CHAPTER VII

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Our aim in the present study has been to explore the nature and degree of occupational mobility of educated Scheduled Castes. It is presumed that the occupational mobility is determined by social background, educational achievements and the reservation policy. Occupational mobility leads to change in the socio-economic status and as a result an individual or a group becomes part of the elite section of the society. In the case of the respondents of this study they belong to the elite section of their community and therefore it is relevant to know who these elites are, what are the problems they faced and what happens to them after they gain elite position in the society. This is the particular significance of the study. We have tried to answer some of these questions in this study.

It may be noted that the sample for the study is of a specific nature because the respondents have been residing and are employed in a capital city which is metropolitan in nature. Also access to education and employment are relatively better besides easy access to redressal of grievances. In addition, the respondents are well-settled in life, highly educated holding good position in various
government departments. In all there are 150 respondents who are heads of the households residing in a D.D.A. locality of South Delhi. The sampling has been done using purposive stratified method and the study is exploratory and descriptive in nature.

After attaining independence in 1947, the Government of India guaranteed education for all and instituted some special facilities for the Scheduled Castes in order to bring about social upliftment among them. But during the last 45 years of independence, all the facilities for them have not reached the lowest strata of the community. The progress they have made differs from state to state and region to region. Also we find inequality within the Scheduled Castes because they too are heterogeneous and based on hierarchy. This may be due to their differential historical socio-economic and cultural conditions. Studies have shown that particular castes within the Scheduled Castes tend to utilise the benefits. Therefore, as a whole, progress made by them is unsatisfactory, marginal and mainly confined to urban areas. It has, therefore, created a gulf between the 'elite' and the 'masses', the 'educated' and the 'illiterate' among the Scheduled Castes.

Studies on Scheduled Castes in general have covered only general sample of the population. They do not deal
with the problem of education and its role in achieving occupational mobility and the subsequent change in their traditional status. This study has tried to demonstrate the role of education in changing the traditional occupations and the socio-economic status of the Scheduled Castes.

**Education as Key to Mobility**

After independence, education has not been adequately and consciously geared to realise the results. No priorities have been clearly sorted out specially in the case of the deprived sections of the society. However, the all-India enrollment of Scheduled Castes in various educational institutions has gone up three time more during last three decades. But the problems of stagnation and dropout are rampant; the higher they go educationally, the more the dropout. The reasons behind this are multiple, important among them being poor social background and poor performance.

The correlation between education and mobility has been thoroughly studied in the west. However, western societies are open and access to individual mobility are high whereas in India, our society is inherently based on social stratification. Due to British rule, modernization and technological changes, the traditional structure got shaken and the changes started taking place. Modern education
played crucial role in change although it has generated inequality since it is confined to upper and middle classes.

In the case of the Scheduled Castes, the contribution of education for positive change is crucial and directly linked to occupational mobility. Studies have shown that other means like economic development, political power, intellectual power and even conversion proved to be ineffective whereas education appears to be effective for their development. Within given situation there is no other viable means than education that can be considered solely useful. In addition, functionally also, education is viewed as very useful in the case of the Scheduled Castes.

The entry into white collar modern occupations from traditional ones is determined by educational attainments. These educational attainments are further determined by its quality and level. Since Scheduled Castes lack a tradition of formal education and belong to first generation, their enrollment, choice, performance and sustenance in education is adversely affected. As a result, they normally go in for general education e.g., Arts, Science and Commerce, etc. take longer time to complete and perform poorly. Consequently, it is difficult for them to enter into formal - full time employment besides being tough to compete for it. This may be one among many reasons why they start their
occupational career at very low level. In addition most of them have to earn while learning. Once they enter into education their career is full of interruptions, gaps, financial problems and lack of proper guidance. Although facilities like freeship, scholarships, hostels, etc., are available, they depend on entry into and continuity in education. In other words, education becomes a condition to be eligible to avail the facilities and minimum level of education becomes a pre-condition to get into employment. Therefore, their occupational mobility has to be necessarily seen through educational attainments which are interlinked and interdependent.

The respondents represent in all, twelve states, although the state of Uttar Pradesh has fifty per cent representation. Of the remaining fifty per cent, most of them belong to Punjab, Delhi and Maharashtra. From Delhi proper there are just 20 respondents and remaining 130 are immigrants either for education or for employment or for both. Majority of them have been living in Delhi for a period of 10 years and above. Castewise representation, Jatavas (they belong to mainly Uttar Pradesh) are 61, Mahars 18, Chamars 16. It appears that mostly the advance castes of the respective states/regions are represented. Educationally, all of them (except for one who is not SSC
and holds a diploma) are educated upto SSC and above. More than a half hold professional degrees and four of them hold master degrees from abroad. Occupationally, majority of them hold occupations at medium and high level i.e., as per the government pattern class II and above category.

**Family Background**

Social background has been considered as one of the social determinants of occupational mobility. For our analysis we have divided it into two categories: (1) family of orientation and (2) family of procreation. However, whenever necessary the term household has been used as the unit of analysis. In the first category, educational and occupational background of father, mother and siblings has been examined. In addition, also we have analysed the respondents' order of birth, number of siblings, highly educated sibling and his/her occupation. A majority of the fathers are illiterate or educated upto very low level. Further, it is revealed that respondents themselves are highly educated and these variables do not have positive correlations with respondents' mobility. However, siblings have shown greater degree of social mobility in terms of occupation of their origin to modern secular manual and non-manual jobs. Information on the educational and occupational background of respondents' wives and their
children was also collected. In addition, number of children, size of household, type of household and total household income is also presented. Most of them have medium and large sized households (i.e. 3 to 5 and 6 to 11 members respectively) and most of them have school going or below age children. In the case of wives, majority of them are illiterate or educated upto very low level. Only 17 wives are employed. In all, the social background of our respondents has been very poor; educationally, occupationally and incomewise. Considering their degree of mobility, they have come a long away. This finding is contrary to the common understanding that the elites from among the Scheduled Castes come from well-off social backgrounds.

**Educational Mobility**

The special privileges provided by the government directly help them to climb up educationally. However, respondents are found to be first generation beneficiaries of the reservations of which they have made maximum use. The present analysis has therefore attempted to trace the careers of the Scheduled Castes in order to determine how much educational mobility has actually occurred. Educational mobility has been measured inter-generationally and intra-generationally. Inter-generationally, an
individual's educational position was compared with that of the father and the eldest son. Social mobility was measured as the movement of social origin, i.e., their ultimate education and occupation. In intragenerational mobility, the individual has been compared with his siblings (eldest and youngest brothers) and wives.

Of a total of 150 respondents, our sample includes 28 who have completed secondary school education, 15 have completed vocational/technical diploma or certificate, 56 have completed undergraduation/postgraduation without professional degree and 54 have completed undergraduation or postgraduation with professional degree like Law, M.B.A., Engineering, B.Ed., Agriculture, etc. Poor financial conditions and lack of guidance and domestic responsibilities have been often cited reasons for not being able to continue education. Those who continued and achieved current educational levels have done so only after getting into jobs and settling down in life.

They come from families where educational attainments are very low which could be attributed to their low socio-economic and cultural background. Government intervention has so far limited itself to expansion of the educational system in order to accommodate the lower castes. What we need is a redistribution and reorganization of existing
educational resources and not simply the expansion of low quality institutions in which Scheduled Castes are being accommodated. Access to higher education requires not only access to institutions of higher education but access to high quality, prestigious and high opportunity professional institutions.

Has Social Mobility Increased?

The conclusion drawn from this study is that there is very high degree of educational and occupational upward mobility perhaps because of general awareness they gained from Ambedkar's movement, the urban exposure and the facilities provided to them. This massive shift from traditional occupations to modern, secular white collar occupations has been possible through education. Since these modern occupations are considered prestigious compared to traditional ones, it may be assumed that our respondents have achieved upward social mobility.

Occupational Mobility

The respondents have achieved upward occupational mobility to a greatest extent. Their mobility is upward and of a long distance in nature. The respondents have an occupational status different from their fathers. Out of 150, 60 respondents are engaged in medium level occupations 50 in high level occupations and 40 in low level occupations.
occupations. Most of the fathers on the other hand, are engaged in lowest and very low level manual, traditional occupations that have low prestige in society. Looking at sons (respondents'), it is found that only 30 eldest sons are employed and a majority are employed at low and very low occupations. However, a majority of the eldest sons (72) are studying while 18 are below age.

When we look at data relating to siblings (we have considered only eldest and youngest brothers for our analysis), the mobility is restricted to respondents only - comparing with the brothers, respondents themselves achieved high degree of mobility. Considering gender dimension and occupational mobility, an overwhelming females are engaged in household activities both at intra and intergenerational levels.

Present Occupational Status

Respondents' current jobs are not the first jobs. They changed many jobs because jobs were temporary, on leave vacancy, low paid, in private organizations where feeling of job insecurity and social insecurity persists. Moreover, comparing their first jobs with present jobs, it is found that out of 150, 122 of them were engaged in low and very low level jobs and majority of them got these jobs under reserved quota. Keeping in mind the time period and
comparing their first job with the present, most of them climbed up the ladder through reservations and promotions. These promotions also are based on reservations. They struggled till they got jobs of their choice and particularly in government departments which our respondents perceived as better jobs. There are only 13 respondents who are engaged in the jobs which are first in their occupational career.

It must be noted here that a majority of the respondents reported that they suffered from caste discrimination, untouchability, underestimation by their colleagues during their entire occupational span. Concrete incidences of social discrimination like blocking promotions, spoiling of confidential reports, assigning unimportant task and harassments, and undue transfer to remote places, etc., have been reported.

**Special Privileges**

Almost all the respondents used all the facilities both in education and for employment and therefore, perhaps, they have been able to achieve such a high degree of mobility. All of them acknowledged the positive contribution of special privileges. However, majority of them reported the improper implementation of the provisions besides being inadequate. However, majority of them favoured the
discontinuance of political reservations for that they do not serve the purpose.

This reminds us of the ongoing controversy on the reservation policy. There are sections of people who argue for time bound policy, or its replacement by economic criteria and yet some argue for descheduling certain castes for they need no more such support. However, one could take a stand based on rational thinking that majority Scheduled Castes belong to rural, poor and socially deprived section and still continue to suffer from the stigma of untouchability. It is empirically established that there is a class or section of Scheduled Castes who have really been benefitted of the provisions and came up at par with general people. However, this section of Scheduled Castes are a micro-scopic minority and urban based. Significant number of them do not like to use the facilities, particularly the political reservations, despite they continue to suffer from social disabilities.

Perceptions and Views

Our respondents belong to the elite section of Scheduled Castes who form a minority. After achieving high degree of upward mobility, it is important to seek their views and perceptions related to their social status, reservation policy and their community in general. A
majority of them reported that they are better-off than their fathers educationally, occupationally, economically and socially. Almost all of them expressed that the practice of untouchability continues. This view was supported by narrations of their own experiences of untouchability in the neighbourhood, during their education and in employment, including such experiences of their wives and children. However, a resistance to some extent is reported perhaps because of their awareness and self-confidence which they gained out of education and urban exposure. Responding to our hypothetical question (applicable to those only who are unmarried, married but have no issues and whose children are below age) whether they will allow their children to avail the facilities in future, a majority reported that they will not allow because they feel confident and competent or people will look down upon. Further, contribution of reservation policy to improve upon their socio-economic status has been reported to be positive to a great extent. Majority of them did not favour discontinuance of the reservation policy or its replacement by economic criteria. The reasons for such views have been given that there is no guarantee of justice if economic criteria are adopted and reservation policy be continued till the Scheduled Castes come at par with general people or full justice is done.
Their views on best means to improve socio-economic conditions of Scheduled Castes in general were sought on priority basis. Education and economic conditions were the first two means reported by majority of them. Nearly half the respondents agreed to the concept of two generations i.e., full implementation upto generations. This can be taken as positive outcome of the existing policy.

Finally, most of them suffer from the identity problem. Some adopted surnames identical to the high castes while many hide their caste in day-to-day life and avoid social mixing. However, their interaction with their kith and kins has been reported to be close and frequent. Most of them help their relatives and castefellows.

Lastly, this micro-scopic minority is targeted for being neo-Brahmins but at the same time suffer from tremendous psychological pressures, are not accepted as social equals and are reminded of and continued with new stigmatized identity. It may be noted that such a study may not lead to generalizations but will help in gaining valuable insights.

**Further Areas of Study**

A comparative study of these Scheduled Castes with a similar type of sample from another metropolitan city may
provide interesting and meaningful insights into the problem. An independent study on Scheduled Caste women belonging to such elite families will be relevant. This section of the community has been ignored in empirical research. Also, the phenomenon of a particular caste, within the Scheduled Castes, being advanced or backward needs thorough probing. Lastly, a comparative study of the Scheduled Castes and non-Scheduled Castes of comparable socio-economic status will give different and meaningful insights.