

INTRODUCTION

Social Class in Urban India: Essays on Cognitions and Structures is a set of articles based on field research conducted in metropolitan Madras in 1966. Most of the articles were previously published between 1981 and 1984 in journals which originate in Canada, India, The Netherlands, and the United States. The articles which were not previously published serve to make our discussion of social class more comprehensive and coherent than it would be without their inclusion.

The previously published articles are reproduced herein without any substantive revisions. This is necessary in order to keep down the costs of their reproduction. Consequently, discussions pertaining to the research site—metropolitan Madras—and methodology are repeated, sometimes verbatim, in some essays. Once the reader has read the first essay and has become acquainted with the characteristics of the research site and the methodology (e.g., sampling, unstructured interviews), he or she may omit discussions of these topics when they appear in later essays. The reader will also note that titles of essays will variously refer to “South India”, “Urban India”, and “Urban South India”. In every instance, the site is metropolitan Madras for collecting data. Such variations in titles do not have any special rationale except that as we thought about the findings of a particular essay they sometimes seemed applicable to a much larger universe than the one from which our sample came.

The field research on which this book is based was made possible by the generosity and assistance of several persons and organizations. First, in temporal sequence, there was the Fulbright-Hayes Scholarly Exchange Program which awarded a grant and assigned us to Madras University for the academic year 1965–1966 for the purposes of a) lecturing on sociology and b) assisting the faculty in founding a Department of Sociology and in founding the interdisciplinary, graduate Program in Social Science. The research was therefore done as a supplement to the official assignment but was done with the enthusiastic approval of Madras University, and the approval and modest financial support of the U.S. Educational Foundation in India which administers the Fulbright-Hayes Program in India.

It was through the university that we were able to find the people who came to constitute our small research staff. We wish to thank them for the enthusiasm, diligence, and care with which they always did their tasks. Foremost among them was A. Gopalakrishna, then a research fellow in anthropology at Madras University, who contributed to the for-

mulation and pre-testing of the interview-schedule, interviewed several dozens of persons, and checked the completed schedules. His knowledge of anthropology and of both the Telegu and Tamil communities and languages were assets to the research. Moreover, he was a companion and friend always lending encouragement to a continued effort whenever the research wasn't going as well as desired. First-rate interviews were also done by Kawal Nain Anand, Vimala Govindaraj, Dorothy Manickam, and A.J. Rupchand. The other member of this staff, Jeyaseelie (Jessie) Manickam, did a fine job of typing, scheduling appointments, and managing our modest office at the university.

Some of the interviews were done at the place of employment of the interviewee. These interviews required the prior permission of employers and union representatives. We wish therefore to express our thanks to the many employers and union officials who gave such permission and provided other assistance to us. A special note of thanks is owed Mr. K. Gurumurti, then president of the Workers and Staff Union of Simpson and Company, whose early endorsement of the research positively influenced the cooperation of some employers, workers, and union officials. We reserve our greatest thanks to the hundreds of persons who consented to be interviewed and who talked so willingly and freely about their conceptions of self, social class, and social relations. In interviewing some of them, we had the opportunity to gain a first-hand knowledge of their modes of living and working and of their social world in general. Only a part of this knowledge has found its way into the pages of this book. Much of it has served simply to make the researchers more thoroughly educated and deeply humane persons.