

Changing Status of Scheduled Castes

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It has been argued, among others by F C Bailey ('Caste and the Economic Frontier'), that while the social status of most castes may change in response to change in their socio economic conditions, that of the Brahmins at the top and the Scheduled Castes at the bottom of the caste hierarchy is fixed. It follows that whatever the change in occupations or economic standards, the Brahmins cannot come down in social estimation and the Scheduled Castes cannot rise.

However, a re-examination of Bailey's own data and evidence from other studies shows that this may not be true. An attempt is made here to show that the causal connect on between social status and socio-economic conditions holds good even in the case of Scheduled Castes.

"DECENT studies of caste have established the close correlation between social status usually referred to as ritual status of caste groups and their socioeconomic conditions like occupations, wealth, level of living and so on. The higher the socio-economic conditions of a group, the higher is its social status in the caste hierarchy. F G Bailey, in his book on Caste and the Economic Frontier, has demonstrated the causal connection between these variables so that social status of a group is always dependent upon its economic condition which latter may be regarded as the independent variable. Therefore, it follows that in order to improve the social status of a group it is necessary first of all to improve its economic conditions or more generally speaking, its socio-economic conditions.

The Scheduled Castes are characterised by a low, in fact the lowest, social or ritual status in the caste hierarchy, as well as by low socio-economic conditions. The above hypotheses suggest that an improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes would automatically raise their social status. But the discussions of social scientists do not assure us on this point. For, it is argued, by Baily for instance, that while the social status of most of the castes may undergo change according to changes in their socio-economic conditions, that of Brahmins at the top and Scheduled Castes at the bottom of the caste hierarchy is fixed. Whatever the change, the Brahmins cannot come down in the social estimation of the people and the Scheduled castes cannot rise. This is presumably because the Brahmins are associated with the most sacred and highly respected occupation of priesthood and the Scheduled castes

with the unclean and lowly occupations of sweeping, cobbling, disposal of carcasses etc. If this were so there is every reason for the Scheduled castes and their well-wishers to despair. But a re-examination of Baily's own data and evidence from other studies shows that there is *no* cause of despair.

Improvement in Economic Condition

As a result of a large number of factors including, primarily, the measures taken by the Government, there has been a noticeable improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes, it may take several generations for Scheduled Castes to come up to the level of the higher castes. But studies of Indian communities have shown that in most cases the educational, occupational and economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes are better than those of "other backward classes" who in point of social status are considered to be higher than the former. It is, therefore, instructive to see whether there has been a corresponding improvement in the social status of the Scheduled Castes,

While there have been a great number of studies about the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes, studies about their social status have been very few and also inadequately conducted, owing perhaps to the vague nature of the subject matter. Such as they are, they provide significant insights into the changing character of the social status of the Scheduled Castes.

In his study, referred to above, of a village in Orissa, Bailey found that the Scheduled Caste termed Boad Outcastes, had made considerable progress in their economic condition. But they had not risen correspondingly in the social estimation of the villagers. Hence Bailey came

to the conclusion that in the case of Scheduled Castes the causal connection between caste status and economic status does not hold good.

The social status of a caste is its ranking in the caste hierarchy by its own members as well as by members of other castes. The correlation and causal connection between social status and socio-economic condition would imply that with the relative improvement in the socio-economic conditions of a group its relative ranking in the caste hierarchy would also rise. If this relationship did not hold good in the case of Boad Outcastes, an improvement in their economic conditions would not have brought about any change in the ranking of that group by its own members as well as by others. But the evidence shows (hat while the other castes did not give a higher status to the Boad Outcastes in spite of their relatively higher economic condition, the latter ranked themselves higher. Thus the social status of the Bond Outcastes in their own eyes had changed in conformity with a change in their economic condition. Therefore, the correlation between social status and economic condition holds good even in the case of Boad Outcastes, although in a partial manner.

Social Tensions : Their Meaning

For the validity of the correlation between social status and socio-economic conditions it is not necessary to show that the two variables invariably change simultaneously. It is possible that while the socio-economic conditions of a group change, certain factors may inhibit the corresponding change in its social status. But according to one of the postulates of social change, uneven change in the correlated variables is always accompanied by social opposition and tension. In the case

of the Boad Outcastes, the change in the variables of social status and economic condition were uneven and they were in fact accompanied by opposition between the Boad Outcastes and the other castes in the village. Baily has dealt with this point in some detail and has pointed out that the Boad Outcastes were trying to sever themselves from the village social structure. The existence of opposition and tension between the Boad Outcastes and the others shows that the social status of the former was responding to a change in their economic condition.

The present author tried to study the relationship between social status and occupational status of Scheduled Castes in an investigation covering three different villages of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Mysore States. In the Gujarat and the Mysore villages the occupational status of the Scheduled Castes was the lowest in their respective villages. They still followed their traditional lowly occupations of cobbling, sweeping and the disposal of carcasses. Correspondingly in the social evaluation of the villagers too they were ranked the lowest. Not only were they so ranked by the other castes but even by themselves. Their relations with the other castes were quite cordial.

Higher than Other Castes

But the situation was different in the Maharashtra village. There the occupational status of Scheduled Castes was higher than that of some other castes in the village. For instance, while the occupational scores for the village as a whole and for the Bhil, Rajput and Vaddar Castes' were 521, 685, 700 and 700 respectively that for the Scheduled Caste of Mahar was 537, the lower score indicating a higher occupational status. The Mahar had also given up their traditional unclean occupations. All this did bring about some change in the attitude of the villagers towards the social status of the Mahar. Although some of the villagers still graded the Mahar lowest in the caste hierarchy, most of them ranked the Mahar either equal to or higher than the Vaddar. All the same the rise of the Mahar in the social estimation of the villagers was not quite commensurate with

the improvement in their occupational status.

The effect of the improvement in their occupational status on the Mahars themselves had been phenomena). They were aware that their improved occupational status had not received adequate social recognition on the part of others and consequently as in the case of the Boad Outcastes they too had reacted by trying to secede from the village social structure. This they had done by renouncing the Hindu religion and adopting Buddhism. When asked to rank the various caste groups in the village, they alone as a group refused to do so on the plea that all groups were equal in prestige. This was no doubt an unrealistic stand — and the Mahars themselves were aware of it in their heart of hearts — but was the result of the tension existing between them and the higher castes.

Slow Change

On the whole it is clear that as a consequence of the change in their occupational status the social status of the Mahar had begun to undergo a change. But since the change in their social status was not commensurate with that in their occupational status, social opposition and tension has arisen in their relations with the other castes.

It is therefore, not necessary to hypothesise that the social positions of the Brahmins and the Scheduled Castes are rigidly fixed at the opposite extremes of the caste hierarchy. No evidence has been adduced so far to prove the fixed position of Brahmins although Brahmins have always been ranked the highest in the caste hierarchy by social scientists and others on a priori grounds. In practice the Brahmins are not given the highest status by virtue of their association with the occupation of priesthood, for the priest in India is no longer rated the highest in social prestige.² At any rate most Brahmins no longer follow their traditional occupations. Wherever Brahmins are ranked topmost in the caste hierarchy, it is because of the prestige of the occupations which they now follow. There are instances where Brahmins as a group are superseded in their occupational status by other groups and in such cases the Brah-

mins are in fact ranked lower in conformity with their occupational status.³

Impact of Tradition

However, the studies on social grading of occupations in India show that the traditional occupations of the Scheduled castes are still ranked the lowest. A significant proportion of the members of these castes still follow their traditional occupations. Consequently even when some of the members have secured higher occupations, the community at large in the beginning is apt to evaluate the Scheduled Castes in terms of the prestige of their traditional occupations rather than that of the new ones. Even when the Scheduled Castes completely give up their traditional occupations it will take quite some time for people to forget their past association with those occupations. Thus there is likely to be an element of time lag in the change of social status of the Scheduled Castes in response to a change in their occupational status. The association of the Scheduled Castes with the lowest types of occupations would appear to inhibit to some extent the normal consequence of the change in their occupational status.

This is a plausible explanation of the observed uneven change in the variables of Caste Status and occupational status of Scheduled Castes. But the fact remains that the correlation and causal connection between social status and socio-economic conditions holds good even in the case of Scheduled Castes.

¹ The Bhil are a group of tribal origin, the Rajput are traditional warriors now reduced to the status of agricultural labourers in the village and the Vaddars are a group included in the category of Backward Classes. In the traditional caste hierarchy all these groups were ranked higher than the Scheduled Castes.

² The present author conducted two investigations of social grading of occupations, one by University students and the other by villagers. In both cases priests secured a rank lower than some other occupations. For instance, the villagers ranked priests only fourth after the occupations of owner cultivator, tenant cultivator and teacher in that order.

³ This is shown in the present author's study on "Caste Status and Occupational Status" as yet unpublished.

Paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 restricts Christians of Scheduled Castes origin from availing the Scheduled Castes status. Paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 states that no person who professes a religion different from Hindu (the Sikh or the Buddhist) religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste. Arguments in favour of the reservation to be religion-neutral. The change in religion does not change social exclusion. The social hierarchy and specifically caste hierarchy continues to remain within Christianity and Muslims View Status Of Application. View Certificate Details. Reprint Application/Acknowledgement Slip. Edit Application. The Backward Classes Welfare Department, a Department under the Govt. of West Bengal is working towards sustainable development of the persons belonging to the Schedules Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes of West Bengal. The main aim of the Department is to improve the quality of life of these socially and economically backward classes and enhancement of capability of the people belonging to these communities, so that they can be very much part & parcel of the PDF | On Dec 10, 2017, Raju Sarkar and others published Demographic Analysis of Population with Special Focus on Recent Status of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and Their Rights in West Bengal | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. Data shows the disabilities populations among scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, general population, with the categorization of rural, urban, male and female and their percentage. Read more. Discover more. caste certificate application, caste certificate address change, caste certificate aaple sarkar, caste certificate apply online odisha, caste certificate banane ke liye, caste certificate banane ke liye document, caste certificate barcode scanner, caste certificate banane ke liye kya kya document chahiye, caste certificate check status, caste certificate correction, caste certificate central, caste certificate check online, caste certificate central government, caste certificate csc, caste certificate. central govt format obc, caste certificate correction online karnataka, sc caste certificate k