CHAPTER-1
THE PROBLEM

1.1. RATIONALE OF THE PROBLEM

Social mobility is very widely discussed and studied phenomenon all over the world. Many studies of social mobility and its impact on caste system have been done by Indian and foreign social scientists. Many sociologists have distinguished between social ‘mobility’ that is merely an unrealized aspiration and actual change in rank, whether this entails the successful manipulation of wealth, political power or connections, educational attainment, ritual symbols or other variables: to specify whether change in rank must mean movement by a caste out of some broader stratum such as a bloc of ambiguously and inconsistently ranked castes; and to indicate whether any unit’s alleged change in rank is acknowledged by others in the system (Silverberg, 1968:8).

Caste mobility has been examined in such topics as ranking methodology, jajmani relations, channels of regional integration, sanskritization and parochialization, the effects of recent legislations and other agencies of socio-cultural change. The priorities of studies of social change may be defined in the context of the substantive areas or issues that need professional attention. The majority of sociologists seem to prefer studies on urbanization, industrialization, and impact of education,
technology and economic factors, etc. on social change in India. The next in order of priority is the preference for the analysis of political processes that lead to social change (Singh, 1974:422).

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 It would be necessary to know about the castes which superseded and the castes which were superseded and the factors which contributed to this discriminating mobility.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

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

1. What has been the social position and status of a backward caste (Saini) through history till independence?

2. What is the impact of critical land legislations on their socio-economic position just after independence?

3. How have democratic processes during last five decades affected their economic, occupational, educational, political and social
position?

4. How specific cases at micro-level reflect the pattern of social mobility and what are the concomitant contributing factors?

For understanding the first question some specific issues related to their social background, before independence, like their landlessness condition and working as tenants, share-croppers, labourers etc. under Zamindari System, their temporary habitats have been studied. In the second question, some specific issues related to Zamindari Abolition and other Land Reforms, about ownership of land, and their impressed social status have been studied. The third question has included specific issues like participation in democratic processes, their land holdings, impact of reservation policy in occupations at a local-regional level. The fourth question takes note of specific issues like economic, occupational, educational and political achievements that determined their social mobility. These have been studied in a micro-setting which reflect the processes and achievements of status minutely.

1.3. TERMS/CONCEPTS/OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

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

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

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

(iii) OBCs: The Backward Castes Commission determines the criteria to be adopted in considering whether any sections of the people in the territory of India (in addition to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes specified by notifications issued under Articles 341 and 342 of the constitution) has been
treated as socially and educationally backward castes and in accordance with such criteria, prepare a list of such castes setting out also their approximate numbers and their territorial distribution. Sainis come under Other Backward Castes category as specified under the above criteria. Thus, 'Saini' is a Backward Caste as per the above provisions.

(iv) Reference Group and Sanskritization: The term reference group was coined by Herbert Hyman in *Archives of Psychology* (1942), to apply to the group against which an individual evaluates his or her own situation or conduct. He distinguished between a membership group to which people actually belong, and a reference group, which is used as a basis for comparison. A reference group may or may not be a membership group, later developed by Merton (1968) indicating mobility. If it has worked in the case of social mobility among Sainis, has been looked into.

Sanskritization refers to the efforts made by a lower caste to emulate the Sanskrit or Brahmin style of life. The castes occupying relatively lower positions in the system of caste hierarchy quite often imitate the cultural patterns of the higher castes. This is usually followed by a claim to higher rank or higher caste status. Sainis consider themselves Kshatriya and trace their origin from Rajputs. Many of the clans of the Sainis are found to be identical to that of Rajputs. This being the case, sub-divisions and hierarchy
found among the Rajputs has been found among the Sainis. Sanskritization has been observed among the Sainis as they followed the patterns behaviour of higher castes in the sacred spheres of their life.

1.4. PERSPECTIVES/ APPROACHES

To trace background of Sainis till independence related to their landless condition, historical approach has been used. Their historical conditions have been traced. To analyze the social mobility and its consequences or impact of upward mobility on Sainis, structural-functional approach has been helpful. Thus, the study has made use of structural-functional approach to observe the structural causing factors and impact of social mobility on Sainis in terms of economic, occupational, educational, and political dimensions.

1.5. AREA OF STUDY

An area, in which large population of Sainis lives in a number of villages together, lies in Haridwar district of Uttarakhand. For the purpose of present study form the heart of this, area two villages namely Dhirmajra and Habibpur Nivada in Haridwar district of Uttarakhand have been selected as specified/focused area of study. The villages are situated in the centre of the villages of Saini community in this area. These villages have shown progress in economic, occupational, political, and educational aspects particularly
after independence and Zamindari Abolition. On these criteria the two villages have been purposively selected after having rounds of the area and looking at the general prestige of the villages in the area.

1.6. UNIVERSE/SAMPLE

In Bhagwanpur Block of district Haridwar (Uttarakhand), there are several villages from where a number of Sainis have shown upward social mobility. Thus, at the first stage some cases have been identified who have shown social, occupational, educational and political mobility in the region like big land holders, teachers, engineers, doctors etc. This Block has constituted the focused universe. Specific intensive field work has been undertaken in two villages. 100 families from each village have been selected for study. Thus, total 200 families have been studied from the two villages.

1.7. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Historical facts about Sainis have been collected from secondary sources like The Imperial Gazetteers of India, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers and other historical records. Empirical data have been collected with help of observation, interview, and personal records. Secondary or official records have been consulted from the Block and District head quarters and other government offices. Quasi participant observation and
case study methods have been used for collecting first hand data. Primary data finally from 200 heads of households have also been collected by using observational interviews.

**1.8. METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

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