

## **A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON SOCIAL MOBILITY WITHIN A CASTE**

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### **Abstract**

Social mobility is very widely discussed and studied phenomenon all over the world. Many studies of social mobility and its impact on caste system have been done by Indian and foreign social scientists. Many sociologists have distinguished between social 'mobility' that is merely an unrealized aspiration and actual change in rank, whether this entails the successful manipulation of wealth, political power or connections, educational attainment, ritual symbols or other variables: to specify whether change in rank must mean movement by a caste out of some broader stratum such as a bloc of ambiguously and inconsistently ranked castes; and to indicate whether any unit's alleged change in rank is acknowledged by others in the system (Silverberg, 1968;8). Caste mobility has been examined in such topics as ranking methodology, jasmine relations, channels of regional integration, sanskritization and parochialization, the effects of recent legislations and other agencies of socio-cultural change. The priorities of studies of social change may be defined in the context of the substantive areas or issues that need professional attention. The majority of sociologists seem to prefer studies on urbanization, industrialization, and impact of education, technology and economic factors, etc. on social change in India. The next in order of priority is the preference for the analysis of political processes that lead to social change (Singh, 1974:422).

**Keywords:** Social Mobility, Foreign Social Scientist, Socioeconomic

### **Introduction**

These and several other considerations reflect the expressed rationale of a study "to narrow the common focus of social mobility in a caste" through their historical and present status in terms of economic, occupational, educational, and political aspects. Thus, it appears reasonable to focus on empirical studies by understanding new settings and on some castes which have become mobile in the recent times. It would be necessary to know about the castes which superseded and the castes which were superseded and the factors which contributed to this discriminating mobility.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In the light of the above, the present study focuses on the following specific questions:

1. What has been the social position and status of a backward caste (Saini) through history till independence?
2. What is the impact of critical land legislations on their socioeconomic position just after independence?
3. How have democratic processes during last five decades affected their economic, occupational, educational, political and social position?
4. How specific cases at micro-level reflect the pattern of social mobility and what are the concomitant contributing factors?

For understanding the first question some specific issues related to their social background, before independence, like their landlessness condition and working as tenants, share-croppers, labourers etc. under Zamindari System, their temporary habitats have been studied. In the second question, some specific issues related to Zamindari

Abolition and other Land Reforms, about ownership of land, and their impressed social status have been studied. The third question has included specific issues like participation in democratic processes, their land holdings, impact of reservation policy in occupations at a local-regional level. The fourth question takes note of specific issues like economic, occupational, educational and political achievements that determined their social mobility. These have been studied in a micro-setting which reflect the processes and achievements of status minutely.

#### **TERMS/CONCEPTS/OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS**

Some concepts or terms have been used in the present study. These have been operationally defined here in the manner these have been used.

(i) Caste: An institution of considerable internal complexity, which has been oversimplified by those seeking an ideal type of rigid hierarchical social stratification, based on extreme closure criteria. Andre Beteille (1980) describes a caste as 'a small and named group of persons characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system, based on concepts of purity and pollution'. Using this conception thus, Saini is a caste in the present study which has all the distinct attributes of caste and socially recognized by all others as a distinct caste.

(ii) Social Mobility: The movement usually of individuals but sometimes of whole groups between different positions within the system of social stratification in any society is conceived as social mobility. It is conventional to distinguish between upward and downward mobility, and intergenerational from intergenerational or career mobility. The present study has focused on vertical upward mobility of Saini's in terms of social, occupational, educational and political dimensions.

#### **METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The historical descriptive facts about the social and economic conditions of Sainis through history prior to independence have been analyzed qualitatively by using description and narrations about the community in various historical sources. A qualitative analysis has been undertaken of facts collected through observation and case studies. Data collected with the techniques of observational interviews and interview schedule from 200 heads of households have been analyzed quantitatively. Simple statistical techniques have been used to classify the facts and to indicate the extent of relationship between background factors and mobility.

#### **AN OVERVIEW OF SELECT LITERATURE**

An overview of select literature is presented here on social mobility and related aspects. This overview is divided in seven parts: (i) meaning and definition of social mobility, (ii) dimensions of social mobility, (iii) social mobility in the caste system, (iv) patterns of social mobility (v) levels of social mobility, (vi) factors of social mobility, and (vii) substantive issues etc.

#### **MEANING AND DEFINITION OF SOCIAL MOBILITY**

The word 'Mobility' is quite often used in our day to day conversations. Mobility very broadly refers to movement of some kind or the other. The concept of mobility has two common referents: Geographical mobility and social mobility. Geographical mobility refers to movement or change in actual physical space. Social mobility on the other hand denotes movement or change in social space that is, movement of an individual or a group of individuals from one social position to another e.g. when an individual, making use of an available opportunity,

becomes a section officer from the position of an office clerk, he is said to have changed his social position from lower to an upper one. Any such movement from one position to another, which may be upward or downward, may be termed as social mobility.

An eminent sociologist, Pitirim Sorokin (1959:202), has offered a comprehensive definition of social mobility with emphasis of transition from one social position to another. He writes:

"By social mobility is understood any transition of an individual or social object or value anything that has been created or modified by human activity from one social position to another."

### **CONCLUSION**

The Problematic Sainis were traditionally characterized as gardener or Mali as well as by poor economic condition and lower social status. Before the dawn independence, the poor people now known as Sainis, were shrouded in the darkness of suppression and were victims of an inferiority complex, deep rooted in poverty, illiteracy and backwardness. As a consequence, they had remained economically and educationally more backward than other higher castes in the countryside. But the recent socio-eco-political changes have enabled them to pursue education to the extent they desired, Now, they are also provided with a of new choices and opportunities in the occupational fields. It is presumed that the social mobility is determined by social background, educational achievements, land holdings, use of reservation policy, and participation in democratic processes. Social mobility leads to change in socio-economic status, and as a result, an individual or a group becomes part of the elite section of society.

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