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AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF BACKWARD GROUPS IN INDIA

By

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Any modern complex society is characterised by advanced and backward sections in its population based upon socio-economic differences among its members, and in a society following the line of least resistance, these differences tend to be hereditary. In an open class society where there are opportunities for all people to achieve higher socio-economic status the presence of advanced and backward sections does not constitute a social problem, for although in the society as a whole the advanced and backward sections will always be there, so far as any individual of the lower section is concerned, given ability and aspiration it is possible for him to rise to the higher section. But in a rigidly stratified society where socio-economic status is determined by differences of birth, the division of society into advanced and backward sections poses serious social problems especially when the backward sections realise that they are kept down by the institutional structure of the society.

Backwardness and advanced condition stand for different degrees of what is termed the socio-economic status of individuals which has two important aspects—social prestige and economic condition—that are dependent upon and usually influence each other. No doubt, these aspects are again the outcomes of many other factors which need not be considered here. In a rigidly stratified society, social prestige is determined by one's birth in a particular status category. Since this is fixed, his economic condition which is dependent upon it is also fixed. In a society characterised by an open class system the social prestige of an individual is not entirely determined by his birth but also by various factors. No doubt, one's family connections define one's social status to start with but eventually one's own ability and achievement are the major determining factors. The economic condition of a person also changes with his social prestige and in societies where wealth is an important criterion of success, the economic condition of a person in turn influences his social prestige.

Traditionally, Indian society was stratified according to the caste system. The essential feature of the caste system is that the several caste groups are integrated into a system of status hierarchy. If the system is to function effectively each group has to accept its rank, respecting the groups above it and commanding respect from groups below it in social rank. The social status of an individual is the same as the position of his caste in the caste hierarchy. The occupation of an individual is by and large determined by the position of his caste. So, in the traditional Indian society, the caste of a person was a fair index of his socio-economic position. However, social stratification in India has been undergoing a discernible change for the last several decades. The phenomenal change in the occupational pattern brought about by the introduction of technology has given rise to inter-caste occupational mobility, and the advent of industrialisation has resulted in a considerable degree of spatial mobility dislocating persons from their integrated caste positions. Although society in India is still composed of innumerable compartmentalised groups, there has been a definite change in the

social position of the different groups in the caste hierarchy. People nowadays do not necessarily accept the social status bestowed upon them by their caste and this is fundamentally opposed to the principle of the caste system. They are no longer tied down to the occupations prescribed by the caste. Thus although the various groups which previously formed the caste system still persist the caste principle is now not fully operative.

Since the social prestige of a person is now not entirely determined by the group to which he belongs, his economic condition also is not rigidly linked to the group status. However, the weakening of the caste principle does not automatically equalise the social status of the different groups and individuals. What is being achieved is a change in the principle of allotment of social status. Whereas previously it was not possible for an individual to rise above the social status of his caste now the social position of his caste need not come in the way of his achieving a higher rank. No doubt, the former lower castes are still low in socio-economic status, but now the individuals have a chance of bettering their status. Their present humble status is a hangover of the operation of the caste principle in the past and it is with a recognition of this fact that the Indian society has voluntarily accepted the principle of giving special protection to these backward groups.

Steps towards raising the socio-economic status of the backward groups were taken even before our independence by the British rulers. Independent India, however, took upon itself this task more seriously. To tackle this problem on a more rational basis the Government of India appointed in 1953 the Backward Classes Commission under the chairmanship of Kaka Kalelkar. The terms of reference of the Commission were primarily to determine the criteria to be adopted in identifying any group as backward, to prepare a list of such groups in addition to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes specified by notifications issued under Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution, to investigate their conditions and to suggest steps to be taken by the Union Government or the State Governments to improve their condition. The Commission submitted its report in March 1955 and the same was published in 1956.

In considering the criteria of backwardness the Backward Classes Commission had to deal with a wide range of groups belonging to different regions, religions and castes. Although all these diverse groups are backward the causes and conditions of their backwardness may be different and the Commission was hard put to it to find out a single criterion of backwardness uniformly applicable to all the backward groups. All that it succeeded in doing was to lay down for general guidance certain criteria and depended upon subjective evaluation for identifying any group as backward. The main criteria of backwardness according to the Commission are : (1) low social position in the traditional caste hierarchy of Hindu society ; (2) lack of general educational advancement among the major section of a caste or community ; (3) inadequate or no representation in Government service, and (4) inadequate representation in the field of trade, commerce and industries. On the basis of these criteria the Commission evolved 12 points of description as being "helpful for classification of various communities as educationally and socially backward."¹

1. For the Commission's discussion of backwardness *vide* Report of the Backward Classes Commission, Vol. I, pp. xiv-xv and 39-47 (The Manager of Government of India Publications, Civil Lines, Delhi, 1956).

One can easily perceive that the criteria of backwardness enunciated by the Backward Classes Commission are inadequate for an objective classification of groups for the following two main reasons : (a) The different criteria are not uniformly applicable to the groups in different sections of the population. For instance, the criterion of low social position in the traditional caste hierarchy of Hindu Society is not applicable to the non-Hindu sections of the population. (b) Each of the different criteria has different degrees of variability which makes comparisons among different groups still more difficult. For instance, with regard to the criterion of inadequate or no representation in Government service, between the intervals of "no representation" and "adequate representation" there can be any number of intermediate positions. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that on the basis of their criteria the Commission have classified as much as 70% of the Indian population as backward leaving one to wonder as to who should help whom!

The causes and conditions of backwardness are no doubt many and varied and an ideal definition of backward groups, if possible, should embrace all these factors. But, if the purpose of the definition is primarily to identify any group as backward, any criterion or criteria which serve this end would be adequate and the other criteria or factors may be ignored. It is with this purpose in view that the definition of backward groups is attempted in this paper.

In a scientific definition of backward groups, two main points need to be considered. The one is the definition of the term "group" in relation to which backwardness or advanced condition has to be determined and the other is to find out the criterion or criteria of backwardness which are uniformly applicable to all groups and which could be objectively measured in a convenient manner. The Backward Classes Commission, in line with the traditional usage has termed the reference category a "class" and the aggregate of these categories is called "classes." Thus, we have "Backward Class" and "Backward Classes" as units of reference. But these terms in the sense in which they are used by the Backward Classes Commission do not accord with their uses in the terminology of Social Sciences. In the Social Sciences, the term "class" stands for a stratum of society comprising individuals or families of equal social status. Such a stratum does not possess a recognisable structure and a coherent pattern of behaviour. For instance, the unskilled workers in India may be regarded as constituting a class and a backward class at that. But that is not the sense in which the term "backward class" is used by the Backward Classes Commission and clearly it is not the purpose of the Government to give special attention to an entire stratum of the society. But by not defining the unit the Commission was put to great inconvenience in the selection of groups in their classification. Certain categories that they had to consider such as the Lingayats are not homogeneous and certain criteria for selection of a category such as that it should be a caste group were found inapplicable for some sections of the population. Such difficulties could be avoided by taking an endogamous group, *i.e.*, a group the members of which usually inter-marry, for the reference group.

In the Indian society the endogamous group to which a person belongs may be regarded as the most homogeneous group in which the different members inter-act. Such groups are to be found in all sections of the population without

distinction of region, religion or language. Categories like Jains and Lingayats do not constitute groups in this sense. These categories have within them several other endogamous groups each with its own socio-economic status. For instance, among Lingayats, almost every group following a different type of traditional occupation is endogamous and has a distinct socio-economic status. Similarly, among the Muslims and Christians there are several endogamous groups in different regions which are socio-economically distinct. It is only when, within any region or religious category, these groups are integrated into a system of status hierarchy that we have a caste system. Thus in India we have a series of more or less parallel caste systems. However, any single caste is also an endogamous group although every endogamous group need not necessarily be a caste. In this paper, therefore, the terms 'backward group' and 'backward groups' are used instead of the terms 'Backward Class' and 'Backward Classes' respectively used by the Backward Classes Commission, the term 'group' standing for an endogamous category of peoples.

As has been pointed out above, backwardness or advanced condition are but different degrees of socio-economic status. Therefore, any criterion of backwardness would naturally form part of a variable continuum which would also indicate advanced condition. For instance, if illiteracy is taken as a criterion of backwardness, this would form one of the extreme ends of the variable continuum called education whose other extreme end would be the highest degree of education standing for the most advanced condition. In between these two positions the various places in the educational continuum would stand for different degrees of backwardness or advanced condition. For assessing backwardness, therefore, we need to consider such entire variable continua like education, income, etc., and not merely parts of the continua like illiteracy, low income and so on. Secondly, since the measure should enable us to make comparisons among various groups the variables selected should be applicable to all groups.

If a large number of variables are to be employed for the measurement of the socio-economic status of groups the scientific procedure would first of all require the construction of a scale out of these variables. For this purpose, a large number of variables indicative of socio-economic status and uniformly applicable to all groups have to be collected and the most appropriate among them should be finally selected in accordance with the approved practices of scale construction. The different gradations of each variable should be given scores according to their correspondence with the different degrees of socio-economic status. When the scale is constructed, it could be applied to every group and the socio-economic position of the group can be expressed in terms of the scale scores. This procedure is good so far as its scientific validity goes. But the labour involved in the different steps is so much that it may not be useful for practical purposes, particularly, when the measure has to be applied to the vast Indian society. However, a simpler method could be suggested.

When the variables of socio-economic status such as education and training, occupation, income, various aspects of level of living and so on are carefully analysed it will be realised that all these factors are inter-correlated. A person's low occupation may be attributed to his low education and training, his low income may be due to his low occupation, his low level of living may be a consequence of his inadequate income and so on. When the various factors are inter-correlated,

the same measure of socio-economic status which can be obtained by measuring all the factors can also be secured by measuring any one of the crucial factors to which the others are related. Of all the variables of socio-economic status occupation may be regarded as most crucial. Occupation is the most significant indicator of both social prestige and economic condition. So far as a person is concerned, his occupation will indicate his socio-economic position. But the socio-economic position of a group can be gauged from the distribution of its earning members in the various occupations.

In considering the distribution of earners in the various occupations the main characteristic of an occupation to which attention has to be paid is its social prestige. The social prestige of an occupation is determined by the social values of people which are again the functions of different variables like income, type of work, the training required of the incumbent and so on. Whatever may be the variables that influence the social evaluation of occupations by the people the relative social positions of the various occupations can be ascertained. The occupations can be rank-ordered either arbitrarily or through the use of judges or by referring the matter to a cross-section of the population. While it is true that to give each occupation a separate position in the prestige hierarchy is an extremely complicating task, the work can be rendered easier by classifying the various occupations into four or five broader prestige categories such as Grade I represented by unskilled labour and those occupations which may be considered equivalent to it ; Grade II represented by semi-skilled and lowest administrative occupations ; Grade III represented by skilled manual occupations such as those of mechanics and drivers ; Grade IV represented by clerical and allied occupations and Grade V represented by professional and higher executive occupations. Certain types of occupations like trade and commerce may not indicate the prestige levels, but even they, from their income and types of business could be equated with any of the above occupational grades. On the same principle, the rural occupations too can be classified into different grades represented by agricultural labourers, village artisans, tenant cultivators, owner cultivators and so on. Ultimately, stress may be laid upon the prestige grade of occupation and not on its type. The use of occupational distribution as a measure of socio-economic status has an important practical advantage in that the information regarding occupations could be very easily obtained.

When occupations are graded as above, the pattern of distribution of the occupations of the earning members of a particular endogamous group can be regarded as a measure of its socio-economic status or the degree of its backwardness or advanced condition and this can be expressed in quantitative terms. A group in which there is a greater representation in the higher grades may be regarded as an advanced group and one in which there is over-representation in the lower grades as a backward group. By giving scores to the different grades of occupations the pattern of occupational distribution can even be reduced to scale scores. The measure can be applied to all groups not only to compare them with each other but also to gauge their progress or regress over the years.

Judged by this criterion it may be observed that different groups of people will be at different levels of socio-economic status. However, the purpose of the Government is to single out the most backward among these groups for special treatment. The number of persons selected for such a treatment cannot be unduly

large as to show that the whole society itself requires special treatment which in a way is true if we are to compare our society with some of the more advanced societies of the West. Moreover, the terms backwardness and advanced condition are relative. Therefore, some sort of an arbitrary limit has to be set for classifying certain groups as deserving of special treatment.

In this connection, for reasons which will be explained presently, it is enough if we restrict our attention to the lowest occupational grade. Any group in which the majority of earners (say, over 60 %) are engaged in such occupations can safely be singled out for special treatment. In practice such backward groups will manifest other more striking features also. In the Indian society at large it is not considered respectable for a woman to work as unskilled labourer unless as a self-employed person such as agricultural worker in the family farm. So, among groups in the higher socio-economic status the women do not as a rule work as unskilled labourers. As the socio-economic status of a group advances not only women but also men may not work as hired labourers as among Brahmins and other advanced Hindus. However, in general when a man works in the lowest occupational grade his wage being very low his wife is also required to supplement his income. Thus wherever labourers do not receive a family wage, we also have a larger proportion of women working as labourers. Even in the U.S.S.R. the fact that a large number of women are employed at heavy labour has been attributed to the low income of workers and not to the equality of sexes.² So, among backward groups in India in which the majority of males work as hired labourers the women too as a rule work in the same capacity. Thus for the purpose of special treatment a backward group may be defined as *an endogamous group in which most of the earners are engaged in the occupations of the lowest socio-economic grade and in which the women too as a rule are engaged in similar occupations.*

The practice for women to work as unskilled labourers as a matter of course has far-reaching consequences. In the Indian society where labour saving devices for domestic work are woefully lacking it is essential that the wife and mother should devote her entire attention to the household chores in order to maintain a decent standard of living. Cooking, keeping the house clean, washing clothes, looking after children, etc., keep a woman busy throughout the day and where a woman is also required to earn a living these duties are neglected. As a rule the level of living in such a group is very low. Even very young children are saddled with responsibilities such as minding still younger children, doing odd jobs, etc. Their education and training are neglected with the result that they, in their turn, walk into the footsteps of their parents. Caught in this vicious circle the backward groups in India have managed to remain backward for the most part generation after generation.

To some extent the above situation is also applicable to persons belonging to advanced groups but who are forced to take up lowly occupations. But a distinction has to be made between persons from advanced groups who are in low occupations and persons from backward groups in the same occupational position. It is a well-known fact that by and large a person evaluates his position in life with reference to the position of the group to which he belongs and his aspiration

2. Milovan Djilas: *The New Class*, 1957, p. 115.

is moulded accordingly. Thus, the aspirational level of persons of low occupations from advanced groups is higher than that of persons of corresponding occupations from the backward groups. Because of their higher aspirational level persons of low occupations from advanced groups would be prepared to make sacrifices to see that at least their children are better placed and thus they are in a position to take advantage of the influence and superior socio-economic status of the other group members. But, on the other hand, on account of their lower aspirational level the members of the backward groups are not even in a position to avail themselves of the opportunities for advancement which are offered to them as is the case with the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in India among whom a large proportion does not grasp the facilities wherever provided by the Government.

The persons with lowly occupations in an advanced group are the persons who have lagged behind the group standards and so naturally they would be eager to catch up with the group norms. On the other hand, persons with lowly occupations in the backward groups are also the people who set the group standards. In such groups it is the persons with higher occupations who deviate from the group norms and usually the level of living of such people is so much different from that of their group that they dissociate themselves from the group. Thus the backward groups are deprived of the example and influence of the more advanced members.

It is clear, therefore, that although apparently the persons in the lowest socio-economic grade belonging to both backward and non-backward groups are on the same footing, in reality, those from the latter are potentially on a higher level.

While the customary female employment in the lowest occupational grade tends to perpetuate the backwardness of a group the prohibition of such a practice tends to maintain the group on a higher socio-economic position. For, in an advanced group when the wife has necessarily to stay at home the husband is compelled to seek an occupation more remunerative than the one of the lowest grade. In this connection, it is interesting to observe that among Muslims where the women observe *pardah* the men usually seek higher occupations. If they are not equipped with training and education for higher posts they get into trade and commerce rather than drift into unskilled manual labour. Incidentally, while it is true that by Islamic injunction all Muslim women are required to observe *pardah* there are a number of Muslim groups in which the women do not observe *pardah*. And, invariably the men in such groups are to be found in the lowest occupational grade and so their women also are required to earn a living. Groups like Kanjars and Pendharas among the Deccani Muslims, the fishing groups among the Moplahs of Malabar and the majority of Moplahs of the interior of South Malabar, the Daldis who are a Muslim fishing group on the coast of Konkan, etc., are instances in point. These groups cannot but be regarded as backward.

At the lower occupational level, in the event of a person's having to change his occupation, the occupational status of his wife may be crucial in determining whether he will drift into a lower occupation or strive for a higher one. For instance, in some parts the blacksmiths belong to a group lower than that of goldsmiths. Accordingly, while the wives of blacksmiths may work as agricultural labourers those of goldsmiths may not. Under these circumstances, if a blacksmith and a goldsmith are forced to change their occupations the former may easily

drift into the occupation of an unskilled labourer but the latter, if at all he may think of this occupation, it would be only as a last resort and that too as a temporary measure. If the goldsmith cannot see any possibility of securing a higher occupation at least equivalent to his present occupation he may hug on to the same occupation even though it may be unremunerative. The above observation is also relevant to situations where owing to the introduction of advanced technology people have been displaced from their traditional crafts. If the displaced persons belong to backward groups having no objection to their women being employed as unskilled labourers, they may adjust themselves to the changed circumstances by taking to unskilled occupations which are easy enough to secure if not in the same place in some adjoining area. If they belong to non-backward groups for proper adjustment they must secure alternative types of skilled jobs for which they may not be adequately trained and which are not easy to secure. Such people are likely to drag on in their unremunerative occupations. So is also the case with farmers belonging to non-backward groups but having uneconomic holdings of land. Although adjustment in these cases is difficult, these are the type of persons who would be prepared to make sacrifices to achieve a higher level of living.

Hitherto the backward groups in India have been classed under three categories : the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Other Backward Classes. The deficiency of the definition of the Other Backward Classes suggested by the Backward Classes Commission has already been pointed out. Similarly, the definitions of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes also are none too suitable. The Scheduled Castes are identified on the basis of untouchability. But untouchability is a relative phenomenon. All the so-called Shudras are untouchable to the Brahmins while among the Shudras themselves the lower sections are untouchable to the higher ones. Even among the so-called untouchables some groups observe untouchability against some others. If Scheduled Castes are defined on the basis of the fact that they usually perform menial or unclean jobs, we come up against other difficulties for, such jobs are also performed by some Muslim and Christian groups which are not regarded as Scheduled Castes. At any rate having abolished untouchability it does not behove Government to define certain groups on the basis which it does not recognise.

The Scheduled Tribes are distinguished on the basis of their segregated life such as their habitat in jungles or hills and their unique culture. But these tribes maintain different degrees of contact with the larger Indian society and the number of those retaining a pristine purity of their culture is comparatively small. So the criterion of segregated life cannot be objective for the definition of Scheduled Tribes just as the criterion of untouchability is not suitable in the case of Scheduled Castes. What is more, if the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are defined as above the implication would be that their problems would be solved by the eradication of untouchability in the one case and by desegregation in the other.

On the other hand, the definition of backward groups in terms of the distribution of earners in the occupational grades is equally applicable to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. On this basis it is also possible to find out the progress which each group would be making when subjected to special treatment. It is natural to expect that the rate of progress of the different groups will not be

uniform and that the time for the attainment of the desired level of advancement beyond which special treatment would not be needed will also be different for different groups. Under these circumstances, if the distribution of earners in the various occupational grades is used as the measuring rod of advancement it would be easier to eliminate group after group from the list of backward groups as time passes.

The practicability of defining backward groups as discussed above can be demonstrated with reference to some of the results obtained from a socio-economic study of the industrial village of Dandeli in the North Kanara District of the Mysore State. The study was conducted by the writer on behalf of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, and the field work was completed in 1955-'56. Only the data regarding the distribution of earners in the various population categories in the different occupational grades need to be considered here.³

Dandeli is one of the biggest Government timber depots in India and besides, at the time of the study, had two large industrial establishments for the processing of forest produce. One of these establishments is a saw mill run by the Forest Department and the other is a plywood factory owned by a private limited concern. All the occupations of the place are of non-agricultural type.

The development of Dandeli has a short history of about 30 to 40 years and almost all its residents are immigrants, some from the same district and the others from far away places like Andhra, Kerala and other parts of India. These people belong to a large number of endogamous groups of which about 50 were identified as such during the study. However, in many of the groups the numbers are not sufficiently large so as to be treated as separate groups for statistical analysis. Therefore, for the sake of convenience the endogamous groups are classified into a smaller number of broader population categories, each category consisting of groups of more or less similar socio-economic status judged mainly from a subjective point of view.

These categories may be termed as follows : (a) Brahmins, comprising a number of Brahmin groups, chief among them being the Gaud Saraswat and Saraswat Brahmins. (b) Intermediate Hindus consisting of a large assortment of trading and warrior castes, Marathas and other agricultural and allied groups and the Lingayats. This category is not quite homogeneous as to the socio-economic status of the different groups for, among the so-called groups like the Marathas and the Lingayats there are several endogamous groups some of which should really be regarded as backward. But owing to lack of detailed information the refined distinction could not be made. (c) Other Backward Hindus consisting of groups such as Bedars, Lamanis, Kurubars, Vaddars and so on. (d) Scheduled Castes consisting of several endogamous groups of untouchables derived from different regions. (e) Karwar Muslims comprising two endogamous divisions of Muslims from the coastal region of the North Kanara district having more or less the same social status. (f) Other Muslims. This category consists of many endogamous Muslim groups of varying socio-economic status and so cannot be regarded as homogeneous. (g) Telugu Christians consisting of two endoga-

³ This material has been used with the kind permission of the Director, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona-4.

mous Christian groups from Andhra originally converted from among untouchable and backward Hindu castes and continuing in their backward condition even now. And (h) Other Christians consisting chiefly of the Christians of the North Kanara district.

Similarly, the large number of different types of occupations are generalised into five different socio-economic grades of increasing status on an arbitrary basis. They are Grade I represented by occupations of unskilled manual labour including unclean Jobs, Grade II represented by semi-skilled and lowest administrative occupations, Grade III represented by skilled technical occupations like the jobs of mechanics, drivers, etc., Grade IV represented by clerical, teaching, supervisory and related occupations and Grade V represented by professional and higher executive occupations such as the positions of doctors and officers. Occupations like those of contractors, hotelkeepers, traders, etc., have been treated as a special category, for, in their case the socio-economic status cannot be determined by the type of occupation alone but by also taking into consideration the nature of business, income, etc.

The population categories described above comprised among themselves 1,216 earners as follows :

(a) Brahmins	99
(b) Intermediate Hindus	259
(c) Other Backward Hindus	198
(d) Scheduled Castes	78
(e) Karwar Muslims	97
(f) Other Muslims	151
(g) Telugu Christians	279
(h) Other Christians	55
Total	1,216

The percentage distribution of the 1,216 earners according to the population categories and the occupational grades is shown in Table I. With regard to the

TABLE I.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF EARNERS ACCORDING TO POPULATION CATEGORIES AND OCCUPATIONAL GRADES

Occupational Grades Population Categories	I	II	III	IV	V	Other
(a) Brahmins	2	9	5	39	13	31
(b) Intermediate Hindus	37.2	19.2	11.1	10.3	0.4	21.2
(c) Other Backward Hindus	77.7	7.1	1.5	1.5	—	12
(d) Scheduled Castes	83.3	3.8	2.6	1.3	—	9
(e) Karwar Muslims	36	23.7	15.3	10	—	14.4
(f) Other Muslims	47.6	10.6	10.6	4.6	—	26.4
(g) Telugu Christians	85.3	7.2	2.5	2.9	—	2.2
(h) Other Christians	36.3	21.8	12.7	16.3	—	12.7
Total	55	12	7	9	1	15

four Hindu categories of Brahmins, Intermediate Hindus, Other Backward Hindus and the Scheduled Castes, it is clear that according to the patterns of distribution of their earners in the different occupational grades the Brahmins are the most advanced, the Intermediate Hindus come next and the other Backward Hindus and Scheduled Castes with more or less similar patterns of occupational distribution come third. The disparities between the patterns of occupational distribution will become still more striking if the ungraded occupations are somehow allotted grades in which case the greater proportion of these occupations in the case of Brahmins will be in the higher grades as compared with those in the case of other categories, and in the case of the Other Backward Hindus and Scheduled Castes almost all these occupations will be in Grade I. It is also clear from the table that if the pattern of distribution of earners in the occupational grades were any indication of socio-economic status there is very little distinction between the Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Hindus as compared with the other categories.

It has been suggested earlier in this paper that a group in which the majority of the earners are in the lowest occupational grade may be regarded as backward for the purpose of giving preferential treatment. Accordingly, the groups which can be regarded as backward among the Hindus in the above table, namely, the Scheduled Castes and the Other Backward Hindus have about 80 to 90 % of their earners in the lowest grade if we also take into account the ungraded occupations. On the same basis if we put down the percentage of earners in the lowest grade among the Intermediate Hindus to about 45, this shows us a wide gap of about 40 % between these groups and the backward groups. The difference between the Intermediate Hindus and the backward groups in this respect would be still greater if we eliminate from the category of Intermediate Hindus some of the groups which properly belong to the category of backward groups.

With regard to the Muslims the pattern of occupational distribution of the category termed Karwar Muslims bears a close resemblance to that of the Intermediate Hindus. The category of Other Muslims while being more backward than the Karwar Muslims, is also closer to the Intermediate Hindus as compared with the Hindu backward groups. The manifestation of relatively greater backwardness by this category is due to the fact that it comprises some groups which belong to the category of backward groups. Among the Christians, the Telugu Christians are a homogeneous category and there is no doubt that their socio-economic position is identical with that of the backward groups among Hindus. The category of Other Christians is more akin to the Intermediate Hindus in the pattern of occupational distribution.

A second distinctive feature of backward groups, as has already been pointed out, is that among them the women as a rule are also engaged in the lowest occupations. The data summarised in Table II would entirely support this statement. This table shows percentage distribution of the adult females in the different population categories according to earners and those engaged in occupational Grade I. Significant though the figures are, they would have been still more impressive if instead of all adult females only the adult females capable of working were taken into account and if all the occupations were graded. As it is, we find a very significant gap between the percentages of the earning females among the back-

TABLE II—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FEMALE EARNERS AND FEMALE EARNERS IN OCCUPATIONAL GRADE I BY POPULATION CATEGORIES

Population Categories	Earning Females	Female Earners in Grade I
(a) Brahmins	4.3	1
(b) Intermediate Hindus	18.9	12.2
(c) Other backward Hindus	61.5	55.4
(d) Scheduled Castes	53.7	46.3
(e) Karwar Muslims	6.7	2.2
(f) Other Muslims	26.5	18.6
(g) Telugu Christians	55.9	53.4
(h) Other Christians	34.2	21.1
Total	33.0	27.0

ward groups and the other categories of population. 61.5 per cent of the adult females among the Other Backward Hindus, 53.7% among Scheduled Castes and 55.9 % among the Telugu Christians are earners. If the nature of the ungraded occupations is taken into account these percentages also represent the proportions of the female earners in the lowest occupational grade although the corresponding figures shown in the table are slightly lower. The proportions of adult female earners and those engaged in the lowest occupational grade among the Brahmins are negligible. Among the Intermediate Hindus 18.9 per cent of the adult females are earners and 12.2 per cent are engaged in the lowest occupational grade. If the ungraded occupations are taken into account, the percentage of earners in the lowest occupational grade may be slightly larger, say, about 15 per cent. But this figure pales into insignificance before the corresponding figures in the case of the backward groups. Moreover, most of the female earners among the Intermediate Hindus are reduced to the state of having to earn a living by special circumstances such as widowhood.

The percentage of female earners and those engaged in the lowest occupations among the Karwar Muslims is very small. The women of the group as a whole observe purdah. On the other hand, in the category of Other Muslims relatively a large percentage of adult females are among the earners. This is mainly because these categories comprise some Muslim groups among whom the women do not observe purdah and which because of their backwardness permit female employment. In the category of Other Christians too the percentage of female earners is quite high. But the position of the backward groups in respect of female employment is indeed unique.

The data discussed above no doubt bring out the striking disparities in socio-economic status existing between backward and non-backward groups. It must

however be pointed out that in the tables presented many of the population categories consist of more than one endogamous group. But for accurate results the occupational distribution of earners in each of the endogamous groups has to be considered separately which is possible when dealing with larger communities. In such a case the possibility of some of the groups now regarded as non-backward showing a backward socio-economic position and some of the groups regarded as backward showing a non-backward position cannot be ruled out.

Thus it is abundantly clear that the backward groups have disproportionately a large share of occupations of the lowest grade. Their advancement would lie in their attaining to higher types of occupations. But higher employments require education and training on the part of the incumbents and for this the people of the backward groups have to be taught when they are young. The mere provision of facilities is not sufficient but genuine efforts have to be made to see to it that these people really avail themselves of the facilities reserved for them. It is here that the various causes and conditions of backwardness such as reasons of an economic, social, psychological or religious nature which may be different for different groups have to be taken into account. For, taking a policy decision is one thing and its implementation is another.

Secondly, the reservation of posts in the Government Departments alone cannot do the trick of enhancing the position of backward groups. It has to be kept in mind that because of the general backwardness of the country as a whole, the lot of the so-called advanced groups itself is none too enviable. The crux of the problem lies in the fact that by far the largest proportion of occupations in our country is made up of the occupations of the lowest grade. As may be seen from Table I, in Dandeli as much as 55 per cent of the occupations are in this grade. Actually this figure would be over 60 per cent if the ungraded occupations are taken into account. For the country as a whole, although exact figures are not available, there is no gainsaying the fact that the proportion of the lower occupations is much too large. It is a well-known fact that in advanced countries like the U.S.A. the proportion of occupations in the various prestige grades are continuously changing and the expanding occupations on the whole are those of higher prestige levels, whereas contracting occupations on the whole found at lower prestige levels. Therefore, the real solution to the problem of backward groups and to the backward condition of the country as a whole in India consists in increasing the proportion of the superior occupations at the expense of the inferior ones and not merely in giving superior occupations to the backward groups at the expense of the advanced groups. It is however obvious that precautions have to be taken against the new opportunities being grasped with disproportionately higher frequency by the advanced groups. Again from this point of view, in framing the employment policy the accent should be on the provision of higher types of employments rather than merely on more jobs. So far as the backward groups are concerned, it is clear that providing one higher job is as good as providing two occupations of the lowest grade for, in the former case the wife will cease to earn and what is more important—the level of living in the family will improve.