CHAPTER IV
THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND

The people of Oriental, apart from their membership in the formal system of the factory, were divided in terms of their language, caste and kinship affiliations. I will describe these affiliations, making up what I have called the institutional system of Oriental, and explain their significance in relation to the formal system in the next chapter. Before that, however, I must show how the language, caste and kinship affiliations existing at the time of my study came into being. This question can be understood only as a part of the wider question of the social background of the Oriental personnel.

In this connection, it is important to bear in mind what has been written till now on the question of the social background of factory workers in India. Much interest has been shown in this regard by labour economists, government agencies and social scientists, although there are few really empirical studies on the subject. Some of the outstanding contributions in the field are: Broughton (1924), Royal Commission on Labour in India (1931), Buchanan (1934), Gadgil (1948) and Moore (1951). On going through the relevant portions of these studies, one gets the following image of the background of Indian industrial labour:
The Indian population has been overwhelmingly rural and agricultural. The institutions of joint family, caste and village controlled the behaviour of the individual. The transmission of occupation on family and caste lines and the *karma* philosophy lying at the basis of Hinduism, together with the immobility of status inherent in caste brought about a fixity in the activities and outlook of people. Moore (1951: pp. 38-39). However, the ever-increasing pressure of population on land put more and more people below subsistence level and forced them to migrate to towns and cities. It is this population that was absorbed by factories as they sprang up and grew. It mainly comprised the low castes and untouchables, since they were economically worst-off. Buchanan (1934: p. 294); Prabhu (1956: pp. 67 ff.).

Yet the migration to town and to industrial work meant for the migrant a dislocation in his social life. In many cases, he left his family back in the village. Even when a migrant managed to take with him his wife and children, he had probably a piece of land or his old parents or brothers and sisters in the village needing his continual attention. (Gadgil (1948: p. 120), Prabhu (1956: p. 79). In any case, he was obliged to return to his village for all important social events, such as marriage, illness, death and rituals. (Royal Commission on Labour in India (1931: p. 14); Prabhu (1956: p. 81). These facts have induced the contention that the institutions of Indian society demand an allegiance from factory workers which is incompatible with their allegiance to factory work.
Also, as Moore (1951: p.124) has pointed out, the traditional institutions of India 'have emphasized fixity rather than mobility of social position, and some of this attitude has seemingly been carried over into the industrial situation'.

The factory worker was a fish out of water in the strange environment of the town. He found it extremely difficult to adjust with the rigours of factory work because, above all, Indians are not accustomed to protracted strenuous toil. Broughton (1924: pp.18-19). The Indian worker, therefore, was not committed to his work. He kept on moving from job to job. (Royal Commission on Labour in India (1931).

This is indicated by the high degree of absenteeism and labour turnover in Indian factories in the early years of industrialization."

In drawing the above picture, I have only tried to take stock of the thinking on the subject of social background of industrial workers. I have not exactly reproduced the relevant arguments in the studies I have mentioned above. Nor do I mean that each of the authors I have mentioned would agree with all parts of the argument emerging from the preceding paragraphs. Some recent studies (Thornber (1957), Myres (1959) have produced evidences to question the validity of the above summary.

In the light of what has been written so far, I will try here to describe the social background of Oriental employees. Specifically, I will attempt to answer, in the given sequence, the following questions: (i) From which
social and cultural groups did they come? (ii) Which factors served to bring them to Oriental? (iii) What were the social implications of their working in the factory?

It has been mentioned in chapter II that Rajnagar has since long been a large town with considerable trade and commerce and a centre of administration. Therefore, although it lay in the midst of a predominantly agricultural area, it was distinct from the surroundings in that it contained a wide variety of non-agricultural occupations even in pre-industrial days. There were, in Rajnagar, producers of and dealers in numerous necessities and luxuries of urban life, civil and military officials, teachers, priests, physicians, artisans and household servants. The report of the 1891 census of Rajnagar states:

"In the Bombay Presidency, it (Rajnagar) stands fourth in numbers...... As a centre of railway traffic, it holds an important position...... Still as the seat of a rich and a popular native court, unrivalled in Gujarat, (Rajnagar) opens fields of enterprise as well to the educated classes, from far and near, who cherish the ambition of aspiring to high administrative posts, as to the scores of hangers-on and tide-waiters whose ambitions are far lowly pitched, but who cannot grow in the soil by themselves, and twine as parasites round cherishing stocks of strong growth......"
The table given in chapter XI gives a good idea of the distinctness of Rajnagar from its surroundings in respect of occupations.

These diverse jobs were manned by a socially heterogeneous population. Rajnagar being in the heart of the linguistic region of Gujarat, the bulk of the population was Gujarati-speaking. I will refer to this population as Gujarati. However, as I have explained in chapter II, Rajnagar had since long attracted people from other regions. There was therefore a significant proportion of non-Gujaratis in Rajnagar. Predominant among these were the Marathi-speaking people — hereafter called Marathi — from the Maharashtra region. The erstwhile Marathi rulers of Rajnagar attracted many Marathis to Rajnagar to man the army, administration and other jobs. Besides Gujaratis and Marathis, there were people from many other regions (including a few foreigners). Among them a significant number hailed from the present Uttar Pradesh area. These people spoke Hindi and were popularly called Bhaiyas, since they addressed each other and others by the term bhaiya (lit. brother). I will use this term for them. Table I gives the relative proportions of the important language groups in Rajnagar in 1891 and in 1951.

The people in each linguistic group belonged to a variety of castes and sub-castes, most of which were traditionally associated with particular occupations. Gujaratis, for instance, ranged from the untouchables and
tribals through the lowest labouring castes, through artisans to the highest castes such as Patidar, Sania and Brahman. There were corresponding castes among Marathis and others. The census of 1891 enlisted as many as 130 castes in all linguistic groups in Rajnagar. Of these 87 were Gujarati, 28 Marathi and 13 Bhaiya castes. The rest were from other regions.

The social and cultural heterogeneity in Rajnagar mentioned above had certain important implications which must now be discussed. These observations are not based on my fieldwork; they are, however, quite well-established by earlier research and I have only translated them insofar as they are applicable to Rajnagar.

In the characteristically urban activities of public and private services, business and administration in Rajnagar, members of different linguistic and caste groups came in close contact with one another, thus minimising or removing the ideas of pollution, segregation etc. There was evidently a greater cultural give-and-take in Rajnagar than in rural areas. On the other hand, the close interdependence, ritual, economic and political, between caste groups obtaining in villages was absent in the town, since the people mostly depended on the impersonal authority of the State. Hence members of a language-group or caste lived in their own social world. This was reflected in spatial segregation of castes and linguistic groups. There were typically Gujarati and Marathi areas in Rajnagar, though in
either of them some people of the other group could and did settle. As far as possible people preferred to live in the areas dominated by their own groups. Further, within a linguistic group, different castes had a tendency to segregate in particular areas. This segregation was, however, not on the basis of small endogamous castes but on the basis of a broad classification of castes into higher, middle, lower and untouchables. The higher castes converged in the middle of the city and the lowest castes and untouchables were spread on the periphery. In-between lived the middle castes. However, with the expansion of the city, housing colonies of the richest people, mostly from higher castes, grew on the edges of the town. Moreover, as the railway offices and factories grew on the periphery, there developed typical working-class areas where migrants from other places lived in chawls and quarters irrespective of language and caste. Again, the cantonment area included some permanent and semi-permanent migrants of various castes. Each caste and language-group had its own ethnocentrism and prejudices against others. Thus in Rajnagar the free inter-mixing of communities and cultural interaction incidental to urban economic structure coexisted with social separation in other aspects of social life. It can be said that this pattern persists even today, though it is undergoing important modifications.

It is necessary at this stage to examine the pattern and tenure of settlement in Rajnagar of the different
sections of the population. This will throw some light on
the prevalent hunch that the bulk of the population of an
Indian city consists of people with a rural-agricultural
nexus having minimal connection with the city. Here also
sources of information or statistical data are inadequate;
consequently I have relied to a large extent on my personal
experience.

There were quite a few castes in Gujarat and elsewhere
which can be called urban castes, since their traditional
occupations are typically 'urban', hardly necessary in the
village economy. For instance, the Bania trader or money­
lender was not needed in most villages. Even when a Bania
grocer or banker was found in a village, he would be mostly
staying in the village casually, leaving his family and
most property in his native town. Similarly, the goldsmiths,
copper-smiths, jewellers, artists, grain-parchers, calico­
printers etc. would be hardly necessary in the daily life
of a village. Rajnagar having been a large town since long,
it included a number of 'urban' castes with headquarters in
the city and permanently settled therein. Whatever property
or other interests the members of these castes had were in
the city or in other towns and they had no significant social
connections with rural society and agriculture. The marriage
relations of these groups also were either confined to the
city or with other towns. I will call these people permanent
residents of Rajnagar.

As the city grew as a centre of trade and administration,
many people of different castes migrated to it from nearby villages as well as from distant areas. Some of them first migrated alone and kept on economic and social connections with their property and families in the villages; however, in many cases these migrants got settled jobs in the city or were able to start business or industry on a permanent basis. They gradually shifted their focus of activity from their villages to Rajnagar, brought their families and even invited their kin- and caste-fellows to join them in the city. Their children took the benefit of formal education and other features of city life and would eventually enter urban occupations. Such persons did maintain contacts with their kin and caste-fellows in the villages, but these contacts were only for special occasions like marriage and death. In this case there was a progressive increase in their connections with Rajnagar and a proportionate fall in their connections with their natal villages. Numerous carpenters, blacksmiths, Patidars, Brahmans etc. in the city belonged to this group. I will call these semi-permanent migrants.

Moreover, there were many people who migrated to Rajnagar just for earning livelihood. They migrated alone, or with wives and children, leaving the other members of the family behind in the villages. They had land or other property in the villages which they were required to attend to occasionally. They had few or no social connections in the city and would look forward to returning home when economic prospects bettered in the village or at least when
they retired from their jobs. I will use the phrase temporary migrants for these people.

The Marathi population in Rajnagar could also be classified in the three divisions mentioned above: (i) permanent residents, (ii) semi-permanent migrants and (iii) temporary migrants. The Marathi rulers persuaded many Marathis to immigrate to Rajnagar. This was partly to reward some kinsmen or courtiers for an act of valour or help in their achievements by granting him some land or property in or around Rajnagar, partly to help some people out of dire poverty in their homeland and partly because suitable Gujaratis were not available for some state and army services. Once this immigration was set in motion, it continued and grew as more and more Marathis followed their kinsmen and friends and entered the expanding cadre of state services, professions, artisanry and household services. In several cases entire kin-groups or castes migrated to the Rajnagar area and eventually minimised or stopped contacts with their native regions. Some of these even disposed of whatever land or other property they possessed in Maharashtra and acquired property in Gujarat. In such cases the succeeding generations had hardly any contacts with Maharashtra and considered Rajnagar as their native place. These can be classified as permanent residents. There were, however, other Marathis who, inspite of secure jobs in the city, kept up contacts with Maharashtra, thus falling in the 'semi-permanent migrant' category. Still others among
Marathis were temporary migrants, working in Rajnagar, but having chief social connections with their native region.

Among language-groups other than Gujarati and Marathi, there were only a few people belonging to the permanent resident and semi-permanent migrant categories. All others came to Rajnagar in search of jobs and stayed on the periphery of the town in chawls and slums. Some of them brought their wives and children to Rajnagar, but the latter were very temporary dwellers in the town and kept on moving to and fro their native villages. A majority of these temporary migrants, however, left their whole families and other social affiliations in their villages. These people stayed alone in hired rooms. In several cases, some migrants who belonged to a single kin-group or caste or village hired a room in common. The number of persons thus sharing a room ranged from two to eight. This device served two purposes for the migrants: (i) each of those sharing a room could save on house-rent and (ii) it increased the security of the migrants in the strange environment of the city; each could be looked after by the others in case of illness and other difficulties.

II

I have mentioned above that most of the jobs were traditionally associated with particular castes. It must, however, be remembered that the relation between caste and occupation has never been so exclusive as is often imagined, even in rural areas. In the urban areas, where there is a
wide variety of jobs, it has been much weaker. In Rajnagar, trade and commerce were not the monopoly of the Bania; they were practised by various castes, such as the Brahman, Patidar, Gola as also by the Muslims. It depended on who had the money and the courage to undertake trade risks rather than on caste. Similarly, government services and professions were manned by those who took formal education and learnt the relevant skills for these jobs. Household and other menial services and casual labour were in the hands of people of numerous low castes, though the higher castes seldom entered these jobs because of their low status. Since most of the arts and crafts such as carpentry, smithy and manufacture of artistic goods involved transmission of skills, they were in the hands of the respective artisan castes. Though in most cases fathers wanted their children to continue their own jobs or trades, it was not possible in many cases for several reasons. The son of a trader might receive formal education at school and college and might take a fancy to government service or some profession. Or it might be unprofitable to involve all sons in a family in the father's business; hence all except one or two might take up some other jobs. Government service and professions solely depend on one's individual education and training and those who could not acquire these had to find out alternative jobs. The sons of artisans also could not all be accommodated in their fathers' lines and took to other jobs depending on their education and experience. As a result the different
caste groups in Rajnagar in successive generations reared up a population whose employment prospects were not determined by caste, but depended largely on individuals' achievements. Simultaneously, the increasing population led to growing unemployment both in the city and its surroundings and it resulted in movements of population between the city and other towns and villages. The combined effect of these factors was that when new jobs were opened up, there were people willing to take them up without being necessarily obsessed or held up by traditional occupations.

The factory personnel of Rajnagar has to be analysed in this context.

The first textile mills to be started in Rajnagar were located on its eastern boundaries. The labour for these mills was drawn from the lower-caste groups residing in the vicinity of the area. Even in 1957, the bulk of the working force of the oldest textile mill in Rajnagar comprised members of Gola (sheep herder) and Muslim castes. This was partly due to the fact that the mainly unskilled jobs in textile mills had a low status in job-hierarchy and higher and middle caste people did not want to enter these jobs if they could help. The administrative and technical jobs were, of course, taken up by members of higher castes who received education and skills essential to such work.

When XY, the parent factory of Oriental, was established in 1908, the ruler of Rajnagar had an idea to turn the area to the north-west of the city into an industrial area. He helped the chief promoter of XY to acquire the agricultural
and fallow lands in this area, partly owned by people of nearby villages, and construct the factory there. In course of time other factories opened up there and the area has now become a sizeable industrial area with good possibilities of expansion. As the factories developed, many people from the nearby villages who were jobless or had lost their lands got into industrial jobs. They were attracted by the proximity of the factory to their homes and the prospects of earning cash income. The villagers were illiterate and unskilled, but since most of the jobs in XY required no special skills, they had no difficulty in learning their tasks in the factory. In 1957, as many as 70 per cent of the workers in XY were from the nearby villages. Considering the factory population on the basis of residence-pattern, we must distinguish these villager-workers from the three categories mentioned above (the permanent residents, semi-permanent migrants and temporary migrants). I will call those coming to factory from their village-homes the village-based workers.

XY was nearly 3.5 miles away from the heart of Rajnagar. This distance, together with lack of proper means of transportation (bicycles, buses etc.) acted as a disincentive for the townspeople to take up jobs in XY. However, people living in the cantonment area and the northern and western periphery of the town started changing over to factory jobs, when they were jobless or held very meagrely paid jobs such as household service. These were mostly lower-caste and
untouchable Gujaratis, but by this time some Marathis and Bhaiyas had started leaving their homes and travelling in search of jobs to the various industrial centres. Some of these managed to get jobs in factories in Rajnagar and lived in the chawls and houses near the industrial area. These temporary migrants also eventually entered XY. They were followed by their kinsmen and castemen, thus bringing about a linguistically heterogeneous but predominantly low-caste working force in the factory.

The factory gradually expanded. Jobs also increased and semi-skilled and skilled jobs came into existence. These required the skill and experience of artisan castes and, in some cases, even formal and technical education. In the meanwhile the system of communication between the factory area and the town improved and the bicycle came into vogue as common man's vehicle. Members of the artisan and other middle castes living either as permanent residents or semi-permanent migrants in the city consequently drifted to factory-jobs. Also, the technical institute started by the ruler was turning out persons with some formal knowledge in skilled factory jobs such as turning, fitting, welding, dyeing and bleaching. These persons were absorbed in skilled jobs. As factory jobs grew, some people of higher castes (such as Brahman, Bania and Patidar) who could not go to higher jobs in administration and professions for want of education joined the skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled jobs in the factory according to their skill and experience. The factories
in Rajnagar then ceased to be the 'monopoly' or 'last refuge' of low castes and untouchables and came to possess a cross-section of the caste-hierarchy of the region. In the textile mills, however, where jobs were mostly unskilled, the workforce was dominated by the low-caste groups which first joined them due to proximity with their homes. 3

The engineering workshop of XY, which later developed into Oriental, included a large number of skilled jobs unlike the other departments where jobs were mostly unskilled. The skilled jobs were mostly manned by higher and artisan caste people from Gujarati and Marathi groups. Unskilled jobs were dominated by lower castes and untouchables from among Gujarati, Marathi and Bhaiya groups. They were either semi-permanent or temporary migrants living on the periphery of the town or residents of nearby villages (village-based workers).

III

I have tried to explain the linguistic and caste heterogeneity of the personnel of Oriental by the socially heterogeneous population of Rajnagar, the location of the factory and the nature and range of jobs available in it. My interviews indicated an important fact, however, that nearly 67 per cent of employees had their kinsmen, castemen, neighbours, fellow-villagers, friends or friends' friends working in Oriental. See Table II. To understand this, it is necessary to understand the procedure of recruitment of personnel prevailing in the factory.
The recruitment of the highest officers and engineers was in the hands of the Managing Director. Some officers migrated to Oriental from other factories for better economic prospects. The Managing Director was always on the look-out for persons with real ability to handle particular jobs. When he found out a proper person, he offered him a decent salary and thus attracted him to Oriental. Other officers were raised from lower jobs. The Workshop Superintendent, for instance, joined the AY workshop as a draughtsman. The Scheduling and Designs Engineers similarly started on much lower jobs.

The recruitment of the other personnel was under the charge of the Workshop Superintendent. He took decisions regarding the nature and numbers of persons to be recruited from time to time on the basis of the production policies laid down by the Management and in consultation with the heads of the various departments and workshops regarding the needs of the respective units. The bulk of the 'second line' engineers and officers of Oriental came from local colleges and the technical institute mentioned in chapter II; or from other factories. Skilled workers and the lower supervisory staff also came from other factories or from artisan occupations. In this case the Management generally gave an objective test by asking the aspirant to operate a machine or do some other job. The successful candidates were taken up in accordance with the need of the time. For the clerical staff and semi-skilled and unskilled jobs in
workshops, there were always a surplus number of aspirants approaching the Management over what they needed. Wednesday and Friday were the main recruiting days for workers' jobs when a large number of persons queued up at the factory gates to secure jobs. Advertisement as the means of recruitment was seldom used by the Management.

In most cases, when some jobs were vacant or when some additional jobs were created, those already in employment suggested the names of their relatives, caste-fellows, neighbours etc. according to the availability of job-seekers in these groups and the possible suitability of a man for a job. If, for instance, an employee had a matriculate relative and another little-educated one, he would want to bring in the matriculate as a clerk and the other as a worker. Most employees had someone in mind whom they wanted to bring to Oriental.

It can be seen from Table III that of the 238 employees I interviewed, 11 got into Oriental through the Managing Director, 18 through the Workshop Superintendent, 68 through other staff members and 105 through workers. Only 36 (i.e. nearly 15 per cent) were employed without any social link. In the case of 51 employees, the person acting as a link was a near relative, for 36 he was a distant relative, for 20 he was a caste-fellow, for 70 a neighbour or friend and 25 were employed through their fellow-villagers. This shows that in Oriental recruitment was by and large made through some channels and that employees of all cadres acted as the channel.
The Management were interested in ensuring that, as far as possible, they employed those who had some link in the factory, or at least were known to someone known to them (the Management). The prescribed form of application, which every worker filled in at the time of recruitment, included a question: "through whom has he (the applicant) come (for job)?" The Management explained this stress on social links as follows:

"If we recruit a completely unknown man, he might misbehave. Though we can turn him away, the turnover involved would mean an obvious loss to the Company. On the other hand, if we take a person coming through somebody we know, we are on safer grounds. For the person acting as the link implicitly assumes responsibility for the man he brings and would restrain him from negligence of work, misbehaviour, or trade-union activities. Thus for us the stress on social links provides an insurance against any activities harmful to the production and the general discipline of the factory."

The Electrical Engineer's remarks on a resignation from a subordinate is very significant in this context. He wrote: "This fellow is most useless and must be dismissed. In future we must take care to appoint only those workers coming through somebody whom we already know."

For the person recruited through a social link, the stress on such link meant that in the factory he would not have to work in a social vacuum, that there was someone to take his side in case a dispute arose with other workers or
officers or with the management. As a worker said, "Since my brother is an old employee in Oriental, the Management do not turn me out though they often make it clear that they are not satisfied with my work." His boss endorsed his statement. There were a number of employees in the factory who were usually referred to, not by their own names, but as officer X's brother, clerk Y's cousin, turner Z's neighbour, pattern-maker N's friend, and so on.

The employees acting as social links for bringing others to the factory considered the stress on such links as the means to fulfil their social obligations. A man who could secure jobs for his relatives, castemen, neighbours or friends was considered to be a 'good man' and was respected in society. This feeling of social obligation was evident when the Workshop Superintendent mentioned his acting as a social link. He said, "I have brought to Oriental nearly 50 persons who are my relatives, castemen or neighbours. Most of them were without jobs and I am glad that they are fixed up." In India, generally, it is a man's duty to do what he can for his own people in the family, caste, village etc. The person acting as social link in employment had the satisfaction of having performed his duty in that respect.

The Management's policy to recruit persons having social links in the factory had thus a triple social function. In the formal system of the factory, it made for a loyal and peaceful working force. For the recruited employee, it made the factory a work-place of security and stability. And for
the person acting as link, it enabled him to fulfil the social expectations associated with his role in society.

IV

In the foregoing description of linguistic and caste affiliations of factory workers in Rajnagar I have tried to examine the contention that only low-caste migrants from rural areas enter industry in India. I will now deal with the factors which drew the people to factory work, on the basis of data collected from Oriental.

In the early years of Oriental, till 1945-46, the supply of labour was considerably short of demand. For unskilled labour, the factory mainly depended on the landless labourers of nearby villages. These villagers were largely ignorant of factory-work or were afraid of the drudgery and routine involved in it. They therefore preferred stray labour which left for them ease and comfort. Some of my informants narrated how they would go about, now collecting fuel and fodder, now working on the farm of a landlord, now in the village-grocer's shop and at times retiring for several months together. They also recalled that a man from Oriental went to their villages and tried to persuade them to join the factory; sometimes he gave ex gratia money to those who accepted his offer to join Oriental. Even after joining the factory, the people worked reluctantly and often left the job. Many of my informants vividly described how some workers left the factory work by jumping the fence on
an odd side without informing his supervisor and never came back.

There was a shortage of skilled workers too. A skilled worker had to be trained as an apprentice in Oriental if he did not possess prior experience of the job for which he was recruited. Training in the factory meant doing work with little or no wages for some time and most people thought of immediate gains from the job rather than of long term prospects. As for people trained in other factories, there were only a few such factories in this region. These few factories were, moreover, in need of skilled labour just as Oriental was. On many occasions a good skilled worker in one factory was offered more wages than he got by the Management of another factory. A few skilled workers of Oriental had left it on one or more occasions and returned to it when offered more wages or salary. There was thus a high degree of labour turnover in the beginning. This is evident from Table IV.

However, this reluctance and mobility of people about Oriental jobs was short-lived.

Of the 238 employees I interviewed, 44 (nearly 18 per cent) were permanent residents of Rajnagar or permanent migrants with little connection elsewhere. See Table V. Most of them were from the families of merchants, professionals or state-employees, others hailed from low-caste families engaged in menial services or skilled or unskilled labour. The rest belonged to artisan families. Barring six
employees, these permanent residents had little knowledge or experience about their traditional occupations. See Table VI. They were therefore not inhibited by caste norms in selection of jobs. Among these, those who received formal and technical education were in higher technical and administrative jobs in the factory; the others worked as skilled or semi-skilled workers. These people, living in the 'urban' atmosphere of Rajnagar, were in touch with many items of civilization which had by then entered Indian cities through contact with the west - items such as textiles, furniture, modern foods and drinks, etc. There was an urge to 'westernize', and a person or a family which utilized the products of new civilization could proportionately raise status in the respective caste as well as among neighbours.

These ambitions could be fulfilled by taking up jobs in the factory, since the factory ensured a stable income to the employee. Besides, most of the people under reference had long broken away with the traditional occupations. They could not look to a fixed occupation in their childhood for themselves, since their parents worked in professions or government services. The factory provided an opportunity to all these people. Another important thing about Oriental jobs was that even after joining the factory in a particular position, the employee could look forward to raising his income and status in the factory; this made him look forward to raising his status in society by utilizing more and more products of civilization.
The employees of artisan castes, unlike the others mentioned above, had connections with their traditional occupations. Most of them had learnt their jobs from their relatives before entering the factory, and had also practised them for some time. Most carpenters (Suthar), for instance, earned by making agricultural implements, furniture, or building materials. However, these jobs were to be done only as orders came forth; sometimes the artisans earned a lot, but sometimes they had to sit idle if there was no work. This resulted in an uncertainty and variability of income and for unpopular artisans there was also a bit of insecurity. In contrast with this, the factory work offered a stable income, security of livelihood and also opportunity to raise income and status, which again would put the workers in growing contact with products of the new civilization and boost their status in society.

Forty-seven of the 238 employees belonged to the 'semi-permanent migrants' category. They also hailed from various castes. Practically all of them had severed their connection with their ancestral occupations. They took up Oriental jobs according to their formal education and training. Most of them indeed came to factory jobs because they possessed the relevant education and training. This education and training were themselves a part of the ambitions of these employees or their parents and relatives to raise their status in the caste and neighbourhood by being able to utilize the products of civilization. Others joined
the factory, because their traditional occupations could not support all the members of their growing families. For instance, a petty merchant in a village, with least chances to expand his business, could maintain his own family, though sometimes with great difficulty. When, however, his sons grew up, he could accommodate only one or two sons in his own business. The others had to search for alternative means of livelihood. In such cases, the sons left their family occupations only to strengthen the economy of the family. Employees who belonged to this category worked in Oriental as parts of their families and to fulfil the needs of the family. By adding to the income of the family, they could stabilize it as a social entity, enabled it to maintain its status in society and looked forward to raising this status when their income increased.

The temporary migrants numbered 107 (44 per cent) and village-based employees 40 (17 per cent) among the 238 interviewed. Except for a few high-caste staff members among them, they were from the low castes of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. They were from the families of agricultural labourers or petty landholders living from hand to mouth, some even below that level. Most of them came for unskilled factory jobs, because their land became too uneconomic with the growing families (under situations similar to that described above for a shopkeeper's family). For many farmers, their barely sufficient agricultural produce left them nothing to sell for money which they needed to pay taxes or to
purchase necessities such as clothes, spices, kerosene etc. They had, therefore, to look to jobs which gave them money. The job in Oriental had this implication for many unskilled employees. Besides, the cash-giving jobs in the factory enabled these employees to acquire a special status for themselves and their families in the caste and neighbourhood. With the money they earned, they could purchase better implements or bullocks for their agriculture, keep their houses in better-looking condition than other houses, purchase good shoes and clothes and other household articles for family-members and, above all, pay-off their debts rather quickly. As a worker remarked:

In our villages, if you are an ordinary labourer, the grocer and others will hesitate to give you credit. But, if you are a factory worker, anyone will give you credit, since you have a regular income and can repay your debts with much ease.

There were also workers who said they boasted in their far-away villages that they were supervisors (though in fact they were semi-skilled workers) and earn special regard of their castemen and fellow-villagers.

In the villages around Rajnagar, the factory-workers were a distinct group. They had special modes of living - they went to bed earlier than others at night; in the evening they took their meals earlier than others; they hardly participated in routine-worship recitals (bhajan) and so on. The people regarded factory workers with some distinction.
and the latter moved with an air in the village.

If the above analysis has given the impression that all employees in Oriental were pushed to factory jobs to strengthen the family economy and to enhance its status in society, the impression must be corrected. There were at least a few employees (3 per cent of those I interviewed) who were driven to the factory job out of the sheer necessity to exist. Most of these were high caste men who did not receive any education nor had the aptitude to learn skilled jobs. Their traditional occupations died away with one of their ancestors due to bad habits or loss of clientele and these employees had to move from one unskilled job to another before somebody (some socially linked person) landed them into Oriental for petty unskilled work. Others in this category were middle- or low-caste men who did not have a definite source of livelihood since their ancestors were stray labourers or vagrants. These employees did not have many social links either. They worked to provide for themselves or their thin families. Then there were a few employees in clerical jobs without any possibility to move up. For them also, the job in Oriental was just another job - "a choice among evils", because they had no alternative.

For these employees, factory work had no status-raising possibilities attached to it. In fact, for some of them work in the factory meant a very low position in their castes and neighbourhoods.

Barring these exceptions, however, it is possible to
say from the preceding description that the social institutions (family, marriage, caste, neighbourhood etc.) of the employees contained features (idea of status, urge for westernization, economic pressure on the family etc.) and functions which the employees could well serve by working in the factory. The factory, with its hierarchical job-structure and status-raising possibilities, was a means by which employees could hope to fulfil their social aspirations and play their social roles better and better. The factory thus gradually became an important component of the social world of employees, instead of remaining a distinct entity associated with work, sweat, bossing and unwholesome wages. On the other hand, due to the procedure of recruitment mentioned above, employees worked in a miniature social world of caste, language, kinship, village and neighbourhood ties. These social institutions were, to that extent, components of the factory. The society and the factory were integral parts of each other from the viewpoint of the employees.

In a way, the Management of Oriental were aware of the relationship just brought out, for they soon tried to make adjustments with the social needs of their employees. The question of Oriental workers leaving the factory on being attracted by other employers was sensed by the Management as early as in 1944. They started a scheme whereby persons willing to learn the specialized skilled jobs were required to give a surety for Rs. 100/- and an agreement to serve the Company for ten years. This meant that the person
who wanted to learn a skilled job in Oriental was precommitted for ten years. On the other hand, the Management initiated schemes providing security and economic incentives to workers. They introduced the provident fund scheme in 1943, the efficiency bonus in 1946 and the attendance bonus in 1948. They advanced loans of money to workers in their social needs such as marriage, death, house-repairs etc. In 1956 the co-operative credit society was started with a view to encouraging saving among workers and facilitating loans of money in their social needs. Casual leave was granted in four instalments although the Government rule permitted only three instalments. Holidays were granted according to the wish and tendencies of workers. In the Hindu month of Sravana, on Mondays workers were allowed to go home an hour earlier than the scheduled closing time. The factory thus made adjustments with the social necessities of the people. This enhanced the regard of the employees for the factory and for the Management.

Thus, the flexible occupational background of the employees, the fact that factory jobs fulfilled the aspirations of individuals and the growing needs of their families, the socially congenial environment in the factory and the Management's efforts to adjust with the social needs of the employees - all these factors eventually led to a committed working force in Oriental. This 'commitment' of labour can be seen from Table IV. In 1957, only 92 workers in an average of 690 left the factory as against 192 departures in an average of 259 in 1944. Those workers who earlier
left Oriental and rejoined it said, "We came back because we found the situation here much more congenial to our needs and ambitions than in other factories." A worker proudly said, "I have almost melted myself along with this iron in Oriental for the last fifteen years. I feel it is my own factory."

Among the 44 'permanent resident' employees mentioned above, 30 had been living in Rajnagar for a very long time. They had little or no knowledge of their ancestors living outside Rajnagar. They were living in or near their larger kin-groups in the town and most of their caste-fellows also lived in Rajnagar. 16 employees in this category owned houses in the town. The others did not have houses in Rajnagar, but neither had they houses of their own anywhere else.

Other persons (numbering 14) belonging to the 'permanent resident' category could trace back their ancestors living in other villages and towns. However, in this case, the father, grandfather or some more distant ancestor had migrated to Rajnagar. As years passed, the other members of the family migrated to the town and slowly reduced their contacts with the native place. Six respondents in this group had ancestral houses; two had even some land in the native place. But the employees themselves cared very little for this property. It was managed by distant kinsmen who
sent a portion of the income to the owner; the portion claimed by the respondent was in many cases negligible. Seven persons in this group had already acquired houses in Rajnagar and all their ceremonies relating to marriage, death and other rituals were performed in Rajnagar. Most of these people had seldom visited their native places. They regarded Rajnagar as their native place. Some had not seen their close relatives (even first or second cousins) staying in their native place in their lifetime.

For these permanent residents, work in Oriental did not imply a break in their social relationships. In fact, several employees in this category said they wanted to stick to the factory inspite of better and more remunerative jobs available elsewhere, because working in Oriental meant for them remaining in the midst of their families and friends. There was no contradiction between their loyalty to their families, castes etc. and to Oriental. They could work for relatives etc. in spare hours and could utilize the privilege and other leaves for fulfilling their social commitments.

Out of the 47 employees in the 'semi-permanent migrant' category, 34 migrated to Rajnagar in previous generations for business, crafts or state service and settled in the town. Others migrated to Rajnagar in their own generation, either for jobs or for education. 26 of them stayed in Rajnagar with their wives and children, with parents and other relatives staying in the native place. However, 12 had brought their brothers, sisters or other near relatives with them for
education or job. 21 had also their parents with them in Rajnagar, the land and/or houses in the native place being managed by other brothers or more distant relatives. These people did not own houses or other property in Rajnagar. Most of their kin, castemen etc. lived in the native villages or towns. They went to their native places for all important social and religious ceremonies. However, the visits to the native places depended on the distance between them and Rajnagar. For example, those in this category who lived around Rajnagar paid 42 visits per year on an average during 1952-57; whereas the corresponding figures for the people from other parts of Gujarat and for people from beyond Gujarat were 29 and 2.3 respectively. That is, the employee's contact with the native place was in proportion to the ease of moving to and fro and the expenses involved. Those who could not go easily to the native place fulfilled their social commitments by delegating their functions to other members of the family. For instance, the employee went to the native place only when some near relative was marrying or had died; for other deaths and marriages, he was represented by his brother or father or cousin. The economic commitments of these employees were maintained through the agency of mail-service.

Many persons in this semi-permanent category looked forward to settling in Rajnagar and educating their children in the best manner possible. They expressed their 'dream' to educate their children in college and make them engineers
and officers. Some even planned to purchase houses in Rajnagar. In this case, then, work in the factory entailed some break in the traditional social life of employees. As seen here, the employees tried to adjust social life with factory work.

Of the 107 temporary migrants, 39 were Marathis and Bhaiyas and the rest Gujaratis. They were mostly agriculturists or landless labourers. Though almost all of them had followed near or distant relatives in Rajnagar as well as in Oriental, they left their family members in their native places.

Fifteen employees in this category lived in hired rooms with relatives, caste-fellows or neighbours; 16 had brought with them only their wives and children and only 3 had other relatives staying with them in Rajnagar. That is, most of these employees had left their social world to join Oriental jobs. Some of them had to care for their family members staying far away and attend to work in respect of land, house or other property. They often exhibited homesickness and tried to idealize life in their native villages in relation to life in the town. Most of them expressed a desire to return home whenever there was a chance of a reasonable job or on retirement. They had to return home on such occasions as marriage, death of father or mother or even serious sickness of wife or children. Some had also to go to the native place in the agricultural season to look after their land or harvest. However, all of them did not
go home very often. They were conscious of the loss involved in a visit to the native place. As a worker put it:

In going to the native place, on a month's leave, you have to spend half a month's salary on travelling alone. In addition, if you are going to see your people, you would naturally want to purchase things for giving gifts to your wife, children and others. Besides, you will be losing your salary or wages, together with the attendance and efficiency bonuses for period of absence. The total would reach something around three months' wages. Why not send an equal amount to the family by mail so that they can use it for paying off debts or purchasing land etc.?

This is sound rational arithmetic. I know of quite a few Bhaiyas and Marathis staying as temporary migrants in Rajnagar who visited their native places only on very important social occasions. They maintained social and economic ties with the family by mail. In some cases, the people coming from a single village or a small region visited the native place in turns and thus kept up social relations with their homes and villages. A Gujarati worker said:

"When a Bhaiya goes to the native place, all persons of his caste and village go to see him off at the railway station and send gifts and money to their respective families. When he returns, they all gather round him and receive communications from their families."
Thus the temporary migrants also tried to make adjustments between factory work and their social commitments. Secondly, most of them were unskilled workers. They were therefore easily replaceable. An officer connected with workshop administration categorically said that the visits of Bhaiyas and Marathis to their homes was not at all a problem for the Management. A few who were skilled workers were influenced by the possibility of raising their status in the factory. They expressed a strong inclination to settle down in their jobs, work hard and educate their children "like the others round here are doing."

Nearly all of the 40 village-based workers were the permanent residents of their respective villages. They mostly kept up their social relationships intact and worked in the factory, like the permanent residents of Rajnagar. Some of the villagers had some ancestral land, but they managed it either through relatives or through hired labour. When they were required to attend to the land or any social obligations, they could utilize the privilege leave granted by the Company. For the village-based workers, then, factory work did not imply a break with their social commitments. In fact, as I have shown in a preceding paragraph, the factory job served as an instrument for boosting one's status in society.
The data presented in this chapter, though rather hazy, suggest that the hypothesis that the traditional institutions of India are a major hurdle to a committed factory population is based on a questionable image of "traditional institutions". There was more flexibility in the institutions of Oriental employees than is generally believed (vide the occupational and spatial mobility characteristic of many employees' families and castes). Further, the institutions themselves were undergoing change for economic reasons and as a result of contact with a wider world (vide the economic necessity for members of a family to be sent out for jobs and the urge to exploit new products of civilization). The new needs and aspirations developed by the institutions could be fulfilled by their members taking to factory jobs. Therefore, the individuals who came to the factory did so as members of their institutions rather than being thrown out by them.

The switch-over to factory jobs did imply a modification in the social relationships of employees, particularly for the temporary migrants. This modification, however, hardly entailed a break-down in their old social affiliations (vide the maintenance of economic and social ties with family members inspite of spatial separation, attending rituals and ceremonies by proxy, utilizing the modern communication channels etc.). For most employees,
the obligations to society and those to Oriental coexisted.

On the other hand, the factory (i.e. the Management) made allowances to the society within which it worked (vide the leave benefits, credit facilities, incentives etc.). Also, the recruitment policy adopted in Oriental brought about a socially desirable environment for the employees.

The factory and the society made adjustments with each other. Each became an integral part of the other and thus coexisted.

This coexistence may not be perfect in all cases. It would be too much to assume a complete coexistence even in the case of Oriental. However, the coexistence suggested here may serve as a model against which specific studies can be made. In the case of Oriental, there seems to be a high degree of coexistence between factory and society.

NOTES

1. I have chosen the census year 1891 because it gives facts about the immediately pre-industrial days for Rajnagar.
2. See Ghurye (1950), Chapter I.
3. This information is based on my talks with the employees of various factories in Rajnagar, when I collected the preliminary data about them.
4. This phrase is borrowed from Moore (1951); see Chapter III.
5. See Chapter III.
6. The Management also introduced a scheme to give elementary formal education to workers. Officers conducted classes; free stationery was provided to the workers and they were made free from work earlier than others. Those who passed a test at the end of the year were promised special increments in wages. The scheme, however, failed within a few months.

7. A few of them were migrants to the villages from other areas, but their number was insignificant.

8. A similar hypothesis is suggested by Nash (1956) in his Guatemala study. In suggesting the coexistence model, I have borrowed from his work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentage to total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marathi</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi-Hindustani (Bhaiyas)</td>
<td>04.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>112,471</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I - Linguistic Groups in Rajnagar - 1891.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Relationship</th>
<th>No. Staff</th>
<th>No. Workers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Near Relative</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant Relative</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastemen</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow-villagers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbours, Friends</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No social connection in factory</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>out of 76</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II - Employees with Social Links in Oriental.
Table III - Numbers of Employees recruited through various Social Links in Oriental.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average Nos. employed</th>
<th>New Arrivals</th>
<th>Nos. leaving jobs during the year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table IV - Arrivals and Exits of Workers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table V - Pattern of Residence of Oriental Employees.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection with traditional occupation.</th>
<th>Permanent residents</th>
<th>Semi-permanent migrants</th>
<th>Temporary migrants</th>
<th>Village based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No memory.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken since long</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken in grand-father's generation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken in father's generation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken in own generation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection still retained</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table VI - Pattern of Residence according to Connections with Traditional Occupation.