Chapter VI

CONCLUSION
I

The thesis is divided into five chapters. These are: the introduction, the problem and perspective, the Dobhi Block, the family, economic life, and power and privilege.

The first chapter brings out a review of the studies on social stratification in India. These are divided into three parts, namely, monodimensional, multidimensional and recent studies on social stratification. Besides providing an overview of these studies we have discussed the plan and objectives of the study along with a note on the method of the study.

The central concern of the thesis is to understand and analyse the distribution of power and privileges as the basis of social stratification. In general in India, and in Dobhi Block of Jaunpur District of Uttar Pradesh in particular, power and privileges are found in different forms and expressions. We start with the assumption that power determines the distribution of resources in a given society. And it becomes a privilege when one possesses power or products of power. Thus, one who has power and enjoys privilege(s) is also bestowed with prestige in a society. We are not referring to power as something for its own sake. Power is essentially an economic and social phenomenon.
An extreme view of power would mean that everything in a society can be categorised in terms of more or less power, hence more or less privileges. The distribution of power, therefore, refers to the rank-order of positions in a given social situation.

Social stratification refers to this unequal distribution of power and privileges. Because of such an inequality stratification becomes a sensitive aspect of society. But it is always based on certain values and norms on the basis of which scarce resources of the society are distributed among various groups and members.

Who gets what and why - is a perennial question. And to this extent there is a general answer to this question. However, we propose to examine this question in a very specific context, namely, the Block we have studied in Uttar Pradesh.

Most of the studies on social stratification in India have undermined the significance of power and privilege as the most important bases of social stratification. It is a fact that these too emanate from the socio-cultural and economic factors and processes, but it is also true that power and privilege determine to a large extent social and economic possessions in a particular society. It is with this perspective we have provided a critical review of the studies on social stratification in India.
The emphasis in the studies of social stratification has shifted from time to time in terms of substantive areas as well as approaches. In the fifties and sixties the main emphasis was on the studies of caste, class and elite with their all ramifications. We can say that most of the studies of social stratification had three foci, namely, (i) caste as an all encompassing system of stratification, (ii) a demarcation between caste, class and power, and (iii) caste and class struggle.

In the seventies and eighties we notice some new trends. One finds an increased emphasis on indigenisation of concepts and approaches in the studies of social stratification in particular and the Indian society in general. This new emphasis has opened up a new area of debate and research. There is more emphasis on the understanding of structural segments of society in terms of their historicity. It is with this perspective we have given a detailed account of monodimensional, multidimensional and recent studies in the area of social stratification. Without going into the details of these major types of studies we would say that at least three points need our attention:

(1) What are the various dimensions of social stratification which have been examined and analysed in these studies?
(2) What are the approaches and methods applied in these studies?

(3) To what extent these various approaches and methods have been found relevant for analysing social stratification in India?

Some scholars have observed that India's colonisation itself is a significant factor in shaping the growth of knowledge. It is this 'knowledge' which has brought about distortion of India's social reality. Further, the western social science approaches and methods have added to the distortion produced by the British rule in India. Various studies of caste have decisively concluded that the British rulers used caste for perpetuating their policy of "divide and rule" by putting one caste against another or by granting decree to a particular caste for higher rank over some other castes. These trends proved negative for the Indian subcontinent. To regard caste as a unique Indian phenomenon on the one hand, and an archaic and primeval institution on the other, served the interests of the British colonisers. The plural character of the Indian society has been praised with this particular interest of the British rulers in India.

Thus, the above studies created more misconceptions and distortions rather than clarifications and correct projections of India's social reality. Indigenisation of
the concepts and approaches should be seen in terms of the British rule in India and the acceptance of western models and approaches for understanding of the Indian society. We have raised the following questions and tried to seek answers to them:

(1) How far the studies of social stratification have incorporated the historicity of Indian society?

(2) What are the approaches, methods and techniques in regard to social stratification?

(3) Where did they originate and how the experiences behind their origin are different from the experience of Indian social reality?

(4) What measures have been taken to ascertain priorism of these tools of understanding?

We can confidently say that today there is more realisation among the sociologists about the appropriateness of theory, methods, concepts and techniques being used by them. They are aware of theoretic and substantive concerns. The nature of direction of social change in Indian society is mainly responsible for this cognitive awareness. We have examined the phenomenon of social stratification from the point of attributes of status and interaction between various status groups. Hierarchic relations have been seen from both angles.
Our effort is to see social stratification in terms of a unit which encompasses not only single village or inter-village ties, but a group of villages as a unit in itself. We have started with the assumption that it is this unit which has become an operational arena of status groups, networks and social relations. Such an analysis is, therefore, not confined to inter-village, inter-group and inter-family comparisons. All these are very much in this unit. But more than all these, there is a synchronisation and existence of the unit as an independent entity. From this point of view our study is a departure in terms of substantive as well as analytical aspects.

We have found that caste, land and education are the most crucial factors in status determination. We have discussed these three dimensions of social stratification in the subsequent chapters. On the basis of these three variables and patterns of interaction between various groups, family and individual we have also discussed various channels and networks between these units in the Block.

We have selected Dobhi Block of Jaunpur district in Uttar Pradesh. The data were collected in three phases: (i) preliminary survey, (ii) identification of selected families, and (iii) a detailed study of selected families. Fieldwork was carried out in three successive phases so that
data could be generated in a systematic manner. Besides generating data we have also collected data from office records, reports, archival materials, etc. A couple of case studies were also conducted for ensuring qualitative depth to the study.

II

Dobhi Block, the locale of our study, is a part of Jaunpur district. The district is centrally located and it is connected with Varanasi, Ghazipur and Azamgarh districts. Dobhi is one of the 20 blocks, and it consists of 124 villages. The details of these villages, including size, composition, infrastructure, are given in Chapter II. The Block is fairly large multi-caste one. However, the villages in the Block show variations in terms of their size, social structure and population.

The district Jaunpur has about 72 caste groups whereas we find 35 castes in all in Dobhi Block. The Brahmins dominate numerically among the upper castes. However, the Rajputs (Thakurs) are predominant in the Block. Ahirs and Chamars are numerically stronger than Brahmins and Thakurs. We have given details about Brahmins, Rajputs, Ahirs, Koeris and Chamars based on the District Gazetteer of Jaunpur.

As per available records the permanent settlement took place in the area around 1795. Under the settlement,
the landowners were made de-facto owners of land. The occupancy tenants were created, who could be evicted under the regulation of the settlement. The Raghuvanshi Rajputs received the privilege of landownership. Ahir, Koeri, Kurmi and Chamār, etc. became tenants. Some Brahmins were also granted lands. Table 2:2 on p.80 provides details about caste and landownership. Thus Rajputs not only have been owning land till today; they have also been cultivating a large chunk of land.

We have found that caste and education are closely interlinked in Dobhi Block. Our data reveal that the Thakurs of Dobhi Block have not only been owning and controlling land, but they also enjoyed higher social and political status than any other castes. We have substantiated this point in our analysis in chapters III, IV and V.

The pattern of relationship between caste, land and education has not changed substantially in the post-independence period. We have given details about caste and landownership in the year 1978-79 (pp. 88-90). The details given as referred to above bring out ramifications of relationship between caste and landownership particularly in regard to size and composition of caste and amount of landownership. We have also discussed relationship between caste, land and education. We have found that class structure in the Block is concomitant with caste structure. Incongruence between caste and class is of a marginal nature. This is evident
from Table 2:5 on p.97.

On the basis of our understanding of caste, class and land we have found that during the post-independence period the pattern of landowning has not changed much in Dobhi Block. The ex-tenants have not been benefitted substantially after the zamindari abolition. But it is a fact that today land is owned by many more families than in the past. Land reforms have also defused the situation to some extent. Inter-caste and intra-caste relations have changed significantly. The Jajmani system has become weak. One can notice today that the rich farmers are a product of post-independence period. New occupations have come about. Out-migration has become more conspicuous. Thus social change has become a fact of life, and also to some extent a new value in village life.

Some of the changes listed above have affected the traditional structural arrangement. Some families have gone up in the social hierarchy whereas others have slid down as a result of various forces of change.

We have found a close tie between caste and education. Parallel to caste hierarchy, there is a hierarchy of attainment in the field of education. The members of the upper castes are not only more and highly educated, they have also been controlling and managing for the last eighty years various educational institutions in the Block. The control
of the upper castes over these educational institutions has increased particularly after independence. One of the most important reasons is that they have found management of educational institutions as an alternate source of power and privilege to some extent in place of the zamindari system. The data we have provided in this context are quite self-revealing. Table 2:7 provides caste-wise enrolment of students in schools and colleges in the Block. It is found that the upper castes are numerically preponderant in regard to enrolment of boys and girls in the schools and colleges in the Block. Our data regarding caste background of teachers also substantiate the hypothesis regarding upper caste dominance. Nearly 73 per cent of teachers are Thakurs and Brahmins.

We find a sort of summation of statuses, hence continuity of traditional status. It is not that the upper caste teachers have teaching alone as the source of their livelihood; they also own substantial agricultural land and other material assets. Thus caste, class and education are co-existent to a large extent in the Block. The congruence between these three becomes the real and effective basis of distribution of power and privileges in the Block. Today power structure, including the formal one, is determined by the levels of such congruities or incongruities in the
village community. Those who have been able to retain land have attained formal education and also belong to upper stratum of the society are in fact "new lords" in the village community. To the extent they are new to the system or to a changed form of the village leadership, there are new forms of social relationships, dominance and exploitation.

We have also examined the contemporary power structure in the Block. Our data show that the upper castes particularly Thakurs have been able to get into positions of power in the village panchayats at the Block level. More than three-fourth of Pradhans are Thakurs and Brahmins. Ahirs, an intermediate agricultural caste, have also been benefitted to a considerable extent. Some of the numerically Ahir preponderant village panchayats have voted them to the positions of power. We find that about 80 per cent positions in the cooperative societies and other institutions are occupied by the upper castes. More or less same is the proportion of upper castes in regard to landholding and educational attainment. There is nothing like absolute control of power, but these figures also indicate that there is a very significant observable asymmetrical structure of power corresponding with social, cultural and economic inequalities.
We have stated at the outset in the thesis that family is the main unit of social status in the village community. Intra-caste and inter-caste status distinctions in terms of ownership of land, attainment of education, power, resources and networks have been examined through family as the unit of observation and analysis. It is the family which is rated as enjoying or deprived of certain status. Individual members draw their status from the status of the family barring some exceptions. The notion of composite-status has also been found quite useful in highlighting both the status of family and the individual. We have discussed in third chapter three factors, namely, caste, land and education. A given family can be judged in terms of these factors as its support base. We have in fact examined the resourceability of different castes and families in terms of these variables by putting them in some rank-order.

With a view to understand the social structure of Dobhi Block we have analysed the composition of households with reference to caste, clan and lineage and have tried to relate these divisions in terms of land and other resources. We have also seen the extensions and spread of given families in several villages. These facts bring out the nature of zamindari systems and tenurial conditions. We
also understand that the zamindars were not a monolithic lot. They were differentiated in terms of their zamindari rights and so were their tenants. To a considerable extent, these differences have been transformed during the post-independent period into new forms of inequality. We have given details about families which were benefitted after the abolition of zamindari and the families which were put to disadvantages. The implications of land reforms have also been put to scrutiny. Continuity and change are the essence of today's situation. There is nothing like complete transformation or replacement of the old system by a new one.

Keeping in view the forces of change in the post-independent period we have grouped all the families into four categories, namely, (i) rich farmers, (ii) middle farmers, (iii) poor farmers and (iv) marginal and landless cultivators. This categorisation corresponds with caste and educational hierarchies. It is almost impossible to find a convincing answer to the question whether caste status determines such class-based ranking or class status brings about flexibility in the norms of caste ranking.

In fact, caste is not simply a system of ritualistic and religious observances; it is a composite system - a system of wholesome relationships. Similarly a class system cannot be reduced just to economic relationships. There
is always a social and cultural dimension of class relations. And finally, both caste and class are systems of power relations. Concretisation of caste and class in terms of their effectivity can be seen at the level of family. Therefore, we have accepted family as a looking glass for analysing caste, class and power.

Our analysis of Dobhi Block should not be taken as if there has not been any change in the village community. The traditionally privileged castes and communities have openly expressed that they have lost their traditional status on several counts. The main agricultural castes have gained status in social, political and economic spheres. The lower castes feel more liberated today than yesteryears. Factually also, these expressions can be corroborated. We have also analysed change in the Block in the context of jajmani system, caste associations and people's perceptions about their status, etc.

IV

We have further examined our major hypothesis regarding the nexus between caste, land and education in the chapter on economic life. After having provided a brief account of the traditional economic structure of the Block, we have discussed eight cases of the families which have improved their economic status over a period of time. These cases
demonstrate that people could improve their economic status provided they have necessary motivation, acumen and support from necessary quarters. However, there were also factors external to the village to which these persons belonged to. Most of these families belonged to the upper castes, namely, Brahmins and Thakurs. However, two Ahir and one Chamar families were also able to move up economically on the same pattern as witnessed in the case of Thakurs and Brahmins.

More important for us is the analysis of factors and forces which have brought about structural changes in the economic life of the people in the post-independent period. We have listed several factors, but the most important is India's independence itself. It further facilitated the abolition of zamindari system and introduction of measures of land reforms. Another connected factor is the introduction of adult franchise and new political institutions at various levels. And the third factor is introduction of developmental institutions and agencies in the countryside. All these have brought about transformation of the traditional economic structures and networks.

We find that there is an unevenness in the transformation that has taken place over the years. That some have changed more, others have changed less and some have not changed noticeably. Agriculture remains the main source of livelihood.
But the production relations and the form and content of production have changed considerably. There is diversification of economic activities. Newer occupations have become a fact of life. Education and migration have contributed to the diversification of the economic activities in the villages. We have given details in regard to various economic pursuits. We have also found a sort of correspondence between occupational hierarchy and caste ranking. This has been further substantiated by our observation regarding subsidiary occupations, land arrangements and nature of agricultural production. One of the interesting findings is the investment pattern. People invest today in non-traditional fields expecting high returns. Business is certainly the best choice for the people for investing their savings. We have listed new economic activities in which the people of the Block are engaged today. But again this is mainly an upper caste phenomenon. The middle castes invest more in conventional sectors particularly in purchase of land. The upper castes besides investing in highly profitable enterprises also spend on the education of their children. The middle castes and lower castes spend less on education and more on social occasions.

Lastly, we have discussed the phenomenon of power and distribution of privileges and resources as the bases of
stratification in Dobhi Block. Theoretically speaking, zamindari system does not exist, and therefore, it cannot be the basis of power and privileges. But in reality caste and landownership are the most important bases of social inequality today in the Block.

The hierarchy of power was ascriptive in the past. The same ascriptive base to a large extent became the basis for acquiring power in the initial years after independence. Thus, ascription becomes basis of achievement, and this very achievement continues to prevail during the last three and half decades. In fact, it is a vicious circle in the sense that ascription becomes the basis of achievement and the achievement practically takes a form of ascription. In this way, there is a continuity of the traditional system to a large extent. It is not the continuity of a given caste in the positions of power, but it is the continuity of certain families and individuals drawn from the village community who share certain common attributes. The ranking based on these attributes can help understanding of hierarchy of power. To this extent, there is a change in the traditional power structure. We have discussed in this chapter the forces and factors of continuity and change in the realm of power and distribution of privileges.
We find that the concept of dominant caste requires a revision taking into account intra-caste distinctions, inter-caste similarities, distinctions at the levels of families and individuals in regard to power and dominance. The eight cases which we have referred to in Chapter IV are different from the rest of the families of their respective castes. Their economic dominance does not fall in the general pattern of dominance. The attributional ranking as the basis of power hierarchy negates the effectiveness of corporate or caste dominance. What we find is a sort of continuity in some respects and a sort of change in some other respects in regard to the structure of power and privileges.

We have analysed the traditional power structure in terms of caste panchayat, village panchayat, hereditary positions and offices of power, etc. The upper castes enjoyed power and privileges on the ascriptive basis. They had no threat from other castes and communities. They took interest in several types of welfare activities. The lower castes were certainly deprived of an access to positions of power, and therefore had no chance to engage themselves in any such activities. At times they were denied opportunities for expressing even their genuine grievances.

In the post-independence period the impact of political parties, village panchayat, cooperative societies,
developmental agencies, adult franchise have been immense in bringing about noticeable changes in the distribution of power and privileges. We have earlier pointed out that the upper castes continue to dominate in the positions of power in the post-independence period too. At the same time there is a trend towards liberalisation of traditional moorings. There is a hiatus between the ideal and the actual. Today there are many more incongruities. The fact that there is a reservation for the Scheduled Castes in Dobhi Block in the village panchayats, cooperative societies and at other levels itself shows a clear departure from the traditional power relations. How effective the Scheduled Caste members are in these bodies is a question of a substantive nature. But the fact that they have their representatives itself is a significant development. Keeping this in view we have analysed the positions and offices occupied since independence by members of different castes and communities. We have related our data with landholding and educational attainment.

While analysing the distribution of power and privileges we have also examined the sources of power. A small minority of families have access to sources of power and privileges. Some families are deprived completely of both power and privileges. However, it does not mean that power is a zero-sum game. Power is a relative phenomenon. There are
indirect ways of extricating power, and there are also hazy expressions of enjoyment of power. We have also analysed inter-connections between power at village, block, district and the state levels by specifically citing examples of some families.

Factions, rivalries and bickerings are also found in the Block on the basis of party affiliation, connections with leaders, groups at the district, state and national levels and the caste affinity. Networks also create cleavages in the village community. We have cited examples of such networks of various families. The most important point is that the privileges are distributed on this basis. A large number of families are denied facilities because they belong to rival groups or have no connections. We have cited three examples of families who received encouragement for upward mobility from the people at the apex of the power structure.