

IMPLICATIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE FOR EMPLOYMENT POLICY IN INDIA

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A man's occupation is not merely a source of his income; it influences his way of living, interests and attitudes, aspirations and status. What is more, it even shapes the future and careers of his dependents. The life chances of persons in higher occupations are better than those of persons in lower occupations. Without doubt, higher occupations are more desirable than lower ones.

It is a well established fact that as socio-economic conditions of a society improve the proportion of occupations of higher prestige also goes on increasing. In the Western countries in general which have shown rapid socio-economic growth in the past, the proportions of occupations of higher prestige are on the whole increasing at the cost of occupations of lower prestige. For instance, in the United States of America the proportion of unskilled male workers diminished from 34.2 per cent in 1910 to 26.1 per cent in 1940, and the same trend has been continuing ever since.¹ According to the study of occupations conducted by the National Opinion Research Centre in 1947, the workers in the lower-prestige occupations such as (1) domestic service workers, (2) protective service workers, (3) service workers, other than domestic and protective, (4) farm labourers and foremen, and (5) labourers (except farm) together formed only 18 per cent of the total working force.² An increase in the proportion of non-manual and professional workers at the expense of manual workers in recent years has been reported from many other countries.³

In India so far much attention has not been given to the prestige aspect of occupations. The Census of India, which is our main source of information on the subject, classifies occupations according to livelihood classes or industries and there is no way of knowing the prestige gradation of occupations in each industry. So the trend of prestige categories of occupations

¹ Foote Nelson N. & Hatt Paul K., "Social Mobility and Economic Advancement" in *American Economic Review*, Vol. XLIII, May 1953, (Papers and Proceedings of the 65th Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association), pp. 371-72.

² North Cecil C. & Hatt Paul K., "Jobs and Occupations: A Popular Evaluation" in *Class, Status and Power*, eds. Bendix R. and Lippset S. M., Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1954, p. 422.

³ Report on the "Fourth Session of the Advisory Committee on Salaried Employees and Professional Workers" in *Industry and Labour*, Vol. 19, No. 1, January 1958, pp. 2-27.