obtain a higher place in the Hindu social system. Finally, when as agricultural serfs and laborers (or as artisans if they live cleanly) they give up keeping pigs and eating pork, adopt such customs as infant marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, seclusion of women, as well as various commensal restrictions enforced by their *panchayats*, and supplant their aboriginal priests with Brahmins or semi-Brahmins, they rise correspondingly in the caste scale. Along with the adoption of a new and higher calling there accordingly may be and often is adoption of new social customs and religious practices and change of residence. Thus a variety of economic, social, and sometimes adventitious circumstances breaks up tribes into endogamous subgroups. In the United Provinces it appears that, from being tribes, the Korwas, Saheriyas, and Tharus are at present emerging as Hindu castes. Among the Saheriyas the work activities of the members of the tribe have changed with changing circumstances and have crystallized out.

Throughout India the economic history of depressed castes and tribes thus often gives a clue to Indian social gradation. And we have also, among the recently settled and Hinduized tribes and castes, division and subdivision into subcastes, due to the adoption of different occupations and social practices by different social groups according to opportunities. The gipsy, thieving tribes often

find it easy to adopt some primitive crafts like brush-making, comb-making, tanning, leather-working, rope-making, basket-making, and weaving. These occupations, however low, inevitably give rise to separate castes, all marking an entry of the tribe into the pale of Hinduism. That the opportunities of permanent agriculture have not always been available for them (mainly due to the fear and repugnance that they engender among the higher castes) explains that India has today about four million persons who adopt crime as a hereditary calling (a challenge to the social order), and fifty to sixty millions of the depressed castes, a legacy of the high-caste Hindu's crime of unapproachability.³

In northern India, on account of the heavy population pressure, such depressed castes as the Chamars, who represent 12 per cent of the total population in the United Provinces, can obtain only the worst and most distant plots and the worst wells, and must pay the heaviest rents and rates of interest. Their holdings are, as a rule, the smallest. They cannot even in the best years make ends meet by cultivation, and resort to keeping pigs and flaying dead carcasses, occupations which prevent their rise in the social scale.

In western India much of the social unrest among the depressed castes has also arisen because the lands set apart for the service of village menials, or their share of grain at each harvest, can no longer maintain the castes who have increased in numbers and cannot obtain employment.

In a densely populated valley, subjected to a long series of immigrations, it is naturally more difficult for the vagrant aboriginal tribes to adopt agriculture and honest livelihood. Thus, the so-called criminal tribes and castes are mostly to be found in India in the outskirts of prosperous valleys of which they were often the original owners and rulers. Where, however, they have sought refuge or have been driven into the jungles and foothills, economic adjustment has been easier and the tribes are vigorous and expansive, while they show no criminal habits at all.

In the mountains and jungles of Cheta Nagpur, Assam, and the Central Provinces, for instance, such tribes and castes are hardly

³ B. S. Haikerwal, *Economic and Social Aspects of Crime in India* (Foreword by the present writer), p. 14; also R. Mukerjee, *Ground Work of Economics*, pp. 28-29.

“depressed.” Greater opportunities of economic life and tribalism have enabled them to resist the alien culture of the plains or to assimilate it without deterioration.

Economic facts and statistics all point to the gradual absorption of the aboriginal tribes into Hindu social organization. Nor is social assimilation through Hinduism confined to the aboriginal tribes. Many land-holding and military clans and tribes in northern and western India, such as the Gujars, Jats, Ahirs, and Meos of Rajputana and the Punjab and the Marathas of Bombay, have become Hindu castes. The entry is often through intermixture with the Rajputs, and the establishment of claims of Rajput descent through myth or legend, the Brahmans helping them to invent their fictitious and miraculous pedigree. On the other hand, it is even probable that the Agnikula Rajputs, the Parmar, Chauhan, Padihar, and Solanki, owe their origin to the raising of an indigenous Aryan tribe lower in scale⁴ in occupation to the Kshtriya status by reason of its deeds in conquest and its militant organization. Both the Gujars and Jats were ancient Vaishya tribes who came into fitful prominence on the stage of India history, and these have claimed and obtained Rajput filiation.⁵

It is in this manner that tribal and caste sociojuridical government has mingled and has been assimilated to each other in India. The semi-Hinduized aborigines were assigned a place as castes and tribes on the lower rungs of the Hindu social ladder, and their *panchayats* today are most irrepressible aboriginal institutions. Beginning with the original polity of the aboriginal folk, we find in great strength and cohesion among many of the Indian tribes and castes an elaborate village *panchayat* system, with its usual complement of village officers based upon a federal union of villages under a subdivisional headman and council. The old tribal jurisdictions, as well as the central government of the chiefs in council, or local hereditary chiefs, or again a strong democratic organization of circles of village councils, still survive. The most vital of the aboriginal survivals, however, are: (1) the social control exercised by the standing assemblies of the castes; (2) the local jurisdiction of the as-

⁴ Probably Vaishya.

⁵ C. V. Vaidya, *History of Medieval India*.

semblies of groups of from five to a hundred villages; (3) the communal apportionment of revenue burdens and of political duties of all kinds according to the measure of rights in the tribal subdivisions; (4) the agrarian distribution under the scattered field system and the equalization of agricultural and grazing rights in the village communities; and (5) the organization of watch and ward as well as the allotment of lands for village officials, artisans, and employees.⁶

If the plasticity of Hinduism and caste organization could enable the primitive tribes to gain social admittance and recognition through an upward economic movement, caste itself, internally speaking, has not been slow to respond to uplift and occupational change.

Indeed, caste is hardly the steel frame, inexorable and solid, as its semirigidity and isolation would lead one to expect. The formation of subcastes and the ease with which they are formed indicate the dynamic aspects of caste.⁷ In the immense array of the occupational groups which form the largest portion of Hindu castes we find that, when members of one caste take to the occupation of another, both communities occupy more or less the same social status and coalesce later in the same caste with the same social and religious observances. As peasants, artisans, and traders rise in the economic scale, in every upward step there is a ramification of the caste into groups, marking the ascent of the social ladder. In some cases the adoption of a degrading occupation by certain families has spelt social disaster for that section, and, though still retaining the caste name, they are compelled to marry among themselves and thus form a subcaste. In other instances the converse is the case, and a group that abandons a disreputable occupation or commands social respect by the adoption of the customs (and restrictions) of higher castes itself attains in time to a higher social grade. Thus we find in Bombay the upper section of the Nadars looked down upon because they commenced making salt, as are also the Rangari—the dyeing division of the Shimpis—and the Haldi Malis, who prepare turmeric. On the other hand comes the shining example of the Chandlagar, Chitara, and Rasania, subcastes of the Mochis, who gave up leather work and

⁶ R. Mukerjee, *Democracies of the East*, p. 9, also chap. xiii.

⁷ R. Mukerjee, *Principles of Comparative Economics*, II, 7-11.

took to making spangles, painting, and electroplating. As a result they are treated like reputable artisans and do not touch their brother Mochis.

Where modern conditions have rendered their employments unprofitable, enterprising individuals have drifted away from their parent castes to new trades or have taken to the land. In much the same manner are formed the new castes—Kadia-kumbhars, Luharsutars, Sutar-luhars, and Kumbhar-sutarias in Baroda.⁸ In 1911 the first-named group was still forming, with only forty-five persons. In 1931 the Kadia-kumbhars, who are potters, had taken to the more elaborate work of builders. The Sutar-luhars were similarly a new group, formed by fission in 1911. Although numbering only 72 then, they are now 2,040, and include among them also Luhars who had turned Sutars. We see, thus, two opposite processes coalescing for purposes of association.

In the Punjab as well the Desi Kumbhars rarely engage in making earthen vessels; although this seems to have been the original trade of the tribe, they look down upon it and take it to only in extremity. They have a higher status than their fellows from Jodhpur, who still work in clay. Many of them who have no land of their own engage in agricultural labor rather than in potter's work. Similarly the Suttrars, who are most exclusively devoted to agriculture, look down upon the trade of the carpenter, which they follow only when in poor circumstances. They keep aloof from the Khatis, or carpenter who works in wood.

It is especially characteristic that many of the lower castes have taken to agriculture, despise their former occupation, and separate themselves from those who still follow it. On the other hand, traditional agricultural castes split up into groups by abandoning field work as something below them and taking to other pursuits. From the recent caste history of Bengal may be adduced examples of the separation of the Mahishyas from the Jalia Kaibartas, of the Tilis from the Telis, and of the Rajbhangshis from the Koches and Paliyas, with whom they have affinities. The attempts of a group of Mahishyas to constitute a higher group called the "Devadas," and of one group of Shahas (until recently all regarded as of the same group

⁸ *Baroda Census Report, 1931*, p. 410.

as the Sunris) to form a higher caste group under the distinctive name "Sadhubaniks" are also instances to the point.

Perhaps the most remarkable example of the upward economic movement and consequent social differentiation is to be seen among the workers in cloth and tanned leather, who rank higher than the makers of raw materials. All the tribes—the Chamar, Meghwal, Dhed, Julaha, Paoli, Mochi—engaged in weaving coarse cloth and working in tanned leather in the Punjab were originally of the same race, or at all events closely connected, and perhaps of aboriginal descent. The Chamars are divided into several distinct sections which will not intermarry. The Chandor Chamars will not associate with the Jatava Chamars, who, they say, work in leather made from camels' and horses' skins, which is an abomination to the former. On the other hand the Marwari Chamars, settled at Delhi, who make trips in the Punjab in the cold weather selling leather ropes in the villages, refuse to have any connection with the local Chamars, who, they say, tan leather and eat the flesh of animals that have died; while they work only in leather already tanned. In the United Provinces those Chamars who have given up their former occupation of skinning dead animals now call themselves "Jatavs" or even "Jatav Rajputs." In other places they still call themselves Chamars, but call those who follow the traditional occupation "Pharraiya Chamars." Again, the Koris, who have given up weaving, will style themselves "Kush Kuleen Rajputs" or "Tantuvai Vaishyas."⁹ Similarly, in Madras, the Panikkans who have taken to weaving will not intermarry with those who serve as barbers to the Shanans. In Bengal the Sukli Tanti has become a separate endogamous group, because it only sells cloth and does not weave it.¹⁰

A very characteristic instance of social differentiation is to be found among the Teli castes of the Central Provinces. The hereditary occupation of the caste is oil-pressing, but a large majority have abandoned it and become cultivators. They are subdivided into Ek-baila, Dobaila, Erandia, Sao, and Gandli. Ek-baila Telis use only one bullock in their oil mill, while Dobailas use two. Sao Telis are mainly cultivators and grow sugar cane and rice. The Gandlis are land-

⁹ *Census Report of the United Provinces, 1931*, p. 538.

¹⁰ E. A. Gait, *Census Report of India, 1911*.

owners, traders, and moneylenders, and aspire to be classed as Banyas. Erandia Telis are socially the lowest subcaste, and they alone extract castor oil (eranda). Oil-pressing in any form, but especially castor oil, is regarded as a vulgar occupation, and most Telis are anxious to rise in society by abandoning it.

If castes are splitting into subcastes and new castes are formed, due to the change of occupation in the economic uplift, subcastes also are getting fused into wider castes everywhere in India. Even in Kerala, the most caste-ridden tract in India, the fisherman and the washerman castes are aiming at amalgamation and sooner or later will fuse. The movement toward amalgamation of subcastes is similarly noticeable among the Brahmins of Orissa, the Ahirs of Bihar, the Aguri or Ugra Kshattriyas and the Baidyas in Bengal, while in Northern India the Ahars and Ahirs and Barhais and Lohars are also fraternizing in order to improve their social status. Even castes show signs of fusion in some provinces. In Bengal the Brahmins and Kayasthas are mingling to a certain extent in some districts. In Orissa the Chasas are trying to intermarry into, and pass themselves off as, members of the Khandait caste; while the Khandaits in their turn are trying to enter the Karan caste. The adoption by the artisan classes comprising the carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, and others of a common designation—for example, Viswakarma or Viswa-Brahman as in Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces, the Madras Presidency, and Travancore; and of the milkman castes such as the Ahirs, Goalas, Gopis, and Idaiyans by the single name "Yadavas" in various parts of India—also points the way toward amalgamation, and is a clear instance of the adaptation of castes to modern conditions.

The caste system is thus plastic and fluent. No tendencies are stronger, especially in the lower rungs of the Hindu social ladder, than the almost unceasing processes of differentiation and fusion of castes and subcastes on the one hand, and on the other the rapid and frequent change of the customs of caste which are essentially superficial. While the obnoxious restrictions of the caste system are often abjured, the protection which the caste system insures to individual members of each group or subgroup amply guarantees the future of the system.

The decline of the time-honored handicrafts and occupations, due to competition from the machine industry of the West, and a consequent new social valuation upon vocations have set adrift multitudes who have been forced to take to occupations that have no reference to ancestral callings. The growing population pressure has also led to the cityward drift of millions of landless people. In the markets, factories, and teashops all sorts of castes work and eat together, defying the ancient restrictions of commensality and exclusive living. But, if these economic forces loosen the grip and the rigidity of the caste system, the ancient tradition of organized collective action, which caste has preserved for the Indian through the centuries, has led to the rehabilitation of the caste *panchayat* even in factories and slums. In the crowded tenements and *bustis* of Cawnpore, Calcutta, Madras, and Madura we find the caste *panchayat* effectively exercising its disciplinary authority among the majority of the lower and depressed castes. Caste has certainly brought the ancient experience of social government to the aid of the new industrial order as it is evolving out of the present chaos and unsettlement in our new manufacturing towns and regions.

What is true of the depressed classes, which have migrated in large numbers to the cities for manual work and industrial labor, is also true of the higher artisan castes, which are fighting the rigors of the present industrial transition by absorbing groups dissimilar in ethnic origin and domicile, by adopting the functions of trade-unions, and by expanding into federations on the basis of community of occupation in adaptation to the larger economic and cultural needs of today. Similarly, the merchant and trader castes have often shown great integrity and solidarity in business and trade, their *sabhas* and guilds representing the dignity and power of the commercial community in most cities of India outside the radius of European banking. Again, some castes, such as the Patidars of Western India, the Kurmis of the United Provinces, the Namasudras of Bengal, and the Christian castes of Travancore, have used their discipline and authority for controlling elections to local bodies. The Patidars have actually captured seats in district boards and municipalities with an ease which has been an eye opener for the higher castes like the Brahmans and the traders, among whom caste solidarity has con-

siderably weakened. Caste has thus furnished a new implement in the process of industrial and political adjustment. It has become, so to speak, the "election agent" of the new system of representative government, as well as the guild or trade-union in the new system of industry. Caste shorn of its abuses may thus become a powerful lever of group action and solidarity, at no time more indispensable than in the present era of social strains and new opportunities.

While economic forces act as social binders and levelers, and the liberalizing movement in social service, literature, and art throughout Hinduism gradually disintegrate the caste restrictions, the new civic and political consciousness has engendered the fear among the backward castes that they are being swamped by the advanced sections of the community in the struggle for political privileges and proportional representation in government service, and thus these now stand out as independent and even rebellious units. It is this feeling that keeps asunder the different castes of the Hindu community, and has now become the root cause of recent caste exclusiveness, which was being resolved in the gradual process of social assimilation. An increase of unemployment among the middle classes has, indeed, indirectly contributed to strengthen the barriers separating one caste from another, which education and economic and social reform have been pulling down. Whether caste, by utilizing its social discipline and coexistent tolerance, will subserve the ends of nationality and, by adapting new political institutions, will ultimately resolve Indian society into horizontal divisions, more inelastic, perhaps, in the beginning than their prototypes in the West¹¹ has thus become less certain than the transformation of guilds and caste *panchayats* into co-operatives and trade-unions, by which caste will adapt itself to new economic conditions. It may be that caste, through its renewal of guilds and co-operatives and the adaptation of economic forces and institutions to its service, will import into the political field the lessons of tolerance and mutual good will, and will overthrow, or at least control, the forces of disunion that are at present preventing its development in the direction of nationality.¹²

¹¹ *Baroda Census Report, 1931*, p. 41.

¹² R. N. Gilchrist, *Indian Nationality*; also R. Mukerjee, *Civics*, pp. 50-54.

Occupational castes easily have transformed themselves into guilds in India, guaranteeing the artisans, traders, and merchants both social and economic protection.¹³ The guild is nothing but a temporary or permanent union of caste people plying the same craft and trade and framing general rules of conduct and social morality and observances, while sometimes it regulates trade or wages, the conditions of employment of labor and the use of machinery, as well as the education of apprentices and the protection and maintenance of the destitute and the helpless. But one craftsmen's guild may comprise different castes or one caste may have subdivided guilds.

Thus, in some cities the trade council is differentiated from the caste *panchayat*. For example, in Ahmedabad there are three castes of confectioners, and, therefore, three assemblies for caste purposes, but only one confectioners' guild. So the silk-*mashru*-weavers' *maha-jan* in the same city contains both Kanbis and Vantias. Many more instances might be cited. In the Punjab some of the classes of artisans, such as Luhars, Julahas, Telis, and Dhobis, are more trade-guilds than tribes, and a family giving up its traditional occupation and taking to another would be considered, after a generation or two, to belong to the caste whose common occupation it had adopted, so that the different castes are not divided from each other by fixed and lasting boundaries. Still, so strong is the tendency to follow the ancestral occupation, and so closely are the persons belonging to each such caste or trade-guild interconnected by community of occupation, which generally carries with it intermarriage and similarity of social customs, that these well-recognized divisions are of real importance in the framework of society. On the other hand, the same caste may be divided into distinct guilds. At Lahore both the Hindu and the Muhammadan goldsmiths form one craft guild, which has fixed the charges for particular classes of work. Such rates are strictly adhered to by members of the same guild. In many cities of northern and western India there is a guild of traders of all castes, consisting of representatives of each caste, which decides cases relating to trade.

At Surat and Ahmedabad, Jaipur and Delhi, Agra and Muttra, and Puri and Madura, the guild organization and the powers exer-

¹³ R. Mukerjee, *Principles of Comparative Economics*, chap. xii.

cised by the *vania*, the *seth*, the *mahajan*, and the *peridanakaran* deserve the most careful investigation. In different regions and among different occupations the solidarity of the industrial and mercantile guilds and their capabilities for self-government have varied, and thus the recognition of their place and status at the hands both of ruling authorities and of the community as a whole have been different. Again, a flourishing guild which regularly derives its fee income from monthly or annual collections of a certain percentage of profits and spends it on charity or feeding the poor; on *pinjrapols*, *dharamshalas*, tanks, shade trees, cattle troughs, fountains; on the supplying of rice, ghee, oil, and other requisites to temples; on anointing and scents for the bath of the gods; or on processions at festivals, etc., naturally commands greater prestige than a guild which contributes its small income derived from occasional subscriptions to the expenses of a village or city festival and amusement. Similarly, the jurisdiction of the guild and its power to resist outside competition vary. In the small village the guild is all-powerful and the caste coincides with the guild, lending it a double authority. In cities where there is a large number of workmen, artisans, and traders who do not belong to the guild, the power diminishes—unless, as is very often the case, different guilds mutually support one another and form a loose union to protect themselves from the forces of competition and exploitation from outside.

The federation of groups of guilds has been a characteristic development in Indian economic history. Where the organization is rather loose, as in central India and Rajputana, the number of guilds is very large, a city having even more than a hundred guilds, while with a strong and compact organization the number diminishes. The more powerful the guild, the stronger the tendencies toward a federation; the weaker the guild, the more marked are the tendencies toward subdivision, and the larger the number of guilds.

In many cities of southern and central India we find the merchants, bankers, and large dealers united together into one central co-ordinating guild, while the artisans representing the simpler handicrafts and occupations are similarly federated into one artisans' organization. The bankers' and merchants' guilds fix the rates of exchange and discount, settle commercial disputes, levy petty im-

posts on certain transactions, and spend the proceeds on humane and religious objects. In the smaller cities these guilds, working outside the pale of the chambers of commerce and similar associations modeled on Western lines, still contribute not a little toward a high degree of mutual trust within the commercial community, the promotion of industrial peace, and the prevention of commercial crises. In many of the Indian states in central India and Kathiawar these guilds still exercise important rights and privileges and hold an important and influential position in the body politic, embracing as these do all the merchants and the bankers of the region. For a long time to come the indigenous organizations of bankers and traders will continue to play an important part in India, although they must move with the times and adapt themselves to modern banking methods in order to arrest the present decline of their business. Similarly, the present decline of handicrafts in India may be effectively combatted by reorientating the guilds of artisans and craftsmen into co-operative industrial societies.¹⁴ A notable instance of the revival of an important handicraft through assimilating modern methods of business and marketing into the guild structure is furnished by the Sourashtra community of silk-weavers and traders in Madura in the south.

In India caste solidarity has not been incompatible with the fusion of social and economic elements. The artisans' guild, as we have seen, sometimes embraces different castemen, or one caste comprises several guilds. The guild of traders also comprises not only different castes but also different races. The Muhammadans also form guilds, as they form village communities and castes, in weak imitation of Hindu models. In India, therefore, the guild has developed as a conglomerate structure in obedience to larger economic needs than what caste satisfies, and caste is not the only root of the institution.

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¹⁴ R. Mukerjee, *Groundwork of Economics*, pp. 169-70.