Chapter III

THE FAMILY
We shall discuss the structure and composition of different social groups in the Dobhi Block. Our main emphasis is on the analysis of their background in terms of caste, land and education. For this purpose we consider family as an important unit. Family, being a social group, is the basic unit of status evaluation. The individual is also a unit of social stratification, but it is the family with which an individual is perenniably associated. A given family can be differentiated from another in terms of its caste and class background. Some families enjoy higher status, and others do not. Not only intercaste familial status distinctions exist, there are also intracaste familial status distinctions. Hence, a hierarchy of statuses at inter-caste and intracaste level. The factors which determine status include caste-rank, ownership of land, attainment of education, occupation, political achievements, capabilities and resourcefulness, and networks etc. These factors together determine the generalised status of a family.

Status of a family is not static. It acquires different dimensions in the context of external and internal forces of social change. Some traditionally privileged families enjoyed higher status in the past, and even today continue to enjoy high status. However, some of their counterparts elsewhere have suffered a setback, and their status has certainly gone down. Some families which were
"depressed" in the past, they have emerged today quite powerful and influential. There are some lower castes families who enjoy superior status today than some of the higher caste families. Our view is that the activities of an individual, a family and a caste-group are not confined to a particular village where they are located. Therefore, their status is determined not only by those who live in these villages but also by those who live outside it. It cuts across caste and village boundaries. Status of a family is an inter-village, inter-family and inter-caste phenomenon. It would be our endeavour to examine these aspects in detail. How the 'extensions' of status ranking go beyond a single village? And, how status of a family stretches across the caste boundary? In order to answer few such questions we wish to discuss factors of status-determination of an individual and family in concrete situations. K.L. Sharma's study of Rajasthan villages shows that caste and class are important units of social ranking for status determination. But an individual and family are equally important units of status ranking and these units of status-determination are interrelated. For evaluating the 'composit status' of each household Sharma has used selected indices such as caste, income, landholdings and types of houses. The score secured by each household on these indicates determine
the "composite status" rank of a given household. Our 'experience' about Dobhi Block suggests that it is difficult to ascertain the income of a family. It renders a researcher helpless particularly when the farm income is to be ascertained. The income of the members who are casually employed cannot be exactly ascertained. Somewhat similar problem arises in regard to the ownership of a house by a family.

The present study refers to three variables, namely caste, land and education for evaluating social status. In a broad sense the landownership also facilitates the possession of other resources including educational attainment. It helps a family to build its support base including participation in politics and formation of networks/connections. And these further facilitate acquisition of power positions in the statutory bodies.

Ownership of land is closely linked with caste. Higher castes own substantial landholdings. Thus, possession and control of land not only provides prestige and status to the family, but also opens avenues for acquiring wealth and prosperity for members of a family. In the same way, education becomes a deciding factor in choosing occupation, and thereby of income of a family. Eventually, a combination
of these factors would determine the status of a family even in the years to come.

**Composition of the Households**

The present study is based on a census and enumeration of 386 households. These have been drawn from 68 villages of the Block. These households comprise 214 main families for which qualitative data have been collected along with their 172 agnate families who live separately from the stem families. We have undertaken this task to have a composite view of social composition of our sample. For our purpose a household is defined as the entire group of persons who commonly live together and take their meals from a common kitchen unless the exigencies of work prevent them from doing so. These persons must be related to the head of the household who may be any person who bears the chief responsibility for the maintenance of the household and is recognised as head of the household. Our sample consists of the main castes of the Block. It represents higher castes such as Brahmin and Thakur. The middle castes in our sample are: Ahir, Koeri, Kumhar, Mallah and Bhar. We have also included Chamars in our study. Thus, the sample broadly represents the entire Block. Of the total households, 53.88 per cent belong to higher castes, 28.75 per cent to the middle castes, and 17.35 per cent are drawn
from the Chamars.

Now we would give details about size and educational attainments of these households and examine their relationship with ownership of land. Our data on these counts pertain to 386 households.

The size of households of different caste categories shows some broad variations. These are presented in the following table.

### Table 3.1
Caste and size of households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Size of the household</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>up to 5</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>members</td>
<td>members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher castes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17.30)</td>
<td>(29.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle castes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(27.02)</td>
<td>(40.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled castes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(44.77)</td>
<td>(51.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures within brackets indicate percentage.
It is evident that more than 50 per cent of households of the higher castes are of large-size. The small-size households are nearly 17 per cent of the total households. This trend gets reversed in respect of the Scheduled Caste households. The percentage of small-sized households is more than the middle-sized and large-sized households. So far as middle castes are concerned, the distribution of households in terms of size does not indicate any significant pattern as households of different sizes are more or less equally distributed.

The ownership and control of land among the higher castes continues to remain "traditional" in Dobhi Block to a large extent. It has changed to some extent. The middle castes and Scheduled Castes also own land in varying proportions. And to a limited extent landlessness prevails among the higher castes too. This is evident from the following table.

It is clear from the table that the households belonging to different caste-categories are divided in terms of landholdings. For instance, the landlessness or owning less than 1 acre of land is more pronounced among the Scheduled Caste households. Roughly three-fourth households in this category are landless. However, nearly one-fourth households belonging to the middle castes also
fall under this category. But only 5.37 per cent higher castes households are landless or own less than 1 acre of land. Another notable feature is that more than one-third households belonging to the higher castes own substantial land, that is, above 15 acres. Contrary to this, only 1.80 per cent households of the middle castes have the privilege of owning land more than 15 acres. No Scheduled Caste

**Table 3:2**

**Caste and landownership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Land owned (in acres)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landless</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or less than 1 acre</td>
<td>acres</td>
<td>acres</td>
<td>acres</td>
<td>15 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher castes</td>
<td>14 (5.37)</td>
<td>41 (19.71)</td>
<td>52 (25.00)</td>
<td>31 (14.90)</td>
<td>70 (33.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle castes</td>
<td>31 (27.92)</td>
<td>63 (56.75)</td>
<td>13 (11.71)</td>
<td>2 (1.80)</td>
<td>2 (1.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled</td>
<td>49 (73.13)</td>
<td>14 (20.89)</td>
<td>3 (4.47)</td>
<td>1 (1.50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures within brackets indicate percentage.

household owns this much of land. Nevertheless the highest number of households from the middle castes own land in the category of 1-5 acres (56.75 per cent) followed by 11.71 per cent in the category of 6-10 acres. The respective
percentages of the Scheduled Caste households in these two categories are 20.89 and 4.47 only.

Another noticeable feature is the variation in the landholdings of different castes. And significant differences in the landowning exists within the households of the same castes. These variations indicate the relative economic strength of specific households.

**Caste and Educational Attainment**

We have analysed educational attainments of 2386 persons belonging to 386 households. Of these, 1376 belong to the higher castes, 680 to the middle castes, and 330 to the lower caste. These figures include members of both sexes excluding the school-going children. We notice that the educational achievements of the persons belonging to different castes reflect the same trends which we have observed in regard to caste hierarchy and economic position of different castes. There is a definite relationship between the caste status and educational attainments. These appear to be closely related. It is evident in the following table.

The table clearly shows that significant variations are there in respect of the educational achievements of persons belonging to different castes. Firstly, there are
Table 3.3
Caste and educational achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Levels of literary</th>
<th>Total No. of Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>illiterate or literate and without any Middle educational levels</td>
<td>High school and Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High caste</td>
<td>421 (30.59)</td>
<td>249 (18.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle caste</td>
<td>427 (62.79)</td>
<td>81 (11.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Caste</td>
<td>232 (70.30)</td>
<td>34 (10.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>637</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures within brackets indicate percentage.

lesser number of illiterates among the higher castes than the middle and lower castes. The percentage of illiterate persons is 30.59 among the higher castes, 62.79 among the middle castes, and 70.30 among the lower castes. Thus, the number of illiterates belonging to the middle and lower caste groups is more than double. But the variations get narrowed down at the primary, middle and high school/intermediate levels. There is not much disparity. However, at the higher level of education, namely, graduation and above, the disparity increases.
As such 18.82 per cent people have acquired higher education among the higher castes, whereas from the middle castes only 5.58 have acquired higher education. The lower caste still lags behind as only 2.42 per cent are graduates from among the Chamars.

The resourceability of different castes, namely, higher, middle and lower corresponds with their rank-order, hence we find a correlation between caste and educational achievements. These observations are also substantiated by the fact of students pursuing professional courses and studying at higher level. Our data suggest that a large number of students receiving higher education belong mainly to the higher caste families. They are much less among the middle and lower castes.

**Structure and Composition of Family**

We present in table 3.4 family structure in respect of different castes. A broad picture emerges from the table. It is evident that the average number of members in various castes varies considerably. However, the average number of members belonging to all castes is 12.53. The average of members among Brahmins and Thakurs is higher than the general average. But families belonging to other castes do not show such a trend except the Kumhars and Mallahs who are very close to the general average.
Table 3:4
Family composition, caste and numerical strength.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Caste</th>
<th>Number of families</th>
<th>Number of persons in the family</th>
<th>Average number of persons in the family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>18.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thakur</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>14.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahir</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>9.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koeri</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>9.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumhar</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>12.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallah</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>12.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>7.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamar</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>9.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>2682</td>
<td>12.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, the average number of members among other castes such as Ahir, Koeri, Bhar and Chamar falls short of the general average number. In other words, the higher castes register on an average of 15 members for the middle castes. The corresponding number for the middle castes is 10 members, and for the Chamar it is 9 persons only. In view of these facts it may be concluded that the
size of family is larger among the upper castes than the middle and lower castes. The Chamars in particular have small family in Dobhi Block.

Table 3:5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Number of generations living in the family</th>
<th>Total No. of families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thakur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahir</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koeri</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallah</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumhar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamar</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that families living with three generations are found among all the castes. However, in relative terms, this pattern is more pronounced among the Thakurs. Families with two generations are also found among all the castes. However, the number of such families is more among the middle and the lower castes than the upper.
castes. The number of families living with only one generation is negligible. And the number of families living with four generations is largely confined to the Brahmins and Thakurs. It is almost absent among other castes.

Families differ in terms of size and composition. We have already seen these differences in the context of different castes. However, it is equally important to look into these variations among the families in the same caste. We have noticed that the families belonging to a caste show wide variations in the membership. There are families who do not have more than two members, and there are families with as many as forty members. Large families are found among the Brahmins and Thakurs. But among the Ahirs, Koeris, Kumhars, Mallahs and Bhars no family consists of more than 29 members. Almost the similar trend is noticed among the Chamars too. Three categories in terms of family-size can be found as given in the following table.

The distribution of members in these three broad categories suggests that among the Brahmins and Thakurs large-sized (more than 10 members) families is the dominant pattern. The small-sized families are relatively less in these two castes. But among the families belonging to Ahir, Koeri, Kumhar, Mallah and Bhar castes, the trend gets reversed. There are less number of families in these castes.
Table 3:6
Distribution of members by caste and family size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Upto 5 members</th>
<th>6-10 members</th>
<th>Above 10 members</th>
<th>Total No. of families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thakur</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahir</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koeri</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumhar</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallah</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamar</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

with more than 10 members. In fact, the number of families is by and large the same in each of these three categories. This holds true in respect of the families belonging to the Chamar also. Among the Ahirs, Koeri and other middle castes nearly 50 per cent of the families consist of 5 members only. And the number of families having 6-10 members is largest among the middle castes.

In addition to these we have also collected information on actual composition of family members, their relationship
with the head of the family, period of separation from the
family, number of families separated from ag- netic units,
their details of members working outside the village. We
have also inquired about fulfilment of family obligations,
financial assistance rendered by the working members, and the
values and norms cherished by the family members.

It is found that the joint family pattern is generally
predominant among the Brahmins and Thakurs. Nuclear family
is more common among the Chamars. The Ahirs, Koeris, Kumhars,
Mallahs and Bhars have both nuclear and joint families.
Among the Thakurs of Senapur (Jaunpur district) joint families
are 74.5 per cent and the nuclear families are only 2.5 per
cent. But the respective percentage for the untouchables
(the Chamars) are 34 per cent and 66 per cent in the same
village. 4

However, most of the families despite being nuclear
perform all the "necessary" obligations of joint families.
Occasions like birth, marriage and death bring many agentic
nuclear families together. Some families particularly among
the middle and lower castes pursue agricultural activities
together on cooperative basis. There exists a great deal
of unity and solidarity among these families.

However, joint family is considered an ideal type in
Dobhi Block. It is valued morally very high. But in
practice such families must qualify for certain attributes. For instance, such families must be privileged to possess substantial landholdings and economic resources. Their members should be having lucrative jobs. However, such an ideal of joint-family is not quite common among the middle and lower castes. Few exceptions are found among the Brahmins and Thakurs in the Block.

A family is evaluated quite high, if its members have not separated for a longer time. It should be noted that the values attached to the joint family vary contextually. For example, a joint-family which is infested by frequent quarrels and disputes among its members, is looked upon with disgrace and contempt. Separation in such a family is seen desirable, and not as stigma. When separation takes place with mutual consent of the members it is also considered socially respectable.

The cultural expectations of an ideal joint family and that of a nuclear family are not significantly different in Dobhi Block. The cooperation and fulfilment of obligations among agnatic kins and relations with affines are by and large governed by common cultural norms. Our data suggest that the separation in the family takes place largely for the economic reasons. Other reasons could be there, but these too brew mainly from the economic considerations. The reasons
for separation are not caste-specific. For example, increased pressure on land and brighter prospects of employment in towns and cities have resulted into large scale migration from Dobhi Block. The increasing opportunities for higher education have also raised ambitions and encouraged occupational mobility. The desire for more individuality and independence has grown rapidly, and newly acquired values have challenged the traditional world-view.

The norms and values of the joint family receive much less importance than the desire for higher standards of living. Among the poor families with meagre landholdings, the young male members go out in search of work. They hope that they would be able to contribute to their families. In course of time these migrants witness a change in their attitudes and values and develop a desire for setting down away from their parents and brothers.

We have also come across such instances where all the working members of a joint family do not necessarily contribute equally to the economic exigencies of the family. There could be several reasons. Some of the working members keep their families at the place of their work. They get their children educated there itself. They do not claim any share from the joint property in the village. Such situations too contribute to the "break-up" of the joint families.
Disparity in the income of the earning members also causes split in the joint family. Often the formal split is not there, but the family gets separated functionally. We have observed cases where the earning members with comfortable incomes have constructed their own houses and invested in other economically viable activities. They have avoided contributions towards any capital investment in the joint family. Formal separations in such families have not taken place for quite a long time.

We have also observed other aspects of the family life in Dobhi Block. The sub-units within a joint family live jointly and separately both in many ways. They may take the food from the same kitchen and live under the same roof, yet they bear the cost of education, and personal social obligations individually. However, such patterns are more pronounced in those large families which own landed property in common and the members are engaged in different occupations. Such families are set for eventual break-up. However, despite the separation, the members attend social functions, marriages and other activities organised by the stem family. They help their kinsmen in seeking jobs and extend a variety of other favours including the economic assistance to the needy members of the family.
Historical Background of the Families

Most of the families are the original settlers in their respective villages who have been living there for several generations. However, two Brahmin families are living in their respective villages for the last three generations. They had migrated from a village near Varanasi to the present village to look after a temple. Among the Thakurs, only 14 families have migrated from other places. These families could be called "migrants" but not in the strict sense of the term. These families owned land in more than one village. Hence, they preferred not to lease out substantial lands owned by them in these villages. They migrated to these villages from other villages from within the Block in order to manage their land. All of these families have their kinsmen in the ancestral villages. However, with an exception of three families none of them own any land at present in their ancestral villages. They have either disposed of the land owned by them in the ancestral villages or have transferred to their lineage members living in the native villages. Most of such families resorted to mutual transfer at the time of the consolidation of landholdings which came into operation in 1965 in Dobhi Block.

Among other castes also some families have migrated from other places. Among Ahirs, 6 families belong to this
category. Three of them migrated from the villages within the Block, and the remaining three came from outside the Block. But there is only 1 migrant family each among Koeris, Kumhars and Bhars. They migrated from the adjoining villages outside the Block. There are 7 families of Chamar who have come to their present villages from other villages located within the radius of 15 to 25 kilometers. Some of these villages belong to other Block of the district.

Most of the families belonging to Ahirs, Koeris and other castes migrated under a system locally known as Nawasa. Under this system, a son-in-law is adopted by his mother-in-law as her "guardian". This is done in case she does not have a son to look after her. The son-in-law starts living with his wife at the mother-in-law's house. He looks after the family and its property.

The Chamar families had other reasons to migrate. Some of them had migrated to the present village to serve as the permanent agricultural labourers for Thakur families. These families had migrated for seeking employment and their protection against plague which broke out in their native villages about sixty years ago causing many deaths. Therefore, they sought shelter in the present village. Two families reported to have migrated to escape the wrath
of their village landlords to whom they refused to render begar (forced labour).

Broadly speaking, the Brahmins and Thakurs owned and controlled land before the abolition of zamindari system. A large proportion of land was held by the Thakurs - the dominant landowning caste. The Ahirs and Koeris were by and large the fixed-rate and occupancy-tenants. Quite a few castes such as Mallah, Bhar, Kumhar, Bin etc. also had this privilege. The tenants-at-will were from among the lower castes such as Chamars, Pasis and Khatiks who also constituted the bulk of agricultural and landless workers.

Such was the general pattern in Dobhi Block. However, substantial differences existed in the status of landowners. They were differentiated in terms of their rights in land which were quite complex. Besides these, there were other factors which determined the 'status' of a particular family belonging to a particular class of landowners.

Our data reveal that among the Brahmins, a lone family enjoyed the status of a zamindar. Remaining 15 families were kastkars (cultivators). Their landlords were Thakurs from several villages within the Block. However, two families reported that their landlords were the Banias of Varanasi district. Among the Thakurs also, all were not
zamindars. Out of the total of 93 families, 82 were zamindars, 6 were kastkars, and 5 families were both kastkars and zamindars. It is interesting to find that the families which were kastkars, held the land under proprietary rights. The other Thakur families from other villages were their landlords. One zamindar was a Muslim who belonged to Jaunpur city. Those families having the status of a zamindar and a kastkar were confined to two villages only.

The Ahirs and Koeris constituted the class of fixed-rate tenants. Other middle castes too were the tenants. All the families of Ahirs, Koeris and Kumhars were the tenants of the Thakurs. One family of Mallahs and another of Bhars were never tenants. One was an agricultural labourer and the other was engaged in the traditional occupation of boating and fishing.

The Chamars never had the distinction of being the fixed-rate tenants. Out of the total of 35 families, 7 were tenants-at-will, 3 were agricultural labourers and the rest of 25 families were agricultural labourers attached to the Thakurs. These families were granted some land by the landlords in lieu of their services. The land thus given to them constituted part of their wages.
The zamindari rights had many aspects in regard to ownership and management of land. As all the Thakurs were related to one of the twelve lineages, they had shares in land which belonged to their respective patti. And such lands were distributed in several villages of the Block. In many instances all the agnatic members of a patti had share in the same village. The kinsmen had their respective shares in the land in the proportion to their lineage divided it in course of time. This undoubtedly varied to a very large extent. Consequently upon this, substantial differences existed in the landownership pattern and the size of holdings. The proportion of land owned by a family under the zamindari rights also varied significantly. Against these complexities, some Thakurs owned land in several villages of the Block, whereas some had in a few villages only. Again the proportion of share also varied considerably. In course of time, the sale-purchase or transfer of land through mutual adjustments among the families of the same village or another village rendered the entire pattern still complex. These together had varied implications for the owners as well as for the tenants.

Our data indicate that all the thirteen families of Brahmins were kastkars whose landlords belonged to two to
five villages within the Block. Only one family enjoyed the status of a zamindar whose tenants were Mallahs and Khatiks of the same village. One zamindar belonged to Varanasi. Among the Thakurs, more than 50 per cent families owned land in two to five villages. Nearly 15 per cent families owned land in six to nine villages, and only 10 per cent families owned land in more than ten villages of the Block. However, the landownership of 3 families was confined to a single village only. Although these families owned land in several villages, majority of them concentrated in one village only where they held substantial portion of land under self-cultivation. Perhaps for these reasons, none of these families had any tenants in those villages where they had settled with their lands.

The distribution of tenants was mainly determined as stated above. The majority of the Ahirs had their zamindars from a single village only. The Koeris too had the same pattern. Only 9 families from among the Ahirs and 3 Koeri families had their zamindars who belonged to two to five villages. The Kumhars, Mallahs and Bhars had the similar pattern.

Out of 35 families of Chamars, 25 had their zamindars in a single village. But 6 families had their zamindars in
two to five villages. The re...es were never tenants. It may also be noted that the tenants were not confined only to the castes of Ahir, Koeri, Kumhar, Mallah, Bhar and Chamar. Caste composition of the tenants was heterogeneous. Our study shows that some families of Brahmins and Thakurs were also tenants of the Thakurs. There were also few tenants among Nonias, Pasis and Khatiks. The majority of the tenants belonged to the middle castes. There were much less tenants among the lower and the upper castes.

The above description clearly demonstrates that ownership and control of land facilitated a hierarchically structured system of relations in Dobhi Block. The entire gamut of relations - social, economic and political within the caste and between the castes was characterised by this ranking of castes and sub-castes. The power and authority of the Thakurs was confined to the village in which they lived. It is clear that the status of the influential families was determined by their zamindari rights in land in several villages. Besides, the amount of share held by a family in the joint ownership of land was also an important factor in determining its status. The fact that some families had more and more and some had less shares constituted a hierarchy.
The families of the tenants too were differentiated. The tenancy rights they were granted, the amount of land they cultivated, the number of zamindars whose patronage they enjoyed, and the status of their zamindars were very important factors in their status-determination. Thus both caste and class based distinctions were found among the tenants in the Block. The tenants were also differentiated in terms of power and privilege. Some Ahir and Koeri families enjoyed higher status than their counterparts elsewhere in the Block. Though these families were in a minority, yet they were influential. These slightly better off families were taken into confidence by the upper caste dominants in decision making regarding public activities such as schools, construction of ponds and wells etc.

In order to ascertain the educational status of the 214 families during the zamindari days, we have analysed the educational achievements of the father and the grand-father of each Head of these families. Our data shows that the congruence between caste and class is concomitant with educational attainment. However, differential attained within a given caste and a given family existed. For example, in the grandfather's generation, 11 families of Brahmins were illiterate, 4 were literate without any
educational standard and the remaining 1 family had acquired education upto eighth standard. Only 3 were illiterate, 7 were literate without any educational standards in the father's generation. Remaining 4 families had education upto primary and middle, and 2 had education upto intermediate level. Among the Thakurs only 1 family had distinction of having a graduate, and in another family one person was educated upto intermediate level. Nearly one-third families were illiterate and literate without any educational level. Approximately one-third had education upto primary/middle levels. During the father's generation there were only 13 illiterate families. The number of families having acquired primary level of education had increased. But only 3 families acquired education upto graduation.

The picture about the middle castes is discouraging. None of these families had formal education in the father and the grand father's generations. The number of families having acquired some education without any educational level were very few. There were two each from Koeris and Kumhars, three from the Chamars and one from the Ahirs. Only one member in a Mallah family had acquired education upto the intermediate level in the father's generation. However, during the grand-father's generation two Chamars were literate though without having any formal education.
The analysis presented so far refers to the zamindari period. The following description is about the nexus between caste, land and education during the post-independence period.

Caste, Land and Education

With the abolition of the Zamindari Rights in land in 1952, all types of tenants got permanent rights on the land cultivated by them. F.G. Moore and C.A. Freydig observe: "Most of the 376000 zamindaris, however, faced only minor reductions in income. Of the 19.6 million farmers in U.P., 3.1 million became bhumidars, 14.7 million became sirdars, and the remaining 1.3 million became asamis and adivasis." But at the same time those zamindars who had possessed huge holdings suffered considerable loss.

As a consequence of the zamindari abolition many changes took place in the pattern of status in rural Uttar Pradesh. The most striking change was the tenurial security. Our findings suggested that two concrete factors were basic: (1) the average of land lost by the zamindar families or acquired by the tenants' families, and (2) subsequent relationship that emerged between the landlords and the tenants. Not many families of the ex-zamindars lost land as a consequence of the zamindari abolition. Nearly 40 percent of these families did not suffer any loss. Only 8
families are reported to have lost land between 6 to 10 acres. The loss of land in the range of 1 to 5 acres was reported by as many as 13 families. The minimum loss of land, for example, less than 1 acre, was suffered by 3 families only. Only one family lost 15 acres of land.

Tenants from among Ahirs and Koeris were benefitted most. But all of them were not benefitted equally. Roughly 50 per cent families of these two castes could not acquire any land, 7 families were benefitted nominally, and an equal number of families acquired land from 1 to 5 acres. Among the Kumhars, Mallahs and Bhars very few were benefitted. Out of a total 23 families from these three castes, only 6 families could acquire land from 1 to 5 acres. The remaining 11 families could not acquire any land. This pattern is slightly different in respect of the Chamars. Out of 35 families, 8 did not get any land, as they were not tenants. However, 13 families made a claim for land measuring less than one acre each. An equal number of families acquired land from 1 to 5 acres, and only one family acquired more than 5 acres of land.

We could not ascertain the position in respect of 38 families belonging to various castes including Brahmins. Several tenants got ownership of land, but the amount of land was meagre. Most of the Thakurs retained a large part of the best land under self-cultivation, hence no substantial
redistribution of land took place. Somewhat similar observations have been reported in other studies. Beteille, for instance, observes that the "ownership of land has shifted only in a small way from the old rentier class to the emerging class of farmers and owner-cultivators." 7 K.L. Sharma in his study of six villages of Rajasthan observes that the small zamindars living in their respective villages in Bharatpur could manage to retain their landholdings because of their direct control and supervision over their lands. Contrary to this, their counterparts in the Jagirdari villages of Sikar and Jaipur districts could not do so. Some of the Rajput zamindars have lost substantial landholdings after the land reforms. 8

It is true that not all the families suffered the loss of land consequent upon the zamindari abolition. Nor all the tenants were equally benefitted. The big landowning families were quite powerful and influential. They could manage to escape the provisions of land reforms. Advice and guidance were sought from some zamindars by their tenants. Some of the zamindars had very cordial relations with the tenants. Besides owning large landholdings, some members of their families took up modern jobs, namely, legal practice. Because of their position and "modern outlook" they were able to resolve their problems with the tenants more successfully than those.
who adhered to orthodox notions and practices. They were able to retain choicest land for self-cultivators at the time of the abolition of the zamindari system.

One Head of a family of Machehati village was working as Patwari (village land revenue officer). He managed to retain land not only of his family, but also of those agnets kins who were in good terms with him. Another family of Mandupur village managed to retain most of its land. The head of this family was a teacher in a local High School, and understood quite well litigational matters. Some zamindars hurled threats and used coercive tactics to eject their tenants.

Under the provisions of the Zamindari Abolition Act, not all families of ex-zamindars lost their land. Some of them could manage to retain their land. Somewhat similar situation existed in respect of the ex-tenants also. They were benefitted in varying measures. A.R. Desai makes an observation in this regard. He states: "Only those rich tenants who could pay the compensation could acquire ownership rights. The poorer sections of cultivating tenants, who could not afford to pay compensation, were either forced to borrow money for acquiring ownership or were denied ownership, and at the same time, lost tenurial
security and became non-owning proletariat or back-door tenants, operating under conditions of increasing insecurity and under various obligations and subordination to the proprietors of land they rented. It is true that the financial position of the tenants was a major consideration in determining their rights in the lands. However, in accordance with the provisions of the Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, different types of rights were granted to the peasants. Such provisions were largely in the favour of well-to-do peasants. It is in this context we analyse our data for a better understanding.

As already observed, the tenants in Dobhi Block were differentiated socially, economically and politically. Among them, the economically well-off managed to claim some land which they cultivated under fixed-rate tenancy rights. Other landlords who were relatively not so strong were also benefitted. The traditional caste leaders too suffered no loss. Some leaders were reported to have acted as go-betweens between the tenants of their own caste and that of the zamindars. It is interesting to know that a number of persons resorted to brockeraige in order to derive fringe benefits for themselves and their caste members.
Despite the fact that the zamindari system has been abolished, significant changes have not taken place in the landownership pattern. The following table gives the landowning pattern among 214 families.

**Table 3:7**

Distribution of landholdings among various castes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste of the families</th>
<th>Landholdings in acres</th>
<th>Total No. of families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landless or less than 1 acre</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thakur</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahir</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koeri</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumhar</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallah</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamar</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A broad picture emerges from the table. Firstly, the ownership of land is still confined to the traditionally landowning castes. Secondly, some changes are also noticed
in this regard. It is amply clear that people of various castes are differentiated in terms of landownership. Such a differentiation exists not only within different castes, but also within the same caste. The table also shows inequalities in the distribution of land among various castes. There are wide disparities in the ownership of land. Landlessness or landholdings below 1 acre are confined to about 15 per cent of the families. The Chamars fall mainly in this category. There are 33 per cent families owning between 1 to 5 acres. Families of this category are found in all castes, but the Ahirs are mainly in this bracket. The Koeris and Kumhars are other two castes found in this category.

Landholdings between 6 to 10 acres is confined to nearly 16 per cent of the total families in which the Brahmans have more share than Ahirs and Thakurs. Only 2 families of Koeris and 1 family each of Mallahs, Bhars and Chamars own land between 6 to 10 acres. Nearly 11 per cent families owning land between 11 to 15 acres are mainly Brahmans and Thakurs. However, 1 family each of Ahirs, Bhars and Chamars fall in this category. About 25 per cent of the total families own land above 15 acres. Thakurs are prominent in this category.

Our analysis suggests that the gap between the landholdings of different families has not narrowed. This is
substantiated by the fact that among 53 families owning more than 15 acres of land only one family of Brahmin own 16 acres of land. A Koeri family owns 20 acres, and an Ahir family owns 21 acres. The remaining 50 families of Thakurs show a differential pattern. There are 40 families having landholding upto 30 acres, and 8 families own upto 45 acres, and the remaining 2 families own upto 50 acres of land. Thus, the distribution of landholdings between different castes and within the same caste is quite uneven.

In terms of caste and class landowners can be classified as follows:

1. The class of rich farmers owning 15 acres and above constitute 46.78 per cent among the higher castes. Only 2.85 per cent of the middle castes belong to this category and there is none from the Scheduled Castes.

2. The middle farmers own land between 6 and 15 acres of land. 40.36 per cent of the higher caste families belong to this category of farmers. Only 17.14 per cent of families of the middle castes and 5.71 per cent of the Scheduled Castes belong to this category.
3. The poor farmers own between 1 to 5 acres of land. Among the higher castes the percentage of farmers belonging to this category comes only 11.00 per cent and that of the middle castes it is 65.71 per cent. The families belonging to the Scheduled Castes are 37.14 per cent.

4. The last category is of marginal and landless cultivators who own less than 1 acre of land or are landless agricultural workers. From among the higher caste group only 1.83 per cent families belong to this category. The families belonging to middle castes are 14.28 per cent and those to the Scheduled Castes are 57.14 per cent in this category.

Land is greatly valued in Dobhi Block. Control and ownership of land ensure security and provide social and economic status. There are vast disparities in regard to ownership of land among different castes. The families with larger holdings enjoy higher status than those having smaller holdings. Status is not confined to a caste or to a village, it goes beyond these normal boundaries in case of those who enjoy high status. The lower caste's familie with substantial landholdings are more noticed being small in number whereas the upper caste's families remain less noticed being numerous. The landowning families often
become reference groups. We have seen such families in Dobhi Block. One of them is of Koeris and another is that of the Ahirs. There are two other such families of Bhars and Chamars. Of these four families two own more than 15 acres, and the other two own 15 acres of land.

However, landowning is only one factor in status determination. Other factors include the caste rank, economic position, occupation, education and the political networks. A combination of all these factors or some of them determine the overall status of the family. Consequently, some families enjoy higher status, others remain at the middle and lower positions.

**Educational Status and Families**

In order to evaluate the educational status of a family, scores ranging from 0 to 3 were given to the members of a family. The scores given are as follows: (i) illiterate or literate without any educational level (score = 0), (ii) Primary and Middle (1 score), (iii) High School and Intermediate (2 scores), and (iv) Graduate and above including professional degrees (3 scores).

Educational status of a family has been computed by the total scores secured by its members, and it is divided by the total number of members in the family for whom the
weightages were given. Those family members who were still continuing their education were excluded from this exercise. To determine the actual educational status of these families total scores were computed in respect of each of them. Their educational status was determined in accordance with the scores secured by each family.12

Different castes show variations in their educational statuses. On the whole 11.68 per cent of the total families are uneducated. No family of Brahmins, Kumhars and Mallahs castes is uneducated. Only 1 family of Thakurs and 2 families of Koeris are uneducated. But several families of Ahirs, Bhars and Chamars are uneducated.

The families under the category of poorly educated (primary and middle levels) are 37.85 per cent of the total families. A large number of families in this category belong to Kumhars, Koeris, Chamars and Ahirs, followed by Mallahs and Bhars. Among the higher castes also, 6 families of Brahmins and 14 families of Thakurs are poorly educated.

In the category of moderately educated families (High School and Intermediate level), a large number of families belong to Thakurs followed by Brahmins. The
Table 3:8

Distribution of families by caste and educational status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste of the family</th>
<th>Categories of educational statuses</th>
<th>Total No. of families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uneducated</td>
<td>Poorly educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thakur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahir</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koeri</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumhar</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallah</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhar</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of families in this category is less from among Ahirs, Koeris, Bhars and Chamars. The Mallahs are, however, mainly in this category.

There are very few families at the top of educational ladder. Only 7 per cent of the total families are highly educated. A small minority of highly educated families come from upper castes. Only 1 family of Brahmins and the
remaining 14 families of Thakurs are highly educated. None of the families from other castes belong to this category.

What emerges from above analysis substantiates the hypothesis that caste-based inequalities not only reflect and strengthen ranks, class distinctions, but also create further inequalities in regard to educational attainments. Our data suggest that educational disparities are found within a given caste in terms of class and status distinctions. It is clearly evident that even achievements are largely dependent upon ascriptive resourcefulness.

Patterns of Change since Independence

The zamindari abolition, followed by land reforms through comprehensive legislation, modernization of agricultural practices and the Community Development Programmes and Panchayati Raj institutions have brought about multiple changes in caste and class structure. These structural innovations and various developmental measures have resulted into a social-psychological impact on a cross section of rural people. Some findings may be reported here. Brahmins have a feeling that their status has slid down to some extent. Among the Thakurs responses vary. A large number of Thakurs feel that the abolition of zamindari system has made a serious adverse effect on their prestige.
They have lost land, hence their control and dominance over other people has also diminished. The control over the lower castes has loosened because of their reduced dependence upon the Thakurs. This has changed the nature of the relationship between the Thakurs and their ex-tenants. The zamindari abolition has also narrowed the gap which existed between the zamindars and their tenants in the economic field. Consequent upon these factors, the scarcity of the agricultural labourers is widely faced. Many Thakurs have started ploughing the fields themselves which they had never did before.

Some respondents from among the Thakurs feel that the abolition of the zamindari system has positive dimensions also. It has changed the world-view of their members. They are making progress because of the drastic changes in their outlook inflicted by the land reforms. There is an appreciation for the dignity of labour in general. Their economic status has enhanced because of the self-management of the land they own. And it has enabled the community in having more educational achievements, and in going for diversified jobs. The responses from the ex-tenants also bear psychological overtones. They feel that the abolition of zamindari has generated
a sense of freedom and independence among them. The Thakurs are no more their 'sarkar' (government). Their 'Thakur Sahibi' has ended. The actual tillers of the land have become the owners; no one can evict them. This has created a sense of self-respect among them. Besides, no single caste enjoys monopoly of landownership. Land has come to market. One can purchase and sell it. The possession and ownership of land has increased their status. Such a change has inspired them to put more work with a view to improve their economic condition. The disparity between them and their zamindars has narrowed to some extent. They too work at times together on the farms.

But a couple of ex-tenants from among Chamars have reacted differently. Majority of them have maintained that there is a status quo. The zamindari abolition has not helped them. The lands they cultivated have been taken away from them by the zamindars claiming that under self-cultivation. However, only some conscious tenants could retain some land. But majority of them are still landless who continue to suffer humiliation, get threats and abuses from their ex-landlord families. Some of them do not get any land from the Thakurs for cultivating on the basis of sharecropping.
Caste Associations

The formation of caste associations may be viewed as an organised action to acquire higher social status and to fulfil political aspirations. In order to achieve these goals various caste associations sprang up from time to time. Their activities, however, extended to many other aspects of life. The activities of the caste associations through the legitimate channels have influenced many aspects of life. The emergence of caste associations especially among the castes mainly engaged in agriculture appear to be a post-independence phenomenon. Some of the important associations reported by the respondents are Yadav Maha Sabha (Ahir), Mourya Sangh (Koeri), Praja Pati Sangh (Kumhar), Nisad Sabha (Mallah), Raj Bhar Mahasabha (Bhar), Harijan Sangathan and Nirankari Sansthan (Chamar). Some of these associations have become more active in the wake of social, economic and political activities in the area. Among the Brahmins also, Sanatan Dharm and Mahagayatri Sangh's activities are pursued though in a low key. The Kshatriya Maha Sabha, Rajput Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Chetak are some associations which have existed in the past, and continue to exist today also. But they have not made any significant
impact in Dobhi Block. Interestingly, the caste associations comprising mainly tenants are quite active. But the authority of the traditional caste leaders is gradually eroding. However, caste has been quite adaptive in recent times, it has acquired new functions and forms of activities. The traditional caste councils and the new caste associations exist concurrently.

Caste associations have strengthened caste consciousness, but not all are members of caste associations. Most of the people participate in the caste meetings, and only a few take active part in the programmes of caste associations. The local political leaders advocates, and school/college teachers are mainly active members in the caste associations. They derive support mainly from the political leaders at the district, state and the national levels. Quite often leaders of a particular caste serve as a reference group for caste associations. The members of a caste who get involved in the activities of their association generally derive benefit from the association itself as well as from the contacts they develop with important leaders of their caste.

The caste associations function mainly as interest groups. They aim to promote mobility of their members
in social, economic and political spheres. The leaders of these associations organise their activities to have access to positions of power and economic benefits. 14

The Jajmani System: Continuity and Change

The Jajmani system has been an important institution of village life. It is a system based on inter-caste relations and mutual obligations. It includes receiving and rendering of services, rewards and obligations, between two interacting groups. The interacting groups have relations based on the principle of "give and take". But these relations have generally been asymmetrical and inegalitarian, hence Jajmans and Purjans as patrons and clients. The patron-client relationship exists in social, economic and religious spheres. These relations are characterised by receiving and rendering of services to the patron by the client on the occasions like birth, marriage and death and some other social functions.

Land ownership seems to be the basis of this system in the Block. The Jajmani relations are based upon the land ownership as the Jajmans are generally landowners. The Purjan (clients) do not own land. They are a heterogeneous group drawn from different castes.
Both patronhood and clienthood are hereditary and a prerogative to receive and render services. A client has the right to serve a particular family or a group of families which may be located in more than one village. This customary right passes from one generation to another. It may be divided among the sons of a given client. If a joint-family of a patron splits into nuclear families, they are distributed correspondingly among the units of client's joint family. A client has a privilege to serve a Jajman. The payments are both in kind and cash.

There are some broad patterns of Jajmani system in the Block. The artisans and functionary castes which render services to their Jajmans include Barhai/Lohar, Nai, Bari, Kahar and Dhobi. The Kumhars, Malis, Baraish and Chamars also render certain services on occasions like birth, marriage and death. The Brehmins too serve the Jajman (who are of lower status) on such occasions and preside over religious functions. But they are not regarded as Purjan. They are treated as the kul-purohits (family priests).

Artisans and functionary castes are not found in every village. Inter-village connections are based basically on Jajmani ties besides other economic and
socio-cultural activities. Thus, a Purjan is required to serve his Jajmans in several neighbouring villages where his services are not available. The Purjans are normally paid twice a year at the time of harvesting. In addition to this they are paid on social occasions gifts in both cash and kind. The payment given at the time of harvest is known as Lehnā. The payment varies from village to village, caste to caste and even from family to family.

Changes in the Jajmani system may be attributed to the land reforms, Community Development Programmes and the adult franchise. These innovations have created a situation of new form of social relations, social awakening and mutual dependence. Technology, education, occupational mobility, sanskritisation etc. have produced stresses and strains in the patron-client relationships. Dependence on forces of market, competition, bargaining and freedom in decision-making are some of the consequences of the structural factors which have in turn resulted into the weakening of the Jajmani system.

Some of the traditional occupations of the functionary castes and artisans are fast loosing grounds. Reasons are many. The technological innovations are one of them. The Kahars (water carrier), a domestic servant caste, is no
more found in the service of Brahmins and Thakurs. Earlier they were required to fetch water from wells. With the coming of tube-wells most of the traditional wells in the villages have gone dry. Many families have installed hand-pumps in their houses. Thus, many Kahar families are not needed by their Jajmans for fetching water. The Kumhars (potters) are gradually giving up their traditional occupation. The demands for tiles and big earthen vessels are diminishing. They have stopped making them. However, they make earthen vessels for market.

The position of carpenters and blacksmiths has also weakened due to the same reasons. The new types of agricultural implements, tractors, modern ploughs etc. are replacing the old ones. These implements are available in market. The artisans find it more convenient and profitable to sell their products on cash payment in the open market rather than working as Purjans for their Jajmans. However, the Nais have not witnessed such a change. Their services are still required. There is no substitute for them in the village. But some barbers have started saloons in local bazars as a part of market economy. They do charge from their Jajmans also if they avail saloon services. The traditional occupations do not provide
income adequate for livelihood. Hence a large number of people from among functionary and artisan castes are looking for alternate sources of livelihood. Some of them have completely rejected traditional callings. Others are looking for new avenues and prospects for employment.

Sanskritization has also weakened the Jajmani system. The Nais, for instance, have stopped the removal of jutha (defiled) plates. The Kahars too have abandoned making cowdung cakes for their Jajmans. The biradaris have played a vital role in such cultural change. Discarding of some of the traditional occupations is considered as a step towards status-enhancement. Discarding midwifery and removal of carcass by Chamars is another example of such a change. It should, however, be noted that despite these changes the Jajmani relations are being maintained in a changed form. Services of Purjans are required on certain occasions more as a matter of cultural practice. They are paid their neg (dues) by the Jajman. This too is symbolic.

**Jajmani Relations**

Jajmans and clients have not been found necessarily in the same village. Patrons have at times been competing among themselves for extending patronhood to the clients. Leach considers this phenomenon as a unique one. In a
class society the lower class people compete for gaining benefits from the rich or they rebel against them to gain access to resources. The situation of competition among patrons is therefore symbolic of elite-conflict rather than class-conflict. During the zamindari days attempts were made by some Thakurs to persuade some functionary castes to settle in their villages. They were promised house-sites, gift of land and regular Jajmani, and other kinds of protection. The castes like Nais, Kahars, Dhobis and Luhars were prompted for such affiliations with particular zamindars. They also served those families of zamindars who had granted lands to them at some point of time. We have come across some Thakurs who had granted lands to the functionary castes. The land gifts were of two types: jagir or mufti. The mufti land was a grant free of revenue.

The situation has changed now. All the Jajmans are not treated equally by the Purjans. The distinctions are maintained on the basis of the dominance of the Jajman family, its economic status and resourcefulness. For example, a family of Thakurs in Hirapur village has feudal style of life and has also given land to some Purjans in the village. This family enjoys a very high status according to the Purjans of the village. One family in another
village has provided jobs to some Kahars and Nais in a college. A manager of a school has obliged several persons by giving jobs in a school. The persons who have been provided jobs render different sorts of services to the influential people.

There are some families of Nais, Lohars and Kahars whose economic standing is quite strong. They own land, possess bullocks and are substantial farmers. Some members of their families are engaged as white-collar workers, and their young members are receiving education in schools and colleges. They do not care much for their Jajmani obligations. They may not be able to avoid the influential patrons, but they pay little attention to the families whose economic status is not higher than that of their own. Some of the poor Brahmin and Thakur patrons are being ignored by these well off Purjans. Quite often they threat to severe Jajmani relations on the pretext of a dispute between them and their Jajmans.

Patrons belonging to different castes are treated differently. Thakurs and Brahmins are usually attended by Nais, Kahars, Baris, Lohars and Dhobis. Ahirs, Koeris and other middle castes are served by Nais, Lohars and Dhobis only. But the Chamars are served by Nais and Dhobis only
at ceremonial occasions. Jajmani ties in regard to a Lohar is based on the ownership and possession of land. Those families not owning any land or little land do not have Jajmani relations with a Lohar.

Both economic standing and caste rank of a Jajman are important considerations in the Jajmani system. A patron belonging to a middle caste or the Scheduled Caste cannot influence his client to the extent a patron belonging to the higher caste can do. The higher caste patrons receive better attention of the clients than the middle caste patrons. The lower caste patrons receive even lesser attention than the upper and middle caste's patrons. In other words, there is a congruence between caste-hierarchy and the hierarchy of the patrons.

The Jajmani relations between a client and a patron are loosely defined and quite reciprocal in nature. These relations are no doubt asymmetrical, but not necessarily highly exploitative. Jajmani system is a form of cultural practice rather than a mechanism of economic exploitation. The ties between a patron and a client are not of a uniform nature as they depend upon the status of both patron and client, but more on the status of the patron.
It has been found that the well-to-do families of the middle castes have paid their clients on the pattern of the payments made by Thakurs and Brahmins. They have done so in order to ensure the regular services by Nais and Lohars. Some Thakurs have been able to derive better services from their clients by other means also. They have helped their clients in several ways, namely, by lending money, gains, a pair of bullocks and agricultural implements. Besides, they have also helped them in seeking a job, government loans, gram samaj lands, and variety of other favours. Their acquaintance with the powerful families of the Block and their connections with persons in power positions render them capable of extending these favours.

**Status Perception**

Both caste and class are crucial dimensions of determination of social status of a family in the Dobhi Block. Status is not confined to a given caste or a given village; it is an inter-caste and inter-village phenomenon.

All the 214 respondents were asked to identify some families of their village whose status has either enhanced or slid down. They were also asked to provide reasons for their assessment. A couple of families were identified
by them within their own castes. The respondents have shown acute perception about status-evaluation. The families of these two categories are drawn from several castes of the Block. It is clear from the perceptions made that the status of a particular family is not confined to its caste alone. It is evaluated by others also who do not belong necessarily to the same caste or village.

The respondents were able to recall some families within their own castes whose status has either elevated or slid down. These families belong to a number of villages. Some of the families have been referred commonly by several respondents.

These observations indicate that the status of a family is evaluated not necessarily within the caste and village of the family. Status of a family is an inter-caste and inter-village phenomenon. Caste and class go beyond a given village or even a block in status-evaluation.

Our analysis shows that property is the most important factor in determining status of a family. We have seen this in regard to the poor Brahmins and Thakurs on the one hand, and the well-off Nais, Kahars and other lower castes on the other. Proletarianisation of the former and embourgeoisement of the latter are obverse
structural processes, but validate the common factor, namely, the economic one in status-determination. The economic prosperity of a family is considered crucial factor irrespective of its caste rank. Big landholding is no doubt valued quite high, but the economic prosperity acquired by a family through business, contracts, etc. is equally valued high. Possession of modern agricultural implements and production of surplus by a family are valued a lot. Educational achievements of a family facilitate entry of its members into professions like engineering, medicine, legal practice, administration, teaching etc. Power positions held by family members in statutory bodies and other institutions are considered criteria of high status. Possession of trucks, tractors, cars, big pucca houses etc. are a few material possessions which are rated as symptomatic of high status. Attributes and qualities related to personal character possessed by members of a family also contribute to the prestige of the family.

Among the ex-tenants, the perception of status elevation differs compared to ex-zamindars and landless labourers. Ownership of land is valued very high in status-determination. Economic achievements made by a family through petty business, such as dairy, transport of goods,
shop-keeping, small contracts, brick-kiln and the like are considered important factors. The educational achievements of the members of a family also add to its status. Jobs like that of school teacher, clerk, police constable, sub-inspector and employment in railways, cotton mills, factories etc. are also considered important input in status-enhancement. Holding of the office of the village pradhan and some other such positions adds to the family status.

Factors leading to sliding down of status include loss of land on account of sale, split in the family, litigation, mortgage, mismanagement etc. Other factors which erode the prestige of a family consist of death of a valuable member of the family, failure of other family members to maintain the prestige of the family, pauperisation of the family due to indebtedness, drug addiction, loss in business litigation etc. The involvement of the family members in anti-social activities, prostitution, brokerage in bride-selling, spying, low-status occupations, easy means of making money also lower down status of a family.

All the 214 respondents were also asked to evaluate the overall present status of their own families. 22 per cent respondents have evaluated themselves as of high status; 43 per cent of the middle status and the remaining
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29 per cent of the lower status. Nearly 6 per cent did not respond.

The self-evaluation of family status shows variations in terms of caste. Among the higher castes approximately 36 per cent evaluated themselves high, 49 per cent middle, and 11 per cent rated themselves as low. The middle castes feel that only 7 per cent of them enjoyed high status. At the middle level, there are 46 per cent. The remaining 41 per cent have evaluated themselves with low status. But the Chamars feel that 63 per cent families are having low status followed by 23 per cent at the middle level and only 9 per cent at the top. For 6 per cent families responses could not be ascertained.

Conclusion

Thus, we have discussed in this chapter the structure and composition of different social groups in Dobhi Block. Our main focus was on the analysis of their background, in terms of caste, land and education. For this purpose, the family has been considered as an important unit.

Some of the major aspects that we have dealt with are: structure and composition of families, their background, land ownership and educational attainment. We have also
analysed these families with reference to caste associations, Jajmani relations and status perception.

The analysis reveals that family being a social group is the basic unit of status evaluation. A given family is differentiated from another in terms of its caste and class background. There exists not only inter-caste familial status distinctions, there are also intra-caste familial status distinctions. Hence, a hierarchy of statuses at inter-caste and intra-caste level. Some of the important factors which determine status are: caste rank, ownership of land, attainment of education, occupation, capabilities and resourcefulness.

We have also observed that the status of a family is not static. It acquires different dimensions in the context of internal and external forces of social change. Consequent upon this, the status of some traditionally privileged families has remained higher whereas some of their counterparts have suffered a setback. Their status has gone down. Some families which were 'depressed' in the past have emerged today quite powerful and influential.

Our findings show further that the activities of the family are not confined to a particular village where it is located. It cuts across caste and village
boundaries. Therefore, the family status is inter-village, inter-family and inter-caste phenomenon. The 'extensions' of status ranking go beyond a single village. Thus, the status of a family stretches across the caste and village boundaries in Dobhi Block.
Notes and References


2. This is the definition of the household applied by the Indian Census. We have slightly modified the definition. We have not considered any such member who is living with the household but not related to the head of the household.

3. The selection of the families which constitute the sample of the present study involves simple method. The Block level officials were requested to furnish the names of such individuals belonging to different castes who avail various kinds of benefits, from the Block. A list was also prepared of such individuals who occupy some positions in formal organisations and statutory bodies like cooperative bodies, village panchayat, educational institutions etc. A cross-section of people belonging to the major castes of the Block were requested in an informal talk to give the names of such individuals who are known to be (a) traditionally powerful and privileged and respected persons belonging to different castes, (b) such individuals who earlier enjoyed power and privilege but whose status has deteriorated in the course of time. (c) Such individuals and families who did not have any significant status in the past but have emerged influential at present, (d) Such individuals who are important at the levels of district, block, a couple of villages and only at the village level. This combined method enabled us to identify our sample drawn from 68 village panchayats.


10. According to these provisions, if the peasants could pay ten times their annual land rent to the government in one lump sum (or twelve times their annual rent over four years) they could become Bhumidars. Under this right they were granted full rights to dispose the lands as they wished, to sell it or build houses on it. They were also entitled to receive 50 per cent deduction in their annual land tax. Those peasants who could not pay ten times of their annual land rent they remained seerdars. Under this right, they were given permanent hereditable interest in the lands so long as they continued to pay annual rent. But they had no rights to build houses on the land or to sell it and no conversions in their annual land rent. Besides these two categories, two small categories were also included: Asamis (permanently recognised tenants), and adhivasis (a transitory class abolished in 1954). Summarised from Joseph W. Elder, A Case Study of the Consolidation of Holdings Act in Uttar Pradesh, Economic Development and Cultural Change, Vol.XI, Number 1, October, 1962, pp.20-21.

11. These categories of class structures have been borrowed from A.R. Desai's Changing Profile of Rural India. However, while adopting these categories a slight modification has been introduced in the category of middle farmers in which the lower limit of the interval has been increased to 6 acres.

12. The scheme of categorisation of educational status has been worked out as such: upto 0.00 score =
uneducated family, up to 1.00 score poorly educated, 
1.00 - 2.00 moderately educated and above 2 scores — 
highly educated family.

13. L.I. Rudolph and S.H. Rudolph, The Political Role of 
India's Caste Associations, Pacific Affairs, 1960, 
35(1), pp.5-22.

14. The evidence for this is not lacking. There are 
several sociological studies on these aspects, see 
for example, K.K. Verma, Changing Role of Caste 
Associations: A Study of Kurmi Sabha, Patna: A.N. 
Sinha Institute of Social Sciences, 1976.

15. E.R. Leach, Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon 
and North-West Pakistan, London, Cambridge University 