

**CASTE CONSIDERED UNDER ITS  
MORAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS  
ASPECTS: THE LE BAS PRIZE ESSAY  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE FOR THE YEAR 1860**

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Caste Considered under Its Moral, Social, and Religious Aspects: The Le Bas Prize Essay in the University of Cambridge for the Year 1860 by Arthur J. Patterson

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**ARTHUR J. PATTERSON**

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# C A S T E

CONSIDERED UNDER

ITS MORAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS ASPECTS.

THE LE BAS PRIZE ESSAY IN THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CAMBRIDGE FOR THE YEAR 1860.

BY

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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A LARGE number of Members of the Civil Service of India who were students at the East India College at Haileybury at various intervals during the thirty years that the Rev. C. W. LE BAS, M.A., formerly Fellow of Trinity College, was connected with that Institution, desirous of testifying their regard for Mr. LE BAS, and of perpetuating the memory of his services, raised a Fund which they offered to the University of Cambridge for founding an annual Prize, to be called, in honour of Mr. LE BAS, The *Le Bas Prize*, for the best English Essay on a subject of General Literature, such subject to be occasionally chosen with reference to the history, institutions, and probable destinies and prospects of the Anglo-Indian Empire.

The Prize is subject to the following Regulations, confirmed by Grace of the Senate, Nov. 22, 1848 :—

1. That the LE BAS Prize shall consist of the annual interest of the above-mentioned Fund, the

Essay being published at the expense of the successful Candidate.

2. That the Candidates for the Prize shall be, at the time when the subject is given out, Bachelors of Arts under the standing of M. A. ; or Students in Civil Law or Medicine of not less than four or more than seven years' standing, not being graduates in either faculty, but having kept the exercises necessary for the degree of Bachelor of Law or Medicine.

“3. That the subject for the Essay shall be selected, and the Prize adjudicated, by the Vice-Chancellor, and two other members of the Senate, to be nominated by the Vice-Chancellor, and approved by the Senate, at the first Congregation after the tenth day of October in each year.

“4. That the subject shall be given out in the week preceding the division of the Michaelmas Term in each year, and the Essays sent in before the end of the next ensuing Easter Term.”

The subject for the Essay for 1860 was—

Caste considered under its Moral, Social, and Religious Aspects.

## PREFACE.

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THE singular institution of Indian *caste* has ever, from the time of the Greek historians and geographers to the present day, attracted the attention of all who have written upon the subject of India. It is something so exclusively Indian that they could not do otherwise. The institution was so alien, in form at least, to European ideas; it prevailed over so vast a portion of the globe, and had existed from so ancient a date; that forced as they were to study it in detail, the first accounts transmitted to Europe could not but be imperfect. Even after India had come into the possession of an European nation, and had been traversed in every direction by Europeans, the



theories and judgments formed of its character, of its merits and demerits, of its past effects and future destiny, were obscure and contradictory. This must be partly attributed to hasty generalization and a want of patient observation and collection of undoubted facts. They were often too apt to forget that the institution prevailed over a territory two-thirds the size of Europe, in countries as dissimilar in language, race, manners, and religion, as Portugal and Sweden, among populations as unequal in civilization as the citizens of Paris and the peasantry of Poland; and that of this vast territory they were acquainted with but a small portion, which they could only observe during the scanty leisure of an active life. Their errors are to be further explained by the imperfect knowledge which the most learned in Europe had of Indian history. That history is still obscure and scanty. Only a small portion of Indian literature is open to any but Oriental scholars; nor is the whole accessible even to them. Still year by year is the veil gradually removed from the face of this

historic Isis. The history of Indian institutions becomes every day fuller and clearer.

Among these institutions Caste presents peculiar difficulties. The questions, to which it gives rise, are at once theoretical and practical. An idea current in the minds of more than a hundred millions of human beings, it cannot be strictly said to be purely religious, social, or political, yet it is complicated with ideas of religion, politics, and social distinctions. Traditional prejudices affect the minds both of Europeans and of Hindus in its discussion. Add to this an ambiguity of character that might well puzzle the first observers. It means sometimes so little, sometimes so much. It represents distinctions that are reasonable and apparent, and others that are purely factitious. It separates porters that bear burdens on their heads from palankeen-bearers that bear them on their shoulders; it separates the member of a civilized community from a savage. The popular Hindu mind conceives Caste to be an inseparable attribute of humanity. The ideal outcaste may be considered

as one who belongs to a caste of which he is the only member. Not that such beings actually exist in India any more than in any other part of the world. The Parsees are considered as a caste, so are the Jews; and, from observing the habits of their European masters, natives have come to the conclusion that even among themselves the *Sahib logue* are not ignorant of the distinctions of caste.

As this institution was peculiar to India, Europeans, struck with its strangeness, found or thought that they had found therein the source of other points of difference between Indian civilization and that in which they had themselves been reared. In so doing, they attributed to it an importance greater than it really possessed. In the following essay many of these supposed results of caste will be shown to prevail in other countries ignorant of that institution, but in some other respects circumstanced similarly to India.

In treating the subject of this essay, I have thought it best to give a sketch of the history