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**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CASTE IN THE SEGMENTATION  
OF THE URBAN LABOUR MARKET:**  
**STUDY OF A MIDDLE-SIZED INDUSTRIAL TOWN IN WESTERN INDIA**

by  
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PANEL 3 : HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF  
TOWN DEVELOPMENT

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper investigates the impact of industrialization and urbanization on the role of caste in the structuring of the urban labour market and in job access. This empirical assessment is based on in-depth surveys conducted in a middle-sized industrial town in Western India, namely Jetpur, which specializes in textile-printing.

The origin of this industry in Jetpur exemplifies the transition from family crafts to industrial production by the caste of artisans traditionally engaged in dyeing and printing work. The entrepreneurial dynamics of this industry are then marked by the traditional caste-based occupational specialization which determined the possible routes of access to entrepreneurship: extension of the familial business from textile trade to manufacturing by entrepreneurs from merchant castes, and transfer of capital from agriculture to the urban industry by entrepreneurs from the traditional caste of cultivators.

In contrast, the caste base of the hired labour force of the printing industry is generally open, due to its considerable manpower requirements. To some extent, the intermixing of communities and castes in the factories contributes to the weakening of traditional social segregation. However, more subtle forms of discrimination along caste lines appear, and casteism and communalism are likely to be revived. Further, social and familial networks and caste-based solidarities play a strategic role in the access to industrial jobs and thus reproduce traditional segmentation.

More generally, the structure of the urban labour market in Jetpur is still marked by caste-based differentiations. Caste and religious affiliations influence the female labour force participation rate. A relative degree of occupational specialization by caste and the survival of certain ascriptive hereditary activities are also notable. Furthermore, low-caste workers tend to be employed in more irregular and unprotected jobs, and they seldom accede to the status of employer. Differential access to education according to caste strengthens such discrimination rather than explains it.

Thus, the process of small-scale industrialization which has taken place in the middle-sized town under study has not led to a more equalitarian pattern of access to jobs, neither has it achieved the economic advancement of the socially under-privileged sections of the population.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Industrialization and urbanization are usually considered to be vehicles of modernization and social change: this issue in India has been the starting-point for extensive academic debate and research work, with special emphasis laid on the consequences of such processes on ascriptive caste-based social and economic organization.<sup>1</sup>

With reference to this general debate and given the context of urbanization in India, where the share of the urban population (26 per cent in 1991) remains quite modest in the context of a predominantly rural population, small and middle-sized towns provide a particularly relevant field of study. These towns maintain preferential links with their rural hinterland, and hence stand at the interface between the villages typified as the crucible of tradition and the large cities depicted as the very place of modernity. In the same way, with a view to analysing the impact of industrialization on the traditional pattern of occupational specialization, it seems interesting to focus on small-scale industries since they are in a better position to illustrate the transition from familial and hereditary crafts to industrial production.

Thus, the present paper centres on the case study of a fast-growing middle-sized town whose development relies on small-scale industrialization. The selected town, namely Jetpur, is situated in the sub-region of Saurashtra, the western peninsula of Gujarat which is one of the most urbanized and industrialized States in India<sup>2</sup>. Jetpur further exemplifies mono-industrial development based on a traditional activity, the dyeing and printing of textiles (essentially cotton saris), which is promoted by local entrepreneurs.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example : "Indian urbanization and planning : vehicles of modernization", edited by A.G. NOBLE and A.DUTT (1977). A comprehensive review of urban studies in India in connection with "the famous theme of the continuity and change in urban social structure" can be found in GANDHI (1983).

<sup>2</sup> In 1991, the rate of urbanization in Gujarat was 34 per cent as against 26 per cent for India, which ranks Gujarat second among the major States of India, after Maharashtra. With respect to gross value of industrial output, Gujarat ranked second in 1980-81 among all the States in India, after Maharashtra.

The aim of this paper is to explore several questions in connection with the significance of caste in the current organization of the labour market in an industrial town like Jetpur :

- Is there discrimination in the access to the different occupational and employment categories, according to the workers' caste or communal affiliations? To what extent and in which way does the caste differentiation operate in the process of the segmentation of the labour market ?

- Regarding the industrial sector in particular, what is the actual role of caste in job access routes? To what extent does common work experience in the factory contribute to the weakening of traditional caste-based and communal cleavages? Are there new or more subtle forms of fragmentation of the industrial labour force in which the caste factor still operates?

The findings presented here are based on primary data collected in Jetpur and its region between October 1987 and November 1989, as part of a research project on the urban development, industrialization and migration processes in middle-sized Indian towns<sup>3</sup>. The system of investigation adopted combined several types of approach and survey, which included the following: a statistical survey on migration and employment covering 10 per cent of the households in the urban agglomeration and five nearby villages (2301 households), a survey of 50 industrial establishments, a collection of 64 industrial workers' life histories, in-depth interviews in the migrants' places of origin covering 10 villages and two small towns<sup>4</sup>.

Before examining the selected issues, the development of the textile-printing industry in Jetpur, as well as its significance for the urban economy and the hinterland, are outlined briefly.

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<sup>3</sup> This project was financed by ORSTOM, the French Institute of Scientific Research for Development through Co-operation (Paris-France), where the author is a research fellow. To conduct her research in India, she was affiliated as a visiting scholar at the Gujarat Institute of Area Planning (Gota - Ahmedabad) from July 1987 to June 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Details of the observation methods are given in: DUPONT, 1989 and 1991-a; DUPONT & LELIEVRE, 1990.

## A - JETPUR: A MONO-INDUSTRIAL POLE

### A-1- Origin and development of the textile-printing industry in Jetpur

The dyeing and printing of textiles is a traditional craft in the Saurashtra region and its origin in Jetpur can be traced to the beginning of the 19th century (SAMPATRAM, 1863). However, the industry in its present form has developed since 1947 with the introduction of the technique of screen-printing which gradually supplanted block printing (TRIVEDI, 1970). This technical change allowed the transition from household crafts to industrial production to take place, leading to the emergence of Jetpur as a regional pole.

At its beginning this industry was promoted by local entrepreneurs, Khatris by caste, for whom dyeing and printing is an ancestral activity. The bright economic prospects of this industry then attracted many entrepreneurs, who did not necessarily belong to the traditional community of craftsmen. Amongst the newcomers were Vaniyas, the traditional caste cluster of Gujarati traders, and Kanbis (also locally called Patels), traditionally a caste of cultivators. The Vaniya entrepreneurs hail more specifically from families of traders in textiles or printed saris, who maintain direct contacts with the sari-printing industry. The role played by the Kanbis in the industrial development of Jetpur is more remarkable: they have gradually entered this industry in increasing numbers and reinvested in the urban industry the profits set aside from agricultural incomes, especially from cash crop agriculture. In a broader perspective this evolution has to be related to the "emergence of the Kanbi cultivators as a dominant middle-order caste in Saurashtra" in the post-independence period (JOSHI, 1989)<sup>5</sup>.

The textile-printing industry in Jetpur developed considerably with the main period of expansion occurring from the mid-sixties to the mid-eighties. In the late 1980s, the number of printing units set up in the urban agglomeration and its immediate surroundings approximated 1200, all belonging to the small-scale sector<sup>6</sup>. The development of the screen-printing industry also promoted several ancillary manufacturing and servicing activities: about 250 small units manufacturing screens, about 100 small units engaged in finishing processes, and about 20 units manufacturing

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<sup>5</sup> The origins of this process lie in the land reforms and tenancy acts of the post-independence period, which gave full occupancy rights and ownership to the former tenants-at-will (especially the Kanbis) who were working on the lands of local rulers.

<sup>6</sup> By 1988 criteria, an industrial undertaking belonged to the category of "small scale industry" if the capital invested in plants and machinery did not exceed 3.5 million rupees and 4.5 million rupees in the case of ancillary units.

In Jetpur industrialists adopt the common practice of dividing their concern into small-sized units, in order to avoid extra taxes and to escape from labour legislation. Therefore the 1200 small scale printing units correspond only to about 500 distinct individual enterprises or familial groups.

dyes or other chemicals used in the printing process, located in the town and nearby villages. Since the entire process of production is manual, the total employment generated by the textile-printing industry is considerable. According to the estimate provided by the industrial association, the maximum employment capacity of this industry would approximate 40,000 (ancillary units included, and all types of work and status in employment considered).

The remarkable expansion of the textile-printing industry in Jetpur over the last forty years has been associated with rapid population growth - indicating important immigration - and spatial spread of the built-up areas and industrial zones. Jetpur and its surrounding suburbs together constitute an urban agglomeration of around 114,000 inhabitants (1988 estimate<sup>7</sup>). The predominantly regional as well as rural origin of the immigrants further shows a town deeply rooted in its countryside.

### **A-2-Importance of the textile-printing industry for the urban economy and the hinterland**

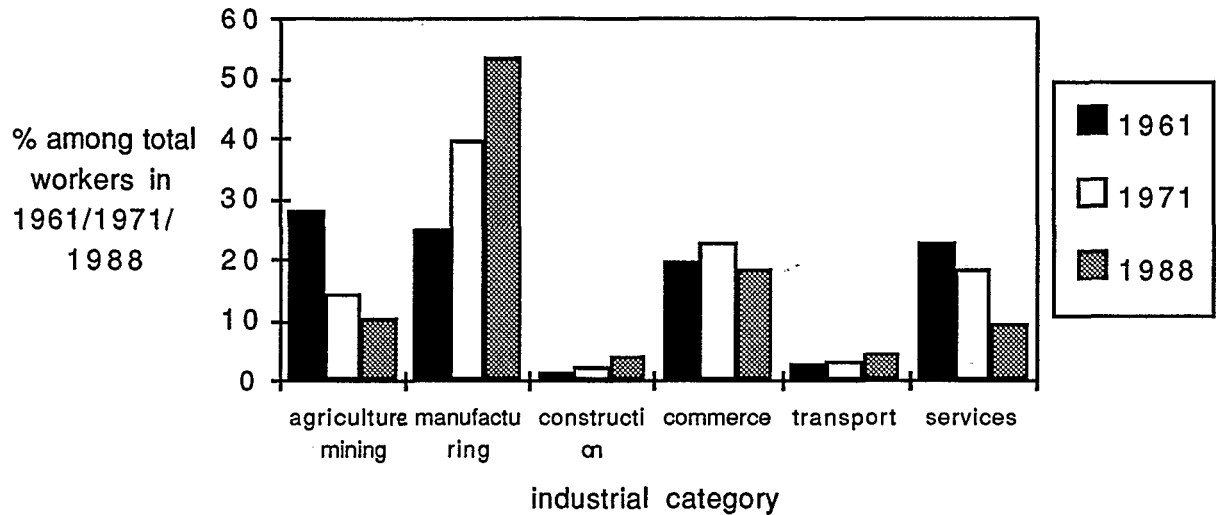
The development of the textile-printing industry in Jetpur is also reflected by the increasing share of workers employed in manufacturing and allied activities: from 25 per cent in 1961 to 40 per cent in 1971 and 53 per cent in 1988, mainly at the expense of agriculture and services (Fig. 1). More precisely, in 1988, 44 per cent of the workers residing in the urban agglomeration were concentrated in the textile-printing industry (including screen manufacturing and finishing units). However female workers were almost excluded from this sector: they represented only 2 per cent of the persons employed. Hence, the impact of the textile-printing industry becomes even more striking for male workers alone: this sector gives employment to almost half of them.

Furthermore, this urban-based industry also makes a major contribution to the livelihood of the people residing in the surrounding villages: in the sample of five villages located within 8 kilometres around Jetpur, 21 per cent of the total employed population, and 33 per cent of the male employed population, are engaged in this sector. Around half of the production workers employed in the textile-printing industry are commuters, mostly from the villages located within a radius of 25 kilometres around the industrial centre, and also from towns, even bigger than Jetpur, up to 32 kilometres away. From the economic viewpoint as well, in terms of the employment opportunities provided, Jetpur appears as a growth centre that is highly integrated with its hinterland.

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<sup>7</sup> This estimate is based on the 10 per cent household survey conducted in January-April 1988. The corresponding confidence interval at 95 per cent level is: 109 935 -118 862.

Fig. 1 - Percentage distribution of Jetpur's workers by industrial category in 1961, 1971 and 1988.



source of data : 1961 and 1971 : censuses  
1988 : 10 % household survey

Table 1: Labour force participation rates by caste and sex.  
Population of Jetpur urban agglomeration in 1988.

caste	males		females		males + females	
	%	nbr	%	nbr	%	nbr
Brahmin	55.8	353	4.0	299	32.1	652
Kshatriya	57.6	262	5.7	210	34.5	472
Vaniya	57.5	292	4.5	289	31.2	581
Kanbi	54.3	1381	11.4	1241	34.0	2622
Khatri	52.0	442	2.5	408	28.2	850
other Hindu nonBC	58.2	834	5.8	761	33.2	1595
Hindu OBC	57.3	1479	12.0	1317	35.9	2796
Muslim non OBC	61.4	280	3.3	244	34.4	524
Muslim OBC	56.2	564	5.1	531	31.4	1095
S.C.	52.0	377	17.6	330	35.9	707
Christian, Sikh	n.c.	12	n.c.	15	n.c.	27
total	56.1	6276	8.7	5645	33.6	11921
Chi-square	13.35809		152.78617		28.82447	
significance	0.2043		0.0000		0.0000	

OBC : other backward castes/classes of Gujarat ; S.C. : scheduled castes.  
n.c. : percentage not computed (less than 30 observations)  
nbr of missing observations = 4  
source : 10 % household survey - 1988

## **B - CASTE AS A FACTOR IN THE SEGMENTATION OF THE URBAN LABOUR MARKET**

This section examines the structure of the urban labour market with the aim of highlighting inter-relationships between caste and labour supply, and between caste and employment characteristics including occupation and labour status<sup>8</sup>. The existence of possible caste-based discrimination in the access to jobs will be appraised against the process of selection based on educational qualifications.

### **B-1-Caste and female labour force participation**

To start with, caste or communal affiliation influences the labour supply, at least for females. Even if the overall labour force participation rate of the female population of Jetpur remains quite low (9 per cent as against 56 per cent for males), the caste group introduces significant variations<sup>9</sup> (Table 1). Economic as well as cultural factors interfere to create these disparities. For instance, economic necessity probably explains that the highest female labour force participation rate is registered for women from scheduled castes (18 per cent), followed by the group of Hindu backward classes (12 per cent). Yet the participation rate of Muslim women from backward classes is very low (5 per cent) and closer to that of other Muslim women (3 per cent): in this case, the religious identity appears to be more determinant than the proximity of economic conditions. The labour force participation rate of Kanbi women is also noticeable (11 per cent), due to their contribution to familial agriculture, the traditional activity of this caste.

The variations in female labour participation rates show how labour supply is influenced not only by the people's economic conditions but also by familial cultural characteristics like caste and religion.

### **B-2-Caste and occupational specialization**

The survival of occupational specialization based on caste has been shown in many empirical studies, though the process of industrialization and urbanization is acknowledged as a major agent of change undermining the traditional caste-based socio-

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<sup>8</sup> The statistical analysis is based on the data of the 10 per cent household survey of 1988 which covered a sample of 11925 individuals residing in the urban agglomeration, including 3741 employed persons.

<sup>9</sup> The variations in the male labour force participation rates according to the caste group are statistically not significant.



economic organization (GANDHI, 1983). The situation observed in Jetpur calls for a qualified appraisal.

The distribution of workers by occupation and by caste (Fig. 2) shows a relative degree of specialization<sup>10</sup> and in particular the survival of certain caste-based hereditary activities. For example, the Brahmins are over-represented in professional and clerical jobs, the Vaniyas (or Gujarati Baniyas) in business management, the Kanbis in agriculture, the Khatri among the entrepreneurs of the dyeing and printing industry, and the scheduled castes among the service workers.

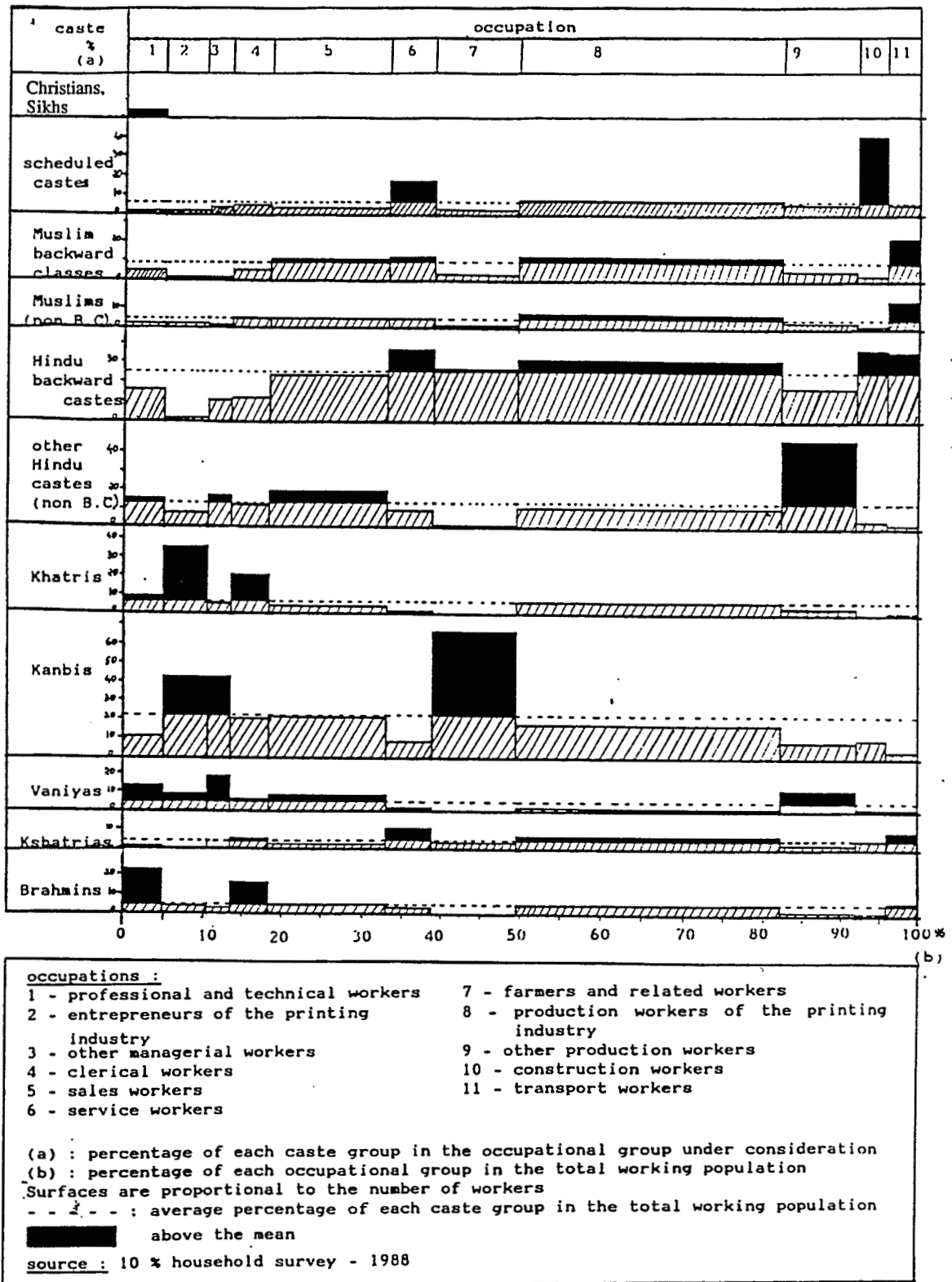
Another noticeable feature is the high concentration of scheduled castes and Hindu backward castes in construction work. These two groups account, respectively, for 40 per cent and 36 per cent of the construction workers, while their proportions in the total urban work force are 6 per cent and 25 per cent. It is worth noting that construction is the occupational category with the highest proportion of casual workers (65 per cent as against 26 per cent among the total urban work force) and with the longest periods of unemployment over the year. Thus, socially under-privileged sections tend to be more frequent in the occupational group which proves to be the most vulnerable in terms of lack of protection and irregularity of employment.

In the occupations where female workers are not marginal nor excluded, the tendencies towards caste-based specialization underlined above are true for male as well as female workers.

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<sup>10</sup> The Chi-square test of independence between the variables "caste" and "occupation" in the working population surveyed in 1988 shows an association significant at the 0.1 per cent level. In the classification by caste, the Khatri have been considered as a separate category, due to their basic role in the industrial development of Jetpur. Yet the Gujarati Khatri call themselves Brahma Kshatri, and they claim a Kshatriya origin, although in "The Tribes and Castes of Bombay Presidency" (1922) ENTHOVEN identified the meaning of their caste name as "weavers" and further typified them as "hereditary silk and cotton weavers".

Fig. 2: Percentage distribution of employed persons by caste in each occupation, for 100 male or female workers. Workers residing in Jetpur urban agglomeration in 1988



As regards the caste base of the new occupations generated by the industrialization process, two divergent patterns emerge between the entrepreneur-employers of the textile-printing industry and the industrial production workers.

The caste base of the entrepreneurs is the result of the competing forces between two major groups, the Khatri and the Kanbi. Today the Kanbi entrepreneurs, who belong to agriculturists' families, outnumber the Khatri who were the original craftsmen (42 per cent of the entrepreneurs as against 35 per cent respectively). However, the Khatri still constitute the relative majority group of the entrepreneurs running proper printing factories (44 per cent), whereas the Kanbis dominate the ancillary establishments (they account for 67 per cent of the entrepreneurs running screen manufacturing or sari finishing units). A third minority but significant group that should be mentioned is the Vaniyas, who account for 9 per cent of the entrepreneurs of the textile-printing industry. They are exclusively found at the head of printing factories, and have not penetrated the ancillary establishments. Needless to say, the proportion of each of these three castes among the entrepreneurs of this industry is remarkably higher than their respective proportion in the total working population<sup>11</sup>. The participation of every other caste group is marginal and their proportions to the total number of entrepreneurs are also significantly lower than their proportions to the total work force.

Thus, three main profiles emerge among the entrepreneurs in the Jetpur's textile-printing industry: the artisan-entrepreneurs, the ex-farmer entrepreneurs, and the merchant-entrepreneurs. They further illustrate three types of investment strategies deeply marked by the traditional caste-based occupational specialization which determined the possible routes of access to entrepreneurship : gradual transition in capital accumulation from family crafts to industrial production in the case of Khatri entrepreneurs, transfer of capital from agriculture to the urban industry for the Kanbis, and transfer of capital from familial textile trade to textile-printing industry for the Vaniyas.

In contrast with the three-polar caste base of the entrepreneurs, the industrial production workers belong to a wide span of various castes: no caste group or community is excluded, and furthermore, apart from the Vaniyas, no group is noticeably under-represented as compared to their proportion in the entire working population. For example, to take the two extremes of the traditional caste hierarchy, the Brahmins as well as the scheduled castes are represented in the industrial working class in proportion to

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<sup>11</sup> The difference observed in the sample population between the percentages of the caste under consideration among the entrepreneurs and among other workers is significant at the 0.1 per cent level for the Kanbis and the Khatri, and at the 1 per cent level for the Vaniyas (Chi-square tests).

their share in the total working population. Among the caste or community groups which are slightly over-represented as compared to their share in the total work force, are the Hindu backward castes and, to a lesser extent, the Muslims<sup>12</sup>. But it should be emphasized that the formation of the industrial working class transcends the traditional caste-based segregation pattern. However, as will be shown in another section, a refined analysis highlights more subtle forms of selection within the industrial labour force itself.

### **B-3- Caste and labour status**

The disparities of labour statuses, according to criteria of the autonomy, security and regularity of employment<sup>13</sup>, open another ground for possible discrimination among the workers on the basis of their inherited characteristics. In this way, the distribution by status in employment and that by nature of employment provide further insights into the significance of the caste factor in the segmentation of the labour market (Figs. 3 & 4).

There is first a marked contrast between, on the one hand, the Kanbis, Khatri and the Vaniyas who hold dominant positions in the local economy (especially in the printing industry) and, on the other hand, the scheduled castes, the backward classes and the Muslims who belong to the underprivileged sections of the population. In comparison with their respective share in the total work force, the former are clearly over-represented among the employers, while the latter play only a marginal part as employers but tend to be over-represented among wage earners in the private sector. Moreover, the scheduled castes and backward classes are more frequently subject to casual employment than the other caste groups, which is true also when the comparison is limited to the category of wage earners in the private sector. For example, 73 per cent of the scheduled caste wage earners, 66 per cent of the Muslim backward classes and 55 per cent of the Hindu backward castes are casual employees, as against 40 per cent or less of the private wage earners in every other caste group (Table 2).

The male workers belonging to underprivileged castes or communities (scheduled castes, other backward classes, Muslims) are also disadvantaged in terms of average annual number of days worked (Table 3). In addition, they combine two handicaps: fewer months of employment over the year, and fewer days worked per working month.

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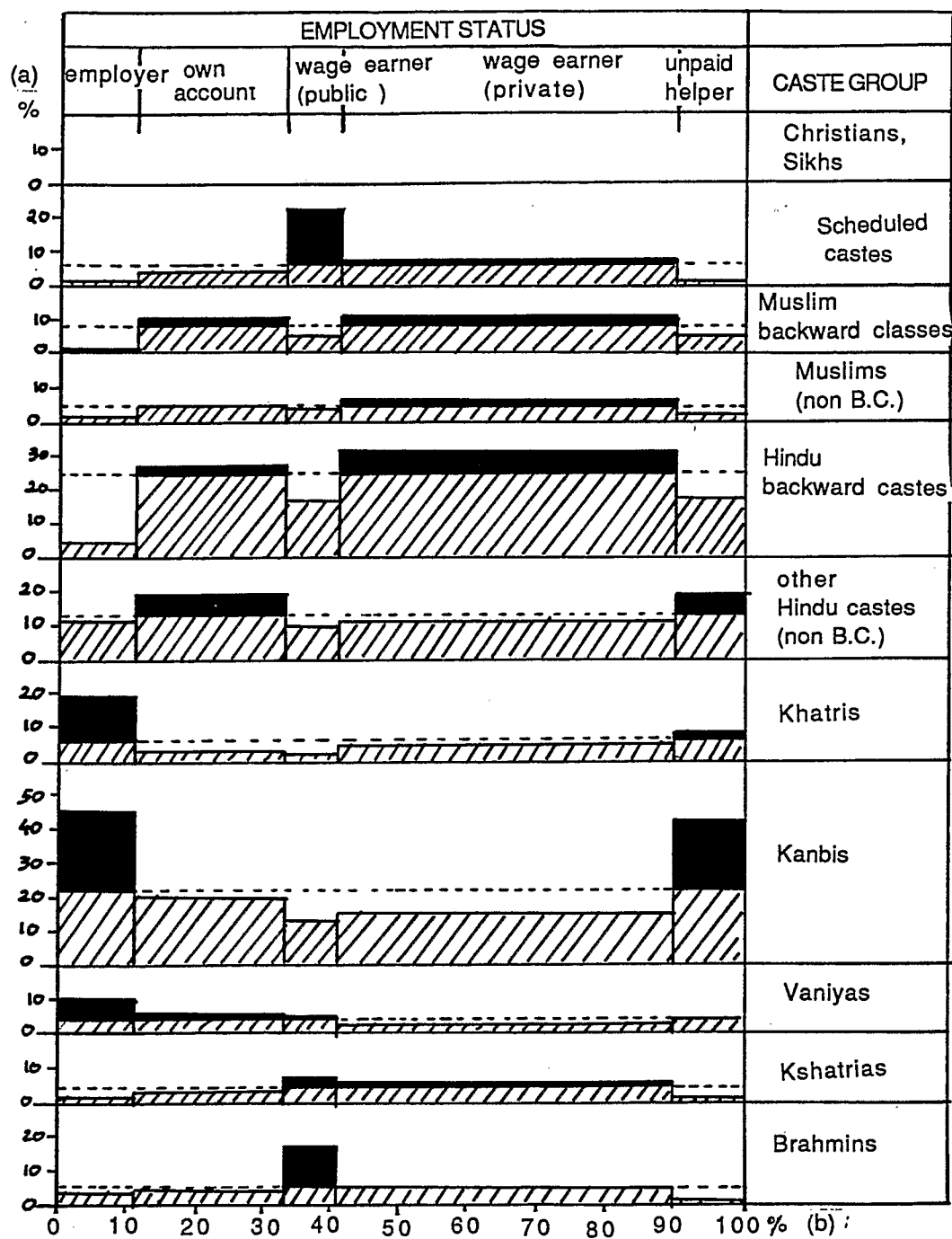
<sup>12</sup> The difference observed in the sample population between the percentages of the caste group under consideration among industrial production workers and among other workers is significant at the 0.1 per cent level for the Hindu backward castes, the Muslims (other than backward classes) and the Muslim backward classes separately (Chi-square tests).

<sup>13</sup> We follow here an approach to labour market analysis developed by HARRIS & al. (1990).

The pattern is different for female workers: what is remarkable is the Kanbis' annual number of days worked which is much below the average (174 as against 262). This can be explained by the traditional specialization of this caste in agriculture, and the mainly seasonal employment of women. Due to the relatively high contribution of female labour in this caste, this specialization also shows up in the remarkable participation of Kanbis as temporary or seasonal workers and as unpaid helpers.

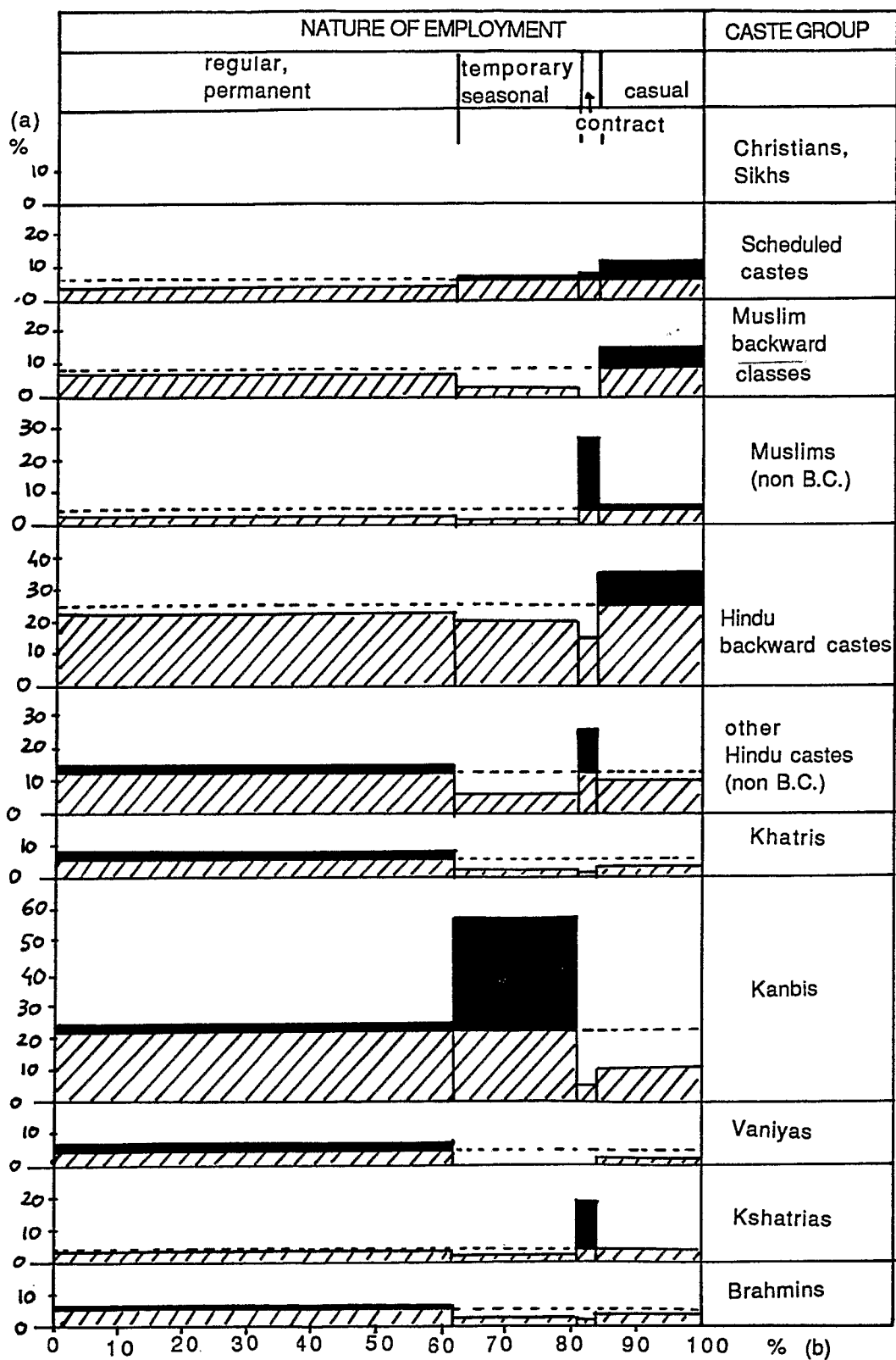
Among employees in the public sector, two statutorily opposite castes are over-represented in proportion to their respective share in the working population (for males as well as for females): the Brahmins and the scheduled castes. But, while the former more often perform qualified professional or clerical jobs, the latter are mainly confined to unskilled service work or construction work.

Fig 3: Percentage distribution of employed persons by caste in employment status for 100 male or female workers. Workers residing in Jetpur urban agglomeration in 1988.



(a) : percentage of each caste group in the category of employment status under consideration  
 (b) : percentage of each category of employment status among total workers  
 Surfaces are proportional to the number of workers  
 ----- : average percentage of each caste group among total workers  
 ■ : above the mean  
 source : 10 % household survey - 1988

Fig 4: Percentage distribution of employed persons by caste in each nature of employment, for 100 male or female workers. Workers residing in Jetpur urban agglomeration in 1988.



(a) : percentage of each caste group in the category of nature of employment under consideration  
 (b) : percentage of each category of nature of employment among total workers  
 Surfaces are proportional to the number of workers  
 ----- : average percentage of each caste group among total workers  
 ■ : above the mean  
 source : 10 % household survey - 1988

Table 2: Percentage distribution of wage earners in private sector by nature of employment for each caste group. Workers residing in Jetpur urban agglomeration in 1988.

employ. nature	regular	temporary	contract	casual	total	total
Brahmin	53.8	4.3	2.2	39.8	100.0	93
Kshatriya	42.5	0.9	21.7	34.9	100.0	106
Vaniya	82.4	0.0	0.0	17.6	100.0	51
Kanbi	57.2	8.1	2.4	32.3	100.0	297
Khatri	62.6	3.3	1.1	33.0	100.0	91
O Hindu non BC	39.2	5.2	16.0	39.6	100.0	212
Hindu OBC	32.9	9.0	3.0	55.0	100.0	598
Muslim non BC	28.2	1.7	29.9	40.2	100.0	117
Muslim OBC	31.7	2.4	0.0	65.9	100.0	208
S.C.	13.7	5.8	7.2	73.4	100.0	139
Christ. Sikh					n.c.	9
total	40.1	5.8	6.8	47.3	100.0	1921
nbr of observ.	770	112	130	909	1921	////////

Chi-square = 417.57192 ; significance = 0.0000  
missing observation = 1  
n.c. : percentages not computed (less than 30 observations)  
source : 10 % household survey - 1988

Table 3: Average number of work-days during the reference year (1987) by caste group and sex, among the employed. Workers residing in Jetpur urban agglomeration in 1988.

caste group	males			females			total workers		
	mean	std dev	cases	mean	std dev	cases	mean	std dev	cases
Brahmin	318	82	184	320	93	12	318	83	196
Kshatryia	302	86	145	275	138	10	300	90	155
Vanyia	351	41	162	360	0	10	351	40	172
Kanbi	306	97	722	174	120	135	285	112	857
Khatri	336	62	217	345	42	8	336	61	225
O Hindu non BC	319	81	459	297	105	40	317	83	499
Hindu OBC	289	99	777	301	102	138	291	99	915
Muslim non BC	289	93	155	279	125	5	289	94	160
Muslim OBC	274	99	300	308	98	22	276	99	322
S.C.	274	97	183	285	108	43	276	99	226
Christ, Sikh	334	68	7	360	0	7	347	48	14
total	303	92	3311	262	123	430	298	97	3741
F	16.9150 ; sign = 0.0000			14.1036 sign = 0.0000			17.5131 ; sign = 0.0000		

F = between groups mean square/within group mean square  
missing observation = 1  
The workers who took up their first job or changed for a new job during the reference year (1987) have been excluded (i.e. 199 cases out of 3942 employed workers).  
source : 10 % household survey - 1988.



#### **B-4- Caste-based discrimination or selection based on educational qualifications**

The characteristics of the employment pattern by caste shows the survival of some traditional occupational specializations as well as the mutual strengthening of certain social and economic disparities. To be in a position to conclude whether this reveals the existence of caste-based discrimination in the access to jobs, it is necessary first to examine the effect of education in this process of selection. As expected, the different occupational and employment categories tend to be associated with certain educational qualifications. The workers' level of education also shows major variations according to caste or community. The illiteracy ratio is marginal among Brahmins, Vanyias and Khatri (less than 2 per cent for male workers) and highest among Hindu backward castes and scheduled castes (38 per cent and 33 per cent respectively for male workers, 84 per cent and 79 per cent for female workers). Conversely, the proportion of workers who attended college or above is highest among Vanyias, Brahmins and Khatri (29 per cent, 22 per cent and 16 per cent respectively, as against 8 per cent for all workers). Thus, the over-representation (in proportion to their respective share in the total work force) of Brahmins and Vanyias among professional and technical workers, and of Brahmins and Khatri among clerical workers could be explained by their better educational qualifications, corresponding to the requirements of these jobs. On the other hand, the under-representation of scheduled castes and Hindu backward castes among those occupational groups and their over-representation among unskilled occupational categories like service workers and construction workers are in accordance with the low educational qualifications of these castes.

However some caste-based differentiations persist in the employment pattern even after the major effects of the educational structure by caste are neutralized. This can be seen by examining separately the employment structure of the workers who have attended secondary school or above, and for whom the span of possible occupations should be more open. Similar tendencies of over- and under-representation are still observable, especially as regards the castes and occupational groups examined above. Moreover the gap between the rates of participation of each caste in the same occupational group is not necessarily reduced. For instance, among the workers who attended secondary school or above, 26 per cent of the Brahmins are professional or technical workers as against only 4 per cent of scheduled castes, while the corresponding proportions among total workers (all educational levels included) are 22 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. Further, 22 per cent of the Brahmins with secondary or higher education are clerical workers, as

against 8 per cent of Hindu backward castes, while the corresponding proportions among total workers are 16 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. On the other hand, 9 per cent of the scheduled caste workers with secondary or higher level of education are still construction workers, whereas this occupational group account for only 1 per cent of all workers with the same level of education.

Turning to the employment status, educated workers from backward castes and scheduled castes are seldom employers (less than 7 per cent among those with secondary or higher level of education, as against 18 per cent of all workers with the same level of education). Educational credentials do not compensate for the lack of financial capital, nor for the lack of the "right connections" or a network of relations.

Lastly, scheduled castes and backward castes, even when equipped with secondary or higher education, remain the most affected by casual employment. In particular, 43 per cent of scheduled caste workers and 26 per cent of the Hindu backward caste workers with this level of education are casual labour, as against 13 per cent on average for workers with the same level of education .

In short, the differences of educational qualification across various castes tend to strengthen the segmentation of the labour force along caste lines, rather than explain it. Not only do the low-status castes have a limited access to education and especially higher education, which hence reduces the span of the possible jobs, but the educated workers belonging to those castes tend also to be discriminated against in the access to more regular and qualified jobs.

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Despite industrialization and important in-migration which have altered the ascriptive socio-cultural organization of occupations, the structure of the Jetpur's labour market is still marked by notable caste-based differentiation. Moreover, low-caste workers tend to be associated with more irregular and unprotected jobs. As might be expected, educational qualifications play a part in the access to the different types of jobs and labour statuses. However, this factor does not explain all the facets of the process of the segmentation of the labour force.

## C- INDUSTRIAL WORKERS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CASTE

The first section of this paper has demonstrated the role of the textile-printing industry in employment generation for the population residing in the urban agglomeration and that of the surrounding areas. The present section focuses on the hired industrial workers. In addition to its numerical weight, this specific segment of the labour force proves to be of particular interest in order to study the impact of industrialization on the significance of caste among the working class.

Does common work experience in the factory, in a universe governed by the same economic rationality, contribute to the weakening of traditional communal and caste-based barriers? Are workers subjected to the same laws of enterprise in a position to form a united working class? These questions are in line with some of the recurrent themes in research on the working class in India<sup>14</sup>; here they will allow us to examine the role of industrial work in the formation of a working class, faced with the survival - or revival - of communal and caste-based cleavages<sup>15</sup>.

### C-1- Nature of employment in the textile-printing industry

In order to understand better the working conditions and the ground for possible labour division, a sketch of the nature of employment in the Jetpur's textile-printing industry is in order.

In this small-scale industry, the hired labour force consists mainly of manual workers who acquire their skills in the factory itself, whereas office workers account only for 7 per cent of the total industrial workers. The main characteristics of employment in the Jetpur's textile industry are its precariousness and irregularity. Most of the production workers are recruited on a daily basis and paid according to piecework wage system, hence they have absolutely no security of employment. Receiving a regular monthly salary remains the "privilege" of the office workers and, among the manual workers, of the dyers (8 per cent of the industrial workers) who prepare the solutions of dyestuff and thus perform the most strategic and skilled operation in the process of production. However, none of these salaried workers has the status of permanent and protected

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<sup>14</sup> In addition to the authors mentioned above in note 8, see also: HEUZE (1982), PANJWANI (1984), and the comprehensive bibliographical review of HEUZE and SELIM (1991).

<sup>15</sup> This section draws partly on the last section of a paper published in French: see DUPONT, 1991-b.

employees: they are deprived of the various employment benefits attached to this status, and are subject to dismissal, even after many years of employment in the same establishment.

The considerable manpower requirements in the Jetpur's textile-printing industry entailed an intermixing of communities and castes. Hence, in a previous section, we have shown that the caste and community base of the industrial working class considered as a whole was generally open, without marked discrimination. Nevertheless, the significance of community and caste is certainly not excluded from the universe of industrial labour. Their role in job access routes deserves mention.

### C-2- Access to industrial jobs

To find a job either as an apprentice or as a trained worker, most of the workers benefited from contacts with, or an introduction from, persons already employed in this industry. Moreover, the persons who provided support were also often from the same caste, and/or from the same village or state of origin, or otherwise neighbours or acquaintances, or simply relatives and in-laws.

Among those who did not get any support to find a job in the textile-printing industry, some went on their own to meet the factory managers. Others went to the *gujari*, which is a local labour market in the strict sense of the word, a place where workers in search of employment gather every morning, waiting for employers - or their intermediaries - to recruit them. Yet, the existence of such a labour market does not guarantee an entirely open access to employment in the textile-printing industry. Preferences or discrimination based on community or caste cannot be excluded. More generally, certain entrepreneurs show a pronounced preference for the recruitment of workers belonging to their caste in order to be assured of more loyalty from their employees. The volume of labour required however, limits the extent of such a practice.

To sum up, entry into the industrial labour market in Jetpur relies on various networks of social relations. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of many other studies on industrial labour market in India, all of which underline the significance of personal contacts in job access routes<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> To mention only a few of them, see for example: BREMAN (1980), DESHPANDE (1979), HEUZE (1987), HOLMSTROM (1984), KLAAS VAN DER VEEN (1979), NATHAN (1987).

Furthermore, beyond the wide range of castes among which industrial workers are recruited, a refined analysis of the structure of the industrial labour force highlights more subtle forms of selection. The dyers, who form the production workers' aristocracy, due to their specific skills and their regular salary, are more often recruited among the castes which control the dyeing and printing industry. Thus, the Kanbis account for 35 per cent of the dyers as against 21 per cent of the total hired workers in this industry, and the Khatri for 18 per cent as against 6 per cent respectively; conversely the backward castes (Hindus or Muslims) represent only 25 per cent of the dyers, while they account for 39 per cent of the hired workers in the printing industry. The scheduled castes' workers are also subject to discrimination, tending to be confined to the most unskilled jobs: they account for 30 per cent of the miscellaneous unskilled industrial labourers while they represent only 5 per cent of the industrial workers<sup>17</sup>. These examples demonstrate the existence of the phenomena of the over- and under-representation of certain castes in certain specific occupations. Yet, there are no impassable caste barriers between the various categories of manual workers in the printing industry, and no caste has the monopoly of a specific occupation.

### C-3- Weakening of traditional barriers

In line with the above conclusion, our premise was that a common setting - the factory - combined with the urban environment should encourage inter-communal and inter-caste contacts and weaken the observance of traditional segregation, as compared to the stricter rules of the village society whence most of the industrial workers hail (as rural immigrants and commuters). This is confirmed to some extent, as proved by the interviews conducted in the villages of origin of the workers. To quote an example often reported by the respondents, drinking tea and chatting with fellows from another confessional community or another caste is a practice commonly accepted in town between workers.

Another more striking illustration is provided by the inter-state migrant workers housed on the factory premises. These are contract labourers recruited through intermediary agents, mainly from the densely populated northern States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and from the neighbouring State of Rajasthan. They are generally male adults and teenagers and come to Jetpur without their family, and the duration of their stay depends directly on the duration of their employment, which is usually temporary. The same team frequently includes workers with different confessional and caste affiliations, Muslims as

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<sup>17</sup> The percentages given in this paragraph pertain to the sub-sample of 1764 hired workers included in the 10 per cent household survey of 1988, whether those workers live in the Jetpur urban agglomeration or in the five nearby villages surveyed. The differences observed between the proportions under comparison are statistically significant at the 0.1 per cent level, according to the Chi-square tests of comparison.

well as Hindus, from high-ranking castes to Harijans. All the members of the team have to share the same living space, often limited to a corner of the workshop. Promiscuity on the work-site is thus accentuated by a lack of differentiation in the dwelling-place. Under specific conditions, namely in the context of work far from the place of origin, and hence far from the place of social reproduction, economic reproduction takes precedence over traditional social constraints. The requirements of industrial work tend to transcend - to a certain degree and temporarily - confessional and caste barriers, which is facilitated by geographical, social and cultural uprooting. Yet, as soon as these migrant workers manage partly to escape the totalitarian hold of the factory, by arranging for independent accommodation outside, they combine with members of the same community or caste group to share a dwelling: social logic recovers its own principles over the logic of strict economic survival. The share of inter-state migrants workers in the total labour force of the textile-printing industry is still limited to around 10 per cent. However, the significance of this type of recruitment is quite indicative of a new economic logic and its possible consequences on the weakening of traditional barriers.

Conversely, the employers sometimes activate casteism and communalism, in a more pernicious way than through preferential recruitment, in order to create divisions among the workers of their factory and prevent the formation of a movement of solidarity in the event of a conflict between a worker and the factory management.

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Under certain specific conditions employment in industrial labour turns out to be an instrument of social change. The considerable manpower requirements entail an intermixing of communities and castes, and common work experience in the factory contributes to some extent to the weakening of communal and caste barriers. However, though weakened, the traditional cleavages surface in more subtle forms and are likely to be revived. Further, access to industrial jobs is not entirely open, it still relies on a network of relations, especially on kinship and caste-based solidarities. In that sense, employment in the industrial sector reproduces and reinforces traditional social segregation.

But caste is certainly not the only factor of fragmentation in the industrial labour force. As shown in another paper (DUPONT, 1991-b), new forms of segmentation have been also generated by the working conditions associated with the capitalist form of industrial development. These include the near exclusion of the female labour force, compartmentalization between the different operations of the production process,

competition and rivalries between workers as a result of insecurity in employment, segregation and increased exploitation of inter-state migrant workers due to their specific mode of recruitment as contract labourers housed in the factories, and the disadvantages suffered by commuting workers in the competition for jobs in a situation of employment crisis. All these factors of division are in conflict with the formation of a united working class.

## SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

This paper has investigated the impact of industrialization and urbanization on the role of caste in the structuring of the urban labour market and in job access. This empirical assessment is based on in-depth surveys conducted in a middle-sized industrial town in Western India, namely Jetpur, which specializes in textile-printing.

The origin of this industry in Jetpur exemplifies the transition from family crafts to industrial production by the caste of artisans traditionally engaged in dyeing and printing work. The entrepreneurial dynamics of this industry are then marked by the traditional caste-based occupational specialization which determined the possible routes of access to entrepreneurship: extension of the familial business from textile trade to manufacturing by entrepreneurs from merchant castes, and transfer of capital from agriculture to the urban industry by entrepreneurs from the traditional caste of cultivators.

In contrast, the caste base of the hired labour force of the printing industry is generally open, due to its considerable manpower requirements. To some extent, the intermixing of communities and castes in the factories contributes to the weakening of traditional social segregation. However, more subtle forms of discrimination along caste lines appear, and casteism and communalism are likely to be revived. Further, social and familial networks and caste-based solidarities play a strategic role in the access to industrial jobs and thus reproduce traditional segmentation.

More generally, the structure of the urban labour market in Jetpur is still marked by caste-based differentiations. Caste and religious affiliations influence the female labour force participation rate. A relative degree of occupational specialization by caste and the survival of certain ascriptive hereditary activities are also notable. Furthermore, low-caste workers tend to be employed in more irregular and unprotected jobs, and they seldom accede to the status of employer. Differential access to education according to caste strengthens such discrimination rather than explains it.

Thus, the process of small-scale industrialization which has taken place in the middle-sized town under study has not led to a more equalitarian pattern of access to jobs, neither has it achieved the economic advancement of the socially under-privileged sections of the population.

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