Preface

I myself believe in information which give rise to knowledge. My prime area of academic interest is human society with its diversities. I have also deep heartfelt regards to scholars. These basic characters which I consider as fundamental qualities, I do possess, and I think with sincerity. For such association of characters my exposition to the above mentioned sectors are relatively great.

Prior to initiation of this research project, with specific problems, I was trying to involve myself in a work of value. Decision making from within is somewhat difficult at least to begin with me. To my friends with academic interests, this intention of mine as well as the problem I was facing, was known. Mr. D. Sengupta was one of my professional colleagues with academic interest. Through him I was acquainted with Dr. P. N. Hansda, he was a member of Rajya Sabha (the Upper house of Parliament) when I met him. I came to know that he was carrying out researches on cultural dynamics of the Santals. Dr. Hansda is a Santal, the most numerically dominant scheduled tribe of India. In the arena of our frequent discussion the name of Professor Asok K. Ghosh of the Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University, came in. Mr. Sengupta and Dr. Hansda are friend and research student respectively of Professor Ghosh.
In the meantime a great coincidence took place. Professor Ghosh came down to Delhi where we three were in. I was introduced to Professor Ghosh and he was kind enough to listen to my intention, idea and so also my limitations and constrains.

Professor Ghosh suggested me to take up a research project on power, status and caste in an urban situation. I concede that at the initial stage, it was not possible for me to understand the core area of the problem. I had interest on caste. I think Professor Ghosh suggested "power" for my previous background in political science. He also wanted me to involve myself in these two sectors. In such situation "status" was added as the third dimension. The ultimate formulation was perhaps an after-thought. Accordingly I made myself engaged in theoretical background of the problem. Who have done what in which context and area? In pursuing the same with great enthusiasm, I came across with the title "Caste, Status and Power" in the rural setting of Assam. In the very beginning Professor Ghosh suggested me to carry out similar work, at least in terms of topic, context, in the city of Calcutta.

Dr. Chauhan, the author of the above mentioned book indirectly made an impact on me. It is about four years since I started upon this dissertation; it is yet another
four years since such thoughts as they may contain began to take shape in my mind. The formulation was further made possible with my continuous exposures to publications on the issues directly or indirectly related to power, status and caste.

I started work on Calcutta and intensive field investigation was set in. The city of Calcutta rendered great help with rich libraries, as National Library, libraries of the Anthropological Survey of India, Asiatic Society, Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University, British Council, United States Information services, and many more such other magazines of books. To the librarians and other appropriate authorities, I express my grateful appreciation.

Simultaneously I came close to Professor Ghosh both in terms of spatial distance and frequency of meetings. To enhance my interest on the topic and for the purpose of clarity of the problems Professor Ghosh involved with me on a pilot project on the same topic. Through this I had the practical training of various aspects of methodology and technique.

Above all, the result of the primary survey was indeed fascinating. It was concerned with theoretical issues on the one hand and practical with corroboration of
data on the other. For more than three years, I carried out the field work in intensive details, of course, as far as possible and practicable. Simultaneously, I was being exposed with the contributions on the area of research, made by both national and international scholars. At this stage of completion of my dissertation, I look back and remember Mr. Sengupta and Dr. Hansda for their great help, and owe special thanks to them.

I know that any one of the issues under consideration, like power, status and caste, is never static. These are always undergoing through changes for which there are a number of responsible factors. These factors are also placed in a state of transformation. Prior to this work of mine no comprehensive work along this line was carried out in any urban complex, especially in the city of Calcutta. There are many works which may be considered as stray finds. I hope that the present work has laid the foundation. In future any one of the sectors may be compared with data and result of the present work.

For a work of this nature, with enormous labour output there were also a great inputs of academic issues, acquaintance with the people and other merits of quality. For survey work with the application of both questionnaire and case studies methods I have had the opportunity to be in close
contact with many persons. All of them rendered valuable cooperation. I had a few encounters which gave me new experiences. To all the persons concerned, initially informants and later friends, I am thankful.

This work has taken a long time to complete not only because of the size and because of personal vicissitudes, but also because some of the key concepts were developed as the work progressed. This situation of continuous change may be explained in terms of dynamic nature of social phenomena connected with the issues on power, status and caste, and so also the new insight which are evolving in processual forms. At one point, I had to stop and so I did with presentation of results.

My heartfelt regards and profound thanks are due to Professor Asok K. Ghosh of the Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University, who encouraged me to carry out the work and provided with invaluable help in all situations and circumstances concerned with the work. This he did with great care both in his office and in his personal collection of materials.

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