

Review Article

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Paradigm Shift among Scheduled Caste in Jharkhand: A Study of Garhwa District

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ABSTRACT

Status is a position provided to the person of the concern society based on societal norms, values and customary practices. It is further being divided into two parts, first one is the Ascribed status, and another is Achieved status. The ascribed status is assigned to a person by the group or society, whereas achieved status is earned by the individual through his/her personal attributes and is taken note of by the people in and around his/her location. It is also evident that in majority of the cases, the ascribed status always determines the nature and extent of the achieved status. The ascribed status of the Dalits contributes or hinders in the formation of their achieved status. It also includes their social interaction and social relations with non-Dalits in the exiting local level social structure. This status is being characterized and specified by the process of Sanskritization, social and religious reforms, and the constitutional provisions in the formation of achieved status of Dalits in their different strata of life. The social status is the convergent form of both the ascribed and achieved statuses of a person in each society or social structure. In every circumstance, one's higher ascribed status always contributes positively to his or her higher achieved status. Conversely, lower the ascribed status, lower is the achieved status though this may be other way round in the exceptional case. Anyway, the symmetrical or linear relationship between the lower ascribed and achieved statuses gets more crystallized, if the person comes from a group which remains socially excluded forever. But due to the prospects of Independence, Education, Constitutional safeguards and Modernisation several kinds of changes occurred in the status of Dalits in the society.

Through this paper, I have tried to identify the process of social status formation among Dalits in Jharkhand.

Keywords: Musher, Dusadh, Bhuinya, Scheduled Caste, Social Movements, Constitutional Provisions

Social Status

"In the past, status was juristic term connoting the individual's rights and duties as relevant to his (or her) condition and status in life....the sharp changes in status fortunes that emerged from the erosion of privileges (since the 19th century onwards) could not be encompassed by the old legalistic definition of the term, yet it was sometime before it was broadened sufficiently to be useful as a tool of analysis" [1]. It was, who perhaps for the first time attempted to define sociologically the term status [2]. For him, status is primarily a position in a social structure, involving rights, duties, and reciprocal expectations of behaviour, none of which depends on the personal characteristics of the status occupant [1]. Referring to Max Weber's idea of status, further says that, "In saying that status is an 'effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive and negative privileges' [3]. Weber has emphasized its relational base and that a status claimant must have an audience from which to receive or to demand deferential response". Thus, the term status is relational and inter-subjective where its meaning and acceptance vary from person to person or from group to group. It is also positional and highly structural in terms of various spheres and inclusive of its own properties. In other words, Weber (1961) deals with status in terms of a quality

of social honour. He argues that the economically determined class situation leads to status situation which is atypical component of the life situation of men and women. "This, in turn, is determined by a specific positive or negative social estimation of honour. This honour may be connected with quality shared by a plurality and, of course, can be linked, in the most varied ways, with the status distinction" [4]. Similarly, in the caste system, castes as status groups are defined essentially in terms of style of life. Property and occupation enter as important elements in the style of life of a status group, but they need not be decisive. Social honour in the caste system is very closely tied to ritual values. Styles of life, which are highly esteemed, are generally associated with a large number of ritual restrictions. Thus, there are restrictions among Brahmins on the eating of various kinds of food. Together with this there are ritual prescriptions with regard to the number of dress, the caste mark so on [5].

A point may be mentioned here that the term status has been conceptualized primarily in the context of relatively open society where individual has been free to avail of opportunities enabling him/her to easily occupy a position or social position in the society. But in a relatively closed society, particularly the Hindu social system in India, occupying a status or position according to one's personal attributes or qualities has remained absent or restricted only individual of certain caste. So also, sociologists and social

anthropologists from both India and abroad have hardly made any attempt to define the term status in the context of Indian society. Has attempted to define the term status in the context of caste system and has situated it in the religious and ritual domains only [6]. In his opinion, the term status is to be explained only in terms of pure and impure caste of its member. But has stated that, "For one thing, the unit of social appraisal in urban India is increasingly not the corporate group but the individual; and the determinants of this appraisal include education, economic resources, political influence, general knowledgeability, etc., besides religious status [7]. This composite evaluation of one's social standing by others and one's awareness of this evaluation by them will here be designated status with a capital S". Unlike Weberian formulation of status of social class, the formation of status or of social status of an individual in India, in Saberwal's sense, is based on the secular characteristics or criteria, i.e., education, economic resources, employment, power or authority or political influence which are achievable by him or her in the society, although his or her corporate group (caste) status does influence it positively or negatively. Hence, an individual may go up or down but his/her caste remains, by and large, static or stagnant due to its ascribed status which its members inherit in the caste system, in spite of a microscopic minority intending to disown it.

Interestingly, in defining the term status, Dumont keeps economic and political power separately. In other words, both status and power for him are disjointed. This lives the scope of defining the term status, separate from the one being religious or ritual in nature, based on economic and political power as well as social interaction and relations extracted from that. Then, Dumont's definition of status is either incomplete or it is supplemented by the economic and political power, which in his understanding may or may not be considered as crucial element of defining status. In a way, this is more explicit in formulation of 'dominant castes' requiring necessarily to undergoing the process of Sanskritization for achieving higher status in the society of Hindu social system [8]. But according to status exclusively based on purity and pollution does not sustain unless it is separated by economic and political power. In his own words, "now, in the changed situation, the social system is more complex and, as a result of that, the status-evaluation of a person or of a group has become a little difficult [9]. Other aspect, such as economic and political power, with their specific sets of hierarchies also plays a significant role in determination of status. This does not mean that the caste hierarchy is eliminated or has grown weak. Rather, it has loosened its hold over the people in the public domain but retained it in the private one." Referring to Merton's status-set, i.e., status or position acquires in various domains, Ram has summed-up such statuses and termed it social status which also includes status or caste status of a person inherited from his/her caste.

Status Arrangement of Various Castes and Communities in Jharkhand

If we see the views presented by many sociologists and social anthropologists, as referred earlier, about the caste system in India, we find the same complexity of Hindu caste system in Jharkhand. In the Hindu caste system, an individual is born, lives and dies within the limits of his caste, as stated earlier. Thus, a caste in contemporary rural Jharkhand is an endogamous group with a set of ritual practices which separate it from other castes. The caste of a person is determined by his/her birth. In the Hindu caste system, people belonging to a caste claim that the origin of their caste, is not only different but also superior from each other castes. This claim is legitimized based on their various myths

of origin of their caste, which constitute an important element of caste beliefs. People belonging to different castes create their internal hierarchies, according to their myths and beliefs about the origin of their caste [10]. The simplest and universally acceptable categorization of all the Hindu castes in Jharkhand is three-fold: Forward, Backward and Scheduled Castes, as stated earlier. The Forward Castes (upper castes) are Brahmin, Rajput and Kayastha and these have been historically dominant and continue to be so in both urban and rural areas. The Backward Castes (lower and upper) are a heterogeneous category in between the upper castes and the Scheduled Castes. The Scheduled Castes are at the lowest level of the caste hierarchy. In addition to these, three categories, there are also Muslims and a fifth category is Scheduled Tribes in Bihar [11]. It mainly shows the rank or social status of a caste group in the caste hierarchy and accordingly it maintains its caste status in the society.

Different Schools of Thoughts about Social Status in the Caste System

A person's caste status in the caste system is considered while measuring his social status. There are two schools of thought regarding determination of a person's status in the caste system. According to one school, caste is an institution with a systemic form and a person's status is based on his birth in a particular caste (*Jati*), which has a definite rank in the caste hierarchy [12]. This is his 'ascribed status' with which he is born and dies. It is also viewed in terms of his corporate group which is similar to his caste rank. Has rightly stated that caste does not only simply place the people into higher or lower position, but it also determines their way of life, their customs, manners, occupations, social relations and status in the society [13]. Caste also imposes certain restrictions on its members to avoid intermixing, maintaining purity and performing of certain vital tasks in the society. "The institution of caste, thus, cuts across diversity of groups and gives them all a common social idiom". The concept of 'ascribed status', taken from, deals with a person's status in a society wherein it is assigned to the person by the society, without regard for his/her unique talent or characteristics [14]. It also deals with one's occupational pursuit and general social standing, which is determined at birth, but that may change over a period of time.

According to the second school, caste system is a dynamic one, and one is subjected to a variety of changes, especially in urban areas. A person's status (also his caste rank) is determined on the basis of several attributes acquired by him and the interaction between him and others. Such interaction is also guided by a person's socio-economic status and power position. There are also other criteria for status determination of a person, and these are ritual purity and pollution, caste calling, etc., which themselves is subjected to change. Thus, on the basis of change in the pattern of interaction and social relation of a person with others, his status in the caste system is 'achieved' and remains changeable. In this sense, a person's status is his position which is accorded to or 'achieved' by him in the caste system, while rank of his caste is an order assigned to his caste in the caste hierarchy. In other words, the status is attributed to an individual, while rank is assigned to a caste as a corporate group. Status is changeable, while rank is almost fixed [15-17].

Universe of the Study

For the purpose of the present study, a region in the state of Jharkhand has been selected due to its socio-economic and educational backwardness in general and of the Dalits in particular. Jharkhand is being divided into five regions namely North Chhotanagpur, South Chhotanagpur, Santhal Pargana, Kolhan and

Palamu. For this study the Palamu are is being considered as the study area. This is further being divided into 3 Districts Palamu, Latehar and Garhwa. The study is being conducted into one block of Garhwa district i.e. Meral. In the Meral block Sangbaria village is being taken as the study area because of the availability of Dalits in this village. The society in Jharkhand as a whole is considered to be a semi- feudal in its structure and functions. Here the upper castes, numerically not being large, have traditionally enjoyed the ritual and socio-economic as well as political superiority and social prestige. Their numerical weakness is more than compensated by their ritual status, social prestige, and economic and political power in the state. Dalits in Jharkhand are the most backward Scheduled Castes. Due to their low socio-economic, political, and educational and hierarchical positions in the existing social system, they have been, for centuries, the victim of the feudal or semi-feudal social order in India in general and in Jharkhand in particular.

The Population of Jharkhand according to the 2011 census stands at about 32 million, making it the 13th most populated state in India. The state makes up about 3.5% of the country's population a figure which was about 3% during the last census in 2001. The state is spread over an area of about 79000 sq. km. one of the smaller states in the country in terms of area. The density of population per sq. Km. is about 414, which is above the national average by a good 30 points. The state has a growth rate of about 22% which slightly exceeds the national growth rate of about 17%. The population of the state is rising considerably more due to the lack of education and lack of understanding about family planning. The literacy rate in the state is about 67% a figure that needs instant correction and steps to do so need to be put into effect immediately. The sex ratio in Jharkhand is about 940. The statistics in the Jharkhand Census 2011 reveal facts that can be instrumental in planning for a better development plan for the state. Garhwa district which is situated at the western part of the state is being taken as the study area. According to the census, 2011 the total population of Garhwa district is 1322784, in which males are 683575 and females are 639309. In this SC are 319946, which consists 165313 males and 154633 female Presently, the Garhwa district, with its headquarters at Garhwa. It consists of 3 sub-divisions Garhwa, Ranka and NagarUntari and 19 Community Development Blocks. Garhwa and Majhion are two Nagar Panchayat of the district, the other being a Census town Sinduria., There are altogether 888 villages in the district and 193 panchayats.

Selection of Study Area and Sample Size

The present study has been carried out in the Meral block of Garhwa district. In the Meral block, the total population, according to 2011 census, is 1,30,308 persons (67,253 males and 63,055 females) in which 31,448 persons (16,238 males and 15,210 females) are Scheduled Castes. For the purpose of the data collection, the sample of respondents 125 have been selected from the village Sangbaria .More precisely, the respondents have randomly been selected. The data has been collected through the semi-structured Interview Schedule administered separately on both the rural and urban respondents.

Research Methodology

The proposed study is exploratory and descriptive. The purpose of such research design is to describe the nature, forms and extent of social exclusion of Scheduled Castes or Dalits and the formation of social status among them within and outside the Hindu social system. It also reveals social, economic, political and cultural aspects of their life and, in turn, examines how these facilitate them in forming their social status, both within and outside the caste system.

Sources of Data Collection

The study is based on both the primary and secondary sources of data or information. The primary sources of data consist of the interviews with the respondents and also observation of their attitudes and behaviour. Similarly, the secondary sources of data are books, articles, magazines, Census data, Government documents, journals, etc. The government documents include reports of the Ministry of Rural Development, Planning Commission and reports of the State Directorate of Economics and Statistics. The Census data have been used with regards to population of Dalits, their literacy rate, occupational pursuits, and caste composition and so on. The data collected from both the sources have been processed and analysed in accordance with the stated objectives, and a few hypotheses verified in course of pursuing the study.

Responsible factors of Changes

It is pertinent to analyze views of the respondents about formation of their status or social status as well as of Dalit's in general in the caste system in the studied locales. The caste hierarchy in the Sangbariya village clearly appears in terms of '*Uchcha*' (upper) and '*Neecha*' (lower) *log* (people) or caste where the upper castes and middle level castes (Brahmins, Rajput and Sahu) are at the top and enjoy the highest social status and the Dalit's (Chamar, Dusadh and Musahar) are placed at the bottom and are treated as low. The people of the upper and middle level castes of the village are known as twice-born. In the village, caste plays the vital role in deciding the social relations and interaction with people of the different caste groups. Most of the respondents have accepted that the purity and pollution is observed by people of the upper and even middle level castes against the Dalit's of the village because of low caste status or rank assigned to them and their caste in the traditional caste system. On the basis of their low caste status, they are even physically segregation and untouchability is practiced against them by people of the uchcha jatis [18]. also has viewed that the ritual purity and pollution, the barrier which separates the untouchable groups from others in India, meant that these people could not be incorporated into the mainstream in Hinduism. This has not changed even after Ambedkar's neo-Buddhist movement. There is hardly a movement, with secular agenda, which attempts to influence minds of the people with secular agenda. She has further argued that the "religious ideologies act as opiate to masses. The constitutional benefits have covered only a fraction of the scheduled castes population since most of the deserving ones are hardly aware of their rights".

We have also found that the Dalits in the studied village are socially discriminated, physically isolated and economically deprived because of their low caste identity and status. Today, the social distance is very much observed between pure and impure or the upper and lower castes of the village. As far as the caste system is concerned, it is still a rigid form of stratification in the village where the social relations among members of the different caste exist on the basis of caste status. Most of the respondents from the village are economically handicapped and are totally dependent upon their labour which, in turn, influences their social status in the caste system practiced therein.

Table 1.1 given below explains, in certain way, the social status of our respondents in terms of their sitting on a cot along with number of the upper and middle level castes, having commensal relations or taking food, water, smoking, etc. with them, and participating in the ritual or religious ceremonies performed by members of each castes in the village. The table also clearly shows that 18.4 per cent of the total respondents of the Chamar, Dusadh and Musahar castes sit with people of the upper and middle level

castes on the same cot. Similarly, 14.4 per cent of the respondents are invited by people of the upper and middle level castes in their social functions. Apart from that, no respondent is invited by them on the ceremonial occasions celebrated by people of the upper and middle level castes in the village. Even those respondents who have established their social relationship with some people of the upper castes in the village, they do not get the considerable amount of honors or prestige from the latter due to their low caste status. Therefore, it can be said that despite a somewhat better economic status of a few respondents, caste plays the decisive role in determining the social status of even these of respondents in the Sangbariya village.

Table 1.1: Caste-wise views of the Respondents on changes in Caste Status of Dalits

Sl. No.	Changes in features of Caste	Caste of the Respondents		
		Sangbariya Village		
		Chamar	Dusadh	Musahar
1.	Sitting along with upper castes	11(8.8)	9(7.2)	3(2.4)
2.	Commensal relation with upper castes	9(7.2)	7(5.6)	2(1.6)
3.	On ceremonial occasions in upper castes house	5(4)	4(3.2)	1(0.8)
4.	upper castes on ceremonial occasions at own house	-	-	-
5.	None	17(13.6)	18(14.4)	39
	Total	42	38	45

Further, most of the respondents do not have privilege of sitting on the same cot with members of the upper and middle level castes due to their low caste background, and even those having such relations with them also face some sort of discriminations and untouchability in their day-to-day social life. This is equally true in the case of other Dalits or Dalit castes living in the village. It can, then, be said that the social status of the respondents as well as people of the Dalit castes as a whole is not elevated in the existing caste system because of their low caste rank or status.

In the village, most of the respondents continue to be prohibited from taking water from the village wells, entering the *koti dai* worship (A local deity). In the Indian society, the 'lower' castes (that is, the Scheduled Castes) have traditionally been ranked 'low' in the caste hierarchy; and often this ranking has rarely been challenged till recently from any quarter [19]. Due to the "low rank of their castes, the Dalits have suffered from the cumulative inequalities in the economic, political and ritual systems" [20]. In the Sangbariya village, we have found the social status of Dalits in general and of our respondents in particular similar to that as mentioned above by many social scientists where people's caste plays the main role in determining their social position or status. As we know, each caste in the caste system is traditionally assigned an occupation and the occupation is also ranked pure or impure in accordance with the rank of the caste in the caste hierarchy. As far as the Scheduled Castes or Dalits in the village are concerned, they have traditionally been assigned fixed occupations and rank as mentioned in the traditional Hindu caste system. However, most of the respondents have now given up their traditional occupations, but their social status has not changed due to status or rank of their caste in the traditional caste hierarchy existing there [21]. Argues that, "The status of a person (in a society) is depended not on his

wealth as in the classes of modern Europe, but on the traditional importance of the caste in which he had the luck of being born".

Social Status in Class (Socio-economic status) Structure

The notion of class has been analysed by many Sociologists and Social Anthropologists in the western as well as in Indian societies. Generally speaking, the concept of class is associated with the economic status and accordingly life style of the people. In most cases, the term class is identified exclusively with the economic position vis-à-vis status of individuals without taking into account the social and political or power aspects. But such understanding of class is invariably located in a given mode of production or production relations, as analysed extensively by Karl Marx. Opposed to that, has defined class in the given market situation and social relations therein [22]. But such conceptualization is based on the empirical social reality found in the open society or social structure [23]. Uses class in terms of owners and non-owners of the means of production in a pure economic sense. Apart from that, gives contradictory view on classes and status group by saying that "the difference, broadly, is between a hierarchy of a small number of organized or partly organized economic groups whose relations to each other are antagonistic, and a hierarchy of numerous groups, more correctly described as aggregates of individuals of equal social prestige based on similarities which are not exclusively economic, and whose relations to each other are not primarily antagonistic but are partially competitive and partially emulative"[24]. Talks of classes only in a market economy: "... always this is the genetic connotation of the concept of class: that the kind of chance in the market is decisive moment which presents a common condition for the individual's fate [25]. 'Class situation' is, in this sense, ultimately market situation" (ibid). As Ogburn and wrote, "class societies may be represented as extending from those like the caste which are relatively rigid or closed to those which are flexible" [26]. Contrary to that, in a relatively closed society like that in India, the traditional institutions such as caste and religion besides the economic means of production, play a dominant role in deciding the economic position or status of an individual and group. For instance, the status of a poor Brahman and a poor Dalit is equally made by religion and caste in the formation of 'class' but also unequally made in the structural location in the social structure [27].

Within the above mentioned analytical framework of class hierarchy, we find that most of the Dalits, including our respondents, are landless agricultural labourers and are dependent on land source of others for their livelihood in the Sangbariya village. Rightly mentions about the economic relation in rural Bihar being fundamentally represented in terms of '*Malik*' (upper castes land owners) and '*Praja*' (lower castes landless) [28]. Even urban areas are largely owned by the Malik-upper and middle level castes and the lower castes or Dalits are mostly skilled and unskilled labourers. This is true elsewhere also. For example, explains the relationship among the owners (the Brahmin), the tenants (the non-Brahmin), and the agricultural labourers (the Adi-Dravid) the untouchable castes in a village in Tamil Nadu [29]. He shows that the caste system overlaps, to a larger extent, the class structure status or socio-economic status in the agrarian setting, although certain aspects of life as land ownership, occupation, etc. are not dependent upon caste as before.

Thus, in formation of class in rural areas, land plays the crucial role in determining the social status inclusive of economic, educational and the political status of people. Therefore, due to their deprivation or non-possession of the land, Dalits of the studied village are socio-economically most vulnerable and may

be termed as lower class in the class hierarchy if we situate it in the village. In the case of land ownership, has stated that “Since in a feudal or semi-feudal society the main source of wealth is land, it naturally belonged (since early time) to higher castes. It is difficult to imagine the lower castes owning the important means of wealth [30]. Hence, to a great extent, the caste system was congruent with the class system. Those who owned the instruments of production were the higher castes (class) and those who laboured under them to produce were of the lower castes (class)”.

The table 1.2 shows views of the respondents on the social status and class or the socio-economic status of the Dalits respondents in the village. There are (69.6%) of the respondents of all the three Dalits castes who have found the class or socio-economic status of the Dalits as low, followed by (25 or 20%) of the respondents whose views on class or socio-economic status of the Dalits is of middle level. And there are only 13 (10.4%) the respondents who have viewed the Dalits acquiring high' class or socio-economic status in the village. The table also shows that most of the respondents, who have viewed the Dalits of the village with low class or socio-economic, are illiterate, mostly landless agricultural labourers and who earn their wages mainly in kind, but their monthly income is less than Rs. 100, and are totally dependent on their labour force. On the other hand, the respondents who have the middle level of socio-economic status are literate, agricultural labourers with some auxiliary source of income of more than Rs. 100 p.m., compared to those who are educated up to matriculation and employed, with more than Rs. 3000 p.m., both the public and private sectors organizations in the nearby town, have placed a few Dalits in high class or socio-economic status. It may not be out of context to mention the views of the respondent, Tablu Ram, who has stated that the social position of Dalits, compared to non-Dalits, is very low and the degraded one. They do not receive the amount of respect, prestige or honour from people of the upper and middle level castes because of their low caste status. Even those Dalits, who are socio-economically, educationally and politically a little better-off, also do not get the amount of respect or honour as the other non-Dalits of the similar position receive in the village. This amounts to status incongruence or incongruence between their both ascribed and achieved statuses. Thus, the ascribed status somehow influences their day-to-day social life in the village. It may, however, be clarified that the views of the respondents on the Dalits' class or socio-economic status being low, middle and high in class or socio-economic statuses are inter se, i.e., within the Dalits themselves and, by extension, the reflections of the respondents' own class or socio-economic status in the village, and in no way, are comparable with that of the non-Dalit castes in the village.

Table 1.2: Caste-wise views of the Respondents about the Class or Socio-economic status of the Dalits in the village

Caste of Respondents	Class or Socio-Economic Status of the Dalits		
	Sangbaria Village		
	Low	Middle	High
Chamar	25(20)	10(8)	7(5.6)
Dhobi	-	-	-
Dusadh	23(18.4)	9(7.2)	6(4.8)
Musahar	39(31.2)	6(4.8)	-
Total	87(69.6)	25(20)	13(10.4)

Taking into account the ascribed status of the Dalit respondents in the erstwhile traditional social structure as well as the changing

contemporary social set-up in the town, we have found that the social position consisting of social, economic, educational and political positions of the respondents is better than, say, ten years back. As far as the Dalit's social status, compared to that of the upper caste people in the town is concerned, according to the respondents, it is improving gradually because of improvement in their socio-economic status. They also do not face the extreme form of caste discrimination by people of the upper and middle level castes as the Dalits in general and the respondents in particular of village do. In the whole process, their ascribed (caste) status is certainly low in the traditional social structure of the Hindu caste system and because of that their social status is also rated low in the esteem of prestige by people of the upper and middle level castes in the society. Apart from that, the respondent Raghurai Ram, a Primary teacher, has narrated his own experiences about change in his caste status after his getting job in the government school. Earlier, people of the upper and middle level castes did not give respect to him, but now, they address him with regard and respect. By achieving somewhat better socio-economic status, most of the respondents feel elevated in extending their social relation with members of the different caste groups in the locality where they live in. Taking cognizance of such change among the Dalits, has stated the same thing by saying that the barrier of the traditional society is breaking down because of social interaction of the Dalits with people of the higher castes in the state [31]. For such type of change, many factors are playing the positive roles. For instance, the contemporary social development has changed the social climate and become favourable even for the Dalits, especially after Independence. Urbanization also has improved their social, economic, and political conditions, whereas the government policy of protective discrimination has been considered as an effective force for bringing about the change in their style of life and has decreased the excessive influence of the caste Hindus. Also has articulated about such change by mentioning that the lower level (caste-based) occupations of ex-untouchables have gone considerable change due to their migration from village to city where they are associated with new kinds of jobs in both private as well as government organizations [32]. In the case of their social status, their educational level and thereby their employment position have played the primary role not only in the formation of their social status, but also in bringing about some changes in it in the recent decades. Therefore, education is an important mean of achieving as well as enhancing social status of the Dalits in the class hierarchy. However, argues that education, as a part of superstructure, is moulded by the needs of the economic system and the classes who control it [33]. In general, the Indian Constitution has overlaid certain preferential provisions in favour of Dalits, which have proved to be instrumental in their educational progress. For instance, Article 46 deals with promotion of educational interests of the SCs, STs and other weaker sections of Indian society, and it has also been helping Dalits in achieving education up to certain level and the bureaucratic as well as non-bureaucratic job.

Now-a-days, they feel more comfortable in their social relationship or interaction with people of the upper and middle level castes groups than that in earlier times.

We have analysed above views of the respondents on achieving statuses both in caste and class or socio-economic status hierarchies by the Dalits in the studied village. Keeping aside the multiple-hierarchy or status hierarchy which simply means hierarchy of statuses or positions found in every spheres or domains of life, we shall examine here briefly the respondents' views on the process of formation of status or social status among the Dalits both in

caste and class or socio-economic status hierarchies in the village areas. In other words, we shall analyse their views on various factors contributing to formation of social status among Dalits, although these factors themselves might be acting as process in the status formation. Some of the factors may be consciousness or awareness resulting into assertion or otherwise, sanskritization and reference group/individual behaviour, constitutional provisions, etc. We shall analyse below our respondents' views on impact of these factors on the formation of status of the Dalits in both caste and class or socio-economic status hierarchies in rural and urban areas, particularly in the studied locales of the village and the town.

Social consciousness and Status formation

It is true that certain types and levels of social consciousness and awareness have arisen among the Dalit's in India in the modern time, particularly after Independence. In their growing consciousness and awareness, a number of social movements led by both the Dalit and non-Dalit leaders, before and after independence, have contributed a lot. Opines that "Dalit consciousness in no way is limited to the Scheduled Castes. It has begun to symbolize a much broader spectra of the oppressed and hitherto excluded from the social strata" [34]. Dalit's have been excluded from the main residential settlement of the village and are also kept outside the social and cultural hierarchies, with people of the upper castes at the top due to their social and cultural settings or rankings in the caste hierarchy[35]. Even after achieving mobility through secular channels with their hard work, they are not accepted by people of castes ranked higher in the caste hierarchy. Due to the extreme form of social exclusion, Dalit's could not accumulate 'social capital' which could generate or create potential to develop their socially assertive consciousness [36].

In the case of Sangbaria village, the caste-based status of the Dalit's has not changed because of their socio-cultural moorings at the lower level in the social hierarchy. In the opinion of most of the respondents, a large majority of the Dalit's have accepted their low evaluation by people of the upper and middle level castes who have ever developed subordinate attitudes and behaviour towards them due to low status or rank of their caste in the caste hierarchy practiced in the village. A point may be mentioned here that Dalit's, across their castes and degree of their socio-economic status, have remained helpless to accept their subordinated status or social status in the village, even if they have accumulated certain types of social and cultural capital which has ever been undermined by people of the upper and middle level castes in the studied village. More specifically, majority of the Dalit's are conscious of well-being of their family members, their exploitation of various sorts, their discrimination and social exclusion, low ranking of their caste in the caste hierarchy, etc. According to many respondents from the village, Dalit's have been conscious of their rights of equality or equal status, dignity or respect as well as respectful treatment towards them by people of the upper and middle level castes. But due to lack of independent source of their livelihood, negation of their social and cultural capital and lack of unity among them, they are unable to develop a positive consciousness and awareness among them to ascertain equality of their status or social status, whatsoever they have achieved, with that of people of other castes, irrespective of incongruity of both in caste status or rank and the one achieved by them.

Caste wise-views of the respondents on the degree of levels of consciousness or awareness of the Dalits contributing to status formation among the Dalits both the village and town can be seen from table 1.3 below. As is clear from the table, the respondents' views explained that the Dalits in village are not more aware of

their status or social status in both caste and class structure, of number of constitutional provisions, etc., that's why they are not able to improve their social status-in several cases equal to or better than of non -Dalits in class or socio-economic status and caste hierarchy existing there. Similar are the views of those respondents who are educated up to certain level and employed in government as well as private sectors jobs on status formation of Dalits living in the village.

Table 1.3: Caste-wise views of the Respondents on Social Consciousness of Dalits

Sangbaria Village				
Types of Social Consciousness				
Caste of Respondents	About their rights, i.e., Reservation, free education	Government schemes for them	Assertive against social discrimination	No
Chamar	7(5.6)	3(2.4)	2(1.6)	
Dhobi	-	-	-	
Dusadh	5(3.2)	3(2.4)	2(1.6)	
Musahar	2(1.6)	-	-	
Total	14	6(4.8)	4(3.2)	

Emulation and Social Status

We have explained, at the out said, the concept of status or social status which remains a static conceptual category and becomes part of hierarchy of several such statuses placed in ascending and descending order. The status placed below obviously tries to reach to the level of the one placed above it and sometimes to supersede it not only through material achievement but also emulating its behaviour pattern and life style. Such process has been termed as sanskritization in the Hindu caste system in India and reference group/individual behaviour in the class-based society in the West. More specifically on the basis of empirical data from the particular studied locale-a village, has termed this process as sanskritization in which the lower caste and the tribals emulate the sanskritize life style and behaviour pattern of the upper castes, particularly Brahmins [37]. According to him, Sanskritization means, "a process by which low Hindu caste or tribal or other group change its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently "twice-born" caste. Generally, such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally concerned to be the claimant caste by the local community...it is generally accompanied by and often results in upward mobility for the caste in question; but mobility may also occur without Sanskritization; resulting only in positional changes in the system and does not lead to any structural change". This means that position or status of people of the sanskritized castes changes, not leading to any change in the structural arrangement of the system or Hindu caste system itself.

It may not be out of context to be mentioned about a few studies conducted on sanskritization and its impact among the lower caste in Bihar. For instance, has explained that the high castes like Brahmins and Rajput's have positive urge to westernize their style of life for distinguishing themselves from others, whereas the lower castes try to sanskritise their style of life for building up the traditional status held by the high castes [38]. On other hand, deals with the limits of Sanskritisation in the selected villages of his field study in Bihar where he finds that the Dalit's do not need this process, but only some lower castes, to improve their life style. Dalit's are actually economically and politically powerless and are not at all ashamed of their caste identity [39]. But on the contrary, they feel proud of them. This is substantiated by the fact that some of the so-called lower castes in the village have

achieved so much economic and political (voting) power that, if they wished, they could sanskritise themselves. However, they do not feel inferior and, therefore, do not feel the need to sanskritise. He has given some examples of backward castes like Yadav's, Koeris and Dalit's of Buxar district of Bihar.

Table 1.4: Caste -wise views of the Respondents on Emulation of Way of Life

Types of Emulation	Sangbaria Village		
	Caste of Respondents		
	Chamar	Dusadh	Musahar
Taking vegetarian meal	5	4	-
Performing Hindu Rituals and ceremonies	7	7	8
Worshipping Hindu god and goddess	5	5	9
Believing in Hindu Religious sects	7	6	6
Reciting Hindu religious books	1	-	-
None	17	16	22
Total	42	38	45

Socio-Religious Movements and Status Formation

The religious reforms movement in India has also occurred, during various period, among some Scheduled Castes in different part of India. Referring to these reform movements, discussed the role played by some enlightened individuals in particular areas like Guru Ghasi Das in Chhattisgarh (M.P. but now in a separate State), Yogi Virabrahma in Andhra Pradesh, Narayan Guru in Kerala and the movements led by Swami Achhutanand and Shiv Narayan in U.P., and Mangoo Ram in Punjab [40]. More precisely, Ghasi Das led the movement among the Chamars towards the Satnam (the true name), Narayan Guru initiated the movement of Shri Narayan Dharma Paripalan among the Pulayas' and other lower castes in Kerala, and Shiv Narayan led the movement among the Chamars of eastern U.P. and Achhutanand led the movement for among the Chamars for their being Adi Hindu in Central and western UP. Besides, two movements of Kabir Panth and Raidas Panth have also been quite active among the Chamars of eastern U.P and Jharkhand. Similarly, Mangoo Ram led the Adi Dharma Movement among the Chamars of Punjab. Anyway, these movements ultimately helped the Dalits and other low castes in imitating some and rebelling more against most of norms of higher castes, and also encouraged them to rebel against the disabilities they had suffered at the hands of the caste Hindus. More recently, the Dalits, especially living in urban areas in many states have inclined largely towards Dalit movement as well as the conversion to Buddhism led by Ambedkar. It is necessary to mention here that these movements certainly contributed to not only negating the social disabilities and degraded status of the Dalits, but also enhancing their social status, in some ways, and making them conscious and aware of that, besides negating their social disabilities and inferior social status in the traditional caste system at the local levels.

Table 1.5: Caste-wise views of the Respondents on Dalits' believing in different Religious Sects or Panths

Caste of Respondents	Bara Gobind Village			
	Believing in Religious Sects or Panths			
	Hindu believes	Buddhism	Kabir Panth	Jai Gurudeo Sect
Chamar	28	5	5	4
Dhobi	-	-	-	-
Dusadh	25	5	5	3
Musahar	42	1	1	1
Total	95	11	11	8

Without going into details of views expressed by respondents from the village some of these sects and panths and their impact on social life and the status of Dalits in recent year, it may be interesting to note the views of our respondents from the village. Dwarika Ram, follower of the Jai Gurudeo sect, has stated that "he does not believe in any Hindu gods and goddesses. He does not perform even Hindu rituals. Those who follow this sect attend the weekly meeting where they put their opinion about their communities. In this sect, most of the people belong to lower strata who have been the victim of age-old problem of the Hindu social order. Through participating in these meetings, they demand equal rights and respect from people of the upper and middle level castes". On the other hand, Dholak Ram (a Kabirpanthi), who is a teacher in the government primary school, has said that those belonging to this panth do not find any caste-based discrimination practiced by any other castes. According to him, people of the upper caste give respect to him and treat him equally in social interaction in the locality. Even then, the followers of the Kabirpanth conduct meetings where they condemn the rigid form of caste system and the heinous practice of untouchability. Most of the respondents, especially educated ones have stated that this Panth has really enhanced their social status in the social-hierarchy.

These achieved statuses also provide them equal status in the hierarchy of commensality and social interaction with people of the different caste groups. As far as change in the caste status of the Dalit respondents is concerned, it is occurring on the basis of their individual attributes rather than the group attributes; wherein individual is included in the system, while their group still remains excluded by people of the upper and middle level castes.

Despite of these circumstances one of the important factor which had played vital role in the status formation is the Constitution of India. It is one of the most important instruments that guarantee equality of opportunity, social and economic justice, liberty of thought and expression, etc., within the framework of a sovereign state. It clearly declares building of a new society by putting aside the differences of caste, race, religion and sex. Thus, the Constitution of India provides special provisions for the Scheduled Castes or Dalits for bringing them at par with others. The protective Constitutional measures are to the removal of untouchability and the prevention of physical as well as socio-psychological atrocities or violence inflicted on them. Similarly, welfare and developmental provisions vis-à-vis measures are related to relaxation in admission and provision of free ship and stipend or scholarship in the educational sphere, employment in the public sector organizations and political representation at the State and the Centre levels. In fact, the genesis of these special provisions for the Dalits or Scheduled Castes (and also for the Scheduled Tribes) can be traced back to the Poona Pact of September 24, 1932, signed by Dr. Ambedkar and the representatives of

Mahatma Gandhi. This Pact had insured the then 147 seats in the provincial legislatures (now State Assemblies) and 18 per cent of the general electorate seats in the Central legislature (presently Lok Sabha) were to be reserved for the Scheduled Castes due to Dr. Ambedkar's efforts. For instance, Article 46, contained in Parts IV entitled Directive Principles of State Policy provides educational facilities to the weaker sections, and Articles 14 and 15 provide them equality, with others, before law. Article 17 and the added Untouchability Offences Act of 1955 call for abolition of the practice of untouchability. More precisely, Article 17 of the Constitution states that untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. Similarly, Articles 330, 332, 334 and 335 contain special provisions for the Scheduled Castes' reservation in public sectors jobs and their reservation in both the Centre and State Legislatures, besides making the provision of a special officer to ensure the proper implementation of these provisions.

In this regards, we have found of our respondents from some changes occurred through the implementation of the Constitutional Provisions. These provisions have played positive role in enhancing social status of the Dalits not only in caste system but also in class structures. Changes in the village are very slow as is evident from the fact that the village respondents are still not allowed to fetch water from the well commonly used by the caste Hindus. They have remained deprived of social, economic and political benefits of the various constitutional provisions and measurements and schemes for decades. It has been observed that such provisions have also contributed positive role in enhancing awareness of the respondents about their social rights more in the town than that in the village. The respondents who are socially, economically and educationally better off have got affirmative response from people of the other castes about their social status and even they have improved social relationship with them.

Table.1.6: Caste-wise views of the Respondents on impact of Constitutional Provisions on Status formation among Dalits

Caste of Respondents	Sangbaria Village			
	Impact of Constitutional Provisions related to			
	Welfare & Development	Freedom of Expression	Atrocity Act	No impact
Chamar	7	3	2	30
Dhobi	-	-	-	-
Dusadh	5	3	2	28
Musahar	4	-	-	41
Total	16	6	4	99

Similarly, most of the respondents have also expressed their anger against the various forms of atrocities and untouchability practiced against the Dalits in the rural areas. They have opined that due to their socio-economic vulnerability, the Dalits do not dare to resist or even express their views against inflictor (s) of untouchability and atrocities against them. The constitutional provisions adopted and implemented by the government for the welfare and enhancement of status or social status or protection of social rights of the Dalits, have not reached in the studied village. Thus, it may be said that only a few Dalits living in rural areas and the studied village in particular have got benefited from some and not all provisions and measures given in the Constitution.

More specifically, this has happened due to their achieving education and getting employment in both public and private sectors organizations, compared to those living in the village. As far as the social discrimination, untouchability or atrocity are

concerned, some of the respondents from the town have stated that people belonging to all the three Dalit castes do not hesitate to protest against those people who practice such a social evil against the lower castes. Thus, it may be said that the constitutional provisions and related measures have played a positive role in the formation of status or social status of the Dalits.

Conclusion

In sum, it may be said that there are some visible changes in the traditional social status of the Dalits or Scheduled castes as well as in their social relations and interactions with people of the upper and middle level castes in rural areas due to adoption and implementation of the constitutional provisions and measures in Jharkhand. Vidyarthi and also have stated that the relationships of Dalits with people of the higher castes in Jharkhand are on the verge of change [41]. In their opinion, the enforcement of the Indian Constitution and Untouchability Offences Act, along with the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Acts, are being responsible for such change. Now-a-days, a person belonging to a higher caste may be seen eating in the house of a Chamar, or Rajwar or Dusadh or Musahar. Earlier, the Dalits were not allowed to use utensils and also eat in the house of a higher caste. But now, they use the same utensils in which a higher caste person eats. Children of the higher castes sit together with children of the Scheduled Castes in the same classroom. Thus, due to impact of the constitutional provisions and measures, industrialization, and modern means of communication, etc., some changes have taken place in the Hindu caste system also. People of the upper castes are not as allergic today to the Scheduled Castes as they had been in the past, though there exist the antagonistic relations, of one type or the other, between them. People of the upper castes are slowly but gradually shielding their irrational and traditional prejudices and inhibitions towards the Scheduled Castes or the Dalits both in villages and towns.

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